

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY PIANISM
IN MUSIC BY SIGNIFICANT RUSSIAN AND
FRENCH COMPOSERS

En A Kim, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2015

Directed By: Professor Bradford Gowen
School of Music

In Western music history, the early twentieth century (1900-1945) was an age of fluctuation. A large number of distinctive stylistic trends, such as Impressionism, Neoclassicism, Mysticism, and Post-Romanticism, flourished in this era of change and growth. Despite these new trends, composers of the early twentieth century continued to exhibit common classical characteristics within the diversified new materials of each individual style. In addition, the composers thoroughly maximized the various effects derived from the piano itself with different approaches to touch, color, texture, and a fully broadened sound spectrum. The culmination of virtuosity and effectiveness in performance of the piano literature was thus greatly intensified and emphasized. Accordingly, works from this time period are generally marked by high technical demands, colorful melodies, rich harmonies, complex rhythms, and distinctive sonorities.

During the early twentieth century, the main centers of musical innovation began to spread from Germany and Austria to other European countries such as France, Spain, Hungary, and Russia. In particular, the French and Russian styles of music during this period demonstrate numerous possibilities of pianistic sound through new technical and musical means.

Among the abundant French and Russian repertoire of this era, the word “significant” allows us to narrow down the scope of the program to three dissertation recitals. Selecting significant composers in certain period is a subjective process; indeed, I have chosen composers considered either major or among the best-known, according to the accepted meaning.

This dissertation was completed by performing selected works composed after 1900 by French composers Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) Claude Debussy (1862-1918), and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937); and Russian composers Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915), Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943), and Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) in three recitals at the Gildenhorn Recital Hall in the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center of the University of Maryland. Recordings of the recitals may be accessed through the University of Maryland Library System.

**EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY PIANISM IN MUSIC BY SIGNIFICANT
RUSSIAN AND FRENCH COMPOSERS**

By

En A Kim

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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2015

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RECITAL PROGRAM- First Dissertation Recital

December 7th, 2013. 2:00PM
Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center,
College Park, University of Maryland

En A Kim, Piano
Jenny Wu, Violin

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Prelude in G minor, Op. 23 No. 5 (1903)
Etude-Tableau in C minor, Op. 39 No. 1 (1916-17)

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

La Valse- poème chorégraphique pour orchestre (1919-20)

(Transcription pour piano par l'auteur)

INTERMISSION

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Sonata for Violin and Piano in G minor (1917)

Allegro vivo
Intermède: Fantasque et léger
Finale: Très animé

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Sonata No. 2 in D Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 94 *bis* (1943)

Moderato
Scherzo: Presto
Andante
Allegro con brio

RECITAL PROGRAM –Second Dissertation Recital

April 4th, 2015. 2:00PM

Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center,
College Park, University of Maryland

En A Kim, Piano

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Estampes (1903)

Pagodes

La soirée dans Grenade

Jardins sous la pluie

Feux d'Artifice from Preludes, Book 2 (1913)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Piano Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 28a (1917)

INTERMISSION

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Miroirs (1904-05)

Noctuelles

Oiseaux tristes

Une Barque sur l'océan

Alborado del gracioso

La Vallée des cloches

RECITAL PROGRAM –Third Dissertation Recital

November 2nd, 2015. 5:00PM

Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center,
College Park, University of Maryland

En A Kim, Piano

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Prélude Op. 31 No. 4 in C Major (1903)

Prélude Op. 33 No. 1 in E Major (1903)

Prélude Op. 33 No. 3 in C Major (1903)

2 Mazurkas, Op. 40 (1903)

No.1 in D-flat Major

No.2 in F-sharp Major

Désir, Op. 57, No. 1 (1908)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Ten Pieces for Piano from Romeo and Juliet, Op. 75 (1937)

No. 2 Scene: The Street Awakens

No. 6 Montagues and Capulets

No. 7 Friar Laurence

No. 10 Romeo and Juliet before Parting

INTERMISSION

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Nocturne No. 12 in E minor, Op. 107 (1915)

Barcarolle No. 12 in E-flat Major, Op. 106 *bis* (1915)

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 36 (Revised version in 1931) (1913)

Allegro agitato

Andante

L'istesso tempo- Allegro molto

RECORDING TRACK LISTING

First Dissertation Recital –CD 1

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

[CD1, Track 1] Prelude in G minor, Op.23 No.5 (1903)

[CD1, Track 2] Etude-Tableau in C minor, Op.39 No.1 (1916-17)

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

[CD1, Track 3] La Valse- poème chorégraphique pour orchestre (1919-20)

(Transcription pour piano par l'auteur)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Sonata for Violin and Piano in G minor (1917)

[CD1, Track 4] Allegro vivo

[CD1, Track 5] Intermède: Fantasque et léger

[CD1, Track 6] Finale: Très animé

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Sonata No.2 in D Major for Violin and Piano, Op.94 *bis* (1943)

[CD1, Track 7] Moderato

[CD1, Track 8] Scherzo: Presto

[CD1, Track 9] Andante

[CD1, Track 10] Allegro con brio

RECORDING TRACK LISTING
Second Dissertation Recital –CD 2

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Estmapes(1903)

[CD 2, Track 1] Pagodes

[CD 2, Track 2] La soirée dans Grenade

[CD 2, Track 3] Jardins sous la pluie

[CD 2, Track 4] Feux d'Artifice from Preludes, Book 2 (1913)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

[CD 2, Track 5] Piano Sonata No.3 in A minor, Op.28a (1917)

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Miroirs (1904-05)

[CD 2, Track 6] Noctuelles

[CD 2, Track 7] Oiseaux tristes

[CD 2, Track 8] Une Barque sur l'océan

[CD 2, Track 9] Alborado del gracioso

[CD 2, Track 10] La Vallée des cloches

RECORDING TRACK LISTING

Third Dissertation Recital- CD 3

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

[CD 3, Track 1] Prélude Op.31 No.4 in C Major (1903)

[CD 3, Track 2] Prélude Op.33 No.1 in E Major (1903)

[CD 3, Track 3] Prélude Op.33 No.3 in C Major (1903)

2 Mazurkas, Op. 40 (1903)

[CD 3, Track 4] No. 1 in D-flat Major

[CD 3, Track 5] No.2 in F-sharp Major

[CD 3, Track 6] Désir, Op. 57 No.1 (1908)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Ten Pieces for Piano from Romeo and Juliet, Op.75 (1937)

[CD 3, Track 7] No.2 Scene: The Street Awakens

[CD 3, Track 8] No.6 Montagues and Capulets

[CD 3, Track 9] No. 7 Friar Laurence

[CD 3, Track 10] No.10 Romeo and Juliet before Parting

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

[CD 3, Track 11] Nocturne No. 12 in E minor, Op.107 (1915)

[CD 3, Track 12] Barcarolle No.12 in E-flat Major, Op. 106 *bis* (1915)

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Piano Sonata No.2 in B-flat minor, Op.36 (Revised version in 1931)(1913)

[CD 3, Track 13] Allegro agitato

[CD 3, Track 14] Andante

[CD 3, Track 15] L'istesso tempo- Allegro molto

Program Notes

I. French Repertoire

I-1. Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

After the commencement of World War I, Paris remained the most appropriate place for artistic revolution. Greater public interest in all the arts including painting, literature, theater, dance and music, allowed Paris to become a vibrant city for innovation in a relatively short period of time. In that period of time, Impressionism rose to prominence as one of the more important artistic trends, and was highly extolled by many French artists.

In the musical realm, Claude Debussy, one of the most significant Parisian composers, introduced an extraordinary historic evolution in the art of sounds. In a letter to his publishers in March 1908, Debussy mentioned the term *Impressionism*, saying, "I am trying to do 'something different' — in a way— what the imbeciles call 'impressionism', a term which is as poorly used as possible, particularly by art critics."¹As this quotation indicates, the word *Impressionism* to Debussy indicated vagueness of intent and of expression, despite the creative artistic ideas inherently imbued.

As time went on, the concept of Impressionism was reassessed and redefined. In 1937, Oscar Thompson wrote, "In literature, in painting, in music, the aim of these kindred artists was to suggest rather than to depict; to mirror not the object but the emotional reaction to the object; to interpret a fugitive impression rather than to seize

¹ E.Robert Schmitz, foreword by Virgil Thomson. *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*. New York: N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1950. 82.

upon and fix the permanent reality."² The elements employed by Debussy such as modality, pedal-points, pentatonicism, the whole-tone scale, and bitonality became included as part of the description of the term *Impressionism*. It is obvious that one can only figure out this terminology by garnering more knowledge derived from the deep study of Debussy's forms, tonalities, modalities, rhythms, and harmonies.

Estampes (1903)

Debussy composed piano music throughout his lifetime. In his sets of piano pieces, he became more adventurous as time went on, in terms of the choice of subject, exploration of new sounds, reflection of existing objects, and combinations of sounds.³ *Estampes* was completed in July 1903 and first performed in January 1904 at the Société Nationale by Ricardo Viñes. Debussy set the musical image as a reflection of prints, which were images printed from engraved copper or wooden plates. The inspiration for these pieces consists of three images: an oriental city of pagodas, an unpredictable evening in the warm night of Granada, and a stormy afternoon with Parisian children.

According to Burge⁴, the Javanese gamelans including the concepts of orchestra at the International Expositions in Paris in 1889 and 1900 stimulated Debussy to compose the first movement, *Pagodes*. As the title indicates, this work depicts pagodas, which are temples in India, Indo-China, Japan, and China. In addition, this architecture of pagodas depicts a construct that was termed 'Oriental' in Debussy's time. Similarly, one can easily recognize the pentatonic motifs reminiscent

² Oscar Thompson. *Debussy; Man and Artist*. New York: Dover Publications, 1967.

³ David Burge. *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990. 5-6

⁴ *Ibid*

of ‘Oriental’ music in *Pagodes*, as well as the complex counterpoint depicting bells, gongs, chimes, and street noises. Four aspects of the piece’s texture are layered on top of each other to create an integrated work, namely, the influence of gamelan music suggesting the art of percussion and rhythmic counterpoint, the use of the pentatonic scale, the ‘Oriental’ aspect which includes shimmering sounds throughout, and the ‘Western’ aspect which continues the evolution of the traditional *sonata* form.⁵

Soirée dans Grenade or “Evening in Granada” richly illustrates the atmospheric mood of Andalusia by expressing nocturnal sounds. This movement begins with a *habañera* rhythmic pattern, or in Debussy’s own words, “slowly with a nonchalantly graceful rhythm,” reflective of the heartbeat of that Spanish folk dance. This is a slow *habañera*, but a *habañera* nonetheless, and thus asserts an exact tempo and rhythmic stability throughout. As the intensity builds, a climax quickly arrives, but is then interrupted by other, mysterious rhythms and textures that suggest the dreamy sounds of a wayward guitar. At the end of this work, a performer should emphasize the languid character of the melody, reflective of the warm and heavy perfumes that permeate the air on a quintessential Andalusian night.

The third movement, *Jardins sous la Pluie*, is exceptionally interesting in terms of the manner in which Debussy suspends tonality for lengthy passages within a tonal work.⁶ In other words, Debussy moves from one tonality to another without employing the traditional means for modulations. This work alternates among four modes; minor, major, whole-tone, and chromatic. It begins in the minor modality, imbuing the opening with a somber color. Conversely, the major tonality emerges at

⁵ E. Robert Schmitz, foreword by Virgil Thomson. *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*. New York: N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1950. 82-83.

⁶ David Burge. *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990. 6-7

the end of the work, depicting sparkling brilliance emerging from several fragments of the diminishing storm. In performance, the work should be played *non-legato* in the opening section, gradually integrating other aspects of the piece in a fluid atmosphere, while maintaining sensitive use of the pedal.

Though there is no formal story to go along with *Jardins sous la Pluie*, one might argue that it depicts the games of children in a garden, which are interrupted by a rain storm. After the heavy storm, the children resume their games as the final raindrops fall from the leaves. Regardless, one recognizes that this work is a description of “Gardens in the Rain.”⁷

Feux d’Artifice from Préludes Book 2 (1913)

Debussy’s 24 *Preludes* are published in two volumes: Book I, ‘Twelve Preludes,’ was published in 1910, and Book II, ‘Twelve Preludes,’ was published in 1913. Despite the brief nature of the preludes, they consist of complex musical materials. Each prelude, which conveys a vivid flavor of the subject, is characterized by stylistic clarity; supple melodies, rhythmic precision, and clarity of form. Each of these 24 works depicts a subject, spanning legends, literature, vaudeville, painting, architectural landmarks, archeological objects, and natural phenomena, which are then musically individualized and crystallized by the composer.

In the first book, the basic material for each prelude is relatively simple, and is, in most cases, seemingly natural, colorful, and unforced.⁸ The second book, on the other hand, is generally evaluated as being more advanced in its musical language,

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ David Burge. *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990. 12.

more difficult in its interpretations, and tending toward a more abstract treatment of its literary and pictorial connotations.⁹

Feux d'Artifice (Fireworks) is the last of the 24 preludes. As the title of the work indicates, it describes a display in a fireworks exhibit, arguably the richest, most powerful demonstration, resulting in a grandiose climax to the evening's festivities. One can imagine the myriads of colors exploding in the sky and reflected in the silvery Seine River below on the evening of Bastille Day celebrations.¹⁰ Debussy hints at Bastille Day by using an echo of *La Marseillaise* as a nostalgic *au revoir* to the ending of this prelude. This prelude begins with calm material, which becomes more and more complex in melody, rhythm, and harmony. This increasing richness and vigor comes to a boiling point. This dynamic treatment of the main material plays a decisive role in creating a long, tense line, resulting in a sense of restlessness throughout the work that ultimately erupts in climactic explosions near the end before subsiding into mysterious echo effects.

Sonata for Violin and Piano

The *Sonata for Violin and Piano* was written in 1917 and is Debussy's last completed work before his death in 1918. The sonata was the third in a projected series of six chamber sonatas. This sonata is a powerful and innovative work which fuses conventional concert performance traditions and expectations with a challenging affinity for gypsy violin playing.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ E. Robert Schmitz, foreword by Virgil Thomson. *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*. New York: N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1950. 187

It is a significantly compact sonata, lasting only 14 minutes and consisting of three movements: *Allegro vivo*, *Intermède (Fantasque et léger)*, and *Finale (Très animé)*. The first movement, *Allegro vivo*, discloses a broadly melodic style by utilizing extreme *legato* lines, frequent hemiolas, and generous long note values in the violin part. With arpeggiated figuration, the piano part is more active on several key changes. Although the movement is marked *Allegro vivo*, this tempo marking generally indicates a sense of constant urgency.

The second movement, *Intermède*, is the most ‘fantastic’ of the three, alternating easily between *scherzando* music, and that of a more improvisatory nature. It presents chromatic melodies marked “*espressif et sans riguer*” in the middle of the movement. After an energetic outburst from the violin near the end, the music quickly dies away into nothingness.

The greatest performance difficulty of the sonata is arguably in the last movement. The violin reprises the first theme of the first movement in the beginning of this final movement. The underlying piano accompaniment is faintly reminiscent of *Jardins sous la Pluie* of *Estampes* (1903). After an initial introductory phrase, an unaccompanied violin solo begins, comprised of an almost incessant stream of sixteenth notes. Finally, it is important to note that although the main motive of the movement sounds in *pianissimo*, Debussy drives to the end of the work with a staunch *fortissimo* in the home key of G major.

The premiere of the sonata was on May 5, 1917. The violin part was played by Gaston Poulet with Debussy himself at the piano, in what would be Debussy’s last public performance.

I-2.Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Since Ravel was a great admirer of the piano music of Liszt, his piano works reflected the virtuosity of the nineteenth century pianist's distinctive style. In addition, Ravel succeeded in finding new sonorities, apart from Liszt. He used the high register of the piano with successive seventh and ninth chords, and rhythmically complex arpeggiation to create a sense of glitter and spark that came to characterize his piano works.

Miroirs (1905)

Miroirs (1905) consists of five pieces, and is one of Ravel's most original piano works, along with *Jeux d'eau* (1901) and *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908).¹¹ *Miroirs* was inspired by a specific portrait and/or subject for each movement: in *Noctuelles*, the composer illustrates the fluttering of moths at night, in *Oiseaux tristes*, the songs of sad birds, in *Une barque sur l'océan*, a ship sailing on the ocean, in *Alborada del gracioso*, the strumming of a Spanish guitar, and in *La vallée des clothes*, the chiming of distant bells.

Noctuelles is interesting in particular for its rhythmic and harmonic complexity, presenting the hemiola, and the frequent changes in the division of the beat between three-against-four to sextuplets. *Une barque sur l'océan* describes the swell of the sea waves through the marvelously effective arpeggiations. These

¹¹David Burge. *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer Books , 1990.46-47

arpeggios also recall one of Ravel's earlier water pieces, *Jeux d'eau*, as well as the virtuosity found in Liszt's piano works.

The fourth piece, *Alborada del gracioso*, evokes the biting dissonances of the Spanish folk guitar and accompanying dance movements. This piece conveys brilliant harmonic progressions, innovative melodic colorings, and the rhythmic excitement of a vigorous Spanish dance. In terms of virtuosity, this piece is the most difficult of the five to perform due to the rapid repeated notes, the double-note glissandos, color effect, and complex and continuous dance rhythm in fast tempo.

The last piece, *La vallée des cloches* and the second piece, *Oiseaux tristes* are faced on, based on what Burge calls, "found-object" sounds, in which Ravel tried to depict the sound of distant bells and bird calls, respectively."¹²

La Valse, poème chorégraphique pour orchestre

La Valse, poème chorégraphique pour orchestre (a choreographic poem for orchestra), was composed in 1919-1920. It was premiered in Paris on December 12, 1920. The work was originally written for a ballet, but now is more often performed as a concert work.

In his analysis of the piece, the composer George Benjamin states regarding *La Valse*, "whether or not it was intended as a metaphor for the predicament of European civilization in the aftermath of the Great War, its one-movement design

¹² David Burge. *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990. 48.

plots the birth, decay and destruction of musical genre: the waltz.”¹³ However, Ravel denied that it is a reflection of post-World War I Europe, saying: “While some discover an attempt at parody, indeed caricature, others categorically see a tragic allusion in it — the end of the Second Empire, the situation in Vienna after the war, etc... [*La Valse*] is a dancing, whirling, almost hallucinatory ecstasy, an increasingly passionate and exhausting whirlwind of dancers, who are overcome and exhilarated by nothing but ‘the waltz.’ This dance may seem tragic, like any other emotion...pushed to the extreme. But one should only see in it what the music expresses: an ascending progression of sonority, to which the stage comes along to add lights and movements.”¹⁴

La Valse was composed as a ballet under a commission from Sergei Diaghilev, the founder of Ballets Russes, as a ballet. Diaghilev rejected the work, saying it was not a ballet but a portrait of ballet. In the preface of the score, Ravel writes: “Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually scatter: one sees at letter A an immense hall peopled with a whirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth at the fortissimo letter B. Set in an imperial court, about 1855.”

Ravel transcribed *La Valse* for two different settings: one for two-piano/four-hands, and another for solo piano. Due to its difficulty, the solo piano transcription requires a prodigious technique on the part of the performer. Lucien Garban wrote the transcription for piano/four-hands in 1920.

¹³ *JSTOR Online*. Jessie Fillerup. Ravel, “*La Valse*”, and the *Purloined Plot*. College Music Symposium, Vol. 49/50 (2009/2010), 345-355. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41225261>. [Accessed October 4, 2015]

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

I-3. Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

According to pianist Marguerite Long, Fauré's music conveys three unities: unity of style, unity of rhythm, and unity of tonality, which make up the characteristics of authentic classicism.¹⁵ Stylistically, Fauré was a link between the end of Romanticism and the more modern styles found in the second quarter of the twentieth-century. Fauré's music was certainly not written to show off technical, pianistic skills; indeed, the difficulties of its demands are usually well concealed. In Fauré's music, moving and distracting characters emerge unexpectedly, making it difficult to convey his phrasing, superimposed voices, and changes of keys.

His piano works can be divided into several categories: music of water (the 13 *Barcarolles*), music of the night (the 13 *Nocturnes*), music of fantasy (the four *Valses-Caprices*, the five *Impromptus*, the *Ballade*, and *Dolly*, for four hands), and music of reason (the *Theme and Variations* and the several the *Preludes* and *Fugues*).¹⁶

Barcarolle No. 12 in E-flat major, Op. 106 bis

Originally, the barcarolle was a folk song sung by Venetian gondoliers. The character of this genre is often depicted by a rhythm reminiscent of the gondolier's stroke, as well his reflection shining up through the water. Following the precedents set by Chopin and Mendelssohn, Fauré broadens the characterizations found in the barcarolle. He established extensive use of the barcarolle, equipping the genre with

¹⁵ Marguerite Long, translated by Olive Senior-Ellis. *At the Piano with Fauré*. New York: A Crescendo Book, 1981. 62-63

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 75-76.

flexibility and subtlety through his extraordinary rhythmic treatment. Despite the many subjects found in Fauré's barcarolles, they are all unified by a single, rhythmic link.¹⁷

As with his nocturnes, Fauré composed barcarolles throughout his entire life, and they demonstrate the evolution of his style from a relatively simplistic understanding of the genre in his early period, to the enigmatic and complicated quality of his late works. All of Fauré's barcarolles are composed in 6/8 or 9/8, the exception being the seventh barcarolle, written in 6/4.

The twelfth *Barcarolle* was composed in 1915 and is dedicated to the pianist Louis Diémer. Fauré apparently took great care in composing this work, noting, "I composed it by licking it over like a bear does its cubs."¹⁸

Nocturne No. 12 in E minor, Op. 107

Fauré's thirteen *Nocturnes* were written between the years of 1883 and 1921. He translated his feeling by timbre, the expressive character of the musical phrasing, and the sequence of harmonies. Fauré borrowed the structure and the term *nocturne* from Chopin.

Generally, the nocturnes are comprised of one or several contrasting themes, with a central and livelier episode giving large contrasts to the piece. Both Chopin and Fauré nocturnes convey a similar general idea, which is that the genre should

¹⁷ JSTOR Online. J. Barrie Jones. *Fauré's Performance Practice*. Cambridge University Press, Tempo: New Series, No. 151 (Dec., 1984), 32-35. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/946217> [Accessed October 24, 2015]

¹⁸ Marguerite Long, translated by Olive Senior-Ellis. *At the Piano with Fauré*. New York: A Crescendo Book, 1981. 79.

enjoy a great deal of freedom that closely embraces all vagaries of thought in the image of a dream.¹⁹

The last three *Nocturnes* were written in 1913, 1915, and 1921, respectively. At the end of his life, Fauré reverted back the relatively simple and melancholy material from his early period to interpret his love of beauty. The twelfth *Nocturne* highly reflects Chopinesque character, though it is, however, both melodically and harmonically harder to comprehend than Chopin's nocturnes. Dissonances, highly chromatic lines, and harmonic ambiguities make this nocturne difficult to grasp and to perform.

II. Russian Repertoire

II-1. Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Scriabin composed ten sonatas, and dozens of preludes, études, and other short works for piano under the great influence of his mother, who had been a piano student of Theodor Leschetizsky. As a small child, Scriabin disclosed an astonishing musical memory, reminiscent of the young Mozart, and reproduced entire compositions at the piano after only one hearing.²⁰ Those outstanding talents enabled him later to produce works at a rapid pace; for instance, the fourth and fifth piano sonatas were composed in two and three days, respectively. His creation, the 'mystic' chord (a chord comprised of a series of altered fourths — C, F#, Bb, E, A, and D,

¹⁹ JSTOR Online. J. Barrie Jones. *Fauré's Performance Practice*. Cambridge University Press, Tempo: New Series, No. 151 (Dec., 1984), 32-35. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/946217> [Accessed October 24, 2015]

²⁰ David Burge. *Twentieth-Century Piano music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990. 53

which first appeared in his *Fourth Piano Sonata* in 1903), was developed out of his obsession with extra-musical ideas. The *Fourth Piano Sonata* combines extreme chromaticism through this chord, with a strong sense of classical form.

Two Mazurkas, Op. 40

Scriabin's early piano music shows the influence of Chopin. Specifically, Chopin's musical characteristics such as an often melancholy atmosphere, a strong melodic line, chromatic accompaniment, complex inner voices, and extended left hand arpeggiation, are prevalent in Scriabin's early works. Written in 1903, his *Mazurkas Op. 40* belongs to his mature period, and reveal Chopin's influence in terms of the title, and the sentimental and melancholy melodic lines found throughout Chopin's works.

The first work is written in D-flat major, and the second is in F-sharp major. His unique musical expression, combining the romantic traditions of the 19th century and innovative harmonies of the early twentieth century are distinctively appeared in these mazurkas.

The year 1903 was a highly fruitful year for Scriabin. In addition to his *Two Mazurkas*, Op. 40, he also composed his *Fourth Piano Sonata*, *Two Poems* Op. 32, two études from *Études* Op. 42, *Valse* Op. 38, and nineteen preludes: 4 Preludes, Op. 31, 4 Preludes, Op. 33, 3 Preludes, Op. 35, 4 Preludes, Op. 37, 4 Preludes Op. 39.

4 Preludes, Op. 31/ 4 Preludes, Op. 33

Scriabin also composed his *Preludes, Op. 31* and *Preludes, Op. 33* in 1903. By this time, his innovative musical side had matured. Each set consists of four preludes which strongly display Scriabin's mature style, that is, a unique blend of Russian musical traditions, Impressionistic features, and an increasing sense of what he called mysticism. The first prelude in the Op. 31 set is in D major, and is the longest and most compelling piece of the four. The main theme excites with the subtle changes of harmonies and colors, creating a mood full of romance and tenderness. The second prelude in F-sharp minor starts with a powerful bass underneath a hesitant and angry theme. The third prelude in E-flat minor is marked *Presto*, and lasts under a minute. Conversely, the final prelude of the set in C major is marked *Lento*. A depiction of serene detachment or of mystical haze is created by its solemn and glacial movement. A prevailing feature of the set is a mingling of his early and later styles.²¹

Four Preludes, Op. 33 is a varied and well-balanced set. The first prelude in E major begins with a limpid and melancholy melody, while the second prelude in F-sharp major, a key central to Scriabin's consciousness, appears in a dreamy sound world. The mood is shattered by an outburst of anger from the third prelude, and the last prelude, which further pushes the boundaries through the use of daring harmonies.

²¹ Maurice Hinson. *Guide to the pianist's repertoire*. 3rd ed., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. 720.

Désir, Op. 57, No. 1

Scriabin's *Morceaux, Op. 57* were written in 1908. *Désir* is the first of two works. In the latter part of his career, he composed a number of sets under the title *Morceaux*, or "Pieces"—Ops. 45, 49, 51, 52, 56, 57, and 59. These sets contain two, three, or four short works.

By 1907, Scriabin's works were imbued with a spiritual and cosmic sensibility. In *Désir*, he conveys a spiritual or mystical urge rather than some sensual or materialistic character. His mystical mood, sparse texture, and slower movement are especially apparent in *Désir*. The work is to be played slowly, but we can see the forward motion through Scriabin's use of a stop-and-start feature. A short motive gradually develops greater range towards deeper and more mysterious spheres, finally reaching a brief climactic moment. When the climax fades away slowly at the end, we are left with a mystical, ghostly, and atmospheric effect. *Caresse dansée*, the second work in this opus, is a seductive dance. Unlike the ending of *Désir*, however, it ends securely in C major.

II-2.Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Compared to Scriabin's innovative nature, Rachmaninoff remained, notably, a traditionalist as a pianist and a composer. It is doubted that he was one of the finest pianists of his day and, as a composer, the last representative of the Russian late-Romantic period. Although his conducting career is largely unknown today, in 1907, when his first piano sonata was composed, Rachmaninoff was regarded as one of the

finest conductors in Russia.²² In 1917, Rachmaninoff escaped the Russian revolution and began a twenty-six-year residency in the United States.

Like Scriabin, Rachmaninoff was also deeply influenced by Chopin's music, even though he was never taken under the spell of Chopin in the same way that Scriabin was. However, it is obvious that he added Chopin's sentimentality and deep sense of spirituality and melancholy to his music. With a pronounced lyrical melodic line, expressive breadth, and rich and distinctive orchestral colors, Rachmaninoff continued in the idiom of a great 19th century romantic composers, along the lines of Liszt, Tchaikovsky, and Mussorgsky.

Rachmaninoff's life as a composer may be divided into three main periods: the first period from 1886 to 1897, as a student at the Moscow Conservatoire, stretching as far as the *Moments Musicaux*, Op. 16; the second period from 1897 to 1917, his most active period as a composer, beginning with his second concerto through the second set of *Études-Tableaux*, Op. 39; and the third period from 1917 to his death in 1943, comprising Op. 40 through Op. 45. The *Ten Preludes*, Op. 23 and the nine *Études-tableaux*, Op. 39 were composed in his second period, while the *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* was written in the third period, and also holds the distinction of being his last composition.

Prelude in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5

The *Ten Preludes*, Op. 23, were completed in 1903 and the nine *Études-tableaux*, Op. 39 in 1917. Rachmaninoff composed 24 preludes in all major and

²² Music Online: Classical Music Reference Library, s.v. "Rachmaninov: The Sonatas". Available at <http://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/918563> . [Accessed September 15, 2015]

minor keys in Op. 23 and Op. 32. The set of preludes, Op. 23, was completed in 1903 and published in order of alternating major and minor keys according to the circle of fifths, a pattern of keys used both by Chopin and by Scriabin.

“Prelude in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5”, was composed in 1901. The set of Opus 23 consists of ten preludes and Rachmaninoff himself premiered this particular prelude in Moscow in February 1903. The first section begins with punctuated sixteenth-note and eight-note chords representing a chordal march. Contrasting the first section is the lyrical and melancholy melody in the second section, which also contains sweeping arpeggios in the left hand. This prelude is one of the most performed and recorded pieces of the set.

Etude-Tableau in C minor, Op. 39, No. 1

The following quote by Rachmaninoff in a letter to Marietta Shaginyan, a Soviet writer and an activist, expresses his thoughts on the subject of death during this time:

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

before old age. But if there is something beyond, then that is terrifying.’
He immediately became rather pale and his face began to tremble...²³

The second set of *Études-Tableaux*, Op. 39 certainly reflected Rachmaninoff’s dark introspection, since eight of the nine pieces are in minor keys, and a majority of them feature *Dies Irae*.²⁴ The first piece of the Opus 39 was inspired by a Swiss symbolist painter, Arnold Böcklin’s ‘Waves’ according to Oskar von Riesemann.²⁵ The nightmarish momentum is depicted in the beginning of the piece, making taxing technical demands on the performer. The description of the sea and its turbulent waves is expressed through rapid note passages. The few bars comprising a contrasting theme emerge in the middle section, when the *Dies Irae* appears in the staccato eight-notes of the left hand.²⁶ The giant wave rearing up throughout the piece gradually accelerates in speed and intensity until the end, when all in its figurative path is smashed.

Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 36

Rachmaninoff composed his second piano sonata in B-flat minor and the massive choral symphony *The Bells*, Op. 35 in the same year of 1913. *The Bells*, premiered on December 13th 1913, with Rachmaninoff conducting, in St. Petersburg. Three days later, the first performance of the second piano sonata took place by Rachmaninoff’s playing in Moscow.

²³ Barrie Martyn. *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*. England and Brookfield, Vermont: USA Scholar Press. 1990. 271.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 269-277

²⁵ Oskar von Riesemann. *Rachmaninoff’s Recollections: told to Oskar von Riesemann*. New York: Macmillan, 1934, 177

²⁶ Barrie Martyn. *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*. England and Brookfield, Vermont: USA Scholar Press. 1990. 272.

The second sonata is in a three-movement form, and has characteristics of his Second symphony, Op. 27 and Third Piano Concerto, Op. 30.²⁷ The first movement strongly states a descending scalar motive and this presents throughout entire movement. After massive chordal passages, the movement ends with an unanswered, hesitant question. The second movement opens with a sequential descending idea, but it is tranquil and quiet. According to Robert Matthew-Walker, the author of *Rachmaninoff: His Life and Times*, “It is a quiet summer’s day in Southern Russia, with the butterflies gently fluttering against the rich colours of the motionless roses and lilacs in full bloom, the grass warmed with haze, the earth full yet not damp underfoot.”²⁸ The last movement starts with the reprise of the *Lento* and the two main themes of the first movement are present throughout. The coda functions as a recapitulation, brilliant in the extreme, and highly triumphant.

II-3.Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) may rightly be regarded as one of the most significant and successful composers of piano music in the twentieth-century. Indeed, his nine piano sonatas are firmly established in the standard repertoire, and many smaller pieces constitute a valuable contribution to the twentieth century piano literature.

²⁷Music Online: Classical Music Reference Library, s.v. “Rachmaninov: The Sonatas”. Available. <http://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/918563> . [Accessed September 15, 2015]

²⁸ Robert Matthew-Walker. *Rachmaninoff: His Life and Time*. Tunbridge Wells [England]: Midas Books, 1980.

Prokofiev's piano music is defined by his individual and percussive style, which is one of his essential innovations in piano technique. In addition to the percussive treatment of the piano, he blends a lyric element accompanied by strong dissonances.

Piano Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 28a

Prokofiev's *Third Piano Sonata* was composed in one single movement marked *Allegro tempestuoso* at the beginning. It is based on earlier sketches "From Old Notebooks" of 1907. Indeed, he had a large notebook into which he would write his ideas and, when there was enough accumulated material, he would begin the composition. The rhythmic drive, horn-like theme, contrasting lyrical and slow sections, and technically difficult coda are outstanding features of the *Third Piano Sonata*.

The work begins with a blasting E major harmony lasting two measures, then breaks out into toccata-like figuration. After a motoric or fanfare-like section, a slow and legato chromatic scale, marked *Moderato*, sets the foundation for the functional "second movement" in this one-movement work. Throughout the last section, the functional "third movement," a loud and marching theme in A minor alternates with a truly quiet C major arpeggio in *pianissimo subito*. The sonata ends with A minor chord in *fortissimo*.

Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet, Op.75 (1937)

In 1934, Prokofiev was trying to decide whether to return permanently to Russia after spending much of the post-Revolution years in the West. His fifth ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*, was written and ready to go into rehearsal in 1935 at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. However, the Bolshoi declared that Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* could not be danced and the project was canceled. He decided to produce two orchestral suites for concert use, as well as a set of ten pieces for solo piano which he published as his Op. 75. He himself premiered the solo piano transcription in Moscow in 1937.

The piano suite is close to the original version of the ballet music, despite the fact that the ballet order is considerably changed for musical reasons. Each of the ten pieces retains the descriptive title that corresponds to the titles in the ballet.

Prokofiev's use of a separate opus number and his own public performance of the work in recital truly show his intent to express the importance and uniqueness of the solo piano version.

The second piece in the suite is entitled *The Street Awakens*, and corresponds to a scene in the first act of the ballet. The movement entitled *Montagues and Capulets* is a shortened version of the No. 13 in the ballet entitled *Dance of the Knights*, which is in two contrasting sections. One section lends greater weight to the meeting of two young lovers from hostile families. The last piece combines four of the ballet numbers No. 38, *Romeo and Juliet/Juliet's Bedroom*, No. 39, *Farewell before the Parting*, No. 43, *Interlude* and No. 47 *Juliet Alone*.

Sonata No. 2 in D major for Violin and Piano, Op. 94 *bis*

Prokofiev originally composed his *Sonata in D Major* for flute and piano in 1942. The work was transcribed by the composer himself in 1943 at the request of violinist David Oistrakh. Prokofiev employed the percussive effects and shocking dissonances of his piano compositions and with the demands a more lyrical and elegant compositional style. The violin version of sonata was premiered on June 17, 1944 in Moscow by David Oistrakh and Lev Oborin.

The work consists of four movements and embodies the Sonata form. The first movement is built on a floating melody and imaginative harmonies. The rhythmically energetic second movement is marked *Scherzo:Presto, and* shows light and joking sense of whim which follows the original sense of a scherzo. The third movement, *Andante*, opens with an aching tune for the violin, after which jazz-inspired inflections emerge during the middle section. The last movement, *Allegro con brio*, is heroic, typical of Prokofiev's writing for solo piano. After a contrasting middle section, the main theme returns full of joy.

Annotated Bibliography

Bruhn, Siglind. *Images and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music: The Extra-Musical Subtext in Piano Works by Ravel, Debussy, and Messiaen*. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997

In this book, Bruhn discusses Ravel's *Miroirs* based on non-musical stimulus which are images and impressions, tales and poems, and spiritual concepts and divine attributes.

Burge, David. *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*. New York and Toronto: Schirmer Books, 1990.

In this book, Burge discusses the solo piano repertoire of the first nine decades of the twentieth century. It includes studies of a large variety of musical genres and repertoire. It consists of four chapters arranged chronologically: From 1900 to the End of World War I, Between the Two World Wars, The Postwar Period, and The 1970s and 1980s. Each chapter includes the significant composers in different continent as the subchapter. I focused on the first chapter since my dissertation topic's time frame fits with it, specifically, Debussy and Ravel. This book generally deals with each composer's life and compositional style with appropriate musical examples in details.

Fiess, Stephen C.E. *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev*. Metuchen, NJ, and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994.

This book is based on Fiess' doctoral dissertation, "The Historical and Pedagogical Value of Prokofiev's Published Music for Solo Piano" from the University of Colorado in Boulder, CO in 1989. Fiess first focuses on the aesthetics and historical context of Prokofiev's piano music, and then provides a pedagogical introduction to his piano works intended for the soloist, teacher, and student. This book consists of four chapters: The aesthetics of Prokofiev's Piano Music, Prokofiev's Piano Music in Historical Context, A pedagogical introduction to the piano works of Prokofiev, and Conclusions. In the second chapter, the author explains Prokofiev's piano music in detail dividing it into three periods of time: the Russian period, the foreign period, and the Soviet period. It examines stylistic characteristics of Prokofiev's piano works in relation to innovations in style in the piano music of his contemporaries. In the third chapter, his music is divided into four categories: pedagogical works, advanced-intermediate-level works, advanced-level or concert works, and transcriptions.

Fillerup, Jessie. "Ravel, La Valse, and the Purloined Plot." *JSTOR Online*. College Music Symposium, Vol. 49/50 (2009/2010).

The JSTOR article discusses *La Valse* by Ravel regarding structural, and aesthetic contexts. Also, Fillerup gives theoretical analysis including motivic and harmonic unity.

Hinson, Maurice. *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*. 3rd edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Hinson lists alphabetically by composer the tremendous amount of solo repertoire for pianists. He also indicates the level of difficulty, based on his personal ideas.

Jones, J. Barrie. *Fauré's Performance Practice*. *JSTOR Online*. Cambridge University Press, Tempo: New Series, No. 151 (Dec., 1984) [Accessed October 24, 2015]

This article explains how to perform Fauré's music as he belonged to an earlier generation than Debussy. Jones's approach to Fauré's performance practice is categorized by 'left hand before right', 'tempo rubato', and 'pedaling'.

Kelly, Barbara L. "Ravel, (Joseph) Maurice." *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press.

The Oxford article on Ravel gives detailed information of his biography and compositional styles, piano works, and artistic preoccupations.

Long, Marguerite. *At the Piano with Fauré*, translated by Olive Senior-Ellis. New York: A Crescendo Book, Taplinger Publishing Company, 1981

This book is based on Long's personal experiences with Fauré. When she was at the start of her career beginning with her title of Premier Prix du Conservatoire de Paris, Fauré's music gave a decisive influence on her life and finally, she met him in person. With this experience, she wrote about his personal story with him, the interpretation of Faure's music, Faure's friends, and performance advice.

Martyn, Barrie. *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*. Brookfield, Vermont: Scholar Press, 1990.

This book consists of three sections which are: Rachmaninoff the composer, Rachmaninoff the pianist, and Rachmaninoff the conductor. Each part is also divided

up into smaller sub-chapters. The first chapter deals mostly with his life from childhood to the later years in detail, with a chronological summary of his principal compositions. In the second chapter, Rachmaninoff's concert career, piano repertoire, discography is conveyed. Lastly, his career as a conductor, conducting repertoire and chronological list of performances are dealt with in the third chapter.

Riesemann, Oskar von. *Rachmaninoff's Recollections: told to Oskar von Riesemann*. New York: Macmillan, 1934.

Riesemann describes Rachmaninoff's life and the interpretation of his works in this book.

Schmitz, E. Robert. *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, foreword by Virgil Thomson. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966.

In the first chapter, Schmitz gives a biographical sketch of Debussy's life including characteristics of his personality. Also, his thoughts about many "ism"-s such as perceptivism, impressionism, romanticism, classicism as well as aspects of his musical styles including form, harmony, melody, performing style with his influences from the past and on the future. From the second chapter to the fifth chapter, it chronologically describes of all the solo piano works by Debussy.

Walker, Robert Matthew. "Rachmaninov: The Sonatas". *Music Online. Classical Music Reference Library*. [Accessed September 15, 2015]

This article on Rachmaninoff gives detailed historical and analytical information about his two piano sonatas.