

**The Development of the  
Russian Piano Concerto in the  
Nineteenth Century**

Jeremy Paul Norris

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Music

1988 December

**The Development of the Russian Piano Concerto  
in the Nineteenth Century**

Jeremy Paul Norris

The Russian piano concerto could not have had more inauspicious beginnings. Unlike the symphonic poem (and, indirectly, the symphony) - genres for which Glinka, the so-called 'Father of Russian Music', provided an invaluable model: 'Well? It's all in "Kamarinskaya", just as the whole oak is in the acorn' to quote Tchaikovsky - the Russian piano concerto had no such indigenous prototype. All that existed to inspire would-be concerto composers were a handful of inferior pot-pourris and variations for piano and orchestra and a negligible concerto by Villoing dating from the 1830s. Rubinstein's five concertos certainly offered something more substantial, as Tchaikovsky acknowledged in his First Concerto, but by this time the century was approaching its final quarter.

This absence of a prototype is reflected in all aspects of Russian concerto composition. Most Russian concertos lean perceptibly on the stylistic features of Western European composers and several can be justly accused of plagiarism. Furthermore, Russian composers faced formidable problems concerning the structural organization of their concertos, a factor which contributed to the inability of several, including Balakirev and Taneyev, to complete their works. Even Tchaikovsky encountered difficulties which he was not always able to overcome.

The most successful Russian piano concertos of the nineteenth century, Tchaikovsky's No.1 in B flat minor, Rimsky-Korsakov's Concerto in C sharp minor and Balakirev's Concerto in E flat, returned

to indigenous sources of inspiration: Russian folk song and Russian orthodox chant. As characteristic of nationalist works in general, their contribution to the development of the piano concerto was not profound; nevertheless, they represent a valuable, if numerically small, addition to the repertory, and laid the foundations of a twentieth-century school of concerto composition, headed by Rachmaninov and Prokofiev, of unparalleled brilliance and virtuosity.

## List of Works

### Introduction

Dimitry Bortnyansky: Sinfonia Concertante (1790)

Alexander Villoing: Piano Concerto in C minor Op.4 (183?)

[The Introduction also contains passing references to concerto-type works that are lost or have remained in manuscript.]

### Part One: The Piano Concertos of Anton Rubinstein

Concertos: No.1 in E minor Op.25 (1850); No.2 in F major Op.35 (1851); No.3 in G major Op.45 (1853-4); No.4 in D minor Op.70 (1864); No.5 in E flat major Op.94 (1874).

Miscellaneous works for piano and orchestra: Fantasy in C major Op.84 (1869); Russian Capriccio in C minor Op.102 (1878); Concertstück in A flat major Op.113 (1889).

### Part Two: The Piano Concertos of the Nationalists and the Eclectics

Mily Balakirev: 'Grande Fantaisie' on Russian Folk-songs for piano and orchestra Op.4 (1852); Concerto movement in F sharp minor 'Op.1' (1855-6); Piano Concerto in E flat major (1861-2, 1906-9, completed by Lyapunov).

Sergey Taneyev: Piano Concerto in E flat major (1876, unfinished).

Anton Arensky: Piano Concerto in F minor Op.2 (1881-2); 'Fantasy on themes of I. T. Ryabinin' for piano and orchestra Op.48 (1892).

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov: Piano Concerto in C sharp minor Op.38 (1882-3).

Sergey Lyapunov: Piano Concerto in E flat minor Op.4 (1888-90).

Sergey Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto in C minor (sketches) (1889); Piano Concerto in F sharp minor Op.1 (1891).

Alexander Scriabin: Piano Concerto in F sharp minor Op.20 (1896-7).

(List of Works continued)

Part Three: The Piano Concertos of Peter Tchaikovsky

Concertos: No.1 in B flat minor Op.23 (1874-5); No.2 in G major Op.44 (1879-80); No.3 in E flat major (in one movement) (1893).

Miscellaneous works for piano and orchestra: Concert Fantasia Op.56 (1884); Andante and Finale Op.79 (1893, orchestrated by Taneyev).

## Introduction

The earliest examples of works designated 'piano concerto' to be produced by Russians date from the late eighteenth century and were specifically composed for the palaces of the aristocracy and the Imperial court. They were invariably of chamber dimensions, despite their generic title, and were predominantly derivative in style, leaning heavily on French 'opéra comique', Italian 'opera buffa e seria' and early German classical music. Though no actual piano concerto has survived from this period, it is all too clear from related works that this stylistic eclecticism was not solely due to the desire to satisfy the musical whims and tastes of the aristocracy. For many years Russian composers, lacking a tradition of their own, considered it necessary to travel abroad to study contemporary Western European musical trends. Indeed, this became almost a tradition in itself; Dmitry Stepanovich Bortnyansky (1751-1825) lived in Italy for ten years (1769-79) and studied with Baldassare Galuppi, Daniel Nikitich Kashin (1770-1841), travelled to Bessarabia to work with Giuseppe Sarti in 1778; and later, Glinka, as is well known, spent three years in Italy (1830-33) where he studied with Francesco Basili in Milan.

Most Russian composers, however, learnt their craft by imitating the imported music, which for both geographical and cultural reasons was already a generation behind the times. Needless to say, the majority of these early Russian compositions are little more than pale imitations of already obsolete art forms. Nevertheless, a few reveal some degree of musical individuality, if not originality, and one or two even hint at the emergence of a growing national character.

Inevitably however, the employment of folk song - more often than not, merely its most superficial characteristics - was usually primitive in the extreme.

Whether Bortnyansky incorporated folk song elements in his piano concerto - probably the first piano concerto composed by a Russian - is impossible to determine as the score has never come to light. However, according to Gerald Seaman,

in all probability it resembled the 'Concert Symphony' [Sinfonia Concertante] written by him in 1790 and took the form of a Sextet (1) in which the leading part was played by a 'fortepiano organise' i.e. a piano equipped with organ registers. (2)

If this is the case, then a fairly accurate idea of the style and content of the lost concerto can be obtained by perusing, if not the concerto itself, the closely related 'Sinfonia Concertante'.

The 'Sinfonia Concertante', like its sister work, the Quintet in C (for piano, harp, violin, viola da gamba and cello, composed in 1787), dates from a period when Bortnyansky was employed as court Kapellmeister in St Petersburg between 1780 and 1796. It was composed for performance at the palaces of Gatchina and Pavlorsk and was dedicated to 'son Altresse impériale Madame La Grande Duchesse de Russie par D. Bortniansky 1790'<sup>3</sup> and scored for 'Le Fortepiano Organisée, L'Arpe, deux violons, Viola da gamba, Basson et Violoncelle'. Noticeably eclectic in style, the 'Sinfonia Concertante' represents a skilful blend of elements, principally melodic, derived from Italian opera 'buffa' and features of early German Classical

1. It is, in fact, a Septet.
2. Gerald Seaman, 'The Rise of Russian Piano Music', The Music Review, 27 (August 1966), p.180.
3. According to the inscription on the manuscript, cited in Orcherki po istorii Russkoi Muzyki, 1790-1825, M. S. Druzin and Y. V. Keldysh (Leningrad, 1956), p. 309.

music. The Italian influence is evident in the delicately scored 'Allegro maestoso' first movement, the thematic material of which is predominantly structured around the repetition of short rhythmic motifs alternating with variants:

Ex. 1

(a) 1st subject

(b) 2nd subject

Though hardly developed in a conventional sense, these melodic phrases are employed with a degree of technical proficiency rivalling that of Bortnyansky's teacher Galuppi, and surpasses all future Russian instrumental writing until the chamber works of Alyabyev and Glinka. Curiously enough, in common with the first truly great Russian piano concerto, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1 in B flat minor, Bortnyansky's slim, elegant wisp of a work incorporates a French folk song in its thematic material - 'Dodo, l'enfant do, l'enfant dormira bientôt'. It is first announced by the piano in the closing section of the first movement's exposition, and rises to prominence in the development and coda where it is subjected to some degree of elaboration (see Ex.1b). More than a century later, Debussy based the opening and closing sections of his sparkling piano work 'Jardin sous la pluie' (from 'Estampes') on this folk song, and like Bortnyansky, exploited the tune in both major and minor tonalities.



Compared to the first, the second movement ('Larghetto') is less inspired thematically and less adventurous from a textural point of view. The somewhat four-square elegiac theme (Ex.2) tends to pall after a while and though the more involved middle section, heralded by an attractive bassoon solo, recaptures to a certain extent the listener's interest, the movement lacks sufficient contrast to be entirely satisfactory. Of the three movements, the 'Larghetto' is most 'Italian' in style, and this is evident in the vaguely 'siciliano' character of its opening:

Ex. 2



The 'Allegretto' finale of the 'Sinfonia Concertante' is in Rondo form, and, characteristically, is lighter, more vivacious and generally less complex than the preceding two movements. Although the Russian musicologist Yury Keldysh considers its themes reminiscent of Ukrainian folk dance (Bortnyansky was, in fact, Ukrainian), and draws attention to the similarity between the principal theme (Ex.3a) and the refrain from the first aria from Bortnyansky's 'nationalist' opera 'Sin - sopyenyk' ('The rival son') (Ex. 3b)<sup>4</sup>:

4. Yury Keldysh, Istoriya russkoy muzyki - chast pyevaya (Moscow, 1948), p.424.

## Ex. 3

(a) *Allegretto* *Sinfonia Concertante*

(b) *Andantino* *'Sin - sopyenyk'*

the overall impression suggests more the influence of German classical music, in particular, Mozart's 'Divertimenti'.

Despite being of chamber dimensions, the mildly virtuosic interplay between the first violin, bassoon and piano (representing the 'Concertante') adequately justifies the generic title 'Sinfonia Concertante'. Furthermore, the piano writing is effective without being obtrusive and the work as a whole is commendable for the delicacy of its scoring and the genuine lyricism of its leading thematic ideas.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, a slightly more substantial form of piano concerto emerged; significantly coinciding with the establishment of public concerts and, following the relaxation of culturally repressive measures initiated during the reign of Alexander I, a growth in musical activity at all social levels. Though music continued for a time to be centred around the palaces of St Petersburg and Moscow, serf orchestras began to be set up on private estates and music salons became increasingly fashionable in the cities. Among the lower echelons of Russian society, home music-making rapidly established itself as a popular pastime and was further stimulated by a growth in publications such as the journals Severnaya arpa (Northern Harp) and Zhurnal otechestvennoy muzyki (Journal of National Music - published by D. Kashin between 1806 and

1807). More importantly, the appearance of musical albums and 'Almanacs', containing a wide variety of contemporary Russian composition, brought music into the home and encouraged the formation of ensembles consisting in the main of violin, piano, harp, voice and klavieroobraznye-gusli (piano-gusli). Song, whether in its pure form or in popular instrumental arrangements, in particular, variations, eventually dominated all other forms of music and was to have a profound influence on the structure and musical character of early Russian composition; as Boris Asafeyev noted:

There are few recollections of that era without several pages devoted to musical pastimes. All are dominated by song. The village, the landowner's mansion, the urban residences, the suburbs, the outskirts of towns, the roadside inns and public houses; the bourgeois and merchant circles as well as the families of the nobility, the houses and palaces of the courtiers, finally theatrical shows with a varied repertoire; all these were saturated by all manner of song. Equally permeated by song-like qualities were the experiments of Russian musician/composers. (5)

The early Russian piano concerto was no exception and, until Alexander Villoing (1804-1878) composed his more conventionally structured Concerto in C minor Op.4, sometime during the 1830s, almost all were in the form of potpourris or variations on popular songs. Few have survived until the present day and those that have are somewhat insipid and derivative, leaning heavily, like their chamber-oriented predecessors, on the out-moded musical characteristics of imported Western European music.

In all probability, the concertos of Kashin were typical, though taking into account his interest in folk song, which for many years he collected, they may have contained more than just a superficial

5. Boris Asafeyev, Russkaya muzyka ot nachala xix stoletia (Moscow, 1930), p.3.

employment of folk characteristics. Although his concertos - which according to contemporary newspaper reports, he performed in public<sup>6</sup> - no longer exist, an idea of Kashin's compositional methods can be gleaned from existing works, such as the larger-scale variations for piano solo intended for concert performance. Bearing in mind that it was a tradition to perform the solo part of concertos unaccompanied<sup>7</sup> - as the Irish composer/pianist John Field (1782-1837) frequently did throughout his years in St Petersburg - and that these parts were often designed for such a purpose, it can be fairly safely assumed that they resembled their 'solo' piano counterparts. A study of Kashin's solo variations, therefore, may be instructive in assessing the format and musical characteristics of his concertos. Gerald Seaman neatly describes a typical example, on the dance tune 'Akh, Seni moi, seni, seni novye, moi':

[It] consists of ten variations in which the emotional intensity is heightened (if such a word may be used in this context) not only by means of a gradual increase in tempo, but by playing the variations in a successively lower register. Sometimes this device is used within a single variation, as in No.VI, which, on its repeat, is played an octave lower. It is remarkable that each one of these variations has the character of a Russian dance. No.I for instance, is typical of a folk instrumental accompaniment as the dancers move slowly round. No.VI suggests the sound of stamping, while Variation IX seems to be evocative of a dance 'v prisyadku' - the lively Russian dance executed in a squatting position with folded arms. The character of the last is underlined not only by a 'Sforzando' but by the introduction of stronger harmonies . . . Generally speaking, the whole set conveys the impression of a folk-scene and is an interesting

6. Kashin played one of the piano concertos as early as 1790 at a public concert in Moscow given by the serf orchestra of General Bibikov. Kashin, who was the son of one of Bibikov's serfs, was also director of the orchestra during the 1790s.
7. Chopin performed his Piano Concerto in F minor unaccompanied, in Paris, 1831.

precursor of the type of folk picture employed so successfully by Tchaikovsky at a later date. (8)

The lost piano concerto of Aleksey Dmitrevich Zhilin (176?-c.1851) was probably also constructed in the form of variations though, judging by his existing compositions, was more likely to have been smaller in scale and less exuberant in character than Kashin's. His music in general was very popular during the first half of the nineteenth century and is considered by some authorities to have influenced Glinka in matters of structural design.

Despite the devastating effects of the Napoleonic Invasion, the flow of foreign musicians into Russia during the ensuing decades continued unabated and was to have a continuing influence on the development of Russian music. Indeed, as a direct consequence of the wave of patriotism inspired by the recent war, Russian musicians, anxious to express themselves in means other than the stale, emotionally sterile forms that had for so long dominated 'serious' music-making in Russia, actively encouraged the dissemination of contemporary Western European music by inviting foreign musicians to perform, including the Schumanns, Thalberg, Berlioz, Hummel, Henselt and Liszt, in order to learn new methods and techniques. The impact on Russian audiences, particularly of the great virtuoso pianists, was both immediate and sensational, but had little actual influence on contemporary Russian composition. Balakirev's Oriental Fantasy Islamey (1869) was perhaps the first important Russian piano composition to reveal a definite influence, particularly of Liszt's Transcendental Studies, though it was composed more than two decades after Liszt's final visit to Russia.

8. Gerald Seaman, 'The rise of Russian Piano Music', The Music Review, 27 (August 1966), p.182.

Of greater importance in the development of Russian music, at least in the short term, were the compositions of John Field, who lived and worked in St Petersburg from 1803 to 1822 and eventually settled in Moscow until his death in 1837. One work in particular, his Variations on the song 'Kamarinskaya', was to have a significant influence, for it inspired Glinka's epoch-making orchestral fantasy of the same title (composed in 1848). Originally conceived, like Field's variations for piano solo, Glinka's fantasy was to become the point of departure for the entire Russian symphonic school and thus indirectly contributed to the development of the Russian piano concerto. 'Well? It's all in "Kamarinskaya" just as the whole oak is in the acorn' wrote Tchaikovsky in his diary 27 June 1888.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Field's variations and nocturnes for piano solo were to determine the style of Russian piano composition for several generations and their influence is strongly felt in the piano works of Engalychev, Laskovsky and Glinka.<sup>10</sup>

Field composed seven piano concertos, many of which he performed regularly both on tour and in the Russian capital, St Petersburg, where he made his debut in March 1804 playing the Concerto No.1 in E flat. Several were published in St Petersburg between 1812 and 1821 and the first three became very popular throughout Europe. Field's concertos influenced both the musical ideas and structures of the three early Russian works for piano and orchestra which have survived from this period; Laskovsky's Piano Concerto, Alyabyev's Concertstück on themes of Steibelt (the manuscript of which is preserved in the

9. Dni i godvi P.I. Chaikovskovo, ed. A. Orlova and others, (Moscow/Leningrad, 1940), pp.449-50.

10. Both Laskovsky and Glinka studied, for a short time, with Field. Among Field's many other pupils was the composer Gurilev, and the piano pedagogue Dubuque.

State Central Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow) and Genishta's Piano Concerto (preserved in the Library of the Moscow State Conservatoire). Another piano concerto which has survived dating from this period, by a composer of German origin who lived and worked in Russia, Ivan Genrikhovich Cherlitsky, contains elements of Field's concerto writing, in particular, his style of virtuosic pianism. Composed around 1818, Cherlitsky's concerto consists of two movements; an 'Allegro' in sonata-form and a Rondo finale. Though apparently devoid of any national colouring, its thematic material is said to be of interest.

Field's concertos also contain structural innovations which were adopted and further developed by later, more celebrated Russian composers. His Second Concerto in A flat (c.1811), thought to be a model for Chopin's F minor Concerto, contains a lengthy fugato in its Rondo finale which may have suggested something similar to Balakirev in both the first and third movements of his Concerto in E flat. Moreover, Field's Third Concerto, in E flat, adumbrates Tchaikovsky's 'Concert Fantasia' by seventy years or so by being cast in two long, brilliant movements.

Perhaps Field's most influential concerto, in as far as the development of the Russian piano concerto is concerned, was his seventh in C minor, his only concerto in a minor mode. Praised by Schumann in Neue Zeitschrift für Musik<sup>11</sup>, the Seventh Concerto was to have a not inconsiderable influence on Villoing's Piano Concerto

11. It is possible that Field's innovative step of introducing a slow interlude into the first movement of the concerto may have persuaded Schumann to attempt something similar in his Fantasia in A minor (later to become the first movement of the Piano Concerto in A minor Op.54). Field's 'Waltz' Rondo finale may also have suggested to Schumann the incorporation of waltz-like passages into his finale.

Op.4 (also in C minor), which in turn was to serve as a model for his pupil Anton Rubinstein's earliest attempt at concerto composition; the Piano Concerto in D minor (1849; later revised as the Octet Op.9 - see Part One, pp.14-15). In fact, Villoing's concerto was the first piano concerto by a Russian to be performed abroad and was frequently played by Anton Rubinstein during his European tours, 1840-43. Villoing's concerto is interesting for the early Romantic colouring and expansiveness of its piano writing, which not only influenced Rubinstein but also foreshadowed developments in Tchaikovsky's keyboard style (see Part One, p.15, Ex.1). Structurally, it reveals the influence of another of Field's concertos, No.5 (the so-called 'L'Incendie par L'Orage') in that its Adagio slow movement, like the corresponding movement in Field's concerto (subtitled 'Hymn of Thanksgiving'), serves as an introduction to the Rondo finale. Beethoven's 'Waldstein' Sonata Op.53 possibly provided the initial idea for such a scheme, and like Genishta's concerto, superficial elements of Beethoven's style can be heard in the first and second movements. Further inspiration appears to have been provided by an epigraph of verses from Lamartine, dedicated to Byron, printed on the cover of the score (see Plate 1).



Que par le son s'exprime en finant genre,  
 Soient de la manière de certains auteurs  
 Comme par exemple de la fin d'un son  
 Et mouvant dans l'usage à la fois de l'oreille  
 J. Kellner 1822



  
**GRAND CONCERTO**  
 (en UT mineur)  
 pour le  
**Piano-forte**  
 avec accompagnement de grand orchestre  
 d'un 1<sup>er</sup> ou d'un 2<sup>nd</sup> piano  
 composé et humblement dédié  
**à l'ACADEMIE ROYALE DE MUSIQUE**  
 à Stockholm

pour accomp. de l'orchestre RM 30 sp.  
 de 2<sup>nd</sup> piano RM 225 sp.  
 de 1<sup>er</sup> piano RM 15 sp.

Op. 4.

par Alexandre Villberg  
 maître de musique demeurant  
 à Slesvig, (près de R. 1861.)  
 à l'ordre de l'Académie de Musique, à St. Pétersbourg le 14<sup>th</sup> Mars

## Part One: The Piano Concertos of Anton Rubinstein

There are artists who devote a lifetime to one composition in order to make it perfect. There are others who throughout their lives create innumerable compositions which are, however, far from being perfect. These last seem to me more logical. There cannot be absolute perfection in a man's composition. However, in imperfect compositions one could find enough beauty worthy of appraisal. There is something sympathetic in the fertility of creativity because it is naive. At the same time, the faith that one could create something perfect carries in it the seal of conceit.

(Anton Rubinstein, in his Gedankenkorb (Basket of Thoughts), published in 1897)

Few could be better qualified to make a statement of this kind than Anton Grigorevich Rubinstein (1829-1894), himself no stranger to conceit,<sup>1</sup> for underlying its general meaning - between the lines, as it were - is a thinly disguised attempt on Rubinstein's part to defend his own prolixity of musical creativity and, on a subconscious level, perhaps, to justify his serious lack of self-criticism. As early as 1853, before Rubinstein had begun to make a name for himself as a composer and long before his more important works had been composed, one critic had already noted his shortcomings:

. . . one could say that each of his works contains surprising moments but rarely is the impression of the whole fully satisfactory; some motif or other makes one feel bored; there is lack of clarity, or too much monotony . . . To me, it seems that Mr Rubinstein writes too much and too quickly. That is his greatest enemy. (2)

1. 'I regard Brahms as the successor of Schumann', Rubinstein once proclaimed, 'and myself as the successor of Schubert and Chopin - we two conclude the third epoch of musical art.'
2. Biblioteka dlya chtenya (Library for Reading), April, 1853, pp.79-80.

Liszt reached similar conclusions and, though usually magnanimous and encouraging to fledgling composers, felt compelled to inform Rubinstein of them:

I respect your compositions and I find much to praise in them . . . with a few critical observations. Your excessive productivity did not afford you spare time to disclose more individuality in your compositions and complete them. It has been justly said that it is not sufficient to make a composition, one should complete it. (3)

Rubinstein's frustratingly lackadaisical attitude towards the finer and final stages of composition - resulting in a scar of carelessness that ran its course through almost every piece of music he composed - is evident from his correspondence. In a letter to B. Senff<sup>4</sup> dated 5 June 1874, for example, Rubinstein admitted to having great difficulty with two of his compositions and doubted whether he would be able to finish them in time. He wrote to Senff:

The Symphony and the Fifth Piano Concerto are giving me a lot of trouble . . . I don't think I will be able to complete them before next winter. (5)

However, we learn from a letter written just four months later to his mother, dated 12 October, that Rubinstein managed to accomplish his task long before his self-imposed deadline and even threw in a cello concerto and sketch for an opera for good measure:

I am very satisfied with my summer (from the work point of view); the piano concerto, symphony, concerto for cello and sketch for an opera have all been finished. (6)

3. Letter to Rubinstein, dated 19 November 1854, quoted in La Mara, Liszt's Briefe, Vol.6, pp.177-8.
4. Rubinstein's publisher.
5. A. G. Rubinstein, Izbrannye pisma (Selected Letters) (Moscow, 1954).
6. Ibid.

Such haste of conception and lack of self-criticism (reflected incidentally in the flawlessness of Rubinstein's manuscripts) is apparent in all but one of the five concertos for piano and orchestra - the exception being the Concerto No.4 in D minor, Op.70. Undoubtedly the uncharacteristic care that Rubinstein took in the concerto's preparation and subsequent revisions ironed out many of the flaws that have marred his other works for piano and orchestra.<sup>7</sup>

Rubinstein's five existing piano concertos, though central to his creativity and covering a period of some twenty-four years (1850-1874), reveal little in the way of musical or technical development - only, perhaps, a marginal lessening of anachronistic features. Probably, his earlier attempts at concerto form, the manuscripts of which have not survived,<sup>8</sup> followed to some extent the stylistic features, themselves derivative, of the Piano Concerto in C minor, Op.4, by Rubinstein's teacher and mentor Alexander Villoing.

For reasons known only to himself, Rubinstein decided to re-orchestrate his third attempt at concerto form (the four-movement Piano Concerto in D minor, also dating from 1849) and to publish it as an Octet for piano, violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, clarinet and horn, (Op.9). The influence of Villoing is clearly discernible in Rubinstein's use of double octaves in the opening of the Octet (see Ex. 1), which, in turn, incidentally bears more than a passing resemblance to a passage (Ex. 2) in Tchaikovsky's Piano

7. Composed in 1864, and arranged and published for two pianos in 1866, the Piano Concerto in D minor, Op.70, underwent several alterations in 1869 that Rubinstein considered were 'not particularly important' (according to a letter to Senff dated 24 May of that year). Further changes were incorporated into the second edition (1872), involving performance indications, piano texture and the orchestration of the second half of the first movement's coda. Nevertheless, despite such care, the original manuscript was inscribed incorrectly as 'Concerto in E flat'.
8. The concertos in F major and C major dating from 1849.

Concerto in B flat minor (from the first movement's introductory section). It would seem, from the significant influence Rubinstein's Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos had on Tchaikovsky's own concertos (see pp.50-61), that the similarity in their respective piano styles may perhaps be more than mere coincidence.

Ex. 1

(a) *Energico e passionato* *Villoing*

(b) *Allegro non troppo* *Rubinstein*

Ex. 2

(Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso)

Apart from the slight and inconsequential influence of Villoing<sup>9</sup> and the inclusion of dry technical and pianistic procedures derived

9. Rubinstein played the first movement of Villoing's Piano Concerto in C minor, Op.4 in one of his earliest solo performances - on 9 October 1842 (according to Nikolas Findeisen in his book Anton Grigorevich Rubinstein: Ocherk evo zhizni i muzykalnoi (Moscow, 1907)).

from Moscheles, Hertz, Kalkbrenner, Czerny, Clementi and Hummel<sup>10</sup> (Rubinstein's first piano teacher - his Prussian-born mother Kaleria - had little imagination as far as repertoire was concerned), the principal stylistic influence on Rubinstein's early concertos was the music of Schumann and Mendelssohn. In 1845, Anton Rubinstein, together with his younger brother Nikolay, was taken to Berlin, on Meyerbeer's recommendation, to study theory, harmony and counterpoint with Siegfried Dehn, a pedagogue whose teaching was firmly entrenched in the traditions of the Classical-Romantic school.<sup>11</sup> Their stay lasted one and a half years, at the end of which Anton had become so immersed in the characteristics of early Romantic German music that, for the remainder of his life, he was unable to break away from it (despite several determined attempts in later years to compose in a consciously nationalist style).<sup>12</sup> Although Rubinstein greatly admired Schumann's music - an enthusiasm kindled, perhaps, by the latter's favourable review of Rubinstein's first published piano

10. Rubinstein's very first public performance on 11 July 1839 (which was, incidentally, favourably reviewed in the Moscow journal Galathea) was of a movement from Hummel's A minor Piano Concerto.
11. Apart from being a teacher of musical theory, Siegfried Dehn (1799-1858) was also Director of the music collection in the Berlin Royal Library and editor of the periodical Caecilia. Among his other illustrious pupils were Kullak, Cornelius and Glinka.
12. During the years 1852-53 Rubinstein composed one full-scale opera, Dmitry Donskoy or The Battle of Kulinkovo, and three one-act operas 'depicting the different peoples of Russia': Hadji-Abrek (to a poem by Lermontov), The Siberian Hunters and Fomka the Fool. As a consequence of the hostility following the production of Fomka the Fool (supporters of the Nationalists, the music critic Vladimir Stasov in particular, resented its being compared with Glinka's Ruslan and Life for the Tsar and considered Rubinstein's work a deliberate parody of Glinka's operas in general), Rubinstein refrained from composing any more 'nationalist' music apart from an inferior concert overture Ivan the Terrible (1868), until the appearance of the Russian Capriccio for piano and orchestra, Op.102, in 1878. About this time Rubinstein also composed his two finest works, also in the nationalist vein: the Fifth Symphony in G minor, Op.107, and the opera The Merchant Kalashnikov.

piece (an *étude* entitled Ondine)<sup>13</sup> - it was the more easily assimilated music of Mendelssohn that Rubinstein turned to for inspiration whilst composing the Piano Concerto (later Octet) in D minor. The opening of the third movement, for example, is reminiscent of one of Mendelssohn's Songs without Words in regard to layout and rhythmic structure (see Ex.3). From a harmonic and melodic point of view, however, the young Rubinstein seemed incapable, in this instance, of reproducing even Mendelssohn's simple style. The complexities of Schumann's musical language, therefore, however much appreciated, must have been most bewildering.

Ex. 3

(a) *Adagio* *cantabile* Mendelssohn (op 53 no.4)

(b) *Andante non troppo* Rubinstein

The negative aspects of Rubinstein's attachment to - or, rather, dependence on - early Romantic German music did not go unnoticed by

13. In one of his last reviews as Editor of Neue Zeitschrift für Musik Schumann wrote of 'the talented boy who had acquired a great reputation as a pianist' and, despite finding fault with a harmonic progression, stated that 'perfection and originality could not be expected from such a young composer'. Schumann also saw, in the proliferation of melodic ideas, the 'promise of significant development' (Gesammelte Schriften über Musik and Musiker von Robert Schumann, Vol.4, Leipzig, 1854, pp.244-5).

his contemporaries. The composer and music critic Alexander Serov, a fervent Wagnerite, wrote the following:

How unfortunate that our era still cannot free itself from the influence of tedious Mendelssohnism and that precisely those aspects of that great talent that are weak and harmful for art . . . have found such a zealous and prolific disciple in Rubinstein!(14)

Liszt more or less concurred with this statement but optimistically believed that Rubinstein would eventually find his own creative personality:

I do not want to preach to Rubinstein - he may sow his wild oats and fish deeper in Mendelssohn waters, and even swim away if he likes. But sooner or later I am certain he will give up the apparent and the formalistic for the organically real . . . (15)

Rubinstein never quite fulfilled Liszt's hopes. For a time he did indeed continue to 'fish in Mendelssohn waters' but, contrary to Liszt's predictions, he later turned to the music of others (including Liszt himself) for ideas instead of formulating his own musical language. Beethoven's presence, for example (and perhaps unwittingly Schubert's as well), is strongly felt in the opening movement of Rubinstein's First Piano Concerto, Op.25 (see Ex.4).

Furthermore, the slow movement's dialogue between piano and lower strings could conceivably be an attempt by Rubinstein to imitate the sublime 'Andante con moto' movement from Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto in G, Op.58. Needless to say, Rubinstein's music, owing to its trite melodies, uninspired harmony and pseudo-dramatic utterances


14. Alexander Serov, Izbrannye Stati (Selected Articles), ed. Georgii Khubov (Moscow, 1950-57), p.584.
15. Letter to Karl Franz Brendel (successor to Schumann as Editor of Neue Zeitschrift für Musik), quoted in Letters of Franz Liszt, ed. Constance Bache, Vol.I (London, 1894) (translation of Vols 1 and 2 of Franz Liszt's Briefe), p.219.




more suited to the opera house than the concert hall, fails abysmally to recapture the beauty of Beethoven's music. Far more striking is Rubinstein's somewhat blatant plagiarizing of musical ideas from the first movement of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto in his own Fifth Piano Concerto in E flat, Op.94. Did Rubinstein really believe that borrowing ideas from Beethoven's Fourth Concerto (in G major) rather than the Fifth Concerto (in E flat major) would allay suspicion of plagiarism? Perhaps not. In any case, the result is a curious hotch-potch of Beethovenian quotations, bland, inconsequential passages where Rubinstein has, inevitably, to fall back on his own invention - bizarre, incongruous, though wholly characteristic, episodes that seem to spring from nowhere - such as, for example, the strange drone-like passage for piano solo<sup>16</sup> in the quasi-development section of the Rondo-finale (see Ex.5) - and, surprisingly, yet again wholly characteristic, moments of great beauty.

Beethoven (Sonata in Eb, op. 31 no. 3)

**Ex. 4** Presto con fuoco



Rubinstein



**Ex. 5**



16. According to the manuscript, this theme is a Tarantella napoletaine populaire. The employment of bare 5ths in the accompaniment - a feature typical of Central Italian folk songs - would seem to support this.

Beethoven's influence is particularly apparent at the very beginning of Rubinstein's concerto. Not content, however, with moulding and adapting a 'borrowed' idea to suit his musical intentions, Rubinstein reproduces it almost note for note (in a different key, of course). Only a composer of either immense arrogance or carelessness - or, in Rubinstein's case, perhaps both - could have contemplated such a procedure. The 'borrowing' is all the more audacious in that it occurs in exactly the same position in the concerto format, i.e. in the first movement at the soloist's principal entry,<sup>17</sup> as that from where it was taken (see Ex.6). Rubinstein also makes considerable - some might say excessive - use of double trills in the development section of the first movement - another significant pianistic feature of the first movement of Beethoven's concerto.

Ex. 6

Rubinstein



Beethoven (Concerto in G, op 58)



Remaining examples of Beethoven's influence on Rubinstein's concertos are perhaps too nebulous and unimportant to merit further analysis. In any case, their innate tendency towards salon music precluded any substantial transplantation of Beethoven's musical ideas' taking root successfully. Instead, Rubinstein turned to

17. Disregarding, for a moment, Beethoven's unusual and innovative step of opening the Concerto with a few bars from the soloist.

Liszt's compositions for inspiration and ideas, firstly because they too possessed an ambivalence towards the salon and, secondly, because they more than satisfied Rubinstein's craving for virtuosity.

Apart from a few isolated examples of Lisztian keyboard figurations, such as the ascending double chromatic scales a 6th apart heralding the beginning of the development section in Rubinstein's Concerto in G major, Op.45 (a device used by Liszt to conclude the short cadenza at the beginning of his Piano Concerto in E flat), it is again Rubinstein's Fifth Piano Concerto in E flat, the most derivative of all the five concertos, that contains the most interesting and significant 'borrowings' from Liszt. Indeed, so well preserved are they that, like Lyadov's Variations on a theme of Glinka, Op.35 (which are unashamedly based on piano pieces by Chopin) and Lyapunov's Transcendental Studies (similarly dependent, as far as germinal ideas are concerned, on Liszt's studies of the same title), it is possible to determine the exact piece from which the borrowing has occurred. For example, the 'Allegro deciso' section of Liszt's Piano Concerto in A major (Ex.7a) may well have been the inspiration behind the powerful and effective chordal writing in the first movement's codetta between the exposition and the development

Ex. 7 (a)

Liszt

Allegro deciso

*ff* *sf*

*8<sup>va</sup>*-----

(b)

Rubinstein

Allegro moderato

*8<sup>va</sup>*

section (Ex.7b).<sup>18</sup> Immediately following the 'fortissimo' chords of Ex.7b is a passage in which Rubinstein uses a figuration favoured by Liszt in his Transcendental Study Mazeppa. Needless to say, it is employed with somewhat less imagination (see Ex.8). Liszt's Mazeppa may also have been the source of inspiration for the slow movement of Rubinstein's Piano Concerto in E flat, for, after the brief, tempestuous cadenza that concludes the middle section, Rubinstein introduces a solo recitative passage strongly reminiscent of the more expansive quasi-recitativo that immediately precedes the 'Trionfante' coda of Mazeppa. Both passages incidentally serve a similar function in that they interrupt or, rather, call a halt to an impending climax in the music, and both assume the role of bridge-passages leading to a concluding section. Particularly interesting is that common to both are rising diminished intervals and quasi-atonal chromatic descending phrases (features, needless to say, not often found in Rubinstein's music (Ex.9).

Several other examples of Rubinstein's dependence on Liszt are worth noting, not least the various Lisztian derivations that appear in the Rondo-finale of Rubinstein's Fifth Piano Concerto. The principal theme, for example, is constructed in two sections, both of which bear a striking resemblance to piano works by Liszt. The first, a lumbering 'tarantella' of sorts, was perhaps modelled on Liszt's Tarantella (the final piece in the tripartite appendix to his

18. In the third edition of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto - the version performed today - the piano's chordal accompaniment to the famous introductory theme (Ex.37) is so strikingly similar to the two passages quoted here that it is almost certain that Tchaikovsky (or whoever was responsible for the changes incorporated into this edition) used both as a model. However, until recently only Liszt's A major Concerto has been acknowledged as a possible source of Tchaikovsky's inspiration. (For a more detailed account of this issue see p.54),

Ex. 8

(a) Liszt

(b) Rubinstein

Ex. 9 (a) Rubinstein

Recit.

(b) (quasi recitativo) Liszt

più rit. . . . .

(più p)  
(sospirando)

rall.

Années de pèlerinage: deuxième année (Italie)), so similar is the pianistic layout and underlying musical character (see Ex.10).<sup>19</sup>

The inspiration behind the second section of the Rondo theme can even

19. The idea, however, of incorporating an Italian dance tune (see Ex.5) into the finale of the Fifth Piano Concerto probably resulted from Rubinstein's close involvement in the conception of Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No.2 in G minor (which contains a 'tarantella' finale). Rubinstein also conducted the first performance of this Concerto, with Saint-Saëns at the piano, in the Salle Pleyel, Paris on 13 May 1868. Although a few superficial similarities exist between these two concerto movements, principally because of their mutual source of inspiration, it is none the less apparent that Rubinstein almost totally disregarded Saint-Saëns's superior and masterly handling of orchestral resources. Had he not done so, the Fifth Concerto's somewhat elephantine treatment of what is essentially a delicate and spirited dance tune might have been tempered to a more appropriate texture.

Ex. 10

Liszt

un poco meno presto ma sempre con molto brio

Allegro

Rubinstein

Ex. 11

Allegretto

Liszt

Rubinstein

more confidently be attributed to one of Liszt's piano pieces - on this occasion, La Chasse, one of the Paganini Studies (see Ex.11). Rubinstein also introduces unison chromatic-scale figurations into the quasi-development section of the Rondo - a startlingly effective yet comparatively rare pianistic device most probably derived from Liszt's Transcendental Study Chasse-neige (see Ex.12).<sup>20</sup> Finally, Rubinstein revisits Liszt's Paganini Studies and constructs an entire cadenza on the violinistic figuration that forms the basis of No.4 of the set. The redistribution of notes into a more conventional pianistic layout across two staves goes some way towards disguising

20. Ascending and descending chromatic scales also figure prominently in the fourteenth variation of Alkan's Le festin d'Esope, Op.39 No.12, though they are assigned to the right hand only. As Rubinstein dedicated his Fifth Piano Concerto to Alkan, it is almost certain that he was acquainted with, and perhaps influenced by, Alkan's most famous work for piano (published in 1857).

its source; the sound itself, however, is unmistakably Lisztian (or Paganinian) (see Ex.13).

## Ex. 12

Rubinstein

Liszt

## Ex. 13

Liszt

Vivo

R.H.

L.H.

*p* staccatissimo

Rubinstein

In some ways it was, perhaps, almost inevitable that a lesser composer such as Anton Rubinstein should borrow from someone of Liszt's stature; Liszt was, after all, internationally famous, and his music and playing influenced all aspects of nineteenth-century musical thought.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Rubinstein undoubtedly found Liszt's music attractive in its tendency towards salon music and in the virtuosic possibilities inherent in its musical vocabulary. All

21. Possibly Rubinstein's intention was to improve on what was borrowed, for there is no doubt that he considered himself superior to Liszt as far as composition was concerned.

the same, Rubinstein's dependence on Liszt's music is curious in view of the fact that they were diametrically opposed to each other in regard to musical aesthetics: Rubinstein's music was deliberately entrenched in early nineteenth-century styles whereas Liszt's music was straining at the leash, as it were, in the direction of the twentieth century.

Rubinstein's blatant borrowing of Liszt's ideas is perhaps all the more surprising in view of their ambivalent attitude towards each other from a personal point of view and of the fact that, on the whole, they disliked one another's music.<sup>22</sup> Rubinstein wrote of Liszt:

I know his faults (a certain pomposity of manner for one thing), but always esteemed him as a great performer . . . a performer-virtuoso indeed, but no composer. I shall doubtless be devoured piecemeal for giving such an opinion . . . (23)

(It could be considered that this statement applies more convincingly to Rubinstein himself than to Liszt.) Liszt's overall opinion of Rubinstein as a composer has already been noted (see p.13). On several occasions, however, he was more specific. In discussing Rubinstein's Ocean Symphony, for example (according to Yury Arnold), Liszt commented:

Its realism is astonishing. Listening to it, you feel everything you would during a sea voyage, even sea sickness. (24)

22. However, according to one of Liszt's letters (La Mara, Liszt's Briefe, Vol.1, p.200), he did like one work by Rubinstein: the Zwolf Lieder des Mirza-Schaffy, aus dem persichen von F. Bodenstedt, Op.34.
23. Anton Rubinstein, Autobiography (supplement accumulated by Aline Delano). Boston, 1890, pp.75-6.
24. Quoted in Vladimir Stasov's Essays on Music, translated by Florence Jonas (London, 1968), p.182.



As far as performing was concerned, Liszt never acknowledged Rubinstein's talents and certainly did not consider him his successor. 'Have you heard Tausig?' he would ask. Rubinstein, on the other hand, could not refrain from acknowledging his indebtedness to Liszt's pianistic skills without committing perjury:

There was at that time a manner of virtuosity - Liszt headed this movement. In my own playing I imitated Liszt. I adopted his mannerisms, his movements of the body and the hands, the throwing back of his hair, and in general, all the fantastic devices which accompanied his playing. (25)

There can be little doubt that Rubinstein's piano concertos were influenced to a very large extent by the breathtaking virtuosic style of performing in which Liszt excelled. Whatever their faults, it cannot be denied that they represented splendid vehicles for Rubinstein's legendary playing, and it was principally because of Liszt's influence that they were so.

From a structural point of view, Rubinstein's five piano concertos reveal, for the most part, a rather unexpectedly fine grasp of concerto form and an adept handling of the problems of balance between soloist and orchestra. All are in three movements and all follow closely, though with discrepancies that are in themselves characteristic of the form, the structural pattern developed by Mozart and consolidated by Beethoven. Rubinstein, however, lacked Mozart's and Beethoven's irrepressible desire to expand, develop and broaden musical horizons. Consequently, during the twenty-four years or so from the First Concerto (1850) to the last (1874), he endeavoured to preserve the basic format of the Classical concerto by

25. Quoted in A History of Russian-Soviet Music, by James Bakst (New York, 1966), p.169.

eschewing the thematic and structural innovations undertaken by his contemporaries. Liszt, being in the vanguard, came under fierce criticism from Rubinstein for his experiments, particularly those connected with monothematicism:

His desire for novelty (à tout prix) gave him the idea of forming whole compositions of one and the same thing. Sonata, Concerto, Symphonic Poem, all with one theme only - an absolutely unmusical proceeding.

Curiously, Rubinstein himself indulged in the very same 'unmusical proceeding' he so vehemently condemned in the compositions of Liszt. The Fantasy in C major, Op.84, for example, is entirely monothematic and, like the two other miscellaneous works for piano and orchestra - the Russian Capriccio in C minor, Op.102, and the Concertstück in A flat, Op.113 (see pp.65-9) - even follows closely the multisectional one-movement design of Liszt's concertos. Like his 'sour grapes' over the rejection of his early Russian operas, it was probably the poor reception of the Fantasy that encouraged him to make such a hypocritical statement.

As far as the concertos were concerned, however, there were several reasons why Rubinstein preferred conventional structures. In the first place, they were the structures he had studied and performed during his formative years and later analysed as part of his pedagogic duties at the St Petersburg Conservatory. They were therefore the structures he was most familiar with. For a not very original thinker with compositional aspirations these structures provided Rubinstein with comfortable frameworks on which to hang his somewhat derivative musical ideas. This procedure was noted by Boris Asafeyev:

It was as if Rubinstein created in his mind a tonal structure complete with basic melodic profiles and then quickly and

enthusiastically filled it in with well-planned musical ideas. (26)

A second reason why Rubinstein chose convention instead of innovation was that he was generally more successful, as far as audiences were concerned, with tried-and-tested forms. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was loath to restructure his most important 'bread-and-butter' works - the concertos. Rubinstein, therefore, aligned himself with the more conservative composers of his day and continued to produce three-movement concertos. He was not slow to realize, however, that there was still room for improvement within the structure itself - particularly as the relationship between piano and orchestra had undergone a dramatic reappraisal during the first quarter of the nineteenth century (largely on account of the appearance of Beethoven's Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos) and as the concerto itself was becoming grander in both dimensions and expression.

One significant development resulting from this awareness was Rubinstein's abandonment of the double exposition shortly after he had completed his First Piano Concerto in E minor.<sup>27</sup> In fact, much to Rubinstein's credit, he achieves a neat compromise in his Second Piano Concerto in F<sup>28</sup> (composed the following year) by commencing with a single exposition in which the soloist enters at the transition between the first and second subjects. In addition, the entire second subject is given to the piano. The listener is thus spared

26. Quoted in Anton Grigorevich Rubinstein by L.A. Barenboim (Leningrad, 1957), Vol.1, p.125 (originally in 'A.G. Rubinstein', Sovetskaya muzika, 1946, No.6, p.7).

27. Dedicated to his teacher, Alexander Villoing, the Piano Concerto in E minor, Op.25, was composed in 1850 and published in 1858.

28. Dedicated to Charles Lewy and published in 1858.

the possible tedium of a secondary exposition yet is not deprived of the feeling of expectation resulting from the delay of the soloist's entry.

In his Third Piano Concerto,<sup>29</sup> the emancipation of the soloist is taken a stage further but, unfortunately, the over-enthusiasm with which Rubinstein pursues this objective results in what John Culshaw (referring to Liszt's two concertos) describes as 'a kind of musical malaria . . . [a] tendency to break out in cadenzas at every possible opportunity'.<sup>30</sup> The first-subject group of the opening movement's exposition, for example, is a curiously diffuse section, the general impression of which, because of the interruptions of the piano's inconsequential 'quasi-cadenzas', is more of a large-scale introduction than a tightly organized section with an expository function. One factor that may go some way to explain why Rubinstein chose this unorthodox approach is that the Third Concerto was intended to be a musical portrayal of a dream the composer had had, in which the piano finally achieves its solo status:

I once had an unusual dream of a church in which were gathered various orchestral instruments. Into the church entered a piano, which aggressively demanded that it too should be accepted as one of them. The instruments of the orchestra subjected it to questioning and asked it to produce various timbres and melodies. But in the end they found it lacking and thus not suitable. The piano fell into despair and complained but then, having gathered all its strength, impudently declared itself an independent orchestra and sneered at the other instruments.

29. Dedicated to the pianist and composer Ignaz Moscheles, the Piano Concerto in G, Op.45, was composed 1853-4 and was published in 1858. It was first performed on 18 May 1857 in London by the London Philharmonic Orchestra with Rubinstein as soloist. The dedication, incidentally, is not without some significance, for it can hardly be mere coincidence that the most structurally adventurous of Rubinstein's concertos is dedicated to one of the pioneers of the multi-sectional single-movement concerto and an early exponent of cyclic form and thematic recall.

30. John Culshaw, The Concerto (London, 1949), p.47.

Annoyed, they pointed out to it that it could not even imitate them and they threw it out of the church.

I was trying to describe this dream in sounds and I even wanted to add a programme. However, I finally decided not to carry out this idea, having come to the conclusion that, in having a programme written out beforehand, one would hear one thing and then, later, something quite different.

Gedankenkorb (Basket of Thoughts), p.44<sup>31</sup>

On the whole, Rubinstein is fairly successful in depicting his dream, albeit in a somewhat crude musical/pictorial kind of way. Ex.14, for example, could perhaps be interpreted as the piano's defiant gesture of independence, taking, as it does, the principal thematic material formerly announced by the orchestra.

Ex. 14

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It is labeled 'Ex. 14' on the left. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Moderato con moto'. The music consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a series of chords and single notes, while the bass staff contains a more complex, rhythmic accompaniment. A dynamic marking '8ve.....' is visible at the end of the piece.

Whether such a procedure is musically successful, however, is another matter.

It is only in his Fourth Piano Concerto in D minor, Op.70 (dedicated to Ferdinand David), by far the most successful of the five, that Rubinstein achieves a near-perfect balance in the distribution of exposition material between piano and orchestra. Not only are both the first-subject group and the transition shared more or less equally but, in the second-subject group, the piano is allocated the

31. It is interesting to note that A. D. Alexeyev, in his study of Rubinstein's piano music, makes the significant observation that in the Third Concerto 'the piano is like an orchestra' (A. D. Alexeyev, Russkaya fortepiannaya muzika konets XIX nachala XX veka (Moscow, 1969), p.133).

first theme and the orchestra (strings) are given the second theme. Far from being sectional in effect, as one might expect, the near antecedent-consequent relationship between the two themes creates a convincing whole that fits admirably into the structure of the first movement's exposition.

Though Rubinstein was not particularly adept at creating new forms or even implementing those already in existence, he did, however, undertake certain structural modifications (as opposed to structural innovations) within the established frameworks. One such modification, a fairly rare procedure whereby themes in the recapitulation are announced in reverse order, is effectively used in the second movement of the Fifth Concerto and in the first and last movements of the Third Concerto. In the first movement of the latter, the recapitulation commences with the second-subject group theme 'B' and is followed by theme 'A'. The movement is subsequently rounded off with a coda based on the first subject, thus making the pattern of reversal more or less complete. A similar construction is used in the finale, but in this instance the first subject is recapitulated normally.<sup>32</sup>

A more common modification - one employed in almost every sonata-form movement in Rubinstein's concertos (see table below) - is the abridgement of the recapitulation. This is usually brought about either by a reduction - or, sometimes, total exclusion - of the transition between the first and second subjects or by the omission

32. A fine example of this procedure is found in the first movement of Mozart's piano Sonata in D major, K.311. In the recapitulation the first and second subjects are reversed.

of subject material that has been prominent in the development or is likely to be so in the coda:<sup>33</sup>

Concerto No.1

1st mvt. recap.: Omission of salon style interlude (piano solo) from secondary exposition.

3rd mvt. recap.: First subject only; both transition and second-subject group omitted.

Concerto No.2

1st mvt. recap.: Subsidiary theme of first-subject group omitted; transition abridged.

3rd mvt. recap.: Abbreviated first subject; transition and second-subject theme (a) omitted.

Concerto No.3

1st mvt. recap.: First subject and second subject extension omitted.

3rd mvt. recap.: Transition replaced by cadenza; extended closing section.

Concerto No.4

1st mvt. recap.: First subject omitted; developed transition.

3rd mvt. recap.: Concentrated.

Concerto No.5

1st mvt. recap.: Transition omitted.

(3rd mvt.: Sonata-rondo form.)

33. Notable examples predating Rubinstein's include Beethoven's piano sonatas, Op.31 Nos 1 and 2, Brahms's Tragic Overture and first and second symphonies, and Chopin's piano sonatas in B flat minor and B minor.

In the more extreme cases of abbreviation (the third movement of the First Concerto and the first movement of the Third, for example), the resultant imbalance between exposition and recapitulation gives the movement a quasi-binary character, particularly as the abridged recapitulation strongly resembles coda material in its feeling of impending resolution. In the finale of the First Concerto, for example, the line of demarcation between the abridged recapitulation and the coda is extremely difficult to ascertain. Indeed, what appear to be fragments of a recapitulation could very well be part of an extended coda grafted on to the development section.<sup>34</sup> Whether Rubinstein, in implementing these structural modifications, was consciously endeavouring to contribute towards the development of the piano concerto in general or was merely trying to prove to his contemporaries that he could compose structures not entirely based on accepted formulae is a matter for conjecture. To judge from his general impatience and carelessness in matters of composition, it is more likely, however, that these modifications were incorporated for the sake of expediency - saving Rubinstein both time and effort in reworking material already stated in the exposition.

Another procedure employed by Rubinstein that significantly deviates from convention is that of thematic recall, i.e. the reintroduction of thematic material later on in a work (particularly

34. This hypothesis is supported by the somewhat bizarre key-scheme of this section, for Rubinstein 'recapitulates' in the unrelated keys of F major and A flat major (the prevailing or 'tonic' key of the movement is E major).



in the finale).<sup>35</sup> There is only one substantial example of this method of construction in Rubinstein's concertos - in the finale of the Third Piano Concerto - and it is employed on a massive scale; no less than five separate quotations from both the previous movements are crammed together in a multi-sectional episode taking the place of the recapitulation's closing section:

- (i) Adagio: three bars from section B' of the second movement (E flat major);
- (ii) Andante: four bars from section A of the second movement (E flat major);
- (iii) Moderato con moto: eight bars of second-subject group theme (a) of the first movement (C minor);
- (iv) (continuation): eight bars of second-subject group theme (b) of the first movement (A flat major);
- (v) Cadenza (solo piano): identical to the cadenzas in the quasi-introductory first-subject group of the first movement.

Unfortunately, any benefits arising from this crude and heavy-handed attempt at structural unity are outweighed many times over by the

35. Significant near-contemporary examples of thematic recall include Schumann's Piano Quintet (the principal theme of the first movement is 'recalled' in the coda of the finale and involved in a double fugue with the principal theme of the last movement); Berlioz's Harold in Italy, the finale of which, 'The Orgy of Brigands', commences with numerous reminders of previous movements; Schumann's Rhenish Symphony; Mendelssohn's Scottish Symphony; and Beethoven's Ninth symphony. More significant than any one of these, as far as possible influence on Rubinstein's concertos is concerned, is Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.5 (frequently a source of inspiration to Rubinstein). Towards the middle of the Rondo-finale, Beethoven recalls the anticipatory fragments of the rondo theme as they appeared in the closing section of the slow movement.

appalling artificiality of the whole procedure and by the disastrous effect it has on the continuity of the otherwise boisterous finale. This is principally because no attempt whatsoever is made either to integrate the transplanted material into its surroundings or to reconcile the disparate elements within this material through the many devices available to a composer for just such a purpose (for example, structural elision, 'ostinato' accompaniment, rhythmic diminution and augmentation, etc.). Consequently, what was intended to be a glorious résumé of the Concerto as a whole becomes, instead, a section that jeopardizes its musical credibility (in much the same way as a rejected transplant - in a medical sense - jeopardizes the existence of its host). Furthermore, not content with confining his thematic 'recalls' to this one section, Rubinstein also incorporates material from previous movements in the coda of the finale. Its treatment here, however, is wholly acceptable, being neatly and skilfully integrated.<sup>36</sup>

One final modification undertaken by Rubinstein is worth noting - not on its musical merits, it must be pointed out, but because it may have had a significant influence on a later and superior piano concerto by a near contemporary (and thus directly contributed, albeit in a small way, to the development of the Russian piano concerto). Whilst working on the preliminary sketches of his new piano concerto (the Concerto in E flat), Mily Balakirev asked Vladimir Stasov, in a letter dated 14 July 1860, to send him the scores of Litolff's Fourth Concerto, Chopin's Third Scherzo and Rubinstein's Second

36. According to A. D. Alexeyev, 'this way of linking movements had not been used before in three-movement concertos - not on such a wide scale, anyway. It helped to develop one of the most popular concerto forms of the nineteenth century - the finale of the "synthetic" type.' (A. D. Alexeyev, op. cit., pp.133-4.)

Concerto.<sup>37</sup> As Edward Garden points out in his article 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', 'he [Balakirev] was always willing to study Rubinstein's scores, even if only as examples of what to avoid.'<sup>38</sup> All three works perused by Balakirev were, to a greater or lesser extent, to have some influence on his new concerto. As far as Rubinstein's is concerned, it was the insertion of a solo piano fugato into the fabric of the first movement that particularly interested the younger composer. However, whereas Rubinstein's 56-bar fugato (based on the first subject) constitutes the first half of the cadenza and goes no further, Balakirev, seeing further possibilities in the contrapuntal treatment of his theme (in this case, the second subject), makes it, perhaps inadvisedly, the central idea of his development section. (A fugato also appears in the development section of the finale of Balakirev's Concerto, this time more successfully, as it is constructed on the attractive, rhythmically vibrant second subject.)<sup>39</sup>

To return, for a moment, to procedures relating to structural unity. Rubinstein was perhaps most successful in achieving this partly through his efficient, textbook-orientated manipulation of thematic material and partly through the motivic similarities

37. Quoted in 'Three Russian Piano Concertos' by Edward Garden, Music & Letters, Vol.60, No.2 (1979), p.167.

38. Ibid., p.167.

39. Although Litolff's influence is evident mainly in the second movement of Balakirev's Piano Concerto in E flat, it would be wrong not to acknowledge the fact that Litolff also incorporated a fugato in the development section of the finale of his Concerto Symphonique No.4 in D minor, Op.102 - the score requested by Balakirev. If Balakirev were indeed looking for ideas among the scores sent to him by Stasov, then it was probably the combined influence of Rubinstein and Litolff that finally persuaded him to incorporate fugatos into the first and third movements of his Concerto.

inherent in the material itself, as illustrated in Ex.15.<sup>40</sup> Whether Rubinstein consciously employed these preconceived melodic fragments or 'fingerprints' as a means of achieving unity or whether they are merely characteristic turns of phrases that unintentionally create unity is difficult to determine. However, so numerous are these thematic interrelationships and so persuasive are the more substantial examples that it seems probable that Rubinstein was not unaware of their motivic potential. Exx.16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 (taken, respectively, from Concertos Nos 1, 2 and 3 (first movement expositions), Concerto No.4 (second movement) and Concerto No.5 (finale)) provide further illustrations of Rubinstein's use of this device.

Ex. 15

The image shows four staves of musical notation in treble clef, with a key signature of one flat. Vertical dashed lines connect specific notes across the staves, illustrating thematic relationships. The staves are labeled as follows:

- Staff 1: Piano Concerto no. 4 (1st mvt.)
- Staff 2: Impromptu, op. 75 no. 4
- Staff 3: Romance, op. 44 no. 1
- Staff 4: Piano Concerto no. 1 (2nd mvt.)

Rubinstein was also adept at using thematic transformation as a means of achieving structural unity. However, owing to the prerequisite degree of patience and imagination needed to carry out the technical complexities inherent in such a procedure convincingly, Rubinstein chose, perhaps wisely, not to employ this process unless he were absolutely sure of his material. Ex.21, for instance, from the Piano Concerto No.1, illustrates how neatly Rubinstein transforms the

40. The first three examples were correlated by L. A. Barenboim, *op. cit.*, Vol.1, p.317. The fourth example was added by the present writer.

tranquil, rhythmically languid introductory theme of the finale into its strident, martial second subject. Far more ingenious, extensive and structurally unifying are Rubinstein's transformation of the opening theme (first subject) of the Concerto No.4 in D minor - undoubtedly the finest melody to be found in the concertos (Ex.22a) - and the motivically linked principal subject of the finale (Ex.22b).

Ex. 16 (a) 1st subject

Allegro con moto  
mf

(b) 1st subject, subsidiary theme

f

(c) Transition theme

ff

(d) 2nd subject (rhythmically simplified to clarify the melodic contours)

p

(e) Salon interlude

Ex. 17

1st subject:

f

1st subject, subsidiary theme:

p

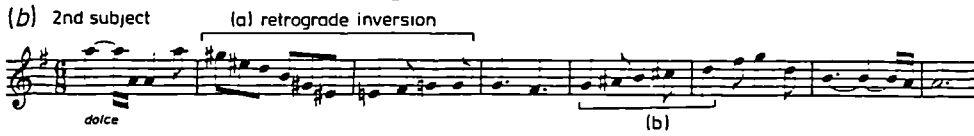
(a) inverted

Ex. 18

(a) 1st subject



(b) 2nd subject



(c) 2nd subject (b)



Ex. 19

(a) Section 'A', principal theme



(b) Section 'B', principal theme



(c) Section 'C'



Ex. 20

(a) Section 'A', principal theme



(b) Principal theme



(c) Section 'B', principal theme



**Ex. 21** (a) *Allegro non troppo*

(a) *p*

(b) *f*

Detailed description: Ex. 21 consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff, labeled (a), is marked 'Allegro non troppo' and 'p'. It contains two phrases: (a) and (b). The second staff, labeled (b), is marked 'f' and contains two phrases: (a) and (b).

**Ex. 22** (a) *Moderato*

(a) *f*

(b) *f*

Detailed description: Ex. 22 consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff, labeled (a), is marked 'Moderato' and 'f'. It contains three phrases: (a), (b), and (c). The second staff, labeled (b), is marked 'f' and contains five phrases: (d), (a), (c), (b), and (e).

**Ex. 23** (a) *Allegro*

(a) *p*

(b) Bridge passage  
*animato*

(c) 1st subject, continuation

(d) Bridge passage  
*mp*

(e) Transition  
*animato assai*

Detailed description: Ex. 23 consists of five staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff, labeled (a), is marked 'Allegro' and 'p'. It contains two phrases: (a) and (c). The second staff, labeled (b), is marked 'animato' and contains four phrases: (a), (b), (a), and (b). The third staff, labeled (c), contains two phrases: (a) and (a), ending with a *sf* marking. The fourth staff, labeled (d), is marked 'mp' and contains two phrases: (d) and (d). The fifth staff, labeled (e), is marked 'animato assai' and contains one phrase: (e), ending with 'etc.'.

Variants of these themes, exclusive to the finale, are seen in Ex.23. The essence, therefore, of Rubinstein's thematic unity between the first and third movements is seen in Ex.24. Thematic transformation is also used to develop the second subject - this time through the use of rhythmic diminution (see Ex.25).

## Ex. 24

3rd mvt. } Correlated by L. A. Barenboim<sup>41</sup>

3rd mvt.

1st mvt.

## Ex. 25

(a)

(a)

mf etc

mf (a)

As far as the influence of folk song on the concertos is concerned, Soviet musicologists - Barenboim and Alexeyev in particular - have gone to extraordinary lengths to establish some kind of connection - no doubt to contribute to an ideologically compatible appraisal of recent musical history - or, failing that, to attribute 'Russian' characteristics to Rubinstein's music at every conceivable opportunity. A. D. Alexeyev, for example, firmly believes that Rubinstein's music is based on two principal stylistic elements - the 'Russian' element (e.g. urban songs and romances) and the 'Oriental' element (e.g. peasant folk music). 'Contrary to general opinion,' he

41. L. A. Barenboim, op. cit., Vol.1, p.324.



concludes, 'the second type was widely expressed in Rubinstein's music.'<sup>42</sup>

General opinion in this case may in fact be better informed, as neither the content of Rubinstein's concertos nor Rubinstein's own attitude towards folk song seems to agree with this viewpoint:

'Russian folk songs' wrote Rubinstein 'are exclusively melancholy and monotonous. This monotony has been a stumbling block for composers.' (43)

He even attributed the initial failure of Glinka's operas to their folk song content. Though undoubtedly 'sour grapes' again (see p.28), there is, nevertheless, little evidence of Russian 'peasant' folk song material in the concertos.<sup>44</sup> Only the third movement of the D minor Concerto possesses a noticeably folk-like character, though Barenboim attributes this to the influence of the krakowiak, a dance of Polish origin.<sup>45</sup>

However, Barenboim also points out that the krakowiak was

widely accepted in Russian towns and was played by orchestras at aristocratic or merchants' balls as well as performed by amateur pianists in students' evenings or meetings of the intelligentsia. (46)

In addition, according to Barenboim, the dance, along with the waltz and quadrille,

42. A. D. Alexeyev, Russkaya fortepiannaya muzika (Moscow, 1963), p.129.

43. James Bakst, op. cit., p.170.

44. In fact, the only example of thematic material incorporated into the piano concertos not composed by Rubinstein himself is, curiously enough, of Italian origin - a Tarantella napolitaine populaire (mentioned on p.19) located in the quasi-development section (C') of the Fifth Piano Concerto's finale.

45. L. A. Barenboim, op. cit., Vol.1, p.322.

46. Ibid.

became popular in the city suburbs and was danced along with peasant folk-dances in the factory workshops accompanied by accordions. (47)

Barenboim is also of the opinion that the influence of the accordion was responsible for the alternating chords found at the close of the principal subject of the finale (Ex.23a) and for the ensuing development of this pattern in the transition (Ex.23e). The 'shouts', he concludes, 'and the stamping of the dancers' are represented by sforzando exclamations in the orchestra.

Despite the apparent influence of folk music on the Fourth Piano Concerto's finale, Cesar Cui (after hearing its first performance) nevertheless considered it was

something like those wild dances that Gluck and Righini wrote . . . something like the alla Turca one finds in Mozart,

and he concluded that, although it was original, he found it

strange and lacking in artistry because of its crude dancing character. (48)

Underlying Rubinstein's thematic material, irrespective of whether it is folk-orientated or Mendelssohnian in character or whatever, is a somewhat unadventurous harmonic framework firmly entrenched in early nineteenth-century convention. A strikingly dull illustration of this is the opening of the Fifth Piano Concerto's second movement (Ex.26). Worse still are the many passages devoid of any harmonic change whatsoever - the quasi-cadenzas in the first

47. Ibid.

48. C. Cui, Izbrannye stati (Moscow, 1957), p.152.

movement of the Third Concerto, the solo entry in the first movement of the Fifth Concerto and the eight bars of mind-numbing double octaves (from the same concerto) in the concluding bars of the first movement's codettas (see Ex.27).

**Ex. 26** Andante

Violino I  
Violino II  
Viola  
Cello e Bassa

*p*

**Ex. 27**

What have finally and irrevocably condemned Rubinstein's concertos to oblivion, however, are the patches of harmonic carelessness, usually to be found connecting one section to another. In the slow movement of the Third Concerto, for example, Rubinstein attempts structural elision by recapitulating the  $A^2$  section in the tonic major (the prevailing key of the  $B'$  section), but in trying to return to the tonic minor somehow manages to get entangled in dominant 7th chords in the unrelated key of F. Rubinstein finds a partial solution to his problem by enharmonically reinterpreting the final dominant 7th chord as a German 6th on the flattened submediant of E major. Though academically acceptable, the musical result, however, leaves a lot to be desired (see Ex.28).

## Ex. 28

F major:  $\text{V}_7$  ( $\text{V}_{7b}$ )  
 E major:  $\text{bVI}_{\#6}$   
 E minor:  $\text{VI}_{\#6}$   $\text{Ib}$

The Fifth Piano Concerto, being the least inspired of all, is particularly rich in examples. It is almost embarrassing to witness how Rubinstein attempts to extricate himself from a harmonic mess created by the omission of the transition section between the first and second-subject groups in the recapitulation of the first movement (see Ex.29). Disturbing also is the harmonic wrench from E major to E flat Major in the coda of the first movement. As in the slow movement of the Third Concerto (see Ex.28), the knowledge that such a procedure can be justified theoretically does little to alleviate the aural discomfort that results (see Ex.30).

## Ex. 29

## Ex. 30

E major:  $\text{V}_7$  II  
 F# minor: I enharmonic  $\text{V}_9$   
 E♭ major: VII

Apart from harmonic anomalies, Rubinstein's concertos contain several striking examples of imbalance between piano and orchestra - a comparatively serious miscalculation in that the areas affected are not exclusively confined to sectional perimeters or points of modulation but can, and often do, occupy whole chunks of a movement's structure. Perhaps in normal circumstances it may seem a little excessive to consider an imbalance of this kind a 'serious miscalculation'. Indeed, many famous concertos - in particular, Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto, for example - are blighted to some extent by this malaise. However, in the case of these two concertos, more often than not, it is superfluous passage work in the soloist's part that is rendered almost inaudible under the weight of the orchestra's indulgent lyricism and not material of any particular significance or interest. In Rubinstein's concertos, however, the reverse is often the case, with the thematic material, usually sparsely distributed throughout the orchestra anyway, submerged in a sea of inconsequential virtuosic piano-writing, as illustrated by Ex.31 (from the last movement of the Fifth Piano Concerto).

Ex. 31

The image displays a musical score for Ex. 31, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system is for the piano, with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a complex, virtuosic piano part with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a flute part (Fl. Cl. soli) with a melodic line. The second system continues the piano and flute parts, with the piano part showing some triplet markings. The flute part has a melodic line with some triplet markings. The piano part is marked 'Piano' and the flute part is marked 'Fl. Cl. soli' and 'mf'.

In general, Rubinstein's piano style is inclined towards bombast for the simple reason that the comparatively naive underlying musical ideas do not match the overblown manner in which they are presented. Though bristling with all the virtuoso devices and figurations popular at that time, it is, none the less, essentially music of the salon, albeit aggrandized to suit the requirements of the concert hall. A fairly typical example of Rubinstein's piano-writing, when reduced to its fundamentals, reveals its true heritage, particularly in somewhat unadventurous harmonies, a preoccupation with melodic sequences and an overall musical timidity - all quintessential features of salon music (see Ex.32). The 'blowing-up' of conventional salon-style keyboard writing was also responsible for several of Rubinstein's most characteristic figurations, including patches of hypertrophied chordal writing (encouraged, no doubt, by Rubinstein's enormous span) and, more successfully, perhaps, the chordal decoration of what are intrinsically straightforward arpeggio accompaniments (see Exx.33 and 34).

Ex. 32

Rubinstein (op.94, 1st mvt.)

The musical score for Ex. 32 consists of two systems of piano notation. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a complex, highly ornamented melodic line in the right hand with many slurs and ties, and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The second system continues the piece with similar complexity. The tempo marking 'Presto appassionato' is located below the first system.


Ex. 33

Rubinstein (op 94, 1st mvt.)

The musical score for Ex. 33 consists of two systems of piano notation. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features dense, block-like chordal writing in both hands, with many slurs and ties. The tempo marking 'Presto appassionato' is located above the first system.


## Ex. 34

Rubinstein (op. 70, 2nd mvt.)

(a) 

ben marcato la melodia e molto piano il accompagnamento

Rubinstein (op. 35, 2nd mvt.)<sup>49</sup>

(b) 

Other characteristics of Rubinstein's piano style include unison quaver and semiquaver passage-work; rapid staccato chords—a curious variant of which occurs in the First and Fifth Concertos (see Ex.35a and b respectively); octave trills and chromatic scales in 6ths (all features by no means uncommon in piano works by other composers). More idiosyncratic, however, is the flattened-pyramid-shape semi-quaver and/or demisemiquaver pattern (one side of which is usually chromatic in construction) often used by Rubinstein as part of his transition and bridge-passage material (see Ex.36).<sup>50</sup>

## Ex. 35 (a)


*f* 

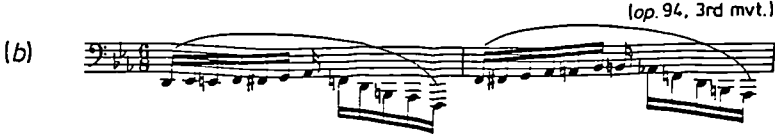
(b) 

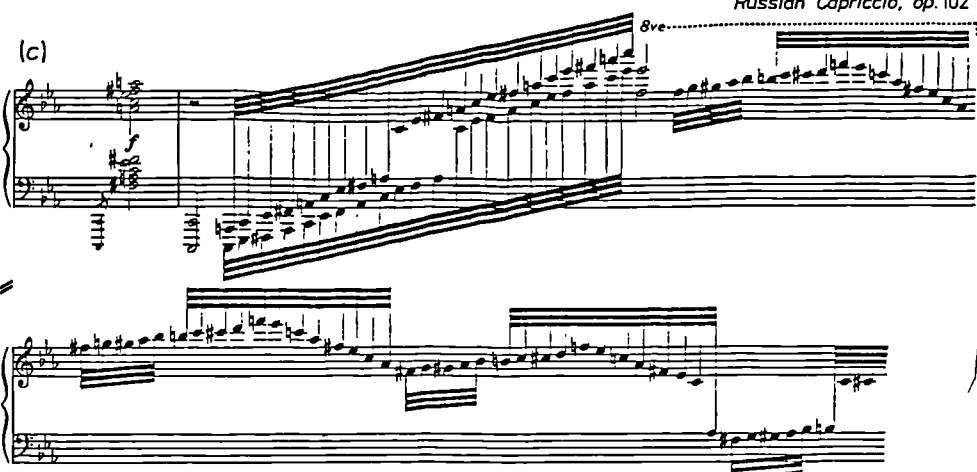
49. Ex.34b is of particular significance as it may conceivably have had some influence, in regard to keyboard layout and treatment of thematic material, on the slow movement of Balakirev's Piano Concerto in E flat (Rubinstein's Second Piano Concerto being one of the scores perused by Balakirev while he was searching for ideas for his own concerto).

50. Other examples of Rubinstein's 'pyramid' can be found in both the first and third movements of the Concerto in G, Op.45.

## Ex. 36

(a)  (op. 94, 1st mvt.)

(b)  (op. 94, 3rd mvt.)

(c)  Russian Capriccio, op. 102

Rubinstein is also fond of combining melody and accompaniment (usually a flowing semiquaver counterpoint) in one hand and then doubling this, an octave lower, with exactly the same figuration. This perfunctory, though highly effective, procedure is employed in the development sections of both the Third and Fourth Concertos.

Though the influence of other composers on Rubinstein's musical style - for example, Beethoven and Liszt in regard to pianistic ideas and Mendelssohn in matters of harmony and melody - has already been noted, there is evidence, however, that Rubinstein may have been influential in his own right, though this has not been generally acknowledged in the past. The most important composer to have been influenced by Rubinstein was his pupil Tchaikovsky, and the composition in which Rubinstein's influence manifested itself most



noticeably was Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1.<sup>51</sup>

Although Tchaikovsky was a reasonably good pianist and had a great respect for the piano (which he considered the 'king of instruments'), nevertheless it seems likely that he occasionally had need to refer to the keyboard works of others in order to find pianistic solutions to his musical problems.<sup>52</sup> Obvious sources of inspiration, apart from Liszt's compositions, were the five piano concertos of Anton Rubinstein, the last of which was composed one year before Tchaikovsky's first attempt at the form in 1875.

Tchaikovsky had a markedly ambivalent attitude towards Rubinstein's music and it often led to contradictory, and occasionally hypocritical, remarks in his correspondence and diaries. According to his brother Modest:

While recognizing Rubinstein's great gifts as a composer and valuing some of his works very highly - such as the Ocean Symphony, The Tower of Babel, the pianoforte concertos, Ivan the Terrible, the violoncello sonatas and many pieces for pianoforte, Tchaikovsky grew angry and impatient over the vast majority of the virtuoso's mediocre and empty creations. (53)

Though not everything written by Modest Tchaikovsky can be regarded as completely reliable, his conclusions concerning his brother's

51. The only substantial published account of Rubinstein's influence on Tchaikovsky is Ulrich Niebuhr's article 'Der Einfluss Anton Rubinsteins auf die Klavierkonzerte Peter Tschaikowskys', Musikforschung, XXVII/4 (1974), pp.412-34. The German musicologist T. Stengel and the Russian musicologists A. D. Alexeyev and A. A. Nikolayev have also commented on a possible connection but have not put forward any concrete evidence to support this.
52. Tchaikovsky freely admitted that he found writing for the piano very difficult. In a letter to his brother Anatoli, dated 21 November 1874, he wrote (in connection with the First Piano Concerto): 'I have, as a duty, to force my brain to invent piano passages, with the result that my nerves are very strained.' Quoted in Zhizn Petra Ilyicha Tchaikovskovo by M. I. Tchaikovsky (Moscow, 1900-02), Vol.1, p.451.
53. Modest Tchaikovsky, The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, ed. Rosa Newmarch (London, 1906), p.592.

attitude towards Rubinstein's music is, to some extent, substantiated by the composer's correspondence. Rubinstein's Ivan the Terrible, for example, apparently made a favourable impression on Tchaikovsky, judging from a letter he wrote to the composer Ippolitov-Ivanov dated 12 June 1889: 'What about Rubinstein's Grosny? A wonderful piece!'. Tchaikovsky considered another work, Don Quixote, 'very interesting and, in places, splendid' and subsequently arranged it for piano duet for the publisher Bessel. (Cynics may, of course, attribute Tchaikovsky's magnanimity to remunerative considerations.) Only in his diaries, however, is the full extent of Tchaikovsky's dislike for Rubinstein's music candidly and truthfully aired:

Play 'Nero' after supper. I am still astonished at the impudent liberties taken by its composer: Oh you ridiculous clown! By God, I am seized with anger looking at this score. But then I play this abomination because I am conscious of my superiority - at least as to sincerity - and [it] gives support to my energy. You think that you write vilely, but seeing such trash which nevertheless, was performed seriously - your soul feels better. I am ashamed that I feel so much anger over this work - but why should I make pretences in my diary? (54)

The final sentence is most revealing; from it one can deduce that probably Tchaikovsky greatly disliked Rubinstein's music all along but generally kept his opinions to himself so as not to jeopardize his personal and professional relationship with the 'God of Olympus' (as Tchaikovsky called him). Rubinstein was, after all, the most influential musician of his time in Russia. Had Tchaikovsky aired his views, he might well have alienated himself from the powers that be and thus have forfeited the (no doubt) lucrative commissions that came his way (such as the arrangement for piano duet of the 'very

54. Quoted in Tchaikovsky: A Self-Portrait by Vladimir Volkoff (London, 1975), p.79.

interesting and, in places, splendid' Don Quixote for Bessel.<sup>55</sup>

One wonders, therefore, why Tchaikovsky turned to Rubinstein's concertos for ideas. Possibly it was for the same reason that Balakirev had studied the score of Rubinstein's Second Concerto some fifteen years earlier - as an example of 'what to avoid' (as Edward Garden puts it). More likely, however, is it that, having embarked on a large-scale form unfamiliar to him (i.e. concerto), and having subsequently encountered difficulties peculiar to that form that he felt ill-equipped to deal with, Tchaikovsky found it necessary to acquaint himself with concertos by other composers, including Rubinstein, particularly for guidance in matters of structure and keyboard style.<sup>56</sup> In Rubinstein's concertos - which, according to his brother Modest, he 'valued' - Tchaikovsky was fortunate enough to find on his doorstep, as it were, a corpus of contemporary works technically competent in the aspects of composition he found so difficult (aspects, incidentally, solely concerned with the 'mechanics' of composition, i.e. the means of expression rather than the expression itself - it goes without saying that Tchaikovsky realized the folly of using other features of Rubinstein's music as a source of inspiration).

Curiously, however, the passages in Rubinstein's concertos that seemed to have been most influential - usually those exhibiting a degree of originality, albeit in somewhat crude and sometimes

55. Tchaikovsky also arranged Rubinstein's orchestral piece Ivan the Terrible for Bessel in 1869 and translated, from the original German into Russian, the texts of Rubinstein's Persian Songs, Op.34.

56. The German musicologist Stengel is likewise of the opinion that Rubinstein influenced Tchaikovsky in terms of structure and piano technique, though he does not go into any detail in order to substantiate this (Die Entwicklung des Klavierkonzerts von Liszt bis zur Gegenwart) (Heidelberg, 1931), pp.83-4.

unprepossessing terms - were, more often than not, supreme examples of the very same 'superfluous virtuosity' that Tchaikovsky so much despised.<sup>57</sup> A striking example, initially derived, perhaps, from Liszt's Second Piano Concerto in A major (see Ex.7a) is the chordal passage from the codetta of Rubinstein's Fifth Concerto (first movement: see Ex.7b). It is interesting to speculate as to what extent, if any, Tchaikovsky and the pianist Alexander Siloti, to whom Tchaikovsky turned for advice, were influenced by these chords whilst revising the score of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto in preparation for its third edition (see Ex.37). Furthermore, Tchaikovsky's use of French horns immediately before the soloist's entry, though not exactly in the same position as Rubinstein's, is nevertheless so strongly reminiscent (particularly in the 'tonal' juxtaposition of horns and piano) that it goes a long way towards substantiating a possible connection. Another distinctive pianistic feature possibly 'borrowed' from Rubinstein - one that has, none the less, become a 'trade mark' of Tchaikovsky's style and that occurs in three of his five works for piano and orchestra<sup>58</sup> - is a pattern of rising diminished 7th arpeggios usually a 6th apart. It is employed in a particularly effective way in Tchaikovsky's First Concerto, where it becomes an important constituent in the cadenza/bridge-passage between the two principal statements of the opening theme (see Ex.38). What is interesting, however, is that an identical figuration can be found in the retransition section of the finale of

57. What is doubly ironic is that, except in the case of the First Piano Concerto, in which the skilfully integrated virtuosity is of paramount importance to the musical sense of the work, 'superfluous virtuosity' becomes an unwelcome characteristic of every work composed by Tchaikovsky for piano and orchestra.

58. The First and Third Concertos and the Concert Fantasy in G, Op.56.

Rubinstein's Fifth Piano Concerto (Ex.39). Whether Tchaikovsky was directly influenced by this arpeggio pattern is difficult to determine, as Rubinstein's Concerto was published after Tchaikovsky had completed his First Piano Concerto (on 21 February 1875). However, Rubinstein was in the habit of playing to invited audiences new compositions that were still in the manuscript stage, so it is possible, particularly in view of the fact that, it being the first piano concerto Rubinstein had composed for ten years, it was a relatively important event, that Tchaikovsky might have heard, and possibly examined, the concerto sometime during 1874. If this were the case, then Tchaikovsky may not only have been influenced in matters of piano technique<sup>59</sup> but may have actually acquired the idea of composing a piano concerto, in the first place, from hearing Rubinstein's.<sup>60</sup>

## Ex. 37

Allegro non troppo  
e molto maestoso

*ff*

8ve... 8ve... 8ve... 8ve...

59. In his diatribe aimed at Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto (described in detail in a letter Tchaikovsky wrote to his patroness Nadejda von Meck dated 21 January 1878), Nikolay Rubinstein accused Tchaikovsky (among other things) of stealing ideas from other composers. It is possible, in view of the evidence presented in this study, that Nikolay Rubinstein may have been referring to Tchaikovsky's apparent borrowing of pianistic figurations from the piano concertos of his brother, Anton.
60. In fact, it is not known why, in November 1874, Tchaikovsky embarked on a piano concerto. Whatever the reason, it must have been very persuasive, as (according to his friend, the music critic Laroche) Tchaikovsky had stated many times during his student days at the St Petersburg Conservatoire that he would never write a work for solo piano and orchestra.

## Ex. 38

Musical score for Ex. 38, showing a piano passage with a rising chromatic double octave in the final bars. The score is written for piano and features a complex, dense texture with multiple voices in both hands. The key signature is B-flat major, and the time signature is 3/4. The passage is marked with a forte dynamic and includes a 'div.' (diviso) marking in the final bars.

## Ex. 39

Musical score for Ex. 39, showing three figures (Fig. N, bars 14-16; bar 20; bar 24) illustrating a rising chromatic double octave. The score is written for piano and features a complex, dense texture with multiple voices in both hands. The key signature is B-flat major, and the time signature is 3/4. The passage is marked with a forte dynamic and includes a 'div.' (diviso) marking in the final bars.

Other passages in Rubinstein's concertos that may have influenced Tchaikovsky include the rising chromatic double octaves in the final bars of the Fifth Concerto (used by Tchaikovsky in the corresponding place in his First Piano Concerto: see Ex.40) and the principal theme of the D minor Concerto's second movement, the chordal accompaniment of which (see Ex.41a) bears a strong similarity to that of the principal theme of the second movement of Tchaikovsky's second Piano Concerto in G major, Op.44 (Ex.41b). Far more substantial, however, is Rubinstein's apparent influence on the structure and keyboard layout of Tchaikovsky's cadenzas; it is, after all, in the cadenzas that Tchaikovsky would have needed most help.<sup>61</sup> Particularly significant is the similarity between the principal cadenzas of the first movements of Rubinstein's D minor Concerto and Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto. It must be pointed out, however, that Rubinstein's influence is confined to germinal ideas concerning

61. Being essentially orchestral in concept, Tchaikovsky's piano style was not entirely suitable - or so he thought - for the kind of pyrotechnic display expected of a concerto at that time.

structure and, to a lesser extent, to piano style; fortunately it did not touch upon the musical content itself.

## Ex. 40

Rubinstein

(a)

Musical score for Rubinstein's cadenza, marked *(ff)*. The score is in G minor, 3/4 time, and consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a dynamic range from *(ff)* to *mf*.

Tchaikovsky

(b)

Musical score for Tchaikovsky's cadenza, marked *(fff)*. The score is in G minor, 3/4 time, and consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a dynamic range from *(fff)* to *mf*.

## Ex. 41

Rubinstein

(a)

*can molto espressione*

Musical score for Rubinstein's cadenza, marked *can molto espressione*. The score is in G minor, 3/4 time, and consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a dynamic range from *p* to *mf*.

Tchaikovsky

(b)

*molto cantabile*

*p*

Musical score for Tchaikovsky's cadenza, marked *molto cantabile* and *p*. The score is in G minor, 3/4 time, and consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a dynamic range from *p* to *mf*.

RUBINSTEIN: CONCERTO IN D MINOR,  
Op.70 (1864)

TCHAIKOVSKY: CONCERTO IN B FLAT  
MINOR, Op.23 (1875)

Cadenza (66 bars)

Commences on the flattened  
submediant chord of B flat major  
- the key of the preceding 2nd  
subject.

Cadenza (75 bars)

Commences on the flattened  
submediant chord of B flat major  
- the key of the preceding 2nd  
subject.

## SECTION I: SENZA TEMPO

Entirely constructed on a left-hand ostinato arpeggio pattern (see Ex.42a)

## SECTION I: A TEMPO RUBATO

Entirely constructed on a left-hand ostinato arpeggio pattern (see Ex.42b)

## Ex. 42

(a) (senza tempo) Rubinstein

(b) (a tempo rubato) Tchaikovsky

(G flat major - C flat major - B flat minor)

Rising key structure:

G flat major/F sharp major (enharmonic change) - B minor - C minor - D flat major - E flat major - F major - G major - D minor - C major - C minor - G major - F major - E flat major - C flat major.

## SECTION II 'TEMPO I'

(subito accelerando e stringendo sempre quasi Prestissimo)

## SECTION II

(accel. - a tempo - accel. - a tempo - accel. - a tempo - accel.—>)



Rising key structure:

B flat minor - C minor - D minor  
- E minor - A minor - D minor.

Rising key structure:

C flat major/B major (enharmonic  
change)  
E flat minor - D sharp minor  
(enharmonic change) - B major.  
C minor - D major - E minor -  
F major - G major - A major -  
B flat major - G flat major.

Ritard.

Quasi adagio

The most striking similarities can be summarized thus:

- (1) Both cadenzas begin on the flattened submediant chord of B flat major - the key of the preceding 2nd subject;
- (2) Both are constructed in two sections, the first of which is ad libitum as far as tempo is concerned ('senza tempo' and 'a tempo rubato' being more or less synonymous), and both display a remarkably similar approach to keyboard layout and treatment of thematic material (note in particular how, in both Exx.42a and 42b the right-hand part is introduced on the second beat and is subsequently syncopated across the bar-line);
- (3) Both second sections have an identical musical function in that they are designed specifically to create an increase in tension and excitement, and both achieve this through identical means, such as sequential treatment of the thematic material rising through a series of keys either a major or minor 2nd apart, a fragmentation of this material and, finally, a gradual acceleration to a climax.

Rubinstein immediately follows his cadenza with a coda based on the first-subject theme accompanied by double octaves reminiscent of Tchaikovsky's octaves, which are found in a very similar position in the finale of his Concerto in B flat minor (see Ex.43). In addition, Tchaikovsky's nine bars of solo piano *ff* double octaves, of which Ex.43b are the concluding two bars, serve exactly the same function as the 14 bars of double octaves (also characterized by octave leaps) located towards the end of Rubinstein's D minor Concerto, i.e. they both lead into a grandiose 'tutti' climax marking the beginning of the coda. Tchaikovsky also follows Rubinstein's key-scheme - the soloist's octaves commence in the dominant of the prevailing key of the Concerto and proceed into the tonic major, which concludes the coda and the work as a whole.

## Ex. 43

Tchaikovsky (2nd edn., 1879)

The image contains two musical excerpts, (a) and (b), illustrating double octave passages. Excerpt (a) is labeled 'Rubinstein' and shows two staves of music with 'Sve.' markings above the notes. Excerpt (b) is labeled 'Tchaikovsky (2nd edn., 1879)' and shows two staves of music with 'Sve...' markings above the notes. Below the first staff of (b) are the markings 'fff martellato' and below the second staff is 'ritenuto molto'.

The influence of Rubinstein's D minor Piano Concerto on Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto has already been noted in Soviet musicological studies. To quote A. A. Nikolayev:

Maybe Russian music would not have acquired the Concerto in B flat minor by the genius of Tchaikovsky if before that there had not existed the concertos of Rubinstein and, in particular, the Fourth Concerto in D minor. (62)

A. D. Alexeyev is of the same opinion: 'More than any other work, Rubinstein's Fourth Concerto leads to the B flat minor Concerto of Tchaikovsky.'<sup>63</sup> However, neither writer substantiates his conclusions with any concrete evidence or persuasive analysis. On the other hand, the German musicologist Ulrich Niebuhr, in addition to having independently reached several of the conclusions put forward so far in this study concerning Rubinstein's influence on Tchaikovsky (see 'Der Einfluss Anton Rubinsteins auf die Klavierkonzerte Peter Tschaikowskys', Die Musikforschung , XXVII/4 (1974), pp.412-34), considers that Tchaikovsky may have been influenced by Rubinstein's treatment of thematic material and draws attention to a similarity in approach regarding the construction of the subject matter in Rubinstein's Third Concerto and Tchaikovsky's First Concerto. In addition, he believes, with perhaps more justification, that there is a possible connection between the principal theme of Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto's finale and the jaunty finale theme of Rubinstein's Third Concerto (see Ex.44).<sup>64</sup>

Ex. 44

(a) *Allegro con fuoco* Tchaikovsky

(b) (Allegro) 2nd phrase Rubinstein

63. A. D. Alexeyev, Russkaya fortepiannaya muzika (Moscow, 1963), p.139.

64. Tchaikovsky may also have been influenced by the vibrant opening theme of the finale of Rubinstein's Fourth Concerto (see Ex.23a which, although visually dissimilar, is closer in character.

In assessing the historical significance of Rubinstein's five piano concertos it is necessary, first of all, to interpret the perplexing ambivalence they created in the minds of those who heard and played them (they are now no longer performed) and, secondly, to attempt to reconcile these conclusions with the even more perplexing ideologically orientated evaluations of Soviet musicologists (there having been no substantial research undertaken in this area anywhere else). There can be little doubt that Rubinstein's own performances of his compositions favourably influenced audiences and critics alike as to their musical content. Saint-Saëns's account of Rubinstein's Paris debut bears witness to this phenomenon:

It seemed as if the race of 'piano gods' had disappeared when one beautiful day there appeared posters with the name of Anton Rubinstein. He made his début with his Concerto in G major. The next day he was a celebrity, and at the second concert, the hall was crowded to suffocation. I was present at the concert, and I harnessed myself into the chariot of the conqueror. (65)

Rubinstein made an even greater impression on another French composer, Berlioz, when he gave a private performance of his Fourth Concerto:

Berlioz - old, stooping, he did not go either to the theatre or to the concert. He went to listen to the D minor Concerto of Anton Rubinstein, who had performed the day before. A. R. willingly sat down at the piano and began playing. In the shaded room there were also his wife, Heller, Berlioz and myself. Berlioz lay on the couch in his usual posture, head lowered, sad expression and fixed staring eyes . . . . I glanced at him. He lay motionless. Large tears rolled down his emaciated cheeks, and his feverish eyes burned. The playing finished: A. R. stood up and raised his leonine head. Berlioz rested himself on his shoulder and said in a trembling voice 'Oh my friend! It is splendid! It distracts me from my suffering!' (66)

65. Quoted in James Bakst; op. cit., p.170.

66. Quoted in V. A. Rubinstein's Oskoki proshlova, pp.29-32.

Again, it is difficult to determine what impressed more - the playing or the music itself. Perhaps it was an amalgam of both; with Rubinstein, as with Liszt, the two were often indistinguishable. On the other hand, Rubinstein's fellow-countrymen were far less magnanimous in their opinions and, more often than not, 'hit the nail on the head' when it came to his shortcomings as a composer. Possibly they were, by now, indifferent to his stunning displays at the keyboard and were therefore more able to extricate the true musical essence from its soft padding of 'superfluous virtuosity' (for what it was worth). Furthermore, the oppressive atmosphere of intrigue and rivalry between musical factions (particularly the so-called nationalists and the Conservatory-trained eclectics) encouraged harsh criticisms, which, in some cases, were little more than thinly disguised personal attacks.<sup>67</sup> The Russian composer, critic and self-confessed Wagnerite Alexander Serov, for example, who in any case considered Rubinstein a 'backward classicist with German training',<sup>68</sup> refused to recognize Rubinstein's Third Piano Concerto as a Russian composition because 'it was not written in the national style created by Glinka and because its composer had been born a Jew'.<sup>69, 70</sup> Cesar Cui, on the other hand, was more specific in his criticism. He deplored, for example, the many 'tedious and commonplace passages' of the Fifth Piano Concerto, particularly those revealing 'difficulties

67. See Robert C. Ridenour's Nationalism, Modernism, and Personal Rivalry in Nineteenth-Century Russian Music (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1981).

68. Quoted in Boborykin's Vospominania, Vol.2, p.451.

69. Alexander Serov, Izbrannye stati, Vol.2 (St Petersburg, 1893), p.602.

70. For the very same reason, Cesar Cui likewise refused to acknowledge Rubinstein's symphonies. In his opinion 'the First Russian symphony was by Rimsky-Korsakov' (Izbrannye stati (Leningrad, 1952), pp.66-8).

not commensurate with their musical objectives and which were written in coarse strokes'. However, he concedes that there are 'some happy ideas and interesting places' and that the Concerto exhibits 'a successful use of piano and orchestra' and concludes his review by stating that 'in any case, this Concerto, like all his instrumental music, is better than his operas'.<sup>71</sup> The Third Concerto fares worse under his pen, being written off as a 'weak, tedious and pretentious work of little interest', though he did consider the Fourth 'more successful'. Nevertheless, as far as the general public was concerned, the consensus of opinion during the closing decades of the nineteenth century was that Rubinstein was a first-rate composer; indeed, even Tchaikovsky considered him at one time (during the 1870s) to be one of the two leading symphonists of his time (the other was Raff!).<sup>72</sup>

The concertos, needless to say, were performed frequently, not only by Rubinstein himself but by many of the leading virtuosi of the day, including Anna Esipova (to whom Rubinstein dedicated his Russian Capriccio in C minor, Op.102 for piano and orchestra (see pp.66-9)), Rubinstein's brother Nikolay and the ubiquitous Hans von Bülow, who considered the Fourth Concerto 'magnificent'.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, during the early years of the present century, the Third, Fourth and Fifth Concertos became part of almost every leading pianist's repertoire; the Third, for example, was a favourite vehicle of the Polish-American pianist Josef Hofmann (1876-1957), and the Russian pianist Josef Lhévinne (1874-1944) made his American debut in 1919 playing the Fifth.

71. *Ibid.*, p.120.

72. See David Brown's Tchaikovsky: a Biographical and Critical Study. Vol.1: The Early Years (1840-1874) (London, 1978), p.280.

73. Hans von Bülow, Briefe und Schriften, Vol.4 (Leipzig, 1895), p.218.

In addition to five piano concertos, Rubinstein composed three miscellaneous works for piano and orchestra: the Fantasy in C major, Op.84, the Russian Capriccio in C minor, Op.102 and the Concertstück in A flat, Op.113. The Concertstück, which was specially written to be performed by the composer during his fifty years' jubilee celebration in 1889, is of little significance and can safely be passed by. The remaining two works, however, are interesting as they represent Rubinstein's only substantial ventures into monothematicism and multi-sectional single-movement design.

The Fantasy in C major (completed in autumn 1869 and first performed by Rubinstein in Moscow in December that year) is constructed in four connected movements or sections, in much the same way as Weber's Konzertstück in F minor (1821). Indeed, the Fantasy may have been a conscious effort on Rubinstein's part to contribute to the Spohr-Weber-Moscheles-Liszt evolution of the single-movement concerto. It is an uneven work filled with a great deal of 'padding' and, though exhibiting a mildly Russian character in parts, lacks the 'vital spark' needed to bring the music to life. Monothematicism is a precarious musical procedure, even when undertaken by imaginative composers such as Schubert or Liszt; when tackled by a composer such as Rubinstein, who was not noted for structural ingenuity and inventiveness, disappointing results are almost a foregone conclusion.<sup>74</sup> From a pianistic point of view, the Fantasy is written in the grand manner, so much so that it prompted the Russian musicologist Boris Asafeyev to state that 'the leonine pianism of Anton Rubinstein (as demonstrated in this work) found a clever and ardent continuator in

74. Far superior from every point of view is Rimsky-Korsakov's essay in monothematicism - the Piano Concerto in C sharp minor, Op.30 (1882-3).

Rakhmaninov'.<sup>75</sup> A. D. Alexeyev considers that Tchaikovsky was also influenced by Rubinstein's Fantasy and notes that the alternation of soloist and orchestra, as in the initial exposition of the principal theme of the Fantasy, is similarly employed in Tchaikovsky's concertos.<sup>76</sup>

Undoubtedly, the most interesting of the miscellaneous works for piano and orchestra is the Russian Capriccio in C minor, which dates from Rubinstein's so-called 'Russian' period, 1878-82 (see footnote 12) and which, according to Barenboim, was composed at the same time as his opera The Merchant Kalashnikov.<sup>77</sup> The work is mentioned in a letter Rubinstein wrote to Senff dated 12 October 1878. The letter also reveals an amazing reappraisal of his former musical attitudes:

I think that it will be effective and that Esipova (to whom the work is dedicated) will be able to perform it - if she won't be put off, that is, by the coldness - or, rather - indifference, that the public and the critics show to everything Russian, be it in art or in science. (78)

Like the Fantasy in C major, the Russian Capriccio is multi-sectional in design and is constructed in four movements: (1) Moderato assai; (2) Allegro moderato; (3) Tempo I; (4) Allegro (with coda). Though eschewing the monothematic procedures of the earlier work, the thematic material of the Capriccio - three spurious folk songs - is cyclically developed to promote unity. Theme 'A', for example, on

75. Quoted in L. A. Barenboim, op. cit., Vol.2, p.47.

76. A. D. Alexeyev, Russkaya fortepiannaya muzika (Moscow, 1963), p.139.

77. Gerald Abraham, in his splendid article 'Anton Rubinstein: Russian Composer' (Slavonic and Romantic Music (London, 1968), pp.99-106), includes the Capriccio in his list of Rubinstein's 'Russian' compositions. However, he considers Rubinstein's 'Russian' period to have been 'about 1879-82 to be precise', in which case the Capriccio and the opera The Merchant Kalashnikov, both of which were composed in 1878, are excluded chronologically.

78. Quoted in L. A. Barenboim, op. cit., Vol.2, p.203.



which the 'Moderato assai' section is based, reappears in every other section and is even given prominence in the coda (see Ex.45). Theme 'B' is used in the 'Tempo I' section and the coda and theme 'C' in the 'Allegro' section and the coda (see Ex.46). In the manipulation of these themes Rubinstein exhibits uncharacteristic ingenuity: in the 'Allegro moderato' section, for example, theme 'A' is counterpointed by its inversion (see Ex.47), and in the following section, 'Tempo I', theme 'B', which was initially announced by the soloist, is subjected to similar treatment, with the additional complexity of being involved in canonic imitation (see Ex.48). In the coda, 'Meno mosso', all three are brought together in a kind of apotheosis of the thematic material. To make the themes musically compatible, however, Rubinstein found it expedient to alter them either rhythmically or intervallically (or, occasionally, both) (see Ex.49).

Ex. 45 (Theme "A")

Moderato assai  
Violas  
*mf con espressione*

Ex. 46

(a) (Theme "B")

*f largamente*

(b) (Theme "C")

Allegro  
*mp scherzando*

Ex. 47

Theme "A" (inverted)

*mp*

Theme "A"

## Ex. 48

Fl., Cl., Fag.

Vins. I & II (octave lower)

## Ex. 49

Theme "C" Flauti

ff Clarineti

Theme "B" meno mosso

Pianoforte fff Oboi

Theme "A" Violoncelli e Bassi

ff

In addition to using folk-like thematic material to enhance the Russian character of the music, Rubinstein also employs a primitive form of 'changing background' technique, à la Glinka's *Kamarinskaya*, in his treatment of this material. Unfortunately, Rubinstein confines his employment of this effective structural procedure to the 35-bar orchestral introduction; as soon as the soloist enters, all thoughts of imaginative instrumental scoring seem to disappear.

Despite its shortcomings - which, among others, include the almost obligatory 'superfluous virtuosity' in the piano part - the *Russian Capriccio* was generally well received. The German pianist Emil Sauer, who studied the piano with Anton Rubinstein's brother Nikolay, heard three different performances (with the Rubinstein brothers and Anna Esipova as soloists) and wrote favourably about it,

particularly the finale, which he found 'incomparably brilliant and rhythmically sparkling'.<sup>79</sup> Even Tchaikovsky admired it, though 'not as a piano piece but as an orchestral one'.<sup>80</sup> However, not everyone liked it. S. Kruglikov, writing about Rubinstein's music in general, considered that:

Some things are not bad, even in the Caprice Russe - where, by the way, there is a good beginning, but it is very soon replaced by folk thematicism not of root origin, which has already acquired a vulgar shade of the pubs and barracks. (81)

In the Russian Capriccio, Rubinstein set off, with characteristic lack of subtlety, on a new path that might well have led him to achievements of a truly significant nature. Sadly, characteristic also is Rubinstein's legendary 'impatience and carelessness'. Thus, after a promising start (noted by Kruglikov), Rubinstein hesitated, retraced his steps, as it were, and resumed his former 'common-European' direction. It is of little consolation to learn that Rubinstein's Russian Capriccio may have inspired and influenced a similar work for piano and orchestra also banished to obscurity: Arensky's Fantasia on themes of Ryabinin.

79. E. Sauer, Meine Welt, Bilder aus dem Geheimfach meiner Kunst und meines Lebens (Stuttgart, 1901), p.109.

80. G. Abraham, op. cit., p.103.

81. S. Kruglikov, 'Concertos of A. G. Rubinstein', in Artist, No.2 (Moscow, 1892), p.125.

**Part Two: The Piano Concertos of the Nationalists  
and the Eclectics**

Although Rubinstein's first three piano concertos represent the only quantitatively significant contribution to the development of the genre in Russia during the 1850s, the more talented, though as yet youthful and undisciplined Mily Balakirev made two attempts at concert-style composition between 1852 and 1856. The works dating from this period - the 'Grande Fantaisie' on Russian Folk Songs Op.4 for piano and orchestra and a projected piano concerto in F sharp minor - both remained unfinished, testifying not only to Balakirev's impatience and irrepressible urge to move on and explore new musical avenues but also to the enormous, almost insuperable problems facing self-trained composers wishing to work in areas where there were few precedents; in Balakirev's case, the composition of a nationalist-style concerto.

Balakirev probably found little of interest or guidance in Villoing's Concerto, it being, as already noted, wholly derivative in style. Nor could he turn for support to earlier Russian fantasias or pot-pourris on folk songs for piano and orchestra, as almost all remained unpublished and were, in any case, merely weak imitations of their western European counterparts. Furthermore, Rubinstein's concertos were not readily available to him for perusal as they did not appear in print until 1858, two years after Balakirev's final youthful attempt; the Piano Concerto in F sharp minor. He may have heard them played by the composer but it is doubtful whether the teenage Balakirev would have had the courage to ask Rubinstein if he

could examine the scores.<sup>1</sup> Apart from a perceptible influence in Balakirev's early piano compositions of Field, Mozart, Schumann and Hummel (whose A minor Concerto he had studied at the age of nine with Field's pupil Dubuque - using Field's fingering), it was principally in the works of Adolf Henselt, who had been living and working in St Petersburg from 1838, that Balakirev found ideas that could be developed further and moulded to a Russian national musical idiom.<sup>2</sup>

Henselt's Piano Concerto in F minor (published in 1846, though the manuscript, according to Clara Schumann, was in existence two years earlier) was especially important in the development of Balakirev's early style and it has been suggested by G. I. Timofeyev (in Russkaya Mysl 1912) that it served as a direct model for a movement of a septet for strings, flute, clarinet and piano - in fact, Balakirev's very first composition (dating from 1852) - which according to Edward Garden was probably recast three years later, as the Octet Op.3.<sup>3</sup> It is also possible that that same year, 1852,

1. Though, as Edward Garden points out, 'he [the mature Balakirev] was always willing to study Rubinstein's scores, even if only as examples of what to avoid' (E. Garden, 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', in Music and Letters, vol.60 No.2 (1979), p.169).
2. It is known that Balakirev admired Henselt's compositions, or at least, acknowledged him as a composer of some merit. In 1884 Balakirev composed his Study-Idyll 'Au jardin' for piano, in a deliberately Henseltian manner and also dedicated the piece to him. Four years later, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Henselt's début as a pianist, Balakirev published an article on the German composer under the pseudonym 'Valerian Gorshkov' in the journal New Times. That same year, Balakirev also recommended as a model concerto movement the Larghetto from Henselt's Piano Concerto in F minor Op.16 to his protégé Sergey Lyapunov, who was having difficulties with the slow movement of his own concerto '(No.1 in E flat minor).
3. The idea of arranging his very earliest work as an octet probably resulted from Balakirev's acquaintance with Rubinstein's Octet Op.9, itself a rescoring of an earlier sketch for a piano concerto in D minor composed in 1849. The combination of instruments used seems to confirm this, being identical apart from Balakirev's preference for oboe in place of Rubinstein's clarinet.

Henselt's variations for piano and orchestra Op.11 on 'Quand je quittai la Normandie' from Meyerbeer's 'Robert le diable', composed in Russia and published in 1840, may have triggered in the mind of the fifteen-year-old Balakirev the idea for a similar work on Russian themes. The result was his 'Grand Fantaisie sur airs nationales Russes pour le Pianoforté avec accompagnement d'Orchestre composée et dédiée a son maître Monsieur Charles Eisrich par MILY BALAKIREFF op.4' (according to the inscription on the manuscript deposited in the Leningrad Public Library).

The composition of this, the earliest of all Balakirev's large-scale works, did not come easily and it is evident from the various inks used on the manuscript and from additional pencil markings, that the piece had been composed at different times and passages rewritten over and over again. Even the initial tempo marking caused Balakirev some anguish; the original 'Larghetto maestoso' in ink was crossed out and 'Allegretto' was substituted in pencil and this, in turn, was cancelled and replaced by 'Andantino'. That Balakirev could have contemplated such wildly differing tempi for the opening section of the Fantasy is an indication of his musical immaturity and youthful exuberance (though only to be expected from a boy of fifteen). This is further evident from the linguistic macedonia inscribed on the final page, 'Finis del prima parto Auctor Milius Balakireff'. Clearly it was Balakirev's intention to add further sections to the existing score (which was finished 12 December 1853) but he was side-tracked either by more urgent musical projects, or what is more likely, by circumstances in his personal life.<sup>4</sup>

4. In 1853, Balakirev left the Alexandrovsky Institute, Nizhny-Novgorod, and entered the University of Kazan.

The Fantasy incorporates two Russian folk tunes, 'Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos'<sup>5</sup> and 'Sredi doliny rovnye', and throughout the remainder of the work Balakirev endeavoured to maintain, with varying degrees of success, a national character through the additional use of folk-like melodies and rhythms. Here are the two folk songs as they appear in the Fantasy:

Ex.1

(a) Akh, ne solnyshko zatmilos



(b) Sredi doliny rovnye



Balakirev's attachment to folk song, as noted by Vladimir Stasov in his article '25 liet russkovo iskustva' ('25 years of Russian art') written 1882-3,<sup>6</sup> was deeply rooted right from the very outset of his creativity, and his treatment of them, particularly during the

5. On the manuscript, next to the initial orchestral statement of this folk tune, Balakirev wrote, in pencil, the following two lines, presumably taken from the original song: 'Ah, clear in the mist the sun is not eclipsed,/The poor maiden fair weeps having been deceived, deceived . . . ' (translated from the Russian).
6. See V. Stasov, Selected Essays on Music, ed. Gerald Abraham (London and New York, 1968).

years of maturity in works such as the Symphonic poem 'Russia' (completed in 1884) and the finale of the First Symphony (1897) is unrivalled in nineteenth-century Russian symphonic composition. Of course, Balakirev's employment of folk song in the early Fantasy is considerably less sophisticated than in these masterworks and consists in the main of variations in which contrast is provided by accompaniment figurations employed in a manner similar to Glinka's 'changing background' technique. Also unsophisticated, though at times mildly impressive in its somewhat conventional virtuosity is the soloist's writing. Most of the thematic material, however, is allocated to the somewhat feeble orchestral part.

More successful, though still very much an apprentice work, is the first movement of a projected piano concerto in F sharp minor premièred by Balakirev at a university concert on 12 February 1856 in St Petersburg. Both the performance - which represented his debut in the city where he was to live for the remainder of his life - and the concerto itself were highly praised. The composer Alexander Serov, later a fervent opponent of the nationalists, wrote warmly of the occasion:

Balakirev's composition (the 'Allegro' first movement of his concerto in F sharp minor) was splendidly performed by the composer and was met with sincere enthusiasm by the public. As expected, the success that followed was unqualified, and the audience's appreciation was ardently expressed by tremendous applause. Indeed, one cannot but be delighted with the Concerto, for it is poetically conceived, attractively scored and is rich in charming, graceful melodies. Moreover, it was performed with great mastery, tenderness and yet at the same time, power. (7)

Further on he commented sagaciously, 'Balakirev's talent is a godsend to our country's music.'



Judging from the 'Op.1' designation given on the title page, this concerto movement may either have been a reconstruction of material predating the 'Grande Fantaisie' (Op.4) or, more likely, was begun before the Fantasy and was completed sometime during 1855-6 (with additional revisions in 1857).<sup>8</sup>

The overall style of this early concerto movement strongly reflects two important influences on Balakirev's musical development during his formative years: the many hours spent perusing the scores of the great Classical and early Romantic composers in the fine music library of Alexander Ulybyshev,<sup>9</sup> and the concerts given at Ulybyshev's residence where Balakirev heard these scores brought to life as it were; in particular, the works of Mozart, Mendelssohn and Hummel. The concerto movement also contains features redolent of Chopin for it was around this period that Balakirev became acquainted, through Eisrich, with Chopin's Piano Concerto in E minor Op.11, a work for which he was to have lifelong admiration.<sup>10</sup>

From a structural point of view, Balakirev's concerto movement closely adheres to classical sonata form, even to the point of reinstating the opening orchestral ritornello. In the development, however, he side-steps the thorny issue of combining piano and orchestra in a working-out of expository material - and at the same time provides the movement with a substantial solo cadenza - by stating the two forces, i.e. piano and orchestra, separately (thus

8. On page 18 of the manuscript Balakirev has written 'St Petersburg, 26 January 1856, Buterin's house' and on the following page 'The end'. Somewhat disconcertingly, however, Balakirev has also written, on page 18, '29 June 1857'.

9. Ulybyshev was a local landowner, amateur musician and writer introduced to Balakirev by Balakirev's music teacher Karl Eisrich.

10. A few months before his death in May 1910, Balakirev re-orchestrated Chopin's E minor Concerto for the centenary celebrations of the Polish composer's birth.

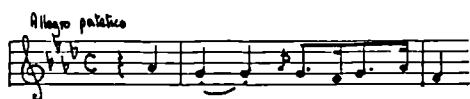
adumbrating Tchaikovsky's Third Piano Concerto by nearly forty years: see Part Three, pp.213-19). Balakirev, however, relies too heavily on sequential repetition for either section to be entirely convincing. Furthermore, the thematic ideas themselves are neither distinctive,<sup>11</sup> nor, for that matter, particularly original, being reminiscent of first subject themes in the concertos of Henselt and Chopin:

## Ex. 2

- (a) Balakirev: Piano Concerto in F sharp minor



- (b) Henselt: Piano Concerto in F minor



- (c) Chopin: Piano Concerto in F minor



Of greater interest, at least from a historical or musicological point of view, is the concerto movement's piano writing, for here and there between passagework of a more derivative nature are found keyboard figurations, in embryonic form as it were, that presage the rich mosaics of piano sound which characterize Balakirev's mature works. The rapid alternation of single notes and chords distributed between the hands, as in the concerto's closing sections for example, are found throughout the later piano works - the famous Oriental Fantasy Islamey for example:

11. Arensky apparently thought otherwise, for he incorporated a variant of Balakirev's second subject in his Piano Concerto in F minor Op.2 composed thirty years later (see p.107).

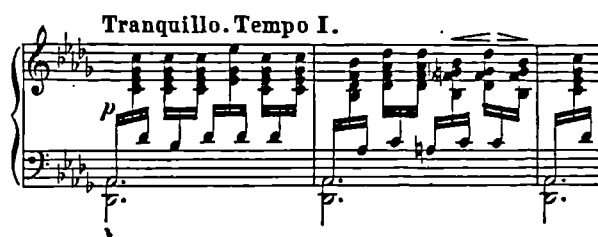
## Ex. 3

(a)

Concerto in F sharp minor



(b)

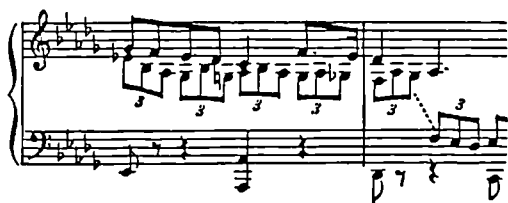
Oriental Fantasy Islamey

Another 'fingerprint' of Balakirev's keyboard style is his use of polyrhythms in the same hand, usually formed between a triplet quaver or semiquaver counter-melody underneath a slower-moving principal thematic line:

## Ex. 4

(a)

Piano Concerto in F sharp minor



(b)

Mazurka No.5 in D



(c)

'Spanish Melody'



Elsewhere, however, the spirit of Chopin is never very far from Balakirev's creative thought, and on occasion, the source of his inspiration is scarcely concealed:

## Ex. 5

(a)

Balakirev: Concerto

(b)

Chopin: Etude Op.10 No.1

For all its faults - the pseudo-dramatic gestures, the overtly sentimental turns of phrase, the ersatz brilliance of the soloist's part, and so on - the Concerto in F sharp minor is a considerable advance on the Fantasy Op.4, particularly in terms of the dynamic balance and distribution of thematic material between soloist and orchestra. Why the work remained unfinished is not known. Bearing in mind, however, that during the 1850s Balakirev's development as a musician far outstripped the rate at which he composed, it seems likely that by the time the concerto movement had been completed, both his style and his capacity for self-criticism had already evolved far beyond the concerto's rather narrow, obsolete mode of expression. Moreover, just a few months prior to its completion, Balakirev had been introduced to his idol, Glinka. This, and many subsequent meetings were to have a considerable influence on Balakirev's musical outlook and provided a powerful fillip to his own nationalist aspirations. As the concerto movement contains no Russian musical characteristics whatsoever, Balakirev was probably loath to continue in the same vein. Better to 'wash his hands' of the whole affair and start again.

Balakirev's final and most substantial attempt at concerto form, the Piano Concerto in E flat, was begun in June 1861 while the composer was on holiday in Nizhny-Novgorod, though it is apparent that the new work had been on his mind for some time: 'How goes Lear, how goes the concerto?'<sup>12</sup> wrote Vladimir Stasov on 12 June, the previous year. In common with the two earlier works for piano and orchestra, and every large-scale composition begun during the following decade, it remained unfinished, and it was left to Balakirev's disciple Lyapunov to complete the concerto nearly fifty years later.<sup>13</sup>

Characteristically, Balakirev needed some kind of external musical stimulus to sustain his inspiration during the composition of the new concerto and, at the same time, guidance in matters of orchestration, piano technique, and combining piano with orchestra. He consulted Berlioz' treatise on orchestration from which, so he informed Stasov in a letter dated 14 July 1861, he gained considerable insight into writing for natural horns and trumpets, which he intended to use in the concerto. For guidance in writing for piano and orchestra he examined Liszt's Piano Concerto in E flat, informing Stasov 'In that work one can learn a lot in the use of piano and orchestra',<sup>14</sup> and expressed the desire to see Liszt's Second Concerto in A, which, he had been informed, had recently been published in full score. He also asked Stasov to send him Rubinstein's Second Concerto Op.35, Chopin's Third Scherzo Op.39 and Litolff's Fourth Concerto (Concerto Symphonique) Op.102. All three, in fact, were to be influential in some way or other. Rubinstein's concerto, as has

12. Perepiska M.A. Balakireva s V.V. Stasovym, ed. Vladimir Karenin, vol.1 (Moscow, 1935), p.74.

13. The curious history of the concerto is definitively chronicled in Edward Garden's article 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', Music and Letters, vol.60 No.2 (1979), pp.166-79.

14. Ibid. p.167.

already been noted (see Part One, pages 36-7) may have encouraged Balakirev to employ fugatos in the opening movement and the finale of his new work. Litolff's concerto, on the other hand, was specifically requested for its attractive slow movement which Balakirev clearly intended to use as a model for his 'Andante', which was giving him problems: 'I don't remember exactly what kind of Andante there is but I need it very much for my own composition which is coming together in such a strange manner that I can't attribute it to any form known to me.'<sup>15</sup> Litolff's slow movement is designated 'Andante religioso'.

On 3 August, Balakirev informed Stasov that he intended to base his own 'Andante' on a Russian church chant. If Stasov had been exceptionally prompt in delivering the requested score sometime between 14 July and 3 August, then it is just conceivable that the initial idea for a slow movement with definite religious overtones may have come from Balakirev's perusal of Litolff's concerto. Balakirev may, in any case, have come across Litolff's concerto (composed c.1852) in earlier years, as hinted at in the letter quoted above. Certainly from a structural point of view, Balakirev appears to have been influenced by Litolff, as the following points illustrate:

1. Both movements begin with a short introduction (Litolff - 5 bars, Balakirev - 6 bars) modulating to the tonic key;
2. Both these introductions overlap the principal subject of the movements by one bar;
3. The initial solo statements of the principal subject are both in the form of arpeggiated chords;
4. Both development sections are entirely based on the principal subject;

15. M. Balakirev, Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy dlya fortepiano, ed. K.S. Sorokin, vol.3 (Moscow/Leningrad, 1954), p.269.

5. Both recapitulations commence with a 'tutti' statement of the principal subject accompanied by similarly scored octave chords in the soloist's part:

## Ex. 6

(a)

Balakirev

(b)

Litolff

Litolff's movement also contains a curious anticipation (in the soloist's opening passage) of the opening theme announced by the piano in the first movement of Balakirev's E flat Concerto. The similarity, however, is probably fortuitous:

## Ex. 7

(a)

Litolff

(b)

Balakirev

Elsewhere, Litolff's influence is negligible, though the following similarity in keyboard layout may be significant:

Ex. 8

(a) Litolff: 1st movement (p.15)

The musical score for Litolff's 1st movement consists of two staves, treble and bass clef. The top staff features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) followed by *sf* (sforzando) in two measures. The bottom staff features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the top staff.

(b) Balakirev: 1st movement (Fig.22)

The musical score for Balakirev's 1st movement consists of two staves, treble and bass clef. The top staff features a melodic line with various ornaments and a dynamic marking of *sf*. The bottom staff features a complex, arpeggiated texture of eighth notes, characteristic of Balakirev's style.

In comparison with Litolff's concerto, the influence of the remaining score requested by Balakirev, the Scherzo No.3 in C sharp minor by Chopin, is slight indeed, being restricted to one section only in the concerto. Moreover, the borrowing is neither thematic nor essentially pianistic, rather a borrowing of a musical idea that underlines one of the most beautiful passages in the Scherzo (the 'Meno mosso' section in the tonic major beginning at bar 155). Balakirev's adaption is, in turn, one of the finest passages in the concerto, and his use of coruscating arpeggio figurations (which, to a less prosaic ear could be likened to the 'tinkling of troika bells', to use the overworked epithet), superbly complement the brief, thoroughly Russian melodic fragments that they accompany:



## Ex. 9

(a)

Chopin

Meno mosso

*mf sostenuto* *f Pleggerissimo*

*sostenuto* *p*

(b)

Balakirev

*pp* *pp*

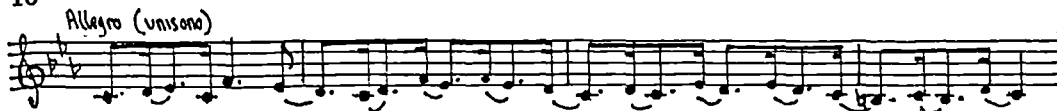
By 8 August 1862 Balakirev had finished the first movement and had written at least 'a quarter of the second movement' (according to

a letter written that same day to Rimsky-Korsakov).<sup>16</sup> Fifty-three pages of sketches exist from this stage in the concerto's genesis - one of which is dated 4 August - and these come to an abrupt halt at the transition to the second theme. Although he found the work somewhat strenuous and complained that it had a 'bad effect on his health', a further quarter was completed after ten days (so he informed Cesar Cui)<sup>17</sup> and ideas for the finale more or less settled though as yet not committed to paper. By November, Balakirev had arranged the first movement for piano duet so it could be performed by members of the 'Kuchka'.<sup>18</sup> Rimsky-Korsakov apparently thought very highly of the new work, as Balakirev noted in a letter to Stasov dated 11 October 1862: 'I played to Korsinka the whole of my concerto, and he declared emphatically, banging his fist on the table, that it was better than Lear.'<sup>19</sup>

Rimsky-Korsakov mentions the concerto in his autobiography, though it is probable that the year given (1866) is yet another example of his notoriously faulty memory:

The first movement of his Piano Concerto was ready and orchestrated; there were wonderful intentions for the Adagio and for the finale the following theme:

Ex. 10



Then in the middle of the finale the church theme 'se zhenikh gryadot' [Lo, the bridegroom is coming] was to have appeared, with the piano accompanying it in imitation of the ringing of bells. (20)

16. Perepiska M.A. Balakireva s V.V. Stasovym, vol.1 (Moscow, 1935), p.400.
17. Ibid. p.400.
18. One of these performances was mentioned in an unpublished letter (deposited in the Leningrad Conservatory) written by Cui, 28 October 1863.
19. Edward Garden, Balakirev (London, 1967), p.254.
20. N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov: Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy, vol.1, Letopis' moyei muzykal'noy zhizni (Moscow, 1963), p.22. (In English: My Musical Life (New York, 1942), p.63.)

riously, the finale known to us today (orchestrated by Lyapunov in 1910) contains neither of the two themes mentioned above. One can only conclude from this that Balakirev had, sometime during the 1860s, completely re-sketched the movement without informing his friends or colleagues, or what is more likely, that Rimsky-Korsakov had confused the finale with sketches for another work which now no longer exists.<sup>21</sup>

Periodically, Balakirev voiced his intention to complete the concerto, but being perhaps aware of the first movement's deficiencies and subsequently reluctant to add further to it, achieved nothing until 1909. In the summer of that year, however, he produced a revised version of the first movement in response to the continued insistence of his publisher J.H. Zimmermann. He also managed to finish the second movement soon after, though was unable to work on the finale (which he had decided in any case was unsuitable and needed to be recomposed). Four days before Balakirev's death, on 12 May 1910, Lyapunov wrote in the manuscript, on the last page of the second movement: 'The composer wishes to strike out the last bar and to pass over without a break into the finale, as indicated in the plan.'<sup>22</sup> Lyapunov completed the finale during the summer and the concerto was first performed at a memorial concert conducted by him on 4 December 1910 in Berlin, with L. Kreutzer as soloist.

The concerto's extraordinarily protracted and fragmented genesis is reflected in its fundamental weakness - the disconcerting rift in

21. According to Rimsky-Korsakov, Balakirev was making sketches for 'an octet or nonet with piano in F major' around the same time as the concerto (ibid. p.64).

22. Edward Garden, 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', in Music and Letters, vol.60 No.2 (1979), p.169.

quality between the immature and thematically uninspired first movement, and the more complex, richly scored second and third movements (particularly the third, somewhat over-enthusiastically orchestrated by Lyapunov). As Edward Garden bluntly put it, the concerto was, in effect, 'the work of a partially fledged composer realised by a sick old man all but 50 years later', adding ' . . . [It] was bound to suffer as a result'.<sup>23</sup>

It is possible that when Balakirev finally resumed work on the concerto in 1909 he became aware of the lack of continuity between movements, for there is evidence to suggest that he attempted to remedy the situation through various processes of thematic unity. The second subjects of the 'Andante' (Ex.11e) and the finale (Ex.11f) resemble both the opening theme of the concerto (Ex.11d) and the motif on which the first movement's fugato is based (derived from the second subject, Ex.11g). Moreover, all appear to be variants on the folk song 'Sobiraites-ka, brattsy-rebyatushki',<sup>24</sup> the same folk song that Balakirev suggested to Rimsky-Korsakov as the basis for his Piano Concerto in C sharp minor (see Ex.11c).<sup>25</sup> Significantly, Balakirev was also to use a variant of this folk song in the opening theme of his fine Piano Sonata, composed in 1905 (Ex.11a):

23. Ibid. p.169.

24. No.18 from Balakirev's collection of 40 folk songs, published in 1866.

25. See also pages 113-17.

## Ex. 11

(a) Balakirev: Sonata in B flat minor, 1st movement



(b) 'Sobiraites-ka, brattsy-rebyatushki'



(c) Rimsky-Korsakov: Piano Concerto Op.30



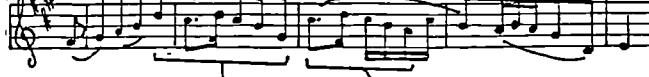
(d) Balakirev: Piano Concerto in E flat



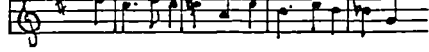
(e)



(f)



(g)



Apart from thematic transformation, the concerto also contains a neat example of what the pundits would describe as 'postponed and reversed antecedent and consequent', i.e. a process of thematic unity - almost invariably subconscious - whereby a complete and self-contained melody is created from the reversed juxtaposition of two seemingly disparate, disjunct phrases; in Balakirev's case, the opening movement's two principal subjects (the second of which somewhat disconcertingly resembles the sea shanty 'Blow the man down'):

## Ex. 12



Balakirev, however, was not always so subtle or successful in the manipulation of his thematic material (acknowledging that a subconscious process is as valid a part of a composer's creative powers as a conscious process). For instance, any benefit gained from the insertion of the opening motif of the concerto (Ex.11d) into both the bridge passage between the Adagio and the finale and during the course of the finale itself (examples of 'thematic recall') is cancelled out several times over by the blatant artificiality of the procedure.

Balakirev's efforts to draw together the wayward movements of his concerto through thematic means were considerably undermined by structural deficiencies and miscalculations. In the first movement for example - a fairly large-scale affair by any standards - second rate ideas are worked to exhaustion and in one particular low spot, in the development, a somewhat 'dry and school-masterly'<sup>26</sup> fugato is introduced, based on an undistinguished motif (Ex.11g) derived from the second subject. The second movement, built around the beautiful Russian Orthodox chant 'so svyatymi upokoi'<sup>27</sup> is a much finer conception, with imaginative scoring (particularly in the woodwind), ingenious counterpoint and a more thoughtfully contrived piano part. However, for its length, the movement lacks contrast; indeed, throughout the course of seven minutes or so, the Adagio tempo is maintained without change, apart from the occasional 'poco riten', 'poco allargando' etc. Nor does the attractive second subject (Ex.11e), derived from the folk song 'Sobiraites-ka, brattsy-rebyatushki', offer anything significant in the way of contrast, being also 'Adagio' in tempo. The finale is the most attractive of

26. E. Garden, Balakirev (London, 1967), p.255.

27. Balakirev also used this theme in his anthem 'Rest with the holy ones' (Requiem).

the three movements and contains a wealth of exuberant and effective musical ideas: in particular, the Musorgskian transition section (reminiscent of the Coronation Scene of Boris Godunov):<sup>28</sup>

Ex. 13

Musical score for Ex. 13. The top staff is labeled 'Orchestra' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Pianoforte with *Sve*'. The score consists of two systems of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, while the orchestra part has a more complex melodic line.

and the splendidly virtuosic second subject:

Ex. 14

Musical score for Ex. 14. The score is for piano and consists of two systems of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is highly virtuosic, featuring rapid sixteenth-note passages and complex rhythmic patterns.

Also attractive is the opening theme of the finale - which resembles the fourth original melody from Balakirev's symphonic poem 'Russia':

Ex. 15

Musical score for Ex. 15. It consists of two staves of music, labeled (a) and (b). Both staves are in the key of E-flat major and 4/4 time. Staff (a) is labeled 'Concerto in E $\flat$ ' and starts with a piano dynamic marking 'p'. Staff (b) is labeled ''Russia''. The two staves show a comparison of melodic lines, with staff (a) having a more rhythmic and syncopated feel compared to the smoother line in staff (b).

28. Whether Balakirev was influenced by Musorgsky in this passage is not known, as it may have been introduced into the finale by Lyapunov after Balakirev's death.

- and the 'troika bells' passage quoted on p.83 (Ex.9b). Again, the movement is too long, for Balakirev (or Lyapunov) cannot resist toying with these lovely ideas - which are in themselves perfect and self-contained - not only within the subject groups but also in an extended and decidedly rambling development section.<sup>29</sup>

Although Balakirev studied Liszt's E flat Concerto and noted that 'one could learn much about the use of piano with orchestra from that work' it is not readily apparent either from the first movement or the 'Adagio' that he was as yet capable, or willing, to apply this new-found knowledge. Certainly the first movement contains several passages redolent of Liszt's piano style and one or two which reveal a direct influence of Liszt's concerto itself:

Ex. 16



Nevertheless, the role of the piano is predominantly supportive and suggests an approach similar to Litolff. Arnold Schering's

29. In common with the first movement, the finale's development contains a fugato. In this instance, however, it is more skilfully contrived and is predominantly constructed on the second bar of the second subject (i.e. the bar which had previously been omitted in much of the previous 'working-out' of the theme).



description of Litolff's First 'Concerto Symphonique' (1844) could almost apply to the first movement of Balakirev's concerto:

The orchestra is conceded an exceptional position; it has become the chief bearer of the ideas and it reserves for itself the last and most important word, while upon the piano devolves the role of an obbligato orchestral instrument, similar to the Beethoven Choral Fantasia, although to be sure, with a strong virtuoso tendency. The composer no longer works with solo and tutti in a one sided fashion, but seeks to effect externally . . . as well as internally, a complete parallel to the symphony. (30, 31)

Balakirev's 'Adagio' fared even worse in regard to the distribution of thematic material between piano and orchestra, for out of a total of 154 bars, the soloist is allocated a mere ten and a half: six and a half of the chant 'so vyatymi upokoi' expressed through solemn, widely spaced arpeggiando chords and four bars of the second theme in unison octaves. In the remaining 140 or so bars the soloist is assigned the 'role as commentator on the proceedings rather than as a participant'.<sup>32</sup> But despite the grandeur of the piano writing - the passages of double octaves, sweeping arpeggios and sonorous chords exploiting the extremes of the keyboard to the full (see Ex. 6a) - the piano reveals itself to be a commentator with little to say of any significance, and in one passage is so noisy and verbose it distracts from the proceedings themselves:

30. Abraham Veinus, The Concerto (New York, 1964), p.211.

31. Ironically, Liszt also was striving towards a more symphonic approach in his concertos - No.2 was even enscribed 'Concerto symphonique' and No.1 was dedicated to Litolff. However, Liszt's approach was somewhat different from Litolff's. Instead of diminishing the importance of the soloist, his intention, rather, was to enhance the orchestral part through symphonic means.

32. E. Garden, 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', Music and Letters vol.60 No.2 (1979), p.170.

## Ex. 17

The finale is altogether more successful in its use of piano and orchestra though how much can be attributed to the talents of Lyapunov remains unknown. From the outset the two forces are exploited on equal terms; the soloist takes on the spikey first phrase of the opening theme (Ex. 15a) and when the strings enter with the more lyrical second phrase, beautifully complements it with a delicate filigree of semiquavers. After 16 bars the roles are reversed, but so skilfully is this managed that there is not the slightest hint of artifice. The transition is similarly well-wrought though Lyapunov's orchestration is at times somewhat heavy-handed. Better judged is the second subject group, particularly the 'troika bells' passage (Ex.9b). The remainder of the finale is likewise considerably more enterprising in its contrasts of texture and instrumentation than the previous two movements though, as already noted, shares with them a tendency to over-estimate the potential of the material.

Apart from Rubinstein's Piano Concerto in D minor Op.70 composed in 1864, Balakirev's unfinished concerto represents the only work for piano and orchestra composed in Russia during the 1860s. Rimsky-Korsakov believed, however, that Musorgsky may also have attempted a concerted work:

During the season of 1866-7 I became more intimate with Moussorgsky . . . he played me many excerpts from his opera Salambo which greatly delighted me. Then also, I think, he played me his fantasy 'St John's Eve' for piano and orchestra, conceived under the influence of the Todtentanz [Liszt]. Subsequently the music of this fantasy, having undergone many metamorphoses, was utilized as material for 'A Night on Bare Mountain'. (33)

Musorgsky's biographer, M. D. Calvocoressi, suggests, however, that Rimsky-Korsakov was mistaken in his belief that the fantasy was initially conceived for piano and orchestra and accuses him of 'thickening the fog' which has enveloped the early genesis of the work. But a great deal of the fog can be attributed to Calvocoressi himself, for he misquotes Rimsky-Korsakov as saying that the work was composed 'at the beginning of the sixties',<sup>34</sup> and subsequently draws the conclusion

no one else seems to have seen or heard of this version with piano 'written under the influence of Liszt's Danse macabre' (which Mussorgsky could not possibly have heard before March 1866), and there is good reason to believe that it never existed outside Rimsky-Korsakov's notoriously faulty memory. (35)

But Rimsky-Korsakov clearly stated in his autobiography that Musorgsky played him the fantasy sometime during the season of 1866-7. Furthermore, the inscription on the autograph score reads

33. N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, op. cit., p.73.

34. M.D. Calvocoressi, Mussorgsky (London, 1946), p.176.

35. Ibid.

'Planned in 1866.<sup>36</sup> Began to write for orchestra, 12 June 1867, finished the work on the eve of St John's Day, 23 June 1867, in the Luga District on Minkino Farm'. From a chronological point of view, no obstacle exists therefore to suggest that Rimsky-Korsakov was mistaken. Moreover, the fact that the final stage of composition occupied so brief a period of time (eleven days) indicates that perhaps Musorgsky was working from a version of the fantasy that was already in full score (i.e. for piano and orchestra). Finally, Rimsky-Korsakov is quite adamant that such a version existed, for he mentioned it three times in his autobiography; once in his recollections of the years 1866-7 (quoted above) and twice in his reminiscences of a period (1882-3) during which he was revising and completing many of Musorgsky's works: <sup>37</sup>

(p.261) . . . A Night on Bare Mountain was the only thing I could not find my way with. Originally composed in the sixties - under the influence of Liszt's Todtentanz - for the piano with accompaniment of orchestra, this piece (then called St John's Eve and both severely and justly criticized by Balakirev) had long been utterly neglected by its author, gathering dust among his unfinished works.

(p.262) . . . In working on Mussorgsky's piece I made use of the last version for the purpose of closing the composition. Now then, the first form of the piece was for piano solo with orchestra: the second form and the third, vocal compositions and for the stage, into the bargain (unorchestrated!)

Could Rimsky-Korsakov's 'notoriously faulty memory' have deceived him on four separate occasions? (Not forgetting the reference to the work in his preface to the 'Night on Bare Mountain' score.) If not, there

36. The fantasy is first mentioned in a letter to Balakirev dated 20 April 1866 - one month after Musorgsky had heard Todtentanz in a performance conducted by Balakirev.

37. For a full account of Rimsky-Korsakov's revisions etc. to Musorgsky's 'St John's Eve' see E. Garden's article 'Three Nights on Bare Mountain', The Musical Times (July, 1988), p.333.

existed for almost a year, an unusual, powerful and, judging from the subsequent versions, musically significant work for piano and orchestra by one of the greatest of Russian composers. Edward R. Reilly, in his article 'The First Extant Version of Night on a Bare Mountain', is understandably non-committal - bearing in mind the lack of conclusive evidence - as to whether such a version existed:

. . . The surviving manuscript incorporates changes made after the work was first composed. Thus the possibility that these alterations were even more substantial than is currently known cannot be entirely ruled out. It is also possible that Musorgsky originally sketched the work with piano and orchestra in mind, but subsequently orchestrated it without piano, because of the similarity to Liszt's *Todtentanz*. (38)

Reilly concludes his investigation, however, siding with Calvo-coressi: 'In my opinion it is most likely that Rimsky-Korsakov simply made a mistake.'

Another recollection chronicled in Rimsky-Korsakov's autobiography<sup>39</sup> was of a very young Sergey Taneyev who, having recently graduated from the Moscow Conservatory, came to St. Peterburg in 1876 to show him, among other compositions, his unfinished Piano Concerto in E flat.<sup>40</sup> First, however, Taneyev took the new work, on Tchaikovsky's recommendation, to Anton Rubinstein for his opinion:

' . . . I spent an entire evening at his house,' he wrote to Tchaikovsky. 'He listened to both movements [41] of the concerto, examined them in great detail and made many remarks for which I am very grateful and which I will undoubtedly put to use. The

38. Edward R. Reilly, Musorgsky. In Memoriam 1881-1981, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Michigan, 1981), p.139.

39. N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, op. cit., p.382.

40. The concerto is listed under No.19 of the complete register of Taneyev's works in the volume Sergei Ivanovich Taneiev, His Personality and Creative Work (Moscow: State Publishing Bureau, Music Sector, 1925), pp.120-3.

41. Only two movements were composed, the second of which was left in short score. It was later orchestrated by V. Shebalin after Taneyev's death.

following points contain the essence of these remarks: regarding the first movement:

- (1) Too long.
- (2) Rhythmically monotonous. The first two subjects are both in 4/4 - which is very wearisome.
- (3) Lack of interesting ideas in the piano part. There is not a single place where the pianist can "show off".
- (4) The piano hardly ever plays in the higher registers - mainly in the lower. The first theme is too often stated "ff" after a crescendo on the dominant.

The majority of these remarks suggest alterations which can be made to the piano part, and in accordance with this I am prepared to rewrite it. As far as the second movement is concerned, he really did not like it, in fact, he said that he could say nothing about it, as he could find no music in the piece whatsoever . . . On the basis of these observations Anton Grigorievitch advised me to completely rewrite both movements and what has already been composed could be useful as an outline only...' (42)

On the following day Taneyev played the concerto at the home of P. L. Peterson,<sup>43</sup> accompanied by Gustav Kross on second piano. Among those present were Davidov, Cui and Rimsky-Korsakov.<sup>44</sup> Although Taneyev had not discussed Rubinstein's comments with them, their observations were very much along the same lines. Characteristically, Cui had further criticisms to make - in particular, he noted that many of Taneyev's melodies began with the repetition of their opening bar or bars and that these bars were often introduced into the middle of the phrases as well. He pointed out in no uncertain terms the monotonous effect this created, which he found throughout the movement, and singled out two phrases as examples:

42. P.I. Tchaikovsky: S.I. Taneyev, Pisma, ed. V.A. Zhdanov (Moscow, 1951), pp.8-9.

43. Peterson was, at one time, the proprietor of Bekker's piano factory.

44. David Brown, in Groves, states that Taneyev kept his compositions a secret to everyone except Tchaikovsky, up until 1878. The facts quoted above suggest otherwise; indeed, Taneyev appears to have been almost 'pushy' in his efforts to promote his music, or at least in seeking advice on how to improve it.

## Ex. 18

(a)



(b)



Taneyev's letter continues:

. . . Nothing definite was said about the second movement, but everyone agreed that it was worse than the first. However, Cui advised me not to rewrite the concerto, but to finish it and even have it published. Then, making use of all that is lacking in this work, try to improve future compositions. It seems to me that I should try and find a compromise between his opinion and that of A.G. [Rubinstein].

Unless I compose new melodies there is no way I can avoid the rhythmic monotony and repetitiveness of the themes. I think I will leave the themes as they are, reduce everything as much as possible and then completely rewrite the piano part. I would very much like to hear your opinion of this . . . (45)

In his reply, dated 2 December, Tchaikovsky was more tactful than Rubinstein and Cui, and, characteristically, endeavoured to raise Taneyev's spirits by referring to the concerto as 'charming' and expressing his belief that 'despite its formal drawbacks, not a single musician can deny its strong and appealing qualities'.<sup>46</sup> He did acknowledge, however, that there was something lacking and suggested to Taneyev that he should not only utilize the knowledge

45. P.I. Tchaikovsky: S.I. Taneyev, *Pisma*, pp.8-9.

46. *Ibid*, pp.10-11.

gained from composing the concerto in future works, but also use it immediately to improve the concerto itself 'otherwise [it] will never be finished'. He continued: 'Try to add a more virtuoso element to the first movement, without completely reducing or changing your original material.' Tchaikovsky also suggested to Taneyev that he write a brilliant finale 'in which the pianist can express some freedom and which makes up for the lack of virtuoso effects in the preceding two movements', adding, 'But be determined . . . for God's sake, write the finale as soon as possible!'<sup>47</sup>

Taneyev was clearly discouraged by the broadside of friendly but severe criticisms from Rubinstein, Cui and company, for he left the slow movement in its arrangement for two pianos and made no attempt to start the finale (though he informed Tchaikovsky in a letter dated 24 March 1877 from Paris, that he intended to compose it during the summer).<sup>48</sup>

According to B. Yagolim in the preface to the score of Taneyev's concerto published in Moscow in 1957, Tchaikovsky pointed out a number of flaws in its instrumentation, which he (Tchaikovsky) considered 'not quite equal to the first rate beautiful passages in which the composition abounds'. The total number of Tchaikovsky's corrections, comments and revisions etc., scribbled in the margin of Taneyev's score amount to, in fact, nearly one hundred; evidently Tchaikovsky's innate composer's sense compelled him to point out weaknesses wherever they existed. He did not mince words either; comments such as the following: 'I don't like the instrumentation of these two bars, nor the previous two; it is feeble, inconsistent and illogical' (Fig.39) are characteristic and are in sharp contrast to

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.



the paternal magnanimity of his letters.<sup>49</sup> In the subsequent checking-through, every nook and cranny of Taneyev's orchestration was perused, every musical stone unturned.

Considering the extent to which the concerto needed revising, Tchaikovsky must have realized that it was not destined for publication. Nevertheless, it must have peeved him that his efforts were to have served so little purpose, for Taneyev, not surprisingly, dropped the work like a hot brick soon after. He was probably right to do so, for the concerto's weaknesses are so fundamental and extensive that no amount of rewriting could render it acceptable. Rubinstein's advice - that Taneyev should completely recompose both movements 'and use what has already been written as an outline only. . .' was harsh, but just, as were his comments enumerated in Taneyev's letter. His first criticism, that the work was too long, is certainly valid, for although the two movements are fairly conventional in size, the thematic material is so poor and spun out to such an extent, that an impression of length is created by the monotony that results. Medtner's views on the subject, expressed in a letter dated 13 September 1926, to Rachmaninov, who at the time was seriously worried about the length of his Fourth Piano Concerto (in G minor, Op.40), sums up to perfection the intrinsic problem of Taneyev's early work:

Naturally there are limitations to the lengths of musical works, just as there are dimensions for canvases. But within these human limitations, it is not the length of musical compositions that create an impression of boredom, but is rather the boredom that creates the impression of length . . . (50)

49. Only in his diaries did Tchaikovsky express his true opinions concerning the music of other composers. It is doubtful, for example, whether Tchaikovsky 'greatly appreciated [Taneyev's] concerto' or for that matter that he considered it 'abounding in first rate, beautiful passages' (as Yagolim suggests in the preface to the score).
50. Quoted in S. Bertenson and J. Leyda, Sergei Rachmaninoff (London, 1956), p.246.

(How this was supposed to reassure Rachmaninov heaven only knows, for Medtner does not account for the presence of boredom in the first place!)

Taneyev's melodies are not only dull and repetitive (for example, the two cited by Cui and quoted in Taneyev's letter to Tchaikovsky: see Ex.18); some are hideously unmusical to boot. The following theme, for example, must surely be one of the ugliest, most ungainly opening subjects in concerto literature:



Moreover, its unusual intervallic spacings suggest that it was perfunctorily conceived at the keyboard and was not the end product of genuine musical inspiration. Neither is the principal theme of the 'Andante funebre' second movement particularly attractive:



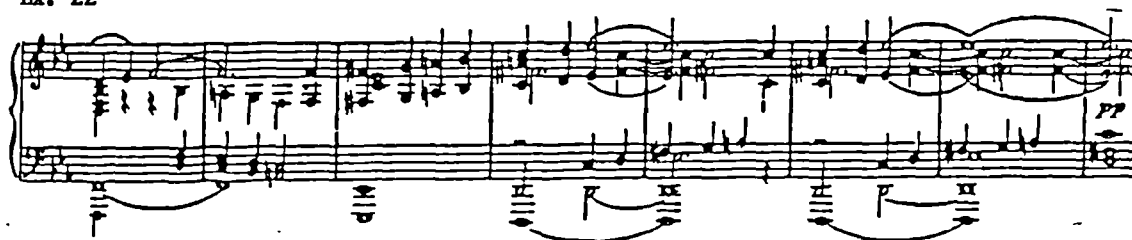
Both themes (Exx. 19 and 20) are subjected to considerable repetition. The following passage, based on Ex.20, is a fairly typical example and, furthermore, displays a harmonic awkwardness characteristic of much of the concerto:

Ex. 21



Rubinstein's strictures concerning the soloist's part - that it 'lacks virtuosity' and that it occupies far too great a period of time in the lower registers of the instrument - are also valid, though to be fair to Taneyev, he was probably aiming for a more symphonic approach to his concerto writing (in the manner of Tchaikovsky) and was thus less concerned than Rubinstein with external glitter. Much of the piano writing, in fact, leans substantially on Tchaikovsky's First Concerto composed two years earlier, though needless to say, the ideas are not so convincingly realized. Taneyev was intimately involved in the genesis of Tchaikovsky's famous concerto<sup>51</sup> and was also one of its leading exponents, so it is hardly surprising to find similarities in layout and design. The following passage, for example, is a pallid imitation of Tchaikovsky's 'orchestrally conceived' piano writing - compare with the second subject of Tchaikovsky's concerto, Ex.25 p.179 - one characteristic of which is the distribution of thematic material between the hands in the form of a dialogue:

Ex. 22



More blatantly borrowed is the famous passage of double octaves that introduces the first cadenza in Tchaikovsky's concerto (first movement: development, bars 348-358). In his own concerto (Fig.55), Taneyev varies the piano's initial few bars but the borrowing is

51. Taneyev also gave the Moscow première of the concerto on 21 November 1875.

obvious. One wonders why Tchaikovsky did not comment on this clear act of plagiarism:

## Ex. 23

(a)

Taneyev

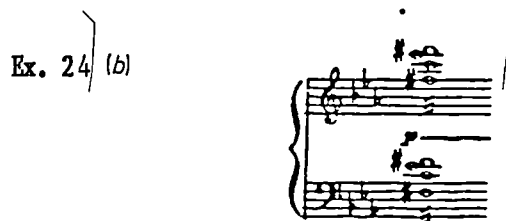
(b)

Tchaikovsky

In addition to Tchaikovsky's influence, Taneyev's work also suggests that he was acquainted with Rubinstein's piano concertos, in particular No.5 in E flat Op.94, composed in 1874 and published the following year. Apart from the Rubinsteinian rhythmic diminution in the soloist's opening statement,

## Ex. 24(a)

Taneyev also indulges in a somewhat brash effect created by the rapid repetition of chords - a figuration found in both Rubinstein's First and Fifth Concertos (compare this with Ex.35, p.49):



Liszt's presence is evident, particularly in the scales of chromatic thirds (derived from Liszt's Concerto in E flat) leading into the coda to the first movement and the use of contrary motion chromatic octaves as in the Hungarian Rhapsody No.6, and Brahms makes a brief appearance in the employment of octave trills - an important feature of his First Concerto, in D minor Op.15.<sup>52</sup>

To summarize, Taneyev's musical style, as displayed in his early Concerto in E flat, is derivative, unsettled and above all, immature. The piano writing possesses neither the fluency of Rubinstein's, nor the gripping 'orchestral' quality of Tchaikovsky's, though elements of both, in the form of weak imitation, are found throughout. His style was, however, to develop and mature, though as David Brown points out, it did not blossom into anything particularly distinctive or distinguished:

Taneyev's style was to develop a more broadly based eclecticism which ultimately achieved an illusion of individuality through its constant capacity to avoid commitment to the style of any one composer. (53)

52. In January 1875, whilst still a student, Taneyev performed Brahms' D minor Piano Concerto at an R.M.S. concert in Moscow with Nikolay Rubinstein conducting.
53. See 'Taneyev', in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians ed. Stanley Sadie (London, 1980).

Nevertheless, it is to be regretted that Taneyev never attempted to write a piano concerto later on in life, for he was undoubtedly more talented, both as a composer and pianist, than many of his contemporaries. Like Balakirev, however, his creative gifts were more often than not dissipated in the guidance of others. Taneyev also became increasingly involved in the science of musical theory and counterpoint.<sup>54</sup> Only on one occasion did he revisit the concerto genre; ironically enough, to orchestrate another work for piano and orchestra that remained unfinished: Tchaikovsky's 'Andante and Finale' Op.79 (see Part Three, pp.219-28).

For all his immaturity as a composer, at least Taneyev attempted to cast his abortive concerto in a contemporary idiom, using more recent examples of the genre as sources for his musical ideas. The same cannot be said of the compositions for piano and orchestra by the Bohemian (naturalized Russian) conductor and composer Eduard Napravnik. All three, the Piano Concerto Op.27 (1877) and the Fantasias on Russian themes, Op.30 (1878) and Op.39 (1881) date from a period (1876-1881) when Napravnik was Director of the Russian Musical Society and were clearly composed for inclusion in its concert programmes.<sup>55</sup> Little is known of these works and in all probability they were of the 'pot-pourri' variety fashionable at that time.

Of more interest is Arensky's highly polished Piano Concerto in F minor, Op.2, which he composed during his final year of study at the

54. Among his more important writings are 'Strict Counterpoint' (1909) and 'Theory of the Canon' (later completed by the Soviet music scholar V.M. Belyayev).

55. One of the fantasias, probably Op.39, was performed at a concert - under the aegis of the R.M.S. - as part of an All-Russian Exposition that took place in Moscow, late summer 1881. On this occasion, however, it was organized and conducted by Rimsky-Korsakov.

St Petersburg Conservatory (1881-2). Perhaps highly 'Polish' is a more suitable epithet, for the Concerto leans very heavily on the concertos of Chopin, in particular No.2 Op.25 (also significantly in F minor). Indeed, so extensive is this influence, that it prompted the Russian critic R. Genika, writing in Russian Musical Gazette in 1906, to conclude: '[In this concerto] there is more that is borrowed and derivative than original.'<sup>56</sup> Two examples should suffice to illustrate the extent to which Arensky's somewhat weak musical individuality was subordinated by Chopin's. The first - the soloist's initial entry - cannot be attributed to any one passage in Chopin's music; however, it pursues Chopin's style to such an extent it could easily be mistaken either for parody, or for a passage taken from one of his juvenile sketchbooks:

## Ex. 25

Tranquillo e cantabile

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system is titled "Tranquillo e cantabile" and includes the dynamic marking "pp ma poco marcato". It features a treble and bass staff with various musical notations including slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The second system is marked "molto rit." and "pp" and also consists of two staves with similar musical notation.

The second example is the soloist's entry in the second movement, 'Andante con moto'. Its similarity to passages in the first movement of Chopin's F minor concerto is striking:

56. Quoted in G.M. Tsuipin, A. S. Arensky (Moscow, 1966), p.79.

## Ex. 26

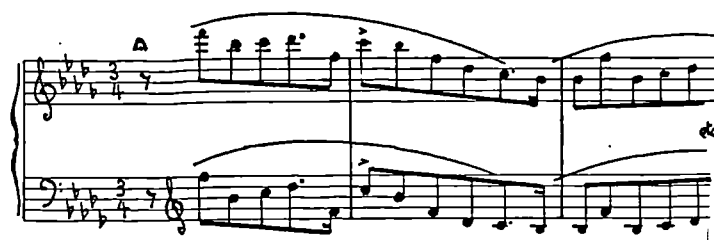
(a)

Chopin



(b)

Arensky



Moreover, in his working-out of Ex.26b Arensky employs tremolo strings as an accompaniment - also an important feature of Chopin's concerto.

Whereas Chopin's influence reigns supreme in the lyrical sections, Arensky turned to Liszt's Concerto in E flat for ideas in the more dramatic episodes.<sup>57</sup> The opening motif of Arensky's concerto:



and the major part of the soloist's virtuoso writing is derived from the majestic introduction (i.e. the piano's opening passage of double octaves and the cadenza) of Liszt's concerto. Arensky also makes use of a harmonic progression from the first of Liszt's Transcendental Studies (entitled 'Preludio') in the finale's coda:

57. With one notable exception: the closing phrase of Arensky's second subject is borrowed from the principal theme of the 'Allegretto vivace' section of Liszt's concerto.



## Ex. 27

(a) Arensky:

(b) Liszt:

The two passages are virtually identical apart from Arensky's modifications to the left hand chords, and, of course, the transposition to a key one tone lower. The most intriguing 'borrowing' of all, however, is from neither Chopin nor Liszt, but from Balakirev. For some curious reason, Arensky used, for his second subject, the corresponding theme from Balakirev's unfinished Piano Concerto in F sharp minor. Perhaps Arensky's teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, suggested the theme as an example of a second subject to be studied and Arensky went a stage further and incorporated a variant on it in his concerto:

## Ex. 28

(a)

Balakirev

(b)

Arensky

It is to be regretted that he did, for the theme is the weakest in the concerto, being a sugary-sweet affair more redolent of the Russian salon than the concert hall. Arensky, however, was

apparently oblivious to its shortcomings for he subsequently apotheosized the theme - with an off-beated 'ff' chordal accompaniment - in a passage of unbelievable banality in the closing section of the exposition. Without a doubt, it rivals, in sheer awfulness, the final pages of Rubinstein's First Concerto, and the orchestral statements of the first episodic theme in Tchaikovsky's finale, from the Andante and Finale Op.79 (zealously orchestrated by Taneyev after Tchaikovsky's death).

The concerto's only saving grace is its last movement - a rondo cast in the somewhat unusual time signature of  $\frac{5}{4}$ . Arensky retained a lifelong fascination for unorthodox rhythms and time signatures,<sup>58</sup> and was particularly interested in quintuple time. Tchaikovsky was not impressed by these experiments and pleaded with Arensky to give them up. In connection with Arensky's piano piece 'Basso Ostinato', for example, he wrote:

Dear Anton Stepanovich, Pardon me if I force my advice upon you.. . .It seems to me that the mania for  $\frac{5}{4}$  time threatens to become a habit with you . . . I made the discovery yesterday that in this instance  $\frac{5}{4}$  time was not at all necessary. You must own that a series of three bars of  $\frac{5}{4}$  is mathematically equal to a similar series of  $\frac{3}{4}$  [presumably Tchaikovsky meant five bars of  $\frac{3}{4}$  time]; in music, on the contrary, the difference between them is quite as sharp as between  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{6}{8}$  . . . In my opinion your 'Basso Ostinato' should be written in  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{6}{4}$  but not in  $\frac{5}{4}$ . I cannot imagine a more distinct five bar rhythm in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. What do you think? (59)

Arensky was not convinced, for he preserved the 'Basso Ostinato' in

58. His collection entitled 'Logaedics' Op.28 (Essays on Forgotten Rhythms) for piano solo, for example, is prefaced by a chart which attempts to clarify the rhythmic complexities of each of the six individual pieces (entitled Logaèdes, Péons, Ioniques, Sari-metre des chansons persanes, Strophe alcéene, and Strophe sapphique) supposedly based, according to the score, on 'Les poesies antiques des grecs, des romains et d'autres peuples'. The collection itself has now been forgotten.
59. Modest Tchaikovsky, The Life and Letters of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (London, 1906), pp.496-7.

its original  $\frac{5}{4}$  format. Ironically, Tchaikovsky changed his mind concerning the musical merits of quintuple time, for he cast the entire 'Waltz' second movement of his Sixth Symphony Op.74 (Pathétique) in  $\frac{5}{4}$ .

The finale of Arensky's Concerto begins with a motif probably inspired by the opening of Grieg's famous Piano Concerto in A minor:

## Ex. 29



Curiously, Grieg was later to use this very same phrase in the second of his Symphonic Dances Op.64 composed in 1898, some sixteen years after Arensky had written his finale. The connection, however, is probably fortuitous. The second theme is an attractive imitation of folk song and bears a superficial resemblance to other folk themes, spurious or otherwise, found in the Russian symphonic repertory:<sup>60</sup>

## Ex. 30



In common with the second subject of Chopin's finale (Concerto in F minor), Arensky introduces this theme in unison octaves on the piano accompanied by staccato strings. In this instance, however, the influence of Chopin is negligible and Arensky succeeds in creating some measure of national colouring (hence the nickname 'Russian' that was occasionally attached to the work).

60. Rimsky-Korsakov's Sadko, Stravinsky's Firebird, etc.

Although Arensky's teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov regarded the concerto as 'an ideal student work'<sup>61</sup> - probably in reference to the undeniable skill with which the twenty-year-old student constructed and orchestrated the work - it did not impress Taneyev, who considered it Arensky's most feeble composition up until that time. Neither was the Russian critic and musicologist Boris Asafeyev particularly enamoured with the new work:

The salon-lyrical themes are insipid and lacking in contrast... in parts, there is an over-indulgence in decorative passagework which hinders the degree of symphonic development. (62)

Nevertheless, for a brief period, Arensky's concerto was taken up by the pianists Pabst (who gave its first performance), Goldenweizer and Ginsburg and was included in the repertory of teaching material at Russian conservatories.

The neglect afforded to Arensky's fledgling work in the concert halls of today is understandable bearing in mind its feeble musical ideas and heavy stylistic dependence on others. The same cannot be said, however, of Rimsky-Korsakov's fine Piano Concerto in C sharp minor (Op.30), for it is immensely appealing, both in the beauty of its themes - all derived from one source: the Russian folk song 'Sobiraites-ka, brattsy-rebyatushki'<sup>63</sup> ('Gather round, fellow brothers') - and the virtuosity with which these splendid ideas are presented. Its absence on concerto programmes, as Edward Garden has pointed out,<sup>64</sup> can only be attributed to the fact that small-scale concertos and concerted works are no longer fashionable.<sup>65</sup>

61. G.M. Tsuipin, op. cit., p.79.

62. Boris Asafeyev, Russkaya muzyka, p.228 (quoted in Tsuipin, p.87).

63. No.18 from Balakirev's collection published in 1866.

64. E. Garden, Music and Letters, op. cit., p.173.

65. Tchaikovsky's Third Concerto Op.75 and the Concert Fantasia Op.56 are both superior to the more conventionally structured Second Concerto in G Op.44, yet performances of these attractive works are far less frequent.

Though Rimsky-Korsakov, in his autobiography, could neither recall exactly when he first conceived the idea of composing a piano concerto, nor when the work was completed, it is apparent from a letter dated 14 January 1883 to S. N. Kruglikov, that he had been busy finishing and orchestrating the work during the Christmas/New Year holidays 1882/3. Furthermore, 'Jan 3, 1883, N. Rimsky-Korsakov Pityer' is inscribed on the final page of the score.

What prompted Rimsky-Korsakov to embark on a piano concerto is not known. Certainly, piano concertos and concerted works figured prominently in his musical activities during the year 1882.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, if his repeated references to the existence of a version of Musorgsky's fantasy 'St John's Eve' for piano and orchestra are to be believed (see pages 93-5), it is possible that the initial idea of composing a piano concerto was in part derived from his study of Musorgsky's score (he was at the time deeply engrossed in completing and revising, among other works, Musorgsky's 'Khovanshchina'). Apparently, the new concerto surprised and delighted Balakirev, who never previously credited Rimsky-Korsakov with the skill for either playing or composing for the instrument:

It must be said that it sounded beautiful and proved entirely satisfactory in the sense of piano technique and style; this greatly astonished Balakirev, who found my concerto to his liking. He had by no means expected that I, who was not a pianist, should know how to compose anything pianistic. (67)

Rimsky-Korsakov was, in fact, a finer pianist than Balakirev or any of the other members of the 'Kuchka' realized, for as early as 1866

66. Early in the year, he supervised the composition of Arensky's concerto, and in August conducted both Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and Napravnik's 'Fantasia on Russian themes' at two concerts - the programmes of which were chosen by him - given by the R.M.S. for the All-Russian Exposition in Moscow.

67. N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, My Musical Life (New York, 1942), p.263.

he had surreptitiously set out to acquire a firm foundation in piano technique:

... I diligently conned Czerny's Tägliche Studien, played scales in thirds and octaves, studied even Chopin's études. These studies were carried on without the knowledge of Balakirev, who never suggested to me work at the piano - though how necessary that was! Balakirev had long given me up as a pianist; usually he played my compositions himself. If occasionally he sat down to play four-hands with me, he would quit playing at my first embarrassment, saying he would rather play it afterwards with Moussorgsky. In general, he made me feel uncomfortable, and in his presence I usually played worse than I really knew how. I shall not thank him for that. I felt that I was making progress in my playing, after all - working rather hard at home. But I was afraid to play before Balakirev, and he was utterly unaware of my progress; moreover, I was rated 'without capacity for playing' by others, especially by Cui. Oh, those were wretched times! The circle often made fun of Borodin and me for our pianistic achievements, and therefore we, too, lost faith in ourselves. (68)

Rimsky-Korsakov's clandestine studies certainly bore fruit in the concerto for it is rich in imaginative, if not wholly original, piano writing. Some figurations are clearly derived from Liszt (to whom the work is dedicated) and Rimsky-Korsakov quite openly admitted that he was, to a considerable extent, influenced by the Hungarian composer: 'in all ways the concerto proved a chip from Liszt's concertos.'<sup>69</sup> To a certain extent this is true, particularly in regard to their respective multi-sectional single-movement designs and involvement in thematic transformation. However, whereas Liszt went to extraordinary lengths, particularly in the Second Concerto in A, to unify still further his structure by superimposing sonata form principles onto the existing framework, Rimsky-Korsakov maintained a distinct four-section design with the soloist providing connecting links in the form of short cadenzas. No further unifying element was deemed

68. Ibid., pp.66-7.

69. Ibid., p.263.

necessary by Rimsky-Korsakov, for he rightly considered the monothematic scheme of the work was more than sufficient for this purpose.

Rimsky-Korsakov's compositional methods within this structure also contrasts sharply with Liszt's, for in place of traditional development or 'working-out' of thematic material, he adopted a 'mosaic-like' approach to the many and varied transformations of the theme using a procedure not dissimilar to Glinka's 'changing background' technique. The resulting kaleidoscopic range of textures, harmonies and tone colour is often breathtakingly beautiful, and nowhere does the underlying monothematicism pall.

M. F. Gressin's description of Rimsky-Korsakov's creative procedures in general applies particularly well to the Concerto:

[He] starts with the careful choice of a rich and expressive central idea . . . which is the first and essentially vivid link in a series of vivid links, from which the artistic whole is gradually built up. Thematic repetitions, constant reminders of the idea, ensure against the introduction of elements which have no direct relation to the plan . . . Melodic-rhythmic variations on the theme in different sections of the work, by enriching it with important and sometimes unexpected details, make the chief features and idea of the theme all the more strongly felt. The surrounding of the theme by constantly changing harmonies illumines it on all sides. The variation of exposition plays its part in the interpretation of the theme. The moments when the theme is transposed into different tonalities intensify its apprehension and make it felt as it were in different surroundings, while at the same time they quantitatively intensify the impression created by the theme. These are all ways of analysing the theme which is being impressed on the listener . . . (70)

The thematic idea on which the concerto is based, the folk song 'Sobiraites-ka, bratstsy-rebyatushki', was chosen 'not without Balakirev's advice'<sup>71</sup> and, as mentioned earlier, comes from Balakirev's collection of forty folk songs published in 1866:

70. Mysli i vospominaniya o N.A. Rimskom-Korsakove (Moscow, 1956), p.79 (quoted in E. Garden, Music and Letters, op. cit., p.172).

71. N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, op. cit., p.263.

Ex. 31

## СОБИРАЙТЕСЬ-КА, БРАТЦЫ-РЕБЯТУШКИ

Очень медленно

Голос

1. Со-би-рай-те-ся-ка, бра-тцы-ре-  
2. Со-кля-дай-те-ся-ка, бра-тцы-ре-

Ф-п.

-бя-туш-ки, на квар-ти-руш-ку  
-бя-туш-ки, на пол-штѣб-чи-ка

Для повторения      Для окончания

на... на мо-ю.      - дят!"  
на... на ви-но.

The folk song was fairly widely known in Russia during the nineteenth century and was subsequently published in several other collections. It was apparently a military 'recruitment' song of the type known as 'heavy', owing to difficulties of performance, and was greatly valued. Rimsky-Korsakov was by no means the only composer to make use of its beautiful, mournful Dorian mode characteristics. Eduard Napravnik incorporated 'Sobiraites-ka, bratstsy-rebyatushki' in his 'Folk Dance' for orchestra (1875-6), M. Slavinsky arranged it for voice and piano, and most significant of all, Balakirev used variants of the folk song in both the first



movement of his Piano Sonata (see Ex.11a) and throughout the Piano Concerto in E flat, most notably, the opening theme and the subsidiary subject of the second movement (Ex.11d and e). A variant of the folk song - almost identical to the opening of Rimsky-Korsakov's concerto - also appears in Rachmaninov's beautiful *Étude-tableau* in D minor Op.33 No.5:<sup>72</sup>

Ex. 32

(a) Rimsky-Korsakov: Piano Concerto (transposed)



(b) Rachmaninov: *Étude-tableau*

Although Rimsky-Korsakov's treatment of the song is ingenious and exhaustive, employing all manner of compositional device, such as fragmentation, inversion and retrograde (see Ex.33) and canon (Ex. 34a)<sup>73</sup> not for a moment does this artifice detract from the inherent beauty of the folk song. Nor is it readily apparent. The following tabulation clarifies the more important derivations:

72. Rachmaninov was well acquainted with Rimsky-Korsakov's concerto, certainly well enough to declare that it was not 'klaviermässig' (see pages 119-20).

73. The most important and extensive use of canon in the concerto, however, is Rimsky-Korsakov's treatment of the 'Allegretto quasi polacca' theme (Ex.33e).

## Ex. 33

(a) *Moderato*  $p$   $b$   $b'$   
 THEME: *Adagio a piacere*  $p$   $a$   $b$   $b'$   
 (b)  $p$   
 (c) *Poco a poco più animato*  $p$   $a$   $b$  (d) *Molto animato*  $a$   $a'$   $p$   
 (e) *Allegretto quasi placido*  $mf$   $a$   $a'$   
 (f)  $f$   $a$   
 (g) *p espressivo*  $a$   $a+b$  combined  $retrograde$   
 (h) *Andante mosso*  $a''$  (retrograde of  $a'$ )  
 (i)  $a$   $b$   $a''$   
 (j)  $a$   $a''$   $a$  (without first note)  
 (k)  $a''$   $a''$   
 (l) *Allegro*  $p$   $b$  notes 1-4 inverted notes 5-8 of  $a$  notes 6-8 of  $a$  %  
 (m)  $a$ : notes 1-4 inverted %  $a$ : 1-4 retrograde inv. %  
 (n) *Andante tranquillo*  $a''$   $a''$   $a''$   
 (o) *Allegro con fuoco*  $p$   $a''$   $a''$   $a''$

Perhaps the most striking feature of Rimsky-Korsakov's process of metamorphosis is that each fragment - usually derived from either the first or second phrase of the theme (see Ex.33b,  $\overbrace{\quad}^a$   $\overbrace{\quad}^b$ ) - is melodically as attractive as the original folk song. This quality - rare amongst works based on thematic transformation - is probably the most potent factor in the success of the concerto and is all the more

remarkable bearing in mind that all are derived from one source. Also remarkable is the variety of moods encompassed - ranging from the somewhat pensive folk song itself through the wistfully lyrical 'Andante mosso' themes (Ex.33i, j and k) and ending with the fiery coda (Ex.33o) (which bears no resemblance, incidentally, to the folk song, though its origin becomes clear if one retraces one's steps, as it were, through Ex.33k → h → e).

In addition to the concerto's thematic material, Rimsky-Korsakov also constructed all the cadenzas and many of the accompaniment figurations, in both the orchestra and the soloist's part, on fragments from 'Sobiraites-ka':

## Ex. 34

(a)

Ex. 34(a) shows a musical score for a piano and strings. The piano part is marked *ad lib.* and the strings are marked *p cresc. o string.*. The score features a melodic line with a slur over it, with the letter 'a' written above the slur and 'etc' at the end. There are also some smaller 'a' markings below the piano part.

(b)

Ex. 34(b) shows a musical score for a piano and strings. The piano part is marked *p cresc.* and the strings are marked *f*. The score features a melodic line with a slur over it, with the letter 'a' written above the slur and 'etc' at the end. There are also some smaller 'a' markings below the piano part. The score includes a section labeled *Cadenza* and a dynamic marking *pp*.

(c)

Ex. 34(c) shows a musical score for a piano and strings. The piano part is marked *Cadenza a''*. The score features a melodic line with a slur over it, with the letter 'a'' written above the slur. There are also some smaller 'a'' markings below the piano part.

From a pianistic point of view, Rimsky-Korsakov - as Ex.34b and c clearly illustrate - was fully capable of writing idiomatically for the instrument. Balakirev was not only astonished by this discovery, he may even have considered some of Rimsky-Korsakov's pianistic ideas fine enough to use in his own piano works. Two examples should suffice to illustrate this, both from the Mazurka in D (which forms, coincidentally, the second movement of the Piano Sonata, the first movement of which, as already noted, is based on the same folk song as Rimsky-Korsakov's concerto):

## Ex. 35

(a)

Rimsky-Korsakov

Balakirev

(b)

*Andantino tranquillo.*

Rimsky-Korsakov

Balakirev

Borodin may also have been influenced pianistically by Rimsky-Korsakov, as there is a similarity in layout between an accompaniment figuration from his Scherzo in A flat (1885) and a left hand pattern from the first section of Rimsky-Korsakov's concerto:

## Ex. 36

(a) Borodin



(b) Rimsky-Korsakov



In the concerto's coda, however, Rimsky-Korsakov borrowed a left-hand figuration from 'Limoges', the seventh number from Musorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition:

## Ex. 37

(a) Musorgsky



(b) Rimsky-Korsakov

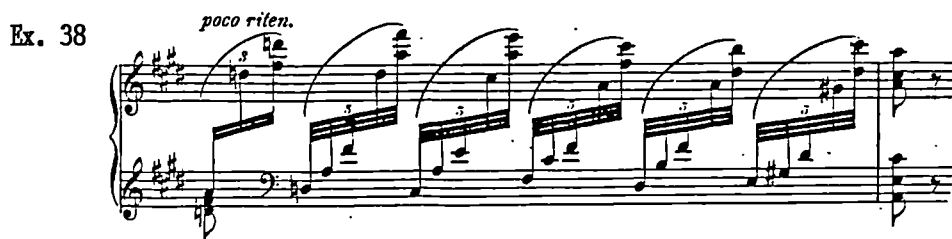


Not all Rimsky-Korsakov's compatriots considered the concerto's piano writing to be idiomatic. Rachmaninov, for example, singled it out - in an interview given for The Etude in 1923 - as not being 'klaviermässig':

I believe in what might be called indigenous music for the piano; that is, music which the Germans would describe as 'klaviermässig'. So much has been written for the instrument that is really alien. Brahms is a notable example. Rimsky-Korsakov is possibly the greatest of Russian composers; yet no one ever plays his concerto in these days, because it is not klaviermässig. On the other hand the concertos of Tchaikovsky are frequently heard because they lie well under the fingers! (74)

74. 'New Lights on the Art of the Piano', in The Etude (April-May 1929), quoted in Sergei Rachmaninoff, S. Bertensson and J. Leyda (London, 1956), p.231.

It is curious that Rachmaninov should have cited Tchaikovsky's concertos as being klaviermässig, for the piano writing of the Concerto No.1 in B flat minor, the only one he actually performed, is now widely recognized as being 'orchestral' in concept and is clearly not idiomatically written for the instrument. Admittedly, there are a couple of passages in Rimsky-Korsakov's concerto which are awkwardly written, particularly when the soloist is in contention with the orchestra. However, these difficulties, which are mainly related to stretch, do not occur very often and are easily negotiated by pianists with a large span. Rachmaninov would not have had any problem with the following passage, for example:



The concerto, which was published in Leipzig in 1886, was first performed in St Petersburg by N. S. Lavrov at a Free School Concert on 27 February 1884. It was favourably reviewed by Cui, who praised its 'thematic and harmonic details, its modulations and unusual delicacy and irresistible splendour'.<sup>75</sup> However, Cui considered the ending of the concerto 'too compact' and that, as a whole, it was 'more of an orchestral piece with piano obbligato'. His first criticism is perhaps deserved, for the coda is just a little too frenetic in its modulations and too heavy in its scoring to complement the more transparent, leisurely paced preceding sections.

75. Cesar Cui, Izbrannye Stati (Leningrad, 1952), pp.336-7.

His second criticism, however, is without foundation, for apart from the solo cadenzas, the impressive passages of double octaves, the sweeping glissandi (inspired by Liszt's Second Concerto) and other artifacts designed to promote virtuosity, the piano part contains a fair proportion of thematic material, which it presents simply, yet effectively. Indeed, the role of the soloist is beautifully calculated, being either in contest with the orchestra, or complementing it with arabesque-like figurations derived from the folk song. Only in the first half of the coda is there a tendency for both soloist and orchestra to vie for attention contemporaneously - often a weak moment in concerto writing.

The Piano Concerto in E flat minor Op.4, by Sergey Lyapunov, composed between 1888 and 1890, is also cast in one movement and reveals similar cyclical intentions to Liszt's concertos, to which it is heavily indebted. According to Lyapunov's correspondence with his close friend and mentor, Balakirev, during the months of June and July 1888, the composition of the new concerto did not come easily to him, though he was pleased with the soloist's part. The main stumbling block, so he informed Balakirev, was the 'Andante' movement - a problem which he also encountered in his First Symphony. Balakirev suggested that he study the concertos of Chopin and the 'Larghetto' of Henselt's Piano Concerto. He also recommended the 'Andante' slow movement of Arensky's Concerto. Lyapunov, however, found it impossible to reconcile the cyclical elements in his new concerto with the introduction of a separate, self-contained slow movement. Instead, he compromised and incorporated an 'Adagio non tanto' episode - in the unrelated key of D, a favourite key of Balakirev's - into a multi-sectional single-movement design: 'As your concerto is in E flat minor,' wrote Balakirev, 'then for the Andante the best key

would be B major or D major as a perfect contrast in its colour or brightness with the gloomy E flat minor.'<sup>76</sup> (see Ex.39).

Lyapunov's difficulties regarding the composition of his first piano concerto largely stem from his inability to handle large-scale structures, for unlike Balakirev, who possessed an uncanny talent for producing convincing large structures through often very unconventional means, Lyapunov lacked architectural foresight and his works are sometimes 'patchy' in effect.

The E flat minor Concerto is constructed in 'sonata allegro' form and is unusual in that its thematic material is stated in reverse order in the recapitulation (suggesting that Lyapunov was acquainted with Rubinstein's Third and Fifth Piano Concertos, which both employ this rare procedure - see Part One, page 32). Lyapunov's thematic material, though not particularly striking, is pleasantly evocative in its national characteristics, and in both its underlying harmonies and pianistic treatment, is very close to Balakirev's style:

Ex. 39

(a)

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is marked 'Allegro con brio' and consists of two staves with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second system is marked 'pp' and also consists of two staves with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. This system features a more complex harmonic structure with sustained chords and melodic lines.

76. Letter dated 20 June 1888, quoted in M.E. Shifman, S.M. Lyapunov: zhizn i tvorchestvo (Moscow, 1960), p.35.



(b)



(c)

Musical score for section (c), marked *A tempo un poco più moderato*. The score consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a melodic line with a long slur and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The second system has a bass clef and continues the melodic and harmonic material. A *cantabile* marking is present in the first system.

Indeed, Lyapunov's concerto was greatly influenced by Balakirev and parts may have been recomposed by him.<sup>77</sup> Even during the final stages of the concerto's composition Balakirev could not refrain from meddling: 'Your concerto has been copied out. It was necessary to alter one or two passages where the harmonies did not agree at the end.'<sup>78</sup> However, as Calvocoressi pointed out,

despite all the spiritual affinities between the two, Liapunov, as a composer, remained very different from Balakirev. His music is more purely lyrical, less vehement, fundamentally contemplative. He was endowed with a keen sense of colour and poetry, but

77. It is known that sections of Lyapunov's First Symphony were re-orchestrated by Balakirev and additional material incorporated into the score.

78. A. Lyapunova, 'Iz Istory Tvorcheskikh svyazei M. Balakireva i S. Lyapunova', in Balakirev, Issledovaniya i stati (Leningrad, 1961), pp.392-3.

not with the burning energy (and attendant restlessness of imagination) that characterizes Balakirev . . . (79)

Many would dispute these somewhat sweeping generalizations, particularly in regard to Lyapunov's later piano concerto (in E, Op.38) and the resplendent Transcendental Studies. However, as far as the early Concerto in E flat minor is concerned, there is perhaps a grain of truth in Calvocoressi's remarks, for the work's more robust episodes sound contrived, and the soloist's virtuoso passage-work somewhat forced and lacking in spontaneity. Nevertheless, Lyapunov's First Concerto enjoyed some success after its première on 8 April 1891,<sup>80</sup> and was taken up by many eminent pianists, including Hofmann, Igumnov and V. I. Scriabin (the wife of the composer Alexander Scriabin).

It was also around this time that the young Rachmaninov was making his first tentative steps in the direction of concerto writing. Sketches exist - deposited in the Rachmaninov Room in the State Central Museum of Musical Culture, Moscow - of ideas for a piano concerto in C minor dating from November 1889. Though clearly the work of an apprentice,<sup>81</sup> characteristics of his more mature style, such as rising and falling sequential patterns, syncopation etc., are to be found from the outset in the short score sketches of the opening orchestral tutti:

79. M.D. Calvocoressi, Masters of Russian Music (in collaboration with Gerald Abraham) (London, 1936), p.437.

80. The concert, which took place at the Free Music School in St Petersburg, was conducted by Balakirev, with A.I. Borovka as soloist.

81. The sixteen-year-old Rachmaninov was studying composition with Arensky and Taneyev at the Moscow Conservatory during the academic year 1888/9.

## Ex. 40

The musical score for Ex. 40 consists of three systems. The first system shows a violin part on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto'. The second system continues the violin and piano parts, with a 'crescendo' marking above the piano staff. The third system shows the violin and piano parts continuing, with a 'p' marking above the piano staff and a 'crescendo' marking below it.

The sketch of the soloist's opening statement is also of interest, being a hotchpotch of other, more celebrated concerto openings (in particular the concertos of Grieg<sup>82</sup> and Schumann). What is more likely, however, is that Rachmaninov was imitating the piano style of Tchaikovsky's First Concerto (and indirectly, the source of Tchaikovsky's inspiration: Rubinstein's Octet in D minor. Compare Ex.41 with Exx. 1b and 2, Part One, page 15):

## Ex. 41

The musical score for Ex. 41 is a piano part. It features a melodic line in the right hand, which is marked with a 'g' above it, indicating double octaves. The left hand provides a supporting bass line. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score consists of two systems of two staves each.

This seems a reasonable assumption considering that Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto provided the inspiration for the opening passage of double octaves of the revised version (1917) of Rachmaninov's first published concerto, the Piano Concerto in F sharp minor Op.1:

82. Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor Op.16 was to have a considerable influence on Rachmaninov's first published piano concerto: the Concerto in F sharp minor Op.1 (see pages 127-31).

## Ex. 42

(a)

Tchaikovsky

(b)

Rachmaninov

Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto in F sharp minor Op.1 is first mentioned in a letter to his cousin Natalya Skalon dated 26 March 1891:

In your letter you asked me what I am now composing. A piano concerto. Two movements are already written down, [83] the last movement is composed but not yet written; I will probably finish the whole concerto by late spring, and then during the summer orchestrate it. (84)

The last two movements of the concerto were composed and written down in great haste, as he informed his close friend Mikhail Slonov in a letter dated 20 July:

On 6 July I finished composing and scoring my piano concerto. I could have completed it much sooner, but after the first movement I idled for a long time and began to write the remaining movements on 3 July. I composed and scored the last two movements in two and a half days. You can imagine what a job that was. I wrote from five in the morning till eight in the evening, so after finishing the work I was terribly tired. Afterwards I rested for a few days. While working I never feel fatigue (on the contrary - pleasure). With me, fatigue appears only when I realise a big labour is finished. I am pleased with the concerto . . . (85)

83. The first movement had been finished the previous year.

84. S.V. Rachmaninov, Pisma (Moscow, 1955), p.42.

85. *Ibid.*, p.54.

The first performance of the new work took place on 17 March 1892 at a students' concert given at the Moscow Conservatory with Rachmaninov as soloist and the director of the Conservatory, V. I. Safonov, as conductor. The concert was on a grand scale and consisted in the main of concertos, concerto movements and arias by eleven composers, including Saint-Saëns, Rubinstein, Mendelssohn and Gluck and finishing with Scriabin playing Liszt's Piano Concerto in E flat (see Plate no. 2 ). Rachmaninov's concerto was ninth on the programme and apparently made 'an agreeable impression' on the critic A.H.C. who pointed out in particular the 'unquestionable skill already at his [Rachmaninov's] disposition' though noted that due to nerves, the performance as a whole was not completely 'self-assured'.<sup>86</sup> Rachmaninov's nervousness may in part be attributed to the importance of the occasion - this is only to be expected. However, his agitation was probably exacerbated by his disagreements with Safonov during rehearsals over tempi and Safonov's repeated suggestions on how to improve the work. Rachmaninov's relationship with the director was not, in any case, particularly amiable at the best of times.

In common with almost all his Russian predecessors who attempted to compose concertos, Rachmaninov needed a model on which to base his new work, or at least to provide ideas which could then be adapted and moulded to his own designs. The work chosen by Rachmaninov was Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor (a concerto which Rachmaninov admired, though never played in public<sup>87</sup>) and its influence is stamped not only on the leading musical ideas of Rachmaninov's concerto, but also its style of piano writing:

86. A.H.C. in Drevnik Artista, No.1 (Moscow, 1892), p.39.

87. Rachmaninov did, however, conduct a performance of Grieg's Concerto on 26 January 1908 in St Petersburg, with his cousin Alexander Siloti as soloist. The concert also included, incidentally, the première of his Second Symphony Op.27.

Ex. 43

(a)

Rachmaninov: opening bars of 1st movement

Musical score for Rachmaninov's opening bars of the 1st movement. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features a piano introduction with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The right hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The left hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The score ends with a fermata over the final note.

(b)

Grieg: opening bars of 1st movement

Musical score for Grieg's opening bars of the 1st movement. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features a piano introduction with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto moderato'. The right hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The left hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The score ends with a fermata over the final note. The tempo marking 'poco rit.' is present.

Ex. 44

(a)

Grieg: 1st movement

Musical score for Grieg's 1st movement. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features a piano introduction with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto moderato'. The right hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The left hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The score ends with a fermata over the final note.

(b)

Rachmaninov

Musical score for Rachmaninov's 1st movement. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features a piano introduction with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The right hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The left hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The score ends with a fermata over the final note.

(c)

Grieg:  
3rd movement

Musical score for Grieg's 3rd movement. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features a piano introduction with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto moderato'. The right hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The left hand part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note triplet. The score ends with a fermata over the final note.

## Ex. 45

(a)

Rachmaninov: 3rd movement

Musical score for Rachmaninov's 3rd movement. The score is divided into two systems. The first system is for the Piano, with the tempo marking *Allegro scherzando*. It shows the piano part with dynamics *pp* and *mf*, and the string part with dynamics *pp* and *mf*. The second system is for the Strings, also with the tempo marking *Allegro scherzando*. It shows the string part with dynamics *pp* and *mf*.

(b)

Grieg: 3rd movement

Musical score for Grieg's 3rd movement. The score is divided into two systems. The first system is for the Piano, with the tempo marking *Allegro moderato molto e marcato*. It shows the piano part with dynamics *pp* and *mf*, and the string part with dynamics *pp* and *mf*. The second system is for the Strings, also with the tempo marking *Allegro moderato molto e marcato*. It shows the string part with dynamics *pp* and *mf*. A *Solo* section is marked in the piano part, starting at measure 15.

Grieg's concerto may also have suggested to Rachmaninov the interpolation of a slower interlude (in D major 'Andante espressivo') in the finale.

Why Rachmaninov turned to Grieg's A minor Piano Concerto for ideas is not altogether clear, though certainly he thought very highly of it from a purely pianistic point of view. In his interview with *The Etude*, in 1923, quoted from earlier regarding Rachmaninov's opinions of Rimsky-Korsakov's concerto, he stated that 'although he [Grieg] could not be classed as a great master pianist, [he] had the gift of writing beautifully for the piano and in pure "klaviermässig" style'.

17 марта.

Концерт учащихся консерватории, в пользу всех недостающих товарищей.

1. Увертюра из оперы „Ифигения в Авлиде“ (съ композицией Р. Вагнера)..... *Гарка.*  
Исп. Оркестр.
  2. Концерт для виолончели съ оркестромъ..... *Сель-Синси.*  
Исп. уч-къ М. Дзятинский (ка. пр. А. Э. Фоль-Гаспа).
  3. Ария изъ оперы „Дон-Жуанъ“..... *Мелоя.*  
Исп. уч-къ А. Сердюковъ (ка. пр. Э. О. Тальбуз).
  4. Концертъ для ф.-п. съ оркестромъ, g-moll, I и II части..... *Сель-Синси.*  
Исп. уч-ка А. Ердлаева (ка. пр. Н. Ю. Шацера).
  5. Концертъ для скрипки, f-moll, II и III части. *Волына.*  
Исп. уч-къ Н. Аверино (ка. пр. Н. В. Грешман).
  6. Концертъ для ф.-п. съ оркестромъ, b-moll, I части..... *Н. П. Уйисовичю.*  
Исп. уч-къ А. Максимовъ (ка. пр. Н. А. Пабста).
  7. Ария и скерцо изъ концерта для ф.-п. d-moll..... *Литовскія.*  
Исп. уч-ка Э. Юнгъ (ка. пр. Н. А. Пабста).
  8. Стрелы изъ оперы „Перотъ“..... *А. А. Гурбановичю.*  
Исп. уч-къ М. Чуришиновъ (ка. пр. Е. А. Лавровской).
  9. Концертъ для ф.-п. съ оркестромъ, I части..... *Уч. С. Думенинова.*  
Исп. авторъ, ка. пр. А. С. Двенского).
  10. Концертъ для скрипки съ оркестромъ, I части..... *Д. И. Абеляновъ.*  
Исп. уч-къ Е. Чижевскій (ка. пр. Н. В. Гржимли).
  11. Ария изъ оперы „Аида“..... *Перди.*  
Исп. уч-ка Б. Абразовичъ (ка. пр. Б. А. Лавровской).
  12. Концертъ для ф.-п. съ оркестромъ Es-dur. *Лиски.*  
Исп. уч-къ А. Сербины (ка. пр. В. П. Сафонов).
- Оркестръ учениковъ консерватории, усиленный участием двухъ профессоровъ консерватории, О. О. Схавилена (дирижера) и Р. Ф. Швашицъ (контрабасъ), и шести постороннихъ артистовъ.



Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto in F sharp minor was published in 1893. Though at first the new work was favourably received, Rachmaninov soon became aware of the work's deficiencies - its heavy unimaginative scoring, somewhat densely chordal piano writing and episodic passages of little structural or thematic significance. The borrowings from Grieg's concerto may also have embarrassed him, for in the revised version of 1917, these were either excised altogether, or were refined to such an extent that the influence of Grieg was no longer immediately apparent (compare the following with Ex.45a):

## Ex. 46

Rachmaninov clearly regretted the premature publication of his first concerto.<sup>88</sup> He even toyed with the idea, several years later, in 1897, of composing a new and finer work to erase the memory of it though these plans came to nothing. Ten years or so later he returned to his Op.1 and voiced his intention, in a letter to Nikita Morozov dated 30 March 1908, to . . . revise it completely:

88. This was largely due to Tchaikovsky, for it was through his influence that Rachmaninov obtained an important contract with Gutheil in 1893 which led to his works being published without delay. Naturally being anxious to see his compositions in print, and from a purely financial point of view, keen to earn money other than by teaching, which he loathed, Rachmaninov hurried into print music which was either in need of further refinement, such as the First Piano Concerto Op.1, or was of the 'pot-boiler' variety composed for the 'fin-de-siècle' Russian salon.

Tomorrow I plan to take my first concerto in hand, look it over, and then decide how much time and work will be required for its new version, and whether it's worth doing anyway. There are so many requests for this concerto, but it's so awful in its present state . . . Of course, it will have to be completely rewritten for its orchestration is worse than its music. So tomorrow I'll come to a decision concerning this matter and I'd like to decide in the affirmative.

I have three pieces that frighten me: the first concerto, the Capriccio, and the first Symphony. How I should like to see all of these in a corrected, decent form! (89)

However, Rachmaninov had to wait another nine years before he could find the time to achieve his objective, and the revised concerto was completed on 10 November 1917 and handed over to the publisher Koussevitzky, just weeks before he finally left Russia for his self-imposed exile.<sup>90</sup>

One year after Rachmaninov had been putting the final touches to the first version of his Piano Concerto in F sharp minor Op.1 in 1891, his composition teacher Arensky composed his second and final work for piano and orchestra: the 'Fantasia on themes of I. T. Ryabinin' Op.48. Ryabinin (1844-?), who, as a reciter of 'bylini'<sup>91</sup> (epic tales and legends), followed in the footsteps of his equally

89. S.V. Rachmaninov, Pisma (Moscow, 1955), p.344.

90. A detailed description of Rachmaninov's revisions to the First Piano Concerto is outside of the chronological scope of this thesis. However, a recent study (in German) by Fritz Butzbach (published 1979), gives an exhaustive, bar by bar account of Rachmaninov's alterations, excisions etc., and must be considered the definitive study in this musicological field. A less weighty account outlining Rachmaninov's intentions is Geoffrey Norris' article 'Rachmaninov's Second Thoughts' in The Musical Times cxiv (1973), pp.364-8. Norris' study of Rachmaninov's music for the Master Musicians series (London, 1978) also contains a section devoted to the First Concerto's revisions (pp.110-15).

91. Rimsky-Korsakov, who openly admitted to being influenced by 'bylini' in his opera Sadko and who apparently heard Ryabinin in St Petersburg the same year as Arensky, indirectly gave a neat definition of the genre in his autobiography: 'This recitative is not conversational language, but a sort of conventionally regulated narration of parlendo singing of which the prototype may be found in the declamation of Ryabinin's bylinas' (N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov, op. cit., pp.364-5).

famous father Trofim Grigoryevich, came to Moscow from Zaonezhya (now Karelskaya ASSR), and was invited to give a recital at the small hall at the Conservatory. It was during this performance that Arensky found the thematic material for his projected work for piano and orchestra, as Alexander Goldenweizer, who was also present, explained:

I sat next to Arensky and while we were listening I noticed that he was writing down Ryabinin's tunes in a notebook. He actually wrote only a couple which were later to form the basis of a fantasia or something - it's not a work I know. (92)

The two themes chosen by Arensky are as follows: the first is a slow-moving (Andante sostenuto) melody entitled 'Iz tovo li goroda iz Muromlya' from an ancient Russian folk tale, the boyar Skopin-Shvisk; and the second, a contrasting, more lively tune called 'Zhil Svyatoslav devyanosto let' is from a well known folk-bylina based on the legend of the Russian heroes Volg and Mikul.<sup>93</sup>

The 'Fantasia' is constructed in three contrasting sections, the first two, each comprising half a dozen or so variants (as opposed to variations) on Ryabinin's themes, and the third, a kind of resumé including a section combining the two themes (at Fig.12, see Ex.50), and a coda in which they alternate. Sandwiched between the first two sections is a brief cadenza and fugato. Arensky's treatment of the 'bylini' material is characteristically highly polished and moderately effective though in all probability, his harmonic vocabulary and orchestration is not sufficiently imaginative to convey to the full the powerful images evoked during Ryabinin's recitations (Arensky's

92. Cited in an unpublished dissertation by I. Isobov, A.S. Arensky, deposited in the Moscow Conservatory, and quoted in G.M. Tsuipin, op. cit., p.88.

93. Both songs are quoted in T.V. Popov, Russkoye narodnoye muzykal'noy tvorchestvo, vol.1 (Moscow, 1955), pp.146 and 152.

teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, would have been far more successful from this point of view). The soloist's writing takes us little further than Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky in its somewhat conventional virtuosity, though Arensky's predilection for widely spread left-hand arpeggiando figurations was to have a significant influence on the piano styles of his pupils Rachmaninov and Scriabin.

## Ex. 47

Andante sostenuto

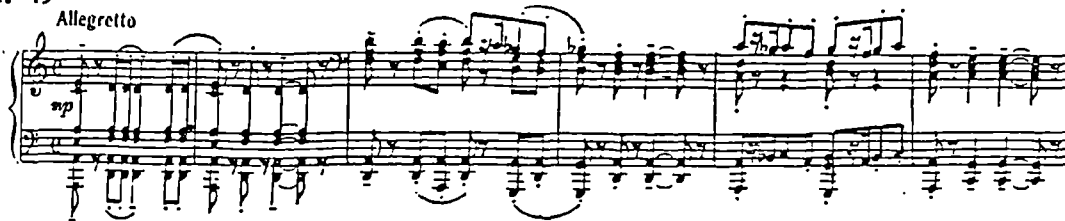
Elsewhere, Arensky occasionally employs a heavy-handed chordal accompaniment to the Ryabinin themes: the second variant on 'Iz tovo li goroda iz Muromlya' beginning at Fig.2 for example (probably inspired by the 'Allegro deciso' section of Liszt's Second Piano Concerto - see Part One Ex.7a):

## Ex. 48

Andante sostenuto

The second bylini theme 'Zhil Svyatoslav devyanosto let' fares little better as far as imaginative treatment is concerned though it does represent, in its rhythmic assertiveness, an ideal countermelody to the more languid 'Iz tovo li goroda iz Muromlya'.

## Ex. 49



Following Rubinstein's example (in the Russian Capriccio Op.102, dating from 1878), Arensky combines the two 'bylini' themes in a piano solo (at Fig. 12) - accompanied by lower strings - reminiscent in its chordal textures of some of Tchaikovsky's more awkward keyboard writing (in the Sonata in G, Op.37, for example):

## Ex. 50



According to Tsuipin, Arensky's 'Fantasia' was an immediate and sensational success, second only in popularity to his D minor Trio.<sup>94</sup> The fact that Goldenweizer, a renowned pianist very active on the Russian musical scene, did not know of the work, seems to suggest otherwise.<sup>95</sup> Certainly the 'Fantasia' sank rapidly into oblivion

94. G.M. Tsuipin, *op. cit.*, p.94.

95. Goldenweizer was by no means a stranger to Arensky's music; in 1897, he performed Arensky's Piano Concerto in F minor at one of Belyayev's Russian Symphonic Concerts.

soon after, despite the attempts of the pianist M. Grinberg to revive it, and unless fashions change, it is likely to remain so.

Fashions certainly do change, however, as exemplified by the varying fortunes of Scriabin's Piano Concerto in F sharp minor (1896-7), the last and possibly one of the finest of nineteenth-century Russian piano concertos. Today, this work is fairly regularly performed and is appreciated for its lyrical beauties and delicate, transparent scoring. Several decades ago, however, it was all but forgotten. Abraham Veinus' otherwise excellent volume The Concerto (published in 1944, and revised in 1964) makes no mention of the work or its composer, although attention is paid to inferior piano concertos which are now hardly ever performed, such as those of Moscheles and Paderewski, not to mention Rubinstein.

The idea for this, his first published work outside of an exclusively piano-solo idiom<sup>96</sup> came to Scriabin sometime in the autumn of 1896 and is first mentioned in a letter to his publisher Belyayev, dated 12 October. The following month Scriabin informed Belyayev that the concerto was finished and that he had begun orchestrating it. The final stages of composition took longer than anticipated and were laced with uncertainty: 'I can say nothing about the Concerto for the present - innate doubt prevents me.'<sup>97</sup> Early the following year, Scriabin was still working at the orchestration, adding the finishing touches to the variations in the second movement and supervising the arrangement for two pianos made by his fiancée

96. There also exists a very early work left in short score entitled 'Fantasy' for piano and orchestra, composed during Scriabin's first year at the Moscow Conservatory (1887-8). It was published posthumously and orchestrated by G. Zinger.

97. Letter of 17 December to M.P. Belyayev. A.N. Scriabin, Pisma (Moscow, 1965), p.160.

Vera Isaakovich.<sup>98</sup> When Belyayev finally received the concerto manuscript in April 1897, he immediately sent it to Rimsky-Korsakov and Lyapunov who had agreed to peruse any new work Belyayev intended to publish. Rimsky-Korsakov was so furious at the shoddy workmanship, inaccuracies and general untidiness of the score that he felt compelled to write to Scriabin and reprimand him. Scriabin was deeply embarrassed by the letter he received and hurried to make amends. Characteristically, in his reply he attempted to vindicate his slovenly behaviour:

I have just received your letter which plunged me into depression. There is nothing I can say to justify myself apart from one or two small things which prevent me from concentrating in general and writing the score in particular. This is neuralgia, and I've been suffering from it for several days now. I am so ashamed!! I will do all that I can to put right the rest of the concerto now . . . (99)

By the middle of May, Belyayev was, understandably, beginning to lose his patience, as Scriabin was still toying with the orchestration of the second and third movements: 'You promised not to keep the rest of the Concerto and now you feed me "tomorrows". You are wrecking my stomach...'<sup>100</sup> When Belyayev finally received the completed score, it was again forwarded to Rimsky-Korsakov for scrutiny. His remarks were again, highly critical, this time in connection with the concerto's orchestration. Having lost Rimsky-Korsakov's address, Scriabin was unable to reply. However, in a letter to Lyadov dated 14 May, he poured out his indignation at Rimsky-Korsakov's strictures and at the same time gives a rare, lucid account of his creative processes:

98. The arrangement was published by Belyayev the following year, but shamefully, no acknowledgement was given to Vera Isaakovich for her contribution. The title page simply reads 'Arrangement for two pianos by the author'.

99. A.N. Scriabin, *op. cit.*, pp.168-9.

100. Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin*, vol.1 (Tokyo, 1969), p.235.

Yesterday I received a letter from Nikolai Andreevich [Rimsky] which grieved me. I am very grateful to him for his kind help, but has he wasted all this time on the Concerto only to say the orchestration is weak? Since he is so kind couldn't he have noted those places which seem to him most weak and explain why?

To orchestrate a concerto, you don't have to have written several symphonies or preliminary exercises. Nikolai Andreevich says that a concerto is very difficult to orchestrate and that it is easier to write for orchestra alone.

Let us suppose that all this is true. But that is for an ideal orchestration. What I want for my first try is a decent orchestration. This goal can be reached through advice and a little help from people who know. It is easy to say 'study orchestration', but there is only one way and that is to hear one's own composition performed. Trial and error is the best teacher.

Now, if I don't hear my music, and nobody tells me anything, then how can I learn? I have read scores, am reading, and will of course continue to read them, but I always come up against the same thing . . . the need for wisdom's experience.

I am working every day, but it leads nowhere. I can make as many inventions and combinations as I like. I can create patterns Nikolai Andreevich himself never dreamed of. But without practice, this adds up to naught.

Forgive me for prattling on. But all this is rather painful for me. I had counted Nikolai Andreevich as good, good, and now I see he is only kind. At any rate, I am ashamed to have bothered him and I will not repeat that mistake in the future. I will manage on my own. Advise me, please, what should I do? In any case send me the score (you have it). I will reorchestrate it and answer for it myself.

Sergei Ivanovich [Taneyev] is so generous, he wants to do everything to make the orchestration a success. He is working with me . . . (101)

Despite Scriabin's declaration that he intended to reorchestrate the concerto in collaboration with Taneyev, a comparison of the original manuscript with the score as published by Belyayev in 1898 reveals that Scriabin did not make any significant alterations, despite the many comments scribbled by Rimsky-Korsakov on the score: 'How sloppy to put rests here!', 'To hell with this!', 'Why this suddenly?!' etc.

When Rimsky-Korsakov handed over the score to Lyadov he enclosed a covering note of undisguised rancour:



Look at this filth, I have! There is much I don't understand. It is beyond my powers. I am in no condition to cope with such a mush-headed genius. Best to let the composer publish it for two pianos and have someone else orchestrate it . . . As for me, I have cleaner work to do, I have no time to scrub Scriabin. (102)

However, the Soviet philosopher and musicologist Valentin Asmus points out in his introduction to Scriabin's letters, that when Rimsky-Korsakov passed judgment on the demerits and imperfections in Scriabin, they were the demerits and imperfections of a genius. And indeed, in his autobiography, Rimsky-Korsakov referred to Scriabin rather ambiguously as 'that star of first magnitude, newly risen in Moscow, the somewhat warped, posing, and self-opinionated A. N. Scriabin'.<sup>103</sup> So underneath the vitriol, the sarcasm and apparent animosity there lay admiration and, as Rimsky-Korsakov admitted to his friend and secretary Vasily Yastrebtsev in a moment of self-confession, professional jealousy:

I found in myself clear indications of Salieri. To a degree, I am irritated by the success of Chaliapin, Scriabin, Nikisch, d'Alheim, and others. I behave more kindheartedly with a talented mediocrity. (104/105)

The first performance of Scriabin's Piano Concerto took place on 11 October in Odessa and was conducted by Safonov with the composer as soloist. All went well, according to a letter from Scriabin to Belyayev written the day after.<sup>106</sup> Safonov confirmed this in a letter to Cui: 'Yesterday the Odessa programme went brilliantly.

102. Faubion Bowers, op. cit., p.237.

103. N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, op. cit., p.379.

104. Faubion Bowers, op. cit., p.238.

105. Significantly, the period of Rimsky-Korsakov's involvement with Scriabin's concerto coincided with the composition of his opera Mozart and Salieri. There can be little doubt that Rimsky-Korsakov's irrational attitude to Scriabin and his music was in part due to his deep involvement in the plot of Pushkin's drama, and his identification with the character of Salieri.

106. A.N. Scriabin, op. cit., p.183.

Scriabin had enormous success with his remarkable concerto. . .,<sup>107</sup>  
 By 10 December 1898, when the concerto was first heard in St Petersburg, Rimsky-Korsakov had apparently changed his views concerning the work and even made it known that he was willing to conduct the concerto if there was the possibility of another performance in the capital. Rimsky-Korsakov's strictures must have still rankled, for Scriabin was to have none of it. Instead, he and Safonov took the concerto to Moscow where it was given its première performance in that city on 30 March 1899. Ironically, the critic Yuly Engel singled out for particular praise Scriabin's orchestration.

It is difficult to comprehend Rimsky-Korsakov's objections to the concerto. Clearly his critical faculties were momentarily obscured by emotions which he was unable to suppress, for as Bowers stated 'No more inoffensive or domesticated music exists'.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, this very quality could be considered the concerto's principal weakness, for it treads so lightly that no new ground is broken and stylistically it stays well within the comfortable Chopinesque idiom typical of Scriabin's early style. The soloist's part, though technically exacting, eschews conventional virtuosity and rarely takes the centre stage. There is not even a cadenza for the soloist to get to grips with. What Scriabin presents us with is a beautifully crafted musical collaboration between piano and orchestra, as opposed to the more traditional confrontation found in the concertos of his contemporaries, and from this point of view it is almost unique in Russian concerto literature. Perhaps this in itself could be considered innovative.

107. Faubion Bowers, op. cit., p.244.

108. Ibid., p.244.

The most immediately striking quality of Scriabin's concerto is the constantly changing rhythmic flow of the thematic ideas, themselves often diffuse or fragmentary, reflecting perhaps the quicksilver, vacillating thought processes of the composer himself. There is, in fact, a significant parallel between the overall character of the concerto and a description of its composer by the Russian musicologist, Leonid Sabaneyev:

This fearfully restless, minute man lacked the power which inner psychic muscles give, which Wagner, for instance, that no less active and expansive man, had.

Of course, the matter does not rest in their nervousness or their small stature. It is something else, something that shines through their work. Scriabin lacked power, but he had a burning, blinding unearthly joy . . . His exterior and his psyche were in strange harmony with his half-childish caprices which showed up in his quick changes of mood, his sudden drop in spirits . . . His delicacy and refinement were the product of his early pampering and advantages. (109)

Sabaneyev's epithets: restless, joyful, capricious, delicate and refined, summarize to perfection the varied moods of this elegant concerto. So, too, does the suggestion that Scriabin lacked power, for the work is sketched in pastel shades rather than the strong primary colours of, say, the concertos of Tchaikovsky or Rachmaninov, and is dwarfed by them in terms of emotional range and depth.

Structurally, Scriabin's concerto adheres closely to traditional concerto form with the exception of its slow movement which is in the form of 'theme and variations'. The seemingly spontaneous, improvisatory nature of the music conceals, in fact, a very closely wrought structure indeed, as do almost all Scriabin's larger-scale compositions. The concerto also contains a hint of the intensively organized harmonic-melodic system on which almost all his mature works were to

109. Quoted in Faubion Bowers, The New Scriabin (London, 1974), pp.36-7.

be based, for its opening subject is constructed on a descending sequence of three-note figures, indicated in the score by accents:

Ex. 51



Bowers quotes an important discussion between Sabaneyev and the mature Scriabin concerning the composer's creative processes and its application in the early piano concerto:

For this strange man of fantasy, how doubly odd that so much came 'from his head'. His creativity in music was half-intuitive, a half if not more, constructed as logically as geometry. He himself told me that he rarely 'improvised' themes, that rather he formalized them. He loved to show these 'rational constructions' in his compositions, after they were written.

'Thought must always be present in composition and in the creation of themes. It is expressed by means of principle. Principle guides creation. I create my themes mainly by principle, so they will have concordant proportion.

'Take for example my Concerto. The bedrock of its design is the descending sequence of notes. Against this background the whole theme grows and unfurls.' He played me the theme of the Concerto and accented these descending steps richly, and the melody took on quite a different meaning and sense. (110)

These three-note 'nuclei' (see Ex.51) were subsequently to play an important role in the first movement's development, particularly in the bridge passage leading to the recapitulation (and thus back to the first subject from which the pattern is derived). The charming second movement (Tema con Variazioni) is supposedly based on a theme composed during Scriabin's childhood. The theme itself is unremarkable, being wholly diatonic and sequentially repetitive. Its treatment, however, is imaginative. Of particular interest is the second variation, which transforms the 'Andante' theme into a rousing

'Allegro scherzando' came characterized by sprightly off-beat staccato chords and octaves, and the third, a lugubrious 'Adagio' exploiting the lower extremes of the piano:

Ex. 52

Var III 3  
Adagio M.M. ♩ = 40

Piano  
Viol. I  
Viol. II  
Vla.  
V-cllo  
C-bass

The most immediately appealing of the three movements, however, is the rondo finale, for its leading thematic ideas, though not as profound as in the first movement or as scintillatingly decorated in the second, are more virile in concept. The principal theme is a splendid example:

Ex. 53

Allegro moderato

The episodic theme, initially stated at Fig. 3, is typical of Scriabin's soaring melodies during his so-called 'early' period. Pianistically, though, its layout anticipates the many melodic-chordal

figurations found in the 'transitional' works - the 'prestissimo' finale of the Fourth Sonata Op.30 and the first subject of the Fifth Sonata Op.53.

Ex. 54

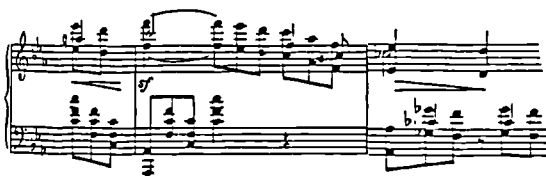


The left hand accompaniment, however, is still cast in a figuration first extensively employed in Scriabin's most famous piano work: the Étude in D sharp minor Op.8 No.12 - the influence of which saturates much of the piano writing in the rondo's episodes. The second episode also contains an unashamed borrowing from one of the lovely Preludes Op.11 (No.20 in C minor, composed in 1895). One can hardly blame Scriabin - it is a phrase of exceptional beauty:

Ex. 55

(a) Prelude Op.11 No.20

(b) Concerto, 3rd movement



Instead of rounding off his concerto with an aggrandized version of the second theme (Ex.54), in the manner of Tchaikovsky or Rachmaninov, Scriabin based his coda on a tiny fragment of melody extracted from the first movement - the four-bar corollary to the first subject theme. Understandably enough, the tonalities are

different as Scriabin's intention in the coda was to go out in a blaze of F sharp major. From all other aspects: orchestration, piano writing etc., the two passages are more or less synonymous:

Ex. 56

(a)

Scriabin: Concerto, 1st movement

## Ex. 56 (b)

The image displays a page of a musical score for a full orchestra. The score is arranged in a standard format with staves for woodwinds, brass, piano, and strings. The instruments listed on the left are: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in A (Clar. (A)), Bassoon (Fag.), Horns I and II (I. II. Cor. (F)), Horns III and IV (III. IV.), Trumpet (Tr. (b)), Trombone (Tromb.), Piano (Piano), Violin I (Viol. I), Violin II (Viol. II), Viola (V. la), Violoncello (V. celli), and Double Bass (C. bass). The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The music is marked with a forte (ff) dynamic throughout. The woodwinds and strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the piano part features a complex, multi-layered texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The brass instruments play a more melodic line with some sustained notes. The overall texture is dense and rhythmic.

So efficiently does this thematic interloper fulfil its function and so naturally does it grow from the main body of the rondo that its presence usually passes by unnoticed, even by experts in the field.<sup>111</sup> Scriabin was to make much use of thematic recall in

111. Hugh MacDonald, in his study of the composer's music, refers to the three movements as being 'thematically unrelated' (H. MacDonald, *Skryabin* (London, 1978), p.28).



later compositions, and as he endeavoured more and more to translate his creative dictum 'From the greatest delicacy (refinement) via active efficacy (flight) to the greatest grandiosity' into musical terms, so these 'recalls' became increasingly important.<sup>112</sup>

112. In the Third Sonata Op.23, the principal theme of the third movement is apotheosed in the climactic 'maestoso' passage in the closing pages of the finale, and in the Fourth Sonata Op.30, the delicate Wagnerian opening theme (Andante) is expanded to the very limits of piano sonority. Other examples of 'recall' or thematic apotheosis are found in the Fifth and Ninth Sonatas (Op.53 and 68 respectively).

### Part Three: The Piano Concertos of Peter Tchaikovsky

There is no tonal blend, indeed the piano cannot blend with the rest, having an elasticity of tone that separates from any other body of sound, but there are two forces possessed of equal rights, i.e. the powerful, inexhaustibly richly coloured orchestra, with which there struggles and over which there triumphs (given a talented performer) a small, insignificant but strong-minded rival. In this struggle there is much poetry and a whole mass of enticing combinations of sound for the composer . . . To my mind, the piano can be effective in only three situations: (1) alone, (2) in a contest with the orchestra, (3) as accompaniment, i.e. the background of a picture.

(Letter to Nadezhda von Meck, October 1880)<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of 1874, Tchaikovsky started work on what would prove to be, despite its inauspicious beginnings, one of the most popular and frequently performed piano concertos in the repertoire: the Piano Concerto in B flat minor Op.23. Tchaikovsky's decision to embark on a piano concerto as his next major work after the opera Vakula the Smith seems at first a curious one considering his antipathy towards the genre during his student days,<sup>2</sup> and his dislike, in particular, for the combination of piano with strings. During the years following his graduation from the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1865, however, it appears that Tchaikovsky's tastes in matters of structure and, more importantly, texture (to which he was more sensitive in his

1. Perepiska s N. F. von Meck, ed. V. A. Zhdanov and N. T. Zhegin (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6), p.439.
2. According to Hermann Laroche, a fellow student, Tchaikovsky had frequently declared during his years at the St Petersburg Conservatory that he would never compose a piano concerto. (See David Brown, Tchaikovsky: a Biographical and Critical Study, Vol. 1 'The Early Years' (London, 1978), p.71.)

preferences than even the music of individual composers), underwent a radical change. It is difficult, for example, to imagine how he could have tolerated, let alone conceive, the Introduction to the First Piano Concerto (scored almost exclusively for piano and strings), not to mention the quasi double concerto for violin and cello 'Andante non troppo' movement of the Second Piano Concerto in G, Op.44, unless he had discovered some way of reconciling the two seemingly disparate elements. This leads one to surmise that perhaps Tchaikovsky's initial antipathy towards the concerto may have stemmed not so much from an instinctive dislike of the tonal juxtaposition of piano and orchestra as such but rather from a growing realisation of the immense difficulties involved in combining the two forces and, arising from this, a recognition of his inability, albeit temporary, to overcome them.

Whatever the reason or reasons that lay behind this antipathy, it did not inhibit Tchaikovsky in his appreciation of other composers' concertos (an ambivalence referred to by the composer's brother, Modest, as a 'platonic hatred'). Indeed, Tchaikovsky considered Liszt's Piano Concerto in D minor, for example, as 'one of the most brilliant works in piano literature'. He also admired Liszt's Todtentanz and, whilst listening to a performance of the same composer's Concerto in E flat, scribbled the word 'brilliant' on his concert programme.

Whereas most nineteenth-century piano concertos were created by composer-virtuosi as vehicles for their own use, this was clearly not Tchaikovsky's intention. Though he was perfectly capable, from a technical point of view, of playing his own works, as testified by his private performance of the First Concerto a mere three days after

it had been completed (see pp.151-5)<sup>3</sup>, temperamentally he was entirely unsuited to the rigours of the concerto platform and was more than willing to step back and allow others the attending glory.

So the question still remains: what factor or factors encouraged Tchaikovsky to undertake a large-scale structure unfamiliar to him? One explanation worth considering is that he may have composed it specifically for his friend and colleague, Nikolay Rubinstein. This is hinted at in a letter Tchaikovsky wrote to his brother Anatoli dated 21 November:

I am now totally immersed in the composition of the piano concerto. I am particularly anxious that [Nikolay] Rubinstein should perform it at his concert . . . (4)

[It is not clear which concert Tchaikovsky was referring to. In any case, his intention was not realised, as Rubinstein did not perform the concerto in public until two years later.]

Another possible explanation concerns the German pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow to whom the work was eventually dedicated. Tchaikovsky greatly admired von Bülow's playing (he heard him in St Petersburg in 1864), and after the German pianist had given a recital at the Bolshoy Theatre in Moscow in March 1874, the year the First Concerto was composed, Tchaikovsky wrote a very flattering review praising, above all, the 'passionate intellectuality' of his playing. Von Bülow quickly reciprocated, writing to a friend that he intended

3. Despite many references to the Piano Concerto in B flat minor in Tchaikovsky's correspondence, he makes no mention of having difficulty in coping with its formidable technical demands. Furthermore, the version which Tchaikovsky played to Rubinstein, which was soon to become the first edition, is even more demanding than the version performed in the concerto hall today, being peppered with unnecessarily awkward passages.
4. M. I. Tchaikovsky, Zhizn Petra Ilyicha Tchaikovskovo (Moscow, 1900-2), i p.451.

to play Tchaikovsky's Variations Op.19 in a forthcoming concert. Furthermore, some two months later, whilst reviewing the Milan première of Glinka's A Life for the Tsar for the Allgemeine deutsche Musik-Zeitung, von Bülow mentioned in glowing terms Tchaikovsky's First Quartet, his first two symphonies and, in particular, the Overture Romeo and Juliet. Tchaikovsky was very grateful for this commendation - which no doubt boosted his reputation in Europe - and in May 1875, as a token of gratitude, sent von Bülow the score of the First Concerto by way of the publisher Karl Klindworth, entrusting him with its first performance.<sup>5</sup>

In a letter to Tchaikovsky dated 1 June, von Bülow replied:

I am proud of this honour bestowed on me, to première this work, which is delightful from every point of view. (6)

It is conceivable, therefore, that in composing the First Concerto Tchaikovsky may have had von Bülow, as well as Nikolay Rubinstein, in mind from the outset.

Whatever the inspiration behind the First Piano Concerto, its composition was an ordeal for Tchaikovsky, as his correspondence reveals. To his brother Modest he wrote:

I'm submerged with all my soul in the composition of the piano concerto; the thing is advancing, but very badly.

(26 November) (7)

The difficulties encountered probably concerned the piano part, for the rest of the concerto is comparatively free of the kind of flaws

5. The première took place in the Town Hall, Boston, on 25 October 1875 under the directorship of Benjamin Johnson Lang.
6. Dni i Gody P. I. Tchaikovskovo: Letopsis' zhizni i tvorchestva, ed. V. Yakovlev (Moscow/Leningrad, 1940), p.118.
7. M. I. Tchaikovsky, The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, ed. Rosa Newmarch (London, 1906), p.162.

which are so often hallmarks of a troublesome period of gestation. Tchaikovsky mentions these difficulties in the same letter (to his brother Anatoli) that expressed his wish for Rubinstein to perform the new concerto:

. . . the work progresses very slowly and doesn't come at all easily. I push myself on principle and force my brain to think out piano passages; the result is nervous irritability.

(21 November) (8)

It was for this reason that Tchaikovsky sought advice from Nikolay Rubinstein:

As I am not a pianist, it was necessary to consult some virtuoso as to what might be ineffective, impracticable and ungrateful in my technique. I needed a severe, but at the same time, friendly critic, to point out in my work these extreme blemishes only.

Apparently, Tchaikovsky already had reservations about playing to Rubinstein, for the letter continues:

Without going into details, I must mention the fact that some inward voice warned me against the choice of Nikolay Rubinstein as a judge of the technical side of my composition. However, as he was not only the best pianist in Moscow, but also a first rate all-round musician, and knowing that he would be deeply offended if he heard I had taken my concerto to anyone else, I decided to ask him to hear the work and give me his opinion upon the solo parts. (9)

Tchaikovsky subsequently played his First Piano Concerto to Rubinstein on 5 January 1875 (Christmas Eve, according to the Russian calendar). Also present were Tchaikovsky's former fellow student Nikolay Hubert and Nikolay Kashkin, a music critic and professor at

8. M. I. Tchaikovsky: Zhizn Petra Ilyicha Tchaikovskovo (Moscow, 1900-2), Vol.1, p.451.
9. Letter of 21 January 1878 to Nadezhda von Meck: Perepiska s N. F. von Meck, i (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6), pp.173-4.

the Conservatory. To gauge from this famous and oft-quoted letter Rubinstein, instead of complying with Tchaikovsky's wishes and limiting his comments to the piano part, set out, with what appeared to be near maniacal fury, to condemn the concerto as a whole:

[Rubinstein considered] my concerto was worthless, absolutely unplayable; the passages so broken, so disconnected, so unskillfully written, that they could not even be improved; the work itself was bad, trivial, common; here and there I had stolen from other people; only one or two pages were worth anything; all the rest had better been destroyed, or entirely rewritten . . . (10)

Taking into consideration the fact that Tchaikovsky's no doubt heightened account of what happened - written some three years after the event - was probably induced by a fit of pique over Rubinstein's meddling into his private affairs,<sup>11</sup> some of the comments are nevertheless not totally without foundation. Rubinstein's strictures concerning the piano writing, for example, have a grain of truth in them, particularly his observation that passages were unskillfully written; indeed, some of the more consciously virtuosic passages unequivocally reflect a somewhat laboured conception. Furthermore, Tchaikovsky, in any case, tended to think in orchestral terms when writing for the piano, a procedure which not only encouraged him to produce ham-fisted figurations such as those criticized by Rubinstein, but also hindered his ability to express himself in purely pianistic terms when and where such textures would, indeed, be suitable.

10. Ibid.

11. According to a letter dated 20 January 1878 to his brother Anatoli, Tchaikovsky had discovered that Rubinstein had been to see his patroness Nadezhda von Meck to dissuade her from bestowing upon Tchaikovsky an annuity. Apparently Rubinstein feared that with this not inconsiderable boost to his financial situation, Tchaikovsky might contemplate resigning from the Conservatory. He also believed the annuity would 'foster idleness' (to borrow James Friskin's words: 'The Text of Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto', Music and Letters 1 (1969), pp.246-51).

Nevertheless, despite Tchaikovsky's initial apprehension towards composing a work for piano and orchestra, and his apparent shortcomings in matters of piano style, what eventually emerged was a truly magnificent concerto. So fine, in fact, is the soloist's part (disregarding for a moment, the comparatively superficial blemishes noted by Rubinstein, which were in any case amended in the second edition brought out in 1879; see pp.156-9) and so skilful is the way in which it is integrated into the structure of the concerto, that it leads one to surmise that perhaps the difficulties mentioned by Tchaikovsky in his letter to Anatoli (21 November 1874) were not so much connected with the piano writing per se, but were more to do with the problems of combining the soloist's part with the orchestra. Apart from a few passages where the piano tends to be overwhelmed, a fault common to many otherwise excellent concertos, the balance and integration is superbly engineered.

## Ex. 1

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Woodwind, Piano (Pb.), and Violins & Cellos. The score is written in a single system with three staves. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Woodwind part features a melodic line with several triplet markings. The Piano part is highly technical, featuring dense sixteenth-note passages and triplets. The Violins & Cellos part provides a harmonic accompaniment, also featuring triplet markings. The score is enclosed in a hand-drawn rectangular box.

To a significant extent this was due to the 'orchestral' quality of Tchaikovsky's keyboard style, for in many passages it allowed the piano to utilize the same material as the orchestra through composi-



tional processes such as conscious imitation - promoting, as in the preceding passage (Ex.1), a feeling of dialogue and confrontation; and, enhancing the feeling of thematic homogeneity, the use of straightforward doubling (Ex.2):

## Ex. 2

(a)

*Poco 'meno mosso*

*molto espress.*

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

*p dolce e molto espress.*

*p*

(b)

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

The image displays two musical examples, (a) and (b), illustrating the concept of straightforward doubling. Example (a) features a score for four woodwinds (Ob., Cl., Fg., Cor.) and piano. The woodwinds play a melodic line with dynamics ranging from *p* to *mf*. The piano part provides harmonic support with dynamics from *p* to *mf*. Example (b) shows a score for three woodwinds (Ox., Cl., Fg.) and piano. The woodwinds play a melodic line with dynamics from *p* to *mf*. The piano part provides harmonic support with dynamics from *p* to *mf*.

Indeed, on occasion, the piano part is often not so much a separate entity interrupting the proceedings going on in the orchestra as a direct consequence of them. The orchestral quality of the First

Concerto's piano writing also prevented Tchaikovsky from indulging in the kind of inconsequential virtuosity so prevalent at the time. Though complex and effective passages abound they are invariably conceived in accordance with the concerto's underlying musical ideas and are, as such, specifically designed to complement them.

Sadly, Tchaikovsky never again achieved such a concise, effective, yet appropriate piano style. One can only conclude that Nikolay Rubinstein's criticisms went very deep indeed and inhibited all Tchaikovsky's further attempts at composing for piano and orchestra.

Tchaikovsky ignored Rubinstein's probably very sound advice on how to improve the piano part: 'I shall not alter a single note,' he declared, 'I shall publish the work precisely as it stands.'<sup>12</sup> The concerto was subsequently brought out, without amendment, by Jurgen-son in 1875 (though only the orchestral parts and an arrangement for two pianos; the full score of the first edition was not published until 1955 - in the Soviet Complete Edition).

Immediately after the Moscow première<sup>13</sup> in December 1875, it appears, however, that Tchaikovsky experienced a change of heart concerning the issue of the concerto's apparent deficiencies and decided to undertake some revisions after all. He wrote to von Bülow of his intentions, presumably because the German pianist was at that

12. Perepiska s N. F. von Meck, i (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6), pp.173-74.

13. Curiously enough, the conductor was none other than Nikolay Rubinstein. David Brown casts some doubt as to 'whether the latter (Rubinstein) had really been so merciless in his verdict' (Tchaikovsky: Vol II. The Crisis Years, London, 1982, p.19). Tchaikovsky's own review of the performance adds weight to this supposition: 'The present writer could not wish to hear a better performance of the piece than this one, for which he is indebted to the sympathetic talent of Mr Taneyev and Mr Rubinstein's mastery as a conductor.'

time the only person to have shown genuine interest in the new work, and received the following reply:

You write to me that you want to make some changes in your Concerto? I shall, of course, receive them with great interest - but I should like to express my opinion that they are not at all necessary - except some enrichment of the piano part in certain tuttis, which I took it upon myself to make, as I did in Raff's concerto also. And allow me one other observation: the great effect of the finale loses something if the triumph of the 2nd motive, before the last Stretta, is played "molto meno mosso". (14)

The Strasbourg-born pianist Edward Dannreuther, who gave the English première of the concerto at the Crystal Palace on 23 March 1876, had considerably more suggestions to make and wrote to Tchaikovsky informing him of them. As James Friskin points out, 'His approach must have been considerably more tactful than Rubinstein's',<sup>15</sup> as he received in reply a most cordial letter from the composer. The letter, which was first published in the Musical Times, November 1907, thanked Dannreuther for his 'wise and practical advice' and finished with an assurance that these amendments would be incorporated into the concerto 'as soon as the question of a second edition arises'. Tchaikovsky was true to his word, for Dannreuther's suggestions, which are almost entirely confined to the piano part of the first movement and involve some 140 bars, were indeed incorporated into the second edition (published by Jurgenson in August 1879, both as a full score revised and corrected by the composer, and as an arrangement for two pianos).<sup>16</sup>

A closer examination of the first and second editions not only

14. P. I. Tchaikovsky, Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy, II: Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska (Moscow, 1953), pp.292-3.

15. James Friskin, 'The Text of Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto', Music and Letters 1 (1969), p.248.

16. The original score in which Dannreuther scribbled these amendments still survives and is now deposited in the British Museum.

reveals how efficiently Dannreuther revised the 'unskilfully written' piano part but also, in the light of these amendments, shows unequivocally how justified Nikolay Rubinstein was in his criticisms.<sup>17</sup> The first major revision involves the redistribution of notes forming the piano's opening chords<sup>18</sup>:

Ex. 3

*Andante non troppo e molto maestoso*

The image shows a musical score for Ex. 3, comparing the 2nd and 1st editions of a piano part. The score is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The 2nd edition shows a more compact and conventional chordal structure in the left hand compared to the 1st edition.

Dannreuther then proceeded to facilitate other awkward chordal passages by rearranging the left hand notes into conventional close position chords:

Ex. 4

The image shows a musical score for Ex. 4, comparing the 2nd and 1st editions of a piano part. The score is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The 2nd edition shows a more compact and conventional chordal structure in the left hand compared to the 1st edition.

17. The amendments, which, in the Soviet Complete Edition of Tchaikovsky's works, take the form of an 'ossia', involve bars 6-25, 71-84, 129-145, 219-222, 228-250, 261, 426-439, 491-531, 620-639, 646-656 (first movement only).

18. As mentioned in Part One, p.54 it was not until the third edition (1889) that the famous octave chords, covering the entire range of the keyboard, were incorporated.

The left hand is also the recipient of Dannreuther's 'blue pencil' in an important solo passage (bars 144-147) found between the two principal statements of the first subject:

Ex. 5

Musical score for Ex. 5, showing two editions of a piano solo passage. The top system is labeled '2nd Edition' and the bottom system is labeled '1st Edition'. Both systems consist of two staves (treble and bass clef). The 2nd Edition shows significant changes in the left hand, particularly in the articulation and phrasing of the solo passage, indicated by dashed boxes and annotations.

More drastic revisions occur in bar 252, bars 430-443 and bars 635-640:

Ex. 6

(a)

Musical score for Ex. 6(a), showing two editions of a piano passage. The top system is labeled '2nd Edition' and the bottom system is labeled '1st Edition'. Both systems consist of two staves (treble and bass clef). The 2nd Edition shows significant changes in the left hand, particularly in the articulation and phrasing of the solo passage, indicated by dashed boxes and annotations.

(b)

Musical score for Ex. 6(b), showing two editions of a piano passage. The top system is labeled '2nd Edition' and the bottom system is labeled '1st Edition'. Both systems consist of two staves (treble and bass clef). The 2nd Edition shows significant changes in the left hand, particularly in the articulation and phrasing of the solo passage, indicated by dashed boxes and annotations.

## Ex. 6 (c)

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece, labeled 'Ex. 6 (c)'. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the right hand, and the bottom two are for the left hand. The music is written in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The right hand part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The left hand part is characterized by a 'vamping' style, with a steady, rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes in the lower register. A 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking is visible in the first measure of the left hand. The score is divided into three measures by vertical bar lines.

Whereas the earlier revisions (Exx.3-5) were principally concerned with alleviating the unnecessary technical difficulties created by Tchaikovsky's inexperience at writing virtuoso piano music, Ex.6a,b,c go a stage further in that they alter Tchaikovsky's initial conception with the view of heightening the soloist's thematic lines. Dannreuther achieved this by the simple expediency of exploiting more fully the piano's percussive capabilities, either by welding together the semiquavers in Tchaikovsky's original part, thus forming octaves and octave chords (Ex.6b) or, as in Ex. 6c, doing away with the arpeggio accompaniment altogether and substituting a 'vamping' left hand the lowest notes of which venture into a register not exploited by the orchestra. Dannreuther realised of course, being an experienced pianist, that octaves produce considerably more sound than broken chords as they can usually be struck from a height.

Even with Dannreuther's improvements to the piano part, Tchaikovsky was not entirely satisfied with his concerto. Consequently, during the winter of 1888-89 whilst preparing a third edition of the concerto for Jurgenson, he consulted the pianist Alexander Siloti, a former pupil of Liszt, who had become one of the concerto's leading

exponents.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from revising several tempo markings, including the modification of the Introduction's 'Andante non troppo' to 'Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso' (see Ex. 7 b<sup>1</sup>), and the redesignation of the second movement's middle section from 'Allegro vivace assai' to 'Prestissimo'<sup>20</sup>, Tchaikovsky replaced seventeen bars in the finale (a passage whimsically referred to by the composer as 'die verfluchte Stelle') with five bars of more suitable material, and made extensive changes to the layout of the piano's introductory chords (see Ex.7b). As far as the latter is concerned, it is a matter of some conjecture as to who was initially responsible for such a dramatic revision. As James Friskin rightly points out,

. . . it is hard to believe that Tchaikovsky, admittedly not an expert pianist, would have so far departed from his original conception as to rewrite it in a manner that tempts the soloist, as it almost invariably does, to overpower the main theme, marked merely mezzo forte in the orchestra. (21)

Friskin surmises, therefore, that the 'influence of some keyboard virtuoso would seem more probable'.<sup>22</sup> He cites Siloti as a possible contender and in support of this theory comments that such a treatment was, according to many who knew Siloti, 'characteristic of his pianism'. Considering that Siloti worked with Tchaikovsky in the

19. What prompted Tchaikovsky to embark on a third edition of his First Piano Concerto is not known. However, one possible reason could be that his renewed acquaintance with his former fiancée, Desirée Artôt - after nearly twenty years - reawakened his interest in the First Piano Concerto, a work which according to David Brown (Tchaikovsky: The Early Years, London, 1978, p.26) is dedicated to Artôt in all but name. Coincidentally, it was also in Berlin that same year (1888) that Tchaikovsky heard an excellent performance of the concerto given by Siloti.

20. See footnote 51 on p.185.

21. James Friskin, 'The Text of Tchaikovsky's B flat minor Concerto', Music and Letters 1 (1969), p.250.

22. Ibid.

preparation of the third edition (there is evidence of this in Tchaikovsky's correspondence), and that as a devoted admirer of Liszt he would undoubtedly have known and played Liszt's Second Piano Concerto (the 'Allegro deciso' section of which is generally considered the progenitor of the famous chords in Tchaikovsky's Introduction), then such a conjecture seems plausible:

Ex. 7

(a) *Allegro deciso.* *Liszt*

(b) *Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso* *Tchaikovsky - 3rd Edition*

However, Siloti's daughter, Kyriena Siloti, herself a professional pianist, refuted her father's involvement in the matter.

Another 'keyboard virtuoso' who might have had some influence concerning the redistribution of these opening chords was Edward Dannreuther, whose role in the development of Tchaikovsky's First Concerto is generally considered to have ended with the second edition of 1879. Several not altogether unconnected factors seem to suggest otherwise. Dannreuther appears to have continued his correspondence with Tchaikovsky after 1879 - or at least resumed it a few years later - as he played host to Tchaikovsky at his home in London in the



late 1880s. According to Dannreuther's son, Admiral Hubert Dannreuther, their meeting, which was conducted in French, was most cordial. As Dannreuther was intimately involved in the concerto's development and was in part responsible for its enormous success - for which, no doubt, Tchaikovsky must have been very grateful - it seems reasonable to assume that the First Concerto was a major topic of conversation. Certainly Tchaikovsky would have been very receptive to any further ideas Dannreuther might have had concerning the piano part and may even have pressed him for them. Indeed, this might have been the reason for Tchaikovsky's visit in the first place.<sup>23</sup>

The influence of Anton Rubinstein's Fifth Piano Concerto on Tchaikovsky's introductory chords (discussed in Part One) is also a possibility that merits careful consideration though, as yet, no concrete evidence has come to light to substantiate this. Certainly from a purely pianistic point of view, Rubinstein's codetta material from the first movement of his concerto bears a striking resemblance to Tchaikovsky's Introduction (compare Exx.8 and 7b):

Ex. 8

23. Dannreuther was intimately acquainted with two of the three concertos most likely to have influenced the introductory chords of Tchaikovsky's concerto: Liszt's Second Piano Concerto (see Ex.7) and Grieg's Piano Concerto (the third concerto, incidentally, being Rubinstein's Fifth Concerto Op.94: see Part One, pp.50-61). In fact, Dannreuther gave the English premières of both works.

Moreover, it is probable, considering the importance of the event, that Dannreuther was present when Grieg made his London debut playing his own concerto at St James' Hall, London on 3 May 1888. The work was an unqualified success with both critics and audience. Perhaps the stunning double octave chords in the Introduction of Grieg's concerto prompted Dannreuther to suggest to Tchaikovsky a reappraisal of the soloist's role in his own concerto's Introduction.

The issue of Anton Rubinstein's influence on Tchaikovsky's First Concerto, which, as suggested in Part One, may have been more widespread than has hitherto been acknowledged, leads one conveniently to another criticism of Nikolay Rubinstein: that Tchaikovsky had 'stolen from other people'. Although Tchaikovsky did not specify in his letter to Nadezhda von Meck the composers Nikolay Rubinstein accused him of 'stealing' from, it would seem reasonable to surmise that his brother Anton figured prominently among them, considering the extensive and, in the present author's opinion, incontrovertible evidence to that effect<sup>24</sup> (see Part One, pp.50-61). It is difficult, however, to imagine who else Nikolay Rubinstein had in mind. Certainly several passages resemble, in their pianistic layout, sections of Mily Balakirev's essay in transcendental virtuosity, the Oriental Fantasy, Islamey composed in 1869. Both Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky knew the work well - Tchaikovsky having arranged for its publication in 1879 through his friendship with Jurgenson and Rubinstein, as the work's dedicatee, having performed it widely. As Tchaikovsky was to all intents and purposes a 'nationalist' during the period<sup>in which</sup> he conceived his First Concerto it would seem only natural that he would have had some interest in what was, until Musorgsky composed Pictures at an Exhibition in 1874, the only large-scale Russian piano composition of any real merit. However, although Islamey represented an ideal model for Tchaikovsky in as far as it represented an almost unique compendium of Lisztian keyboard devices moulded to the rhythmic and melodic idiosyncrasies of Russian folk song, Islamey's influence on

24. Rubinstein's accusation could not of course, have applied to Tchaikovsky's final version of the introductory chords (Ex.7b) as they were not incorporated into the score until 1889 when Jurgenson brought out the third edition.

Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto is almost negligible (if at all) being exclusively confined to piano passage-work of little structural or thematic significance:

Ex. 9



As far as Nikolay Rubinstein's remaining strictures are concerned; that passages in the First Concerto were 'broken, disconnected' and that the work as a whole was 'worthless, absolutely unplayable, bad, trivial and common', history has proved otherwise. It must be remembered, however, that Rubinstein heard the concerto only once - hardly sufficient to have ascertained its true merits - and the performance given was presumably in a form which did little justice to the musical content of the concerto. Nevertheless, one performance was certainly enough for Rubinstein's musical perceptiveness - heightened perhaps by a tinge of jealousy - to have determined the concerto's principal weaknesses. It is surprising therefore that he did not comment specifically on what has generally been considered the concerto's most 'glaring defect': the Introduction.

Much has been written about this famous passage, particularly in regard to its apparent extraneousness. Eric Blom, for example:

The great tune's strutting upon the stage at the rise of the curtain, like an actor-manager in a leading part, and then vanishing suddenly and completely, leaves the hearer disconcerted and dissatisfied. He feels as though he were witnessing a performance of Hamlet in which the Prince of Denmark is killed by Polonius at the end of the first scene. It is this even more than its appearing in the wrong dress of D flat major which makes Tchaikovsky's introduction, for all its magnificence, or at least

magniloquence, one of the most baffling solecisms in the music of any great composer. (25)

So disconcerted is Blom in regard to the theme's isolated occurrence that, in an attempt to justify its existence, he felt compelled to put forward a theory in which he conjectures that Tchaikovsky may have intended to reintroduce the theme later on in the concerto but failed to do so 'in the heat of composition'.<sup>26</sup> In order to substantiate this hypothesis, he even sketched a possible combination of the Introductory theme and the second subject of the finale - a somewhat absurd undertaking as Tchaikovsky would never have employed such a procedure:<sup>27</sup>

Ex. 10

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of two staves: the upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The melody in the upper staff is a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The second system continues this musical piece, also in two staves, showing further development of the melodic and harmonic material.

In fairness to Blom, however, just as he considered that Tchaikovsky was perhaps 'groping towards',<sup>28</sup> the reintroduction of his famous

25. Eric Blom, 'Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra', in Tchaikovsky: a Symposium, ed. Gerald Abraham (London, 1945), p.51.

26. Ibid. p.52.

27. The comparative ease, however, with which these two themes combine with one another ties in neatly with Henry Zajakowski's belief that they may have been derived from the same source, i.e. the Russian folk song Podoydn, Podoydn vo Tsar-Gorod, No.30 in Tchaikovsky's collection of 50 Russian folk songs (for a more detailed account see pp.174-6).

28. Eric Blom, op. cit., p.52.

opening theme into the finale, so Blom himself was groping intuitively towards the explanation of the Introduction's function which is generally accepted today:

Is it too fantastic to suggest that Tchaikovsky had some sort of return of his initial theme up his sleeve and really did intend it to assume the function of a 'motto' but that somehow in the heat of composition he failed to let this part of his plan take shape? One cannot do more than formulate some such theory, but it is quite possible to make it appear credible if one takes the trouble to think it out. (29)

As recent analytical studies have revealed, Tchaikovsky did indeed reintroduce the opening theme into the remainder of the concerto. However, this was not in the form of a direct statement, but broken up into fragments and scattered among the principal thematic material of the rest of the concerto. To be more precise, the Introductory theme - the contours of which were possibly derived from the Ukrainian folk song Oy, kryatchie, kryatchie, chyonie voron (Oh caw, caw, black raven),<sup>30</sup> which serves as the first subject of ensuing exposition - represents a compendium of thematic fragments on which the majority of the concerto's themes are based.<sup>31</sup> The initial discovery of the First Piano Concerto's thematic interconnections, though still unacknowledged in the West, was made by the Soviet musicologist Alexander Alexeyev, and a fairly comprehensive analysis of them appear in his study Russkaya fortepiannaya muzika konets XIX nachalo XX veka ('Russian piano music from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century') published in 1969. 'There is a lot in common between the themes of the concerto', wrote Alexeyev, 'and they grow out of the Introduction':<sup>32</sup>

29. Ibid.

30. See E. Orlova, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (Moscow, 1980), p.55.

31. See Exx.11 and 12.

32. A.D. Alexeyev, Russkaya fortepiannaya muzika (Moscow, 1969) p.64.

## Ex. 11

Apart from noting the important connection between the Introductory theme and the first and second subjects of the concerto's first movement, Alexeyev also offers a novel explanation of the discrepancy between the initial statement of the slow movement's principal theme (see Ex.11e b')<sup>33</sup> and the movement's remaining statements (Ex.11f b'') by suggesting that the melody itself is derived from bars 6 and 7 of the Introduction's theme (Ex.11a, b' b''). Less convincing, however, is his conjecture that the first subject of the finale (Ex.11g c') is somehow derived from the first subject of the first movement (Ex. 11b) or vice versa. Both themes in fact are Ukrainian folk songs, so any resemblance is of little significance and is, in any case, irrelevant to the more important issue of Tchaikovsky's thematic procedures.

Alexeyev's belief that the Introduction to Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto represents a 'prologue to the work', and that its

33. This, incidentally, is 'corrected' in the Eulenberg score so as to conform with the other statements.

'grandiose melody contains germs of forthcoming themes'<sup>34</sup> could, of course, be considered merely an interesting sidelight unsupported by any concrete evidence were it not for the fact that the same discoveries were made independently in the West by Professors Edward Garden and David Brown some ten years later.<sup>35</sup> Dr Brown's tabulation of the First Concerto's thematic interrelationships (which also incorporate Edward Garden's discoveries), is so comprehensive and well-structured that it merits being quoted in its entirety. The connections speak for themselves:

## Ex. 12

a. Peter Tschaikowsky b. [DESirée] Artôt c. [Ukrainian folksong]

d. [Il faut s'amuser: transposed]

e. [Second subject: part 2]

f. [First subject: transposed]

g. [Introduction]

h. [Second subject]

i. [Opening]

j. derived from bars 1-2 of introduction

34. A. D. Alexeyev, *op. cit.*, p.64.

35. See Edward Garden, 'A Note on Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto', *Musical Times*, April 1982, pp.238-9; and David Brown, *Tchaikovsky: Vol.II. The Crisis Years* (London, 1982), pp.22-4.

David Brown also toys with the idea that Tchaikovsky may have deliberately introduced cyphers into his thematic material (hence the pEtEr tsCHakowsky and DESirée Artôt in Ex.12a and b on which the opening theme and the second subject are supposedly constructed).<sup>36</sup> Regarding these thematic interconnections as a whole, however, Brown is quick to point out that they were probably 'casual' and not deliberately thought out:

It is, in fact, difficult to believe that Tchaikovsky invented his own melodies with such cold-blooded calculation as [Ex.12] might suggest; rather these thematic relationships seem to have sprung from a particularly intensive application of those natural habits of mind that had produced the families of themes we have already noted in certain earlier compositions, including the recent 'Vakula'. The opening theme of the concerto is as heavily involved in these relationships as any. (37)

The opening theme, and the harmonies underlying the first two bars of the concerto (Ex.12h, i) are not, however, the only thematic and harmonic features exploited later on in the concerto, though they are, admittedly, the most important, particularly the former. The last five notes of the opening thematic statement of the concerto (preceding the principal theme), for example, are to have considerable significance in the development section (commencing at the 'Allegretto' bar 330: see Ex.13). In addition, the descending triplet semi-quavers in the cadenza between the first and second statements of the Introductory theme (which in turn may have been derived from the last three notes of Ex.13a) were probably the germinal idea behind the stunning fortissimo double octaves located between the second statements of the two themes which constitute the second subject (Ex.14).

36. A full account of Dr Brown's discoveries can be found in Tchaikovsky: a Biographical and Critical Study. Vol.1: 'The Early Years' (1840-1874) (London, 1978), pp.197-200.
37. D. Brown, Tchaikovsky: Vol.II. The Crisis Years (London, 1982), p.24.



## Ex. 13

(a)

(b)

(Development section)

## Ex. 14

(a)

(b)

The first movement's development section also utilizes, in a fairly extensive manner, the pianissimo trumpet fanfare (located in the closing section of the Introduction)<sup>38</sup> which heralds the first statement of the first subject:

## Ex. 15

Initially, this fanfare motive appears in the same instruments (trumpets in F) commencing at bar 316. After four bars, however, it is reinforced by the horns and announced fortissimo. The similarity

38. In anticipation of the exposition, the piano part in this closing section appears to be toying with the sinuous contours of the Ukrainian folk song first subject which immediately follows.

between the piano's 'accelerando' double octaves which lead into the Introduction's cadenza and the French ditty Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire used as the principal theme of the slow movement's central section, on the other hand, is perhaps merely fortuitous. Nevertheless, as an example of Tchaikovsky's thematic unity on a subliminal level, it is most illuminating:

Ex. 16

(a)

accelerando

(b)

ff

An additional connection between the Introduction and remainder of the concerto worth noting involves the 'tail-end' of the opening theme's antecedent phrase:

Ex. 17

Consisting of triplet quavers with the first quaver tied to a crotchet, this rhythmic pattern, either in its original form or a variant which omits the crotchet and the first quaver - the effect is more or less the same - not only reappears several times in the Introduction (which is not in itself unusual: see Ex.18) but also assumes an important role in the rest of the movement, most notably in the soloist's double octaves mentioned earlier (see Ex.14) and in the accompaniment to the second part of the second subject group (a style of accompaniment, according to Edward Garden, first introduced by Glinka in the Persian Chorus from his opera Russlan and Lyudmila,

see Ex.19):<sup>39</sup>

Ex. 18

Ex. 18 consists of three musical examples labeled (a), (b), and (c). Example (a) is a piano cadenza with a dense texture of many notes. Example (b) shows a more rhythmic pattern with triplets. Example (c) shows a similar pattern with a 'p' dynamic marking and a '3' marking.

Ex. 19

Ex. 19 shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Violins'. The middle staff is labeled 'Violas con sordini'. The bottom staff is labeled 'Cellos con sordini'. The notation includes triplets and dynamic markings.

This pattern is also used extensively, in both its original and variant forms, in the principal cadenza:

Ex. 20  (see also Ex.9b)

Apart from the First Piano Concerto's superb original melodies, most notably the dual themes of the first movement's second subject, the principal theme of the slow movement and the second subject of the finale, Tchaikovsky incorporated three borrowed melodies (as

39. See Edward Garden, 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', Music and Letters Vol.60 No.2 (1979), p.176.

already noted); The French ditty Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire and two Ukrainian folk songs.

The first borrowed melody to be employed, a folk song noted down by Tchaikovsky whilst staying with his sister and brother-in-law at Kamenka<sup>40</sup> in the Ukraine and identified by G. A. Tumenev as Oy, kryatchie, kryatchie, chyonie voron (Caw, caw, black raven: see footnote 30, p.166), assumes the important role of the opening movement's first subject (see Ex.11b). Although considered by some authorities to be greatly lacking in thematic appeal ('paltry in the extreme' was how Eric Blom described it<sup>41</sup>) in the context of the concerto as a whole, i.e. sandwiched between the almost excessive lyricism of the opening theme and the sweet melodiousness of the second subject, its rhythmic bite and stark melodic contours provide welcome and necessary relief.<sup>42</sup>

The second borrowed melody, a French ditty entitled Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire, popular in Russia around the time the First Concerto was composed,<sup>43</sup> is incorporated into the Prestissimo section of the second movement (see Ex.12d). Apart from its apparent motivic significance, in as far as its 'rocking' character has much in common with the first movement second subject (as noted by David Brown), the consequent phrase of the opening melody and the theme of

40. According to Tchaikovsky this folk song was sung by 'every blind Ukrainian singer'. (Letter to Nadezhda von Meck of 21 May 1879. Perepiska s N. F. von Meck, II (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6), p.116.)

41. Eric Blom, 'Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra', in Tchaikovsky: a Symposium; ed. Gerald Abraham (London, 1945), p.53.

42. A fragment of this Ukrainian folk song also appears in the first piece, entitled 'Song', in Khatchaturian's collection for piano solo, Scenes from Childhood.

43. In his biography, Tchaikovsky's brother Modest referred to it as a tune 'which my brother Anatoli and I were constantly singing at the beginning of the '70s'. It was also an acknowledged favourite of Tchaikovsky's ex-fiancée, Desirée Artôt.

the first movement's coda (bars 2 and 3, see Ex.12j), it provides the main thematic interest in a section which, according to A.D. Alexeyev represents the equivalent of a scherzo movement in a four movement concerto.

The third borrowed theme, a Ukrainian 'round dance' entitled Viydi, viydi, Ivanku ('Come, come, Ivanka') which Tchaikovsky took from A. V. Rubets's collection of 216 Ukrainian folk songs published by Jurgenson in 1872, is employed as the first subject of the finale. Although rhythmically and melodically repetitive almost to the point of monotony (a feature of Ukrainian dance tunes), the folk song is preserved in its original form. Tchaikovsky even retains its two-part character by scoring the piano part in thirds:

## Ex. 21

Вий-ди, вий-ди И - ван-ку за-співай нашъ вес-нян ку,  
зі-мо-ва-ли, неспі-ва-ли, вес-ни до - жи - да-ли.

*Allegro con fuoco*

*mf*

Until recently, these three tunes have been considered the only borrowed thematic material incorporated into the concerto. However, in a letter to Musical Times (February, 1982) Henry Zajakowski puts forward the interesting hypothesis that another folk song may have been utilized:

... the Introduction theme is similar to an actual folk theme, 'Podoydn, podoydn vo Tsar-Gorod' (which incidentally is almost certainly the direct model for the D flat subject of the finale) - No.30 in Tchaikovsky's collection of 50 Russian folk songs ...

It is difficult to see how Zajackowski can find similarities between this folk song and the opening theme of the First Piano Concerto. However, this theory that it may have been a model for the finale's second subject is, as the following tabulation illustrates, quite convincing:<sup>44</sup>

Ex. 22

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Tchaikovsky:' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Folksong:'. Both staves are in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The top staff contains a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The bottom staff contains a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. Vertical dashed lines connect the notes between the two staves, showing they are identical in pitch and rhythm.

Not that Tchaikovsky was a stranger to using folk song in such a manner. As David Brown points out in reference to Tchaikovsky's treatment of folk song in the incidental music to Ostrovsky's play The Snow Maiden (composed the year before the piano concerto):

. . .nothing reveals more clearly Tchaikovsky's attitude towards folksong than his treatment of these borrowed melodies . . . For him the people's musical artifacts were not sacred, even if they were precious. If folksongs needed modification or supplementation to suit their broader function in his work, then modified or supplemented they would be, for he had faith enough in their

44. This is the same folk song, incidentally, which Balakirev used in his Second Overture on Three Russian Themes (composed between 1863 and 1864 and which subsequently became the Musical Picture, 1000 years and in its final version the Symphonic poem: Russia). Perhaps Balakirev's well-documented dislike of the finale's second subject was not so much a criticism of Tchaikovsky's melodic writing (he greatly admired the equally passionate 'love theme' from Tchaikovsky's overture Romeo and Juliet) as a disapproval of his treatment of the folk song. It may even have been Balakirev who suggested the folk song to Tchaikovsky in the first place.

capacity to retain a recognisable character of their own, even when so changed. (45)

Incidentally, Tchaikovsky also incorporated four folk songs into his opera Vakula the Smith - the last large-scale work he undertook before composing the piano concerto - and his treatment of them is of a very similar kind to that in the Snow Maiden. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to discover that, in addition to direct and instantly recognizable quotations of folk material (i.e. Ukrainian dance tunes), Tchaikovsky's First Concerto should also contain a melody (hitherto regarded as original) which uses a folk song as its prototype.

From a structural point of view, the close thematic relationships inherent in the First Concerto's subject matter greatly influenced Tchaikovsky's overall formal considerations and, in the process, encouraged him to adopt a strategy of symphonic development which he had previously eschewed (a notable exception being the original version of the Second Symphony, Op.17). Indeed, in the majority of works composed prior to the piano concerto, the self-sufficient nature of the expository material tended to demand an episodic rather than developmental approach. As John Warrack observed:

[Tchaikovsky was] too successful a melodist. [His] basic act of invention was not structural and hence symphonic, but melodic. The melody that is of itself complete will obviously not be susceptible of development: as Taneyev pointed out, it can do little more than be repeated . . . (46)

Although Tchaikovsky, by the adroit manipulation of his orchestral resources and his seemingly inexhaustible permutations of texture

45. David Brown, Tchaikovsky: a Biographical and Critical Study, Vol.1: 'The Early Years' (1840-1874) (London, 1978), pp.287-8.  
 46. John Warrack, Tchaikovsky Symphonies and Concertos (B.B.C. Music Guides) (London, 1974), pp.8-9.

and tone colour, is able to sustain interest and even generate excitement through this procedure, it still remains, nevertheless, a poor substitute for true symphonic development. Furthermore, episodic construction, by its very nature, tends to expose any deficiencies a composer might have in regard to the process of welding chunks of material together. Tchaikovsky was well aware of his own weaknesses in this matter:

I cannot complain of poverty of imagination, or lack of inventive power; but, on the other hand, I have always suffered from my want of skill in the management of form. Only after strenuous labour have I at last succeeded in making the form of my compositions correspond, more or less, with their contents. Formerly I was careless and did not give sufficient attention to the critical overhauling of my sketches. Consequently my seams showed, and there was no organic union between my individual episodes. This was a very serious defect, and I only improved gradually as time went on; but the form of my works will never be exemplary, because, although I can modify, I cannot radically alter the essential qualities of my musical temperament. (47)

With the exception of the First Piano Concerto, all of Tchaikovsky's works for piano and orchestra suffer in varying degrees from this structural defect. The worst affected is undoubtedly the Second Concerto, for whether out of boredom, apathy, or a growing dislike for the musical ideas he was working with, Tchaikovsky makes no attempt whatsoever to forge 'organic unions' between his subject material.

In the First Concerto, on the other hand, the 'seams', which are stitched in a variety of ways, are neatly concealed and are, in any case, interesting in themselves. Most celebrated of all is the 'dovetailing' between the first and second subjects of the concerto's opening movement. Not content with doing away with the transition altogether (as in the original version of the Second Symphony's first

47. Letter of 25 June 1878 to Nadezhda von Meck, Perepiska s N.F. von Meck, i (Moscow/Leningrad), pp.377-8.



movement), Tchaikovsky inserts two bars from the ensuing second subject proper into the concluding bars of the first subject:

## Ex. 23

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Ex. 23. Each system consists of a single treble clef staff (labeled 'Ob') and a grand staff (labeled 'Pk') for piano accompaniment. The first system shows the beginning of a piano introduction with a dynamic marking 'p'. The second system continues the piano introduction, with dynamic markings 'poco meno mosso' and 'p molto espress.'.

Eric Blom muses over the possible compositional procedures adopted here:

This occurs so naturally that one could not possibly say whether Tchaikovsky had first invented the second subject independently and then devised this premonition of it or whether the snatch quoted in the second bar of [Ex.23] first came to him as an indefinite glimmer and gradually developed into a theme; and it is precisely this impossibility of detecting his procedure which proves that we have here an example of spontaneous ingenuity, not of mere mechanical contrivance. (48)

As Ex.24 illustrates, the procedure adopted by Tchaikovsky, however, is not really so impossible to detect; the 'indefinite glimmer' referred to by Blom is, in fact, derived from the contours of the first subject. Bars 182-183 show this particularly well:

48. Eric Blom, 'Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra', in Tchaikovsky: a Symposium, ed. Gerald Abraham (London, 1945), p.54.

Ex. 24

Musical score for Ex. 24. The top staff is labeled 'Oboe' and contains a melodic line with an 'x' marking a phrase. The bottom staff is for Piano, marked 'p', and contains a rhythmic accompaniment with 'g' markings.

What we have in effect, therefore, is not merely the skilful overlapping of two distinctly independent themes but an 'organic' development of one theme from another, cemented together and consolidated by the process of dovetailing.

Although Tchaikovsky refrains from using a similar device to forge a connection between the constituent themes of the dual second subject (instead, he extends the final phrase of the first theme with reminders of the opening of the concerto<sup>49</sup> (x) in dialogue with a fragment from the first subject (y)):

Musical score for Ex. 25. The top staff is for Oboe with 'x' markings above it. The bottom staff is for Piano, marked 'marcato', with 'y' markings below it.

he overlaps the concluding bars of the second subject's second (string) theme with the return of the first theme. Aware also that some kind of thematic link would assist in promoting a smooth connection (as in Ex.23), Tchaikovsky is quick to take advantage of the 'rocking' figure of descending fifths and fourths which concludes the second subject's string theme:

49. See 'A Note on Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto' by Edward Garden, Musical Times, April 1982, pp.238-9.

## Ex. 26

Having found a solution to his 'eternal transition problem', as David Brown puts it, Tchaikovsky was then confronted with the even more formidable task of providing the First Concerto's opening movement with a *development section of matching ingenuity*. Inspired perhaps by the 'structural' successes achieved in the exposition through the skilful manipulation of his thematic material, Tchaikovsky chose to pursue a similar line in the development, with particular emphasis on thematic transformation. At the very outset, in an orchestral ritornello based initially on the muted string theme of the second subject interspersed with fragments of the first subject, Tchaikovsky makes this objective clear:

## Ex. 27

Deprived of the calming effect of the original legato slurs, this theme immediately reveals a more aggressive side to its character. A few bars later it undergoes an even more dramatic transformation when Tchaikovsky, in order to create a flowing quaver movement to counter-balance the four-square crotchet character of the string theme (Ex. 27) (and simultaneously to activate a useful accompaniment figuration,

doubles its original tempo and obsessively exploits the theme's first four notes:

Ex. 28

(a)

(b) (transposed)

*pp arco. con sordina.*

Its first statement, however, is located some four bars earlier (bassoons), accompanying a motif unmistakably derived from bars 2 and 3 of the Introduction's principal subject – yet another nail in the coffin of the theory proclaiming that the Introduction had nothing whatever to do with the remainder of the movement:

Ex. 29

Flutes and Oboes

*cresc.*

Bassoons

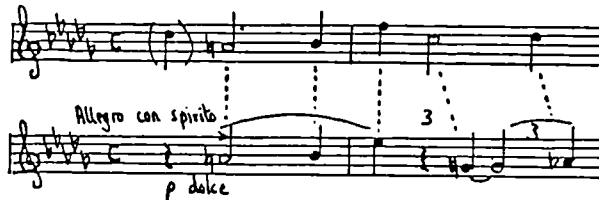
*cresc.*

Ex.28a is then inverted to accompany its former self, now stated 'forte' and 'poco accelerando', whilst the trumpet 'fanfare' motive from the concerto's Introduction (see Ex.15) adds more weight to the texture. The last five notes of the concerto's initial thematic statement (Ex.13a) are then powerfully invoked in the form of triplet crotchets which then disintegrate into a falling quaver pattern based on the inversion of Ex.29 – initially derived from the second subject 'muted' string theme (see Ex.28).

The brief cadenza that follows, like that in Tchaikovsky's Third Piano Concerto (see pages 217–18), is integrally involved in the

development and is predominantly structured around an ingenious transformation of the wind theme of the second subject:

Ex.30



After a short bridge passage, an apparently new motif appears in an impassioned dialogue with itself over some forty bars – first on the piano alone and then joined by the orchestra (see Ex.1) – and subsequently builds up to a tremendous climax crowned by a vociferous fortissimo statement of the second subject's string theme. Considering that almost every scrap of thematic material used so far in this movement has been related to previously stated material, the belief that Tchaikovsky should have chosen a 'new idea' for such an important section of the development seems implausible. In fact, on closer examination, this 'thematic interloper',<sup>50</sup> reveals itself to be yet another example of Tchaikovsky's thematic transformation; on this occasion a fragment of the first subject (previously used extensively in a quasi-developmental capacity in the exposition):

Ex. 31



The final section of the development (which superficially resembles its opening section), gradually resumes thematic normality, with

50. David Brown, Tchaikovsky: Vol.II: The Crisis Years (1874-1878) (London, 1982), p.26.

fragments of the first and second subjects (string theme) skilfully distributed amongst the orchestra, accompanied by arabesque-like passagework in the piano part. Its function is very much one of preparation for the return of the first subject proper which immediately follows.

As far as the recapitulation is concerned, Tchaikovsky's main preoccupation seems to have been twofold: firstly, to reduce or cut out altogether thematic material that has been subjected to exposure in the development - hence the isolated statement of the first subject and the total omission of the second subject's string theme - and secondly, to generate a feeling of excitement, movement and impending resolution through the exclusion of material of a more quiescent nature. Much to Tchaikovsky's credit, little compromise seems to have been necessary to achieve both objectives, and the flow from one thematic idea to another is efficiently carried out without resorting to structural artifice.

The principal cadenza of the first movement, which replaces the recapitulation's closing section, forms an organic link between the recapitulation and coda, and naturally enough is itself developmental in character. Following the format of the cadenza of Rubinstein's Fourth Piano Concerto (see Part One, pp.56-9), it is bipartite in construction (with a 'recitative' style link to the coda), and contains thematic references to all the principal subjects.

The first section of the cadenza begins with a dialogue between the first three notes of the second subject's 'wind' theme (Ex.32 'x') and a four-note motif from the link passage between this theme and its muted string counterpart (see Ex.32y), itself initially derived from the first subject. The accompaniment, which closely resembles Rubinstein's cadenza opening (see Part One, Ex.42), grows

organically out of the piano's arpeggiated chords of the conclusion of the preceding section:

## Ex. 32

*Cadenza a tempo rubato*

The string theme of the second subject then makes its first appearance since the development in a form very close in character to its initial statement in the exposition. It adopts the same broken-chord accompaniment as Ex.32 with the added complexity of a trill figure executed by the same hand as the theme. The following section of the cadenza is devoted to reflective statements of the second subject string theme interspersed with aggressive octaves based on the triplet quaver rhythm of the Introductory theme's tail-end (Ex.17), followed by the sequential treatment of the second subject's string theme. After a massive build-up in tension (reminiscent of, and possibly inspired by the closing section of Rubinsten's cadenza), the first subject makes a veiled appearance (in the original key of B flat minor):

## Ex. 33

*riten. e pesante  
ad lib.*

The 'Quasi Adagio' section which brings the cadenza to a close and which also functions as a link to the coda, is devoted to further contemplation of the so-called 'Artôt' motif. After the almost obligatory demisemiquaver runs which all cadenzas in the nineteenth century seemed to be required to conclude with, the coda is ushered in by the same rhythmically augmented version of the second subject's string theme that was extensively exploited in the development. After a complete and more or less exact statement of this theme, a hybrid theme appears (see Ex.12j) and dominates the rest of the coda. Motivically, this closing theme represents a counterpart to the Introduction's principal subject (Ex.11a) for it not only contains references to the concerto's opening theme, it also inherits the 'rocking' pattern from the second subject group.

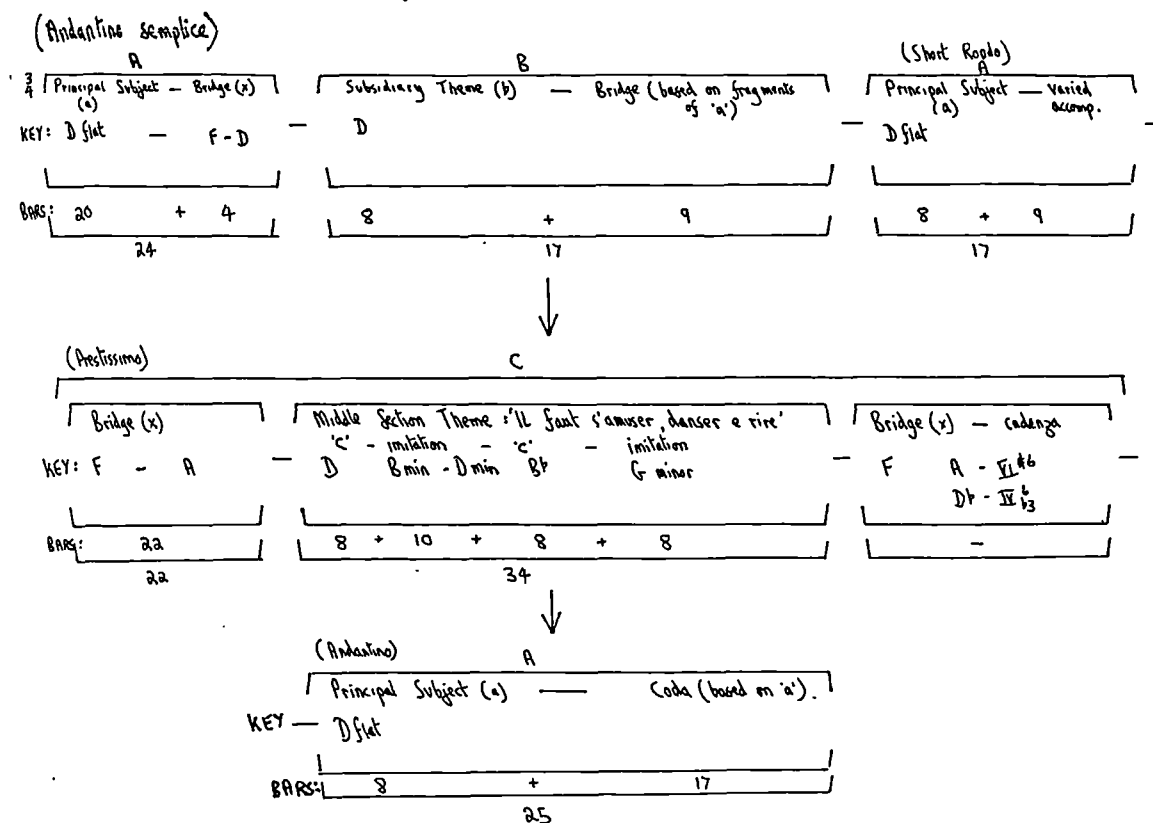
Tchaikovsky was never again able to compose a concerto movement of comparable precision, structural ingenuity and lyrical invention. It was as if the mould had been broken immediately after its completion. Nevertheless, the remaining movements of the Piano Concerto in B flat minor, though less complex thematically and perhaps emotionally, beautifully complement the first movement's concentrated appeal by their sustained melodic contours and structural simplicity.

The second movement which, as mentioned earlier, incorporates the French ditty Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire in its prestissimo middle section<sup>51</sup>, 'neatly combines two structural blueprints',

51. In a letter to K. N. Igumnov dating from 1912 (printed in Sovetskaya Muzyka, 1946, No.1, pp.88-9), Taneyev argues that the original marking 'Allegro vivace assai' is in fact the correct tempo and the 'Prestissimo' is too fast. The Soviet musicologist Yury Tyulin is presumably of the same opinion for in his analysis of the 'Andante simplice' movement he refers to the central section only as the 'Allegro vivace assai' (Yury Tyulin, Proizvedeniya Tchaikovsky, struktorniy analys, Moscow, 1973, p.195).



according to David Brown, 'ternary in respect of speed scheme, simple rondo with regard to thematic recurrence and key':<sup>52</sup>



Tchaikovsky appears to abandon his former preoccupation with thematic interrelationships as none of the principal themes is motivically connected to any other.<sup>53</sup> However, he still considered structural unity sufficiently important to have inserted fragments of the principal theme into the link passage between sections 'B' and 'A'<sup>2</sup>, and, more significantly, re-introduces the introduction to 'B' into the

52. David Brown, Tchaikovsky: Vol.II: The Crisis Years (1874-1878) (London, 1982), p.21.

53. Though as Alexeyev suggests, the inconsistency concerning the first bar of the opening theme points to a possible link between it and the introductory theme of the concerto.

prestissimo middle section:<sup>54</sup>

Ex. 34 (*Andantino semplice*)



Apart from some melodic imitation based on fragments of *Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire* in the 'prestissimo' section, no substantial thematic development takes place in this movement. Instead Tchaikovsky adopts the technique of 'changing background' to vary each successive statement of the subject material. Particularly attractive in this respect is the statement by two solo 'cellos of the principal theme (in section A<sup>2</sup>), accompanied by semiquaver chords on the piano rhythmically derived from the preceding 'B' section:

Ex. 35

Schubert's *Trout* Quintet, incidentally, appears to have been the model for the second half of this section,<sup>55</sup> for the piano's

54. Judging by the slight incongruity of section B's introduction, Tchaikovsky may have originally conceived Ex.34 at the faster tempo ('prestissimo') and incorporated it earlier into the movement as an afterthought.

55. Schubert's influence is also evident in the first and third movements of Tchaikovsky's String Quartet in D, Op.11.

syncopated chordal accompaniment is very similar to that in the fifth variation of the quintet's fourth movement. The unison trills which immediately precede this section (a feature of both the fifth variation of the fourth movement and the slow movement of the Trout Quintet) seem to support this theory, as does the more extensive use of trills in Tchaikovsky's coda.

The central 'prestissimo' section, on the other hand, suggests the influence of Chopin; in particular, the finale of the Sonata in B flat minor, Op.35 (in regard to the section's vertiginous octave semiquaver passagework) and the Study in E major Op.10 No.3:

Ex. 36

Chopin  
(poco più animato)  
p f

Tchaikovsky  
(Prestissimo)  
(mf)

It could also be surmised that Tchaikovsky derived the rising arpeggio figuration which accompanies the piano's initial statement of the movement's principal theme, from the middle section (also in D flat major) of the 'Funeral March' movement of the sonata by Chopin mentioned above, though this connection is too insubstantial to draw any positive conclusions.<sup>56</sup>

56. Even less conclusive - and fanciful to boot - is the conjecture that Tchaikovsky's 'cello counter-melody in the 'Schubertian' section mentioned above, may have given Rachmaninov a thematic idea on which to base one of his most famous melodies; the second subject theme of the Concerto in C minor's first movement:

Ex. 37

Rachmaninov (transposed)

Tchaikovsky  
p

One final word concerning the thematic inconsistency of the principal theme's first bar. Much has been written about this apparent anomaly and it has led to a wide variety of explanations, from Alexeyev's plausible idea that it was influenced by the contours of the concerto's opening theme to the belief of performers, conductors and even publishers,<sup>57</sup> that it is a mistake on either Tchaikovsky's or the printer's part in need of correction. Eric Blom's more moderate viewpoint is generally considered acceptable:

It is quite possible that Tchaikovsky, having first hit on the less striking form of the phrase and then introduced the more telling one in the piano part, decided to let the discrepancy stand in order to give the solo an added importance by making it heighten the significance of his theme. (58)

Perhaps the contemplative 'Quasi Andante' section of the first movement's principal cadenza provides an answer, for contained within its first five notes, the contours of which are unmistakably those of the Andantino's principal theme, are both versions of its opening bar:

Ex. 38

Curiously, this poignant little phrase is also strongly reminiscent of the so-called 'Artôt' motive from the first movement's second subject. Judging by the *complex thematic relationships displayed so*

57. Eulenberg miniature score.

58. Eric Blom, 'Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra', in Tchaikovsky: a Symposium, ed. Gerald Abraham (London, 1945), p.55.

far in this concerto, the significance of such a fragment should not be too hastily dismissed as mere coincidence.

The finale of the B flat minor Piano Concerto, though essentially sonata rondo in structure and character (in as far as its highly contrasted principal thematic material is juxtaposed in seemingly unrelated blocks rather than developed and dovetailed), exhibits enough features of first-movement or sonata form to make a clear-cut structural designation *impractical*. *Opinions differ, however: John Warrack, for example, states emphatically that 'the finale is again in sonata form'*<sup>59</sup> whereas the Soviet musicologist Yury Tyulin, on the other hand, considers the movement to be a rondo with an ABAB<sup>1</sup>ARB<sup>2</sup>K structural framework ('R' indicating 'Razrabotka' - Development, and 'K' - coda).<sup>60</sup>

David Brown's sonata rondo designation is perhaps closest to the mark, and his summary of the finale's structure as a whole is so trenchant it merits quoting in its entirety:

While in the 'aria situation' of the 'Andantino semplice' it had been natural to think in enclosed musical sections, the sonata rondo scheme that was usual for the concerto finale required rather more than Tchaikovsky supplied in his alternation of two thematic blocks supplemented by brief self-contained chunks of transition containing only the lightest hint of quasi-development intent. Tchaikovsky's marshalling of these neatly processed lumps of material is tidy, and he offers some token of developmental activity by contrapuntally engaging some of his thematic materials above the extended dominant preparation that leads to the final titanic delivery of the broad second theme. The movement makes a simple and effective finale, but it largely avoids those questions of organic growth that Tchaikovsky had so boldly confronted in the first movement. (61)

59. John Warrack, Tchaikovsky Symphonies and Concertos (B.B.C. Music Guides) (London, 1977), p.43.

60. Yury Tyulin, Proizvedeniya Tchaikovsky, structorniy analys (Moscow, 1973), p.197.

61. David Brown, Tchaikovsky: Vol.II: The Crisis Years (1874-1878) (London, 1982), pp.21-2.

It could be surmised, of course, that had Tchaikovsky employed the kind of 'organic growth' displayed in the first movement, the finale would not have been so simple and effective as the version we know today.<sup>62</sup> However, Tchaikovsky compensates for its lack of a thematic process by employing a more direct and, in some cases, more localized approach to his treatment of themes. All the principal subject material of the finale, for example, contains and fully exploits the following rhythm: ♪♪ ♪♪ ♪, initially derived from the Ukrainian folk song 'Come, come, Ivanka' on which the movement is based. It also finds its way into the bridge passage linking sections A<sup>1</sup> and A<sup>2</sup> with B<sup>1</sup> and B<sup>2</sup> respectively - also based on the Ukrainian folk song first subject (Ex.21a):

Ex. 40 (*poco più animato*)

The musical score for Ex. 40 consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a melody of eighth notes, marked 'cresc. mf'. The middle and bottom staves are for piano accompaniment, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes and chords, mirroring the melody's rhythm. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Incidentally, echoes of the first movement are also present in this bridge passage, though are probably unintentional. The first and third bars of Ex.40, for example, are strongly reminiscent of the motive (initially derived from the first subject) which is employed in the development's passionate dialogue between piano and orchestra (see Ex.1). In addition, the bridge passage's swirling semiquavers

62. The otherwise splendid finale of Balakirev's Piano Concerto in E flat suffers to a certain extent, from the application of 'first-movement' thematic processes.

have much in common with the quaver passagework found near the beginning of the first movement's development.

More important, however, is the 'fresco' or 'changing background' technique which Tchaikovsky adopts as a means of varying the texture, rhythm and thematic content of the Ukrainian folk song's accompaniment. Among the procedures used are pizzicato strings;<sup>63</sup> which, according to Edward Garden, 'occur much in the music of Glinka (for example, in the Kamarinskaya on Two Russian Folksongs) and Balakirev (Overture on Three Russian Folksongs)',<sup>64</sup> quasi-canonical imitation (in the woodwind); a very effective employment of hemiola - with the strings in compound duple time against the piano's 'simple triple', and 'off-beat chirps and skirls on the flute and clarinet'.<sup>65</sup>

Although in the so-called 'working-out' section of the finale Tchaikovsky adopts a more conventional process of thematic development, due to its innate transitional character it cannot really be considered a bona fide development as such. It begins, depending on one's viewpoint, at bar 183 'Molto più mosso', a section devoted to fragments of both first and second subjects - alternating but never together. Throughout, the piano pursues a similar kind of vertiginous octave passagework as that employed in the central prestissimo section of the second movement (a feature possibly inspired by the finale of Rubinstein's Third Piano Concerto Op.35, a popular and frequently performed work at that time). The 'Tempo I ma tranquillo' section that follows is perhaps closer to a conventional development section in as far as its treatment of the finale's thematic material

63. The motive used by the strings is an inversion of the final bar of the movement's four-bar introduction - also 'pizzicato'.

64. Edward Garden, 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', Music and Letters Vol.60, No.2 (1979), p.176.

65. Edward Garden, *Ibid.*

is more tightly organized. Furthermore, it is predominantly constructed around a neat combination of second subject fragments and the 'skipping figure' accompaniment to the Ukrainian folk song. These features in themselves could easily have provided Tchaikovsky with the foundations of a satisfying and self-contained central ritornello. Instead, he turned them to better use, by using them in a massive twenty-nine-bar build-up over a dominant pedal supplied by lower horns, timpani and double basses leading - through nine bars of fortissimo double octaves from the soloist (see Ex.42) - to the final statement of the second subject, 'Molto meno mosso'.

Even more so than the previous two movements, the piano writing in the concerto's finale is skilfully tailored to its underlying musical ideas, and despite a pronounced virtuosic character, possesses little of the 'note-spinning for the sake of it' feeling present in all Tchaikovsky's remaining works for piano and orchestra. Edward Dannreuther had little to suggest in the way of improvements to the finale's piano writing (his proposed amendments, as already noted, were almost entirely confined to the pianistically more expansive and ambitious first movement). Nor had Siloti, whom Tchaikovsky had consulted in regard to the third edition (1889) of the concerto, though two small changes which were subsequently incorporated may have resulted from their collaboration: the replacement of part of the 'skipping' figure with more forceful and rhythmically impetuous octave semiquavers (see Ex.41) and the simple, yet extremely effective redistribution *à la* Rubinstein,<sup>66</sup> of the double octaves immediately preceding the second subject's final statement:

66. See Part One p.60, Ex.43.



## Ex. 41

2nd edition (1879)

3rd edition (1889)

## Ex. 42

3rd edition (1889)

*riten.*

2nd edition (1879)

With the completion of the Piano Concerto in B flat minor (which the 18-year-old Sergei Taneyev intuitively dubbed 'the first Russian piano concerto' some four days before it had been completed<sup>67</sup>), Tchaikovsky's contribution to the development of the genre more or less came to an end. His remaining works for piano and orchestra (the Concertos in G Op.44 and E flat Op.75, the Concert Fantasia Op.56 and the unfinished Andante and Finale Op.79), although displaying some novelties of formal construction offer nothing radically new in terms

67. According to A. A. Al'shvang, P. I. Tchaikovsky (Moscow, 1959), p.213-14.

of musical thought, piano technique or treatment of soloist and orchestra. On the contrary, all exhibit a marked decline in practically every facet of musical composition, particularly the Second Concerto's opening movement and the Andante and Finale (which Tchaikovsky's over-zealous and misguided pupil Sergey Taneyev orchestrated and introduced to the public after the composer's death).

What factors precipitated this dramatic deterioration in Tchaikovsky's concerto writing (his symphonies, ballet scores and operas remained unaffected) are not altogether clear. However, from contemporary correspondence and diary entries it appears that, to a very great extent, the quality of his work depended on his mood at the time and his attitude towards the process of musical composition. In an illuminating letter to Nadezhda von Meck dated 24 June 1878, Tchaikovsky gave a detailed and, on the whole, plausible account of these processes:

You want to know my methods of composing? Do you know, dear friend, that it is very difficult to give a satisfactory answer to your question, because the circumstances under which a new work comes into the world vary considerably in each case.

First I must divide my works into two categories, for this is important in trying to explain my methods.

(1) Works which I compose on my own initiative - that is to say, from an invincible inward impulse.

(2) Works which are inspired by external circumstances: the wish of a friend, or a publisher, and commissioned works.

Works belonging to the first category do not require the least effort of will. It is only necessary to obey our inward promptings, and if our material life does not crush our artistic life under its weight of depressing circumstances, the work progresses with inconceivable rapidity. Everything else is forgotten, the soul throbs with an incomprehensible and indescribable excitement, so that, almost before we can follow this swift flight of inspiration, time passes literally unreckoned and unobserved. There is something somnambulistic about this condition. On s'entend pas vivre. It is impossible to describe such moments. Everything that flows from one's pen, or merely passes through one's brain (for such moments often come at a time when writing is an impossibility) under these circumstances is invariably good, and if no external obstacle comes to hinder the creative glow, the result will be the artist's best and most perfect work . . .

For the works in my second category it is necessary to get into the mood. To do so we are often obliged to fight with indolence and disinclination. Besides this, there are many other fortuitous circumstances. Sometimes the victory is easily gained. At other times inspiration eludes us, and cannot be recaptured. I consider it, however, the duty of an artist not to be conquered by circumstances. He must not wait. Inspiration is a guest who does not care to visit those who are indolent . . .

I have explained that I compose either from an inward impulse, winged by a lofty and undefinable inspiration, or I simply work, invoking all my powers, which sometimes answer and sometimes remain deaf to my invocation. In the latter case the work created will always remain the mere product of labour, without any glow of genuine musical feeling. (68)

If, for a moment, one dismisses as mere affectation Tchaikovsky's statement that works in the first category 'do not require the least effort of will' - an attempt, perhaps, to romanticize in the eyes of Mme. von Meck the role of the composer and his relationship to his work - then the First Piano Concerto fits this category to perfection. The same cannot be said, however, of the Second Piano Concerto or indeed any of the other works for piano and orchestra, for they unequivocally belong to the second category and, on the whole, were ~~brought~~ *brought* into the world merely to fill empty spaces which sporadically appeared in Tchaikovsky's creativity. In addition, all (except the Second Concerto) utilize and develop material initially intended for other works but rejected on grounds of unsuitability or poverty of invention, and all were subject to delays and interruptions of various kinds.

The historical background of the Second Piano Concerto, as documented in Tchaikovsky's correspondence - in particular, to Mme. von Meck, the pianists Taneyev and Siloti and the publisher Jurgenson - succinctly illustrates Tchaikovsky's change in attitude towards

68. Perepiska s N. F. von Meck, i (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6), pp.371-375.

composition. In a letter to Mme. von Meck dated 12 October 1879, just two days after he had begun composing the concerto, Tchaikovsky wrote the following:

I am now convinced more than ever before that I cannot live long without working. A few days ago I began to sense in my innermost heart a kind of indefinable dissatisfaction with myself which was gradually beginning to turn into boredom . . . I realised that what I lacked was work, and began to apply myself a little. Immediately the boredom went and I felt altogether lighter in spirit. I have begun to compose a piano concerto. I will work without hurrying, straining or tiring myself in any way. (69)

Three days later, in another letter to Mme. von Meck, Tchaikovsky continued in the same vein and also indulged in a little self-delusion in order to justify his newly adopted sobriety:

The new musical child of mine is beginning to grow, and little by little its formal character is taking shape. I am composing with great inspiration, but am trying to refrain from the usual feverish hurrying which is always badly reflected in my music. (70)

One wonders what became of the 'great inspiration' Tchaikovsky referred to. Certainly from a melodic point of view - often a most accurate barometer as it were, of musical inspiration - the Second Piano Concerto is poorly provided for and lacks the kind of memorable themes which adorn the First Concerto. The most obvious weakness of the Second Concerto's thematic material is undoubtedly its lack of a central, all-pervading melodic idea or prototype. Whereas almost all the principal melodies in the First Concerto apparently sprang from two or three related sources, the corresponding themes in the Second Concerto are entirely autonomous (apart from one or two negligible similarities) and, in any case, are on the whole undistinguished and forgettable. As Eric Blom picturesquely put it, 'The G major contains

69. Perepisika s N. F. von Meck, II (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6), p.231.

70. P.I. Tchaikovsky, Polnoye sobraniye: Sochineniya dlya fortepianno s orchestrom (Moscow, 1955), p.xiii.

little we are tempted to hum on leaving the concert-room, much less while occupying the bathroom'.<sup>71</sup>

The Schumannesque opening theme (first subject) of the concerto, for example, is not only unprepossessingly foursquare (and four-bar) in character, it is also rhythmically clumsy and harmonically unimaginative:

Ex. 43



The second subject, which consists of two eight-bar phrases announced by the orchestra and soloist respectively, is hardly an improvement as its perfunctory canonic treatment, far from enhancing what little beauty the theme possesses, merely emphasizes its blatantly contrived contours:

Ex. 44

The theme is then subjected to more repetition than its musical fragility can support - a fate also suffered by the exposition's third

71. Eric Blom, 'Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra', in Tchaikovsky: a Symposium, ed. Gerald Abraham (London, 1945), p.58.

subject, perhaps the least objectionable of the first movement's subjects. As far as the rest of the concerto is concerned, Tchaikovsky's melodic inspiration seemed to rally slightly. The slow movement, 'Andante non troppo', though inordinately long owing to a middle section over-burdened with slow moving melodic sequences, nevertheless contains some of the concerto's finest melodic writing. Tchaikovsky was particularly proud, and justifiably so, of the closing section of the movement; the first and perhaps only section in the concerto of genuine Tchaikovskian lyricism:

## Ex. 45

The musical score for Ex. 45 is presented in two systems. The top system is for the piano, marked 'Tempo I' and 'p'. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The bottom system is for the violin, marked 'Vl. Solo' and 'p espr.'. It features a more melodic line with long phrases, including a triplet and a fermata. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/8.

It is difficult to reach a judgement concerning the quality of the finale's thematic material. All one can say is its melodies, though not particularly memorable, adequately convey the light-weight capriciousness of Tchaikovsky's pseudo-folk orientated musical ideas (initially inspired, perhaps, by the finales of Anton Rubinstein's Third and Fourth Piano Concertos).

Though the Second Piano Concerto's colourless thematic material ranges from mediocre to bad (with the exception of a few pages from the 'Andante non troppo'), Tchaikovsky nevertheless distributed this material liberally (through the use of sequences and direct repetition) over a huge canvas and framed the result in a structure

distended by his pursuit of grandiloquent effects. 'There is a sense of grandeur being consciously sought rather than resulting from a genuine musical impetus.'<sup>72</sup> The first movement's transition (between the first and second subjects) is a case in point. Although based on a somewhat flimsy thematic idea - a two-bar fragment of the first subject in dialogue with some inconsequential passagework from the soloist:

Ex. 46

The musical score for Example 46 consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, and the middle and bottom staves are in bass clef. The music is written in 3/4 time. The top staff begins with a series of eighth notes, followed by a series of sixteenth notes. The middle staff begins with a series of eighth notes, followed by a series of sixteenth notes. The bottom staff begins with a series of eighth notes, followed by a series of sixteenth notes. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'mf' and 'f'. The music is a two-bar fragment of the first subject in dialogue with some inconsequential passagework from the soloist.

Tchaikovsky repeats it a further three times in more or less the same form (the last developing into a trite, musically sterile quasi-cadenza which rounds off the section). The second subject which immediately follows is, as mentioned earlier, also subjected to excessive repetition. Its first and third bars, for example, are heard fourteen and seventeen times respectively, during the subject group. Only eight of these repetitions can be attributed to Tchaikovsky's somewhat perfunctory use of canonic imitation.

As far as the Second Concerto's overall form is concerned, each movement represents a different manifestation of the considerable structural problems Tchaikovsky appeared to have experienced during

72. John Warrack, Tchaikovsky (London, 1973), p.164.

the years 1878 to 1885.<sup>73</sup> In the first movement, for example, Tchaikovsky attempted to build a large-scale structure on thematic material that was not only second rate, but also devoid of the kind of developmental potential inherent in, and subsequently utilized to great effect by, the First Concerto's themes. The difficulties of engaging such material, particularly in a structure the dimensions of the first movement, inevitably distracted Tchaikovsky's attention from other important formal considerations, such as the construction of transition material and bridge passages. Consequently, weak though the first movement's subject material is, weaker still are the passages which attempt to hold it together. Nowhere in the first movement, or indeed anywhere else in the concerto does one find the superbly contrived process of dovetailing which so efficiently 'stitches' together the first and second subjects in the First Concerto's opening movement, or, for that matter, the kind of bridge passage, such as the link between the principal themes of the First Concerto's finale (see Ex.40) instilled with a feeling of indispensibility through being motivically generated by the surrounding thematic material. Instead, Tchaikovsky dispenses with the orchestra altogether and merely utilizes virtuosic passagework previously employed either as an accompaniment to more important ideas (for example, the bridge between the second and third subjects) or, as in Ex.46, used previously as straightforward 'padding'. Needless to say, the results are disappointing, particularly the bridge passage between the transition (see Ex.47) and the second subject group. Apart from the uncomfortable upward shift of a semitone (from the

73. It may be significant that during this period almost all Tchaikovsky's major instrumental works including the Italian Capriccio (Op.45) and the Serenade for Strings (Op.48) eschew traditional structures, in particular, sonata form.



somewhat over-emphasized, dominant seventh chord of G major to the tonic of E flat) and the somewhat brutal piano writing, the passage in question is devoid of any thematic interest whatsoever. Furthermore, the tacet, incorporated no doubt for dramatic effect, is not particularly convincing:

Ex. 47

Musical score for Ex. 47, showing piano and violin parts. The piano part features a dense, rhythmic texture with triplets and dynamic markings like *sf* and *ff*. The violin part has a melodic line with a *cantabile* marking and dynamic markings like *p* and *sf*. The tempo is marked *L'istesso tempo*.

Although the interminably long and somewhat episodic development section gets off to a promising start with a fine orchestral ritornello parading a richly harmonized statement of the second subject (a) Ex.44, Tchaikovsky's underlying paucity of ideas soon becomes devastatingly evident as the music passes through a link to the next section:

Ex. 48

Musical score for Ex. 48, showing Cor, Vla, Vcl, and Cb parts. The Cor part has a melodic line with dynamic markings like *mf* and *dim.*. The Vla part has a melodic line with dynamic markings like *dim.* and *pp*. The Vcl part has a melodic line with dynamic markings like *dim.* and *p*. The Cb part has a melodic line with dynamic markings like *dim.* and *pp*.

It is hard to believe, in fact, that the composer of this tuneless and instrumentally threadbare section had previously been responsible for some of the most lusciously orchestrated passages to have

appeared so far in the development of the nineteenth-century piano concerto!

After an appallingly perfunctory and contrived sequential treatment of the second subject's piano theme (merely transposed upwards a fourth; then fragmented)

Ex. 49

The image displays a musical score for Example 49, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system features a piano part on the left and a string part on the right. The piano part begins with a piano (p) dynamic marking and includes a trill (tr) in the right hand. The string part includes a 'Ped.' (pedal) marking. The second system continues the piano part with a trill and a 'p' dynamic marking, and the string part with 'tr' markings and 'p' dynamics for 'VI. I.' and 'VI. II.'. The string part concludes with a 'p Vla.' (piano Viola) marking.

Tchaikovsky launches into the first of the development's two solo cadenzas (somewhat pretentiously designated 'Un poco capriccioso e a tempo rubato'). Whereas the first cadenza in the Piano Concerto in B flat minor is a thematically complex affair involving the sequential and modulatory treatment of both first and second subject material (the former is also engaged in dialogue with itself), the corresponding cadenza in the Second Concerto is a dull, characterless passage constructed on unprepossessing chunks of second subject material separated by descending scales reminiscent of the double octave passages in Liszt's Transcendental Study Mazeppa. Furthermore, the cadenza's final bars appear to be plagiarized from Mazeppa's opening 'Cadenza ad libitum':

Ex. 50

Tchaikovsky

Liszt  
(poco a poco precipitando)

Cadenza ad libitum

Ad. cresc.

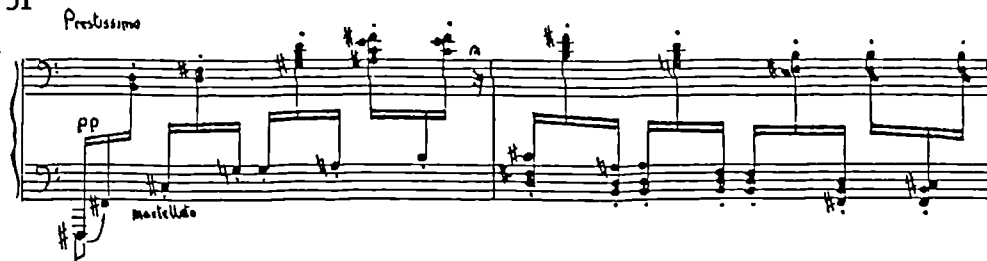
After a noisy and boisterous orchestral section based on a variant of the first subject, accompanied by triple forte yet completely ineffectual double octaves from the piano, Tchaikovsky wisely chose a more contrapuntal texture in the next and longest of all the development's episodes. Although the chattering woodwind passages (based on the second subject's triplets) are appealing, if only for the contrast they invoke from the heavy chordal texture of much of the preceding movement, even Tchaikovsky himself considered this section too long and he sanctioned the removal of some twenty-three bars (bars 319-342). The fact that Tchaikovsky could have contemplated, let alone realized such a cut (something he could never have countenanced in the development of the First Concerto) suggests that he had less confidence in the quality of the Second Piano Concerto's musical ideas than his correspondence leads us to believe. Furthermore, Tchaikovsky's lack of faith in this material was perhaps fully justified considering the cut could be so painlessly administered, with little or no detrimental effect to the surrounding material or to the development section as a whole.

The final part of the development is in the form of a large-scale multisectional solo cadenza presented in Tchaikovsky's most bombastic overblown piano style. Again, the paucity of invention is greatly evident though this did not inhibit Tchaikovsky in his pursuit for virtuosic effect. Even the intrepid Taneyev had difficulty in negotiating some of its thornier technical problems, as he mentioned in a letter to the composer dated 9 April 1882:

Much discomfort is caused me by four pages in the cadenza where the left and right hands have alternating chords. To play these is terribly difficult though this is hardly apparent in performance. I think by the end of the second page the audience will be weary and by the end of the fourth, their patience sorely tested . . . (74)

The passage in question involves some fifty-three bars based on, and beginning with the following pattern:

Ex. 51



Although musically this cadenza is of little significance (apart from pianistically influencing the cadenza in Rachmaninov's First Piano Concerto composed some ten years later), it epitomizes more than any other section of the concerto, Tchaikovsky's determination to compose what he considered to be 'good' piano music (as opposed to good music for the piano or, in Tchaikovsky's case, 'orchestrally conceived' piano music). As Edward Garden points out:

74. P.I. Tchaikovsky, Polnoye sobraniye: Sochineniya dlya fortepianno s orchestrom (Moscow, 1955), p.xiv.

[Tchaikovsky] was incapable of being inspired by the piano as an instrument . . . The success of the First Piano Concerto can be attributed to the fact that he was not thinking in terms of the piano at all, but of the orchestra. All the themes are conceived in their orchestral form (Tchaikovsky told Mme. Von Meck that he always composed with instrumental colouring in mind), and the piano, even if it introduces a theme, is merely having an arrangement, however, good, of an orchestral conception . . . It is clear that, after Rubinstein's severe strictures about the piano part in the First Concerto, Tchaikovsky in the Second was sincerely trying to compose in terms of the piano rather than the orchestra, and it may be that this was partially responsible for the manifest inferiority of the later work. (75)

Perhaps this is also why the second movement, despite its inordinate length, is generally considered the least objectionable of the concerto's three movements; for the piano, far from being obtrusive and assertive as in the first movement, is allocated a variety of more moderate roles, including simple accompaniment (as in the middle section and the beginning of the recapitulation), participation in dialogue with the solo violin and cello (the 'più mosso' section starting at bar 98, for example), and solo passages of Rubinstein-esque lyrical contemplation (see Part One, Ex.41). In fact, so subordinate is the role of the piano and so prominent are the solo violin and cello that the 'Andante non troppo' is practically a triple concerto; a curious outcome considering Tchaikovsky's former distaste for such a combination. However, despite his apparent satisfaction with the 'Andante' movement, Tchaikovsky still had reservations concerning this particular combination of instruments, as he mentioned in his letter to Mme. von Meck dated October 1880 (quoted on p.147). Nevertheless, the following year Tchaikovsky produced the Piano Trio Op.50 which Mme. von Meck had for some time been trying to persuade him to compose, and used passagework in the Andante as a model for some of its piano figurations:

## Ex. 52

Piano Concerto No. 2: 'Andante non troppo'

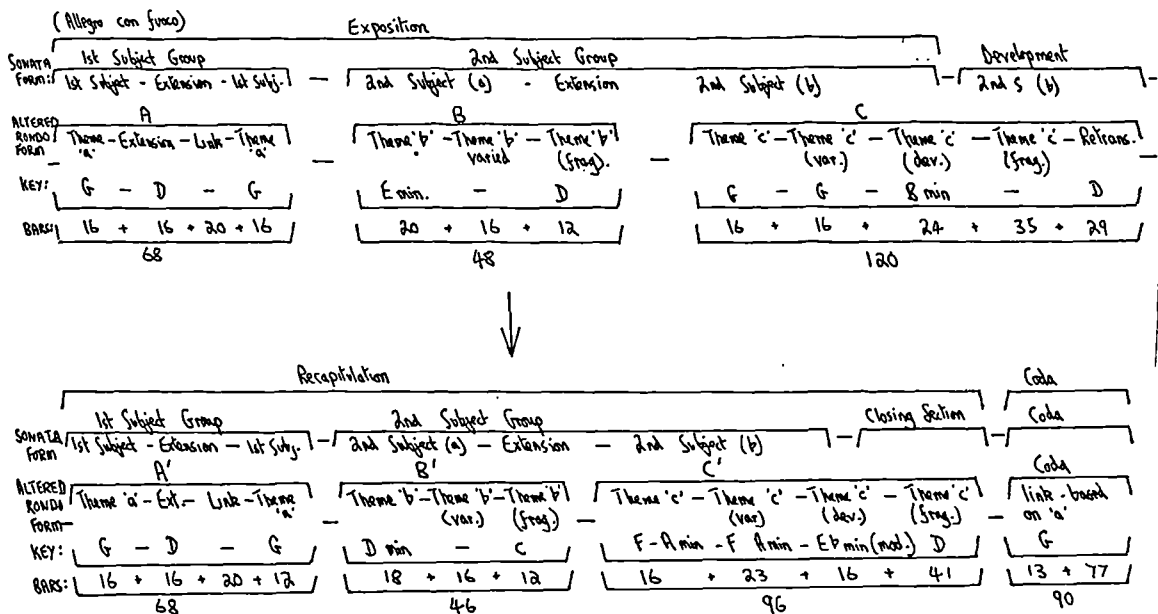
VAR. IX. Andante stabile ma non tanto

Piano Trio in A minor: 2nd movement.

Whereas the 'Andante non troppo' second movement suffers structurally from a marked diffuseness in the presentation and elaboration of its principal thematic material (a second manifestation of the formal problems encountered by Tchaikovsky during the years 1878 to 1885), the finale, in its pursuit for structural clarity, veers somewhat too enthusiastically on the side of compactness (a third manifestation), with the result that its abbreviated time scale is not altogether satisfactory for the concluding movement of a very large piano concerto. Although various labels have been attached to the structural design of the finale (ranging from Tyulin's 'Svobodnaya forma' (free form)<sup>76</sup> to Roger Fiske's 'very bald Sonata form'<sup>77</sup>), the movement is in fact an adroit fusion of rondo and sonata form. Tchaikovsky achieves this by superimposing the more salient features of rondo - such as the invariable tonic key recurrence of the principal subject, rhythmically motivated thematic material, comparatively clear-cut sectional divisions, etc. - on to a suitably modified sonata-form framework:

76. Yury Tyulin, Proizvedeniya Tchaikovsky; structorniy analys (Moscow, 1973), p.197.

77. Roger Fiske, Musical Opinion No.62 (1938), October, p.18.



It is, in fact, these modifications (which include the almost complete omission of bridge passage/transition material and the inclusion of a development exclusively based on the second subject theme 'b'), which engender the bustling character of the finale.

On the completion of the Second Piano Concerto in the spring of 1880, Tchaikovsky again sought the advice of Nikolay Rubinstein. On this occasion, however, he considered it more expedient to send Rubinstein the score rather than risk another unpleasant confrontation. Tchaikovsky's decision to consult his volatile colleague was not taken without some trepidation, as his letter to his publisher Jurgenson, dated 20 February, reveals:

I tremble at the thought of the criticisms I may again hear from Nikolay Grigorevich (Rubinstein) to whom the concerto is dedicated. Still, even if once more he does criticise yet nevertheless goes on to perform it brilliantly as with the First Concerto, I won't mind. It would be nice, though, if on this occasion the period between the criticism and the performance were shorter. (78)

78. P. I Tchaikovsky, Perepiska s P. I. Jurgensonom (Correspondence with P. I. Jurgenson), Vol. I (Moscow, 1938), pp.139-40.

On 13 May Tchaikovsky wrote to Rubinstein '. . . if in editing the piano part you find it necessary to alter anything entrust these corrections to Taneyev.'<sup>79</sup>

Apparently, Rubinstein did consult Taneyev on the matter, for Taneyev wrote to Tchaikovsky informing him that 'there was absolutely nothing to be changed'.<sup>80</sup>

The following month, after perusing the score for a second time, Rubinstein's opinions began to crystallize and he informed Tchaikovsky of them. This time, however, he was tactful enough to confine his comments to matters concerning the piano part and cautious enough to admit that, in any case, his conclusions might, perhaps, be wrong owing to 'having scarcely played the concerto once through'.<sup>81</sup>

In a somewhat petulant letter to Mme. von Meck dated 28 September, Tchaikovsky not only rejected outright Rubinstein's quite justifiable comments concerning the new concerto, but also jumped on, and twisted to his own advantage, Rubinstein's diplomatic little peroration by interpreting it literally:

Nikolay Grigorevich has given me his opinion of my concerto that it seems the piano part is too episodic and not sufficiently separated from the orchestra. I think he is wrong. However, he only knows it from a superficial run-through and I hope that on closer acquaintance with it his opinion will alter. In general, Rubinstein tends too often to be unjust in his assessment of a new piece which he has not yet learnt. I can think of many cases when he has hurt me deeply with his hostile attitude to some new work or other and then, after a year or two, has radically altered his judgement. [82] I hope that such is the case this time, for if he is right I shall feel very annoyed as I took particular care to make the solo instrument stand out in as much relief as possible from the orchestral background. (83)

79. Istoriya russkoy muzyki b isyedovaniakh i materialakh (History of Russian music in research and materials), ed. Prof. K. A. Kuznetsova (Moscow, 1924) Vol.I, p.181.

80. Perepiska s P. I Jurgensonom Vol.I (Moscow, 1938), p.164.

81. Prof. K. A. Kuznetsova, op. cit., p.182.

82. An obvious reference to the First Piano Concerto.

83. P.I. Tchaikovsky, Polnoye sobraniye: Sochineniya dlya fortepianno s orchestrom (Moscow, 1955), p.xiv.



Owing to the sudden death of Nikolay Rubinstein in Paris on 11 March 1881, it was Taneyev who gave the first performance of the Second Concerto on 18 May 1882 at the opening concert of the Industrial and Cultural Exhibition in Moscow. The following month, in a letter dated 18 June, Taneyev informed Tchaikovsky of the general opinion of the concerto:

Opinions of this work vary quite a lot, but they all come down to this; that the first and second movements are too long. One hears opinions that it is one of the most beautiful concertos and very brilliant in performance, that some prefer it to the first concerto etc. - that they approve of the solo violin and cello in the second movement; on the other hand, some say that nothing much is going on in the piano, in which perhaps, it is impossible not to agree, and that there is too great an emphasis on the part of the other two instruments. (84)

In an 'amusing mixture of sarcasm and humour'<sup>85</sup> to quote David Lloyd-Jones, Tchaikovsky expressed in no uncertain terms his annoyance on receiving this thinly disguised condemnation of his new work:

Most grateful for your performance of the concerto. I will freely admit that it suffers from being too long and regret that those people to whom critical examination of the work was entrusted two years ago did not point to this deficiency at the time. In doing so they would have rendered me a great service, greater even, perhaps, than performing this concerto so magnificently in its present imperfect state. All the same, merci, merci, merci, merci. (86)

Tchaikovsky heeded Taneyev's comments and undertook three small cuts for the St Petersburg premiere of the concerto (5 November 1888) given by Vasily Sapelnikov with Tchaikovsky himself conducting.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, one month prior to this performance, having been approached by Jurgenson with the offer of bringing out a new edition of

84. Ibid, pp.xiv-xv.

85. Eulenberg miniature score, pp.iv-v.

86. P. I. Tchaikovsky, S. I. Taneyev, *Pisma* (Letters), 1951, p.80.

87. The cuts, which are the only ones officially sanctioned by the composer, involve bars 319-342 in the first movement, and in the Andante; bars 247-281 and 310-326 (piano) and 327 (orchestra).

the concerto, Tchaikovsky decided to consult Siloti in connection with possible improvement to the work. Judging from Tchaikovsky's response, Siloti's suggestions must have been fairly drastic:

I positively cannot agree to your abridgements, especially the cuts in the first movement . . . my author's sense is greatly outraged by your rearrangements and alterations and I cannot bring myself to allow them. (8 January 1889) (88)

Nevertheless, the concerto's inordinate length continued to prey on Tchaikovsky's mind. In a letter dated 30 March 1891, he admitted to Jurgenson that he found the Second Concerto intolerable 'in its present form'.<sup>89</sup> Jurgenson, sensing that Tchaikovsky was perhaps prepared to compromise over the matter of cuts, assigned Siloti the task of editing the third edition. After several letters of protest, in which Tchaikovsky objected to Siloti's attempt to do away with both the central section of the Andante and the recapitulation in the first movement (letter dated 26 July 1893) and implementing radical changes to the first movement's principal cadenza (letter dated 8 August), he finally capitulated, at least to some of the lesser amendments. On 20 August he wrote to Jurgenson:

I have agreed to certain of Siloti's changes, others I quite definitely cannot accept. He is overdoing it in his desire to make this concerto easy, and wants me literally to mutilate it for the sake of simplicity. The concessions I have already made and the cuts which both he and I have introduced are quite sufficient. I am exceedingly grateful to you for your readiness to republish this concerto. There will be no great changes - it will be a matter of cuts only. (90)

The edition, however, which Jurgenson eventually brought out (in 1897: four years after Tchaikovsky's death), contained all the

88. P.I. Tchaikovsky, Polnoye sobraniye: Sochineniya dlya fortepianno s orchestrom (Moscow, 1955), p.xv.

89. P. I. Tchaikovsky, Perepiska s P. I. Jurgensonom, II (Moscow/Leningrad), p.210.

90. Ibid.

changes, alterations and cuts to which Tchaikovsky so strongly objected and bears the ignominious title 'Nouvelle Édition, revue e diminuée d'après les indications de l'auteur par A. Ziloti'.

Tchaikovsky's grudging acknowledgement of the Second Concerto's principal weakness, i.e. its excessive length, may explain why his third and last piano concerto, the Piano Concerto in E flat Op.75 - which was composed more or less contemporaneously with his haggling with Siloti over the Second Concerto's cuts - remained seemingly unfinished (the 'Andante' and finale were left in short score and orchestrated by Taneyev after the composer's death: see pp.219-22). As he explained to Siloti in a letter dated 25 September 1893: 'Since it is inordinately long, I have decided to leave it as one movement which I'll call "Allegro de concert", or perhaps "Konzertstück".'<sup>91</sup>

Tchaikovsky expressed the same intention in a letter to S. Stoyov-sky:

I am working now on the instrumentation of the concerto for our kind Diémer. [92] Tell him, when you see him, that when I began orchestrating I was uneasy and disturbed about the length of this concerto. Then I decided to retain just one movement, the first, and that will become the whole concerto. The work can only gain from this, since the last two movements contain nothing in particular. (93)

This letter, which is in the possession of V. Horowitz (the photostat copy is preserved at the Tchaikovsky Home-Museum in Klin), settles

91. Quoted in the Editor's Note; P. I. Tchaikovsky, Symphony in E flat major (Restored, instrumented and edited by S. Bogatyryev) (Moscow, 1961), p.12. (Original source: P. I. Tchaikovsky, S. I. Taneyev, Pisma, Moscow, 1951, p.249.)
92. The French pianist and composer Louis Diémer (1843-1919), to whom the Third Piano Concerto was dedicated, studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Bazin, Marmontel and A. Thomas, and in 1888 joined the staff as professor of piano. He performed Tchaikovsky's Concert Fantasia in a concert given in Paris on 4 March 1888 under the directorship of the composer.
93. Quoted in the Editor's Note; P. I. Tchaikovsky, Symphony in E flat major (Restored, instrumented and edited by S. Bogatyryev) (Moscow, 1961), p.12.

once and for all the issue as to whether the Andante and Finale movements - published in Taneyev's arrangements by Belyayev in 1897 as Op.79 - should seriously be considered as part of a three-movement concerto commencing with the 'Allegro brillante' first movement, brought out by Jurgenson in 1894. Tchaikovsky's intentions on this matter are clear and unequivocal: 'I decided to retain just one movement, the first, and that will become the whole concerto'.

The idea for a third piano concerto was probably first mooted as early as 1888 when Diémer asked Tchaikovsky to compose something for him. Four years later, while on his fourth and longest visit to London, Tchaikovsky again met Diémer and it is reasonable to assume that the issue of the new concerto was raised. Always loath to waste material, Tchaikovsky decided to return to the discarded sketches of a proposed symphony in E flat (composed in May and October 1892) and reconstructed them in the form of a piano concerto. Although by any standards an inauspicious and unpromising start for a new composition, any possibility of something enduring and profound resulting from such a procedure were well and truly dashed by Tchaikovsky's earlier assessment of the defunct symphony:

Have gone over attentively and, so to speak, looked with an impartial eye at my new symphony, which fortunately, I have not had the time to orchestrate and release for performance. The impression it produces is far from flattering, in a word, the symphony was written just for the sake of writing something, and contains nothing interesting or appealing. I have decided to scrap it and forget about it. This decision is irrevocable, and it is a good thing I have taken it. (94)

Thus Tchaikovsky not only planned to utilize material originally intended for another work soon to be discarded; the material itself

94. Pisma k Blizkim (Letters to Relations) (Moscow, 1955), letter no.644.

had been composed merely to fill a creative vacuum!

During the summer of 1893 Tchaikovsky worked assiduously, though without pleasure, on the new concerto (along with the Pathétique symphony), and on 1 July, wrote on the draft of the first movement 'Finished - thank God! The revisions were begun June 23rd and finished July 1st, the day of Bob's<sup>95</sup> departure'.

By 10 July the sketches for all three movements were completed. Returning to Klin after having spent some time in Hamburg and St Petersburg Tchaikovsky got down to orchestrating the new concerto. Having already discarded the 'Andante' and finale (see letters to Siloti and Stoyovsky, p.212), this task was soon completed and the finished manuscript was enscribed '3 Oct(ober) 1893. Klin'.

Not surprisingly, Tchaikovsky's earlier reservations concerning the material of the aborted Symphony in E flat developed almost into antipathy during its reconstruction as a concerto. Indeed, at one stage, he expressed the intention (in a letter to Siloti dated 1 August 1893) of destroying it altogether if the opinion of Taneyev, to whom Tchaikovsky intended to show the new concerto, proved to be unfavourable. Knowing that Tchaikovsky was quite capable of following this through - he had done exactly that to the score of his Symphonic Ballad 'Voyevoda' less than two years earlier<sup>96</sup> - Siloti wrote to Tchaikovsky imploring him to reconsider such drastic action:

As you write that the concerto's music is not bad, then it is always possible to create outward brilliance. This will be quite easy to do, so long as the work is not particularly long. (97)

95. Tchaikovsky's nephew, Vladimir Davidov.

96. Coincidentally, it was Siloti who preserved the orchestral parts of the Voyevoda, thus rescuing one of Tchaikovsky's finest symphonic works from oblivion.

97. P.I. Tchaikovsky, Polnoye sobraniye; Sochineniya dlya fortepiannos orchestrom (Moscow, 1948), p.ix.

Siloti's final remark may well have sparked off in Tchaikovsky's mind the idea of jettisoning the 'Andante' and 'Finale' movements, for it is in Tchaikovsky's reply (dated 25 September and quoted on p.212) that this possibility was first put forward.

Regarding the actual process of reconstruction undertaken by Tchaikovsky, it is remarkable how closely he adhered to the Symphony's original material.<sup>98</sup> In fact, the only notable differences (apart from the addition of the piano part) occur in the orchestration - understandably modified to provide material for the soloist - and in the construction of the development's closing section.<sup>99</sup>

Remarkable also, considering its orchestral provenance, is the piano writing itself, which in many respects far surpasses that of the Second Concerto, or for that matter, the Concert Fantasia (discussed on pp.228-41). It must be remembered, of course, that as Tchaikovsky's finest piano music was invariably orchestral in concept, the task of extracting and developing potential keyboard figurations from existing symphonic material - a near insurmountable undertaking for more pianistically orientated composers such as Liszt or Rachmaninov - posed fewer problems than one might have expected. The beautiful second subject, for example, is a case in point. Initially conceived for clarinet with woodwind accompaniment, the theme, though hardly idiomatic, adapts itself admirably to its new medium, particularly from a 'tonal' point of view:

98. Tchaikovsky also retained the original scoring.

99. In the concerto, commencing at bar 235, the soloist embarks on a large-scale cadenza of some 88 bars, whereas in the Symphony the development continues for another twenty bars.

## Ex. 53

The musical score for Ex. 53 is divided into two systems. The top system is labeled '(Orchestra)' and includes a 'Cl. solo' part. The bottom system is labeled '(Piano)'. The tempo is marked 'Meno mosso' and 'Poco meno ed espressivo'. Dynamics include *mf*, *p*, and *etc.*. The score shows various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and triplets.

The third subject, on the other hand, is so amenable to pianistic treatment that commentators have erroneously jumped to the conclusion that it had been composed 'fresh for the concerto'.<sup>100</sup> Certainly Tchaikovsky's skilful toccata-like treatment does little to discourage this view:

## Ex. 54

The musical score for Ex. 54 is a single system. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto vivace'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and various musical notations including slurs and accents.

The symphonic origin of the third subject, however, is verified by Semeon Bogatyryev's reconstruction of the Symphony in E flat, as it faithfully incorporates Tchaikovsky's original orchestration for most of the first movement.<sup>101</sup> Bogatyryev outlined his intentions in the Editor's note to the score:

100. Roger Fiske in Musical Opinion No.62 (1938), Dec., p.209.

101. The manuscript is preserved in the Tchaikovsky Museum in Klin.

Altogether, the Editor's task was, first, to find in the sketches the continuation of the Symphony's first movement, 248 bars of which had been scored by the composer himself, and secondly, to orchestrate the music that had not been orchestrated (the end of the Development Section, the whole of the Recapitulation and the coda - 157 bars in all . . . (102)

What Tchaikovsky composed afresh for the concerto, however, was the cadenza, which neatly slots into place between the orchestral ritornello section of the development and the recapitulation. Indeed, like its counterparts in the First and Second Concertos, it contributes to the 'working-out' of expository material - in this instance, concentrating on the second subject (Ex.53). Despite a certain repetitiveness brought about by an over-indulgence in the sequential treatment of thematic material, accompanying passagework, etc., and a tendency towards emotionally manipulative effects such as 'telescoping' of themes and wave-like dynamics, the Third Concerto's cadenza is a stunning 'tour de force' of virtuosic piano writing, rivalling the First Concerto's principal cadenza from a musical point of view and surpassing it in pianistic effectiveness. It is as if Tchaikovsky had at last stumbled upon a piano style appropriate to his musical needs, for it neither displays the awkwardness of the First Concerto's writing nor the turgidity of the Second's. Some sections are spectacular in their virtuosity. In the 'Allegro vivace' for example, the second subject luxuriates in passagework which fully exploits the extremes of the keyboard:

102. Editor's Note, P. I. Tchaikovsky, Symphony in E flat major (Restored, instrumented and edited by S. Bogatyryev) (Moscow, 1961), p.15.



## Ex. 55

Allegro vivace.

Furthermore, by confining the virtuosic element to a supporting role i.e. as accompanimental material, instead of focusing attention on it in the hope that it might provide enough excitement and variety to sustain the listener's interest, Tchaikovsky avoids the superfluosity that marred much of his earlier concerto writing. Only occasionally in the Third Concerto does the piano writing exhibit the kind of clumsiness which Nikolay Rubinstein criticized (and Dannreuther amended), nearly twenty years earlier in connection with the First Concerto and, interestingly enough, the passages in question are very similar in layout. Compare, for example, the following:

## Ex. 56

(a) First Concerto: first edition.

(b) Third Concerto

(c)  First Concerto:  
first edition.

(d)  Third Concerto

For all its faults, the Third Concerto is nevertheless superior to all Tchaikovsky's other compositions for piano and orchestra with the exception of the First Concerto, which must be considered in a different class altogether. With its three strong melodic ideas (Exx.53 and 54: the first subject can be located in the photostat of the manuscript's title page - see Plate 3.), an exciting well-wrought development and a cadenza of almost unprecedented virtuosity, it represents an undeservedly neglected Russian piano concerto of considerable appeal. Perhaps if Tchaikovsky had succeeded in composing two additional movements of comparable stature - three-movement concertos being always more popular than single movement concertos - then the Third Concerto might have secured a place in the repertoire.

It was this belief, of course, which encouraged Tchaikovsky's protégé Sergey Taneyev (to whom was entrusted the completion of Tchaikovsky's unfinished compositions), to undertake the misguided and thankless task of reconstructing the sketches for the Andante and Finale, which had been handed to him by Modest Tchaikovsky shortly after the composer's death on 25 October 1893. The ever diligent

*Allergo brillante* (♩ = 138) *St. Louis Diemer* *Concerto N. 3* 1. *P. Fiedlermann 71*

*Allergo brillante* (♩ = 138)

*Allergo brillante* (♩ = 138)

*Allergo brillante* (♩ = 138)

Note: Tom Clapham to La Petite Plantation s'en remet au droit de sa sœur la re de P.

Taneyev set about the work without delay, noting, in a letter dated 3 November: 'The "Andante" is delightful, though it is a pity that Peter Ilyich arranged it as a piano work and did not leave it for orchestra.'<sup>103</sup>

Curiously, in the 'progress report' sections of his correspondence with Modest, not once did Taneyev refer to the two movements in terms more specific than 'Konzertstück', 'piano piece' or simply 'piano composition'. Whether his reluctance to attach a label to the work stemmed from a pious belief that his task involved solely the work's reconstruction and nothing else or whether he genuinely intended to reunite the two wayward movements with the published first movement (and thus complete the already titled 'Third Piano Concerto') is not known. However, when the possibility of publication eventually arose, the question of a title for the two movements proved too difficult for the publisher Belyayev and he appealed to Taneyev for suggestions:

I have one or two questions: in view of the fact that the first movement of Peter Ilyich's piano concerto has already been published by Jurgenson, what are we going to call the two unpublished movements? It is hardly convenient to call them the other two movements of the same concerto. But if it is to be a separate work then could it be the 4th concerto in 2 movements or the 2nd Concertstück? You were very close to Peter Ilyich and probably understood his intentions; I hope you won't withhold your ideas on this matter. (104)

After much deliberation, Taneyev decided to name the work, appropriately yet somewhat unimaginatively, 'Andante and Finale' - the titles of the two individual movements. The score was published in 1897.

103. P.I. Tchaikovsky, Polnoye sobraniye; Sochineniya dlya forte-pianno s orchestrom (Moscow, 1948), p.x.

104. Ibid.

Right from the outset, Taneyev's intentions, naturally enough, were to recreate as closely as possible the style of instrumentation Tchaikovsky would have adopted had he continued the work. In order to achieve this, Taneyev scored the finale in the same manner as the already completed first movement (with the addition of cymbals and side-drum to emphasize the martial character of the music) and whittled down the scoring of the 'Andante' to woodwind, horns and strings. Apart from one or two miscalculations, such as the somewhat Rubinsteinesque doubling of the horns and first violins beginning at bar 24 of the Andante, and a predilection generally for inappropriate unison and octave doublings, the instrumentation is, one the whole, admirably carried out. A particularly nice touch is the opening of the central 'Più mosso' section of the 'Andante' - strongly reminiscent, in its use of solo violin, cello and piano, of the corresponding section in the Second Piano Concerto's 'Andante non troppo' movement (which may have been Taneyev's intention: compare Ex.45 with Ex.57):

## Ex. 57

The musical score for Ex. 57 consists of three staves. The top staff is for Piano, marked 'Piano' at the beginning. The middle staff is for Violin, marked 'Viol.' and 'Solo'. The bottom staff is for Viola, marked 'Viola'. The score includes dynamic markings: 'Piano', 'Solo', 'molto esp.', and 'poco cresc.'.

Taneyev also incorporated more subtle characteristics of Tchaikovsky's symphonic style; for example thematic material in double octaves in the upper strings; liberal use of horns to enrich the middle registers of the orchestral texture; the introduction of

subsidiary material (usually solo cello) to add variety and interest to the recapitulation of a principal subject etc. Skilful though Taneyev's instrumentation is, however, his efforts did little to disguise the appalling triviality of much of the material he was working with. For example, the Andante and in particular, the Finale, are characterized by long stretches of unremitting diatonic harmony over tonic pedals, contrived counterpoint, rambling passages of pseudo-developmental intent (particularly in the coda of the finale) and, worst of all, melodies of truly astonishing banality:

## Ex. 58

a. 1st Episode



b. 2nd Episode



Unfortunately, Tchaikovsky's dull and somewhat perfunctory piano writing does little to disguise the poverty of invention - on the contrary, it tends to underline the inferior quality of the music it attempts to support (Ex.64 is a particularly illustrative example). Furthermore, not only is the solo writing predominantly superfluous - which is damning enough - it does not even offer the secondary attraction of virtuosity (apart from, perhaps, the opening theme of the finale - a curious blend of Brahms and Schumann spiced with chromatic figurations derived from Liszt). Obviously, Tchaikovsky, recognizing the futility of pianistically elaborating a work which he rightly acknowledged to be inferior, decided that Siloti's suggestion

of adding 'outward brilliance',<sup>105</sup> was not worth the effort. In any case, disenchantment and apathy set in long before the work had been completed, judging from the apparently unfinished soloist's part in the coda of the Andante:

## Ex. 59



Clearly Taneyev thought differently about the possibilities of revitalizing the existing piano part, for after giving the first performance of the 'Andante and Finale' in St Petersburg on 8 February 1896, he subsequently set to work re-composing much of the solo writing of the 'Andante' (the Finale is left unchanged, apart from some seventeen bars in the first episode: see Ex.64), completing it in time for a performance on 17 October 1898 at one of Belyayev's 'Russian' concerts (conducted by Rimsky-Korsakov). Two weeks earlier, Taneyev wrote to Modest Tchaikovsky informing him of the forthcoming concert and of his new version of the work:

I am playing the Andante and Finale and hope that you will be able to come and hear it. I have made a revision of the piano part and it seems to me to be effective. It preserves everything composed by Peter Ilyich, but also shows off the pianist to greater advantage, and I think perhaps the concerto will be more successful in this form. (106)

105. See letter quoted on p.214.

106. Quoted in P. I. Tchaikovsky, Polnoye sobraniye: Sochineniya dlya fortepianno s orchestrom (Moscow, 1948), p.xi.

In the short term Taneyev was accurate in his prediction, for the performance was indeed a considerable success (as he proudly informed Modest towards the end of October). However, contemporary performances of Taneyev's version are few and far between though in the Soviet Union it has been occasionally given by L. Lukomsky and A. Jokhelyes (both professors of the *Moscow Conservatory of Music*).

At first glance, Taneyev's revisions - which involve some eighty bars of the 'Andante' and seventeen in the 'Finale' - suggest a fairly conventional virtuosic reappraisal of Tchaikovsky's somewhat awkward and ineffectual piano writing; and indeed, this is the case for the first half dozen or so bars from bar 37 where Taneyev's 'Ossia' comes into effect:

Ex. 60

The musical score for Ex. 60 is presented in two systems. The upper system, labeled 'Taneyev', shows a piano solo in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a bracketed 'Ossia' marking. The lower system, labeled 'Tchaikovsky', shows piano accompaniment in the bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It includes a 'p' (piano) marking and a 'poco cresc.' (poco crescendo) marking. The two systems are aligned bar-by-bar for comparison.

On closer examination, however, one discovers that a great deal of Taneyev's revised piano solo - apart from incorporating Tchaikovsky's original figurations (modified and extenuated to produce a more satisfactory effect), also embraces a considerable amount of thematic material formerly and exclusively assigned to the orchestra (see



Ex.61).<sup>107</sup> It could be argued, of course, that Taneyev has merely replaced the superfluous with the superabundant. On the other hand, whatever Taneyev was capable of devising, it could hardly be considered inferior to the often paltry token of a piano part provided by Tchaikovsky:

Ex. 61

The musical score for Ex. 61 is presented in three systems. The top system, labeled 'Taneyev', shows a piano part with a complex texture of sixteenth notes and rests, marked 'cresc.'. The middle system, labeled 'Tchaikovsky', shows a piano part with a more traditional arpeggiated texture in the left hand, marked with '6'. The bottom system, labeled 'Cnd.', shows a piano part with a more traditional accompaniment. The score is divided into two measures by a vertical dashed line.

Not that Taneyev was invariably justified in implementing his quite often drastic revisions, nor, for that matter, was he always entirely successful. It is questionable, for example, whether his arpeggiated arrangement of the left hand of Tchaikovsky's piano part from bar 69 represents an improvement. On the contrary, it could be considered that Tchaikovsky's treatment, though less grateful and effective from a pianistic point of view, is more appropriate within the context of a concerto-style work:

107. The comparatively complex texture that results is characteristic of Taneyev's own compositions at the time and reflects his growing preoccupation, during the 1890s, with counterpoint (both 'strict' and 'free').

## Ex. 62

The image shows a musical score for Ex. 62, comparing two versions of a piano passage. The top system, labeled 'Taneyev', features a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a supporting accompaniment. The marking '[pp]' is present in the first measure. The bottom system, labeled 'Tchaikovsky', shows a similar but more complex piano texture. The marking 'f espr' is present in the first measure. Vertical dashed lines separate the two systems into three measures for comparison.

It must be emphasized, however, that these are very much isolated occurrences. In any case, much to Taneyev's credit, when confronted with a genuinely fine passage of Tchaikovskian piano writing (an even rarer occurrence!) he had the sense to leave well alone:

## Ex. 63

The image shows a musical score for Ex. 63, consisting of a single system with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The top staff has a melodic line with a slur over it, marked 'a tempo' and 'f espr.'. The bottom staff has a chordal accompaniment. The marking 'dim' is above the final measure, and 'mv' is at the end of the system.

At this point in the score, Taneyev's revisions come to an abrupt halt and are not resumed until bar 47 of the Finale. Considering the large amount of recapitulated piano writing still to follow, Taneyev's decision not to continue further is curious to say the least. Even more perplexing is his indifference to the apparently unfinished piano part in the Andante's coda section (see Ex.59).

Despite there being plenty of scope for improvement elsewhere in the movement, Taneyev chose to confine his alterations in the Finale

to the 'twiddling little figures'<sup>108</sup> (to quote Eric Blom) which accompany the second episode's principal theme. Again, as in the Andante, he manages to preserve 'everything composed by Peter Ilyich' (or nearly everything), and at the same time, provides a decorated version of thematic material originally found only in the orchestra:

Ex. 64

Whether Taneyev was musically successful in his virtuosic reappraisal of Tchaikovsky's piano writing, or whether he had merely compounded

108. Eric Blom, 'Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra', in *Tchaikovsky: a Symposium*, ed. Gerald Abraham (London, 1945) p.67. Blom seems to show some confusion here, for apart from attributing these 'twiddling little figures' to either Tchaikovsky or Taneyev, stating that they are 'nothing for either of them to be proud of, or for the player to enjoy, for they have not even the attraction of difficulty' (suggesting that he was unaware of Taneyev's version which, whatever one thinks of from a musical point of view, undeniably provides the soloist with a part which is both technically attractive and rewarding to play; see Ex. 64), Blom nevertheless mentions the 'great deal of pianistic embroidery' of the Andante, the keyboard writing of which, he considers, 'shows how intimately Taneyev understood the peculiar Tchaikovskian way of pianistic treatment . . .' The only conclusion one can reach therefore is that Blom, although acquainted with Taneyev's version, somehow failed to notice the seventeen bar 'ossia' in the finale.

his original folly (i.e. his orchestration of the Andante and Finale) by drawing attention to the work's underlying weaknesses is a matter of taste. Indeed, the whole issue of whether the elaboration of material which is fundamentally inferior in the first place represents a valid contribution to music can only be assessed in purely subjective terms: tot homines, tot sententiae. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to condemn Taneyev's efforts too severely for, at worst, he merely amplified some of the more glaring defects in a piano part which, it must be remembered, was never intended for publication anyway, and at best, marginally improved, from a performing point of view at least, a composition which is generally considered best forgotten.

Like the Third Piano Concerto Op.75, the Concert Fantasia in G, Op.56 was constructed around material originally intended for another work but rejected on grounds of unsuitability or inferior quality. However, whereas the Third Concerto emerged, albeit half-heartedly, from the sketches of what was to be a seventh symphony (see p.213), the idea for the Concert Fantasia (to be more precise, for a piano concerto - the idea for a two-movement work for piano and orchestra entitled 'Concert Fantasia' came later), was conceived some three days prior to that of the parent work from which material was to be extracted, i.e. the Third Orchestral Suite in G, Op.55. This is evident from two entries Tchaikovsky made in his diaries for 1884:

Hit upon an idea for a piano concerto, but it turned out too weak and not original. (109) (13 April)

Three days later he wrote:

109. Quoted in The Diaries of Tchaikovsky (trans. Vladimir Lakond) (New York, 1973), pp.23-4. (Original source: Dnevnik P. I. Tchaikovskovo (Diaries) (Moscow/Petrograd, 1923), p.12.)

I've tried to lay the foundation of a new symphony . . . As I strolled in the garden it was not a future symphony but a suite which germinated in my mind. (110)

It would be wrong, however, to assume as some commentators have suggested, that the idea 'hit upon' by Tchaikovsky on 13 April was 'subsequently re-worked' and incorporated into the Concert Fantasia,<sup>111</sup> for it is apparent from another diary entry, written one month later (11 May), that Tchaikovsky was still preoccupied with the original concept of the Third Suite's first movement (on which the second movement 'Contrasts' of the Concert Fantasia was eventually to be based), and had, to all intents and purposes, forgotten about his earlier idea for a concerto:

The first movement of the Suite, called Contrasts, and its themes

Ex. 65



have become so repugnant to me that, after spending the whole day on it, I decided to discard it and write something else entirely different. (112)

The following day, however, Tchaikovsky returned to 'Contrasts' - evidently his characteristic thrift regarding time and material momentarily overrode his growing antipathy for the work - and mercifully found a solution to his problems:

After tea I began to busy myself again with the repugnant 'Contrasts', suddenly a new idea flashed into my mind and the work improved. (113)

110. Edward Garden, Tchaikovsky (London, 1976), p.105.

111. Editorial footnote (by Vladimir Lakond) in The Diaries of Tchaikovsky (New York, 1973), p.24.

112. *Ibid.*, pp.33-4. (Original source: Dnevnik P. I. Tchaikovskovo (Diaries) (Moscow/Petrograd, 1923), p.20.)

113. Loc. cit., p.34 (Lakond), p.21 (Dnevnik).

Precisely what this new idea was is not known. However, since just one month later Tchaikovsky informed Mme. von Meck (in a letter dated 16 June) that as well as the Suite, he had also begun a piano concerto,<sup>114</sup> it seems reasonable to assume that the new idea concerned the transformation of the 'repugnant' 'Contrasts' into something more agreeable to him, i.e. a movement of a piano concerto.

During the following two weeks Tchaikovsky gradually formulated the overall design of his new work and in a letter to Taneyev dated 30 June, outlined his intention to construct it in two movements only.<sup>115</sup> Although work on the Concert Fantasia proceeded fairly rapidly (it was finished, according to a letter to Mme. von Meck, on 15 August and the orchestration was completed on 24 September) there were several factors which prevented Tchaikovsky from devoting his full attention to its composition. Apart from anxiety over his sister Alexandra's health, Tchaikovsky was deeply concerned about his violinist friend Joseph Kotek, who was suffering from tuberculosis and who eventually died later that year in Switzerland. In addition to these personal worries, Tchaikovsky was eager to finish the Third Orchestral Suite, which necessitated composing a new movement to replace 'Contrasts'. Tchaikovsky decided on an 'Elegy' and the Suite was finished in July 1884.

After resuming work on the Concert Fantasia, Tchaikovsky wrote to Mme. von Meck on 14 July informing her of its progress.<sup>116</sup> He also deliberated at great length on the merits and eligibility of various pianists he had in mind for the first performance of the new work:

114. Perepiska s N. F. von Meck, III (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6), p.285.

115. P. I. Tchaikovsky, S. I. Taneyev, Pisma (Moscow, 1951), p.108.

116. Curiously, in his correspondence with Mme. von Meck, Tchaikovsky persisted in referring to the new work as a 'piano concerto'.

I want to finish the piano concerto, which I wrote to you about, this autumn or winter. Of course I can no longer hope for an ideal performer such as N. G. Rubinstein - of whom I always thought when conceiving a concerto. There is, however, a pianist - a certain young man called D'Albert who came to Moscow last winter and whom I have heard many times in concerts and private houses. In my opinion this brilliant pianist is the true heir to Rubinstein. Taneyev (whom I place very highly as a musician-theorist, composer and teacher) is, of course, a suitable performer as far as I'm concerned, though he is not a virtuoso. In regard to Siloti, between you and me, it seems to me (though perhaps I am mistaken) that he is just a somewhat puffed-up local celebrity. Not that his playing is without external brilliance and power in a material sense of the word, just that he didn't make a serious impression on me . . . Perhaps this is because he is still very young . . .(117)

Despite Tchaikovsky's reservations towards Taneyev's playing (which to an observer appear somewhat ungrateful and unwarranted considering the apparently superb performances Taneyev had already given of Tchaikovsky's First and Second Concertos) it was nevertheless Taneyev to whom Tchaikovsky turned when the possibility of the Concert Fantasia's première arose:

I must play him [Taneyev] the newly completed concerto which he will perform for the Musical Society. He will start learning it straight away. (118)

The first performance took place in Moscow - with Taneyev as soloist - on 22 February 1885 under the direction of Max von Erdmannsdorfer as part of the tenth symphonic meeting of the Russian Musical Society.<sup>119</sup> Tchaikovsky, who was present, wrote in glowing terms of Taneyev's playing, and the performance as a whole:

I heard a splendid performance of my fantasia given by Taneyev with the orchestra, and I am very pleased. It was a great success with the audience - more so than the Suite. (120)

117. Perepiska s N. F. von Meck, III (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6), p.289.

118. Ibid., p.307.

119. Taneyev also gave the St Petersburg première of the Concert Fantasia - on 5 April 1886, conducted by Hans von Bülow.

120. Perepiska s P. I. Jurgenson, II (Moscow, 1952), p.28.

When the subject of the Concert Fantasia's dedication arose, however, Taneyev, despite his loyalty and tireless efforts on behalf of Tchaikovsky's music, was once again passed by (as he had been for the First and Second Piano Concertos), and the dedication inscribed on the published two-piano arrangement, which was brought out in December 1884, was given instead to Anna Esipova, pupil and, later, second wife of Leschetizky. Esipova's failure to play the work in public, however, resulted in Tchaikovsky changing the dedication when the Concert Fantasia's full score was published in 1893. The new dedicatée, Sophie Menter, a Bavarian pianist at that time on the staff of the St Petersburg Conservatory, proved to be a wiser choice, for she played it frequently and with great success. In the original manuscript, however, no dedication is given.

Because of the feminine nature of these dedications the Concert Fantasia was dubbed the 'Damen-Konzert' in Germany. Considering the prodigious difficulties of the soloist's part, which in places surpass anything Tchaikovsky had hitherto written, this can only testify to the immense technical competence of the two ladies concerned. Generally speaking, the Concert Fantasia's piano writing suggests a further reappraisal of the soloist's role in relation to the orchestra, for whereas in the First and Second Concertos the feeling is predominantly one of confrontation, in the Concert Fantasia it is more one of collaboration, with the piano either assuming a purely decorative role, or joining forces with the orchestra in the presentation of material. An important development of this shift in emphasis is the perceptibly lighter texture of piano writing in passages where piano and orchestra are



together:<sup>121</sup>

Ex. 66

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is for the piano, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a dynamic marking of *p* and a tempo marking of *leggerissimo*. The bottom staff is for the violin, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It begins with a dynamic marking of *pp*. Both staves contain complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and are marked with various dynamics and articulations. The score ends with a double bar line and a final chord.

Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky, as if anxious to compensate for the comparative economy of piano writing in the outer sections of the Concert Fantasia's opening movement, provides this movement with a central cadenza-style 'Solo' of unprecedented length, virtuosity and magniloquence. Apart from the welcome entry of what appears to be a new melody but is, on closer examination, merely a thematic lead into the principal subject (a function similar to the third subject of the Second Piano Concerto's opening movement), the 'Solo' is practically monothematic in design and depends to a very great extent on the virtuosic possibilities inherent in the theme to sustain interest. However, being deficient in the kind of pianistic imagination and insight which enabled Balakirev, for example, to manipulate and transform thematic material into almost entirely new and interesting configurations (as in, for example, the Oriental Fantasy, Islamey),

121. According to Roger Fiske (Musical Opinion, No.62, 1938, Nov., p.114) this lightening of texture may have resulted from the withdrawal of Nikolay Rubinstein's influence following his death in 1881.

Tchaikovsky merely paraded his scarcely altered theme in a series of virtuoso guises, hoping that sufficient contrast might be generated between sections to maintain the listener's attention:

## Ex. 67

The image displays three sections of a musical score, labeled a), b), and c).  
 Section a) is a short passage in treble and bass clefs, marked with a forte-fortissimo (*fff*) dynamic. It features a complex, rapid melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.  
 Section b) is a longer passage, also in treble and bass clefs, marked with a tempo of *(d=d)*. It includes the instruction *poco e molto espress.* and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a highly decorative, arpeggiated melody, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment.  
 Section c) is a final passage in treble and bass clefs, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and marked with a crescendo (*cresc.*). The right hand continues with a similar arpeggiated texture, and the left hand has a more active accompaniment.

Although credit must be given to Tchaikovsky for devising pianistic figurations and textures which by themselves are interesting and varied enough for such a purpose, the theme itself, being a somewhat four-square diatonic affair without much in the way of either harmonic or thematic potential, significantly weakens the musical credibility of the passagework. Furthermore, as it resembles, whether intentionally or otherwise, the already sufficiently exposed first subject of the first movement (see Ex.72), a feeling of monotony soon pervades the 'Solo' despite the keyboard pyrotechnics which illuminate the proceedings.

As far as the piano writing itself is concerned, apart from drawing upon his own somewhat limited reserve of patterns, figurations etc. (of which Ex.67a and c are perhaps most typical), Tchaikovsky also borrowed ideas from Liszt, not only for the 'Solo's' purely bravura passages, but also for two sections of more poetic intent; the recitative-style link passage characterized by a series of descending arpeggiated diminished seventh chords reminiscent of the corresponding section of Liszt's Transcendental Study Mazeppa, and the quasi-impressionistic closing section of the 'Solo' (designated 'Andante molto sostenuto'), possibly inspired by another Transcendental Study by Liszt, the remarkably prescient Harmonies du Soir:

## Ex. 68

(a)  Tchaikovsky

(b)  Liszt

Elsewhere, however, Tchaikovsky's piano writing is, on the whole, fairly conventional and contributes nothing significant or unusual to the genre.

From a structural point of view, on the other hand, the Concert Fantasia is highly unconventional and offers some interesting solutions to familiar problems. It would be a mistake, however, to

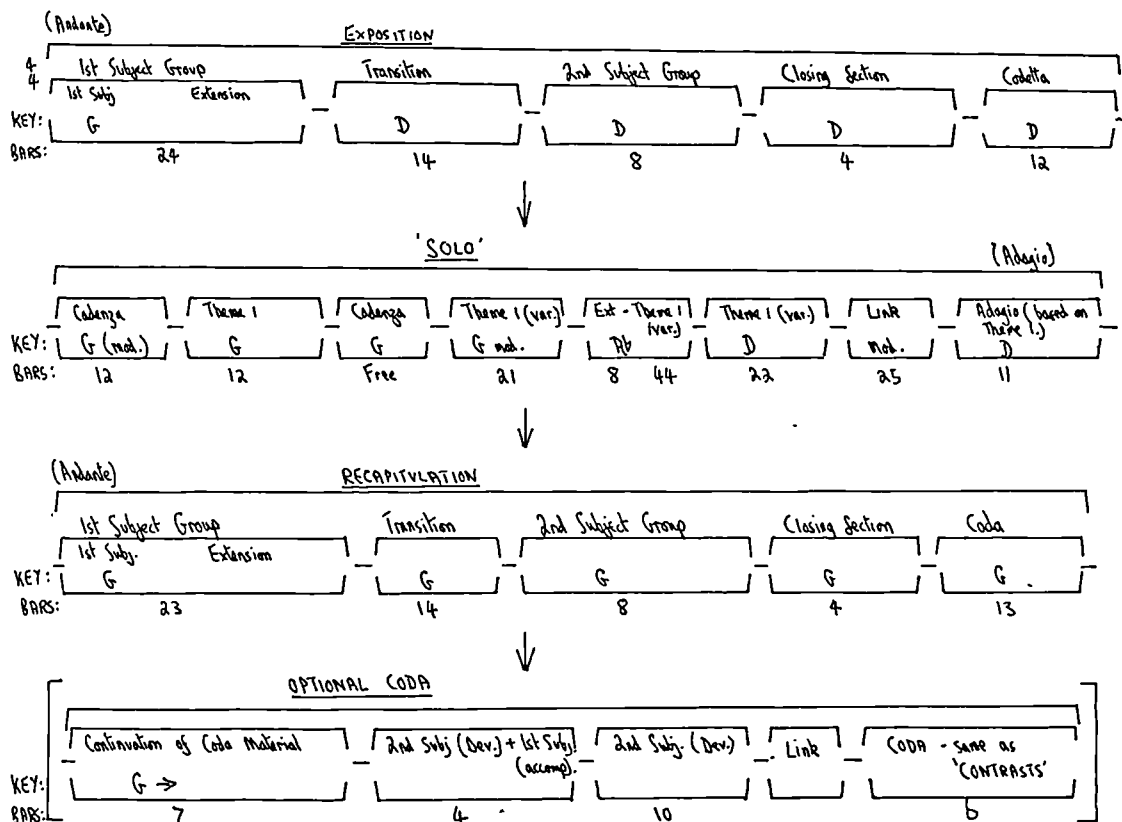
assume that these were undertaken in a spirit of fervent experimentalism, for unlike Liszt (to whom the development of new forms was an integral part of his musical creativity), Tchaikovsky would adopt an unfamiliar structure, or radically alter an existing one as a means of avoiding what could be potentially troublesome. His decision to construct the Concert Fantasia in two movements for example, was not brought about by a desire to be radical or experimental, but rather by a realization of the advantages to be gained in preserving the transplanted 'Contrasts' in its original single-movement format.<sup>122</sup>

Considering that the second movement 'Contrasts' is substantially endowed with slow, lyrical sections (which would naturally prohibit or at least render superfluous the inclusion of an additional, i.e. 'slow' movement), and also adequately fulfils the important musical function of generating contrast (as its title indicates), then Tchaikovsky's strategy of providing a single-movement alternative to the more conventional slow and 'finale' movements in a traditional tripartite concerto is successful and, on the whole, skilfully undertaken.

The most striking structural innovation, as far as the individual movements are concerned, is the complete omission of their development sections (both movements are in 'abridged' or 'altered' sonata form). In the first movement, somewhat misleadingly entitled 'Quasi Rondo' ('Quasi Sonata' would have been more appropriate), Tchaikovsky neatly side-steps the thorny problems involved in the 'working-out' of exposition material in a concerto development

122. Roger Fiske (in Musical Opinion No.62, 1938, Oct.-Dec.) believes that in its present form 'the movement could hardly have been designed to begin the work. Perhaps the sketch was for the Andante section only' (p.114). However, the fact that the themes for both the 'Andante' and the 'Molto vivace' sections were quoted in Tchaikovsky's diaries suggests otherwise (see Ex.65).

situation by inserting in its place the 'Solo' (discussed on pp.233-35) based on new material. As the following analysis illustrates, this 'cuckoo in the nest', being considerably larger than the unrelated 'parent' sections which support it, threatens the stability of the somewhat flimsy textbook-orientated sonata structure which forms the basis of the movement:



In the structurally more complex second movement entitled 'Contrasts', Tchaikovsky does not even trouble himself to fill the void left by the development's omission. Instead, the closing section of the exposition and the first subject of the recapitulation are juxtaposed without any formal link whatsoever. Recognizing the need for some kind of musical development, however, even if it is only token or ersatz, Tchaikovsky neatly combines, with a slight

modification to the mode of the quicker theme, the first and second subjects when the latter makes its appearance in the recapitulation:

## Ex. 69

The musical score for Ex. 69 is titled 'Più mosso.' and is marked with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. It consists of four staves. The top staff is for Violins (1. Vi. and 2. Vi.), the second for Violas (1. Cl. and 2. Bas.), the third for Tambourin, and the fourth for Quartet. The music is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accents, and slurs, indicating a complex and intricate piece of music.

Despite the superficial attraction of such a procedure it is not without its drawbacks. As Eric Blom points out:

As an achievement in neat thematic telescoping this piece may indeed be regarded as a 'locus classicus'. The only fault one may perhaps find with it, considered as such a feat, is that the quick theme is in itself rather wanting in spontaneity. One has the feeling that it may have been adjusted to fit in with the slow one by trial and error before work on the composition began in real earnest. (123)

A hint that Tchaikovsky intended to treat his thematic material in such a manner can be found earlier in the movement, for in the exposition's 'Più mosso, quasi moderato assai' link passage between the first and second subjects, the two themes are 'dovetailed' (i.e. fragments of them are alternated - they are not, as yet, heard together), with four bars of the quicker tempo (in  $\frac{2}{4}$  time) set against one of the 'Andante' (in  $\frac{4}{2}$  time).

123. Eric Blom, 'Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra', in Tchaikovsky: a Symposium, ed. Gerald Abraham (London, 1945), pp.62-3.

## Ex. 70

Ex. 70 is a musical score for piano and orchestra. The piano part is written in treble and bass clefs. The orchestral part includes strings (Violins 1 & 2, Violas, Cellos, Double Basses), woodwinds (2 Clarinets, Bassoons, Flute), and Percussion (Tambourine). The score features overlapping melodic lines and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *ff*. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a triplet of sixteenth notes. The orchestral part includes a staccato quaver accompaniment in the woodwinds and a staccato quaver accompaniment in the strings.

In addition, in the closing bars of this section Tchaikovsky takes the overlapping process one stage further by providing the final phrase of the 'Andante' first subject with a staccato quaver woodwind accompaniment which immediately becomes the 'ostinato' figure on which the second subject is founded:

## Ex. 71

Ex. 71 is a musical score for piano and orchestra. The piano part is written in treble and bass clefs. The orchestral part includes strings (Violins, Violas, Cellos, Double Basses), woodwinds (Clarinet in Bass), and Percussion (Tambourine). The score features overlapping melodic lines and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *p*. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a triplet of sixteenth notes. The orchestral part includes a staccato quaver accompaniment in the woodwinds and a staccato quaver accompaniment in the strings. The tempo is marked *Molto vivace (d = d)* and *giocoso*. The piano part is marked *a tempo*.

The whole process, in fact, is similar to the overlapping of themes employed by Tchaikovsky in the corresponding section of the First Piano Concerto's opening movement (see page 178, Ex.23) and is a further example of his ingenuity in finding acceptable solutions to awkward formal problems (in this case, the transition from first to second subjects).

Although structurally the Concert Fantasia is moderately successful in presenting its constituent material and is, according to John Warrack, 'an original method of developing ideas within the demands of piano virtuosity and orchestral accompaniment',<sup>124</sup> it is perhaps the ideas themselves which have prevented the work from achieving wider popularity. Not that its principal thematic material is especially dull or inferior, as it undoubtedly is in the 'Andante and Finale' and to a lesser extent in the Second Piano Concerto, merely that it lacks the essential element of lyrical spontaneity of the kind which pervades, for example, the thematic material of the First Concerto. As has already been noted, the First Concerto's themes sprang, as it were, from one single, phenomenal burst of inspiration and as such display motivic similarities which, intentionally or not, subtly enhance the overall unity of the work. Though unity, albeit on a much smaller scale, is achieved by the Concert Fantasia's themes, the comparatively poor quality of the material also induces an underlying feeling of monotony:

124. John Warrack, Tchaikovsky, Symphonies and Concertos (B.B.C. Music Guides) (London, 1977), p.48.



## Ex. 72

The image displays two musical staves side-by-side. The left staff is titled 'QUASI RONDO' and contains three staves of music. The top staff is labeled '1ST SUBJECT', the middle 'SOLO: PRINCIPAL THEME', and the bottom 'CONTRASTS: CODA THEME'. The right staff is titled 'CONTRASTS' and contains three staves of music. The top staff is labeled '1ST SUBJECT', the middle 'SUBSIDIARY THEME', and the bottom 'THIRD SUBJECT'. Vertical dashed lines connect corresponding notes and phrases between the two movements, illustrating thematic material shared between them.

Tchaikovsky was acutely aware of the deficiencies of his new work for he took the novel and unprecedented step of furnishing the 'Quasi Rondo' with an optional coda of considerable virtuosity in case the performer wished to jettison 'Contrasts' and play the first movement on its own. However, although this appendix is both a competent development of the tuneful second subject and an effective applause-raiser, it would be unwise to recommend its execution irrespective of whether 'Contrasts' is incorporated or not, as one commentator has suggested<sup>125</sup>; for Tchaikovsky characteristically filched its final six bars from the coda to the 'Contrasts' movement. To conclude both movements, therefore, with identical material would only promote confusion in the listener and, besides, could on no account be considered musically acceptable.

125. Roger Fiske, in Musical Opinion, No.62 (1938), Nov., p.115, states: '. . . there seems no reason why the pianist should not play it in any case.'

## Bibliography

In Russian

- Alexeyev, A.D., Russkaya fortepiannaya muzyka (Moscow, 1963).
- Alexeyev, A.D., Russkaya fortepiannaya muzyka konets xix-nachala xx veka (Moscow, 1969).
- Al'shvang, A.A., P. I. Tchaikovsky (Moscow, 1959).
- Asafeyev, Boris, Russkaya muzyka ot nachala xix stoletiya (Moscow, 1930).
- Baremboim, L.A., Anton Grigorevich Rubinstein, 2 vols (Leningrad, 1957).
- Cui, Cesar, Izbranniye stati (Leningrad, 1952).
- Druzin, M.S. and Keldysh, Y.V., Orcherki po istorii Russkoi Muzyki 1790-1825 (Leningrad, 1956).
- Findeisen, Nikolay, Anton Grigorevich Rubinstein, ocherk evo zhizni i muzykalnoi (Moscow, 1907).
- Karenin, Vladimir (ed.), Perepiska M.A. Balakireva s V.V. Stasovym, vol.1 (Moscow, 1935).
- Keldysh, Yury, Istoriya russkoy muzyki, 3 vols (Moscow, 1947-54).
- Kunin, N., N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov (Moscow, 1974).
- Kuznetsova, K.A. (ed.), Istoriya russkoy muzyki b isyedovaniakh i materialakh (Moscow, 1924).
- Lyapunova, A., 'Iz Istory tvorchestvikh svyazei M. Balakireva i S. Lyapunova', in Balakirev, Issledovaniya i stati (Leningrad, 1961).
- Orlova, E., Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (Moscow, 1980).
- Popov, T.V., Russkoye narodnoye muzykal'noy tvorchestvo, vol.1 (Moscow, 1955).

- Rachmaninov, Sergey V., Pisma, ed. Z.A. Apetian (Moscow, 1955).
- Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolay A., Polnoye sobranniye sochineniy, Vol.1:  
Letopsis moyei muzykal'noy zhizni (Moscow, 1963).
- Rubinstein, Anton G., Izbranniye pisma (Moscow, 1954).
- Rubinstein, V.A., Oskolki proshlova (Moscow, ?).
- Scriabin, Nikolay A., Pisma (Moscow, 1965).
- Serov, Alexander, Izbranniye stati, ed. Georgii Khubov (Moscow, 1950-57).
- Serov, Alexander, Kriticheskiy stati vol.1 (Moscow, 1892).
- Shifman, M.E., S. M. Lyapunov: zhizn i tvorchestvo (Moscow, 1960).
- Smirnov, M., Russkaya fortepiannaya muzyka (Moscow, 1983).
- Sorokin, K.S. (ed.), M. Balakirev: Polnoe sobranie sochineny dlya fortepiano, vol.3 (Moscow/Leningrad, 1954).
- Tchaikovsky, I.I. (ed.), Dnevniky P. I. Tchaikovskovo (Moscow/Petrograd, 1923).
- Tchaikovsky, Modest, Zhizn Petra Ilyicha Tchaikovskovo, vol.1 (Moscow, 1900-2).
- Tchaikovsky, Peter Ilyich, Perepiska s P.I. Jurgensonom, vol.1 (Moscow, 1938).
- Tchaikovsky, Peter Ilyich, Perepiska s N.F. von Meck, ed. V.A. Zhdanov and N.T. Zhegin (Moscow/Leningrad, 1934-6).
- Tchaikovsky, P.I. and Taneyev, S.I., Pisma, ed. V.A. Zhdanov (Moscow, 1951).
- Tchaikovsky, Peter Ilyich, Pisma k Blizkim: Izbrannoe, ed. V.A. Zhdanov (Moscow, 1955).
- Tchaikovsky, P.I., Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy II: Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska (Moscow, 1953).
- Tchaikovsky, P.I., Polnoye sobraniye: Sochineniy dlya fortepianno s orchestrom (Moscow, 1955).

Tsuipin, G.M., A.S. Arensky (Moscow, 1966).

Tyulin, Yury, Proizvedeniya Tchaikovsky, structorniy analys (Moscow, 1973).

Yakovlev, V., Dni i Gody P.I. Tchaikovskovo: lepotis zhizni i tvorchestva, compiled by E. Zaidenshnur, V. Kiselev, A. Orlova and N. Shemanin (Moscow/Leningrad, 1940).

In English

Abraham, Gerald, 'Anton Rubinstein: Russian Composer', Slavonic and Romantic Music (London/New York, 1968).

Abraham, Gerald, and Lloyd-Jones, David, Forewords to Eulenberg miniature scores of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concertos Nos 1 and 2.

Bakst, James, A History of Russian-Soviet Music (New York, 1966).

Bertenson, S. and Leyda, J., Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music (New York, 1956, 2/1965).

Blom, Eric, 'Works for Solo Instrument and Orchestra', in Tchaikovsky: a Symposium, ed. Gerald Abraham (London, 1945).

Bowers, Faubion, Scriabin, vol.1 (Tokyo, 1969).

Bowers, Faubion, The New Scriabin (London, 1974).

Brown, David, Tchaikovsky: A Biographical and Critical Study. Vol.1: The Early Years (1840-1874); Vol.2: The Crisis Years (1874-1878) (London, 1978/1982).

Calvocoressi, M.D., Masters of Russian Music (in collaboration with Gerald Abraham) (London, 1936).

Calvocoressi, M.D., Mussorgsky (London, 1946).

Culshaw, John, The Concerto (London, 1949).

Davis, Richard, 'Henselt, Balakirev and the piano', The Music Review, 28 (August, 1967).

- Garden, Edward, Balakirev: a Critical Study of his Life and Music (London, 1967).
- Garden, Edward, Tchaikovsky (London, 1976).
- Garden, Edward, 'Three Russian Piano Concertos', Music and Letters, vol.60 No.2 (1979).
- Garden, Edward, 'A Note on Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto', The Musical Times (April, 1982).
- Garden, Edward, 'Three Nights on Bare Mountain', The Musical Times (July, 1988).
- Hinson, Maurice, Music for Piano and Orchestra (Bloomington, 1981).
- Liszt, Franz, Letters, ed. Constance Bache, vol.1 (London, 1894).
- MacDonald, Hugh, Skryabin (London, 1978).
- Norris, Geoffrey, 'Rakhmaninov's Second Thoughts', The Musical Times xiv (1973).
- Norris, Geoffrey, Rakhmaninov (London, 1978).
- Rachmaninov, Sergey V., 'New Lights on the Art of the Piano', The Etude (April/May 1929).
- Reilly, Edward R., Musorgsky. In Memoriam 1881-1981, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Michigan, 1981).
- Ridenour, Robert C., Nationalism, Modernism, and Personal Rivalry in Nineteenth Century Russian Music (Ann Arbor, 1981).
- Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolay A., My Musical Life (New York, 1942).
- Rubinstein, Anton Grigorevich, Autobiography, supplement compiled by Aline Delano (Boston, 1890).
- Seaman, Gerald, 'The Rise of Russian Piano Music', The Music Review 27 (August, 1966).
- Stasov, Vladimir, Essays on Music (translated by Florence Jonas) (London, 1968).

- Tchaikovsky, Modest, The Life and Letters of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, ed. Rosa Newmarch (London, 1906).
- Tchaikovsky, Peter Ilyich, Diaries (translated by Vladimir Lakond) (New York, 1945).
- Threlfall, Robert, 'Rachmaninoff's Revisions and an Unknown Version of his Fourth Concerto', Musical Opinion (1973).
- Veinus, Abraham, The Concerto (New York, 1964).
- Volkoff, Vladimir, Tchaikovsky: A Self-Portrait (London, 1976).
- Warrack, John, Tchaikovsky (London, 1973).
- Warrack, John, Tchaikovsky: Symphonies and Concertos (BBC Music Guides) (London, 1977).

In German

- Bülow, Hans von, Briefe und Schriften, vol.4 (Leipzig, 1895).
- Butzbach, Fritz, Studien zum Klavierkonzert Nr.1 F# moll Op.1 von S.V. Rachmaninov (Regensburg, 1979).
- Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, vol.2 (Basel, 1963).
- Niebuhr, Ulrich, 'Der Einfluss Anton Rubinsteins auf die Klavierkonzerte Peter Tschaikowskys', Musikforschung, vol.27, No.4 (1974).
- Rubinstein, Anton Grigorevich, Die Musik und ihre Meister, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1892).
- Rubinstein, Anton Grigorevich, Gedankenkorb (Leipzig, 1897).
- Schumann, Robert, Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker, vol.4 (Leipzig, 1854).
- Stengel, Th., Die Entwicklung des Klavierkonzerts von Liszt bis zur Gegenwart (Heidelberg, 1931).