Piano Performance Dissertation

By

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DEDICATION

To Okjae Lee, Sungjoo Kim, Siwoo Kim, and Kwangjae Lee, my family in Seoul, Korea. And to my mentor of a lifetime, Alexander Toradze. I am forever grateful for your unconditional love and support.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

Three piano recitals were given in place of a written dissertation.

The first dissertation concert took place on April 27th, 2023, at Chelsea First United Methodist Church. The program featured the Piano Sonata Op. 2, No. 3 in C Major by Ludwig Van Beethoven and the Piano Sonata Op. 5, No. 3 in F Minor by Johannes Brahms.

The second concert was on November 21st, 2023, at Britton Recital Hall. The program featured Preludes Book 1, No. 7, "Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest" and Book 2, No. 12, "Feux d'artifice" by Claude Debussy; *Trois mouvements de Petrouchka* by Igor Stravinsky; Piano Sonata in B Minor S.178 by Franz Liszt.

The third concert, a lecture recital, focused on Sergei Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 9 in C Major, Op. 103. It was held on January 15th, 2024, at Britton Recital Hall. The lecture recital featured a brief biography of the composer, as well as the historical background of the work, followed by a discussion of the compositional methods used in each movement of the Ninth Piano Sonata.

Recital I Program

Piano Sonata Op. 2 No. 3 in C Major — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Allegro con brio

Adagio

Scherzo: Allegro

Allegro assai

Intermission

Piano Sonata Op. 5 No. 3 in F Minor — Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Allegro maestoso

Andante: Andante espressivo–Andante molto

Scherzo: Allegro energico

Intermezzo "*Rückblick*" [Remembrance]: Andante molto

Finale: Allegro moderato ma rubato

Recital I Program Notes

Siwon Kim

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata Op. 2 No. 3 in C Major (1795)

Allegro con brio

Adagio

Scherzo: Allegro

Allegro assai

Beethoven, who had just turned 22, moved from Bonn to Vienna in 1792 to be a pupil of the great composer and teacher Joseph Haydn. Beethoven's time in Vienna allowed him to immerse himself in the city's musical culture and establish connections with influential figures such as Count Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel von Waldstein, who is known as a dedicatee of 'Waldstein Sonata.'

At that time, Beethoven was a young, ambitious virtuoso who needed to prove himself to the world. Understandably, all three piano sonatas under Opus 2 consist of four movements, which was unusual during that time, hinting at the composer's aspiration towards composing Symphonies. Eventually, Beethoven brought the piano sonata genre up to one of the most prominent genres. Over time, his 32 piano sonatas evolved dramatically. One can observe the Classical era's legacy and the exploration of Romanticism through the progression of sonatas.

Piano Sonata Op. 2 No. 3 in C Major, composed between 1794 and 1795, is a significant work commonly considered Beethoven's earliest grand and virtuosic sonata. It is both the lengthiest

and the heaviest of the three sonatas under Opus 2; Beethoven dedicated this work to his teacher, Joseph Haydn.

The first movement opens with a famously awkward third trill passage in piano, followed by a brilliant outburst of octave passages. This movement is the most lengthy and technically challenging among all four movements; it is the lengthiest first movement in Beethoven's early piano Sonatas. The development section is full of harmony changes, and the quasi-cadenza section is inserted before returning to the recapitulation, featuring dramatic octaves and brilliant passagework.

In contrast to the energetic first movement, this slow second movement offers moments of introspection and lyricism. This movement resembles an opera: an opening of string quartet-like texture with a short, hesitant phrase alternates with a serene and sentimental aria-like section. The aria section presents long phrases in contrast to the other section and is filled with an emotional 'sigh' motive that features chromaticism. Beethoven's experiments with chromatic harmonies and modulations add depth and emotional richness to this movement.

The third movement is a playful scherzo movement. It showcases Beethoven's mastery of rhythm and humoristic effects. Its light-hearted character is conveyed through rapidly alternating dynamics, syncopated rhythms, and unexpected pauses. The contrasting trio section provides a moment of respite before the return of the energetic scherzo material.

The final Sonata Rondo movement is a technical brilliance and dramatic intensity whirlwind. It opens with an explosive fanfare-like theme that demands excellent agility from the pianist. Beethoven extensively explores different keys and textures, creating moments of tension and release throughout. The short chorale-esque development is grandiose and hymn-like and must have inspired Johannes Brahms, as his Piano Sonata No. 3 Op. 5 presents a section that greatly resembles it. The coda brings the sonata to a triumphant close with virtuosic flourishes.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Piano Sonata Op. 5 No. 3 in F Minor (1853)

Allegro maestoso

Andante: Andante espressivo–Andante molto

Scherzo: Allegro energico

Intermezzo "*Rückblick*" [Remembrance]: Andante molto

Finale: Allegro moderato ma rubato

Brahms' third Piano Sonata, created in 1853, is the composer's most extensive piano solo work and is easily referred to as one of the most successful masteries of combining Old and New. Around that time, the sonata form was treated as 'old fashion' as the character pieces arose as the mainstream genre, which suits the current romanticism very well. However, young Brahms put a free spirit of romanticism into the rigid classical form of sonata and created a masterpiece that greatly respects both old and new. The sonata has a non-traditional five-movement structure that showcases extreme chromaticism and thematic transformation.

This sonata is dedicated to Countess Ida von Hohenthal of Leipzig as a gesture of gratitude, who took Brahms' younger brother as a piano tutor in her household.

The first movement is orchestral in texture that resembles the symphonies, and like an orchestra overture, it is relatively short in length. It is very ambitious, referencing Brahms's idol, L.V. Beethoven. It opens with a broad leap covering almost the entire keyboard range as if announcing the composer's ambition to conquer the instrument. The famous fate motive derived from Beethoven's symphony is the primary tool driving this movement.

The beautiful second movement begins with the serene downward motion of two voices in A-flat Major. It ends with the majestic, magnificent orchestral coda in D-flat Major that evokes the image of the Sunrise after the precious and secretive lovers' affair. This movement was one Brahms played for Berlioz in Leipzig and for Clara Schumann when she was in deep sorrow for her husband's mental breakdown, which led to the tragic loss.

There is a poem by Otto Inkermann under the pseudonym C.O. Sternau on the top of the score that Brahms gave to his publisher and said, "It is not the direct source of the composition, but it will help to understand this movement."
In English, the poem goes:

"The evening dims, the moonlight shines,
There are two hearts united in love,
And embrace in rapture."

Indeed, this movement vividly delivers the poem's imagery of two lovers walking under the shining moon and stars, conversations, and consistently beating hearts with its voice placements, rhythmic features, and harmonies. This movement is over ten minutes long, making it a perfect standalone piece.

The third movement is an energetic F minor waltz with a meditative D-flat Major trio section in the middle. Here, Brahms pays his respects to a fellow romantic composer, F. Mendelssohn, by quoting his Piano Trio No. 2 finale movement in the opening. In the contrasting trio section, Brahms again brings back the fate motive.

The fourth movement begins with mirroring the second movement as if remembering the beautiful memories from the past. But, it does it in the minor key of F, not in the original key of Ab Major. This sadder and darker main theme of the second movement is accompanied by the fate motive. This movement is brief and controlled but very emotional; the lonely and bittersweet mood dominates it.

The fifth movement is a big rondo where all diverse ideas come together at the virtuosic and triumphant closing. The first episode after the opening refrain is essential as it is a musical cryptogram, “F-A-E.” It comes from the motto “*Frei Aber Einsem*.” [Free but lonely.] This motto comes from a violinist, Josef Johaim, who was Brahms' lifelong best friend; it resonates significantly with 19th-century romanticism. As to balance Old and New, Brahms inserts a short quotation from Haydn's “*Gott, earhalte Franz den Kaiser”* [God save the King] in this movement.

Brahms's expression of emotions is inward. As known, he was a very thoughtful and careful person and was always grounded. Thus, sometimes, his music may be complex to digest. But, this only makes his music so rewarding to study and understand as Brahms was highly self-critical and hated easy playing and easy composing.

Recital II Program

Préludes — Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Book 1, No. 7 *'Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest'*

[What the westwind has seen]

Book 2, No. 12 *'Feux d'artifice'*

[Fireworks]

Trois mouvements de Petrouchka — Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

I. *Danse Russe* [Russian Dance]

II. *Chez Petrouchka* [Petrushka's Room]

III. *La semaine grasse* [The Shrovetide Fair]

Intermission

Piano Sonata in B Minor S. 178 — Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Recital II Program Notes

Siwon Kim

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Préludes (1909–1913)

Book 1, No. 7 "*Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*"

[What the west wind has seen]

Book 2, No. 12 "*Feux d'artifice*"

[Fireworks]

Préludes by Claude Debussy showcases his distinct musical style and signifies a notable deviation from conventional structures and harmony. Created between 1909 and 1913, these preludes mirror the evolving cultural milieu of France in the early 20th century, characterized by emerging art movements like Impressionism that were acquiring increasing importance.

During the late 1800s, Impressionism surfaced as an art movement that focused on seizing ephemeral instances through light, color, and sensorial perceptions rather than exact depictions. It resulted in a shift away from rigid tonality towards abstract expressions of feelings or scenery within music. Debussy is widely recognized as the leading figure of Impressionist music, with his pieces - particularly the preludes - exemplifying musical ideals through their emphasis on atmosphere, intricate textures, and pioneering use of timbre and harmony. His combination of vivid imagery and emotions without conforming to established musical structures or tonalities aligns perfectly with Impressionism's core principles: a desire to capture evanescent moments beyond traditional limitations.

Although preludes had already been employed by notable composers, such as J. S. Bach and F. Chopin, before Debussy's composition of his collection, they were not a novel type. Nonetheless, unlike those preceding ones that adhered to rigid structural conventions like fugues or traditional forms, Debussy's preludes offered greater leeway for self-expression and exploration, which were aspects characteristic of the shifting artistic landscape during the late 19th century.

The characteristics of Debussy's Preludes are divergent from the preludes fashioned by composers such as J.S. Bach and F. Chopin due to their autonomous musical nature and unique individuality. While Bach's prelude themes primarily operated in ushering fugues or more extensive compositions, Debussy opted for exclusive standalone pieces that possess distinctive traits on their merit. Chopin's preludes adhere to classical structures and Romantic sentimentality, whereas Debussy seeks to depart from these conventions. His compositions typically forsake overtly defined forms to develop atmosphere and mood by exploring tone, color nuances, and harmonically dense language. Additionally, while Chopin highlights virtuosic keyboard techniques within his works, Debussy places greater emphasis on subtle expressions rather than technical skills when composing piano pieces.

Prelude Book 1, No. 7 depicts a stormy scene through an amalgamation of rich harmonies and intense dynamics. It effectively captures the essence of Romanticism while also hinting at the impressionistic elements that would later define Debussy's works. The composition commences with spooky pianissimo arpeggios in the low register as if mimicking the storm forming from afar. It develops into powerful octaves, mirroring wind gusts, followed by contrasting sections saturated in chromatic harmonies and dissonant chords. As such, this prelude remains entrenched in turbulence or tranquility as it unfolds into a narrative shaped by their constant interplay, evoking the tempestuous spirit inherent within many windy storm scenes.

Prelude Book 2, No. 12 features the composer's signature blend of tone-color and harmonic language, capturing the spectacle of a night sky ablaze with fireworks on the water on Bastille Day in a staggering fashion. One could hear the French national anthem at the very final moment of the work. With lightning-fast chromatic runs, twinkling arpeggios, and tumbling chords cascading down like fallout from an explosion, he brings to life a stunning sound painting filled

with brilliance and energy that demands virtuosic skill on the part of any pianist seeking to convey its impact accurately.

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Trois mouvements de Petrouchka (1921)

I. *Danse Russe* [Russian Dance]

II. *Chez Petrouchka* [Petrushka's Room]

III. *La semaine grasse* [The Shrovetide Fair]

Igor Stravinsky's *Trois Mouvements de Petrouchka* is an impressive adaptation of his ballet masterpiece, "Petrushka." With adeptness and precision, this transcription captures the fundamental aspects of the original production while offering a distinguishing vantage point on its musical and narrative motifs. Initially written for Sergei Diagilev's legendary Ballet Russes in 1911, Petrushka debuted in Paris on June 13th. It was choreographed by Michel Fokine and set designed through Alexandre Benois' efforts. The collaboration between Stravinsky and Diaghilev flourished, yielding numerous revolutionary ballet scores, including Firebird (1910), Petrushka (1911), and The Rite of Spring (1913). Through innovative choreography, Diaghilev challenged the limits of dance while offering Stravinsky chances to explore novel musical concepts. This partnership propelled both Stravinsky and Diaghilev to fame and forever changed the landscape of ballet and music.

The plot of Petrushka centers around three puppets who all become animated during St. Petersburg's yearly Shrovetide Fair celebrations event: Petrushka, a mischievous, sorrowful yet gentle and sweet traditional russian puppet who is madly into the Ballerina, the elegant figure, as well as proudly brutish Moor. Its storyline delves into underlying themes, such as a love interest conflicting with jealousy and an ongoing battle between societal restrictions and liberation. Undeniably, Petrushka is more than a mere fairy tale; it serves as a mirror, reflecting human

nature in all its complexity. The characters within the story embody various facets of humanity: Petrushka signifies fragility and yearning for authentic affection, and the Ballerina embodies elegance and loveliness. At the same time, the Moor represents hostility and control. Stravinsky employs their interactions and clashes to spotlight fundamental emotions that have universal resonance despite cultural differences among audiences.

Stravinsky transformed *Trois Mouvements de Petrouchka* from its initial orchestral score into a remarkable piano piece, displaying his supreme skills in composition and pianism. The transcription was accomplished between 1921–22 and features three distinct movements: *Danse russe* [Russian Dance], *Chez Petrouchka* [Petrushka's Room], and *La semaine grasse* [The Shrovetide Fair]. He condensed the original three acts into three separate movements.

With its spirited rhythms and folk motifs, the *Danse russe* movement vividly evokes the bustling energy of a fair. Stravinsky cleverly employs syncopation and uneven phrasing to convey an unpredictable quality that mirrors the frenzied nature of Russian dance.

In *Chez Petrouchka*, the second movement confronts Petrushka's inner world. Stravinsky proficiently portrays a melancholic reflection of his puppet existence by incorporating dissonant harmonies and angular melodies that illustrate vivid scenes within your mind's eye. The music elegantly shifts back and forth between introspective pauses to burst with frenetic energy– this truly captures an internal struggle for Petrushka as he yearns to be released from life as just another marionette on strings.

In *La Semaine grasse*, the final movement of Stravinsky's masterpiece, we witness a musical representation of the Shrovetide Fair. A medley of merry carnival melodies and dances blend to form an intricate tapestry of sentiments and sensations. This section boasts impressive virtuosic feats alongside elaborate rhythms and vivid harmonies– all of which capture the frenzied atmosphere brimming with energy during this festive period.

Stravinsky exhibits excellent skills in transforming his *Trois Mouvements de Petrouchka* from a full orchestral score to an extraordinary solo piano arrangement that retains its powerful and

intricate nature. The fact that he transcribed the composition himself is evidence of his profound knowledge of the instrument, highlighting how it can express magnificence, intensity, and nuance.

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Piano Sonata in B Minor, S. 178 (1853)

The Piano Sonata in B Minor, crafted by Franz Liszt during the years 1852 to 1853, holds a significant and influential place among compositions of its genre. Through this colossal creation, Liszt's proficiency in pianistic technique shines through while also demonstrating his capacity to construct an intensely expressive and theatrical musical storyline. During a phase of significant personal changes, Liszt created the Piano Sonata in B Minor, intending to challenge conventional norms and establish himself as a serious composer. Despite already gaining immense recognition across Europe as a virtuoso pianist, he sought to experiment with traditional forms. This Sonata exemplifies the intense emotions, heightened sense of drama, and individual expression that characterized Romanticism's era.

The Sonata's continuous 30-minute playtime showcases a seamless blend of individual movements merged under the umbrella of the sonata form – comprising exposition, development, and recapitulation. Liszt ingeniously created a nested structure within his composition by crafting an internal sonata that contributes to its distinctiveness while conserving thematic resources. The first page introduces three foundational motifs that evolve throughout the piece, providing ample material for subsequent variations.

While some analyses propose that the Sonata consists of four consecutive movements, without any pause between them, it is believed that a significant sonata form structure overlays these movements. However, determining the exact commencement and conclusion points of traditional development and recapitulation sections has been widely disputed among experts. Alternatively,

different interpretations suggest either a three-movement format accompanied by one or two expositions and recapitulations in a rotational fashion within each movement cycle.

Thematic transformation, the critical element of Liszt's composition style here, involves taking a melody or motif and modifying it in diverse ways throughout the entirety of the work. He expertly manipulates these themes with precision, rhythmically, and harmoniously to construct intense moments relieved by resolution.

At the core of this sonata lies a descending scale motif, the so-called “Pathetique” motif, played *sotto voce* with an ominous undertone. This haunting melody makes several appearances throughout the piece, including pivotal moments in its structure. Abruptly following it is a forceful “Coriolan” motif marked by octaves and followed closely by a “*Hammerschlag”* motif that is hammering loudly away on the left hand– establishing a dialogue between them, which builds to stirring heights until culminating into D Major's noble *Grandioso* material that is derived from “Cross” motif. Later, Liszt reimagines his initial hammering motif as luscious lyrics within another movement, *Andante sostenuto*, whose purpose focuses solely on spotlighting different themes from earlier segments– exhibiting thematic economy through quick progression for maximum effect all around the sonata’s recurrence. As we come full circle towards our end-goal recapitulation section, something more complex takes shape: fugatos driven skillfully using contrapuntal techniques bring progressively compressed versions, returning us once again back home where everything began anew.

All sections exemplify Classical forms, making this composition one of the earliest examples of double-function form. This musical structure incorporates two classical forms simultaneously, with one containing the other. As early as 1851, Liszt experimented with a non-programmatic "four-movements-in-one" format in *Grosses Konzertsolo* for piano. Published under the title *Concerto pathétique* in 1865 as a version arranged for two pianos, it showcases thematic connections to both sonata and later Faust Symphony by Liszt.

The programmatic nature of this sonata is a noteworthy feature, as Liszt implied its emotional themes by giving titles to certain sections upon completing the composition. These titles Liszt

used in his other compositions besides the sonata, like *Contrapunctus, Sinfonia, Recitative, Marche funèbre,* and *Choral*, provide interpretative clues without constraining listeners to a fixed storyline or plot line; instead, they are free to create their own narrative while experiencing the music.

The significance of Franz Liszt's Piano Sonata in B Minor transcends multiple facets of music history. One noteworthy attribute is its deviation from conventional classical formats, as it instead adopts a more fluid framework that anticipates forthcoming advancements like symphonic and tone poems. Such pioneering creativity permits Liszt to convey his emotional sentiments unreservedly while ensuring an interlinked musical progression throughout the piece. In addition, the sonata exhibits the pinnacle of Romantic piano playing, which requires remarkable technical proficiency from the musician. The prodigious obstacles it posed surpassed what was deemed attainable on the instrument during that era and motivated subsequent generations of pianists to venture into uncharted territories of creativity. Liszt's Piano Sonata in B minor is universally recognized as an iconic masterpiece of solo piano music, representing a cornerstone of Romantic-era composition due to its profound emotional depth and technical difficulty. Beyond being remembered for formal innovations, this piece bears historical significance as a testimony to the unparalleled genius of Franz Liszt.

Lecture Recital Script

What do you think of Prokofiev's music? Some may know him by his famous 'Peter and the Wolf.' Some may think of his ballet 'Romeo and Juliet,' or the Opera 'War and Peace.' If you're a pianist, you may think of the famous three 'War Sonatas.' I used to regard Prokofiev as a composer who didn't care much about romanticism or lyricism. Back then, I only liked the composer's percussiveness and powerful drive, sometimes described as "barbaric." The first Prokofiev work I put my hands down on was his Sixth Piano Sonata, famous for just that of Prokofiev. I loved playing that sonata.

That may be why his Ninth Piano Sonata didn't speak to me initially. This work is far from being barbaric or highly driven to resemble the War field like its precedents. At that time, The Ninth Piano Sonata came across as a strange, weak, and out-of-character work. But when I listened to this piece again after a couple of years, I immediately fell in love. It nearly paralyzed me with its beauty. I was fascinated by this new, other side of his music, which is very gentle and extraordinarily lyrical yet never banal or overly romanticized. It was almost like a religious experience. When Prokofiev's Ninth Piano Sonata finally showed me its beauty and power, I realized I had grown up. To paraphrase pianist Sviatoslav Richter's words on this work, "The more I play it, the more I love it."

The Ninth Piano Sonata may be the composer's least performed piano sonata, and there needs to be more information about it in public. I am proud to be on the journey of understanding this undiscovered, unabused treasure.

I wanted to know what and why this sonata was so different from the precedents. My study includes a composer's biography closely intertwined with his music. Also, Prokofev's unique musical and technical treatments shown in this work depart from traditional harmonic idioms.

Sergei Prokofiev was born on April 27, 1891, in a rural village in Sontsivka, now in Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine. His father, Sergei Alexeyvich Prokofiev, was an agronomist and estate manager, and his mother, Maryia Zitcova, was an enthusiastic piano lover and a good self-taught pianist with a classical taste. She was Prokofiev's first piano teacher who taught him Haydn and Mozrt's music and provided the musical atmosphere for her son. Young Prokofiev grew up listening to his mother practicing piano, and it was only natural for him to sit on the piano from a very early age. There is a well-known picture of nine-year-old Prokofiev sitting on the piano with his first Opera, "*Velikan*," [The Giant], and the manuscript of the first page can be found. The fact that a young little boy had the guts to compose an opera and titled it "The Giant" speaks volumes.

In 1902, through a family friend, Yuri Pomerantsev, Prokofiev met with Sergei Taneyev, who was Rachmaninov's and Scriabin's teacher. Taneyev immediately noticed the young boy's talent and recommended Reinhold Gliere as Prokofiev's tutor. Gliere spent the summers of 1902-1903 in Sontsivka with Prokofiev. They would work 8 hours per day every day, and specifically, Gliere trained him to write short pieces built into the structure of a cycle. And that ability to write multiple pieces simultaneously stayed with him ever since.

In the spring of 1903, Alexander Glazunov, who soon became the director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, advised Prokofiev to apply for entrance. During his study in the conservatory from 1904 to 1914, he studied harmony and counterpoint with Anatole Liadov, orchestration with Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, conducting with Nikolai Tcherepnin, who comes from a distinguished musical family in Russia, and piano with Anna Yessipova, who herself was a great pianist who attracted Tchikovky and Liszt's praise.

Prokofiev left Russia in 1918 as the Russian Revolution broke out in 1917. The years between 1918 and 1935 are the so-called "Foreign period" or "Emigrant period." His travel routes during this time included Japan, Canada, the United States, and France. Reading his diary entries during

this trip is fascinating, as they contain Prokofiev's candid responses and impressions of those foreign countries. In the latter two countries, he stayed the longest, and he eventually settled in Paris in 1923 until he returned to Moscow in 1936.

He enjoyed the popularity and the feeling of familiarity in his homeland for many years after his return. Still, as a Soviet Artist, he had to endure the constant threat of bureaucratic condemnation. In later years, he had to endure the continuous delays and cancellations of staging his works, the disappearance of his close friends, and the sentencing of his first wife, Lina Prokofieva, to eight years in a Siberian labor camp. His health rapidly declined as he had several strokes which he never fully recovered from. However, Prokofiev was still full of music and spirit till the very end of his life. Richter once visited Prokofiev in the hospital in 1948, and he saw Prokofiev still writing music in his hospital bed using small tissues and scraps that he hid under his pillow as doctors and nurses didn't let him write anything.

With a cruel twist, Prokofiev died on March 5, 1953, the same day as the official day given for Josef Stalin's death.

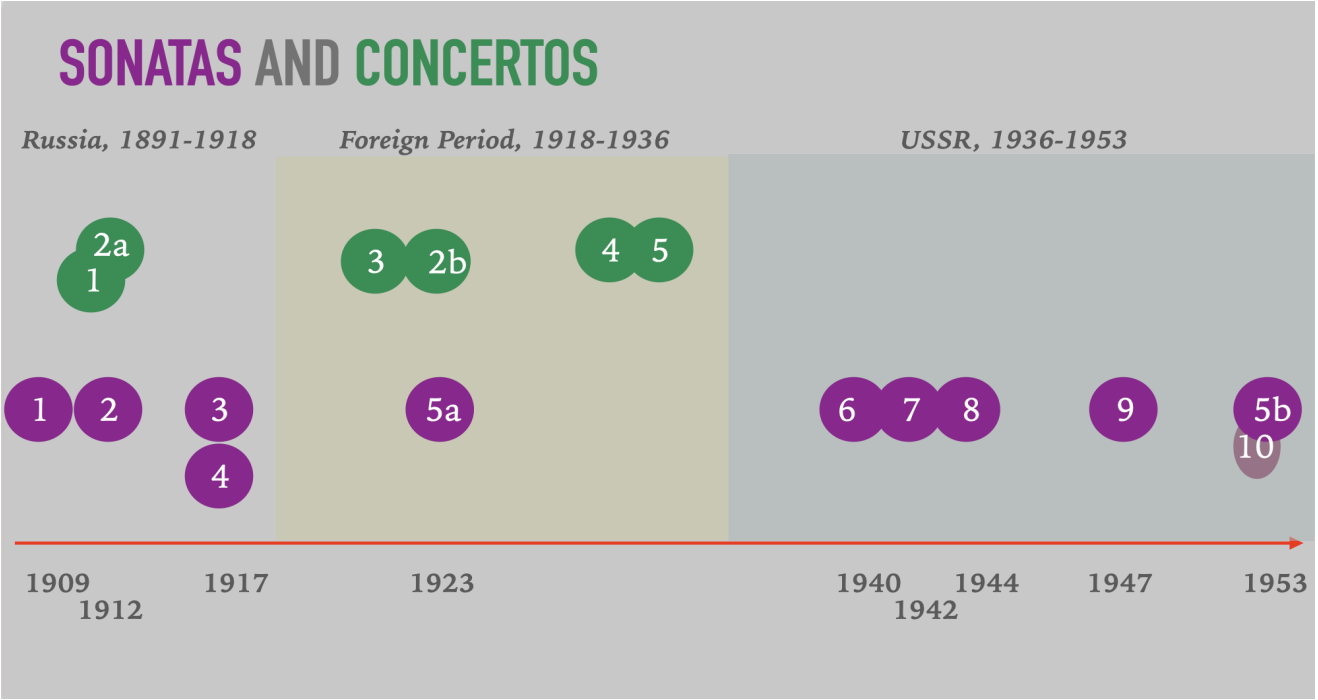


Figure 1. Timeline of Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas and Concertos

This chart made by Prof. Prolova-Walker at Gresham College in the UK summarizes the timeline of his piano sonatas and concertos. Prokofiev has already completed piano sonatas Nos. 1 through 4 before leaving Russia.

The first four sonatas are in the minor keys, and the later five are in the Major key. The early sonatas are rooted in a more classical aesthetic, understandably from the influence of his mother and teachers at school. In the last five, he created new harmonic and melodic effects without losing the integrity of the sonata form. One could sense the composer's search for simplicity and purity with the progression of the sonatas.

It cannot be ignored that in the late 1920s, Prokofiev was introduced to "Christian Science," which focused on healing, believing that reality is purely spiritual and the material world is an illusion. It is a legitimate speculation that the connection between "Christian Science" and Prokofiev's search for simplicity and purity in his music is not an accident. In Prokofiev's diary,

there are multiple entries about God and purity. It is not coincidental that Prokofiev has so many pieces written in C Major, including the Ninth Piano Sonata.

According to Grove Music Online's article "Prokofiev, Sergei," by D. Redepenning, Prokofiev explained the transition of his musical style during his career through five "Basic lines."

His childhood greatly influenced the Classical Line, and this line took a neoclassical form in sonatas and concertos. Compositions in this line imitate the 18th-century classics. *Gavottes*, the Classical Symphony No. 1, and part of the *Sinfonietta* belong to this line.

The modern line began with a meeting with Taneyev. Prokofiev started a search for his own harmonic language, which developed into a search for a language to express powerful emotions. Diabolic Suggestions, Sarcasms, Scythian Suites, *The Gambler, Seven they were Seven*, the Quintet, and the Symphony No. 2 identify as this line.

The *Toccata* or "Motor" line can be traced to Schumann's *Toccata,* which left a great impression on young Prokofiev. The repetitive intensity of the melodic figures is prominent in this line. *Toccata* op. 11, *Scherzo* op. 12, Piano Concerto No. 2 and No. 5 aligned with this line.

The lyrical line first appears as a thoughtful and meditative mood. This line is not always associated with the melody or the long melody. Autumnal Sketch, The Legend Op. 12, Violin Concerto No. 1, and *Tales of an Old Grandmother* belong to this line. There are two types of Prokofiev's lyrical materials. One is the contemplative, expansive melodies that frequently use wide intervals in considerable length. The second is intimate, simpler themes, sometimes related to Russian folk music. Prokofiev added, "As time went on, I gave more and more attention to this aspect of my work."

At the time, critics often referred to Prokofiev's music as "grotesque." The composer didn't like that word and strongly said he would prefer his music to be called "*Scherzo-ish*" in quality. Or Whimsicality, laughter, mockery. I want to say this quality, "Humor."

The Ninth Piano Sonata contains all these five aspects, in form and style, melodic and harmonic features, and mood, emphasized on lyrical lines with humor.

On the top of the Ninth Piano Sonata manuscript, it says "To Sviatoslav Richter," who was a dedicatee and premiered the work. I cannot ignore how similar his handwriting here is to the one in "The Giant."

The Ninth Piano Sonata was completed in 1947 in Nikolina Gora, right after World War II. It is the composer's last original piano work except for the short sketch of Piano Sonata No. 10. The Ninth Piano Sonata was premiered just two years before Prokofiev's passing and was published in 1955, two years after his passing. It is largely due to the Zhdanov doctrine on the music of the Soviet Union that claimed to be an "anti-formalism" campaign. Under this doctrine, many artists suffered its censorship, including Prokofiev and Shostakovich. Artists who failed to comply with the government's wishes risked persecution. This doctrine was in force until Stalin died in 1953.

A renowned Soviet musicologist, Israel Vladimirovich Nestyev, called the Ninth Piano Sonata "the Swansong in this Genre." My mentor, a world-renowned Prokofiev specialist, pianist Alexander Toradze, and the director of the historic Mariinsky Theatre, Valery Gergiev, once told me this sonata should be called "Farewell." I couldn't agree more.

There are two memories of Prokofiev's Ninth Piano Sonata written in Richter's memoir. The first one describes the moment when Prokofiev first introduced the work to him in the datcha in Nikolina Gora, and the second one depicts the moment of the premier of the sonata, which was on the eve of Prokofiev's sixtieth birthday. They show Richter's impression of the work, which significantly changed from being disappointed by its simplicity to loving it very much. And that transformation of the impression is just like mine.

While Prokofiev's Ninth Piano Sonata promotes simplicity and purity, the work has its twist and surprises. Indeed, It is less complex and technically challenging, especially compared to the previous three sonatas. However, it still has something that makes this piece mysterious and

captivating, sounding very "Prokofiev." I wanted to study the composer's tools used in this piece to identify those elements that make simple materials not so simple anymore.

With the help of a dissertation by Patricia Ruth Ashely from the University of Rochester, published in 1963, I've learned that Prokofiev uses these devices throughout the work. These are not traditional or customary in the sonata genre, so these should be identified as the vocabulary of the composer's own musical languages that he has been practicing.

- Cyclic treatment
- Terian or Tertiary harmony
- Polymodality, polychords, superimposed chords
- Chromatic harmony
- Creation of new chords through added notes
- Creation of new chords by chromatic motion of one or more lines against a pedal point.
- Parallelism
- Unexpected modulations to foreign and unusual keys
- Harmonies based on unusual scales

Cyclic treatment is the most unusual and unique feature used in this sonata. Each of the four sonata movements concludes with a quotation from the following movement, except the last movement, which finishes with a quotation from the very first movement. These are the end of the third movement and the beginning of the fourth.

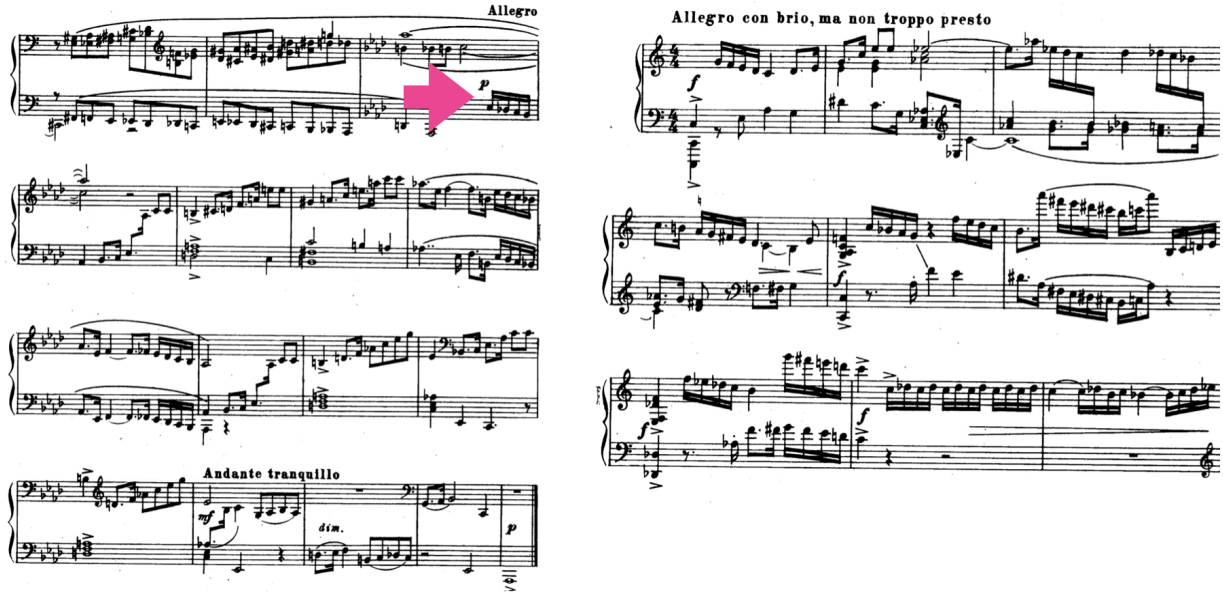


Figure 2. Cyclic treatment

It is apparitional as the quotations' tonality differs from the movements in which they appear and from the movements to which they actually belong. As a noble Russian music scholar, Simon Morrison, states, "The Music remembers the future; it is a circular set of reminiscences about that which has yet to occur." I encourage the audience to pay attention to the ending of each movement, grasp when a new, unexpected musical material appears, and remember it till the movement ahead begins.

The more I look into the work, the more I realize it is full of tertian or tertiary harmony. The word "Tertian" comes from a Latin word, *Tertianus*; it means “Of or concerning third.” In music theory, tertian describes any piece, chord, counterpoint, etc., constructed from the intervals of Major and Minor thirds. Simply, tertiary harmony is just the practice of moving chords up or down by thirds regardless of whether or not they belong in the same key together.

Among many non-functional harmonies, this is the most common in modern film music for its dramatic effect. Tertian harmony is useful as it allows for heavier use of chromaticism while maintaining common tones to keep things sounding smooth.

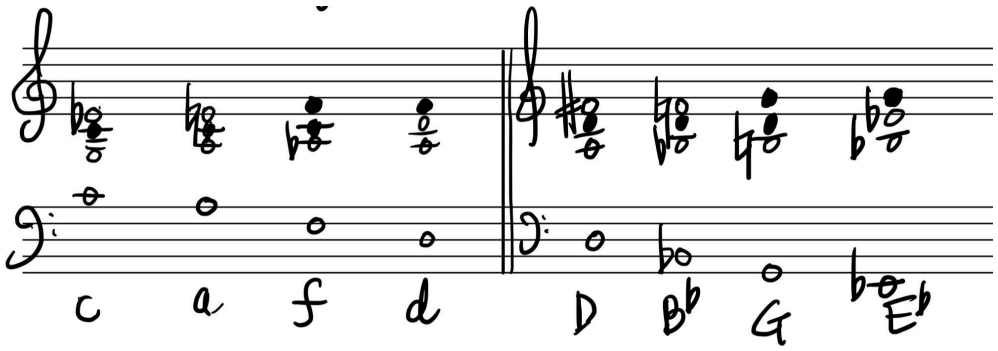


Figure 3. Tertiary harmony

Tertian progressions with minor triads sound dark and moody. One with Major triads sounds dramatic and “Awe-inspiring.”

This Sonata features chromaticism heavily without being so obvious via various arrangements. It enhances harmonic ambiguity and mysteriousness. Although this work is written in C Major, many places do not sound like it because Prokofiev abundantly uses a mixture of polychords and polymodality. It blurs the effect of Major or Minor modes and makes it difficult to identify the tonal core. Similarly, one can observe modulations and harmonies of unexpected or foreign keys.

The Ninth Piano Sonata consists of four movements:
I. Allegretto (3/2, C Major)
II. Allegro strepitoso (12/8, G Major)
III. Andante tranquillo (4/4, A-flat Major)
IV. Allegro con brio, ma non troppo presto (4/4, C Major)

They are in the order of “slow-fast-slow-fast” movements and could be seen as Prokofiev’s own take on Beethoven’s legacy, “fast-slow-fast-slow” sonata movements design.

The first movement opens with an expansive, tranquil theme in 3/2 meter, particularly diatonic. The main melody uses only the white keys except for only one chromatic passing tone. Even so, most of Prokofiev's "twisting" devices are already present, such as the added Major 7th in pink,

chromatic non-chord tones in blue, pedal points marked in green to create a new harmony, and the parallelism in purple.

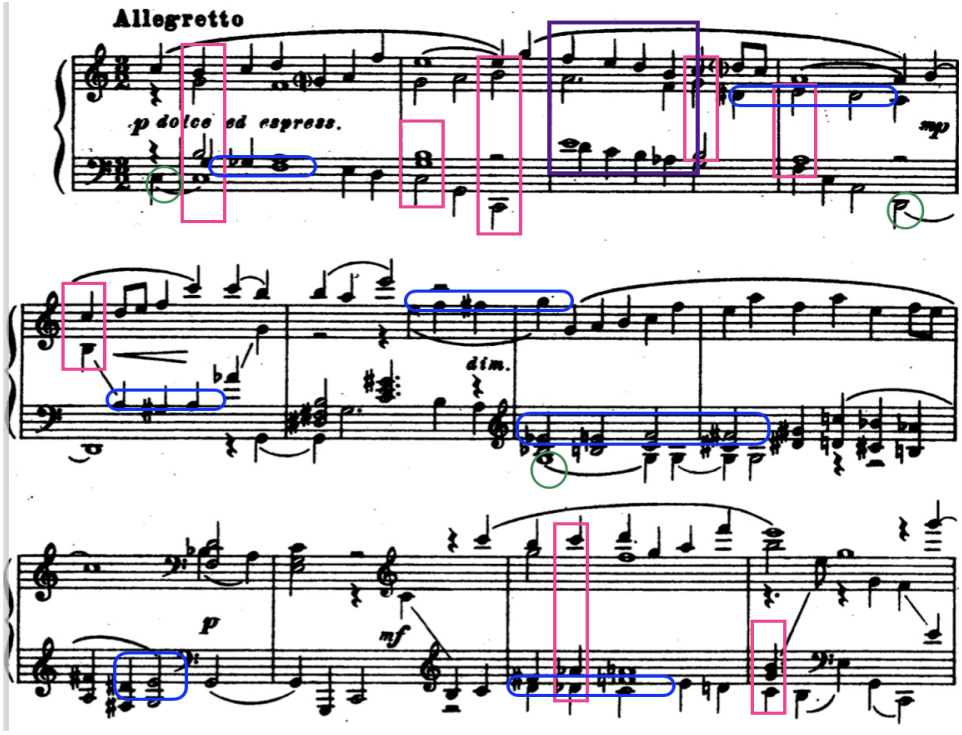


Figure 4. 1st mvt. Opening Section

It is important to mention the characteristics of Prokofiv's melody, which is shown very well in this opening. Prokofiev regarded himself as a melodist and focused very much on the originality of the melody. As beautiful as his melodies are, the large or unusual intervals and broad range make his melody difficult to sing. And as it does not rely on cliches, it is generally hard to remember. Also, it is hard to make sense without harmony. This opening melody may sound rather strange than beautiful when played alone, but it becomes completely a different story when played with everything on the score.

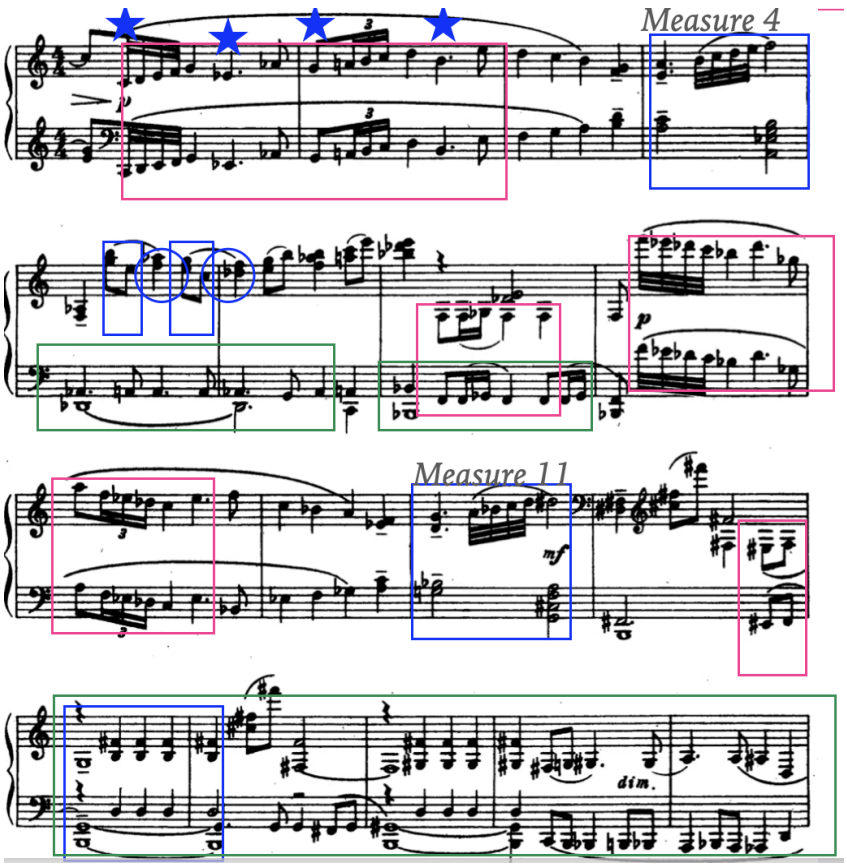


Figure 5. 1st mvt. Bridge Section

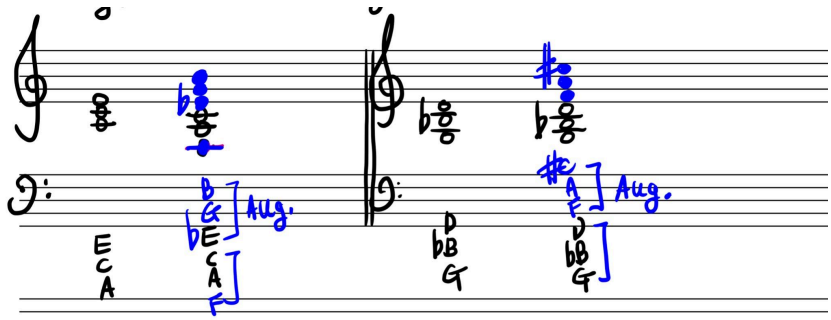
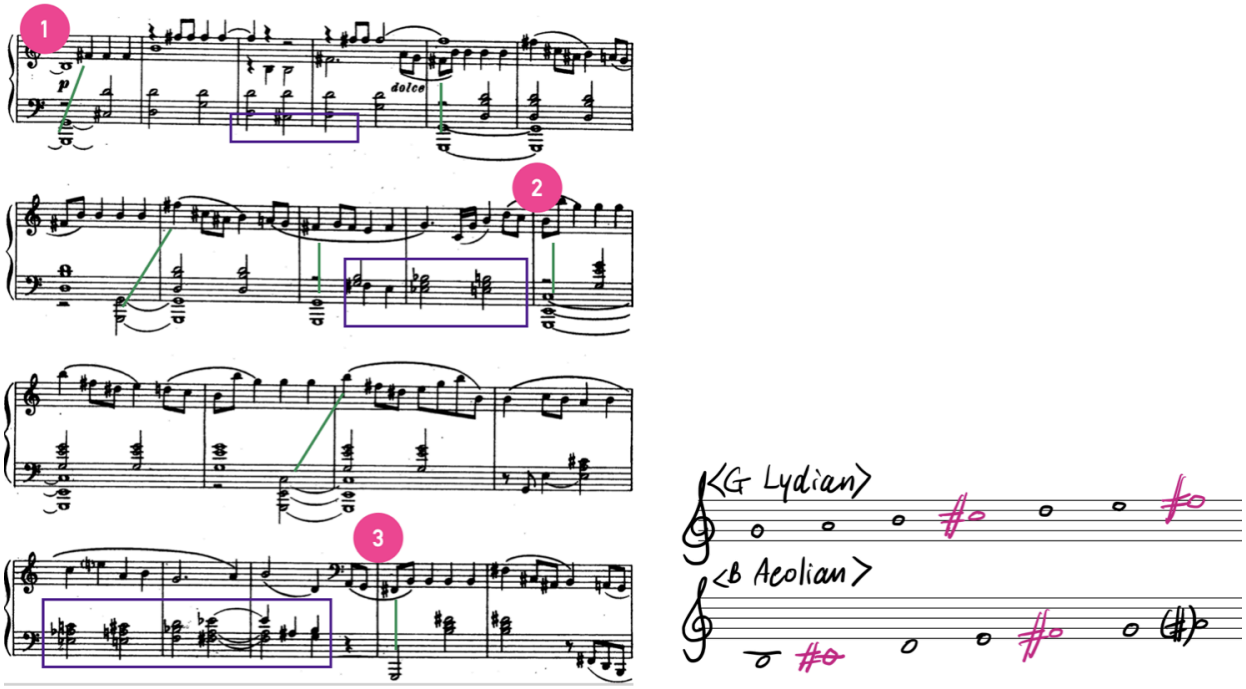


Figure 6 1st mvt. Bridge Section m.4, m.11, rearranged

The first movement bridge section begins with a simple octave double marked in pink, which is quite an unpianistic parallel move and heavily utilizes tertian harmony in blue marks with chromaticism differently from the opening section. Notes under stars (C, Eb, G, B) are in a tertiary relationship. Measures 4 and 11 provide interesting examples of tertiary harmony with the superimposed chords consisting of added augmented chords in each. The second line's squares and circles correspond to each other of the same shapes in the tertiary relationship, and

the last line's square is essentially a superimposed chord built with G Major and B Minor on top, a minor third apart. And, green squares show examples of chromatic motions against pedal tone, which creates foreign harmonies.

The second theme is constructed with a lullaby-like rocking melody with the bells. This theme is repeated three times in different registers; polytonality and polymodality are the key components here. It mixes G Major and B minor in numbers 1 and 3 and C Major and E minor in number 2. This G Major and B minor polymodal mixture is G Lydian and B Aeolian with the raised 7th note that shares C# and F# as common tones. Again, these keys are in tertian relationships.
It is also significant that every measure of the theme begins with the Major 7th interval of G-F# in the outer voices except for the measure with the rest in the bass, where G is remembered. Chromatic treatments are evident here as well as shown in purple squares.



(L) Figure. 7 1st mvt. 2nd Theme
(R) Figure. 8 G Lydian mode, B Aeolian mode with raised 7th

The closing section promotes heavy chromaticism on the pedal points, enhanced with parallelism. This section consists of two parts: the first part presents the repetitive dotted rhythm

that reappears in the later movements, and the second part provides a short bursting moment of drama.

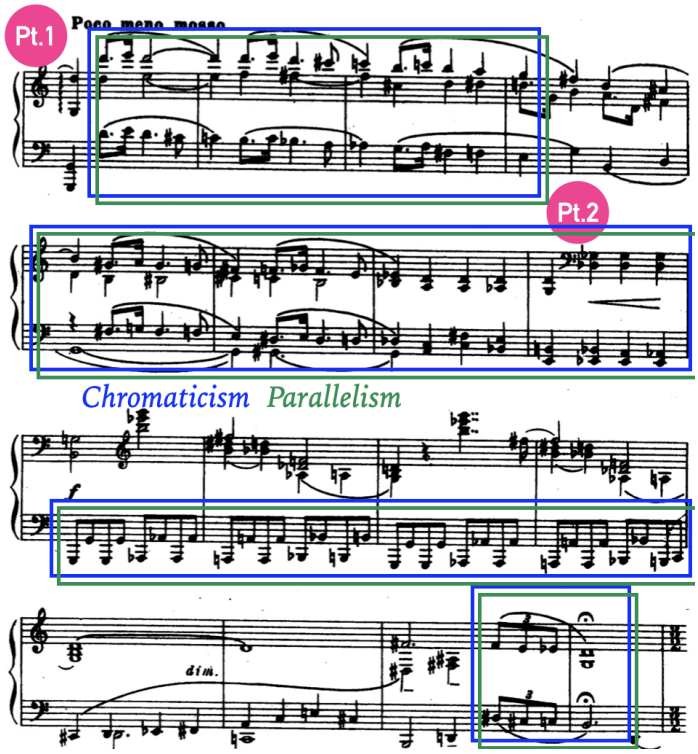


Figure 9. 1st mvt. Closing Section

We've looked at the exposition. The development and recapitulation of the movement follow as shown. The development is highly chromatic while it wanders around keys, range, and rhythms. In Recap, it is very unique and unconventional that the first theme in the recapitulation begins in the key of B Major. Traditionally, the recap would open up with the home key.

<Exposition>

Theme I (CM)- Bridge- Theme II (GM)- Closing

<Development>

Highly Chromatic

Modulatory fragmentation- elaboration on Theme I - Theme II- Closing Theme- Theme I

<Recapitulation>

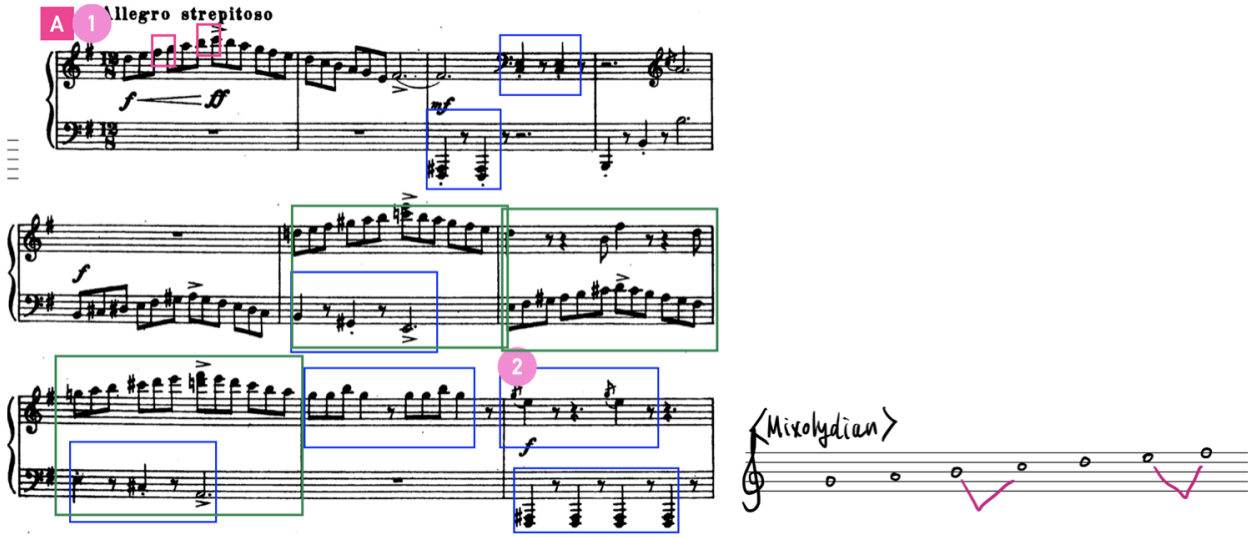
Theme I (BM, shortened)- Bridge (expanded)-Theme II (CM, return to the home key)-Concluding

Figure 10. 1st mvt. Structure

The second movement, *Allegro strepitoso* is in ABA' ternary form. The outer A parts utilize rapid triplets and dissonant interval characteristics, which the composer uses in most of his fast movements. *Strepitoso* means 'noisy, impetuous.' The use of tertian harmony is evident in this compact movement.

The A section contains two parts: the first part is the rapid triplet run and opens with D Mixolydian mode. This mode has semitones between 3rd- 4th and 6th- 7th notes. It is often considered jazzy. Although this movement has only one sharp, it succeeds well in having the effect of a D tonality at start and finish. One will hear a long-rising D Major scale at the end of the movement, in which the very last is made natural C.

The A section's second part is fairly chromatic, with a melody consisting of fast sputtering notes and sustained notes accompanied by soft, repeating chords. The conventional triads and tertian harmony is apparent (blue), creating foreign harmonies with unusual scales (green).



(L) *Figure 11. 2nd mvt. Opening Section*
(R) *Figure 12. Mixolydian mode*

The B section is clearly written in two voices that are conversing with each other: the upper voice is more vertical while using more or less chord tones. And the lower one proceeds in a much linear and chromatic way. This B section is harmonically fascinating for several reasons. First of all, the harmonic progression itself is very unexpected in this part, with the journey from

B minor and back to B minor. And the lower voice's chromatic treatment makes it even more unsettling.

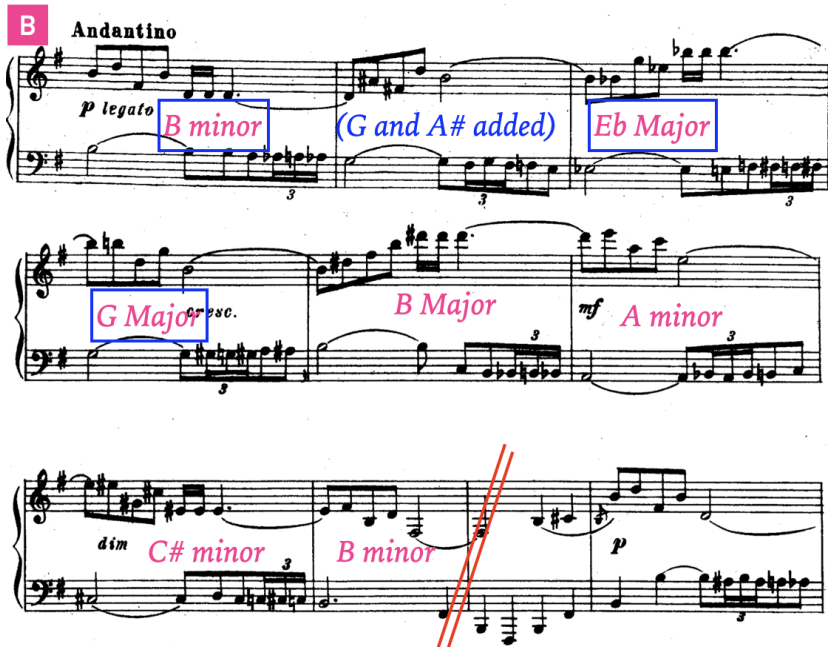


Figure 13. 2nd mvt. B Section

Especially, the first four measures show Prokofiev's mastery of tertian harmony and superimposed chords. The first measure is a simple B minor triad. Then, the thirds are added at each end, forming a Major-minor-augmented 9th chord on G in the second measure. The third measure makes it the Eb triad by adding Eb but dropping the 5th, 7th, and 9th notes. This chord with all consisting notes is a superimposed chord consisting of Eb Augmented, and D Augmented chords placed a minor third apart. To resolve into the G Major triad in the fourth measure, Eb moves down by a half-step and becomes D, two upper voices, F# and Bb (A#), move up by a half-step and become G and B. Nattily, the three untouched common tones are G Major chord tones.

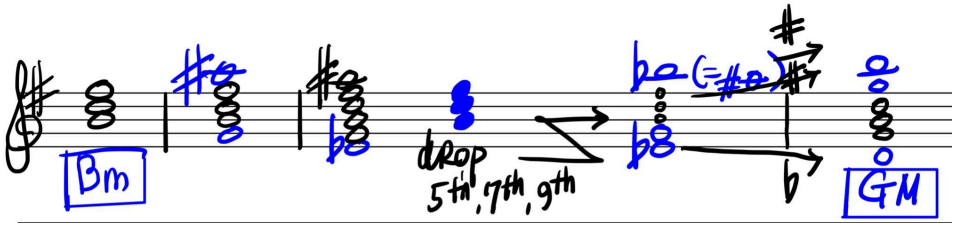


Figure 14. 2nd mvt. Beginning of B Section, respelled

The beautiful third movement is 4/4 meter, ABA'B'A" Rondo plus coda in warm Ab Major. If C Major is a "white key," Ab Major would be a "black key." The A section is elegant and noble and has a strong variation component. The main theme is reflective and meditative, evoking an image of a cello solo or lyrical ballet music.

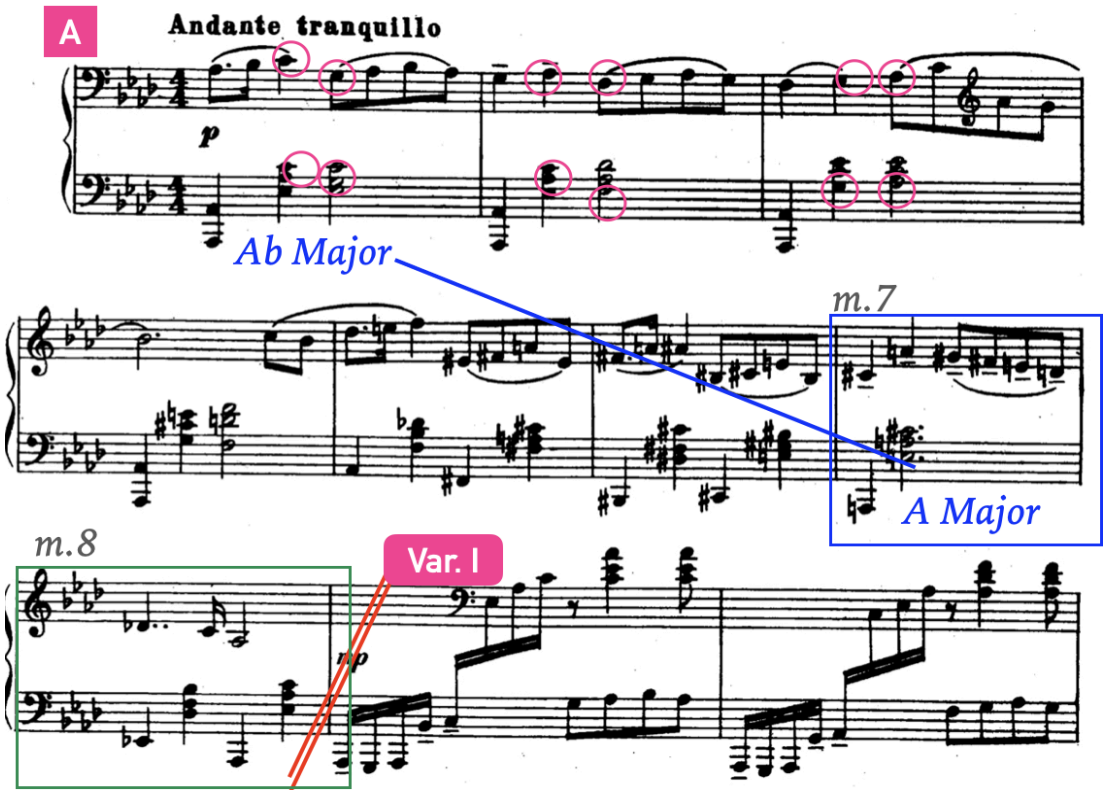


Figure 15. 3rd mvt. Opening Section

As beautiful as it is, the beginning is quite un-pianistic in its register as both hands play the same note together twice per measure for the first three measures. It makes it challenging to balance the melody and the accompaniment. Again, this melody shows the typical style of Prokofiev with its broad leaps and unconventional intervals- yet maintains its beauty perfectly. The broad upward leap of Minor sixth interval in the 7th measure signals the ending of the theme each time while creating a brief pause-like moment.

As this theme reoccurs, we will hear its endings, which is equivalent to measure 8, and it will become increasingly indecisive. Morrison states, and I agree, "It is as though the composer was

attempting to find a dignified, non-cliched way of fading out. But the music is not about silence, a marker of death. It is about the possibility of sounding forever."

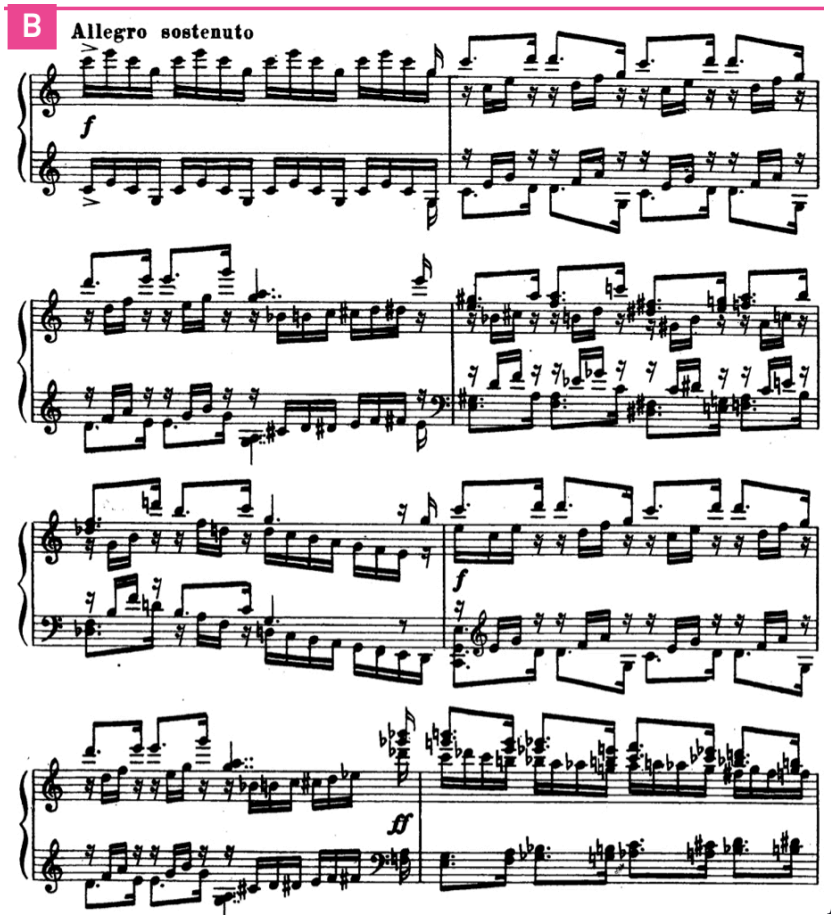


Figure 16. 3rd mvt. B Section

The contrasting B section is in C Major, again the key of tertian relationship with Ab Major. It is bright and exciting, built on the dotted rhythm from the previous section but it completely changed its character. If A section was a ballet or a slow dance in a ballroom, this B section is a fire alarm or a breaking news. One will hear motors and fanfare sounds in this section.

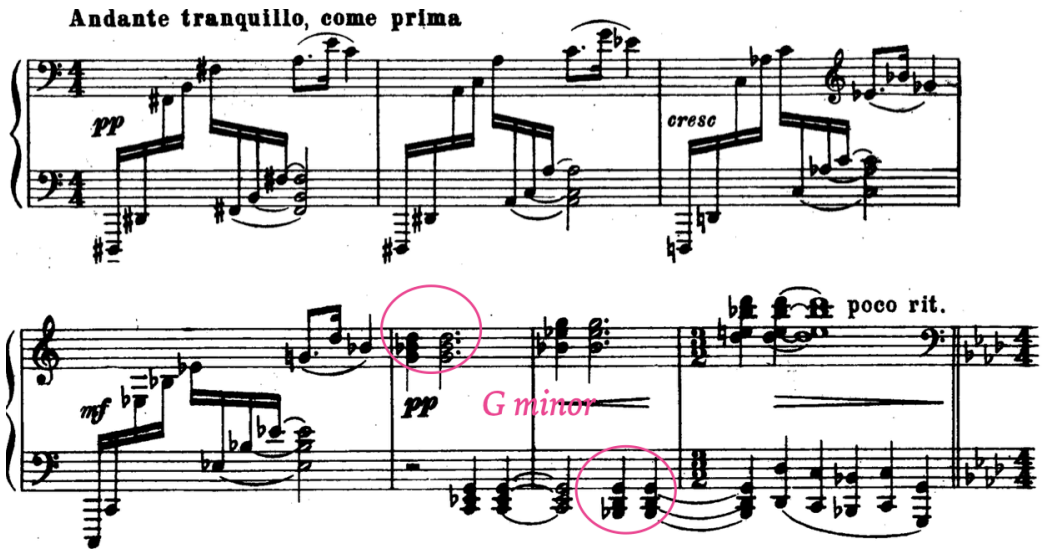


Figure 17. 3rd mvt. Transition to A' Section

The transition before returning to A' is one of my favorite moments in the piece. It is beautiful but so ambiguous that it is difficult to predict where it's going until the last moment. The tailing part lands on G Minor unexpectedly before returning to Ab Major, and the preparation to get to that G Minor is so smartly done.

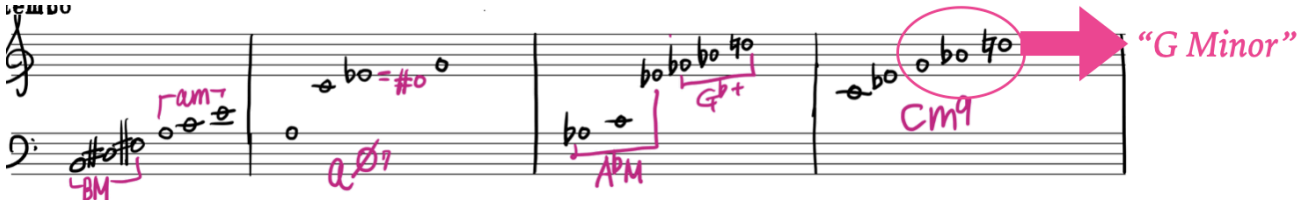


Figure 18. 3rd mvt. Transition to A' Section, respelled

It is filled with straightforward superimposed chords and tertian harmony. Again, they do not follow the traditional functional harmonic idioms; but sound fresh and ethereal. How this section gradually builds up and down and returns to the main theme is fascinating. Out of such simple triads and chord combinations, Prokofiev created a part that sounds so complex.

The fourth movement opens with a pleasant, light-hearted theme resembling a fairy-tale adventure, as if Prokofiev is telling a story to his past self. In the ending section, the music brings back the first opening theme of the sonata. This particular treatment completes the whole circle of the sonata and, simultaneously, evokes the vivid image of an aged Prokofiev looking back to the beautiful memories from the past. Or is he looking forward to that peaceful, transcendent world? We could only leave it up to our imagination.

Sonata-Rondo movement: A-B-A-C-A-B-A (Coda)

Exposition Theme I	Theme II	Development I - New material	Recapitulation I	II	Coda I
A	B	A-C	A	B	A
CM (I) *Bridge*	GM (V)	CM(I)- *B+bridge* *Transition* EbM(bIII)	CM(I) *Bridge*	CM(I) *Develop.*	1st mvnt I CM (I)

Figure 19. 4th mvt. Structure

As shown in the chart above, the fourth movement is in the Sonata-Rondo movement, where the third return of the first theme serves a development function, and the fourth return, is recapitulation.

This movement extensively applies sequential figures and parallel motion, including occasional melodic doubling and conventional triads. While this movement bears a reasonably noticeable formal structure and tonal design, the chromatic treatments are evident all over it, especially in the transition and developmental sections.

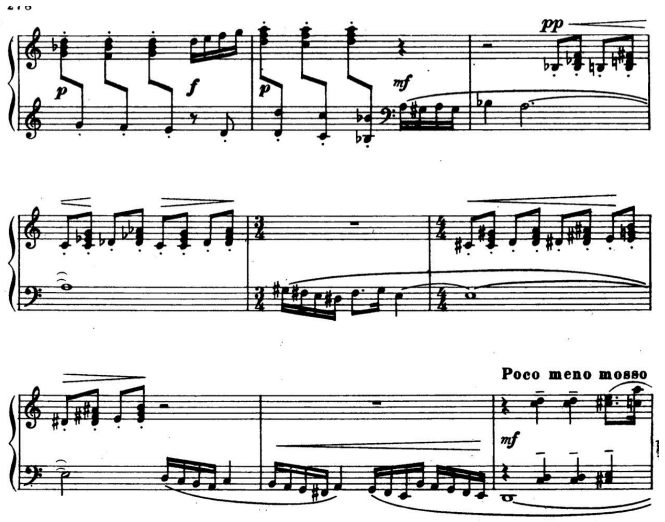


Figure 20. 4th mvt. Bridge Section

Figure 20 is from the bridge section. I chose this part to show the use of conventional triads twisted with chromatic treatments and sequential figures. These repetitive fragments of writing are present throughout the whole movement.

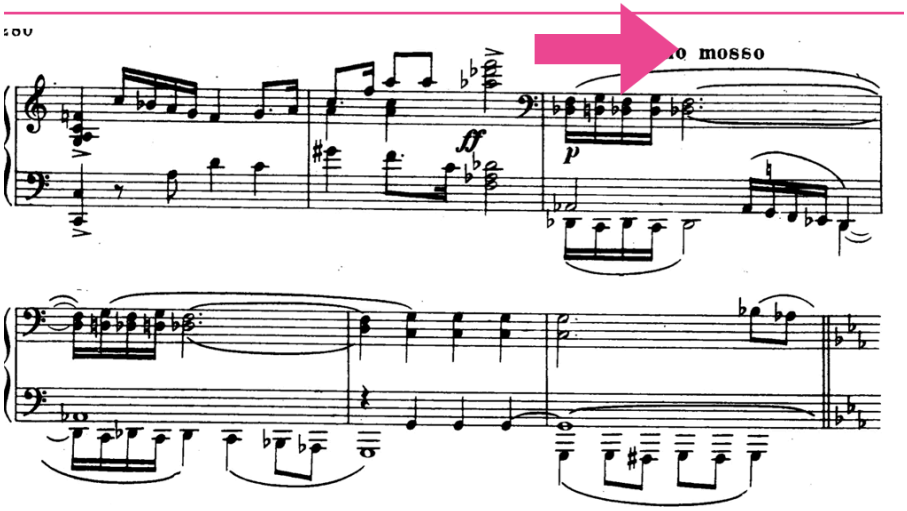


Figure 21. 4th mvt. Beginning of Transition

Figure 21 is the beginning of the transition into the new material, C Section in E-flat Major in the development. It shows the heavy chromaticism in an unusual way of repeating the minor 2nd intervals, and long sustained notes serve the pedal point function to enhance the ambiguity.

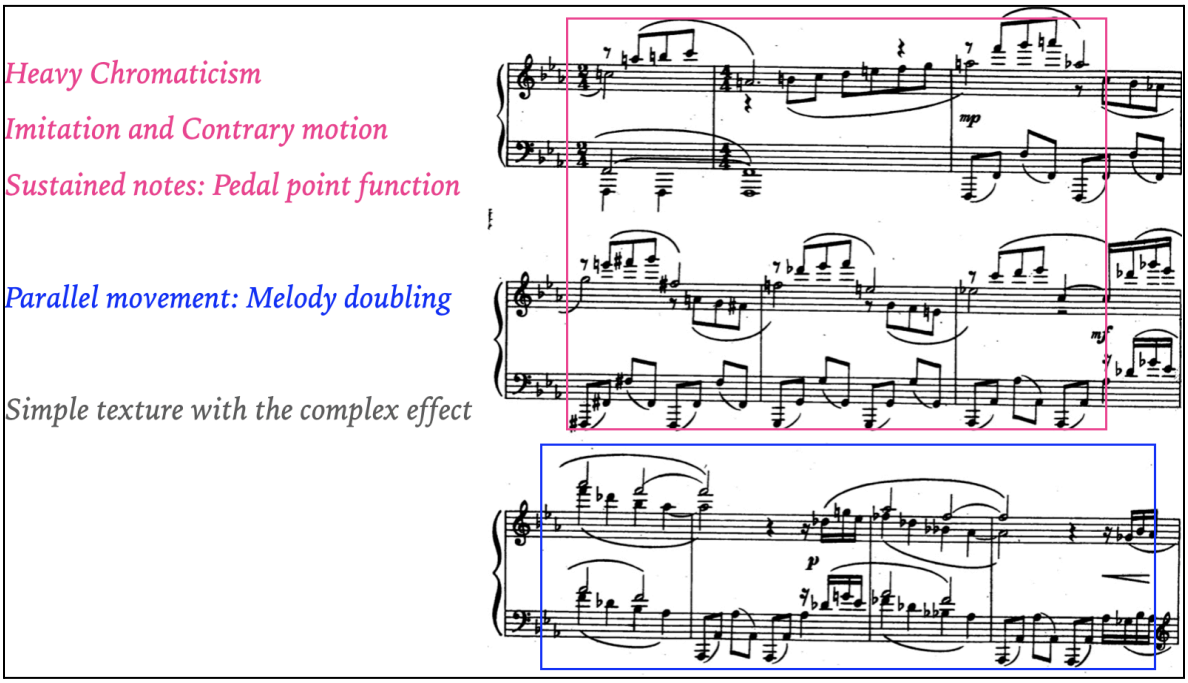


Figure 22. 4th mvt. Development Section

Figure 22 shows the later part of the development. Chromaticism is observed in multiple voices through imitation and contrary motion and sustained notes in the middle.

Parallel movement via doubled melody can also be observed. It is, again, relatively simple in rhythm and texture, but Prokofiev's treatments make it mysterious and complex.

The ending of this sonata is one of the most melancholic and magical endings I've witnessed. I see the image of ascending into Utopia, which could be a heavenly place—or, rather, a sad realization of the lost dreams and memories from the past.

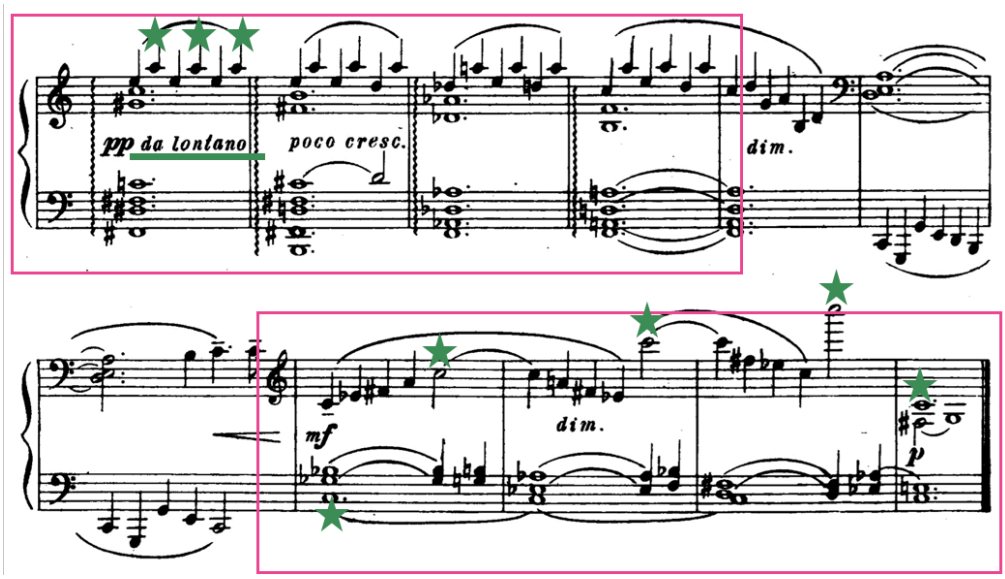


Figure 23. 4th mvt. Ending Section

Figure 23 shows the ending of the sonata. I've rearranged the first four measures of *Figure 23* in *Figure 24* to show their tertian relationships. I've omitted the recurrent upper A as I see it as an added note for a particular effect, not part of the main harmony stream.

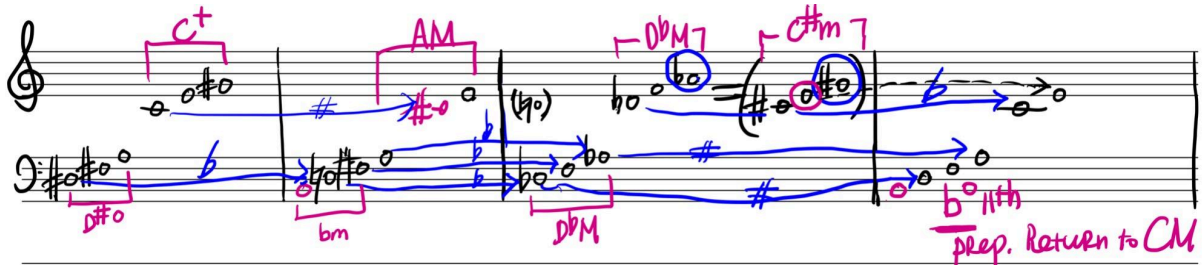


Figure 24 4th mvt. Ending Section respelled (1)

The first measure is a superimposed chord consisting of a D# Diminished chord and a C Augmented chord. In the second measure, a lower third, B, is added on the bottom while D# moves down and C moves up a half step to become D natural and C#. G# is omitted. So, the second measure becomes the superimposed chord built with B Minor and A Major.

In the third measure, the bottom B is dropped, and D, F#, and A move down by a half step, forming a Db Major chord. Meanwhile, the upper chord could be seen as Db Major or implied C# Minor with the added E natural note. D natural in this measure functions as a passing tone emphasizing the chromaticism.

At the fourth measure, B on the bottom is added back on, and Db and Ab move a half step up as that passing tone D arrives at C on the upper voice. This fourth measure is essentially a B -Diminished 11th chord, which prepares the return to a home key of C Major.

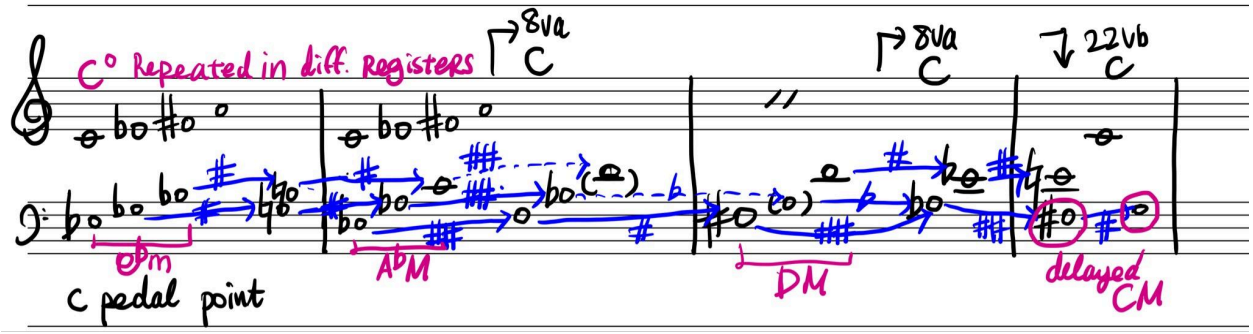


Figure 25. 4th mvt. Ending respelled (2)

Most easily noticeable in the last four measures of the sonata is that a note, C, is sustained as a pedal point on the bottom and emphasized on the right hand in multiple registers, creating a ringing effect. I've rearranged the last four measures of the sonata in *Figure 25* to see them in their closest distance from each other.

While the right hand repeats the C Diminished 7th chord, the left hand moves closely to make its way to the home key of C Major. The progression of this ending again proves Prokofiev's genius and his search for simplicity and purity in his music. It is crucial not only that the harmonic progression is unique and hard to predict but also that the arrival of C Major is only

accomplished at the very last note of the whole piece with the simplest triad. Also, in the course of rearrangement, I realized its rising quality clearly that was subtly nuanced in the composer's writing.

The last apparent tertian relationship in the sonata is how A keeps ringing at the beginning of the '*da lontano',* and that bell changes to a note of thirds higher, C at the end. '*Da lontano'* means "From afar" and is only appropriate for such an ending.

Throughout my study of the piece, the constant realization I encountered was how Prokofiev plays with irony and sarcasm. This sonata, out of all the things, represents that aspect perfectly with a persistent contrast of simplicity and complexity.

There is a difference between the purity from naivete and the purity from wisdom. Prokofiev's Ninth Piano Sonata perfectly represents the wise man's longing for purity.

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