

CAMILLE SAINT-SÄENS' PIANO CONCERTO NO. 5 IN F MAJOR, OPUS 103:
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF FORM, COMPOSITION TECHNIQUES, AND A
PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVE

Seung Won Yoo, B.M., M.M.

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APPROVED:

Joseph Banowetz, Major Professor

Jeffrey Snider, Minor Professor

Adam Wodnicki, Committee Member

James C. Scott, Dean of the College of Music

Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.
Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

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The majority of books about Saint-Saëns cover his life, compositions, contemporaries, and French music in general. Although his life is well documented, most sources present only brief analyses of his works; there is not one single comprehensive and exhaustive study of the *Piano Concerto in F Major*, Opus 103, available in the current literature. This study aims at filling the gap by providing other musicians interested in performing this piece with an initial study-guide.

The research for this study focuses on several aspects of Saint-Saëns' music. The currently available literature and past research is thoroughly examined, appraised, and quoted when relevant to the discussion. The original score of the concerto is analyzed regarding its form, compositional style, and performance indications. Diagrams, charts, and musical examples are presented to illustrate and substantiate the researcher's conclusions.

Chapter I presents the topic and purpose of this study, a brief biography of Saint-Saëns, a chronological overview of his five piano concertos, and the historical background of the *Piano Concerto No. 5 in F Major*, Opus 103. Chapter II presents a formal analysis and a compositional analysis of Opus 103. Chapter III presents a perspective of Saint-Saëns playing style and performance recommendations by the author. Chapter IV concludes this study by determining the importance of Opus 103 in piano literature and by explaining the reason that performers with professional aspirations should consider including this concerto in their repertoire.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Topic and Thesis

Charles Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 – 1921) was a prolific French composer and performer who lived throughout most of the nineteenth century. He was considered a virtuosic pianist and one of the best organists of his time. Today's audiences recognize Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of Animals*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Organ Symphony*, and some other instrumental *concertante* works. His Piano Concerto in G Minor, Opus 22, and Piano Concerto in C Minor, Opus 44, are familiar, but his other works for piano and orchestra are often neglected by performers.

The majority of books about Saint-Saëns cover his life, compositions, contemporaries, and French music in general. Although his life is well documented, most sources present only brief analyses of his works; there is not one single comprehensive and exhaustive study of the Piano Concerto in F Major, Opus 103 available in the current literature. This study aims at filling the gap by providing other musicians interested in performing this piece with an initial study-guide.

The research for this study focuses on several aspects of Saint-Saëns' music. The currently available literature and past research is thoroughly examined, appraised, and quoted when relevant to the discussion. The original score of the concerto is analyzed regarding its form, compositional style, and performance indications. Diagrams, charts, and musical examples are presented to illustrate and substantiate the researcher's conclusions.

Saint-Saëns as a Pianist, Organist, Writer, and Composer

Camille Saint-Saëns was born in Paris in 1835. His father, Joseph Victor, was a clerk at the Ministry of the Interior who died of consumption when Saint-Saëns was only three months old. Saint-Saëns' mother and great-aunt raised him.

Saint-Saëns' mother decided early in his life that Saint-Saëns was to become a musician. At the age of two, he started taking piano lessons with his aunt, and quickly was recognized as a child prodigy. Saint-Saëns was sufficiently advanced by the age of

seven to be able to continue his studies under Camille-Marie Stamaty (1811 – 1870), a popular piano teacher who had studied with Kalkbrenner and Mendelssohn. His public debut was made at the age of ten, performing the Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Opus 37, and the Piano Concerto in B-flat Major, K. 450, by Mozart, with his own cadenza.

Saint-Säens entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1848. At the Conservatoire, he studied organ with Benoist, composition and orchestration with Halévy, and took classes of accompaniment and singing.¹ Saint-Säens' score reading was, by all accounts, amazing; Wagner mentioned that Saint-Säens could play his compositions – including *Tristan und Isolde* – at first sight as if he knew them by heart.²

Saint-Säens became famous primarily as an organist. He took the position of organist in the Madeleine Church in 1857, where he worked until 1877. He held just one professional teaching position as a piano professor, from 1861 to 1865, at the École Niedermeyer. Fauré studied under Saint-Säens at that school.

Saint-Säens was an avid traveler and performed throughout his life on all five continents. His talent reached international acclaim and he was surpassed in fame only by Liszt and Rubinstein. His last public performance was held at the Casino in Dieppe, France, on August 6, 1921, seven months before his death.

Saint-Säens was not only the most virtuosic performer of his time, but a prolific writer as well. Most of his literary works about music were published from 1885 to 1921. Saint-Säens' *Musical Memories* is an English translation (by E. Giles Rich) of 23 of the 36 essays in *École Buissonnière*.³ In addition to writing extensively about music, Saint-Säens covered subjects as diverse as astronomy, archeology, and the natural sciences, and even produced works of drama and poetry.

As a composer, Saint-Säens wrote one-hundred-sixty-nine works including operas, ballet music, songs, and instrumental compositions. He won first prize in a competition founded by the *Société Sainte-Cécile* with his composition *Ode à Saint-Cécil* in 1852, and also won the competition of *Le Grand Fête International du Travail* with his cantata *Les Noces de Prométhée* in 1867. However, he failed to win the Prix de Rome twice.

Saint-Saëns composed for the piano through his entire life; he wrote music for solo piano, for piano duet, for two pianos, and for piano and orchestra. These works were published between 1856 and 1921.⁴ His piano music comprises an extensive variety of styles and forms, ranging from dances to innumerable character pieces and études. Curiously, Saint-Saëns never wrote a sonata for piano solo.

Chronological Overview of Saint-Saëns' Five Piano Concertos

From Saint-Saëns' eight published works for piano and orchestra, the five concertos are considered to be the finest of his piano music.

His Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Opus 17 was written in 1858 during his first year at the Madeleine. The Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Opus 22 (1868) was performed with Anton Rubinstein conducting on May 13, 1868, in Paris. A year later, Saint-Saëns wrote his Piano Concerto No. 3 in E-Flat Major, Opus 29, which features a highly controlled balance between the solo and the *tutti*.⁵ His Piano Concerto No. 4 in C Minor, Opus 44, written in 1875, features two movements based on thematic transformations similar to Liszt, unlike the usual three movements for concertos.⁶ After this concerto, Saint-Saëns did not compose another piano concerto for almost twenty years.

The year 1878 was tragic for Saint-Saëns. He lost his two sons only six weeks apart from each other. The first boy fell off a balcony and the second died of an illness. Saint-Saëns blamed his wife for these accidents and left her. Ten years later, his mother, who was his very dedicated supporter, also died. This time, Saint-Saëns decided to leave Paris and headed to Algiers, his favorite destination to escape from the depressing realities of Paris. During that time, his works for piano focused mainly on solo pieces, transcriptions, piano duets, and pieces for two pianos.

Historical Background of the "Egyptian Concerto"

Saint-Saëns was a traveler. His escapes from Paris took him to many so-called "exotic" places: Ceylon in 1890, Egypt in 1891, Point Pescade (Canary Islands) in 1892, Spain, Egypt, and China in 1893. He eventually returned to Cairo in January 1896.⁷

At his hotel room in Cairo, Saint-Saëns wrote his Piano Concerto No. 5 in F Major, Opus 103. Saint-Saëns nicknamed this work the “Egyptian Concerto” for the following reasons, as he mentioned to Louis Diemer, to whom the work is dedicated:

“It is a kind of voyage to the Orient which even goes, in the episode in F-sharp, to the Far East. The passage in G is a Nubian love song which I heard sung by the boatmen on the Nile while I was going down the river by *dahabeah*.”⁹

This piece features simple melodies, unique chord spacings, running scale passages, arpeggios, and octaves in the first movement. The second movement incorporates oriental-sounding scales, and rhythmic patterns that attempt to recreate the mood of his boat trip down the Nile River. The *étude*-like finale includes a large number of fast sixteenth notes in the solo piano part, imposing severe technical demands on the performer. The piece also displays great balance between the piano and orchestra parts, which do not overshadow one another.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF THE PIANO CONCERTO NO. 5 IN F MAJOR, OPUS 103

Formal Analysis

First Movement: *Allegro animato* (sonata form)

In the first themes, the mood of the music alternates between calm and choral-like (A) to agitated passages (A'). The second theme (B) is a lyrical *cantabile* melody in “Dolce un Poco Rubato”.

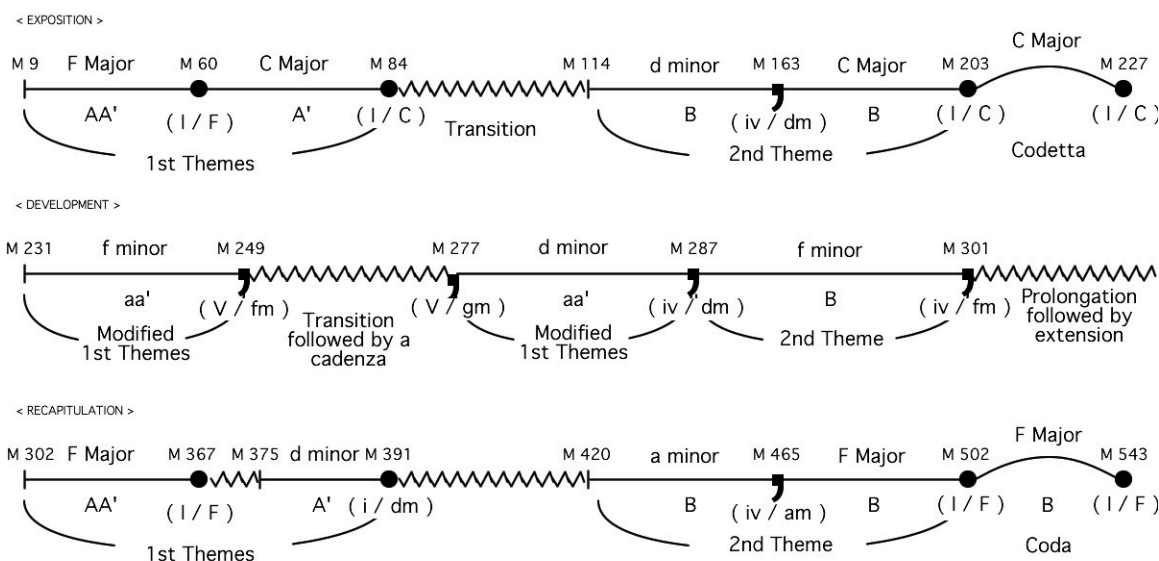


Figure 1: Formal diagram of the First Movement of Opus 103.

a) Exposition (mm. 1 – 227):

- mm. 1 – 9 (V/F): a short orchestral introduction in the key of F Major.
- mm. 9 – 42 (V/F): the calm choral-like passage of the first themes appears in the solo, then alternates with the *tutti* in the key of F Major.
- mm. 43 – 60 (I/F): the agitated passages of the first themes in the solo and the *tutti* appear simultaneously in the key of F Major.
- mm. 60 – 67: transition to C Major.
- mm. 67 – 84 (I/C): modulation of the agitated passage of the first

- themes to the key of C Major.
- mm. 84 – 91: transition to A minor.
- mm. 91 – 114 (iv/am): bridge with a counterpoint in the key of A minor.
- mm. 114 – 163 (iv/dm): the *cantabile* second theme in the solo is followed by a quasi-cadenza in the key of D minor.
- mm. 166 – 203 (I/C): the *cantabile* second theme in the *tutti* in the key of C Major.
- mm. 203 – 227 (I/C): *Codetta* in the key of C Major.
- b) Development (mm. 237 – 320):
- mm. 237 – 249 (V/fm): modified first themes of the *tutti* alternates with the solo in the key of F minor.
- mm. 249 – 259: transition to a cadenza-like section.
- mm. 260 – 277 (V/gm): a cadenza-like section, which begins in the key of C minor and then modulates to the key of G minor.
- mm. 277 – 287 (iv/dm): the modified first themes of the *tutti* appears in the key of D minor.
- mm. 290 – 301 (V/fm): the *cantabile* second theme in the solo appears supported by the dominant C pedal point in the *tutti*, in the key of F minor.
- mm. 301 – 313: prolongation of B-flat followed by an extension with counterpoint technique in the solo.
- c) Recapitulation (mm. 322 – 502):
- mm. 322 – 350 (I/F): the choral-like passage of the first themes appears in the *tutti*. Then, it alternates with the solo in the key of F Major.
- mm. 352 – 367 (I/F): the agitated passage of the first themes appears in the key of F Major.
- mm. 367 – 375: transition to A minor.
- mm. 375 – 391 (i/am): the modulation of the agitated first theme in the *tutti* appears in the key of A minor.

mm. 391 – 397: transition to bridge.

mm. 398 – 419 (I/E): bridge featuring the *tutti*/orchestra in a contrapuntal texture, in the key of E Major.

mm. 420 – 465 (IV/am): the second theme in the *tutti* followed by a cadenza-like section in the key of A minor.

mm. 468 – 502 (I/F): *cantabile* second theme in the *tutti*, in the key of F Major.

d) Coda (mm. 503 – 543):

mm. 503 – 543: Coda restates the second theme in the key of F Major.

Second Movement: *Andante* (free rhapsodic style)

The through-composed second movement is in a rhapsodic style. The changes of key and meter, recitative passages, and free cadenza-like style, all bear some unique characteristics.

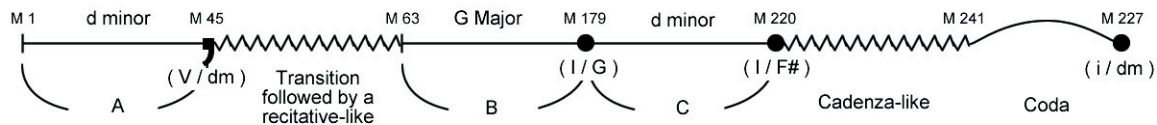


Figure 2: Formal diagram of the Second Movement of Opus 103.

mm. 1 – 45: first part (A) in D minor.

mm. 46 – 62: transition followed by recitative-like section.

mm. 63 – 179: second part (B) in G Major.

mm. 181 – 220: third part (C) in F-sharp Major.

mm. 221 – 241: cadenza-like section.

mm. 241 – 270: Coda in D minor.

a) Section A (mm. 1 – 45):

The first part begins with a strongly syncopated rhythmic passage in the *tutti*, incorporating the virtuoso solo in mm. 1 – 17. From mm. 17 – 33, the solo illustrates the energetic and undulating movement of a steamboat. Then, the steamboat glides on to calmer waters in mm. 42 – 44.

b) Section B (mm. 63 – 179):

The second part begins with a Nubian love song (G Major), which Saint-Saëns heard during a boat trip on the Nile River, in Egypt, as mentioned in Chapter I. That section is a lyrical cantabile that is reminiscent of Chopin's *Barcarolle* (another type of "boat music").

c) Section C (mm. 181 – 220):

Saint-Saëns strives to convey the croaking of frogs and the chirping of crickets mixed with an Oriental tune, in the key of F-sharp Major.

d) Coda (mm. 241 – 270):

The coda repeats the beginning of Section A (mm. 1 – 12) of the *tutti*, which merges with the recitative-like solo.

Third Movement: *Molto allegro*

Stegemann mentioned that this movement is in rondo form.¹⁰ However, this movement is actually structured in an A – B – C – A – B – C pattern. The repetition of the A section is not in the tonic; it switches from F Major to C minor (mm. 233 – 256) and C-sharp minor (mm. 257 – 268). In addition, the B section features a fluctuation of the key, as one usually sees in the development section of the sonata form.

The difficult technical figures – fast running passages of chords, double notes, arpeggios, and octaves – denote the characteristics of a *étude*. Later, Saint-Saëns composed for solo piano the *Étude*, Opus 111, No. 6 based on this third movement.

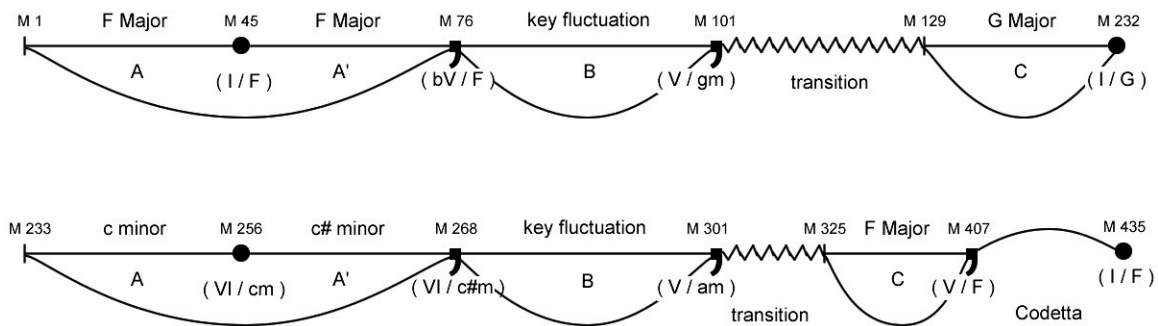


Figure 3: Formal diagram of the Third Movement of Opus 103.

a) Section A (mm. 1 – 76 / F Major, mm. 233 – 256 / C minor, mm. 257 – 268 / C-sharp minor):

The first section consists of two passages, one of ascending chords, and another of a descending arpeggio.

b) Section B (mm. 76 – 201 / G minor, mm. 269 – 301, D minor):

The solo is characterized by an ascending progression of inverted chords, followed by a descending progression of broken chords, in a “question and answer” pattern. The solo and the *tutti* collaborate, with complex polyrhythms such as 3 against 4 and 3 against 2. This section also features a fluctuation of the key.¹¹

c) Section C (mm. 129 – 232 / G Major, mm. 325 – 407 / F Major):

Two contrasting passages in *staccato* and *legato*.

Compositional Techniques

Compositional Techniques from the Baroque Period

a) Contrapuntal Texture:

A contrapuntal texture, probably influenced by J. S. Bach, appears in the exposition (mm. 91 – 114), in the development (mm. 231 – 238), and in the *tutti* of the

recapitulation (mm. 397 – 443). Moreover, the section mm. 313 – 316 shows an imitative style.



Figure 4: Contrapuntal texture: Opus 103, first movement.

The second portion of the first movement of Opus 44 (mm. 9 – 16, mm. 26 – 31) was written with a *fugato* section as well as the contrapuntal combination of themes.

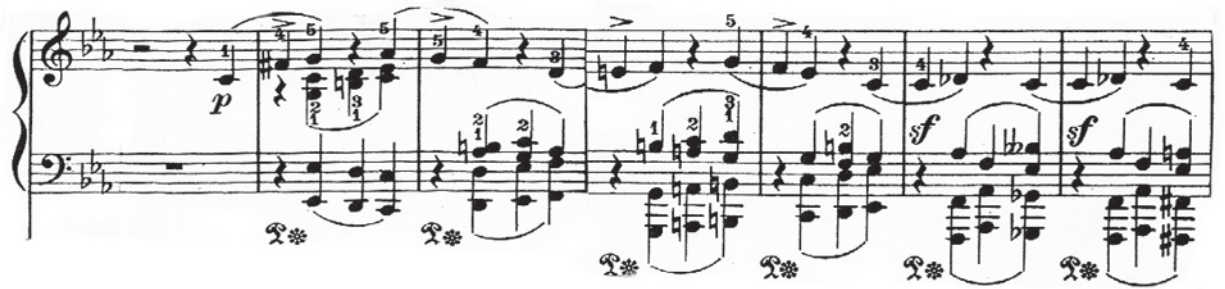


Figure 5: Example of influence of J. S. Bach: Opus 44, first movement, mm. 9 – 15.

The toccata style of J. S. Bach can be found in the beginning of the first movement of Opus 22, which features a piano cadenza that incorporates a G pedal point characteristic of Bach.¹²

Figure 6: Example of use of toccata style of J. S. Bach: Opus 22, second movement, mm. 1.

b) *Concerto Grosso* Style:

The concerto grosso style appears in the first movement of Opus 103, more specifically in the exposition (mm. 9 – 42), and in the recapitulation (mm. 322 – 349), both of which feature the alternation of the solo and *tutti*. This style also appears in the beginning of the first movement (mm. 1 – 65) of Opus 44, which features the alternation between the solo and the *tutti*.¹³

Figure 7: Example of *concerto grosso* style: Opus 103, first movement, mm. 9 – 12, mm. 25 – 27.

Influences from the Romantic Period

a) Virtuosity in a Lisztian Style:

Saint-Saëns studied with Liszt for two years and admired his music very much. Liszt also showed a great deal of respect and admiration for Saint-Saëns, whom he acknowledged “as the best musician [...] of all France and Navarre.”¹⁴ It is without doubt that Saint-Saëns was influenced by the virtuosic style of Liszt. The virtuosic style of compositional writing was one of the most noticeable characteristics of the music of Liszt. Saint-Saëns evokes the piano style of Liszt with improvisational passages that feature a transcendental technique.¹⁵

The beginning of the second movement (mm. 1 – 17) of Opus 103 shows the brilliant virtuoso style of the piano solo with running scale passages, arpeggios, and octaves.

The image displays a musical score for the second movement of Opus 103, measures 4 through 9. The score is written for piano and is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 4-6) features a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The right hand plays a series of ascending octaves, while the left hand plays a series of descending octaves. The dynamic marking is *ff*. The second system (measures 7-9) shows the right hand playing a series of triplets of eighth notes, and the left hand playing a series of triplets of eighth notes. The dynamic marking is *ff*. The third system (measures 10-12) shows the right hand playing a series of triplets of eighth notes, and the left hand playing a series of triplets of eighth notes. The dynamic marking is *sempre f*. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, time signatures, dynamic markings, and articulation marks.

Figure 8: Example of virtuosic style: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 4 – 9.

According to Pollei’s research of the Lisztian piano virtuoso style in the piano concertos of Saint-Säens, five major components are categorized as follows: bravura, toccata, cascade, filigree, and *semplice*.¹⁶ The *semplice* component is considered a unique category in virtuosic style because it is non-virtuosic in itself, but it demands from the performer the ability to switch quickly between a virtuosic passage and its opposite.

The mm. 241 – 259 portion of the second movement of Opus 103, indicated as ‘quasi recitativo’, features a simple melody with single notes or octaves in the solo accompanied by the insistent dramatic rhythmic momentum of the *tutti*.



Figure 9: Example of *semplice*: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 243 – 248.

The brilliant Lisztian virtuosity appears in many passages of Saint-Säens’ piano concertos. Especially, the first movements of Opus 22 and Opus 29 are filled with brilliant cadenza-like or true cadenza passages.

b) Lyricism in a Chopinesque Style:

Saint-Säens favor for Chopin’s music can be ascertained from the examination of the recital programs of Saint-Säens from 1887 to 1920; Saint-Säens never performed the same music twice, except for the *Barcarolle* and the *Impromptu*, both by Chopin.¹⁷ The *Barcarolle* was performed three times: in 1887 (London), and 1906 (Baltimore and

New York). The *Impromptu* was performed twice: in 1906 (New York) and in 1920 (Oran, France).¹⁸

The middle section (mm. 63 – 180), a Nubian love song, reminds the listener of the *Barcarolle* by Chopin; both feature a beautiful lyrical melody accompanied by a insistently wavelike moving, repeated pattern.



Figure 10: Nubian love song: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 63 – 74.



Figure 11: Chopin's *Barcarolle*, mm. 4 – 9.

c) Parallelism and the Use of Pentatonic Scale

Since the late eighteenth century, several composers have shown occasional interest in the music of so-called “exotic lands”. In this context, “exotic” refers to anywhere from the westernmost islands of the Pacific to the Middle East, extending even to the African continent. Saint-Saëns was no exception and included exotic references in a few of his works such as *Havanaise*, Opus 83 (1887), *Africa*, Opus 89 (1891), and the Piano Concerto No. 5 in F Major, Opus 103 (1896).

In Opus 103, the solo features parallel motion (mm. 34 – 37), which is a certain compositional technique usually employed to evoke the overall sound of the Orient. The melody of that passage has a nonfunctional harmony for producing this sound effect.



Figure 12: Parallelism: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 34 – 37.

Moreover, the melody of mm. 182 – 220 features a Chinese-like tune based on a pentatonic scale, which is widely used in the Far East and in various parts of Europe as well.



Figure 13: Pentatonic: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 186 – 189.

After Saint-Saëns, Debussy also resorted to parallelism to create the same Oriental sound effects in his work *Pagodes*, in which he also used tunes based on the pentatonic scale to recreate the atmosphere of Chinese popular music.¹⁹



Figure 14: Parallelism in Debussy's *Pagodes*, mm. 27 – 28.



Figure 15: Pentatonic scale in Debussy's *Pagodes*.

Features of 20th Century Music

a) Rhythmic Figures: Syncopation and Polyrhythms:

The music of Saint-Saëns bears very distinct and marked rhythmic features. Syncopation and polyrhythms are used often in his piano concertos. Both *tutti* from the opening (mm. 1 – 16) and from the ending (mm. 241 – 258) of the second movement, feature a strong syncopated rhythmic character.



Figure 16: Syncopation: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 243 – 244.

Another example of syncopated rhythm appears in many places of the *tutti* (mm. 6 – 8, mm. 14 – 16, mm. 54 – 60), and again in the *tutti* and solo in turns (mm. 233 – 260) in the third movement of Opus 103.



Figure 17: Syncopation: Opus 103, third movement., mm. 260 – 263.

Syncopated rhythms can also be observed in other works of Saint-Saëns, as in the following example taken from the first movement of Opus 22 (mm. 29 – 34).



Figure 18: Syncopation: Opus 22, first movement, mm. 29 – 32.

An example of polyrhythms can be seen in the form of three against four, or three against two in the solo and the *tutti* (mm. 78 – 104, mm. 233 – 292) in the third movement.



Figure 19: Polyrhythm: Opus 103, third movement, mm. 78 – 84.

b) Percussive Element:

The driving rhythmic force of the percussive character appears in sections mm. 233 – 268 and mm. 407 – 430 of the third movement. The percussive treatment of the piano is one of the noticeable characteristics of music of the twentieth century.



Figure 20: Percussive element: Opus 103, third movement, mm. 257 – 263.

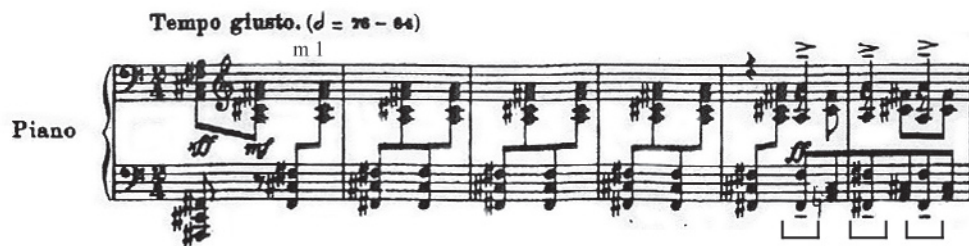


Figure 21: Percussive element in Bartók's *Allegre Barbaro*, mm. 1 – 6.

The percussive style of this third movement is similar to what is found in the *Allegre Barbaro* by Bartók, which features a combination of persistent hammering chords full of “barbaric” energy and the sharp rhythmic pattern of the main subject.²⁰

CHAPTER III

PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVE

Background on Saint-Saëns' Piano Performance Style and his Recordings

Before Chopin and Liszt, Kalkbrenner was regarded as the most important pianist in Paris and his playing style is considered the precursor of the French playing style that followed. Kalkbrenner demanded that touch be as uniform as possible, controlled by the fingers alone, and he showed great concern with developing a variety of finger touches to achieve that effect. Kalkbrenner's playing was characterized by a finger touch very close to the keys, octaves played from the wrist, and a very clear and natural sound. Camille-Marie Stamaty, one of Kalkbrenner's main students, was a piano teacher in great demand in Paris who studied briefly with Mendelssohn in Leipzig, and Saint-Saëns was one of Stamaty's most gifted students.

Saint-Saëns' playing was very controversial in his lifetime, for the musical purity of his approach was perceived as a lack of feeling. He was recognized as a talented performer of great technical skill, yet his playing was labeled – some say unfairly – as dry and cold.

In listening to Saint-Saëns playing by way of piano recordings,²¹ the clarity and precision of his playing style are evident, which is marked by his acute sense of rhythm, light touch, simple articulation and finger-work, power, gracefulness, and well-executed legato. Saint-Saëns' execution feels very intellectual, devoid of exaggeration. It is fair to presume that emotional feeling was not the center of Saint-Saëns' musical performance, according to this excerpt from a letter to his friend Camille Bellaigue:

“The music, like painting and sculpture, exists by itself outside of all emotion. The more that sensitivity develops, the more music and the arts are estranged from pure art.”²²

The Importance of Evenness, Light Touch, and Pure Sound

Saint-Saëns paid a great deal of attention to evenness throughout his life, shown in the following correspondence:

“The agility has come back completely, but that evenness of which I was so proud is no longer as beautiful as in the past and I have to pay more attention to it.”²³

For performing the Concerto No. 5, the classical style of a pure sound should be adopted for the exposition and recapitulation sections in the first movement. Overall, the running scale passages in the first movement should be executed with evenness, light touch, and precise rhythmic sense.



Figure 22: Evenness, light touch, and precision: Opus 103, first movement, mm. 45 – 49.

Pedaling for an Effective Sound

Saint-Saëns did not like any overuse of the damper pedal. He complained that modern editions abuse the pedal in the music of Mozart, Beethoven, and Chopin.²⁴ He pointed out that Mozart never indicated the pedal and Beethoven wrote “*senza sordini*” when he wanted pedal. Therefore, the proper use of pedaling is very important for the music of Saint-Saëns. These are my recommendations for pedaling, but each performer should use his or her discernment on deciding the best use of the pedal according to the condition of the hall and piano.

In the running scale passage of mm. 45 – 49 (Opus 103, first movement),²⁵ the pedal should not be used so as to prevent blurring of the sound. However, the running scale passage of mm. 5 – 6, mm. 42 – 49, and mm. 52 – 53 in the second movement should be played with the pedal holding throughout the passage, to create a glissando effect.

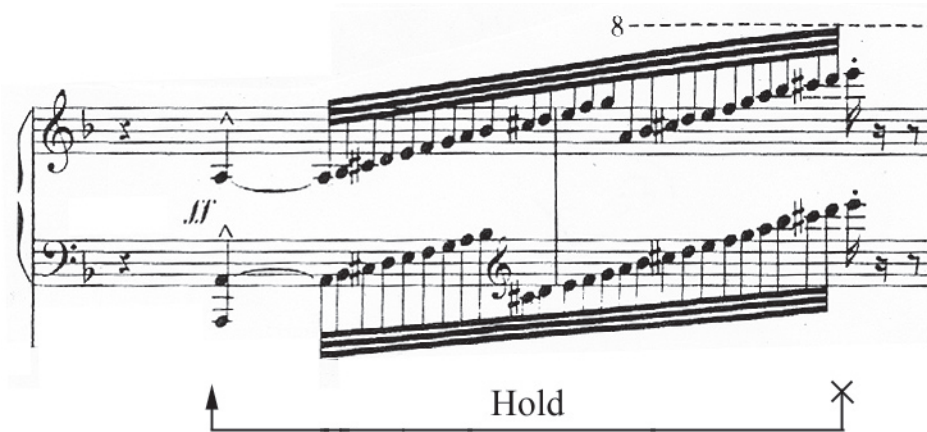


Figure 23: Pedal holding: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 5 – 6
 (pedal holding not indicated by composer).



Figure 24: Pedal holding: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 48 – 49
 (pedal holding indicated by composer).

The use of the accent pedal should be observed by the player to help emphasize the accent in passages of fast tempo. For example, in the section of mm. 9 – 17 of the second movement, the pedal should be touched very shortly and briefly on the accented notes.²⁶

Figure 25: Accent pedal: Opus 103, second movement, mm. 9 – 13

(pedal marking not indicated by composer).

The Metrical Rhythmic Sense in the *Étude*-like Third Movement

Saint-Saëns talked about the importance of establishing the tempo in his article about the metronome. To Saint-Saëns, melody and harmony were only rhythmical combinations.²⁷ Many of his works mark the metronome number exactly, as in the Piano Concerto in C Minor, Opus 44.

The metrical rhythmic sense is an important technique to be applied to the execution of the third movement of Opus 103, especially in the sections of mm. 78 – 100, and mm. 269 – 292: the *tutti* and the solo incorporate with the complex rhythmic pattern, three against four, or three against two.²⁸

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION

The Blending of Traditional, Contemporary, and Progressive Features in the Concerto No. 5

The Piano Concerto in F Major, Opus 103 by Saint-Saëns features the classical three-movement form. It also features a sonata form in the first movement, a rhapsodic through-composed three-part form in the second movement, and a sonata form in the third movement.

The views on Saint-Saëns' compositional style are controversial. As Prod'Homme observed:

Often, it is true, Saint-Saëns has been reproached by some with being too faithful to classic form, with sacrificing too much to its requirements, with being “too cold,” or not sufficiently a “theatrical man”; while others, on the contrary, have praised him for the same reasons.²⁹

In addition, many authors believe that Saint-Saëns does not have his own characteristic style and that he imitates the styles of other composers. However, D. Parker mentioned in his “Camille Saint-Saëns: A Critical Estimate” that “it would be unwise to declare that he (Saint-Saëns) has nothing to say” and that “because what he (Saint-Saëns) learns becomes a very real part of himself.”³⁰

Remarkably, the compositional style of Opus 103 manages to blend traditional and classical features with more progressive and contemporary ones. It displays influences from both the Baroque period (contrapuntal texture, *concerto grosso* style) and the Romantic period (virtuosity of a Lisztian style, lyricism of a Chopinesque style). In addition, the rhythmic figures of syncopation and polyrhythms, along with percussive elements, are recognizable features of 20th century modern music. The use of parallelism and the pentatonic scale is a characteristic that this work shares with other works of French music.

Performance Perspective

It is important to notice that Saint-Saëns came from a lineage of performers and instructors who believed that the student should develop firmness of the fingers and

flexibility of the wrist, adding progressively the weight of the forearm and then of the arm, in quite the opposite sequence that many students learn nowadays. Saint-Saëns' playing style was marked by great clarity, evenness, delicacy, and precision.

In the first movement, the performer should pay close attention to producing simplicity and purity, without unnecessary exaggeration, as required in most works of the Classic era. In the second movement, the performer should show the ability to bring out two different characteristics of the Romantic era: a Liszt-like rhapsodic virtuosity and a Chopin-like lyricism (as in the *Barcarolle*). In the third movement, the performer should be able to play with great technical skill because of this movement's étude-like characteristics.

Importance of the Concerto No. 5 in Piano Literature

Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 5, Opus 103 is very representative of French piano literature and should be performed more often to the public. It is a charming composition, which makes it appealing to an audience, and also features distinct aspects of classical, romantic, and contemporary music that can prove stimulating and challenging for the expert performer. Although Saint-Saëns' Opus 44 and Opus 22 are generally favored by performers, Opus 103 is certainly Saint-Saëns' most programmatic concerto. Piano performers should benefit from including the Concerto No. 5 in their repertoire for both its technical demands – more specifically in the third movement – and its beautiful melodies and composition. Anyone interested in having an in-depth view of Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 5, Opus 103 that includes historical background information, a formal analysis, and performance recommendation, all grouped in one single source, should find this study helpful and timesaving.

APPENDIX A

EXCERPT OF SAINT-SÆENS' OPUS 44, FIRST MOVEMENT

2

Fourth Concerto

Edited by
Isidor Philipp

I

Camille Saint-Saëns. Op. 44

Allegro moderato ♩ = 126

Piano I Solo

Piano II Orchestra

p

81967 x

Printed, MCMXLIV, by G. Schirmer, Inc.
Printed in the U. S. A.

APPENDIX B

RECITAL PROGRAMS OF SAINT-SAËNS
FROM 1887 TO 1920

These programs were selected from a compilation by George Kehler, *Piano in Concert*, vol 2 (Metuchen, NJ, & London: The Scarecrow Press, inc., 1982), pp. 1127 – 1129, which probably does not list all of Saint-Saëns' recital programs. These programs are displayed here because they substantiate Saint-Saëns' predilection for Chopin's music such as the *Barcarolle* and *Impromptu* (although which *Impromptu* is undetermined).

9392 / St. James's Hall, London / May 21, 1887

(assisted by M. Diaz Albertini, violin)

C. SAINT-SAËNS: Hymn to Victor Hugo (written for Orchestra and Choir, trans. for Piano-forte by the composer)
GABRIEL FAURE: Sonata for Piano and Violin
RAMEAU: Les Soupirs, Les Cyclopes, Les Tourbillons, Les Niais de Sologne (Air Varié)
C. SAINT-SAËNS: Trans. from Bach; Sonata for Piano and Violin; Allegro appassionato
CHOPIN: Barcarolle | Mazurka
BEETHOVEN: Andante, Polonaise
CHOPIN-SARASATE: Solo-Violin: "Nocturne," "Habanera"
GOUNOD-SAINT-SAËNS: Fantaisie ou Faust

9393 / Baltimore, Maryland / November, 1906

BACH: Italian Concerto; Prelude and Gigue
RAMEAU: Les Tourbillons, Les Cyclopes
GLUCK-SAINT-SAËNS: Caprice on Ballet Airs from "Alceste"
CHOPIN: Barcarolle
SAINT-SAËNS: Fragments of 1st Act "Samson and Dalila"
HAYDN-SAINT-SAËNS: Andante from Surprise Symphony
SAINT-SAËNS: Mignonne, Nonchalente, Langoureuse, Canariote, Waltzes; Quartette from "Henry VIII" (trans. by the composer)

9394 / Carnegie Hall, New York / November 27, 1906

BACH: Italian Concerto; Prelude and Gigue
RAMEAU: Les Tourbillons; Les Cyclopes
BEETHOVEN: Sonata, A♭, Op. 26
CHOPIN: Barcarolle
SAINT-SAËNS: Fragments of First Act, Samson & Dalila
HAYDN-SAINT-SAËNS: Andante, from Surprise Symphony
SAINT-SAËNS: Valse Mignonne; Valse Nonchalente; Valse Langoureuse; Valse Canariote; Quartet from Henry VIII, trans. by the composer

(Musical Courier; New York Mail; New York Post)

9395 / Plymouth Church (Orange Street), Brooklyn, New York / December 3, 1906

BEETHOVEN: Sonata, No. 2 in d, Op. 31, Adagio (C) from Sonata No. 1, Op. 31, Sonata No. 3 in E♭, Op. 31

CHOPIN: Impromptu, Etude

SCHUMANN: Waldscenen, Eintritt, Freundliche Landschaft, Jagd, Abschied
LISZT: Au Bord D'Une Source, Tarantelle
SAINT-SAËNS: Fragments of the 1st Act of Samson et Dalila, Chorus of Priestesses, Ballet, Air of Dalila, Fragments of Algerian Suite, Reverie à Beidah, Marche Française

9396 / Comtesse René de Béarn (Musée de Dieppe, Fond Saint-Saëns) / October 15, 1908

MOZART: Concerto c
SAINT-SAËNS: Psaume (Fragment) Inédit; Africa, Piano; Comtesse de Guitaut
BEETHOVEN: Concerto No. 1, Piano: Saint-Saëns
SAINT-SAËNS: Scherzo, Piano: Comtesse de Guitaut, Orgue: L'Auteur

9397 / Théâtre Municipal d'Oran / February 9, 1920

(avec le concours de Gaston Régis)

SAINT-SAËNS: Le Rouet d'Omphale (a deux pianos)

CHOPIN: Impromptu

BEETHOVEN: Adagio
SAINT-SAËNS: Menuet et Valse
GLINKA-LISZT: Marche Tcherkesse
SAINT-SAËNS: Scherzo (a deux pianos); Cyprès et Lauriers (a deux pianos)
RAMEAU: Les Tourbillons, Les Cyclopes
SAINT-SAËNS: Réverie à Blida, Marche Militaire, Fragments de la Suite Algérienne; Variations sur un thème de Beethoven (a deux pianos)

NOTES

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2. Harold Schönberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), 265.
3. Watson Lyle, *Camille Saint-Saëns: His Life and Art* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1923), 208.
4. Sabina Rartner, "A Cache of Saint-Saëns Autographs." *Notes* 40 (1984): 496 – 502.
5. Stephen Studd, *Saint-Saëns: A Critical Biography* (London: Cygnus Art, 1999), 75.
6. Donald Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis*, 12th ed. vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 90.
7. Michael Stegemann, *Camille Saint-Saëns and the French Solo Concerto from 1850 to 1920* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1984), 44 – 45.
8. "Dahabeah is an Arabic word [...] for a native passenger boat used on the Nile. The typical form is that of a barge-like house-boat provided with sails, resembling the painted galleys represented on the tombs of the Pharaohs." Source: "DAHABEAH," *LoveToKnow 1911 Online Encyclopedia*. © 2003, 2004 LoveToKnow. <<http://32.1911encyclopedia.org/D/DA/DAHABEAH.htm>>
9. Quoted in notes written by Maurice Emmanuel, Saint-Saëns Museum, Dieppe. Quoted in Sabina T. Ratner, *The Piano Works of Camille Saint-Saëns* (Ph.D. diss. University of Michigan, 1972), p.103.

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10. Michael Stegemann, *Camille Saint-Saëns and the French Solo Concerto from 1850 to 1920*. (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1984), 92.
11. See figures 18, 19.
12. Michael Roeder, *A History of the Concerto*. (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1994), 287.
13. See appendix A.
14. Franz Liszt, Letter 157, *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Marie zu Sayn-Wittgenstein*, translated and edited by Howard E. Hugo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 228.

15. Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music and Other Papers* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1957), 171.
16. Paul Pollei, "Lisztian Piano Virtuoso Style in the Piano Concerti of Camille Saint-Saëns." *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 7 (1980): 59 – 76.
17. Which *Impromptu* is undetermined in the original program; see copy of programs in appendix B.
18. George Kehler, *The Piano in Concert*. (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982), 1128 – 1129.
19. Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, 2d ed. (New York: Norton, 1979), 92.
20. Thomas Fenyo, *Piano Music of Bartók*. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1956), 67.

Chapter III

21. Record album *Camille Saint-Saëns Plays Saint-Saëns*. (Santa Monica, CA: Delta Music Inc, 1995), tracks 1 - 6. This album features audio recordings of piano-rolls previously recorded by Saint-Saëns. Also, "Saint-Saëns: Improvised Cadenza for Africa for Piano and Orchestra" (recorded in 1904), *Landmarks of Recorded Pianism*, vol. 1 (New York: I.P.A., 1977), side 1, track 4.
22. John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: a Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano*. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965), 296.
23. Rollin Smith, *Saint-Saëns and the Organ*. (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992), 182.
24. Robert Stevenson, "Saint-Saëns at San Francisco." *Inter-American Music Review* 10 (1988), 12.
25. See figure 22.
26. Joseph Banowetz, *The Pianist's Guide to Pedaling*. (Indiana University Press, 1985), 61.
27. Camille Saint-Saëns, *Outspoken Essays on Music* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1922), 122.
28. See figure 19.

Chapter IV

29. J. Prod'Homme, "Camille Saint-Saëns." *The Musical Quarterly* 8 (1922): 476.
30. D. Parker, "Camille Saint-Saëns: A Critical Estimate," *The Musical Quarterly* 5 (1919): 563, 564.

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