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Re-Assessing Rachmaninoff's Legacy: The Piano Concertos and Evolution of His Musical Style

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RE-ASSESSING RACHMANINOFF'S LEGACY:
THE PIANO CONCERTOS AND EVOLUTION OF HIS
MUSICAL STYLE

Varazdat Khachatryan MMus

Submitted for the qualification of PhD

Technological University Dublin
Conservatoire

Supervisors: Dr Mark Fitzgerald and Dr David Mooney

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the evolution of Sergey Rachmaninoff's five major piano/orchestral works and their revisions, which span most of his career. Composing at the turn of the twentieth century, which was marked by several revolutions, two world wars and changes in musical tastes from romanticism to modernism, Rachmaninoff was often referred to as a 'conservative' composer. However, contrary to this categorisation, throughout his musical life he developed a style that has become unique and revolutionary in its own right. This thesis aims to unravel the key arguments at the heart of the conservative-progressive debate and shed new light on Rachmaninoff's legacy.

To show the development of his writing style and introduction of progressive and novel elements, the thesis offers a comprehensive framework of analysis, situating Rachmaninoff's works within the context of the continuing evolution of the Romantic piano concerto. It takes Piano Concerto No. 1, written in a traditional romantic form, as a starting point, and analyses the subsequent piano/orchestral works through internal comparison (within and between the piano concertos and their revisions), while also offering external comparisons where necessary. This approach helps trace the transformation of Rachmaninoff's writing style and goes beyond the argument of similarities and differences between romanticism and modernism. To understand, compare and reveal the hidden nuances of Rachmaninoff's compositional language, this thesis combines the analysis with a systematic application of charts and tables for all five works. The chronological and comparative analysis as well as a technical and harmonic assessment of the revisions of his concertos shed an extra light on the composer's legacy and the development of his style.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for graduate study by research of the Technological University Dublin and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the TU Dublin's guidelines for ethics in research.

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Signature **Varazdat Khachatryan**

Date **31/03/2021**

Candidate

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my father Albert Khachatryan, who from a very young age believed in me as a musician and as a person, and did all in his power to see me succeed.

KEY TO READING THE CHARTS AND TABLES

A, B, C, ... – Principal subjects

A-1, A-2, ... - Sections of the subject

Aa, Ab, ... - Variants of the subject

/A, /B, ... - Introduction for the subject

A Ext – Extension of the subject

Intro – Introduction

Orch – Orchestra

Solo – Piano

Ped - Pedal

A Orch, A Solo, ... Execution of the subject by orchestra or soloist

Orch+Solo – Execution of the subject with both orchestra and soloist

TR – Transition

TR1, TR2, ... Number of transitions

RT - Retransition

CS – Closing section

CS1, CS2, ... Number of closing sections

EP – Episode

Dir – *Dies Irae*

() – Material used in the section

/bar number – Anacrusis

/section (/A, /Coda, /TR, etc.) – Introductory linking passage to the section

Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc) – degree of the tonal plot

↑ and ↓ – raised and lowered degree of the tonal plot

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INTRODUCTION: RACHMANINOFF'S LEGACY AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE PIANO CONCERTO GENRE

I have no sympathy with the composer who produces works according to preconceived formulas or preconceived theories. Or with the composer who writes in certain style because it is the fashion to do so. Great music has never been produced in that way — and I dare to say it never will. Music should, in the final analysis, be the expression of a composer's complex personality. It should not be arrived at mentally, tailor-made to fit certain specifications — a tendency, I regret to say, all too prevalent during the past twenty years or so.¹

Often referred to as the 'last romantic of the twentieth century', Sergey Rachmaninoff's legacy provides an interesting insight into the development of musical scene of the time. Most of his works were composed at the juncture of important historical events marked by several revolutions, two world wars and dramatic changes to the world. Moreover, musical tastes and structures were transforming from romanticism to modernism, forming a context in which Rachmaninoff was often referred to as a 'conservative' composer. However, the evolution of Rachmaninoff's style and means of its articulation provide a deep insight into the transition of musical traditions, where he can be described as a form of bridge that links the romantic era with the new tendencies of twentieth-century writing. His early compositions, including the first piano concerto, carry a heavy influence of Tchaikovsky whom he admired, but his later works acquire a unique stamp of his own interpretation.

His piano concertos are perhaps the most representative musical works of his legacy, which show the progression and transformation of his writing style, enabling the researcher to follow Rachmaninoff's evolution as a composer and pianist in its

¹ David Ewan, 'Music Should Speak from the Heart: An Interview with Sergei Rachmaninoff', in *The Etude*, Vol. 59, No. 12 (December 1941), 804

entirety. Covering an extensive period of his life (from 1891 until 1934), these large-scale piano/orchestral works allowed him to show his talent as a composer and pianist at the same time. Rachmaninoff composed his first concerto at the age of 16 when he was still a student and did the last revision of his fourth concerto 2 years before his death (1943), offering a selection of works that range across almost his entire creative lifespan. The piano concertos also provide an insight into the evolution of both symphonic and piano composition at the same time.

Despite the unique character and brilliance as well as the popularity of Rachmaninoff's works, his musical legacy remains under-researched in musicology. More generally, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin could be considered as the first most prominent Russian composers whose piano works dominate their musical heritage compared to the works composed in other genres. Furthermore, Rachmaninoff's contribution to the development of the Russian piano concerto genre is also undervalued. Generally, the piano concerto was not a widespread compositional genre in the Russian musical tradition prior to Rachmaninoff's time. The late eighteenth century Russian piano concerto, with its small-scale salon setting, predominantly took the form of variations on popular songs.² Before Rachmaninoff, only a few Russian composers had written piano concertos and Russia in general was behind in comparison with Western composers. Starting from his second piano concerto Rachmaninoff moves toward symphonising the genre and amplifying its Russianness by introducing Orthodox chant-like melodies and evocations of church bells, among other features. While incorporating Russian folk-related modes into his writing style, Rachmaninoff never replicated any existing folk or urban melodies in his own

² Jeremy Paul Norris, 'The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century' (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 1988), 1–6

compositions. The only melodic motif that he borrowed and used throughout his lifetime was the *Dies Irae* medieval chant.

After his first concerto, Rachmaninoff's second and third piano concertos become more complex with polythematic double, and sometimes triple sub-melodies. The third piano concerto is considered the pinnacle of his musical legacy. Composed in early 1909 for his first concert tour of the USA and now very popular among pianists, the third concerto was rarely played in the years after its composition because of its technical challenges. With his fourth piano concerto, Rachmaninoff's compositional language gradually became harmonically more advanced, yet structurally and texturally simpler compared to his earlier works.

Rachmaninoff the Composer: Conservative – progressive debate

When discussing Rachmaninoff as a composer, one of the key debates evolved around the definition of whether or not he can be seen as a conservative or progressive composer.

In his own words, he was 'organically incapable of understanding modern music, therefore [he] cannot possibly like it'.³ The label 'conservative' also reflects the rivalry that existed at the time between the musical schools of Moscow and St Petersburg. The former was headed by Rubinstein and centred on the cult of Tchaikovsky whereas the second group was headed by Rimsky-Korsakov and claimed that they were the 'progressive' group of the time. However, while Rachmaninoff

³ Joseph Yasser, 'Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff's Music', in *Tempo, New Series No 22 (Winter)* (Cambridge: CUP, 1951–1952), 11

belonged to the Muscovites and admired Tchaikovsky, he also had strong attachment to the works of Rimsky-Korsakov as he confesses in some of his letters.⁴ In fact, the scores of Rimsky-Korsakov were the only works Rachmaninoff took with him (apart from his own compositions) when emigrating from Russia in the midst of the Bolshevik revolution.⁵

The fragment from an interview with David Ewan for journal *The Etude* in 1941, seen at the start of this introduction, is among many of Rachmaninoff's comments confirming his antipathy towards modern music. While many musicologists use his words to confirm or argue about Rachmaninoff's conservatism, one should read the rest of his commentary in the same article to understand if he was indeed against all modern music or whether he merely distrusted the approach of some of the contemporary composers. In the last part of the interview Rachmaninoff clearly states his position by saying:

You cannot explore a new world, without first becoming familiar with the old one. Once you are in the possession of technic, once you have learned your classic rules well, you are so much the better equipped to set out in your own direction as a composer.⁶

According to Rachmaninoff, composers often 'plunge into the writing of experimental music' without properly understanding and mastering the rules which would enable them to break them in a meaningful and effective manner. One of his two examples was Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*) which Stravinsky composed after completing works in a classical form such as his first Symphony and years of having been under intense supervision of 'a master like

⁴ Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (New York: NYUP, 1956), 369

⁵ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (England: Ashgate, 1990), 287

⁶ Ewan, 'Music Should Speak from the Heart: An Interview with Sergei Rachmaninoff', 804

Rimsky-Korsakoff'.⁷ In Rachmaninoff's view, although *Le Sacre* is a bold statement of 'imaginative harmonies and energetic rhythms', a professional like Stravinsky with his traditional academic training knew how to react against the rules and when to break them in order to create a new compositional language. Thus, the so-called conservatism of Rachmaninoff was not about rejecting modern music as a whole but rather about how the composer approaches it and what they achieve at the end of their compositional journey.

Interestingly, often the way he is defined as a conservative composer has nothing to do with the classification of the musical era Rachmaninoff's compositions can be ascribed to, but rather the negative connotation of the word 'conservative' and the attitude towards 'conservatism' that was prevalent during the rise of modernist composers in the early-mid 1900s. As a result, when discussing Rachmaninoff's legacy, there is an inevitable desire to 'defend' him against those who claim him as conservative.⁸ In addition some publications such as *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* can play an important role in shaping the critics and audience's perception of a composer and thus leave a long-term impact on how he is perceived.⁹ One of the most noticeable negative connotations is apparent in Eric Blom's widely quoted description of Rachmaninoff in the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* published in 1954.

As a composer he can hardly be said to have belonged to his time at all, and he represented his country only in the sense that accomplished but conventional composers like Glazunov or Arensky did. He had neither the national characteristics of the Balakirev school nor the individuality of Taneyev or Medtner. Technically he was highly gifted, but also severely limited. His music is well-constructed and effective, but monotonous in texture, which consists in essence mainly of artificial and gushing tunes accompanied by a

⁷ The second example is about the famous Russian painter Mikhail Vrubel

⁸ Marina Frolova-Walker and Peter Donohoe, 'Russian Piano Masterpieces: Rachmaninov' (Gresham College, January 19, 2021) <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/rachmaninov-piano>

⁹ Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 16

variety of figures derived from arpeggios. The enormous popular success some few of Rachmaninoff's works had in his lifetime is not likely to last, and musicians never regarded it with much favour. The third pianoforte Concerto was on the whole liked by the public only because of its close resemblance of the second, while the fourth, which attempted something like a new departure, was a failure from the start.¹⁰

The aforementioned statement itself is somewhat inconsistent with the claims it makes: the author admits that Rachmaninoff's second and third piano concertos have had 'enormous public success', which in his view is unlikely to last. He somewhat tacitly justifies this claim by the fact that 'musicians never liked it with much favour'. Arguably, this is a weak argument to make a judgement about the composer's future. Furthermore, he refers to the lack of Rachmaninoff's individuality which, in his view, is not on par with Taneyev or Medtner. However, if one looks deeper the main characteristic features of Rachmaninoff's writing including his extensive use of chromaticism, Orthodox chants and bells together with his multi-layered texture, have become his individual trademarks setting his writing apart from other composers. Furthermore, Rachmaninoff's beautifully phrased melodies, which Blom describes as 'artificial and gushing tunes' have been critical in capturing the imagination of the audience and made the composer's music interesting and popular during his lifetime and afterwards.

As a result, the gaps in the systematic analysis of his works and discrepancies in the existing literature led to exaggerations and indefensible argumentation by both his critics and supporters.

¹⁰ Eric Blom (ed.), *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th editions, Vol. 7 (London: MacMillan, 1954), 27

The existing scholarship

While the existing literature and scholarship offer an overview of his life and works, it largely focuses on individual aspects and is rather general and biographical. Because of their popularity the second and third concertos receive more attention while the first and fourth concertos are largely under-played by performers and under-studied by researchers. This leaves a gap in the analysis of the development of Rachmaninoff's musical language as a whole, which needs to be re-assessed in its entirety.

An overwhelming part of existing English and Russian language scholarship about Rachmaninoff is largely biographical and focuses on some of his individual works or aspects of his more popular compositions. There are some publications with deeper analysis of Rachmaninoff's works, particularly in recent years, which explore his compositional language and writing style. However, the lack of comprehensive and systematic analysis of his works and the evolution of his compositional language across his career results in misleading and often extreme categorisations which portray him as a conservative, old-fashioned or thoroughly modern composer, depending on the predilections of the researcher who uses Rachmaninoff's letters or recollections to justify his/her argument.

Overall, in recent years, there has been a stronger trend in recognising progressive elements in Rachmaninoff's compositions. However, most scholarship offers a segmented and generalised approach to understanding Rachmaninoff's legacy, thus failing to provide a holistic picture of the transformation of his writing style over the years and the true extent of the novelties and contribution he made to the development of Russian and international musical traditions. Broadly speaking, the scholarship can be divided into three groups:

- biographical publications, which place a heavy emphasis on Rachmaninoff's life, letters and recollections (with limited or no analytical reference to his works)
- semi-biographical sources (with some analytical material but still a heavy emphasis on the composer's life)
- analytical research (with a strong emphasis on the analysis of his compositions and style) and where the conservative-progressive debate is much more prevalent.

Importantly, the last group is perhaps the most limited in scope and analytical reach. This thesis aims to contribute to and fill in the gaps by offering a different view of the transformation of Rachmaninoff's compositional language through a holistic analysis of his five major piano/orchestral works and their revisions that span most of his compositional career.

Biographical accounts

Oskar Riesemann, Sergei Bertensson, Barrie Martyn, Geoffrey Norris, Max Harrison and Michael Scot are among the key authors of the main English language sources about Rachmaninoff. Their publications are largely biographical with short descriptive or analytical overviews of Rachmaninoff's compositions. The earliest biographical material about Rachmaninoff is by Oskar Riesemann in his *Rachmaninoff's Recollections*, published in 1934.¹¹ Riesemann is often referred to as

¹¹ Oskar Riesemann, *Rachmaninoff's Recollections* (Freeport and New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970)

a primary source for Rachmaninoff's biographical data, given the fact that the composer himself dictated his own biography to Rieseemann. However, Bertensson claims that Rachmaninoff did not find the final title of the publication satisfactory and was unhappy about 'several embroidered and invented quotations in which he was made to judge and explain his compositions' and compliment himself.¹² Rachmaninoff's letter to his friend Vladimir Wilshaw also refers to his angst about some of the inaccuracies in the book. He complains that Rieseemann 'composed it out of his head' and it is 'very boring'.¹³ However, Michael Scot insists that inaccuracies in Rieseemann's book are minimal and in turn questions the objectivity of Bertensson's criticism which was based on evidence from Rachmaninoff's sister-in-law Sofia Satina who closely collaborated with Bertensson and Leyda on their version of Rachmaninoff's biography and life.¹⁴

One of the more comprehensive biographical sources about Rachmaninoff is the seminal work by Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda entitled *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, published in 1956.¹⁵ This seminal work has become one of the frequently referenced sources about Rachmaninoff, widely quoted by researchers and practitioners thanks to its largely accurate accounts and detailed illustration of the composer's life and career. While they started working on the book in 1946, difficulties finding a publisher resulted in a ten-year delay before it was finally released in 1956. The delay was partly due to the fact that John Culshaw and Victor Seroff managed to get ahead of Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda by publishing Rachmaninoff's biography in 1949 and 1950 respectively. This most likely hindered Bertensson and Leyda from getting a publisher when other biographies about

¹² Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 299

¹³ Victor Seroff, *Rachmaninoff* (London: Cassell, 1951), 194

¹⁴ Michael Scott, *Rachmaninoff* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008), 158

¹⁵ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*

Rachmaninoff were already available on the market.¹⁶ Alongside a descriptive biographical overview, Culshaw provides brief analysis of some of Rachmaninoff's compositions, while Seroff mainly focuses on the historical and biographical aspects of the composer's life. However, Bertensson's carefully documented work is only concentrated on Rachmaninoff's life and work based mainly on Rachmaninoff's letters in addition to reviews, articles, interviews and recollections in a highly efficient chronological order.

It will henceforth serve as the main and most reliable source for anyone wishing to obtain all the important and unadorned facts concerning Rachmaninoff's long and distinguished career.¹⁷

Interestingly Yasser concludes his review of Bertensson's book hinting at the lack of a 'full-fledged analysis' of Rachmaninoff's works, but then adds that it would have been difficult to incorporate everything in a single publication which is already about 500 pages long.¹⁸ It is evident from Yasser's comment that already in 1956 there was a gap in the analysis and understanding of Rachmaninoff's musical language, his style, form and harmonies. And this is despite the fact that a number of research papers had already been published including one by Yasser himself.

From the Russian language sources an important contribution is made by Zaruhi Apetian¹⁹. Apetian's two volumes which were first published in 1957 and a later edition released in an expanded form in 1961 include recollections from more than fifty contemporaries of Rachmaninoff representing a large spectrum of

¹⁶ David Butler Cannata, Introduction for *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* by Bertensson and Leyda (Bloomington and Indianapolis: IUP, 2001), xxix–xxxi

¹⁷ Joseph Yasser, review for *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* by Bertensson and Leyda, in *Notes*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Music Library Association, Sep. 1956), 643

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 644

¹⁹ Zaruhi Apetian, *Vospominanie o Rahmaninove* [Remembering Rachmaninoff] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Musicalnoe Izdatelstvo, 1961)

professions including scholars, musicologists, artists, composers, family and friends. The book starts with *Notes about C. V. Rachmaninoff* (Записка о С. В. Рахманинове) - an over one-hundred-page long account by Sofia Satina of Rachmaninoff's life in detail. In addition to the accounts of contemporaries which are an invaluable source in themselves for understanding Rachmaninoff as a person, conductor, composer and pianist, this is one of the most comprehensive collections of Rachmaninoff's own letters and notes. These letters and recollections lead to a greater understanding and chronologically indicate Rachmaninoff's intentions, mood, concerns, hesitations and commendations when working on his compositions. This thesis also refers to these letters, examined in detail as background material, to help explain some of the reasons behind the use of different stylistic, formal or harmonic features in different periods of composer's life and works.

Another noteworthy biographical account of Rachmaninoff is written by Michael Scott. While his book *Rachmaninoff* written in 2008 heavily references the works by Riesemann, Bertensson and other biographers discussed above, he gives a valuable insight into the various stages of Rachmaninoff's life divided into eighteen distinct chapters.²⁰

Semi-biographical scholarship

In his book *Rachmaninoff* music critic Geoffrey Norris addresses the gap highlighted by Yasser by providing a descriptive analysis of Rachmaninoff's major

²⁰ Scott, *Rachmaninoff*

works alongside a detailed biographical account.²¹ The first edition was published in 1976 and later revised in 1993 due to some findings related to the dates of some of Rachmaninoff's compositions and also the growing interest in his music from scholars, musicologists and performers.²² Following an eighty-page biographical account, Norris discusses the genres Rachmaninoff composed in by summarising some of his major works.

Perhaps the most successful in combining the analytical and biographical data is Barrie Martin's *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* written in 1990 which is a valuable publication for anyone who wants to study Rachmaninoff.²³ As the title indicates, the book is divided in three sections, exploring each of Rachmaninoff's three career paths in details. The first part of the book (*Rachmaninoff the Composer*) successfully blends the composer's life with the analysis of his major compositions in a chronological order. Another valuable resource is the detailed list of Rachmaninoff's performances, recordings and piano repertoire. This gives an extra insight into the works Rachmaninoff played most frequently and helps one infer certain possible influences or preferences the composer may have brought to his own compositions. Given the diversity of information and detail, Martin's book can be considered as an encyclopaedia addressing almost every aspect of the composer's life and career. However, while there are numerous references to English and Russian sources validating the accuracy of the biographical part of Rachmaninoff's life, the analytical part is done in a form of a brief summary with some music examples giving only a high-level overview of the compositions.

²¹ Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (Oxford: OUP, 2001)

²² *Ibid.*, v–vi

²³ Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*

Similar to Martin, Max Harrison also combines elements of Rachmaninoff's life and works in his book entitled *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, published in 2005.²⁴ However, contrary to Martin and Norris, Harrison structures the publication in a chronological order, summarising the compositions and where they sit chronologically in Rachmaninoff's life and career. Written in 2005, Harrison's analysis makes frequent references to the works by Bertensson, Martin and Norris, among others. Harrison writes in a popular style for mass readership, as a result the musical examples are included in an appendix at the end.

Another key contribution to understanding Rachmainoff's legacy is Vera Briantseva's *Sergey Vassilievich Rachmaninoff*, published in 1976.²⁵ Structurally, her work resembles those by Norris and Martin and includes a very brief analysis of some of Rachmaninoff's compositions that run in a chronological order alongside the discussion of the composer's life and career. Interestingly, some of the chapters in the works by Rieseemann, Briantseva and Martin share near identical titles.

Oskar Rieseemann (1934)	Vera Briantseva (1976)	Barrie Martin (1990)
Chapter 2: The St. Petersburg Conservatoire	Chapter 2: At the Moscow Conservatoire (В Московской Консерватории)	Chapter 3: Student Years, 1886– 1892
Chapter 5: The “Free Artist” in Moscow	Chapter 3: “Free Artist” Begins His Journey (Свободный Художник Начинает Свой Путь)	Chapter 4: “Free Artist”, 1892– 1897
Chapter 11: America	Chapter 7: In a Foreign Land (На Чужбине)	Chapter 8: New World, 1917– 1943

²⁴ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005)

²⁵ Vera Briantseva, *Sergey Vassilievich Rachmaninoff* (Moscow: Sovetsky Kompositor, 1976)

While it is not uncommon to have similar titles for chapters if one takes a chronological approach to Rachmaninoff's life, it is striking to see the use of "Free Artist" in all three of the publications. This is a commendation title awarded to Rachmaninoff for his educational excellence and achievements graduating from Moscow Conservatoire with a 'Great Gold Medal' in composition and piano performance.²⁶ Given that Rieseemann's work was written first, Briantseva and Martin most likely borrowed some elements of his structure in their own accounts of Rachmaninoff. Briantseva gives a thorough account of Rachmaninoff's life and makes frequent references to Apetian with some (albeit fewer) examples from foreign scholars such as Rieseemann. Similar to Norris and Martin, Briantseva gives short descriptions of all Rachmaninoff's (even unpublished) compositions from his student years and places them chronologically next to the historical events or life periods of Rachmaninoff. The publication includes music examples in the analytical part as well as a large number of photographs (some not widely known) of Rachmaninoff, concert posters and manuscripts.

Analytical scholarship

In recent years there has been a revival of research interest in Rachmaninoff's compositions that aim to explore some of the composer's works rather than focus on his biography. These, however, still take a segmented approach and do not provide a holistic and systematic analysis of Rachmaninoff's compositional language and its transformation throughout his musical career, and thus fail to capture the full extent

²⁶ Briantseva, *Sergey Vassilievich Rachmaninoff*, 104

of the evolution of his writing style and approach to music. As such, the research materials published in the last two decades, especially those that adopt a performance-based approach to analysis, mainly focus on Rachmaninoff's most popular works, such as Piano Concerto Nos. 2, 3 and the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. As a result, Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 4, which are not performed as often, are left out of the analysis and remain largely under-researched.

The tendency to see Rachmaninoff as a moderately progressive composer appeared as early as 1919 in the writing of John Alden Carpenter. He noted in the journal *The Etude* that 'Rachmaninoff's importance in contemporary music lies in the fact that he is a sensitive touchstone between the new and the old, and a strong and logical link between the great music of the past and the newest tendencies of the present times'.²⁷ He continues by saying that a person with both values has a better chance to progress in the art than 'the detached genius'. Interestingly, the next short appraisal just after Carpenter is by composer and pianist Percy Grainger, who states that Rachmaninoff 'represents the somewhat rare case of a creative mind that is thoroughly original and personal without being particularly modern'.²⁸

One of the most notable contributions defending Rachmaninoff against a 'conservative' label and portraying him as a progressive composer is by musicologist Joseph Yasser. In his article *Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff's Music*, published in 1951-52, he argues that 'Rachmaninoff should be placed somewhere among the moderately progressive composers, and in no wise among those who are frankly conservative'.²⁹ According to Yasser, Rachmaninoff's progressive tendencies

²⁷ John Alden Carpenter, 'Appreciations of Rachmaninoff from Famous Musicians in America', in *The Etude*, Vol. 37, No. 10 (October 1919), 617

²⁸ Percy Grainger, 'Appreciations of Rachmaninoff from Famous Musicians in America', in *The Etude*, Vol. 37, No. 10 (October 1919), 617

²⁹ Yasser, 'Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff's Music', 25

are highlighted through his persistent use of chromaticism, but they are not felt nearly as strongly as in the music of Wagner and his successors'.³⁰ This is mainly due to Rachmaninoff's diatonic and long, beautifully shaped melodies alongside 'intra-tonal chromaticism'. Yasser refers to Russian musicologists such as K. A. Kuznetsov, Daniel Zhitomirsky, Michael Bukinik and Boris Asafiev among others, who also argue that Rachmaninoff was a progressive composer, giving examples of his works that use techniques reminiscent of Prokofiev or 'characteristic of the post-Scriabin era'.³¹

In his article *The (Re) Appraisal of Rachmaninov's Music: Contradictions and Fallacies*, published in 2006, Glen Carruthers further elaborates on Yasser's statement, noting that while it is difficult to perceive Rachmaninoff as a modernist, his first symphony was too adventurous, especially harmonically, to define him as a conservative composer.³² Following Carruthers's line of thought, and as discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the same could be said about Rachmaninoff's fourth piano concerto where harmonic ambiguity goes beyond the limits of romanticism. Embedding his writing style solely within the early romantic era of composition is often manipulated by critics and musicologists to argue that Rachmaninoff was attached to conservative ideals and did not depart from romantic compositional traditions.

On the opposite spectrum are scholars, musicologists and critics who consider Rachmaninoff as strictly conservative. They often refer to Rachmaninoff's own words about modernism as discussed earlier in this chapter to prove that he is strongly attached to conservative ideals. However, among the notable analytical contributions to the debate are those published by Jonathan Frank and Thomas Lee Fritz. In his

³⁰ Yasser, 'Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff's Music', 20–21

³¹ *Ibid.*, 21–23

³² Glen Carruthers, 'The (Re) Appraisal of Rachmaninov's Music: Contradictions and Fallacies', in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 147, No. 1896 (London: Musical Times Publication, 2006), 46

article *Rachmaninov and Medtner: A Comparison*, published 1958, Frank argues that Medtner, seen as a modernist and contemporary composer, is ‘vastly superior’ to Rachmaninoff after comparing some of the stylistic and melodic features of both composers.³³ Fritz also strongly positions Rachmaninoff in the category of the conservatives alongside with Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein in his dissertation from 1959 examining the development of Russian piano music through a comparison of Mussorgsky, Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Prokofiev.³⁴ While Fritz mainly focuses on Rachmaninoff’s melodic structure, rhythm and the economy of the thematic material, he also concludes that his harmonic language simply follows and continues that of Tchaikovsky. He also mentions Rachmaninoff’s pianism and ability to combine the pianistic features of Liszt, Chopin and Schumann producing ‘a stylistic mixture which is massive and florid and at times so overwhelming that it eclipses all other musical considerations’.³⁵ Fritz describes Rachmaninoff’s overly complicated piano passages as a novelty not seen in Russian music before him, but considers these as artificial resulting in ‘banality’ and ‘cluttering’ of the piano texture’³⁶

At the extreme end of the spectrum are those who portray Rachmaninoff as a twentieth-century modern composer. In his *Architectonic Technique and Innovation in the Rachmaninov Piano Concertos*, published in 1979, Richard Coolidge defends Rachmaninoff against the criticism of him being conservative by arguing that he is a ‘thoroughly modern’ composer.³⁷ Coolidge supports his argument by illustrating the structural innovations in Rachmaninoff piano concertos and highly praising the

³³ Jonathan Frank, ‘Rachmaninov and Medtner: A Comparison’, in *Musical Opinion* (March 1958), 387

³⁴ Thomas Lee Fritz, ‘The Development of Russian Piano Music as Seen in the Literature of Mussorgsky, Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Prokofiev’ (D.M.A diss., University of Southern California, 1959), 123–137

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 135–136

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 136

³⁷ Richard Coolidge, ‘Architectonic Technique and Innovation in the Rachmaninov Piano Concertos’, in *Music Review*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (August 1979), 176–216

composer's fourth piano concerto as 'a great work in every respect'.³⁸ The fact that Coolidge bases his argument largely on the fourth concerto limits the reach and applicability of his analysis. In addition, while Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4 includes some new features and stylistic ideas discussed in Chapter 4, it is hard to define the concerto a perfect and flowless composition, especially compared to his other piano/orchestral works (see Chapter 4).

David Cannata³⁹ and Robert Cunningham⁴⁰ in their works published in 1999 also follow the broad definition of Rachmaninoff's progressive tendencies in a similar way to Yasser's arguments. However, unlike Cunningham and Yasser who claim that Rachmaninoff is different from his predecessors such as Tchaikovsky, Liszt or Wagner, Cannata argues that he has in fact been influenced by these composers. The latter, to some extent, is also argued in Chapter 2 of this thesis when analysing the influences on Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 2, drawing parallels with the works of Grieg, Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky. However, in his dissertation later published as *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony*, Cannata barely touches on Rachmaninoff's other works, focusing mainly on his symphonies and their tonal structure. In contrast, Cunningham analyses several of Rachmaninoff's solo piano works such as the *Etudes-Tableaux* Opp. 33 and 39. He uses the Schenkerian method to illustrate Rachmaninoff's progressive harmonic language. However, this method has a limited applicability to analysing Rachmaninoff's works and could be confusing when applied to his compositions with extensive use of chromaticism, 'Hyperdissonance' and modal integration, particularly in his late works.⁴¹ Furthermore, focusing mainly on the tonal

³⁸ Coolidge, 'Architectonic Technique and Innovation in the Rachmaninov Piano Concertos', 198

³⁹ David Butler Cannata, *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 1999)

⁴⁰ Robert Cunningham, 'Harmonic Prolongation in Selected Works of Rachmaninoff 1910–1931' (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1999)

⁴¹ Blair Allen Johnston, 'Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff' (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 14

structure and disregarding the formal, textural and rhythmic elements of the compositions make it difficult to trace Rachmaninoff's overall stylistic development.

Noteworthy contributions in assessing Rachmaninoff's evolution and his compositional style are offered by Blair Allen Johnston and John Stephen Gosden.⁴² In *Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff*, a doctoral thesis completed in 2009, Johnston focuses on Rachmaninoff's late compositions written between 1909 and 1940, analysing three key elements: 1) functional tonal organisation, 2) 'Fantastic' equal-interval chromatic structure, and 3) special modal structure.⁴³ He justifies the choice of Rachmaninoff's late compositions by the fact that they are under-researched and are 'richer and more complex' compared to his earlier works.⁴⁴ By drawing comparisons between Rachmaninoff and his contemporaries such as Prokofiev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin, Mahler, Richard Strauss and Shostakovich, Johnston positions the composer as a post-romantic rather than an 'anachronistic' romantic composer who has features of both romantic and the twentieth-century music.⁴⁵

Rachmaninoff's Postromantic aesthetic position, as opposed to a Romantic position or to a modernist position, is clear: conflict, fragmentation, distortion, and exaggeration beyond the boundaries of the Romantic, yes; but also, in the end, unity of design and structural resolution tied to conventional roots that true modernists tried to sever.⁴⁶

Johnston's main focus in his dissertation is Rachmaninoff's last three opus compositions written between 1934 and 1940 (*Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Symphony No. 3 and Symphonic Dances). Conversely, in his *Rachmaninoff's Middle-*

⁴² Stephen John Gosden, 'Rachmaninoff's Middle-period Orchestral Music: Style, Structure, Genre' (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2012)

⁴³ Johnston, 'Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff', 7

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 28

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 240

period Orchestral Music: Style, Structure, Genre doctoral dissertation completed in 2012, Gosden analyses Rachmaninoff's three orchestral pieces (Symphony No. 2, *The Isle of the Dead* and Piano Concerto No. 3) which belong to the middle period of his legacy (1900–1917).

However, these works are limited in their approach and timespan. Gosden identifies the concepts of style and genre as key to understanding Rachmaninoff's music and where it stands in the compositional trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁴⁷ He rejects the idea of a 'chronological linear perspective' to show the development of Rachmaninoff's musical language. His comparisons and arguments are mainly based on Leonard Meyer's terminology of the genres explained in his *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* in addition to James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's Sonata Theory. While Gosden's analysis is valuable in showing progression in Rachmaninoff's composition and departure from the established norms of the symphonic and piano concerto genres, the short timeframe does not allow one to observe the full extent and the overall stylistic development of Rachmaninoff's fifty-year compositional career. This thesis fills this gap by extending the timeframe of the comparison by taking the full set of piano/orchestral works that span across the almost entire compositional career of Rachmaninoff. Another important aspect is Gosden's choice of comparing two different musical genres (symphony and piano concerto) which risks generalisations. Although Rachmaninoff called his piano concertos 'symphonies' and changed the relationship between the piano and orchestra, thus 'symphonising' the genre of the piano concertos,⁴⁸ one should be cautious about the structural and formal differences between these two genres and most importantly

⁴⁷ Gosden, 'Rachmaninoff's Middle-period Orchestral Music: Style, Structure, Genre', 23–24

⁴⁸ Nikolay Bazhanov, *Rachmaninoff* (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1983), 18–19

the soloistic role of the pianist who clearly dominates the piano/orchestral works, particularly in the case of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3.

Research questions, aims and methodology

As outlined in this chapter, the existing literature is limited when it comes to the analysis and understanding of Rachmaninoff's legacy. As important as it may be, the debate about Rachmaninoff being a conservative or progressive composer does overlook an important element of his legacy and writing style, and that is the evolution of his compositional language and the time period in which it was written. This thesis aims to bridge these gaps by offering a systematic approach to analysing Rachmaninoff's writing style by answering the following questions:

- What are the technical (form, structure, texture, chromaticism) and harmonic transformations of Rachmaninoff's compositional language in his piano concertos that show the evolution of his writing style and allow one to define him as a progressive composer?
- What are the novelties that he brought to composition and do they show a departure from broadly defined romantic traditions of composition if viewed within the historical context and timeframe of the writing?
- Is the evolution of his compositional language sufficient to break away from claims of him being conservative?

This doctoral thesis agrees with Yasser and Carpenter that Rachmaninoff is a moderately progressive composer and a link between the old and new. However, Rachmaninoff's progressiveness should be observed in relation to the evolution of the concerto form and structure as well as understood in the context of further developing the traditions of nineteenth century romantic pianism, and not in comparison to the modernism of the twentieth century. Rachmaninoff stretched the limits of all technical aspects of romantic concerto writing through extensive chromaticism, textural enhancement of the material, alteration of the concerto form and the symphonisation of the concerto genre. While gradually his piano/orchestral works became harmonically more adventurous, he never went outside the limit of tonality or engaged in the same level of experimentation as modernists such as Schoenberg or Stravinsky. Furthermore, the positing of a single binary (conservative – progressive) in which to contextualise Rachmaninoff's work is both overly simplistic and limits our understanding of where to situate his works.

This thesis goes beyond the existing literature and musical analysis and proposes an original framework to explain the complexity of his music and show the transformation of its form, structure, chromaticism and texture as well as the harmony. And for this, the thesis explores Rachmaninoff's piano/orchestral works which span his entire writing career and illustrate distinct progressive elements for the time of writing. The thesis explores the evolution of Rachmaninoff's compositional language focusing primarily on a single genre. However, the progressive tendencies of his piano concertos can also reflect the changes in the compositional language of his symphonic and solo piano works that transformed parallel to the concertos.

Contrary to Gosden's rejection of a chronological and linear perspective, this thesis argues that in the case of Rachmaninoff a systematic chronological and

comparative analysis as well as technical and harmonic assessment of his piano/orchestral works and respective revisions shed a new light on the composer's legacy and the evolution of his writing style. Concentrating on a single genre that is one of the most important in Rachmaninoff's musical heritage and covers all periods of Rachmaninoff's musical career, makes it easier to follow the modifications and development of his compositional language, without a risk of untenable comparisons between different genres. In contrast to the researchers discussed earlier, the progressiveness of Rachmaninoff in this thesis is illustrated by taking his first piano concerto written in a traditional romantic form as a starting point, and analysing the subsequent piano/orchestral works through internal comparison (within and between his piano concertos and their revisions in a chronological order), as well as external comparisons where necessary (drawing parallels with the works by other composers). This approach helps show the evolution of Rachmaninoff's writing style, going beyond the simplistic argument of technical and stylistic similarities and differences between romantic or modern music.

Furthermore, by analysing the complete set of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 4 and all their revisions, this thesis offers a holistic and comprehensive view of Rachmaninoff's legacy. This is important also due to the revival of interest in performing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 4 in recent years, which, however, remain under-researched from the analytical perspective. One of the very few published works comparing Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto with its revised version is by Morley Grossman whose approach in his short essay⁴⁹ is adopted in this thesis as a framework for analysing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4.

⁴⁹ Morley Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2006)

When discussing the evolution of Rachmaninoff's writing style, an important element of the methodological approach includes the division of his output into different periods of his life. Both Gosden and Johnston follow Cannata's approach and divide Rachmaninoff's compositional career into four periods taking the year 1909 as a critical point (see Chapter 1). According to Gosden, Rachmaninoff's music from 1900 to 1909 'are characterised by the rich harmonies, thick textures, and sweeping melodies', whereas his works written post 1909 stand out by 'increased chromaticism, biting dissonances, greater textural economy and transparency, more thematic and motivic concision, and an overall rise in harmonic, rhythmic and formal complexity and adventurousness'.⁵⁰

While all the technical features mentioned above and their alterations are obvious in Rachmaninoff's later compositions, this thesis argues that it is difficult to take the year 1909 as a breaking point. The development of the composer's musical language during Rachmaninoff's mid period from 1900 to 1917 was gradual without any sudden drastic changes. For example, there is not an obvious diversity in the two sets of preludes written before and after 1909 (Preludes, Op. 23, 1903 and Preludes, Op. 32, 1910). Of course, stylistically the second set of the Preludes is closer to Rachmaninoff's later compositions with their economical and fragmental approach, increased chromaticism and texture, but the first set of the preludes is not far from the first. For example, almost all ten preludes in Op. 23 (apart No. 6) are based on short, fragmented subjects, whereas Preludes Nos. 5 and 11 of Op. 32 are stylistically closer to Rachmaninoff's earlier period with their long-phrased melodies and simplistic approach. Moreover, accepting the year 1909 as a critical point makes it difficult to

⁵⁰ Gosden, 'Rachmaninoff's Middle-period Orchestral Music: Style, Structure, Genre', 19–20

position both *The Isle of the Dead* and Piano Concerto No. 3 written in that year as either ‘middle Russian’ or ‘late Russian’ compositions.⁵¹

Another important methodological attribute that complements the analysis in this thesis is the use of charts and tables. The concept is similar to that used by Julian Horton when analysing the movements of a number of piano concertos in his book, including Brahms’s Piano Concerto No. 2.⁵² However, in order to show the harmonic modulations in Rachmaninoff’s piano/orchestral works, in addition to the key structure, the charts in this thesis also incorporate the tonal plot. Generally, the purpose of the charts is to illustrate more clearly the large-scale and inter-thematic functions, showing the overall similarities, differences and departures from traditional norms in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto Nos. 1–4 and the Rhapsody. They show how his writing style evolves in a form of a parabolic arch, moving structurally and harmonically from the simple first (original version, 1891) to the complex third piano concerto and then move towards simplification in his last piano/orchestral piece. However, it is not always easy to clearly divide and display the exact form, structure and harmonic transformation of the movements, especially in the case of Piano Concerto Nos. 3 and 4 due to the alterations of the form and harmonic ambiguity.

In addition to the charts this thesis also uses comparative tables which are specifically constructed to illustrate the structural modifications made during the revisions of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 4. Such an analysis is also important from the chronological perspective given that the revision of Piano Concerto No. 1 is made at a later date (1917) and clearly shows the transformation of

⁵¹ This terminology is borrowed from Johnston who refers to Rachmaninoff’s legacy as ‘Early Russian’ (1890–1896), ‘mid Russian’ (1900–1908), ‘late Russian’ (1909–1917) and ‘exile’ (1926–194). Johnston, ‘Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff’, 6

⁵² Julian Horton, *Brahms’ Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83: Analytical and Contextual Studies* (Leuven: Peters, 2017)

Rachmaninoff's writing from the early to late periods of his career. Similar tables can be found in Barrie Martin's work.⁵³ However, by markedly refining and expanding the scope and utility of such a technique, this thesis successfully unifies both charts and tables using the same definitions and terminology. The systematic application of this tool provides a holistic approach to understanding, comparing and revealing the hidden nuances of the transformation and evolution of Rachmaninoff's writing style in relation to form, structure and harmony across almost all of his compositional career, which is overlooked in the existing literature or in the conservative-progressive debate.

For the sake of clarity, the parsing of the sections in the charts and tables is marked by bar numbers and not figures (rehearsal marks). While this somewhat complicates the reading because few orchestral scores include bar numbers, it helps avoid unnecessary cluttering.

Structure of the thesis

There are five chapters in this thesis broadly matching the number of Rachmaninoff's piano concertos, and the chronological order in which the works were written and revised. The first chapter discusses Rachmaninoff's heritage, the historical and musical context within which he composed, and the main influences and key characteristics of his compositional language in different periods of his life. The second chapter introduces Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto in its original version and examines the influences and similarities with piano concertos written before him.

⁵³ Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 278–281

The chapter also includes the analysis of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2, in order to illustrate the novel elements in his compositional language and stylistic departure from his first piano concerto. The comparison of both concertos is complemented by respective charts, which closely follow the analysis. The third chapter discusses Piano Concerto No. 3, showing the further evolution of Rachmaninoff's musical language compared to his first two piano concertos. Piano Concerto No. 4 is analysed in Chapter 4, including its two revisions as well as the revision of Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto, which chronologically fits in this time period. Given that the revision of Piano Concerto No. 1 was made just before leaving Russia in 1917 and published in 1919 in the United States, it was more logical to incorporate it alongside the analysis of Rachmaninoff's fourth concerto to establish the stylistic shifts compared to earlier works. The tables that accompany this chapter help illustrate more clearly the cuts and structural alterations Rachmaninoff made during the revisions. The final chapter discusses the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (referred to as Rhapsody in this thesis) as Rachmaninoff's fifth and final piano/orchestral work. It analyses the stylistic differences compared to his earlier concertos and its overall place in Rachmaninoff's musical heritage. The thesis ends with a Conclusion which discusses the stylistic changes demonstrated across the five piano/orchestral works and providing an overview of how his musical language evolved over time.

CHAPTER 1: RACHMANINOFF'S MUSICAL LANGUAGE

This chapter provides an overview of Rachmaninoff's musical language, placing it within the context of the late romantic and post-romantic musical environment. The goal is to demonstrate the main characteristic features of Rachmaninoff's compositional style to help contextualise the analysis of his piano concertos discussed in the successive sections of this thesis (Chapters 2–5). Furthermore, this chapter assesses the historical background in which Rachmaninoff composed, including the Russian and Western musical traditions and compositional trends of the time; this helps shed light and enable a better understanding of the main influences on and the progression of Rachmaninoff's compositional style.

History of the romantic piano concerto

The idea of the romantic piano concerto can be said to begin with Beethoven. Building on the strictly structured three-movement form of his predecessors Mozart and Haydn, Beethoven's piano concertos illustrate a further transformation of the classical concerto genre. As in the traditionally written classical concerto, the first movements of Beethoven's piano concertos are based on a sonata allegro (exposition-development-recapitulation-coda), followed by a slow more lyrical second and rondo or modified sonata allegro third movements.⁵⁴ However, the soloist's role and virtuosity are greatly enhanced in his piano concertos and are accompanied by increased orchestral support. In line with the development of the piano as an

⁵⁴ Leon Botstein, 'Concerto: Chapter 4', in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford: OUP, 2021)

instrument, the composer's last two piano concertos gained more dynamic diversity and range further emphasising the soloistic/heroic character of the piano parts. Moreover, the modification of the form in Beethoven's fifth piano concerto where the traditional *ritornello* of the first movement was delayed due to the new solo piano-oriented bravura introduction, was one of the features later adopted by early romantic composers.

The new tendencies of romantic composers to write according to their personal preferences, shaped the musical scene where one would prioritise the opera (eg., Wagner) or symphony (eg., Berlioz), whereas others would favour the piano as a central compositional instrument. Following more melodic and intimate examples of Hummel and Field, Chopin composed his extremely pianistic concerto with light orchestral support acting as a framework to shape the concerto.⁵⁵ The highly ornamental and nocturnal character of Chopin's piano writing is a good example of the new direction which brings the virtuoso piano concerto writing to maturity. The minimal orchestral involvement and unequal tutti sections greatly affect the overall balance of the piano and the orchestra in favour of the soloist. Furthermore, Mendelssohn in his piano concertos entirely removed the traditional long orchestral openings and replaced the *ritornello* with a sonata allegro form where the pianist introduces the main material at the start of the composition. Although the soloist still dominates throughout the concerto as in Chopin's compositions, the short orchestral tutti sections with contrasting materials and occasional thematic interaction with the soloist help balance the piano and the orchestral parts.

Liszt took Mendelssohn's ideas even further and partially ignored the formal approach of the traditional concerto structure. While his first piano concerto is written

⁵⁵ Michael Thomas Roeder, *A History of The Concerto* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1994), 224

in four movements loosely resembling the sonata form, the single-movement second concerto have more cyclical structure. Consisting of six sections, the entire concerto shares the same thematic element throughout the work, bringing it closer to the symphonic poem, thus starting to symphonise the concerto genre. In addition to the novel interpretation of the concerto form, Liszt took the virtuosity of the pianist to the level that could be compared to Paganini's exceptional violin technique.

In their concertos Schumann and Grieg re-considered the balance by raising the importance of the orchestra, while, however, still keeping a strong emphasis on the soloists. The virtuosity and narrative of the solo part retained its importance dominating throughout the composition, but the formal and thematic unity of the concerto became an essential feature characterising the romantic era concerto genre. In contrast to Liszt, both Schumann and Grieg preferred to use the sonata allegro for the first movement. Perhaps the most important departure from virtuosic piano concerto traditions, is Schumann's choice of the *cadenza* for the first movement of his A minor piano concerto. Instead of the usual bravura solo piano *cadenza* that illustrates the virtuosic technicality of the performer, Schumann introduced a more meditative and improvisational solo section incorporating all the thematic materials of the concerto.

Overall, the Austro-German traditions of the nineteenth century instrumental music could be seen as holding a central position of all European composers. One way to depart from early romantic traditions was to incorporate folk or native dance elements and fuse characteristic features of different genres in one. Similar to their European counterparts, Russian composers were also influenced by the German school. Mikhail Glinka and Anton Rubinstein brought the romantic traditions into

Russia where it further evolved through the nationalisation of the compositional language and added Russian folk elements.

Russian musical scene and the piano concerto genre

The Russian musical scene at the turn of the twentieth century was split between the supporters of the Moscow and St. Petersburg Free Music Schools. Rachmaninoff belonged to the first group, known as Muscovites, which included Anton Rubinstein and Piotr Tchaikovsky, among others. Muscovites followed more strongly the Western European musical traditions of the early romantic period. Anton Rubinstein, a key proponent of the romantic Austro-German school of music, brought these traditions to Russia, founding the first state-sponsored conservatoire in St. Petersburg in 1862. His approach was later followed by his younger brother Nikolay Rubinstein to establish the Moscow Conservatoire in 1866.⁵⁶

The standardised forms of the early romantic period were largely opposed by the supporters of the free music school led by Mily Balakirev in St. Petersburg, known as ‘The Mighty Handful’.⁵⁷ The latter formed the second group who resisted the Muscovites and promoted musical nationalism. The two groups were in intense competition, regularly firing outright and often prejudicial criticisms at each other and keeping the musical scene charged up.

Muscovites hated and did not know Wagner, disliked the Russian National School in the persons of Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakoff, and Mussorgsky (especially the last), maintained a sceptical attitude towards Liszt and Berlioz,

⁵⁶ Lyudmila Rapatskaya, *Istoriya Russkoy Muziki: Ot Drevney Rusi do Serebryannogo Veka* [The History of Russian Music: From Old Russia to the Silver Age] (Moscow: Vlado, 2001), 161–162

⁵⁷ Mily Balakirev, Alexander Borodin, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

considered Brahms a nonentity, and worshipped Tchaikovsky as the people of St. Petersburg never worshipped him either before that or later.⁵⁸

However, starting from the end of the nineteenth century, especially after the death of Tchaikovsky, the rivalry against and dismissal of Western or Russian innovators by Muscovites gradually faded. The above statement by Sabaneyev most likely refers to the times of Anton Rubinstein and his personal attitudes towards innovators rather than what all Muscovites thought of them. As Walter notes, with strong conservative views and adherence to the German school of music, Rubinstein ‘viewed the innovators (Liszt, Wagner, and ... Balakirev circle) with undisguised derision’ and ‘[he] had absolutely no faith in their future’.⁵⁹

Interestingly, there is an inherent contradiction in understanding the position of both groups which is largely linked to the misinterpretation of the term ‘conservatism’ and ‘innovation’. Generally, the term ‘conservative’ means rejection of all foreign influences and prominence of the national ideals. However, in the nineteenth century Russian music scene, the nationalist Muscovites were called conservatives because they favoured the standardised Western European ideas opposed by the progressive St. Petersburg group who wanted to keep the national principles and favoured innovation. From César Cui’s memoirs it is apparent that the ‘Mighty Handful’ were largely opposed to the standardised German conservatoire setting brought by Anton Rubinstein and not Western European music at large.

We formed a close-knit circle of young composers. And since there was nowhere to study ... our *self-education* begun. ... We were very disrespectful in our attitude toward Mozart and Mendelssohn; to the latter we opposed Schumann, who was then ignored by everyone. We were very enthusiastic about Liszt and Berlioz. We worshipped Chopin and Glinka. ... we discussed

⁵⁸ Leonid Sabaneyev, ‘Sergey Rachmaninov’, in *Modern Russian Composers* (New York: International Publishers, 1927), 104

⁵⁹ Victor Walter, ‘Reminiscences of Anton Rubinstein’, in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Oxford: OUP, Jan. 1919), 15–16

musical form, program music, vocal music and especially operatic form (Cui 1952, cited in Taruskin 1984).⁶⁰

In fact, most Russian composers studied abroad and were influenced, to a varying degree, by Western European traditions. While Mikhail Glinka is seen as the founder of the Russian musical language, as Taruskin notes in his article ‘with Glinka Russian music did not depart from Europe but quite the opposite — it joined Europe’.⁶¹ Similarly, composers and pianists from the West such as John Field and Daniel Steibelt, passed their knowledge to the Russian musicians and audiences while living in Russia in the early nineteenth century. In addition, visiting performers such as Schumann, Liszt and Berlioz, among others, also greatly influenced the formation of the Russian piano concerto traditions.

Generally, the piano concerto was not a widespread compositional genre in the Russian musical tradition of the time. The late eighteenth century Russian piano concerto repertoire, with its small scale and chamber-like setting, was dominated by variations on popular songs based on ‘French *opéra comique*, Italian *opera buffa e seria*, and early German classical music’.⁶² Before Rachmaninoff, only a few Russian composers had written piano concertos. Tchaikovsky’s First Piano Concerto is one of the best-known works, which became famous for integrating Russian orthodox chant and folk elements into the romantic concerto form. Others included Rubinstein’s five Piano Concertos which carried a noticeably strong German influence.⁶³

Piano Concerto Op. 4 in C minor composed around 1830 by Alexander Villoing, who was Rubinstein’s teacher, could be seen as typical of the mid-nineteenth

⁶⁰ Richard Taruskin, ‘Some Thoughts on the History and Historiography of Russian Music’, in *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (California: University of California Press, Autumn 1984), 331

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 323

⁶² Jeremy Paul Norris, ‘The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 1988), 1–6

⁶³ Barrie Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (England: Ashgate, 1990), 49

century Russian piano concerto, which is heavily indebted to Beethoven. As such, Villoing's piano concerto closely follows the German traditions of virtuoso concerto writing reminiscent of Beethoven's last two piano concertos. As Jeremy Norris describes, Villoing's piano concerto stands out with its 'early romantic colouring and expansiveness of its piano writing' alongside structural features borrowed from Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 53.⁶⁴ It is also important to note that Rubinstein frequently performed Villoing's piano concerto in Russia and abroad. Villoing in his turn studied under the Irish composer and virtuoso pianist John Field and was greatly influenced by the latter's Piano Concerto No. 7 in C minor.⁶⁵

Rubinstein closely followed his teacher Villoing's piano concerto structure and pianistic approach (for example, the extensive use of double octaves or strictly defined sonata form). Composed over 24 years, all five concertos by Rubinstein show minimal personal stylistic or technical development, and do not massively deviate from each other. They mostly imitated the compositional ideas of Austro-German composers such as Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and Mendelssohn. This strong attachment to the romantic German compositional school did not receive a strongly positive acclaim among Russian critics and musicologists of the time. Music critic and composer Alexander Seroff was among those questioning Rubinstein's compositional approach:

How unfortunate that our era still cannot free itself from the influence of tedious Mendelssohnism and ... aspects of that great talent that are weak and harmful for art.⁶⁶

Most of Rubinstein's piano concertos have a strong three-movement classical concerto structure discussed earlier in this chapter, and follow the patterns and forms

⁶⁴ Norris, 'The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century', 11

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 10–11

⁶⁶ Alexander Seroff, *Izbrannyye Stati [Selected Articles]*, ed. Georgi Khubov (Moscow, 1950–1957), 219

seen in the works of classical and early romantic German composers with little distinctively personal qualities. It is particularly noticeable in his first three piano concertos which are heavily based on Beethoven's orchestral and piano writing style. However, in his *Thoughts and Aphorisms* Rubinstein wrote:

I regard Brahms as the successor of Schumann, and myself as the successor of Schubert and Chopin — we two conclude the third epoch of musical art.⁶⁷

Despite Rubinstein's self-defiant statement, the parallel with Schubert is partly true, if one considers him as the successor of Beethoven's from whom Rubinstein excessively borrowed. In contrast, there appears little rationale and reason to justify his statement about Chopin whose solo-centric approach and pianism is lacking in Rubinstein's concertos. Interestingly, Rubinstein also shared some physical similarities with Beethoven and was nicknamed 'Van the Second' by Liszt.⁶⁸ By calling him the second Beethoven Liszt may have in fact wanted to gently prompt Rubinstein to find his own compositional language and distance himself from the heavy influence of Western composers. Both Liszt and Rubinstein were sceptical about each other's works and voiced their criticism on numerous occasions: Liszt was criticised for trying new ideas just for the sake of being innovative, and Rubinstein for being conventional and not having his own compositional language. However, in his late compositions (including Piano Concerto Nos. 4 and 5) Rubinstein borrowed some new ideas and compositional features from Liszt. While stating that Liszt's new monothematic approach was 'an absolutely unmusical proceeding', Rubinstein himself used the same compositional technique in his late works such as the Fantasy in C major, Op. 84, *Caprice Russe* in C minor, Op. 102, and *Koncertstück* in A flat

⁶⁷ Walter, 'Reminiscences of Anton Rubinstein', 16

⁶⁸ Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 269

major, Op. 113.⁶⁹ Moreover, during the recitals in his later years Rubinstein even started to imitate the extravagant stage presence and ostentatious pianism of Liszt as well. He openly admitted duplicating Liszt's 'mannerism, his movements of the body and the hands, the throwing back of his hair, and in general, all the fantastic devices which accompanied his playing'.⁷⁰

Among the most prominent and distinctive of Rubinstein's concertos is his Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 70, with its thematic unity, almost ideal balance between the soloist and the orchestra, and the incorporation of Russian folk and urban song elements. In addition, his fourth concerto is one of his few pieces that he worked on in detail, polishing and carefully revising every element of the concerto.⁷¹ This may be one of the main reasons why this concerto has gained more popularity than the others. The Russianness of the concerto was more prominently accentuated later by Soviet musicologists to raise the nationalistic value of the work. One of many was Alexander Alekseyev who tried to make parallels between melodic elements of Rubinstein's fourth piano concerto with Russian folk and urban songs.⁷² However, Rubinstein himself was indifferent towards Russian folk songs and according to him they were 'exclusively melancholic and monotonous'.⁷³

Tchaikovsky who was Rubinstein's student adhered to the same traditions when composing his most popular piano concerto in B flat minor. Interestingly, Tchaikovsky's diaries and various letters reveal his love-hate attitude towards Rubinstein's music.⁷⁴ Perhaps, the young composer may have been reluctant to upset

⁶⁹ Norris, 'The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century', 21–28

⁷⁰ James Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1966), 169

⁷¹ Rubinstein's compositional approach was to write quickly and as many works as possible resulting in carelessness, which was highly condemned by his contemporaries including Liszt.

⁷² Aleksandr Alekseev, *Istoria Fortepiannovo Iskustva* [History of Russian Music] (Moscow: Muzika, 1988), 286

⁷³ Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*, 170

⁷⁴ Vladimir Volkoff, *Tchaikovsky: A Self Portrait* (London: Crescendo Publishing, 1975), 79–80

his teacher and the most influential Russian musician of the time by criticising his works. After all, there were only few examples to follow if one wanted to compose a Russian piano concerto at the time. As such, Tchaikovsky closely followed his mentor's pianistic and structural approach for his first piano concerto, but moved away from Rubinstein's early romantic German traditions by adding some more Russian folk elements and by imitating traditional instruments such as the balalaika, garmon (button accordion) and buben (percussion instrument). Among the most striking similarities between Tchaikovsky's first and Rubinstein's fourth piano concertos are elements such as the 'pattern of rising diminished 7th arpeggios usually a 6th apart', the rising chromatic double octaves, the overall key structure, and design of the solo piano in the two-part *cadenza*.⁷⁵ In addition, the famous chordal⁷⁶ piano opening of the final edition of the concerto (Ex.1.1, 1st movement, bars 6ff) is reminiscent of Rubinstein's fifth piano concerto (Ex.1.2, 1st movement, bars 265ff). However, it is not clear whether Tchaikovsky borrowed from Rubinstein or vice versa, considering the fact that both concertos were written in 1874.

The musical score shows four measures of music. The right hand (treble clef) plays a series of chords that rise chromatically, with an interval of a diminished 7th between each chord. Above each of these chords is the notation '8^{va}---|'. The left hand (bass clef) plays a similar series of chords, with an interval of a diminished 7th between each chord. Below each of these chords is the notation '8^{vb}---|'. The dynamic marking 'ff' is placed at the beginning of the first measure.

Ex.1.1 Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto No. 1, 1st movement, bars 6–9

⁷⁵ Norris, 'The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century', 54–60

⁷⁶ In the first edition of Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto the soloist starts with broken chords.



Ex.1.2 Rubinstein, Piano Concerto No. 5, 1st movement, bars 265–268

Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 stands out with a novel symphonic approach with an added *scherzo* idea in the second movement, symmetry of the form and structure, and use of Russian and Ukrainian folk and dance elements. Not being a virtuoso pianist himself, Tchaikovsky had to consult piano virtuosos such as Nikolay Rubinstein (Anton Rubinstein's younger brother) and Hans von Bülow⁷⁷ to get their practical advice on the piano parts of the concerto. Being harshly criticised by Nikolay Rubinstein for the concerto being 'worthless, absolutely unplayable and unskilfully written', Tchaikovsky approached Bülow and pianist Edward Dannreuther who made several suggestions to make the concerto more playable.⁷⁸ Dannreuther's suggestions were addressed and included in the second edition of Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto. For the final version of the concerto published in 1888 by Jurgenson, Tchaikovsky consulted Russian pianist Alexander Siloti. It is unfortunate that Tchaikovsky could not strike the same perfect balance, thematic unity and pianism of Piano Concerto No. 1 in his later piano-orchestral works.⁷⁹ While the Russianness still exist in his later compositions, the symphonism was replaced with the traditional virtuoso piano concerto approach where the soloist takes the centre stage and outweighs the orchestra with a more dominating and leading role. By positioning the

⁷⁷ Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto is dedicated to conductor and virtuoso pianist Hans von Bülow.

⁷⁸ Norris, 'The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century', 152–157

⁷⁹ Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3, *Concert Fantasia*, Op. 56, *Andante and Finale*, Op. 79

solo piano *cadenza* in the development of the first movement of his second piano concerto or giving the entire development of the *Concerto Fantasia* to the soloist, Tchaikovsky further departed from the symphonic and more balanced approach seen in Piano Concerto No. 1.

While those who supported the St. Petersburg school took a greater interest in the opera genre than the concerto, Balakirev made three attempts to compose a piano concerto in the 1850s, albeit with not much success.⁸⁰ The lack of traditional training in composing a piano concerto and the shortage of strong models in the Russian concerto genre most likely made it difficult for him to produce a genuinely nationalistic work that diverged from the German school. In addition, Balakirev was rejecting the ‘Germanic developmental method’ and favoured the variational approach to the motivic materials,⁸¹ which may have been one of the main reasons why his attempts to compose in a large-scale concerto genre did not succeed. Another distinctive feature seen in Balakirev’s music is the use of plagal cadential harmonies (i.e., submediant (VI) as the second tonic) to avoid the dominant (which was referred to as the ‘Western Cadence’). In his article *The Russian Submediant in the Nineteenth century* Mark DeVoto discusses the importance of the Russian Sixth and its prominence as a conduit of ‘nationalist mannerism’.⁸² In his first unfinished piano concerto in F sharp minor Balakirev tried to incorporate Russian folk songs into the classical and early romantic concerto form. Generally, Balakirev’s compositional style can be associated with three Western composers – Beethoven, Chopin and

⁸⁰ *Grande Fantasy* on Russian Folk Songs Op. 4, Piano Concerto in F sharp minor and Piano Concerto in E flat major

⁸¹ Thomas Lee Fritz, ‘The Development of Russian Piano Music as Seen in the Literature of Mussorgsky, Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Prokofiev’ (D.M.A diss., University of Southern California, 1959), 105

⁸² Mark DeVoto, ‘The Russian Submediant in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Current Musicology*, No. 59 (October 1995), 63

Schumann.⁸³ However, compared to the Chopinesque first piano concerto, in Balakirev's Piano Concerto No. 2 in E flat major the attachment to Russian folk songs is much stronger. As in the case of Tchaikovsky, to achieve the effect of Russianness in his second piano concerto Balakirev resorts to the imitation of traditional instruments in the piano and orchestral parts in addition to folk songs. Furthermore, Balakirev's final attempt to compose a piano concerto was greatly influenced by Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E flat major for its piano and orchestral writing style. Similar to Balakirev's famous oriental fantasy *Islamey* for solo piano, his second concerto is primarily based on illustrating the soloist's virtuosity as seen in most of Liszt compositions. For structural and technical references, he also used Rubinstein's second and in particular Litolff's fourth piano concertos as a template.⁸⁴ While Balakirev completed his Piano Concerto No. 2 in E flat major just before his death in 1910, as Edward Garden noted 'the work of a partially fledged composer realised by a sick old man all but 50 years later ... was bound to suffer as a result'.⁸⁵ It is particularly evident in the third movement of the concerto with its monotonous and repetitive character mainly focused on technically challenging piano passages.

Rimsky-Korsakov's short (about 15 minutes) Piano Concerto in C sharp minor, Op. 30, composed in 1883 is another important development in the Russian piano concerto genre. His single-movement monothematic concerto with bravura piano passages undoubtedly was influenced by Liszt's piano concertos and symphonic poems. However, one of the most distinct features of the concerto is its use of one folk song taken from Balakirev's *Forty Russian Folksongs*. While Rimsky-Korsakov's choice of the single thematic feature is certainly distinctive among the piano-orchestral

⁸³ Taruskin, 'Some Thoughts on the History and Historiography of Russian Music', 332

⁸⁴ Norris, 'The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century', 79–80

⁸⁵ Edward Garden, 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', in *Music and Letters*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (1979), 169

works composed before him in Russia, the lack of contrasting secondary themes constrains the development of the concerto into a full-length composition.

There are many nineteenth-century works for piano and orchestra in which the movements are tied into one, not least Liszt's second concerto in A major, but few, if any, which are based on only one theme.⁸⁶

This is perhaps one of the main reasons why the concerto is rarely performed nowadays, like many other short concertos composed in the early romantic period. Furthermore, increased demand for a multimovement piano concerto that can be performed in the concert halls as part of a recital, or be accepted for piano competitions, may have also played a role in pushing short concertos out of repertoires.

In his approach to the piano concertos and compositions in general, Rachmaninoff was strongly influenced also by the musical approaches of the Moscow school of music and more specifically by his teachers Anton Arensky, Sergey Taneyev and Tchaikovsky who had a major impact on the composer's writing style. More generally, the Muscovites, including Taneyev and Arensky, were strong supporters of Tchaikovsky's musical concepts and followed the traditions of the classical and romantic schools of music. Taneyev and Arensky tried to compose in the piano concerto genre, but without much success and public acceptance. With some references to Rubinstein and Liszt, Taneyev's Piano Concerto in E flat major written in 1876 is heavily based on Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto without much personal character. Some of the piano and orchestral passages and the overall symphonic approach come from Tchaikovsky. However, Taneyev's piano concerto lacks the beautiful melodies, virtuosity of the piano writing and the continuity that are the most

⁸⁶ Garden, 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', 173

attractive features of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. After trying to fix the numerous stylistic, orchestral, melodic and structural faults with the help of Tchaikovsky, Taneyev eventually abandoned the concerto and never composed again in this genre.⁸⁷

By contrast, Arensky's Piano Concerto in F minor, Op. 2, composed in 1881, was well executed structurally, harmonically and melodically. However, similar to Taneyev's work, it did not bring much success to the composer. Stylistically and structurally, the concerto has many similarities to Chopin's piano writing, while also being influenced by Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto with regards to some structural and melodic features. Occasionally there are also some chordal and double octave passages reminiscent of concertos by Grieg, Liszt and even Balakirev. From Balakirev's unfinished Piano Concerto in F sharp minor, Arensky borrowed melodic material for the second subject of his piano concerto.⁸⁸ Apart from a beautifully crafted piano part and the use of folk song, one of the main stylistic features is his use of an unusual rhythm (5/4) in the finale which can be seen as Arensky's trademark. The main reason for the neglect of his first piano concerto is mainly because of its obvious similarities to Chopin particularly in the first two movements. Similar to Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto, Arensky composed his piano concerto during his student years, and it was obvious this academic composition would be greatly influenced by the knowledge and technique learned from tutors such as Rimsky-Korsakov and would naturally lack much of a personal input. If Arensky had continued composing in the concerto genre similar to Rachmaninoff, most probably he would have departed from the traditions and introduced new characteristic features in the

⁸⁷ Sergey Taneyev's second and final encounter in the piano concerto genre was the orchestration of Tchaikovsky's *Andante and Finale*, Op. 79 after his death.

⁸⁸ Norris, 'The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century', 107

concertos as are seen in his chamber pieces. His second and final piano-orchestral work *Fantasy on Russian Folksong*, Op. 48, composed in 1892 is based on two songs collected by ethno-musicologist Trophim Ryabinin.⁸⁹ Similar to Rimsky-Korsakov's piano concerto, Arensky's *Fantasy* also is rarely performed, most probably because of the short length of the composition.

One of the most important piano concertos summarising the nineteenth century Russian musical scene is perhaps Alexander Scriabin's Piano Concerto in F sharp minor, Op. 20, completed and premiered in 1897.⁹⁰ Typical of Scriabin's early compositions, the piano concerto has many similarities to Chopin's musical language. While written in a traditional three-movement concerto form, Scriabin's piano concerto stands out with its lyrical approach, rhythmic variety and effortless collaboration between the soloist and the orchestra.

To summarise, the early Russian piano concerto genre is heavily based on Austro-German classical and early romantic traditions. While there was a rivalry between Moscow and St. Petersburg music schools, by the start of Rachmaninoff's career the two groups started to slowly converge in their approach to musical nationalism by incorporating Russian folk and urban elements in their works as seen in Balakirev's concerto attempts (St. Petersburg school) and Tchaikovsky's highly successful Piano Concerto No. 1 composed in 1874 (Moscow school). As a result, the Russian piano concerto may be best described as one following a traditional romantic piano concerto form complemented by Russian folk and urban song elements with their specific harmonic features (discussed later in this chapter), long-phrased

⁸⁹ Gennadi Teipin, *A. C. Arenski* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Muzika, 1966), 88

⁹⁰ Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin: A Biography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 243

melodies and imitations of the sound of traditional instruments such as balalaika, garmon, and percussion instruments (for example treshchotka and bubni).

Rachmaninoff the Composer

Rachmaninoff's earliest surviving composition written in 1887 when he was attending Arensky's harmony class in Moscow Conservatoire, was the Scherzo in D minor for the orchestra. The piece closely follows the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's incidental music for Shakespeare's *A midsummer Night's Dream*.⁹¹ Later in his first attempt to write a piano concerto in C minor in 1889, Rachmaninoff studied piano concertos by Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Rubinstein and Saint-Saëns.⁹² Furthermore, given the fact that he extensively performed Chopin's pieces, Rachmaninoff was interested in his music. This is further confirmed by his intention to write 24 preludes or structure his second piano sonata following the form and key of Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 2 in B flat minor. However, his first piano concerto has more to do with the concerto by Schumann and in particular Grieg's piano concerto, while the second and third movements of his second piano concerto carry technical and structural similarities to Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto in B flat minor. The close similarities of his first piano concerto to Rubinstein's fourth piano concerto as well as the influences associated with Tchaikovsky and Grieg, are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁹¹ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 36–37

⁹² Aleksey Kandinsky, *S.V. Rachmaninoff* (Moscow: Musika, 1982), 14

However, despite various influences discussed in this chapter, from an early age Rachmaninoff started to experiment and expand the harmonic language of the classical and romantic schools and showed emerging signs of a unique compositional language ‘full of colour, lush, often bold and sometimes even rather tough’.⁹³ In comparison, Tchaikovsky was largely indifferent to deviating from classical traditions and his attitude towards alternative approaches was reserved.

Quite conservative in his creative work, Tchaikovsky appears to have been even more stubborn and not too prescient with regard to general ideas about music. He bowed before the classics, showed an appreciable liking for the representatives of the romantic school, but remained cool and inwardly implacable towards the composers who, in his time, were considered musical innovators.⁹⁴

As a result, Rachmaninoff with his traditional heritage and innovative approach can be characterised as some form of a bridge that unites both Russian schools. The key concepts Rachmaninoff borrowed from Tchaikovsky (Moscow school) include the ‘arc-shaped melodic structures and the clear departure-return strategies’ for the harmonic organisation and melodic structure.⁹⁵ At the same time, the chromatic experiments seen in the works of Rimsky-Korsakov, a prominent representative of the St. Petersburg school, and his influence on Rachmaninoff can be detected in the development of the composer’s musical language in particular starting from his third piano concerto.⁹⁶ This is further confirmed by Rachmaninoff in an interview with David Ewen in 1941.

In my own compositions, no conscious effort has been made to be original, or Romantic, or Nationalistic, or anything else. I write down on the paper the

⁹³ Stuart Campbell, *Russians on Russian Music, 1880–1917* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 176

⁹⁴ Joseph Yasser, ‘Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff’s Music’, in *Tempo, New Series No 22 (Winter)* (Cambridge: CUP, 1951–1952), 12–15

⁹⁵ Blair Allen Johnston, ‘Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 8

⁹⁶ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 31

music I hear within me, as naturally as possible. I am a Russian composer, and the land of my birth has influenced my temperament and outlook. My music is the product of my temperament, and so it is Russian Music; I never consciously attempt to write Russian music, or any other kind of music. I have been strongly influenced by Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov; but I have never, to the best of my knowledge, imitated anyone.⁹⁷

Indeed, while Rachmaninoff built his composition on the knowledge and approaches passed on to him by his teachers including Tchaikovsky and the piano concertos written by others before him, he remained truthful to his own style and ideas. Rachmaninoff greatly altered and modified most of the features borrowed from other composers, and unlike Tchaikovsky who uses Ukrainian folk melodies and a French song in his first piano concerto,⁹⁸ in his thematic materials Rachmaninoff opts for Russian folk elements and Orthodox chant music but without an obvious direct imitation. Rachmaninoff clearly explained his position and his use of folk elements in an interview for journal *The Etude* in 1919 by saying:

Not that the masters make a practice of taking folk themes bodily and transplanting them to their own works (although this occurs repeatedly in many masterpieces), but that they have become so saturated with the spirit of melodies common to the native people that all their compositions thereafter produced have a flavor as readily distinguished as the characteristic taste of native fruit or wine.⁹⁹

The use of chant-influenced melodies and folk elements became one of the main characteristic features of Rachmaninoff musical heritage, where the music is undoubtedly Russian but without a direct reproduction of an existing song or material.

⁹⁷ Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (New York: NYUP, 1956), 369

⁹⁸ Norris, 'The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto in the Nineteenth Century', 173–175

⁹⁹ James Frances Cooke, 'National and Radical Impressions in the Music of Today and Yesterday', in *The Etude*, Vol. 37, No. 10 (October 1919), 615

Key characteristics of Rachmaninoff's compositional style

There are several qualities that define Rachmaninoff's compositional style and distinguish him from other composers. The most obvious harmonic feature relevant to the early Russian music is the importance of using the submediant as a second tonic in addition to the extensive use of Aeolian mode (natural minor Aeolian).¹⁰⁰ These two main features common to Russian folk music, give the traditionally written compositions a nationalistic character. From his early works, one can already detect the young composer's own approach and unique stylistic features that later persist throughout his lifetime. These include chromaticism, adventurous harmonies and extensive use of bells and chant-influenced melodies in addition to the folk elements.

The Russianness of Rachmaninoff's music is often associated with three main components which are all connected with the Russian Orthodox church. These include chant-like melodies, church-influenced voice-leading used during liturgies, and evocations of bells. These chant-like melodies are constructed 'step-wise, travelling up and down and sometimes turning on themselves'.¹⁰¹ Rachmaninoff is not strictly quoting the chants but rather uses the underlying principle of their construction in his melodies. As a result, in pieces that otherwise have nothing to do with the church or sacred music, this becomes a defining feature of Rachmaninoff's musical language. Similarly, in the case of the church-influenced voice-leading, Rachmaninoff uses the principle and the melodic structure of the choral music practiced by the Russian Orthodox church — with the top voice moving by a step and the bass moving by a large interval as it would in a church choir.¹⁰² And the bells, which Rachmaninoff uses

¹⁰⁰ Alekseev, *Ruskaya Fortepiannaya Musica [Russian piano music]*, 88

¹⁰¹ Marina Frolova-Walker and Peter Donohoe, 'Russian Piano Masterpieces: Rachmaninov' (Gresham College, January 19, 2021) <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/rachmaninov-piano>

¹⁰² Frolova-Walker and Donohoe, 'Russian Piano Masterpieces: Rachmaninov'

in almost all of his compositions, have become his signature as in the famous opening of his Piano Concerto No. 2.

Other stylistic features include the use of the Orthodox ‘church’ (diatonic) mode and extensive use of Neapolitan sixth chord, which can be seen as part of the Phrygian mode due to common lowered second degree scale. While all these features are characteristic to Russian folk music, Rachmaninoff never used folk melodies in his compositions. Medtner once mentioned in his interview with Alfred Swan that ‘Rachmaninoff is so profoundly Russian himself that he is in no need of folk music’.¹⁰³



Ex.1.3 Neapolitan Sixth chord, Phrygian mode, second inversion of diminished seventh chord and Rachmaninoff Subdominant in C Major/Minor

Another chord commonly associated with Rachmaninoff’s music and named after him as the ‘Rachmaninoff Subdominant’ is the second inversion of the altered seventh chord (with a diminished fourth interval at the top of the chord instead of minor third). It can also be seen as a subdominant seventh chord (iv7) with lowered fifth or a half-diminished chord. It is not common to name chords after a composer given the fact that in some form or other the same chord could have been used prior in his works as is the case with Rachmaninoff Subdominant which has been noted in the works of Schumann, Liszt and even Tchaikovsky. However, the importance of the Rachmaninoff Subdominant as a chord lies in its function and frequent use especially

¹⁰³ Alfred J. Swan, *Russian Music and its Sources in Chant and Folk-song* (London: John Baker, 1973), 172

in the most dramatic and climactic sections of his compositions. Similarly, the famous Tristan Chord labelled after Wagner's opera *Tristan and Isolde*, had been used before by many composers such as Chopin or Schumann but not as a central element in the manner of the suspended Wagnerian chord at the start of the opera.

In his article about modal idioms in Rachmaninoff's music Johnston emphasises the consistent use of diatonic and equal-interval (octatonic, hexatonic) modal passages and neo-modalism in general as an essential part for defining Rachmaninoff's harmonic language.

Diatonic modal idioms in Rachmaninoff's works are consistently associated with introduction, exposition, digression, and post-climatic activity while equal-interval modal idioms are consistently associated with intensification, climax, and destabilization.¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, the use of the octatonic scale is rare in Rachmaninoff's earlier compositions compared to the commonly used hexatonic structures. The close relation between hexatonic and conventional scales makes it easier for them to blend compared to the octatonic structures and tonal functions.¹⁰⁵

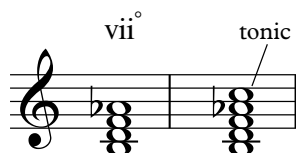
The octatonic scale that is one of the main characteristic features of Rachmaninoff compositional middle period, includes minor third intervals and tritones that can form a diminished seventh chord. As Khananov describes, the Rachmaninoff Subdominant serves a double function, acting also as a dominant.¹⁰⁶ In general, each chord has several functions for the overall sound organisation in relation to the circle of fifths, and the flexibility of the seventh chord and its multiple functions can also be found in other composers' works prior to Rachmaninoff. Moreover, in

¹⁰⁴ Blair Allen Johnston, 'Modal Idioms and Their Rhetorical Associations in Rachmaninoff's Works', in *Music Theory Online*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Society for Music Theory, Dec. 2014), 3

¹⁰⁵ Johnston, 'Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff', 143

¹⁰⁶ Ildar Khannanov, *Muzika Sergeya Rakhmaninova: Sem Muzikalno-teoreticheskikh etudov* [Music of Sergey Rachmaninoff: Seven Music-theoretical Etudes] (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2011), 124

addition to the subdominant/dominant function, the tonic can be observed after adding an extra third interval above the seventh chord (Ex.1.4).



Ex.1.4 Diminished seventh chord and diminished seventh chord with added major third interval in C Major/Minor

This double function is known as *Ladovaya Peremennost* (ладовая переменность – modal variability or more commonly named as mutability) where instability of the tonic helps the music seem to move to any degree without a proper sensation of a modulation.¹⁰⁷ This is a very common Russian folk element and features in Rachmaninoff’s music most frequently appearing in the form of alternation between tonic and submediant.

Mutability consists of free vacillation within the confines of the diatonic collection, whereby two of its pitches — first and sixth scale degrees with the major-mode collection — can in turn serve as primary gravitational centres that carry equal or nearly equal weight.¹⁰⁸

Another of Rachmaninoff’s compositional characteristics is his physical ability as a pianist to introduce and perform wide and dense chords even in the preopus works such as *Three Nocturnes* composed in 1887. Alexander Goldenweiser once mentioned how Rachmaninoff could easily play double thirds in two octaves

¹⁰⁷ Yuri Tyulin, and Privano, Nikolay, *Uchebnik Garmonii* [The Textbook of Harmony] (Moscow: Muzika, 1986), 446

¹⁰⁸ Daniil Zavlunov, ‘M. I. Glinka’s *A life for the Tsar* (1836): A Historical and Analytic-theoretical study (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2010), 439

with his ‘enormous and elastic’ hands.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps one can argue that Liszt also was technically gifted and similar wide-spread chords can also be seen in his compositions. However, Rachmaninoff’s harmonically altered and dense chords are unique and can be considered as one of his stylistically recognisable features.

It is worth noting that many musicologists draw parallels between Wagnerian and Rachmaninoff’s chromaticism. Such an example is David Cannata’s interpretation of Rachmaninoff’s works as a post-Wagnerian culmination.¹¹⁰ However, as described in Yasser’s article, Rachmaninoff’s chromaticism has taken an ‘entirely different course’ and both composers had ‘nothing in common in any other respect’.¹¹¹

Wagner’s chromaticism is mainly the result of a skilful manoeuvring by the composer somewhere between the different and, preferably, widely separated keys, without dwelling too long on each of the individually. On the contrary, Rachmaninoff’s chromaticism ensues digressions within the limits of a single or, at any rate, long exploited key. In other words, Rachmaninoff’s is pre-eminently an *intra-tonal* chromaticism which, by this very quality, stands in marked contrast to the *inter-tonal* chromaticism of Wagner’.¹¹²

Furthermore, Rachmaninoff’s choice of chromaticism and preference of diatonic melodies resulted in a simpler harmonic language compared to that of Wagner for example (see Chapters 2–4). The use of the diatonic melodies in addition to Rachmaninoff’s attachment to the conventional tonal plot are one of the main factors that obscure the progression of Rachmaninoff’s musical style. Even with the extreme use of chromaticism in his later compositions, his harmonic language remains unnoticed and gives an impression of being simple. Johnston further confirmed this argument:

¹⁰⁹ Zaruhi Apetian, *Vospominanie o Rahmaninove [Remembering Rachmaninoff]* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Musicalnoe Izdatelstvo 1961), 422

¹¹⁰ David Butler Cannata, *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 1999), 30

¹¹¹ Yasser, ‘Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff’s Music’, 20

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 21

It is perhaps typical of Rachmaninoff that “extraordinary” chromaticism is in the end somehow subsumed under some “ordinary” tonal procedures — if this failed to happen, he would be not a Postromantic composer but a modernist one.¹¹³

Another element common to Rachmaninoff’s compositional methods is the use of sequences, in particular descending scales that sequentially move upwards. Rachmaninoff remained truthful to this feature and carried it over throughout his compositions regardless of the period he was living in. In addition to this, was the frequent appearance of medieval *Dies Irae* motif, which became another defining feature of his style. Most probably Rachmaninoff associated this musical element with death and uncertainty. On several occasions he admitted to a Soviet writer Marietta Shaginyan about his fear of death.

It is impossible to live while one knows one must die after all. How can you bear the thought of dying? (Shaginyan, cited in Bertensson and Leyda, 1956)¹¹⁴

I have never wanted immortality personally. ... But if there is something beyond, then that is terrifying (Shaginyan, cited in Martin, 1990).¹¹⁵

Compartmentalising Rachmaninoff’s musical heritage

Musicologists propose different approaches to dividing Rachmaninoff’s compositional works. Barrie Martin divides it into three main periods: 1890–1896, 1900–1917, and 1926–1941.¹¹⁶ David Cannata divides Rachmaninoff’s musical compositions into four periods by splitting the middle period into 1900–1908 and 1909–1917, largely based on the idea that during the later years of the middle period

¹¹³ Johnston, ‘Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff’, 78

¹¹⁴ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 199

¹¹⁵ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 271

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19–21

(1909–1917) he developed more complex harmonic approaches starting from Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30 written in 1909.¹¹⁷ Russian musicologist Vera Briantseva takes a more extreme approach by dividing Rachmaninoff’s output in two parts — Russian and American — arguing that it was a ‘tragic mistake’ to leave Russia and as a result he composed only six opus works one of them (Piano Concerto No. 4) already sketched in Russia prior to his emigration.¹¹⁸ However, Briantseva’s argument could be a result of the Soviet ideology to claim that Rachmaninoff would have composed more, had he stayed in Russia. Nevertheless, it is true that after emigrating Rachmaninoff had a heavier performance schedule and composed less. Most probably it was difficult to combine an active performance career with composing as seen also with other composers such as Liszt. Both composers had periods of active compositions followed or preceded (in the case of Liszt)¹¹⁹ by a performance career.

While Cannata’s approach may be reasonable, Rachmaninoff’s stylistic development from 1900 to 1917 occurred without any major dramatic or sudden shifts. It progressed rather smoothly through the expansion and complication of the harmonic, textural and structural forms. In fact, this smooth transition is perhaps one of the reasons why Rachmaninoff was dismissed by his contemporaries for not being a progressive composer during the middle-period of his compositional lifespan. The new compositional trends towards modernism in Russia, which started in around 1910, also greatly overshadowed Rachmaninoff’s rather innovative for the time stylistic development.

As such, this thesis agrees with Martin’s approach and divides Rachmaninoff’s works into three main periods. There are obvious compositional gaps in his output

¹¹⁷ Cannata, *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony*, 65

¹¹⁸ Vera Briantseva, *Sergey Vassilievich Rachmaninoff* (Moscow: Sovetsky Kompositor, 1976), 608

¹¹⁹ Liszt stopped performing after 1847 and dedicated himself to composing

between 1896 and 1900 (due to the mental breakdown), and after his emigration between 1917 and 1926 (due to the major disruption of having left Russia and transition to a new life in the West):

- 1890–1896 (student)
- 1900–1917 (post-recovery from mental breakdown)
- 1926–1941 (émigré).

Rachmaninoff's musical legacy could be seen as a parabolic arch of a constant complication of the form, structure, texture, harmony and musical material from his early years of composing until emigration from Russia in the midst of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. There is then a gradual shift towards simplicity of form, texture and structure, alongside a further development of his complex harmonic language most clearly seen in his fourth piano concerto (see Chapter 4). Some of the simplifications have started to emerge as early as the first set of *Etudes Tableaux* (1911) and the second sonata (1913). The harmonic language is then simplified in his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* most probably because of public indifference towards his new style as seen in his fourth piano concerto.

Rachmaninoff a student (1890–1896)

From an early age Rachmaninoff associated himself with the Moscow school of music and distanced himself from the new and progressive style typical of the St. Petersburg group. Leaving Zverev's home he decided to stay in Moscow instead of

joining his mother in St. Petersburg as it ‘would have looked like a betrayal of Tchaikovsky and Taneyev’ (Riesemann 1970, cited in Scott 2008).¹²⁰ Rachmaninoff’s first opus number was his Piano Concerto No. 1 composed in 1891 during his student years at the Moscow Conservatoire. While he composed several small pieces and made a couple of attempts at a piano concerto before writing his first piano concerto, the latter could be seen as the start of his career as a composer (see Chapter 2).

Apart from Rachmaninoff’s first piano concerto, there are other important works composed during the early years of his compositional career. These include the piano pieces *Cinq Morceaux de Fantaisie*, Op. 3 (which includes the famous C sharp minor Prelude), the *Sept Morceaux de Salon*, Op. 10 and *Six Moments Musicaux*, Op. 16, the three sets of Songs (Opp. 4, 8 and 14), the first Suite for two pianos, Op. 5, and his symphonic poem *The Rock*, Op. 7. These early works already give signs of Rachmaninoff’s own compositional approach and style including his chromaticism, bold harmonies and use of bells and chant-like melodies (this can be seen for example in the C sharp minor Prelude and in the third and fourth movements of Suite No. 1 among other works).

The failure of Rachmaninoff’s first symphony composed in 1895 had a significant role in his future compositional path. While being extremely upset about his inspiration and idol Tchaikovsky’s death, Rachmaninoff felt free from ties to the traditional musical approaches of the time and was trying to ‘discover and open up an entirely new paths in music’.¹²¹ Unfortunately, a disastrous interpretation and performance by the conductor Glazunov who according to some sources was drunk during the premier,¹²² and harsh criticism by César Cui and others from the Petersburg

¹²⁰ Michael Scott, *Rachmaninoff* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008), 27

¹²¹ Oskar Riesemann, *Rachmaninoff’s Recollections* (Freeport and New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 98

¹²² Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 23

group may have forced Rachmaninoff to adopt a compositional reticence. The event also threw him into deep mental depression until his recovery in 1900.

The rivalry between the Muscovites and the Nationalist school in St Petersburg often resulted in unnecessarily harsh commentaries and criticism of each other. Cui's review stated:

If there is a Conservatory in Hell, and one of its gifted pupils should be given the problem of writing a programmatic symphony on the Seven Plagues of Egypt, and if he should write a symphony resembling Mr. Rachmaninoff's symphony — his problem would have been carried out brilliantly and he would enchant all the inmates of Hell.¹²³

The first experience of strong criticism may also have served as a primary reason why Rachmaninoff avoided making any drastic changes in his successive works and spent three years between 1897 and 1900 trying to find his future compositional path. Great economy of the musical material, a cyclic structural effect due to the 'network of motivic relationships' and use of chant-like melodies are some of the main features of the symphony.¹²⁴ The testimony that Rachmaninoff's first symphony aimed to bring novelties and new trends to the Russian compositional scene can be seen in critic and leading journal (*Ruskaya Muzikalnaya gazeta*) editor Nikolai Findeizen's words:

This work shows new impulses, tendencies towards new colours, new themes, new images ... The first movement, and especially the furious finale with its concluding Largo, contains much beauty, novelty, and even inspiration.¹²⁵

¹²³ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 71–72

¹²⁴ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 79

¹²⁵ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 78

Rachmaninoff recovered from depression (1900–1917)

After his recovery from depression in 1900 Rachmaninoff was never again ‘accused of the misuse of dissonance or of any excessive harmonic liberties’.¹²⁶ This is also true if considered from the perspective of the evolution of general musical preferences and tastes — what seemed like a dissonance in 1890 may not have been viewed as such in later years.

The failure of the first symphony scarred Rachmaninoff’s confidence, and he avoided experimenting with novelties for fear of being criticised. However, starting from the second piano concerto his musical style gradually became more complex, where he transformed harmonic, structural and textural compositional features of his works. While sharing some common features with Tchaikovsky’s first piano concerto (especially in the second and third movements), Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2 stands out with its modulatory introductions, thematic unity and intra-tonal chromaticism that enhances the harmony and texture of the concerto (see Chapter 2). After the success of his second piano concerto, Rachmaninoff confidently expanded and amplified all the new elements in his third piano concerto. Moreover, Piano Concerto No. 3 could be seen as the pinnacle of Rachmaninoff’s mastery in transforming and greatly altering the traditional Romantic piano concerto form with more complex and adventurous harmonies (see Chapter 3).

The second period of Rachmaninoff’s compositional path is the most productive and important period where his progressive and innovative style is much more obvious than in any other period. While his Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3 could be considered as the most important works of the period, some of his other works are also central in understanding Rachmaninoff’s legacy. Among them are his two Operas

¹²⁶ Yasser, ‘Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff’s Music’, 19

(*The Miserly Knight*, Op. 24 and *Francesca da Rimini*, Op. 25), Symphony No. 2, Op. 27, Symphonic poem *The Isle of the Dead*, Op. 29 and *The Bells*, Op. 35. Similar to the first period of Rachmaninoff's musical career, the songs form a considerable part of his output in the later years (Songs Opp. 21, 26, 34 and 38). However, the piano as an instrument and the genres involving piano elements significantly dominate all compositions completed in this middle period of his career. The most important piano works of this time include Rachmaninoff's second suite for two pianos (Op. 18), two piano sonatas (Opp. 28 and 36), Preludes (Opp. 23 and 32) and *Études-Tableaux* (Opp. 33 and 39). The latter in particular is an interesting case that illustrates an important departure from his earlier works and a shift toward complexity by using multi-layered and polyrhythmic melodies while at the same time simplifying the thematic materials and choosing short fragments over long-span melodies. The *Études-Tableaux* are one of the more vivid examples where Rachmaninoff successfully incorporated the bell effects. As Martin clearly stated the pieces have very little to do with the concept of a study (etude) and they are mainly concerned with creating a mood or with telling a story, in which the sound of bells often plays a part.¹²⁷ Another important feature is the *Dies Irae* motif that appears almost in every *Études-Tableaux* giving them dark and ominous effect.

Toward the end of the middle period of his compositional career and before his emigration from Russia in the midst of the Bolshevik revolution, Rachmaninoff gradually departs from traditions and influences with his works becoming structurally and harmonically more complex. He becomes more adventurous with chromaticism and textural complexity that included several layers of musical material moving in parallel. He also brings in novelties such as the use of a short fragmental approach, a

¹²⁷ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 231

thinner or more transparent orchestral and piano texture, as well as the tendency to opt for simplicity. Rachmaninoff's harmonic language gradually becomes more daring alongside the de-formation of the classical piano concerto form.

Starting from the first set of *Études-Tableaux*, Rachmaninoff's typically long and interwoven melodic subjects gradually became fragmented and extremely short. Even in Piano Concerto No. 3, which can be considered as a pinnacle of Rachmaninoff's piano concerto writing in terms of complexity, one can already observe some departure from his earlier compositional habits. The orchestration in the third piano concerto is much more transparent compared to Rachmaninoff's earlier compositions, and while there still exist some long melodic subjects, they gradually become shorter, as he prioritises the short fragmental melodic approach. The conventional tonal structure typical of Rachmaninoff's earlier compositions also become more adventurous starting from his third piano concerto. In addition, the formal concerto structure and increased rhythmic and metric features are more complex in Rachmaninoff's later concertos departing from the traditional concerto qualities.

The second period of Rachmaninoff's compositional timeline also stands out because of the revisions of his first opus piano concerto. These revisions are critical to understanding the shifts in Rachmaninoff's writing style and maturing approach to composition. Only three major works were revisited during his lifetime.¹²⁸ Among them the two most critical ones are the revision of his first piano concerto in 1917 and that of his second piano sonata revisited in 1931. The revision of the first piano concerto in 1917 demonstrates the development of Rachmaninoff's approach to harmony, form and texture between 1891 and 1917, showing the evolution of his

¹²⁸ Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1; Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36 and Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40

musical taste and the departure from the style of his student years. Meanwhile, the revision of his second piano sonata crosses two periods of his compositional timeline between 1913 and 1931, and shows a decline in complexity and the adoption of a more simplistic approach of his later works.

The Piano Sonata Nos. 1 and 2 composed in 1908 and 1913 respectively are the two central works that illustrate the stylistic development and transformation of his writing style. While being his first piano sonata, and in general one of the few sonatas composed in Russia before his exodus during the Bolshevik revolution,¹²⁹ Rachmaninoff's Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 28 stands out with its programmatic ideas. In his recollections, Dresden pianist Konstantin Igumnov notes that Rachmaninoff confessed using Goethe's poem as a basis for his first piano sonata.¹³⁰ Similar to Liszt's *Faust Symphony* and following the exact order of Faust, Gretchen and the flight to the Brocken and Mephistopheles, Rachmaninoff's first sonata is also based on Goethe's poem. Other evidence of programmatic use in Rachmaninoff's music is in his letter to Italian composer Ottorino Respighi where he gave hints and instructions for orchestrating five of his *Etudes Tableaux* Op. 33 and 39.

- The first Etude in A minor [Op. 39, No. 2] represents the Sea and Seagulls.
- The second Etude in A minor [Op. 39, No. 6] was inspired by the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf*.
- The third Etude in E flat major [Op. 33, No. 4] is a scene at a Fair
- The fourth Etude in D major [Op. 39, No. 9] has a similar character, resembling an oriental march.
- The fifth Etude in C minor [Op. 39, No. 7] is a funeral march ... The initial theme is a march. The other theme represents the singing of a choir. Commencing with the movement in 16ths in C minor and a little further on in E flat minor a fine rain is suggested, incessant and hopeless. The movement develops, culminating in C minor – the chimes of a church. The Finale returns to the first theme, a march.¹³¹

¹²⁹ The piano sonata was not very popular in Russia prior to Rachmaninoff where the orchestral and operatic musical forms were favoured.

¹³⁰ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 153

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 262–263

Rachmaninoff's Piano Sonata No. 2, op. 36 composed in 1913 also plays a significantly important role in demonstrating the stylistic development of his writing, showing his compositional development. The piano sonata continues the trends and ideas used in his third piano concerto, incorporating complex harmonies, an extremely dense texture full of chromaticism and an abundance of interwoven or parallel thematic fragments. As with his third piano concerto, the second sonata also requires a demanding technical ability from a pianist to overcome not only virtuosic passages but to also separate and introduce the most important thematic elements from the multi-layered musical material. An important fragment of Rachmaninoff's stylistic development is his revision of the second piano sonata in 1931 where one could clearly follow Rachmaninoff's tendency to simplify and thin the texture of the composition.

Rachmaninoff an émigré (1926–1941)

Talking to Alfred Swan just before starting his American season in 1931

Rachmaninoff stated:

I look at my early works and see how much there is that is superfluous. Even in this sonata [referring to his second Sonata in B flat minor] so many voices are moving simultaneously, and it is too long. Chopin's Sonata lasts nineteen minutes, and all has been said.¹³²

The inclination to use shorter melodies, thinner texture and opt for a compact size of a composition that had been already emerging before 1917, intensified in the final phase of Rachmaninoff's compositional timeline. The main characteristic feature

¹³² Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 276–277

of his last six major works¹³³ became an advanced and extensive harmonic language with frequent modulations quite often to a distant key.

The first piece composed as an émigré in 1926 was Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40, which, however, did not prove to be as popular as its predecessors (see Chapter 4). Given the lengthy compositional gap after his last opus number (*Études-Tableaux*, Op. 39, composed in 1916), the critics and general public had high expectations for the new piece, which, however, was received with a degree of indifference. While not a dramatic failure, the response from the audience could be compared to a certain degree with that of his first symphony. Later Rachmaninoff revisited the concerto twice. However, unlike the other two revised compositions (Piano Concerto No. 1 and Piano Sonata No. 2), the two revisions of the fourth piano concerto (1928 and 1941) do not show any further development in Rachmaninoff's writing style. The revision of Piano Concerto No. 4 mostly focuses on structural refinements, taking into account and responding to the criticism of his colleagues and friends.

The perceived rejection of the fourth piano concerto may have been one of the reasons why Rachmaninoff opted for a Rhapsody as his last piano-orchestral work rather than a fifth concerto. He may have thought that the familiar tune borrowed from Paganini may appeal to the audience more than his own new melody as the basis for a new concerto. However, Rachmaninoff's personal input into the Paganini's simple tune and its transformation into a complex composition cannot be underestimated as a key to the success of the Rhapsody.

¹³³ Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40; *Three Russian Songs*, Op. 41; Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42; *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 43; Symphony No. 3, Op. 44 and *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45

Another factor to consider is Rachmaninoff's extensive performance schedule both as a pianist and a conductor, which gave him financial stability and recognition but significantly reduced his time to compose. Between 1918 and 1943, Rachmaninoff performed close to 1000 recitals in the United States, touring more than 200 cities.¹³⁴

With all my travels and the absence of permanent abode, I really have no time to compose, and when I now sit down to write, it does not come to me very easily. Not as in former years.¹³⁵

Furthermore, having had to leave Russia in the midst of the Bolshevik revolution, Rachmaninoff lost his homeland as well as the stability and security of living he once had, which might have created a better environment and inspiration for composition. As an émigré and a Russian composer abroad in an unfamiliar environment, he had to adapt to the new forms of life, and may have been missing the inspiration from his homeland, the familiar environment and nature, and the Russian orthodox chants. As he stated in 1941:

I am a Russian composer, and the land of my birth has influenced my temperament and outlook. My music is the product of my temperament, and so it is Russian music.¹³⁶

It is unfortunate that Rachmaninoff composed only six major works¹³⁷ in his late period and was unable to develop his new ideas and compositional approaches further. During this period the new modernist era was already underway, and Rachmaninoff may have realised that in order to catch up and seamlessly adopt the

¹³⁴ Robin Sue Gehl, 'Reassessing a Legacy: Rachmaninoff in America, 1918–43' (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2008), 41–69

¹³⁵ Patrick Piggott, *Rachmaninov Orchestral Music* (London: BBC, 1974), 84

¹³⁶ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 369

¹³⁷ Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40 (1926); *Three Russian Songs*, Op. 41 (1926); *Variation on a Theme of Corelli*, Op. 42 (1931); *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 43 (1934); Symphony No. 3, Op. 44 (1936); *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45 (1940)

new compositional trends he had to make too many drastic changes in his writing style. Another reason why he may have abstained from turning into a genuine modernist could again be related to the fear of yet more criticism and rejection. For many years, the critics and musicologists pigeonholed him as the last romantic composer of the era. After all, they ignored and largely rejected the novelties he introduced in the fourth piano concerto. This in fact may have forced Rachmaninoff to turn back to the traditional romantic style in his last piano-orchestral work, the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, which received a wide acclaim and acceptance.

Conclusion

In an environment where both Moscow and St. Petersburg groups were trying to define Russian music by synthesising the Austro-German tradition with Russian folk ideology, Rachmaninoff emerged with his own ideas and innovations. While being greatly influenced by several German composers and also having a great respect and admiration towards his mentors, in particular Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff nevertheless put his individual compositional stamp.

He experimented with traditional romantic approaches and influences, but developed his own unique style by transforming the old structures, textures, harmonies and forms. While following the rules and traditions of both German and Russian schools, from the start of his compositional career Rachmaninoff introduced his highly recognisable qualities in the form of chromaticism, beautifully constructed long-phrased melodies and multi-layered thematic texture where several secondary materials move parallel to the main subject. He used tonal modes characteristic of

Russian folk and sacred music, but unlike other composers did not reproduce existing melodies or materials. Religious aspects in the form of Russian Orthodox chants and especially church bells also became a trademark defining Rachmaninoff's musical language.

Starting from his second piano concerto, in the middle period (1900–1917) all these unique characteristics became more prominent, thus weakening the link with the traditional German school. Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto perhaps is the climax of the expression of not only his musical ideas, technique and stylistic features, but also a significant departure from the traditional concerto form.

CHAPTER 2: PIANO CONCERTO NOS. 1 AND 2

This chapter primarily focuses on the form and the structure of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 2, showing the trajectory of transformation from the simple first concerto to the more complex second. The first part of the chapter discusses the similarities of his first piano concerto to Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16. The comparison and structural analysis of both concertos help understand the source of Rachmaninoff's first published opus and give a clear picture of the influences on and writing style of his early works. While there were many composers that shaped and developed the nineteenth century piano concerto genre, this thesis focuses mainly on those who directly influenced Rachmaninoff, including Grieg, Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky.

The second part of the chapter is centred around Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 18, illustrating the departure from his first piano concerto written in a traditional concerto form towards the symphonisation of the genre that was already present in Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto and Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2. The analysis of the new technical and musical features in the second piano concerto shows the development of Rachmaninoff's musical language over the ten years that separate Piano Concerto Nos. 1 (1891) and 2 (1901). Considering the fact that both concertos are based on a similar three-movement structure, each technical aspect is discussed chronologically comparing the concertos movement by movement. This helps illustrate more clearly the development of the concertos and how they changed over time getting closer to symphonic principals. As indicated by Warren Darcy and James Hepokoski:

The history of the concerto in the eighteenth century and beyond, developing alongside the symphony, is that of gradually being attracted to the latter's principles, finding ways of adapting itself to them while retaining important features of its own identity, but eventually (around the fourth decade of the nineteenth century) succumbing rather totally to them.¹³⁸

This is particularly relevant to Rachmaninoff's second and third piano concertos and even more so to the fourth with its complex piano-orchestra collaboration. Moreover, if one separates the contrasting second halves of the second movements (Scherzo) of piano concertos 2 and 3 and defines them as either a different section or a whole separate movement, this will turn the concertos into four-movement compositions and bring them yet closer to a symphonic structure.

Firstly, the thematic material in the second and third movements of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 has similarities with that in the first movement of the same concerto. Secondly, the Scherzo section of the second movement (more evidently in Piano Concerto No. 3) divides the concerto into four sections. The Scherzo idea of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto most probably came from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. As argued by Steinberg, 'one gets the impression that he had kept the score of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto at hand while working on the second and third movements of his own concerto, or perhaps the music was simply at the surface of his memory'.¹³⁹ In other words, Tchaikovsky's piano concerto can already be seen as an attempt to get closer to the four-movement symphonic structure. This technique can also be seen in the second concerto by Brahms. In his book on Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 2, Horton illustrates how the insertion of the Waltz section between the first and third movements and the

¹³⁸ Warren Darcy and James Hepokoski, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: OUP, 2006), 435

¹³⁹ Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: a listener's guide* (Oxford, New York: OUP, 2000), 359

variational character of the finale ‘conveys the impression of a scherzo and trio’.¹⁴⁰ However, in his second piano concerto Brahms clearly divides the work into four movements with the Waltz being the second (*Allegro appassionato*), whereas in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3 the Scherzo idea is integrated into the second movements of the concertos.

Brahms was one of the first to start altering the piano concerto concept by using symphonic form and structure. Not surprisingly, this was widely criticised by critics and composers including Maurice Ravel who said:

I set out with the old notion that a concerto should be a *divertissement*. Brahms’ principle about a symphonic concerto was wrong, and the critic who said that he had written a concerto “against the piano” was right.¹⁴¹

Rachmaninoff’s approach not only aimed at symphonising the concerto, but also at creating a much stronger balance between the soloist and the orchestra. This worked perfectly in Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 4, and to a lesser extent in Concerto 3 which differs from the rest due to its piano-centric approach.

Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1 (1891)

Focusing initially on the original (1891) version of Piano Concerto No. 1 enables us to establish a starting point of the development of Rachmaninoff’s style in a progressive chronological order. This is partly due to the fact that the later revised version of the first piano concerto has been heavily altered, which masks the initial

¹⁴⁰ Julian Horton, *Brahms’ Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83: Analytical and Contextual Studies* (Leuven: Peters, 2017), 324

¹⁴¹ Arbie Orenstain, *A Ravel Reader* (New York, 1990), 344–345

evolutionary path of Rachmaninoff's style of composing piano concertos. Extensive revision and enhancement of the first piano concerto in 1917 brought it closer to the more mature and complex style of Rachmaninoff's late works.

The form of Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1 is relatively straightforward following the format of an early romantic style adopted by Grieg and Schumann in their concertos. Piano Concerto No. 1 is the shortest of Rachmaninoff's four piano concertos, lasting around 25 minutes. Most of the English and Russian language literature including articles and research reports point to the underlying similarity between Rachmaninoff's first concerto and those of Grieg and Schumann both of whom produced a single piano concerto.¹⁴² This first impression is largely down to the fact that all aforementioned concertos start with a descending piano passage and also have structural similarities. Considering the fact that Rachmaninoff was a student in 1890–91, when he was composing the concerto, it is obvious that he would be under the influence of the music and teaching techniques that surrounded him and unsurprising that he took a familiar concerto as a model to create his own first opus.

Schumann's well-known Piano Concerto Op. 54 in A minor which had a different compositional approach compared to his earlier attempts,¹⁴³ was initially a single movement concerto called *Phantasie* and closely followed Beethoven's sonata-as-fantasy form that can be found in Sonatas Op. 27 Nos. 1 and 2 (*Sonata quasi una Fantasia*).¹⁴⁴ Grieg later used Schuman's model for his own concerto in the same A minor key.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² See for example - Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 107; Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 37; Barrie Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (England: Ashgate, 1990), 49

¹⁴³ For Schumann's earlier unfinished piano concerto in F major, he spent time studying concertos by Field, Ries, Hummel and others following the traditional classical form of concerto writing.

¹⁴⁴ Claudia Macdonald, *Robert Schumann and The Piano Concerto* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 226

¹⁴⁵ Donald Ferguson, *Masterworks of the Orchestral Repertoire: A Guide for Listeners* (University of Minnesota Press, 1954), 258

Rachmaninoff conceived the idea of the first concerto in 1889 at the age of 16 and started studying all the piano concertos he could find at the time. By coincidence, the 1889 musical season in Moscow featured a number of concertos. He had the opportunity to hear Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4, Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2, Rubinstein's Piano Concerto No. 4, Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23, and Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2 with the visiting Saint-Saëns himself at the piano and Alexander Siloti conducting.¹⁴⁶ In November 1889, Rachmaninoff started working on a piano concerto in C minor which he shortly abandoned.¹⁴⁷ The manuscript of the first movement consisting of 14-page musical material written for two pianos has more connection to and similarities with Piano Concerto No. 1 of Tchaikovsky than the concertos of Grieg or Schumann.¹⁴⁸

In June 1890 Rachmaninoff started working on what would become his first piano concerto in F sharp minor.¹⁴⁹ However, due to the fact that he graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire in the 1890/1891 academic year, he had to prepare for his exams which delayed the completion of the Piano Concerto No. 1 until the next year (1891).¹⁵⁰ In March 1892 Rachmaninoff performed the first movement of his first piano concerto at the Small Salle of the Hall of Nobility with the Conservatoire director Vasily Safonov as a conductor.¹⁵¹ However, there is no evidence if Rachmaninoff ever played all three movements of his first piano concerto in its original version.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Aleksey Kandinsky, *S.V. Rachmaninoff* (Moscow: Musika, 1982), 14

¹⁴⁷ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 41

¹⁴⁸ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 24

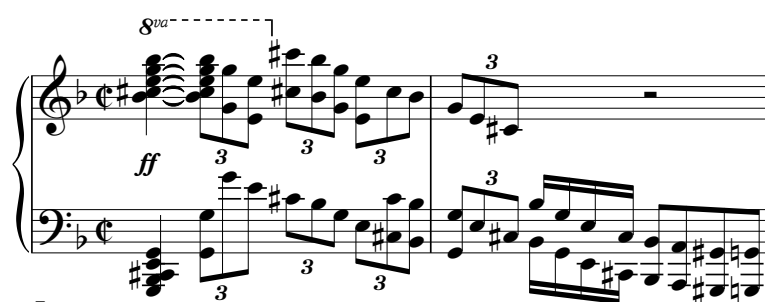
¹⁴⁹ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 48

¹⁵⁰ Victor Seroff, *Rachmaninoff* (London: Cassell, 1951), 32

¹⁵¹ Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in music* (New York: NYUP, 1956), 43

¹⁵² Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 48

In 1890, Rachmaninoff performed the first movement of Rubinstein's Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 70 at a student concert. This concerto may also have influenced Rachmaninoff's musical ideas.¹⁵³ Structurally there are not many common features: while there is no obvious introduction in Rubinstein's fourth piano concerto and the orchestra simply presents the main material from the start, in both concertos the piano starts with similar passages (Rubinstein, bars 25–38 and Rachmaninoff, bars 3–15).



Ex.2.1 Rubinstein, Piano Concerto No. 4, 1st movement, bars 25–26



Ex.2.2 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bars 3–4

The difference is that after the solo piano passage Rachmaninoff allows the orchestra to introduce the main theme first where the exposition starts (see Charts 1 and 26). In contrast, a solo piano passage in Rubinstein's concerto is inserted between the orchestral and solo exposition of the first subject. Both concertos are characterised

¹⁵³ Michael Scott, *Rachmaninoff* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008), 32–33

by sudden tempo changes in the transitional materials, a feature that is commonly seen in both Rubinstein and Rachmaninoff's writings. The interchange of the elegant second subject contrasting with the dramatic and dark main subject, and the triplet left hand accompaniment are among other common features. However, Rubinstein's piano concerto written in 1864 is structurally closer to the classical concerto traditions although it is generally perceived as a romantic piece. This is mainly due to the large orchestral sections, scale-like piano passages and the generally simple tonal plot that is common to the classical concerto form. In addition, Rachmaninoff's densely structured piano passage at the start of his first piano concerto, is much closer to the introduction of Grieg's piano concerto which will be discussed later in this chapter

Stylistically, Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto also has some similarities with Tchaikovsky's writing, such as repetitive melodic elements, double octave piano passages, orchestration focussed mainly on strings and transitional materials that rhythmically contrast with the main subjects. However, Grieg's presence in Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto, particularly the structural and harmonic similarities of both concertos, is much more obvious. Despite the fact that Rachmaninoff never performed Grieg's Piano Concerto in public, it certainly inspired him and had a significant influence on the composition of his own piano concerto.¹⁵⁴ According to his cousin Vera Skalon — the youngest of the three Skalon sisters and Rachmaninoff's first love — the main inspiration for his first piano concerto came from Alexander Siloti's endless practising of Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor at Ivanovka (the family estate of Rachmaninoff's aunt Varvara Satina in the Tambov area) where Rachmaninoff was also spending his summer holiday. However, Grieg's

¹⁵⁴ Patrick Piggott, *Rachmaninov Orchestral Music* (London: BBC, 1974), 42

musical style can also be traced in Rachmaninoff's first attempt at writing a piano concerto in C minor, which he composed even before Siloti's visit to Ivanovka.¹⁵⁵

Grieg's piano concerto as a model

First movement

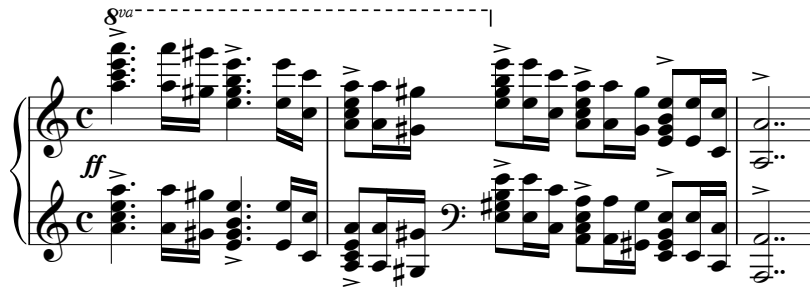
In the original version of the concerto Rachmaninoff replicated Grieg's use of a powerful opening theme by starting the first movement with a similar loud fanfare and descending passage of triplet quavers in double octaves performed by the soloist.¹⁵⁶ While the gesture in both piano introductions is the same, rhythmically they differ. Also, Rachmaninoff's solo piano passage is based on a chromatic movement (Ex.2.3) which requires more time to travel across the keyboard compared to the arpeggio-like short introduction of Grieg's piano concerto (Ex.2.4).



Ex.2.3 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bars 3–4

¹⁵⁵ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 37

¹⁵⁶ Seroff, *Rachmaninoff*, 26



Ex.2.4 Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, 1st movement, bars 2–4

The idea of grandiose openings was not uncommon at the time. Schumann, Liszt in his first concerto, and also, to some extent, Tchaikovsky used such opening themes in their concertos. Rachmaninoff later refrains from these ostentatious introductions and does not use them again in his later concertos.¹⁵⁷

	Introduction				Exposition					
Grieg	Orch	Solo			A Orch	A Solo	TR		B-1 Orch	B-1 Solo
Rachmaninoff	Orch	Solo	Orch+Solo	Solo	A Orch	A Solo	TR-1 (A)	TR-2	B Orch	Solo

	Development						Recapitulation			
Grieg	B-2	Intro+A	A			RT (Intro+A)	A Orch+Solo	TR		
Rachmaninoff		Intro	B	Orch (A), Solo (B)		A	RT (Intro)	A Solo	TR-1 (A)	TR-2

							Coda
Grieg	B-1 Orch	B-1 Solo	B-2	Tutti A		Cadenza	
Rachmaninoff	B Orch	Solo		Dev. Intro	Tutti Orch	Cadenza	

Ex.2.5 Large-scale and Inter-thematic functions of the 1st movement of Grieg's Piano Concerto and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891)

Ex.2.5 above summaries Charts 1 and 23, illustrating the similarities between Rachmaninoff and Grieg's piano concertos. Rachmaninoff uses the same approach as

¹⁵⁷ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 107

Grieg where the soloist restates the orchestral exposition of the first subject that later flows into the transition (TR1) of a playful dance (Grieg, bars 31–48 and Rachmaninoff, bars 32–48). Frequent use of the opening piano passage as a transitional device between subjects can be seen in both concertos. Although Rachmaninoff's first transition is longer than Grieg's and consists of two sections (Rachmaninoff, bars 32–48 and /49–59), equally, the two transitions modulate from the tonic of the home key to the mediant (III, third degree) where the second subject is presented. Moreover, the second part of the first transition (Rachmaninoff, TR1–2 bars /49ff) of Rachmaninoff's piano concerto works as an introduction to the second subject (Rachmaninoff bars 60ff), keeping the dance character of the previous transition and, at the same time, getting stylistically and harmonically (E pedal) closer to the second subject.

Compared to the short and simple first-subject-based development of Grieg's piano concerto (Grieg, bars 73–116), Rachmaninoff integrates both subjects of the first movement in the development of his concerto (Rachmaninoff, bars 82–166). Perhaps the use of the introductory material for the start of the development is the only common feature seen in the development of both concertos (Grieg, bars 73–88 and Rachmaninoff, bars 82–98). However, in the recapitulation of the first movement Rachmaninoff very closely replicates the structure of Grieg's piano concerto (Grieg, bars 117–175 and Rachmaninoff, bars /167–231). Both incorporate all the materials of the exposition with minor alterations such as a single restatement of the first subject, replacement of the mediant key of the second subject with the tonic and brief restatement of the start of the development. The beginning of Rachmaninoff's *cadenza* is also close to Grieg's style (Grieg, bars 176–205 and Rachmaninoff, bars /232–286). It starts with a similar quiet and harmonically explorative manner of piano writing that

follows a prolonged orchestral *fortissimo* tutti. As in Grieg's *cadenza*, Rachmaninoff's original version includes arpeggio passages followed by material from the main subject in double octave chords.

The restatement of previous musical materials carries a resemblance also to Schumann's approach in the *cadenza* of his Piano Concerto. The only difference is that Schumann's *cadenza* features several culmination points, whereas the build-up of the *cadenza* in Rachmaninoff and Grieg's Concertos is smoother and consistently reaches a *fortissimo* culmination before handing over to the orchestra.

Second movement

The second, relatively short, slow movement of the first piano concerto is largely a melodic Chopinesque piece, almost like a nocturne.¹⁵⁸ However, as in the first movement, the influence of Grieg is quite strong here as well. While structurally Rachmaninoff's piano concerto follows the model of Grieg's piano concerto, the start of the movements differ from each other. Grieg introduces the main subject in the orchestra from the very start, whereas Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto starts with a short motif (clarinet bar /1, bassoon joins from bar /5ff) derived from the start of the second subject of the first movement supported by orchestral chords modulating from B minor to D major.

The first subject in both concertos includes two sections (A-1 and A-2, see Charts 2 and 23) where the first section has a short four-bar melodic structure repeated a tone higher (Grieg, bars 1–8 and Rachmaninoff, bars 10–17). If Grieg almost exactly

¹⁵⁸ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 111

repeats the material with only a slight alteration (an extra note in the end, Grieg, bar 7) and a double appoggiatura (Grieg, bar 8) played by the first violins, the repeat of Rachmaninoff's subject is a variation of the initial four-bar pattern. Moreover, the two repeated parts of the first subject in Grieg's piano concerto are clearly divided by a rest (Grieg, bar 4), whereas Rachmaninoff joins them by inserting ascending transitional notes (Rachmaninoff, bar 13), which make the subject reappear again from the second beat as in the first statement.



Ex.2.6 Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, 2nd movement, bars 1–8



Ex.2.7 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2nd movement, bars 10–17

The second part of the subject (Grieg, bars 9–22 and Rachmaninoff, bars 18–26) in both concertos shares similar structural and dynamic features. They both start with sequentially upwards movement, gradually getting louder until they reach the culmination in the middle of the section and they end with a downwards sequence slowly losing power. This arch-like melodic structure and use of sequences later became one of the stylistic features defining Rachmaninoff as a composer.¹⁵⁹ The length of the second part of the main subject in Grieg's piano concerto is longer (15 bars), more sectional and diverges from the main melodic pattern. In contrast,

¹⁵⁹ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 107

Rachmaninoff's first subject is more balanced and symmetrical due to the short (9 bars) second part and use of the same melodic element seen in the first part of the subject.

Apart from a temporary modulation from the home key (D flat Major) into a minor third higher (F flat major) in the repeated solo episode and orchestral transition in Grieg's piano concerto (Grieg, bars 39–48), both concertos stay very close to the tonic of the movement. In the last refrain the chordal piano structure of Rachmaninoff's piano concerto is another element borrowed from Grieg (Grieg, bars /55ff and Rachmaninoff, bars 48ff). However, compared to Grieg's *fortissimo* restatement of the main material, the soloist in Rachmaninoff's concerto acts as accompanist for the first part of the subject and the subsequent variant of the second part of the first subject based on the same chordal triplet idea. In addition, the repeated material at the start of the coda, moving from major to minor subdominant and a similar ascending tonic arpeggio ending can be seen in both concertos as well (Grieg, bars 81–84 and Rachmaninoff, bars 65–69).

Third movement

It is not only the overall structure of the third movement of the first concerto that reminds the listener of Grieg's piano concerto, but also the softness of the orchestral opening, the similar structure and characteristics of all three subjects, the recapitulation that repeats the main materials without any major change, several cadential scale-like passages and the *Maestoso* grand finale (see Charts 3 and 24). Although the bar count in both concertos differs (Grieg, 440 bars and Rachmaninoff,

240 bars), they are almost identical in duration due to different time signatures (Grieg 2/4 and Rachmaninoff 4/4). However, the idea of a waltz-like dance as the first subject for the finale Rachmaninoff is most likely borrowed from Tchaikovsky's or Schumann's third movement.

The third movement of both concertos starts with similar repeated orchestral soft chords, with the difference that in Grieg's case the soloist takes over the second half of the introduction, whereas in Rachmaninoff's work the soloist and the orchestra interact with each other before settling into the first subject. The dance-like first subject (Grieg, bars 9–45 and Rachmaninoff, bars 7–18) is first introduced by the soloist and later repeated by the orchestra with a transition at the end (Grieg, bars 46–68 and Rachmaninoff, bars 19–31) which modulates to the dominant of the relative major key. However, if the first subject in Grieg's piano concerto is rhythmically straightforward with strong downbeats, Rachmaninoff decided to present a more improvisational and performance-wise more flexible concept with alternating time signatures (9/8 and 12/8).

While the second subject of the third movement in both concertos has a similar melody written in the relative major key followed by a transition or closing section (Grieg, bars 69–139 and Rachmaninoff, bars 32–76), there are a number of differences that set them apart. The short six-bar long second subject in Grieg's piano concerto (Grieg, bars 69–74) is followed by a lengthy transitional sequence predominantly based on the four-note semiquaver motif of the start of the first subject. In contrast, the second subject in Rachmaninoff's concerto (Rachmaninoff, bars 32–67) stays longer in the new key (relative major), is written in a ternary form (B–Solo–B) with a middle ten-bar solo bridge passage (Rachmaninoff, bars 48–57) and has a contrasting orchestral closing section (Rachmaninoff, bars 68–76).

The slow third subject in both concertos (Grieg, bars 140–229 and Rachmaninoff, bars /77–123) is written in the submediant (VI, sixth degree) of the home key and consists of three sections. Unlike the single-part third subject first introduced by the orchestra (Grieg, bars 140–161) and later by the soloist (Grieg, bars 162–183), Rachmaninoff introduces a two-part subject (Rachmaninoff, bars /77–92 and bars /93–108) followed by a restatement of the first part of the subject (Rachmaninoff, bars /109–123). This is most probably done to retain the ternary structure of the second subject with a solo middle part instead of repeating the third subject twice as is the case in Grieg’s piano concerto.

Similarly, both concertos restate the first and second subjects with some minor alterations mainly related to the key change (Grieg, bars 230ff and Rachmaninoff, bars 124ff). While Grieg’s recapitulation starts with an alternative version of the introductory repetitive material, Rachmaninoff simply restates the entire orchestral opening. Perhaps the most obvious departure is the choice of different keys in the repeat of the second subject (Grieg, bars 296ff and Rachmaninoff, bars 156ff). Instead of the mediant key seen at the start of the movement, the restatement of the second subject in Grieg’s piano concerto is written in the parallel tonic (I, A major), whereas Rachmaninoff decided to use the submediant (VI, D major) for the repeat of the second subject. The use of the sixth degree (VI, submediant) as the second tonic is one of the early Russian compositional traditions, which Rachmaninoff successfully incorporated in his first opus work.

Although Chart 3 shows a single-part coda in Rachmaninoff’s piano concerto, it can be divided into two, more or less equal, parts (Rachmaninoff, bars 122–132 and bars 133–140). This division brings it closer to Grieg’s two-part coda of the finale (Grieg, bars 353–421 and bars 422–440) with a similar third subject based on the

Maestoso section (in reverse order). The reason for not splitting the coda in the third movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 is due to it being rather short and simply repeating the same musical material of the Maestoso in a different tempo. In contrast, prior to commencing to the Maestoso, Grieg introduced a swift improvisatory section which is based on the first subject material.

These common similarities demonstrate the clear link between Grieg's and Rachmaninoff's piano concertos. It was from his second piano concerto that Rachmaninoff started to reveal his own musical taste and stylistic features, departing from Grieg's piano concerto and gradually moving away from the traditional concerto form in general.

Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 18

Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, Op. 18 was composed in 1901 after a period of depression during which Rachmaninoff completely gave up composing.¹⁶⁰ The failure of his first symphony in 1897 greatly affected the young composer who was 'spoiled by early success, flattery and fame', which resulted in compositional silence for almost four years.¹⁶¹ While coming out of depression with the great help of Russian physician Nikolai Dhal, it was certainly safer and easier for him to start composing again with a relatively familiar and simple structure derived from his Piano Concerto No. 1. Although the second piano concerto shares many common features with the first piano concerto, such as the overall form, structure and harmonic plot, the

¹⁶⁰ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 30–31

¹⁶¹ Seroff, *Rachmaninoff* (London: Cassell, 1951), 58

second and the third movements of the new concerto more closely follow Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 as a model.¹⁶² The reason for choosing Tchaikovsky's concerto as a model may have been because of Rachmaninoff's dissatisfaction with the original version of his Piano Concerto No. 1 and also an attempt to distance himself from Grieg's influence. The later revision of the first piano concerto in 1917, in which Rachmaninoff worked hard to hide most of the traces to Grieg's concerto, confirms this hypothesis.

The second and third movements of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 were written first and performed in December 1900 in Moscow with his first cousin, the conductor, Alexander Siloti. The complete concerto, which was a great success, was premiered on 27 October of the following year at a Moscow Philharmonic Society concert again accompanied by Siloti.¹⁶³ While the chamber-like orchestration, the Scherzo idea that splits the second movement in two sections and the dance-like third movement closely relate to Tchaikovsky's concerto, the first movement of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto shows some particularly interesting and novel features. It has a distinct individuality, while at the same time prefiguring the other two movements, as it is based on similar melodic and thematic elements. However, due to its placing as first movement, it plays an introductory rather than a summarising role by revealing all the melodic and rhythmic elements that appear later in the second and third movements.

In general, the second concerto is much more developed and mature than the first. It includes a number of new ideas such the manner in which he links the entire concerto with smoother transitions based on motifs from the subjects, modulatory

¹⁶² Steinberg, *The Concerto: a listener's guide*, 359

¹⁶³ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 94

introductions that transfer the key from one movement to the other and he also enhances the harmonic and textural representation by intra-tonal alterations and chromaticism. Interestingly, the same ‘economy of the material’ or thematic links between the movements of the Piano Concerto No. 2 can be seen in the aforementioned Symphony No. 1 as well.¹⁶⁴ Although Rachmaninoff’s Conservatoire teacher Taneyev commented on the soloist’s dependence on the orchestra due to the limited solo piano passages,¹⁶⁵ this was most probably done to achieve a greater balance between the orchestra and the soloist. It is true that Rachmaninoff gave greater role to the orchestra compared to the solo-centric first piano concerto. However, this is one the important modifications in Rachmaninoff’s compositional technique that show the development of his musical view from his student years and his first step in symphonising the concerto genre. Rachmaninoff also constantly alternates the lead role of his second piano concerto in order to create an equality in both orchestral and piano parts. Moreover, the arch-like sequential configuration of the main materials already introduced in his first piano concerto, is developed even further in Piano Concerto No. 2.

First movement

Overall structure and key structure

The large-scale function of the first movement of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto Nos. 1 (1891) and 2 is mostly the same; it incorporates the sonata allegro

¹⁶⁴ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 128

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 131

form weaving through Introduction–Exposition–Development–Recapitulation–Coda. Yet, on close examination of the inter-thematic and intra-thematic functions, one can clearly see the differences between the concertos (see Charts 1 and 7).

The first and second piano concertos start with an introduction and the main subject is first introduced by the orchestra and later repeated by the soloist (No. 1, bars /16–31 and No. 2, bars 11–62). However, instead of what had become a popular opening of the first concerto reminiscent of Grieg or Schumann, Rachmaninoff introduced a new modulatory chordal introduction in F minor for the second piano concerto (No. 2, bars 1–8). Moreover, one of the most important features originating in the second piano concerto and to be found in later works are long interlinked principal subjects consisting of several sections and variations. Yet another structural distinction is the absence of a solo piano virtuosic *cadenza* at the end of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 2. Instead, the new solo piano-centric three-part closing section (No. 2, bars 313–352) links the restated second subject of the first movement with the coda.

The long and repetitive orchestral tutti (No. 1, bars 82–98) at the start of the development and its reappearance in the recapitulation (No. 1, bars 226–229) in Piano Concerto No. 1, is missing from the second and third piano concertos (it is also absent in the revised (1917) version of the first piano concerto). Generally, the large tutti sections had lost power in favour of the solo sections in the post-classical concerto or, as Claudia Macdonald defines it, the ‘virtuoso concerto’.¹⁶⁶ However, the independence of the transitional tuttis in the first piano concerto, with almost no thematic or harmonic connection with the main material, helps divide the movement into several distinct parts. This is another key factor showing how Rachmaninoff

¹⁶⁶ Macdonald, *Robert Schumann and The Piano concerto*, 14

diverted from the classical form in his later works by choosing smooth and interlinked series of transitions, bridge passages and closing sections that share similar ideas and fragments with the main subject. This creates an effect of continuity bringing the concerto genre closer to the symphonic cycle.

Interestingly, the development of the second piano concerto is structurally simpler compared to Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto, although the two developments are almost identical in length (No. 1, bars 82–166 and No. 2, bars 161–244). In contrast to the multi-sectional first piano concerto, the development of the second piano concerto can be split in two stylistically very similar sections (No. 2, bars 161–209 and bars 209–237). Moreover, the development of Piano Concerto No. 1 undergoes a series of modulations before settling in the home key of the movement (No. 1, bars 141ff), whereas the development of the second concerto (including the retransition) simply evolves around the tonic (C minor).

As illustrated in Charts 1 and 7, the overall key structure of both concertos is quite simple, mostly evolving around the tonic (I), mediant (III) and dominant (V). While in the exposition the second subject simply modulates to the relative major key (III, third degree), the short orchestral episode restating the second subject in the recapitulation of the second piano concerto is written in the submediant (No. 2, bars 297–312). The use of the sixth degree (VI, submediant) is most probably a recollection of an earlier Russian music tradition. However, Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto stands out with its chromatic sequences that give a sense of constant modulation even if they centre in the tonic of the composition. The harmonic sequences that can even follow one another seen in the development of the concerto's first movement, mostly act as a tool for building the climax.

Material Used (A and B subjects)

The subjects from Rachmaninoff's first concerto to his third gradually become longer and more complex, consisting of several sections. However, already in his first piano concerto Rachmaninoff introduced one of his stylistically distinctive features by presenting the first subject in the arch-like form with the use of ascending and descending sequences. The first subject in the first concerto is relatively simple and short (8 bars). It is first introduced by the orchestra (No. 1, bars /16–23) in the home key of F sharp minor and later almost identically repeated by the soloist (No. 1, bars /24–31). In the second concerto, the first subject is again introduced by the orchestra with a piano accompaniment, but it is much longer (45 bars) than in the first piano concerto and consists of two sections (No. 2, bars 11–27 and bars 27–55). In addition, the first subject of Piano Concerto No. 2 is constructed in the natural minor key (Aeolian mode) without the harmonic leading note inflection which is typical of Russian folk music. As Medtner described:

The theme of [Rachmaninoff's] inspired Second Concerto is not only the theme of his life but always conveys the impression of being one of the most strikingly Russian of themes.¹⁶⁷

Compared to the tonic centred seventeen-bar first part, the second part of the first subject is longer (29 bars), and the upwards sequential movement takes it further from the home key of C minor creating a more prominent arch-like design (No. 2, bars 27–55, Eb–Ab–c–Eb–Ab–f–Db–c). Instead of fully repeating the whole material as in the first piano concerto, the soloist takes over the subject only at the end and displays just a summary of the second half (No. 2, bars 55–62). The transition from the first

¹⁶⁷ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 127

subject to the second in both concertos (No. 1, bars 32–48 and No. 2, bars 63–79) carry similar features such as swift piano figurations based on the first subject material.

The second subject (No. 1, bars 60–81) of Piano Concerto No. 1 (Ex.2.11) is quite close in nature to the preceding transitional materials (Ex.2.9 and 2.10). The second part of the transition (No. 1, bars /49-59) simply works as a bridge to link the first transition with the second subject. Both the transition and the second subject have the same swift dance-like character based on a similar ascending fragment borrowed from the first subject (Ex.2.8).

Moderato

Violin I 

Ex.2.8 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bars 15–17

Vivo

Violin I 

Ex.2.9 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bars 32–33

Meno mosso

Violin I 

Ex.2.10 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bars 49–50

Allegro moderato

Violin I 

Ex.2.11 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bars 60–61

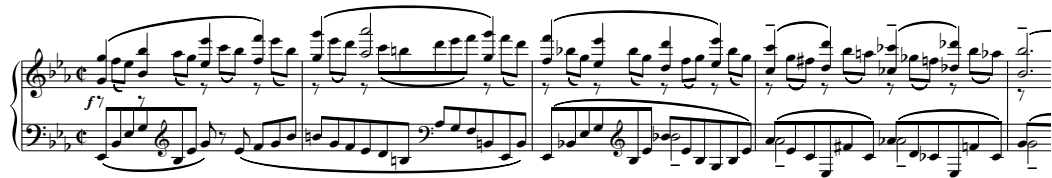
Compared to Piano Concerto No. 1, where the orchestra leads most of the time while the piano imitates and carries out a secondary function, the second subject of the second piano concerto is more solo piano oriented with minimal and light orchestral support. The second subject of Piano Concerto No. 2 has some thematic and stylistic resemblance to the first subject, which Rachmaninoff confirmed in the reply to his friend Nikita Morozov's letter just before the premiere of the second piano concerto.

I have just played over the first movement of my concerto and only now it has become suddenly clear to me that the transition from the first theme to the second is not good, and that in this form the first theme is no more than an introduction — and that when I begin the second theme no fool would believe it to be a second theme.¹⁶⁸

However, regardless of Rachmaninoff's self-criticism, this musical phenomenon of constructing a concerto based on similar motifs was one of his new compositional directions which are intensified in his Piano Concerto Nos. 3 and 4 as well.

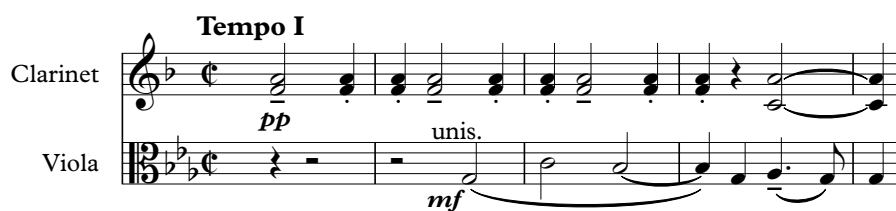
Similar to the first subject, the second subject of Piano Concerto No. 2 also consists of several sections and is rather complex and long compared to the first piano concerto. However, unlike the first subject, the second is based on a single part (No. 2, bars 83–92) repeated and sequentially extended with its variants (No. 2, bars 83–92 and 93–103, bars 103–112, bars 113–120, bars 121–132). From the second subject of Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto, one already can observe the textural enhancement of the piano part which includes a quaver-based extra musical material in the right hand that moves parallel with the chromatically enriched left-hand accompaniment.

¹⁶⁸ Bertensson, and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in music*, 95



Ex.2.12 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 113–117

Another interesting and novel feature of the second piano concerto is the small introductions located just before the first and second subjects. The first introduction (No. 2, bars 9–10) is a simple two-bar solo piano accompaniment delivering the rhythm and character of the movement. Rachmaninoff used a similar two-bar orchestral accompaniment for the start of his third piano concerto as well. In contrast to a simple piano accompaniment, the second introduction (No. 2, bars 79–82) includes a fragment reminiscent of the second subject material. This is presented by violas under the clarinets' rhythmic accompaniment in E flat major. This creates an anticipation without an obvious gap or sudden stylistic shift and seemingly links the sections together.



Ex.2.13 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bars 79–83

Development

The most remarkable and obvious transformation is in the development section of both piano concertos. The first part of the development in Piano Concerto No. 1 (No. 1, bars 82–128 and 129–140) is heavily based on the second subject material with some references to the first subject played by the orchestra (No. 1, bars 129ff). The second part of the development (No. 1, bars 141–152) is clearly restating the first transitional material which contains some elements of the first subject. While the reverse order of the principal subjects in the development section could be due to Rachmaninoff's decision to make a smooth transition from the second subject to the recapitulation, the start of the development feels like a continuation of the second subject. This is also due to the extensive use of the same or similar materials from the exposition without disguise or variations which make the development of the first piano concerto somewhat uninteresting and insignificant. While thematic integrity is one of Rachmaninoff's compositional features that he successfully used in his later piano/orchestral works, in his first piano concerto it creates a feeling of repetitiveness due to the unhidden similarities of the thematic material.

Surprisingly the development of Piano Concerto No. 2 looks simpler and linear without obvious sectional divisions as those which are found in the first piano concerto. The fragments of both subjects (A and B) interact with each other in the first part of the development (No. 2, bars 161–209) while the second part (No. 2, bars 209–237) is predominantly based on the second subject. However, if in the development of Piano Concerto No. 1 it is easy to spot the subjects, the second piano concerto heavily disguises and transforms the subjects to such an extent that at first sight they seem almost like new material. One of the most vivid examples is the fragment introduced first by the lower strings (Ex.2.17, No. 2, bars 162ff) at the start of the development

and later repeated by flute (Ex.2.18, No. 2, bars 165ff). The entire second part of the development, including the soloist's chordal presentation (Ex.2.19) in the culmination (No. 2, bars 219ff), is based on this short fragment which later reappears in the recapitulation and the third movement as well. This new fragment, which probably originated in the third movement (Ex.2.14) considering the fact that it was written first, has some connections to the end of the solo piano introduction (No. 2, bars 8–9) and the second subject of the first movement as well (Ex.2.15 and 2.16) in terms of their harmonic and melodic shape.



Ex.2.14 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 3rd movement, bars 14–15



Ex.2.15 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 8–9



Ex.2.16 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 83–87



Ex.2.17 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 162–163



Ex.2.18 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 165–169



Ex.2.19 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 219–221

Another important aspect of the development in Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto is the orchestra's great role of introducing several fragments of the main material parallel to the soloist. This creates a conflicting effect with the soloist while at the same time enhances the overall texture of the composition. In addition, by alternating the structure of the fragment, Rachmaninoff created more interesting rhythmic variety full of syncopations (for example bars 193ff).

Unlike the first piano concerto, where the introductory material is used to conclude the development section (No. 1, bars 153–166), the retransition of Piano Concerto No. 2 (No. 2, bars 237–244) is again built on the same material mentioned above. The constant use of this fragment throughout the development surely helped the composer to unify the section giving an effect of simplicity. However, the harmonic structure and chromatically enhanced texture of the development in Piano Concerto No. 2 is much more complex compared to the first piano concerto. The unsettled and intricate modulations (quite often to a distant key) and the use of ascending and descending sequences bring much more variety to the development and,

most importantly, form an arch-like structure with two climaxes (No. 2, bars 193ff and 219ff).

Recapitulation, cadenza

The recapitulation of both concertos vary in size with the second concerto being the longest (No. 1, 65 bars and No. 2, 108 bars). However, compared to the first concerto, where Rachmaninoff repeats all the materials from the exposition with only very minor alterations (such as omission of the first subject repeat), the recapitulation of the second concerto fully restates only the first subject (No. 2, bars 245–261 and bars 261–296). The orchestra opens the recapitulation and presents the first subject as it is in the exposition, while the soloist's new chordal accompaniment replaces the initial arpeggio figuration seen at the beginning of the first movement. The rhythmic contrast between the soloist and the orchestra particularly stands out at the start of the recapitulation where Rachmaninoff simply overlapped the long-phrased first subject melody with the rhythmic piano configuration from the development. While the main purpose of this technique is to rhythmically link both sections together, it also greatly enhances the rhythmic variety of the first movement. Using the same fragmented material of the development (No. 2, bars 219ff) as a basis for the new piano accompaniment, Rachmaninoff created a secondary motif that goes parallel to the main subject and enhances the role of the soloist (No. 2, bars 245–261). Because of this new chordal accompaniment and presentation of the second part of the first subject (No. 2, bars 261–288) by the soloist, the restatement of the first subject in Piano Concerto No. 2 is more piano oriented compared to the exposition.

The extended second part of the first subject (No. 2, bars 289–296) works as a transition smoothly leading to a brief restatement of the second subject (No. 2, bars 297–312) played by the orchestra (French horns) in double time (minims). While the recapitulation of both concertos mostly stays in the home key of the movement without modulating to the relative major as it does in the exposition, the short orchestral recall of the second subject in Piano Concerto No. 2 is written in A flat major (VI, submediant) instead of E flat major. Also considering the fact that the restatement of the second subject is very short, a semitone movement from the dominant of the home key (No. 2, bar 298) to the submediant and back (No. 2, bars 313ff) creates a passing effect without radical key change.

The rest of the recapitulation, which also works as a transition to the coda, is a series of variations (No. 2, bars 313–352) based on the main materials of the movement. The orchestration of the second closing section (CS2) is very minimal mostly consisting of held chords harmonising the soloist. The longer restatement of the second concerto most probably aims to achieve a greater balance between the large-scale functions because of the missing *cadenza*.

In Piano Concerto No. 1 the *cadenza* is placed very close to the end of the movement and nearly incorporates all the materials used earlier. Considering the fact that the main subjects are easily recognisable in the development section and the recapitulation almost exactly mirrors the exposition, the *cadenza* may look repetitive and redundant. This might be one of the main reasons why Rachmaninoff drastically altered and revised the *cadenza* of his first piano concerto later in 1917.

Introduction, linking sections, coda

In contrast to the traditionally written introduction of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 1 (No. 1, bars 1–15), the second piano concerto starts with a short (8 bars) sequence of solo piano held chords modulating from F minor to the home key of C minor (No. 2, bars 1–8). Most of the research materials mention this unusual solo piano start of the first movement (Ex.2.20) and compare it with the end of Prelude No. 2, Op. 3 (Ex.2.21).

Ex.2.20 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 1–9

Ex.2.21 Rachmaninoff, Prelude No. 2, Op. 3, bars 55–61

Indeed, there is a resemblance between these two sections if one focuses on the chromatic inner movement of the chords and ignores the rhythmic differences and opposite order of the bass notes. Perhaps Rachmaninoff's recorded performances of the concerto in which he plays the bottom note of the chords first brings the start of

the second concerto even closer to the aforementioned prelude. As Martin mentions in his book:

Rachmaninoff gives impetus to the chords by sounding the bottom note first, one of the few places where he does not observe the printed score.¹⁶⁹

However, in 2005 the grandson of the composer, Alexander Rachmaninoff, approached Russian pianist Denis Matsuev offering him the first performance and recording of two previously unknown pieces which apparently were lost just after Sergey Rachmaninoff wrote them.¹⁷⁰ One of those pieces was the piano reduction of the four-movement Suite in D minor for the orchestra written in 1891 (a year earlier than the famous prelude in C sharp minor). The parallel-octave start of the suite and the following semiquaver arpeggio accompaniment undoubtedly relate to the start of the first subject in Piano Concerto No. 2 (Ex.2.22). Whereas the left-hand part of the slow second movement of the Suite (Ex.2.23) structurally resembles to the introduction of the concerto.

Ex.2.22 Rachmaninoff, Suite in D minor, 1st movement, bars 1–5

¹⁶⁹ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 126

¹⁷⁰ Denis Matsuev, 'Chelovek Shirochaishey Russkoy Dushi [The man of the broadest Russian soul]', in *Izvestia* (March 2018)



Ex.2.23 Rachmaninoff, Suite in D minor, 2nd movement, bars 1–6

Combining both ideas from an unpublished piece and Prelude No. 2, Rachmaninoff created a new and extraordinary introduction for his concerto which also appears in the second and third movements in different but recognisable forms (for example, second movement, bars 124–127 or third movement, bars 35–42). However, due to the fact that the second movement of Piano Concerto No. 2 was written first, the modulatory solo piano transition at the beginning of the first movement was most probably an afterthought brought in to harmonically link the movements together and keep the continuity and flow of the concerto.

In Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 2, the light and swift transitions (No. 1, bars 32–48 and No. 2, bars 63–79) linking two subjects together are faster compared with the slower first subject (Moderato in both cases). While the first piano concerto has a single transition (TR) and a short retransition located in the end of the development (RT), the first movement of the second piano concerto stands out with its several linking sections (TR, RT, CS1, CS2) and bridge passages (see Charts 1 and 7). The end of the exposition in the second piano concerto is much more complex consisting of a two-part closing section (No. 2, bars 133–141 and 141–161) with different characteristics. While the first part of the closing section continues and summarises the second subject material, the second part brings back the swift dynamism of the transition seen earlier in the exposition. Of all Rachmaninoff's piano concertos, the

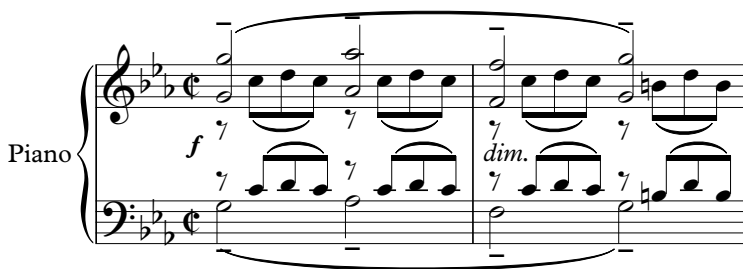
second closing section of Piano Concerto No. 2 is the longest (No. 2, bars 313–352) and consists of two parts as well with short introduction (No. 2, bars 313–320). While the first part of the second closing section (No. 2, bars 313–336) is clearly built on the four-note fragment derived from the development (Ex.2.24), the cellos present a secondary motif based on the second subject (Ex.2.27).



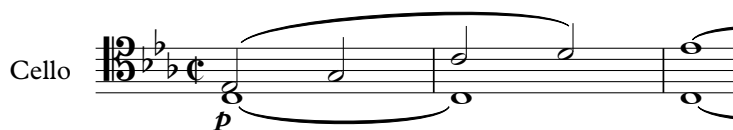
Ex.2.24 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 165–169



Ex.2.25 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 313–314



Ex.2.26 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 319–320



Ex.2.27 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 321–323

The second part of the closing section (No. 2, bars 337–352) is another variant of the first, but with more emphasis on the second subject material. In addition, there are two small bridge passages (No. 2, bars 9–10, bars 79–82) which act as an introduction to the subjects (/A and /B) for a smooth transition. Moreover, the extensions of both subjects throughout the first movement of the second piano concerto also work as linking sections (No. 2, bars 103–112, bars 121–132, bars 289–296). All these linking passages with integrated thematic materials help to unite the first movement of the concerto and create a continuous effect.

The coda of Rachmaninoff's first and second piano concertos are close in nature (No. 1, bars 287–312 and No. 2, bars 353–374): swift semiquaver passages, a soft start and the *martellato* descending (No. 1, bars 308ff) or ascending (No. 2, bars 369ff) chordal endings with a traditional orchestral *fortissimo* tutti full stop in the last bar. However, the coda of the second piano concerto sounds fresher and more independent as it is hard to find repetition or similarity with the materials previously used in the concerto. Perhaps the only obvious hint is the last three concluding piano chords resembling the very start of the first subject. Additionally, after the calm and prolonged second closing section, the gradual acceleration of the coda (*poco a poco accelerando*) brings back the energy and speed of the first subject. In contrast, the coda of the first concerto is built on material borrowed from the transition used just after the exposition of the first subject.

Second movement

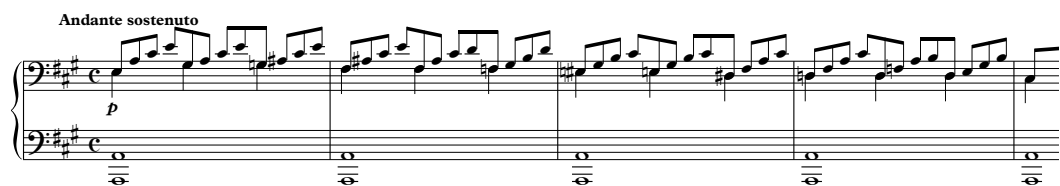
The second movement of the 1891 version of Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto being the shortest among his other piano concertos (No. 1, 69 bars and No. 2, 162 bars), has many similarities to the second movement of Piano Concerto No. 2. Both start with a modulatory orchestral introduction and share the same ternary structure evolving from Piano Concerto No. 1 to the more complex Piano Concerto No. 2 (see Charts 2 and 8). While the introductions to the second movement in both concertos modulate from submediant to tonic and have similar scale-like upwards motion (No. 1, bars /1–8 and No. 2, bars 1–4), the short (four-bar long) introduction of Piano Concerto No. 2 has a more important role compared to the first piano concerto. In order to harmonically link first and second movements together, the modulation starts a major third lower in C minor (vi↓, lowered submediant), which is the home key of the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 2.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter the second movement of Piano Concerto No. 2 was written first, after Rachmaninoff's emotional breakdown, which means that it was easier and less strenuous for him (given his psychological state) to use the simple and familiar second movement of the first piano concerto as a model rather than choose a completely new idea. Additionally, the opening of the Andante of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 can be traced in Rachmaninoff's orchestral introduction of the second movement in Piano Concerto No. 2 as well.¹⁷¹ The solo piano accompaniment of the first subject (No. 2, bars 5ff) likewise comes from the introduction of the six-hand Romance in A major (Ex.2.28) dedicated to the Skalon sisters dating back to 1891.¹⁷² The offbeat emphasised notes of the piano

¹⁷¹ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 128

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 128

accompaniment gives an illusion of a 3/4 time until the first subject presentation by flute (No. 2, bars 9ff).¹⁷³ However, due to the dominating piano accompaniment, the first four bars of the first subject (No. 2, bars 9–13) still sounds as 3/4 with the solo flute being against or ahead of the pianist’s consistent beat. This creates an interesting rhythmic ambiguity which settles later starting from the second part of the subject (bars /13ff).



Ex.2.28 Rachmaninoff, Romance in A major, bars 1–5



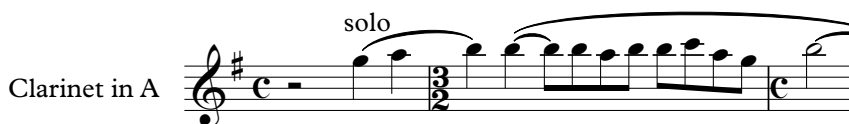
Ex.2.29 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 2nd movement, bars 5–9

The first subject of the second movement in both concertos share some structural similarities (No. 1, bars 10–26 and No. 2, bars 9–46): they both consist of two parts (A-1 and A-2) with the main difference being that the short four-bar melody in the second concerto (No. 2, bars 9–13) does not repeat a tone higher as it does in Piano Concerto No. 1 (No. 1, bars 10–17) and in Grieg’s piano concerto (Grieg, bars 1–8). In contrast to Rachmaninoff’s first piano concerto, the first subject in Piano Concerto No. 2 is first introduced by the orchestra (No. 2, bars 9–23), later repeated

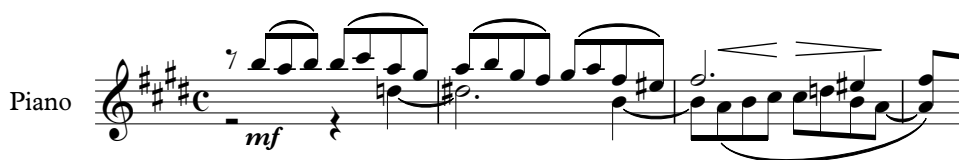
¹⁷³ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 114

by the soloist (No. 2, bars 24–38) and the movement ends with an orchestral restatement of the first part of the subject (No. 2, bars 39–46).

Another common feature is the solo piano-centred second subject of both piano concertos with light orchestral accompaniment and polyrhythmic piano writing (No. 1, bars 27–47 and No. 2, bars 47–106). However, in Piano Concerto No. 2, the second subject of the second movement is much longer (No. 1, 21 bars and No. 2, 60 bars), consists of three sections (B-1, B-2, B-3) and repeats a tone lower after the presentation of the subject (No. 2, bars 71ff). In addition, the middle section (B-2) of the second subject works as a bridge to connect outer parts of the subject which are based on the fragment from the second part of the first subject (A-2). Due to sharing the same motif, the second subject in Piano Concerto No. 2 (Ex.2.31) can be also seen as a variant or a development of the first subject (Ex.2.30) that smoothly joins the main material with the episode.



Ex.2.30 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 2nd movement, bars 12–14



Ex.2.31 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 2nd movement, bars 47–50

In contrast to the tranquil first subject, the second *Un poco piu mosso* subject of Piano Concerto No. 2 is slightly faster and is written in the minor key. The key

structure of the second subject is another interesting factor of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto. Compared to the E major centred first subject, the second subject undergoes a series of modulations with the use of circles of fifths (No. 2, bars 47–54, b–f#–c# and bars 71–78, a–e–b). Moreover, the middle bridge sections of the second subject (B-2) start a semitone higher from the preceding key in the dominant of the lowered leading note (No. 2, V/vii↓ bars 55ff) or lowered submediant (No. 2, V/vi↓ bars 79ff) keys. This chromatic modulation with a pedal support (A pedal and G pedal) creates a suspension similar to the recapitulation of the second subject of the first movement (No. 2, 1st movement, bars 297–312).

One of the new additions in Rachmaninoff's piano concerto writing is the contrasting Scherzo episode (No. 2, bars 107–122) followed by a short solo piano *cadenza* (No. 2, bars 122–128). It is a contrasting swift passage inserted between the second subject of the second movement and the restatement of the first subject. The rhythmically enhanced piano semiquaver sequences with light chamber-like accompaniment lead to an orchestral tutti in F major (No. 2, bar 122) where the short solo piano *cadenza* starts. Between the unmeasured piano passages of the *cadenza* there is a three-bar chordal modulatory section (No. 2, bars 124–126) that resembles the solo piano start of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 2. All these features, modulatory second subject, thematic similarity with the first subject, the Scherzo episode and the short *cadenza*, create an effect of a development in the middle of the movement.

The coda in the second movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 is another distinctive feature compared to the short (5 bars) and simply summarising coda in the first piano concerto (No. 1, bars 65–69 and No. 2 bars 148–162). Instead of usual *diminuendo* ending of the first subject (No. 2, bar 23), the restatement (No. 2,

bars 133–147) increases the dynamics at the last minute for a climactic start of the coda. The pianist starts a chordal descending passage in *forte* accompanied by the left-hand quintuplet semiquavers and woodwinds light triplet staccatos (flute and clarinet). The harmonic image of the coda imitates the first part of the main subject (A-1), while the orchestral triplet accompaniment is reminiscent of the one played by the piano at the start of the second movement. The tonic ascending arpeggio ending of the second movement of Piano Concerto No. 2 is perhaps another obvious element carried from Rachmaninoff's opus 1 (No. 1, bar 68 and No. 2 bar 160).

Tchaikovsky's piano concerto as a model

In the second movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 can be seen some structural ideas from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 (see Charts 8 and 27). The length of the second movement of Tchaikovsky's and Rachmaninoff's concertos is quite close (Tchaikovsky, 170 bars and Rachmaninoff, 162 bars) and similarly the first subject in both concertos is repeated by the soloist after the orchestral execution of the subject. However, Rachmaninoff's first subject material is twice as long (Tchaikovsky, 8 bars and Rachmaninoff, 15 bars) and can be divided into two sections (A-1 and A-2). By contrast, the episode in Rachmaninoff's piano concerto is shorter (Tchaikovsky, 34 bars and Rachmaninoff, 16 bars) and more piano oriented where the orchestra merely harmonises and occasionally gives a hint of the main material (No. 2, bars 107–108). Perhaps the most obvious resemblance is the contrasting episodic Scherzo insertion (Tchaikovsky, bars 59–134 and Rachmaninoff, bars 107–122) followed by a *cadenza* that has a similar start with an ascending passage and the use

of trill at the end (Tchaikovsky, bars 134–145, Rachmaninoff, bars 122–128). Compared to Tchaikovsky’s three-part Scherzo (Ba–EP–Ba) which starts and ends with a variant of the second subject (Ba), Rachmaninoff’s very short episode (Tchaikovsky 76 bars, Rachmaninoff 16 bars) has a brief reference to the first subject material played by the violins at the start.



Ex.2.32 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 2nd movement, bars 107–108

The sextuplet semiquavers played by the soloist in Rachmaninoff’s episode in the second movement are also structurally related to the bridge passages (B-2) of the second subject first played in triplet quavers (No. 2, bars 55ff) then quadruplet semiquavers (No. 2, bars 79ff). The episode in the second movement of Tchaikovsky’s piano concerto has a distinctive dance character due to the moving double bass *pizzicato* downbeats. In contrast, Rachmaninoff’s short episode with a pedal bass on B, gives an impression of a transition. This episodic feature with more advanced form later appears more successfully in the second movement of Rachmaninoff’s third piano concerto better emphasising the dance-like character.

Similar to Tchaikovsky’s piano concerto, Rachmaninoff’s *cadenza* also starts with an orchestral tutti in the subdominant and resolves to the dominant of the home key of the movement acting as a retransition (Tchaikovsky, bars 135–145 and Rachmaninoff, bars 122–128). In general, most of the materials (including the linking or bridge passages) of the second movement in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No.

2 carry elements from the first subject and are rhythmically less contrasted compared to Tchaikovsky's piano concerto.

Third movement

Overall structure and key structure

In both concertos, the structure of the third movement is generally closer to the traditional rondo form. However, while there is no doubt about the original version of the first piano concerto (1891), written as a rondo following the concept of Grieg's piano concerto, Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 raises some questions. The large-scale function of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 2 (see Charts 3, 9 and 28) is much more complex (A–B–A–Development–B–A) and has more resemblance to the overall structure of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 (A–B–A–Development–A–B–A). The third movement of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto can be considered as a sonata rondo rather than a simple rondo structure due to its variational character and the different keys used in the refrains for the main subjects. The middle *fugato* section (No. 2, bars 214–294), which seems like a development, brings the structure of the movement closer to sonata form. This is also due to the almost identical restatement of the second subject (No. 2, bars 310–355) with its *Meno mosso* transitions (No. 2, bars 356–367).

Overall, both structurally and characteristically, the third movement of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto carries similarities with Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. Both concertos feature a scherzo-like first subject (Tchaikovsky, bars 5–44 and Rachmaninoff, bars 43–97) with a strong emphasis on the solo piano and a

second contrasting subject (Tchaikovsky, bars 157–80 and Rachmaninoff, bars 106–149) in the major key first introduced by the orchestra and later repeated and sequentially extended upwards by the pianist. The contrapuntal middle section can also be seen in both concertos, which Rachmaninoff develops even further and turns into a *fugato* (Tchaikovsky, bars 101–113 and Rachmaninoff, bars 214–256). In addition, the short piano *cadenza* that immediately precedes the Molto meno mosso (Tchaikovsky, bars 252–270) or Maestoso (Rachmaninoff, bars 431–454) coda is based on the second subject and can also be considered amongst the common features.

The third movements of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concertos No. 1 and 2 start with a soft and light introduction leading to the first subject (see Charts 3 and 9). However, the introduction of the second piano concerto is longer (No. 2, 42 bars) compared to the first piano concerto (No. 1, 6 bars) and consists of an orchestral opening modulating from the key of the second movement in E major into C minor (No. 2, bars 1–21), followed by a solo piano *cadenza* (No. 2, bars 21–34) and transitional interaction between the soloists and the orchestra on the subdominant of the home key (No. 2, bars 35–42). Another interesting aspect to mention about the introduction of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 2 is the use of materials carried from the first movement of the concerto. In the third movement, there is a clear reference to one of the main motifs of the development (Ex.2.33) found in the first movement (No. 2, first movement, bars 162ff), which in the recapitulation replaces the arpeggio piano accompaniment of the exposition (No. 2, first movement, bars 245ff). This reference starts with a small melodic inverted fragment of the theme (Ex.2.34, minor second downwards movement), and later expands and moves closer to the original motif from the first movement of the concerto (the examples below illustrate gradual development of the fragment from the first movement).

This fragment is played by the violins at the beginning of the orchestral introduction and is not particularly evident because of the inverted melodic configuration compared to the first movement (Ex.2.34 and 2.35). Also, it is not long enough to make an obvious connection with the same fragment in the first movement. However, as it evolves, the fragment grows closer to the familiar motif from the development of the first movement (Ex.2.36 and 2.37) and finally appears in its exact form (Ex.2.38, No. 2, bars 14ff).

Another reference to the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 2 can be heard in the rest of the introduction of the third movement. While the fourteen-bar solo piano *cadenza* of the third movement is mainly based on the dominant seventh (No. 2, bars 21–34), the lower notes of the arpeggios in the last two bars (No. 2, bars 33–34) once again restate the orchestral introductory motif, drawing parallels with the first movement of the concerto.



Ex.2.39 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 3rd movement, bars 33–34

In the modulatory transition of the third movement (Ex.2.41, No. 2, bars 35–42), the violas (No. 2, bars 35ff) and later the second violins (No. 2, bars 38ff) carry the chromatic passage of the inner voice of the solo piano introduction from the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 2 (Ex.2.40, No. 2, 1st movement, bars 1–8). However, unlike the first movement where the solo piano chords are the only musical

material, in the third movement the chords played by the strings are thinner and lighter (*pizzicato*), and the listener's attention is instead distracted by the exchange between the piano and woodwinds. In addition, while both sections are written in the same F minor key, the end of the third movement's introduction acts more as a subdominant of the home key of the movement due to preceding passage in C minor key (No. 2, bars 17–34).

Moderato

Ex.2.40 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 1–9

Ex.2.41 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 3rd movement, bars 35–42

If one considers the second subject of Piano Concerto No. 1 as an episodic bridge (No. 1, bars 32–76) by removing its function as the second subject (B), the third movement of the concerto will transpire in a form of A–B–A where the third subject description (C) automatically replaces the second (B). Thus, some structural and

characteristic parallels can be made between both subjects of Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 2 (No. 1, bars /77–123 and No. 2, bars 106–161). In this new setting the second subject in both concertos¹⁷⁴ characteristically contrasts with the first subject material and after the orchestral presentation the soloist restates the subject. However, a similar structure to the second subject can be found in the third movement in Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 as well (Tchaikovsky, bars /57–88).

In Piano Concerto No. 2 Rachmaninoff introduced another interesting idea that works as a transition from the second subject back to the first (No. 2, bars 150–161). This *Meno mosso* section, featuring the intonation of the first subject in triplet figuration marked *piano* and with a B flat orchestral pedal somehow holds the movement for twelve bars without any sense of harmonic direction. The following recurrence of the first subject starts with an eight-bar introduction (No. 2, bars 162–169) and presents a modified variant of the first subject with more orchestral support and interaction between the piano and the orchestra while keeping the same key structure (No. 2, bars 162–214).

The episodic middle section of the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 2 is based on the material and elements from the first subject but is written in the style of a *fugato* (No. 2, bars 214–294) that ends with an eight-bar tutti (No. 2 bars 294–301). Surely this contrapuntal section is another idea borrowed from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 (Tchaikovsky, bars 101–113) as the structural similarities continue even in the subsequent materials. However, while there is imitation between orchestra and piano in Tchaikovsky's piano concerto, it is not a *fugato* as in Rachmaninoff's episodic middle section of the third movement. In both concertos the restatement of the orchestral tutti (Tchaikovsky, bars 114–121 and Rachmaninoff, bars 294–301), the

¹⁷⁴ The third subject (C) of Piano Concerto No. 1 is labelled as the second subject

first solo piano transition (Tchaikovsky, bars 122–133 and Rachmaninoff, bars 302–310) and the second subject (Tchaikovsky, bars 134–150 and Rachmaninoff, bars 310–367) follow the episodic section. Similar episodic sections featuring some degree of counterpoint in the finales of piano concertos can be seen of a number of other composers, including Beethoven (Piano Concerto No. 3) and Brahms (Piano Concerto No. 1). However, Rachmaninoff developed this new section even further using his contrapuntal skills, with primary and secondary melodies running in parallel, and a canonic exchange between the soloist and the orchestra.

With its arch-like ascending and descending dynamic and harmonic sequences, the *fugato* section is another contrasting element that organically leads to the restatement of the main materials. The eight bar *Meno mosso* transition (No. 2 bars 302–310), the second subject in a distant key of D flat major (No. 2 bars 310–355) and the second *Meno mosso* retransition (No. 2 bars 356–367) almost identically follow each other with only some minor alterations. The last restatement of the first subject material (No. 2, bars 368–430) is in the form of a long retransition imitating the *fugato* idea at the start (No. 2, bars 368–383). A similar passage using both primary and secondary elements spread across the orchestral instruments exists in Tchaikovsky's piano concerto as well (Tchaikovsky, bars 214–242). However, Rachmaninoff added another section (No. 2, bars 384–430) that incorporates a piano arpeggio accompaniment similar to the start of the concerto and a sequence of a new melodic element played by cellos (No. 2, bars 394–401). This new motif (Ex.2.43) has some stylistic resemblance with the second subject of the third movement and also can be seen as an inverted version of the second subject from the first movement of the concerto.

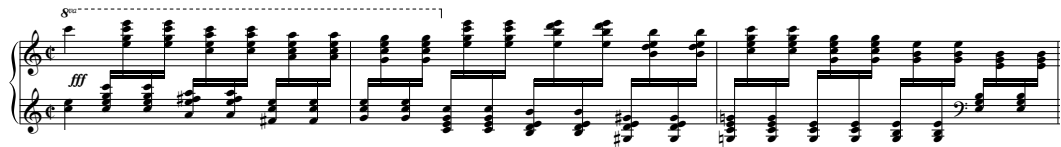


Ex.2.42 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 83–84



Ex.2.43 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 3rd movement, bars 395–399

As in Tchaikovsky's piano concerto, a short solo piano *cadenza* (Tchaikovsky, bars 255–263 and Rachmaninoff, bar 430) precedes the two-part coda of the third movement. In both concertos the first *Maestoso* part of the coda (*Molto meno mosso* in the case of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1) is based on the second subject of the third movement (Tchaikovsky, bars 252–270 and Rachmaninoff, bars 431–454) followed by the dynamic second part of the coda (Tchaikovsky, bars 271–301 and Rachmaninoff, bars 455–476). One can divide the coda of the third movement in Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto as well (No. 1, bars 222–232 and 233–240) considering the time change from *Maestoso* to *Piu vivo* and also the virtuosic octave scales of the soloist. However, the material of the coda in Piano Concerto No. 1 is predominantly based on the same motif and the second part of the coda sounds like a repetitive extension of the first. While all three concertos end with similar swift piano passages in a major key, the rapid alternating-hand chordal passages of Piano Concerto No. 2 (Ex.2.44) is reminiscent of the one in Tchaikovsky's piano concerto (Ex.2.45). In general, virtuosic chordal passages concluding the piano concerto were particularly popular with composers of the romantic period.



Ex.2.44 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 3rd movement, bars 467–469



Ex.2.45 Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto No. 1, 3rd movement, bars 290–293

Material Used (A and B subjects)

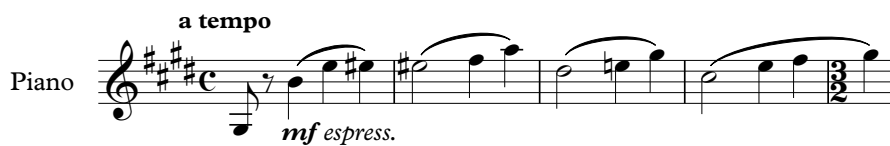
The main materials of Piano Concerto No. 1 consist of short subjects and reoccurring episodes with minor changes, whereas the subjects of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto contain several sections and variations. As illustrated in Chart 9, the first subject of Piano Concerto No. 2 can be divided into two contrasting sections (A-1 and A-2). The first part of the subject (No. 2, bars 43–64) is repeated with some extension in the second iteration (No. 2, bars 65–74) that helps to smooth the modulation to the relative major key of the movement (E flat major). The second part of the first subject commences in 3/2 metre (No. 2, bars 75–82) and is built on a similar alternation of a second interval/adjacent pitches (Ex.2.47) seen at the start of the first movement's first subject.

Ex.2.46 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 11–14

Ex.2.47 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 3rd movement, bars 75–77

The repeat of the same material in C major which is a minor third lower (No. 2, bars 79–82) is followed by a seven-bar sequential extension in A flat major with a pedal support (No. 2, bars 83–89). The latter is based on similar quaver piano passages of the second part of the first subject and works as a modulatory retransition back to the home key (C minor) of the movement. The summarising closing section (No. 2, bars 90–97) is a piano-oriented sequence based on the first two bars of the first subject. The eight-bar *Meno mosso* transition in the dominant of B flat major (No. 2, bars 98–106) carries the main elements of the first subject with the chordal piano structure of the closing section. These common features, taken from the first subject, along with the reduced power of the transition are the preparation for the arrival of the second more melodic subject. Interestingly the great economy of the musical material and harmonically stable key of the first subject does not result in repetitiousness nor dullness. On the contrary, the complex structure of the first subject, chromatic

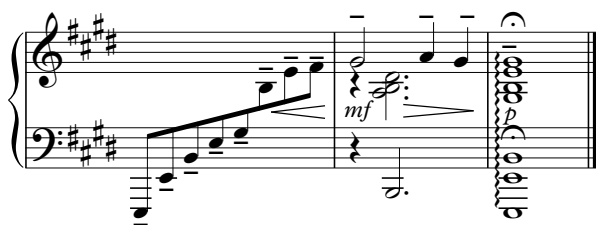
Concerto No. 2 might have originally come from Rachmaninoff's friend Nikita Morozov. However, as Barrie Martin argues, there is no evidence confirming this, especially considering the fact that Sabaneyev never mentions this in his book on Russian composers.¹⁷⁵ This subject of the third movement (Ex.2.52) of the second piano concerto is melodically quite close to the main material of the second movement (Ex.2.49 and 2.50). In particular, the piano extension of the second subject of the third movement discussed earlier exactly replicates the same melodic structure seen at the end of the second movement (Ex.2.51). This also served as the main material used to build the second subject of the first movement as well.



Ex.2.49 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 2nd movement, bars 24–28



Ex.2.50 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 2nd movement, bars 133–135



Ex.2.51 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 2nd movement, bars 160–162

¹⁷⁵ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 129–130



Ex.2.52 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 3rd movement, bars 83–84

It is evident that Rachmaninoff composed the second movement of the Piano Concerto No. 2 first, and most probably the melodic structure of the second movement was later used in the third and first movements, not vice versa. Hence, it is even more doubtful that Rachmaninoff used Morozov's tune as a second subject for the third movement of his Piano Concerto No. 2.

Conclusion

Overall, the research and analysis seems to confirm that Rachmaninoff used Grieg's piano concerto as a template for his first piano concerto. Considering the number of commonalities found in the structural, melodic and harmonic qualities, this conclusion seems inescapable. However, there are features adopted also from other composers such as Tchaikovsky and Schumann. Given the time of the composition (1890–1891) when Rachmaninoff was a student in the Moscow Conservatoire, he was most likely using the knowledge and skills gained from the professors and known composers of the time for his very first published opus. However, already in the first concerto, one can observe Rachmaninoff's personal tendencies and individual style,

including the use of the diminished fourth in the melodic structure of the subjects, his use of chromatic elements (in particular in combination with a triplet accompaniment), and the application of skilful transitions that smoothly join the sections of the concerto together with a use of melodic elements borrowed from the main subjects. All these stylistic features that distinguish Rachmaninoff as a composer are further developed in Piano concerto No. 2.

While the second piano concerto still continues the traditions of the romantic period by incorporating structural and stylistic features from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, Rachmaninoff's diversion from the roots by experimenting with harmonies, the form and the texture of the concerto as discussed earlier in this chapter is already apparent. The common melodic materials that pass through the whole concerto, the innovative modulatory introductions transposing the key from one movement to the next, the linking passages that share the same melodic elements with the main subjects and the progressive harmonic language all serve to confirm Rachmaninoff's concept of bringing the style of the concerto closer to the symphonic cycle and departing from the traditional compositional origins of the past.

The compositional silence after the failure of his Symphony No. 1, Op. 13 in 1897 and the successful recovery from depression in 1901 may have played a significant role pushing Rachmaninoff forward to experiment with new ideas which he later developed further in the complex third piano concerto. However, it should be noted that Rachmaninoff was still cautious about pushing the limits of his harmonic language and he mostly focused on advancing the texture and symphonising the genre instead. The successful first performance of the second and third movements of Piano Concerto No. 2 after an eight-year break from playing with the orchestra, certainly

gave Rachmaninoff the most needed confidence to continue his musical career as a composer.¹⁷⁶

While Martin proposes a hypothesis that the first movement of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto 'already existed in an embryonic state either on paper or in the composer's mind',¹⁷⁷ the evidence from Rachmaninoff's recollections and analysis of the score confirms the opposite.¹⁷⁸ Given the complex nature of the first movement, after the recovery it was easier for Rachmaninoff to start from a relatively simple second movement using some technical and musical materials already available to him. Considering the fact that Rachmaninoff composed and performed the last two movements of Piano Concerto No. 2 first, the opening movement of the concerto looks more as a synopsis of the concerto. In addition, this research also confirms Rachmaninoff's position showing the inevitable similarities of the second and third movements of Piano Concerto No. 2 with Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto whereas the first movement with its innovative introduction and missing virtuosic solo piano *cadenza* stays largely independent from Grieg's or Tchaikovsky's influences.

¹⁷⁶ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 125

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 127

¹⁷⁸ Oskar Rieseemann, *Rachmaninoff's Recollections* (Freeport and New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 112

CHAPTER 3: PIANO CONCERTO NO. 3

This chapter discusses the structural, thematic and harmonic complexity of Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto, illustrating the progressive tendencies of his compositional style and using Piano Concerto No. 2 as the main reference point. The comparative analysis examines the similarities between the two concertos while also illustrating the expansion of new ideas first featured in the second concerto. By pushing the boundaries of the concerto form and structure, the third concerto shows a further departure from the traditional concerto concept. While most of the main structural ideas such as the economical use of thematic materials, the smooth linking passages built on a fragment of the neighbouring sections, the Scherzo section of the second movement and the symphonic approach exists in the second piano concerto, the third stretches the romantic musical idioms to the limit and beyond, getting closer to the cyclical symphonic scheme. Although the two concertos share common characteristics, the writing style and the structure of Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30 composed in 1909 is far more complex and diverse. As Russian critic Grigory Prokofiev wrote:

The new concerto mirrored the best sides of [Rachmaninoff's] creative power — sincerity, simplicity and clarity of musical thought ... It has a freshness of inspiration that does not aspire to the discovery of new paths; it has a sharp and concise form as well as simple and brilliant orchestration, qualities that will secure both outer success and enduring love by musicians and public alike.¹⁷⁹

By 'simplicity' Prokofiev most probably refers to the orchestration and how the listener perceives the piece — the tonic-centred subjects indeed sound simple and

¹⁷⁹ Barrie Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (England: Ashgate, 1990), 210

effortless to the ear. However, performance-wise, the concerto with its polyrhythmic and multi-layered piano writing is technically and emotionally extremely demanding. Moreover, nearly everything in the concerto questions the notion of ‘simplicity’ from the practitioner’s viewpoint: this includes the noticeably long subjects consisting of several parts, numerous transitions and closing sections, the harmonically unsettled development, the *cadenza* written in two versions in the first movement as well as the extended Scherzo section of the second movement, and the tonal and rhythmic diversity of the whole concerto. Almost certainly, after the success of the second piano concerto and with his increased confidence in composing, Rachmaninoff pushed all the boundaries and new ideas adopted in the second concerto even farther in his new concerto, experimenting with the structure, the texture, and even the harmonic language.

Compared to the strong balance between the soloist and the orchestra of the second piano concerto, the third stands out with its piano-centric approach filled with virtuosic solo piano materials. In the third concerto, it is not only the abundance of the solo piano playing throughout the piece that fascinates the listener but also the importance and the attractiveness of the secondary materials played by the soloist, which gains attention even when the orchestra presents the main subject.

Eight years and numerous compositions – among which are Symphony No. 2 (1907), Piano Sonata No. 1 (1908) and the symphonic poem *The Isle of the Dead* (1909) – separate the composition of Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3. The first mention or perhaps hint about the new piano concerto can be found in Rachmaninoff’s letter to Morozov on June 6, 1909:

Now I've taken up a new work. And I again add for the first time, that if health doesn't hinder me and take up a lot of time, I shall work steadily on it.¹⁸⁰

Rachmaninoff completed the third piano concerto at his Ivanovka estate in summer 1909,¹⁸¹ and premiered it during his American tour on November 28 the same year under the baton of Walter Damrosch and later Gustav Mahler in New York.¹⁸² Due to the shortage of time the first performances of the concerto was played with the handwritten manuscript and Rachmaninoff practiced the piano part on a 'mechanical toy' as described by himself (dummy piano) on the way to the United States.¹⁸³ While the audience wholeheartedly accepted the concerto, some American critics such as Henderson and Aldrich portrayed it with some unsympathetic comments such as being 'too long without rhythmic and harmonic contrast'.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto lasts about forty-five minutes and can be placed among longer than average piano/orchestral works. The rhythm can also be said to be less ambitious than in his last two piano/orchestral works. However, the comment about the harmony is questionable: due to frequent chromatic sequences and unsettled modulations the track of tonality can become obscured at times. This will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, together with a comprehensive analytical account of the novelties Rachmaninoff brought to the structure, form and harmony of the concerto.

¹⁸⁰ Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (New York: NYUP, 1956), 158

¹⁸¹ Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 43

¹⁸² Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide* (Oxford and New York: OUP, 2000), 362–363

¹⁸³ Oskar Rieseemann, *Rachmaninoff's Recollections* (Freeport and N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 158

¹⁸⁴ Michael Scott, *Rachmaninoff* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008), 84–86

First movement

Exposition

The first movement of Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto is written in a similar Sonata Allegro form as seen in his earlier concertos. However, compared to his other piano concertos, the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 3 is the longest (438 bars, *ossia* 454 bars) with much more complex inter-thematic functions consisting of multi-sectional primary subjects and linking passages (see Chart 10).

	Introduction		Exposition						
Piano Concerto No. 2	Solo	/A	A-1	A-2	A-2a			TR	
Piano Concerto No. 3		/A	A-1	A-2	/A	A-1	A-2	TR1-1	TR1-2

							Development				
Piano Concerto No. 2	/B	B+Ext	Ba+Ext		CS1-1	CS1-2	A	A+B			
Piano Concerto No. 3	/B	B-1	B-2	B-3	CS1-1	CS1-2	/A	A	Aa	Ab	Ac

			Recapitulation						Coda
Piano Concerto No. 2	RT		A-1	A-2	Ba	/CS2	CS2-1	CS2-2	
Piano Concerto No. 3	CS2	Cadenza	TR1-2a	B-1a	RT	/A	A-1	A-2	

Ex.3.1 Large-scale and Inter-thematic functions of the 1st movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3

As illustrated in Ex.3.1, the exposition of Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto quite closely follows the structure and musical ideas of his second piano concerto. If one considers the eight-bar chordal piano introduction (No. 2, bars 1–8) of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto as an afterthought, then it moves closer to the start of the third piano concerto with its two-bar introductory simple accompaniment (No. 2, bars 9–10 and No. 3, bars 1–2) setting up the pulse of the movement. While the first subject of both Rachmaninoff's piano concertos consist of two parts (A-1 and A-2), the exposition of the twenty-four-bar first subject of Piano Concerto No. 3 is

presented by the soloist with a simple orchestral accompaniment in contrast to the second concerto. In addition to introducing the rhythm of the movement, the orchestral accompaniment, of the third piano concerto, in particular the upper strings, suggests the start (the first three notes) of the first subject.¹⁸⁵

The proportion of the two-part first subject where the sequential second part is longer than the first, is another similarity found between the second and third piano concertos (see Charts 7 and 10). As in the second piano concerto, the first part of the first subject in Piano Concerto No. 3 (bars 3–11) stays very close to the tonic note, while the second part (bars 12–27) consists of ascending and descending sequences temporarily drifting away from the home key of the movement. Another interesting aspect is that the first subject of Piano Concerto No. 3 is written in the melodic minor compared to the first subject of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto which is harmonically closer to the Russian folk and urban song structure.¹⁸⁶ Although technically the overall length of the first subject of the third piano concerto is half the length of the second (No. 2, 52 bars and No. 3, 24 bars), the length of the first subject in both concertos are almost the same due to the fact that the third is barred in 4/4 rather than 2/2. A simple, parallel octave piano execution of the first subject with light orchestral accompaniment perhaps is the least complicated part of the entire third piano concerto. The start of the movement with its simple character is a type of writing 'usually not associated with Rachmaninoff' especially around the time of composing his third piano concerto.¹⁸⁷ However, all Rachmaninoff's piano/orchestral works apart from his first piano concerto, start with relatively simple and pianistically less

¹⁸⁵ Antony Hopkins, *Talking About Concertos: An Analytical Study of a Number of Well-known Concertos from Mozart to the Present Day* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1964), 124

¹⁸⁶ The first subject of the first movement in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 is written in the natural minor (Aeolian) key.

¹⁸⁷ Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*, 363

challenging passages or subjects. This simple opening of the concerto with its developmental approach is another traditional element inherited from the German school. In his article Yasser observes some thematic similarities between the first subject and a Russian chant *Thy Grave, O Saviour, Guarded by Warriors*, regarding the possible origin of the subject.¹⁸⁸ However, Rachmaninoff excluded any possibility of using folk songs or church music as a basis of his piano concerto and replied to Yasser's comment with a famous quote that 'it simply wrote itself'.¹⁸⁹ If Rachmaninoff intended to consciously use any material from any available source, he would have likely altered and modified the extract beyond recognition instead of openly borrowing and restating the material. Alternatively, he would openly title the piece like in his variations¹⁹⁰ or mention it in his correspondences with friends and critics as he does about the use of the *Dies Irae* chant.

After the pianist's two-bar arpeggio-like introduction (bars 27–28), the solo horn and cello repeat the first subject of the first movement (bars 29–52) in a slightly faster tempo (*Piu mosso*) accompanied by the soloist's baroque-style semiquavers and orchestral support. The second run of the subject in a new tempo and soloist's semiquaver swift passages recall the first subject of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto. However, in contrast to the second piano concerto, the soloist's accompaniment of the first subject is texturally enhanced by ascending scale-like secondary motifs (bars 28, 32, 35) and imitative fragments (bars 38ff) moving parallel with the orchestra. In addition, due to the tempo, dynamism and overall change of the

¹⁸⁸ Joseph Yasser, 'The Opening Theme of Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto and Its Liturgical Prototype,' in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Oxford: OUP, Jul. 1969), 313–328

¹⁸⁹ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 312

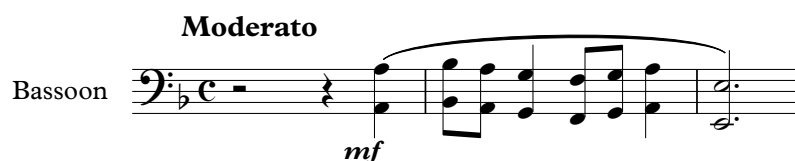
¹⁹⁰ For example, *Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*

character, the more relaxed piano execution of the subject at the start of Piano Concerto No. 3 looks like an introduction or preparation to the entire concerto.

While it is common for Rachmaninoff to introduce a contrasting light and swift transition just after the presentation of a slower first subject, the faster orchestral restatement of the first subject in Piano Concerto No. 3 and the semiquaver structure of the piano accompaniment become stylistically closer to the start of the first transition (bars 52ff). This helps to smoothly join the sections together and achieve a gradual tempo escalation instead of a sudden tempo change, as seen in the other concertos. The first transition consists of two contrasting sections (TR1-1 and TR1-2) with a solo piano cadenza on the dominant of D minor as a conclusion for the first part of the transition (bars 69–81). The second Moderato orchestral section of the first transition (bars 82–92) starts with a new counter melody (Ex.3.3, bassoons and lower strings) derived from the first subject material (Ex.3.2).



Ex.3.2 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 3–4



Ex.3.3 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 81–83

Similar to the second piano-concerto, the contrasting second subject of Piano concerto No. 3 is solo piano oriented with minimal and light orchestral support and

starts with a short introduction (No. 2, bars 79–82 and No. 3, bars 93–106). However, compared to Rachmaninoff's earlier piano concertos, in which the second subject is simply based on the relative major key (III, third degree), in Piano Concerto No. 3 it modulates to the submediant (VI, sixth degree). While the use of the submediant as a second tonic is very common in Russian music¹⁹¹, and Rachmaninoff refers to it many times in his compositions, it is quite unusual for him to stay on the submediant for the duration of the entire second subject of the first movement. The use of a submediant key for the second subject can also be observed in the recapitulation of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 2 (No. 2, bars 297–312). If in the second piano concerto the subdominant key acts as a temporary passing effect, the second subject and subsequent closing section of the third piano concerto stay on the new key (B flat major) until the very end of the exposition. As a result, with a single semitone ascent to an A major chord (dominant of D minor, bar 166) the movement returns to the home key of D minor without an additional harmonic transition. These simple semitone modulations gradually become common to Rachmaninoff's harmonic language in his late compositions such as his fourth piano concerto or the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.

The introduction of the second subject in Piano Concerto No. 3 starts with a rhythmic interaction between the orchestra and the soloist (Ex.3.5) which acts as an introduction to a tranquil second subject. Moreover, the same rhythmic fragment of the second subject's introduction has already been announced earlier by solo clarinet and horn during the first transition (Ex.3.4). As in Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, the third also stands out with the economy of the musical material and

¹⁹¹ Mark DeVoto, 'The Russian Submediant in the Nineteenth Century', in *Current Musicology*, No. 59 (October 1995), 63

numerous thematic references throughout the composition which brings the concerto closer to the symphonic cycle.

Allegro

Clarinet in B \flat *mf*

Horn in F *Solo p legg.*

Ex.3.4 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 69–70

Violin I *pp*

Ex.3.5 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 93–94

The second subject of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 3 consists of three sections (bars 107–114, /115–123, 124–136) where the first two share the same material, characteristics and develop around the same B flat major key. However, the second section of the subject (B-2) acts as a transition by modulating from B flat major to E flat major where the third section (B-3) begins. The latter starts with a three-bar multi-layered and texturally dense rising solo piano sequence (bars 124–126), leading to the chordal climax of the second subject with more orchestral instruments involved (bars 127ff). The last six-bar chromatically enhanced sequences of the third section (bars 131–136) of the subject work as a retransition back to B flat major. This creates another arch-like musical idea where the climatic point is achieved by harmonic, textural and dynamic enhancement.

The following two-part closing section (bars 137–150, 151–166) starts with a lightly articulated (*pizzicato*) first part reminiscent in style to the toccata-like start of the second subject. A gradual *accelerando* and rapid piano passages eventually lead to a brief recollection of the second subject (bars 151–154) and restore (bars 159ff) the initial tempo (*Allegro*) of the subject. This is another excellent example of the integration of thematic, rhythmic, harmonic and stylistic features in a single linking passage which leads to the next section (development) while at the same time summarising the previous material.

Development

From the development onwards the structural and thematic connections between both the second and the third piano concertos become less obvious. While they both start the development with the restatement of the first subject and later heavily disguise and transform the principal materials, structurally they differ from each other. Compared to Rachmaninoff's previous concertos, the development of Piano Concerto No. 3 (bars 167–303) is much longer (No. 2, 84 bars, No. 3, 137 bars), more complex and mainly based on the fragments of the first subject with its variants (see Chart 10, /A–A–Aa–Ab–Ac–CS2). As Hopkins describes:

At first glance most of the material that now appears to be new and even irrelevant, in fact, it is all closely connected to the first theme. What Rachmaninoff does is to select small fragments, groups of three notes or so and build them into sequences.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Hopkins, *Talking About Concertos: An Analytical Study of a Number of Well-known Concertos from Mozart to the Present Day*, 126

Moreover, rapidly changing tonality and an unsettled harmonic picture sharply distinguish the development of the third piano concerto not only from Rachmaninoff's other piano concertos but also from the style of the romantic piano concerto in general. The development of the third piano concerto is where one loses track of the key because of the constant modulation being so smoothly interlinked. While there are some important harmonic changes illustrated in Chart 10, the entire development of the first movement is based on chromatically rising or falling sequences without staying long enough in any of the keys mentioned. This linear harmonic approach gives the development of the first movement an interesting character and sense of harmonic uncertainty while at the same time staying inside the parameters of the tonic of the movement. Rachmaninoff later used a similar harmonic ambiguity with even greater complexity in his fourth piano concerto.

The development of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 3 starts with the same two-bar orchestral accompaniment (bars 167–169) seen at the beginning of the concerto, followed by an exact replica of the first four bars of the first subject played by the soloist that sequentially goes down stepwise, moving away from the home key of D minor (bars 169–181, d–c–Bb–A–G–F). After this short recollection of the main subject, there follows three variants of the highly fragmented material (bars 181–202, 203–218, 219–234) with extensive intra-tonal modulations. The first part (bars 181–202) is based on the Mixolydian with flattened sixth and Rachmaninoff's favourite Phrygian ascending scales strongly emphasised by the double bass.



Ex.3.6 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 181–184, Mixolydian (flat VI) mode



Ex.3.7 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 189–193, Phrygian mode

The fragmented approach for the construction of the development has a long history before Rachmaninoff, and his second piano concerto also stands out with highly disguised fragmented materials. However, Rachmaninoff took it even further in the third piano concerto by using only three or four note short motives from the first subject and developing them into new material. For example, the soloist’s left-hand motive (Ex.3.9) at the beginning of the first variant (bars 181–202) is most probably borrowed from the start of the first subject (Ex.3.8, bars 4-5). The contrapuntal piano answer (Ex.3.10) of the same variant (bars 185-188) also has a similar structure to the first subject (Ex.3.8, bars 3-4).



Ex.3.8 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 3–6



Ex.3.9 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 182–183



Ex.3.10 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bar 185

Compared to the active orchestral interplay echoing the short motifs during the first variant, the second (203–218) is solo piano oriented with extremely light orchestral support. The second variant mainly consists of minor third apart sequences (bars 203–215 a–c–eb–f#–a) followed by stepwise ascending successions (bars 215–218, a–b–c#–eb). The second variant is based on even shorter two-note fragment of the first subject material accompanied by chromatically enhanced quaver sextuplets. This chain of ascending sequences with gradual *crescendo* leads to the texturally dense and heavily accentuated (*molto marcato*) third variant (bars 219–234), involving almost the entire orchestra (apart from trumpet). If the arch-like first variant of the development has its own climatic points (bar 185 and 195) with a soft ending, the second and third variants continue the same dynamic and sequential escalation towards the second closing section (CS2). After the tempo changes of previous sections (Aa, Piu mosso and Ab, Piu vivo), the third variant briefly returns to the initial speed of the movement (Allegro, bars 223ff) before accelerating into the climatic tutti at the start of the final section of the development in double time (Allegro molto. Alla breve, bars 235–303).

Generally, the second closing section can be seen as the fourth (Ad) variant of the development which gradually reduces the established power of the previous sections with various contrapuntal piano passages and an orchestral pedal. While some of the fragments from the development, such as the two-note motif (Ex.3.11 and 3.12) or major/minor third based piano passages (Ex.3.13) can be observed in this section,

it has more of a harmonic rather than thematic role in bringing back the home key of the movement and preparing for the arrival of the solo piano *cadenza*. The second closing section of the first movement ends with a four-bar chordal modulatory bridge (bars 299–303) in the dominant of the home key.



Ex.3.11 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 244–247



Ex.3.12 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 259–262



Ex.3.13 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 283–286

Cadenza, recapitulation, coda

The first half of the *cadenza* is written in two versions (bars 303–341, *ossia* 303–357) with a sixteen-bar difference between the short and longer *ossia* versions. The manuscript held in the British Library demonstrates that the alternative *cadenza* (*ossia*) was written first.¹⁹³ Geoffrey Norris confirms this notion and also mentions

¹⁹³ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composers, Pianist, Conductor*, 211–212

possible issues related to the specific challenges of the recordings of the time. He notes that:

The numbering of the pages in the manuscript ... indicates that the longer *cadenza* was the composer's first choice, but presumably the necessity to fit the concerto conveniently on to 78 rpm records compelled him to choose the shorter one, or maybe Rachmaninoff simply felt that enough power had been generated elsewhere and that lightness provided an agreeable contrast.¹⁹⁴

Indeed, Rachmaninoff played the short *cadenza* for his 1939–40 recording of the third concerto and included five cuts. Giesecking was one of the first to perform the *ossia* version of the *cadenza* in 1939.¹⁹⁵ However, performers started to lean more towards the alternative version of the *cadenza* when Van Cliburn's presented the work in full (without cuts) with the *ossia cadenza* during the International Tchaikovsky Competition held in 1968.¹⁹⁶ Today some performers still chose to play the shorter toccata-like *cadenza*, but the cuts instituted by the composer are no longer endorsed.

Characteristically and structurally, it is true that the chordal *ossia* version of the *cadenza* is much closer to the overall shape of the concerto compared to the toccata-like original version. Moreover, structurally and texturally, it is closely related to and better connects also with the second half of the *cadenza*, smoothly joining the two parts together. In addition, the first part of the coda of the third movement (third movement, bars 381–437) in Piano Concerto No. 3 (which will be discussed later in this chapter) relates to the *ossia* version more than the original. In addition, the *ossia cadenza* of Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto is the most texturally dense section among all his piano/orchestral works.

¹⁹⁴ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 117–118

¹⁹⁵ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composers, Pianist, Conductor*, 212

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 212

Norris's assessment of why Rachmaninoff chose to opt for the shorter *cadenza* is largely convincing if considered from the perspective of projecting a more compact, contrasting and lighter effect alongside the other cuts he made during this recording. However, the first half of the argument about the length of the concerto is not persuasive as one side of the final disc was left empty (the concerto was recorded on just nine sides of five discs by RCA). So, the empty tenth side is either a miscalculation that happened because of Rachmaninoff's extreme speeds, cuts and shorter *cadenza* or it was already decided to record on nine sides only. Besides, there is a possibility that the composer's intention was to have more time to perform the slow sections without rushing through them so that the audience could hear the contrasting elements of the concerto.

The *cadenza* of the third piano concerto is placed just after the development prior to the recapitulation¹⁹⁷ and carries similar characteristic features, such as the variational aspects of the material, sequentially upwards-moving harmonic progressions as well as the focus on a single A subject material. It is hard to define the exact borders of the *cadenza* and its function in the first movement. There are two options to position the start of the recapitulation. If one considers the exact replication of the first subject with its two-bar orchestral accompaniment as the start of the recapitulation (bars 395ff, *ossia* 411ff), then some of the restatements of the transitional (bars 362–374, *ossia* 378–390) and second subject (bars 375–390, *ossia* 391–406) materials have to be considered as part of the *cadenza*. In addition, the recollection of the second subject by the soloist is entitled as a *cadenza* by the composer, and has a virtuosic character with its ornamental piano ending. This indeed

¹⁹⁷ The virtuosic solo piano *cadenza* usually occurs in the end of the first movement in a traditional piano concerto

looks like a tail or closing section of the overall *cadenza* and can justify the notion of being part of a single section.

However, considering Rachmaninoff's ingenious skills to alter and transform the principal materials beyond recognition, these two sections stay very close to the initial material first introduced in the exposition and can be seen as a reverse recapitulation (TR1, B, A). Moreover, the rocking piano accompaniment (bars 362ff, *ossia* 378ff), which mimics the orchestral introductory start of the first movement, and the use of the orchestral instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet and horns) for the recollection of the transitional material further strengthens this musical argument. The restatement of the second subject (bars 375–390, *ossia* 391–406) is based on the first two bars of the solo-piano-centric material from the exposition (bars 107–108) which develops into a *cadenza*. In addition, the use of a lowered supertonic key (Eb major), which returns to the home key of the movement with a simple semitone descent, gives the same passing effect seen in the restatement of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto (No. 2, bars 297–312).

Perhaps the only argument combining both divisional concepts is the necessity of the second subject material insertion either as a part of a *cadenza* or recapitulation. The entire development and the virtuosic solo piano *cadenza* are primarily based on the first subject material and the following exact restatement of the same subject would create a redundancy. Thus, a brief recollection of the transitional and second subject material creates a perfect balance by not overwhelming the listener with the same materials over and over and also smoothly links the development with the recapitulation of the movement. This is perhaps the main reason he quickly summarises the movement with a single restatement of the first subject and short coda.

After a short retransition (bars 391–394, *ossia* 407–410), the exact restatement of the first subject (bars 395–420, *ossia* 411–436) presented by the soloist, concludes the recapitulation of the movement and leads to the eighteen-bar coda. The relatively simple start and ending of the movement further highlights the complexity of the remaining sections in particular the middle section which is a combination of both the development and *cadenza*.

The coda of Rachmaninoff's second and third piano concertos are close in nature incorporating swift semiquaver passages, a soft start and *accelerando* ending of the movement. However, considering the fact that most of the sections and the overall length of the Piano Concerto No. 3 are extended compared to the second piano concerto, the coda feels relatively short (No. 2, 22 bars and No. 3, 18 bars). Interestingly, while being short, it involves a series of variations using materials from both subjects where the orchestra-piano interaction (bars 429-432, *ossia* bars 445-448) based on the introduction of the second subject (bars 93ff) stands out in particular. As found in the last six bars of the third piano concerto, the piano has a more accompanying character while the orchestra imitates the pulse of the first subject.

Second movement

The second movement of Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto, titled *Intermezzo*, follows the same ternary structure of the previous two concertos. As Harrison noted in his book the word *Intermezzo* is misleading as it 'implies separation'.¹⁹⁸ Nonetheless the movement is linked with the start of the concerto with

¹⁹⁸ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 155

some motifs and musical materials. At first glance there is an impression that it is based on the second movement of the second piano concerto with the orchestral modulatory introduction, single A subject material with its variants¹⁹⁹ and a dance like episode. However, compared to the second piano concerto, the solo-centric third is much more advanced and complex (see Charts 8 and 11). Almost the entire movement from the piano solo introduction (bars /32ff) up to the end of the final closing section (bar 190) is played and accompanied by the soloist himself with occasional orchestral support mainly during the closing sections and the episode.

From the very beginning the orchestra, based in the home key of the first movement (D minor), fully introduces the main subject material with a series of intratonal modulations (bars 1–31). This can be seen as the first subject presentation and not as an introduction like that in the second piano concerto. In addition, the orchestral texture of the third concerto's introduction is denser being filled with chromatic elements and parallel secondary materials. Another unusual element is the solo piano chromatic introductory passage (/32-37) with its textural, rhythmical and structural complexity. In general, compared to the outer movements of Piano Concerto No. 3, the piano texture of the second movement is much denser, filled with multi-layered and polyrhythmic piano passages enhanced with chromatic elements. While this is most probably due to the soloistic character of the movement and minimal orchestral support during the execution of the principal materials, the piano writing has more to do with Rachmaninoff's stylistic shift towards the intensification of the piano material seen in later years for example in his *Etudes Tableaux* Opp. 33 and 39 or Piano Sonata No. 2. With a simple chromatic (A to F sharp) downwards action the piano modulates

¹⁹⁹ The second subject of the second movement in Piano Concerto No. 2 is based on the first subject material (see Chart 8)

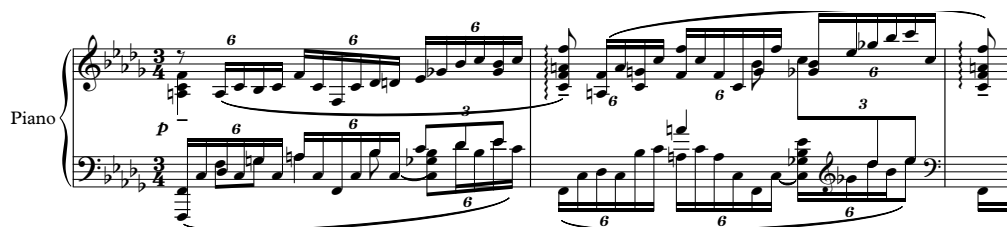
to F sharp minor (enharmonic of G flat minor) which can be seen as the subdominant of the home key of the second movement (D flat minor).

The solo piano passage takes the triplet quaver idea from the orchestra and smoothly links to the main subject by becoming a triplet accompaniment (bars 38ff). However, the arpeggio-like piano accompaniment of the first subject incorporates some additional musical material moving parallel with the main subject (bars 40–46), thus further enriching the texture.

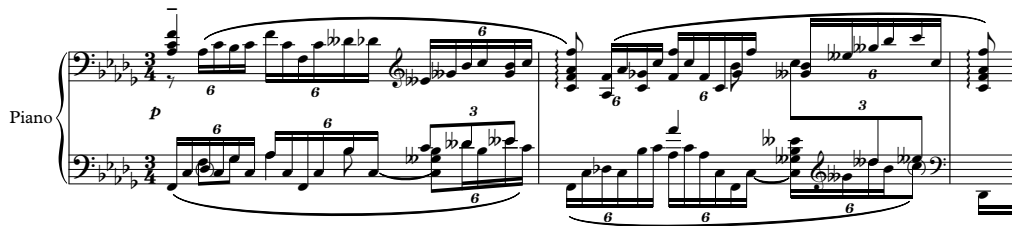


Ex.3.14 Piano Concerto No. 3, 2nd movement, bars 40–45

The main subject is followed by a closing section (bars 47–54) that is repeated later (bars 65–70 and 122–125) with some alterations. The core element of the closing section is the ascending Mixolydian scale under the tonic pedal point. Considering the complexity of the movement, it is surprising to see that all three closing sections are almost identical which is rare in Rachmaninoff's music (Ex.3.15 and 3.16).



Ex.3.15 Piano Concerto No. 3, 2nd movement, bars 65–67



Ex.3.16 Piano Concerto No. 3, 2nd movement, bars 47–49 and 122–124

While the first execution of the subject is in the home key of D flat major, the second (bars 55–64) with slightly faster (*Piu mosso*) and more texturally complex writing moves to the mediant key (F minor) which later modulates to B flat minor prior to settling into an F major closing section (see Chart 11).

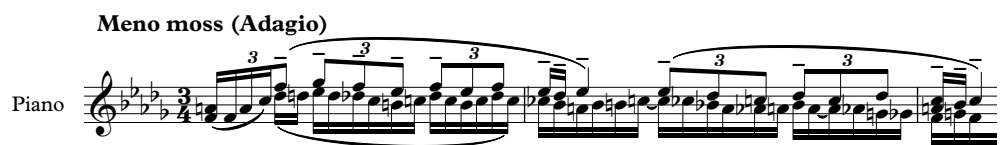
The second subject of the movement consists of two variants (bars 71–77 and 77–84) and it is constructed on the second part of the transitional material (Ex.3.17) from the first movement (first movement TR1-2). Similar to Rachmaninoff’s second piano concerto, the second subject of Piano Concerto No. 3 follows the same developmental character due to its modulatory and variational setting. While the first violins recall the main material (Ex.3.18), the soloist continues to lead the movement echoing the principal motif with its *pesante* right hand and harmonically enhanced left-hand semiquaver chromatic passages (Ex.3.19). Each part of the second subject starts with the dominant of B flat minor emphasised by either piano or orchestral F pedal, resolving into F major in the end. The second part of the subject (bars 77–84) continues the dynamic growth of the previous section and is presented predominantly by the soloist supported by orchestral pedal. Although the orchestra strongly holds on F, the F major key of this section simultaneously acts also as a dominant of B flat minor.



Ex.3.17 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 81–85



Ex.3.18 Piano Concerto No. 3, 2nd movement, bars 72–74



Ex.3.19 Piano Concerto No. 3, 2nd movement, bars 77–79

Interestingly, this entire second subject is missing from Rachmaninoff’s own recording in 1939 alongside with four additional cuts in the outer movements of the concerto (first movement, bars 151–158 and 352–353, third movement 103–131 and 188–200). This can be related to the recording issues discussed earlier in this chapter or Rachmaninoff may have wanted to simplify the movement by keeping the strict ternary form (A, CS, Aa, CS, Ab/Ac/Ad, CS, etc.). However, the section still has an important role thematically linking the first and second movements together. Another possibility for shortening the concerto might be the criticism directed towards the concerto’s overall length and difficulty. At the premiere and until 1919 Rachmaninoff performed the concerto without any cuts.²⁰⁰

The next two variants of the first subject (Ab and Ac) have a similar transitional role and two-part structure involving an extension. The modulatory

²⁰⁰ Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide*, 364

function of the second variant of the subject (bars 85–93 and 94–101) is much stronger comprising a series of upwards sequences starting from B flat major until it reaches D major. The third variant of the first subject (bars 102–106 and 107–110) is presented by the orchestra (strings) with the soloist's chordal support, modulating from D major back to the home key of the movement (D flat major). Starting from the extension of the second variant (bars 94ff), the left-hand arpeggio-like accompaniment of the first subject takes a form of interval and later chordal (bars 99ff) based triplet structure. This gradual enrichment of the piano texture along with harmonically enhanced right-hand heavy chords eventually reaches the climactic start of the final *Maestoso* variant of the first subject (bars 111–121). Particularly interesting is the solo piano ending of *Maestoso* (bars /117–121) where the harmonically enhanced piano chords quite often create a dissonance which is not typical to Rachmaninoff's earlier concertos.

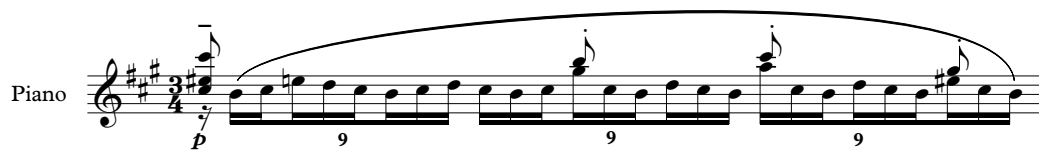
The Scherzo episode of the second movement of Piano Concerto No. 3 (bars 126–183) is written in F sharp minor, the enharmonic of G flat minor, as seen in the solo piano chromatic introductory passage (bars /32-37). However, it evolves mainly in the dominant of F sharp minor (C sharp), which helps to smoothly return into the home key of D flat major (enharmonic of C sharp). Compared to Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, the Scherzo episode of the third piano concerto becomes even closer to the style of Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto.²⁰¹ Though having almost twice as many bars (58 bars written in 3/8) as Tchaikovsky's episode (35 bars written in 6/8), they are the same in length due to the time signature differences. Moreover, a similar *pizzicato* downbeat bass idea that gives a dance-like character to the section can be seen in both concertos.

²⁰¹ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composers, Pianist, Conductor*, 212

However, if Tchaikovsky's episodic middle section of the second movement is almost new material, in Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto there is a hidden thematic message carried from the first movement. While the general melodic element of the piano semiquaver pattern (Ex.3.21) is based on the first subject material of the first movement (Ex.3.20), the woodwinds present a modified version of entire two-part first subject of the first movement (Ex.3.22, bars 137–155 and Ex.3.23, bars 156–183).²⁰² In addition, the second part of the Scherzo has a similar *ritenuto* braking point in the middle (bar 167) similar to the second part of the first subject material (first movement, bar 18).



Ex.3.20 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 3–4



Ex.3.21 Piano Concerto No. 3, 2nd movement, bar 126



Ex.3.22 Piano Concerto No. 3, 2nd movement, bars 137–145



Ex.3.23 Piano Concerto No. 3, 2nd movement, bars 156–168

²⁰² Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 118

After a short closing section (bars 184–190) summarising ideas from the Scherzo and main subject materials, the orchestral restatement of the introduction reduces the power and concludes the second movement. The coda as such is missing from the movement and it does not have an affirmative ending. Instead, there is a *cadenza*-like section (bars 210-217) in the dominant of D minor just after the orchestral restatement of the introductory material. Though it is based on the first three notes of the main subject of the second movement, this section is closely related to the third movement with relevant key structure and acts as an introduction. This is most probably the same concept as that used in the Piano Concerto No. 2 to join all three movements together. However, in the second concerto Rachmaninoff uses the introductory passages not only for harmonic reasons but also in order to keep a similar structure for all three movements. In addition, all the modulatory introductions of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto are smooth without any abrupt stylistic or harmonic changes. By contrast, Piano Concerto No. 3 starts without a proper introduction, its second movement modulates from the key of the first movement (D minor) to D flat major while presenting the main subject (i.e., without clear modulatory introduction), and the third movement then starts with an introduction placed at the end of the second movement sharply following the restatement of the second movement's main subject. This novel ending of the second movement acts as a double function (conclusion/introduction) and further enhances the unity and cyclic effect of Piano Concerto No. 3.

Third movement

The overall structure of the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 3 (A–B–C–A–B, see Chart 12) is generally closer to the traditional rondo form compared to Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto. While most of the subjects and musical concepts of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 3 undergo various alterations and modifications, they remain closer to the main melodic ideas. Perhaps, the most striking feature of the movement is the variational third subject (C) which is based entirely on the materials from the first movement of the concerto.

Unlike Rachmaninoff's two earlier piano concertos, the third movement of the third piano concerto starts with an immediate exposition of the first subject with just a simple two-bar orchestral introduction setting up the pulse of the movement similar to the very start of the concerto. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the end of the second movement of the concerto (second movement, bars 210–217) can be seen as an introduction of the third movement as well, due to its harmonic and rhythmic characteristics and half cadence at the end.

The first subject of the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 3 consists of two parts (bars 3–39 and 39–56) with a toccata-like swift character typical to the finales of Rachmaninoff's previous two piano concertos. While the first part of the subject is based on a simple tonic-dominant-tonic rhythmically repetitive motif, there are some melodic elements resembling the first subject of the first movement of the same concerto. The descending melodic fragment shown in Ex.3.24 and 3.25 is one of the most noticeable examples.



Ex.3.24 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 19–22

Ex.3.25 Piano Concerto No. 3, 3rd movement, bars 12–14

However, in contrast to the long and interwoven first subject of the first movement that largely shares the same melodic elements throughout, the sections of the first subject of the third piano concerto are varied from each other and each one can readily be seen as a separate function. Another interesting quality of the first subject is its extremely short, fragmented structure with an unsettled harmonic character. These two features became a new signature of Rachmaninoff's works around the time of his third piano concerto, and they were articulated even more in his later compositions.

After a sequential repeat of the principal motif a tone lower (bars 7ff), the harmonically descending sequences take the first subject towards the dominant of E minor (bars 19–26). A series of descending successions of the recurring material from the start of the subject (bars 27–39) leads to the second part of the first subject in A minor (bars 39–56). However, the new key has a very short-lived and temporary effect because of an unsettled harmonic character similar to the first part of the subject. In contrast to a triplet-quaver based leaping motif of the first part of the subject, the second is constructed on duple-quaver moving steps which brings the idea even closer

to the first subject material of the first movement. The restatement of the first part of the first subject (bars 57–71) which ends on E minor, is presented by the orchestra with the support of the soloist’s chordal and triplet-quaver passages.

Similar to the first subject, the second subject of the third movement consists of two contrasting sections (bars 72–103 and 103–131). However, in comparison to Rachmaninoff’s usual order where the fragmented version appears after the fully introduced musical idea, the second subject of the third movement is written in reverse order. The hammering *staccato* chords (Ex.3.26) closely relate to the melodic material of the second subject of the movement and can be seen as a variant or motivic preparation for the second subject.²⁰³ This is most probably done to match and continue the chordal and rhythmic characteristics of the last section of the first subject and for a smoother transition to the more relaxed third subject of the movement. In addition, the melodic structure of the second subject of the third movement (Ex.3.27) resembles to the second subject of the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 2 (Ex.3.28).



Ex.3.26 Piano Concerto No. 3, 3rd movement, bars 74–80



Ex.3.27 Piano Concerto No. 3, 3rd movement, bars 103–107

²⁰³ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composers, Pianist, Conductor*, 213



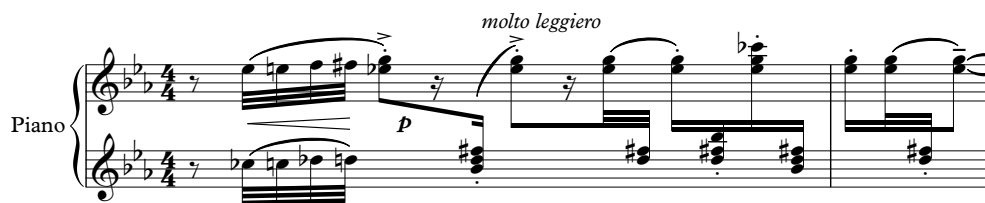
Ex.3.28 Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 83–87

Compared to the harmonically unsettled first subject, the tonal plot of the second subject is quite straightforward. While the arch-like chordal first part of the second subject acts as a transition (bars 72–103, C–e–G), the second part of the subject is centred in G major with its ascending (bars 103ff) and descending (bars 119ff) sequential extension. Texturally and rhythmically the second part of the subject is much more complex with its chromatic extensive flourish and triplets against duplets piano figuration than the heavy chordal first part of the subject. However, it sounds much lighter compared to the hammered first part of the subject and smoothly reduces the power of the section. The end of the second subject which brings the motif and rhythmic characteristics of the first subject is another interesting feature that unifies both subjects together. While the arpeggio-like chordal piano passage (bars 124–127) reminds one of the piano accompaniments of the first subject’s restatement (bars 57ff), the following four bars (bars 128–131) bring back the leaping motif and rhythmic characteristics of the first subject. This eight-bar ending of the second subject works as a thematic bridge to effectively connect with the tutti start of the orchestral closing section (bars 132–151). The latter modulates from G major to E flat major simultaneously reducing the power and preparing for the start of the third subject.

The third subject labelled as *Scherzando* is perhaps the most striking element of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 3. Almost the entire subject is based on the second subject material from the first movement of the concerto. Moreover, compared to the previous two subjects of the third movement, this middle section can

also be considered as a development of the movement due to its variational character. By borrowing materials from the first movement Rachmaninoff with his economical approach brought the concerto to another level of unity and coherence.

The third subject of the third movement can be divided into four sections or variations (bars 152–187, 188–200, 201–208, 209–221) with the restatement of another variant of the first part in the end (bars 222–243). The lightly articulated (*staccato*) start of the third subject (Ex.3.29) closely relates to the introduction of the second subject (Ex.3.30, first movement, bars 93–106).



Ex.3.29 Piano Concerto No. 3, 3rd movement, bars 152–153



Ex.3.30 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 93–94

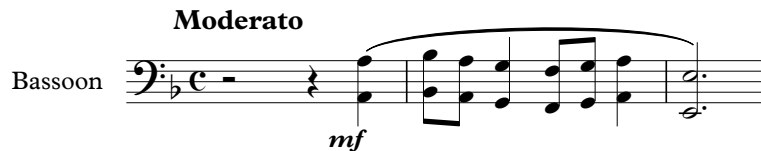
The first part of the third subject also consists of two divisions (bars 152–170 and 171–177) with a pianistically virtuosic closing section in the end (bars 178–187). At the beginning of the third subject the soloist presents an improvisatory variant of the second subject material from the first movement, whilst the orchestra harmonically supports the pianist and at the same time recalls the rhythmic two-bar introductory start of the third movement. After a brief recollection of the rhythmic first movement

with its triplet structure, leaping motif and repeated notes (bar 167), the next part of the first section of the third subject (bars 171–177) presents the musical material in a form of descending sequence echoed by oboes and the second violins. The following closing section (bars 178–187) temporarily brings back the same rhythmic and thematic characteristics of the start of the third movement.

The second section of the third subject, which stylistically and texturally gets even closer to the tranquil second subject of the first movement, starts with a six-bar *Meno mosso solo piano* introductory ascending sequence (bars 188–193) featuring a widespread semiquaver sextuplet arpeggio-like accompaniment. The acceleration (*poco accelerando*) and dynamic rise of this section gradually involving more orchestral instruments on the way (bars 190ff), leads back to the *Scherzando* character of the subject presented by woodwinds (bars 194–200). Meanwhile, the pianist and solo horn (first violins from bars 198ff) give a hint of the following section by introducing a secondary motif (Ex.3.31) that resembles the transitional material from the first movement (Ex.3.32, 1st movement, TR1-2). The upper held notes of the pianist decorated with texturally dense semiquaver passages, combines both ideas of the *Scherzo* and *Meno mosso* while at the same time preparing for the next section.

The musical score for Ex. 3.31 consists of three staves: Horn in F, Piano, and Violin I. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The Horn in F part begins with a 'a tempo' marking and plays a series of notes with a descending sequence. The Piano part features a sextuplet of semiquavers in the right hand and a descending sequence in the left hand. The Violin I part plays a descending sequence of notes.

Ex.3.31 Piano Concerto No. 3, 3rd movement, bars 194–201



Ex.3.32 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 81–83

If the resemblance with the first movement is rather discreet in the first half of the third subject (C-1 and C-2), the other two variants (C-3 and C-4) openly introduce an almost exact version of the first movement's material. Although the materials of the third part of the subject (C-3) come from the exposition of the first movement (first movement, bars /82–92), rhythmically and stylistically the third part of the subject is closer to the start of the restatement of the first movement (bars 362–374, *ossia* 378–390). As in the restatement of the first movement, the soloist accompanies the main subject with a strong harmonic support. However, compared to the modulatory function of the original materials from the first movement, the recollection in the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 3 stays in E flat minor until the very end of the section.

Another simple semitone modulatory movement already common in Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto, temporarily modulates to E major for the execution of the final part (C-4) of the third subject (bars 209–221). The latter is an almost identical replica of the second subject (in particular B-2) of the first movement in a different key (first movement, B flat to E flat major, third movement E to A major). As in the first movement, the fourth section of the third subject is solo piano oriented with light support by solo orchestral instruments (flute and horn). From the third part of the first movement's second subject (B-3) only the introductory bridge passage (1st movement, bars 124–126) is recalled in the third movement of the

concerto. An ascending texturally complex four-bar piano passage (bars 218–221) returns back to E flat major and directly leads to another variant (bars 222–243) of the Scherzo start of the third subject (C-1, CS2). As illustrated in Chart 12, the third subject is the most structurally complex part of the third movement. However, its component parts are seamlessly interlinked by using familiar materials from the first movement and a largely stable harmonic organisation. This creates a sense of effortless flow of the subject and distinguishes it from the rest of the movement.

The restatement of the first subject (bars 243–319) starts with the orchestra later passing the leading role to the soloist (bar 263ff). While giving a slightly altered variant of the first subject, the overall structure and harmonic sequence (tone lower) of the subject remains identical to the start of the movement. Similar to the exposition, after the repeat of the principal material a tone lower (bars 251ff), the harmonically descending sequences take the first subject towards the dominant of D minor (bars 263–270), followed by another restatement of the main material (bars /271–285). While following the same unsettled harmonic pattern of the exposition, the second part (bars 285–302) and the recurring start of the first subject (bars 303–319) return back to the initial starting key (G minor and D minor respectively) at the end of each section.

The restatement of the second subject follows the exact major/minor third modulations (bars /319–350, Bb–d–F) starting from B flat major instead of C major, eventually settling into the relative to home key F major (bars 350ff). The extension of the second subject (bars 356–380) returns back to the home key of D minor through series of rising sequences for the preparation of the coda.

The coda of the third movement in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 consists of three sections (bars 381–437, 438–489, /490–507). If the last two sections

of the coda, which incorporates a *Maestoso* section, are constructed in a similar manner to Rachmaninoff's earlier piano concertos, the first part of the coda is rather unique. While the percussive piano writing at the start of the coda (bars 381ff) gives an impression of new material, the later development of the section (Ex.3.33, bars /397ff) reveals its true origin, harmonically and stylistically imitating the *ossia cadenza* of the first movement (Ex.3.34).²⁰⁴ As the right hand chords almost identically replicate (in double time) what is seen in the first movement's piano cadenza, the orchestra supports the dominant baseline of the soloist's left hand in the coda of the third movement while at the same time rhythmically controlling the section.



Ex.3.33 Piano Concerto No. 3, 3rd movement, bars /397–400



Ex.3.34 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, ossia bars 307–310

Following the same harmonic pattern of the first movement's *cadenza*, the sequential and dynamic escalation of the first part of the coda leads to the climatic orchestral tutti (bars 431–437) of the third movement. The second part of the coda (bars 438–489) which could be easily labelled as a *Maestoso* similar to

²⁰⁴ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composers, Pianist, Conductor*, 214

Rachmaninoff's earlier piano concertos (Vivacissimo in the case of Piano Concerto No. 3), is based on the second subject of the third movement. In general, the orchestral tutti followed by a one-bar solo piano *cadenza* just before the second part of the coda, the use of the second subject material in the parallel major key as well as the alternating hand piano passages at the end of the third movement closely follow the structural ideas of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto. A similar rhythmic articulation (♩-♩+♩) concluding the concerto is another common feature bringing the second and the third piano concertos together.

Conclusion

Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto could be seen as the pinnacle of his compositional style and a highly valuable contribution to the piano concerto genre. After the success of his second piano concerto, there was no need to look for a pattern or find a relevant structure in the works of other composers for his new concerto. Using the same model of the second piano concerto helped Rachmaninoff to fully develop his own musical style and depart from the traditional romantic ideas. As Asafiev mentions in his book, the formation of Rachmaninoff's monumental piano writing style began from his third piano concerto departing from 'naïve romantic features' seen in his earlier compositions.²⁰⁵ While this is true about most of the concerto, still a number of extremely romantic and long, beautifully shaped melodies appear in the piece, starting from the very opening of the concerto. This contrasting combination of

²⁰⁵ Boris Asafiev, *Russkaya Muzyka [Russian Music]* (Leningrad: Musika, 1968), 299

monumentalism and romanticism, creates an interesting hybrid not only attractive to the listener, but also for the performer regardless immense pianistic challenges.

However, compared to the second, the third piano concerto stands out with its structural complexity, advanced harmonic language and multi-layered piano texture full of polyrhythmic elements. In addition, the thematic and motivic connection between all three movements became more apparent in Rachmaninoff third piano concerto bringing it closer to the symphonic cycle. Some of the features, such as the harmonic uncertainty of the first movement's development, extremely short, fragmented motifs of the third movement or excessive use of sequences can be observed in Rachmaninoff's fourth piano concerto as well. In addition, the variational character and the orchestral transparency of the third piano concerto laid ground for the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* written in 1934.

In the third concerto the composer fully presented his new musical ideas already established in Piano Concerto No. 2 and took it even further. However, such a massive leap in experimenting with every musical idea and structural feature known to the composer alongside the extremely monumental piano writing of the concerto may have to some extent exhausted Rachmaninoff's arsenal for future expansion. As Martin noted:

In developing for his Third Concerto the characteristic features of its predecessor, and pushing them to the very limits of expressive and virtuosic possibility, the composer may in a sense be said to have created a problem for himself: along this route he had reached a point beyond which he could not go.²⁰⁶

This is perhaps one of the main reasons why Rachmaninoff looked for something else and changed his compositional direction and language in his fourth

²⁰⁶ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composers, Pianist, Conductor*, 214

piano concerto. The constant complaints from critics and musicians about his third piano concerto being complicated and physically and technically ‘too demanding’,²⁰⁷ most probably resulted in a stylistic shift towards simplicity. This might be one of the reasons why Rachmaninoff performed the lighter *cadenza* of his third piano concerto during his recitals. Some musicologists suggest that if Rachmaninoff continued his compositional career in Russia, his style would have evolved even further towards complexity or at least would have adhered to the complex musical language he formed by the time of writing his third piano concerto. Living in a foreign land, he had to adopt to the standards and public demands of his surroundings and limit his compositional practice due to heavy performance schedule. It was apparent in his numerous correspondences with family and friends how much he missed his homeland. While there is some logic in this argument, Rachmaninoff’s stylistic shift towards simplification, however, started well before his emigration from Russia. Even before Piano Concerto No. 4, one can already observe the stylistic tendency toward thinning and simplification in Rachmaninoff’s works composed after Piano Concerto No. 3, starting from the first set of *Etudes Tableaux*. The use of short fragments and economy of the musical material already seen in Piano Sonata No. 2 composed in 1913 (before its significant thinning and cuts during the revision in 1931) also signal a directional change in Rachmaninoff’s compositional language and tendencies. As such, regardless of the fact whether Rachmaninoff stayed in Russia or not, his new compositional language was already shifting after Piano Concerto No. 3.

²⁰⁷ Patrick Piggott, *Rachmaninov Orchestral Music* (London: BBC, 1974), 51

CHAPTER 4: THE ORIGINAL AND REVISED VERSIONS OF PIANO CONCERTO NO. 4 AND THE REVISION OF PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1

This chapter focuses on the new compositional elements of the revised first piano concerto (1917) and the original and revised versions of Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), unearthing the novel elements and stylistic features Rachmaninoff brought into these concertos.

The only three works Rachmaninoff revised in his lifetime are Piano Sonata No. 2, Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 4, all three of which are today published and performed in both original and revised versions. While opinions diverge among critics and performers as to which version is the ‘right’ one, both versions continue to be played. In the case of Piano Sonata No. 2, there are even recordings by Vladimir Horowitz and Van Cliburn who combine both original and revised versions of the piece.²⁰⁸

Thus, examining two out of the three revised works by Rachmaninoff in a single chapter helps understand more clearly the evolution of his language and examine the underlying reasons and purpose for the significant modifications he made in these pieces. Another reason for comparing the two concertos in a single chapter is to illustrate the novelties Rachmaninoff introduced in his musical language over time between the writing of the original and revised versions, and thus show the overall direction and development of new compositional approaches in his writing style. Some of the new structural, textural and orchestral ideas in the revision of Piano Concerto No. 1 discussed in this chapter signal more strongly about the departure from traditional romantic concepts of composition. The departure from traditional forms

²⁰⁸ Barrie Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (England: Ashgate, 1990), 323

had already been emerging in Rachmaninoff's compositions written before his emigration to the United States in 1917. These new elements are further developed and more firmly embedded in the musical language used in his fourth piano concerto written in 1926.

The revisions of Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 4 differ markedly from each other. Unlike the revision of the fourth piano concerto (and the piano sonata) where the tendency is toward simplification, the revision of Piano Concerto No. 1 goes in the opposite direction where the composer adds complexity and colour. As a result, the revised version of the first piano concerto, which could easily be given a new opus due to its complete revamp, moves away from Rachmaninoff's early compositional language and resembles the style of his more mature years in Russia before emigration to the West. Such a departure significantly weakens the strong ties the first piano concerto had with the works and influences of his predecessors such as Tchaikovsky and Grieg (see Chapters 1 and 2).

To keep the chronological order of the compositional time frame of Rachmaninoff's piano concertos, the chapter starts with a comparative analysis of the original (1891) and revised (1917) versions of Piano Concerto No. 1 looking into the cuts, insertion of additional materials and differences in orchestration in both versions. The second part of the chapter explores the structural and thematic qualities of the original version of Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926) and discusses the novelties and new compositional elements of the concerto alongside the features which Rachmaninoff carried over from the previous three concertos. A brief comparison of all three versions of the fourth piano concerto (1926, 1928 and 1941), discussing the structural and orchestral modifications found between the first and final versions of Piano Concerto No. 4 concludes the chapter. In order to avoid redundancy, the comparison of the

fourth piano concerto mainly focuses on the final edition with some references to the intermediate version where necessary. This is partly due to the fact that most of the revised ideas in the intermediate (1928) version such as structural and orchestral modifications exist in the final (1941) version of the concerto (see Tables 4–6).

Revision of Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1

The original version of Piano Concerto No. 1 was abandoned by Rachmaninoff himself, and he subsequently refused to play the piece in its original form. One such instance was in 1899, when he was expected to perform his second piano concerto for the London Philharmonic Society which did not yet exist. In the absence of a new concerto, in his own words, the first piano concerto was ‘a student work and not presentable to the audience in its current shape.’²⁰⁹ In a letter to Morozov in 1908 Rachmaninoff says:

I receive many requests for this concerto, and it is so awful in its current form that I would like to work on it and, if possible, shape it. Of course, I will need to write it from fresh as the orchestration is even worse than the music itself.²¹⁰

Despite intending to revise the Piano Concerto No. 1 for some time, it was not until 1917 that Rachmaninoff revisited the original scores. Interestingly, the revision of the work coincided with the peak of the Bolshevik revolution which had been causing chaos and disruption throughout the country. After the last concert Rachmaninoff performed in Yalta on 5 September, all of his subsequent performances

²⁰⁹ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 87

²¹⁰ Aleksandr Alekseev, *S.V. Rachmaninoff* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Musikalnoie Izdatelstvo, 1954), 144

were cancelled, and he was confined in his Moscow apartment with his family.²¹¹ By the time he started working on the revision in 1917, Rachmaninoff had already consolidated his own musical style after 25 years as a performing pianist, composer and conductor. The evolution of his musical language and added maturity are evident in the revision of Piano Concerto No. 1, where the ‘four-square’ orchestration of the original concerto is replaced by a complex interplay between various instruments which bring in variety and diversity to the piece.²¹²

In the revised version of Piano Concerto No. 1, Rachmaninoff eliminated all the redundantly repeating materials and replaced them with elegant and smooth transitions that markedly alleviated the previous segmentation of the piece. The texture of the new piano writing is thinner and more improvisational leaving out Tchaikovsky-like influences such as spread chords in minims covering nearly the whole keyboard. Although the instrumentation remained largely unchanged apart from replacing one of the three tenor trombones and a tuba with a bass trombone, the entire orchestration underwent serious modifications. The new more balanced orchestration enhanced instrumental interplay, increased chromaticism of the secondary materials and frequent use of sequential movements that increasingly became one of Rachmaninoff’s main features in his late works.

In addition, the role of the orchestra is much greater in the revised version. The orchestra is transformed from a simple accompaniment to one that is more varied and also supports the soloist with numerous interplays and harmonically enhanced chords.²¹³ The principal or secondary themes played by woodwinds instead of the original piano-strings combination further enriches the material. The maturity of the

²¹¹ Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, *Sergey Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in music* (New York: NYUP, 1956), 205

²¹² Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 278

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 278

composer is strongly noticeable particularly in the replaced or added materials such as the start of the development of the first movement (bars 82–112, 1891 and bars 75–123, 1917) or the first part of the piano *cadenza* where he had the freedom to introduce his new ideas and techniques. All these features and new ideas incorporated in the revised version of Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto will be discussed later in this chapter.

The publication of the revised version is also interesting. According to some evidence Rachmaninoff finished the revision of the Concerto on 10 November 1917, two weeks after the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace in St Petersburg and declared the end of Tsarist Russia. After accepting an invitation from a Swedish concert manager to perform in Stockholm, Rachmaninoff passed the score of his revised first piano concerto to the publisher Sergey Koussevitzky (*Éditions Russes de Musique*) before he left Russia in December 1917.²¹⁴ Rachmaninoff and his family travelled first to Europe and then to the United States where the premiere of the revised version of the First Piano Concerto took place in 1919 with Rachmaninoff as the solo pianist and Modest Altschuler conducting the Russian Symphony Society Orchestra.²¹⁵ It is notable that being a perfectionist Rachmaninoff was pleased with the revised version, especially the fact that he could keep 'the youthful freshness' of the concerto. In his interview to Alfred Swan years later he was even upset that the revised concerto still did not appeal to the public as much as some of his other works including the second and the third piano concertos.²¹⁶

A final 1919 version, that has very minor changes which the author proofread and approved, was published outside of the Soviet Union. Interestingly, in 1965 the

²¹⁴ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergey Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in music*, 206–207

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 218

²¹⁶ Morley Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 49

state publishing house of the Soviet Russia released an edition based on the original manuscript of the 1917 version which was (and still is) kept in the Museum of Musical Culture named after Glinka in Moscow.²¹⁷ This could have been driven by the Soviet ideology aimed at promoting the significance of the Bolshevik revolution as a source of inspiration for Rachmaninoff to revise the original score. As such, by publishing the 1917 version, the Soviet apparatus may have tried to show that Rachmaninoff, a prominent Russian composer, revised the Concerto in the year of the great Russian revolution. However, the more likely reason would be due to the copyright issues as anything printed in Russia prior to 1917 was no longer in copyright. This was also the reason why the US publishers decided to release their own edition in 1919. Nevertheless, the revised Piano Concerto No. 1 nowadays is identified as 1917 regardless of the actual publication date.

The table below shows the changes Rachmaninoff made to the overall structure of the Concerto in terms of length.

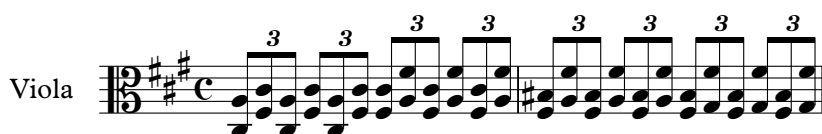
	1891	1917
1 st mov.	312 bars	295 bars (-17)
2 nd mov.	69 bars	73 bars (+4)
3 rd mov.	240 bars	218 bars (-22)
		-35 bars

²¹⁷ Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1*, 48

First movement

The overall structure of the first movement of the revised (1917) Piano Concerto No. 1 stays very close to the original (1891) version. However, when comparing the scores of both versions there is a feeling that Rachmaninoff changed and improved almost every single bar of the movement to match his new compositional language and for a better flow. Although most of the modifications of the first movement start from the first transition (see Table 1, and Charts 1 and 4), the introduction and the first subject of the revised version underwent some changes as well. The first noticeable alteration is the orchestral opening fanfares that in the revised version involves more instruments (bars 1–2 and 9–12, both versions).

Structurally, the revised first subject of the first piano concerto remains identical to the original version. However, the orchestral execution of the first subject (bars /16–23, both versions) notably differs from the original. Compared to the original clarinet-violin combination, in the revised version the first subject is introduced only by the violins and harmonised by more instruments (oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horns and rest of the strings). The violin execution of the first subject gives more soloistic character further emphasising the importance of the main material. Another important alteration is the replacement of a repetitive triplet interval accompaniment of the viola section (Ex.4.1) with a new arpeggio-like figuration (Ex.4.2) which the pianist later imitates in the second run of the first subject (Ex.4.3).



Ex.4.1 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bars 16–17



Ex.4.2 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1st movement, bars 16–17



Ex.4.3 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1st movement, bars 23–25

The decorated accompaniment of the soloist's first subject with chromatic alterations replaces broken arpeggio chords in the original version. The new more sophisticated overcrossing left-hand accompaniment of the first subject further enhances the musical dimensions of the piece.²¹⁸ The wider keyboard coverage of the accompaniment and additional polyrhythmic setting of the piano part bring the composition closer to Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto.

The revised first part of the first transition (bars 32–48, 1891 and bars 32–47, 1917) is much lighter compared to the original, due to the elimination of the pianist's *pesante* left-hand chords and the *staccato* articulation of the orchestral instruments. In the revised version the secondary motif, previously played by first violins and repeated over and over from the first bar of the transition, is reduced to a single appearance in strings supported by oboe (bar 37, 1917) and one further iteration by flute (bar 45, 1917). This amendment helped the composer achieve a transparent and lighter *leggiere*

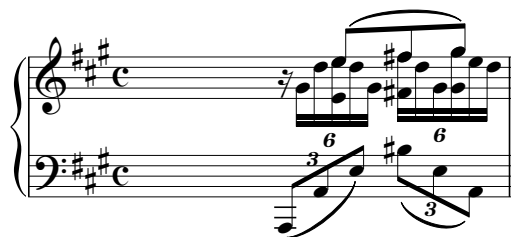
²¹⁸ Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1*, 53–54

feeling and eliminated the repetitiveness of the material. It also enhanced the gradual progression of the first transition to the culmination by including more instruments and adding secondary elements on the way. The unification of the last two bars of the original transition resulted in a single bar in the revised version.

The second part of the first transition (bars /49–59, 1891 and bars /48–56, 1917) of the first movement largely remains untouched with the main difference being the repositioning of the secondary motif originally played by strings in a passage reminiscent of a piano quintet. In the revised version the same motif is played by woodwinds starting with solo oboe-horn (bars 48ff, 1917) and later passing to solo clarinet-bassoon (bars 52ff, 1917). Similar to the first part of the first transition, the revised second part is shorter by two bars due to the merging of the last three bars of the original subject.

As in the first subject of the concerto, the start of the second subject (bars 60–69, 1891 and bars 57–66, 1917) in the revised first movement is also presented by violins only in contrast to the original violin-clarinet combination. In the recurrence of the second subject (bars 69–73, 1891 and bars 66–70, 1917) of the original version, the piano part had awkward timings and the rhythm of the semiquaver sextuplets against the quaver triplets in the left hand (Ex.4.4) affected the overall clarity of the presentation.²¹⁹ The revised version marked *leggiere* provides an interesting solution by giving woodwinds a solo part and adding a *pizzicato* to the violins to support the soloist who now has much lighter and attractive left-hand semiquaver triplets enhanced with chromatic figurations (Ex.4.5).

²¹⁹ Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1*, 57



Ex.4.4 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bar 69



Ex.4.5 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1st movement, bar 66

The extended sequential *Animato* ending of the second subject (bars 74–78, 1891) was simply removed from the revised version resulting in a five-bar decrease.²²⁰ A solo piano chordal passage (bars 79–81, 1891), which resembles the opening of Schumann’s piano concerto, was replaced with a chromatically ascending and more dramatic four-bar piano passage (bars 71–74, 1917) which gives more dynamism to the end of the second subject and smoothly leads to the climactic start of the development (bars 82ff, 1891 and bars 75ff, 1917).

At the start of the development (bars 82–98, 1891 and bars 75–92, 1917) Rachmaninoff replaced the original *Moderato* routinely repetitive and ‘loosely-related’ descending four-note quavers with *Vivace* triplet quavers which is coherent with the solo piano grand opening of the movement and added more drama to the

²²⁰ Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1*, 52

piece.²²¹ The original start of the development feels like an artificial insertion distantly referencing the descending pattern of the introduction with abrupt modulations (A–f–g#). Whereas the revised development starts in the key of A minor instead of A major and is longer by 18 bars, mostly due to a new sixteen-bar additional section (bars 93–108, 1917) based on the principal and secondary materials. In this section, the triplet quavers continue to reiterate the start of the new development parallel to the fragmented third subject which later develops into a main element for the following section (bars 99–112, 1891 and bars 109–123, 1917). At the end of the revised orchestral opening of the development horns ones again restate the opening octave fanfares (bars 119–123, 1917) to summarise this section, prepare for a key change (D minor to C sharp minor) and make the pianist’s entrance clearer. With all these alterations, Rachmaninoff introduced more dynamism and variation and also unified the piece better, linking all thematic, harmonic and rhythmic features together. This is by far his longest orchestral passage in any concerto packed with complex instrumental interplay typical of his later works.²²² These extra additional bars could also be seen as a means of balancing the piece because of the shortened exposition and recapitulation and the many cuts of redundant and repetitive bars.

In general, the rest of the revised development (bars /113–166, 1891 and bars 124–171, 1917) of the first movement stays very close to the original version. The most noticeable modification occurs just after the long orchestral passage where Rachmaninoff changed the harmonic structure of the revised version and altered the texture of the piano writing (see Charts 1 and 4). Instead of B minor (bars /113–128, b–e–c#, 1891), the revised development starts in C sharp minor (bars 124–137, c#–e–

²²¹ Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1*, 52

²²² Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 211–212

g, 1917) while the piano texture of the principal material varies on every modulation (Ex.4.7, 4.8 and 4.9). The new key harmonically corresponds with the rest of the development which is centred on the same C sharp minor key.

Ex.4.6 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, bar 113

Ex.4.7 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1st movement, bar 125

Ex.4.8 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1st movement, bar 129

Ex.4.9 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1st movement, bar 133

In the following part of the development (bars 129–140, 1891 and bars 138–149, 1917) the main changes are to the orchestration. For example, the horns' rhythmic accompaniment in the first version is played by strings in the revised version, while the solo horn replaces the original clarinet in the execution of the main motif (bars 129–130, 1891 and bars 138–139, 1917). This is another example of where Rachmaninoff seems to be attempting to achieve a better balance by sharing the musical material across a wider range of orchestral instruments.

By deleting the original rhetoric orchestral *fortississimo* tutti chords and significantly reducing the descending octave triplets played by the soloist that resembles the opening piano cascade (bars 153–166, 1891 and bars 162–171, 1917), Rachmaninoff transformed the end of the development into a much smoother transition dissipating the full stop effect of the original version. An almost identical restatement of the introductory material gives the original version of the concerto a sense of repetition and redundancy. Whereas after just two bars of the piano opening recollection, the new dance-like lighter *scherzando* piano figuration based on the first four-note motif of the first subject naturally reduces the power of the revised retransition and smoothly leads to the recapitulation.

The recapitulation of the revised first movement continues in the same vein already established in the exposition. Removal of the extended sequential *Animato* ending of the second subject (bars 218–222, 1891) alongside the repetitive *Moderato* restatement of the development (bars 226–229, 1891) was inevitable and highly expected. As Rachmaninoff removed the first *Animato* passage from the exposition, it was obvious that a similar approach would be deemed necessary in the recapitulation. In the brief restatement at the start of the development he had to follow the same logic by replacing the original descending four-note orchestral passage with

the new version based on the introductory material (bars 226–229, 1891 and bars 220–224, 1917). Similar to the start of the development, the restatement of the revised version is written in the parallel minor key (F sharp minor) and better relates to the new *cadenza* which is centred in the home key.

However, there are some extra modifications in the revised version that are important to mention such as the piano restatement of the first subject (bars /172–179, 1917) in a waltz-like rhythm borrowed from the second part of the first transition, a four-bar reduction of the original first part of the first transition (bars 183–186, 1891), two new variants of the second subject piano accompaniment (bars 201–214, 1917) and a new five-bar orchestral bridge passage (bars 215–219, 1917) marked as *Vivace* that replaces the original solo piano passage from the exposition (bars /223–225, 1891).

While it is similar in structure and length (55 bars, 1891 and 53 bars, 1917), the revision of the *cadenza* (bars /232–286, 1891 and bars /225–277, 1917) of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 1 shows a significant harmonic and textural transformation of Rachmaninoff's writing style. The original seventeen-bar *Con Agitazione* start of the *cadenza* written in 3/4 time (bars /232–248, 1891) was removed from the final version. Instead, the revised *cadenza* starts with octave introductory fanfares replacing the original orchestral tutti (bars 230–231, 1891) from the end of the recapitulation and inherently continues the speed (*Vivace*) and power of the preceding orchestral transition. Given that Rachmaninoff deleted all the four-note quaver descending orchestral materials from the second transition, he also needed to replace the twelve bars (bars 249–260, 1891) of a similar pattern in the *cadenza*. The revised first part of the *cadenza* (bars /225–252, 1917) is primarily based on the introductory material (orchestral fanfares and piano cascade) with some references to

the first subject at the end of the section (bars 244–248, 1917). The texturally dense start of this novel section, full of chromatically altered bell-like heavy chords, and the improvisatory ending (bars 244–252, 1917) clearly shows the evolution of Rachmaninoff's compositional language, bringing it closer to the style of his Piano Sonata No. 2 originally written in 1913.

In the middle section of the revised *cadenza* (Con moto bars 261–277, 1891 and Allegro moderato bars 253–268, 1917) which is based on the third subject material, Rachmaninoff introduced a new, harmonically more varied left-hand accompaniment filled with extensive chromatic elements and secondary motifs. The original simple arpeggio accompaniment that closely follows the *cadenza* of Grieg's piano concerto, is significantly limited to seven bars in the revised version (bars 253–259, 1917). The arpeggio passages followed by the first subject material in the original version (bars 272–277, 1891) are replaced with chordal triplets (bars 263–268, 1917), removing the direct connections with Grieg's *cadenza* and maintaining the same energy and power till the first orchestral chord in the coda. The revised Maestoso ending of the *cadenza* (Maestoso /278–286, 1891 and /269–277, 1917) is almost identical to the original version.

The revised coda of the first movement, which is shorter by eight bars (bars 287–312, 1891 and bars 278–295, 1917), has better balance between the piano and the orchestra. In the solo piano-centred original version of the coda, the pianist starts *pianississimo* and finishes with decorative semiquavers, while the orchestra simply harmonises the soloist's part throughout the entire coda. In the revised version, just after the soloist concludes the rhetorical statement of the *cadenza*, the coda starts *attacca subito senza fermata* with a triplet figuration from the introductory piano

opening and with a pronounced and sustained energetic orchestral support until the last chord of the movement.²²³

The orchestration of the new coda is significantly more advanced and novel than the original version. All the instruments are fully engaged, the back-and-forth exchange of the main material gives an impression of a competition or argument between the soloist and the orchestra. Moreover, the rhythmically contrasting middle section (bars 282–284 and 288–289, 1917) alongside the chromatically enhanced nature of the soloistic and orchestral passages resembles Rachmaninoff's later works such as Piano Concerto No. 4 and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. In these last two piano/orchestral works, Rachmaninoff used a great number of offbeat rhythms to create a more varied and sometimes deceptive rhythmic structure.

The removal of the soloist's last *sforzando* chord (bar 311, 1891) together with the traditional final held chord of the orchestra (bar 312, 1891) helps depart from the conventional concerto ending similar to those in Tchaikovsky's or Grieg's piano concertos. Without this extra bar, the descending piano stream effectively ends in the final *sforzando* tutti chord, which adds power to the coda and helps keep the drama of the *cadenza* up until the end of the first movement

Second movement

The new, structurally similar (see Table 2, and Charts 2 and 5) but slightly longer version of the second movement (69 bars, 1891 and 73 bars, 1917), mostly differs from the original in its harmonic variations and the chromaticism used in both

²²³ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 281

orchestral and piano parts. Similar to the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 1, Rachmaninoff reworked the originally simple orchestration by displacing and adding new melodic lines throughout the revised second movement. Overall, he gave a greater significance to the orchestra, transforming its role from a simple accompaniment in the original to a fully supportive function in the revised version. In the piano part he included a number of sub-voices that surround the main subjects, a feature which is common to Rachmaninoff's later works such as Piano Sonata No. 2, *Etude Tableaux* or Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3. As Max Harrison states:

The melody is like the initial version, but its setting now incorporates Rachmaninoff's latter-day chromaticism.²²⁴

From the very start of the second movement the new, texturally dense orchestral introduction (bars /1–8, both versions) stands out with its rhythmic and harmonic features alongside the substantial reorchestration. In addition to the original setting, the new introduction has more instruments involved (flute, oboe, trumpet, trombone) with some rhythmic alterations starting from the very beginning of the movement.²²⁵ Instead of the original unison clarinet upbeat triplet on the fourth beat, the revised version starts with solo horn from the second half of the third beat giving more emphasis to the second (dotted quaver C sharp) note of the motif which is now positioned on the fourth beat. Similarly, the first orchestral chord is now on the second beat (Ex.4.11) and twice as long in duration (minim) as the original crotchet on the third beat (Ex.4.10). This new harmonically richer rhythmic setting supports the *crescendo* of the main material better compared to the original crotchet chords.

²²⁴ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 212

²²⁵ Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1*, 62

Ex.4.10 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2nd movement, bars 1–2

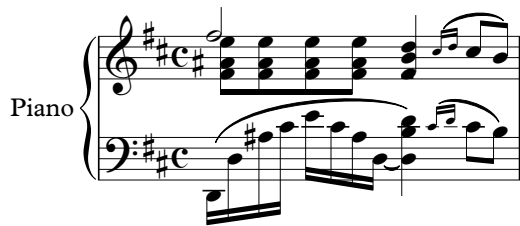
Ex.4.11 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2nd movement, bars 1–2

The new piano introduction of the second movement (bars /9–9, 1917), which is reminiscent of the Piano Concerto No. 3 (Second movement, bars 32–36), is an excellent illustration of the harmonically advanced thinking of mature Rachmaninoff. The restatement of the orchestral opening theme by the soloist and much more harmonically and rhythmically innovative multi-layered passage that replaces the original simple arpeggio-like ascending scale in minims (bar 9, 1891), further enriches the opening of the second movement.

One of the main features of the first subject is the harmonically sophisticated and at same time light accompaniment of the main material. Similar to Rachmaninoff's style of the time when he was revising the concerto, the solo piano execution of the subject was enhanced by secondary motifs moving parallel to the main material. The removal of the original right-hand chords (bars 11, 12, 15, etc., 1891) and the introduction of new downbeat quaver rests for the left-hand triplets in the beginning of the bar (bars 10ff, 1917) help reduce clutter and heaviness of the accompaniment and give more freedom and attention to the main theme. Equally, at the end of the revised solo piano exposition (bars 23–24, 1917) an added right-hand quaver rest delays the entry of the main melodic element enriched with new chromatic decoration. This rhythmic shift helps better accentuate the first note of the motif (G bar 23 and E bar 24, 1917) and break away from the left-hand accompaniment. At the start of the second subject (bars 27–34, both versions) the original clarinet-violas secondary motif is replaced by solo bassoon which later passes over to the violas (bars 32ff, 1917). Moreover, the same descending four-note motif exists in the new piano accompaniment of this section further emphasising the importance of the secondary element.

The newly-written second part of the second subject (bars 35–47, 1891 and bars 35–51, 1917) perhaps is the most important and stylistically contrasting section of the movement. Here Rachmaninoff introduces his new skills and language filled with advanced harmonisation, modulation and chromaticism. He replaced the Tchaikovsky-like unaccompanied thirteen-bar statement of merely sequential chords and octaves (Ex.4.12, bars 35–47, 1891) with a subtle interplay between the piano and orchestra. In the new seventeen-bar extension (Ex.4.13, bars 35–51, 1917) the orchestra gently accompanies and supports the soloist by harmonising and filling the

gaps with additional melodic and chromatic elements, and in some cases taking over the melodies where the piano plays semiquaver sweeping passages (bars 39ff, 1917). In contrast to the second subject based original extension, the new interplay also recaptures the orchestral introductory motif from the start of the movement (Ex.4.13).



Ex.4.12 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2nd movement, bar 35

The image shows a musical score for the second movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), bar 35. It includes parts for Horn in F and Piano. The Horn part has a 'Solo' marking and features a triplet of eighth notes. The Piano part has a complex texture with triplets in both hands. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

Ex.4.13 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2nd movement, bar 35

This section also gave Rachmaninoff a chance to illustrate his new sophisticated modulatory language (bars 35–51, eb–Gb–D) that substitutes the harmonically simple (circle of fifths) representation of the original extension (bars 35–57, b–e–A). Similarly, the simple chromatically ascending left-hand octaves and repetitive right-hand triplets were replaced with the orchestral introductory motif, followed by a harmonically more advanced piano passage (bars 46–47, 1891 and bars /49–51, 1917) that smoothly reaches the restatement material. All this helps to get a harmonically richer sound and adds more drama to the movement, while it also

improves the balance between the soloist and the orchestra. Rachmaninoff's use of the lowered supertonic as a passing key traces back to the second and third piano concertos discussed earlier in this thesis. In the second movement of the revised first piano concerto the key of E flat minor (II \downarrow) again acts as a chromatic temporary ascend that eventually returns back to the home key of D major.

In the restatement of the first subject (bars 48–65, 1891 and bars 52–69, 1917) the main material in the revised version is presented only by the first violins and cellos with additional ornamental chromatic passages introduced by flute, clarinet and bassoon (bars 55, 59–60 and 62, 1917). The original tutti strings and cumbersome triplets-against-duplets piano structure were replaced with a lighter quaver-semiquaver piano variant of the second part of the first subject. All these features, alongside the lighter piano chords accompanied with decorative semiquaver chromatic left-hand passages that also serves as a parallel counter melody, reduces the weight and creates more contrast with the start of the second movement.

The piano part of the revised coda (bars 69–73, 1917) also stands out with harmonically innovative chordal progressions replacing the original G major and G minor repetitive triplet quaver chords (bars 65–69, 1891). The new coda enhanced with chromatic elements, descending semiquaver quadruplets (bars 56–57, 1917) and sextuplets (bar 58, 1917) further enrich the section and match the overall new textural style of the second movement. Similar to the solution with the final chord of the first movement, Rachmaninoff also altered also the end of the coda in the second movement so that the final two solo minim chords are played together with the orchestra.

Third movement

The revised third movement of Piano Concerto No. 1 is a complete reworking from structural, textural, harmonic and orchestral perspectives. The revision of the third movement perfectly corresponds to the style that the musical world now associates with Rachmaninoff. The new rhythmic patterns and complex harmonic language full of chromatic elements are reminiscent of his later works such as *Étude Tableaux*, Piano Concerto Nos. 3 and 4. Although the orchestral voices were substantially reduced in some places alongside the thinning of the overall texture, the new orchestration of the third movement has a more balanced and greater role compared to the original version. Rachmaninoff also added two percussion instruments (triangle and cymbals) and applied a particular emphasis to individual instruments giving some of the main themes to the clarinet, oboe or flute instead of merely concentrating on piano and strings as was frequently the case with the original version of the concerto. As Grossman states:

The tendency to vary the instruments which present principal thematic material in another means of orchestral variety that distinguish the revisions.²²⁶

Compared to the original *pianissimo* soft introduction (Ex.4.14, bars 1–6, 1891), which reminds one of the opening in the third movement of Grieg or Schumann's concertos, the revised introduction starts with a *fortissimo* by the entire orchestra minus the triangle and cymbals (Ex.4.15, bars 1–9, 1917). Instead of the original simple arpeggio, the revised piano part starts with a chordal answer to the orchestral motif which immediately continues the soloist's passage without a delay or a gap as in the original version.

²²⁶ Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1*, 80

Ex.4.14 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3rd movement, bars 1–2

Ex.4.15 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3rd movement, bars 1–3

This conversation between the piano and the orchestra and the alternated time of the first subject (9/8 and 12/8), which is implemented also in the introduction, makes the start of the third movement more dynamic and progressive. The harmonically more attractive five-bar piano passage (bars 5–9, 1917) further enhances the vigorous nature of the introduction and better complements the overall character of the third movement.

While the start of the first subject is identical in both versions (bars /7–9, 1891 and bars /10–12, 1917), there are several changes in the revised version that set it apart from the original such as the relocation of the piano material to the orchestra and the redesign of the end of the original first subject. The chordal four-bar ending of the original first subject (bars 11–14, 1891) is replaced with a lighter two-bar variant (bars /18–19, 1917), which is stylistically closer to the introductory piano passage. Instead

of an orchestral restatement of the first subject (bars 15–18, 1891), Rachmaninoff expanded the initial subject with a swift, dance-like, four-bar piano (bars 16–19, 1917) and two-bar orchestral bridge (bars /20–21, 1917) that smoothly leads to the first transition. The new transition (bars /22–37, 1917), which can also be seen as a development of the first subject as it shares the same rhythmical and textural features, replaces the recurring and sectional sequences of the original version (bars /19–31, 1891). All these features introduced at the start of the third movement illustrates Rachmaninoff’s new tendency in symphonising the concerto genre and increasing the orchestral role. Instead of mere accompaniment seen in the original version of the concerto, the orchestra of the revised version is in constant communication with the soloist by sharing some of the important rhythmic and thematic materials.

The solo-piano oriented second subject (bars 32–67, 1891 and bars 38–61, 1917) experienced the most modification, transforming the originally repetitive *Piu mosso* material (Ex.4.16) into a light and playful *Allegro leggiere* (Ex.4.17).



Ex.4.16 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3rd movement, bars 32–35



Ex.4.17 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3rd movement, bars 38–41

The revised orchestration of the second subject sounds much lighter despite it being played by more instruments than in the original version (flute-clarinet-bassoon-strings, 1891 and oboe-clarinet-bassoon-horn-strings, 1917). This is partly due to the articulation of the instruments including the use of *staccatos* and *pizzicatos* and the elimination of the original three-note ascending unison motif played by solo flute, clarinet and bassoon (bars 32ff, 1891). Furthermore, the strings are given a greater role and more rhythmic interest in the development of the revised second subject (bars /46–53, 1917) compared to the static original version (bars 40–47, 1891). With a simple accompaniment by violas, cellos and double bass, the violins introduce a new and contrasting counter melody which is the only new thematic material in the entire revision of Piano Concerto No. 1.²²⁷



Ex.4.18 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3rd movement, bars /46–53

Similar to the first subject, Rachmaninoff extended the revised second subject by inserting an eight-bar sequential bridge passage (bars 54–61, 1917) and removing the original solo piano episode and the following second subject restatement (bars 48–67, 1891). The new ending of the second subject, featuring alternating-hand chordal piano passage (bars 59–61, 1917), organically reaches the climax and hands over to the fortissimo orchestral closing section. While both closing sections (bars 68–76, 1891 and bars 62–70, 1917) of the third movement have the same power reducing

²²⁷ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 284

purpose for a smooth transition to the third subject, they have different rhythmic and harmonic functions. Compared to the home key based (F sharp minor) original closing section, the revised orchestral tutti continues the dynamic and rhythmic character of the preceding solo piano material in A major later modulating to C minor (bars /67ff, 1917). As a result, the revised third subject starts in the distant key of E flat major instead of the original D major.

The third subject (bars /77–123, *Andante espressivo*, 1891 and bars /71–115, *Andante ma non troppo*, 1917) of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 1 is the part that structurally stays very close to the original version, unlike the previous two subjects (see Table 3, and Charts 3 and 6). Perhaps the most noticeable change is the use of a distant key of E flat major instead of D major²²⁸ and the soloist's new, harmonically much more complex and improvisatory piano passages replacing the original simple piano writing. At the start of the third subject, the original descending oddly grouped semiquaver scales (Ex.4.19, 4-5-7 bar 78 or 4-6-7 bar 80, 1891) were replaced with semiquaver sextuplets and their variants (Ex. 4.20, bars 79ff, 1917) echoing the orchestral third subject motif.

The musical score for Ex.4.19 consists of three staves. The top staff is for the Piano (right hand), the middle for the Piano (left hand), and the bottom for Violin I. II. The tempo is marked 'Andante espressivo' with a metronome marking of a quarter note equal to 60. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The piano part features descending semiquaver scales with fingering (5, 7) and dynamics (mf, pp, m.d.). The violin part features a descending semiquaver scale with dynamics (mf).

Ex.4.19 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3rd movement, bars 76–80

²²⁸ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 284

Andante ma non troppo (♩ = ♩)

Piano

Violin I.II.

Ex.4.20 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3rd movement, bars 70–74

In the first part of the revised third subject of the third movement (bars //77–92, 1891 and bars /71–86, 1917) Rachmaninoff also cuts the number of orchestral instruments. He removes the original clarinets doubling the third subject material played by the violins and bassoon accompaniment and also limited the horn to a single section (bars 81–84, 1891 and bars 75–78, 1917). The thinning of the overall texture of the orchestra and the new ornamental piano writing significantly reduces the weight of this section and better highlights the principal material played by the harmonically enhanced strings.

The first four bars of the revised second part of the third subject (bars /93–96, 1891 and bars 87–90, 1917) also continue the same simplifying idea of the previous section. The chordal right-hand structure of the original version (Ex.4.21) is replaced with a single melody enhanced with some decorative elements (Ex.4.22).

Piano

Ex.4.21 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3rd movement, bars 93–97



Ex.4.22 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3rd movement, bars 87–91

The eight-bar arch-like structure of the second part of the third subject (bars /93–100, 1891 and bars 87–94, 1917) with its contrasting dynamic, tonal and textural qualities, greatly benefits from this new piano setting. In contrast to the pronounced single melody start of the subject, the peak of the climax incorporates denser right-hand chords with chromatic elements (bars /91–94, 1917), thus further enhancing the arch-like structural feature of this section. In contrast, throughout the second part of the original third subject the main material is presented with heavy, right-hand piano chords. Moreover, the original eight-bar section later repeats without a single change (bars /93–100 and /101–108, 1891), whereas in the revised version the strings join the soloist harmonising the first four bars of the section while the piano introduces a slightly altered variant of the same material with a harmonically and rhythmically more advanced ending (bars /95–102, 1917).

Rachmaninoff made a complete reconstruction of the restatement of the first part of the third subject (bars /109–123, 1891 and bars /103–115, 1917) repositioning and rephrasing the orchestral instruments, harmonically inflating the texture of the piano section and adding a new ending. Given that he removed the piano scales from the first part of the original subject (C-1), he also needed to replace the clarinet-violin-violoncello parallel scale-like passages (bars 112ff, 1891). Instead, in the new version of this section, the solo flute and horn respond to the soloist's principal material while the oboe, bassoon and strings harmonise in the background (bars /104ff, 1917).

Additionally, a new, harmonically more advanced piano transition of the third subject with a complex arpeggio-like *ad libitum* piano passage leading to the final E flat major chord (bars 110–115, 1917), replaces the original repetitive simple extension of the third subject of the third movement (bars 116–123, 1891).

The recapitulation of the first subject of the third movement in the original version of Piano Concerto No. 1 starts with simple three-note descending transitional crochets played by the lower strings (bar 124, 1891) leading to the exact replica of the introductory material in the same C sharp major (bars 125–130, 1891). By contrast, a creative scale-like orchestral opening (bar 116, 1917), which replicates the preceding cadential piano passage of the third subject (bar 115, 1917), in a single bar reaches a *fortissimo* tutti restatement of the revised introduction (bars 116–125, 1917). The latter starts in D major instead and modulates back to the dominant (C sharp major, bars 121ff, 1917) of F sharp minor, the home key of the third movement.

The recapitulation of both first (bars /131–155, 1891 and bars /126–155, 1917) and second (bars 156–192, 1891 and bars 156–193, 1917) subjects of the third movement stays very close to the exposition in both versions of Piano Concerto No. 1. The original version of the restatement is almost an exact replica of the exposition with very few minor alterations. Perhaps the only noticeable change is the second transition (bars 193–221, 1891) which is primarily based on the first transitional material. By contrast, the revised version of the restatement has some extra features such as two new percussion instruments (triangle, bars 155ff and cymbals, bars 117ff, 1917), relocated principal or secondary tunes (bars /126–129, 1917) and different variants of some of the piano material. Moreover, the restated second part of the revised transition (bars 146–155, 1917) is longer by two bars and includes additional

material played by solo clarinet (bars 146ff) and flute (bars 147ff) to enrich the piano semiquaver sextuplet passages.

The restated second subject in the revised version is longer by eight bars due to the repetition of the first eight-bar section (D major bars 156–163, G flat (F sharp) major bars 164–171). To contrast with the *pizzicato* and *staccato* articulated transparent exposition of the revised second subject (Allegro leggiero bars 38ff, 1917), Rachmaninoff altered the structure, rhythm and texture of the recapitulation of the same material (Allegro ma non tanto bars 156ff, 1917). Instead of the alternating-hand, swift semiquaver piano texture of the exposition, the new parallel octave quaver triplets give a somewhat more relaxed and less agitated impression. The violin and cello descending crotchets and the sustained note accompaniment of clarinet, bassoon and horns also contribute to achieving the same effect. After modulating to G flat major (bars 164ff, 1917), this effect gradually lessens due to the added new percussion instrument (triangle) and the return of the *staccato* articulation.

The eight-bar sequential bridge passage (bars 54–61, 1917) of the exposition was replaced with a fourteen-bar rhythmically unstable transitional sequences (bars 180–193, 1917). While both sections have a similar linking purpose, the interchangeable rhythm of the second transition (6/8, 9/8, 12/8 and 4/4) and quaver triplet piano texture give a sense of increasing tension expressed through an *accelerando* and efficiently lead to the coda. This creates a better rhythmic and stylistic continuity without an obvious segmentation of the functions seen in the original version of the concerto.

Rachmaninoff fully revamped and transformed the coda of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 1 by removing the melodramatic Maestoso grand finale of the third movement (bars 222–240, 1891) and replacing it with more dynamic and

expressive twenty-five-bar coda (bars 194–218, 1917). According to Geoffrey Norris, the subject used for the *Maestoso* section ‘does not have the same possibilities for upward sequential treatment,’ and the original coda occurs very close to the end of the movement and does not allow enough time to have a meaningful effect.²²⁹

However, this was possibly also done either to break away from the influence of the traditional Tchaikovsky or Grieg-style concerto, or most likely to avoid the redundancy of fully restating all three subjects of the third movement. Rachmaninoff already successfully used the *Maestoso* idea at the end of his Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3 and was to use it again in the final revision (1941) of Piano Concerto No. 4. Given that both second and third concertos were written before the revisional process of the first piano concerto in 1917, he could easily have modified the original coda of the first piano concerto to match the style and characteristics of his later works. Also, as most of the material in the revised third movement of Piano Concerto No. 1 shares a similar restless character, it was perhaps essential to keep the tranquil third subject for the middle of the third movement only for better contrast and unity.

The new coda, which has some similarities with the revised orchestral closing section of the exposition (bars 62–70, 1917), effortlessly continues the intense interchange between the orchestra and the soloist established by the second transition. Although the new percussion instruments (triangle and cymbals) only join the orchestra starting from the recapitulation of the third movement, they bring a new colour and further enriched sound, particularly to the coda. The new ending is a perfect match to the overall character and dynamism of the movement and ends the concerto in one breath from the new transition of the recapitulation through the coda to the finale.

²²⁹ Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 111

All these structural and harmonic modifications seen in the revised version of Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto, further emphasise his compositional direction and evolution from his student years. Particularly noticeable is the departure from the original chamber like orchestration towards a more collaborative, varied and harmonically supportive one. The piano writing is much more virtuosic and advanced which is highly expected from a composer who already produced his two piano sonatas and two sets of *Etude Tableaux*. However, while the overall texture in the revised version is much denser, full of multi-voicing and parallel motivic movements, there is also a tendency towards rhythmic and harmonic ambiguity of which Rachmaninoff's fourth piano concerto stands out.

Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40 (1926)

Rachmaninoff began working on his new piano concerto around the same time or even earlier as the revision of his Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1917. The early sketches of the concerto most probably date from 1914 when the first public mention of the composition appeared in the April issue of the journal *Muzika*.²³⁰ Another notice that Rachmaninoff was working on his fourth piano concerto appeared in the 1917 Russian musical press (*Russkaya Musikalnaya Gazeta*, No. 17/18, 1917).²³¹ The latter, however, could be misleading due to the fact that at the time Rachmaninoff was working on the revision of Piano Concerto No. 1 which could have been mistaken for a new work or fourth concerto. In addition, the revised first piano concerto (1917)

²³⁰ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 60

²³¹ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 299

continues the stylistic features of the second and third piano concertos, whereas Piano Concerto No. 4 moves towards simplicity and textural transparency which is typical to Rachmaninoff's late works.

Furthermore, in the draft of Rachmaninoff's own *cadenza* for the Second Hungarian Rhapsody by Liszt kept in the Library of Congress, there are some fragments of the last movement of the fourth piano concerto. The first performance of the Rhapsody was in January 1919, which may suggest that Rachmaninoff could have started working on the fourth piano concerto just after he left Russia in 1917. While there is no evidence confirming the exact date, the *cadenza* was most probably finalised in the summer of 1918 for his second programme of the 1919 concert season.²³² Also, some parts of the first and third movements of the fourth piano concerto exist in a sketchbook Rachmaninoff passed to Siloti around 1921–22.²³³

Even if Rachmaninoff started working on his new concerto before leaving Russia in the midst of revolutionary turmoil, he certainly could not have found time to finalise the work in the early years of his life as an émigré due to his extensive engagements as a concert pianist. In his letter to Morozov in April 1923, Rachmaninoff complained about being extremely tired from his exhausting concert schedules (more than 75 concerts in 4 months) and that he had no time or will to compose a single piece, confirming that 'it's been five years since I worked on composition'.²³⁴ At the end of this letter Rachmaninoff mentions his 'two major compositions' which he started before leaving Russia and which in his words could be a way to go back to composition when he finds time, as to compose something new would be an extremely hard task after a five-year break.²³⁵ One of the two works

²³² Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 381

²³³ *Ibid.*, 299

²³⁴ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergey Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in music*, 231

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 231

could be the fourth piano concerto, while the second major work could be his unfinished opera *Monna Vanna* or the early sketches of the ballet *The Scythians*, some elements of which he may have eventually used in his Symphonic Dances written in 1940.²³⁶

It was only in 1926 that Rachmaninoff finally found time to complete Piano Concerto No. 4 in Dresden and prepare for the premier, which took place in Philadelphia under Leopold Stokowski in March 1927.²³⁷ This was his first major composition after leaving Russia which, however, did not match the expectations of both the critics and the audience. Based on the criticism, Rachmaninoff decided to revise the concerto the same year by cutting 114 bars and introducing significant changes in the orchestral and piano parts.²³⁸

As stated in Rachmaninoff's letter, it took him 'one and half months of hard work' to finish the corrections of his concerto and send it for publication.²³⁹ The piece was published in 1928 by Tair publishers, which he founded and named after his daughters Tatiana and Irina. However, even the revised version, first performed in 1929 in London, did not gain the overwhelming approval of the audience and critics. After playing it again in the following year Rachmaninoff abandoned the piece until the summer of 1941 when he made his final revisions.²⁴⁰

It is, however, important to understand the extent to which the failure of the Concerto was related to the structural and technical solutions of the original version or whether the audience simply did not understand the new compositional language and style Rachmaninoff adopted and the novel elements and approaches he introduced

²³⁶ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 253–254

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 255

²³⁸ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 111

²³⁹ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 300

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 300

in the fourth piano concerto. The close examination of the revision of the Concerto as discussed later in this chapter aims to explore and find answers to some of these questions.

The extensive modification of the concerto structure, short fragmental subjects and abundance of harmonic modulations in the fourth piano concerto could be seen as Rachmaninoff's attempt to alter his musical style to match the more progressive compositional language of the time and remove the 'conservative' stamp from his name. Despite his great efforts to improve and promote the Concerto as widely as possible, it remained largely rejected by the audiences of the time and was overshadowed by the second and third piano concertos. It could be said that the public may have not been ready yet for a sudden and drastic shift filled with new ideas and innovations in Rachmaninoff's compositional language and style which were broadly seen in the light of his second and third concerto styles. The audience may have been expecting a continuation of Piano Concerto No. 3 or a composition that successfully combines the best elements of the second and third piano concertos, given the wide public acclaim these works gained over the years.

Interestingly, the same ideology of extensive harmonic changes and short fragmentary melodic subjects can be seen in the Sonata No. 2 and in the second set of *Études-Tableaux* Op. 39. However, the unsettled new harmonic language combined with unusually short melodies introduced all at once and at high intensity in the new piano concerto were most likely too much for the audience of the time. Another unusual stylistic shift was the notably thin orchestral and piano texture without numerous sub voices seen in Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto or the second piano sonata. Furthermore, the fact that Rachmaninoff's revised first piano concerto, which initiated and signalled most of his new writing features, also remained largely

neglected at the time plays an important role in the unsuccessful reception of Piano Concerto No. 4. A wider acceptance and regular performances of the revised Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917) could have worked as a smooth transition playing a central role in preparing and familiarising the public with Rachmaninoff's new compositional ideology.

The new short fragmental approach helped the composer to enrich his harmonic language and extend the possibilities of new modulations to some distant keys. For example, the sequential movement of the subject or, most often a small motif of the main material, helps create more frequent modulations and works as a tool to effortlessly link inter-thematic functions even if they are in a distant key. Some of the new ideas used in Piano Concerto No. 4 and the writing style with more adventurous harmonies appears in Rachmaninoff's major works of the later period as well, including the Variations on a Theme of Corelli, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Symphony No. 3 and Symphonic Dances. However, in these later works Rachmaninoff took a half step back, somewhat lowering the intensity and balancing between his earlier approach loved by audiences and new ideas.

While some could argue that this shows Rachmaninoff's conservatism, the shifting in his writing style showcased in the fourth concerto (and used in later works) marks a clear evolution to a different and more contemporary approach to composition. As mentioned earlier, this change also carries the imprint of the time and may have been influenced by his contemporaries such as Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Scriabin or even Gershwin. Although Rachmaninoff states on numerous occasions that he was 'organically incapable of understanding modern music',²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Joseph Yasser, 'Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff's Music'. *Tempo, New Series No 22 (Winter)*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1951–1952), 11

surely, he was aware of the directions and writing style of composers of the time. In February 1924 Rachmaninoff was invited to the premiere of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* under the American bandleader Paul Whiteman.²⁴² While there is no information regarding Rachmaninoff's opinion of Gershwin's music, there is a strong indication of his admiration of new 'authentic American music.'²⁴³ After one of Whiteman's performances in late 1924, Rachmaninoff greatly praised the orchestra and Whiteman's work in general, mentioning his fascination with a new language that could only be heard in America.²⁴⁴ Moreover, his confession that he sent Whiteman's recordings to his daughter and the letter addressed to Medtner about his interest in the 'inimitable rhythm' of foxtrots supports the notion that jazz music could have had a significant impact on Rachmaninoff's late compositions.²⁴⁵

First movement

The symphonic approach seen in Rachmaninoff's previous concertos becomes even more pronounced in his fourth piano concerto where the orchestra frequently dominates the soloist. The new concerto borrows ideas from the previous three concertos and is based on a similar Sonata Allegro form. The length of the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 4 and the lack of a solo piano *cadenza* section are similar to the second piano concerto, while the overall structure of the concerto is stylistically closer to Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto with its short orchestral introduction, swift transitions and variational development section.

²⁴² Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 246

²⁴³ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergey Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in music*, 237

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 237

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 235

An orchestral six-bar ascending arpeggio introduction in D major (bars 1–6) opens the first movement of Piano Concerto N. 4 and modulates to C minor before leading to the first subject introduced by the soloist in G minor (bars 7–22). Although the solo piano introduction of Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto is also written in the dominant of the home key, the firmly established D major of the first four bars of the orchestral introduction in Piano Concerto No. 4 gives a false impression that the concerto is written in a major key. Without the raised seventh (F sharp), the G minor diatonic first subject material has more freedom for intra-tonal movements which also lessens the strength of the minor key.

The first subject of the first movement in the fourth piano concerto is relatively short (16 bars) and does not consist of several long-phrased melodic sections as seen in his earlier three concertos. Moreover, the chordal texture of the subject with pronounced orchestral support is more typical of the climaxes or *Maestoso* endings of Rachmaninoff's concertos.²⁴⁶ The start of the recapitulation of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 2 (No. 2, bars 245ff) is one such example. Another characteristic of the first subject is the continuous chromatically descending modulations and loss of power at the end (*diminuendo e poco ritenuto*) which leaves an impression of uncertainty and lack of direction. The absence of an ordinary cadence at the end of the second subject (especially during the second presentation of the subject) further enhances the uncertainty about the closure of the subject and anticipation of the following section. The first subject is heard twice (bars 7–22 and 28–43) following orchestral introductions (bars 1–6 and 22–27) with some alterations mainly related to changes in the key. The second presentation of the subject (bars 28–43) follows a similar arpeggio like orchestral introduction again starting in D major but moving to

²⁴⁶ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 300

A flat major (bars 22–27) instead of C minor as seen in the beginning of the movement. A descending three-note figuration at the end of the first subject develops into a main material for the contrasting swift transition (bars /44–101).

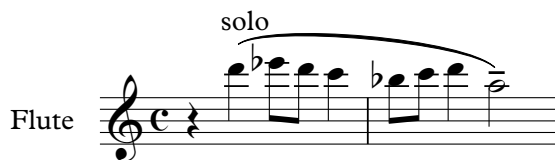
The transitions of the first movements in Rachmaninoff's piano concertos usually have a similar rapid character based on a semiquaver piano figuration to contrast the main subjects. However, compared to the continuous and flowing transitions seen in the previous concertos, the one in the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 4 starts with a somewhat intermittent and repetitive improvisatory dialogue between the orchestra and the soloist (bars /44ff). While the change to the tempo (*al tempo*, *poco meno mosso*) can be seen as an indicator of a new section, the start of the transition is not clearly defined due to the ongoing musical idea of the first subject. After the fragmented first part of the transition (bars /44–75), which is mainly written in the dominant (D major/minor) of the home key of the first movement, Rachmaninoff's traditional uninterrupted piano passages return with chromatically ascending sequences (bars 76–101).

As in the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 3 (No. 3, bars 93ff), there is a small hint of the second subject at the end of the transition (bar 101), which works as an introduction to the new material. In the fourth concerto, the horn (bar 101) gives a hint of the second subject before passing it to the soloist (bar 102). The piano-centric second subject of Rachmaninoff's fourth piano concerto (Ex.4.23) is much shorter (4 bars) and has some melodic resemblance to the first subject of the third piano concerto, in particular, to the second transitional material (Ex.4.24). This is especially obvious at its reappearance at the start of the recapitulation of the fourth piano concerto where a solo flute enters under piano accompaniment (bars 248–256). Similarly, a solo flute restates the transitional material (bars /82–92) in the first movement of Piano Concerto

No. 3 just after the *cadenza* (bars 362–375, *Ossia* 378–391). This restatement is based on a fragment of the first subject again accompanied by the pianist with similar arpeggio figuration. Some similarities to the second subject material can also be found in Prelude No. 7, Op. 32 (Ex.4.25),²⁴⁷ and at the start of the second and third movements in Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36 written in 1913 (Ex.4.26).



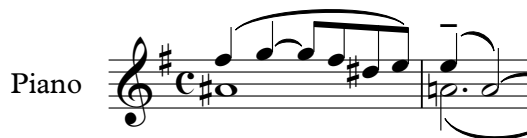
Ex.4.23 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 1st movement, bars 102–103



Ex.4.24 Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movement, bars 363–364 or *ossia* 379–380



Ex.4.25 Prelude No. 7, Op. 32, bars 1–3



Ex.4.26 Piano Sonata No. 2 (1913), 2nd movement, bars 1–2

²⁴⁷ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 301

The main melodic material of the development is introduced by the strings (first violins and cellos) and answered by the solo piano figuration, which is reminiscent of the transitional material. In the second part of the first section (bars 159–172) the same piano figuration develops into an uninterrupted ascending sequence with occasional references to the main material of the development played by the clarinet (bars 162 and 166) and the flute (bar 166).

The second section of the development (bars 173–213) consist of two parts (bars 173–188 and bars 189–213) based on the fragment from the beginning of the development. The first part of the second section traces the overall shape and broad character of the first subject, while the second contrasting part is based on an even shorter two-note (major/minor second interval) motif from the main material. The latter starts with a rhythmically interesting piano feature with offbeat accentuated right hand which further enhances the *agitato* effect (bars 189–196). The occasional orchestral downbeats (bars 190, 192 and 195) gradually become more prominent (bars 196ff) reducing the rhythmic uncertainty of the section. However, both parts of the second section have similar ascending dynamic and sequential characteristics that are one of the main features of Piano Concerto No. 4.



Ex.4.29 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 1st movement, bars 7–10



Ex.4.30 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 1st movement, bars 173–174



Ex.4.31 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 1st movement, bar 189

The variational approach and extensive intra-tonal modulations of the development section in the fourth piano concerto most probably comes from Piano Concerto No. 3. Moreover, similar to the third piano concerto the development is mainly based on the first (A) subject. However, the development of the fourth piano concerto is much shorter (99 bars) compared to the third (137 bars), is texturally lighter with minimal orchestral interchange and support, and has an unusual ending.

In contrast to Rachmaninoff's other concertos where the development section is followed by either a virtuosic solo piano *cadenza* (Piano Concerto No. 3) or recapitulation (Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 2), the climax of the development in the fourth piano concerto leads to an imposing 14-bar closing section (bars 224–237) in C major based on the material from the start of the development. This unusual musical material in the middle of the movement engaging almost the entire orchestra with a sweeping descending chordal piano passage (bars 230–237), gives a false impression that it is concluding the movement. In Rachmaninoff's earlier piano concertos similar *Maestoso* sections usually appeared at the end of the third movement as a Coda (Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891) bars 222ff, Piano Concerto No. 2 bars 431ff, Piano Concerto No. 3 bars 438ff). The reason for such an unexpected musical argument could be Rachmaninoff's intention to try something new and change the conventional role of the retransition leading to the restatement of the principal materials. The use of a

traditional coda in the middle of the movement perhaps is another illusive element preventing listeners from foreseeing the future development of the movement. While the development section of Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 2 directly leads to the recapitulation, the new coda-like ending of the development can be seen as an alternative to the use of an introduction seen in his first piano concerto.

Due to the lack of the virtuosic solo piano *cadenza*, the recapitulation of the fourth concerto is relatively long (125 bars) similar to the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 2 (108 bars). However, in contrast to Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto Nos. 1 and 2, the main materials of the fourth piano concerto are restated in mixed order (B–A, see Chart 13). The recapitulation of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 3 similarly starts in reverse order by restating the transitional material (No. 3, bars 362ff or ossia bars 378ff) and the second subject first. In general, the start of the recapitulation in Piano Concerto Nos. 3 and 4 share many common features (No. 3, bars 362ff or ossia 378ff and No. 4, bars 238ff): both work as a modulatory transition, a similar motif is presented first by a solo flute and later by a solo oboe accompanied by an arpeggio-like piano figuration with strong downbeats.

After the modulatory piano introduction (bars 238–247), a solo flute restates the second subject in E flat major (bars 248–256) followed by an oboe in F sharp (enharmonic of G flat) major (bars 264–270). This combination of a solo woodwind accompanied by the pianist's sparse arpeggio-like accompaniment is very unusual for Rachmaninoff's compositional language and creates a temporary monotonous effect. The same effect continues for the next short orchestral reminder of the main material (bars 278–293) from the development followed by a variant of the transitional material (bars /294–320) from the exposition (bars 46–49 and /62–69) that eventually leads to the restatement of the introduction (bars 321–330). The latter starts in D major, similar

to the start of the first movement, but modulates to E flat major (bars 325–330) eventually resolving in the home key (G minor) of the concerto. A six-bar chordal ascending sequence (bars 331–336) with dominating trumpet-trombone third interval movement continues the style and character of the introduction and smoothly leads to the restatement of the first subject. In comparison to the exposition, the main subject here is played by the orchestra (first strings bar 337ff and later joined with clarinets bars 341ff) while the piano section is mainly based on arpeggios. Similar to the exposition, the chromatically descending closure (solo violin, bars 360-362) of the first subject's orchestral restatement hinders the prediction of an upcoming event.

A short and brisk *Allegro vivace* six-bar coda (bars 363–368) in contrasting 3/4 time (the dominant time signature of the third movement), breaks the calming effect of the end of the recapitulation and concludes the movement. While having different time signatures, the tempo marking (*Allegro vivace*), the length (6 bars), the ascending structure and the start of the coda in a different but again major key (E flat major) is reminiscent of the orchestral introduction of the first movement.²⁴⁸

Second movement

The second movement of Piano Concerto No. 4 has the same ternary structure seen in Rachmaninoff's previous concertos (Introduction–A–B–A–Coda). However, it is structurally and stylistically closer to Piano Concerto No.1 than Nos. 2 and 3. Despite all the common features seen in both concertos such as being written mainly in the home key of the movement, having a modulatory opening and the overall length

²⁴⁸ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 302

of the movement (Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891) 69 bars, Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926) 82 bars), there are a number of unique elements in the fourth piano concerto that show the composer's new approach. The tendency to move towards short fragmental subjects in Piano Concerto No. 4 and generally in Rachmaninoff's late compositions is the most noticeable aspect of the second movement. The Chopinesque nocturnal melodies of the first piano concerto have now been replaced with a rather repetitive and simple dialogue between the pianist and the orchestra.

After a five-bar harmonically vague solo piano introduction, the orchestra presents the first subject (Ex.4.33) in clearly defined C major before passing to the soloist (bar 8). Nearly all research, publications and analysis of the fourth piano concerto, including essays and articles, note the resemblance of the first subject in the second movement to the famous nursery rhyme "Three Blind Mice" (Ex.4.32).²⁴⁹ However, in his own letter to Nicolas Medtner dating from 8 September 1926, Rachmaninoff draws a parallel with Schumann's piano concerto instead (Ex.4.34). In the letter he complains about the overall length of the concerto, noting that 'the orchestra was almost never silent' and reprimands Medtner for missing to point out to him the similarity between his main subject of the second movement and the first movement of Schumann's piano concerto in A minor, Op. 54. Rachmaninoff concludes his letter to Medtner by saying:

I also notice that the theme of the second movement is the theme of the first movement in Schumann's concerto. How is it that you didn't point this out to me?²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 112

²⁵⁰ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergey Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in music*, 246



Ex.4.32 Nursery rhyme “Three Blind Mice”



Ex.4.33 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 2nd movement, bars 6–7



Ex.4.34 Schumann, Piano in A minor, Op. 54, 1st movement, bar 4–7

Nevertheless, the simple, descending, three-note figuration is seen also in Schumann’s piano concerto and the “Three Blind Mice” can be found in the works of many composers. As such, the similarity of Rachmaninoff’s main subject of the second movement to both Schumann’s piano concerto and the nursery rhyme was surely not intentional and was raised by critics after the first performance of Piano Concerto No. 4 in 1927. As Martin suggests the three-note motif most probably came from the first movement, particularly from the descending conclusion of the first subject which later became the main material for the first transition.²⁵¹

In contrast to the structurally more balanced and evenly distributed second movements of Piano Concertos Nos. 1–3, the exposition of the first subject in Piano Concerto No. 4 covers almost the first half of the movement (bars 6–48). Overall, the first subject of the second movement can be divided into three sections (bars 6–16,

²⁵¹ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 303

17–32 and 33–46) where the middle part is a variant or a development of the subject. Although the orchestra initiates the start of the first subject in bar 6, the main material of the subject can be considered as four-bars long introduced by the solo piano from bar 8 (bars 8–11) and repeated several times with some extensions and alterations before reaching the second subject.



Ex.4.35 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 2nd movement, bars 8–11

The first repeat of the subject (bars 12–16) has a small modulatory extension traveling from the home key of the movement to C sharp minor, F minor and back to C major. It is hard to define the middle section as a development of the main material as it is predominantly the first subject with a series of harmonic modulations (bars 17–32, C–A–Db–f). In comparison to the tonic-centred first extended version of the subject (bars 12–16), the second extended repeat follows the idea of the modulatory middle section and moves to E major before settling back to C major (bars 33–42, C–E). At the end of the closing section (bars 43–48) the orchestra repeats the first two bars of the subject (bars 47–48) in the home key of the second movement one last time before introducing the second subject.

Compared to the second movements of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concertos Nos. 1–3 where all materials share some common melodic or structural features, the second subject (bars 49–54) in Piano Concerto No. 4 is rather contrasting both rhythmically and characteristically. Although the sequentially ascending material played by horns

and violas (Ex.4.37, bars 49–51) is basically a semitone version of the first descending three-note fragment of the first subject (Ex.4.36),²⁵² the short six-bar second subject is rather aggressive and dramatic compared to the monotonous and repetitive first subject. Moreover, diverging dynamic and rhythmic characteristics alongside the sudden arrival of the episodic second subject written in the dominant of F minor gives an impression of additional material or an insertion rather than a cohesive musical argument.



Ex.4.36 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 2nd movement, bars 8–9



Ex.4.37 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 2nd movement, bar 49

The following transitional material (bars 55–61) is based on a scale-like ascending melodic element similar to the opening of the first subject from the first movement (bars 7–8). Parallel to the pianist, the solo English horn presents a secondary motif (major second interval) reminiscent of the first subject of the first movement in Piano Concerto No. 2. Sequentially descending passages eventually bring back the simple and melancholic atmosphere of the second movement and smoothly move away from the minor key based second subject, modulating from F minor to C minor and eventually to the home key of the movement in C major.

²⁵² Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 303

After a short restatement of the first subject (bars 62–67), a fifteen-bar coda (bars 68–82) concludes the second movement of Piano Concerto No. 4 in the home key of C major. The coda of the movement has quite a strong resemblance to the ending (*poco a poco agitato*) of Rachmaninoff’s posthumously published *Études-Tableaux* No. 3, Op. 33 written in 1911 (Ex.4.39). Besides being in the same key, both sections share the same melodic and harmonic material.²⁵³

Ex.4.38 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 2nd movement, bars 68–77

Ex.4.39 *Études-Tableaux* No. 3, Op. 33, *poco a poco agitato*, bars 30–39

The exclusion of No. 3 from the initial publication of *Études-Tableaux* Op. 33 could be intentional as back in 1911 Rachmaninoff could have already been designing his fourth concerto. It could also be that he never intended to publish the Etude and decided to use it as a foundation for the second movement of Piano Concerto No. 4.²⁵⁴ Alternatively, the ending of the second movement could be just a brief memory and recollections of his younger years in Ivanovka where among other pieces he wrote the first set of *Études-Tableaux* Op. 33.

The second movement ends with a harmonic preparation for the third movement. Although the second movement of the concerto is clearly in the home key

²⁵³ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 303

²⁵⁴ Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 113

of C major, at the end of the coda first and second horns and lower strings give a small indication of D major key (D and F sharp bars 81–82) which is the dominant of the G minor of the third movement.²⁵⁵ The idea of harmonically linking the second and third movements most probably came from Rachmaninoff's other concertos in particular Piano Concerto No. 3, but it is much more discreet in the case of the fourth piano concerto. The dominating C major piano passages in the Phrygian mode (bars 77–79), followed by a piano trill on C (bars 79–81), overshadows the lightly articulated (*staccato*) D major hint at the very end of the movement (bars 81–82).

Third movement

The overall structure of the third movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4 is closer to the Piano Concerto No. 3. The final movements of both concertos are based on two main subjects (A and B) with a development section in the middle of the movement (see Charts 12 and 15). However, unlike Piano Concerto No. 3 where the development section is based on material from the second subject of the first movement of the concerto, the development of Piano Concerto No. 4 is entirely based on the first (A) subject. Moreover, as illustrated in the Chart 15, for the first time Rachmaninoff decided to present the first subject of the concerto in a form of double or alternating variation (a, b, a, b, a, b, a) where "a" and "b" undergo a series of changes. This is one of the main features that separates the third movement of the fourth piano concerto from others and lays the ground for the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 43. Nevertheless, the third movement of the fourth piano concerto is

²⁵⁵ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 259

written in a sonata form with rather simple and less complicated inter-thematic function compared to the third piano concerto.

The movement starts with a 26-bar introduction based on a leaping ninth motif (Ex.4.41) from the second subject of the first movement (1st movement, bars 102ff).²⁵⁶ The exact motif first appears in the closing section (1st movement, bars 120–138) of the second subject of the first movement played by bassoon (bars 120–121) and later by violins (Ex.4.40, 1st movement, bars 130–131). The first subject material of the second movement is also used as a decoration played by various instruments throughout the third movement (Ex.4.42).



Ex.4.40 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 1st movement, bars 130



Ex.4.41 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 3rd movement, bar 1



Ex.4.42 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 3rd movement, bars 2–3

Stylistically the soft and light introduction of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 4 is very close to the second piano concerto. The introductions of the

²⁵⁶ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 259

third movements in both concertos are relatively long compared to Rachmaninoff's other concertos (PC1 6 bars, PC2 42 bars, PC3 2 bars, PC4 26 bars). They are based on material carried over from the first movement and have a short solo piano *cadenza* (PC2 3rd mov. bars 21–34, PC4 3rd mov. bars 23–26). However, the percussion section consisting of six instruments (timpani, triangle, tambourine, side drum, cymbals and bass drum) is quite unusual for Rachmaninoff's piano concerto setting. The maximum number of percussion instruments that he used before was in Piano Concerto No. 3 (timpani, snare drum, bass drum and cymbals), while the finale movements of the revised first concerto (1917) and the second concerto have only three. The use of more percussion instruments most probably relates to Rachmaninoff's interest in rhythmic variety and repetitively motoric writing which is typical of his late compositions.

After the introduction that evolves mostly in the dominant (D major) of the G minor home key of the third movement, the exposition of the first subject in a form of double or alternating variation (a, b, a, b, a, b, a) emerges in a light toccata-like style. The first subject, similar to the introduction of the third movement, is heavily based on a leaping ninth motif borrowed from the first movement. In general, this motif has an important function throughout the third movement and plays an essential role unifying the whole concerto. The first G minor centred subject (bars 27–103) consists of two stylistically similar themes ("a" and "b") divided into seven sections (a, b, a, b, a, b, a) that are relatively evenly distributed (a – 13 bars, b – 10 bars, a – 10 bars, b – 8 bars, a – 13 bars, b – 11 bars, a – 12 bars). The first "a" and "b" sections are introduced by solo piano (bars 27–49) and later by the orchestra played by bassoons, horns, and lower strings for the first variation of the "a" section (bars /50–59). After the first alternated "b" section played solely by the orchestra (bars 60–67), the soloist takes back the right to introduce another rhythmically interesting variant of the subject

with offbeat, light orchestral support (bars 68–103). The last two solo piano centred sections summarise the subject with extended descending sequences. The first transition – that has some similarities with the “b” section of the first subject with its octave downwards opening and swift piano passages – concludes the first subject and modulates to a distant D flat major (V↓ lowered dominant) of the second subject (bars 104–124, Gb–E–Eb).

In comparison to the short variational first subject of the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 4, the second subject is rather long (39 bars) and can be divided in three sections (bars 125–142, bars 142–147, B-3 bars 148–163). It is largely centred in D flat major with a short modulation to the relative B flat minor for the second part of the subject (bars 142–147) followed by a sequentially rising third section (bars 148–163). The latter starts without an orchestral support, but the soloist continues the same chordal feature of the second subject with a chromatically enhanced left-hand triplet accompaniment.

While the second subjects of the third movements in Piano Concerto Nos. 2–4 convey a similar broad *Meno mosso* character written in a contrasting major key, the sectional second subject of the fourth piano concerto is more typical of the first movements of Rachmaninoff’s previous two piano concertos (see Charts 7, 10 and 15). Moreover, the chordal texture and leading role for the piano over a light orchestral accompaniment is characteristically very close to the first subject of the first movement of the concerto.²⁵⁷ However, the structure and rhythm of the second subject of the fourth piano concerto is reminiscent of some materials used in the development section of the first movement in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Sonata No, 2, Op. 36.

²⁵⁷ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 305



Ex.4.43 Piano Sonata No. 2, 1st movement, bars 89–91 (1913)



Ex.4.44 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 3rd movement, bars 125–129

After the restatement of the first part of the second subject (bars 164–175), the development intervenes with contrasting rhythmic and dynamic qualities (bars 176–378). As in the first movement, the development of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 4 also can be divided in three sections (bars 176–214, 215–364 and 365–378) where the first section acts as an introduction and gradually reduces the tension before picking it up again for the second part of the development. The start of the development (bars 176–191) is an interaction between the orchestral instruments using the introductory material (leaping ninth motif), whereas the second part (bars 192–214) is a suspension with the soloist's tranquil chromatically descending third-interval sequence supported by the orchestral F pedal. Prior to concluding the first section of the development with a solo piano arpeggio passage, the solo clarinet presents a scale-like motif (bars 208–213) in D major resembling the first subject of the first movement.

The idea of a long development section for the third movement most probably came from Piano Concerto No. 3. However, unlike the development of the third piano concerto where Rachmaninoff used the second subject of the first movement as a main material (see Chart 12), the entire development of the third movement in Piano

Concerto No. 4 is heavily based on the first subject. The recurring fragment of the first subject may give an impression of redundancy and repetition and most probably is one of the main faults of the movement. Another problematic area of the development perhaps is the frequent modulations through extensive sequences and an unsettled key structure, which makes the listener lose the connection with the concerto's home key. However, this could have been an intentional tactic by Rachmaninoff aimed at creating a new and more interesting harmonic language with less predictable modulations seen in his earlier piano concertos.

The middle section of the development (bars 215–364) has some similarities with the sectional first subject (a, b, a, b, a, b, a, bars 27–103) and consists of five sections based on the first part (“a”) of the double variational first subject of the movement. However, compared to the clearly alternating first subject with obvious boundaries, the sections in the 150-bar long development are interlinked giving an imitation of a dialog between the soloist and the orchestra. The first two sections (bars 215–250 and /251–289) rhythmically and characteristically are closely related: both are based on the fragments from the introduction and the first subject, present the materials in an abrupt conversational manner, and are texturally transparent and lightly articulated. For the third section (bars /290–312) Rachmaninoff ingeniously modified the first subject in a style of a toccata gradually adding more instruments throughout the course of the section. The fourth section (bars 313–346), which acts as a bridge to the final fifth section, starts with a rising sequence of a descending offbeat thick piano chords involving almost the entire orchestra. Moreover, the element of the first subject gradually becomes less prominent (bars 323ff) with the dominating introductory leaping eighth motif. In contrast, in the final fifth section (bars 347–364) the trumpets and later horns resume the first subject material accompanied by chromatically

descending offbeat chords of the orchestra and the piano. This eventually reduces the momentum laying the grounds and preparing the listener for the last section of the development.

The final section of the development with its introductory material (bars 365–368) from the first movement in C major and the second transition (bars 369–378) has a harmonic modulatory role acting as a retransition leading to the restatement of the second subject in a distant key of B major (bars 379–429). In contrast to the exposition of the second subject presented mainly by the soloist with light orchestral support, the restatement of the same material is more evenly distributed between the orchestra and piano. Although the first two parts (bars 379–391, bars 392–397) of the second subject in the restatement is mainly conveyed by the orchestral instruments (in particular the first violins), the piano accompaniment closely follows the leading orchestral instruments presenting a variant of the same material. In the last two parts of the restated second subject (bars 398–413, bars 414–429), the solo piano regains the leading role but with a more active orchestral support compared to the beginning of the movement.

After modulating from B major to D major, the restatement ends in the key of C major leading to the last transition (bars 430–444). The latter undergoes a series of modulations through ascending sequences to bring back the G minor home key of the movement for the start of the coda. Compared to Rachmaninoff's previous piano concerto, the coda (bars 445–567) of the third movement in Piano Concerto No. 4 is unusually long (123 bars). Unlike the entire third movement, which is mainly based in 3/4 time, the coda is written in 2/4 time (with occasional 3/4, bars 503–506 and 547–548) giving an impression of endless acceleration. One last time the fragment of the first subject of the third movement is used to create sequentially ascending

passages that eventually end in G major. Although the rewritten coda of the third movement in the final version (1941) has a more effective *Maestoso* ending similar to Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3, the novel style of the original coda stands out with its variational character, virtuosic piano passages and advanced rhythmic features. This most likely was another tactic implemented by Rachmaninoff to introduce something new and depart from the traditional techniques of romantic concerto writing. Also, the newly written energetic coda has more connection to the swift start of the third movement with its lightly articulated orchestral and semiquaver piano passages.

Compared to the melodically diverse second and third piano concertos with smoothly interlinking transitional materials, the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 4 looks somewhat repetitive and abrupt. Almost the entire third movement of the fourth concerto is based on a single fragment borrowed from the first movement. Moreover, all three transitional materials linking the large-scale functions of the third movement have a more modulatory than thematic role. Another factor contributing to the monotony is the five-part variations of the development section mimicking the double variational first subject together with the restatement of almost the entire second subject. Although all three movements of Piano Concerto No. 4 share a similar writing style, compositional ideas and technical features, the faults of the third movement stated above most probably were the main reason why the audience and critics of the time may have found it ‘dull and uninteresting’. As a result, when revising the fourth concerto Rachmaninoff primarily focused on the third movement with an intention to address and rectify the key issues. Again, while Martin draws parallels between the ‘emotional aloofness’ of the second piano sonata and the ‘short-breathed’ second subjects in the outer movements of Piano Concerto No. 4,²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 306–308

Rachmaninoff may have done this intentionally to break away from romantic ideas of composition and remove the ‘conservative’ label from his name.

Comparison of the original and revised versions of Piano Concerto No. 4

The reason Rachmaninoff decided to revise Piano Concerto No. 4 is most likely the poor reception of the piece after its unsuccessful premier in 1926. Rachmaninoff thought that the main fault of the concerto was the length of its movements which may have wearied the audience. In his reply to Rachmaninoff in 1926, Medtner disagrees about the first version of the concerto being overly long and questions the musical material instead:

Is it possible that music in general is so unpleasant that the less of it the better? ... it is not the length of musical compositions that creates an impression of boredom, but it is rather the boredom that creates the impression of length.²⁵⁹

While 15 years separate the original and final versions of Piano Concerto No. 4, stylistically all three versions of the Concerto remain the same. Compared to the revisional process of Rachmaninoff’s first piano concerto with the introduction of a clearly visible new language and compositional direction, both revisions of the fourth piano concerto can be described as a refinement of the original version rather than a fully-fledged revamp as seen in Piano Concerto No. 1. The revision of Piano Concerto No. 4 mostly involves changes made to the orchestration, rewriting some of the piano part and significantly reducing the overall size of the Concerto.

²⁵⁹ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in music*, 246–247

	1926	1928	1941
1 st mov.	368 bars	347 bars (-21)	313 bars (-55)
2 nd mov.	82 bars	80 bars (-2)	77 bars (-5)
3 rd mov.	567 bars	476 bars (-91)	434 bars (-133)
		-114 bars	-193 bars

Most of the textural and orchestral modifications already exist in the intermediate (1928) version and are transferred to the final revision (1941) of the concerto. It is only in the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 4 that some of the parts were rewritten twice in 1928 and 1941. Such examples can be found in the first part of the second subject (bars 111–127, 1928 and bars 107–124, 1941), at the end of the development (bars 290–342, 1928 and bars 271–309, 1941), and most importantly in the coda (bars 343–476, 1928 and bars 310–434, 1941).

First movement

Structurally, the exposition and the development of the first movement in all three versions of Piano Concerto No. 4 are very similar (see Table 4, and Charts 13, 16 and 19). The first significant alteration happens in the transitional material of 1941 version (bars /44–76, 1941) where Rachmaninoff removed almost half of the original transition (bars /44–101, 1926). Overall, the final version of the transition is shorter by 25 bars from which 23 bars are variations of the transitional material (bars 49–71, 1926) and 2 bars are the piano descending passage at the end of the transition (bars

95–96, 1926). The second subject (B-1, B-2) and the first closing section (CS1) of the first movement remain almost untouched with a small change at the end of the second part of the subject (B-2) where Rachmaninoff merged the last two bars of the second subject by removing one of the piano passages and transferring the solo flute fragment forward by one bar (bars 118–119, 1926 and bar 93, 1941).

The developments of both revised versions of the first movement also stay closer to the original concerto with some minor alterations mostly related to the rescoring of the orchestral parts or slight modification of the piano writing. One of these small changes can be seen in the development section (Aa-2) where the soloist emphasises the main element of the subject with more frequent repetition and octave doubling.



Ex.4.45 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 1st movement, bars 159–163



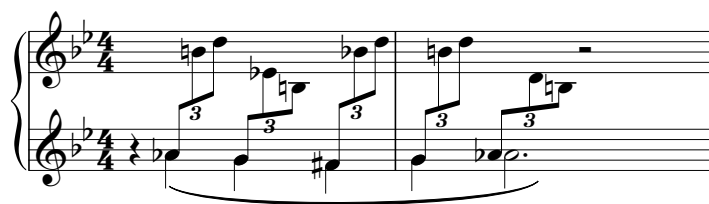
Ex.4.46 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 1st movement, bars 133–137

As shown in Table 4, while one of the variations in the development of the final revision (Ac, 1941) is shorter by two bars, the overall structure of the variation nevertheless remains intact. The missing two bars are due to the changes to the time signature in the original version of the concerto where 3/2 time temporarily shifts to

2/2 (bars 192–196, 1926) while in the revised version it stays in 3/2 (bars 166–168, 1941). However, Rachmaninoff made several orchestral and piano modifications throughout the same (Ac) variation of the development to reduce the repetitiveness of the fragment and give a stronger sense of rhythm. For example, a downbeat triplet quaver, which is tied to a crotchet figuration played by bassoon and strings (bars 197–204, 1926), is removed from the final revision and replaced with a simpler and lighter *pizzicato* articulation highlighting the strong crotchet beats of the pianist (bars 169–176, 1941). Additionally, compared to the repetitive rhythmic structure of the original piano writing of the same section, the final revision of the Concerto in 1941 introduces a new toccata-like variation of the fragment in chordal alternating-hand piano technique (bars 169–175, 1941).

Furthermore, in the final revision (1941) the restatement of the second subject in the recapitulation is shorter by a single bar. More precisely, the section is shorter by a half bar or half note (minim) due to an early start of the horns ending the material of the second subject (bars 254–255, 1926 and bar 226, 1941). As a result, the equivalent segment of the revised version temporarily changes from 2/2 to 3/2 in order to incorporate the whole material into a single bar. Compared to the original version, the newly modified piano accompaniment at the end of this section (bars 251–255, 1926 and bars 223–226, 1941) covers a wider range of the keyboard to match the overall style of the piano figuration of the restatement.

In contrast to the minor refinement of the second subject, the rest of the recapitulation undergoes serious cuts and revisions. In the final version of the concerto the restatement of the development (Aa-1) is reduced by five bars, and the original material borrowed from the transition (Ex.4.47) is replaced with the triplet piano figuration (Ex.4.49) seen at the start of the development (Ex.4.48).



Ex.4.47 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 1st movement, bars 282–283



Ex.4.48 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 1st movement, bars 117–118



Ex.4.49 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 1st movement, bars 253–254

The entire second half of the new variant of the transition (bars 306–320, 1926) is missing from the recapitulation of both 1928 and 1941 revisions and is replaced with two-bar descending triplet passage (bars 306–307, 1928 and bars 272–273, 1941), reducing the length of the first movement by thirteen more bars. This and the following inter-thematic functions (see table 4, TRa, Intro, /A, A) of the recapitulation of the first movement are the only major structural modifications seen in the intermediate (1928) version which later pass to the final (1941) version of Piano Concerto No. 4. As highlighted in Table 4 there is a further ten-bar reduction (Intro 4 bars and /A 6 bars) of repetitive material from the original restatement of the orchestral introduction. The arpeggio piano figuration of the first subject started four bars earlier in the revised versions with a two-bar introduction of the first subject played by the violas and the cellos (bars 315–316, 1928 and bars 280–281, 1941) prior to handing

over to the first violins for the first subject execution (bars 317ff, 1928 bars 282ff, 1941).

The coda of the first movement in Rachmaninoff's fourth piano concerto mostly remains unchanged in both intermediate and final revisions. However, there are some small modifications such as the relocation of the closing material of the restatement from the solo violin to the English horn (bars 360–362, 1928 and bars 305–307, 1941) and the replacement of semiquaver arpeggio piano figuration with chords in the coda.

Second movement

Compared to the outer movement of Piano Concerto No. 4, the second movement underwent the least structural and orchestral changes during the revisional process. The final (1941) revision of the second movement is shorter by five bars due to the reduction of the first (A) subject (see Table 5, and Charts 14, 17 and 20). The first three-bar cut appears in the variant of the first subject (bars 17–32, 1926 and bars 17–29, 1941) leading to an early start of the piano response to the orchestra in three places (bars 18, /21 and /23, 1941). Most probably Rachmaninoff made this alteration in order to give more dynamism and to emphasise the linking or transitional role of this section instead of being a mere variation of the first subject. Another modification in the final version of this section is a two-bar climatic restatement of the main fragment carried by tutti orchestra (bars 24–25, 1941) instead of the original solo piano (bars 27–28, 1926).

In both revisions of the second movement, the closing section (CS) directly leads to the second subject cutting the last repeat of the first subject seen in the original version of the concerto (bars 47–48, 1926). Unlike the first revision (1928) of the second movement which remains unaffected, the piano part of the second subject of the final version is altered to highlight the main material. The semiquaver sextuplet chromatic piano passages of the original version (Ex.4.50) were replaced with rhythmic piano chords (Ex.4.51) imitating the main motif of the second subject played by the horns and the violas.

Ex.4.50 shows a musical score for the Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 2nd movement, bar 49. The score is in 4/4 time and features Horns in F, Piano, and Viola. The Piano part is the central focus, showing a complex chromatic sextuplet passage. The Horns and Viola parts provide harmonic support with triplets and chords.

Ex.4.50 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 2nd movement, bar 49

Ex.4.51 shows a musical score for the Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 2nd movement, bar 44. The score is in 4/4 time and features Horns in F, Piano, and Viola. The Piano part is the central focus, showing rhythmic chords. The Horns and Viola parts provide harmonic support with triplets and chords.

Ex.4.51 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 2nd movement, bar 44

In the final 1941 version of the concerto Rachmaninoff decided to remove the alternating-hand chordal and descending scale-like piano passage from the culmination of the second subject (bars 53–54, 1926). Instead, the transition (TR) of the final revision begins earlier with additional introductory material (bars 48–49, 1941) resulting in a different bar count as illustrated in Table 5. The inserted new material of the transition (Ex.4.53) originates from the first movement of the concerto, in particularly from the recapitulation of the first subject played by violins (Ex.4.52).



Ex.4.52 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 1st movement, bars 282–284



Ex.4.53 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 2nd movement, bars 48–49

This, more recognisable introductory element of the transition, closely resembling the first subject of the first movement, clearly shows the origins of the transitional material and enhances the element of cyclicity of the concerto. Additionally, the first four-bar English horn counter melody of the transition is omitted from the final revision in order to highlight the main material played by the soloist (bars 55–58, 1926 and bars 50–53, 1941). Similar to the second subject of the second movement, in the first part of the coda (bars 68–75, 1926 and bars 63–70, 1941) Rachmaninoff replaced the original semiquaver arpeggio-like or chromatic passages with a group of repeated quaver chords emphasising the harmonic picture of the coda.

Third movement

The revisional process of the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 4 not only includes cuts and the repositioning of melodic fragments within orchestral instruments that was seen in the previous two movements, but it also introduces some structural and harmonic alteration while adding some new materials. However, the main changes of the third movement occur from the second (B) subject onwards, keeping the start of the movement as close to the original as possible (see Table 6, and Charts 15, 18 and 21).

There are only two structural cuts made to the first subject, accounting for eighteen bars out of which fourteen are from introduction of the third movement (bars 3–16, 1926). The removal of two sequential parts at the end of the sixth (“b”) section of the first subject (bars 88–91, 1926) resulted in a further four-bar decrease in the final (1941) version of the movement. However, elimination of the modulatory middle section of the introduction alongside with revised first two bars is the most important stylistic modification of the first subject of the third movement. Compared to the soft and repetitive original opening of the introduction (Ex.4.54), both revised versions start with a *fortissimo* orchestral tutti presenting a fragment of the main material once only (Ex.4.55, bar /1, 1928 and 1941). Additionally, the short eight-bar long introduction of the revised versions stays primarily in the dominant of the home key (G minor) of the movement.

Violin I

Violin II

pp

p

Ex.4.54 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1926), 3rd movement, bar 1

Ex.4.55 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 3rd movement, bar /1

Apart from these structural and stylistic changes, both versions of the first subject of the third movement remain almost identical to the original version. However, there are a few orchestral amendments in the first transition (TR1), including the presentation of important rhythmic material that involves more than one or two instruments (bars 104–106 or 113–115, 1926 and bars 86–88 or 95–97, 1941) and the rewriting of the two-bar ending of the transition (bars 123–124, 1926 and bars 105–106, 1941).

Rachmaninoff rewrote the entire first part of the second subject (B-1) of the third movement twice, both in the revision of 1928 and 1941, making it lighter and moving away from the resemblance of his Piano Sonata No. 2. The piano writing of the original first part of the second subject (bars 125ff, 1926) incorporates heavy piano parallel chords in conjunction with brass instruments. This is very typical of the Maestoso sections that usually emerge at the end of Rachmaninoff's other piano concertos. Despite Rachmaninoff's efforts to thin the overall texture of the first part of the subject during the first revision (bars 111–127, 1928), it stylistically stayed close to the original version with its chordal piano writing. In contrast, the rewritten subject of the final 1941 version (bars 107ff, 1941) engages less instruments, and the main material is distributed between the toccata-like piano and contrasting solo horn. The additional bar in the final revision highlighted in Table 6 is due to the repeat of the

five-bar bridge passage (bars 111–115 and 120–124, 1941) whereas the repeat of the original version is short by a single bar (bar distribution 9–8, 1926 and 9–9, 1941). In contrast to the original piano centred first subject, the bridge passages in the final revision are introduced by the solo horn and have more connection with the first subject of the first movement.



Ex.4.56 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 3rd movement, bars 111–116

In the final 1941 revision the principal motif of the second part in the second subject (bars 125–130) is carried by the first violins with quaver triplet piano accompaniment. In the original version of the subject (bars 142–147) the same quaver triplet figuration is played by the woodwinds, while the pianist continues introducing the main material with a chordal approach similar to the first part of the second subject. Although the third part of the second subject (bars 148–163, 1926 and bars 131–146, 1941) remains unchanged in the final revision, the following first five bars of the restatement of the first part of the subject (bars 164–168, 1926 and bars 147–151, 1941) are modified to match the style of the predecessor.

In the final revision of the third movement the first part of the development (bars 176–214, 1926 and bars /159–190, 1941) is shorter by seven bars from which five bars are a simple cut from the end of the orchestral section (bars 187–191, 1926). Removal of the first movement's first subject based solo clarinet passage (bars 208–213, 1926) and the replacement of the original ascending minim chordal piano accompaniment (bars 208–212, 1926) with a single note descending piano figuration

(bars 186–190, 1941) resulted in the remaining two-bar reduction of the second transition. Additionally, there are also some minor instrumental modifications in the final revision of this section, including the semiquaver triplet fortissimo upbeat in the first violin section (bars /159 and /163, 1941) that resembles the opening of the third movement, and inner chromatic movement in the string section (bars 186–189, 1941).

While all three versions are identical at the start of the middle section of the development (bars 215–364, 1926 and bars 191–299, 1941), the final revision of the first variant of the first subject (Aa) has some harmonic alterations. Compared to the G minor centred original version (bars 215–250, 1926, g–bb–g), the final revision of the first variation modulates to A flat minor instead (bars 191–226, 1941, g–bb–ab). As a result, the following variant (bars /227–247, 1941) of the revised development moves a semitone higher from the original key. By removing the middle section of the second variant (bars 261–278, 1926) Rachmaninoff reduced the development of the final revision by a further eighteen bars. Additionally, the piano writing at the end of the second variant in the final revision (bars 237–247, 1941) is much closer to the first subject with its semiquaver structure compared to the original quaver triplet figuration (bars 279–289, 1926).

Although bar count, structure and the harmonic language in all three versions of the third variant are the same, the orchestration and the piano writing of both revisions show obvious amendments (bars 290–312, 1926 and bars /248–270, 1941). Compared to the original version (bars 290–299, 1926), the first ten bars of the revised piano passages of the third variant (bars /248–247, 1941) is lighter and simpler. The sophisticated orchestration of the same variant with frequent interactions between the instruments sharing the main material further enhances the effect of precision and weightlessness.

The new orchestral style of the third continues in the fourth variant of the final revision of the development section (bars 313–346, 1926 and bars 271–299, 1941). Similar to the first part of the third variation, the fourth starts with different piano material which has a more identifiable first subject motif supported by the solo trumpet (bars 271–277, 1941). In the final revised version, Rachmaninoff removed the fifth variant (bars 347–364, 1926) together with the last five bars of the fourth variant (bars 342–346, 1926). In contrast, the intermediate version structurally stays closer to the original by slightly modifying the first ten bars of the piano section in the fourth variant (bars 290–323, 1928) and rewriting the fifth (bars 324–334, 1928) which is shorter by seven bars. The new semiquaver passages – which replace the original upbeat chordal piano sequences of the last two variants of the development – are perhaps the most noticeable changes observed between the original and intermediate versions.

While the inserted introductory material (1st movement, bars 365–368, 1926 and bars 300–303, 1941) of the first movement remains almost untouched with some minor alterations, the following four-bar short new transition (bars 304–309, 1941) of the final version gives an impression of a continuity by keeping the same rhythmic and dynamic characteristics of the introductory material instead of the original descending semiquaver piano passages (bars 369–378, 1926). The intermediate version of the same section (bars 339–342, 1928) has a similar approach but is less coherent due to static minim piano chords which have less rhythmic and melodic connection to the introductory material. The third transition of both revised versions of the third movement leads directly to the coda eliminating the entire restatement of the second subject (bars 379–444, 1926) and shortening the concerto by another sixty-six bars.

The coda of the third movement, which is rewritten twice (bars 343–476, 1928 and bars 310–434, 1941), is the most modified section in the entire Piano Concerto No. 4. Although the new coda of the intermediate version is longer by eleven bars and most of the materials are rewritten, it closely follows the style and structure of the original coda. By comparison, the final 1941 version consists of three easily identifiable sections (bars 310–383, /384–389 and 390–434, 1941) at the same time keeping the variational piano-centred virtuosic character of the old coda. However, the coda of the final version has some similarities with the original one (for example bars 507–517, 1926 and bars 398–403, 1941) and especially at the end of the movement (bars 553–567, 1926 and bars 420–434, 1941) where the structure and musical material remains the same.

The main feature of the new coda is the middle section restating the material from the second subject of the first movement (bars /384–389, 1941). All three of Rachmaninoff's previous concertos end with similar two-part codas where the *Maestoso* first part is based on the second subject of the third movement. In comparison the new ending of the fourth piano concerto has three sections where the middle section restates the second subject material from the first movement instead. Another integrated piece of material from the first movement can be traced in the sequentially ascending piano passages at the beginning of the coda (bars 316–331, 1941) with accented chords resembling the start of the first subject of the first movement.



Ex.4.57 Piano Concerto No. 4 (1941), 3rd movement, bars 316–320

While the innovative coda of the original version with its virtuosic piano passages and rhythmically attractive characteristics stands apart from Rachmaninoff's other concertos, the new more elaborate version of the ending with some references to the first movement further enhances the cyclic effect of Piano Concerto No. 4.

Conclusion

The examination and comparative study of Rachmaninoff's first and fourth piano concertos illustrates the direction and stylistic progression of his musical language. The revised first piano concerto shows a total transformation of his musical language acquired during twenty-seven years of extensive compositional and performance activities. The comparison of the original and revised versions of Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1 shows the composer's progressive tendencies from his early romantic principles into something new and more advanced. The revised version of the concerto is full of new ideas and concepts setting it apart from a student work composed in 1891. These new elements included an extended harmonic language full of chromaticism, variational character of the primary and secondary elements, more balanced and actively interactive orchestra, among other features, that converted Rachmaninoff's student work into a new composition worth a new opus number. With this abundance of new piano figurations and freshly written transitional or bridge passages, the new version of the first piano concerto is in some places unrecognisable. All the previously sectional and repetitive materials were replaced with more decorative and harmonically interesting passages. The new orchestration has a greater and more balanced role in terms of support and interaction with the soloist.

Rachmaninoff's new compositional language is more noticeable in the newly written sections where he had the freedom to introduce his fresh ideas and techniques without being constrained by the existing material.

Rachmaninoff's fourth piano concerto written in 1926 demonstrates how over time his musical style and compositional approach departed from the romantic traditions to a fresher and more novel juncture. As discussed in Chapter 3, short fragments, advanced modulations and rhythmic diversity gradually took over the expressive and interwoven long principal and secondary materials seen in his earlier compositions. These progressive compositional tendencies started appearing as early as 1911 from the first set of *Études Tableaux* Op. 33, further developed in Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36 and got firmly embedded in his later compositions, including Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40. However, the thinning of the overall texture of both orchestral and piano materials introduced in the fourth piano concerto is a new feature. The multiple sub voices that greatly enhance the fabric of Piano Concerto Nos 2 and 3, Piano Sonata No. 2 or in *Études Tableaux*, were replaced with a single melody lightly accompanied by the soloist's left hand or the orchestra. Even the revised first piano concerto in some places (particularly in the newly written sections) sounds richer compared to Piano Concerto No. 4.

Perhaps the most obvious example of moving towards simplification is the overly modest second movement of the fourth piano concerto written in C major. However, the outer movements of the concerto stand out with their complex structural, harmonic and rhythmic characteristics alongside with extensive use of the sequences. Not only the transitional materials and linking passages of Piano Concerto No. 4 are treated sequentially, but so also are the principal and secondary subjects to some extent. Moreover, the sequences often move chromatically which helps smoothly

modulate to a distant key without an abrupt harmonic shock. Rachmaninoff experimented with the structure of the concerto as well, which is most noticeable in the third movement with its unusual setting (double alternating) of the first subject, complex development and long creative coda. The use of the lowered tonic (I↓, 1st movement) or lowered dominant (V↓, 3rd movement) keys is another new modulatory technique further enhancing the complex harmonic language of the concerto. While the third movement of the concerto firmly stays in 3/4 time, the rhythmic variety and freedom of some of the piano writing gives a sense of alternating time. This is mainly due to the frequent use of upbeat and light or quite often missing orchestral downbeat.

Although Rachmaninoff later revised his fourth concerto twice in 1928 and 1941, the original version still holds a great value showing his progressive thinking with regards to structural, melodic and harmonic transformation. Unlike the revision of the first piano concerto, the final version of Piano Concerto No. 4 stays very close to the original and can be seen as a refinement rather than a revision. His priority was to significantly reduce the overall length of the concerto and further thin the texture (193 bars) similar to the Piano Sonata No. 2 revised in 1931. Thus, compared to the revisional process of Rachmaninoff's first piano concerto or Piano Sonata No. 2, the revised fourth piano concerto technically and stylistically stays very close to the original version without considerable change.

CHAPTER 5: BACK TO TRADITIONS: RHAPSODY ON A THEME OF PAGANINI

This chapter explores Rachmaninoff's last piano/orchestral work and its position in the composer's output. By showing the key features related to the form and harmony of the Rhapsody and exploring the compositional features Rachmaninoff introduced in his work, the chapter sheds further light on the evolution of the composer's writing style and some of the motivations behind the changes. The Rhapsody appears to be a homage to tradition as defined in Chapter 1 of this thesis, but with a fascinating merger of old and new features and stylistic solutions. It is perhaps the clever and skilful combination of these features that makes the Rhapsody Rachmaninoff's most popular work after his second piano concerto.

To analyse and illustrate the overall form and harmonic structure of the Rhapsody, the chapter follows the same chart-based analytical framework and methodology used throughout this thesis (see Chart 22). A rhapsody is generally defined as a collection of episodes in a single-movement compositional form written in an improvisatory manner in contrast to a sonata or a concerto. However, for ease of comparison with the previous chapters of this thesis, the chart uses such terms as 'movement' or 'inter-thematic functions' to describe sections or segments of the composition. This is done deliberately to draw parallels and be consistent when comparing the Rhapsody with Rachmaninoff's piano concertos discussed in this thesis. Furthermore, this is also consistent with the fact that in the Rhapsody, Rachmaninoff clearly follows a three-movement sonata or concerto form. Unlike the analysis of Piano Concertos Nos. 1–4, the score analysis of the Rhapsody does not refer to variants of the subject "A" as A1, A2, ... This is due to the fact that the composition itself is based on variations where the main subject is altered, thus there

is no need to introduce an additional layer of complexity when analysing the composition.

Background and Paganini's theme

Composed in the early nineteenth century, Niccolò Paganini's Twenty-Four Caprices, Op. 1 inspired many composers including Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms, Karol Szymanowski, Witold Lutosławski, Nathan Milstein, Eugène Ysaÿe, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Hans Bottermund, Bryan Hesford, Gregor Piatigorsky, Kenneth Wilson among others.²⁶⁰ The theme is one of the most famous and popular tunes from Paganini's Caprice No. 24 in Twenty-Four Caprices for Solo Violin, Op. 1. While it may appear risky to write variations on the same theme after Liszt and Brahms, Rachmaninoff had already experimented in the genre of variations having written two solo piano works *Variations on a Theme of Chopin*, Op. 22 (1903) and *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, Op. 42 (1931). It refers to Corelli in the title, but in fact the theme is based on an ancient Portuguese dance *La Folia*, which Corelli and a great number of other composers used over the course of more than four centuries.²⁶¹ Similar to the Rhapsody, these two Variations combine a multi-movement structure of a sonata or a concerto with continuous and uninterrupted development of the main theme.

²⁶⁰ Franz Liszt – *Grande Étude de Paganini*; Johannes Brahms – Variations on a Theme by Paganini, Op. 35; Karol Szymanowski – Three Paganini Caprices, Op. 40; Robert Muczynski – Desperate Measures, Op. 48; Witold Lutosławski – Variations on a Theme of Paganini; Nathan Milstein – *Paganiniana*; Eugène Ysaÿe – Paganini Variations; Andrew Lloyd Webber – Variations for Cello and Rock Band; Hans Bottermund – Variations on a Theme of Paganini for Unaccompanied Cello; Bryan Hesford – Variations of a Theme of Paganini, Op. 68; Gregor Piatigorsky – Variations on a Theme by Paganini; Kenneth Wilson – Variations on a Theme of Paganini for Four B flat Clarinets

²⁶¹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (England: Ashgate, 1990), 315–316

According to his letters, Rachmaninoff was well acquainted with the compositions of Brahms and Liszt which he also performed as a regular part of his repertoire²⁶² alongside Schumann's piano cycles such as *Carnaval*, Op. 9, *Kreisleriana*, Op. 16 and *Symphonic Etudes*, Op. 13, to name a few.²⁶³ In his work, Liszt uses Paganini's Caprice No. 24 only in the last, No. 6 *Grande Étude de Paganini*, and does this in almost pure transcription form showing off the virtuosity of the piano playing. Meanwhile, Brahms's two volumes are a collection of technical studies,²⁶⁴ and consist of twenty-eight variations which are all predominantly based on the same thematic material from Paganini's Caprice No. 24. They are technically challenging pieces, but unlike Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody – which is an organically holistic musical work – Brahms's variations can be performed as stand-alone pieces.²⁶⁵

Both Liszt's *Grandes Études de Paganini* (1838, revised in 1851) and the two books of *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* by Brahms (1866) can be considered more as study pieces for solo piano, which include a number of extremely difficult variations. As discussed earlier, Liszt's approach was to use the mere transcription of the Paganini Caprice adding some virtuosic piano passages but keeping the overall key and formal structure of the theme almost intact. In his two sets of fourteen variations, Brahms uses a more complex technique than Liszt, and his variations have their own individual pianistic challenges. Furthermore, some performers change the order of the pieces or play a select number of variations individually which is impossible in the case of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody where all the variations are interlinked structurally and stylistically. Moreover, while the Rhapsody in itself is a

²⁶² See Rachmaninoff's repertoire in Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 417–438

²⁶³ Some of variational and multi-sectional pieces played by Rachmaninoff include Beethoven – 32 Variations in C minor; Haydn – Variations in F minor; Mendelssohn – *Variations sérieuses*; Schubert-Tausig – Andantino and Variations in B minor; Tchaikovsky – Theme and Variations, Op. 19, No. 6

²⁶⁴ Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 327

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 327

holistic piece, it is also a piano/orchestral work which does make it harder to manipulate the structure where the unity and continuity of the composition is crucial in addition to the practical complexity that changing or skipping a movement would.

Rachmaninoff's first sketches of experimenting with the Paganini theme, including the inversion of the theme which later became the famous eighteenth variation, are dated from around 1926.²⁶⁶ After completing his concert tour in 1934, eight years after the composition of his Piano Concerto No. 4, Rachmaninoff started on his last piano/orchestral work. This was also after a three-year compositional silence since the revision of his second piano sonata and the completion of his *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, Op. 42 in 1931. As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the perceived rejection of the fourth piano concerto may have been one of the reasons why Rachmaninoff opted for a Rhapsody as his last piano-orchestral work rather than a fifth concerto. His insecurity and the desire to add an extra marketing impetus to the new work come across also from a discussion he had with Vladimir Horowitz. Regarding the eighteenth variation, he told Horowitz that he composed one specifically for his manager hoping that it might help 'save the piece' (Horowitz 1980, cited in Scott 2008).²⁶⁷

However, while Rachmaninoff's fear of rejection is a strong rationale to support the argument regarding why he chose to write variations, an additional factor may have been his heavy performance schedule which did not leave much time for composing. He repeatedly writes in his letters about the lack of time with heavy concert seasons.²⁶⁸ Before starting the composition of the Rhapsody in his summer

²⁶⁶ David Butler Cannata, *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 1999), 55–58

²⁶⁷ Michael Scott, *Rachmaninoff* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008), 169

²⁶⁸ Sergei Bertensson, and Jay Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (New York: NYUP, 1956), 305

home ‘Villa Senar’²⁶⁹ on the banks of Lake Lucerne in Hertenstein, Switzerland, he asked his Russian secretary and correspondent Yevgeni Somov to send him scores of the *Night Vigil* and two operas by Rimsky-Korsakov (*The Golden Cockerel* and *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*).²⁷⁰ It is unclear whether Rachmaninoff had asked for these pieces for inspiration or for structural or technical reasons. However, he confesses his admiration of Rimsky-Korsakov by saying: ‘Just to read a score by Rimsky-Korsakov puts me in a better mood, whenever I feel restless or sad’.²⁷¹ Interestingly, apart from his own music, the only other score that Rachmaninoff took with him leaving Russia in 1917 was Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera *The Golden Cockerel*.²⁷² This confirms Rachmaninoff’s great interest in Rimsky-Korsakov’s writings perhaps also as a source of inspiration for compositional and stylistic features.

The manuscript of the Rhapsody is signed by Rachmaninoff ‘3 July–18 August 1934, Senar, Praise be to God’. The same words he also uses at the end of his Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, Symphony No. 3, and the *Symphonic Dances*.²⁷³ The original Russian-language sign-off by Rachmaninoff of the ‘Praise be to God’ is ‘Благодарю тебя, Господи!’ [Blagodaryu tebya, Gospodi!].²⁷⁴ The systematic use of this phrase and its word-for-word translation into English ‘Praise be to God’ may lead one to think about a religious element which Rachmaninoff may have wanted to attach to the compositions. While this may be true for the Liturgy, the other works hardly have much to do with sacred music. The use of the phrase in Russian, however, has an additional meaning and is an equivalent to the English phrase ‘Thank God’ or ‘I thank

²⁶⁹ The Villa was named ‘Senar’ after Rachmaninoff and his wife Natalia – **Sergey** and **Natalia Rachmaninoff**

²⁷⁰ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 303

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 303

²⁷² Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 287

²⁷³ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 302

²⁷⁴ Zaruhi Apetian, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* [Literary Heritage], Vol. 3 (Moscow: Vsesoyuznoe Izdatelstvo Sovetski Kompozitor, 1980), 80

God' in a context where it is more a sigh of relief for having finished the work rather than a praise to the Lord in a canonical sense. This also supports the argument about the time constraints that the composer felt during those years and his relief that he managed to complete the work. A strong argument confirming this is revealed in a number of his letters, one of them to his sister-in-law Sofia Satina after finishing Symphony No. 3, Op. 44, saying: 'With each of my thoughts I thank God that I was able to do it'.²⁷⁵

Initially, he named the new composition 'Symphonic Variations on a Theme of Paganini' as mentioned in the letter he wrote to his sister-in-law Sofia Satina, in which Rachmaninoff describes the main characteristics of his new work. He also notes that he plans to ask his manager Charles Foley to arrange a recital to premier the new piece.²⁷⁶ The second interim title by which Rachmaninoff referred to his new work was 'Fantasia for piano and orchestra in the form of variations of a theme by Paganini'.²⁷⁷ In his letter to an old friend Vladimir Wilshaw dated September 8, 1934 he tells him about the 'new piece' while also complaining about the heavy concert season of 1934–35 with 29 recitals in America and 40 in Europe.

Two weeks ago I finished a new piece: it's called a Fantasia for piano and orchestra in the form of variations of a theme by Paganini (the same theme on which Liszt and Brahms wrote variations). The piece is rather long, 20–25 minutes, about the length of a piano concerto. I'll give it to the printer next spring — after I try to play it in New York and London, which will give me time to make necessary corrections'.²⁷⁸

However, before the premiere on 7 November 1934 in Baltimore with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski, Rachmaninoff changed the

²⁷⁵ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 320

²⁷⁶ Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 326

²⁷⁷ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 305

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 305

title to *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.²⁷⁹ The removal of the variational aspect from the initial titles was most likely done to avoid confusion with the Variations on a Theme of Paganini by Brahms. Furthermore, as noted by David Cannata, the final name of Rachmaninoff's new composition may have also been influenced by the success of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) and the *Second Rhapsody* (1931).²⁸⁰ If considered from the marketing perspective, this would also have helped him to appeal to the wide strata of the American audience. While the marketing element may have played a role, Rachmaninoff's variations are genuinely written in a continuous manner which is typical of a rhapsody. As such, the title reflects also the nature of the composition irrespective of the additional motivations for calling it a "Rhapsody".

The Rhapsody: Structure and form

The free form and improvisatory character of a fantasia and rhapsody generally gives more freedom to a composer to break away from structural or thematic constraints seen in other classical forms. As argued earlier, while Rachmaninoff was trying to avoid the piano concerto genre, the Rhapsody is, nevertheless, close to a three-movement sonata or concerto form. Rachmaninoff's treatment of two contrasting subjects (Paganini and *Dies Irae*) in the first part, or as I designate it here, the Rhapsody movement and the toccata-like finale also suggests the incorporation of the traditional sonata form into a variational composition. There are different approaches to segmenting the Rhapsody. Martin argues that the work can be divided

²⁷⁹ Scott, *Rachmaninoff*, 171

²⁸⁰ Cannata, *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony*, 58

into three sections or movements, in which the first movement consists of Variations 1–10, with Variation 11 acting as a transition to the middle (slow) movement (Variations 12–18), and Variations 21–24 form a concluding third movement.²⁸¹ Rachmaninoff's *Variations on a Theme of Corelli* also has a contrasting three-movement structure (Allegro and Scherzo Variations 1–13, Adagio Variations 14–15 and Finale Variations 16–20).²⁸² However, Johnston argues that the work has a four-movement structure where he further splits the middle section of the Rhapsody into two parts (Variations 12–15 and 16–18).²⁸³ His main argument supporting the extra split is the different key correlations (Variations 12–15, D minor to F Major; Variations 16–18, B flat Minor to D flat Major) and the codas at the end of Variation 15 (bars 535ff) and 18 (bars 661).

While both options are possible, the three-movement approach has a stronger rationale. Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis argue that the second movements of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3 (especially the latter) could be split in two with the scherzo second half, giving an impression of a four-movement structure. However, the scherzo section in both cases does not develop enough to be independent and can therefore be considered as part of the second movement structure. Similarly, while Johnston's suggestion to divide the middle section of the Rhapsody according to the keys and their close correlations appears logical, the ending of Variation 15 is an extension based on the same material which is more reminiscent of a closing section than a proper coda.

Furthermore, there are four closing sections throughout the Rhapsody which share a very similar stylistic approach and purpose (each closing section is discussed

²⁸¹ Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 328

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 317

²⁸³ Blair Allen Johnston, 'Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff' (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 241–242

later in this chapter). If we look deeper into all four closing sections and take Johnston's rationale for segmentation based on an obvious stop, the Rhapsody can be divided into five sections by further splitting the first movement (Variations 1–6, Variations 7–10 plus 11 (transition), Variations 12–15, Variations 16–18, Variations 19–24). An alternative to this is to see the Rhapsody as a single-movement composition consisting of Exposition (Variations 1–11), Development (Variations 12–18), Recapitulation (Variations 19–23) and Coda (Variation 24).

One of the key issues when it comes to giving a clear-cut definition of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody and thus also segmenting the work is down to the fact that the composer created a hybrid of a rhapsody, concerto, double variation and single-movement symphonic poem. The close collaboration between the piano and the orchestra as well as the frequent thematic conflict between them in addition to solo piano *cadenzas* throughout the Rhapsody comes from the piano concerto genre, whereas the use of two thematic ideas is more typical of a double variation. Furthermore, Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody is predominantly built on the Paganini theme with the contrasting *Dies Irae* motif being used four times (Variations 7, 10, 22 and 24) as secondary material. While this is typical of a sonata form, the composer uses the same A minor key and parallel treatment for both ideas, thus reminding one of a double variation.

One of the best descriptions of the Rhapsody and its three-movement structure is given by Rachmaninoff himself in his letter to Russian choreographer Mikhail Fokine in 1936 where he suggests creating a ballet based on the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*:

Why not recreate the legend of Paganini selling his soul to the Evil Spirit for perfection in art and also for a woman? All the variations on *Dies irae* represent

the Evil Spirit. All those in the middle, from variation 11 to 18, are the love episodes. Paganini appears (for the first time) in the ‘Theme’ and, defeated, appears for the last time in the 23rd variation — the first 12 bars — after which, until the end, it is the triumph of his conquerors. The first appearance of the Evil Spirit is the 7th variation, where at figure 19 there can be a dialogue with Paganini, when his theme appears alongside *Dies irae*. Variations 8, 9 and 10 are the progress of the Evil Spirit. The 11th variation is the transition to the realm of love; the 12th variation, the minuet, is the first appearance of the woman, up to the 18th variation. The 13th variation is the first appearance of the woman with Paganini. The 19th variation is the triumph of Paganini’s art, his diabolical pizzicato.²⁸⁴

While Rachmaninoff gave this description two years after composing the Rhapsody, surely the programmatic nature of the Rhapsody was planned during or even before it materialised, including all the characters he mentions in his letter to Fokine. In addition, the storytelling nature of the composition is related to both the rhapsody and the symphonic poem. Here again it is difficult to define Rachmaninoff’s Rhapsody as it shares characteristics from both genres. The developmental approach from a relatively simple start to the gradual complication of the form and materials are typical of symphonic poems or tone poems. Indeed, the middle section of the Rhapsody can be seen as a development of a single movement symphony due to the modulatory character and the inverted or fragmented treatment of the material. Similarly, while Rachmaninoff openly illustrated the underlying story of the Rhapsody, it lacks aspects of folk life and traditional dances, which are characteristic of rhapsodies more generally, and focuses mainly on the mystical character of Paganini and death in the form of *Dies Irae*. These can be seen as a form of novel interpretation by Rachmaninoff of the genre of rhapsody. Rachmaninoff himself was aware of this hybrid combination, which could have been one of the reasons why he initially thought to call his work *Fantasia for piano and orchestra in the form of*

²⁸⁴ Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 327–328

variations of a theme by Paganini. This title refers to the two (variations and fantasia/rhapsody) out of the four genres discussed above, elements of which he used in his new work. Considering the fact that Rachmaninoff usually called his concertos symphonies, the argument that he incorporated aspects of all four genres can be said to have some merit.

Mixture of old and new

In his 1932 interview to a New York Times reporter on the question of modern music, Rachmaninoff said:

Music should bring relief. It should rehabilitate minds and souls, and modern music does not do this. If we are to have great music, we must return to the fundamentals which made the music of the past great. Music cannot be just colour and rhythm; it must reveal the emotions of the heart.²⁸⁵

In the same interview Rachmaninoff also argued that modern music represented ‘retrogression’ rather than ‘evolution’.²⁸⁶ This is one of several similar quotations from Rachmaninoff’s interviews where he refuses to accept ‘soulless’ contemporary music. The widespread interpretation of his words refers to this statement as one voiced by a conservative composer. In his reply Rachmaninoff puts forward perhaps one of the key arguments about the purpose of music which in his view should bring relief to the mind and soul.

Another important aspect of this statement is the ‘return to the fundamentals’, which is also key when examining his works. Rachmaninoff demonstrates this most

²⁸⁵ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 284

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 284

clearly in his Rhapsody two years after the interview. However, alongside the fundamentals, the Rhapsody also reflects the progression of his compositional language over the years with the new economical approach to the texture, orchestration and subject material which are the main stylistic features characteristic of Rachmaninoff's final compositional period (1917–1943) as an émigré. As a result, his economical approach when dealing with the musical materials, the fragmentation of the main subjects, transparent orchestration and the overall lighter texture of the Rhapsody are all in line with Rachmaninoff's approach and compositional language of his late years, and firmly confirm the progression of his writing style from his earlier composition. Another important feature and novelty of the Rhapsody is its programmatic nature which is unprecedented in Rachmaninoff's previous four piano concertos. However, the true importance of the Rhapsody is, the clever mix of the old and new where he skilfully combines the new tendencies of his compositional language with the features he used in his earlier works such as the Orthodox church bells, his favourite medieval *Dies Irae* chant, chromaticism and the traditional variational form, among others. This mixture gives a sense of freshness and further illustrates Rachmaninoff's constant pursuit for novel approaches and progression.

Laconic in its statements, with a scarcity of pedal and with rather dry, martellato colouring of short episodes, it sounds like a contemporary composition. The few variations written in his old style only emphasize further its new approach.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ Victor Seroff, *Rachmaninoff* (London: Cassell, 1951), 187–188

Variations

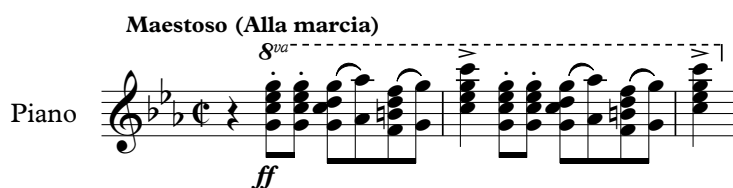
The symphonic approach to piano/orchestral works that emerges in Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, continues also in the Rhapsody. The Rhapsody is dominated by the soloist due to the virtuosic nature of the composition. However, while the orchestral writing is not as dense as in his previous works, the orchestra in the Rhapsody has a distinct role. It contributes to the formation of each variation by supporting the soloist both harmonically and rhythmically, as well as adding extra colour by systematically echoing the main theme and its fragments. Although, compared to Piano Concerto No. 4, the harmonic picture of the Rhapsody is much simpler – staying mostly in the home key of A minor – the overall thinner texture of the composition and short fragmented approach of the main materials matches Rachmaninoff's late works. Perhaps this was one of the main reasons why Rachmaninoff chose the simple binary Paganini tune (Ex.5.1) consisting of five-note fragments (la–do–ti–la–mi) which is easier to manipulate. Interestingly, one of the secondary materials of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 also has a similar five-note form (Ex.5.2) that resembles the Paganini theme.

Violin

Quasi presto

p

Ex.5.1 Paganini, Caprice No. 24, Op. 1, bars 1–12



Ex.5.2 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2, 1st movement, bars 245–247

Rachmaninoff's tendency to expand the use of percussion instruments observed in Piano Concerto No. 4 comes across also in his last piano/orchestral work. Five out of the six percussion instruments used in Piano Concerto No. 4 also feature in the Rhapsody.²⁸⁸ In addition to timpani, triangle, side drum, cymbals and bass drum (the tambourin is missing in the Rhapsody), two harps and another pitched percussion instrument, the glockenspiel, are added to the orchestra setting. Another feature that Rachmaninoff widely used in his fourth piano concerto is the motoric and linear piano writing stylistically reminiscent of Sergey Prokofiev's compositional language. In particular Variations 10, 14 and 22 stand out with their driving dynamism and 'dryness' that reminds of Prokofiev.²⁸⁹ Although Zhitomirsky mentions Variation 10 for its resemblance to Prokofiev's style, Variation 9 of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody has stronger association with Prokofiev with its motoric characteristics and sudden shifts and accentuations, as discuss later in this chapter.

²⁸⁸ Percussion instruments used in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4 – timpani, triangle, tambourin, side drum, cymbals, bass drum

²⁸⁹ Daniel Zhitomirsky, 'Fortepiannoe Tvorchestvo Rachmaninova [Rachmaninoff's Piano Works]', in *Sovetskaya Muzika*, Vol. 4 (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1945), 99

First movement, Variations 1–11

Similar to the start of Rachmaninoff's fourth piano concerto, the Rhapsody begins with an *Allegro Vivace*. The first variation marked *Precedente* follows a short orchestral introduction based on the fragment of the main subject, supported by the soloist's bell-like downbeat double octaves in A (bars /1–9). In the first part of the variation (bars 9–32) the orchestra simply gives a harmonic sketch of the theme with the help of percussion instruments that add more colour to the overly transparent orchestral setting. This is then fully deployed in the second part of the variation by the violins supported by the piano with light staccato (bars 33–56). Rachmaninoff's decision to give the violins the very first execution of the principal theme in its exact form most probably relates to the origin of the main material which is written for the solo violin.

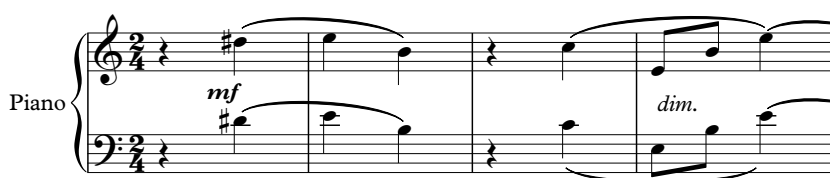
Constructed in a binary form, the Paganini theme can be divided into two sections (A-1, bars 33–40 and A-2, bars 41–56) with the second part being twice as long as the first. In contrast to Paganini, Rachmaninoff treated the main material more symmetrically by restating both sections of the theme. However, even in this relatively simple and straightforward variation, in the repeat of the second part of the theme (bars 49–56) the soloist brings more rhythmic variety. The first part of the subject is simply based on a tonic/dominant relationship compared to the sequentially descending second part.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is divided into two sections, A-1 and A-2. Section A-1 consists of two measures: the first measure has a whole note on G2 (labeled 'i') and the second measure has a whole note on D3 (labeled 'V/i'). Section A-2 consists of eight measures: the first measure has a whole note on C3 (labeled 'V/iv'), the second on B2 (labeled 'iv'), the third on A2 (labeled 'V/III'), the fourth on G2 (labeled 'III'), the fifth on F2 (labeled 'ii°'), the sixth on E2 (labeled 'i'), the seventh on D2 (labeled 'VI7'), and the eighth on C2 (labeled 'V/i'). The final measure of the piece has a whole note on C2 (labeled 'i').

Ex.5.3 Tonal structure of Paganini theme

In the second variation (bars 57–80) the soloist repeats the same material with some alterations, but with the exact same harmonic and metric structure. One of the interesting features here is the downbeat articulations by the horns and the trumpets (bars 57ff) further emphasising the soloist’s chromatic grace note which gives more of a witty comic character. In addition, in the second part of the theme, Rachmaninoff started to show some polyphonic ideas in the form of a descending left-hand scale-like passages (bars 65ff).


It is from the third variation (bars 81–111) that Rachmaninoff starts to depart from the exact execution of the Paganini theme. The five-note fragment of the theme is carried by the strings, while the piano introduces crotchet/quaver-based phrases emphasising the harmonic picture of the main material. In addition, between piano motifs, oboes bring back the soloist’s left hand descending quavers in a short and different configuration (bars /85–86 and /91–92). Imitating the same crotchet/quaver-based harmonic phrasing seen in the piano part of Variation 3 (Ex.5.4), the fourth (bars 112–151) introduces another parallel melody first executed by the English horns and second violins (Ex.5.5, bars 128–135) and later by the violins (Ex.5.6, bars 140–147). While they have different melodic structures, the combination of the chromatic and leaping interval structure of all three motifs and especially the harmonic similarity is quite noticeable.



Ex.5.4 Rhapsody, Variation 3, bars 81–84

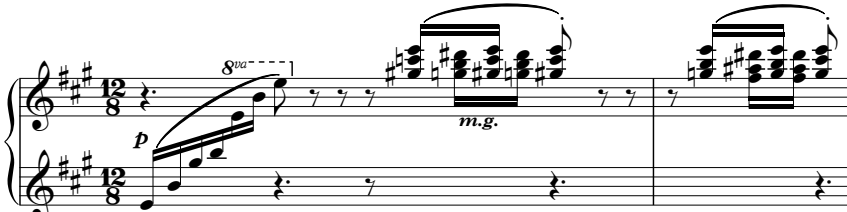
English Horn 

Ex.5.5 Rhapsody, Variation 4, bars 128–131

Violin I, II 

Ex.5.6 Rhapsody, Variation 4, bars 140–143

By using a similar melodic secondary element in both variations, Rachmaninoff efficiently links them together despite the fact that the toccata-like fourth variation starts in a new tempo (*Piu vivo*) and, in general, it is stylistically closer to the fifth variation (bars 152–187). Another connecting feature is the alternating hand chordal piano passages at the end of Variation 4 (bars 148–151) which acts as an introduction for the fifth variation written with a similar piano technique (Ex.5.8). In addition, the main rhythmic material of the fifth variation has some resemblance to the third movement of the revised Piano Concerto No. 1. In the revised transition of the third movement (PC1, 3rd movement, bars 34–35, 1917), the oboe and bassoon echo the alternating hand semitone rhythmic piano motif (Ex.5.7).

Piano 

Ex.5.7 Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), third movement, bars 34–35



Ex.5.8 Rhapsody, Variation 5, bars 152–153

One of the main features of Variation 5 is its interesting rhythmic character and constant exchange between the soloist and the orchestra. They complete each other by almost equally sharing the main material. Although the next Variation 6 (bars 188–241) returns back to the initial tempo, the rhythm is not as strict compared to the previous variations. Minimal orchestral involvement in this section with light, mostly dominant (E) pedal support and occasional fragmental restatement of the theme by woodwinds, gives the soloist the freedom for nonchalant playing that leaves the impression of an improvisation. While still keeping the same toccata-like character of the preceding variation, the sixth variation essentially reduces the power and strict rhythmic continuity, and acts as a closing section.

The similarity with a traditional sonata form is quite apparent in this section where the first subject material loses its power preparing for a slower second subject. Indeed, the central material of the following Variation 7 (*Meno mosso*, a tempo moderato, bars 242–283) is an introduction of the ‘Evil Spirit’ in the form of the medieval *Dies Irae* chant, which can be seen as the second subject. Although Rachmaninoff used this chant in many compositions starting from his first Symphony, the chordal form of the chant ‘reminiscent of Russian Orthodox choral music’ is a new feature he introduces in the Rhapsody.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 307



Ex.5.9 Rhapsody, Variation 7, bars 242–248

However, contrary to the traditional form where the second subject modulates to another key, the Rhapsody keeps the second subject in the home key of A minor accompanied by a five-note fragment of the Paganini theme. Another dramatic feature of the seventh variation is the violins' occasional demisemiquaver *staccato* of the Paganini motif that gives a sense of urgency, uneasiness and anxiety. In addition, the following Variation 8 (bars 284–327) brings back the original speed and character of the composition leaving very little time for the so-called second subject to develop further. Although the speed, length and harmony of the eighth variation stay very close to the main theme of the Rhapsody, it is stylistically closer to the dark and heavy variation that precedes it. However, some of the features such as the alternating piano passages and shared motivic interplay between the soloist and orchestra (bars 300–313) recalls Variation 5. All these rhythmic and characteristic features shared between variations create a better sense of unity and contribute to the overall continuity of the composition.

After this newly arranged main theme recollection full of harmonically enhanced piano chords, Variation 9 (bars 328–367) commences with its advanced rhythmic structure. Due to the dominating and relatively heavy piano configuration in the lower register of the instrument and lighter *pizzicato* orchestration, the sense of the downbeat is in reverse order. The first part of the variation (bars 328–343) sounds if the orchestra is ahead of the time and the soloist plays the actual downbeat which

leaves an impression of rhythmic uncertainty or lack of synchronisation.²⁹¹ However, starting from the second part of the main subject (A-2, bars 344ff), the involvement of more orchestral instruments and the soloist's additional accented downbeats in bars 346 and 350, clarifies the rhythmic structure of the variation. This is one of the 'Prokofievian' variations as described by Zhitomirsky,²⁹² which stands out with its motoric characteristics and sudden dynamic changes or accents.

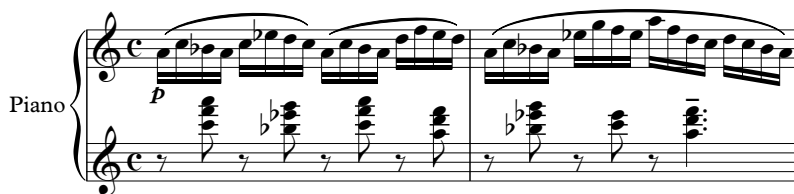
Rachmaninoff's first attempt to break away from Paganini's binary form starts from Variation 10 (bars 368–398) which can be divided in four parts. The first part (bars 368–375) continues the motoric character of the previous variation and once again brings back the second *Dies Irae* subject with its variants. After a bell-like restatement of the chant in 4/4 time (bars 368–375), the soloist with the help of all percussion and brass instruments introduces another variant of the same material with an alternating time of 3/4 and 4/4 (second part, bars 376–382). In addition, the dominating trumpet, trombone, tuba and cymbal combination, coupled with the alternating times, gives an impression of a jazz band.²⁹³ The implementation of this feature in the Rhapsody once again confirms Rachmaninoff's interest in exploring new elements in music and his progressive tendencies to keep pace with the trends of his time by skilfully integrating new elements to organically enhance his compositional language. In addition, given the growing popularity of jazz music in America during the composition of the Rhapsody, the new element that reminds of a Swing Jazz of 1930s would surely attract more audience even if it is introduced in a limited form.

²⁹¹ As a performer, this is one of the rhythmically awkward parts in the Rhapsody where a skilled conductor's and professional orchestra's role is crucial.

²⁹² Zhitomirsky, 'Fortepiannoe Tvorchestvo Rachmaninova [Rachmaninoff's Piano Works]', 99

²⁹³ Rachmaninoff's interest and admiration in Jazz is already discussed in Chapter 4

The second lighter variant of the *Dies Irae* material (third part, bars 383–390) played by the soloist (left hand), upper strings, glockenspiel and harp, is combined with the fragmented Paganini theme in semiquavers in the pianist’s right hand.



Ex.5.10 Rhapsody, Variation 10, bars 383–384

Sudden characteristic change of the variation and, in particular, glockenspiel’s resonance of the soloist’s left-hand motif give a theatrical effect portraying the retreat of the ‘Evil Spirit’. Similar to Variation 6, the last part of the tenth variation (fourth part, bars /391–398) acts as a closing section for the second subject. The last restatement of the chant motif by brass combined with chromatically descending passages of the soloist and strings (bars 391–396) and the five-note Paganini fragment at the end (bars 397–398) summarises the tenth variation.

As mentioned in Rachmaninoff’s letter to Fokine, Variation 11 (bars 399–414) is a transition ‘to the realm of love’²⁹⁴ with chromatically enriched piano passages. Although the soloist briefly presents a fragment of the main theme with a light orchestral support at the start (bars /401–407), the rest of the variation is mainly a piano *cadenza*. While some of the instruments (Ex.5.11) still continue to present fragments from the main theme (oboes – five-note fragment, bars 409 and 411; flutes

²⁹⁴ Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 328

and English horns – a semitone version of the theme, bars /408–411), the soloist simultaneously introduces the start of the piano *cadenza*.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Flute, Oboe, and English Horn. The music is in 3/4 time and consists of three measures. The Flute part starts with a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. The Oboe part starts with a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. The English Horn part starts with a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano). The tempo/mood is marked as *cantabile* (cantabile). The score shows a gradual reduction in momentum, characteristic of a cadenza.

Ex.5.11 Rhapsody, Variation 11, bars 407–409


Smoothly transforming the A minor home key into the dominant of D minor, the eleventh variation concludes the first section of the Rhapsody paving the way for the slower middle section which is in the new key of D minor. This is the first out of three short piano *cadenzas* in the Rhapsody, which has some formal connections with the first movement of Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto. Similar to the Rhapsody, Piano Concerto No. 3 stands out with several short *cadenzas* in addition to the main solo piano *cadenza* in the first movement of the concerto. In particular, it is interesting to note the same structural and functional resemblance of the first short *cadenza* seen in the first transition of Piano Concerto No. 3 (1st movement, bars 72–81): both short *cadenzas* are incorporated into the transitional material, the soloist starts to introduce the virtuosic passages while the orchestra still plays some fragments of the main material, in both cases the *cadenza* acts as a summarising feature by gradually reducing the momentum of the section, and finally the following material is either a slow second subject (Piano Concerto No. 3) or a second movement (Rhapsody).

Second movement, Variations 12–18

The middle section starts with Variation 12 (bars 415–446) as a slow minuet in a new metre (3/4) and key (D minor). However, the long-phrased second part of the variation (bars /431–446) reminds one more of a promenade than minuet. The soloist's material is based on a two-note fragment of the *Dies Irae* (Ex.5.12) while the orchestra restates the skeletal tonic-dominant correspondence of the first variation (Ex.5.13 and 5.14) later develops into a beautiful melody played by first horns and cellos (Ex.5.12, bars /431–434).

Piano 


Ex.5.12 Rhapsody, Variation 12, bars 419–422

Violin II 

Ex.5.13 Rhapsody, Variation 12, bars 415–416

Clarinet in B \flat 

Ex.5.14 Rhapsody, Variation 12, bars 422–424

Horn in F 

Ex.5.15 Rhapsody, Variation 12, bars 430–434

Similar to Variation 7, the *Dies Irae* material is presented by the soloist in a chordal form imitating Russian choral singing traditions. Occasional references to the five-note Paganini theme by various instruments also can be heard throughout Variation 12. The gentle and melancholic atmosphere of the twelfth variation suddenly changes for the more dramatic appearance of ‘the woman with Paganini’ in the next Variation 13 (bars 447–470). The strings restate the Paganini theme in its exact form in D minor (A-1, 8 bars, A-2, 16 bars), but in the new tempo (*Allegro*) and with slightly heavier crotchet/quaver rhythmic configuration in 3/4 time. Harmonically enriched *fortissimo* piano chords in Variation 13 add further weight to the variation by imitating church bells. In addition, the progressive two-hand piano chords and leaping octave-down gesture resemble the introductory start of Piano Concerto No. 2.

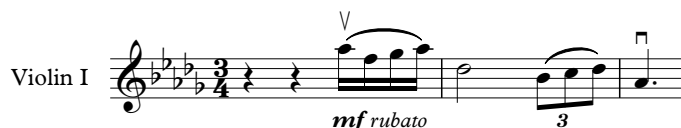
The following F major Variation 14 (bars 471–507) follows the same rhetorical style and is written in the relative key of the previous variation. It is predominantly executed by almost the entire orchestra playing in unison and accompanied by dense chordal piano passages (bars 484ff). The material of the variation is an inverted fragment (Ex.5.17) of the five-note Paganini motive (Ex.5.16) which, in its full inverted version, appears later in Variation 18 (Ex.5.18). Overall, Variation 14 acts as a thematic bridge linking both the rhythmic structure of the Paganini theme and the inverted configuration of the famous eighteenth variation.



Ex.5.16 Rhapsody, Variation 1, bars 33–35



Ex.5.17 Rhapsody, Variation 14, bars 472–474



Ex.5.18 Rhapsody, Variation 18, bars 650–652

A chromatically and rhythmically enhanced stream of semiquaver solo piano passages start two bars prior (bars 506ff) to the *scherzando* Variation 15 (bars 508–564). Based on the same inverted material, it greatly contrasts with the previous orchestra-dominated variation with its soloistic and lighter characteristics. Although the start of the variation (bars 508–535) sounds like another *cadenza*, it is just simply introducing a virtuosic variant of the new inverted material without an orchestral support. Once again, the second part of the variation can be seen as another closing section (from bars 535ff) gradually diminishing the momentum with descending piano passages until it comes to a full stop in F major.

With a simple five-bar (bars 565–569) chromatically descending introduction by *pizzicato* upper strings at the start of the slower Variation 16 (bars 565–613), the harmony changes from F major to B flat minor. As seen in the transitional Variation 11, Rachmaninoff uses the previous key (F major) as a dominant for the new B flat minor Variation 16. While the distant key of B flat can be interpreted as Rachmaninoff's favourite Neapolitan A minor (ii↓ – lowered supertonic), the new key of Variation 16 organically develops through systematic tonic/subdominant and relative key modulations starting from Variation 11 (**a**+perfect4 → **d**+minor3 →

F+perfect4 → **bb**, see Chart 22). The first part (A-1) of the main Paganini theme is executed by woodwinds while the soloist's repeatedly rocking piano figuration once again is reminiscent of Orthodox church bells. A variant of the second part of the main theme (A-2) is played by solo violin (bars 587ff) and later repeated by clarinet (bars 597ff). The overall mysterious character of the variation is achieved by violin tremolos in addition to the monotonous piano passages and repetitively pulsating strings and woodwinds.

Variation 17 (bars 613–638) is a series of closely related modulations (**bb** – bars 613–620, **Db** – bars 621–624, **eb** – bars 625–627, **F** – bars 628–631, **bb** – bars 632–638) with chromatically oscillating arpeggio-like piano passages in 12/8 with light orchestral support. This tranquil variation continues the dark and mysterious characteristics of the previous variation with a gradual change of mood not only because of a new major key, but also due to the discontinuation of the strings' tremolos. This helps to lay the ground for the famous *Andante cantabile* Variation 18 (bars 638–679) in D flat major. The inverted subject of the variation has already been discussed earlier in this chapter, and almost all the research and published materials (including programme notes) mention it as the focal point of the entire Rhapsody. Rachmaninoff uses long-phrased melodies in this variation which may have led some scholars like Geoffrey Norris to suggest that such melodies had finally returned after a period of abandonment:

His considerable gift for writing long, beautifully phrased melodies [in Piano Concerto No. 3] which deserted him temporarily during the composition of the fourth concerto returned for the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁵ Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 120

However, this is not true for the full composition. In contrast to the third piano concerto, the eleven-bar material in Variation 18 quoted by Norris is the only long-phrased melody throughout the Rhapsody. In addition, the fifteenth variation of the Corelli Variations – which is similarly positioned at the end of the middle section of the composition just before the start of the brisk finale – also has a similar long-phrased melody. As noted by Harrison this recollection of the past showed that Rachmaninoff ‘could, if he wished, still compose in the style of his less unpopular works such as Concerto No. 2’.²⁹⁶ Perhaps this is one of the main reasons why this ‘love episode’, if we use the composer’s own words, stands out from the rest of the Rhapsody’s more economical and short-fragmental materials as a reminder of his older compositions. However, as Seroff noted these older techniques ‘only emphasize further his new approach’ as seen in his late works, including the Rhapsody.²⁹⁷ It is also important to mention that the initial inversion of the Paganini theme already happened in Variation 14, which further strengthens the argument discussed earlier in this chapter, that the middle section of the Rhapsody should not be split into two separate movements.

The soloist opens the eighteenth variation by fully executing the entire inverted material (bars /640–650) in the manner of the slow movements in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 3. Similar arpeggio-like accompaniment, the multi-layered structure of the piano writing with polyrhythmic elements in rubato and the sequentially rising second part of the inverted theme is reminiscent of Rachmaninoff’s earlier piano concertos (perhaps more the second piano concerto, as even the slow subjects or movement of Piano Concerto No. 3 are much more complex and densely

²⁹⁶ Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, 305

²⁹⁷ Seroff, *Rachmaninoff*, 187–188

written). After the restatement of the material played by strings and supported by the soloist's triplet chordal passages (bars /651–661), the first four bars of the subject appear for the final time (bars /662–665) where more orchestral instruments are involved. Descending sequences (bars 665ff) based on the fragment of the main material gradually reduce the momentum and sum up the variation. Similar to Variations 6, 10 and 15, the ending of Variation 18 can be considered as another closing section that concludes the second movement of the Rhapsody.

Third movement, Variations 19–24

The third and final section of the Rhapsody is stylistically quite similar to the third movements of Rachmaninoff's piano concertos. In contrast to the previous sections of the Rhapsody, all six variations of the final movement stay characteristically very close to each other and share similar features such as toccata-like solo piano writing, speed, rhythm, and harmony. This repetitiveness gives an impression of this section being a rondo which is commonly used in the third movements of all Rachmaninoff piano concertos.²⁹⁸

In the score the start of Variation 19 is marked after a six-bar simple orchestral modulatory introduction (bars 680–685). However, it is perhaps more logical to consider this orchestral introduction as the opening part of the variation which also marks a change in the tempo (A tempo vivace, bars 680ff). Using the first inversion of the A major key, the C sharp (enharmonic of D flat of the previous variation) helps to swiftly bring back the A minor home key of the composition. The first variation of

²⁹⁸ Hybrid in the case of Piano Concerto Nos. 2 and 4 discussed earlier in Chapters 2 and 4

the Rhapsody's third section (Variation 19, bars 686–705) is a toccata-like version of the main material in triplet piano arpeggios figuration lightly supported by the orchestra. It generally resembles the first sketch of the theme seen at the start of the first variation (bars 9–32). A similar harmonic structure and tonic-dominant correlation of the main material are clearly visible in Variation 19 with slight rhythmic alteration. The following three variations (Variations 20–22) gradually build up the speed with slight acceleration at the start of each variation (*Un poco piu vivo*). Variation 20 (Ex.5.20, bars 706–733) shares a similar arpeggio-like pattern that was observed in the preceding variation but with a more articulated rhythmic structure reminiscent of Variation 12 (Ex.5.19). The use of similar rhythmic and structural features from the first part of the Rhapsody makes the start of the third section look like a recapitulation, thus once again shifting the weight towards the form of a symphonic poem.



Ex.5.19 Rhapsody, Variation 12, bars /431–432



Ex.5.20 Rhapsody, Variation 20, bars 706–708

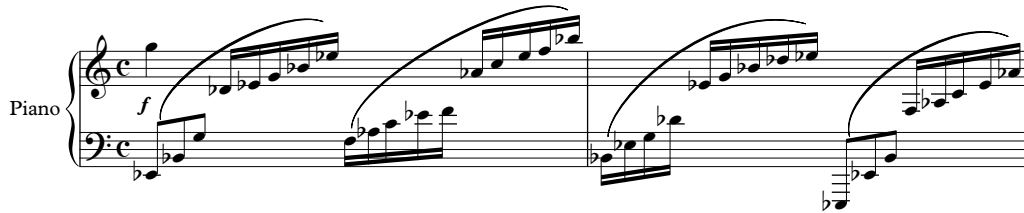
In Variation 21 (bars 734–754) the triplet idea of Variation 19 returns but in a more harmonically advanced organisation. Other common features shared by the first three variations of the finale, are the alternating time signature from 4/4 to 2/4 and the

overall transparent orchestration which is not dense and is mainly based on *staccato/pizzicato* rhythmic correspondence. Variation 22 (bars 754–823) is a form of a suspension builder in the lead-up to the climax or, as Rachmaninoff would like to call it, ‘the point’²⁹⁹ of the entire composition, which is reached in the next variation. All standard binary structures of Paganini theme collapse in Variation 22 in favour of a gradual increase in power and dynamics. The variation can be divided into three parts, each based on rising sequences and a short solo piano cadenza at the end (bars 819–823). The first part (bars 754–786) of Variation 22 is based on rising sequences of descending piano scales with *staccato* chords reminiscent of Orthodox church bell-like chants that gradually become denser, enriched with chromatic elements (bars /776ff). References to the five-note Paganini theme are played by the strings and supported by the orchestral A pedal. However, the *Dies Irae* motif also appears halfway through the first part (bars /776ff) with a similar chordal treatment by the soloist. After the build-up of the climax with the chromatically upwards succession and gradual involvement of more orchestral instruments, the tutti E flat major chord (bar 786) concludes the first part and acts as a dominant of a new A flat major key for the rest of Variation 22. This unusual chromatic modulation is one of those rare examples in the Rhapsody where Rachmaninoff implemented his adventurous harmonic skills seen in abundance for example in his fourth piano concerto. This new distant key is most probably done to give an extra importance and emphasise the climatic point of not only the twenty-second variation but also of the entire Rhapsody.

The second part (bars 786–799) of the variation in the distant lowered tonic (I_↓) starts building another climax with the use of triplet quaver ascending and

²⁹⁹ Marina Frolova-Walker and Peter Donohoe, ‘Russian Piano Masterpieces: Rachmaninov’ (Gresham College, January 19, 2021) <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/rachmaninov-piano>; Blair Allen Johnston, ‘Off-Tonic Culmination in Rachmaninoff’s Rhapsody on A Theme of Paganini’, in *Music Analysis*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Wiley, Oct. 2014)

descending rapid piano passages. For the final section (bars 799–819) of Variation 22 the orchestra once again restates the short motive of the Paganini theme, while the soloist takes over the E flat pedal by emphasising the bell-like downbeats of the arpeggio passages (Ex.5.21) with the constant support of the harp.



Ex.5.21 Rhapsody, Variation 22, bars 799–800

After the climatic E flat major tutti chord (bar 819), the soloist embarks into a virtuosic piano *cadenza* full of double-octave passagework. The solo piano *cadenza* ends with an octave leap in E flat (dominant of A flat major, bar 820) where the Variation 23 (bars 820–872) starts in the original tempo Allegro vivace. After the longest variation of the Rhapsody (Variation 22, 67 bars) and the extensive build-up of the momentum, one expects a closure in the newly established key. However, there are two more variations left, and Rachmaninoff creates some intrigue by playing with a key shift. While the orchestra imitates the same octave leap now in E natural (dominant of A minor, bar 822) hinting at a return to the home key of the composition, the solo piano part ignores the hint and restates the first part (A-1) of the Paganini theme back in A flat minor (parallel to A flat major of the previous Variation 22). With a simple semitone ascent, almost the entire orchestra in *fortissimo* insists on the key change and restates the same material in the home key of the composition (bars /832ff), finally convincing the piano to follow the key and where both converge. In

addition, Variation 23 brings back the original binary form of the Paganini theme, but with fuller orchestral involvement and more challenging piano writing for the second part (A-2, bars 840ff) of the theme.

After the final solo piano *cadenza* (bars 864–872), the last Variation 24 (bars 873–941) concludes the Rhapsody. Full of piano virtuosity, including two octave leaping triplets and Rachmaninoff's favourite alternating hand chordal passages (i.e., bars 899ff), the variation accelerates (*Piu vivo*, bars 899ff) changing the time from 4/4 to 2/4 for the final and substantial restatement of the *Dies Irae* chant (bars 911–918). Typical of Rachmaninoff's piano concerto finale, the coda (bars 927–941) of the Rhapsody is written in the parallel A Major key, with virtuosic alternating hand chords and double-octave piano passages. However, after an extensive build-up with the involvement of the entire orchestra in addition to the bravura piano playing, and the final rhetorical statement of the *Dies Irae* chant by the orchestra, Rachmaninoff decides to conclude the Rhapsody with a simple five-note fragment from the Paganini theme played by the soloist. The light orchestral *staccato/pizzicato* accompaniment (bassoon, horns, tuba, strings and timpani) further enhances the dramatic contrast, leaving an impression of the composer teasing the audience with a cheeky, almost humorous ending to the Rhapsody.



Ex.5.22 Rhapsody, Variation 24, bars 940–941

Conclusion

This overview of the Rhapsody supports the argument that Rachmaninoff avoided experimenting with the harmony and was reluctant to introduce massively new elements into his last piano/orchestral work. This was most likely due to the fear of being rejected after the unsuccessful premier of the fourth piano concerto. Rachmaninoff's last piano/orchestral work is perhaps one of his most texturally and harmonically simple compositions that does not offer the kind of massively complex structural and harmonic solutions seen in his other works, including Piano Concerto Nos. 2–4. Obviously, the word 'simple' is a relative term used within the comparative frame of Rachmaninoff's own standards, particularly if one compares the Rhapsody with his second and third piano concertos and the solo piano works such as the Piano Sonatas or *Etudes Tableaux*. As described by the music critic Robert Simon from *The New Yorker* 'the Rhapsody isn't philosophical, significant or even artistic. It's something for audiences, and what our orchestras need at the moment is more music for audiences'.³⁰⁰ It is also worth emphasising that during that period even his third piano concerto was not widely performed due to its pianistically demanding and complex nature.³⁰¹ Perhaps the rising interest towards newer forms of popular music such as jazz, also played a role in creating a classical composition that was more accessible for wider audiences.

Indeed, one could describe the Rhapsody as a half step back in the progressive evolution of Rachmaninoff's musical language. However, while the compositional style of the Rhapsody is not overly sophisticated compared to his earlier piano/orchestral works, the clever mix of the old and new compositional elements is

³⁰⁰ Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*, 309

³⁰¹ After his recording in 1930, Vladimir Horowitz was one of the advocates of performing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3. However, the concerto received more popularity when Van Cliburn won the first prize in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958.

perhaps the key novelty of the Rhapsody. This is aligned with the hypothesis proposed in this thesis which suggests that Rachmaninoff's writing style can be described in a form of a parabolic arch, transitioning from relative simplicity to layered complexity and then back to the simpler structures, harmonies and form as seen in the Rhapsody. The peak of the complexity is reached in Piano Concerto No. 3, while Piano Concerto No. 4 already shows simplification but still keeps an intense harmonic structure. The Rhapsody follows this trend and is an example where the composer further simplifies all aspects of the composition, including the structure, form, texture and harmony.

Whether intentionally or not, Rachmaninoff creates a hybrid form of a composition that combines elements from different genres. As such, while texturally and harmonically the Rhapsody is not Rachmaninoff's most complex piano/orchestral work, the structure of the composition is relatively sophisticated leaving one to guess which genre Rachmaninoff used as a basis for his Rhapsody. Even if the three-part division suggested by most scholars, including Rachmaninoff, is acceptable, the question still remains as to whether the Rhapsody is a three-movement concerto form or a three-part sonata form with the developmental middle section. Surely his second and third piano concertos were also offered some form of a hybrid combining the symphonic approach with the sonata form. However, in the case of the Rhapsody, Rachmaninoff went even further by crossbreeding four different genres into one (fantasia/rhapsody, sonata/concerto, double variation and symphonic poem). This is perhaps one of the key novel features introduced in the Rhapsody not only among his own piano/orchestral works but more broadly. And the fact that Rachmaninoff managed to successful mix elements from different genres in a piece which became one of his most popular works is a testament in itself of the composer's progressive tendencies who strived for novelty.

Other important aspects include the integration of the programmatic nature into a piano/orchestral work with detailed characters for each variation as well as the implementation of some new contemporary elements in the form of jazz (even if used briefly) and Prokofievian motoric dynamism in addition to the enhanced use of the orchestral instruments for extra colours and effect.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to unravel the overall technical and stylistic development of Rachmaninoff's compositional language and position him in the era in which he was working and living. The main focus for the study has been to reveal the progressive tendencies in Rachmaninoff's musical language, contrary to the notion of him being a 'conservative' composer. For this, the thesis explored his five piano/orchestral works (Piano Concerto Nos. 1–4 and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*) that span Rachmaninoff's compositional career starting from his student times up until his late years in order to illustrate the modifications and transformation of form, structure, texture and harmony.

Rachmaninoff lived and worked through a period of immense change both in terms of artistic movements and world events. The events of the early 1900s and particularly the two revolutions in 1905 and 1917 – which eventually resulted in the formation of the new Russian state under the Soviet leadership of Vladimir Lenin and his followers – had a major impact on Rachmaninoff. After emigrating to the US in 1917, he was engaged in extensive piano and conducting recitals which significantly reduced his compositional activities.

As shown by the analysis of his piano concertos, over the course of his compositional career Rachmaninoff can be seen to have indeed departed from classical and romantic writing traditions and developed a uniquely distinctive style which can be considered a form of progressivism in its own right within the traditions of Russian Romanticism and the tradition of the 19th century piano concerto. Given the massive attention that modernism has gained amongst the public and musicologist over the last

century, composers who belonged to the postromantic era have remained under-researched, an unfortunate oversight which this study has attempted to rectify.

Summarising Rachmaninoff's evolution of the concerto form

While his first student work Piano concerto No. 1 strongly follows the Romantic traditions of Grieg, Schumann, Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky, some of Rachmaninoff's unique features already started to reveal themselves. First and foremost was his great skill at creating beautifully shaped melodies. From as early as his first piano concerto, one already can observe the use of Chopinesque chromaticism, a tendency to unify the composition by smooth transitional ideas based on fragments of the main subjects and an overall economic use of the musical material. In addition, the religious elements in the form of church bells and Orthodox chant music also started to emerge from his student years.

From his second piano concerto written in 1901, he began to break away from his predecessors by expanding the boundaries of the traditional romantic form. As such, the close examination of his stylistic development from the second piano concerto to the complex third concerto as well as the revision of his first piano concerto at the end of his period in 1917, gives ample ground to define Rachmaninoff as a progressive composer within the Romantic concerto tradition. It with the second piano concerto that Rachmaninoff started to manipulate the traditional concerto form and structure alongside expanding his harmonic language and incorporating Russian folk and church elements. It can be surmised that the four-year compositional silence

after his unsuccessful first piano concerto and the failure of his first symphony played a role in his search for new stylistic approaches.

While the influence of Tchaikovsky still exists in Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, the new features – such as the modulatory introductions seen at the start of each movement, the linking and transitional passages based on the main material, and the overall thematic unity – create a hybrid of the piano concerto form and the symphonic cyclic form which departs from the traditional concerto form. Rachmaninoff remained truthful to this idea of symphonising the piano concerto genre until his very last piano/orchestral work. The orchestration, starting from his second piano concerto, becomes more flexible involving more orchestral instruments into the execution of the thematic material, and while the harmonic language still remains tonal and relatively modest, the use of chromatic sequential modulations already exists in Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto.

After the grand success of the second piano concerto, Rachmaninoff stepped even further with his Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30 written in 1909. All the traditional structural, harmonic and textural features of the Romantic piano concerto were stretched to the limits in this work. The piano texture becomes more intense filled with multi-layered thematic materials and polyrhythmic accompaniment quite often within the span of a single hand. In contrast to the second piano concerto, the third concerto is much more solo-oriented, quite often left without orchestral support. While the balance between the soloist and the orchestra may look more uneven compared to the second piano concerto, the orchestration in Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto conveys a new conversational role with frequent interaction between the soloist and the orchestra. In addition, the integration of modal elements in the harmonic language, such as the use of the Phrygian mode, is another characteristic feature that started to

emerge from Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto and was further developed in his later works.

Perhaps the third piano concerto can be seen as the pinnacle or climax of Rachmaninoff's compositional path. The economy of the musical material and thematic unity become one of the key aspects in Piano Concerto No. 3. If, in the second piano concerto, Rachmaninoff uses the same materials throughout the work in a more subtle way, the third movement of the third piano concerto boldly restates some of the materials from the first movement. The number of sequences and frequent use of the lowered supertonic (II↓) – which relates to Rachmaninoff's favourite Phrygian mode – further increases the importance of the concerto and shows the evolution of his compositional technique. While it is true that the harmony does not go beyond tonality, some of the passages with their chromatic enhancements and harmonic ambiguity (especially in the developmental sections) form new features, which Rachmaninoff develops even further in his fourth piano concerto. In addition, the *ossia cadenza* of the first movement is the most texturally dense section amongst all of Rachmaninoff's piano/orchestral works.

In line with all the aforementioned novelties, some of the stylistic features of Rachmaninoff's late compositions such as the extremely short motifs, the fragmentation of the musical materials and excessive use of sequences can already be observed in his third piano concerto. The expressive and interwoven long principal and secondary materials gradually started to diminish in his later compositions in favour of short fragments, advanced modulations and rhythmic diversity. The reduction of the long, smoothly shaped melodies in preference for a driving dynamism reminds one of Prokofiev's compositional style.³⁰² These new compositional

³⁰² Zhitomirsky, 'Fortepiannoe Tvorchestvo Rachmaninova [Rachmaninoff's Piano Works]', 99

tendencies in Rachmaninoff's writing started to emerge as early as 1911 from the first set of *Études Tableaux* Op. 33 and are further developed in Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36 and Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40. In addition, the variational character of Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto seen in the development of the first movement works as a preparation for his final piano/orchestral work – *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* written in 1934.

While the progressive tendencies between Rachmaninoff's first, second and third piano concertos could be seen as an organic gradual evolution toward complexity, reaching a climax with his Piano Concerto No. 3, his fourth piano concerto indicates on one hand, a move towards structural simplicity but combined, on the other hand, with an increase in the harmonic complexity of his compositional language. One reason for this, as Martin notes, could be that Rachmaninoff experimented and pushed the limits of all the stylistic and technical aspects of composition in his third concerto and so 'created a problem for himself' and had to look for a new method that was different and did not simply repeat the approach taken in the third concerto.³⁰³ Another reason for such a change in his compositional direction could be the overall criticism about Rachmaninoff's third concerto being technically 'too demanding'³⁰⁴ which may have pushed the composer to opt for simplifying the texture and structure of his future compositions. A third reason is perhaps his life as an *émigré* in a foreign country where tastes and attitudes were somewhat different from what he knew in his homeland.

As such, while the tendency toward simplification had started to emerge well before the fourth piano concerto, the novel elements and features he introduced in this

³⁰³ Barrie Martin, *Rachmaninoff: Composers, Pianist, Conductor* (England: Ashgate, 1990), 214

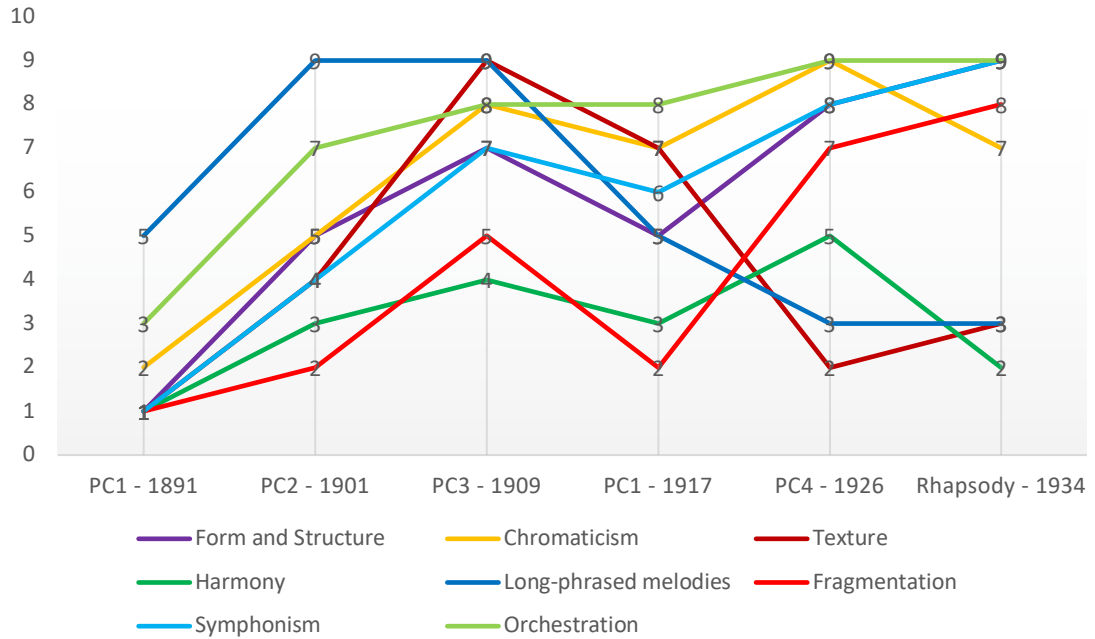
³⁰⁴ Patrick Piggott, *Rachmaninov Orchestral Music* (London: BBC, 1974), 51

piano/orchestral works can be easily seen as a confirmation and formation of his new musical tendencies which take him even further away from the traditional romantic style of writing. As such, the harmonic language became even more adventurous and, in some cases, more obscure in Rachmaninoff's fourth piano concerto, while some of the characteristics such as long-phrased melodies, dense piano and orchestral texture and chromatically enhanced heavy chords started to give way. The overly simple and repetitive second movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 4 is one of the most obvious illustrations of Rachmaninoff's new tendencies. While the outer movements of the concerto are structurally and harmonically complex, the overall piano and orchestral texture is much more transparent compared to his earlier compositions. Another important feature of the fourth piano concerto are the chromatically moving sequences that act as a modulatory tool smoothly linking distant keys.

Despite the experimentation of the fourth concerto, several factors seemed to have deterred him from further advancing these novel elements, including the difficulties of adapting to the new world away from his home country as an émigré musician and composer. His intense performing schedule also, no doubt, played a role in further deterring him from composition. Finally, the fact that his fourth piano concerto did not get a wide acclaim and was largely ignored, further detained him from experimenting in his final piano/orchestral work, the Rhapsody. It seems that – as was the case with Rachmaninoff's first symphony – the poor public reception of Piano Concerto No. 4 played a crucial role in his compositional decision not to go forward and advance his harmonic language. This resulted in the creation of the relatively simple *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*. Here the key phrase is the term 'relatively simple', as this is the case if we approach the Rhapsody from the standpoint

of the complexity of the techniques and novelties Rachmaninoff introduced in his third and fourth piano concertos. However, while the Rhapsody is written in a harmonically simple manner – with almost the entire composition centred in the A minor home key – the form and the structure of the composition is far from simple. The form of the Rhapsody incorporates elements from several genres, including rhapsody, concerto, double variation and symphonic poem in the one work. As a result, while the Rhapsody could be considered as a step backwards in terms of the evolution of his compositional language – closer to his earlier style of writing – this hybrid approach to the Rhapsody and the fact that he skilfully balances the old and new features of his compositional style constitutes a novel approach.

The close examination and comparative analysis of his major piano/orchestral works supports the hypothesis proposed in this thesis that Rachmaninoff's stylistic development can be best described as a parabolic arch. Ex. 6.1 helps visualise the evolution of Rachmaninoff's musical language by assigning a score (albeit subjective) between 1 and 10 to several compositional elements, including the form and structure, chromaticism, texture, harmony, long-phrased melodies, fragmentation, symphonism, and orchestration (1 – least complex/intense; 10 – most complex/intense). As shown in Graph 1 (Ex.6.1), the level of complexity of most compositional elements reaches a peak in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 composed in 1909 after which some of them start declining while others either remain at the same level or show incremental progression.

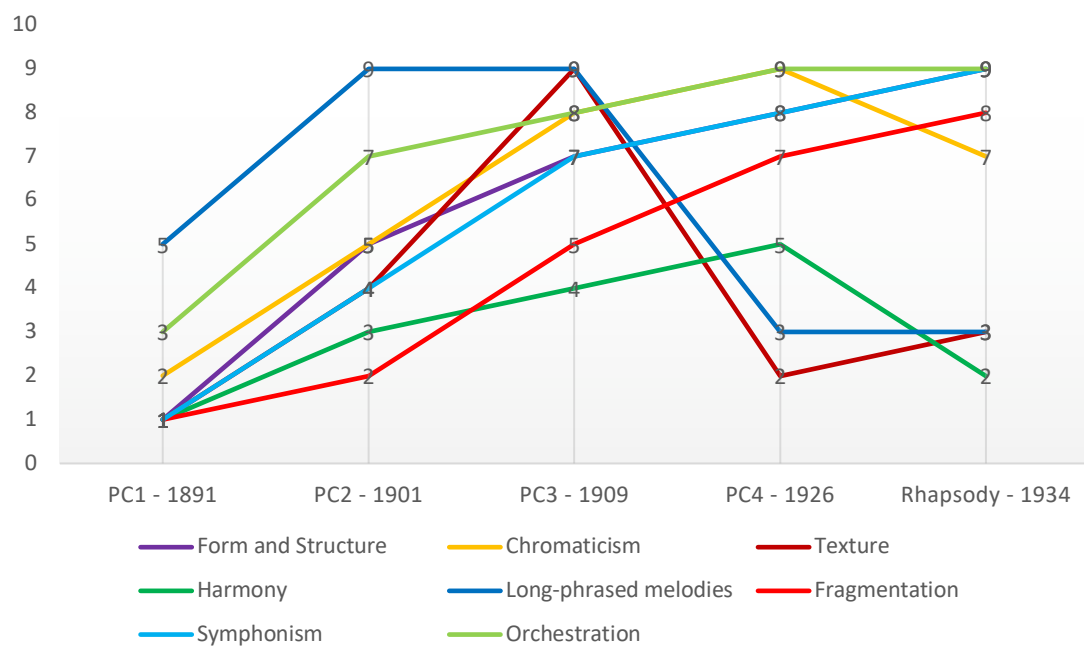


Ex.6.1 Graph 1 (including revised Piano Concerto No.1)

Ex.6.1 indicates a dent between the third and fourth piano concertos where the complexity of Rachmaninoff's writing style declined across all compositional elements. This is due to the fact that during this time in 1917 he revised his Piano Concerto No. 1. While Rachmaninoff greatly altered the original version of the first concerto and introduced new stylistic and structural elements, he was reluctant to elevate them to the same level of complexity that was seen in his third piano concerto and in his later works. This, in his view, would have indicated an overly radical departure from the youthful first opus concerto.

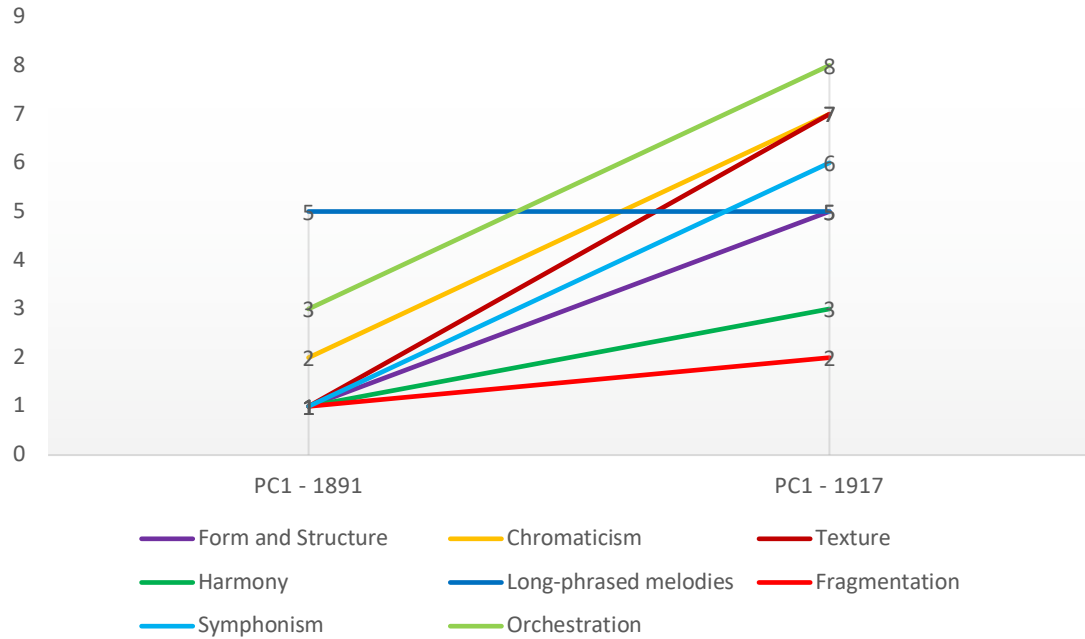
Thus, to illustrate more clearly the evolution of Rachmaninoff's writing style and show the gradual progression of most of his compositional elements after the third piano concerto (with the exception of long-phrased melodies and texture), it is better to exclude the revision of his first piano concerto from the graph as shown in Ex.6.2. As illustrated in Graph 2, most of the technical compositional elements reach a peak

of complexity/intensity in Piano Concerto No. 3 composed in 1909. However, Rachmaninoff continues developing the symphonic approach and more advanced harmony during his last two piano/orchestral works. The consistent increase of fragmentation stems from the decline of long-phrased melodies which were replaced in favour of shorter and more fragmented musical material. This in turn facilitates a rise of harmonic modulations in the fourth piano concerto.



Ex.6.2 Graph 2 (excluding revised Piano Concerto No.1)

To further simplify the visual illustration, Ex.6.3 below shows the first concerto and its revision only, where the progressive tendencies of Rachmaninoff's compositional language are more apparent.



Ex.6.3 Graph 3, Piano Concerto No. 1 (original and revised versions)

Further research

This thesis has focused mainly on Rachmaninoff's piano/orchestral works due to the limitation of time and space while also aiming to trace the transformation of Rachmaninoff's musical language through a single compositional genre to understand more clearly the evolution of his writing style. However, many of the arguments discussed in this thesis could further be traced and backed up by his other works beyond the piano concertos, which could be the focus for a further research project. Rachmaninoff's legacy and his musical style remain under-researched, and a comprehensive analysis of their development would add value to the existing literature.

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APPENDIX 1

Chart 1: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1 (1891)

1st movement (F# minor)										
Bars	1–2	3–8	9–13	13–15	/16–23	/24–31	32–48	/49–59	60–78	/79–81
Large-scale function	Introduction									
Inter-thematic function	Orch	Solo	Orch+Solo	Solo	A Orch	A Solo	TR-1 (A)	TR-2	B Orch	Solo
Key structure	i				i		i–iv	V/III	III	
Tonal plot	f#				f#		f#–b	A (E ped)	A	
	Exposition									

Bars	82–98	99–112	/113–128	129–140	141–146	147–152	153–166	/167–174	
Large-scale function	Development								Recapitulation
Inter-thematic function	Intro	B		Orch (A) Solo (B)	A		RT (Intro)	A Solo	
Key structure	III–ii	V/vi	iv–v	v	i		iv–V	i	
Tonal plot	A–F–g#	d	b–e–c#	c#	f#		b–A–C#	f#	

Bars	175–191	/192–202	203–222	/223–225	226–229	230–231	/232–286	287–312
Large-scale function	Coda							
Inter-thematic function	TR-1 (A)	TR-2	B Orch	Solo	Dev. Intro	Tutti Orch	Cadenza	
Key structure	i–ii	V/I	I				I–i	i
Tonal plot	f#–g#	f# (C# ped)	F#				F#–Bb–Dd–f#	f#

Chart 2: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1 (1891)

2nd movement (D major)										
Bars	/1-8	9	10-17	/18-26	27-34	35-45	46-47	48-55		
Large-scale function	Introduction									
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch	Solo	A-1 Solo	A-2 Solo	B	B Solo Ext	RT	A-1a Orch		
Key structure	vi-i ⁺ -V/VI-V/I		I-II	ii-V/I	I	vi-V		I		
Tonal plot	b-d#-B-D		D-E	e-d-D	D	b-e-A		D-E		

Bars	/56-65	65-69
Large-scale function		Coda
Inter-thematic function	A-2a Solo	
Key structure	ii-V/I	I
Tonal plot	e-d-D	D

Chart 3: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1 (1891)

3 rd movement (F sharp minor)											
Bars	1–6	/7–14	15–18	/19–26	/27–31	32–47	48–57	58–67	68–76	/77–92	/93–108
Large-scale function	A										
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch+Solo	A Solo	A Orch	TR1-1	TR1-2	B	Solo	B	CS	C-1 Orch	C-2 Solo
Key structure	V/i	i		i-V/III		III			i	VI	
Tonal plot	f#			f#-b-A		A			f#	D-e	D

Bars	/109–123	124–130	/131–138	139–142	/143–150	/151–155	156–171	172–181	182–192
Large-scale function	A								
Inter-thematic function	C-1 Solo	Intro Orch+Solo	A Solo	A Orch	TR1-1	TR1-2	B	Solo	B
Key structure	VI	V/i	i		i-V/VI		VI		
Tonal plot	D	f#			f#-b-D		D		

Bars	193–221	222–240
Large-scale function	Coda (C)	
Inter-thematic function	TR2 (TR1)	
Key structure	V	I
Tonal plot	C#	F#

Chart 4: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1 (1917)

1st movement (F# minor)										
Bars	1-2	3-8	9-13	13-15	/16-23	/24-31	32-47	/48-56	57-70	71-74
Large-scale function	Introduction			Exposition						
Inter-thematic function	Orch	Solo	Orch+Solo	Solo	A Orch	A Solo	TR-1 (A)	TR-2	B Orch	Solo
Key structure	i				i		i-iv	V/III	III	
Tonal plot	f#				f#		f#-b	A (E ped)	A	
Bars	75-92	93-108	109-123	124-137	138-149	150-155	156-161	162-171		
Large-scale function	Development									
Inter-thematic function	Intro	Intro+B	B	Orch (A), Solo (B)			A	RT (Intro)		
Key structure	iii	v-vii↓	V/vi	v-vii-ii↓	v		i		V	
Tonal plot	a	c#-eb	d	c#-e-g	c#		f#		C#	
Bars	/172-179	180-191	/192-200	201-214	215-219	220-224	/225-277	278-295		
Large-scale function	Recapitulation									
Inter-thematic function	A solo	TR-1 (A)	TR-2	B Orch	Orch	Dev. Intro	Cadenza	Coda		
Key structure	i	i-ii	V/I	I		i	i	i		
Tonal plot	f#	f#-g#	f# (C# ped)	F#		f#	f#-Db-f#	f#		

Chart 5: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1 (1917)

2 nd movement (D major)		/1-8	/9	10-17	/18-26	27-34	35-48	/49-51	52-59
Bars		Introduction	Solo	A		B			A
Large-scale function		Intro Orch		A-1 Solo	A-2 Solo	B	B Ext	RT (Intro)	A-1a Orch
Inter-thematic function		vi-i [↑] -V/VI-V/I		I-II	ii-V/I	I	ii [↓] -I	iv-V/I	I
Key structure		b-d#-B-D		D-E	e-d-D	D	eb-Gb-D	g-D	D-E
Tonal plot									

Bars	/60-69	69-73
Large-scale function		Coda
Inter-thematic function	A-2a Solo	
Key structure	ii-V/I	I
Tonal plot	e-d-D	D

Chart 6: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1 (1917)

3rd movement (F sharp minor)										
Bars	1–9	/10–21	/22–29	30–37	38–61	62–70	/71–86	87–102	/103–115	
Large-scale function	A									
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch+Solo	A Solo	TR1-1	TR1-2	B	CS	C-1 Orch	C-2 Solo	C-1a Solo	
Key structure	V/i	i	IV–VII		III	III–v↓	VIII↓			
Tonal plot	f#	f#	B–E		A	A–c	Eb–f	f–Eb	Eb	

Bars	116–125	/126–137	/138–145	146–155	156–179	180–193	194–218		
Large-scale function	A								
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch+Solo	A solo	TR1-1	TR1-2	B	TR2	Coda		
Key structure	VI–V/i	i	IV–III		VI–I	vi	I		
Tonal plot	D–f#	f#	B–A		D–Gb(F#)	d#	F#		

Chart 7: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 2, Op. 18

1 st movement (C minor)										
Bars	1-8	9-10	11-27	27-55	55-62	63-79	79-82	83-92	93-103	103-112
Large-scale function	Introduction Exposition									
Inter-thematic function	Solo	/A Solo	A-1 Orch	A-2 Orch	A-2a Solo	TR	/B	B Solo		B Ext
Key structure	iv-V/i	i					III			
Tonal plot	f-c	c					Eb			
Bars	113-120	121-132	133-141	141-144	145-161	161-209	209-237	237-244		
Large-scale function	Development									
Inter-thematic function	Ba	Ba Ext	CS1-1	/CS1-2	CS1-2	A	A+B	RT		
Key structure	III			V/III	III-V	i		V/i		
Tonal plot	Eb				Eb-G	c-f-Bb-eb-c#	G#-F-Bb-Eb-c			
Bars	245-261	261-296	297-312	313-320	321-336	337-352	353-374			
Large-scale function	Recapitulation									
Inter-thematic function	A-1 Orch	A-2 Solo	Ba Orch	/CS2 (A)	CS2-1 (A+B)	CS2-2	Coda			
Key structure	i		VI	V/i	i					
Tonal plot	c		Ab	c						

Chart 8: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 2, Op. 18

2nd movement (E major)									
Bars	1-4	5-8	9-13	13-23	24-28	28-38	39-46	47-54	
Large-scale function	Introduction A								
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch /A Solo A-2 Orch A-1 Solo A-2 Solo A-1 Orch								
Key structure	vi↓-vi I V v-vi								
Tonal plot	c-c# E B b-f#-c#								

Bars	55-62	63-70	71-78	79-86	87-93	93-106	107-122	122-128	
Large-scale function									
Inter-thematic function	B-2	B-3 (B-1)	B-1	B-2	B-3 (B-1)	TR	EP	Cadenza	
Key structure	V/viii↓		iv	V/vi↓		V/III↓-V/I-VII↓-v	VI-V/I		
Tonal plot	d (A ped)		a-e-b	c (G ped)		G-E-D-b	C#-E (B ped)		

Bars	129-132	133-137	137-147	148-162	
Large-scale function	A				
Inter-thematic function	/A Solo	A-1 Orch	A-2 Orch	Coda	
Key structure	I				
Tonal plot	E				

Chart 9: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 2, Op. 18

3rd movement (C minor)										
Bars	1–21	21–34	35–42	43–64	65–74	75–82	83–89	90–97	98–106	106–122
Large-scale function	Introduction									
Inter-thematic function	Orch	Solo	Orch+Solo	A-1 Solo	A-2	A-2	A-2 Ext	CS (A-1)	TR1 Solo	B Orch
Key structure	III↑–V/i		IV/i– V/i	i	III–I	VI		i	V/VII	VII
Tonal plot	E–C–Ab–c									
	A									
	c									
	Eb–C									
	Ab									
	Bb									

Bars	122–149	150–161	162–169	170–179	180–187	188–214	214–294	294–301	302–310
Large-scale function	A								
Inter-thematic function	B Solo	TR2	/A-1a	A-1a	A-2a	CSa	Fugato	CSb	TR1 Solo
Key structure	VII		V/i	i	VI–iv	V/i	i–V/v	V/i–i	V/III↓
Tonal plot	Bb								
	c								
	Ab–f								
	c								
	c–f–g–f–Eb–g								
	c								
	Db								

Bars	310–326	326–355	356–367	368–383	384–393	394–430	430	431–454	455–476
Large-scale function	B								
Inter-thematic function	B Orch	B Solo	TR2	RT-1	/ RT-2	RT-2	Cadenza	Coda-1 (B)	Coda-2
Key structure	II↓			i–ii	V/V	I	V/I	I	
Tonal plot	Db								
	c–d								
	G								
	C								
	A								
	Coda								

Chart 10: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 3, Op. 30

1 st movement (D minor)											
Bars	1–3	3–11	12–27	27–28	29–37	38–52	52–68	69–81	/82–92	93–106	107–114
Large-scale function	Exposition										
Inter-thematic function	/A Orch	A-1 Solo	A-2 Solo	/A Solo	A-1 Orch	A-2 Orch	TR1-1	TR1-1	TR1-2 Orch	/B	B-1 Solo
Key structure	i				V/i				i–V/VI	VI	
Tonal plot	d								d-Bb	Bb-F	Bb

Bars	/115–123	124–136	137–150	151–166	167–169	169–181	181–202	203–218	219–234	
Large-scale function	Development									
Inter-thematic function	B-2 Solo	B-3 Solo	CS1-1	CS1-2 (B-1)	/A	A	Aa	Ab	Ac	
Key structure	VI	II↓	V/VI	VI	i					
Tonal plot	Bb–Eb	Eb	Bb		d		f–e	a–c–eb	eb–f#	

Bars Ossia		303–377	378–390	391–406	407–410	411–412	413–421	422–436	437–454
Bars	235–303	303–361	362–374	375–390	391–394	395–396	397–405	406–420	421–438
Large-scale function	Recapitulation								
Inter-thematic function	CS2	Solo (A)	TR1-2a Orch	B-1a Solo	RT	/A Orch	A-1 Solo	A-2 Solo	Coda (B)
Key structure	i	i		II↓		i			
Tonal plot	a–c–f#–c#–g (G ped)	d–D	D–d–Ab	Eb		d			

Chart 11: Rachmaninoff – Piano Concerto 3, Op. 30

2nd movement (Db major)											
Bars	1–31	/32–37	38–46	47–54	55–64	65–70	71–77	77–84	85–93	94–101	
Large-scale function	Introduction										
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch (A)	Intro Solo	A Solo	CS	Aa Solo	CS	B (1 st mov TR1-2)	A	Ab Solo	Ab Ext	
Key structure	i [↑] -V/i [↑]	iii [↑]	I		iii-vi	III	V/vi-III	vi			
Tonal plot	d	f#	Db		f-bb	F	bb (F ped) F	bb			

Bars	102–106	107–110	111–121	122–125	126–155	156–183	184–190	190–209	210–217	
Large-scale function	Scherzo (1 st mov A)									
Inter-thematic function	Ac Orch	Ac Ext	Ad Solo	CS	1 st mov A-1	1 st mov A-2	CSa	Intro Orch (A)	Intro to 3 rd mov	
Key structure	I [↑]	V/I	I		V/iii [↑] -iii [↑]	V/iii [↑]	V/iii [↑]	iii [↑] -V/iii [↑]	V/i [↑] -II-V/i [↑]	
Tonal plot	D	Db			f#				d-Eb-d	

Chart 12: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 3, Op. 30

3rd movement (D minor)											
Bars	1–2	3–39	39–56	57–71	72–103	103–109	109–131	132–151	152–170	171–177	178–187
Large-scale function	A										
Inter-thematic function	/A	A-1	A-2	A-1	B-1	B-2	B-2 Ext	CS1 (A)	C-1 Solo (1 st mov. B)	C (1 st mov. B)	
Key structure	i		v–V/i	i–ii	VII–ii–V/IV	IV		IV–II↓	II↓		
Tonal plot	d		a–d	d–e	C–e–G	G		G–Eb	Eb		

Bars	188–193	194–200	201–208	209–217	218–221	222–231	232–243	243–285	285–302
Large-scale function	A								
Inter-thematic function	/C-2	C-2 Orch (1 st mov. B)	C-3 (1 st mov. TR1-2)	C-4 (1 st mov. B-2, B-3)	C-1a	CS2a	A-1a	A-2a	
Key structure	II↓		ii↓	II–V	II↓				
Tonal plot	Eb		eb	E–A	Eb				

Bars	303–319	/319–350	350–356	356–380	381–437	437	438–450	450–489	/490–507
Large-scale function		B			Coda-1		Coda-2		Coda-3
Inter-thematic function	A-1b	B-1a	B-2a	B-2a Ext	(1 st mov. Cadenza)	Solo	(B-2)	(B-2 Ext)	
Key structure	i	VI–i–V/III	III		V/i–V/I	I			
Tonal plot	d	Bb–d–F	F	d–D	d–D	D			

Chart 13: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1926)

1st movement (G minor)									
Bars	1–6	7–22	22–27	28–43	/44–101	102–111	111–119	120–138	
Large-scale function	Exposition								
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch (A)	A Solo	Intro Orch (A)	A Solo	TR	B-1 Solo	B-2 Solo	CS1	
Key structure	V/i	i	V/i	i	V-iii-V/iii	III	I	VI	
Tonal plot	g				D-bb	Bb	G-Eb-Gb-Bb	Eb	

Bars	139–158	159–172	173–188	189–213	214–223	224–237	238–247	248–256	
Large-scale function	Development								
Inter-thematic function	Aa-1	Aa-2	Ab	Ac	/CS2	CS2 (Aa)	/B-1	B-1 Flute	
Key structure	i-vii		vi	V/i	V/IV	IV	IV-VI	VI	
Tonal plot	g-f		eb	D	C		C-Eb	Eb	

Bars	256–263	264–270	270–277	278–285	286–320	321–330	331–336	337–362	363–368
Large-scale function	Coda								
Inter-thematic function	/B-1	B-1 Oboe	/B-1	Aa-1	TRa	Intro	/A Orch	A Orch	
Key structure	VI	I↓	I↓-i	v	V	V-VI		i	
Tonal plot	Eb	Gb	Gb-g	d	D	D-EB		g	

Chart 14: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1926)

2 nd movement (C major)										
Bars	1-5	6-11	12-16	17-32	33-42	43-48	49-54	55-61	62-67	68-82
Large-scale function	Introduction		A		B		B		A	Coda
Inter-thematic function	Intro Solo		A	A Ext1	Aa	A Ext2	CS	TR	A	
Key structure	I				V/I-I		V/iv-iv		I	
Tonal plot	C				C-A-Db-f		C-E	C	C	

Chart 15: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1926)

3rd movement (G minor)										
Bars	1–22	23–26	27–39	40–49	/50–59	60–67	68–80	/81–91	92–103	104–124
Large-scale function	Exposition A									
Inter-thematic function	Intro	Solo	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	TR1
Key structure	V/i									
Tonal plot	g									

Bars	125–141	142–147	148–163	164–175	176–191	192–214	215–250	/251–289	/290–312	313–346
Large-scale function	Exposition B									
Inter-thematic function	B-1	B-2	B-3	B-1	A	Aa	Ab	Ac	Ad	
Key structure	V↓									
Tonal plot	Db									

Bars	347–364	365–368	369–378	379–391	392–397	398–413	414–429	430–444	445–567	
Large-scale function	Recapitulation B									
Inter-thematic function	Ae	1 st mov. Intro	TR2	B-1	B-2	B-3	B-1	TR3	Coda (A)	
Key structure	i									
Tonal plot	g									

Chart 16: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1928)

1st movement (G minor)									
Bars	1–6	7–22	22–27	28–43	/44–101	102–111	111–119	120–138	
Large-scale function	Exposition								
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch (A)	A Solo	Intro Orch (A)	A Solo	TR	B-1 Solo	B-2 Solo	CS1	
Key structure	V/i	i	V/i	i	V–iii–V/iii	III	I	VI	
Tonal plot	g				D–bb	Bb	G–Eb–Gb–Bb	Eb	

Bars	139–158	159–172	173–188	189–213	214–223	224–237	238–247	248–256
Large-scale function	Development							
Inter-thematic function	Aa-1	Aa-2	Ab	Ac	/CS2	CS2 (Aa)	/B-1	B-1 Flute
Key structure	i–vii		vi	V/i	V/IV	IV	IV–VI	VI
Tonal plot	g–f		eb	D	C		C–Eb	Eb
								Recapitulation

Bars	256–263	264–270	270–277	278–285	286–307	308–313	314–341	342–347
Large-scale function	Coda							
Inter-thematic function	/B-1	B-1 Oboe	/B-1	Aa-1	TRa	Intro	A Orch	
Key structure	VI	I↓	I↓–i	v	V	VI	i	
Tonal plot	Eb	Gb	Gb–g	d	D	Eb	g	

Chart 17: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1928)

2 nd movement (C major)		1-5	6-11	12-16	17-32	33-42	43-46	47-52	53-59	60-65	66-80
Bars		1-5	6-11	12-16	17-32	33-42	43-46	47-52	53-59	60-65	66-80
Large-scale function	Introduction	A									
Inter-thematic function	Intro Solo	A	A Ext1	Aa	Aa	A Ext2	CS	B	TR	A	Coda
Key structure	I	I									
Tonal plot	C	C-A-Db-f C-E C									

Chart 18: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1928)

3 rd movement (G minor)										
Bars	/1-8	9-12	13-25	26-35	/36-45	46-53	54-66	/67-77	78-89	90-110
Large-scale function	Exposition A									
Inter-thematic function	Intro	Solo	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	TR1
Key structure	V/i i									
Tonal plot	g									

Bars	111-127	128-133	134-149	150-161	162-172	173-193	194-229	/230-266	/267-289	
Large-scale function	Exposition B									
Inter-thematic function	B-1	B-2	B-3	B-1	A	Development (A)				
Key structure	V↓ V									
Tonal plot	Db d-(F ped)-D g eb E-G									

Bars	290-323	324-334	335-338	339-342	343-476
Large-scale function					
Inter-thematic function	Ad	Ae	(1 st mov. Intro)	TR2	Coda (A)
Key structure	V/i i		IV	I	I
Tonal plot	g		C	G	G

Chart 19: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1941)

1st movement (G minor)									
Bars	1–6	7–22	22–27	28–43	/44–76	77–86	86–93	94–112	
Large-scale function	Exposition								
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch (A)	A Solo	Intro Orch (A)	A Solo	TR	B-1 Solo	B-2 Solo	CS1	
Key structure	V/i	i	V/i	i	V-iii-V/iii	III	I	VI	
Tonal plot	g				D-bb	Bb	G-Eb-Gb-Bb	Eb	

Bars	113–132	133–146	147–162	163–185	186–195	196–209	210–219	220–227
Large-scale function	Development							
Inter-thematic function	Aa-1	Aa-2	Ab	Ac	/CS2	CS2 (Aa)	/B-1	B-1 Flute
Key structure	i-vii		vi	V/i	V/IV	IV	IV-VI	VI
Tonal plot	g-f		eb	D	C		C-Eb	Eb
							Recapitulation	

Bars	227–234	235–241	241–248	249–256	257–273	274–279	280–307	308–313
Large-scale function	Coda							
Inter-thematic function	/B-1	B-1 Oboe	/B-1	Aa-1	TRa	Intro	A Orch	
Key structure	VI	I↓		v	V	VI	i	
Tonal plot	Eb	Gb		d	D	Eb	g	

Chart 20: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1941)

2 nd movement (C major)		1-5	6-11	12-16	17-29	30-39	40-43	44-48	49-56	57-62	63-77
Bars		1-5	6-11	12-16	17-29	30-39	40-43	44-48	49-56	57-62	63-77
Large-scale function	Introduction	A									
Inter-thematic function	Intro Solo	A	A Ext1	Aa	A Ext2	CS	CS	B	TR	A	Coda
Key structure	I	V/I-I									
Tonal plot	C	C-A-Db-f C-E f C									

Chart 21: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40 (1941)

3rd movement (G minor)										
Bars	/1–8	9–12	13–25	26–35	/36–45	46–53	54–66	/67–73	74–85	86–106
Large-scale function	Exposition A									
Inter-thematic function	Intro	Solo	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	TR1
Key structure	V/i									
Tonal plot	g									

Bars	107–124	125–130	131–146	147–158	/159–169	170–190	191–226	/227–247
Large-scale function	Exposition B							
Inter-thematic function	B-1	B-2	B-3	B-1	A	Development (A)		Ab
Key structure	V↓							
Tonal plot	Db							
					d–(F ped)–D		g-ab	e

Bars	/248–270	271–299	300–303	304–309	310–383	/384–389	390–434
Large-scale function	Coda						
Inter-thematic function	Ac	Ad	1 st mov. Intro	TR2	Coda-1	Coda-2 (1 st mov. CS2)	Coda-3
Key structure	I						
Tonal plot	E-G	g	C		V/i	I	G

Chart 22: Rachmaninoff, Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43

Bars	/1-9	9-56	57-80	81-111	112-151	152-187	188-241	242-283	284-327	328-367	368-398		
Movement	First movement												
Variations	Intro	Var. 1	Var. 2	Var. 3	Var. 4	Var. 5	Var. 6	Var. 7	Var. 8	Var. 9	Var. 10		
Inter-them. function	/A	A Orch	A Solo									A Solo	<i>Dir</i> +CS2
Key structure	i												
Tonal plot	a												

Bars	399-407	412-414	415-446	447-470	/471-507	/508-564	613-638	638-679	680-705	
Movement	Second movement									Third movement
Variations	Var. 11		Var. 12	Var. 13	Var. 14	Var. 15	Var. 16	Var. 17	Var. 18	Var. 19
Inter-them. function	TR (A)	Cadenza	A Solo	A Orch	A Orch	A+CS3	A Orch	A Solo	A+CS4 Solo+Orch	A Solo
Key structure	i		iv		VI		ii↓		IV↓	i
Tonal plot	a-d		d		F		bb	bb-Db- eb-F-bb	Db	a

Bars	706-733	734-754	754-786	786-811	811-819	819-820	820-864	864-872	873-927	927-941	
Movement											
Variations	Var. 20	Var. 21	Var. 22	Var. 23							Var. 24
Inter-them. function	A Solo		A+ <i>Dir</i>	Cadenza			A Solo	Cadenza	A+ <i>Dir</i>	Coda	
Key structure	i				I↓		i↓-i	i		I	
Tonal plot	a		A ped	Ab (Eb ped)	ab-a	a				A	

Chart 23: Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16

1 st movement (A minor)									
Bars	1-2	2-6	7-18	19-30	31-48	49-52	53-56	57-72	73-88
Large-scale function	Introduction			Exposition					
Inter-thematic function	Orch	Solo	A Orch	A Solo	TR	B-1 Orch	B-1 Solo	B-2	Intro+A
Key structure	i				i-V/III	III			III
Tonal plot	a				a-C	C			C-d-F

Bars	89-101	101-108	109-116	117-128	129-146	147-150	151-154	155-170
Large-scale function	Recapitulation							
Inter-thematic function	A		RT (Intro+A)	A Orch+Solo	TR	B-1 Orch	B-1 Solo	B-2
Key structure	v-vi	vi↑	V/i	i	i-V/I	I		
Tonal plot	e-f	f#	a		a-A	A		

Bars	171-175	176-205	206-209	210-221
Large-scale function	Coda (Intro)			
Inter-thematic function	Tutti (A)	Cadenza	A Orch	
Key structure	i		v/i	i
Tonal plot	a		a (E ped)	a

Chart 24: Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16

2 nd movement (Db major)										
Bars	1-8	9-22	23-28	29-36	37-38	39-46	47-48	49-54		
Large-scale function	A		B							
Inter-thematic function	A-1 Orch	A-2 Orch	CS	B Solo	TR Orch	B Solo	TR Orch	RT (A+B)		
Key structure	I		III↓							
Tonal plot	Db		Fb							

Bars	/55-62	63-76	77-78	79-81	81-84
Large-scale function	A		Coda		
Inter-thematic function	A-1 Solo	A-2 Orch+Solo	CS Orch	CS Solo	
Key structure	I				
Tonal plot	Db				

Chart 25: Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16

3rd movement (A minor)										
Bars	1–8	9–37	38–45	46–68	69–74	75–90	91–102	103–107	108–139	
Large-scale function	Introduction		A		B		A			
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch+Solo	A Solo	A Orch	TR1	B	TR2-1 (A)	TR2-2 (A)	Cadenza1	CS (A)	
Key structure	VI/i–V/i	i		i–V/III	III	iii–i	V/i	i		
Tonal plot	a	a		a–C	C	c–a	a (E ped)	a		

Bars	140–161	162–183	184–229	230–235	236–264	265–272	273–295	296–301	
Large-scale function	C		A		A		B		
Inter-thematic function	C Orch	C Solo	Ca	/A	A Solo	A Orch	TR1	B	
Key structure	VI			i			i–V/I	I	
Tonal plot	F			a			a–A	A	

Bars	302–317	318–325	326–347	348–352	353–421	422–440	
Large-scale function	A		Coda		Coda		
Inter-thematic function	TR2-1 (A)	TR2-2 (A)	CS (A)	Cadenza2	Coda-1 (A)	Coda-2 (C)	
Key structure	i–vii	V/vii	V/i		I		
Tonal plot	a–g	g (D ped)	a	a–A	A		

Chart 26: Rubinstein, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 70

1st movement (D minor)										
Bars	1–24	25–38	39–54	/55–66	/67–90	91–114	/115–134	135–166	167–174	174–198
Large-scale function	Introduction		Exposition		Development					
Inter-thematic function	Orch (A-1)	Solo	A-1 Solo	A-2	TR	B-1 Solo	B-2 Orch	A-1	A-1 Orch	A-1a Solo
Key structure	i	V/i	i		v–iv	III		i–V/vii	vi↑	
Tonal plot	d				a–g	F		d–c (G ped)	b	

Bars	/199–253	254–280	/281–312	/313–336	/337–355	356–431	432–447	448–502
Large-scale function	Recapitulation							
Inter-thematic function	A-2 Orch+Solo	RT	TR	B-1 Solo	B-2 Orch	Cadenza	A-1	Coda (A-2)
Key structure	vi↑–vii↑	V/i	i	VI		IV↓–vi–V/i	i	
Tonal plot	b–f#–c#	d	d–c	Bb		Gb–bb–d	d	

Chart 27: Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 23

2nd movement (Db major)		1-4	5-12	13-20	/21-24	/25-28	/29-32	33-41	42-58
Bars									
Large-scale function	A								
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch	A Orch	A Solo	B-1 Orch+Solo	B-2 Orch	B-2 Solo	CS (A)	A Orch	
Key structure	I			III	I↑			I	
Tonal plot	Db			F	D			Db	

Bars	59-80	/81-114	/115-134	135-145	146-153	154-160	161-170
Large-scale function	B						
Inter-thematic function	Ba Solo	EP	Ba Solo	Cadenza	A Solo	A Orch	Coda (A)
Key structure	III-V/I↑	I↑-VI	III-V/I↑	IV/I-V/I	I		
Tonal plot	F-D	D-Bb	F-D	Db			

Chart 28: Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23

3rd movement (B flat minor)										
Bars	1–4	5–12	13–20	21–28	29–36	37–44	45–56	/57–65	66–80	81–88
Large-scale function	A									
Inter-thematic function	Intro Orch	A-1 Solo	A-2	A-1	A-3 Orch	TR1 Solo	B Orch	B Solo	TR2	
Key structure	V/i	i	III	i	VI	V	III		V	
Tonal plot	bb		Db	bb	Gb	F	Db		F	

Bars	89–96	97–100	101–113	114–121	122–133	/134–150	151–158	159–166	167–174	
Large-scale function	A									
Inter-thematic function	A-1 Solo	A-2	A+B	A-3 Orch	TR1 Solo	B Orch+Solo	TR2	A-1 Solo	A-2	
Key structure	i	V		VII	VI↓	IV	V	i	III	
Tonal plot	bb	F		Ab	G	Eb	F	bb	Db	

Bars	175–182	183–213	214–242	243–251	252–270	271–301
Large-scale function	Coda					
Inter-thematic function	A-1	TR3-1	TR3-2	Cadenza	Coda-1 (B)	Coda-2
Key structure	i		V/i		I	
Tonal plot	bb		(F ped)		Bb	

APPENDIX 2

Table 1: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1, 1st movement

Large-scale and Inter-thematic function	Bars	
	1891	1917
Introduction		
Orch	1–2	1–2
Solo	3–8	3–8
Orch+Solo	9–13	9–13
Solo	13–15	13–15
Exposition		
A Orch	/16–23	/16–23
A Solo	/24–31	/24–31
TR-1 (A)	32–48	<u>32–47 (–1)</u>
TR-2	/49–59	<u>/48–56 (–2)</u>
B Orch	60–78	<u>57–70 (–5)</u>
Solo	/79–81	<u>71–74 (+1)</u>
Development		
Intro	82–98	<u>75–92 (+1)</u>
Intro+B	-	<u>93–108 (+16)</u>
B	99–112	<u>109–123 (+1)</u>
	/113–128	<u>124–137 (–2)</u>
Orch (A), Solo (B)	129–140	138–149
A	141–146	150–155
	147–152	156–161
RT (Intro)	153–166	<u>162–171 (–4)</u>
Recapitulation		
A Solo	/167–174	/172–179
TR-1 (A)	175–191	<u>180–191 (–5)</u>
TR-2	/192–202	<u>/192–200 (–2)</u>
B Orch	203–222	<u>201–214 (–6)</u>
Solo	/223–225	- <u>(–3)</u>
Orch	-	<u>215–219 (+5)</u>
Dev. Intro	226–229	<u>220–224 (+1)</u>
Tutti Orch	230–231	- <u>(–2)</u>
Cadenza	/232–286	<u>/225–277 (–2)</u>
Coda		
	287–312	<u>278–295 (–8)</u>

Table 2: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1, 2nd movement

Large-scale and Inter-thematic function	Bars	
	1891	1917
Introduction		
Intro Orch	/1–8	/1–8
Solo	9	/9
A		
A-1 Solo	10–17	10–17
A-2 Solo	/18–26	/18–26
B		
B	27–34	27–34
B Ext	35–45	<u>35–48 (+3)</u>
RT	46–47	<u>49–51 (+1)</u>
A		
A-1a Orch	48–55	52–59
A-2a Solo	/56–65	/60–69
Coda	65–69	69–73

Table 3: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 1, Op. 1, 3rd movement

Large-scale and Inter-thematic function	Bars	
	1926	1928
A		
Intro Orch+Solo	1–6	<u>1–9 (+3)</u>
A Solo	/7–14	<u>/10–21 (+4)</u>
A Orch	15–18	- <u>(-4)</u>
TR1-1	/19–26	/22–29
TR1-2	/27–31	<u>30–37 (+3)</u>
B		
B	32–47	<u>38–61 (+8)</u>
Solo	48–57	- <u>(-10)</u>
B	58–67	- <u>(-10)</u>
CS	68–76	62–70
C		
C-1 Orch	/77–92	/71–86
C-2 Solo	/93–108	87–102
C-1 Solo	/109–123	<u>/103–115 (-2)</u>
A		
Intro Orch+Solo	124–130	<u>116–125 (+3)</u>
A Solo	/131–138	<u>/126–137 (+4)</u>
A Orch	139–142	- <u>(-4)</u>
TR1-1	/143–150	/138–145
TR1-2	/151–155	<u>146–155 (+5)</u>
B		
B	156–171	<u>156–179 (+8)</u>
Solo	172–181	- <u>(-10)</u>
B	182–192	- <u>(-11)</u>
TR2	193–221	<u>180–193 (-15)</u>
Coda	222–240	<u>194–218 (+6)</u>

Table 4: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40, 1st movement

Large-scale and Inter-thematic function	Bars		
	1926	1928	1941
Exposition			
Intro Orch (A)	1–6	1–6	1–6
A Solo	7–22	7–22	7–22
Intro Orch (A)	22–27	22–27	22–27
A Solo	28–43	28–43	28–43
TR	/44–101	/44–101	<u>/44–76 (–25)</u>
B-1 Solo	102–111	102–111	77–86
B-2 Solo	111–119	111–119	<u>86–93 (–1)</u>
CS1	120–138	120–138	94–112
Development			
Aa-1	139–158	139–158	113–132
Aa-2	159–172	159–172	133–146
Ab	173–188	173–188	147–162
Ac	189–213	189–213	<u>163–185 (–2)</u>
/CS2	214–223	214–223	186–195
CS2 (Aa)	224–237	224–237	196–209
Recapitulation			
/B-1	238–247	238–247	210–219
B-1 Flute	248–256	248–256	<u>220–227 (–1)</u>
/B-1	256–263	256–263	227–234
B-1 Oboe	264–270	264–277	235–241
/B-1	270–277	270–277	241–248
Aa	278–293	278–293	<u>249–259 (–5)</u>
TRa	/294–320	<u>/294–307 (–13)</u>	<u>/260–273 (–13)</u>
Intro	321–330	<u>308–313 (–4)</u>	<u>274–279 (–4)</u>
/A Orch	331–336	- <u>(–6)</u>	- <u>(–6)</u>
A Orch	337–362	<u>314–341 (+2)</u>	<u>280–307 (+2)</u>
Coda			
	363–368	342–347	308–313

Table 5: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40, 2nd movement

Large-scale and Inter-thematic function	Bars		
	1926	1928	1941
Introduction			
Intro Solo	1–5	1–5	1–5
A			
A	6–11	6–11	6–11
A Ext1	12–16	12–16	12–16
Aa	17–32	17–32	<u>17–29 (-3)</u>
A Ext2	33–42	33–42	30–39
CS	43–48	<u>43–46 (-2)</u>	<u>40–43 (-2)</u>
B			
B	/49–54	47–52	<u>44–48 (-1)</u>
TR	55–61	53–59	<u>/49–56 (+1)</u>
A			
A	62–67	60–65	57–62
Coda	68–82	66–80	63–77

Table 6: Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto 4, Op. 40, 3rd movement

Large-scale and Inter-thematic function	Bars		
	1926	1928	1941
Exposition A			
Intro	1–22	<u>/1–8 (–14)</u>	<u>/1–8 (–14)</u>
Solo	23–26	9–12	9–12
a	27–39	13–25	13–25
b	40–49	26–35	26–35
a	/50–59	/36–45	/36–45
b	60–67	46–53	46–53
a	68–80	54–66	54–66
b	/81–91	/67–77	<u>/67–73 (–4)</u>
a	92–103	78–89	74–85
TR1	104–124	90–110	86–106
Exposition B			
B-1	125–141	111–127	<u>107–124 (+1)</u>
B-2	142–147	128–133	125–130
B-3	148–163	134–149	131–146
B-1	164–175	150–161	147–158
Development			
A	176–191	<u>162–172 (–5)</u>	<u>/159–169 (–5)</u>
	192–214	<u>173–193 (–2)</u>	<u>170–190 (–2)</u>
Aa	215–250	194–229	191–226
Ab	/251–289	/230–266	<u>/227–247 (–18)</u>
Ac	/290–312	/267–289	/248–270
Ad	313–346	290–323	<u>271–299 (–5)</u>
Ae	347–364	<u>324–334 (–7)</u>	- <u>(–18)</u>
1 st mov. Intro	365–368	335–338	300–303
TR2	369–378	<u>339–342 (–6)</u>	<u>304–309 (–4)</u>
Recapitulation B			
B-1	379–391	- <u>(–13)</u>	- <u>(–13)</u>
B-2	392–397	- <u>(–6)</u>	- <u>(–6)</u>
B-3	398–413	- <u>(–16)</u>	- <u>(–16)</u>
B-1	414–429	- <u>(–16)</u>	- <u>(–16)</u>
TR3	430–444	- <u>(–15)</u>	- <u>(–15)</u>
Coda			
Coda-1	445–567	<u>343–476 (+11)</u>	<u>310–434 (+2)</u>
Coda-1	-	-	<u>310–383</u>
Coda-2 (1 st mov. CS2)	-	-	<u>/384–389</u>
Coda-3	-	-	<u>390–434</u>