

**PROKOFIEV'S EARLY SOLO PIANO MUSIC:  
CONTEXT, INFLUENCES, FORMS,  
PERFORMANCE**

by

**GARY O'SHEA**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Department of Music  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
The University of Sheffield  
July 2013

## ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns issues of context, influence, form and performance in Serge Prokofiev's early solo piano music and addresses the role of tradition and innovation in the composer's work. Chapter One focuses on the evolution of Prokofiev's style, looking at his search for originality, the discovery of his mature style, and his subsequent aspirations towards simplicity. Chapter Two evaluates the principal influences on Prokofiev and his piano music, including Stravinsky, Debussy and especially Beethoven. Chapter Three assesses Prokofiev's formal processes in his early piano sonatas, discovering how his works were both rooted in and deviated from sonata form tradition. Chapter Four looks at Prokofiev's education and career as a pianist, as well as his interpretations of his own compositions, in order to form a view on how to approach the performance of his works. The chapter finishes with a discussion of recordings of the *Visions fugitives*, tracing the progression of Prokofiev interpretation from pianists active during his lifetime through to contemporary performers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude is expressed to those who have aided me during the conception of this thesis. Most of all, my heartfelt thanks go out to my primary supervisor, Simon Keefe, for his attentive criticism and encouragement. I also owe a great debt to Peter Hill and Nigel Simeone for their continued support throughout.

I would also praise the invaluable help and advice I received from Fiona McKnight in her capacity as Archivist for the Serge Prokofiev Archive at Goldsmiths, London. Her expertise and enthusiasm for the life and work of Prokofiev was indispensable, as was her vast knowledge of research sources on the composer.

On a personal level, thanks must also go to my family and friends, whose love and care has helped carry me through this process. I am especially grateful to my parents both for their humanity and generosity.

# LIST OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Contents	iii
Introduction	iv
Chapter One: The Piano Works in Context	1
Early Compositions	1
1908: From Traditionalist to Innovator	4
A 'Dictionary of Idioms'	12
The Search for Simplicity	19
Chapter Two: Influences on Prokofiev's Piano Works	33
Prokofiev's Interest in Beethoven's Life and Works	34
Musical Quotations: Beethoven and Beyond	38
Beethoven's Influences on the Piano Sonatas	46
Prokofiev and Stravinsky	52
Other Influences: Musical and Literary	61
Chapter Three: Form in the Early Piano Sonatas	67
Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 1 (1907/9)	68
Piano Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 28 (1907/17)	72
Piano Sonata No. 4 in C Minor, Op. 29 (1908/17)	76
Piano Sonata No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 14 (1912)	83
Piano Sonata No. 5 in C Major, Op. 38 (1923)	92
Conclusion	100
Chapter Four: Prokofiev in Performance	103
Early Education	103
Concert Repertoire and Reception	107
Prokofiev's Playing	113
Interpreting Prokofiev	117
Prokofiev Interpreted	125
Epilogue	138
Appendix A: Manuscript Images	141
Appendix B: Concert Programmes	144
Appendix C: Selection of Prokofiev's Performances	145
Bibliography	155

## INTRODUCTION

Into the twenty-first century, Serge Prokofiev's music has enjoyed ever-increasing success, not just with concert audiences, but also commercially, forming the themes of numerous television shows, advertisements, and popular songs.<sup>1</sup> Scholarship has lagged behind, but it is now picking up thanks in part to the formation of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation, which was established by the composer's first wife Lina in 1983. An archive has been set up in the composer's name at Goldsmiths College, University of London, boasting a huge collection of primary and secondary source material, and thus stimulating in-depth research into the composer. David Nice, for example, has recently made use of these materials in his thorough study of Prokofiev's life and music in the West.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, various archives in Russia have been opened up to Western researchers, most recently allowing Simon Morrison to produce a vivid account of Prokofiev's Soviet years.<sup>3</sup>

As the composer's popularity has increased among concertgoers, so too has the literature on specific works. The symphonies, for example, have been set firmly in the context of Prokofiev's life and evolving musical style in a vast study by Malcolm Brown.<sup>4</sup> More recently, Stephen Press has transferred this scholarly approach to the composer's work for the Ballets Russes.<sup>5</sup> The piano works have been the focus of two studies: Stephen Fiess's *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev*, and *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas* by Boris Berman.<sup>6</sup> Fiess's book covers the composer's stylistic elements, as well as providing pedagogical information and brief historical detail. The extensive range of works discussed – Fiess makes reference to all of Prokofiev's piano works in one way or another – prevents thorough contextual and musical analysis. Boris Berman addresses this problem by studying only the sonatas, making passing references to other works in his evaluation of Prokofiev's career as a pianist. What is missing from both

---

<sup>1</sup> Ivana Medic, 'Prokofiev's reception in Western Popular music', *Three Oranges Journal*, November 2009, 17. Prokofiev's son was apparently 'amused' when he discovered Sunderland Football Club had adopted music from *Romeo and Juliet* as their entrance music. Frances Prokofiev, 'Oleg Prokofiev: Traces Left Behind', *Three Oranges Journal*, January 2001.

<sup>2</sup> David Nice, *Prokofiev, A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891–1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Simon Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (New York: OUP, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Brown, 'The Symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev' (Ph. D. diss., Florida State University, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Press, *Prokofiev's Ballets for Diaghilev* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Stephen C. E. Fiess, *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1994); Boris Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008).

studies is scrutiny of issues surrounding the works, arising from stylistic questions posed by scholarship both on the composer and on twentieth-century music in general.

The present study offers a contextual approach to the composer's piano works in relation to his overall stylistic development. The first chapter focuses on the evolution of Prokofiev's style, looking at his search for originality, the discovery of his mature style, and his subsequent aspirations towards simplicity. The section 'Traditionalist to Innovator' draws upon unpublished manuscript sources at the Prokofiev Archive, most of which have hitherto escaped scholarly scrutiny, in order to examine when and why Prokofiev actively began his path to originality. The following section, 'A Dictionary of Idioms', looks at the style itself in relation to an article appearing in the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1922 that hints at Prokofiev's creation of a compositional manifesto through ten years of 'research.'<sup>7</sup> What did this 'research' comprise, what were its results, and most importantly, how did it affect Prokofiev's compositions? The final section takes as its point of departure existing arguments about Prokofiev's turn to simplicity. When did the simplification process take place, and what were its stylistic consequences? To answer these questions, I examine the compositional language of the Fifth Piano Sonata.

The second chapter addresses the principal influences on Prokofiev and his piano music, including Stravinsky, Debussy and especially Beethoven. The impact of certain literature on Prokofiev is discussed, such as Romain Rolland's book *Beethoven the Creator* in relation to the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth piano sonatas.<sup>8</sup> The connection to Rolland's book was revealed by Mira in a reminiscence, and has been partially explored by Simon Morrison in *The People's Artist*. But the book's impact on the sonatas, particularly the Seventh, has yet to be systematically investigated.<sup>9</sup> Nestyev, for example, mentions Prokofiev's reference to the opening motif of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but misses its musical significance – as a recurring motif throughout all three sonatas – as well as its biographical significance.<sup>10</sup> The so-called fate motif is not the only Beethoven reference point in the Seventh sonata, as the work also shares thematic similarities with the 'Appassionata' (as detailed by Rolland). I also set

---

<sup>7</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 1922.

<sup>8</sup> Romain Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator* (New York: Garden City, 1937).

<sup>9</sup> Semyon Shlifstein (ed.) (tr. Rose Prokofieva), *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 188; Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*, 162.

<sup>10</sup> Israel Nestyev, *Prokofiev* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1961), 336.

Stravinsky's controversial friendship with Prokofiev in musical context in this chapter, situating the techniques of *Sarcasms* and the Fifth Piano Sonata in the context of Stravinsky's early ballets. To conclude, I investigate the influences of philosophy and religion on Prokofiev's music with reference to the piano work *Choses en soi*.

The third chapter assesses Prokofiev's formal processes in his early piano sonatas. Several themes from the preceding chapters are revisited, including Prokofiev's relationships to earlier traditions and his stylistic development. To what extent are his works rooted in sonata form tradition, as opposed to deviating from it? How do his approaches relate to his stylistic progression? Boris Berman's book on the piano sonatas provides basic structural information, but my chapter goes considerably further, grounding discussion of sonata form in the work of experts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music such as Donald Tovey, Charles Rosen, and William Caplin.<sup>11</sup> Given Prokofiev's obsession with musical procedures from the classical period, my approach will help to contextualize the musical qualities displayed in his piano sonatas.

Finally, the chapter 'Prokofiev in Performance' discusses Prokofiev's abilities as a pianist. The first section addresses the composer's early education, from his study under his first teachers, his mother and Reinhold Glière, through to his tuition at the St Petersburg Conservatoire with the professors Alexander Winkler and Anna Yesipova. How did his playing develop under their guidance? The second section draws on Prokofiev's diaries and concert reviews to form an overview of Prokofiev's concert repertoire and reception. When and why was he most active as a performer? How was his choice of repertoire designed for particular audiences? Related to the first section, the third, 'Prokofiev's Playing', again uses concert reviews and accounts of his contemporaries in order to assess his development as a pianist. How seriously did Prokofiev take his performing career? The section 'Interpreting Prokofiev' then features an analysis of the composer's recordings of his own works, concentrating on his use of melody, rhythm, dynamics and articulation in an attempt to provide a guide to approaching the compositions. Little work has been carried out in this area – Boris Berman's chapter on 'Prokofiev the Pianist' provides basic information on the composer's activities as a performer, and encourages others to further their knowledge in this area. In order to take up this challenge, I use as a model Peter Hill's chapter on

---

<sup>11</sup> Donald Tovey, *A Companion to Beethoven's Piano Sonatas* (Oxford: OUP, 1999); Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York: Norton, 1980); William E. Caplin, *Classical Form* (Oxford: OUP, 1998).

recordings in his book *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring*,<sup>12</sup> tracing the progression of Prokofiev interpretation from the pianists active during his lifetime to the modern generation, uncovering different approaches to the performance of his music over recent decades.

### Prokofiev: Styles and Traditions

In order to begin a study of Prokofiev's style, it is important at the outset to highlight the various stylistic concepts deriving from Prokofiev himself, as they will be referenced throughout my thesis. Prokofiev separated his musical language into four primary categories: 'classical', 'modern', 'toccata', and 'lyrical'. The 'classical' line is concerned with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forms, primarily with the conception of sonatas and concertos.<sup>13</sup> Prokofiev's forms – usually two- (binary) or three-part (ternary and sonata form) – can be viewed as an extension of the work carried out by Tchaikovsky, but also mirror the German romantic tradition exemplified by the traditional forms of Johannes Brahms. Prokofiev particularly liked sonata form, exclaiming in 1930: 'I want nothing better, nothing more flexible or more complete than the sonata form, which contains everything necessary to my structural purpose.'<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the veracity of this statement is demonstrated throughout his instrumental and orchestral repertoire.

The second line, 'the modern trend', acknowledged by Prokofiev, was symptomatic of his attempt to find an original style, stemming from Taneyev's comments on his lack of originality. Some of the Op. 3 and Op. 4 piano pieces fall in this category, along with the *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, the Op. 39 Quintet, and the Second Symphony, and passages from the Second Piano Concerto as well. The toccata line, the composer explained, is indebted to Robert Schumann's Op. 7 *Toccata*, with the *moto perpetuo* 'motor' line and repetition as key features. It is present across the numerous scherzo movements Prokofiev composed, and is the source of both his hypnotic ostinato, in works such as the Second Piano Sonata and the *The Fiery Angel*, as well as his rapid virtuoso writing. The composer described it as the 'least important' of his stylistic lines. The final line is a 'lyrical' one, relating to the cantabile melodies of works such as the First Violin Concerto and *Tales of an Old Grandmother*. The lyrical line was also the foremost

---

<sup>12</sup> Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Serge Prokofiev (ed. & tr. Oleg Prokofiev), *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), 248.

<sup>14</sup> *The New York Times*, 2 February 1930.



element of the composer's quest for a 'new simplicity'. There is a controversial 'fifth line', 'grotesque', assigned by the composer's critics, but it is explained by Prokofiev as being a mixture of elements from other lines.<sup>15</sup>

Terms are used throughout my study that are common in Prokofiev scholarship but which nevertheless require some explanation. 'Wrong notes' is one example, used when a chromatic note is artificially present within a tonal context, providing no standard harmonic function. As Deborah Rifkin explains in the introduction of her dissertation:

From a compositional standpoint, a note cannot be 'wrong.' Composers do not accidentally include a note that does not belong and then forget to edit it out of publisher proofs. Theorists and critics describe notes as 'wrong' in order to capture the notes' incongruous effect within tonal contexts.<sup>16</sup>

Another term that is related specifically to Prokofiev's style is 'Prokofievization'. This word describes a procedure mentioned by Sviatoslav, Prokofiev's eldest son, where the composer takes a melody and 'Prokofievizes' it.<sup>17</sup> The umbrella term often involves 'wrong notes' as described above, as well as 'chromatic displacement', where a temporary chromatic modulation occurs.<sup>18</sup> Examples of these techniques will be explained as and when they occur.

Two of the primary themes of my study are Prokofiev's relationship to tradition and his innovations. In terms of 'tradition' there are in fact two that framed the composer's outlook: the nineteenth-century Russian style, as conveyed by the *Kuchka* ('The Mighty Five'); and the western eighteenth-century classical tradition exemplified by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The techniques of the *Kuchka* are mainly present in Prokofiev's early piano works, discussed in my first chapter, as a result of what Richard Taruskin describes as 'tonal mutability' – where a melody is transposed to another key centre – and parallel harmonic writing.<sup>19</sup> The western tradition, on the other hand, includes Prokofiev's use of sonata form structures, and accompanying thematic and harmonic

---

<sup>15</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 248.

<sup>16</sup> Deborah Rifkin, 'Tonal Coherence in Prokofiev's Music: A Study of the Interrelationships of Structure, Motives, and Design' (Ph. D diss., University of Rochester, 2000), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Demuth, *Musical Trends in the 20th Century* (London: Rockliff, 1952), 269. Boris Berman states that the term was also used by Prokofiev's other son, Oleg. Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> See: Richard Bass, 'Prokofiev's Technique of Chromatic Displacement', *Music Analysis*, 7/2, July 1988.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 133.

manifestations at the level of the individual phrase. Again, examples of Prokofiev's adherence to tradition are integrated into the study. 'Innovation' does not detail the rejection of these techniques, but rather the developments and deviations from them in the context of Prokofiev's search for an original style. Polytonality, for example, has been regarded by some as an innovative procedure at the beginning of the twentieth century, but is ultimately a metamorphosis of traditional triad-based harmonic theory. Such relationships epitomize the composer's approach.

There is an old-fashioned view of Prokofiev as merely a throwback to an earlier era, with little originality in the context of twentieth-century music. Richard Taruskin, for example, typifies this standpoint:

It is utterly characteristic of Prokofiev that beneath the clangorous surface there always lay a simple harmonic design and a stereotyped formal pattern straight out of the textbook.<sup>20</sup>

Here, Taruskin does not differentiate between a 'stereotyped' approach to musical form and an imaginative recreation of Classical traditions. Therefore, one of the aims of my thesis is to discover how the composer went about balancing traditional and innovative aspects of his music.

There are areas of this kind of study that lie beyond the scope of the current project. It would be interesting to evaluate structural developments in the later piano sonatas, for example, in order to discover if the composer's formal procedures correlate with his stylistic evolution in his Soviet works. The final chapter, too, might serve as a first step in a broader study of Prokofiev performance practice to include the interpretation of his works for other instruments.

---

<sup>20</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 86.

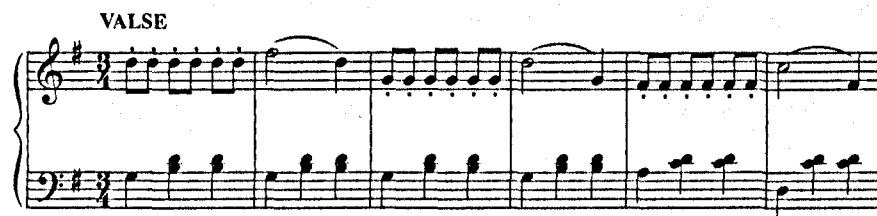
CHAPTER ONE  
THE PIANO WORKS IN CONTEXT

Early Compositions

The remoteness of Prokofiev's birthplace, the miniscule village of Sontsovka<sup>1</sup> – part of what is now Ukraine – inevitably led the composer to write mostly for piano in his early years: the only tuition he received up until 1903 came from his mother, who was an amateur pianist.<sup>2</sup> It was not until Reinhold Glière began teaching him in 1903 that he composed for other instruments, presumably because he did not have sufficient knowledge of orchestration before then.

The composer's earliest works understandably lack skilful craft; for instance, a work about the Indian famine in 1896 entitled *Indian Galop* is unintentionally in the Lydian mode because Prokofiev was avoiding the black notes.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the composition has a certain folkloric quality, with a droning left hand tonic pedal, as well as a four-bar repeating right hand phrase, producing an almost Bartókian theme. The apparent folk influence is almost certainly an accident, however, as Prokofiev stated later: '[In Sontsovka], I never listened closely to [folk] songs and didn't remember a single one.'<sup>4</sup> The composer's *Waltz No. 2* for piano (1899) also displays a simplistic approach, but Prokofiev is now experimenting with ternary form and modulation: the grandiose 'A' theme is in G major (Ex. 1.1), with the calmer 'B' theme in the D major dominant.

Example 1.1 – Waltz No. 2, bb. 1–6



<sup>1</sup> Sontsovka was inaccessible to researchers until 1960, but it has since been renamed 'Krasnoye'. There is a festival held regularly in honour of the composer, and there were even plans to call the village 'Prokofievo'. Stanley D. Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), 139 (n.).

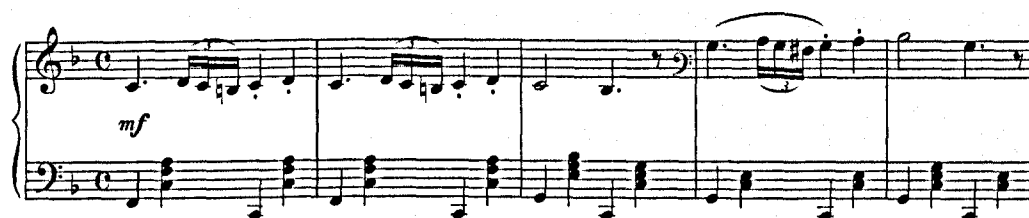
<sup>2</sup> Serge Prokofiev (ed. Francis King), *Prokofiev by Prokofiev* (London: Macdonald & Jane's, 1979), 7–9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

At a young age, Prokofiev was already showing enough ambition to turn his attention to larger scale genres. Nestyev notes that an early opera, *The Giant* (1900), which was written for his friends and family to perform in the household, contains facets of his later style.<sup>5</sup> This is especially clear in the march at the beginning of Act III (Ex. 1.2a), with the driving rhythm and humorous melody prefiguring the famous March from the *Love for Three Oranges* (1.2b). *The Giant* was one of the compositions that Prokofiev took to show Serge Taneyev on a visit to Moscow in 1902, and the professor suggested that Glière instruct Prokofiev in the fundamentals of harmony, form and orchestration. The result was a more sophisticated approach from the composer; for instance, in *Little Song* (1903), Prokofiev moves harmonically to the secondary dominants, whereas his earlier pieces, including Ex. 1.2a from *The Giant*, rarely go beyond the primary chords. Glière, himself a violinist, played through Mozart violin sonatas with Prokofiev, and taught him Beethoven piano sonatas; thus Prokofiev was immediately immersed in music employing his principal structure, sonata form.<sup>6</sup>

Example 1.2a – ‘March’ from *The Giant*, bb. 1–5



Example 1.2b – ‘March’ from *Love for Three Oranges*, Op. 33, bb. 1–4

[Tempo di Marcia.]

Prokofiev was at his most creative for piano after his admission to the St Petersburg Conservatoire in 1904. In his first few years there he wrote over ninety piano pieces, with just ten or so works being written in other genres.<sup>7</sup> Some of the material from these pieces is used in later works; for instance, the second movement of the Fourth Piano Sonata is a transcription of the Symphony in E Minor, which was completed in 1908.

<sup>5</sup> William W. Austin, *Music in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: From Debussy Through Stravinsky* (London: Dent, 1966), 457.

<sup>6</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 1922.

The relocation to St Petersburg had a profound impact on Prokofiev; the city, which, from its foundation in 1703 was overrun by Western culture,<sup>8</sup> subjected the composer to both old and new influences. Furthermore, the numerous concert venues, including the Mariinsky Theatre, meant that Prokofiev was able to attend regular concerts for the first time, which undoubtedly broadened his compositional scope.

Ever since Rubinstein established the Conservatoire in 1862, it had stood for the refinement of the Russian style by integrating it with Western technique. It also promoted the music of Glinka and Rubinstein, who both studied in the West. The freer, less formal approach of the *Kuchka* was for the most part rejected; even Rimsky-Korsakov, who was once a member of this group, came to dismiss it. Before taking up his post as a professor in composition and orchestration at the Conservatoire, Rimsky-Korsakov taught himself the textbook rudiments of harmony, which was the ultimate insult to his former circle. It was Rimsky-Korsakov who guided Prokofiev in orchestration, citing the techniques of Glinka and Tchaikovsky as exemplars, and Alexander Glazunov and Anatoly Lyadov, themselves traditionalists and Rimsky protégés, oversaw his compositional development.

St Petersburg, however, was also leading the way in progressive art, exemplified by the Russian Symbolist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This innovation spread to music through its main proponent, Alexander Scriabin, but Prokofiev was discouraged from adopting the progressive trend by most of his professors – it was only his conducting teacher, Alexander Tcherepnin, who ‘[understood] new music’.<sup>9</sup> Occasionally, Lyadov would quarrel over Prokofiev’s use of a progressive device in an exercise, prompting the professor to proclaim: ‘If you want to compose that kind of music, why do you come to my class? Go to Debussy – go to Richard Strauss!’<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, this was what the composer did: Strauss’s influence is present in the *Fiery Angel*,<sup>11</sup> and Debussy’s features in works such as *Visions fugitives* (see Chapter Two).

---

<sup>8</sup> Pushkin called St Petersburg a ‘window on Europe’. Figes, *Natasha’s Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 241.

<sup>10</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 130.

<sup>11</sup> Rita McAllister, ‘Prokofiev’, in Gerald Abraham, *The New Grove Russian Masters* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 116.

Initially, Prokofiev demonstrated a similarly traditional approach to his teachers, but through acquaintances outside of the Conservatoire was encouraged to experiment. The composer claims it was after a meeting with Taneyev in 1905 that his modernist tendencies were first nurtured. The older composer lamented the lack of originality in Prokofiev's piano works, and it was this that 'launched [Prokofiev] on that slippery path'.<sup>12</sup> It was not until 1908, however, that it became evident in his compositions, in the Op. 2 *Études*, and the Op. 3 and Op. 4 *Pieces*. This is significant, as in 1908 Prokofiev's work was not orientated towards pleasing his professors, apart from perhaps Tcherepnin – whose classes Prokofiev had started attending in the very same year – but instead towards the audience of the St Petersburg Evenings of Contemporary Music, a progressive group to which he was introduced by his compositional mentor, Mikhail Chernov. It was these regular concerts that led him to other notable influential personalities, chiefly Igor Stravinsky and Serge Diaghilev. The year 1908 is a historically significant one, as it was also the year that Arnold Schoenberg abandoned tonality in his Second String Quartet, when the solo soprano sings, 'I feel the air of other planets.'<sup>13</sup> Prokofiev did not go to the same lengths harmonically as Schoenberg; he was searching at that time for his own original means of expression.

#### 1908: From Traditionalist to Innovator

Prokofiev's line of development from a traditionalist to innovator is witnessed in two of his compositions of 1907 and 1908: the unpublished *Seven Pieces*, and the Op. 4 *Pieces*.<sup>14</sup> The *Seven Pieces* range widely in style yet they always look to the past, and unlike Prokofiev's earlier efforts, there is a sense of seriousness and maturity that resonates with romantic composers such as Schumann and Mendelssohn. In 'Upryok' ('Reproach'), shown in Ex. 1.3, Prokofiev uses a cantabile line based upon a rising scale in A minor. Harmonically, there is no hint of any Prokofievization; the opening theme essentially moves from chord I at bar 1 to a decorated dominant chord on the second beat of bar 2, arriving at this chord through an ascending stepwise sequence. The note we are least expecting is the octave G at bar 3, until we discover this is just the

---

<sup>12</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 232.

<sup>13</sup> Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (London: Norton, 1991), 68–9.

<sup>14</sup> Significantly, Prokofiev refused to let any of his juvenilia (i.e. the pieces composed before 1908) be published due to the fact they were 'immature'. The exception is the First Piano Sonata (begun in 1907), although, given his view later that he no longer considered it a 'mature' composition, he probably lived to regret its opus 1 status. See: *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 1922; Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 102.

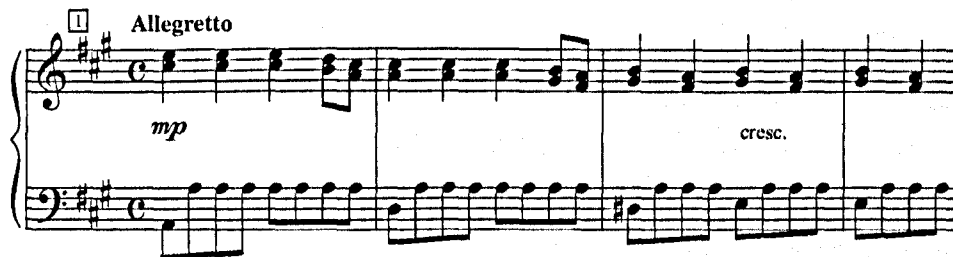
beginning of a contrary motion pattern preparing us for the return of the tonic chord at bar 4. Indeed, this delay adds to the modest drama.

Example 1.3 – ‘Upryok’ from *Seven Pieces*, bb. 1–4



The ‘Intermezzo’ piece is similarly conventional, with the main theme consisting of scalar thirds in A major over a tonic pedal, before the theme is transposed to the E major dominant at bar 4 (Ex. 1.4). A surprise modulation happens at the beginning of the ‘B’ section, with the composer moving up a third to the key of D flat major (Ex. 1.5), but again, such unexpected key changes are found in Tchaikovsky’s music, for instance in his opera *Eugene Onegin*. This type of modulation was a precursor to what Richard Bass describes as ‘chromatic displacement’, found primarily in the Soviet works and in the ‘Classical’ Symphony, where Prokofiev temporarily modulates up or down a semitone, only to return to the home key.<sup>15</sup>

Example 1.4 – ‘Intermezzo’ from *Seven Pieces*, bb. 1–4



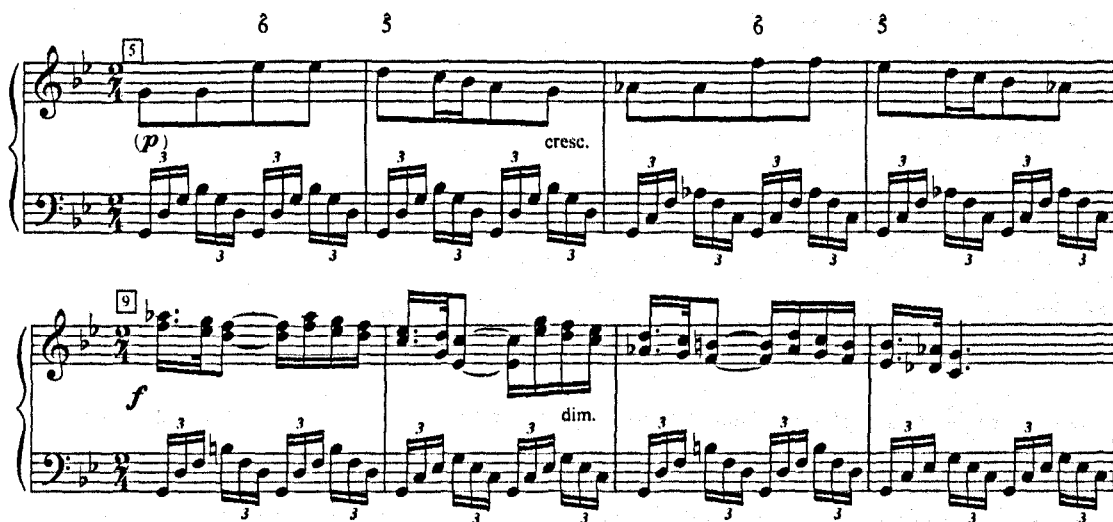
<sup>15</sup> Bass, ‘Prokofiev’s Technique of Chromatic Displacement’, 199. As I have mentioned, this is related to the technique Richard Taruskin describes as ‘tonal mutability’. See: Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 133.

Example 1.5 – ‘Intermezzo’ from *Seven Pieces*, bb. 16–20



Also looking to the Russian past is ‘Vostochnaya pesenka’ (‘Little Oriental Song’), which follows the utilization of orientalism by the *Kuchka*, and is in turn witnessed in Borodin’s *In the Steppes of Central Asia* and Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Sheherazade*. To create a similar sense of exoticism, Prokofiev concentrates on the descent of the sixth degree to the fifth in G minor, displayed with the E flat falling to D in bars 5–6, and with the F to E flat in the transposed version at bars 7–8 (Ex. 1.6). Here, Prokofiev is using a technique Richard Taruskin locates in Borodin’s exotic opera, *Prince Igor*.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the brief modulation from G minor to A flat major at bar 3 is a trait common with the *Kuchka*, being another example of ‘tonal mutability’, stemming from Mily Balakirev’s discovery of folksong from the Volga region in the 1860s. The use of parallel thirds, fourths and fifths at bars 9–12 further demonstrates the influence of Balakirev’s folksong collections.<sup>17</sup>

Example 1.6 – ‘Vostochnaya pesenka’ from *Seven Pieces*, bb. 5–12



<sup>16</sup> Richard Taruskin, ‘Entoiling the Falconet’: Russian Musical Orientalism in Context’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 4/3, November 1992, 266.

<sup>17</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 133.



The Op. 4 *Pieces* are a remarkable contrast: Jim Samson is right to label them as 'radical'.<sup>18</sup> Their departure from tradition comes with their use of the piano as a percussive force, to enhance dissonance. Indeed, Prokofiev's treatment of the instrument had a profound impact on future composers such as Béla Bartók.<sup>19</sup> It is worth pointing out that the introduction of the modern iron-framed piano at the end of the nineteenth century allowed for such possibilities.

Structurally, Prokofiev moves away from binary and ternary form, opting instead for a free through-composed form in all of the pieces. There is no longer clear-cut tonality – chromaticism dominates, characterizing all the main themes in one way or another. Apart from the second piece, it is not until the final cadence that the home keys are solidly established. Rhythmically, the composer is experimental in his combinations of duplet and triplet figures, and we hear an ostinato device throughout the third piece, something that Prokofiev would use frequently from now onwards. We witness less lyricism than in the composer's earlier works. Instead Prokofiev looks forward to his mature piano style, with compact and densely textured subjects. Gone is the preoccupation with warm romantic colouration – which is present even in the First Sonata Op. 1 – and this is replaced with the bombastic, dissonant antithesis. As Rita McAllister explains, there is a 'greater intensity of harmonic dissonance than anything in his music to date.'<sup>20</sup>

If the Op. 2 pieces are a 'premonition of his musical idiom' according to Frank Merrick,<sup>21</sup> the Op. 4 *Pieces*, written in the same year, display the fundamentals of this idiom in microcosm. All the elements of the composer's mature style, as mentioned in his autobiography,<sup>22</sup> aside perhaps from 'classicism', are present.<sup>23</sup> Prokofiev himself described how a 'modern' line features in the last two pieces, 'Despair' and 'Diabolical Suggestion'. Both begin with the interval furthest from the tonic: the tritone. In 'Despair', tonal ambiguity occurs when the three-note descending ostinato is offset by an A flat in the left hand, which falls chromatically to an octave tonic D at bar 5 (Ex. 1.7). D is evidently the tonal centre, despite the lack of a key signature, but harmonic

---

<sup>18</sup> Jim Samson, *Music in Transition: A Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality – 1900–1920* (London: Dent, 1993), 74.

<sup>19</sup> Fiess, *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev*, viii.

<sup>20</sup> McAllister, 'Prokofiev', 112.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Merrick, 'Prokofiev's Works for Piano Solo', *Tempo*, 11, Spring 1949, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 248–9.

<sup>23</sup> Refer to the Introduction (pp. vii–viii).

ambiguity is a constant, beginning with the C major inflections in the right hand at bar 7. The F natural in this bar perhaps also points very tentatively towards the key of D minor rather than D major. Even at the final cadence the major or minor modality cannot be confirmed as the third of the tonic chord is missing. The opening of 'Diabolical Suggestion' is yet more ambiguous, with a tritone on this occasion featuring as an inverted pedal in the right hand; the left hand gives nothing away tonally. Again, it is only in the final bars that C major is established; however, with the absence of a perfect cadence, it is not a tonally conventional ending, even though the tritone F sharp from the beginning is naturalized (Ex. 1.8).

Example 1.7 – *Four Pieces*, Op. 4 No. 3, bb. 1–8

1 Andante con agitazione e dolore.

5

Example 1.8 – *Four Pieces*, Op. 4 No. 4, bb. 122–5

122

8vb

The 'toccata' element, concerned with a 'motor line' and repetition,<sup>24</sup> is present in the second 'Soaring' and the fourth of the pieces. In 'Soaring', the rhythmic intensity is enhanced by the 'Molto allegro' 6/8 metre, which would be used in other later 'toccata'

<sup>24</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 248.

movements such as the finale of the Second Piano Sonata and the first movement of the Seventh Sonata (Ex. 1.9). In these pieces, too, the accents and dynamics have a similar goal namely grotesquely to disrupt phrases by highlighting dissonance (the so-called ‘wrong notes’). In the example, repetition occurs on two levels. On one level there is a three-note ostinato quaver figure that is transferred from the right hand to the left hand, and on another there is a sequence formed of two identical four-bar phrases, including imitation a perfect fourth higher. A ‘grotesque’, scherzo-like quality, which Prokofiev describes as the unofficial ‘fifth’ line of his style,<sup>25</sup> is also created in these phrases, with the playful juxtaposition of question and answer material. In ‘Suggestion Diabolique’ the ‘toccata’ element occurs in the relentless virtuoso writing, culminating in the rapid contrary motion scales near the end of the movement (Ex. 1.10).

Example 1.9 – *Four Pieces*, Op. 4 No. 2, bb. 9–16

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is labeled with a boxed '9' and '[Molto Allegro.]'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff has a three-note ostinato quaver figure (G4, A4, B4) that is repeated and then imitated in the bass staff. Dynamics are marked as *pp*, *f*, and *p*. The second system is labeled with a boxed '13' and continues the same musical material. The notation includes various accidentals and dynamic markings.

<sup>25</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 249.

Example 1.10 – *Four Pieces*, Op. 4 No. 4, bb. 105–110

The image shows a musical score for two systems of piano music. The first system, starting at measure 105, consists of two staves. The right-hand staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It contains a melodic line with a descending chromatic scale, marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*) and the instruction *feroce*. The left-hand staff has a bass clef and contains a descending chromatic line, also marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*). Both staves feature triplets of eighth notes. The second system, starting at measure 107, also consists of two staves. The right-hand staff continues the descending chromatic scale, now marked with a fortissimo dynamic (*fff*). The left-hand staff has a bass clef and contains a descending chromatic line, also marked with a fortissimo dynamic (*fff*). The system concludes with a glissando in the right hand and a final fortissimo dynamic (*fff*).

The fourth ‘lyrical’ strand can be found in the first piece, ‘Reminiscences’, where the F major melody unwinds to create a dark and suitably reflective character; this is achieved by the descending chromaticism in the left hand part (Ex. 1.11a). Some of the chord progressions, such as that at bars 8–9, are examples of a technique Prokofiev would subsequently use, namely delaying a cadence with an unexpected progression. As Robert Morgan explains in the context of the *Visions fugitives*, the effect of this technique is that the ‘listener seems to be wrenched away from normal continuation.’<sup>26</sup> In the example below, the composer moves through a sequence of dominant chords resolving to the tonic in various keys – C minor, G flat major and F major – in a seemingly unexpected, unconventional progression. In the second example, I have removed the ‘Prokofievizations’ to demonstrate how this phrase originates from conventional triadic harmony (Ex. 1.11b).

<sup>26</sup> Morgan, *Twentieth Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*, 241.

Example 1.11a – *Four Pieces*, Op. 4 No. 1, bb. 3–9

[Tranquillo.]

3

7

c: V<sup>7</sup> I G<sub>b</sub>: V<sup>7</sup> I  
 F: V<sup>7</sup> of v v V<sup>7</sup> of  $\flat$ II  $\flat$ II V I

Example 1.11b – *Four Pieces*, Op. 4 No. 1, bb. 8–9 (hypothetical)

c: V<sup>7</sup> I G<sub>b</sub>: V<sup>7</sup> I  
 F: V<sup>7</sup> of v v V<sup>7</sup> of  $\flat$ II  $\flat$ II V<sup>7</sup> I

With his groundbreaking venture into atonality in 1908 Schoenberg had undertaken a project from which he could not retreat; he felt obliged to carry out his destiny. Prokofiev did not go as far as abandoning tonality altogether, but the seeds of experimentation were sown in his 1908 compositions: he used all but one of his four lines of style: ‘modern’, ‘toccata’, and ‘lyrical’. There could, however, be a case made for the ‘absent’ line, ‘classicism’, being present in the form of regular phrase structures of the first and second pieces, with question-and-answer musical dialogue also featuring in the second. Prokofiev did not turn his experimentation into a constant element of his musical style during this period, as Schoenberg did. But, since his pieces were written two years before the *The Firebird*, it could be argued that he challenged convention even before Stravinsky. In the next decade, however, Stravinsky’s influence was to prove strong.

## A 'Dictionary of Idioms'

Prokofiev frequently referred to the need to be original. In his autobiography he explains:

[...] unfortunate is the composer who is afraid or incapable of originality, for whereas the creator of new harmonies is bound to be eventually acknowledged, the composer who has nothing new to offer will eventually be forgotten.<sup>27</sup>

If Taneyev was the initial catalyst for the composer's obsession with originality, the impresarios at the St Petersburg Evenings of Contemporary Music sought to ensure its continuity. In 1908, Prokofiev embarked on his first mature attempt at writing a symphony in competition with his friend and fellow composer, Nikolay Myaskovsky. The product was the Symphony in E minor, which Prokofiev played at the Evenings alongside his newly completed Op. 4 Pieces, provoking an underwhelmed response from Alfred Nurok:

Well, of course it's very nice – very smooth and neat. But it's not nearly so original as your piano pieces. They have so much fire and so much invention! But during the playing of the symphony one was rather inclined to doze off than to leap up from one's seat, as happened when we heard your piano pieces.<sup>28</sup>

Prokofiev did at least manage to secure a performance of the work with the help of Glazunov, but the piece did not acquire an opus number – a clear indication that Prokofiev did not think it was up to publication, perhaps on account of its supposed lack of originality, and the manuscript was later lost.<sup>29</sup> In spite of the work's ill fate, the composer, never one to let good material go to waste, revised the slow movement and incorporated it into the Fourth Piano Sonata, Op. 29, in 1917. He also created a version of the movement for string orchestra, producing Op. 29bis. Nurok's dismissal of the Symphony and praise for his piano pieces led the defensive Prokofiev to label him a 'modernist'<sup>30</sup> – a sign that he was uncomfortable, at least to some extent, with his apparent breakaway from tradition.

---

<sup>27</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 292.

<sup>28</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 152.

<sup>29</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 239.

<sup>30</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 152.

Myaskovsky reacted to the Op. 4 by describing them as a 'great success' and a 'step forward'.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, he encouraged Prokofiev's pursuit of originality, stating in a letter in 1909: '... I prefer your complexities to your simplicities, because the former display not only your fiery temperament but your purely external technical virtues, without which music for me has only half its value.'<sup>32</sup> Indeed Myaskovsky's tastes for the innovative can be gathered from some of the repertoire to which he exposed Prokofiev: Strauss's Opera, *Salome* (which he described as the 'most modern of modern compositions');<sup>33</sup> and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.<sup>34</sup> Prokofiev insisted on discussing more traditional compositions such as Rachmaninov's *The Bells*, but Myaskovsky responded by '[tearing the work] to shreds.'<sup>35</sup> It was Myaskovsky, though, who encouraged the same modernism from students such as Alexander Mosolov in the revolutionary period of 1920s, while teaching at the Moscow Conservatoire.<sup>36</sup>

Quite why Prokofiev was so reluctant to break with tradition is unclear; perhaps the composer's mixture of a formal education, along with criticism from his peers, led to his uncertainty. It is fair to say, however, that most groundbreaking music shocked him. The composer reluctantly played Schoenberg's Op. 11 *Klavierstücke* at a St Petersburg concert in 1911 only because nobody else would learn them – thus introducing Schoenberg's music to Russia – conceding that the work created 'glimpses of atmosphere'.<sup>37</sup> Such was the controversy of the performance that Prokofiev's piano tutor, Anna Yesipova, refused him permission to participate in the concert, but he did so anyway.<sup>38</sup> The typically independent-minded Prokofiev retained mixed views of Schoenberg's music throughout his life – upon hearing the *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 16, in 1925, he noted that two of the pieces were 'creepy and interesting', but the other three 'bored [him] to death'.<sup>39</sup>

Prokofiev noted that one of his mentors at the conservatoire, Nikolay Tcherepnin, an 'innovator', used to put both hands across as many white and black keys on the piano as

---

<sup>31</sup> Serge Prokofiev (ed. & trans. Anthony Phillips), *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), 119.

<sup>32</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 175.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>34</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 464.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 556–7.

<sup>36</sup> Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 244.

<sup>37</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 214.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Serge Prokofiev (ed. Sviatoslav Prokofiev), *Dnevnik 1919–1933* (Paris: sprkfv, 2002), 326.

he could, and that this made his 'head swim'.<sup>40</sup> It was the same professor who incidentally listed Prokofiev in an article, alongside Schoenberg and Stravinsky, as a composer who was 'taking music forward'.<sup>41</sup> With the eclecticism the composer displayed during this period, utilizing both traditional and innovative approaches, it could be argued that this conflict was essentially a Russian facet of his compositional makeup. Through his cosmopolitanism – which, like Stravinsky's, was created through his formal training in St Petersburg – he perhaps became what Orlando Figes describes as a 'European Russian':

The European Russian had a split identity. His mind was a state divided into two. On one level he was conscious of acting out his life according to prescribed European conventions; yet on another plane his inner life was swayed by Russian customs and sensibilities.<sup>42</sup>

This conflict between the old and new can be heard particularly in the works leading up to the October Revolution of 1917, including the Second Piano Concerto, Op. 16 (1913, rev. 1923).

Prokofiev never intended his Second Piano Concerto to provoke controversy. Some of the criticisms came from his own mother, who, when reacting to the dissonance in the work exclaimed: 'How horrible that sounds, just as if you had no ear at all!'<sup>43</sup> This reaction must have been a surprise to the composer, who believed his music to be 'not decadent at all, but classical', since he was more interested in the 'precision in thematic material, clarity of expression and integration of form.'<sup>44</sup> The traditional approach is evident in the structure of the individual movements, which utilize conventional classical forms: a sonata-allegro, ternary-form scherzo, theme-and-variation intermezzo, and a ternary-form finale. The four-movement structure, on the other hand, looks more to the Romantic model than the Classical one (for example, the Liszt First Piano Concerto and Brahms Second Concerto). It is also comparable to the sheer scale and grandeur of the nineteenth-century concerto.

The proportions of the work are somewhat surprising, however, in relation to conventional models, with the outer movements usually lasting over ten minutes each

---

<sup>40</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 120.

<sup>41</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 667.

<sup>42</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, 44.

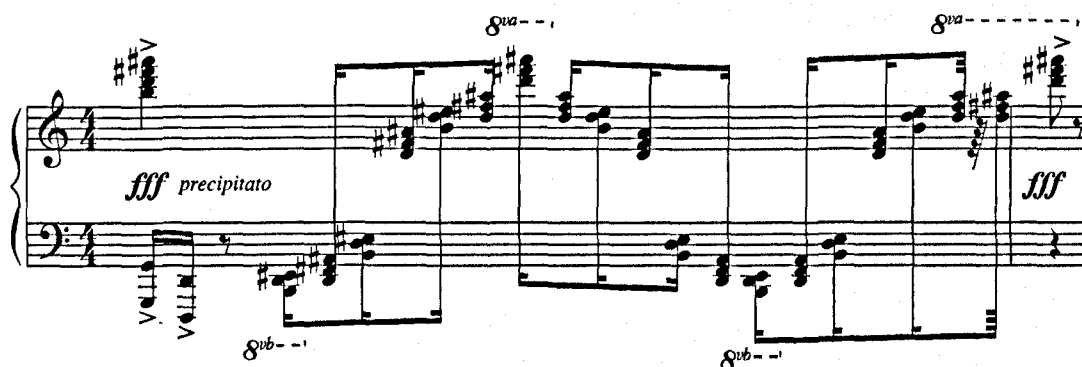
<sup>43</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 252.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.



and the second movement less than three. Barbara Nissman is right to point out that the length of the finale helps to restore balance to the concerto,<sup>45</sup> after a gargantuan opening in both scale and virtuosity; indeed the cadenza is a five-minute *tour de force* (the indication ‘colossale’ even appearing at one point). Indeed the dissonance in this section led Rita McAllister to explain that ‘tonality is not so much absent as irrelevant.’<sup>46</sup> Here, the romantic lyricism from the beginning of the movement gives way to percussive discord (Ex. 1.12). The chords in this passage have a traditional foundation – diminished chords alternate in the left hand with augmented chords in the right – but they are placed in an unconventional context as they do not serve a harmonic function; their dissonance is used only for effect.

Example 1.12 – Second Piano Concerto, Op. 16, Movement I, bb. 143–4



The first movement has moments of *cantabile* lyricism; indeed, it is only in the development of this material, particularly in the cadenza, that dissonance prevails. The opening theme (Ex. 1.13), almost like a Russian lullaby, contains characteristics of the music of the *Kuchka*. The rocking quavers of the left hand occupy parallel fifths to accompany what is essentially the outline of a descending G minor arpeggio in the right hand, and only five notes are used in the theme (G, D, A, C, and B flat), creating a pentatonic scale. Significantly, pentatonicism and parallelism were two common features of nineteenth-century Russian music.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Barbara Nissmann, ‘The Many Faces of Prokofiev’, *Three Oranges Journal*, 4, November 2002.

<sup>46</sup> McAllister, ‘Prokofiev’, 118.

<sup>47</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, 180.

Example 1.13 – Second Piano Concerto, Op. 16, Movement I, bb. 4–6



Halfway through the last movement, a D minor theme appears with a simple theme that could have been lifted straight from Russian Orthodox chant. The crotchets in the left hand outline the bare fifth of the tonic, but the longer pedal notes below give the feeling of briefly ending up in the subdominant. The result is an effect utilized by the *Kuchka*; it is yet another example of ‘tonal mutability’, where a melody creates a rapid change of harmonic centre (Ex. 1.14).<sup>48</sup> Indeed, these influences were perhaps what led Diaghilev to describe the work as ‘nationalist’ in style.<sup>49</sup>

Example 1.14 – Second Piano Concerto, Op. 16, Movement IV, bb. 83–90

While Prokofiev was at work on his Second Concerto, he was reading a biography of Tchaikovsky for inspiration, and parallels can be drawn between the two composers, particularly their balance of Russian and Western influence.<sup>50</sup> The Western element caused controversy at the Pavlovsk premiere on 23 August 1913 [O.S.],<sup>51</sup> with the composer describing the reception in his autobiography: ‘To hell with this futurist

<sup>48</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 133.

<sup>49</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 707.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>51</sup> 5 September 1913 New Style.

music! [...] We came here for pleasure. The cats on the roof make better music!<sup>52</sup> Glazunov summed this up, thinking it was a 'significant development ... but the music!'<sup>53</sup> Prokofiev explained:

True, it does not conform to the best of old traditions, but in itself is entirely logical and complete, and that is all that matters. I have great respect for the old forms, but I also have complete faith in my own instincts for form, and often give myself licence to depart from convention.<sup>54</sup>

This quotation gives us a clear indication of the composer's thinking around this time: he was willing to 'depart from convention' but not in a way that would sacrifice it completely. The version of the concerto we hear today is different from the 1913 version, due to the composer revising it a decade later after it was mistakenly used as fuel to light a stove while Prokofiev was in the West. Unfortunately we will never know what the original version sounded like, although the composer joked to Myaskovsky that it had almost been 'revised into [Concerto] number 4' after a performance in Paris with Koussevitzky.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, he also noted that the main thematic material had remained intact.<sup>56</sup> Through this preservation, the composer ensured the mixture of old and new styles remained; that is the combination of nineteenth-century techniques with experimental dissonance.

The leading Russian musicologist, Boris Asafiev, summed up Prokofiev's Second Concerto in 1930:

In the second concerto Prokofiev reverted to emotionalism, but again not because of a sentimental account of experiences, but in order to reveal the conflicts of soul life, as one of the forms of venting energy. The output of Prokofiev brought the old St. Petersburg culture face to face with the modern world.<sup>57</sup>

Here Asafiev acknowledges the combination of old and new. The outpouring of 'emotionalism', which is primarily displayed in the first and fourth movements, could be connected to the death of Prokofiev's great friend, Maximilian Schmidhof, to whom

---

<sup>52</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 246.

<sup>53</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 418.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 346–7.

<sup>55</sup> Harlow Robinson (ed.), *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 251.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>57</sup> Boris Asafiev (tr. Alfred J. Swan), *Russian Music from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (Michigan: Edwards, 1953), 268.

the work is dedicated – ‘Max’ committed suicide in 1913. The dissonance perhaps reflects the depression Prokofiev experienced in the aftermath of this incident.

The inventive nature of the work also reflects an experimental period that Nicolas Nabokov identifies as mirroring the ‘uncertain climate’ of World War I,<sup>58</sup> during a time that included the overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II. In theatre the prominent figure was Vsevolod Meyerhold and in art, Kazimir Malevich. In music, Arthur Lourié and Nikolay Roslavets led the way with their abandonment of tonality. Stravinsky and Prokofiev were no revolutionaries, however, as both sought to develop and build on tradition.<sup>59</sup> In Prokofiev’s case, the experimentation came about as part of his search for his own language, which he referred to in an article for the *Christian Science Monitor* on 25 February 1922. He explained how he constantly searched for an original style:

Whenever I composed anything I always asked myself if I had heard that before, if it had been stolen from someone. And then many, many times I would destroy what I had written and try to find something different.<sup>60</sup>

Prokofiev wrote that he had created a ‘dictionary of idioms’ after ten years of ‘inventive research’. This would make the starting year of this ‘dictionary’ 1911 or 1912, around the time that the Second Piano Concerto was written.<sup>61</sup> The research would also incorporate works such as the modernist *Scythian Suite* (1915), the themes of which were drawn from the failed ballet *Ala et Lolly*, and the *Classical Symphony* – an experimental imitation of Haydn. Stanley Krebs writes that the composer’s experimentation began in 1914, following Prokofiev’s visit to London, where he became acquainted with the *Ballets Russes*.<sup>62</sup> It seems, however, that Diaghilev and Stravinsky discouraged the composer’s progressive tendencies, preferring instead that he adopt a simpler style; in fact, after the composition of the *Classical Symphony*, Prokofiev had the idea of composing a similar work that he proposed to call ‘A Russian Symphony’, with Diaghilev being the intended dedicatee ‘in recognition for his concern for [the composer’s] Russian style.’<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Nicolas Nabokov, *Old Friends and New Music* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), 119.

<sup>59</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 87. As Taruskin has shown, Stravinsky’s harmonic techniques are an extension of his teacher’s, Rimsky-Korsakov’s, octatonicism. See: Richard Taruskin, ‘Chez Pétouchka: Harmony and Tonality chez Stravinsky’, *19th-Century Music*, 10/3, Spring 1987.

<sup>60</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 1922.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* If we go by what Prokofiev says in the article: ‘I feel that since my twenty-third or twenty-fourth year I have had my dictionary.’

<sup>62</sup> Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music*, 140.

<sup>63</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 259.

In the *Christian Science Monitor* article Prokofiev also has a dig at his critics, commenting on their lack of understanding of this experimentation; they thought he was 'deliberately trying to shock' audiences in an attempt to 'arouse comment and controversy.'<sup>64</sup> This was something that clearly bothered him, as he would give his First Symphony the subtitle '*Classical*' solely to 'tease the geese [the critics] [...] in the secret hope that the symphony might one day itself become a [classic].'<sup>65</sup> Prokofiev, ultimately, did not go wrong in this respect – the piece remains a favourite today. Prokofiev's friend and fellow composer Nicolas Nabokov was left bewildered by the 'animosity [Prokofiev's music] aroused' around this time, labelling it 'tame in comparison with some of the feverish works of Skryabin or the noisy excursions of Richard Strauss.'<sup>66</sup>

Any controversy that was caused, he claimed, was a result of him being 'ten years ahead of [his] public'; Prokofiev was not writing disordered music, but in fact dipping into his own idiomatic dictionary when constructing a work. Here, parallels with Paul Hindemith can be made, who also created a veritable style guide with his book *The Craft of Musical Composition* (1937). Unfortunately Prokofiev was secretive as to what his experimentation comprised, and indeed the results he drew from it. But perhaps the four lines (or five, if you count the problematic 'grotesque' strand) of style detailed in his autobiography hold the answer.<sup>67</sup> If these lines are indeed a synopsis of the composer's dictionary of idioms, this would explain why Prokofiev's music, particularly during the decade 1912–1922, is so eclectic in style.

### The Search for Simplicity

Prokofiev's results of his research could be considered unsuccessful in certain respects. The opera *The Fiery Angel*, continuously revised up until 1927, was the prime product of the composer's experimentation; as Anthony Payne stated after hearing it for the first time, it is a 'stunningly original work'.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the passages of 'expressionism' Boris Berman identifies give the work similar qualities to Alban Berg's operas *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*.<sup>69</sup> Stanley Krebs implies that the composer was in competition with Stravinsky; if

---

<sup>64</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 1922.

<sup>65</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 259.

<sup>66</sup> Nabokov, *Old Friends and New Music*, 120.

<sup>67</sup> Refer to pp. iv–v of the Introduction.

<sup>68</sup> Anthony Payne, 'Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel*', *Tempo*, 74, Autumn 1965, 22.

<sup>69</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 7.

indeed this was the case, Prokofiev did not succeed in achieving 'creative leadership in Western music'.<sup>70</sup> *The Fiery Angel* and the Second Symphony (1925) were failures, and Prokofiev was done with his search for an innovative style. Perhaps he was referring to himself when he said, 'The moment a composer finds his language and says "I've got it" he ceases to be interesting.'<sup>71</sup>

Prokofiev was obviously frustrated – he was particularly bemused by the lack of success of *The Fiery Angel*. After he reshaped the themes of this into his Third Symphony,<sup>72</sup> the composer wrote he had written some of his 'best' music.<sup>73</sup> Summarising these years in a speech the composer made in Chicago during a brief visit to the United States at the beginning of 1926, the composer described his time in the West, up to the point of the Second Symphony:

Leaving Russia in 1918, I was in America for four seasons. During this time I had both successes and setbacks, but the most important occasion was the staging of *The [Love for] Three Oranges*. Following this performance, the critics wrote that, first of all, I do not write melodies; secondly, that I compose bad harmonies; thirdly, the counterpoint is bad; and fourthly, that there is generally no music in it. After that, I went to Europe and stayed there for four years. My greatest achievement there was the première of the Second Symphony, but after its performance the critics said that firstly, it is completely devoid of melody; secondly, the harmony is terrible; thirdly, the counterpoint completely incomprehensible; and fourthly, that there is no music. After this, I left Europe, and here I am again in Chicago.<sup>74</sup>

Behind this typically witty summary there lay an important message, that Prokofiev felt static in his development as a composer and therefore required a change of direction. Indeed, it came about with his move to simplicity, the primary element of which was melody. Less than three months later, in an article published in the *New York Evening Post*, the composer was already alluding to it. His interviewer, Olga Samarnoff, filled in the gaps:

[Prokofiev says:] "The most novel harmonic discoveries can be imitated and adopted by others, whereas a melody is a personal creation and stands as such without the possibility of imitation except through obvious

---

<sup>70</sup> Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music*, 150.

<sup>71</sup> 'Composer, Soviet-Style', *Time*, 66/21, 19 November 1945.

<sup>72</sup> Prokofiev would have usually written a suite to recycle themes, but as there was too much material, he opted for a symphony instead. See: Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 285.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>74</sup> Prokofiev, *Dnevnik 1919–1933*, 368.

plagiarism.” It seems to me this utterance by one of the leaders among modern composers is very significant.

It looks as though the experimentation with harmonic idiom which has been going on feverishly for the last ten or fifteen years has for the time being almost run its course.<sup>75</sup>

Prokofiev’s return to simplicity is often said to coincide with his permanent return to the Soviet Union (1934–36).<sup>76</sup> Stephen Press identifies it as being a key element in the composer’s ballet, *Le pas d’acier*, which was written in the same year (1926) as the *New York Post* article quoted above. This, it could be argued, was the beginning of Prokofiev’s ‘Soviet’ simplicity: the ballet is written on a Soviet theme, and indeed contains the style represented in the composer’s ‘(new) simplicity’ ideal, with its melodiousness and diatonic harmony.<sup>77</sup> Facets of simplicity were present before this work was composed, however. But it was only in 1926 that Prokofiev decided to bring ‘simplicity’ to the forefront of his compositional aesthetic.

In the early nineteenth century, simplicity was regarded as a symbol of Russianness, a symptom of nationalism, which was used to overpower the Western cultural influence. This stems from the ideas of the Decembrists following their uprising of 1812, the influences of which found their way into Pushkin’s literature and even Russian dress. As Orlando Figes explains:

The turn toward Nature and simplicity was widespread throughout Europe from the final decades of the eighteenth century. [...] But in Russia the fashion for the natural had an extra, national dimension. It was linked to the idea that one had to strip away the external layers of cultural convention to reveal the Russian personality.<sup>78</sup>

It perhaps also explains why both Stravinsky and Prokofiev went through phases of stylistic change in this particular direction. Although simplicity came to the fore in the 1930s and 1940s with the work of composers such as Paul Hindemith and Béla Bartók, it is important to remember that their Russian contemporaries predated this *Zeitgeist*. In the case of both Russian composers, simplicity is especially present in the works they composed as exiles, possibly to bring them closer to their mother country. It was Serge

---

<sup>75</sup> Nice, *Prokofiev, A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891–1935*, 223.

<sup>76</sup> Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (New York, OUP), 142; Morgan, *Twentieth Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*, 243.

<sup>77</sup> Press, *Prokofiev’s Ballets for Diaghilev*, 206.

<sup>78</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, 109.

Diaghilev who encouraged this particular strand of Russianness in their music. As Prokofiev noted in a letter to Myaskovsky on 10 April 1915 [Old-Style]:<sup>79</sup>

The most progressive trend to which both Stravinsky and Diaghilev now adhere is this: down with the pathetic, down with pathos, down with internationalism. They are making me into a truly Russian composer.<sup>80</sup>

The results of this approach can be witnessed in Prokofiev's opera, *The Gambler* (1916). Prokofiev exclaimed, 'My whole aim is to make [*The Gambler*] as simple as possible.'<sup>81</sup> The lyricism of the thematic material achieves this simplicity, which is why the composer was able readily to produce the work *Four Portraits and Dénouement from The Gambler*, Op. 49 (1931), at the height of his transition to a simpler musical aesthetic. Similarly, composing with the American public in mind after arriving there in 1918, he wrote two simple works for piano: *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31 and the *Dances*, Op. 32. Here, his simplification was quite literally intended to make him a quick buck.<sup>82</sup> Prokofiev soon discovered that not only the American audiences warmed to these works: notable musicians, in America and abroad, admired the *Tales* in particular. The composer recorded the occasion he played them for the pianist, Arthur Rubinstein:

"They're so simple!" he said. I said I thought I had called a halt to progress in the sense of searching for new paths. Rubinstein was delighted, and exclaimed: "That is splendid! Believe me, whenever I see a composer deciding it is time to stop innovating, that is precisely the time he embarks on a new path."<sup>83</sup>

Back in Russia, Nabokov was so enthralled by *Tales*, that he showed them to his professor, Vladimir Rebikov, who subsequently, disgusted by their simplicity, threw them out of the window of the St Petersburg Conservatoire.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, they contain the elements found in the primary products of the 'new simplicity' starting in the 1930s: cantabile melody, traditional harmonic progressions, and an element of 'Russianness'.

The *Tales* were originally planned as a sonatina, but Prokofiev quickly transformed them into programme music: 'The old grandmother tells her story, coughing and

---

<sup>79</sup> 23 April, 1915 New-Style.

<sup>80</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 245.

<sup>81</sup> Serge Prokofiev (ed. & tr. Anthony Phillips), *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008), Appendix 5.

<sup>82</sup> 'If I did not need the money I would not be writing any of this rubbish.' *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 482.

<sup>84</sup> Nabokov, *Old Friends and New Music*, 116.



mumbling up much of how things really were but with occasional flashes of clarity that bring back precious moments as if they happened yesterday.' The composer's desperate need for finances made him write something that was not 'too demanding' and indeed he composed the work in the space of a month, with the sole purpose of making a name for himself.<sup>85</sup> Simplicity is present in the structure of each of the movements, as well as in their brevity: all three are written in ternary form (ABA), with the returning 'A' section functioning as a coda. Harmonically, the chord progressions are for the most part basic ones, being limited to the primary chords I, IV and V. Parallel harmonies are utilized, possibly in reference to the techniques of the *Kuchka*.<sup>86</sup> The melody mostly occurs in scalar or arpeggiated motion; there are no unexpected leaps, which are usually so characteristic of Prokofiev's style, whether a simplified style or not. Phrase lengths are, on the whole, limited to four bars, which adds a classical touch to proceedings. The heavy use of repetition also ensures a fundamentally economical use of material.

In the first *Tale*, for instance, the bass line gives the outline of a simple tonic to dominant transition – this is reinforced by the dominant inverted pedal in the right hand at bar 3 (Ex. 1.15). This pedal is syncopated, giving a jazz-like feel, and the blue note *acciaccatura* enhances it. The passage at bars 5–7 repeats the I–V progression, but with added chromaticism to decorate the emerging right hand melody, but the tonic to dominant progression is clearest at bars 8–11 after modulating to the key of C major (the fundamental harmonies are denoted as roman numerals). The 'B' theme demonstrates simplicity in its use of a diatonic 'white-note' theme, if we disregard the G sharp passing note at bar 29 (Ex. 1.16). This diatonicism is indeed used throughout Prokofiev's music from 1915, particularly in the Russian numbers of *Visions fugitives*, along with the 'white-note' string quartet that was begun in 1918 but never completed – the themes of which found their way into the Third Piano Concerto.

---

<sup>85</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 336–8.

<sup>86</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, 180.

Example 1.15 – *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31 No. 1, bb. 1–11

Moderato

*p*

con Ped.

d: i v i v i VII C: I V I V I

Example 1.16 – *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31 No. 1, bb. 29–36

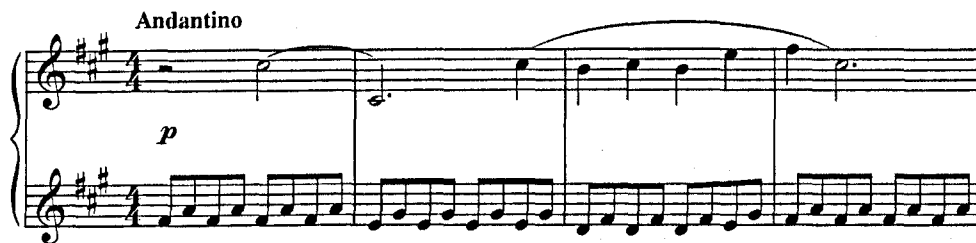
con una dolcezza sostenuto

*pp senza cresc.*

Of all the movements of the *Tales*, the second is the simplest, with a typically Russian song-like theme in the right hand being accompanied by floating quavers in the left, and outlining the melody with the chords I, IV and V in F sharp minor (Ex. 1.17). The melody finishes with a falling perfect fourth, the usage of which Glinka dubbed ‘the soul of Russian music.’<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, the beginning of the fourth *Tale* features a parallel homophonic version of the Dies Irae (Ex. 1.18). If this is a warning of the grandmother’s ensuing death, the ‘Molto Andante’ marking along with a ritenuto and pianissimo dynamic, leading to a single B minor chord in the final few bars, is surely an indicator of her passing.

<sup>87</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 29.

Example 1.17 – *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31 No. 2, bb. 1–4



Example 1.18 – *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31 No. 4, bb. 1–2



Even with Rubinstein's encouragement, Prokofiev was reluctant to explore the path to simplicity; he was less concerned with success than with 'educating' his audiences. When the composer played the *Tales* during his 1927 tour of the Soviet Union, for instance, the concert promoter, Arnold Tsukker stated, 'This is the kind of music that the public should be getting!' The composer replied that 'the public must be educated by being made to accept more profound and complex works ...'.<sup>88</sup> At the height of his experimentation in the mid-1920s, Prokofiev was again pressed by Diaghilev and Stravinsky to simplify his style. On one occasion, Diaghilev was forced to diffuse a fight between his two principal protégés on the matter, with Stravinsky telling Prokofiev that he was on the 'wrong path'.<sup>89</sup> Stravinsky chose to take Diaghilev's advice on achieving simplicity in making a move to neo-classicism in the 1920s; Prokofiev, however, completely dismissed this approach.

Prokofiev did indeed dabble in neo-classicism briefly in his 'Classical' Symphony, but never allowed it to become a consistent component of his overall aesthetic, as Stravinsky did in the 1920s.<sup>90</sup> Prokofiev's Symphony was essentially based on the composer's image of what Haydn would have written had he lived in the twentieth century – the original idea stemmed from the enthusiasm Tcherepnin displayed for music of the Classical period.<sup>91</sup> To compose his symphony, Prokofiev built on the work

<sup>88</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 51.

<sup>89</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 680.

<sup>90</sup> Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar*, 232.

<sup>91</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 155.

carried out by Satie, Busoni, and Reger, among others, who had all adopted past styles as their own. Whether Prokofiev was important in the development of neo-classicism depends on how one defines the term. Paul Griffiths believes that the 'Classical' Symphony is not a true neo-classical work on account of its lack of irony.<sup>92</sup> Richard Taruskin, on the other hand, argues that its style is merely nostalgic and without mockery; he lists the opera *The Love for Three Oranges* (1919) as the composer's first substantial neo-classical work with 'modernistic' tendencies in its parodying of eighteenth-century opera.<sup>93</sup> Nicolas Slonimsky gives a different but potentially just as convincing interpretation: 'while the structure was indeed classical, the sudden modulatory shifts and a subtle element of grotesquery betrayed a 20<sup>th</sup>-century hand.'<sup>94</sup> All three opinions are equally credible, largely on account of the ambiguity of the term 'neoclassical'. To expand on Slonimsky's idea, the symphony brings together the outlook of a Classical work with a twentieth-century aesthetic: this, in itself, is perhaps redolent of 'irony' and 'parody'.

As a perceived movement, Prokofiev rejected neo-classicism outright. In the 1920s, he more or less disowned the Classical Symphony, describing the 'pseudo-Bachism' in it as a 'passing phase'.<sup>95</sup> He also dismissed Stravinsky's efforts, but always in his typically honest, opinionated manner. In a letter to Asafiev, he gives a frank assessment of Stravinsky's new composition, the *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments* (1924):

[The work] is a continuation of the line he adopted in the finale of his Octet – that is, a stylization in imitation of Bach – which I don't approve of, because even though I love Bach and think it's not a bad idea to compose according to his principles, it's not a good idea to produce a stylized version of his style. Therefore I don't regard this concerto as highly as, say, *Les Noces* or *The Rite of Spring*; and in general, I don't think very highly of things like *Pulcinella* or even my own "Classical" Symphony [...] which are written "under the influence" of something else.<sup>96</sup>

Prokofiev's unwillingness to return to this form of pastiche left him the challenge of finding another path to simplicity. Classicism had always been an important aspect of his style in the context of his unwillingness to depart from conventional structures. But

---

<sup>92</sup> Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Modern Music from Debussy to Boulez* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 78–79.

<sup>93</sup> Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music v. 4* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 499–502.

<sup>94</sup> Nicolas Slonimsky (ed.), *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (New York: Schirmer, 1978), 1366.

<sup>95</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 273.

<sup>96</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 94–5.

the most important facet of this 'new simplicity' was melody. This is emphasized in numerous articles by Prokofiev from the 1930s.

The first of these articles was for the *New York Times*, the composer being interviewed by Olin Downes. Prokofiev explained his simplicity as conveying 'a simpler and more melodic style [...], a simpler, less complicated emotional state, and dissonance again relegated to its proper place as one element of music, contingent principally upon the meeting of melodic lines.'<sup>97</sup> The composer acknowledges the Fifth Piano Concerto as a prime example of his new idiom.<sup>98</sup> In a 1934 article for the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*, the composer discussed the 'light-serious' or 'serious-light' element of this simplicity.<sup>99</sup> He then wrote music for the film *Lieutenant Kijé*, with 'light' music accompanying a 'serious' plot, depicting the eventual death of Kijé, returning to the Pushkin- and Gogol-inspired satire. Again the simplicity is evident in the music: were it not for the occasional unconventional dissonance, sections of the work could easily be mistaken for Rimsky-Korsakov.

Prokofiev's permanent return to the Soviet in early 1936 was almost entirely attributable to political courting for propaganda purposes. There were numerous promises of commissions from the state, the money from which could be used to pay off the composer's vast debts abroad. The composer had been lavished with praise by the state, along with receiving the best food and drink and tumultuous receptions during his first return to the Soviet Union as an émigré in 1927. Prokofiev was further encouraged by the abolition, in 1932, of the Russian Association of Proletarian Composers (RAPM) and the subsequent establishment of the Union of Composers. Previously the RAPM had, as Richard Taruskin puts it, 'all but wrecked' the composer's 1929 tour,<sup>100</sup> with their publication in the first issue of Proletarian Musicians:

We had seen a genius in Prokofiev, and expected him to discover new horizons in his music, but each one of his new works has only disappointed us in these hopes. More and more, disillusionment is replacing our former ecstasy and deference.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> *The New York Times*, 2 February 1930.

<sup>98</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 294.

<sup>99</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 96.

<sup>100</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 512.

<sup>101</sup> Harlow Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 238.

The composer was given some insight into conditions in the Soviet Union before his permanent return with the imprisonment of his cousin, Shurik, who was being held as a political prisoner. He had also been subjected to state phone tapping during his 1927 trip. A few months after he returned, however, the reality truly struck with the publication of the damning article in the state-run newspaper *Pravda*, which condemned Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth* for its apparent formalism and anti-Soviet message.<sup>102</sup> Prokofiev's own reputation 'improved' in the aftermath of these attacks, according to Simon Morrison, and he saw an opportunity to become the foremost Soviet composer ahead of Shostakovich.<sup>103</sup>

Following the *Pravda* article, the state adopted the same policy it had enforced on all other arts, Socialist Realism. The modernism of the 1920s – a by-product of the Revolution – was swept aside, and criteria were devised in order to determine the path of future Soviet art.<sup>104</sup> There were three main elements designed for the glorification of Stalin, the Party, and the proletariat: *partiynost'* ('Party-mindedness'), *narodnost'* ('people-mindedness'), and *ideynost'* ('ideological content').<sup>105</sup> Socialist Realism combined historical figures from the tsarist past with imagery of the socialist utopia. Opera and film were regarded as the optimal media in which to spread propaganda with their combining of images and music.<sup>106</sup> Prokofiev responded to these demands by focussing his creative efforts on two Realist works for the stage and cinema: *Semyon Kotko* (1939) and *Alexander Nevsky* (1938).

From a purely musical perspective, compositions were expected to contain folk material. Prokofiev is quoted as saying: 'What is musical reality? It is music, which has its roots planted in Russian folklore.'<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, in 1939, he stressed the importance of folk music: '[...] that music has stood the test of time, it has lived for tens and even hundreds of years and still gives us pleasure.'<sup>108</sup> Indeed this aspect of Socialist Realism had a profound effect on the composer's compositions, as Slonimsky declares: 'Meeting the demands of growing nationalism, Prokofiev increased the amount of

---

<sup>102</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London: Faber & Faber, 1995), 108.

<sup>103</sup> Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*, 41.

<sup>104</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, 'The Soviet opera project: Ivan Dzerzhinsky vs. Ivan Susanin', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 18/2, July 2006, 190.

<sup>105</sup> Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*, 86.

<sup>106</sup> Nathan Seinen, 'Prokofiev's Semyon Kotko and the melodrama of High Stalinism', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 21/3, November 2009, 208.

<sup>107</sup> Rena Moisenko, *Realist Music: 25 Soviet Composers* (London: Macmillan, 1949), 187.

<sup>108</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 46.

Russian-inspired melodic elements in his later works.’<sup>109</sup> This is in spite of him previously showing little interest in folklore.<sup>110</sup>

In spite of this rather unnatural diversion, Prokofiev must have been encouraged upon learning that the tenets of Socialist Realism were compatible with his own policy of simplification. Instead of changing course compositionally, he enhanced his existing stylistic approaches. When discussing ‘Prokofiev dissonances’ in the context of traditional harmony, Marina Frolova-Walker explains:

These had rarely been absent from Prokofiev’s work, in spite of the variety of styles his career had embraced; in order to make his music conform with the demands of Socialist Realism, he could simply bring these elements to the fore – a radical transformation was unnecessary.<sup>111</sup>

There was a final act of simplification resulting from the Decree issued by Andrey Zhdanov in 1948. Prokofiev was castigated along with his fellow senior figures, Dmitriy Shostakovich, Nikolay Myaskovsky and Aram Khachaturian, who were branded ‘formalists’. Originally, it was the lack of purportedly memorable melodies in Vano Muradeli’s opera, *A Great Friendship*, which brought about the conference, but the leading Soviet composers were all attacked for the negative influence they were perceived to have had on the younger generation. The outcome for Prokofiev was the banning of eight of his compositions, including the Sixth and Eighth piano sonatas, as well as the ceasing of royalties from publications and performances, resulting in financial hardship.<sup>112</sup> Alfred Schnittke later claimed: ‘[these attacks] brought the composer’s life to an end in his sixty-second year.’<sup>113</sup>

Prokofiev was unable to attend the conference organised by Zhdanov in light of these attacks due to his increasingly poor health, but he did send a letter of response that was this time defiant, once again stressing the ‘importance of melody’, but conceding that it was difficult to write for the ‘uninitiated listener’ (that is what the Soviets would call the ‘proletariat’) while simultaneously making the material original.<sup>114</sup> In addition to composing works such as the ballet *The Tale of the Stone Flower*, the Cello Sonata and

---

<sup>109</sup> Nicolas Slonimsky, ‘The Changing Style of Soviet Music’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 3/3, Autumn 1950.

<sup>110</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 31.

<sup>111</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 343.

<sup>112</sup> Morrison, *The People’s Artist: Prokofiev’s Soviet Years*, 314.

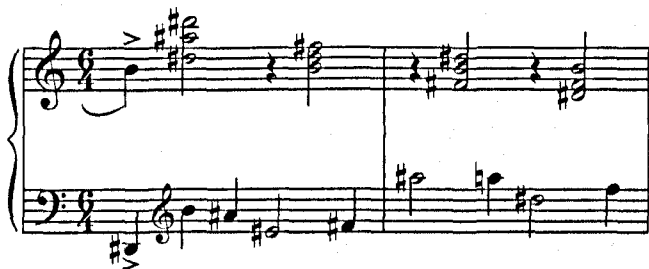
<sup>113</sup> Alexander Ivashkin (ed.), *A Schnittke Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 61.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander Worth, *Musical Uproar in Moscow* (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1973), 95.

the Seventh Symphony, Prokofiev set to work on a complete edition of his piano works.<sup>115</sup> For these three volumes, in enforced simplification, he was asked to remove the ‘col pugno’<sup>116</sup> chord in the Sixth Piano Sonata, and he offered to revise his Fifth Piano Sonata in order to comply with the Soviet aesthetic.<sup>117</sup> The latter revision was one of the last works the composer completed in January 1953, creating his Op. 135 from the original Op. 38 work composed in 1923.

The major differences in the two versions of the Fifth Sonata are structural, and they happen in the first and last movements of this three-movement work. In the opening movement, the broken triadic material, which begins the highly chromatic second subject second theme, gives way to a more clearly defined entry. Then, in the development section of the revised edition, the composer introduces an extra two bars at bars 117–8 to incorporate this new material, surrounding the chromaticism with a solid B major tonal context in the right hand (Ex. 1.19). The end of the recapitulation is altered for the same reason. The coda of the revision is more traditional in its effective preparation for the final C major chord; the original, on the other hand, features chromaticism, which dissipates into a fifth in the final bar. The third is missing in order to enhance the tonal ambiguity.

Example 1.19 – Fifth Piano Sonata, Op. 135 (Revision), b. 117–8



The revised finale incorporates considerable structural changes, with some sections deleted (it is thirteen bars shorter than the original). The largest modification comes with the addition of a longer coda section, which is far more pianistic than the original, and as in the first movement, the revision ends on the tonic triad as opposed to the single note C in the other edition. The second movement, on the other hand, contains small alterations, but the structure remains the same. Outside of the structural changes,

<sup>115</sup> Simon Morrison (ed.), *Sergey Prokofiev and His World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 278.

<sup>116</sup> ‘With a punch’. The pianist quite literally hits a cluster of notes with his/her fist.

<sup>117</sup> Morrison, *The People’s Artist: Prokofiev’s Soviet Years*, 347.



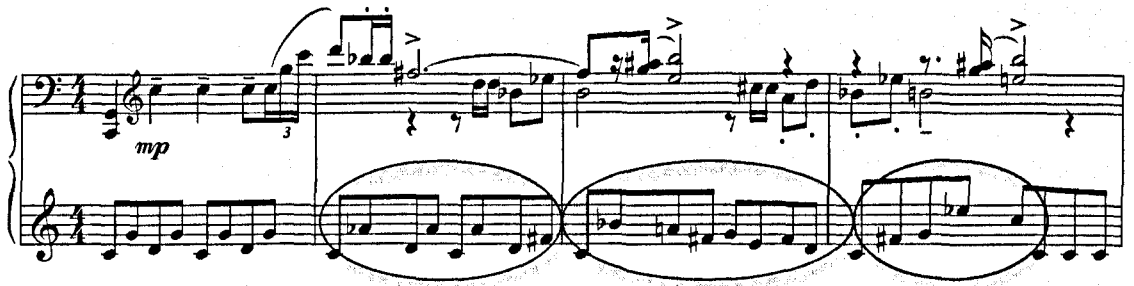
the composer makes small alterations to achieve simplicity aiming for a greater accessibility in the harmony and a more pianistic profile. In the first movement, for instance, the revised bar 6 contains an F and A flat to make the inversion change of the E flat major chord seem less abrupt through the parallel movement of the quavers (Ex. 1.20). Similarly, at the passage at bar 5 of the revised finale, the accompanying left hand plays chromatic notes to mirror the right hand material, in contrast to the original material, where the left hand remains static on a repeating tonic pedal. A greater sense of musical direction prevails in the revision, then, than in the original (Ex. 1.21).

Example 1.20a – Fifth Piano Sonata, Op. 38 (Original), bb. 5–6

Example 1.20b – Fifth Piano Sonata, Op. 135 (Revised), bb. 5–6

Example 1.21a – Fifth Piano Sonata, Op. 38 (Original), bb. 5–8

Example 1.21b – Fifth Piano Sonata, Op. 135 (Revised), bb. 5–8



The overall effect of these changes is striking. Writing about the original Op. 38 version of the Sonata, Prokofiev claimed it was one of his ‘most chromatic’ works.<sup>118</sup> Given that it was composed at the height of Prokofiev’s experimentation in the early 1920s, the avant-garde style is typical of that period. The composer, for the most part, kept the thematic material of the original intact in the Op. 135 revision, but structural and harmonic amendments, particularly in the finale, ultimately create a more balanced work. Writing in 1927 after a string of underwhelming receptions of performances of the original version, Prokofiev declared: ‘this piece is not for the wider public.’<sup>119</sup> He reacted by dropping the sonata from future programmes – an act that revealed the effect the audience reaction had on him. It was probably an ongoing plan for the composer to create a concert version of this work, and twenty years after conceiving the Sonata, he succeeded in doing this, enhancing the classicism in the piece by softening its innovative tendencies.

<sup>118</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 276.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

## CHAPTER TWO

### INFLUENCES ON PROKOFIEV'S PIANO WORKS

So far, Prokofiev's stylistic development from his early childhood through to his mature standing as an established composer has been investigated. This chapter will discover where this style originated through a series of case studies featuring Prokofiev's predecessors and contemporaries, as well as from his spiritual beliefs. Prokofiev himself noted the impact of Beethoven's final piano sonata on his Second Symphony,<sup>1</sup> but it was his second wife, Mira, who claimed that Prokofiev was looking to the composer for inspiration when writing his Sixth, Seventh and Eighth piano sonatas. More specifically, Mira asserts that it was a Romain Rolland biography of the composer that had an impact on these works.<sup>2</sup> Simon Morrison briefly mentions the influence in his short analysis of the sonatas,<sup>3</sup> but the present chapter will discuss it in more detail. What is it about Rolland's biographical and musical insight that attracted Prokofiev? In what form did these ideas manifest themselves in Prokofiev's music?

The first section will focus on Prokofiev's exposure to and admiration for Beethoven's music as a platform for a wider study of his influence, commenting on the incidental biographical similarities of the two composers. Following this, the second section details Prokofiev's use of musical quotations not just of Beethoven, but also of Schumann, and indeed his own works. The Schumann reference is related to the Beethoven allusions in its depiction of the struggle that Rolland so vividly describes. The quotations and reuse of material from his own compositions represents a further Beethoven influence – this time through his compositional process in his recycling of themes. The third section discusses Beethoven's influences in a more general light, in a comparative study of techniques employed by both composers.

The fourth section will detail Prokofiev's friendship with Igor Stravinsky as well as the influence of his music on Prokofiev's compositions. Although Prokofiev probably would not have admitted it, the aesthetics of his music changed when he became part of the Serge Diaghilev circle, following the approaches of the *Ballets Russes's* most prominent member, Stravinsky. There are references to the impact of Stravinsky's

---

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 98–99.

<sup>2</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 188.

<sup>3</sup> Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*, 162.

music on Prokofiev's made by other commentators, particularly on his *Scythian Suite*, but the present chapter will focus on those found in *Sarcasms* – which was conceived around the same time as the *Suite* (1914–15) – among other piano works. Finally, the last section involves a discussion of other musical and literary influences. In the case of Debussy, these are linked to Prokofiev's use of a Konstantin Balmont poem in writing his *Visions fugitives*. His inspiration from spirituality will also be assessed in relation to his admiration for philosophy, as well as his Christian Science religion.

### Prokofiev's Interest in Beethoven's Life and Works

Of all composers, Prokofiev claimed he owed his greatest debt to Beethoven. He was introduced to this music as a child, often lying awake at night listening to his mother play the first volume of the sonatas.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the Chopin that was also played, Prokofiev said it was Beethoven who had a 'permanent' influence on his music and not just an 'incidental' one.<sup>5</sup> It was not until later that he was to appreciate Chopin's music on the same level; this was because he was 'generally scornful of light music' at the time, preferring instead the 'stormy finales' of Beethoven.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, the composer explained that it was because of Beethoven's music that he wrote the music he did.<sup>7</sup>

Prokofiev had played many of Beethoven's piano sonatas by the time he was nine years old, and his teacher Rheinhold Glière used these works to give advice on form and orchestration when he was writing his first juvenile symphony.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, on entering the St Petersburg Conservatoire, Prokofiev had already learned a quarter of the thirty-two Beethoven sonatas.<sup>9</sup> Understandably, Beethoven's music also became an important part of the composer's education while he was at the Conservatoire. In his orchestration classes Rimsky-Korsakov would get students to orchestrate the composer's sonatas for chamber orchestra,<sup>10</sup> and both of Prokofiev's piano teachers, Alexander Winkler and Anna Yesipova, insisted he played Beethoven's music.<sup>11</sup>

Prokofiev also learned the Third Piano Concerto under Winkler and the Fifth under Yesipova. Furthermore, he expanded his solo repertoire to include the Sonata in B Flat

---

<sup>4</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 229.

<sup>5</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 1922.

<sup>8</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 36.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>11</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 103.

Major, Op. 22, the 'Waldstein' Sonata, and the final Op. 111 Sonata in C Minor. Beethoven's music became a part of the composer's repertoire while he performed across America after his emigration in 1918: he played the *Twelve Contredanses*, WoO 14 and also learned the Op. 110 A Flat Major Sonata. Myaskovsky nurtured Prokofiev's admiration for the composer, regularly playing through duets of the symphonies with him; indeed Prokofiev got through the entire cycle this way, even playing solo transcriptions of some, as well as conducting the Fourth. Prokofiev later played through the string quartets with Stravinsky in four-hand piano arrangements.<sup>12</sup> These works, his second wife Mira declared, were his favourite Beethoven compositions, along with the piano concertos and his F Major Sonata for cello.<sup>13</sup>

Prokofiev also maintained a biographical interest in Beethoven: he noted in a letter to Eleonora Damskaya that he had been making notes in order to write 'literary observations' on the composer.<sup>14</sup> Mira claimed he avidly read Romain Rolland's biography of the composer in 1939, something which ultimately influenced him in his composition of the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth piano sonatas.<sup>15</sup> Prokofiev had already formed a philosophical view of the composer in the context of his Christian Science religion, declaring:

When I thought about Beethoven, I came up with a wonderful illustration of what is taught in Christian Science, namely that only by the spirit, and not the senses, can we know what is true. Beethoven composed brilliant music and played it to others. These people had great ears, but they did not understand what this dull fool was playing, and they thought he was an absurdity because he was deaf. Why so? A deaf person could hear the beauty with no ears but a spiritual path, and people with acute hearing listened all ears and never heard the musical message.<sup>16</sup>

Romain Rolland's biography possibly appealed to Prokofiev because of its similar spiritual references to Beethoven, both philosophically and in a religious sense. The author's anguish-filled portrayal of the composer could have led Prokofiev to reflect on his own experiences in 1939, when his close friend and staunch ally, the theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold, was arrested. Prokofiev had been working with Meyerhold on his opera *Semyon Kotko*, but with his imprisonment and eventual execution, the project was

---

<sup>12</sup> Prokofiev, *Dnevnik 1919–1933*, 722.

<sup>13</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 188.

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 39; *ibid.*, 43.

<sup>15</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 188.

<sup>16</sup> Prokofiev, *Dnevnik 1919–1933*, 434.

thrown into disarray.<sup>17</sup> Beethoven's struggle, of course, relates to a different type of crisis, namely his onset of deafness. Rolland sums up the state of affairs in his text:

The misfortune that descends on him [Beethoven] between 1800 and 1802, like the storm in the Pastoral – though in his case the sky never clears again – smites him in all his being at once; in his social life, in love, in art. Everything is attacked: nothing escapes.<sup>18</sup>

Rolland also connects Beethoven and religion, as Prokofiev had previously done in his diaries:

When we speak of Beethoven we have to speak of God: God to him is the first reality, the most real of realities; we shall meet with him throughout all his thinking.<sup>19</sup>

Aside from their perceived spirituality, there are interesting biographical parallels between Beethoven and Prokofiev. Both composers established themselves in a revolutionary environment; Beethoven lived in a world changed by the French Revolution, while Prokofiev had to cope with the effects of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917. In Beethoven's case, to reflect these progressive times in his music, he connected himself with members of the *Order der Illuminaten* – a group of reformist cultural thinkers – while living in Bonn.<sup>20</sup> Prokofiev's equivalents, of course, were the radically minded musicians of the St Petersburg Evenings of Contemporary Music. To achieve an original style, both composers embraced aspects of tradition and innovation. Indeed, this dichotomy is a key feature of Prokofiev's style, and many Beethoven biographers conclude that it was also present in the German composer's outlook. Kinderman, for instance, frequently refers to the Beethovenian 'balance between tradition and innovation'.<sup>21</sup> The author goes on specifically to identify the period up until 1801 as Beethoven's most experimental, where he created a 'tension between consolidation and innovation', before he decided to take his 'new path', rejecting his previous works.<sup>22</sup> Prokofiev's 'new path', after following a similar course in his search for originality, came with his turn to simplicity around 1926. In order to find their original voices, both composers dismissed some of the guidance of their teachers, with

---

<sup>17</sup> Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*, 96.

<sup>18</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 47.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>20</sup> William Kinderman, *Beethoven* (New York, OUP, 1995), 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

Beethoven refusing Antonio Salieri's advice,<sup>23</sup> and Prokofiev going against his St Petersburg professors.

The compositional processes of both composers were also similar. Beethoven carried a sketchbook with him,<sup>24</sup> writing down any themes that came into his head, and Prokofiev did the same throughout his life; when he was ill near to the end and no sketchbook was available, he even used hospital napkins.<sup>25</sup> Throughout this period, too, Prokofiev used separate notebooks for sketching themes for public and private works: propagandist works for the state, and those with a more personal meaning.<sup>26</sup> In spite of his perceived lack of interest in politics, Prokofiev was forced to write politically orientated public music in order to avoid Meyerhold's fate. Beethoven, who famously scribbled out the dedication of his Third Symphony ('Eroica') to Napoleon Bonaparte, was more politically minded; as Kinderman states, the composer actively engaged in politics by writing music for the state in order to 'gain economic reward and court political favour.'<sup>27</sup>

The private music of both composers shares a personal expressiveness; in Beethoven, there is a sense of anguish and fate in the middle- and late-period works that almost always resolves, reflecting his declaration to carry on living for the 'love of his art' in the Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802, in spite of the soul-destroying onset of deafness.<sup>28</sup> For Prokofiev, fate and melancholy are portrayed in the so-called 'War Sonatas' (although Prokofiev did not give them this name): the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Piano Sonatas. Sviatoslav Richter, who premièred the Seventh Sonata, claimed that it 'reflected [the Soviet audience's] innermost feelings and concerns', comparing it to Dmitri Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, the 'Leningrad'. He went on to allude to the terror and brutality of the Soviet regime, but maintained a positive perspective:

With this work, we are brutally plunged into the anxiously threatening atmosphere of a world that has lost its balance. Chaos and uncertainty reign. We see murderous forces unleashed. But this does not mean that what we lived by therefore ceases to exist. We continue to feel and to love. Now the full range of human emotions bursts forth. Together with our fellow men and women, we raise a voice of protest and share the

---

<sup>23</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Kinderman, *Beethoven*, 63.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Jaffé, *Sergey Prokofiev (20th-Century Composers)* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 207.

<sup>26</sup> Natalia Savkina, 'Back in the USSR', *Three Oranges Journal*, January 2001, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Kinderman, *Beethoven*, 169.

<sup>28</sup> Denis Matthews, *Beethoven* (London: Dent, 1985), 264–6.

common grief. We sweep everything before us, borne along by the will for victory. In the tremendous struggle that this involves, we find the strength to affirm the irrepressible life-force.<sup>29</sup>

Connections between the music of Shostakovich and Prokofiev go further. Shostakovich's works can also be divided into those for public and private use; for instance, in his chamber music, he moves from terror to deep solemnity as a reflection of his dealings with the Soviet regime. In his description of his quartets, as well as acknowledging Shostakovich's use of a 'private rather than a public voice', Richard Taruskin draws parallels with the quartets of Beethoven:

The Shostakovich quartet 'voice', like Beethoven's, is an amalgam of generic and specific signifying devices: always allusive, but always elusive as well – code without key. The horrors breached in the Third Quartet (or rather its second half), and the tight-lipped reticence with which it ends, can all be linked with the events and moods of the just concluded Patriotic War. But they can be read in many other contexts as well. Some are personal. Some are political.<sup>30</sup>

#### Musical Quotations: Beethoven and Beyond

Prokofiev's Sixth, Seventh and Eighth sonatas all contain references to Beethoven's 'fate' motif, which famously begins his Fifth Symphony, as well as being present in the opera *Fidelio* and many other works. In Rolland's biography, the motto is frequently recognised by the author as destiny speaking,<sup>31</sup> a concept that ultimately goes hand in hand with Prokofiev's Christian Science beliefs. Prokofiev was not the first to reuse Beethoven's musical signature, and would certainly not be the last; according to Taruskin, it can also be found in the music of Erik Satie, Igor Stravinsky, and Manuel de Falla.<sup>32</sup> Prokofiev had previously used it himself in the Prince's laughing scene of the opera *Love for Three Oranges*,<sup>33</sup> and would later finish his Sixth Symphony with it. In the opera, the motif 'parodies' Beethoven's work in an act of neo-classicism, but in the symphony it has the same tragic effect as in the piano sonatas. Comparisons can also be made with Tchaikovsky's fateful Fifth Symphony, which features a similar ending.

The use of the 'fate' motto is particularly prominent in Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata, where it forms part of the main theme. Its inclusion is perhaps linked to Socialist

---

<sup>29</sup> Bruno Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations* (London, Faber & Faber, 2005), 81.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Taruskin, *On Russian Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 352.

<sup>31</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 181.

<sup>32</sup> Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music v. 4*, 502.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*



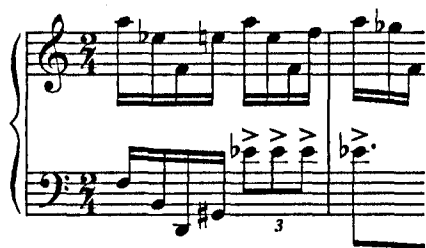
Realism; Marina Frolova-Walker noted how ‘classicizing devices’ were an integral part of the aesthetic. It would also follow the Realist concept of what she describes as a ‘Beethovenian narrative of victory won through struggle.’<sup>34</sup> Prokofiev relays this image by balancing extreme dissonance and tonal ambiguity in the opening movement with a solid B flat major close in the finale. Tonally, this creates the allusion of triumph prevailing over uncertainty.

It is the sizeable presence of experimental dissonance that would explain his utter surprise at being awarded a second class Stalin Prize for the work. In a letter to Myaskovsky, the composer expressed gratitude for his award, while expressing a belief that the sonata ran contrary to the Soviet aesthetic:

I must thank your dear relative separately because no doubt he was promoting my case behind the scenes – otherwise, why would they have given it to me for such a muddled piece when they didn’t give it to me for more simple and clear ones?<sup>35</sup>

In the Sixth Sonata, the ‘fate’ motif is first heard in the left hand at bar 6 as an E-flat rising to F, and returns amongst a denser texture at bar 11, where it is accented percussively with the *fortissimo* dynamic. In the development section, Prokofiev modifies the motif by employing rhythmic diminutions and augmentations at bars 154–6, in processes that are similar to those used by Beethoven in his late sonatas. The figure returns in the last pages of the finale across several registers, among a *perpetuum mobile* flurry of semiquavers (Ex. 2.1). This passage is similar to a section of the ‘Appassionata’ that Rolland describes in his prose. He refers to the motif as that of a ‘kettle-drum’: ‘The tempest can lash! And the kettle-drums roll!’<sup>36</sup>

Example 2.1 – Sixth Piano Sonata, Op. 82, Movement IV, b. 411



<sup>34</sup> Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*, 313.

<sup>35</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 328.

<sup>36</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 185.

Prokofiev writes the main theme of the first movement of the Seventh Sonata in two parts, which is something that Rolland recognises in the corresponding main theme of the ‘Appassionata’ (Ex. 2.2). In the Seventh, it is the second part of this subject – which, like in the Beethoven, is an answer to the opening statement – that contains the ‘fate’ motif. Here, the figure can be heard in the middle of the texture underneath an inverted tonic pedal. Its next appearance is a clear reference to the Rolland biography: Prokofiev writes a repeated C in the left hand in the rhythm of the ‘fate’ motif at b. 76, with the indication ‘quasi Timp.’, thus, highlighting Rolland’s allusion to kettle-drums. The motif returns to open the second subject in the following slow section; here, a comparison can be made with the second subject of the ‘Appassionata’, which is also based on material from the first subject, underscoring Rolland’s concept of ‘unity’.<sup>37</sup>

Example 2.2 – Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, Movement I, bb. 1–6

Allegro inquieto

*mp*

*p*

Example 2.3 – Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, Movement I, bb. 124–8

Andantino

*p espress. e dolente*

*mp*

Prokofiev presents the fate motif in the development section through a similar technique to that employed in the Sixth Sonata; a rhythmically augmented version of the figure is presented in the bass as single Gs at bars 268–9, before being restated as octaves in bars 280–1, in an elongated transformation of the second subject (Ex. 2.4). A busy quaver ostinato passage in the right hand also adds to the tempestuousness. To finish the movement, there are several statements of the motto that descend into the lower registers of the instrument at a quiet dynamic, producing an effect that is very much reminiscent of the ending of the opening movement of the ‘Appassionata’; both

<sup>37</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 148–9.

movements unwind calmly after the intensive drama. The proportions of all three movements of the Seventh create a ‘telescopic’ structure, with the first being the largest and the last the shortest; the length of the middle movement is halfway between the two. Denis Matthews identifies the same layout in Beethoven’s Sonata in F Major, Op. 10 No. 2.<sup>38</sup>

Example 2.4 – Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, Movement I, bb. 280–1



The rising and falling nature of leaping quaver thirds in the right hand, which are used first at bars 23–7, is similar to the contour of a passage from the ‘Appassionata’ that contains comparable material: Rolland quotes from bars 27–9 of the work (Ex. 2.5).<sup>39</sup> Thematically, the Eighth Sonata uses fewer of these Beethovenian figures, but the ‘fate’ motif finds its way into the finale: Prokofiev fittingly ends the ‘war sonatas’ with three statements of the motto that helps cement the trilogy’s ‘unity’.

Example 2.5a – Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, Movement I, bb. 24–7



Example 2.5b – Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 57, ‘Appassionata’, Movement I, bb. 27–9



<sup>38</sup> Matthews, *Beethoven*, 80.

<sup>39</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 181.

Beethoven's struggles against the onset of deafness and the resulting music in his slow movements are described by Rolland as 'mirrors of the soul'.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps Prokofiev attempted to emulate Beethoven's in the second movement of the Seventh Sonata: the dramatic 'Andante caloroso' sends the listener on a journey of despair. As Daniel Jaffé discovered, the composer quotes Robert Schumann's 'Wehmuth' ('Sadness') from his Op. 39 *Liederkreis* song cycle,<sup>41</sup> featuring text that is maybe a coded representation of how Prokofiev was feeling during this difficult period:

Sometimes I can sing  
as if I were happy,  
but secretly tears well up  
and free my heart.

The text can be regarded as a short description of the movement itself. Prokofiev opens it with a chromatic development of Schumann's theme in the same key, E major, with the lyricism and quiet dynamic conveying an apparent innocence; this might represent the first two lines in Schumann's text (see Ex. 2.6). But it is the way this melody is developed that suggests hopelessness. When the theme returns to its home key after a brief modulation to D major, it is answered by a declamatory line at forte: this the first time we witness the 'tears well[ing] up'. Prokofiev maintains the sense of gloom in the middle section by increasing the tempo through a 'Poco più animato' indication, and by writing semiquavers for the first time. The gradual dynamic increase that accompanies it leads to the cancelling out of the faster tempo change ('Più largamente') where impassioned rapid ascending scales become a feature.

Example 2.6a – Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, Movement II, bb. 1–4

The musical score for Example 2.6a shows the first four measures of the second movement of Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83. The music is in E major (three sharps) and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Andante caloroso'. The right hand begins with a piano (p) dynamic, playing a chromatic melody. The left hand plays a mezzo-piano (mp) cantabile line. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* and *mp cantabile*.

<sup>40</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 123.

<sup>41</sup> Jaffé, *Sergey Prokofiev (20th-Century Composers)*, 172.

Example 2.6b – Schumann’s *Liederkreis*, Op.39, ‘Wehmuth’

Sehr langsam. *p*

Voice

Piano

*sehr gebunden* Ich kann wohl manch\_mal sin - gen,

With another increase in volume to fortissimo, the climax of the movement arrives in a section marked ‘un poco agitato’. Here, triplet quavers outline the chords of B minor, D minor, and finally C major, and the harmonic centre briefly remains. The dark character returns when this bright tonality is distorted by a series of chords based around G sharp minor (as well as its enharmonic equivalent, A flat minor) and the volume level returns to piano and pianissimo. Repetition is also an important factor here with E and G octaves providing a harmonic pedal in the bass and accented A flats descending to G in the alto line. Indeed, the resulting static effect introduces uncertainty as to how this journey will end (see Ex. 2.7). What Prokofiev ultimately does is to reintroduce the main theme unexpectedly. After the turbulence the movement has generated, the theme is stripped of its innocence; it now appears as a distant echo of the opening.<sup>42</sup> To add tonal ambiguity at the finish, Prokofiev disrupts the E major home key created by the inverted pedal in the treble with a series of D sharp minor, C sharp minor and C major chords, before the main theme, which has become fragmented, disappears in a pianissimo dynamic. Denis Matthews explains that the finale of the Beethoven Sonata in E Major, Op. 109, contains a similar restatement of the theme ‘enhanced in light of its experiences’;<sup>43</sup> the encompassed variations are highly dramatic and, at times, tumultuous, like in the middle section of Prokofiev’s movement.

<sup>42</sup> Some pianists choose to enhance this echo-like effect by disobeying the written dynamics and tempo by opting for a quieter and slower approach. While Prokofiev does not endorse this in the score, the result can be breathtakingly effective.

<sup>43</sup> Matthews, *Beethoven*, 98.

Example 2.7 – Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, Movement II, bb. 81–86

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a complex, rhythmic melody with frequent accidentals (flats and naturals) and dynamic markings of *pp* and *mf*. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a steady accompaniment of chords, primarily triads and dyads, with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The time signature is 3/4.

Thus the movement ends on a note of slight hope, one that in many ways reflects Prokofiev's personal situation at the time. In spite of the setbacks he had endured since returning to the Soviet Union, it is perhaps his belief in the positivity of Christian Science that led him to overcome these setbacks, hence the final resolution of the tension created across the movement, in order to highlight the last line of Schumann's text, 'to free my heart'. Alfred Schnittke believes that such denial in accepting reality ultimately caused Prokofiev's downfall:

The true tragedy of Prokofiev's life lies in the fact that he refused to accept the tragic as one of life's highest criteria, because the consequence of such a refusal is that the tragic becomes twice as powerful, twice as cogent.<sup>44</sup>

Of course, it is not certain that Prokofiev intended musical-biographical parallels to be made as Shostakovich did later, but there is weight behind Schnittke's claim that the messages in the serious works such as the Sixth Symphony and the Eighth Piano Sonata have long been ignored.<sup>45</sup> And the Seventh Piano Sonata can be added to that list. It cannot be known whether Francis Poulenc was on to something when he described the Schumann theme in the second movement of the sonata as 'one of those melodies of which Prokofiev has the secret.'<sup>46</sup> Apart from the tragic nature of this theme, it is difficult to know why Prokofiev chose the allusion to Schumann in particular, if indeed the paraphrase was intentional. It is possible that the composer's friendly relationship<sup>47</sup> with the soprano, Nina Koshetz, who emigrated and established a career in America, had something to do with it. Koshetz was obsessed enough with the work of Schumann to claim herself as a reincarnation of the composer; therefore, it is likely that Prokofiev

<sup>44</sup> Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader*, 64.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>46</sup> Austin, *Music in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: From Debussy Through Stravinsky*, 466.

<sup>47</sup> Despite Prokofiev's tendency to flirt overtly with females, there is no reason to suggest that he and Koshetz were ever anything more than good friends: the composer strenuously denied having an affair with the soprano in his diaries, even if Prokofiev's wife Lina was suspicious.

heard her perform the work, or even accompanied her in a performance of it. Furthermore, the composer was not allowed to travel abroad after his final trip to America in 1938, so was he in fact reminiscing about his time spent there?

The recycling of themes in Prokofiev's works is not limited to those of other composers; he also reuses themes from his own previously unsuccessful works in the Eighth Piano Sonata. Again, parallels can be drawn with Beethoven, who recycled several themes, including most famously from his ballet *Prometheus* in the 'Eroica' Symphony. Prokofiev was proud enough to make this connection himself. After a conversation with Koussevitzky about the reusing of themes from his ballet *The Prodigal Son* in the Fourth Symphony, he wrote in his diary:

When I started to explain that the Fourth Symphony had been built out of material derived from *Prodigal Son*, [Koussevitzky] exclaimed, 'But that's fine! After all, Beethoven used material from *Prometheus* for his Third Symphony.' I was thrilled by this magnificent precedent: no one is going to argue that Beethoven was a bad symphonist!!!<sup>48</sup>

For the main theme of the first movement of the Eighth Sonata, Prokofiev uses 'Lisa's Theme' from his film score *The Queen of Spades*, Op. 70, with the theme appearing in its full form at bars 10–17 and bars 18–25. Similarly, for the main theme of the slow middle movement, 'Andante sognando', the composer quotes from Scene 12, 'Larin's Ball', of his incidental music to *Eugene Onegin*, Op. 71. In the quoted work, the theme returns in the 'Waltz' of Scene 15 with the same key and modulations as in the sonata. Unlike the Schumann quotation in the Seventh, there is no biographical significance attached to the use of these themes. Instead, as demonstrated in the Third Symphony, which uses themes from the doomed opera *The Fiery Angel*, Prokofiev was unwilling to let what he perceived to be good themes go to waste. The production of *Queen of Spades* suffered a similar fate to *The Fiery Angel*, being cancelled by the Committee on Cinema Affairs due to it losing interest in films based around 'classical subjects'.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, a staging of *Eugene Onegin* was abandoned as a result of the theatre director Alexander Tairov's disagreement with the state. An example of reused material

---

<sup>48</sup> Serge Prokofiev (ed. & trans. Anthony Phillips), *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1924–1933: Prodigal Son* (London: Faber & Faber, 2012), 819. The comparison was made in a letter by Koussevitzky, dated 11 October 1930. Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergey Prokofiev*, 204–5.

<sup>49</sup> Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*, 140.

in the Beethoven sonatas, as Denis Matthews notes, is the F Minor Sonata, Op. 2 No. 1, where the composer draws on material from his WoO 36 Piano Quartet.<sup>50</sup>

Prokofiev's sonatas are not the only compositions that reveal Beethoven's influence. The composer explained, in a letter to Boris Asafiev, how the structure of the Second Symphony is based on Beethoven's Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111: '[...] a sombre first movement, and a theme and variations for the second and final movements.'<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Prokofiev, in writing his First String Quartet in B Minor, decided to use research on the Beethoven quartets as his starting point. The composer described in his biography how this possibly 'explains the somewhat "classical" idiom' of the first movement of the quartet.<sup>52</sup> And this classicism indeed surfaces in the Prokofiev sonatas.

### Beethoven's Influences on the Piano Sonatas

Beethoven's contribution to the piano literature has long been regarded as one of the most significant in musical history, above all in his thirty-two piano sonatas. Prokofiev did not match his predecessor's quantity of writing for piano; however, his nine sonatas mark an important twentieth-century milestone for the instrument. Prokofiev retained the fundamental structures of the eighteenth-century sonata, while conveying original ideas.<sup>53</sup> The influence of Beethoven's model in particular is not just limited to formal procedure, but also includes thematic ideas and treatment, harmony, and rhythm.

Beethoven's sonatas were generally published in groups of three, but as Charles Rosen explains, more as a commercial move to demonstrate the individuality of each work than anything else. The Sixth, Seventh and Eighth sonatas of Prokofiev can be regarded as a trilogy on account of the temporal proximity in their composition reflected in the consecutive opus numbers (opp. 82, 83 and 84). But the Third and Fourth sonatas could also be regarded as a set (opp. 28 and 29), both having the subtitle 'From Old Notebooks' as reworkings of the composer's juvenilia. Therefore, comparisons can be drawn with the Beethoven sonatas in sets of two: opp. 14, 27, and 49.<sup>54</sup> The 'War Sonatas' indeed display contrasting characters, as Frank Merrick points out.<sup>55</sup> The Sixth

---

<sup>50</sup> Matthews, *Beethoven*, 78.

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 98–99. Translation slightly altered.

<sup>52</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 291.

<sup>53</sup> A more detailed discussion of how Prokofiev achieves this forms the basis of the next chapter.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Rosen, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion* (New Haven: Yale, 2002), 164.

<sup>55</sup> Merrick, 'Prokofieff's Works for Piano Solo', 29.



is brutal and percussive, the Seventh punching, reflective and grotesquely humorous, and the Eighth lyrical and pensive.

Prokofiev's sonatas are mostly in three or four movements. The former was eighteenth-century convention, the latter an innovation of Beethoven's for his first Op. 2 set. The anomalies are Prokofiev's First and Third sonatas, which adopt a single sonata-allegro movement structure instead, similar to those used by his compatriots Alexander Skryabin and Nikolay Medtner. Prokofiev, without fail, also begins his three- and four-movement sonatas with a sonata-allegro, which again appeals to convention, although Beethoven (and Mozart before him) occasionally opted for a first movement in variation form. Interestingly, in the sonatas with material composed before 1908, Prokofiev rigidly retains the conventional key relationships of the classical sonata form as witnessed in Beethoven; this can be heard in the First, Third and Fourth sonatas (1907, 1907, 1908).<sup>56</sup> The rest of the works – which, starting with the Second were composed from 1912 onwards – are concerned less with key, although the basic sonata form principles are retained in their developmental processes. This adds weight to the identification in the previous chapter of the year 1908 as the beginning of Prokofiev's more progressive outlook.

The structures of Prokofiev's middle movements display Beethovenian influences. In the three-movement sonatas, Prokofiev generally uses a slow movement in cavatina (or 'slow-movement'), binary or ternary form, which, again, are common to Beethoven. There are two exceptions: in the Eighth Sonata, Prokofiev replaces this with a minuet – a Beethovenian alternative; and in the Seventh Sonata he writes an unbalanced ternary form, creating his most experimental middle movement. In his four-movement works, Prokofiev includes a scherzo as the second movement, which goes against eighteenth-century convention, but Beethoven does the same in several of his sonatas, including the A Flat Major Sonata, Op. 26.<sup>57</sup> Initially Prokofiev may have been reluctant to structure the movements in this way: the original manuscript of the scherzo from the Second Sonata clearly has 'III' written at the top. It is unclear exactly when and why Prokofiev changed his mind, but he remained consistent with this order in his Sixth and Ninth piano sonatas.

---

<sup>56</sup> The latter two of the listed sonatas were revised in 1917 after the Second Sonata was written, which will explain their seemingly odd numbering. This is explained further in Chapter Three.

<sup>57</sup> It is worth pointing out that Chopin also uses the same placement of the scherzo before the slow movement, in his Second (Op. 35) and Third (Op. 58) piano sonatas; indeed, Prokofiev played the former of the two.

In his finales, Prokofiev employs rondo structures, although these are somewhat freer than the classical model; for instance, in the last movement of the Seventh Sonata, Prokofiev uses an arch form variant (ABCBA). The Beethoven finale model, however, was also much more malleable than the opening movement.<sup>58</sup> There is only one final movement where Prokofiev opts for a sonata-allegro structure, namely in the Second Sonata. Beethoven uses it in several of his sonatas, including Op. 27 No. 2 in C Sharp Minor, and the 'Appassionata' Sonata in F Minor, Op. 57.

Prokofiev follows the late Beethoven sonata-form model in his own later sonatas: from the Sixth Sonata onwards, he juxtaposes two contrasting fast and slow sections in his sonata form expositions. Kinderman explains these sections as 'opposites [...] with every new complexity of style seeming to parallel, as its antithesis, a childlike simplicity.'<sup>59</sup> The presence of this 'simplicity' certainly reinforces comparisons between the composers. In his biography, Romain Rolland stresses the importance of unity in Beethoven, seeing this as his 'final goal';<sup>60</sup> the cyclical themes employed in the late sonatas such as the A Major, Op. 101 – which surfaced in earlier works such as his Fifth Symphony – are symptomatic. Prokofiev imitates this practice in his Second, Sixth, and Ninth sonata finales by recalling themes from their corresponding opening movements.

Beethoven had a tendency to write elemental subjects based on conventional pianistic techniques; for instance flourishing scales or arpeggios, and rapid thirds or sixths. The opening of the 'Appassionata' Sonata features an ascending and descending arpeggio in the home key of F minor; Prokofiev uses a similar idea for the opening of the finale of his Eighth Sonata. Rapid thirds and sixths can be found in the virtuoso Sonata in C Major of Beethoven, Op. 2 No. 3, which uses them at the opening of the work as well as at the start of the finale. Similarly, Prokofiev's Sixth Sonata utilizes thirds at the opening, in a dactylic motif that becomes a key feature of the work. The development section of his Third Sonata features ascending white-note parallel sixths, with superimposed thirds added a bar later in an idea based around the triadic material of the first subject. This is reminiscent of the opening of the finale of the Beethoven sonata, where ascending parallel sixths outline rising diatonic parallel triads (Ex. 2.8).

---

<sup>58</sup> Rosen, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> Kinderman, *Beethoven*, 195.

<sup>60</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 174

Example 2.8a – Piano Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 28, bb. 205–7

Example 2.8b – Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C Major, Op. 2 No. 3, Movement IV, bb. 1–2

Boris Berman compares the 'serene, meditative tone' of Prokofiev's Ninth Sonata with the thematic material in Beethoven's late sonatas such as the C major Arietta of Op. 111.<sup>61</sup> Its antithesis is what Romain Rolland describes as 'signs of weakness and terror',<sup>62</sup> demonstrated in Beethoven's contrasting tumultuous passages. Beethoven's obsession with long trill passages in moments such as this had an impact on Prokofiev's Sixth Sonata, where, in the development section of the first movement, trills are employed to embellish the repeating descending four-note motif of the second subject second theme (Ex. 2.9). Indeed, Rolland refers to such repetition in Beethoven as him 'dwelling upon a point'.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, the main subject of the same movement alternates between A major and minor modalities (Ex. 2.10), a harmonic feature that is present at the end of the exposition of Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' Sonata, Op. 106.<sup>64</sup> This can perhaps be regarded as a localized version of the larger-scale manipulation of light and dark contrasts.

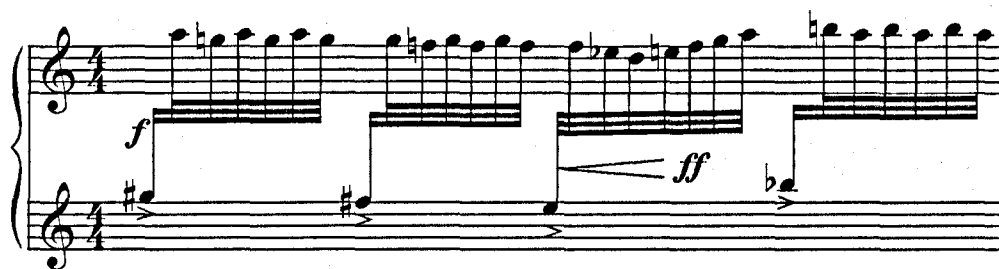
<sup>61</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 194.

<sup>62</sup> Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, 183.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>64</sup> Matthews, *Beethoven*, 97.

Example 2.9 – Sixth Piano Sonata, Op. 82, Movement I, bb. 185



Example 2.10 – Sixth Piano Sonata, Op. 82, Movement I, bb. 1–2



Charles Rosen describes the Beethoven sonatas as containing ‘gravity, as well as passion and humour’,<sup>65</sup> an assessment that could apply equally well to Prokofiev’s sonatas. In Beethoven’s music, the humour comes from the composer’s own personality, and particularly his interest in puns; Prokofiev was also fond of such wit. There are several ways in which both composers reflect this character in their sonatas. For example, unexpected or ‘wrong’ notes or chords have comedic value. In Beethoven, this effect is prominent throughout his Op. 10 sonatas; for instance, the finale of the C Minor Sonata (Op. 10 No. 1) features a C flat major chord that is alien to the home key. Prokofiev frequently uses a similar technique such as in the development of the finale of the Second Piano Sonata in D Minor, where humour occurs on two levels. Firstly, the F sharp triads in the left hand accompaniment are used to destabilize the C major key. Secondly, the dancing theme in the right hand is interrupted by accented repeated C sharps, which achieves the same effect (Ex. 2.11). It is only when we reach the recapitulation section at bar 238 that we realise these C sharps had a wider tonal purpose all along: as leading notes in D minor, they prepare us for the return to the home key.

<sup>65</sup> Rosen, *Beethoven’s Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion*, 4.

Example 2.11 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement IV, bb. 177–184

While in Prokofiev's music, as in Beethoven's, basic harmonic progressions are not unconventional, larger-scale modulations can occasionally be more innovative. For example, the exposition section of Beethoven's 'Waldstein' Sonata, Op. 53, moves from the C major home key to a B flat major tonality in the second phrase, with the opening subject transposed down a tone. Not long after, we find ourselves in the remote key of E major for the second subject (bar 35). Similar digressions take place at the opening of Prokofiev's Fifth Sonata, Op. 38. Again in C major, the tonality reaches E flat major at bar 6, which, through an obscure ascending parallel progression, leads to the dominant seventh of the home key at bar 8. To enhance the classicism of this opening, the composer writes a flowing Mozartian theme at bar 1 over a typical rocking quaver figure accompaniment in the alto (Ex. 2.12).

Charles Rosen also points out that the descent of a tone that occurs in the 'Waldstein', as well as in the 'comic piece' that is the G Major Sonata (Op. 31 No. 1) became an obsession of Prokofiev's.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, as well as being present in the Fifth Sonata, it is also used in the Second Sonata finale, where the flattened leading note of D minor, C, is used as one of the primary tonalities, beginning with the second theme at bar 34. The tarantella rhythm used throughout the finale serves to enhance the comedy (Ex. 2.13); indeed, the same rhythm is used in the 'Scherzo' movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E Flat Major, Op. 31 No. 3.

<sup>66</sup> Rosen, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion*, 166.

Example 2.12 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement I, bb. 1–8

Allegro tranquillo

*p*

*cresc.*

Example 2.13 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement IV, bb. 18–23

[Vivace.]  
*scherzando*

*p*

The second movement of the Prokofiev Sonata, which is also a ‘Scherzo’, is humorous in a visual way as well as a musical one, with the pianist having to cross hands rapidly. The same technique can be found throughout Beethoven’s repertory, such as in the finale of his C Major Piano Concerto, Op. 15. Prokofiev intensifies the witty character with the acrobatic leaping in both hands in the middle trio section, which contains spacings of twelfth intervals in the left hand, with repeated A flat and D flat crotchets. Indeed, Beethoven frequently used similar techniques, as in the Scherzo from his C Major Sonata, Op. 2 No. 3 – which at one point jumps two octaves in the right hand – and in the leaping crotchets in the second movement of the A Flat Major Sonata, Op. 110.

### Prokofiev and Stravinsky

Another important influence on Prokofiev’s music is that of his contemporary, Igor Stravinsky. The two composers had a turbulent relationship; occasionally they were gracious to one another, at other times petty, but their mutual musical influence is

nevertheless apparent. Prokofiev first became acquainted with Stravinsky's music after hearing *Petrushka* in Paris while on a tour of Europe in 1913, which his mother had organized as a graduation present. Prokofiev was enthralled by this new work, which he described in a letter to Myaskovsky:

*Petrushka* is truly entertaining, vivacious, witty, cheerful and exciting. The music – dynamic, with lots of movement and exclamation and illustrating the tiniest features of what is happening on stage ... The orchestration is excellent, even amusing when necessary.<sup>67</sup>

Prokofiev left Paris on 10 May [Old-Style],<sup>68</sup> missing the controversial première of *The Rite of Spring* by just a few weeks. In July 1913, however, in his capacity as a music journalist, Myaskovsky managed to get hold of a copy of the score, which he showed to Prokofiev, picking out passages that reinforced his impression of Stravinsky as a 'gifted innovator'.<sup>69</sup> It was not until 12 February 1914, however, that Prokofiev first heard the work, in a concert organized by Serge Koussevitzky. Afterwards, he exclaimed: 'Whatever else it is, this work is full of life and all but captures the listener.'<sup>70</sup> The pair finally met for the first time in Rome in 1915, where Prokofiev had also arranged to meet Serge Diaghilev. Stravinsky, who was 'anxious' to meet his contemporary, used the opportunity to showcase *The Rite of Spring*, putting Prokofiev's excellent sight-reading ability to the test in a performance of the piano duet version of the work. Prokofiev's diary entry records the profound impact the piece had on him:

To my total and unexpected amazement I saw that [*The Rite of Spring*] is a magnificent work, with its incredible colours, its clarity and mastery. I sincerely congratulated the composer, and he in return praised my performance.<sup>71</sup>

Prokofiev attempted to imitate Stravinsky's success by writing a ballet on an ancient Russian theme, *Ala and Lolli*, but Diaghilev rejected it, describing it as a piece of 'internationalism'.<sup>72</sup> The score for the ballet is now lost, but the reworked material exists in Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite*, Op. 20, which was completed in 1915. The 'international' aspect of the suite is the result of Prokofiev's aforementioned dislike of folksong, and his fondness for traditional structures. If the ballet mirrored this approach,

---

<sup>67</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 235.

<sup>68</sup> 23 May New-Style.

<sup>69</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 429.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 601.

<sup>71</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 29.

<sup>72</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 245.

it would have contrasted with the music of *The Rite of Spring*, which makes use of folksong as well as abandoning traditional form, as an extension to what the *Kuchka* had achieved in the nineteenth century. Hence Stravinsky's compositional approach was in many ways opposite to Prokofiev's methods. Rita McAllister expands on this comparison, highlighting Prokofiev's more traditional, 'international' approach:

Prokofiev's rhythms are almost entirely external: they evolve around unchanging, metric beat, and are characteristically unsyncopated. [...] Prokofiev's melodies, too – again unlike Stravinsky's – are both strongly metrical and fall into recognizable phrase structures; almost all of his linear figurations tend to function as, and to sound like, tunes – though of a highly distinctive nature.<sup>73</sup>

To emulate Stravinsky, Prokofiev instead looked to facets of his harmonic language, as well as his music's brutal and percussive nature. Not only is Stravinsky's influence present in the *Scythian Suite*, but it is also evident in his piano composition, *Sarcasms*, Op. 17 (1914).

Much work has been done in recent decades on analyzing Stravinsky's style. Richard Taruskin's study of his early style links the composer's language to the music of the *Kuchka*.<sup>74</sup> Whether Stravinsky consciously intended it or not, the product of this approach, in the famous 'Petrushka chord', was polytonality.<sup>75</sup> This is also an effect that can be found in *Sarcasms*. Prokofiev's usage, however, is a result of the influence of the Stravinsky aesthetic rather than that of the *Kuchka*; as has been previously discussed, Prokofiev was attempting to find an original style, and such experimentation prioritized Western technique over methods of the *Kuchka*.

The exploitation of bitonality is most evident in the third of the *Sarcasms*, which features different key signatures between the hands: the right hand plays in F sharp minor, and the left in D flat major. In the fourth of the pieces, bitonality is used in a similar way to the 'Petrushka chord' to combine two different tonalities. In the example from *Petrushka*, two broken triads (arpeggios, in effect) are used to compete tonally against one another at the tritone, with a root position C major triad in the right hand against a first inversion F sharp major triad in the left hand (see 2.14a). Prokofiev develops the idea in *Sarcasms* by stating the triads as block chords; instead of the

---

<sup>73</sup> McAllister, 'Prokofiev', 120.

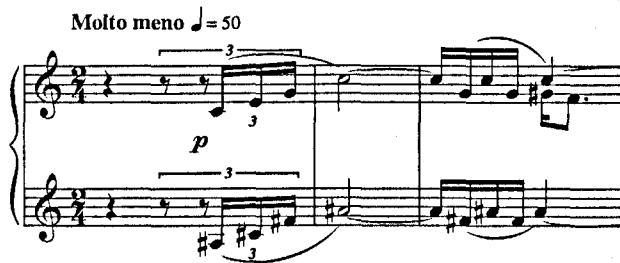
<sup>74</sup> Taruskin, 'Chez Pétouchka: Harmony and Tonality chez Stravinsky', 265–286.

<sup>75</sup> Donald J. Grout & Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* (6th edn., London: Dent, 2001), 703.

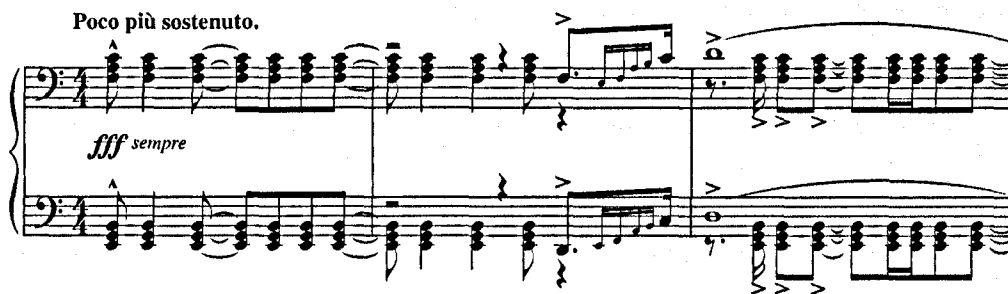


chromatic usage of the tritone, the composer opts to remain completely diatonic by writing an E minor chord in the left hand against an F major one in the right (Ex. 2.14b). If these chords were superimposed at the same octave, the result would be a complete white-note cluster. This is significant, as Prokofiev, beginning with the ballet *Chout* and *Visions fugitives*, would frequently focus attention on diatonicism in his compositions.<sup>76</sup>

Example 2.14a – Stravinsky’s *Petrushka*, ‘*Chez Pétrouchka*’, bb. 9–11



Example 2.14b – *Sarcasms* Op. 17 No. 4, bb. 14–16



Harmonically, the diatonic triads mentioned above consist of two superimposed thirds, but in the third piece, Prokofiev uses an additional third to create a series of seventh chords in the right hand. (Ex. 2.15a) Again, this is similar to a technique used in *Petrushka* where the superimposed thirds outlining a seventh are used as an accompaniment in the left hand (Ex. 2.15b). In the same passage of *Sarcasms*, a harp-like arpeggio is distributed between the hands to add an orchestral flourish. *Petrushka*, which of course was an orchestral work, features similar figures, such as that in ‘*Chez Pétrouchka*’ (Ex. 2.15c).<sup>77</sup> Indeed the rapid scale leading to the high registers at the end of this passage is another idea appearing in both compositions. At the opening of the fourth of the *Sarcasms*, it can be heard after a series of punching seventh chords at

<sup>76</sup> Such was Prokofiev’s fondness for diatonicism, he even planned to write a quartet constructed entirely of ‘white notes’ in 1918. The composition was abandoned, but themes were recycled into the Third Piano Concerto, Op. 26.

<sup>77</sup> I have taken these examples from Stravinsky’s own piano arrangement, *Three Movements from Petrushka*, to facilitate comparison.

fortissimo. This passage also compares with one from 'Dance Russe', which operates a comparable registral change (see Ex. 2.19b).

Example 2.15a – *Sarcasms*, Op. 17 No. 3, bb. 1–4

Allegro rubato.  
 mf  
 secco e senza Ped.  
 p rallentando  
 p

Example 2.15b – Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, 'La semaine grasse', bb. 49–50

Example 2.15c – Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, 'Chez Pétrouchka', bb. 51–52

accel.  
 p

Prokofiev replicates Stravinsky's percussiveness in the opening of the fifth of the *Sarcasms* with a series of accented chords in both hands at a fortissimo dynamic (2.16a). Again, polytonality is present: the chords mix tonalities of C, A flat, E flat, F, D, A and G. In *The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky uses a similar passage in 'Spring Rounds', albeit at a slower tempo, and with syncopation added in the bass (2.16b). The frequent changing of time signature helps to confuse the metric pulse in both instances. In the fifth of the *Sarcasms* the pulse is restored, but the quavers are creatively syncopated across the bar line (2.17a). The ostinato pattern that is produced is again a common feature of *The Rite of Spring*; indeed, in the example from 'Dances of the Young Girls', ostinato patterns appear at three levels of a polytonal texture, with the chords outlining an E flat major seventh, F major, and C major chords (Ex. 2.17b).

Example 2.16a – *Sarcasms*, Op. 17 No. 5, bb. 1–4

*Precipitosissimo.*

*ff*

Example 2.16b – Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, 'Spring Rounds', bb. 36–38

*8<sup>va</sup>*

Piano 1

Piano 2

Example 2.17a – *Sarcasms*, Op. 17 No. 5, bb. 33–9

*pp*

Example 2.17b – Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, 'Dances of the Young Girls', bb. 22–6

16

Piano 1

*mf* *sempre stacc.*

Piano 2

Stravinsky's impact on Prokofiev was significant enough for him to list Stravinsky as one of his favourite composers. In an interview with Motoo Ohtaguro, which took place during a brief stopover in Japan before he headed to America in 1918, Prokofiev gave an honest assessment of his contemporary:

[Stravinsky] is a genius, with an extraordinary gift for orchestration. To be honest, he may not be profoundly imaginative, but his music is vivid and picturesque.<sup>78</sup>

Stravinsky was equally complimentary, describing Prokofiev as a 'remarkable musician' in his autobiography.<sup>79</sup> As with so many good friendships however, it had its downsides. As discussed in the last chapter, as Stravinsky's style moved towards neoclassicism, their relationship cooled somewhat. The two composers were heading in opposite stylistic directions, with Prokofiev continuing to use the techniques he had learned in the previous decade, before eventually resorting to a simpler idiom around 1926. Prokofiev's style during the early 1920s was a reaction to the Parisian scene more than anything else, Paris representing the centre of new music. The composer thus made a conscious effort to be innovative, or rather, to copy Stravinsky's brand of innovation.

One of the compositions from this period that demonstrates Stravinsky's continued influence on Prokofiev is the original version of the Fifth Piano Sonata (1923). The work was innovative enough for Prokofiev to regard it as being one of his 'most chromatic compositions',<sup>80</sup> although we must bear in mind that this view dates from 1941, before the sonatas from the Seventh onwards had been composed. In a section from the development of the sonata, Prokofiev writes a passage that consistently uses bitonality at the tritone to outline the opening motif of the work. This is reminiscent of Stravinsky's use of the technique in his '*Petrushka* chord', where the same interval is used. Indeed, the dotted rhythms, as well as the alternation between staccato and legato articulation, also capture some of the comic elements of the ballet (Ex. 2.18).

---

<sup>78</sup> Naomi Matsumoto (tr.), 'Motoo Ohtaguro interviews Prokofiev', *Three Oranges Journal*, May 2008, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1975), 57.

<sup>80</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 276.

Example 2.18 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement I, bb. 77–80

Further evidence of the turbulent relationship between Prokofiev and Stravinsky can be found in Prokofiev's correspondence. In a letter to Myaskovsky in 1915, Prokofiev declares, 'Stravinsky and I have become good friends.'<sup>81</sup> Two decades later, however, in 1935, Prokofiev wrote to Vernon Duke: 'The rumours of my friendship with Poulenc and Igor [Stravinsky] are very much exaggerated [...]'.<sup>82</sup> Aside from the differences in their views on composition, Prokofiev had also annoyed Stravinsky on a personal level. After Prokofiev performed a piano concert in Warsaw in 1926, he noticed Stravinsky had traced his hand in an autograph album he was asked to sign. The 'mocking remark' that Prokofiev wrote underneath, as referenced by Robert Craft,<sup>83</sup> was recorded by his wife Lina: 'When I begin to learn to play a wind instrument, I will then draw my lungs.'<sup>84</sup> This was later quoted in the French newspapers, and Stravinsky was offended enough to send Prokofiev a stern letter:

Dear Seriozha: I send this clipping, which appeared recently in the Paris newspapers. I suppose that your interpretation of your joke in the album of the Warsaw woman had another character than the one given to it by these unknown-to-me slanderers in the newspapers. Surely it cannot have been your intention to laugh at me as a pianist – for, after all, I play only my own compositions – or even as a conductor. My hand, drawn in the album, both plays and conducts, and not so shamefully, I think, that people might make stupid and nasty fun of me. No doubt many people

<sup>81</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 244.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>83</sup> Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), 310.

<sup>84</sup> Malcolm H. Brown and Roland J. Riley, *Slavonic and Western Music: Essays for Gerald Abraham* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), 281.

object to my activity as a performer, but it is the only way to avoid grimaces of other interpreters of my music. Devotedly and with love, Igor Stravinsky.<sup>85</sup>

Prokofiev's reply is filled with guilt, but also reveals details of how their stormy relationship came into being:

I appreciate your indulgence for this affair in the newspapers. It has affected me terribly. Now it is time to forget that whole period – when you spoke badly about my music as well as about what I wrote in the woman's album.<sup>86</sup>

When describing this affair, Lina wrote that the relationship of Stravinsky and Prokofiev 'never cooled'.<sup>87</sup> The fact that Prokofiev sent only one letter to Stravinsky after the incident, however, acknowledging the death of Stravinsky's elder daughter, suggests otherwise. Perhaps the reason their relationship suffered was because of the similarities in their personalities. Both were prominent musicians, but they remained immature in certain respects; as Lina concedes, both often made fun of people.<sup>88</sup> In spite of their apparent falling out, Stravinskian effects still characterize some of Prokofiev's Soviet-period piano works, particularly the 'War Sonatas', with their more harmonically radical, and at times percussive outlook. In one passage from the first movement of the Sixth Sonata, parallels with Stravinsky's *Petrushka* are inevitable.

Example 2.19a – Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 82, Movement I, bb. 179–80

The musical score for Example 2.19a is a piano score for two staves. The right hand (treble clef) begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a glissando of 14 notes, and ends with another triplet. The left hand (bass clef) has a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a triplet of eighth notes, and ends with another triplet. The score is marked with 'ff' and 'gliss.'. There are also markings for '8va' at the beginning and end of the passage.

<sup>85</sup> Stravinsky and Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents*, 310.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>87</sup> Brown and Riley, *Slavonic and Western Music: Essays for Gerald Abraham*, 281.

<sup>88</sup> Lina Prokofiev, *Lina Prokofiev Interview 3, pt. 1* [sound recording: audio cassette], interviewer: Phillip Ramey (1979).

Example 2.19b – Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, 'Dance Russe', bb. 20–21



Here, the dancing triplets ascend into the higher registers of the instruments, with a glissando added for dazzling effect (Ex. 2.19a). Compare this, for instance, with the passage shown in Ex. 2.19b. Prokofiev's movement is brutal enough to include the 'col pugno' chord mentioned in the last chapter, to add a punching Stravinskian percussiveness.

Other Influences: Musical and Literary

Prokofiev had a profound interest in many forms of literature and poetry, from the classic Russian nineteenth-century authors such as Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky – on whose novels he based his operas *War and Peace* and *The Gambler* – through to the romantic and satirical poetry of Alexander Pushkin and Nikolay Gogol. The Russian Symbolist movement also had an impact on his compositions, with poets such as Valery Bryusov and Konstantin Balmont providing the subject matter for his opera *The Fiery Angel* and the *Five Songs*, Op. 36. The composer was good friends with Balmont, dedicating his Third Piano Concerto to him. Balmont, in turn, wrote a sonnet entitled 'The Third Concerto' for Prokofiev.

On one occasion, when the composer took part in a private performance of his First Piano Sonata at the house of a friend, Kira Nikolayevna, Balmont wrote a poem that mentioned 'mimolyotnosti' ('transience'), and Kira provided him with the loose French translation of 'Visions fugitives', which the composer used as a name for a set of his small pieces dating from 1915–17. The poem itself provides insight into how each piece represents a certain individual character:

In every fugitive vision  
I see whole worlds:  
They change endlessly,  
Flashing in playful colours.<sup>89</sup>

Comparisons with Debussy's music are inescapable. His *Préludes*, for instance, are also character pieces, with the emphasis not so much on distinctive harmonic progressions, but instead on tonal colour. To do this, Debussy deviates from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conventions with a use of pentatonic and whole-tone scales, as well as various modalities such as Dorian, Lydian and Phrygian.<sup>90</sup> The use of parallelism and uncertain tonalities, with keys, in some cases, only being established at the end of the piece, are the trademarks of such music. Comparable techniques can be found in the *Visions fugitives*, prompting commentators such as Harlow Robinson to note the similarities.<sup>91</sup> It is important, however, to recognise that all of the above procedures can be regarded as compositional methods of the *Kuchka*. Ultimately we find these techniques in Debussy because his Russian counterparts, particularly Musorgsky, influenced him.<sup>92</sup> As Robert Morgan points out, however, 'Debussy was the first to use [the techniques] with any real consistency.'<sup>93</sup>

There are many instances of Debussian techniques across the *Visions fugitives*. For example the tonality in the third piece is not fully established until the final perfect cadence, which produces the home key of D minor. From listening to the opening alone, this is not apparent on account of the vague tonality created first by the completely diatonic theme in the Aeolian mode, ascending in a parallel motion (Ex. 2.20). There are further uses of modes at bar 5 (Dorian, transposed into A) and at bar 25 (Phrygian). Debussy's influence later resurfaces in Prokofiev's Fifth Sonata: the left hand material of the second subject of the first movement transforms chromaticism into descending whole-tone scales (Ex. 2.21). Again, this is a part of Prokofiev's experimental outlook during the early 1920s as an alternative to Stravinsky's neo-classicism.

---

<sup>89</sup> Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography*, 129.

<sup>90</sup> Morgan, *Twentieth Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*, 44.

<sup>91</sup> Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography*, 129.

<sup>92</sup> Morgan, *Twentieth Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*, 44.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.



Example 2.20 – *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 No. 3, b. 1

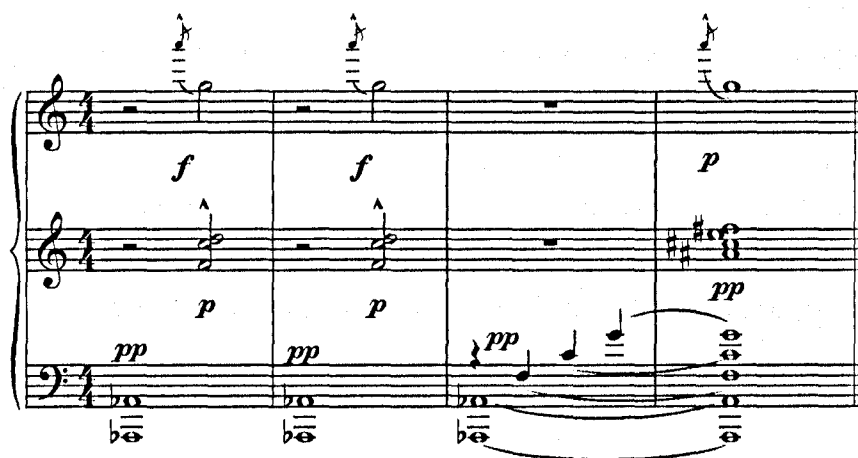


Example 2.21 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement I, bb. 30–4



In the second of the pieces, there is also an allusion to the sound of Russian bells in the final few bars, with the repeated Gs at the top of the texture over an A flat pedal in the bass, with open fifth intervals adding to the harmonic colouration (Ex. 2.22). This was a technique specifically used by Musorgsky in works such as *Pictures at an Exhibition*, as well as in his opera, *Boris Godunov*.<sup>94</sup>

Example 2.22 – *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 No. 2, bb. 21–24



Prokofiev's treatment of the *Kuchka*-influenced techniques is more experimental than in his earlier works, as discussed in the last chapter. The techniques are not used in a conventional harmonic context for the most part, but instead in ways that highlight the 'playful colours' in Balmont's poem. As has been discussed, the same techniques were

<sup>94</sup> Figs, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, 182.

used a few years earlier by Stravinsky in *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*, opening up the pathway to modernism.<sup>95</sup> It is probably significant that these techniques were used after Prokofiev had declared that Diaghilev and Stravinsky were trying to turn him into a 'Russian composer'.<sup>96</sup>

As well as being interested in poetry, Prokofiev absorbed the work of a number of the great philosophers, including Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer. He was not the first composer to be influenced by such ideas, of course; Kant's views had such an impact on Beethoven's compositions that he wrote quotations on his manuscripts,<sup>97</sup> and encounters with Schopenhauer profoundly affected Richard Wagner. Prokofiev was introduced to Schopenhauer's work by his friend, Maximilian Schmidthoff, who would frequently quote Schopenhauer's work, with the composer describing it as 'taking a cold bath in pessimism.'<sup>98</sup> Such was the newfound importance of philosophy in his life that for a short period after he graduated Prokofiev incorporated readings into his daily routine.<sup>99</sup>

The product of Prokofiev's immersion was a philosophical influence on his work. Even in a short story he wrote entitled 'A Bad Dog', the starring poodle's name turns out to be 'Arthur Schopenhauer'.<sup>100</sup> In his compositions, the philosopher's impact can be heard in the two *Choses en Soi* ('*Things in Themselves*'), or '*Ding an sich*' in German, which was a concept originally conceived by Kant and later developed by Schopenhauer. David Nice sums up the theory and its musical significance:

[Schopenhauer classes] the realm of music as the nearest we can reach in the arts to perceiving the unknowable – in this case what lies behind the notes, which we can talk about only in vague terms.<sup>101</sup>

Prokofiev regarded the work as one solely for himself, as he 'wished to indulge in a little musical introspection without trying to find some easily accessible shape for [his] ideas.'<sup>102</sup> The result is some of the most complex music he ever wrote. In his autobiography, the composer went of his way to defend the work from negative

---

<sup>95</sup> Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar*, 227.

<sup>96</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 245.

<sup>97</sup> Kinderman, *Beethoven*, 238.

<sup>98</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 172.

<sup>99</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 253.

<sup>100</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 194.

<sup>101</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 256.

<sup>102</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 286.

criticism, comparing it to Beethoven: the second piece, Prokofiev explains, contains a mixture of 'complex' and 'simple' ideas, much like the late Beethoven sonatas. Prokofiev may also have been keen to defend the work on account of it being a tribute to Maximilian Schmidhoff, but this can only be speculation.

Simplicity is apparent in the second of the *Choses*, which is in a clear ternary structure (ABA) with the two sections containing contrasting material written at different tempos: 'Moderato scherzando' and 'Andante'. The complexity-simplicity dichotomy is evident from the first phrase onwards. The key is initially C major, with the opening quaver figures being completely diatonic, but Prokofiev increases the chromaticism to offset the tonality in more complex development, before returning to the original key through an altered perfect cadence; here, he chromatically modifies the dominant seventh chord of C, turning the notes B and F into B flat, E and F sharp before resolving to the tonic (Ex. 2.23). There is little else to this section – the remainder of the material is based on these opening few bars, with the original cadence returning as a key feature. The 'Andante' section also contains counteracting simple and complex ideas. The lyricism of the scalic right-hand theme is certainly 'simple', with the seventh pedals of the left hand creating a dreamy, wandering character. The texture becomes more complex, however, when later on in the section the harmonies created in the right hand contradict the tonality below (Ex. 2.24). This approach continues into the return of the 'A' section, where the composer uses three staves to accommodate the denser texture and to allow for more chromatic possibilities.

Example 2.23 – *Chose en soi*, Op. 45b, bb. 1–4

The musical score for Example 2.23 is presented in two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Moderato scherzando'. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating C major. The time signature is 4/4. The first four bars show a diatonic quaver figure in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. The final bar features a chromatic alteration of the dominant seventh chord, with B and F altered to B flat and F sharp respectively, before resolving to the tonic. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present in the final bar.

Example 2.24 – *Choses en soi*, Op. 45b, bb. 29–32

The *Choses en soi* also demonstrates the influence of religion on Prokofiev. He became acquainted with Christian Science when the movement was sweeping across America in the 1920s, and was encouraged by his wife Lina to develop his interests further. The impact of Christian Science on the Seventh Piano Sonata has already been noted, but there was a period during the late 1920s when spirituality manifested itself in the composer's output; for example it affected the ballet based on the biblical parable, *The Prodigal Son* (1929). Its influence on *Choses* is less obvious. Prokofiev, writing in his diary on 13 March 1928, explained the situation:

If God is the creator and of only one mind, but man He represents, it is clear that a person will achieve more the closer he reflects the creator. One should always bear this in mind while working. [...] Today, while thinking about this, I wrote material for piano pieces [*Choses en soi*] as an interlude before composing the Third Symphony.<sup>103</sup>

Prokofiev's *Choses en soi* therefore were composed in order to get his creative juices flowing for the composition of his Third Symphony. Simultaneously their conception was a conscious attempt for him to get to know more about himself through his music. To do this, he used his two principal spiritual sources: Schopenhauer and Christian Science. Prokofiev was not the only composer to be writing religion-inspired works at this time; Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), for example, came about after he re-joined the Russian Orthodox Church in 1926.<sup>104</sup> Several works followed in the 1930s, such as Manuel de Falla's *Atlántida*, Ernst Krenek's *Karl V*, Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, and Arnold Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, Prokofiev's *Choses en soi* and *Prodigal Son* form part of a Zeitgeist of religiously themed works.

<sup>103</sup> Prokofiev, *Dnevnik 1919–1933*, 627.

<sup>104</sup> Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 431.

<sup>105</sup> Hermann Danuser, 'Rewriting the past: classicisms of the inter-war period,' in Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 277.

### CHAPTER III

#### FORM IN THE EARLY PIANO SONATAS

Prokofiev's orientation towards sonata form has already been mentioned, in the context of the famous 1930 Olin Downes interview in the *New York Times*: 'I want nothing better, nothing more flexible or more complete than the sonata form, which contains everything necessary to my structural purpose.' In the same article, the composer stated his intention to return 'to classic forms' in his instrumental music while looking for new approaches in opera.<sup>1</sup> It is paradoxical, perhaps, that a twentieth-century composer insisting on originality would follow the preferred form of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sonata, but he was in distinguished company, including composers such as Richard Strauss, Hindemith and Britten.<sup>2</sup>

Prokofiev's obsession with organization and calculation fed his interest in sonata form. Nicolas Nabokov described how he would take his guests along the same route while walking through Paris, marking their progress by timing it to the second throughout their journey.<sup>3</sup> Barbara Nissman compares the composer's use of sonata form with a game of chess, which was one of his favourite pastimes: 'He was able to shape a work profoundly within the limits of his formal framework, using the same skills that, incidentally, made him a superb chess player.'<sup>4</sup> These factors, combined with Beethoven's influence, ultimately turned him to traditional eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forms.

In the context of sonata form, Prokofiev was able to combine traditional aspects of the sonata with his own original ideas. As Charles Rosen explains, '[...] there is no biological continuity among sonata forms',<sup>5</sup> which is what allowed composers such as Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms to extend the possibilities throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> It is the aim of this chapter to evaluate the extent to which Prokofiev adhered

---

<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, 2 February 1930.

<sup>2</sup> James Webster, 'Sonata Form' in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* v. 17 (6<sup>th</sup> edn., London: Macmillan, 1980), 504.

<sup>3</sup> Nabokov, *Old Friends and New Music*, 111.

<sup>4</sup> Fiess, *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev*, vii. Such was the composer's ability at chess, he was able to defeat the future champion of the game, José Capablanca, in St Petersburg in 1914. Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 682.

<sup>5</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Webster, 'Sonata Form' in Sadie, *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* v. 17, 504.

to the more traditional features of sonata form demonstrated by Beethoven, and how he deviated from them. In order to fit with the chronology of the previous chapters I shall turn initially to the Third and Fourth piano sonatas, which were based on material written in 1907 and 1908, and then consider the Second, which was not conceived until 1912; structural trends will be more easily determined as a result. The revised version of the Fifth Sonata has been omitted, as the structure has already been discussed in Chapter One.

#### Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 1 (1907/9)

On the surface, the most striking feature of the final 1909 version of the First Sonata is its one-movement layout, a result of it being a truncation of the original version. In an effort to please his tutor of composition, Anatoly Lyadov, Prokofiev chose to rework a sonata from his youth that was more 'mature' than its counterparts, and 'towered above them as a solid opus'.<sup>7</sup> The one-movement sonata had become something of a trend among early twentieth-century Russian composers. Figures such as Alexander Skryabin and Nikolay Medtner emulated the model produced by composers from the previous century, including Franz Liszt. Apart from his removal of the second and third movements, Prokofiev's revision process is unclear as the original is now lost.

It is significant that Prokofiev was playing Skryabin's Fifth Sonata while revising the First Sonata – this was the first Skryabin sonata to utilize the one-movement sonata allegro form, something that is also present in Prokofiev's work.<sup>8</sup> The dedication to his childhood friend, the local Sontsovka veterinary surgeon Vassily Morolyov, could not have been more appropriate: Morolyov was a Skryabin fanatic.<sup>9</sup> Around the time of the original version of the sonata in 1907, Prokofiev purchased Medtner's *Fairy Tales*, Op. 8 (1904–5) upon Myaskovsky's recommendation,<sup>10</sup> and he studied them again while composing the final version.<sup>11</sup> The First Sonata follows the same procedure used in both of the *Tales*, whereby the short introduction is repeated in the coda at the end. In both the Medtner and Prokofiev, the material is altered slightly to finalize the repetition. The descending octave chromaticism near the end of the second of the *Tales* (Ex. 3.1) is similar to that of bar 1 of the Prokofiev (Ex. 3.2).

---

<sup>7</sup> Serge Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 102.

<sup>8</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 122.

<sup>9</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 83.

<sup>10</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

Example 3.1 – Medtner’s *Fairy Tales*, Op. 8 No. 2, bb. 260–3

Example 3.2 – Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 1, bb. 1–2

The key of Prokofiev’s sonata also parallels the first sonatas of Skryabin and Medtner, which were also written in F minor. (As well as Beethoven’s, of course.) The sonata allegro structure is tight-knit:

Bar	Section	Material	Principal tonal areas
1	Introduction		F minor (standing on V)
5	Exposition	First subject; counter-statement	F minor
26		Transitional theme	F minor, A flat major
42		Second subject; counter-statement	A flat major
74		First closing theme	A flat major, F minor
81		Second closing theme	F minor, A flat major
94	Development	Second closing theme; Transitional theme	B flat minor, D minor
115		First subject; second subject	B flat major, C major, A minor, B minor
134		Retransition	F minor
146	Recapitulation	First subject	F minor
152		Transitional theme	C minor
174		Second subject	D flat major
194		First closing theme	F minor
210		Second closing theme	F minor
240	Coda		F minor

There is nothing unusual in regard to the order of themes and key relationships. Perhaps the most unexpected procedure is the modulation to D flat major for the reintroduction of the second subject in the recapitulation. The returning transitional theme from the exposition is transposed to C minor so as to prepare for the key we would normally expect here, the home key of F minor. Instead, Prokofiev gives us the submediant key

of D flat major for the second subject. This modulation is one that is present in some of Beethoven's recapitulations, for example the first movement of the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata in B flat Major, Op. 106.<sup>12</sup>

The main theme is structured according to a conventional small ternary form (A-B-A'),<sup>13</sup> but the phrasing follows an 11-bar irregular pattern: 4 + 2 + 3 + 2. The material is constructed using a rising scale across fourth and third intervals (marked 'x' and 'y' in Ex. 3.3),<sup>14</sup> and in the 'B' phase of the theme at bar 11 inversions of the 'y' motif are prominent. The harmony is altered in order to move towards the dominant at bar 14 in a two-bar cadential idea that prepares for the counter-statement of the main theme at bar 16 (Ex. 3.3).

Ex. 3.3 – Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 1, bb. 5–15

The musical score for Ex. 3.3 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system, labeled 'A', covers measures 5 to 8. Measure 5 is marked with a box containing the number '5'. The second system, labeled 'B', covers measures 9 to 15. Measure 9 is marked with a box containing the number '8', measure 10 with '10', and measure 13 with '13'. The score is written in B-flat major (two flats) and 3/4 time. It features treble and bass staves. Annotations include 'p' for piano, 'x' and 'y' for interval motifs, 'inv. y' for inverted motifs, and 'inv. x' for inverted motifs. A bracket under measures 14 and 15 is labeled 'Cadential passage (on the dominant)'.

<sup>12</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 281.

<sup>13</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 71.

<sup>14</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 50–2.



The transition at bar 26 reduces the scalic fourth figuration to triplet quavers, and – following many earlier sonata-form movements – the theme is both fragmentary and primitive.<sup>15</sup> The theme sets up the new key of the second subject, the relative major (A flat), with four bars of a technique that Caplin describes as ‘standing on the dominant’ (bars 38–41);<sup>16</sup> in this case the chord is  $V^7$  of III in F minor. The second subject, like the first, employs a small ternary structure, but the ‘A’ section is more traditional in that it is periodic in structure, combining two sets of two-bar ‘basic’ and ‘contrasting’ ideas.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, this form is aligned with the teachings of Lyadov, who favoured an eight-bar thematic structure.<sup>18</sup> The material itself shows similarities to earlier music, with the contrapuntal lines in the right hand at bars 43–4 displaying ascending and descending versions of the four-note scalic idea (Ex. 3.4). This motif also features in both closing themes, helping to imbue the sonata with a sense of coherence.

Ex. 3.4 – Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 1, bb. 38–45

Apart from an irregular phrase pattern in the main theme, the structure of the movement is conventional when compared to the standard Beethovenian model. It is not surprising,

<sup>15</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>18</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 95.

therefore, that it was described as ‘academic’ by Frederick Martens in 1919:<sup>19</sup> it always remains close to familiar principles of sonata form.

Piano Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 28 (1907/17)

The Third Sonata, like the First, is a one-movement work. Based on a sonata the composer wrote in 1907, the extent of revisions is again unclear. It was completed in 1917, as Harlow Robinson acknowledges, during ‘one of the most productive years in all of Prokofiev’s career’; the Fourth Sonata, First Symphony, First Violin Concerto, and the cantata, *Seven, They Are Seven*, were also conceived around this time.<sup>20</sup> Like all of these works, the sonata has a retrospective quality to it, looking back to classical forms. Similarly to the First Sonata, the Third follows a sonata allegro structure. The vast proportions of the introduction section are notable nonetheless:

Bar	Section	Material	Principal tonal areas
1	Introduction		E major
16	Exposition	First subject	A minor (standing on V)
27		Transitional theme	A minor, E minor
58		Second subject	C major, E major
78		Closing theme	F major, C major
94	Development	Fragmentation of introduction, first subject	D minor
103		Second subject	D minor
114		Closing theme	D minor
123		Second subject	A major
132		Closing theme	E flat major, G flat major
140		Second subject	B flat major
146		Closing theme	C major, D minor
154	Recapitulation	Transitional theme	A minor, E minor
192		Motif from first subject	A minor
199		Second subject	C major
215		Closing theme	A minor, B flat major, A minor
235	Coda	Introduction; second theme	C major, A minor

The table reveals significant deviations from traditional sonata form. The sheer scale of the introduction section is unconventional in itself; in fact, its import suggests a status of first subject. But its key is E major – the dominant – and significant development of the passage is avoided during the course of the movement. Even when the first subject enters at bar 16, we are not fully in the tonic key, but rather stand on the dominant. Prokofiev then departs from tradition by establishing the home key in the transition

<sup>19</sup> Frederick H. Martens, ‘The Modern Russian Pianoforte Sonata’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 5/3, July 1919, 362.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography*, 128.

section. The remainder of the exposition is thematically conventional; the second subject is written in the relative major, C major.

All themes return in the tonic in the recapitulation, following eighteenth-century tradition, except for the second subject, which remains in the relative major. This is unusual for a recapitulation in not resolving a polarization of tonic and subordinate key.<sup>21</sup> Nestyev points out that the first subject is removed from the section,<sup>22</sup> a procedure that is not unusual in classical sonata form.<sup>23</sup> While full statements of the theme are indeed avoided, fragments appear at bar 192. The focus on the subdominant, particularly in the development, is again indebted to Beethoven.<sup>24</sup>

The first subject is structured in sentence form, with the phrase pattern 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 3½. Prokofiev uses a two-bar idea, repeats it, and then develops the dotted rhythm to produce a conventional eight-bar phrase.<sup>25</sup> The additional three bars act as a codetta: the previous two bars are repeated, and an additional bar outlining the dominant chord is inserted to modulate to the transitional theme (Ex. 3.5). The second subject, on the other hand, is a small ternary form structure (A–B–A'). The 'A' section features a repetition of two two-bar phrases, which in themselves create a period structure, albeit at half length (we would normally expect this structure to consist of two four-bar phrases).<sup>26</sup> In the 'B' section the hands swap roles as the theme is presented in the left hand, with the right hand accompanying (Ex. 3.6).

---

<sup>21</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 161.

<sup>22</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 137.

<sup>23</sup> Webster, 'Sonata Form' in Sadie, *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* v. 17, 502.

<sup>24</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Example 3.5 – Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 28, bb. 16–26

16 Presentation basic idea repetition

19 Continuation fragmentation

22 Codetta

25

*p* *mf* *dim.* *p*

*p secco* *fp*

*fp* *fp*

*fp* *fp* *pp*

Example 3.6 – Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 28, bb. 58–73

A

58 *Moderato* E — C — B — E antecedent consequent

*semplice e dolce*

*p legato*

62 repetition (with stronger cadence)

66 B

*pp tranquillo*

70 *semplice*

*p* *dim.*

For the remainder of the theme's development, the right hand dominance is restored, but the rhythmic pattern is disrupted by fragmentation. The reprise element (A') resolves this distortion by repeating the 'A' section an octave higher: this manipulation of the theme invokes the main theme of the First Sonata. The soprano line of the 'A' theme, if we are to disregard the accompanying chromaticism, is completely diatonic, very much in line with Prokofiev's harmonic approach at the time; in fact, there is a resemblance between the theme and the opening of the Third Piano Concerto in the contour of the first three notes. The theme's identity is also indebted to a girl the composer took a liking to at the St Petersburg Conservatoire, Sofia Esche, in that the notes spell out the transliteration of her name, if German notation is used: E-C-B-E.<sup>27</sup>

While the Third Sonata marks a departure from eighteenth-century formal tradition in significantly delaying the arrival of the home key, it ultimately extends Beethoven's approach in a work such as the Sonata in E flat major, Op. 31 No. 3, which also starts

<sup>27</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 8.

on the dominant chord and does not reach the tonic until the sixth bar.<sup>28</sup> There is a larger amount of chromaticism than in the First Sonata, but the work always remains within a tonal framework; indeed, apart from at the beginning, we travel through entirely expected keys. The chromaticism mostly occurs in the development section, again in accordance with sonata-form conventions, especially in minor-mode movements.<sup>29</sup>

Piano Sonata No. 4 in C Minor, Op. 29 (1908/17)

The Fourth Sonata is the first to adopt a three-movement structure, following the eighteenth-century sonata model. The work's genesis was rather haphazard; Prokofiev recycled themes from an old suite for strings, using this material in the first and last movements. The remaining Andante is in fact a transcription of the slow movement from an E minor symphony the composer wrote in his youth.<sup>30</sup> David Nice asserts that the movement, which is in A minor in the sonata, was transposed up by two tones.<sup>31</sup>

The first movement is again structured in a sonata allegro form:

Bar	Section	Material	Principal tonal areas
1	Exposition	First subject	C minor
16		First subject second theme	C minor, E flat major, C minor
32		Transition	Thirds juxtaposed outlining chord V
37		Second subject	G major/minor
61		Closing theme	E flat major
71	Development	Fragmentation of first subject	E flat minor, F major, C major
78		Closing theme	C major
89		First subject; second subject	C minor
107		First subject	C minor (standing on V)
117		First subject; second subject	C minor (standing on V)
126		Closing theme; first subject second theme	C minor (standing on V)
137	Recapitulation	First subject	C minor
149		First subject second theme	C minor
162		Second subject	C major
183		Closing theme; first subject	C minor

<sup>28</sup> Rosen, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion*, 173.

<sup>29</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 262.

<sup>30</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 191.

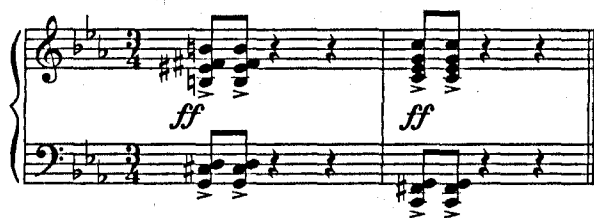
<sup>31</sup> Nice, *Prokofiev, A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891–1935*, 136.

This is a standard structure, of course; the main tonal areas are based around the three primary chords, I, IV and V, in addition to the relative major. That said, Prokofiev opts for the dominant G key for the second subject over the relative major, E flat, which would have been expected in a movement in a minor mode that followed Beethoven's model.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, we would anticipate the second subject in the tonic minor in the recapitulation, but it appears here in the tonic major before the movement returns to the home key for the closing theme. There are parallels with Beethoven's work in this respect, particularly the first movement of the 'Appassionata' Sonata in F Minor, Op. 57, which reaches F major for the second subject before returning to the F minor tonic.

In his analysis of the work, Boris Berman marks the beginning of the transition at bar 16;<sup>33</sup> however, the function of the new theme is not to destabilize the tonality as we would expect from transitional material, but rather to consolidate it. For this reason, this theme can be regarded as a second theme of the first subject group, putting the transition at bar 32. The section is untypically brief for Prokofiev, but similar to the classical model in this respect.<sup>34</sup> It deviates from the home key through a series of thirds that spiral into a world of chromaticism, creating tonal ambiguity ready for the entry of the second subject.

Prokofiev's use of 'wrong notes' at the ends of cadences is distinctive. For example, the end of the exposition at bar 70 expectedly finishes with an E flat major triad, moving into the relative major, but this chord is tinged with a chromatic D acciaccatura. Similarly, for the final cadence at bars 196–7, Prokofiev utilizes a simple perfect cadence, but adds 'wrong notes' to create disruptive tritones (Ex. 3.7).

Example 3.7 – Piano Sonata No. 4, Op. 29, Movement I, bb. 196–7



<sup>32</sup> Rosen, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion*, 11. There are exceptions, of course. In the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata in D Minor, Op. 31 No. 2 ('Tempest'), for instance, the composer moves to the dominant minor key for the second subject.

<sup>33</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 86.

<sup>34</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 19.

The first subject comprises a sentence structure, the initial idea extended from the usual two bars to three, partly to accommodate 3/4 time rather than common time. The repeat following the basic idea produces a 'presentation phrase' that is six bars in total.<sup>35</sup> The function of the 'continuation phrase' from bars. 7–16 is to unsettle the preceding material by means of fragmentation and acceleration of the harmonic rhythm.<sup>36</sup> The developmental processes look to the traditional procedures of the sentence form, with Prokofiev basing a vast amount of material on the small cells that appear at the outset; in this case the semiquaver anacrusis becomes the most important motif (marked 'x' in the example). Within the presentation phrase alone, the figure is rhythmically augmented in the right hand of bar 1, inverted in the left hand of bar 2, written as a resolving acciaccatura in the bass for bar 3, and developed into a turn by augmentation and inversion in the left hand of bar 4. The phrase also contains the harmonic structure of the movement in microcosm: the harmony moves from the tonic chord at bar 1, to the relative major at bar 2, and dominant (via chord V of V) at bar 3, before returning to the tonic at bar 4. This echoes the keys of the first subject, second subject, and closing theme (Ex. 3.8).

---

<sup>35</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 35.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



Example 3.8 – Piano Sonata No. 4, Op. 29, Movement I, bb. 1–11

The musical score for Example 3.8 is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) is labeled 'Presentation' and 'Allegro molto sostenuto.' It features a first theme in the right hand and a semiquaver figure in the left hand. The second system (measures 5-8) is labeled 'repetition' and 'Continuation' and shows the first theme in the right hand and a semiquaver figure in the left hand. The third system (measures 9-11) is labeled 'fragmentation' and shows the first theme in the right hand and a semiquaver figure in the left hand. The score includes various annotations such as 'pp', 'mf', 'p', 'poco rit.', 'aug. x', 'inv. x', and 'y'.

The first subject second theme is linked to the first theme through the use of a descending scale across a minor third interval. This initially occurs at bars 3–4 in the inner voice of the right hand (marked ‘y’ in Ex. 3.8), and is reproduced in augmentation for the melody line of the second theme at bars 17–18. At bars 21–22, the idea is inverted amongst repetitions of the opening semiquaver figure, to add further to the sense of unity (Ex. 3.9). Unusually, the second subject is not as lyrical as the preceding themes, but still draws on the movement’s important motifs. At bar 42 Prokofiev writes a transposed development of the three-note scalic figure in A flat major, in addition to a modification of the semiquaver anacrusis at bar 48 (Ex. 3.10). It is highly appropriate, therefore, that the composer uses these two ideas to round off the exposition section. From bar 65 of the closing theme, Prokofiev provides inversions of the opening anacrusis in sequence, before an inverted development of the three-note motif appears in the final cadence, to produce a passing note up to the tonic E flat (Ex. 3.11).

Example 3.9 – Piano Sonata No. 4, Op. 29, Movement I, bb. 17–22

Example 3.10 – Piano Sonata No. 4, Op. 29, Movement I, bb. 37–49

Example 3.11 – Piano Sonata No. 4, Op. 29, Movement I, bb. 61–70

The second movement is structured in a cavatina form, or, following Charles Rosen's designation, a 'sonata form without development':<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 28.

Bar	Section	Material	Principal tonal areas
1	A	First theme	A minor
33		Transition	F sharp minor, C major
36		Second theme	C major
54	B	First theme	G sharp minor
62		Transition	F sharp minor, C major
71		First theme; Second theme	C major, A minor

Again, Prokofiev's tonal structure follows sonata form convention, aside from the employment of G sharp minor as the key for the return of the first theme in the 'B' section. This return, however, includes a condensation of the theme, having been stated before in fact, again in G sharp minor, at bar 25 of the 'A' section. The second theme is also truncated upon its return, where it now features the first theme as an accompaniment at bar 73. The return of the transition is also altered to accommodate the new key. In addition to key choices, the first and second themes are defined by their overall characters: the first theme is serious and heavy, and the second lyrical and wistful.<sup>38</sup>

The finale is organized in a seven-part sonata-rondo form, once more emulating the structure of several of Beethoven's finales. Progressive tonality is also in evidence in that the sonata finishes in the tonic major when it started in the tonic minor. Again, this is a technique witnessed in Beethoven's music, such as in the Fifth Symphony, Op. 67, and Piano Sonata in E minor, Op. 90. Prokofiev remains close to convention in the movement's layout:

Bar	Section	Material	Principal tonal areas
1	Exposition	Refrain (A)	C major
25		Transition	E minor, G sharp minor/major
43		Couplet I (B)	G major
67		Refrain (A)	C major
84	Development	Couplet II (C)	E flat major, A flat major, C major
134	Recapitulation	Refrain (A)	F minor, C major
153		Transition + interjection of C	G sharp minor, C major, E minor
178		Couplet III (B)	C major, D flat major
201		Refrain (A), coda	C major

The initial statement of the refrain theme, along with the obligatory transition section and first couplet, forms the exposition section. Couplet II introduces a new theme, but it

<sup>38</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 2.

is subjected to procedures generally associated with a classical development section, namely modulation and fragmentation. Instead of travelling to a minor key – typical of the classical model – the theme is instead presented in A flat major, remote from the tonic. For the recapitulation, the composer modifies the refrain with chromatic additions, a move witnessed from time to time in the conventional model.<sup>39</sup>

The movement is neoclassical in its mockery of convention; it is very much in the spirit of the ‘Classical’ Symphony, which was written around the same time. The ‘A’ refrain theme is introduced by a completely diatonic scalic flourish that sets up the humour of the main theme in an effective fashion. Instead of arriving on an expected tonic triad, we are presented with an augmented triad that amounts to a ridicule of convention. At bars 3–5 ‘wrong notes’ chromatically surround the first, third, and fifth degrees of the tonic C major scale, which adds to this effect. The addition of the Neapolitan sixth at bar 6 is not so unexpected, particularly as it resolves to the dominant chord. But later on in the movement, at bar 179, this idea is extended to offset the tonic key in the return of the ‘B’ couplet. The Alberti bass pattern at bar 10, with its wide span and rapid parallel harmonic changes, also adds to the neoclassical ethos, descending in a scalic movement (Ex. 3.12).

Example 3.12 – Piano Sonata No. 4, Op. 29, Movement III, bb. 1–11

*Allegro con brio, ma non leggiero*

<sup>39</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 236–9.

The 'B' theme acts as a continuation of the previous material: the trill here can again be linked with the opening anacrusis of the first movement. This figure becomes an accompaniment to the right hand, which, like the 'A' theme, contains upward chromatic shifts to the Neapolitan sixth. Indeed, as demonstrated in bar 44, this procedure lends itself to the inclusion of more augmented triads (Ex. 3.13).

Example 3.13 – Piano Sonata No. 4, Op. 29, Movement III, bb. 43–44

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is the right hand, and the bottom staff is the left hand. The music is in 2/4 time. The right hand starts with a trill on a note, followed by a melodic line with chromatic shifts. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes. There are three boxes under the left hand staff: the first is labeled 'x', the second is labeled 'aug. triad', and the third is labeled 'inv. x'. The right hand staff has a 'pp' dynamic marking at the beginning.

Thus, Prokofiev remains close to classical sonata form convention in his Fourth Sonata in terms of thematic structure, key relationships, and development; it is evident in many ways that the core of the material was written early in his life, when he was given Beethoven piano sonatas to digest. And this aligns with Nestyev's assertion that Prokofiev 'left the basic themes and general structure of the first two movements unchanged.'<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the composer actively mocks tradition in the finale in avoiding the tonic triad. The music displays the same 'classical' atmosphere of the 'Classical' Symphony in this respect,<sup>41</sup> which features similar techniques of unexpected harmonic progressions and 'wrong note' effects.<sup>42</sup>

#### Piano Sonata No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 14 (1912)

The Second Piano Sonata was originally planned as a sonatina, with the composer writing to his closest friend, Maximilian Schmidhof, in May 1912, that he 'wanted to write a small but serious piece for him.' Prokofiev recycled material from pieces he had already finished; indeed, he references a 'Gavotte in G Minor' and Scherzo in his diaries. Composition on the work turned out to be more complex than the composer had envisaged, however, and he turned it into a full-scale sonata, the first one to be written in a four-movement form.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 155.

<sup>41</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 248.

<sup>42</sup> Austin, *Music in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: From Debussy Through Stravinsky*, 451–55.

<sup>43</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 241.

The Scherzo became the second movement of the final version of the work, to which a trio was added; however, we cannot be sure what happened to the Gavotte material. It is highly likely that the gavotte theme appears as the transitional theme in the first movement, which is written in the key of G minor, as well as being in 2/4 time with dance-like quavers. The material of the third and final movements was presumably new.

The overall key structure of the sonata is unusual in that all of the movements are in the minor mode: D, A, G sharp, and D respectively. The dominant minor of the second movement represents a standard departure from the home key, but the third movement is written in a key a tritone away. This unconventional relationship would in fact become common among Prokofiev's sonatas, such as in the middle movements of the Fifth and Seventh sonatas which share this approach. The first movement, a sonata-allegro, is structured as follows:

Bar	Section	Material	Principal tonal areas
1	Exposition	First subject; counter-statement	D minor (A major cadence), G minor
32		Transitional theme	G minor, F major
64		Second subject	E minor
85		Closing theme	E minor
103	Development	Second subject	C major
115		Closing theme	C major, C minor, E flat major
127		Transitional theme; closing theme	E flat major
143		First subject; transition	D minor, E minor, F major, C sharp minor
205	Recapitulation	First subject	D minor
223		Transitional theme	A minor, F minor, E flat minor
255		Second subject	D minor/C major
276		Closing theme	D minor
295	Coda	First subject	D minor

Prokofiev moves away from sonata-form convention in terms of key structure. Instead of modulating to the dominant or relative major/minor of the home key for the second subject as he did in the First, Third and Fourth sonatas, Prokofiev goes to the supertonic. A possible reason for the G minor key at the beginning of the transitional theme has already been explained, but what this modulation also does is contribute to a descending parallel progression from the point at which the dominant is reached in the first subject through to the second subject:

Bar	30	32	48	64
Tonality	A major	G minor	F major	E minor

Such a procedure may seem unusual in the context of western music, where the polarization of tonic and dominant is paramount, but it is more common in Russian music among the music of the *Kuchka*; it is another example of ‘tonal mutability’, or rapidly shifting key centres.<sup>44</sup> Prokofiev is perhaps mocking western tradition in his use of the A major chord at bar 30, as the movement to the dominant for the second subject is an anticipated technique. Instead, he takes us through a new section in order to reach the new and unexpected E minor key.

The first subject, too, includes apparent mockery. It is structured in two parts: the first part (‘A’) at bar 1 sets off rather innocently, but it is met by a turbulent second part at bar 8. The theme sets itself up to be sentential, with the composer taking a small cell of a third interval in the soprano line and transposing it up by a tone several times. Instead of arriving at the expected conventional cadence, however, the theme instead plunges into the second part (‘B’), which unsettles the home tonality; the disruption is produced by dissonant seconds creating tonal ambiguity, and it is only enhanced by heavy accentuation and increased dynamic levels (Ex. 3.14). The theme is subjected to a more traditional treatment at bar 20, in the form of a counter-statement in preparation for the first strong cadence on the dominant at bar 30.

Example 3.14 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement I, bb. 1–11

A

Allegro ma non troppo  
*non legato*

mf

cresc.

7

B

f

y

<sup>44</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 133.

The transitional theme is connected to the first subject through a focus on the broken octave; the opening anacrusis (marked 'x' in Ex. 3.14) produces a similar figure to that which dominates the new theme. Additionally, the bass employs a descending four-note scale, which can be viewed as an augmented development of the quavers in the left hand (motif 'y') at bar 7 (Ex. 3.15). The second subject is also linked by its use of this figure, appearing in the right hand at bars 66 and 70. The new E minor theme is more conventional than the opening material in that it is a modified period, being eight bars in length, with the latter four bars (consequent) answering the first four (antecedent). The melody is centred around the notes E–D sharp (E flat)–C–B, which is, as in the Third Sonata, another possible mutation of the Esche motif (Ex. 3.16).

Example 3.15 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement I, bb. 32–4

Example 3.16 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement I, bb. 64–71



The second movement, a scherzo, is the shortest of the four, and it is the most conventionally structured. It follows the classical tripartite scherzo model:

Bar	Section	Principal tonal areas
1	A	A minor, G major, E major, A minor
27	B (Trio)	D major, D flat major, A major, A minor
58	A	A minor, G major, E major, A minor

As in the standard classical structure, the composer remains close to the home key of A minor throughout the first part, solidifying it at the outset with tonic pedals. Even the least expected key of the section, the subordinate key of G major, is prepared fully by the movement to the subdominant chord D (V of G major).

The trio section follows the conventional model in that all the keys are in the major, to contrast with the minor home key of the scherzo.<sup>45</sup> The bass notes of the section dictate the fundamental harmonies, and they are presented as pedal notes, similarly to the opening theme. But the material itself is of a different ilk; it is common for figurations from the opening theme to return in the trio,<sup>46</sup> but Prokofiev takes motifs from the first movement's transitional theme instead, as Berman points out.<sup>47</sup> The return of the first section is exactly the same as the initial statement, although lower registers are now utilized, as well as quieter dynamics. Such small adjustments are expected at the return in the context of the traditional classical model.<sup>48</sup>

The third movement is structured in a simple binary form, with an added two-bar coda (ABAB-coda):

Bar	Section	Principal tonal areas
1	A	G sharp minor, E minor, D minor, G sharp minor
23	B	G major, B major
31	A	G sharp minor, E minor, D minor, G sharp minor
53	B	G major
59	Coda	C sharp minor, G sharp minor

Prokofiev's treatment of thematic material is conventional; there are only small differences between the initial ideas and their restatements. At bar 31, the 'A' theme

<sup>45</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 212.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>47</sup> The transitional motif is in itself a development of the opening anacrusis of the sonata, as described above. Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 62.

<sup>48</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 214.

acquires a more lively texture than earlier, with semiquavers outlining the top line and a dotted counter-melody added to the alto. The new octave accompaniment in the bass outlines the contour of the 'A' theme in rhythmic augmentation, before a winding chromatic line embellishes it at bar 35 (Ex. 3.17). Similar treatment is present in the late works of Beethoven.<sup>49</sup> In spite of new additions, however, the basic harmonic progressions remain the same. The modulation to B major is omitted from the return of the 'B' section as the melodic line descends into the low registers to extend the theme. With the coda, the second half of the movement is slightly longer than the first, matching the expected proportions of a traditional binary movement.<sup>50</sup>

Example 3.17 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement III, bb. 31–6

The key structure departs from convention in having themes retain their original key when repeated. It was common practice for the keys to correspond symmetrically: AB–BA.<sup>51</sup> There are parallels with the first movement in the treatment of the initial 'A' theme: it, too, begins rather innocently before being disrupted by violent dissonances at bars 16–18, and accompanied by descending chromatic parallel tritones at bars 19–22. The second 'B' theme has Russian qualities, adding weight to Berman's description of

<sup>49</sup> Kinderman, *Beethoven*, 238.

<sup>50</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 21.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

the movement as a 'skazka' ('fairy tale').<sup>52</sup> The 7/8 time signature is an exotic, uneven one, much like the 11/4 section of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*, which is referenced in Prokofiev's autobiography.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, the parallel harmonies of the right hand are reminiscent of the *Kuchka*.<sup>54</sup>

The final movement, in a sonata-allegro form, follows Beethoven's procedure in several of his finales, such as the 'Appassionata' Sonata.<sup>55</sup> The thematic scheme is as follows:

Bar	Section	Material	Principal tonal areas
1	Exposition	First subject; counterstatement	D minor (A major cadence), G minor
34		Second subject first theme	C major, D major, C major
50		Second subject second theme	C major
97		Second subject first + second themes combined	D major/C major
133		Third subject	C major
153		Closing theme	C major
161	Development	First subject	G minor, E flat major
177		Second subject themes	C major
209		First subject; second subject second theme	D minor, C sharp minor
238	Recapitulation	First subject	D minor
258		Second subject first theme	D major, E major
274		Second subject second theme	D minor
305		First subject + second subject second theme	D minor
321		Second subject first theme + second theme; first subject	E flat major, D flat major, C major, D minor

This structure provides a 'looser' approach to sonata form with the addition of a third subject, and somewhat unconventional key relationships. A more flexible application of sonata structure was also common to finales of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>56</sup> Berman's description of the bar 34 material as a 'transitional theme' is understandable, since it immediately follows the first subject as well as modulating to D major;<sup>57</sup> however, the theme also modulates back to C major, both new keys appearing in the passages that follow. Therefore, it could be argued that the statement of this theme is the start of the second subject. In this case, bar 50 becomes the second subject

<sup>52</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 62.

<sup>53</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 84.

<sup>54</sup> Figs, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, 180.

<sup>55</sup> Matthews, *Beethoven*, 91.

<sup>56</sup> Rosen, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 64.

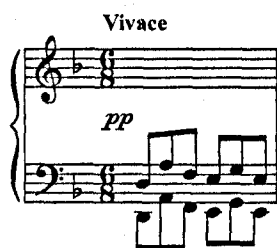
second theme in C major and the first and second themes are cleverly combined bitonally at bar 97, which merges the two new tonalities of C major and D major.

The third subject first theme is in fact cyclical; this material is identical to the development of the second subject at bar 103 of the first movement. This is reminiscent not only of a procedure found in late Beethoven sonatas, but also of other classical-period repertory as well,<sup>58</sup> and was more frequent still among romantic-period composers.<sup>59</sup> The recapitulation has a traditional key structure, with Prokofiev opting to present the restatement of the second subject first theme in the tonic major. The return of the second subject in the Neapolitan key of E flat major at bar 319 is something of a surprise, the composer using it as a starting point for echoing the descending scalar four-note idea from the first movement:

<b>Bar</b>	321	326	328	334
<b>Tonality</b>	E flat major	D flat major	C major	B flat major

The first subject anticipates what is to come: the quavers in bar 1 helps to outline the movement's two primary tonalities, D minor and C major (Ex. 3.18). The main right-hand melody does not enter until bar 18 after a short introduction, and this is structured in an extended period form; it consists of four-bar phrases, but the antecedent and consequent groupings are double the usual length, at eight bars each. The second subject first theme, which is also sixteen bars long, has an identical structure to the first; here, the function of the contrasting idea is chromatically to unsettle the C major tonality (Ex. 3.19). For the consequent phrase at bar 42, the composer simply transposes the antecedent up a tone to D major.

Example 3.18 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement IV, b. 1



<sup>58</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 139.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

Example 3.19 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement IV, bb. 34–41

The humour of the second subject's second theme derives from a mockery of tradition. At bar 58, for example, the composer writes a C major chord to plant the tonality in the listener's ear, only to destabilize it in the following two bars, with Prokofiev using chromatic notes located either side of the third and fifth degrees of the C major scale: D sharp, F sharp, F natural, and A flat. Such treatment is a clear case of 'Prokofievization', the organized lampooning of conventional procedure (Ex. 3.20).

In Daniel Jaffé's succinct formulation:

The work sets out to shock by seeming to unfold conventionally, if impetuously, in its first few bars before suddenly and unnervingly seizing up on a jarring, insistently knocking dissonance.<sup>60</sup>

Example 3.20 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement IV, bb. 58–61

Viewing the sonata as a whole, Prokofiev remains close to sonata-form convention in terms of the movement forms as well as key structures, apart from in the first

<sup>60</sup> Jaffé, *Sergey Prokofiev (20th-Century Composers)*, 33.

movement, which includes unanticipated keys. It is at the local level of individual phrases that Prokofiev primarily challenges tradition. In the first movement, this not only occurs in the second part of the first subject, but also in the large sections of ostinato repetition, particularly in the development. The finale includes mockery in the 'Prokofievizations' of the second subject as well as in the repetition of the C sharp 'wrong note' in the development (as discussed in the previous chapter). As David Nice explains, the Second is 'more unified' than the First Sonata,<sup>61</sup> and for that matter the Third or Fourth as well. The opening anacrusis of the first movement, for example, sets up both the transitional theme and the second movement trio, and the opening of the development is reproduced in the finale. Similarly, in the last movement, the opening D minor and C major harmonic references become the keys of the first and second subjects. Such kinds of unity were, of course, almost an obsession for Beethoven.

#### Piano Sonata No. 5 in C major, Op. 38 (1923)

The Fifth Piano Sonata is the only one written outside Russia. Prokofiev's subsequent desertion of the genre may be due to a 'lack of confidence', as Rita McAllister states, after a string of unsuccessful compositions in the West.<sup>62</sup> Possibly the composer's pragmatic, business-like demeanour led him to consider the medium not as commercially viable as stage works. Such a perspective would have been all the more important at a time when the composer's finances were in disarray. He wrote in his 23 January diary entry in 1923: 'here I have \$5, and over there [America] I owe \$2,500!'<sup>63</sup>

The Fifth Sonata is in three movements, the first and third adopting more subdued tempo indications than perhaps expected ('Allegro tranquillo' and 'Un poco allegretto'). This led Myaskovsky to claim that the sonata embodied 'nothing but restraint':<sup>64</sup> Prokofiev in turn blamed the restraint on a recent bout of scarlet fever.<sup>65</sup> The result is an extraordinarily serene, almost Mozartian classicism at the outset, countered by subsequent chromatic themes. Prokofiev again uses tritone key relationships to create the tonalities of the movements (C major, G flat major, C major), the interval becoming a prominent feature of the thematic content as well. The first movement's sonata-allegro form is organized as follows:

---

<sup>61</sup> Nice, *Prokofiev, A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891-1935*, 86.

<sup>62</sup> McAllister, 'Prokofiev', 140. The Sixth Sonata did not appear until 1940, after the composer returned to the Soviet Union permanently in 1936.

<sup>63</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915-1923*, 701.

<sup>64</sup> Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography*, 178.

<sup>65</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 255.

Bar	Section	Material
1	Exposition	First subject; counter-statement
20		Transitional theme
26		Second subject first theme
46		Closing theme
53		Codetta (extension of transitional theme)
62	Development	First subject
91		Transitional theme, second subject
113		Second subject closing theme
125		First subject (false recapitulation)
140	Recapitulation	First subject
156		Transitional theme
160		Second subject
178		Closing theme
187		Transitional theme
191	Coda	First subject

The main tonal area column has been omitted from the table since conventional tonality is not apparent in the same way as in the earlier sonatas, with polytonality, parallelism, and modal writing all playing important roles. The home key of C major is an exception, appearing where expected at the beginning and the end of the movement, as well as dominating the recapitulation in the context (for example) of incessant repetitions of the tonic chord in bars 183–187. Here, the composer departs from classical sonata-form conventions: the home tonality is solidly established but without polarization against a subordinate key. The deviation from and return to C major is still a feature of the movement, but situated against a backdrop of unconventional harmonic devices and tonal areas.

The first subject resembles a model period form. It is eight bars long, comprising a four-bar antecedent and four-bar consequent. An initial ‘basic’ idea of two bars is followed by a two-bar contrasting idea that moves to a weak cadence, in this case, finishing on the submediant chord of A minor. Following classical tradition, Prokofiev modifies the ‘contrasting’ idea in the final two bars of the consequent, in order to prepare us for the strong perfect cadence at bars 8–9, which introduces the counter-statement.<sup>66</sup> This cadence provides tonic and dominant polarization not witnessed at the level of the movement’s overall key structure; it is designed principally to help reinforce the tonic and thus plant C major firmly in the listener’s mind. With the alteration of the

<sup>66</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 88.

contrasting idea at bars 7–8, Prokofiev uses an ascending parallel triadic progression with seventh decorations to reach the dominant seventh chord a bar later (Ex. 3.21).

Example 3.21 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement I, bb. 1–9

Antecedent

Allegro tranquillo

*p*

basic idea

continuation

Consequent

5

basic idea

continuation

*cresc.*

*f*

IV I/IV IV  $\flat$  III  $\flat$  III $_4^6$  I $^7$  II III $^7$   $\sharp$ IV $^7$  V $^{\sharp 7}$  -  $\sharp$ 7 I

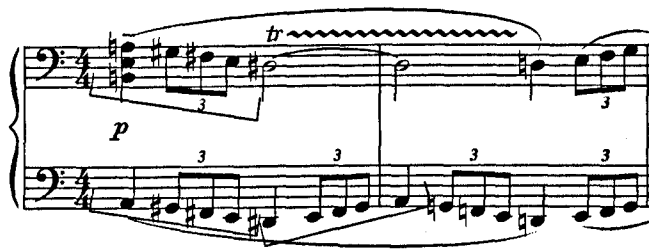
In the transitional theme at bar 20, the composer destabilizes harmonic procedures by introducing the tritone interval, and the result is rather grotesque. Whereas a tonic-dominant polarization usually creates a harmonious opposition, the tritone is the remotest note from the tonic; we therefore lose our tonal anchor (Ex. 3.22). In bar 77 in the development section, Prokofiev extends this idea by presenting the primary motif of the first subject against a dotted accompaniment in two different keys: E major in the treble and B flat in the bass (Ex. 3.23). The effect that is produced is bitonality at the tritone. The second subject adopts parallelism and whole-tone writing reflecting an obvious Debussian influence; Prokofiev played Debussy's music around the time of composition,<sup>67</sup> and, according to his wife Lina, would listen to *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* over and over again.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Jaffé, *Sergey Prokofiev (20th-Century Composers)*, 90.

<sup>68</sup> Lina Prokofiev, *Lina Prokofiev Interview 1, pt. 1* [sound recording: audio cassette], interviewer: Phillip Ramey (1979).



Example 3.22 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement I, bb. 20–1



Example 3.23 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement I, bb. 77–8



The slow, dance-like middle movement is structured in a ternary form as follows:

Bar	Section	Principal tonal areas
1	A	G flat major, G sharp minor, E major, A flat major
59	B	E minor
84	A	G flat major, G sharp minor, E major, C minor
116	Coda	C minor, G flat major

The harmonic structure is more straightforward than in the opening movement, with the left hand mostly providing tonal foundations. At the beginning of the movement, for example, a G flat chord is repeated in the left hand to establish the home key; this chord changes to G sharp minor at bar 10, E major at bar 13, and A flat major at bar 21. The function of the treble voice in the ‘A’ theme is a disruptive one; for its entry at bar 5, Prokofiev writes a descending chromatic line that starts on an unexpected note, a C flat a perfect fourth above the tonic.

To heighten the chromaticism, the composer introduces an ascending chromatic line in the inner voice of the left-hand chord, in contrary motion to the right hand material. This disruption is extended at bar 10 through polytonality, with C major ideas in the right hand pitted against G sharp minor chords in the left, and then again at bar 13, with a whole-tone idea at the top of the texture disturbing the E major tonality below. The theme itself is jazz-like, with blue note acciaccaturas in the left hand chords presented at the outset. The almost improvisatory feel of the theme is enhanced by its irregular phrase lengths: 5 + 3 + 3 + 5 etc. (Ex. 3.24).

Example 3.24 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement II, bb. 5–14

In contrast, the interior ‘B’ theme is harmonically stable in that the treble and bass parts are working together tonally: an E minor tonal centre is established by the accented E in the left hand at bar 59, as well as E and B notes above in the right hand. Structurally, there is a resemblance to the opening theme of the first movement; period form is again in evidence, a four-bar antecedent being followed by a four-bar consequent (Ex. 3.25). Furthermore, the theme is immediately repeated at bar 67, albeit a semitone higher, in F minor. There are also similarities in the harmonic direction of the themes. In the first movement, the home key of C major is briefly bypassed with the addition of an E flat major chord in the sixth bar; in the second movement ‘B’ theme, the same disruption occurs (incidentally) with the same chord of E flat at bar 60.

Example 3.25 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement II, bb. 59–66

Prokofiev's treatment of ternary form is looser than the conventional model with his use of E minor as the subordinate key, as we would usually expect a modulation to the tonic minor. However, the return of the 'A' theme follows convention in presenting material in the same keys – apart from the C minor passage at bar 117, which prepares for the coda – and in heavily embellishing some of the main motivic material, for example at bar 84 through the addition of rapid descending scales. The coda begins with the interior 'B' theme, which is again a standard eighteenth-century technique, Prokofiev concluding the movement with a haunting final statement of the theme.<sup>69</sup>

The final movement a seven-part sonata-rondo form:

Bar	Section	Material
1	Exposition	Refrain (A) first theme
9		Second theme
19		Third theme
25		Couplet I (B)
36		Transition
40		Refrain (A) first theme
52	Development	Couplet II (C)
74		False recapitulation – (A) first, second and third themes
95	Recapitulation	Refrain (A) – second theme, with interjections of first theme
108		Third theme
113		Couplet IV (B)
131		Refrain (A) first theme
144	Coda	First theme

Tonal areas, sometimes absent as in the first movement, have again been deliberately omitted from this chart. The refrain (A) themes are bound together by their tonal centre of C, which also provides the subordinate tonality for couplet I. One interesting exception is the bar 40 refrain, where Prokofiev adds F notes to the bass to give the effect of a subdominant tonal centre in what is a truncated version of the opening (the second and third themes are excluded, as is sometimes the case in sonata-rondo movements).<sup>70</sup> As has been explained by Rosen, the subdominant is a characteristic focal point for a classical sonata finale.<sup>71</sup>

As a Beethovenian (and indeed Haydnesque) effect, the composer includes a false recapitulation at bar 74: bars 2–3 of the refrain are presented initially in the dominant

<sup>69</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 211–6.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>71</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 118.

key area.<sup>72</sup> The recapitulation proper begins at bar 95, as the second theme of the refrain returns intact; the first theme appears only through frequent fragmental bursts. A more grandiose return of the opening theme occurs later in the recapitulation (bar 131), where the composer prefigures the harmonic language of Olivier Messiaen with a development of bars 1–3 that is less concerned with harmonic function than with colouristic embellishment (Exx. 3.26 and 3.27).

Example 3.26 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement III, bb. 1–4

Example 3.27 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement III, bb. 131–2

The first theme of the refrain is periodic, with a four-bar antecedent and a four-bar consequent, but tonally ambiguous largely on account of avoiding the interval of a third. The second theme sets itself up to follow a sentence phrase structure. The initial statement of the theme features a two-bar presentation phrase that includes a repetition of the basic idea. The continuation phrase, however, is disrupted by the sudden time change from 4/4 to 3/4, with no resulting cadence. What Prokofiev does instead is to introduce an immediate restatement of the theme in a balanced four-bar phrase. The theme also has a bitonality quality, a B major chord in bar 9, for example, repeated in the treble against C notes in the bass (Ex. 3.28).

<sup>72</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 238.

Example 3.28 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement III, bb. 9–15

The third theme at bar 19 departs from tradition in employing a six-bar sentence, both presentation and continuation comprising three bars. To maintain a sense of unity, Prokofiev draws on the semiquaver *moto perpetuo* found in the second theme. The second subject continues with inconsistent, unpredictable phrasing: 5 + 2 + 4. If the phrasing goes against the classical grain on this occasion, the development returns to more conventional procedures. Couplet II operates in terms of tonal centres rather than keys, but the quick rate of modulation is reminiscent of a classical development. The development section deals with the obligatory fragmentation of themes; Prokofiev's motivic treatment also has a Beethovenian quality to it. At the opening (Ex. 3.29), for example, Prokofiev introduces both rhythmic augmentation and diminution in order to alter the passage from bar 3 (see Ex. 3.26). Caplin refers to this procedure as 'expansion'.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Caplin, *Classical Form*, 20.

Example 3.29 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38, Movement III, bb. 52–53



The Fifth Sonata is experimental in its approach to sonata form, as the composer himself claimed. Prokofiev attributed this ‘complexity’ to the ‘Parisian atmosphere’;<sup>74</sup> indeed, the use of parallel and modal writing brings Ravel’s and Debussy’s styles to mind. The uneven phrase structures for a large number of the themes points to an active avoidance of classical-period procedure, but happens only after Prokofiev has lulled the listener into a false sense of security with conventionally structured ideas, such as those at the opening of the first and final movements. A basic adherence to sonata form remains in place, however, Prokofiev following conventions such as counter-statements, codettas, and false recapitulations. David Nice aptly describes the work as ‘Prokofiev’s most intellectual approach to sonata form so far.’<sup>75</sup>

### Conclusion

When the sonatas are assessed chronologically, a pattern emerges that complements the findings in earlier chapters. The First Piano Sonata, like the composer’s other early works, is highly traditional in structure, displaying Russian influences in its debts to Skryabin and Medtner. Prokofiev largely follows sonata-form conventions, which were relayed to him by his teacher Reinhold Glière around the time the first version of the sonata was composed, through discussions of Beethoven’s sonatas. Indeed, the focus on the subdominant is a common feature of Beethoven’s sonata movements, as are the small ternary and period thematic structures that Prokofiev employs.

The Third Sonata is similar in approach to the First with a conventional key structure and subdominant bias. Although the unusually large introduction features a prolonged dominant pedal, its function could be regarded as a novel extension of traditional procedure in simply increasing the tension between tonic and dominant. The Fourth Sonata is similarly traditional in its focus on the primary chords; the minor to major

<sup>74</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 276

<sup>75</sup> Nice, *Prokofiev, A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891–1935*, 194.

idea in the recapitulation section is reminiscent of Beethoven's 'Appassionata' Sonata. The finale, however, seems almost anachronistic on account of its later composition. Here, 'Prokofievizations' allow the composer actively to mock tradition with his 'wrong note' ideas and use of leaping Mozartian accompaniment figures. The thematic processes are broadly speaking Beethovenian, Prokofiev often taking a small cell and extensively developing it; and, of course, the sonata's progressive tonality mimics Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Prokofiev no doubt chose to resurrect these two works in 1917 in accordance with his move towards a more simplified style at this time, as discussed in Chapter One.

The Second Sonata was a groundbreaking one for Prokofiev, the key structure of the first movement significantly departing from sonata-form tradition. Prokofiev sets out his stall in the first few bars, the seemingly innocent main theme plunging into dissonance. When Prokofiev is not writing disruptive music along these lines, he occasionally reverts to the harmonic language of the *Kuchka* in some of the parallel writing. Again, this aligns with practices in Prokofiev's compositions around the same time, such as the Second Piano Concerto and his opera, *The Gambler*. The last movement in particular contains some of the mockery that is also present in the Fourth Sonata, with 'wrong note' ideas, as well as avoided thirds and fifths. The interest in unity can be attributed to Beethoven's influence and manifests itself in the use of cyclical themes and linking ideas.

The Fifth Sonata takes the experimentation of the Second Sonata to a new level. Prokofiev sets us up with a relatively traditional theme, save for unexpected harmonic turns, much like in the Second, but in subsequent themes largely avoids conventional tonality. The composer employs polytonality and modal writing instead – some of which looks to contemporary French traditions – along with a foregrounding of the tritone interval. The irregular phrase lengths, too, mark a departure from tradition, as does the lack of tonic and dominant polarization in the recapitulation of the first movement. The basic structural outline, however, is perhaps even more traditional than that of the Second Sonata. The rondo finale, for example, maintains a Beethovenian focus on the subdominant key in its restatement, while the first movement includes familiar traditional devices such as codettas and false recapitulations. Some of the motivic development, particularly in the last movement, also demonstrates Beethoven's influence.

In Prokofiev's mature style, demonstrated particularly in the Second and Fifth sonatas, compositional skill often resides in making unconventional harmonic progressions sound 'natural'. As Arnold Whittall explains: 'Prokofiev shows that the triadic harmony can still function with validity and originality when apparently "non-functional" tonal relationships are involved.'<sup>76</sup> The beginnings and ends of movements are notable for their closeness to classical tradition. The first subject, much like in the eighteenth century, is usually the most conventional; it is in the subsequent themes and development that Prokofiev departs more strikingly from classical convention. Prokofiev usually resolves the tension created by his musical procedures at the end of movements, Neil Minturn pointing out that the majority of them finish with triadic harmony.<sup>77</sup>

The elemental nature of Prokofiev's musical ideas, displayed in compositions as early as the First Sonata, is fundamentally Beethovenian, as is his superficial formal clarity. Prokofiev's melodies are often inconsistent in their phrase lengths, as sometimes are Mozart's, creating 'tensions [that are] set up between symmetry and asymmetry.'<sup>78</sup> It seems appropriate, therefore, that the most Mozartian sonata from a textural point of view, the Fifth, also contains the most fluctuating and unpredictable phrase lengths. Most impressively, Prokofiev manages to reinvigorate classical tradition in the twentieth century. As Nicolas Nabokov explains:

Probably one of his most important achievements is the creation of a perfectly unified contemporary style of piano music which forms a synthesis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century traditions with modern technical inventions.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, 175.

<sup>77</sup> Neil Minturn, *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>78</sup> Eric Roseberry, 'Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas', *Music and Musicians*, 19/7, March 1971, 40.

<sup>79</sup> Nabokov, *Old Friends and New Music*, 150.



## CHAPTER IV

### PROKOFIEV IN PERFORMANCE

This chapter will assess Prokofiev's development as a pianist, beginning with the early studies with his mother, and continuing in St Petersburg under the guidance of his professors Alexander Winkler and Anna Yesipova. Using reviews and accounts of his contemporaries, Prokofiev's development as a performer will be evaluated; Prokofiev's abilities as a composer have received widespread recognition, but it is important to determine his achievements on the concert stage as well. Insight into his technical development will be necessary, as well as information about his choices of repertoire. Finally, my chapter will conclude with thoughts on the interpretation of Prokofiev's piano music as evidenced in his own invaluable recordings, tracing the progression from his own playing and the great pianists who knew him, through to the modern generation of interpreters.

#### Early Education

As an amateur pianist, Prokofiev's mother could offer him only a limited education in performance.<sup>1</sup> He never went into great detail about her tuition, describing only her following of Rudolf Strobl's and Karl Van Ark's methods, and the shortcomings of her approach.<sup>2</sup> Not a great deal is known in fact about Strobl's method; he acquired a reputation as a great teacher, and it is possible that Prokofiev's mother used at least one of his teaching editions.<sup>3</sup> Van Ark, on the other hand, was a tutor at the St Petersburg Conservatoire and a pupil of Leschetizky, whose indirect influence will be discussed later.<sup>4</sup> Prokofiev lamented the fact he 'never learnt a piece properly', as well as the poor technique he had acquired during these early years, with particular reference to his problematic hand position, which 'took [him] many years to overcome.'<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Serge Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Serge Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 230.

<sup>3</sup> Zofia Chechlínska, 'Strobl, Rudolf' in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians v. 18* (6<sup>th</sup> edn., London: Macmillan, 1980), 290.

<sup>4</sup> Comtesse A. Potocka, *Theodore Leschetizky: An Intimate Study of the Man and the Musician* (New York: The Century Co., 1903), 214–219.

<sup>5</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 230.

Glière's appointment in the summer of 1902 was designed primarily to help Prokofiev develop as a composer, but his newly assigned teacher later noted the strengths and weaknesses of Prokofiev's playing brought on by his early tuition:

He played the piano with great ease and confidence, although his technique left much to be desired. He played carelessly and did not hold his hands properly on the keyboard. Sometimes he managed rather difficult passages with comparative facility but at other times he could not play a simple scale or an ordinary arpeggio.<sup>6</sup>

Part of the reason Glière was unable to help Prokofiev overcome these problems is that Glière himself was not a very good pianist. Prokofiev played on this by asking him to perform a difficult passage of an étude or sonata, evidently enjoying watching Glière struggle. He was also unreceptive to Glière's advice. Noticing his 'poor' phrasing and 'incorrect hand position', Glière attempted to remedy them, but noted that Prokofiev was 'rather obstinate and did not always take [his] advice.'<sup>7</sup>

On his acceptance to the St Petersburg Conservatory in 1904, Prokofiev took the examination for obligatory piano studies, Alexander Winkler providing an assessment of his playing comparable to Glière's: '[...] you read music quite well, and you don't play badly, although you need more technique.'<sup>8</sup> Winkler agreed to take Prokofiev on as a student, prescribing Beethoven sonatas and Bach fugues,<sup>9</sup> as well as Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto,<sup>10</sup> but inconsistency continued to be a problem: 'one bar would be good and the next one bad.'<sup>11</sup> Winkler attempted to cure Prokofiev's bad technique by giving him exercises to strengthen his fingers and put them in a more rounded position. For the first time in his life, Prokofiev consciously practised technique.<sup>12</sup>

According to Glière, who heard him play during the summer, Winkler's instruction had certainly helped his physical approach to the instrument. Overall Winkler was pleased with his pupil's progress, but described him as 'not too diligent in his work.' Glazunov, on the other hand, gave him top marks for the technical and public examinations: 'brilliant technique, beautiful tone.'<sup>13</sup> Prokofiev summed up these comments well in his

---

<sup>6</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 146.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>8</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>10</sup> Serge Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 93.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>13</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 137.

diary, writing 'it's clear that I do have the abilities as a pianist', but also confessing that he rarely managed to practise for an hour a day, in spite of Winkler demanding much more from him.<sup>14</sup>

As his studies progressed, Prokofiev made it his ambition to become a concert pianist. He was aware he would have to continue working under a different teacher to realize his dream, though, his peers first suggesting leading teacher Anna Yesipova as the best option. His decision was made after consulting Glazunov, who explained: 'while Winkler [is] a first-class musician, Yesipova is a pianist and [Winkler is] not'. It was a difficult choice for Prokofiev, who had established a close friendship with his teacher – he later dedicated his Op. 4 *Études* to Winkler – but eventually decided to join Yesipova's class.<sup>15</sup>

Yesipova was another pupil of Leschetizky, but she gained special attention as his prized pupil; he described her as a 'model of musicianship'. There was clearly a deeper, more personal connection between them as well: they were to marry. Indeed, Leschetizky was said to have sacrificed his own career as a soloist in order to develop Yesipova into a virtuoso.<sup>16</sup> There are many parallels in musical upbringing that made Yesipova a suitable match for Prokofiev. She, too, entered the St Petersburg Conservatory in her early teens, making considerable progress, but also suffered from a certain 'amateurishness, due to a lack of discipline', which 'impeded her advance toward virtuosity.'<sup>17</sup> She therefore transferred to the greatest teacher at the institution, Leschetizky.

Leschetizky was a disciplinarian, and notorious for frequently throwing music at his pupils. He is even once said to have declared to Yesipova that her lessons would stop, after she had had a bad one.<sup>18</sup> It seems that Yesipova had a similarly strict approach towards Prokofiev, not allowing him to get away with his hitherto relaxed practicing schedule. Glière gave an example: 'Once, in a fit of anger, Yesipova declared, "Either

---

<sup>14</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 47.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–2.

<sup>16</sup> Ethel Newcomb, *Leschetizky As I Knew Him* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1921), 157.

<sup>17</sup> Potocka, *Theodore Leschetizky: An Intimate Study of the Man and the Musician*, 219–220.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

you will place your hands properly on the keyboard or you will get out of my class!”<sup>19</sup> Despite initial disagreements, Prokofiev would later praise her tuition to his peers.<sup>20</sup>

Yesipova first got Prokofiev to practise baroque- and classical-period works, such as Bach, Handel, Mozart and Beethoven,<sup>21</sup> before moving on to the Mendelssohn Prelude and Fugue in E Minor. His rendition of the latter work provoked criticism from his teacher, who repeatedly stopped him on account of problems with dynamics and an ‘uneven’ accompaniment, before pointing out ‘delicious nuances’.<sup>22</sup> Prokofiev’s playing of his own First Sonata also came in for criticism, Yesipova describing it as ‘over-pedalled’ and ‘all fortissimo’.<sup>23</sup> Yesipova’s advice clearly made an impact, however, and Yesipova’s son, Ilyin, gave an evaluation: ‘I thought you were just a composer who played the piano a bit, but you clearly have the ability to turn into a marvellous pianist.’<sup>24</sup> Prokofiev revealed, in a letter to his close friend and fellow pianist Vera Alpers, that he had started to practise technique for half an hour a day.<sup>25</sup> Beginning his practice session with exercises, he particularly recommended the Brahms exercises, which were no doubt studied at Yesipova’s suggestion.<sup>26</sup>

Yesipova also encouraged Prokofiev gradually to build up his repertoire, in preparation for a career on the concert stage. Under Yesipova’s guidance, he learnt Schumann’s Sonata in F Sharp Minor and *Toccata*, Glazunov’s Sonata in E Minor, and virtuoso Liszt works, such as the Sonata in B Minor and a transcription from Wagner’s *Tännhäuser*.<sup>27</sup> Prokofiev also practised the Chopin B Minor Sonata, with Yesipova making him study a Mozart adagio to help him with tonal control.<sup>28</sup> Prokofiev’s playing made a particular impact on his professors, including Serge Lyapunov, who after his final recital remarked: ‘you have great gifts as a pianist.’ And this was in spite of Prokofiev’s memory failing, forcing him to improvise, as well as the breaking of a string.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 147.

<sup>20</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 230.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 40.

<sup>28</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 315.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 619–621.

Gaining the top mark for his final recital, Prokofiev also entered the Anton Rubinstein Piano Competition, a contest exclusively for conservatoire performers. Much to his delight, Yesipova could only offer limited help in preparing for it, on account of illness. He played his own First Piano Concerto, Op. 10, later giving the reasons for this choice in his autobiography:

While I might not be able to compete successfully in performance of a classical concerto there was a chance that my own might impress the examiners by its novelty of technique; they simply would not be able to judge whether I was playing it well or not!<sup>30</sup>

The gamble paid off and Prokofiev won first prize, a grand piano, much to Glazunov's disgust.<sup>31</sup> Prokofiev was focussing too much on composition to maintain his quality of playing, and after graduation complained that his 'technique failed [him].<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, he continued to learn new repertoire, including Chopin Études, Schumann's *Carnaval*, and Saint-Saëns' Second Piano Concerto, in addition to his own compositions, of course, perhaps sensing the important role performance would play in his future career.<sup>33</sup>

#### Concert Repertoire and Reception

After leaving the Conservatory, Prokofiev used his increasing reputation as a pianist both at home and abroad to reinforce his compositional reputation. This is confirmed in a recorded interview given by his first wife, Lina:

He was fundamentally a composer [...] He gave concerts of primarily his own music, so that this became [better-known]. So his approach was not that of a soloist but of a composer.<sup>34</sup>

As a result, Prokofiev's recital programmes from 1915 to early 1918<sup>35</sup> overwhelmingly feature his own works: Opp. 1, 2, 3 and 4; the piano sonatas nos. 1–4; Op. 12 pieces; *Toccata*; *Sarcasms*; *Visions fugitives*; and the First and Second piano concertos. But as his attention began to turn to America on account of his frustration with the Russian Revolution, he gradually included the music of other composers in his programmes,

---

<sup>30</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 247.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 248

<sup>32</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 736.

<sup>33</sup> Information collated from Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth* and Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*.

<sup>34</sup> Lina Prokofiev, *Lina Prokofiev Interview 6, pt. 1* [sound recording: audio cassette], interviewer: Phillip Ramey (1979).

<sup>35</sup> Some of these are listed in Appendix C.

particularly that of Chopin.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, for his concert in the Kursaal, Petrograd, on 2 March 1918, he played four waltzes, two nocturnes, two mazurkas, two études, and the Fourth Ballade. This was the first time he had given a recital in public in which his own compositions did not feature at all.<sup>37</sup> His practice routine at the time was inconsistent, much to the despair of his friend Boris Bashkirov, who believed that Prokofiev should be practising for at least an hour, given his talent. This advice inspired Prokofiev, who began to take work at the instrument more seriously, incorporating it into his daily routine.<sup>38</sup>

During Prokofiev's two-month stay in Japan in the summer of 1918, which he used as a stop-off point before heading to the West, he came across two fellow graduates of the St Petersburg Conservatory, the violinist Mikhail Piastro and the pianist Alfred Meyerovich (a fellow student of Yesipova), who were performing in a concert in Tokyo.<sup>39</sup> They introduced Prokofiev to their impresario, a Pole by the name of Awsay Strock, who secured him two concerts on the 6 and 7 of July, along with the possibility of more concerts that never materialized.<sup>40</sup> Prokofiev did not learn any new repertoire for these, probably because he had spent two and a half months without a piano.<sup>41</sup> He played his own works alongside shorter works of Chopin and Schumann.<sup>42</sup>

Prokofiev took his American performances seriously, as they were initially his main source of income once he had emigrated. In order not to alienate his audiences in his quest to garner a reputation, he decided to include popular works alongside his own compositions. Practising for three hours a day, he learnt 'something not too daunting in order not to frighten the Americans': three Rachmaninov preludes, and two études and Feuillet d'album of Skryabin.<sup>43</sup> These were played alongside his Op. 2 Études, Second Sonata and *Suggestion Diabolique* at his debut performance in New York's Aeolian Hall on 20 November 1918. Two appearances at Carnegie Hall followed on the 10 and 11 of December, Prokofiev introducing his First Concerto to America on the first evening, and performing the Third Sonata on the second day, as well as conducting his

---

<sup>36</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 251.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 140–141.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 287–288.

<sup>40</sup> Anthony Phillips, 'Prokofiev in Japan: A View from the Interior', *Three Oranges Journal*, 15, May 2008, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 298.

<sup>42</sup> There is a copy of the concert programme for these concerts in Appendix B (Ex. B.1).

<sup>43</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 349–350.

'Classical' Symphony.<sup>44</sup> The reviews of his works were not favourable, including in the *New York Times* following his Aeolian Hall performance:

Prokofieff uses, like Arnold Schonberg, the entire modern harmonies. [...] He is a psychologist of the uglier emotions – hatred, contempt, rage – above all rage – disgust, despair, mockery, and defiance legitimately serve as models for moods. Occasionally there are moments of tenderness; exquisite jewels that briefly sparkle and then melt into seething undertow. The danger in all this highly spiced music is manifest; it soon exhausts our faculty of attention [...].<sup>45</sup>

Such reviews led Prokofiev to choose simpler works for American audiences in future; indeed, he added his Fourth Sonata, *Visions fugitives*, *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, *Toccata*, and three gavottes (presumably from Opp. 12, 25 and 32), to programmes in 1919. Prokofiev continued to select famous or easily digestible works of other composers such as Musorgsky, Borodin, and Glazunov. One concert in New York on 12 October was entirely populist in orientation, focussing on the German classics: Bach's French Suite in G Major, Beethoven's *Country Dances*, and Schumann's Sonata in F Sharp Minor.<sup>46</sup> He added Schumann's *Carnaval* to this list for his last three concerts of the year in New York, Washington and Chicago; a reviewer of the first of these rather sympathetically attributed the numerous wrong notes in *Carnaval* to Prokofiev's thumb injury.<sup>47</sup>

The beginning of 1920 saw Prokofiev programme works he had already played several times, but on 11 February, he performed the Rimsky-Korsakov Concerto at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and Josef Stransky, one of the work's first renditions in the city. He had offered to perform his own First Concerto, which they 'did not want [...] at any price', so went for the obscure work of his former teacher: '[it] is completely unknown here.' The work is technically easier than his First Concerto, being of a similar short length, so Prokofiev was able to learn it in just three weeks.<sup>48</sup> For his recitals at the end of the year along the Pacific coast, he also learnt Beethoven's Sonata in A Major, Op. 101.

---

<sup>44</sup> Refer to the copy of the concert programme in Appendix B (Ex. B.3).

<sup>45</sup> *The New York Times*, 21 November 1918. The spelling 'Prokofieff' is an alternate transliteration of his name that was favoured (by Prokofiev himself) up until the 1930s, when the more common 'Prokofiev' was adopted.

<sup>46</sup> *New-York Tribune*, 13 October 1919.

<sup>47</sup> *The New York Times*, 23 November 1919.

<sup>48</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 465.

Prokofiev experienced a lull in his performing activity in 1921 attributable to completing the Third Piano Concerto. In writing this work, Prokofiev could not have envisaged how popular it would become, particularly following the indifferent reviews of its first performances. After the première in Chicago on 16 December 1921, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock, a reviewer noted: 'As music it did not register like the ['Classical'] Symphony, being greatly a matter of skewed harmony, neither conventional enough to win the affections nor modernist enough to be annoying.'<sup>49</sup> Similarly, after it was repeated in two performances in New York on 26 and 27 of January 1922 with the New York Symphony Orchestra and conductor Albert Coates, the review in the *New York Times* was dismissive:

[The concerto] no doubt represents Mr. Prokofieff's most advanced state of mind as a 'modernist.' It is by no means unintelligible as music. It is not so swamped in a morass of discord that its outlines are not perceptible, especially in the first movement. But it seems singularly hard and dry as music, bringing little to nourish the intellect or warm the soul.<sup>50</sup>

Prokofiev himself described the New York reviews as 'even more superficial [than the Chicago ones], not to say downright careless.' It is no wonder, then, that Prokofiev did not perform the concerto again in America until 29 January 1926, when he featured alongside the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Serge Koussevitzky. Across Europe, in 1922–26, though, Prokofiev's performance of the concerto enjoyed great success in cities such as Paris, London, Brussels, Amsterdam, and Rome. Following the first London performance in 1922, a reviewer in *The Times* wrote:

Music entered the room with Mr. Prokofiev. His concerto is of absorbing interest all through. [...] The pianoforte part is practically continuous, and is a real orchestral part, not concertante; the interesting thing about it is that the orchestral tone-qualities are used with great adroitness to emphasize and give zest to the tone qualities of the piano, seldom to contrast with it. [...] The thing must look very weird on paper, and is certainly amazingly difficult to play, but it was all put before us with complete clarity and proportion.<sup>51</sup>

Such positive reviews must have encouraged Prokofiev to resurrect the Second Piano Concerto. Prokofiev had left the only copy of the score of this work in the Soviet Union

---

<sup>49</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, 17 December 1921.

<sup>50</sup> *The New York Times*, 27 January 1922.

<sup>51</sup> *The Times*, 26 April 1922.



before he left for the West, and it was destroyed by the residents of his old apartment.<sup>52</sup> Paris was an apt city for the première of this work on 8 May 1924, as the capital of modern art at the start of the twentieth century. Indeed, the concerto, which was programmed alongside the first performance of Arthur Honneger's Pacific 231, was 'extremely successful'.<sup>53</sup> Prokofiev was discriminating about where he performed the work, mostly limiting it to the European capitals; he did not play it in America until 21 January 1930, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Koussevitzky.<sup>54</sup>

Prokofiev's most substantial concert tour came at the beginning of 1927, where for three months he returned to his home country for the first time since leaving it in 1918. Here, he performed a wide variety of his own music to great acclaim. After a performance of the Third Concerto in Moscow, he wrote: 'At the end the hall shouted its head off. I don't think I ever got such a reception anywhere.'<sup>55</sup> The Leningrad audiences were even more receptive than the Moscow ones.<sup>56</sup> And all of this happened in spite of him getting stage fright on several occasions. He declared nonetheless that he '[had begun] to get accustomed to the Russian public.'<sup>57</sup> Dmitriy Kabalevsky wrote that his 'tremendous success [...] undoubtedly served to heighten public interest in his music.'<sup>58</sup>

Prokofiev continued to perform across the West and the USSR through the late 1920s and early 1930s, with *Choses en soi* being performed in Brussels for the first time on 18 March 1929 and the second of the Two Sonatinas, Op. 54, in London on 17 January 1932. He also played the Fifth Piano Concerto around Europe after its première in Berlin on 31 October, enjoying considerable success. After a performance in London on 1 February 1934 alongside the BBC Orchestra and Bruno Walter, a reviewer of *The Guardian* wrote:

Taken as a whole, this new concerto, with its brilliant and extremely difficult solo part, which the composer played with astonishing dexterity, and its clever orchestration, is one of Prokofieff's most attractive works. If he develops further along the lines of the eloquent fourth movement,

---

<sup>52</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 90.

<sup>53</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 275.

<sup>54</sup> Serge Prokofiev, *Dnevnik 1919–1933*, 749.

<sup>55</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 30.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>58</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 205.

[...] he may in the future move us as much as he has delighted us in the past.<sup>59</sup>

Prokofiev's most productive year as a performer was 1930, when he gave almost one concert each month. The surge in activity can probably be attributed to his lack of income at the time; Serge Diaghilev had died the previous year and the Ballets Russes was consequently disbanded, starving Prokofiev of commissions. The move to the USSR, where collaborations were being discussed, must have looked even more attractive, and Prokofiev set about plotting his permanent return, which happened in January 1936. There was one final tour of the West in 1938, before he was banned from leaving the Soviet Union.

Prokofiev still gave concerts up until the first performance of his Sixth Sonata, which featured in a radio broadcast on 8 April 1940, but he passed on the responsibility of the premières of the remaining sonatas to the talented Soviet pianists, Sviatoslav Richter (Seventh and Ninth) and Emil Gilels (Eighth), limiting his own performances to domestic settings. Richter noticed that Prokofiev's playing was 'no longer as good' around this time,<sup>60</sup> which is why he entrusted them to these young artists: he simply did not have the time to practise, and illness was gradually making him weaker. According to his second wife Mira, Prokofiev stopped performing in public completely in 1942 turning his attention solely to composition.<sup>61</sup> Even when encouraged by the great pianist and pedagogue, Heinrich Neuhaus, to give a piano recital of his own sonatas, he replied, 'yes, but that would cost me half a sonata.' His first wife Lina quoted him as saying, 'Well I hope the day will come when I won't have to play my works and for them to become known, so I can devote my time only to composing.'<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Prokofiev's increased celebrity status within the Soviet Union ensured that this was the case. He no longer had to give concerts to promote his music and support himself financially, a scenario that no doubt pleased him; according to his friend Vernon Duke, a piano recital was 'a task he seldom relished.'<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 February 1934.

<sup>60</sup> Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, 74.

<sup>61</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 164.

<sup>62</sup> Lina Prokofiev, *Lina Prokofiev Interview 6, pt. 2* [sound recording: audio cassette], interviewer: Phillip Ramey (1979).

<sup>63</sup> Vernon Duke, *Passport to Paris* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), 244.

## Prokofiev's Playing

Various accounts from Prokofiev's contemporaries give broadly consistent descriptions of his performing style, and a pattern begins to emerge once sources are evaluated chronologically. Among Prokofiev's earliest public performances was a rendition of his Second Piano Concerto in St Petersburg in 1913, at which a critic described his 'sharp, dry touch.'<sup>64</sup> Glazunov's description around this time adds to an apparent perception of coldness:

An original virtuoso of a new kind with original technique, he is trying to produce the effects, which are often beyond the piano's abilities, often at the expense of beauty of sound. A tiresome affectation, not always sincere.<sup>65</sup>

Reviews of his earliest American performances in 1918 focus on the dynamic limitations of his playing. After the first performance of his First Piano Concerto in the country, a reviewer noted:

[...] His pianissimo is seldom in evidence. ... The composer handled the keyboard – handled is the precise word – and the duel that ensued between his ten flail-like fingers was to the death; the death of euphony ... the piano all the while shrieking, groaning, howling, fighting back, and in several instances it seemed to rear and bite the hand that chastised it.<sup>66</sup>

The lack of tonal colour ('sharp, dry touch', lack of 'beauty of sound', 'shrieking') and absence of dynamics suggests that Prokofiev suffered from technical deficiencies. Glazunov's description of Prokofiev's 'original technique' as well as another reviewer's observation of 'a technique all his own' may indicate technical flaws.<sup>67</sup> Even a year later, it appears the problem had not diminished; a reviewer in the *New York Tribune* noted that, 'nuance, color and singing tone seem foreign to his ideal.'<sup>68</sup> A year later, inspired by Rachmaninov's refined playing and possibly taking heed of negative reviews, Prokofiev began to practise at greater length. He gave attention to his technique, as revealed in a diary entry:

I practised the piano for one or two hours a day working up my programme for America and paying particular attention to making my technique as accurate as possible with the aim of ensuring that I did not

---

<sup>64</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 33.

<sup>65</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 38.

<sup>66</sup> *The New York Times*, 11 December 1918.

<sup>67</sup> *The New York Times*, 21 November 1918.

<sup>68</sup> *New-York Tribune*, 31 March 1919.

play a single note carelessly or without thinking deeply about it. I cannot deny that it was listening to Rachmaninoff that gave me the impulse for this degree of precision, and I see it as the way forward for my future development of keyboard mastery.<sup>69</sup>

Subsequent reviews tend to give more favourable accounts of his playing, in response to recitals in 1922, citing 'technical mastery' and 'crisp and incisive rhythmical touch';<sup>70</sup> a 'powerful, clearly articulated' style;<sup>71</sup> and 'amiable and adroit' performance.<sup>72</sup> When Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1927, his friends, who had not heard him play for nine years, noticed a 'remarkable change' in his piano playing.<sup>73</sup> As Boris Asafyev explained:

In general, Prokofiev's playing became softer and more rounded [...] because of [...] strikingly touching and emotionally rich phrasing, as well as his outstanding ability to mould and carry on the melodic line [...].<sup>74</sup>

A reviewer in *The Times* provides a similar assessment in 1931:

Mr. Prokofiev seems to have abandoned the hard, glittering, metallic tone which he used to favour, and has adopted a manner more suave [...].<sup>75</sup>

Neuhaus relates an anecdote of Prokofiev demonstrating his new orchestral piece first in the home, and then at a public audition. In the first instance, Prokofiev played 'carelessly, composer-like, crudely, with many mistakes and a barbarous use of pedal.' On the latter occasion, which took place a few days later, he had ironed out his shortcomings; according to Neuhaus 'he played the same piece superbly, perfectly, with true virtuosity.'<sup>76</sup> Prokofiev clearly had to work to maintain his refined style; indeed, the fact it did not come naturally to him was possibly the result of his neglect of technical practice until the age of fourteen. Even then his commitment was sporadic.<sup>77</sup> Evidently, Prokofiev felt increasingly unable to devote a large proportion of time to preparing for performances during his later years.

---

<sup>69</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 532–3.

<sup>70</sup> *The New York Times*, 27 January 1922.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *New-York Tribune*, 15 February 1922.

<sup>73</sup> Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 82.

<sup>74</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 39.

<sup>75</sup> *The Times*, 20 January 1931.

<sup>76</sup> Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 233.

<sup>77</sup> Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev*, 92.

Prokofiev's good friend, Vernon Duke, gave a vivid account in his memoirs of a Prokofiev appearance on stage:

The strangely gauche manner in which [Prokofiev] traversed the stage was no indication of what was to follow; after sitting down and adjusting the piano stool with an abrupt jerk, Prokofiev let go with an unrelenting muscular exhibition of a completely novel kind of piano playing. This young man's music and his performance of it reminded me of the onrushing forwards in my one unfortunate soccer experience; there was no sentiment, no sweetness there – nothing but unrelenting energy and athletic joy of living.<sup>78</sup>

The impression is of an emotionally detached figure, who separated himself in effect from the music. Boris Asafyev observed that he played 'simply, clearly and sensibly', adding:

His reserve does not always imply dryness or indifference: Prokofiev knows how to control his emotions, but does not shy away from the touching, gentle lyricism. He is not interested in pompous pathos. He found something better: simplicity and naturalness...<sup>79</sup>

The 'naturalness' and 'simplicity' were demonstrated in Prokofiev's physical approach to playing. Poulenc noted that he 'played on a level with the keyboard', with an 'extraordinary sureness of wrist'.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, according to Milstein he sat 'remarkably still, without making unnecessary movements,' and 'his hands flew over the keyboard with remarkable ease, without the slightest tension.'<sup>81</sup> This coolness came about after a series of public blunders just after graduating from the Conservatory. He obsessed over finding ways to cut out his mistakes in performance and concluded:

When performing in public one must be totally oblivious to one's surroundings and immerse oneself in the music, the music itself and nothing but the music. The performance will benefit and the cause of any anxiety will be removed, since the audience, the source of anxiety, will be outside the field of attention.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Duke, *Passport to Paris*, 24.

<sup>79</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 38.

<sup>80</sup> Francis Poulenc, *My Friends and Myself: Conversations* (London: Dobson, 1978), 120.

<sup>81</sup> Vladimir Blok (ed.), *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews* (Moscow: Progress, 1978), 210.

<sup>82</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 594.

Prokofiev also trained his memory in an effort to prevent lapses during concerts, even going so far as to purchase a book of mnemonics and to learn a poem every day.<sup>83</sup> His approach to memorizing a work was thorough:

When a piece has been sufficiently learned with the music, one must try to remember it away from the piano, imagining the sound of the music in parallel with the way it is written, that is to say recalling the music through the ears at the same time as remembering how it looks to the eyes. This must be done slowly and meticulously, reconstructing in imagination every detail of every bar. This is the first stage. Stage two consists of recalling all the music aurally while training the visual side to recall not the score but the keyboard and the individual keys which are employed to produce the sound of the music in question.<sup>84</sup>

Prokofiev evidently found a system that worked. Nabokov later commented on Prokofiev's extraordinary musical memory, describing how he had the ability to quote the themes of other composers that he had only heard once or twice and sometimes a long time before. He had memorized early operas by Tchaikovsky, as well as entire scenes from Musorgsky's opera *Marriage*. Indeed, he entertained guests by showing off this ability for hours at a time.<sup>85</sup>

Describing Prokofiev's concert performances, Asafyev remarked that he always strove to communicate melodies; his performances therefore always had a 'beautiful singing quality, without ever being sweet.'<sup>86</sup> His phrasing, according to Yakov Milstein, was 'clear and brilliantly moulded', with the 'warmth, sincerity, poetic softness, [and] the ability to handle the melodic line fluently and smoothly.' He played with a 'full' and 'resilient' sound as well.<sup>87</sup> Prokofiev was always strict with tempo, Francis Poulenc noting that it 'never, never varied'; importantly, Poulenc recommended that all performers of Prokofiev's music approach it in the same way.<sup>88</sup> Milstein declared that his rhythm was 'clear-cut',<sup>89</sup> and Asafyev described it as being full of 'high tension' and 'virile, unwavering energy'.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 260.

<sup>84</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth*, 534.

<sup>85</sup> Nabokov, *Old Friends and New Music*, 126.

<sup>86</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 39.

<sup>87</sup> Blok, *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews*, 209.

<sup>88</sup> Poulenc, *My Friends and Myself: Conversations*, 120.

<sup>89</sup> Blok, *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews*, 209.

<sup>90</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 39.

Many reviews echo Milstein's assessment of Prokofiev's playing as 'clear'.<sup>91</sup> This quality came across particularly in his articulation, for example his staccato playing, which Poulenc described as 'marvellous'. Several contemporaries also noted his unique use of accents. Asafyev drew attention to a whole palette:

There is an endless range of them: from hardly audible and scarcely noticeable pushes to pricks and passing-by stresses to temperamental and powerful strokes. The accent in Prokofiev's performance becomes the most valuable shaping element, bringing sharpness, capriciousness, and a special dry spark to his playing. Regular metric stresses disappear behind rhythmically defined and dynamically rich accents. This makes the phrasing especially clear and intensely vital...<sup>92</sup>

The clarity was also demonstrated by Prokofiev's sparing use of the pedal. In fact, Sviatoslav Richter remarked that he 'played virtually without any pedal.'<sup>93</sup>

What is remarkable about these accounts is that they indicate how influential Yesipova was in her teaching of Prokofiev. His playing captured the primary qualities of Leschetizky's 'school': 'emphasised rhythm, clarity, inaudible pedalling, [and] brilliance in staccato passages.'<sup>94</sup> Naturalness was also crucial, with the hand, arm and wrist being 'under complete control' and working independently of one another.<sup>95</sup> Leschetizky's own playing, like Prokofiev's, also focused on a melody that was 'isolated from the harmonies around it', a technique he learned by listening to singing.<sup>96</sup> The thorough way in which Leschetizky encouraged his pupils to prepare a score, paying attention to the smallest detail, eventually found its way into Prokofiev's playing.<sup>97</sup>

### Interpreting Prokofiev

Information from Prokofiev's contemporaries provides a solid foundation for deciding how to interpret his music. The recordings the composer made are just as valuable. Prokofiev's earliest recordings date from 1919, when he was asked to create piano rolls for Duo-Art, the American player piano company.<sup>98</sup> He made no fewer than seventeen rolls in total, with the latest being produced in 1930. Among these are a wide variety of

---

<sup>91</sup> Blok, *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews*, 209.

<sup>92</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 39.

<sup>93</sup> Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, 68.

<sup>94</sup> Annette Hullah, *Living Masters of Music: Theodor Leschetizky* (London: John Lane, 1906), 40.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>96</sup> Newcomb, *Leschetizky as I knew him*, 160.

<sup>97</sup> Hullah, *Living Masters of Music: Theodor Leschetizky*, 43.

<sup>98</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 340.

his own compositions ranging from the *Toccata*, Op. 11, through to his transcriptions of the 'March' and 'Intermezzo' ('Scherzo') from *The Love for Three Oranges*. He also recorded works of other Russian composers: Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninov, Glazunov, Skryabin, and Myaskovsky.<sup>99</sup>

Prokofiev took part in BBC Radio broadcasts, including a recital on 5 December 1927, when he played his Third Piano Sonata and other solo pieces, in addition to accompanying his wife Lina, who sang some of his songs.<sup>100</sup> Then, on 9 December, he gave the first British performance of the Second Piano Concerto with the Wireless Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ernest Ansermet.<sup>101</sup> Recordings of these have not come to light. He later made phonographic recordings for His Master's Voice in London and Paris in 1932 and 1935, this time performing only his own works: the Third Piano Concerto with the London Symphony and Piero Coppola, as well as several solo miniatures. For the recording of the concerto, he described how the session was spread over two days, taking six hours in total – each take was four minutes long (the duration of a side of a disc), but Prokofiev encountered many problems. First the clarinettist played a wrong note, and then he himself played badly, as he struggled to avoid mistakes when under pressure.<sup>102</sup>

The piano rolls are significantly limited in their ability to pick up fine details and lack the warmth of phonographic records, but as Prokofiev himself stated after playing back a roll for the first time, 'all [his] accents, ritardandi and wrong notes [are] there.'<sup>103</sup> His phonographic recordings are occasionally hazy, with the inevitable clicks of early recordings, but offer a better account than the mechanical rolls. These recordings, along with the aforementioned written descriptions of Prokofiev's playing, help provide a reasonable guide to interpreting his piano works in a manner true to the spirit of the composer.

Prokofiev's fascination with melody is evident from his interview with Olin Downes in 1930, where he stresses the importance of a 'melodic expression'.<sup>104</sup> And it is

---

<sup>99</sup> Nice, *Prokofiev, A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891–1935*, 369.

<sup>100</sup> Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 370.

<sup>101</sup> Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922–1936*, 106.

<sup>102</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1924–1933: Prodigal Son*, 1009–10.

<sup>103</sup> Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923*, 340.

<sup>104</sup> *The New York Times*, 2 February 1930.



demonstrated in his recorded performances; there is always a conscious effort to bring out the melodic line in the simple lyrical pieces, as in the transcription of the 'March' from *The Love for Three Oranges*. In the second movement of the Third Piano Concerto, Prokofiev follows the same procedure, with the classical texture of the first variation being matched by the prominence of the top line, a feature more or less emulating an interpretation of a Mozart theme and accompaniment. Whenever the pianist is faced with such passages, then, the top line should be emphasised and the accompaniment conveyed subtly, as in the opening passage of the Fifth Piano Sonata (Ex. 4.1).

Example 4.1 – Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38/135, Movement I, bb. 1–4



Of course the top voice is not always the most important in the texture, and Prokofiev, as might be expected, included nuances in his interpretations that were not necessarily indicated in the score. One such example occurs in his recording of the 'Gavotte', Op. 12 No. 2, where the inner counterpoint is brought out on repetition of the theme at bar 19. The same is true of the Andante from the Fourth Sonata, where the theme is transferred to different voices of the fugal texture: Prokofiev demonstrates this by playing the tenor theme boldly at bar 16, even in the context of a pianissimo dynamic. It is therefore imperative for the performer to study a Prokofiev work in detail before executing it, trying to discover how the various strands of the texture fit together. In the third movement of the Second Sonata, for example, each appearance of the main ostinato motif should be pronounced, even in less obvious places, such as in the left hand at bars 31–34 (Ex. 4.2).

Example 4.2 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement III, bb. 31–34

Prokofiev's attitude to phrasing comes straight from the classical school – each section is shaped according to the placement of cadences. He tends to slow down at the end of phrases in lyrical passages, such as in the Op. 12 No. 7 'Prelude'. Often there is a dramatic but unwritten *ritenuto* at the end of slower movements; however, toccata-style pieces, like the *Suggestion Diabolique*, remain *a tempo*. Moreover, Prokofiev's interpretations of groups of slurred notes follow the classical tradition, with the first note slightly accented with a *diminuendo* leading to the second note, which is played almost staccato. He demonstrates this throughout his recordings of the Op. 12 pieces, as well as in the third movement of the Third Piano Concerto, in passages such as at bar 172:

Example 4.3 – Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, Movement III, b. 172

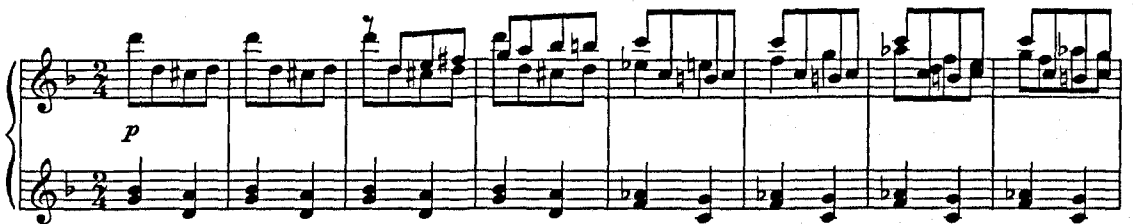
As regards to articulation, quavers that are not marked *legato* are generally played non *legato*, as in the recording of the 'March', Op. 12 No. 1. Therefore, quavers in passages like the opening of the Seventh Sonata need to be played in an almost detached fashion (Ex. 4.4).

Example 4.4 – Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, Movement I, bb. 1–6



The same is also required for the following passage from the first movement of the Second Piano Sonata (Ex. 4.5):

Example 4.5 – Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 14, Movement 1, bb. 32–9



When Prokofiev has legato and staccato sections alongside each other, it is important to create effective contrasts between the two, almost exaggerating the different touches, as he does himself in the 'Gavotte', Op. 12 No. 2. The composer exhibits varying approaches to staccato, depending on the type of movement. In fast toccata movements such as *Suggestion Diabolique*, the staccato crotchets are played as short as possible, in a fairly dry manner. In the tenth number of the *Visions fugitives*, on the other hand, the staccato quavers are full of weight due to the slower, heavier tempo and 'Ridicolosamente' ('Ridiculously') indication. The same is true in the final section of the middle movement of the Fourth Sonata and at the beginning of the third of the *Tales of an Old Grandmother*.

Prokofiev's pedalling is always very clear in his recordings, which corresponds with contemporary accounts of his playing: he never blurs harmonies. In the sections where the pedalling is immediately audible, the pedal is either marked in the score as in the second theme of the first of the *Sarcasms*, or is used to help the performance of a technically difficult passage, for example the chromatic thirds throughout the *Toccata*. Occasionally Prokofiev uses the pedal for effect, particularly in his character pieces. At the beginning of the third of the *Tales*, for instance, the composer pedals on every final beat of the bar, which rather gives the impression of a grandmother stumbling along.

The same is true of some of the *Visions fugitives*. In his recordings from the Fourth Sonata and Third Concerto, however, no such effects are present; even in a passage from the Third Concerto, where it is perhaps tempting to blur a series of ascending parallel triads, Prokofiev refrains from using any pedal (Ex. 4.6).

Example 4.6 – Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, Movement I, b. 219



Prokofiev uses dynamics to help create dramatic contrasts, regularly exploiting loud and quiet extremes in the same work. In the Third Piano Concerto, for example, his pianissimos in the first variation are barely audible; however, in the first movement, the powerful fortissimo accented chords at bars 46–50 are the complete opposite. In spite of this approach, Prokofiev never goes overboard. It is evident from the lack of harshness that he uses his arm weight to produce a loud sound, no doubt at Yesipova's request given the naturalness her own playing exhibited. Sforzandos are executed in the same way; even among the most chaotic textures, such as those in *Suggestion Diabolique*, Prokofiev avoids creating a forced tone.

Asafyev's assertion that Prokofiev uses a whole range of accents in performance is evident in his recordings.<sup>105</sup> There are natural, unmarked accents in the dance movements of Op. 12, such as the 'Gavotte' (No. 2) and 'Rigaudon' (No. 3). Marked accents are often present in cadences that emphasize unexpected harmonic twists, such as in the 'March', Op. 12 No. 1; such passages are often played in a witty, grotesque manner. Otherwise, the execution of an accent depends on its context. In virtuoso movements such as the first of the *Sarcasms* or sections of the Third Piano Concerto, accents are generally used in percussive and hasty playing. When accents highlight a particular motif as in the development section of the opening movement of the Seventh Sonata, they should be played in a piercing manner, as Prokofiev demonstrates in his recording of *Suggestion Diabolique*. Interestingly, whenever several accents appear

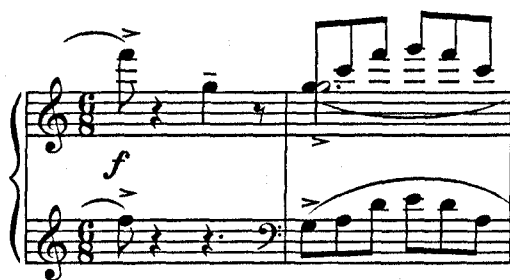
<sup>105</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 39.

alongside one another Prokofiev includes a temporary *accelerando* as in renditions of the aforementioned 'Gavotte' and 'Rigaudon'.

In his slower or more light-hearted movements, Prokofiev's accents do not necessarily imply louder notes; often they indicate a slight *rubato* and drawing out of the passage, in contrast to how they function in faster movements. For example, several of the slower *Visions fugitives* numbers (3, 9 and 11) contain slight delays at the production of accents. The composer's recording of 'Paysage' (Op. 59 No. 2) is an example of a faster movement with this type of accentuation, presumably because it is of a subdued nature. On the other hand, the accents across the slow movement of the Fourth Sonata are heavy, though the passage is still stretched out, perhaps on account of the serious character of the music.

Tenuto markings indicate a lesser accent; unlike regular accents, Prokofiev never plays them percussively. They are often found in more light-hearted movements such as the 'Prelude', Op. 12 No. 7, and the 'Scherzo', Op. 12 No. 10. In Prokofiev's slower music – for example, the final bars of the middle movement of the Fourth Sonata – tenuto markings also ensure that the note is not played too short. The rhythm of tenuto notes is free from *rubato*, however, resulting in another difference from accented notes. The contrast is clearly evident in this passage from Prokofiev's recording of the 'Étude' from Op. 52:

Example 4.7 – 'Étude' (No. 3) from Six Pieces, Op. 62, bb. 83–4



Rhythmically, Prokofiev sometimes deviates from the notated value of a given note. For example, a semiquaver in a dotted rhythm can be shortened to a demisemiquaver or hemidemisemiquaver irrespective of tempo. The composer demonstrates this in the second section of the 'March', Op. 12 No. 1, and the 'Rigaudon', Op. 12 No. 2, as well as in the first movement of the Third Piano Concerto (bar 77) and sections of the second

movement. Interestingly, Sviatoslav Richter interprets the dotted rhythms in the second movement of the Seventh Sonata in the same way in his recordings. This is significant as he received coaching from Prokofiev in preparation for the first performance of the Seventh Sonata.<sup>106</sup>

The rhythms in the character pieces like the *Visions fugitives* are much freer than in Prokofiev's absolute music; in the sixth number, for example, Prokofiev's rushed quavers sound more like semiquavers. The same is true of the tenth piece, where the faster rhythms are exaggerated in a similar fashion (again matching the 'Ridicolosamente' indication). It is therefore important that these works are not played strictly and that interpretative liberties are taken.

Prokofiev's only written metronome markings appear in piano scores of the early 1930s; his adoption of these tempos in his rendition of the Op. 59 pieces tells us that his recordings offer a reliable indication of what he really wanted. The most interesting tempo marking is 'Andante', where Prokofiev's tempos range from crotchet = 46 in his first recording of the third of the *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, to crotchet = 92 in the Op. 59 'Paysage'. Prokofiev's later interpretation of the same piece from *Tales* rises slightly but not significantly to crotchet = 52, but this is not a significant alteration. With this information in mind, we can perhaps question Boris Berman's assertion that the composer plays the middle movement of the Fourth Sonata 'unexpectedly fast';<sup>107</sup> the consistent metronome marking of the first section is crotchet = 52, close to the slowest Andante.

Interestingly, Prokofiev usually plays the second sections of ternary form movements, in fact developmental sections in general, at a slightly faster tempo. In the 'March', Op. 12 No. 1, the speed increases from crotchet = 120 to crotchet = 130, as it does in the 'March' from *The Love for Three Oranges*. The biggest increases in the tempo occur in the remainder of the Op. 12 pieces, with the Gavotte (No. 2) rising from 104 to 130, and the Prelude (No. 7) going from 160 to 180. Even the andantes display these changes; for instance, the tempos of the first and second recordings of the third 'tale' go from crotchet = 46 to 56 and crotchet = 52 to 60 respectively. In some cases Prokofiev slows down apparently to accommodate technically difficult upcoming passages: these

---

<sup>106</sup> Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, 79.

<sup>107</sup> Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 94.

decreases are not marked in the score. In the second movement of the Third Concerto, the tempo reduces from 160 to 130 at Figure 60 in order to enable the composer to play his leaping notes accurately. The same occurs in the third movement at Figure 93, with a decrease from crotchet = 180 to crotchet = 160, to accommodate the rapid ascending and descending scales.

Prokofiev tends to take risks in faster tempos; indeed, in his recording of the Third Concerto he clearly speeds the orchestra up on account of their cautious tempos, including in the very first 'Allegro'. The following review of a New York concert on 12 October 1919 suggests that the risks did not always pay off:

He played Bach's melodious suite with simplicity and grace such as belong to it; only his tempos in the fast movements were too fast, sometimes to such an extent that the outlines were blurred.<sup>108</sup>

Some passages in Prokofiev's recordings indicate a lack of clarity in his playing, possibly because he lacked practice time. Mastery of virtuoso feats such as those in the 'Étude' from the Op. 52 pieces, however, prove that technical command of the keyboard was always possible for him.

### Prokofiev Interpreted

The study of Prokofiev's own playing is useful in that it highlights aspects of a work from the compositional perspective that a score cannot. In order to investigate the evolution of Prokofiev interpretation more generally, we must also examine the performances of the pianists who worked in Prokofiev's lifetime and trace the developments through to more recent players. I have therefore chosen five pieces from the *Visions fugitives* as a case study of how the recordings of five pianists demonstrate which elements of Prokofiev performance have remained static, and which have changed over time. The earlier pianists I have selected are Prokofiev himself, as well as his protégés Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels. The more recent recordings consulted are complete cycles by renowned Prokofiev interpreters Boris Berman and Michel Béroff.

The recordings have been selected from five sources: for nos. 3, 5, 10, 11 – *Emil Gilels in Recital* (Vox, 1992 [from a 1974 performance]); nos. 3, 6 – *Sviatoslav Richter Plays*

---

<sup>108</sup> *The New York Times*, 13 October 1919.

*Scriabin, Debussy, Prokofiev* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1990 [from a 1962 performance]); nos. 5, 11 – *Sviatoslav Richter [British Debut Recital]* (BBC Legends, 2008 [from a 1961 performance]); nos. 3, 5, 6, 10, 11 – Boris Berman, *Prokofiev: Complete Piano Music, Vol. 2* (Chandos, 1999); nos. 3, 5, 6, 10, 11 – Michel Béroff, *Prokofiev Piano Concertos, etc.* (EMI, 1996). For each piece, there follows a discussion of interpretative decisions regarding tempo, articulation, pedalling, texture (voicing), and dynamics, where appropriate.

### *No. 3: 'Allegretto'*

There are several issues to bear in mind when preparing a performance of the third of the *Visions fugitives*. Prokofiev is typically vague in his tempo indication; he does not provide a metronome marking, and offers only the marking 'Allegretto'. Is a consistent tempo to be applied throughout the whole piece, in spite of a highly contrasting second section? There are practical issues that need to be addressed, such as playing the legato parallel triads: is the pedal to be used as an aid, or is the smooth line to be maintained by finger-work alone? Similarly, the finger swapping required at bar 5 is near impossible to achieve at high speed; how does a pianist cope? The piece is also full of varying articulation and accentuation; the composer's own gamut of different touches requires pianists to take a view on how to proceed. Finally, only a small range of dynamics are used throughout, in which case maintaining interest is also an important concern.

As a result of the ambiguity in the tempo marking, significant divergences emerge in tempos adopted by the pianists under examination. Prokofiev, whose interpretations incline towards rapid speeds, chooses a quick crotchet = 130, which is effective in bringing out the lyricism of the tenor line. But even his tempo is slower than Boris Berman's – a breathtakingly-fast crotchet = 144. Berman has the virtuoso technique to execute the piece with clarity, even if his performance perhaps contravenes the 'Allegretto' indication.

At the other end of the spectrum, Sviatoslav Richter opts for a lethargic crotchet = 96. While possibly closer to the 'Allegretto' marking, the left-hand melody loses some of the lyricism exhibited at faster tempos. On the other hand, his performance allows the listener to revel in the composer's wondrous harmonies, as one would in, say, Debussy



or Ravel. Emil Gilels's interpretation is close to the composer's at crotchet = 124; similarly, Michel Béroff's rendition is crotchet = 120.

Given the composer's own tendency to play the developmental section of a movement faster than the music that precedes it, does the same apply to the 'B' section here? Prokofiev himself speeds up the semiquaver passages of the 'B' section, making them sound improvisatory, although the overall tempo remains consistent. (The staccato crotchets at bar 13 are played strictly in tempo, for example.) Richter creates a marked contrast by playing the second section at crotchet = 120, which helps to achieve an almost balletic impulse; Gilels increases slightly to crotchet = 132, but nevertheless creates a similar effect.

Interestingly, both the contemporary pianists Béroff and Berman play the second section at the same speed as the first. Such an approach, in my view, creates an imbalance that diminishes the character of both sections. If the first section is played too fast in order to compensate for the dance-like nature of the second, we lose some of the harmonic intricacy and cantabile lyricism. If the second section is too slow, on the other hand, the driving force is removed, working against the humorous idiom.

Duration and tempo in Op. 22 No. 3

3	Duration (mins:secs)	Tempo (♩=)
Prokofiev	0:55	130
Gilels	0:56	124
Richter	1:12	96
Berman	0:50	144
Béroff	0:52	120

Aside from inserting small accelerandos for the semiquavers of the second section, the composer plays the entire piece in tempo apart from adding unwritten ritenuos in two places. The first occurs at bar 5 and helps to accommodate the finger swapping in the left hand, but also has the added function of rounding off the first phrase. The second at bars 11–12 is more significant; here, the composer slows down considerably to bring the first section to an end, creating an even greater sense of contrast with the ensuing livelier section. Prokofiev does not quite obey the ritenuo marking at bar 8 in beginning it a crotchet before it occurs in the score, but he is back in tempo a bar later. The last ritenuo at bars 27–8 is predictably the biggest of them all, rounding off the piece.

There are both similarities and differences in the treatment of *ritenutos* by other pianists. Richter, like Prokofiev, also begins the *ritenuto* at bar 8 early, but from the beginning of the bar. This creates an even greater slowdown at an already leisurely tempo. On the other hand, Gilels, Berman and Béroff remain faithful to the score in playing it exactly as written. In Richter's recording, the final *ritenuto* is incredibly slow on account of the pianist starting it two bars earlier than notated. Such an approach makes for a more effective transition into the final two bars, which to all intents and purposes are 'adagio'. Gilels's interpretation mirrors Richter's in this respect, albeit with the final two bars played at a faster tempo. Béroff also begins the same *ritenuto* a bar early, although does not slow down in as pronounced a fashion for the final two bars.

Prokofiev typically includes a wide range of articulation in his recording. The quavers at bar 12 are written *staccato*, but the composer plays them *non legato* instead, in order not to make them sound too dry. To provide contrast, the *staccato* crotchets of the second section at bars 13 and 17 are played firmly, wry humour taking precedence over tonal colour. Interestingly, the quavers in the alto voice at bar 16 are played *staccato*, even though this is not indicated in the score. Also, the quavers in the tenor at the end of bar 22 are *legato* in spite of not being written under a slur. This is effective in bridging the transition back to the flowing main theme. Prokofiev's accents throughout are solely rhythmical, consistently anticipating the accented note. Even for the dissonances at bars 21–22, he refrains from cold percussiveness.

Gilels and Richter offer a similar interpretation of the articulation markings to the composer, but Béroff and Berman differ notably in remaining true to the score. For example, on account of the absence of slurs, Béroff plays the quavers at bar 12 in a detached fashion, as well as those in the tenor line at bar 22. In Berman's recording, all quavers not marked with slurs are played *staccato*, such as the crotchets in the left hand at bars 11–12. Notably, the treatment of accents from both Gilels and Richter concerns the placement of the note, which is of course similar to the composer's approach. On the other hand, Béroff opts for a mixture of rhythmical (anticipatory) and tonal accents. At bars 14–19, for instance, the accents are anticipatory, with Béroff choosing to reserve the tonal accents for the dissonant notes of bars 21–22. Berman's accents in these bars have a similar effect, but perhaps partially on account of the manic tempo adopted, he avoids rhythmical accents completely in the first section.

Aside from Berman, who pedals entire bars, the general approach from all the pianists is to pedal each crotchet subtly in order to clarify the harmonic changes, although there are exceptions, of course. At bars 11–12, for example, Prokofiev pedals every half bar instead in order to let the harmony ring out. Gilels's approach here is slightly different in that he pedals every first and third crotchet and not the second and fourth, creating a slurred effect. Béroff's use of the pedal is interesting throughout. In the first section, he begins by using it sparingly, the right-hand chords consequently not flowing seamlessly with a legato. Instead, Béroff reserves the pedal for bars 7–10 for the sole intention of making the bass notes last for their full duration.

Prokofiev himself treats the texture as a four-voice texture, almost invoking the sound of a string quartet.<sup>109</sup> The right hand is split into two voices, with the top of the chord brought out, but this merely provides an accompaniment for the most prominent voice in the tenor (a viola-like melody). All the pianists follow his example, but Béroff curiously brings out the dissonances throughout the left hand of the second section. This produces an effective contrast with the innocence of the opening section.

Dynamically, the entire first section is subdued in Prokofiev's recording, including the forte passage at bars 11–12: the composer probably applied the *una corda* pedal throughout. The forte of the second section is louder, producing a sterner, almost 'serioso' character. Richter also uses the *una corda*, but his range of dynamics is even smaller than the composer's; for example, at bar 11 the forte passage sounds more like *mezzo-piano*. Gilels remains closer to the score with his interpretations of fortes and pianos, but also makes additions, such as a subtle *diminuendo* at bars 21–22 in order to create a smoother transition between the *mezzo-forte* and piano dynamics. Both Béroff and Berman take the score's dynamic markings literally. Béroff avoids use of the *una corda* completely, whereas Berman reserves it for the final two bars to create an almost hymn-like colour.

#### *No. 5: 'Molto giocoso'*

Several issues arise in No. 5. The tempo indication 'Molto giocoso' is again ambiguous, inviting us to compare interpretations. The piece is in a binary form, resulting in

---

<sup>109</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the work has since undergone an arrangement for string quartet, not by Prokofiev but Sergey Samsonov.

questions as to how contrasts between the sections are put unto effect. Again, accents form an important part of the piece. What kind of functions do these accents fulfil? (For example, the accent in the left hand at bar 2 implies an unwritten crescendo leading up to the chord.) Analysis of the differing treatment of staccato articulation is also important, given the vast amount of such articulation.

A wide range of tempos are again exhibited in my chosen recordings. The composer's own crotchet = 140, is only marginally surpassed by Richter's crotchet = 142. In both cases the tempo brings into focus the collection's title *Visions fugitives* ('fleeting visions'), the piece only lasting about twenty-five seconds. Berman and Gilels opt for a slower crotchet = 120 and crotchet = 112 respectively, but interestingly produce similar overall durations as the Prokofiev and Richter recordings. This can be attributed to their treatment of the second section from bar 8 (as well as the brevity of the piece). In the Prokofiev and Richter performances, tempos slow down for the second section to crotchet = 96 and crotchet = 126; however, this is probably in order to render accurate the left-hand leaps rather than for any specifically musical reason. On the other hand, Gilels and Berman interpret the second section at the same speed, in my view inhibiting the 'giocoso' element of the first section. Béroff solves this problem by playing the whole piece faster and all at the same tempo: crotchet = 132.

Duration and Tempo in Op. 22 No. 5

	Duration (mins:secs)	Tempo (♩=)
Prokofiev	0:27	140, 96
Gilels	0:26	112
Richter	0:20	142, 126
Berman	0:23	120
Béroff	0:19	132

Prokofiev plays the staccato articulation as short as possible. But given the tempo taken, it would probably have been impossible to achieve a true staccato for the semiquaver anacrusis into bar 1, so he plays the notes non legato instead. The last note of the piece is executed staccato, even though not notated in the score. All the other pianists follow his example, with Berman even placing accents on each note of the anacrusis.

The accents in Prokofiev's recording are both rhythmical and tonal. At bar 2, for example, the G flat major chord is played loudly, with a crescendo leading up to it, and

is anticipated. Richter's accents on the other hand are devoid of rhythmical manipulation and Béroff's free from tonal contrast. Gilels's accents are less distinct, but Berman's are highly original in providing large tonal contrast but also allowing the chords – G flat at bar 2 and F sharp at bar 6 – to ring out. Prokofiev reserves the pedal for the second section, but releases it when the harmony changes so as to prevent blurring. Richter half pedals in order to give the tonic G major chord seemingly everlasting resonance, and both Gilels and Béroff imitate him in this respect. Berman, on the other hand, uses less pedal throughout the section, but the heavy reverb effect of the recording enhances the passage.

Prokofiev's left and right hands are evenly balanced throughout, giving both strands of the texture equal importance, and this is imitated by Gilels. For the second section, however, Richter presents the left-hand material in a more pronounced fashion on account of the accents. Béroff, placing greater importance on harmony, accentuates the left hand, while Berman takes the opposite view, having the left hand provide a quieter accompaniment. The second section provides dynamic contrast (fortissimo as opposed to the preceding forte). All the pianists make the second section more percussive as a result, possibly using the Russian technique of playing vertically by dropping the arms on to the chords. Béroff, a student of the French piano school, produces a sonorous fortissimo, but does not quite convey the harsh grotesqueness required.

#### *No. 6: 'Con eleganza'*

Issues relating to tempo again surface in the sixth number. How do the pianists interpret 'Con eleganza'? The piece is in ternary form, with a 'B' section from bars 9–16. At the end of this section there is a fermata: how long is the pause, and how is it prepared? How are dynamic contrasts between the piano marking of the outer sections and the mezzo-forte climax in the middle section put into effect? Finally, how is the trill performed, as well as the tenuto and accent markings?

Prokofiev opts for the fastest speed at crotchet = 170, and there is even a small *accelerando* in the final bar, giving the impression of a hasty conclusion to a dance. The composer slows down into the fermata without actually giving us a break. Richter is second fastest with a significantly slower speed of crotchet = 140, but many liberties are taken with tempo and with *rubato* from phrase to phrase. There is even a small (unwritten) break at the end of bar 8, with an even longer one for the pause at bar 16,

after a *ritenuto*. Richter inserts a small *ritenuto* at the end of the piece, in contrast with the composer's recording, but in so doing breaks up the dance-like element of the piece and creates a dream-like atmosphere instead. Berman's interpretation is similar in this respect, but without as much *rubato*. Béroff's rendition, on the other hand, is much slower at crotchet = 96, with even longer, drawn-out *ritenutos*, and has the greatest amount of *rubato*, seeming almost improvisatory.

Duration and Tempo in Op. 22 No. 6

	Duration (mins:secs)	Tempo (♩=)
Prokofiev	0:20	170
Richter	0:26	140
Berman	0:26	140
Béroff	0:34	96

The use of accents is diverse. The first beat of the melody is tonally accented on every occasion in Prokofiev's recording, even though not marked in the score (for example, at bars 1 and 9). Written accents are played subtly, and often indicate simply the peak of the phrase (for example, at bars 3 and 11). On the other hand, tenuto notes such as those at bars 7–8 are played with tonal emphasis. This, along with its repetition at bars 23–4, happens to be the only part of the piece where the composer chooses to use pedal as well.

Richter's accents contrast with those in the composer's recording as he makes the accented notes longer and more drawn-out. His interpretation of tenuto is also different from Prokofiev's in that it has a dulling effect on the note. Berman's accents are similar to Richter's, but his tenuto notes are played entirely rhythmically with a bolder tone. In the Béroff recording, the accented notes are anticipated, creating a *scherzando* effect. His tenutos have the same function, albeit with a shorter delay. All the pianists execute the trill at bar 11 in the same manner as Prokofiev, playing it from the lower note, but Béroff treats it classically by adding two *appoggiatura* notes leading up to the C at bar 12.

In Prokofiev's recording the right hand material is brought out, with the left hand providing the quieter accompaniment, apart from at bars 7–8, where the fifths are emphasised as the dominant is reached. He treats the piano dynamics subtly, allowing a large contrast with the *mezzo-forte* in the 'B' section and a serious character at the

arrival of the minor mode. Both Béroff and Berman follow this example. Richter ignores the contrast completely, however, as there is no audible difference in dynamics throughout, possibly on account of the application of the *una corda* throughout the movement.

*No. 10: 'Ridicolosamente'*

The tenth of the pieces has the unusual tempo indication of 'ridicolosamente' ('ridiculously'), which is again ambiguous. How do the pianists respond in their interpretations and are there any tempo fluctuations? Given the humorous nature of the movement, how is articulation and accentuation approached? This is a piece where accents and tenuto markings both come into play, so it is important to compare the variety of effects introduced by them. For an unknown reason Richter does not appear to have recorded the tenth number.

Prokofiev's general tempo is crotchet = 88, which allows for a grotesque and mechanical style, but flexibility is introduced as well, for example in his speeding up of the demisemiquavers at bb. 15–16. It is clear that he intended the piece to convey an improvisatory quality, and this is a key feature of the 'ridiculous' element. Gilels uses a similar tempo as Prokofiev at crotchet = 84, but maintains a constant tempo throughout, aside from a small *ritenuto* in the penultimate bar (also included by Prokofiev).

Berman's interpretation is slightly slower at crotchet = 72. The tempo has a whimsical quality to it; he maintains interest through unpredictability in approach, for example by adding an unwritten pause at bar 37. Béroff's rendition is fastest at crotchet = 130, but as a result sounds more like a toccata than a scherzando piece. Béroff introduces an element of humour by inserting two small breaks following the E major seventh chords at bars 20 and 28.

Duration and Tempo in Op. 22 No. 10

	Duration (mins:secs)	Tempo (♩=)
Prokofiev	0:52	88
Gilels	0:54	84
Berman	1:08	72
Béroff	0:39	130

Prokofiev plays the right-hand accents at bars 3 and 5 in neither a tonal nor a rhythmical way, so the markings are probably intended to ensure that the performer creates an effective contrast between forte and piano; indeed, the diminuendo markings also contribute to this. (We need to remember the obvious fact that a diminuendo is impossible to achieve on a piano on a single note, disregarding natural decay.) Instead, Prokofiev plays the tenuto notes (for example at bars 7–10) with more tone, but completely rhythmically. Gilels takes a similar approach to accents and tenuto markings as Prokofiev; however, Berman's and Béroff's accents are much more punching and percussive.

The staccato quaver accompaniment is not played too short by the composer, but is heavy and colourful instead. The other pianists follow this trend, apart from Béroff, whose staccato notes are shorter on account of the faster tempo. The composer, along with Berman, plays the accompaniment at a quieter dynamic throughout, whereas Gilels and Béroff assign it more prominence. Prokofiev's use of the pedal is sparing in that he only applies it on groups of slurred notes, such as the demisemiquavers at bars 15–16 and the arpeggio figures throughout, an approach imitated by Béroff. Gilels and Berman, on the other hand, use no pedal, adding to the dry, sarcastic, and 'ridiculous' elements of the piece.

#### *No. 11: 'Con vivacità'*

The tempo indication for the eleventh number is 'Con vivacità', which again is vague in the absence of a metronome marking. Does the repetition and witty character of the piece produce a similar tempo to the tenth *Vision*? The piece is divided into three clear sections; is the middle section (bars 17–24) to be played at a slower tempo on account of its subdued and expressive ('espressivo') nature? The indication at the beginning of the piece is 'assai accentuato', but how are these accents played? Given the similarity to the preceding number, are they executed in tempo? Finally, is the subtle dynamic difference (between p and pp) observed for the outer sections?

Prokofiev takes the piece at an incredibly fast crotchet = 176, which almost makes it sound like a jazz improvisation. For the more orthodox 'B' section, however, he slows down considerably to crotchet = 116, remaining in tempo to give the melody a chant-like quality. Richter's recording is only slightly slower at crotchet = 172, but opts for a quicker second section at crotchet = 152, which gives it a more passive quality in spite



of tempo fluctuations. Béroff, like the composer, also chooses a faster tempo, crotchet = 168, but with a considerable slowing down to crotchet = 112.

Gilels utilizes a slower tempo of crotchet = 144 for the first section, helping to enhance the clumsy humour of the piece. With the general tempo of crotchet = 110 for the second section, Gilels frequently employs rubato and consequently highlights the 'espressivo' requested by the composer. Berman's rendition is similarly slow at crotchet = 140, but provides less of a contrast for the second section, which is taken at crotchet = 124. Berman's approach of playing the section strictly in time gives it a dance-like quality that is missed at a slower tempo.

Duration and Tempo in Op. 22 No. 11

	Duration (mins:secs)	Tempo (♩=)
Prokofiev	0:55	176, 116
Gilels	1:11	144, 110
Richter	0:53	172, 152
Berman	1:05	140, 124
Béroff	1:01	168, 112

Again, Prokofiev as a rule speeds up through certain groups of notes such as the semiquavers at bars 4 and 12, and those that bring the first section to a close at bar 15. From bar 29, the composer also inserts an unwritten accelerando to the end, giving the effect of a small coda. All the other pianists play the A section in tempo, tending to slow down slightly for the trill at bar 8 (Berman's pronounced slowdown being quite dramatic). At the end of the piece, Gilels's approach is different to the composer's as he includes an unwritten ritardando. This makes the ending sound less haphazard and whimsical, and provides a greater sense of finality.

In Prokofiev's recording, he rhythmically anticipates notes when accents are presented. This almost gives the effect of syncopation, capturing the image of a grotesque dance. Richter and Béroff take a similar approach. On the other hand, Gilels and Berman opt for tonal accents, Berman's accents being particularly punchy albeit within a subdued context. The composer's staccato is as weighty as in the tenth piece, and is imitated by Richter. Gilels, Berman and Béroff play staccato notes as short as possible, contributing to a dry and sarcastic feeling. All the pianists play colourfully the staccato crotchets

throughout the second section; instead of truly executed staccati, they are played detached.

Prokofiev does not pedal the first section, apart from at bars 7–8 as the forte is approached, and then again at bars 14–16 to round off the section. (This is mirrored in the recapitulation.) The second section is not pedalled at all, presenting a cold contrast to the opening. Interestingly, Richter imitates Prokofiev exactly, but introduces touches of pedal into the second section in order to colour the staccato notes. Gilels, Berman and Béroff use the pedal in the first section only for the contrary motion arpeggio figure at bar 15, and like Prokofiev, not at all in the second section.

In the Gilels and Berman recordings, the right hand line is prominent with the left hand acting as an accompaniment, whereas in Béroff's rendition, like in Prokofiev's and Richter's, both hands assume an equal importance. There is a discernible difference in dynamics in Prokofiev's recording when the 'A' section returns at pianissimo, having previously been marked piano. But by bar 29, Prokofiev returns to the original piano dynamic, even though this is not notated in the score. At bars 13 to 15, he seems to ignore his own dynamic markings in that the pianissimos sound more like piano and increases almost to forte for b. 15. The allargando at the end of the second section seems to soften the dynamics as well as to decrease the tempo; as a result the composer interprets it more like, say, a 'morendo' marking. Richter's rendition is very close to the composer's in this respect, even including the unwritten dynamics. Prokofiev also includes an unmarked accelerando at the end of the piece, which has the opposite effect of adding intensity in the lead up to the final forte.

There is an even greater dynamic contrast between the outer sections in Gilels's recording, possibly accentuated by his use of the una corda pedal, which almost nullifies any accents. Gilels adds a crescendo at bars 13–15, imitating the composer's recording, but plays the contrary motion arpeggio at bar 15 at subito piano, thus introducing an element of surprise. Both Béroff and Berman follow Prokofiev's dynamics in the score, although Berman uses the technique of crescendo to subito piano at bars 13–15. In both recordings, there is little difference between the dynamics of the outer sections.

The recordings of the *Visions fugitives* tell us a lot about the changing interpretation of Prokofiev's piano music. The composer often played his music at tremendous speed,

but his ambiguous tempo markings produced a wide variety of tempos from other pianists. Prokofiev's protégés Richter and Gilels tended to imitate the composer's tempo links between sections, whereas the contemporaries Berman and Béroff kept consistent tempi throughout. In matters of articulation and dynamics, again Richter and Gilels often displayed a greater understanding of the composer's wishes than others, odd exceptions notwithstanding. Prokofiev sometimes ignored his own markings in the score, or at least gave an impression of improvisation like Artur Schnabel with Beethoven, Dinu Lipatti with Chopin, and Glenn Gould with Bach. In his recordings Prokofiev's own fluctuations of tempo do not correlate with Poulenc's recommendation to keep a steady pulse. But one has to factor in the possibility of the composer having little practice time prior to the recording sessions, as well as the pressure of delivering during them. Therefore, my own view is that pianists should follow Poulenc's advice; after all, Richter and Gilels on the whole conform to such a policy, and they were two of Prokofiev's favourite interpreters.

The interpretative *Zeitgeist* in the first half of the twentieth century was different from that in the second half, largely on account of Prokofiev the pianist assuming the mantle of Prokofiev the composer. As the century progressed, performers tended to take the score more literally, as is indeed reflected in the later recordings of the *Visions fugitives*. In Richter's and Gilels's interpretations, elements of originality still surface, such as Gilels's addition of unwritten dynamics in the third piece. This is not to imply that the Berman and Béroff recordings are unoriginal; indeed, these pianists sometimes introduce their own unique ideas. But they do so less markedly than Richter and Gilels, not to mention Prokofiev himself. In part this can be attributed to the 'limitations' of the studio – to editing recordings in such a way as to remain as close as possible to the score.

It is important, of course, for the performer of Prokofiev's music to study his scores thoroughly, but also not to be afraid to introduce un-notated elements that enhance images and characters intended to be conveyed. Such an approach will help contribute to fresh and original renditions of his music. In addition to incorporating aspects of his playing style, I offer a personal insight into his music; if the performer's personality is disengaged, I feel, the performance can become an academic exercise. Dynamic contrasts are large in his early and late works for the most part, for example in his Second, Sixth and Seventh sonatas. While it is tempting to play the loudest passages

percussively in these works, it is important to remember the composer never played them in such a way. Therefore, I execute extremes in dynamics using natural, relaxed actions: the way Prokofiev was encouraged to play by his teacher, Anna Yesipova. Middle-period works such as the Fifth Sonata or *Choses en soi* are more subdued in their dynamic restraint, so I rely instead on contrasts in sonority, utilizing the *una corda* pedal as a colouring device, in much the same way I would in, say, Debussy or Ravel.

Owing to the composer's clear, articulate playing, I pedal only when it is completely necessary; that is if Prokofiev has marked it in the score – for instance at the beginning of the Fifth Sonata finale – or if the passage is impossible to play otherwise. As I have demonstrated, Prokofiev used exclusively classical textures and forms in his music. Consideration, therefore, has to be given to interpreting structure. The sections within the work should be made obvious to the listener through the highlighting of themes and development. I aim to play each theme with a different character in mind, like I would in a classical sonata, and treat developmental material more freely while at the same time building the intensity. Where outer sections are mirrored, for instance in a ternary-form movement, I focus on creating a contrast when the opening material returns. A good example is in the slow movement of the Seventh Sonata, where I play the main theme in an almost solemn nature upon its return, with the dynamics more subdued than before in spite of the same markings in the score. Related to this, I feel it is important to make obvious the role of melody and accompaniment in the texture, much like Prokofiev does in his own playing. Perhaps the most important facet of my interpretation, however, focuses on enhancing any Prokofievizations within these phrases, primarily through highlighting 'wrong notes' and conventional accented cadences following unexpected harmonic progressions.

### Epilogue

Prokofiev's own attitudes to performance were in some respects nostalgic, looking back to the time of Mozart and Beethoven when improvisation was an integral feature of the performance experience. His approach as pianist, then, continued his predilection for eighteenth-century tradition, as demonstrated in his compositions. From an early age he was exposed to Beethoven, specifically the piano sonatas, which influenced him throughout his life (see Chapter Two). As we have seen, this interest was nurtured first by his mother and subsequently by his Conservatoire professors. But as he became

accustomed to life in revolutionary St Petersburg, his musical experimentation began to broaden, epitomized by the Second Piano Concerto.

It was chiefly on account of his financial circumstances that Prokofiev turned to simplicity upon moving to the West in 1918, composing populist pieces such as the *Grandmother's Tales* in order to earn a living. Wanting to continue his experiment in originality instead, he moved to Paris, a centre of new music, to be closer to the Ballets Russes troupe. Soon he discovered, however, that the product of his search for a 'Dictionary of Idioms', the style he used in the Second Symphony, was unappealing not just to audiences, but also to Diaghilev and Stravinsky. It was a style even he admitted later that he did not understand.<sup>110</sup> A natural reversion to simplicity followed around 1926 in his ballet *Le pas d'acier* and remained with Prokofiev for the rest of his life.

In spite of many idiomatic traits, Prokofiev always built upon fundamental eighteenth- and nineteenth-century formal traditions; even in the Second Symphony he took Beethoven's C minor Piano Sonata, Op. 111, as a structural model. His obsession with sonata form is evident throughout his output, from the layout of the sonata as a whole, down to individual movement structures and thematic forms. Again, his implementation of these was influenced by the Classical tradition of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.

Prokofiev was able to mould an original style through his reworking of classical forms. Along the way, he took inspiration from several sources, including his Russian predecessors through to Debussy and Stravinsky, as well as philosophy and religion. To end, then, I come back to the quotation I challenged in the Introduction:

It is utterly characteristic of Prokofiev that beneath the clangorous surface there always lay a simple harmonic design and a stereotyped formal pattern straight out of the textbook.<sup>111</sup>

As I have demonstrated, Prokofiev's stylistic individuality is created from the combining of tradition and innovation. In this respect the composer is no different than Beethoven, who built upon the teachings of Haydn in extending the capabilities of sonata form. Therefore, Richard Taruskin's rather derogatory old school view of Prokofiev's musical language as 'stereotyped' ultimately does the composer a great

---

<sup>110</sup> Robinson, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 258.

<sup>111</sup> Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, 86.

disservice. The arrival of a unique, effective style was achieved only after several years of dedication, and its individuality remained intact even after the composer's return to the Soviet Union, where there was the added struggle of having to compose to specification. Instead of being depicted as a hackneyed composer who merely rehashed old styles, Prokofiev should be remembered as a notable and imaginative reinventor of formal traditions.

APPENDIX A:  
MANUSCRIPT IMAGES

Example A.1 – Waltz (1899)



Example A.2 – 'March' from *The Giant* (1900)



Example A.3 – 'Upryok (1907)



Example A.4 – Intermezzo (1907)

Intermezzo

Allegretto

mp

cres.

mf

p

Example A.5 – 'Vostochnaya pesenka' (1907)

Восточная песенка

Andante

p

cres.

f

dim.

Example A.6 – Piece on E-s-C-H-E (1910)

E-s-C-H-E

dim.

p

P cantabile

Example A.7 – 'Scherzo' (1912)

Шерцо

Allegro molto

p

dim.

poco rit.



Example A.8 – Tales of an Old Grandmother, Op. 31

Сказки старой бабушки.

Andantino.

Example A.9 – Dances, Op. 32

Жарко.

Allargato: Con dignita.

APPENDIX B:  
CONCERT PROGRAMMES

Example B.1 – Japan recital (6 July 1918)

MR. A. STROK, CONCERT DIRECTION

**Programme**  
July 6th Saturday.

1. Première Sonate ..... Sergei Prokofieff
2. a. Prelude ..... Sergei Prokofieff
- b. Etude No. 4 ..... Sergei Prokofieff
- c. Gavotte ..... Sergei Prokofieff
- d. Toccata
3. Troisième Ballade ..... Chopin
4. Trois Etudes ..... Chopin
5. Troisième Sonate ..... Sergei Prokofieff
6. a. Reproche ..... Sergei Prokofieff
- b. Conte ..... Sergei Prokofieff
- c. Desespoir ..... Sergei Prokofieff
- d. Suggestion Diabolique


July 7th Sunday.

1. Deuxième Sonate ..... Sergei Prokofieff
2. a. Élévation ..... Schumann
- b. Pour-quoi ..... Prokofieff
- c. Nouvelle
3. a. Nocturne ..... Chopin
- b. Mazurka
- c. Waltz
- d. Etude
4. a. Marche ..... Sergei Prokofieff
- b. Scherzo
5. a. Visions fugitives ..... Sergei Prokofieff
- b. Fantaisie

YAMAHA PIANO USED

Example B.2 – New York recital (20 November 1917)

**AEOLIAN HALL**  
Entrance on 43d St. bet. 5th & 6th Ave.  
WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON  
NOVEMBER 20th, 1918  
at 3.00 o'clock  
PIANOFORTE RECITAL  
— BY —  
**SERGE PROKOFIEFF**



**All Russian Program**

I  
Quatre Etudes ..... Sergei Prokofieff  
Second Sonate  
Allegro, ma non troppo  
Scherzo  
Andante  
Finale

II  
Trois preludes ..... Serge Rachmanineff  
Feuille d'album ..... Alexandre Scriabine  
Deux études

III  
Prelude ..... Sergei Prokofieff  
Scherzo ..... Sergei Prokofieff  
Gavotte ..... Sergei Prokofieff  
Suggestion diabolique

Tickets, 75c, \$1.00, \$1.50, Boxes, \$12.00  
War Tax Additional. On Sale at Aeolian Hall Box Office.  
Management: WOLFSOHN MUSICAL BUREAU  
STEINWAY PIANO USED

Example B.3 – Carnegie Hall concerts (December 1918)

**FIRST EVENING CONCERT**  
Tuesday, December 10th, at 8:15 o'clock  
Soloist: SERGE PROKOFIEFF  
Russia's foremost Composer-Pianist (American Debut)

**PROGRAMME**

1. Symphony No. 2, E-minor ..... Rachmanineff
2. (a) Nuance (for strings) (first performance) ..... Scriabine
- (b) Humoresque (for four bassoons) (first performance) ..... Prokofieff
- (c) "Baba Yaga" (The Witch—Russian Folk-lore) ..... Liadoff
3. Piano Concerto No. 1 (first performance) ..... Prokofieff  
Composer and Orchestra
4. Caucasian Sketches ..... Ippolitoff-Ivanoff

**FIRST AFTERNOON CONCERT**  
Wednesday, December 11th, at 3 o'clock  
Soloist: SERGE PROKOFIEFF

**PROGRAMME**

1. Symphonic Picture "Hercules Nocturnus" ..... Vasilenko  
After the Poem by Menchikovsk, "God's Resurrection"
2. Symphony No. 1, E-minor ..... Scriabine
3. Piano Solo (first performance) ..... Prokofieff  
By the Composer
4. Classical Symphony (new MS) ..... Prokofieff  
Conducted by the Composer

HAVING ESTABLISHED THE RECORD OF BEING THE ORCHESTRA  
THAT PRODUCED MOST NOVELTIES IN NEW YORK, THE  
RUSSIAN SYMPHONY SOCIETY WILL CONTINUE  
TO LIVE UP TO THIS REPUTATION

**PRICES**

First Tier Boxes, for five afternoons or evenings	\$100.00	Single, \$25.00
Second Tier Boxes, for five afternoons or evenings	75.00	" 20.00
Parquet, for five afternoons or evenings	9.00	" 2.00
Dress Circle (front), for five afternoons or evenings	7.00	" 1.50
Dress Circle (rear), for five afternoons or evenings	5.00	" 1.00
Balcony (front), for five afternoons or evenings	3.50	" .75
Balcony (rear), for five afternoons or evenings	2.50	" .50

And 10c Government Tax calculated on price of tickets for single performances  
Old subscribers may retain their seats by notifying the management before  
November 1st. Applications by mail will be given careful attention.

ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO RUSSIAN SYMPHONY SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.  
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ADDRESS DANIEL MAYER, 1048 AEOLIAN HALL, NEW YORK  
THE STIEFF PIANO IS THE OFFICIAL PIANO OF THE RUSSIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

APPENDIX C:  
LIST OF PROKOFIEV'S PERFORMANCES

The following list has been compiled using several sources, including Prokofiev's diaries and letters, and newspaper reviews of his concerts. Where details have been omitted, this is due to absent information from the sources consulted.

1915

Date	Location	Works	Other Performers
13 April	Petrograd	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	Court Orchestra
7 July	Pavlovsk	Prokofiev – First Concerto	Fitelburg (conductor)
21 July	Pavlovsk	Prokofiev – First and Second piano sonatas	

1916

2 February	Moscow	Prokofiev – Opp. 1, 2, 3 & 4; Op. 12; <i>Sarcasms</i> ; Second Sonata	
------------	--------	---	--

1917

2 February		Prokofiev – First Sonata; Op. 2; <i>Suggestion Diabolique</i> (from Op. 4); Second Sonata; <i>Sarcasms</i>	
18 October	Kislovodsk	Prokofiev – <i>Visions fugitives</i> , Third Sonata	

2 March	Petrograd	All Chopin – four waltzes; two nocturnes; two mazurkas; two etudes; Third Ballade	
16 April	Petrograd	Prokofiev – Fourth Sonata; Suggestion Diabolique; Third Sonata	
6 July	Tokyo	Prokofiev – First Sonata; Prelude (Op. 12?); Etude No. 4 (Op. 2?); <i>Gavotte; Toccata</i> , Op. 11; Third Sonata; Op. 4. Chopin – Third Ballade; Three Etudes	
7 July	Tokyo	Prokofiev – Second Sonata; <i>March; Scherzo; Visions fugitives; Fantasie</i> [?]; Schumann – ‘Aufschwung’ and ‘Warum?’ from Op. 12; <i>Novelletten</i> ; Chopin – nocturne; mazurka; waltz; etude	
20 November	New York	Prokofiev – Op. 2; Second Sonata; <i>Suggestion Diabolique</i> ; Rachmaninov – three preludes; Skryabin – two etudes; <i>Feuillet d'album</i>	
10 December	New York	Prokofiev – First Concerto	Russian Symphony Orchestra; Modest Altschuler (conductor)
11 December	New York	Prokofiev – Third Sonata	

1919

17 February	New York	Prokofiev – Fourth Sonata; ten <i>Visions fugitives</i> ; <i>Toccata</i> ; Skryabin – three pieces; Musorgsky – <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> (selection)	
30 March	New York	Prokofiev – First Sonata; three gavottes; two <i>Grandmother's Tales</i> ; <i>Toccata</i> ; <i>Sarcasms</i> ; Skryabin – <i>Poème Satanique</i> ; Musorgsky – <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> (selection)	
12 October	New York	Bach – French Suite in G Major; Beethoven – <i>Country Dances</i> ; Schumann – Sonata in F sharp minor	
26 October	Chicago	Prokofiev – Fourth Sonata; ten <i>Visions fugitives</i> ; <i>Toccata</i> ; Skryabin – three pieces; Musorgsky – <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> (selection)	
28 October	Chicago	Bach – French Suite in G Major; Beethoven – <i>Country Dances</i> ; Schumann – Sonata in F Sharp Minor	
22 November	New York	Schumann – <i>Carnaval</i> ; pieces by Musorgsky, Borodin, Glazunov, Skryabin; Prokofiev – Third Sonata; <i>Tales</i>	
28 November	Washington	Same as above	
28 December	Chicago	Same as above	

1920

25 January	Montreal	Works by Skryabin, Rachmaninov, Musorsgky, Prokofiev	
27 January	New York	Works by Skryabin, Rachmaninov, Musorsgky, Prokofiev	
3 February	Buffalo	Prokofiev – <i>Suggestion Diabolique</i> ; Rachmaninov – prelude	
11 February	New York	Rimsky-Korsakov – Piano Concerto	New York Philharmonic; Josef Stransky (conductor)
16 December	San Francisco	Prokofiev – selections from Op. 12 and <i>Visions fugitives</i> ; Rimsky-Korsakov – <i>Novelette</i> ; Beethoven – Piano Sonata in A Major, Op. 101	
22 December	San Diego	Beethoven – Piano Sonata in A Major, Op. 101; pieces by Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov and Musorgsky; Skryabin – <i>Poème</i> , Op. 32; Medtner – <i>Conte</i> , Op. 9; Prokofiev – selections from Op. 12 and <i>Visions fugitives</i>	

1921

13 January	Los Angeles	Beethoven – Piano Sonata in A Major, Op. 101; pieces by Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov and Musorgsky; Skryabin – <i>Poème</i> , Op. 32; Medtner – <i>Conte</i> , Op. 9; Prokofiev – selections from Op. 12 and <i>Visions fugitives</i>	
12 November	Cleveland	Included Medtner	
16 December	Chicago	Prokofiev – Third Piano Concerto	Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Frederick Stock (conductor)

1922

10 January	New York	Works by Musorgsky and Prokofiev	
26 & 27 January	New York	Prokofiev – Third Piano Concerto	New York Philharmonic; Albert Coates (conductor)
14 February	New York	Prokofiev – ‘March’ and ‘Intermezzo’ from <i>Love for Three Oranges</i> ; <i>Toccata</i> ; selections from Op. 32, Op. 12 and <i>Visions fugitives</i>	
17 February	New York	Beethoven – a sonata	
15 April	Paris	Prokofiev – Third Piano Concerto	
25 April	London	Prokofiev – Third Piano Concerto	London Symphony Orchestra; Albert Coates (conductor)
24 October	Paris	Prokofiev – Third Piano Concerto	
26 October	Paris	Selections of Musorgsky and Prokofiev	

1923

17 February	Barcelona	Musorgsky – six <i>Pictures</i> ; Prokofiev – Third Sonata	
19 February	Barcelona	Prokofiev – six short pieces including <i>Suggestion Diabolique</i>	
March/April	Brussels	Recital, and Prokofiev – Third Piano Concerto	

1924

21 January	London	Prokofiev – First Piano Concerto	
9 March	Paris	Prokofiev – Fifth Sonata	
21 March	Marseilles	Prokofiev – Second Sonata	
30 March	Lyon	Prokofiev – Second Sonata	
8 May	Paris	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	Koussevitzky (conductor)
15 & 16 November	Brussels	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
5 December		Prokofiev – Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth piano sonatas	

1925

15 January	Warsaw	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
24 January	Berlin	Prokofiev – Second Sonata	
1 March	Paris	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
4 & 8 November	Stockholm	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	Dobroveyn (conductor)
4 December	Strasbourg	Prokofiev – Fifth Sonata; <i>Toccata</i> ; gavotte	
13 December	Amsterdam	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	



1926

29 & 30 January	Boston	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	Boston Symphony Orchestra; Koussevitzky (conductor)
4 & 6 February	New York	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
26 March	Frankfurt	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
7 April	Rome	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
26 December	Pasdeloup	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	

1927

17 January	Riga	Prokofiev – Fifth Sonata; ‘March’ from <i>Love for Three Oranges</i>	
24 January	Moscow	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
26 January	Moscow	Prokofiev – Third and Fifth sonatas; <i>Toccata</i> ; gavotte from Op. 32	
28 January	Moscow	Same as above with ten of <i>Visions fugitives</i>	
4 February	Moscow	Prokofiev – Second and Fourth sonatas; <i>Grandmother's Tales</i>	
7 February	Moscow	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
12 February	Leningrad	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
6 March	Moscow	Prokofiev – Fifth Sonata; Op. 12; <i>Suggestion Diabolique</i>	
7 March	Kharkov	Prokofiev – Second and Third Sonatas; <i>Toccata</i> ; <i>Visions fugitives</i>	

5 December	London	Prokofiev – Third Sonata; ‘March’ and ‘Scherzo’ from <i>Love for Three Oranges</i> ; <i>Grandmother’s Tales</i> nos. 2 and 3; gavottes from Opp. 25 and 32; <i>Toccata</i>	
------------	--------	--	--

1928

2 January	Freiburg	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
-----------	----------	----------------------------	--

1929

18 March	Brussels	Prokofiev – <i>Choses en soi</i> ; Third Sonata, <i>Visions fugitives</i> ; Op. 43 <i>Divertissement</i> ; selection from Op. 12; Op. 2 nos. 2 and 3	
2 December	Amsterdam	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
22 December	Paris	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	

1930

6 January	New York	Prokofiev – <i>Choses en soi</i> ; ‘March’ from <i>Love for Three Oranges</i> ; gavotte from Op. 25; <i>Suggestion Diabolique</i>	
21 January	Boston	Same as above; Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
29 January & 1 February		Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
13 & 14 February	Los Angeles	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
18 February	San Francisco	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
March	Havana	Prokofiev – <i>Choses en soi</i>	
20 March	Montreal		

5 April	Brussels	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
16 April	Turin	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
12 October	Berlin	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
15 November	Liège	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
21 November	Warsaw	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
18 December	Paris	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
19 December	Antwerp	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	
27 December	Ghent	Prokofiev – Second Concerto	

1931

17 January	London	Prokofiev – <i>Choses en soi</i> ; second movement from Fourth Sonata; three gavottes; 'March' from <i>Love for Three Oranges</i> ; <i>Tales</i> ; <i>Suggestion Diabolique</i> ; arrangements (suite) of Schubert waltzes; Musorgsky – four <i>Pictures</i> ; Myaskovsky – <i>Deux Bizareries</i>	
------------	--------	--	--

1932

11 January	Prague	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
17 January	London	Prokofiev – Sonatina Op. 54 No. 2; Schubert waltzes; <i>Tales</i> nos. 2 and 3; March and Prelude from Op. 12; <i>Suggestion Diabolique</i>	
31 October	Berlin	Prokofiev – Fifth Concerto	
25 November	Moscow	Prokofiev – Fifth Concerto	

1 December	Leningrad	Prokofiev – Fifth Concerto	
December	Paris	Prokofiev – Fifth Concerto	

1933

19 April	Leningrad	Prokofiev – Second Sonata	
21 April	Leningrad	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	
19 May	Batumi	Prokofiev – Third Concerto	

1934

1 February	London	Prokofiev – Fifth Concerto	
------------	--------	----------------------------	--

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Music History, Aesthetics & Criticism

Abraham, Gerald, *The New Grove Russian Masters* (London: Macmillan, 1986).

Asafiev, Boris (tr. Alfred J. Swan), *Russian Music from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (Michigan: Edwards, 1953).

Austin, William W., *Music in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: From Debussy Through Stravinsky* (London: Dent, 1966).

Bakst, James, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music* (Westport: Greenwood, 1977).

Blom, Eric (ed.), *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (5th edn., London: Macmillan, 1954).

Brown, Malcolm H. & Riley, Roland J., *Slavonic and Western Music: Essays for Gerald Abraham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Caplin, William E., *Classical Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Colles, H. C. (ed.), *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn., London: Macmillan, 1927).

Colles, H. C. (ed.), *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (4<sup>th</sup> edn. supp., London: Macmillan, 1938).

Cook, Nicholas & Pople, Anthony (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Doctor, Jennifer, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Figes, Orlando, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 2002).

Frolova-Walker, Marina, *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

Griffiths, Paul, *A Concise History of Modern Music from Debussy to Boulez* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978).

Grout, Donald J., *A History of Western Music* (1st edn., London: Dent, 1960).

Grout, Donald J. & Palisca, Claude V., *A History of Western Music* (4th edn., London: Dent, 1980).

Grout, Donald J. & Palisca, Claude V., *A History of Western Music* (6th edn., London: Dent, 2001).

- Krebs, Stanley D., *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970).
- Lambert, Constant, *Music Ho! A study of music in decline* (London: Faber, 1934).
- Leonard, Richard, *A History of Russian Music* (London: Jarrolds, 1956).
- Maes, Francis, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
- Moisenko, Rena, *Realist Music: 25 Soviet Composers* (London: Macmillan, 1949).
- Montagu-Nathan, Montagu, *A History of Russian Music* (London: W. M. Reeves, 1914).
- Montagu-Nathan, Montagu, *Contemporary Russian Composers* (London: C. Palmer & Hayward, 1917).
- Morgan, Robert P., *Twentieth Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (London: Norton, 1991).
- Rosen, Charles, *Sonata Forms* (New York: Norton, 1980).
- Sabaneyev, Leonid, *Modern Russian Composers* (London: Lawrence, 1927).
- Sadie, Stanley (ed.), *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians v. 18* (6<sup>th</sup> edn., London: Macmillan, 1980).
- Salzman, Eric, *Twentieth-century music: an introduction* (London: Prentice-Hall, 1974).
- Samson, Jim, *Music in Transition: A Study of Tonal Expansion and Atonality – 1900–1920* (London: Dent, 1993).
- Schwarz, Boris, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972).
- Slonimsky, Nicolas (ed.), *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (New York: Schirmer, 1978).
- Slonimsky, Nicolas, *Music Since 1900* (London: Dent, 1938).
- Taruskin, Richard, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).
- Taruskin, Richard, *The Oxford History of Western Music v. 4* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- Taruskin, Richard, *On Russian Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
- Tovey, Donald, *A Companion to Beethoven's Piano Sonatas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Whittall, Arnold, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (New York, Oxford University Press).

Wilson, Elizabeth, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London: Faber & Faber, 1995).

Worth, Alexander, *Musical Uproar in Moscow* (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1973).

#### Monographs & Biography

Berman, Boris, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008).

Blok, Vladimir (ed.), *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews* (Moscow: Progress, 1978).

Brown, Malcolm, 'The Symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev' (Ph. D. diss., Florida State University, 1967).

Duke, Vernon, *Passport to Paris* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955).

Fiess, Stephen C. E., *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1994).

Gutman, David, *Prokofiev* (London: Alderman, 1988).

Hill, Peter, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Hullah, Annette, *Living Masters of Music: Theodor Leschetizky* (London: John Lane, 1906).

Ivashkin, Alexander (ed.), *A Schnittke Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

Jaffé, Daniel, *Sergey Prokofiev (20th-Century Composers)* (London: Phaidon, 1998).

Kinderman, William, *Beethoven* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995).

Matthews, Denis, *Beethoven* (London: Dent, 1985).

Minturn, Neil, *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

Monsaingeon, Bruno, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations* (London, Faber & Faber, 2005).

Morrison, Simon (ed.), *Sergey Prokofiev and His World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Morrison, Simon, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

- Nabokov, Nicolas, *Old Friends and New Music* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951).
- Nestyev, Israel, *Prokofiev* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1961).
- Newcomb, Ethel, *Leschetizky As I Knew Him* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1921).
- Nice, David, *Prokofiev, A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891–1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
- Potocka, Comtesse A., *Theodore Leschetizky: An Intimate Study of the Man and the Musician* (New York: The Century Co., 1903).
- Poulenc, Francis, *My Friends and Myself: Conversations* (London: Dobson, 1978).
- Press, Stephen, *Prokofiev's Ballets for Diaghilev* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).
- Prokofiev, Serge (ed. Prokofiev, Sviatoslav), *Dnevnik 1919–1933* (Paris: sprkfv, 2002).
- Prokofiev, Serge (ed. King, Francis), *Prokofiev by Prokofiev* (London: Macdonald & Jane's, 1979).
- Prokofiev, Serge (ed. & trans. Phillips, Anthony), *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907–1914: Prodigious Youth* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006).
- Prokofiev, Serge (ed. & trans. Phillips, Anthony), *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915–1923* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008).
- Prokofiev, Serge (ed. & trans. Anthony Phillips), *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1924–1933: Prodigious Son* (London: Faber & Faber, 2012).
- Prokofiev, Serge (ed. & trans. Prokofiev, Oleg), *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991).
- Rifkin, Deborah Anne, 'Tonal Coherence in Prokofiev's Music: A Study of the Interrelationships of Structure, Motives, and Design' (Ph. D. diss., University of Rochester, 2000).
- Robinson, Harlow (ed.), *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998).
- Robinson, Harlow, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002).
- Rolland, Romain, *Beethoven the Creator* (New York: Garden City, 1937).
- Rosen, Charles, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion* (New Haven: Yale, 2002).
- Samuel, Claude, *Prokofiev* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1971).
- Savkina, Natalia, *Prokofiev: His Life and Times* (Neptune City: Paganiniana, 1984).



Shlifstein, Semyon (ed.) (trans. Prokofieva, Rose), *S. Prokofiev – Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961).

Seroff, Victor, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Soviet Tragedy* (London: Frewin, 1969).

Stravinsky, Igor, *An Autobiography* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1975).

Stravinsky, Vera & Craft, Robert, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (London: Hutchinson, 1979).

Walsh, Stephen, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring* (London: Pimlico, 1999).

#### Articles in Journals/Periodicals

Abraham, Gerald, 'Prokofiev as a Soviet Composer', *The Music Review*, 3, November 1942.

Bartig, Kevin, 'Restoring Pushkin: Ideology and Aesthetics in Prokofiev's Queen of Spades', *The Journal of Musicology*, 27/4, Autumn 2010.

Bass, Richard, 'Prokofiev's Technique of Chromatic Displacement', *Music Analysis*, 7/2, July 1988.

Brown, Malcolm H., 'Prokofieff's Eighth Piano Sonata', *Tempo*, 70, Autumn 1964.

Brown, Malcolm H., 'Review: [untitled]', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 16/1, Spring 1963.

Bush, Geoffrey, 'People who live in glass houses', *Composer*, 37, Autumn 1960.

Dobson, Dennis, 'Review: [untitled]', *Music Survey*, 4/2, Spring 1950.

Frolova-Walker, Marina, 'The Soviet opera project: Ivan Dzerzhinsky vs. Ivan Susanin', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 18/2, July 2006.

Keldysh, Georgi, 'Soviet Music Today', *Tempo*, 32, Summer 1954.

Keller, Hans, 'Review: [untitled]', *Music Survey*, 3/3, February 1952.

Martens, Frederick H., 'The Modern Russian Pianoforte Sonata', *The Musical Quarterly*, 5/3, July 1919.

Matsumoto, Naomi (trans.), 'Motoo Ohtaguro interviews Prokofiev', *Three Oranges Journal*, May 2008.

McAllister, Rita, 'Some days in the life of Sergei Sergeievich', *Music and Musicians*, March 1971.

Medic, Ivana, 'Prokofiev's reception in Western Popular music', *Three Oranges Journal*, November 2009.

- Merrick, Frank, 'Prokofieff's Works for Piano Solo', *Tempo*, 11, Spring 1949.
- Montagu-Nathan, Montagu, 'Sergei Prokofiev', *The Musical Times*, 57/884, October 1916.
- Moreux, Serge, 'Prokofiev: An Intimate Portrait', *Tempo*, 11, Spring 1949.
- Nissman, Barbara, 'Prokofiev's Two Versions of His Fifth Piano Sonata: Facsimile and Commentary', *Musical Times*, October 1989.
- Nissmann, Barbara, 'The Many Faces of Prokofiev', *Three Oranges Journal*, 4, November 2002.
- Payne, Anthony, 'Prokofiev's The Fiery Angel', *Tempo*, 74, Autumn 1965, 22.
- Phillips, Anthony, 'Prokofiev in Japan: A View from the Interior', *Three Oranges Journal*, 15, May 2008.
- Prokofiev, Frances, 'Oleg Prokofiev: Traces Left Behind', *Three Oranges Journal*, January 2001.
- Prokofiev, Serge, 'The War Years', *The Musical Quarterly*, 30/4, October 1944.
- Roseberry, Eric, 'Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas', *Music and Musicians*, 19/7, March 1971.
- Savkina, Natalia, 'Back in the USSR', *Three Oranges Journal*, January 2001.
- Seinen, Nathan, 'Prokofiev's Semyon Kotko and the melodrama of High Stalinism', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 21/3, November 2009.
- Slonimsky, Nicolas, 'The Changing Style of Soviet Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 3/3, Autumn 1950.
- Stuart, Charles, 'Review: [untitled]', *Music Survey*, 3/3, Spring 1950.
- Taruskin, Richard, 'Chez Pétrouchka: Harmony and Tonality chez Stravinsky', *19th-Century Music*, 10/3, Spring 1987.
- Taruskin, Richard, 'Entoiling the Falconet': Russian Musical Orientalism in Context', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 4/3, November 1992.
- Zuk, Patrick, 'Nikolay Myaskovsky and the Events of 1948', *Music & Letters*, 93/1, February 2012.

#### Newspapers/Magazines

- Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 December 1921.
- Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 1922.
- New-York Tribune*, 31 March 1919.

*New-York Tribune*, 13 October 1919.  
*New-York Tribune*, 15 February 1922.  
*The Manchester Guardian*, 2 February 1924.  
*The New York Times*, 11 December 1918.  
*The New York Times*, 21 November 1918.  
*The New York Times*, 13 October 1919.  
*The New York Times*, 23 November 1919.  
*The New York Times*, 27 January 1922.  
*The New York Times*, 2 February 1930.  
*The Times*, 26 April 1922.  
*The Times*, 24 August 1922.  
*The Times*, 20 January 1931.  
*The Times*, 28 May 1931.  
*Time*, 19 November 1945.

### Interviews

Prokofiev, Lina, *Lina Prokofiev Interview 1, pt. 1* [sound recording: audio cassette], interviewer: Phillip Ramey (1979).  
Prokofiev, Lina, *Lina Prokofiev Interview 3, pt. 1* [sound recording: audio cassette], interviewer: Phillip Ramey (1979).  
Prokofiev, Lina, *Lina Prokofiev Interview 6, pt. 1* [sound recording: audio cassette], interviewer: Phillip Ramey (1979).  
Prokofiev, Lina, *Lina Prokofiev Interview 6, pt. 2* [sound recording: audio cassette], interviewer: Phillip Ramey (1979).

### Discography

Berman, Boris, *Prokofiev: Complete Piano Music, Vol. 2* [sound recording, CD] (Chandos, 1999).  
Béroff, Michel, *Prokofiev Piano Concertos, etc.* [sound recording, CD] (EMI, 1996).

- Gilels, Emil, *Emil Gilels in Recital* [sound recording: CD] (Vox, 1992).
- Prokofiev, Serge, *Masters of the Piano Roll* [sound recording: CD] (Dal Segno, 2004).
- Prokofiev, Serge, *Prokofiev Plays Prokofiev* [sound recording: CD] (Naxos, 2001).
- Richter, Sviatoslav, *Prokofiev: Piano Sonatas 6, 7 & 8* [sound recording: CD] (Russian Revelation, 1997).
- Richter, Sviatoslav, *Sviatoslav Richter [British Debut Recital]* [sound recording: CD] (BBC Legends, 2008).
- Richter, Sviatoslav, *Sviatoslav Richter Plays Scriabin, Debussy, Prokofiev* [sound recording: CD] (Deutsche Grammophon, 1990).