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INTERPRETATIVE ASPECTS IN RACHMANINOFF’S
TRANSCRIPTIONS FOR PIANO SOLO: A PERFORMER’S
GUIDE

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Interpretative Aspects in Rachmaninoff’s Transcriptions for Piano Solo: A Performer’s Guide

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Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) was one of the greatest virtuoso pianists, composers, and conductors of the first half of the twentieth century. Transcriptions for piano solo hold a very special place in Rachmaninoff’s compositional output. The purpose of this study is to help performers develop careful and thoughtful interpretation, as well as to gain a deeper knowledge of important stylistic aspects found in these works. First, the study identifies the essential compositional aspects in Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions that are pertinent to composer’s style to further determine their interpretational implications. Then, these aspects are examined through the specific musical examples in order to describe the particular pianistic means necessary for successful interpretation. Additionally, an examination of Rachmaninoff’s own recordings, as well as those of Jorge Bolet and Benno Moiseiwitsch, provides an invaluable insight into the wealth of appropriate interpretational choices for each selected example and the performance tradition of the works. The study is supplemented by the author’s own recording of the complete set of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions for piano solo.
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Rachmaninoff as Composer

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) was one of the greatest virtuoso pianists, composers, and conductors of the first half of the twentieth century. His compositional and performing style was deeply rooted in the nineteenth-century musical values. These values always brought him great success and financial stability as a performer, but not always as a composer.

In the decidedly innovative musical climate during the interwar decades, with the post-tonal new musical language of Schoenberg and Stravinsky dominating the scene, the diatonic music of Rachmaninoff was criticized for being old-fashioned. Similar to several other composers, such as Alexander Glazunov, Jean Sibelius, and Francis Poulenc, Rachmaninoff never surrendered to the “modern” approach. In 1939, he wrote to Leonard Liebling: “I feel like a ghost wandering in a world grown alien. I cannot cast out the old way of writing, and I cannot acquire the new. I have made intense efforts to feel the musical manner of today, but it will not come to me. Unlike Madame Butterfly with her quick religious conversion, I cannot cast out my musical gods in a moment and bend the

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1. Francis Poulenc addressed the same kind of criticism of his music in a 1942 letter: “I know perfectly well that I am not one of those composers who has made innovations like Igor [Stravinsky], Ravel or Debussy, but I think there is room for “new” music which does not mind using other people’s chords. Wasn’t that the case with Mozart-Schubert?” Quoted from: Darlene R. Berkovitz, “Program Notes for Lincoln Center Winds and Piano at Carnegie Music Hall,” January 29, 2013, accessed March 30, 2016, http://pittsburghmusicalliance.org/2013/01/23/chamber-music-society-of-lincoln-center-winds-piano/.
knee to new ones.”² Despite the criticism, Rachmaninoff’s music has not only lasted beyond his time, but continues to acquire immense admiration among musicians worldwide.

Remarks in reference to his works such as “artificial and gushing tunes” and popularity that is “not likely to last”³ are, perhaps, responsible for the relative obscurity of musicological evaluation of Rachmaninoff’s works that lasted for several decades after the composer’s death. Musicological assessment of Rachmaninoff’s compositional style and subsequent esteem of him as composer grew throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century. Presently, it has attained the same authority as the composer’s performing art. Following the Revolution of 1917 and permanent move to the United States, Rachmaninoff focused on his performing career and achieved great success. However, demands of such a career left only a limited amount of time and energy to compose. Rachmaninoff’s compositions of the Russian period are characterized by lyricism, long melodic lines, heavy layering of textures, and elaborate style of writing. Works written after the move display more motivic prominence and leaner textures.

The majority of Rachmaninoff’s compositional output falls into three main categories: compositions for piano or featuring piano, symphonic, and vocal works. The most well-known symphonic compositions include the three symphonies, the symphonic poem *Isle of the Dead*, and the *Symphonic Dances*. His vocal works are numerous and diverse. They include four operas (*Aleko, Francesca da Rimini, The Miserly Knight*, and unfinished opera *Monna Vanna*), the cantata *Spring*, the choral symphony *The Bells*, and

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over a hundred songs and romances. Rachmaninoff wrote four piano concertos and the *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* for solo piano and symphony orchestra. Large solo piano compositions include two sonatas, op. 28 and op. 36, *Variations on a Theme of Corelli* and *Variations on a Theme of Chopin*. Among compositions for two pianos are two suites and *Russian Rhapsody*. Short solo piano compositions are: seventeen under the title of *Études-tableaux*, contained in opp. 33 and 39, twenty-three preludes opp. 23 and 32, six *Moments musicaux*, among others. Chamber works include *Trio élégiaque* nos. 1 and 2 (for piano, violin, and cello), two string quartets (unfinished), Sonata for cello and piano, as well as numerous shorter compositions.

**Transcriptions**

Transcriptions hold a very special place in Rachmaninoff’s compositional output. Thoughts and definitions of what constitutes a piano transcription vary greatly among scholars: from “the adaptation of a composition for a medium other than its original one”4 to “the transcriber additions or interpretation, rather than the faithful reproduction.”5 The latter is more applicable to Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions. For Rachmaninoff, the act of transcribing was a satisfying compositional experience rather than a pure exercise in piano reduction technique: “During my summer rests from the fatigue of my tours as a pianist, I return to composition. My last works were transcriptions for piano of a work by Bach and the Scherzo from Mendelssohn’s music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.”6


Rachmaninoff’s first transcribing experience began with a four-hand piano reduction of two complete orchestral scores by Tchaikovsky — *Manfred Symphony*, op. 58 in 1886 and the ballet *Sleeping Beauty*, op. 66 in 1891, followed by Glazunov’s Symphony No. 6, op. 58 (1896, published 1897). *Sleeping Beauty*, perhaps, marks the beginning of the composer’s professional interest in transcribing. Published in 1892 by Jurgenson publishing house, it was the first score for which the young Rachmaninoff received payment. However, the first transcription of the ballet was severely criticized by Tchaikovsky for several reasons. According to Tchaikovsky, it appeared to have been made from a two-piano version instead of the full score, followed the original too slavishly, and lacked imagination.⁷ Such criticism was taken seriously by Rachmaninoff and undoubtedly influenced his later transcribing techniques.

The focus of this research will be on Rachmaninoff’s solo piano transcriptions for two hands. Transcriptions occupy a niche of their own in Rachmaninoff’s output. It is the only genre that the composer kept coming back to consistently throughout roughly forty out of fifty-two years of his active compositional career. The first solo piano transcription is that of Bizet’s “Minuet” from the *l’Arlésienne Suite No. 2*. The original version was first realized in 1900 and later revised circa 1921. Transcription of Tchaikovsky’s “Lullaby” op. 16, no. 1 is Rachmaninoff’s last composition, written in 1941.

It is immediately apparent that Rachmaninoff’s interest to transcribe was not limited by any stylistic period of the original compositions: J. S. Bach as well as contemporaries like Fritz Kreisler inspired him to transcribe. With equal success, he applied his masterful touch to parts of symphonic works and operas, pieces for voice and piano, violin and piano, as well as violin solo. Maurice Hinson’s description of the

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Mendelssohn “Scherzo” transcription states: “Seldom has the spirit of an orchestral showpiece been applied to the piano as effectively…. [C]onsiderable ingenuity is exercised to suggest the constant repeated sixteenth notes of the winds without actually copying them.”

The original musical sources that inspired Rachmaninoff to transcribe span across different musical genres. Four transcriptions are based on orchestral scores. These are: “Minuet” (1903, revised 1922) after Bizet’s “Intermezzo” (Minuetto) from the l’Arlésienne Suite No. 2; “Hopak” (1923-24) from the opera Sorochinsky Fair by Mussorgsky; “Flight of a Bumble Bee” (1929) from Act I of Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera The Tale of Tsar Saltan; and “Scherzo” (1933) from Mendelssohn’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, op. 61.

Transcriptions of chamber music include “Liebesleid” (1921) and “Liebesfreud” (1925) after Fritz Kreisler’s Alt-Wiener Tanzweisen nos. 1 and 2, originally written for violin and piano. Transcriptions of vocal works are “Wohin?” (1925) from Schubert’s song cycle Die schöne Müllerin, “Lullaby” (1941), op. 16, no. 1 by Tchaikovsky, and two of Rachmaninoff’s own romances, “Lilacs” (1913, published 1919, revised 1938), op. 21, no. 5 and “Daisies” (1923), op. 38, no. 3.

Rachmaninoff also transcribed movements from J. S. Bach’s Partita No. 3 for Violin Solo in E Major, BWV 1006, comprising them into the Suite (1933). The three movements chosen from the original seven movements of the composition are “Preludio,” “Gavotte,” and “Gigue.” Special case is the transcription under the title “Polka de V. R.” (1911) after Behr’s “Lachtäubchen” (Scherzpolka) in F major, op. 303.

Rachmaninoff, perhaps, had never seen the original score of this work. He transcribed it by remembering his father Vasily playing it on the piano.9

The transcription of the American National Anthem, the “Star-Spangled Banner” shows that Rachmaninoff was not reluctant to transcribe music outside of what may be considered main-stream classical. This transcription exists only in the form of a recording by the composer himself. It is unknown whether Rachmaninoff wrote down the score, but it was not published during his lifetime. This transcription will not be covered as a part of this research.

A complete list of Rachmaninoff’s published transcriptions is included in the Appendix A. It is arranged in chronological order by the date of composition. The list also contains titles of the original compositions, dedication, year of composition, the revisions (whenever applicable), and dates of Rachmaninoff’s recordings. The study is also supplemented by the author’s own recording of the complete set of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions.

PROBLEM AND JUSTIFICATION

It is difficult to convey the degree of challenge presented to pianists by Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions. In the words of American Record Guide critic Margaret Barela, Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions are “fiendishly difficult works with their luxuriant harmonies, rhythmic subtleties, and contrapuntal lines that can tangle the most nimble

Maurice Hinson also notes that the transcription of Mendelsohn’s “Scherzo” is “a real finger twister, reserved only for spectacular virtuosos.”

As a set, the transcriptions encompass three compositional mediums: symphonic, vocal, and chamber. Rachmaninoff’s “profound and practical command of the piano enable him to translate musical sound from any medium to the keyboard in terms of his own unique pianism.” Representation of those mediums in their pianistic realization offers an additional challenge to the interpreter. Again, Margaret Barela writes: “imaginative pianists playing transcriptions are able to evoke a vague sense of the other colors, the other instruments.”

A musical composition continues to live and evolve through performances, no matter if played live before an audience or in the recording studio. The number of recordings of the complete set of transcriptions has been growing steadily over the last couple of decades, indicating constant attention to this repertoire. Just since 1993, complete recordings were made by such artists as Howard Shelley (Hyperion, 1993), Janice Weber (IMP, 1993), Irina Ossipova (Arte Nova, 1996), Idil Beret (Naxos, 1998), Vladimir Ashkenazy (Decca, 2002), Olga Kern (Harmonia Mundi, 2004), Freidrich Hoericke (MDG, 2004), Ekaterina Mechetina (Fuga Libera, 2006), Ian Hobson (Arabesque Recordings, 2009), and most recently, Vadym Kholodenko (Delos, 2014), among others.

12. Ibid., 107.
The critics’ reviews of the abovementioned releases show that the level of expectations from a performer of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions is very high. This might be due to the fact that Rachmaninoff recorded all of his transcriptions himself. Bryce Morrison of *Gramophone* writes that transcriptions should “evoke another time and age, one of fun and fancy free, where… the pianist moves eagerly to the dessert course of the evening, to ‘top this’ pyrotechnics, to light-heartedness and mischief…”\(^\text{14}\)

Some of the reviews, though, lean toward the negative side. Sharp comments of critics most often are directed toward issues of unimaginative performances, lack of character and wit, insufficient attention to the inner voices or the accompaniment, poorly projected melodic lines, and heaviness of supportive textures, among others. Notably, the recordings of Rachmaninoff, Moiseiwitsch, Cherkassky, and Bolet are often cited as *etalons* for performance of the transcriptions.

While many of Rachmaninoff’s recordings, especially those of the concertos, have already been analyzed in depth by scholars, no such research exists in regards to the transcriptions. This is puzzling in light of the fact that, besides the concertos, the transcriptions represent the only complete set of Rachmaninoff’s own works recorded by the composer himself. Examination of Rachmaninoff’s own recording is needed in order to provide a valuable insight into the composer’s performing style and expand the performer’s understanding of interpretational possibilities inherent in the works. As precisely put by Jay Alan Hershberger: “The careful performer can take clues and general principles from Rachmaninoff’s playing. Without slavishly imitating his interpretation, a

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pianist can develop an interpretation that is at once within Rachmaninoff’s style and yet is personal and fresh.”

Overall, in the words of Jonathan Woolf: “It’s surprising how much can go wrong in the Rachmaninov transcriptions.” Indeed, these transcriptions present many stylistic and pianistic challenges in combination with a high mark of expectation from a modern performer. This summarizes one of the reasons for the existence of the present study.

Pianists’ interest in Rachmaninoff’s compositional and performing art has grown fast in recent decades. Many pianists have begun to explore performer-oriented research of Rachmaninoff’s works. Some examples include analysis of Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, op. 18 by So-Ham Kim Chung (1988), Études-tableaux op. 33 by Pamela Wright Wilder (1988) and op. 39 by Marina Radiushina (2008), and Variations on a Theme of Corelli, op. 42 by Celine J. Yim (2003). The same trend exists with piano transcriptions of other composers, which have been extensively explored as well. The following authors focused their research on the genre of transcription in a particular composers’ output: Gilya Hodos researched transcriptions of Moritz Moszkowski (2004); Valerie Woodring Goertzen of Johannes Brahms (1987); Di Zhu of Prokofiev (2006); Matthew T. Loudermilk of Vladimir Horowitz (2010); Yi-Syuan Lin of Stephen Hough and Marc-Andre Hamelin (2009). Also, Glen Blaine Carruthers explored transcriptions of Bach’s works by composers beginning with Czerny to Rachmaninov (1986); Gregory Scott Taylor dedicated his research to the eight transcriptions of Chopin’s Etude op. 10, no. 5 by Leopold Godowsky (2010).

The existence of an extensive body of performers’ research on Rachmaninoff’s keyboard style and genre of transcription in piano literature reflects the high degree of pianists’ interest in both areas. However, no scholarly performer-oriented research about Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions exists at this moment. A systematic, performance-oriented study of these pieces in relation to Rachmaninoff’s style is required especially in lieu of the growing popularity of this repertoire. This circumstance, together with the abovementioned interpretative challenges of the transcriptions, underlines the need for the present study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Harold Schonberg wrote: “When Rachmaninoff played, it was a unity. Everything was perfectly planned, perfectly proportioned.” Logical flow and impeccable proportion were undoubtedly important to Rachmaninoff. He famously criticized himself, whenever he thought his interpretation did not reach a culminating point to his satisfaction. At the same time, as Schonberg states: “He [Rachmaninoff] took plenty of liberties with the music, confident of his own taste.” Though always thoughtful and carefully planned, Rachmaninoff’s interpretations were not necessarily “puritanical.” No matter if he played music of other composers or his own, it is clear that Rachmaninoff certainly took great care in developing and executing his interpretations.

The purpose of this study is to help performers develop their own careful and thoughtful interpretation of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions for piano solo, as well as to gain deeper knowledge of important stylistic aspects found in these works. In order to


17. Bertensson and Leyda, 195.
achieve this purpose, the present study focuses on the following questions: 1. Which aspects of Rachmaninoff’s compositional and transcribing style are important for a performer to consider, while developing an informed and logical interpretation of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions for piano solo? 2. What interpretative implications do these aspects of Rachmaninoff’s style carry for a performer and how to successfully implement them? 3. What interpretative choices have Rachmaninoff and other notable pianists made in regard to these aspects in their recorded performances of the transcriptions?

All aspects in question are interconnected in a number of ways since their aim is to help performers build informed interpretations of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions. In order to recognize the interpretative implications inherent in these works, the performer should understand what features of Rachmaninoff’s style are exemplified in transcriptions and need particular consideration. In other words, it is necessary to investigate the first aspect before proceeding to the others. Analytical description of interpretative choices that Rachmaninoff and other notable performers have made in their recordings could shed more light on all of the preceding questions.

This research will explore specific aspects of Rachmaninoff’s keyboard style that underline his transcriptions. It will help performers build their interpretations on a solid foundation of knowing what aspects to consider together with their interpretational connotations and particular pianistic means required for implementing them. Examination of recordings by Rachmaninoff and two notable performers offers additional sources of knowledge and inspiration. As aptly put by Francis Ryan: “Any analysis will be only a poor reflection of the richness of relationship to be discovered in a great musical work.”
Analysis will, however, increase the performer’s conscious awareness of these relationships and aid him in projecting them in performance.”\textsuperscript{18}

Bearing in mind the relatively short duration of each piece, Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions are fairly complex compositions with a wide array of features which are important for performers to consider. This research focuses on the most prominent stylistic aspects, which are, perhaps, irreplaceable in these pieces, making the transcriptions instantly recognizable as Rachmaninoff’s works. Developing a profound understanding of these features is equivalent to having “good taste” that is necessary for cultivating a proper conception of a work, as Rachmaninoff mentions in a quote below.

According to a 1931 concert advertisement in Portland’s \textit{The Spectator}, Rachmaninoff said that a master pianist

\begin{quote}
… is justified in finding his own interpretations and in putting his own personality into the rendering of the composition. I indicate my own feeling about tempo, phrasing, and dynamic shading in the music itself, and this is the outline of my own conception. But some great pianist may play my piano pieces with many differences of detail, with nuances and shadings I might not use myself; and yet his conception of the piece as a whole will never be wrong because his own good taste and musical instinct would guard against it.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Rachmaninoff points out that his music allows for a range of interpretations. “Many differences of detail,” that are possible to employ in interpretation of transcriptions, are, perhaps, as endless and varied as the personalities of the interpreters. Each individual interpretational possibility, though, should be consistent with the overall understanding of Rachmaninoff’s style in transcriptions.


When highlighting particular pianistic means used by the great pianists to project interpretational connotations inherent in the transcriptions, this research takes into consideration the philosophy expressed by the composer himself: “It is certainly most interesting, at times, to see how some other pianist will give a piece you have written yourself an entirely different musical color, or present it from quite another angle of interpretation than your own.”20

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Developing a convincing interpretation of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions is a time-consuming and difficult process. Its growth should be deeply rooted with broad knowledge in several areas. Most importantly, a successful interpretational approach to Rachmaninoff’s works must be based on profound knowledge of features that constitute Rachmaninoff’s keyboard style. This can be accomplished through analyzing Rachmaninoff’s style in piano compositions in general, not limited to transcriptions only. Literature devoted to such analysis includes theoretical studies of his piano works, performance-based research, and descriptions of Rachmaninoff’s own performing style. Understandably, all of these areas of research are interconnected. Rachmaninoff’s compositional style undoubtedly influenced his performing style and vice versa. Thus, both of those areas should be considered in performance-based research of Rachmaninoff’s works.

Following a brief overview of sources that offer wide-ranging information on Rachmaninoff’s life and works, the first part of the literature review in this chapter is dedicated to theoretical and stylistic analysis of Rachmaninoff’s piano compositions. The second part is an overview of existing performance-oriented research of his works. The last part is devoted to methodologies for performance-based research and literature that deals with thoughts on learning and performing useful for the present study.

Any research related to life and works of a composer usually begins with gathering general biographical data. Biographical sources for Rachmaninoff are plentiful
and diverse. Older, well-regarded and extensive sources consulted during the course of this research are those by Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda (1957)\textsuperscript{21} and Barrie Martyn (1990).\textsuperscript{22} Newer publications include those by Geoffrey Norris (2001),\textsuperscript{23} Max Harrison (2005),\textsuperscript{24} and Michael Scott (2008).\textsuperscript{25} Additionally, there are two greatly valuable guides to further research for anyone interested in Rachmaninoff and his works: Robert Palmieri’s \textit{Sergei Vasil’evish Rakhmaninov: a Guide to Research} (1985)\textsuperscript{26} and Robert Cunningham’s “\textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff: a Bio-Bibliography} (2001).\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{Stylistic analysis of Rachmaninoff’s works}

The first category of this literature review consists mainly of doctoral essays focused on theoretical and stylistic analysis of Rachmaninoff’s piano compositions. The most relevant to the present research is the essay of Jonathan F. Sokasits that analyzes the keyboard style of Rachmaninoff in his transcriptions.\textsuperscript{28} In this research Sokasits takes for a model Rachmaninoff’s transcription of “Liebesleid.” First, he identifies areas in which Rachmaninoff transforms the original composition. This is accomplished through direct

\begin{itemize}
  
  
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Geoffrey Norris, \textit{Rachmaninoff} (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).
  
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Max Harrison, \textit{Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings} (New York; London: Continuum, 2005).
  
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Michael Scott, \textit{Rachmaninoff} (Stroud, Gloucestershire: History Press, 2008).
  
  
  
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Jonathan F. Sokasits, “The Keyboard Style of Sergei Rachmaninoff as Seen through His Transcriptions for Piano Solo” (DMA essay, University of Wisconsin, 1993).
\end{itemize}
comparison of the original composition to its transcription. The process reveals Rachmaninoff’s alterations of the original formal structure, tonality, intensification of harmony, thickening of texture, use of counterpoint, and extended keyboard range. These findings are effectively tied to Rachmaninoff’s style in his original piano compositions.

The next three chapters trace the interplay of altered elements through the rest of the transcriptions. First, transcriptions of chamber music are explored, then, the orchestral works, and finally, the *Suite* from Bach’s Partita No. 3 for Violin Solo. At the end of the last chapter, a brief conclusion explains the role of transcriptions as a unique niche of Rachmaninoff’s compositional activity. Findings presented in Sokasits’ work form the basis of the theoretical approach in the present essay.

Sokasits’ work is a fine example of the line of research concerned with detailed theoretical analysis of a representative body of Rachmaninoff’s piano works. One of the oldest research papers in the same category is Glenn R. Winters analysis of *Preludes* op. 23 and op. 32, and *Études-tableaux* op. 33 and op. 39.29 In this work Winters examines each of the pieces separately. Analysis of begins with general discussions of the preludes and etudes, which place each of the sets into historical perspective. Then each composition in a set is analyzed separately in sufficient depth. Each of the opuses occupies its own chapter. Here the author assesses thematic material, form, harmony, counterpoint, texture, and gives brief performance oriented suggestions. Summary of finding in each genre discusses Rachmaninoff’s treatment of melody, rhythm, harmony, and use of keyboard.

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A very similar approach is displayed in Jacob J. Surdell’s analysis of Études-tableaux, op. 39. This work takes further the research of Glenn Winters. In summary, Surdell points out Rachmaninoff’s use of complex ternary design, imaginative use of harmony, and reliance on short motives.

Pamela Wilder in her analysis of the Études-tableaux op. 33 divides all stylistic elements into three categories. In the first category she makes conclusions about descending tendencies of melody, repeated rhythmical figures that give sense of forward motion, common tone in harmonic changes, and avoidance of interval of the third in a chord (“harmonic twilight effect”). In the second category, Wilder discusses the role of inner voices in transitions, depletion of material in cadenzas, codas, and relationship of texture and accompaniment to tempo. Rachmaninoff’s formal structure in the Études-tableaux, op. 33 is discussed in the third category. The author concludes that the composer combines frequent use of ternary forms according to the concept of the Golden Mean.

Another study of a similar kind is Albert Ysac’s study of Variations on a Theme of Chopin, op. 22 and Variations on a Theme of Corelli, op. 42. The author first discusses sets of variations from a historical perspective. Then four areas are explored in detail: melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture. The two works represent early and late


periods of Rachmaninoff’s compositional style. Stylistic differences between the works include longer, flowing, wide range melodies of the early style and shorter, motivic melodies in the later style. Harmonic language remains rich, with frequent use of pedal tones. Rhythm relies on syncopations and polyrhythms. Texture, originally thick and polyphonic, becomes leaner with clearer differentiation of parts in Rachmaninoff’s later period. From these points of view each variation is discussed separately and in depth.

A slightly different way of approaching analysis of Rachmaninoff’s piano works is represented in the research paper of Heejung Kang on *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, op. 43.\(^{34}\) Kang is also concerned with theoretical analysis of melodic, harmonic, and textural elements of the work. However, she goes further and discusses the imagery and semantics of *Dies irae*, themes of “love and death,” and understanding of Rachmaninoff’s “humor.” She argues that Rachmaninoff’s ideology of “love and death” is responsible for the similarity of structure between the *Rhapsody* and *The Isle of Dead*. In the last chapter Kang provides comparative analysis of two recordings of the Rhapsody - by Rachmaninoff and Moiseiwitsch. Both approaches (to semantics and to performing tradition) greatly extend not only theoretical, but performers perspective of the work.

Raymond J. Gitz discusses the question of imagery and semantics in Rachmaninoff’s works further in his study of the *Études-tableaux*, op. 39.\(^{35}\) He talks about *Dies irae*, Russian chant, bell sonorities, as well as influence of works of Swiss

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painter Arnold Böcklin. Much of the work relies on studies of reviews and opinions of scholars.

The two studies described above are not designed strictly as performer-oriented research. However, they could be used as such since they discuss several key aspects that are important to interpreters. Performer-oriented research would be concerned with numerous elements: discussing Rachmaninoff’s performing style, overall performance tradition of certain works, practical performing and learning suggestions to pianists, or a combination of the above. These research works are discussed in the next section of this literature review.

Performance-oriented research

One kind of research designed to aid performers and teachers is shown in interpretive analysis of Rachmaninoff’s piano and orchestra recordings by Jay Alan Hershberger. He begins with an overview of Rachmaninoff’s training and career as a pianist. Then he focuses on analysis of Rachmaninoff’s interpretational elements, such as musical architecture, tempo, voicing, articulation, agogics, dynamics, revisions, cuts, etc. Hershberger determines that Rachmaninoff’s interpretive style is based on strong communication of the overall melodic and formal organizations of his works. These two elements are indicated as having the biggest influence on interpretational choices. The concluding section of this research brings up several important points about modern understanding of freer Romantic pianistic style and interpretative process that will result in informed performances of Rachmaninoff’s works. Overall, even though Hershberger

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does not give specific performing suggestions, his examination of Rachmaninoff’s performing style is a valuable contribution to performer-oriented research.

Other examples of performance-oriented research also show a wide range of approaches. The following two research works are both addressed to performers and examine the same work. However, they approach it in two very different ways. First is So-Ham Kim Chung’s analysis of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, op. 18. She examines the work’s orchestration, structure, key relationships, etc. She only briefly touches upon learning and performance problems in the concerto that she herself has encountered. Natalya V. Lundtvedt in her analysis of the same piece explores issues of “authenticity” and “historically-informed performance.” She examines a wide range of recordings beginning with the early twentieth century, focusing mainly on the two recordings made by Rachmaninoff himself. This examination is combined with a thorough study of the markings in the score.

Another work relevant to the present research is Ruby Cheng’s analysis of the Third Piano Concerto. She examines Rachmaninoff’s performances of several other pieces, including his transcription of “Preludio” from J. S. Bach’s Partita No. 3 for Violin Solo in E major. Rachmaninoff’s recording of the third concerto is examined closely especially for freedom of tempi, rubato, and any interpretational deviations from the written text. A chart of Rachmaninoff’s tempi in his own performance of the piece is

provided as well. An analysis of four other recordings of the third concerto is added to highlight more recent performing tradition of the work.

**Research methodologies and thoughts on learning and performance**

The works discussed above apply a wide range of performance oriented methodologies. Obviously, learning the work, developing its interpretation, resulting in a successful performance is a long and demanding process for a performer. Thus, each step of this process calls for a research methodology which would be most appropriate and effective for achieving its goals. For now, however, scholarly discussion of these much different approaches, their best applications, and effectiveness is somewhat limited.

The following work discusses some difficulties that researchers experience when attempting a performance analysis. Francis Ryan in his performer's guide to analysis explains why traditional theoretical analysis devised by theorists and composers is often not very effective for performers. In turn, he designs a prototype of an analytical system for performers. This system is based on aural perception of a work, treats all parameters as equally important, and can be applied to music of several periods and styles. Separate chapters of the paper are devoted to melody, harmony, fabric (including timbre and texture), and rhythm. Each aspect undergoes a detailed classification, description, analysis, and graphic representation. Five short works by various composers are analyzed to demonstrate the system at work.

An invaluable look into Rachmaninoff’s own thought on performance and learning is offered in James Cooke’s *Great Pianists on Piano Playing: Study Talks with*

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*Foremost Virtuosos.*

In chapter sixteen, “Essentials of artistic playing,” Rachmaninoff himself explains several aspects of what constitutes artistic playing. In answering questions posed by Cooke, Rachmaninoff talks about essentials of phrasing, tempo, character and contrast, pedaling, and the danger of convention. Lastly, Rachmaninoff states that real musical understanding relies on knowledge and ability to project those elements that give a work its unity, cohesion, force, or grace. Undoubtedly, his thoughts cannot be overlooked in the process of study of his own works. The book also contains illuminating writings of Rachmaninoff’s contemporaries and famous pianists, such as Godowsky, Hoffman, and Busoni.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes methods chosen to investigate the aforementioned three research questions on interpretation of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions for piano solo. The study is designed to identify essential interpretational aspects in Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions that are particularly associated with Rachmaninoff’s pianistic and compositional style, explain their interpretational implications, and trace them throughout transcriptions, discussing particular pianistic means of their realization. Description of ways in which Rachmaninoff and other well-known performers projected those aspects in their recorded performances will give additional insight into Rachmaninoff’s style and interpretational possibilities in his transcriptions. Such investigation is accomplished through a multistep process and is presented in the two following chapters.

In chapter four, the study identifies particularly important stylistic traits that clearly represent Rachmaninoff’s style in transcriptions. In addition to the author’s own research, choice of the aspects in question also relies on research provided by Jonathan F. Sokasits in his doctoral essay “Keyboard Style of Sergei Rachmaninoff as Seen through His Transcriptions for Piano Solo.” This work delivers main points of departure in regards to Rachmaninoff’s style in transcriptions, as it identifies many important ways in which Rachmaninoff transforms original compositions and makes them idiomatic for piano. While the focus of the Sokasits’ work is theoretical, the present research is particularly concerned with aspects of Rachmaninoff’s style that have strong performance implications. Following the identification of each trait of Rachmaninoff style present in the transcription, main points of its interpretational implications are specified. Based on
these implications this work identifies four of the areas which need particular interpretative attention. Namely, these are the composer’s harmonic additions, contrapuntal and polyphonic procedures, closing sections, and transcriptions of the orchestral works.

Additionally, references to existing research identifying Rachmaninoff’s stylistic traits in original compositions are provided throughout the chapter in order to support their identification in transcriptions. Implications of these same traits in the original works, whenever recognized by the authors, are referenced as well because they, undoubtedly, contribute to understanding the interpretational aspects in transcriptions.

In the fifth chapter, thus identified aspects of Rachmaninoff’s style will be examined through the specific musical examples to describe particular pianistic means necessary for successful interpretation. Each of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions displays most (if not all) traits of Rachmaninoff’s style. Most representative examples of a particular feature or interplay between the features are selected and described in detail. An examination of differences and similarities between individual examples is necessary to inform interpretive parameters in each particular case. Matters of formal structure, thematic material, harmony, texture, and rhythm are discussed here from the interpretational point of view. Additionally, attention is directed toward Rachmaninoff’s marking of dynamic, articulation, pace, and agogics in the score.

Finally, the study describes interpretative choices that Rachmaninoff and other notable performers made in their recorded performances of the transcriptions in regards to identified stylistic traits. Rachmaninoff’s recordings are, definitely, some of the most valuable sources for study of his style for interpreters. Recordings of Benno Moiseiwitsch
and Jorge Bolet will be considered for specific points of comparison, since neither artist has recorded all of the transcriptions.

Understandably, Rachmaninoff’s own interpretations might be considered as definitive by many. The composer himself often admired interpretations of his works by other great pianists. One famous case is the interpretation of the “Scherzo” from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963), which Rachmaninoff supposedly “much preferred to his own.”

Another great pianist who devoted his art to Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions is Jorge Bolet (1914-1990). Even though his career bloomed in the latter half of the Twentieth century, Bolet considered older pianists of the Golden Age, including Rachmaninoff and Moiseiwitsch, as his greatest inspirations: “Every time I heard Rachmaninoff play, I said to myself, “That is what I want to sound like.”” In a Carnegie Hall recital review from February 1974, Harold Schonberg called Bolet “a throwback to the romantic giants of the keyboard.”

**Scores and recordings**

A necessary set of tools for the present research consists of scores of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions, scores of original compositions on which transcriptions are based, and existing recordings by Rachmaninoff, Moiseiwitsch, and Bolet. In

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instances where Rachmaninoff or one of the other pianists made several recordings of the same piece, all of them are considered.

The edition of the score used for this research is *The Piano Works of Rachmaninoff, Volume Seven: Transcriptions (Piano Solo)* by Alfred Publishing Company Incorporated.⁴⁵ This particular edition is widely used and available for purchase in the United States. All excerpts used from this score are reproduced with the publisher’s permission. The edition contains all piano solo transcriptions except “Polka de V. R.,” for which a Muzgiz 1948 edition will be used. ⁴⁶ The excerpt from the Mendelssohn’s “Scherzo” from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is reproduced from the Muzgiz edition from 1960.⁴⁷ Both of the later scores are in the public domain.

Fortunately, Rachmaninoff recorded all of his transcriptions, with the same pieces sometimes recorded more than once. This choice was made, perhaps, due to the length of the pieces and time available on a record. Rachmaninoff definitely realized the importance of recording technology: “Think what it would have meant to us today could we possess records made by Liszt, the greatest pianist who has ever lived. Yet we can only dimly imagine what his playing must have been. Future generations will be more fortunate in that the finest modern musicians, through their records, will be something more than names to those who come after them.”⁴⁸


Rachmaninoff’s first recording of a transcription is that of “Polka de V. R.” for Edison Records, made on April 24, 1919 in New York on gramophone records. All three takes of the piece made during that recording session were quickly issued by the company without prior consultation with the performer. Later, Rachmaninoff took great care in making sure that only approved recordings would be released to the public.

In 1919, Rachmaninoff began recording sessions with American Piano Company (Ampico) on piano rolls. Those recording were since re-issued as long-playing vinyl records by Decca, (made on an Ampico concert grand piano),\(^{49}\) and used later in the compact disc, \textit{Rachmaninoff plays Rachmaninoff} released in 1990.\(^{50}\) Ampico piano rolls included recordings of “Brooklet,” “The Bumble-Bee,” “Hopak,” “Liebesfreud,” “Liebesleid,” “Lilacs,” “Minuet,” “Polka de V. R.,” as well as “The Star Spangled Banner.” As mentioned previously, the latter transcription is excluded from the present research.

Beginning in 1920, Rachmaninoff recorded all fourteen transcriptions covered in this research for Victor (from 1929 called RCA Victor). Many recordings were made on ten-inch 78 rpm discs. Some were on twelve-inch discs, which provided higher quality of sound more appropriate for classical music recordings. Recordings Rachmaninoff made for Victor: “Polka de V. R.” (October 12, 1921, and April 4, 1928); “Liebesleid” (October 25, 1921); “Menuet” (February 24, 1922); “Lilacs” (earliest recorded on May 17, 1920, then October 24, 1923, December 27, 1923, and February 2, 1942); “Hopak” (April 13, 1925); “Wohin?” (December 29, 1925); “Liebesfreud” (December 29, 1925

\(^{49}\) Ampico concert grand piano was constructed by Norman Evans, regulated by Denis Hall of the Pianola Institute, and recorded at the Kingsway Hall in London.

\(^{50}\) Sergei Rachmaninoff, \textit{Rachmaninov Plays Rachmaninov: The Ampico Piano Recordings (1919-29)}, Decca 425 964-2, 1990, CD.
and February 26, 1942); “The Bumble-Bee” (April 16, 1929); “Scherzo” (December 23, 1935); “Daisies” (March 18, 1940); “Gavotte” and “Gigue” (February 26, 1942); “Preludio” (February 27, 1942); and “Lullaby” (February 26, 1942). Selected recordings (usually later versions from multiple recordings) were transferred to vinyl recording (1973) and then released on compact disc by RCA Victor Gold Seal label in 1989.\textsuperscript{51}

More recently, new technologies are constantly being applied to reissue Rachmaninoff’s recordings in better quality and with more authentic sound. In 2009, a compact disc \textit{Rachmaninoff plays Rachmaninoff} was released by RCA with nine of the transcriptions re-recorded from the originals using Zenph Re-Performance technology (recorded April 13, 2009, Kenon Recital Hall, Peace College, Raleigh, N.C.; original performances recorded between 1921 and 1942).\textsuperscript{52} Nine of the transcriptions recorded on Ampico rolls between 1919 and 1929 were recreated on a compact disc \textit{A Window in Time: Rachmaninoff performs his solo piano works}\textsuperscript{53} (re-recorded by Wayne Stahnke on a Boesendorfer 290SE reproducing piano, August 27, 1996, Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Center, Los Angeles).

Benno Moiseiwitsch recorded two of the transcriptions: Mendelssohn’s “Scherzo” from \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream} on March 17, 1939,\textsuperscript{54} for HMV, division of RCA label. Recording of “Lilacs” was completed on October 5, 1948.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{52} Sergei Rachmaninov, \textit{Rachmaninoff plays Rachmaninoff: Zenph Studios re-performance}, Sony B002BF1N6K, 2009, CD.

\textsuperscript{53} Sergei Rachmaninoff, \textit{A window in time Rachmaninoff performs his solo piano works}, recorded from 1919 to 1929, 80489 Telarc, 1998, CD.

\textsuperscript{54} Benno Moiseiwitsch et al., \textit{Great Pianists of the Twentieth Century: Benno Moiseiwitsch}, recorded 1939, 456 907-2 Philips, 1999, 2 CDs.
A year before the previously mentioned Carnegie Hall recital in 1974, Jorge Bolet recorded nine of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions for the RCA label. He again recorded “Liebesleid” and “Liebesfreud” in 1987 for DECCA. All the live recordings of the pianist are issued as well. They include transcriptions of “Lullaby” (performed on March 15, 1978 in Philadelphia) and “Polka de V. R.” (February 23, 1974, Amsterdam).

55. Benno Moiseiwitsch, Great Pianists: Moiseiwitsch 7, recorded 1948, 8.110675 NAXOS, 2003, CD.


57. Jorge Bolet et al., Jorge Bolet, the Romantic Virtuoso, recorded 1987, 478 2374 Decca, 2010, 4 CDs.

CHAPTER FOUR

STYLISTIC AND INTERPRETATIONAL ASPECTS

Examination of compositional procedures used repeatedly in the transcriptions as well as in the original works helps interpreters recognize Rachmaninoff’s stylistic imprint. Many stylistic traits present in the original compositions are recurrently found in Rachmaninoff’s transcription “clearly identify[ing] these pieces as his own.”59 The composer must have thought of them as the most effective in achieving a particular musical goal. Before the combination of these features could be fully appreciated through informed and imaginative performance, each feature, on its own merits, should be studied separately.

This chapter discusses the hallmarks of Rachmaninoff’s style in his transcriptions for piano solo. Besides the author’s own observations, identification of each notable stylistic trait is supported by research of Jonathan Sokasits. Also included are opinions of other authors pertinent to presence of a particular examined feature in Rachmaninoff’s original works. Throughout this chapter, explanations of these features are addressed to the performers.

In the beginning of his work Sokasits identifies several important areas for consideration. Through direct comparison of each transcription with the original upon which it is based, he determines that Rachmaninoff’s identity is revealed in “common treatments in the realm of formal structure, harmony, chromaticism, and counterpoint.”60

59. Sokasits, 32.
60. Ibid., preface, vii.
Another important feature mentioned later and traced through Sokasits’ work is Rachmaninoff’s idiomatic “use of the keyboard,”\textsuperscript{61} as seen through the composer’s handling of texture and registration. Understandably, “in passages that epitomize the quintessential Rachmaninoff” a combination of these musical parameters work together to produce a desirable effect.\textsuperscript{62} Whether they are infused into the works of other composers or imposed over his own earlier composition, research pertinent to these areas yields the most prolific results in the Sokasits work and forms the platform for the following discussion.

**Harmonic language**

Rachmaninoff’s harmonic language in his original compositions is described by many theorists as complex with progressive harmonies and advanced chromaticism, while still based on a tonal diatonic framework. This description is especially applicable to the works of the middle and late periods, to which most of the transcriptions belong. However, the compositions that Rachmaninoff transcribed, including those of his contemporary Fritz Kreisler, do not share the same level of harmonic intricacy, making Rachmaninoff’s enhancements, whenever they appear, easily identifiable.

In transcriptions of works for violin and piano, Kreisler’s “Liebesleid” and “Liebesfreud,” Rachmaninoff displays “the greatest freedom in making chromatic and harmonic alterations.”\textsuperscript{63} Distinct examples of the composer’s harmonic additions are also found in Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions of J. S. Bach’s violin Partita no. 3, “Preludio,” “Gavotte,” and “Gigue.” In these pieces the transcriber’s harmonic language imposed

\textsuperscript{61} Sokasits, 35.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 61.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 62.
upon the original melodic line is outstanding especially in comparison to the simplicity of the implied harmonization. Exquisite contrapuntal manipulations, registral shifts, and harmonic flourishes contribute to a stylistically descriptive expression, “Bachmaninoff,” used by Barry Martin in regards to style in these works. Through the harmonic language in these transcriptions, Rachmaninoff “does also inject a strong personal element … at times giving the music an unmistakably hybrid air….”

For the performer, recognition of Rachmaninoff’s harmonic contributions is the first important step in interpreting the composer’s harmonic language. As it has been pointed out, Rachmaninoff’s harmonic language in the transcriptions stands out in comparison to the harmonization of the originals. Different kinds of harmonic alteration found in Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions carry dissimilar interpretational connotations and need separate consideration.

One of the aspects of Rachmaninoff’s harmonic contributions in transcriptions is the use of distinct and unconventional chords or progressions. Martyn wrote: “[a]s in all his transcriptions, Rachmaninoff leaves an unmistakable impress of his own personality in the spicy harmonies with which he seasons Kreisler’s naive tunes.” This quote points out an important interpretational point that harmonic additions often used by Rachmaninoff carry powerful coloristic connotations.

Jacob Surdell recognizes colorful effect of Rachmaninoff’s harmonies in Études-tableaux op. 39, nos. 3, 5, 6, and 8. Similarly, “interesting harmonic progressions

64. Martyn, 324.
65. Ibid., 295.
involving the Neapolitan chord of D minor add color\textsuperscript{66} to the sections of \textit{Études-tableaux} op. 39, no. 8 in D minor. Rachmaninoff’s use of this particular chord as an important coloristic effect, and its association with the Phrygian mode is a specifically noteworthy interpretational point for performers. Likewise, effective coloristic addition to harmonization is employed by Rachmaninoff in the closing chords of “Lullaby,” perhaps, reflecting the composer’s affection for jazz. The transcription is also remarkable for the choice of whole-tone scale in the cadenza-like passage (likely an influence of modal idioms favored by many Russian composers of the time). Rachmaninoff’s choice of unusual harmonies in transcribing the works of other composers requires imaginative use of coloristic effects from a pianist.

\textbf{Chromaticism}

Another important attribute of Rachmaninoff’s language in transcriptions is frequent implementation of chromaticism. Many authors point out frequent presence of chromaticism in Rachmaninoff’s original works. For example, the Prelude op. 32, no. 8 in A Minor “features unusual chromatic passages as well as striking dissonant clashes.”\textsuperscript{67} Particia Brady points to intense chromaticism in \textit{Étude-tableaux} op. 33, no. 6 in E-flat minor.\textsuperscript{68} However, Rachmaninoff’s extensive use of chromaticism should be evaluated for its function based on interaction with other compositional parameters within the particular setting.


\textsuperscript{67} Cunningham, 10.

\textsuperscript{68} Patricia Brady, “Rachmaninoff’s \textit{Études-Tableaux}” (DMA essay, Indiana University, 1986), 108.
Sokasits traces chromatic elements in the transcriptions throughout many examples showing particulars of Rachmaninoff’s use of chromaticism in several different settings. One of the settings is when all voices present in the texture move in chromatic motion. While several such instances are explained by Sokasits, one observation made is of particular interest; he states that in “Liebesleid” “Rachmaninoff’s two-measure introduction sets up an air of harmonic uncertainty.”69 Similarly, “[t]he introduction and opening phrase of Daisies … is characteristic of many of Rachmaninoff’s opening gestures: tonality gradually emerges out of harmonic confusion.”70

Since the opening materials are generally expected to introduce the main key rather than create a harmonic confusion, these and similar examples require particular attention from the interpreters. Sections with harmonic confusion created by chromaticism, found in the opening material of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions, as well as in instances of especially noticeable harmonic contributions, comprise one of the areas exploited in more detail in the following chapter.

Another setting in which Rachmaninoff exploits chromaticism is identified by Sokasits in the cadenzas and closing sections supplemented in many of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions. There, the composer often employs chromatic movement layered over stable presence of a pedal tone. For instance, the cadenza in “Liebesleid,” according to Sokasits, “illustrates a favorite device of Rachmaninoff: the juxtaposition of the confusion of chromaticism and dissonance with the stability of a pedal tone.”71 He also points out Rachmaninoff’s use of this device in his original works, such as the Prelude

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69. Sokasits, 50.
70. Ibid., 68.
71. Ibid., 52.
The cadenza of “Polka de V. R.” also displays use of chromaticism in conjunction with repeated return to the tonic. In the closing passage of “Brooklet” “[b]oth hands contain rising flourishes that embellish the tonic triad with chromatic neighbor-tones. This passage is reminiscent of the close of the Prelude op. 23, no. 6 in E-flat major.”

Besides harmonic features, cadenzas and closing sections in Rachmaninoff’s works display other similarities of compositional approach. Sokasits points out Rachmaninoff’s use of entire range of the keyboard in the rising and falling passages present in the closing sections of “Liebesleid” and “Lilacs.” The same compositional approach is evident in the codas to “Liebesfreud,” “Polka de V. R.,” and “Lullaby.” Pamela Wilder also finds similarity of compositional approach between cadenzas and codas in Rachmaninoff’s original works. She states that endings or codas of Études-tableaux, op. 33 are Rachmaninoff’s “fingerprint that is unmistakable… Some of these endings occur in the form of cadenzas, specifically in numbers 1, 2, and 8.”

Interpretational connotation of cadenzas found throughout the standard repertoire of tonal works is generally well understood. For the performer, cadenza-like passages are commonly associated with improvisatory freedom. In the transcriptions, they are represented visually with smaller print or specifically marked by the composer. As Sokasits determines, cadenzas are often incorporated into the transcriptions at the most climatic point in the works. Instances that illustrate all of the abovementioned qualities

72. Ibid., 59.
73. Sokasits, 72.
74. Wilders, 42.
75. Sokasits, 60.
are found in “Liebesleid,” “Lullaby,” and “Liebesfreud.” In original works, such instances can be found in Étude-tableaux op. 39, no. 8 in D minor, Prelude op. 32, no. 10 in B minor, and “Melodie” op. 3 no. 3, among others.

Distinct visual identifications, such as those in cadenzas, are largely (but not entirely) absent in the closing sections. However, apparent similarities of compositional approach are of utmost importance for the performers, as they draw parallels of interpretational connotations between the sections. In particular, they reveal that improvisational elements pertinent to cadenzas are present to some extent in the closing sections as well. Part of the discussion in the following chapter is specifically devoted to the matters of interpretation in the closing section of Rachmaninoff transcriptions.

As Sokasits identifies, Rachmaninoff often supplements the original works with an introduction, external extensions, cadenza, and closing material. These sections undoubtedly represent Rachmaninoff’s style, as they were added to the original works in the process of transcribing. Many of these sections present examples of Rachmaninoff’s use of chromaticism. However, the interpretational implications in them differ in a number of ways, as described above. For this reason, different kinds of Rachmaninoff’s additions to the form are discussed separately. Opening materials and external links are presented in the first part of the following chapter devoted to the discussion of harmony and chromaticism, while closing sections are described in the part specifically allotted to them.

**Polyphonic and contrapuntal textures**

Rachmaninoff’s treatment of melodic material in the transcriptions is a particularly interesting subject of study for performers. While, understandably, the
melodic shapes of the original works remain unchanged, Rachmaninoff often juxtaposes them or supplements them with additional melodic lines, creating complex polyphonic and contrapuntal textures. A great range of examples of such compositional procedures is present in many transcriptions. Many representative instances are found in the transcriptions of works originally written for voice and piano, violin and piano, violin solo, and “Polka de V. R.”

In “Liebesleid,” Sokasits traces changes that added inner voices undergo from the first presentation of the main theme to the end of the piece. As Martin noted about the transcriptions of “Liebesfreud,” “[t]he manner in which the two themes in the piece are combined in labyrinthine polyphony is an unfailing source of musical pleasure.”76 In “Lullaby,” Rachmaninoff transforms the original piece by “overlaying the innocence of the original with a sharp chromaticism and complex polyphony….”77

Pamela Wilder states that Rachmaninoff is an “expert” in handling contrapuntal material.78 In his original compositions, Rachmaninoff often supplies the main melodic line with a number of additional voices and juxtaposes several distinct melodic lines. As a result, textures are intricately woven with a number of independent melodic shapes and accompanying figurations. Max Harrison observes that Rachmaninoff employs counterpoint to a great extent in both opuses of his preludes, inner voices being a “qualifying feature” of Preludes op. 32, nos. 2, 6, 7, and 9.79

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76. Martyn, 295.
77. Ibid., 354.
78. Wilder, 43.
79. Harrison, 171.
Glen Winters traces Rachmaninoff’s “freely-weaving counterpoint” throughout the Prelude op. 23, no. 10 in G-flat major. In analysis of the Prelude op. 23, no. 3 in D minor, he also points out two important interpretational connotations in Rachmaninoff’s contrapuntal textures, such as “the need of careful balance of many intertwining voices” and “the importance of being alert to the shapes of phrases.”

Another important interpretational aspect is pointed out by Rachmaninoff himself. It is documented in an account of Rachmaninoff’s rehearsal of “Daisies” with the singer Nina Koshetz: “Now I am the soloist and you are accompanying me, giving an answer to a narration.” Rachmaninoff’s own remarks are of a particular interest. The composer himself points out the conversational nature of interaction between melodic lines of the piano and voice in his original composition. The performer, thus, has to determine which one of the melodic lines represents a soloist in all instances of interaction.

Rachmaninoff’s profound understanding of compositional and pianistic devices play a great role in the way the composer employs counterpoint in his transcriptions. From a performance point of view, important features of Rachmaninoff’s approach are contained in the composer’s use of acoustical qualities of the instrument and the factors that influence aural perception of a melodic line and its elements. In the juxtaposition of melodic elements, Rachmaninoff frequently places a main melodic line, already familiar to the listener, in the highest register within the texture. Both factors of repetition and registration aid the aural perceptibility of the melodic line. The new melodic elements are

80. Winters, 40.
81. Winters, 18.
82. Harrison, 203.
usually inserted below in the middle register where higher timbral complexity of the sound also helps their projection.

Particular details of interpretation described above and factors that influence choice of appropriate pianistic devices are exploited in the area of the fifth chapter specifically devoted to Rachmaninoff’s use of counterpoint and polyphony. Additional aspects that influence pianistic approach to this compositional trait are explained there through specific examples.

The four transcriptions of the symphonic works present a unique part of Rachmaninoff’s transcribing output. In these pieces, the composer keeps closely to the original text of the works. Alterations of harmony, contrapuntal additions, and added sections or passages are present to a much lesser degree. However, Rachmaninoff’s stylistic imprint is still very recognizable in the distinctive ways in which he adapts the orchestral textures and sonorities to the piano: a broadly intricate texture and sensitivity in reproducing the instrumental changes, in particular, are unmistakable characteristics.

Influenced by his early experiences of transcribing orchestral music of Tchaikovsky and Glazunov, the composer employs ingenious compositional techniques in his renditions of Bizet’s “Minuet,” Mussorgsky’s “Hopak,” Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumble Bee,” and Mendelssohn’s “Scherzo.” Rachmaninoff was well acquainted with all four compositions in their orchestral as well as piano versions. In Russia, he had conducted Mussorgsky’s “Hopak” and Mendelssohn’s incidental music to A Midsummer Night’s Dream and publicly performed a two-piano version of Bizet’s “Menuet” with Alexander Goldenweiser.
One of the difficulties presented to a transcriber of orchestral works is “how best to portray the orchestral colors of the original work in a manner that is idiomatic to the keyboard.”83 Experienced as a conductor and transcriber, Rachmaninoff successfully recreated orchestral effects in his piano transcriptions, as many writers have noted. In these transcriptions, as well as in piano arrangements of composer’s own symphonic music, “one observes Rachmaninoff’s great ability in transferring to the piano the colors, sonority, multi-layered texture, and power of the orchestra.”84 According to Harrison, “[t]he lightness of Rimsky-Korsakov’s orchestral writing is retained” in the transcription of “The Bumble-Bee.”85 So skillful and creative is the composer’s transferring of “gossamer orchestral textures” to the piano in the transcriptions of Mendelssohn’s “Scherzo” that Martyn rightfully defines it as “the miracle of Rachmaninoff’s writing.”86

From an interpretational point of view, Rachmaninoff’s idiomatic use of the piano is evident from the pianistic setting of the orchestral passages explained by Sokasits. The composer certainly considered technical problems of execution while adapting orchestral texture to fit the two hands of the pianist. Such concerns are obvious in the transcribing techniques used by Rachmaninoff, such as splitting of fast passages of proximal parallel moving lines between hands or modifications of pitch repetitions that would be particularly strenuous for a pianist. While Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions of orchestral works are certainly technically demanding, use of these techniques facilitates more fluent execution.

83. Sokasits, 85.
84. Sokasits, 26.
85. Harrison, 265.
86. Martyn, 323.
However, the most important changes from the interpretational point of view are found in the modifications of texture, registration, and dynamics of the transcribed works. In the following passage Sokasits explains the compositional approach in these areas as well as their implications for a performer: “[w]hile Rachmaninoff could have left it to the pianist’s discretion to make some alterations of color, tone, and dynamics to imitate the varied sonorities of an orchestra, he often elects to change his settings and leave little doubt as to the change in instrumentation he is portraying.” 87 Such changes of settings are evident in Rachmaninoff’s use of thicker textures, registral shifts, and wide dynamic contrast not present in the original work.

**Registration, texture, dynamics**

In regard to registration Rachmaninoff’s alterations to the original are apparent in the composer’s depiction of “changes in the orchestration of identical or parallel musical phrases.” 88 The compositional approach used here is of particular interest to interpreters. In the transcriptions of symphonic works Rachmaninoff often employs registral shifts, placing certain layers of the texture in the register other than its original. Rachmaninoff’s use of such technique is apparent in his original compositions as well. For example, in *Étude-tableaux* in E-flat minor, op. 33, he fully explores timbres associated with different portions of the piano range. As Cunningham points out, in this piece “[f]reshness of expression is achieved through frequent register transfers.” 89

Rachmaninoff’s replication of fuller orchestral textures, as Sokasits states, often results in thickening of the chords, an addition of parallel moving lines, and octave

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87. Sokasits, 96-97.
88. Ibid, 96.
doublings. Performers should observe that these devices are often coupled with widening of the registration. Together with changes in texture and registration, Rachmaninoff often adds dynamics not explicitly indicated in the original orchestral composition, or amplifies the dynamic markings that are indicated. The composer’s use of dynamics, understandably, is not analyzed in Sokasits’ work. However, it is of the greatest value for performers, as it significantly influences means of achievement of particular effects desired by the composer, especially in the transcription of orchestral works.

An illuminating account of Rachmaninoff’s demeanor while playing through an orchestral score on the piano comes from Robert Russell Bennett. In 1940 while completing the orchestration of *Symphonic Dances*, op. 45, Rachmaninoff consulted Bennett on the use of saxophone in the work. As Bennett recalls,

> At that time he played over his score for me on the piano and I was delighted to see his approach to the piano was quite the same as that of all of us when we try to imitate the sound of the orchestra at the keyboard. He sang, whistled, stamped, rolled his chords, and otherwise conducted himself not as one would expect of so great and impeccable a piano virtuoso.90

Rachmaninoff recurrently uses changes of texture, registration, and dynamics to avoid exact repetition, or, most importantly, to portray or amplify effects produced by a change in orchestral sonority fully exploiting the acoustical possibilities of the piano. Imitation of different aspects of orchestral sonority on the piano is important and much desired in order to achieve the dramatic effects that Rachmaninoff strived to preserve.

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90. Bertessson and Leyda, 361.
CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATIONAL ANALYSIS

This chapter continues the discussion of the identified features of Rachmaninoff’s transcribing and compositional style and their interpretational implications. Particular instances are explained in detail through analysis of selected representative examples. Pianistic realization of these features, understandably, depends on each particular case. Thus, suggestions of appropriate pianistic means are given on case-by-case basis.

Further, a close examination of Rachmaninoff’s own recordings, as well as those of Jorge Bolet and Benno Moiseiwitsch, provides an invaluable insight into the wealth of appropriate interpretational choices for each selected example and the performance tradition of the works. Through an analysis of the composer’s own recordings, the modern performer can acquire a better understanding of Rachmaninoff’s identity as a pianist, which clearly impacted his compositional style. Although the transcriptions are seemingly written as “after-dinner peppermints,” they do indeed “extend and celebrate Rachmaninoff’s own particular art as a pianist, that is, to recreate a work as though it were his own composition.”

Rachmaninoff’s harmonic language: color, chromaticism, and frequent harmonic changes

While Rachmaninoff added his distinctive harmonies to essentially all of his transcriptions, some of the pieces received more extensive treatment in this area. Namely, these are the transcriptions of the “Preludio” and “Gavotte” from J. S. Bach’s violin Partita no. 3 and Fritz Kreisler’s “Liebesleid” and “Liebesfreud.” These transcriptions

91. Martyn, 294.
offer a great number of possible points for discussion of Rachmaninoff’s harmony and, thus, provide the bulk of the following examples for analysis.

As mentioned before, Rachmaninoff’s harmonic language often displays a strong emphasis on chromatic structures and patterns. For the performer and, most importantly, for the listener, complex chromaticism obscures harmonic direction and points of arrival, creating an overall ephemeral and intricate impression. In Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions, examples of intricate chromaticism are often found in the small sections that did not appear in the originals. These sections were added to the piece during the transcribing process.

Hinson points out that “Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions are not only unique in sound and brilliance but also supremely expressive.” 92 Undoubtedly, part of this expressiveness is realized through Rachmaninoff’s own complex and distinctive harmonic language. The interplay of the three abovementioned features of this language will be traced through the examples below. Some of the implications of Rachmaninoff’s harmonic additions will be discussed together with an identification of possible interpretational tools.

Particularly recognizable are sections of “Preludio” and “Gavotte,” where Rachmaninoff employs imaginative harmonic progressions using some of his favorite chords as well as implementing more frequent harmonic changes than implied in the original work. The last remark is of special importance for performers since harmonic pulse greatly influences choice of tempo for interpretations in works written within the tonal idiom.

The transcription of “Preludio” is of particular interest in exploring interpretative possibilities in passages featuring frequent harmonic changes (Ex. 1). There, “[t]he exotic harmonies at mm. 107-108, for example, engender a natural *ritard* as the ear demands a bit more time to follow the complex harmonic progression closing the phrase.”93 As noted by Ruby Cheng, an appropriate interpretational tool for this section is to gradually slow down, as marked by the composer.

Rachmaninoff’s *ritenuto* begins in m. 108, but the performer should note numerous changes of harmony which are present already in m. 107. The right correlation between the frequency of harmonic changes and the pace at which they are executed is essential for successful projection of all of Rachmaninoff’s harmonies. Moreover, Rachmaninoff’s harmonic choices become noticeably personal with the insertion of a somewhat unexpected G minor (rather than a possibly implied continuation of a G major) chord.

Accompanied by a slight registral shift, this particular mode change produces a coloristic effect and requires special pianistic attention. Perhaps, additional time is needed to aid both aural perception and accurate execution of this harmonic progression. The mode change can be highlighted through attentive voicing of the B-flat in the G minor chord. The *ritenuto*, if implemented earlier than marked by the composer, should be overstretched as it would be inappropriate in the context of such a rhythmically driven piece.

As expected, no harmonic change of such magnitude is left unnoticed by Rachmaninoff the pianist. In his only issued recording of the piece made in 1942, he attenuates the G minor chord with a change of color and a quieter dynamic level, accentuating the unexpected mode change. Rachmaninoff relaxes the rhythmic drive of the music in the measure that precedes the *ritenuto* marking, thus allowing more time for listeners to absorb all of his “exotic harmonies.” It should be noted, that the composer’s choice of tempo is on a faster side of a possible range. Rachmaninoff accentuates the F-sharp minor chord using it as a clear indication for the beginning of the *a tempo* section, highlighting harmonic structure of the work.

George Bolet’s rendition of the “Preludio” presents a somewhat more lyrical approach to the piece. The recording is about twenty-five seconds longer than Rachmaninoff’s, indicative of overall slightly slower tempo. Bolet’s choice of tempo, however, provides the pianist with an opportunity for careful and colorful rendition of this passage. The *ritenuto* is implemented according to the composer’s indication. It is interesting to note that Bolet follows the phrase until the F-sharp minor chord on the downbeat of the *a tempo* section and pauses before proceeding, perhaps, reflecting the melodic approach to the section.
Rachmaninoff’s harmonic enhancements in the transcription of “Gavotte” are particularly apparent in two instances. First of them is contained within the sequence in mm. 26-33 at the beginning of the second episode (Ex. 2a). One possible conventional harmonization of the second half of each phrase would be a cadence IV-I₆/₄-V-I. However, the composer uses a combination of dominant-to-tonic movement of the base line (Ex. 2a circled in brown) and progression of the seventh chords creating an explicit coloristic effect.

The seventh chords that move down in stepwise motion at the ends of each two sentences are marked with *tenuto* (Ex. 2a indicated in blue). Achieving continuity of sound for each chord for a full two beats is possible only by means of the sustaining pedal. The markings of *staccato* should be regarded as an indication of lightness rather that very short sounds. It should be noted that in the second phrase the top notes of the chords in mm. 32-33 are separated into an independent voice divided between hands, suggesting that similar voicing could be applied to the chords in the first sentence.


Rachmaninoff’s use of half-measure-long pedaling in both cases shows the composer’s clear preference for sustaining the harmonies of the *tenuto* chords (1942
recording). Such pedaling helps to emphasize each harmony as a whole, accentuating its coloristic effect. Also, the composer begins the *diminuendo* in m. 29, thus preceding the marking in the score and naturally following the direction of the harmonic progression. The same dynamic plan is repeated at a higher dynamic level in mm. 31-33.

Additionally, Rachmaninoff makes two noticeable interpretational choices not indicated in the score. First, he rolls the first of the *tenuto* chords in both sequences accentuating the top note, which is a voicing technique often used by the composer (described in the counterpoint section). Also, a notable change of dynamics occurs in the first phrase, where *mf* appears to have been moved to the middle of m. 26. Likely, Rachmaninoff chooses to accentuate the beginning of a new section with a louder dynamic since neither harmonic nor registral change is present.

Another example of Rachmaninoff’s exquisite harmonic sensitivity is found in mm. 82-87 of “Gavotte,” where the *ossia* provided by the composer offers ingenious harmonization of the original melody (Ex. 2b). Instead of repeating the same harmonization, Rachmaninoff uses the Neapolitan chord of G-sharp minor (Ex. 2b circled in blue) in place of the subdominant chord. In “Gavotte,” choice of specific interpretational tools for projection of this coloristic effect should be influenced by the wide registral placement of the chords, which, in Rachmaninoff’s music is typically associated with the sonority of church bells. Observation of dynamic contrast, which creates an echo-like effect, helps to emphasize the harmonic change. The Neapolitan chord should be attenuated both dynamically and agogically. The top line of the left hand marked with *tenuti* should remain prominent at all times.
Rachmaninoff’s interpretation in the 1942 recording is characterized by a considerably slower tempo throughout mm. 84-87. Through utmost care in balancing the chords in different registers, Rachmaninoff produces a particularly memorable sonority. The overall coloristic effect is that of deep melancholy commonly associated with much of Rachmaninoff’s compositions. Evidently, Rachmaninoff conceived this remarkably discrete section as the lyrical climax of the piece. Perhaps, the repetition of material in the original line has directed Rachmaninoff’s attention to textural-coloristic effects such as wide registral placement, full textures, and use of the Neapolitan chord in the *ossia*. In his interpretation, Rachmaninoff gives this section a quality of a reminiscent narrative and distinct personal flavor, implementing impressive coloristic change and a slower tempo.

Curious examples of Rachmaninoff’s use of chromatic harmonic progressions are found in several sections that were added to Kreisler’s “Liebesleid” and “Liebesfreud” in
the process of transcribing. The composer begins the transcription of “Liebesleid” with a harmonically unstable two-measure long introduction. The chromatic progression used here obscures the arrival of the tonic key of A minor mainly due to the absence of a conventional cadence (Ex. 3a). Thus, it is left to the discretion of the performer how to guide the listener through the unstable chromatic progression and emphasize the arrival of the tonic.

Faced with a wide variety of choices, performers are encouraged to closely consider correlations between timing, dynamics, and voicing. A valuable clue can be found in Rachmaninoff’s own dynamic and agogic markings. While the overall dynamic level indicated is $p$, a fuller sound for the beginning of the melody is necessary to separate its entrance. The indicated dynamic swell in the introduction suggests emphasis on the first beat. Without it, the overall gesture of the opening gives an impression of a quadruple meter starting on the written third beat of the first measure. A certain freedom of time manipulation is required to reflect the uncertainty of the harmonic progression in this section as well as many chromatic alterations of harmony present throughout the piece that, undoubtedly, give this music its charm. However, a return to steady tempo di valse is essential to keep the piece from stagnating.

Later on, when similar material is used as a link between the two statements of the main melody, it is re-harmonized to include the dominant-to-tonic cadence (Ex. 3b and 3c). The harmonic progression is still highly chromatic, but the presence of the cadence clarifies the return of the theme. In the first link Rachmaninoff avoids using accents, keeping the articulation of the top line short, perhaps, suggesting a short break of character before the return of the lyrically sentimental main theme. Rachmaninoff reapplies the accents in the second link that connects the third and fourth repetitions of the main theme later in the piece. The texture of the whole section is much thickened by the addition of multiple voices. The chromatic link concludes the theme rather than leads into the next, more elaborated repetition.


In the 1921 recording, Rachmaninoff applies a judicious *ritenuto* to the introduction and begins the main theme at a higher dynamic level. While the *ritenuto*
facilitates the listener’s anticipation and engages attention, the dynamic change emphasizes the arrival of the main key. Similarly, the link in mm. 17-18 is marked by a slight time expansion. In the last example (mm. 113-114), the change of pace is barely noticeable, sounding more like an accurate closing of the phrase. Besides the presence of dominant-to-tonic cadence in the later examples, another probable reasoning behind such interpretations is that with each recurrence of the material, a listener’s ear might already expect that such transitions will be followed by the repetition of the theme.

George Bolet in his recording for RCA appears to implement the same pattern of taking gradually less time with each reiteration of the material. The *ritenuto* is present in the opening bars to a lesser degree than in the composer’s own interpretation. The second recurrence of the material is marked by only a slight *rubato*, none of which could be observed in the third repetition. In the DECCA recording of 1987, again, only the first two instances are interpreted with barely noticeable push-and-pull manipulation of pace and dynamic swells.

As we come to expect, the transcription of “Liebesfreud” also has instances of chromatically moving harmonic material. One example of such transitions is a highly chromatic modulatory link in mm. 71-73 used to connect two differently arranged repetitions of the second theme (Ex. 4a). First time, the theme is presented in A-flat major while its repetition, after chromatic modulation, is placed in E major.
Auditory connection between the themes is strengthened by the reiterated pitch of A-flat in the right hand, which is respelled as its enharmonic counterpart G-sharp. At the same time the chromaticism in the harmonic progression of the left hand underlines tonal instability, and similarly to the example in the “Liebesleid,” requires adequate interpretational care. The beginning of the theme in m. 63 is marked $p$ and leggiero, while the transitional material has an indication of $mf$. The performer might choose to make the transition smoother by implementing a diminuendo. Slight expansion of time is necessary, possibly, stretching into the beginning of triplets on the upbeat.

Another example of Rachmaninoff’s use of chromatic harmonies is a link between the two phrases of the F major theme in the second half of the transcription (Ex. 4b). Since no change of key occurs here, this unusual chord progression might be considered a harmonic embellishment and, as such, requires special coloristic. Sensitive shading is required for the whole section, as it is marked $p$ before the return of the theme at a higher dynamic level. Instead of F-sharp minor, a chord with subdominant function would definitely be a more conventional choice preceding the dominant-to-tonic cadence.
Performers should be aware of such a peculiar harmonic choice that, resulting from Rachmaninoff’s imaginative use of chromaticism, creates a powerful coloristic effect. In combination with slight timing delay and lower dynamic level, finding a right balance between the notes of the chord is essential in order to produce the desired coloristic result.

Ex. 4b: Rachmaninoff, “Liebesfreud,” mm. 133-137.

Rachmaninoff made two recordings of this piece separated by almost seventeen years, 1925 and 1942. In the 1925 recording the composer gradually slows down in mm. 71-73 (following already a slower pace from m. 63 onward). The performer should note that while no *ritenuto* or *diminuendo* markings are present in the score they are implemented by Rachmaninoff, reflecting the instability of the chromaticism and its transitional nature. The effect created here is the disintegration of the stability of the previous key, facilitating the listener’s anticipation of upcoming key change. In the second example, the composer progressively expands the time between each chord. As expected, special coloristic attention is given to the F-sharp minor chord.
The 1942 recording of “Liebesfreud” shows the 68-year old composer-pianist in complete possession of his technical abilities. Aside from a big cut towards the end of the piece and considerably faster tempi throughout the work, the interpretational devices used here remain essentially the same. For the two examples examined above, they are adjusted only in proportion to the overall change of tempi.

In the first recording of “Liebesfreud” from 1973, George Bolet uses interpretational devices that are very similar to Rachmaninoff’s. The two examined instances are marked by a gradual relaxation of pace and intensity of the sound. In comparison, the second recording from 1987 is longer almost by a minute, already showing the pianist’s more restrained approach to the bravura of the work. However, the interpretation of the fragments in question remains fundamentally unchanged.

Short and very chromatic introductions of “Daisies” and “Polka de V. R.” contain interpretational implications similar to those of the introduction of “Liebesleid.” Such introductions are harmonically ambiguous, creating harmonic confusion, as noted by Sokasits.94 All introductory material in transcriptions, including the longest example from “Liebesfreud,” are characterized by much chromatic movement or use of unconventional harmonic progressions that obscure rather than introduce the main key.

Rachmaninoff’s use of introductory material in many of his transcriptions might partially have come from a practical consideration. As we know, the composer often used his transcriptions as encores in the recitals. And, perhaps, the introductory material was utilized to bring the public’s attention back to the sound of the piano after the customary extensive applause.

94. Sokasits, 69.
The most fitting example is the introduction of “Hopak,” which fairly closely represents Mussorgsky’s own piano version in the opening, except for the repetition on the dominant preceding the entrance of the main theme. Rachmaninoff teasingly elongates this repetition from two to six measures long, marking the last two with *ritenuto e diminuendo*.

The beginning measures in the transcription of the “Daisies” (Ex. 5) remain unchanged compared to the original song, confirming that Rachmaninoff’s affection for introductions is not pertinent to the composer’s transcriptions only. Perhaps, the most famous example that readily comes to mind is the opening of his second piano concerto. The earliest instance of the introductory material in the transcriptions is found in “Polka de V. R.” (Ex. 6). There, the composer indicates *ritenuto* and *a tempo* in the score, suggesting that similar interpretational means may perhaps be employed in the rest of the examples.

Ex. 5. Rachmaninoff, “Daisies,” mm. 1-3.

In the 1940 recording Rachmaninoff applies a slight *rubato* to the introduction in “Daisies” with a judicious *ritenuto* and an expertly controlled *diminuendo* at the end of the phrase. The composer gives the listener opportunity to observe every harmony created by the chromatic movement of the voices. The same effect is repeated in the recurrence of the material in mm. 23-24 (Ex. 7).


Performers should recognize that according to the dynamic plan in the score the tension of the dense downbeat chord in the second measure slowly dissipates while the voices move away from the center. If the performer chooses to implement a *ritenuto*, they should consider carefully where it should begin.
In the case of “Polka de V. R.” the composer marks a *ritenuto* in the second half of m. 3, which is absent in other harmonically ambiguous introductions. In all three available recordings (1919, 1921, and 1928), he follows the marking to the fullest extent, almost bringing the music to a stop, highlighting the humorous and playful nature of the work as well as harmonic confusion. In words of Barrie Martyn, “[a]s no pianist has made the pauses between long-held notes more pregnant with meaning than he, so none has prolonged a *ritenuto* to greater limits.” The writer cites the opening of “Polka de V. R.” as an example of one of these “two minor quirks” of Rachmaninoff’s performing style.

The performer, however, should be aware that such personal interpretative choice, while is very effective and memorable, might lead to inadvertent superficial imitations. Understandably, the harmonic uncertainty of the material and composer’s *ritenuto* marking should still be observed. Additionally, performer’s attention could be directed towards the phrasing in the left-hand line, articulation of the right-hand line, or the emphasis on the dissonant intervals between the two lines.

George Bolet, in both the live and the studio recordings of “Polka de V. R.” from 1974, executes the *ritenuto* marking in somewhat more straightforward manner, transitioning smoother into the main theme. The tempo and the character of the beginning are matched to those of the main theme as well. Tasteful and elegant, Bolet’s interpretation of the opening could be considered as representative of the fairly conservative side of the plausible range of interpretations.

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95. Martyn, 411.
Undoubtedly, Rachmaninoff’s harmonic language requires not only profound interpretational understanding of tonal idioms, but also considerable amount of intuitive sensitivity from pianists. The harmonic progression, its direction and frequency of change, and observations of Rachmaninoff’s use of unconventional harmonies require much attention from the performer and should greatly influence their interpretative choices.

Rachmaninoff’s frequent harmonic changes require not only accuracy of performance but also considerations of the time needed to observe them for the listener. For Rachmaninoff, complex, unorthodox, and unexpected harmonies often serve as tools of coloristic nature. To reflect this, the performer should implement a great variety in attributes of sound, careful balancing of registers, and precision in pedaling. It should also be noted that performer’s familiarity with Rachmaninoff’s harmonic language must not decrease the attention directed toward its expressive effectiveness.

Rachmaninoff’s use of chromaticism is frequently found in the opening material of the transcriptions. Characterized by harmonic ambiguity, these sections require careful manipulations of time and dynamics from the performer, whether such manipulation are explicitly indicated by the composer or not. Evident from the examined recordings, they often induce a change of pace, as well as influence choice of dynamics in conjunction with other factors. Performers who approach Rachmaninoff’s harmonic language sensitively and perceive its peculiarities would be able to choose the stylistically appropriate interpretational devices from a wide range of available options.
Melody: polyphonic and contrapuntal elements

The level of difficulty presented before the performer by multivoice textures in many of the transcriptions is hard to overestimate. Rachmaninoff’s studies with Taneev, as noted by many, is responsible for his affection and mastery of textures rich in polyphony and contrapuntal elements.

Several previously identified factors require attention from a pianist for successful distinction of each layer. In addition to the difference in dynamic levels among multiple layers of melodic lines and textural material, there are other factors requiring attention of a pianist for a successful projection of such complex texture. Some of these factors include placement of the melodic line within the texture, and listener’s familiarity with the melodic contour. Additional influences include level of rhythmic activity of each melodic layer and intervallic relationships within the line.

As a composer Rachmaninoff was well versed in using the registral, rhythmic, and intervallic features for the purpose of influencing the perceptibility of melodic lines presented simultaneously. In Rachmaninoff’s multi-voice textures, the already familiar melodic lines are usually found in the highest register. Their registral exposure and listener’s familiarity with the melodic contour aid its projection. New lines are inserted in the middle register of the keyboard, below the main melody, where greater timbral complexity of sound helps their perceptibility. Additionally, Rachmaninoff exploited the fact that the melodic lines with higher rhythmic activity and pitches in close proximity (such as chromatic lines) have an aural advantage. Such lines are more easily distinguishable by the ear as melodic elements within complex textures.

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The interaction among several melodic lines in Rachmaninoff’s complex multi-voice textures presents an interpretational challenge of the greatest degree. Such textures contain a possibility of proportionately different emphasis among melodic lines. Rachmaninoff’s markings of articulation and dynamics, however, often indicate the level of importance of a particular melodic element, guiding the performer towards better understanding of the composer’s intentions.

“Polka de V. R.” presents a great example of Rachmaninoff’s compositional procedures, as well as an opportunity for examining his own interpretations of them available through four different recordings. From what is known, Rachmaninoff heard the original piece played by his father (Vasily Rachmaninoff) and never saw the original score of Franz Behr’s “Lachtäubchen,” op. 303, being unaware of its existence. This might explain the composer’s choice of A-flat major key rather than the original F major, as well as the fact that the piece is often referred to as Rachmaninoff’s own composition rather than a transcription.

Rachmaninoff freely transforms the simplistic textures of the borrowed material. His complexity of writing manifests itself through intricate layering of multiple melodic elements. A marvelous example of Rachmaninoff’s multi-voice writing is the return of the main theme and its repetition at Tempo I, mm. 95-110 (Ex. 8). The texture of the right hand is composed of two independent voices. The top voice is based on the already familiar main melody found at the beginning of the piece, only an octave higher this time. The new melodic line is presented in the lower voice, which is emphasized agogically by multiple tenuto markings. Later, a motivic cell derived from the ending motive of this voice is inserted into the texture of the left hand and also marked with tenuti.
Thus, Rachmaninoff moves the familiar melody into the highest register, giving it an advantage of being aurally well perceived without the need for added emphasis. Performers should simultaneously observe that the composer’s agogic markings indicate prominence of the newly added melodic line and elements. The dynamic marking of $p$ should not diminish the differentiation of the separate voices, but rather project the comparatively relaxed character of the section awaiting a climatic explosion in the next.

Further, Rachmaninoff’s addition of multiple melodic lines might carry an implication of alteration of the *Tempo I* marking, especially if the initial tempo chosen at the beginning of the piece is not suitable for accommodating the projection of textural
complexity in the return. The tempo in the beginning of the piece should be chosen with considerations to the playful and light character of the music. In the return, the vocal inflection of the middle voice adds lyrical shades, which might require adjustments of pace. Careful choice of tempo and precise execution of this section by the performer should result in the ease of following each melodic line.

In all four available recordings (two from 1919 and one each from 1921 and 1928), Rachmaninoff separates the entrance of a lower voice in the right hand on E-flat from the simultaneous entrance of the top voice at the end of the cadenza-like passage in m. 94 by a considerable amount of time. He emphasizes the entrance not only agogically, but also dynamically, progressively increasing this tendency from one recording to the next. Throughout the entire Tempo I section, several of the notes in the middle voice are timed to sound slightly before their counterparts in the upper voice. This technique gives the middle voice an aural advantage of being heard as a prominent independent line and helps to emphasize the indicated dynamic differences between the voices.

Analogous tendencies are noted by Robert Philip in the Rachmaninoff’s 1942 recording of “Lilacs.” Pianist “separates a melodic line from its accompaniment by subtly dislocating it rhythmically, particularly by playing melody notes fractionally late….“97 The seeming contradiction in the above observations of timing is explainable by the registral placement of the pitches. Since Rachmaninoff traditionally arpeggiates from the bottom up, the melodic pitches that are placed higher within the texture will be played slightly later than the rest of the texture and lower placed melodic pitches will sound slightly earlier.

It is important to note that such manipulations in “Polka de V. R.” work in conjunction with the overall freedom of tempo. Max Harrison describes the 1921 recordings of this piece and “Liebesleid” as “bewitching demonstration of the real meaning of rubato, dependent on the instant response of hand to imagination.”

Throughout the Tempo I section Rachmaninoff’s freedom of rubato gives the theme a flavor of reminiscence rather than just more elaborate repetition.

In recordings from 1973 and 1974, Jorge Bolet’s rubato is more restricted in comparison to Rachmaninoff’s. The playful character, prominence of the main melody, and closer correspondence of tempi make clear the connection between the Tempo I section and the beginning of the piece. His overall approach combines emphasis on larger formal features of the work with more subtle projection of the contrapuntal additions in Rachmaninoff’s multidimensional texture.

The Meno mosso section of “Polka de V. R.” (mm. 62-68) is a curious and rather unusual example of a repetition of material (mm. 62-63 and mm. 64-65) with almost identical articulation markings and reiterated dynamic of mf (Ex. 9). Multi-voice textures of this harmonically stagnating section present a pianist with the possibility of different voice emphasis, an opportunity not to be overlooked. In mm. 66-68, Rachmaninoff inserts the new chromatic element in the lower part of the left hand (ex. 9 circled in brown), while the rest of the material is repeated from the previous measures. This chromatic element is separated into an individual voice in m. 68, carrying implications of similar interpretation in mm. 66-67.

98. Harrison, 236.
In both recordings, from 1919 for Ampico (March 17) and Edison (April 24) companies, Rachmaninoff repeats the choice of voicing in the first and second two-measure phrases, emphasizing the middle voice entering on the offbeat in the right hand. This repeated choice of voicing seems rather uncommon for Rachmaninoff especially in lieu of the 1921 recording for Victor where the composer changes his choice of voicing in the above section. In the first two measures, he draws attention to the top voice; in the next two, to the middle; and after, to the bass line and interaction of all voices. Additionally, the analysis of Rachmaninoff’s voicing in this section from the 1928 Victor recording shows similar results. In line of the previous observations, Jorge Bolet’s
recordings from 1973 and 1974 show the pianist’s more subtle interest in contrapuntal additions.

A notable example of Rachmaninoff’s masterful use of polyphony is found in the transcription of “Liebesfreud.” There, two themes combined throughout the middle section present a considerable pianistic challenge (Ex. 10). Great agility and control is required to elegantly execute each melodic shape while quickly changing placement of hands on the keyboard, all the while maintaining character markings of *grazioso* or *scherzando*. As Sokasits describes, in mm. 204-210, the composer combines three thematic fragments and “shows almost demonic delight” in his “contrapuntal wizardry.”

A careful execution of several melodic contours and their fragments is a prerequisite, and definitely demands pianistic control of a very high degree. Also, performer’s interpretation should be guided by careful observations of Rachmaninoff’s markings in the score. In mm. 145-146, the first four notes of the main theme in the left hand are marked with *tenuti* bringing performer’s attention to the entrance of the theme. However, *tenuti* disappear for the next three measures when both melodic lines first play in octave unison and then weave out of each other without much rhythmic interference. The performer should note here that the melodic lines “differentiated from one another rhythmically are heard as several melodic units presented simultaneously.” The *tenuti* appear again in mm. 150-152, highlighting the chords in the top voice, which, if neglected, might be overshadowed by the chordal texture of the simultaneously inserted second element of the main melody.

99. Sokasits, 82.

Altogether, the performer should recognize that Rachmaninoff’s compositional procedures and markings indicate conversational interaction between the elements of both melodic lines rather than a continuous dominance of one line over the other. While the performer’s attention should be directed more towards the line emphasized by the markings, careful balancing is required to keep both lines clearly audible at all times.

Ex. 10. Rachmaninoff, “Liebesfreud,” mm. 146-159.

In both recordings from 1925 and 1942, Rachmaninoff masterfully displays his art of simultaneous projection of several melodies and their interaction. The bottom voice is more prominent in the first three measures. Then, the pianist shifts the listener’s attention
to the top voice. Perceptibility of the top voice in mm. 150-152 is supported by his use of sustaining pedal, showing the composer’s preference for the lasting notes of the melodic line over the chordal textures beneath.

Jorge Bolet, in his recording from 1973, shifts attention between the voices more frequently than Rachmaninoff, highlighting the top voice during the octave unisons. In the 1987 recording, his approach to the whole section is more lyrical, very elegantly conveying the conversational nature of the polyphonic lines. The top voice in mm. 150-152 is executed with much attention, while chordal textures underneath are concealed.

The transcription of Tchaikovsky’s “Lullaby” presents a special interest in regards to handling of the contrapuntal interaction (Ex. 11). As Max Harrison noted, “this paraphrase has a Godowsky-like and quite a chromatic elaboration that recalls the Polka de V. R. of 30 years before.”101 In detail, Sokasits has traced throughout the “Lullaby” Rachmaninoff’s incorporation of a chromatic descending two-note motive of F-flat to E-flat “that grows in musical significance and, in the end, rivals the importance of the main theme.”102 Present in the original Tchaikovsky composition, the motive curiously bears a strong resemblance to the well-known main theme of Rachmaninoff’s Prelude op. 3, no. 2 in C-sharp minor (motive A-G-sharp-C-sharp) and a similar pattern in Prelude op. 32, no. 13 in D-flat major.103

102. Sokasits, 76.
103. Cunningham, 162.
Ex. 11. Rachmaninoff, “Lullaby,” mm. 36-49.

The growing prominence of this chromatic motive particularly affects its interaction with the main melody in mm. 36-49, where it develops into a continuous countermelody. Undoubtedly, Rachmaninoff was well aware that “[a] preponderance of chromatic motion enables individual voice threads to be distinguished with little difficulty, even in a dense, complex texture.”

Thus, his extensive articulation markings present throughout this section are an indication of special importance placed on this greatly developed countermelody. At the same time, the level of rhythmic activity in the melody of the original voice line diminishes its prominence in comparison to the countermelody.

The performer should also observe the difference between articulation markings in the first and second half of the section. Multiple accents present in the first half (marked in the example 11) should help the performer make the bottom voice more

104. Cunningham, 42.
perceptible within the thick accompanimental texture. The degree of such accentuation invariably depends on the acoustical properties of the instrument and reflects a personal interpretative choice of the performer.

In the recording from 1942, Rachmaninoff clearly emphasizes the countermelody in the left hand. Using his hallmark technique of rhythmic displacement and making a considerable dynamic difference between the voices, Rachmaninoff creates an effect of a duo performance, as if each part is executed artfully by an expert chamber musician.

Jorge Bolet in his studio recording from 1973 only slightly highlights certain elements of the countermelody in the left hand and instead turns listener’s attention toward the main melody in the right hand. Interestingly, his interpretation changes noticeably in the live recording from 1978 made in Philadelphia. In this performance the countermelody is given more importance making the balance between the two lines more uniform.

Rachmaninoff’s complex polyphonic and contrapuntal textures in transcriptions present many choices as well as challenges to the pianist. A successful projection and shaping of each line inside such intricate textures requires exclusive control of dynamics, exceptional independence of hands and fingers, and careful consideration of pedaling. However, it should also be aided by perceptive observations of Rachmaninoff’s compositional procedures. Awareness of these factors and their impact on the listener should greatly influence the performer’s interpretation of complex textures.

Of course, as a composer and a pianist Rachmaninoff possessed a profound understanding of the acoustical qualities of the instrument and the factors that influence aural perception of a melodic line and its elements. Through his use of registral
placement, intervallic relationships, and rhythmic activity of each line, Rachmaninoff aids the discernibility of melodic layers, well aware of how important these elements are to a performer. Taking full advantage of these qualities and their implication, the pianist can bring listener’s attention to the melodic elements without losing the vitality of the other textures. Presence of multiple layers in Rachmaninoff’s textures also offers the interpreter an opportunity for different emphasis, which adds interest especially in the repetition of material.

Together with observations of Rachmaninoff’s compositional techniques, close attention has to be given to the composer’s detailed indications in the score. These indications guide the performer toward more detailed understanding of the musical goals fulfilled by the composer through intricate counterpoint. Besides specifying particular needs of articulation and agogics, they often indicate the conversational nature of melodic lines or highlight the addition of an entirely new important layer in the piece, guiding performers toward more accurate conceptualization of the compositional elements.

**Closing sections: improvisatory elements, use of rubato**

Many of Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions contain closing material that was added by the composer to the work in the process of transcribing. These sections should be of a special interest to the performer because they clearly represent Rachmaninoff’s own compositional style. Closing passages and *codas* are often found in Rachmaninoff’s short compositions, such as Prelude op. 23, no. 6 in E-flat major and *Étude-tableaux* op. 39, nos. 4, 5, and 8. However, even a larger scale piano solo composition such as *Variations on a Theme of Corelli* contains a *coda* similar to those found in the shorter pieces. Analysis of Rachmaninoff’s compositional approach to closing sections reveals these
similarities. A common functional feature of these *codas* is noted by Robert Cunningham in Rachmaninoff’s Prelude op. 32, no. 13 where “protracted tonic prolongation is doubtless intended as a *coda*...”\(^{105}\)

While masterfully embellished, closing passages and *codas* in Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions of works for two performers and “Polka de V. R.” are also based on the harmonic prolongation of a tonic key. The length of the material is dependent on the length of the piece itself. While in shorter transcriptions the composer adds only brief improvisatory, *cadenza*-like passages, somewhat extended *codas* supplement longer works. Brief passages, termed by Sokasits as the “final flourish,”\(^{106}\) usually span a considerable range of the keyboard in rising and falling sweeps. The shortest example of a “final flourish” is found in “Brooklet,” while slightly more extended sections are added to “Lilacs,” “Daisies,” and “Lullaby.” *Codas* in the transcriptions of “Liebesleid” and, especially, “Liebesfreud” are longer and virtuosic, with ornate passages, arpeggios, a *glissando*, and *martellato* chords covering the entire range of the keyboard.

Besides harmonic elongation of the tonic key, many of the closing passages in the transcriptions share other compositional attributes. Intricate chromaticism layered over stable presence of a tonic key (“post-climactic pedal tone”\(^{107}\) is another compositional characteristic of the closing sections. As mentioned before, Rachmaninoff often employs virtuosic passages that extend over considerable range of the keyboard, requiring agility.

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105. Cunningham, 170.
106. Sokasits, 74.
Similar compositional devices are used by Rachmaninoff in the *cadenza* passages often inserted by the composer at the climactic moment in the transcriptions as well as in his original works.\(^{108}\) The virtuosic *cadenza* passage of “Polka de V. R.” is based mainly on elaborate predominantly chromatic embellishments of the E-flat seventh chord, the dominant of the key.

A comparison of the closing section and other parts of the work reveals certain important similarities. In the closing sections, Rachmaninoff often employs harmonic prolongation of a tonic key, where reiterated notes of a tonic chord or a pedaltone are juxtaposed against virtuosic and chromatic flourish. Not only closing sections, but also inserted improvisatory *cadenza* passages display a combination of tonal stability and chromaticism.

The performers customarily assign improvisational qualities to the *cadenza* passages, often visually represented in smaller print, and, appropriately, interpret these sections with a certain amount of freedom. However, similarities of compositional devices used by Rachmaninoff in *cadenzas* and in closing materials indicate that improvisational qualities and some degree of interpretational freedom are affiliated with both sections. Even in Rachmaninoff’s original works, performers are sometimes encouraged to give the interpretation “a decidedly improvisatory feeling,” such as in the case of Prelude op. 23, no. 3 in D minor.\(^{109}\)

Elements of improvisation, inherently present in the genre of transcription, come into view with Rachmaninoff’s transcription of “The Star Spangled Banner” which the

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108. Sokasits, 60.

composer committed to wax but, apparently, not to paper. Traces of improvisatory freedom pertinent to Rachmaninoff’s style as a performer are evident in the textual freedom with which he often treats his own compositions. Small alterations, of individual notes and short passages in many of Rachmaninoff’s recordings of his own works, are frequently noted by many scholars.

In transcriptions same traits are evident in the opening of “Polka de V. R.” described earlier (Ex. 6). In the latter two recordings of this piece (1921, 1928) Rachmaninoff shortens the introductory material by a half measure, skipping the second half of m. 2 and, thus, shifting the metric pulse. A much more significant cut is implemented in the later recording of “Liebesfreud” (1942). There, Rachmaninoff connects the middle of m. 245 to the middle of m. 313, removing a climatic section marked *poco a poco accelerando* together with the following *quasi cadenza* section. In fact, this recording is shorter than the recording of 1925 by two minutes making the piece last five minutes instead of seven.

Rachmaninoff’s improvisational skills must have developed during his study in Moscow. According to some accounts, the composer, while in Russia, engaged in music parlor games of joint improvisation with Glazunov, Taneyev, and Arensky. Sokasits also notes that “[s]tudy of Rachmaninoff’s procedures for transcribing Kreisler’s “Liebesleid” provides many insights into his practices as both improviser and composer.”

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111. Sokasits, 61.
In several of the transcriptions, Rachmaninoff meticulously specifies pace, sound, and touch necessary for the performer to carry out dramatic intentions in the closing material. Winters describes a similar instance in Prelude op. 32, no. 12 in G-sharp minor, where the composer uses sixteen indications of pace per the first sixteen measures of music. As she points out, Rachmaninoff employs them “to indicate a specific nature of rubato intended in a given passage.”

In the transcriptions too, the performer can observe logical connections between the improvisational element of the compositional approach in the closing sections, mentioned earlier, and the composer’s intentions of specifying attributes of rubato applied to them. The coda of “Polka de V. R.” has markings con moto with later indication of leggiero; the ending statement is Meno mosso, with an additional ritenuto. Similarly, the four-measure long “final flourish” of “Lilacs” has indications of accelerando, veloce, and ritenuto, while for the whole closing section of “Daisies” the composer marks Poco piu mosso and ritenuto at the end. The general tendency is that the beginnings of the sections should project a certain agitation, which is then counterbalanced by the slower, more lyrical ending.

The closing section of “Liebesfreud” also contains several indications of quickening of pace: Piu mosso – poco a poco accelerando – Presto. However, this is the only transcription where the composer does not employ the arch effect of acceleration and retard pertinent to the rest of the examples, explained by the bravura display of the ending as well as the general virtuosic character of the piece.

Not all of the instances of the closing material in the transcriptions are explicitly marked with changes of tempo or sound qualities by the composer. Nevertheless, they

112. Winters, 90.
still can carry such implication for the performer based not only on their similarities to closing sections in other transcriptions, but also on their connections to other musical parameters in the piece. The examples below trace Rachmaninoff’s use of the compositional devices in the closing sections, providing detailed analysis of compositional tools used within each section and connections between these areas and other parts of the work. Suggestions on interpretation are given in lieu of such analysis and reflect the overall tendencies described above.

As mentioned before, the coda in “Polka de V. R.” is the earliest example of added closing material in the transcriptions (Ex. 12). Rachmaninoff was free in choosing the compositional parameters for this coda, which is evident from the history of this composition, especially considering that Franz Behr’s original composition does not contain a coda. Rachmaninoff, perhaps, had never seen the original score and was unaware of the true composer. Besides the added coda, the middle section of the composition, while based on Behr’s material to some extent, is also freely composed. Thus, in both sections the performer can discern strong traits of Rachmaninoff’s compositional style.

In the coda of “Polka de V. R.” after a tempo, Rachmaninoff adds an indication of con moto, suggesting playing in a lively, brisk manner throughout. In the beginning, the line of chromatically rising triplets divided between hands should be used to propel the music forward and give the impression of con moto. Later, the performer should note that the frequency of harmonic change doubles when the chromatic passages reach the highest register in mm. 137-138. Performers should take advantage of agogic emphasis, which now falls on the tonic chord and, if implemented, helps to reflect the acquired rhythmic
drive. The following descending cascade of tonic-based arpeggios (mm. 139-140) is marked *leggiero*, prompting pianists to use a light touch to achieve the fast speed and, perhaps, for a sparkling effect. The fast section ends with a rhythmically free ascending virtuosic passage (m. 141) in both hands. It is marked *pp* and, similarly to the previous passage, requires great agility of fingers and even and light touch due to the speed and soft dynamic level.


A quick change of sound and prompt shifts in both hands is required for a *meno mosso* closing statement, which suddenly interrupts the previous virtuosic flourish with loud dynamics, long note values, and unexpected departure from the tonic. But it quickly winds down, marked with a decrease of dynamics (*f - decrescendo - p - pp*) and tempo (*ritenuto*), and brings the piece to a soft and delicate close. Great technical control and
rapid adjustment of touch is needed to project the improvisatory spontaneity in changing of the dynamics and character not only in the closing section but throughout the whole piece.

In all four available recordings (1919 Edison and Ampico, 1921, and 1928), Rachmaninoff projects *con moto* with a slight acceleration in the first three measures of the *coda*. Then, the tempo remains steady allowing for clarity in passagework and precise control of dynamics. The cascading passage in mm. 139-140 is not only fast and brilliant, but very crisp. In the three out of four recordings, Rachmaninoff executes this passage completely without the use of the sustaining pedal.

An exception is the recording of 1928, where the composer brings a touch of sustaining pedal to every group of four notes. An element of improvisation is present in the *meno mosso* interruption, first note of which is played slightly earlier than expected. The fact that Rachmaninoff executes the last chord in one stroke is only a reminder that technical difficulties found in the transcriptions reflect the composer’s own astounding pianistic abilities.

Bolet’s studio recording from 1973 and live recording from 1974 differ slightly in the degree of spontaneity of expression. In the live recording the pianist seems to be more extemporaneous, possibly focusing less on technical perfection generally expected from a studio recording. In both recordings, the rising chromatic passages are played with great energy and in a tempo considerably faster than that of the previous section. The pianist slows down lightly and softens the intensity of sound at the end of the passage in triplets.

Bolet enhances the contour of the cascades of “final flourish” by the rise and fall of the dynamics. At the end of the A-flat major passage, the pianist does not use the
sustaining pedal, instead achieving the light and soft sound in the lowest register. He also makes a crescendo to the top of the following passage, adding a touch of virtuosic sparkle at the end. Interpretational freedom is evident in the last chord of the piece which is rolled in a very intricate manner, slowly unfolding from the middle. Bolet also changes the note of the chord in the left hand to an open position of the tonic triad, so the roll ends in both hands on A-flat.

The coda in the transcription of “Liebesleid” was added by Rachmaninoff in the process of transcribing Kreisler’s original Old-Viennese Dance no. 2 (Ex. 13). This coda is one of the examples where Rachmaninoff did not explicitly specify any change of tempo or character. However, the similarities between this section and other sections in the main body of the work suggests a certain interpretation, as pointed out by Sokasits. He observes that “the appended coda returns to the brilliant triplet eighth-notes of the first A-major section. Although no return to the piu vivo tempo is indicated, the acceleration of rhythmic activity recalls the earlier setting of this theme and almost demands performance at a faster tempo.”113

Throughout the first eight measures, chromatic embroidery in repetitions upon the reiterations of the tonic is slightly altered each time by the composer. If an application of rubato to this section is desired to reflect these suggestively improvisatory alterations, interpreters are encouraged to avoid emphasis on the regularity of the two-bar phrasing. Observation of hemiola in mm. 197-198 facilitates a feel of a quicker pace. The A-major arpeggio ending the section streams in a continuous line to the top of the keyboard with rhythmic acceleration at the end. In order to create continuity of the line in this passage, the performer should disregard implications of the barline. Any acceleration acquired

113. Sokasits, 44.
throughout the *coda* might be balanced with the slower pace of the closing chords, which bring the piece to a lyrical closing.


Rachmaninoff’s recording of “Liebesleid” from 1921 is a wonderful example of the composer’s use of *rubato*, as mentioned before. In the *coda*, the pianist emphasizes the F-natural in m. 188 through color change and slight *ritenuto*. The tempo is gradually increased throughout the rising chromatic figurations throughout mm. 191-194. Excitement builds up in the perceived acceleration of *hemiola* passages resulting in a swing-like effect of the keyboard-wide A-major *arpeggio*. The closing chords, then, slow down, returning to the overall lyrical character of the piece.
As described by Martyn, this recording is “a shade more spontaneous in the *piu vivo* section and the *cadenza*”\(^ {114} \) in comparison with the recording from 1922 for Ampico. In line with this observation, Rachmaninoff’s treatment of the *coda* in the recording from 1922 is also more restrained. While the increase of tempo is not as intense, the A-major rising *arpeggio* is still very effective. As in the earlier recording, it is played as one big musical gesture, undivided by the barline.

In the recording from 1973, Jorge Bolet begins the *coda* in a noticeably faster tempo than that of the preceding section. Steady pace is retained throughout the section until the closing chords. A noticeable textual alteration occurs when the pianist changes the chord in m. 202, moving the inside voices of the chord a half step up. The result is a colorful combination of the original tonic chord and newly inserted Neapolitan chord, often found in Rachmaninoff’s own compositions. Through such textual alteration, the pianist reflects improvisational impression created by Rachmaninoff in this *coda*, as well as improvisational freedom associated with transcription as a genre itself. In the 1987 recording, Bolet’s overall interpretation is somewhat more restrained. However, rendition of the *coda* remains very similar to the earlier recording, retaining the textual and tempo changes from the earlier rendition.

A combination of measured and unmeasured sections in the closing material of “Lilacs” can create a certain amount of confusion for the performer (Ex. 14). The unmeasured section is represented with typical smaller print and fitted into one continuous measure. This rising and falling passage is distinctly improvisatory and calls for an appropriate interpretational approach. On the other hand, contrasting visual representation of the measured section in mm. 54-57 could be interpreted as an abrupt

\(^{114}\) Martyn, 240.
change in intentions, possibly, signaling a return to the initial pace of the preceding material. Yet, certain compositional features unite the two sections of the closing material into a continuous whole.


In the unmeasured passage, rising intervals of fourth and third are underlined by an A-flat major arpeggio in the left hand. In the measured section, a similar effect of tonal stability is brought about by the reiterated A-flat and E-flat in the left hand functioning as if a pedal point. The four-note patterns of the right hand (mm. 54-56) are based on the intervals and pitches of the analogous patterns found in the cadenza. The chromatically moving line in the right hand and reiterated tonic in the left hand create a hemiola in mm. 54-55. Effects from the shift of strong and weak beats produced by the hemiola are much stronger than that of the barline dividing the measures. Both of the chromatic moving lines in these two measures should be understood as separate voices. The rhythmic and harmonic features suggest that emphasis ought to be placed on the line in the right hand.
Ultimately, the performer should observe that the musical features present in the measured section are clearly related to the preceding unmeasured passage. The differences in the visual representation between the sections should not be regarded as being indicative of a sudden change in dramatic intentions. The continuity from one section to the next is facilitated by a smooth change of pace and sound, if any change is desired, as well as the performer’s careful observations of dynamics and rhythmic features.

In all three available recordings (the 1922 Ampico piano roll and the 1923 and 1942 Victor recordings), Rachmaninoff keeps the tempo acquired from the acceleration of the unmeasured cadenza-like passage throughout most of the measured section. In this section he emphasizes the chromatic movement of the lower voice in the right hand. In effect, rhythmic division of the written score is completely overpowered by the hemiola in the passagework of the right hand. The ritenuto in the ending measures is usually observed slightly earlier than indicated, balancing the quick pace of the preceding passages and bringing the piece to a lyrical closing.

Benno Moiseiwitsch’s interpretation of “Lilacs” from 1948 is artful and unique in many ways. The pianist presents what is essentially his own arrangement of Rachmaninoff’s transcription — with octave doublings of melodic fragments, registral transfers, thickening of harmony with additional tones, and other textual alterations, reflecting interpretational freedom and elements of improvisation pertinent to the genre of transcription. In the closing material, the pianist slows down slightly at the end of the veloce descending passage and keeps the acquired slower pace throughout the measured section, ending the piece with a broad ritenuto. A rhythmic grouping in the measured
section is dictated by the melodic movement and hemiola, similar to the composer’s interpretation.

While Moiseiwitsch’s interpretational choices differ somewhat from Rachmaninoff’s, the logic of the closing section as a whole is still intact due to the balanced acceleration and deceleration throughout the entire section. Tobias Matthay calls such manipulations of time “rubato-curve” and points out that “the actual extend of a rubato-curve may, and should vary with the mood of the performer….”

Closing sections in Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions clearly represent Rachmaninoff’s own style. They were added in the process of transcribing, with the exception of “Daisies” where the composer left the original ending of his own song essentially unchanged in the transcription. Valuable interpretational insight is acquired through a careful analysis of compositional features of this section and notated markings within their musical context.

Rachmaninoff’s extensive markings in the closing section specify the nature of rubato that performers should employ. Such directions include changes in speed, intensity of sound, and touch. In the beginnings of the closing sections, the composer often calls for agitation in pace and excitement in character (accelerando, con moto, veloce) intensifying harmonic pulse and, especially, rhythmic activity (using shorter note values and hemiola.) The fastest passages are often marked with soft dynamics requiring agility of fingerwork and light touch from the pianist, whether leggiero is indicated or not. With the exception of “Liebesfreud,” in the added closing sections the composer

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almost always brings the pieces to a soft and lyrical ending, marking closing chords or statements with a *ritenuto*.

Careful observation of these marking, whenever indicated, is necessary to carry out the composer’s dramatic intentions. Also, they serve as valuable points of departure for the similar sections that do not contain such markings. Understandably, application of *rubato* and its extent might vary not only among performers, but also among the performances by the same pianist. As Rachmaninoff himself pointed out: “Rubato must be individual. One cannot fix upon a moment when the general tempo must change...If such a variation in tempo is planned by the brain alone, that is wrong. Rubato must be determined by the heart, by feeling.”\(^{116}\) Additionally, improvisational freedom of the genre is often reflected in textual alterations found in several analyzed performances.

**Transcriptions of orchestral works: registration, dynamics, and articulation**

In Rachmaninoff’s transcriptions of orchestral works, the composer’s profound understanding of transcribing techniques is evident in his ability to replicate the orchestral textures and changes in sonority while, deftly creating variety through the change of texture, registration, articulation markings, and dynamics. Understanding the correlation between the effects produced by the orchestra and Rachmaninoff’s techniques of transferring them to the piano will aid the performer in developing an imaginative and informed interpretation and in choosing the particular pianistic means for their successful realization.

Rachmaninoff’s ingenious use of coloristic abilities of the piano inspires interpreters to look for an extensive range of possibilities for expression of orchestral

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\(^{116}\) Sergei Rachmaninoff, “Interpretation depends on Talent and Personality” *The Etude Magazine* 50, no. 4 (April 1932), 239.
sound. Frequent markings of articulation and agogics, as well as abrupt changes of
dynamics are employed by the composer to idiomatically reflect effects of the original
orchestral sonority in the piano score. Pianist should take full advantage of the acoustical
properties of different registers of the instrument used by the composer to portray
changes in instrumentation in the original piece.

Undoubtedly, one of the requirements for successfully interpreting these
transcriptions is the detailed knowledge of the orchestration of the original pieces. A
special consideration from the performer should be directed towards producing effects
similar to the orchestral and retaining the overall character of each piece. In order to
emulate the orchestral sonorities on the piano, interpreters are required to give careful
attention to differentiation of articulation, going beyond what is provided extensively by
the composer. The use of both soft and sustaining pedals should be guided by the
desirable change of timbral properties of sound, besides mere adjustment in dynamic
levels.

Out of four symphonic works that Rachmaninoff transcribed, three share
comparable features of orchestration, while the fourth differs to some extent. The light
and transparent orchestral textures are pertinent to Bizet’s “Minuet,” Mendelssohn’s
“Scherzo,” and Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumble Bee.” In Mussorgsky’s
“Hopak,” the celebratory finale of the opera, orchestral textures grow denser as the piece
unfolds, depicting joyous hops and jumps of the Ukrainian traditional dance.

Mendelssohn’s “Scherzo” is an “example of the featherlight, will-of-the-wisp
style for which Mendelssohn is known.”\textsuperscript{117} Rachmaninoff’s transcription of this piece is

\textsuperscript{117} Phillip Huscher, “Felix Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” program notes for
praised by many for retaining the playful, graceful character of the music and for its successful pianistic adaptation of the textures. This transcription poses a challenge to even the most technically equipped pianists, as it requires fast, even finger articulation and precision of touch, combined with prevailing lightness required throughout the entire length. Sustaining pedal, applied discreetly, has to accommodate both clarity and continuity of the sound under any acoustical conditions.

The most fundamental decision is choice of tempo, which should reflect the dance-like fluid triple meter and constant forward motion, while avoiding the danger of frantic or rushed performance. Pianists with exceptional technical abilities are advised against choosing an excessively fast tempo, as well as any instances of a technical display at the expense of musical considerations.

The orchestration of the piece is full of “…whimsical interplay between strings and woodwinds…” Leading the performer through this interplay, Rachmaninoff accentuates the changes in orchestration by indicating two contrasting dynamics in m. 129 and similar material in m. 151 of his transcription. The passage beginning on the second beat of m. 129 is sparsely orchestrated throughout (Ex. 15 and 16), with short phases exchanged between different sections of woodwinds and strings. Beginning with flute accompanied by violins in pizzicato, it differs sharply from the preceding material, which involves nearly all orchestral forces.

Diverse articulation markings are used in the mm. 123-126 to replicate the sonority of each textural layer. In a successful performance, the right balance between finger articulation and the amount of sustaining pedal should result in the rich, distinctly layered sound. Absent in the orchestral work, the marking of an abrupt dynamical change
in m. 129 is used to encourage coloristic separation between the two parts. A light touch and, perhaps, use of *una corda* pedal is needed to imitate the crispness of plucked strings and the delicacy of the flute.

Rachmaninoff’s recording of “Scherzo” from 1935 is “a marvelous example of orchestration at the keyboard, with an incredibly airy texture given by a very sparing use of the sustaining pedal.”\(^{119}\) The passage described above shows the pianist’s preference for clarity and discrete projection of the textural layers. Even throughout the dynamically intense sections, such as in mm. 127-128, Rachmaninoff employs minimal use of the sustaining pedal, if any. An incredible pianistic control is evident in distinct dynamic level and articulation allotted to each line in mm. 123-126 and in the immediate change to light and airy sound he manages in m. 129. Such colorful rendition of the work in Rachmaninoff’s “magical recording”\(^ {120}\) is especially impressive considering the speed of 92-100 per dotted quarter at which it is executed. Together with striking coloristic effects, Rachmaninoff’s interpretation is marked by constant forward drive.

Moiseiwitsch’s recording of “Scherzo” from 1939 is rightfully among the most famous in the pianist’s discography. Produced in one unrehearsed take, it was considered by the pianist as his greatest recording. Numerous reviews point out the assets of Moiseiwitsch’s playing, such as “a resonant tone even in soft passages, remarkably even fingerwork, and incredible consistency of articulation and speed.”\(^ {121}\) Moiseiwitsch portrays the dreamlike atmosphere of Mendelssohn’s *entr’acte* through spontaneity of

\(^{119}\) Martyn, 446.

\(^{120}\) Harrison, 299.

dynamic contrast, sparkling tone in the upper register of the keyboard, and masterfully imperceptible use of the sustaining pedal. These qualities are apparent in the aforementioned passage through energetic crescendo leading to the accented downbeats of mm. 129 and 151 and the crisp articulation of the octaves in the left hand. The tempo is only slightly slower than Rachmaninoff’s, approximately 92 = dotted quarter, adding a dance-like, spinning feeling.

Rachmaninoff’s choice of registration in the middle part of the transcription of “Minuet” has important consequences for the performer. As Sokasits points out, “Rachmaninoff uses shifts of register to emphasize the passing of a theme between instruments, even if no such registral shift occurs in the original work.” In the original orchestration, the lyric theme in A-flat major is repeated three times in the same register, played in octave first by the winds (two clarinets and saxophone), then, by the first violins and cellos, and third time by the first and second violins and cellos.

Compared to Godowsky’s version, where all three times the theme is set in the same register, Rachmaninoff elected to differentiate registration for each. He takes advantage of timbral possibilities of each area of the piano and thus emphasizes alterations in the orchestral instrumentation, avoiding repetition. The first theme is set in the middle register, matching that of the first clarinet. The second theme appears an octave lower, as played in the orchestra by celli, omitting violins. The third occurrence is the lyrical peak of the piece. It is transcribed in octaves, reflecting the doubling of violins and cellos, and set in the register higher than in the original. Markings p and cantabile reflect the overall light and charming character of this music. Accompanying textures become denser and span wider registral space with each occurrence of the theme.

122. Sokasits, 100.
The influence of Rachmaninoff’s own pianism is greatly evident in the second setting (Ex. 17). There, the wide accompanimental figurations below the theme in the left hand limit pianists (especially those with small hands) to use mainly thumb for the notes of the melody. This technique is advantageous for producing rich cello-like tone and is often encountered in other Rachmaninoff works. However, it requires careful shaping of the melody and legato through pedaling. The balancing of melody and accompanimental patterns throughout in all three settings is of particular importance, as pianists are required to maintain the comparatively low dynamic level and still retain a lyrical character.

Ex. 17. Rachmaninoff, “Minuet,” mm. 69-86.
In the middle part in both recordings of “Minuet” from 1922 (made only two month apart), Rachmaninoff showcases his much praised ability for producing lasting singing tone. The melody is clearly projected and sensitively shaped regardless of the density of the accompanimental texture. With each entrance of the theme, the pianist highlights the timbral differences of the registration through strong voicing techniques. The lower the registration of the theme, the more prominence it is given. At the same time, the accompanimental figures occurring in close proximity to the melody in the middle register are executed much softer than the rest of the texture.

In the recording from 1973, Bolet’s continuity of sound, sensitivity of shaping, and seamless legato is particularly remarkable in the first and third melody in A-flat major. The second occurrence is given less prominence, compared to Rachmaninoff’s recording. However, the rise and fall of the accompaniment passages in fourths (orchestrated for flute, clarinet, and harp) at the beginning of each phrase are dynamically highlighted, adding a new coloristic layer to the interpretation of the theme.

Rachmaninoff’s transcription of Mussorgsky’s “Hopak” presents pianists with an opportunity of imitating the richness of orchestral sound with rapid changes of registration and dynamics through the whole expanse of the keyboard. Compared to the two of Mussorgsky’s own piano scores, in Rachmaninoff’s “wild version”¹²³ the orchestral effects are projected through a much wider dynamic range, extensive registral leaps, and denser chordal textures.

For instance, changes of orchestration in mm. 26-29 are amplified through the use of completely filled-in chords marked with double sforzandi on the downbeats (Ex. 18). Throughout the rest of the phrase, the composer indicates p and staccato to imitate lightness of woodwinds, requiring a rapid change of touch. Insertion of a rest also signals that the effect of the downbeat should not overpower the following chords or interfere with clear delivery of the rhythm. A prompt release of the sustaining pedal and adjustment of touch to execute the indicated p dynamic level is necessary for the staccato chords to emerge distinctly.


In 1925 recording of “Hopak,” Rachmaninoff creates an exuberant atmosphere with powerful sound in the bass register, strong rhythmic accents, and unprompted dynamic contrasts. An effect of spontaneous expression is created by the frequent changes of pace, some of which are not explicitly indicated in the score. In the above example, Rachmaninoff plays sff chords with explosive power. The sustaining pedal is released by beat two to give way to clearly articulated chords. Similar tendencies are evident in the earlier 1921 piano roll recording. In the sequence preceding the return of the theme, Rachmaninoff elects to place one of the thematic fragments in the higher register than that indicated in the score. With this registral shift the composer avoids
exact repetition of the material and utilizes a wider registral range and timbral possibilities of the piano.

In the rendition from 1973, Jorge Bolet streamlines the presentation of this brief piece by employing lesser variations of pace compared to the composer’s performance. Still, he successfully projects the energetic and exciting character of the work through the use of forward drive of the dotted rhythms, contrasting dynamics, changes of touch, and resonant upper register.

In terms of pianism, imitation of orchestral textures requires great variety of touch, widespread dynamic contrasts, and increased attention to differences of registration. Specific pianistic considerations should be directed towards matters of pedaling, articulation, and balance. Interpreters have to possess knowledge of overall style, the character of each piece, and its original orchestration, which the composer certainly had in mind while transcribing. Such knowledge combined with detailed understanding of Rachmaninoff’s transcribing techniques described above will guide the performer toward more convincing and authentic interpretation.

**Conclusion**

“In the art of transcription Rachmaninoff was in his happiest vein. … His transcriptions especially radiate rare joyousness and flights of fancy.” ¹²⁴ Indeed, the experience of performing these pieces as well as listening to them is a very satisfying one. As a set, transcriptions show not only the admiration that Rachmaninoff had for the works of other composer’s but also his own marvelous skills as a composer, transcriber and pianist. They display all the bravura of virtuosity, captivating melodic manipulations,

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¹²⁴ Hinson, 107.
memorable harmonic additions, variety of textures, while fully exploiting the acoustical capabilities of the instrument as well as a great range of emotional expression.

The combination of these features, infused into the works of other composers does not fail to make a lasting enthralling impression. During Rachmaninoff’s life only a few other pianists included some of these pieces into their concert repertoire as the composer performed the pieces himself. Presently, the popularity of the set is rightfully very high. This is evident not only from the multiple releases of the complete set but also from the most recent concert programs. Understandably, for the live performances pianists select only some of the transcriptions, usually the most famous ones. Each piece distinctly different from the next, transcriptions present a wide range of character and emotion, and a suitable combination can complement any program.

The path to achieving true success in performing any one of the transcriptions might be lengthier than expected. The range of pianistic and musical demands posed by any of these pieces is somewhat concealed by the initial empathetic impression and attractiveness of the music which “[f]alls easily on the ear.”\textsuperscript{125} A great care is required in developing interpretations that fully encompasses the extent of Rachmaninoff’s art as well as pianism and musicianship of the performer. In Rachmaninoff’s own words: “One must play a piece a thousand time, making a thousand experiments, listening, comparing, judging… for only as the individual learns to decide and to control his musical effects does he become an interpreter and come near the stature of the composer whose works he would recreate.”\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{125} Hinson, 27.

\textsuperscript{126} Harrison, 268.
Rachmaninoff’s compositional and transcribing approach was certainly influenced by his own pianism. Luckily, the composer left the best possible testimony of his skills in his own recordings of the entire set of the transcriptions. As a matter of fact, Rachmaninoff’s performances are so enchanting and convincing that they present a certain amount of danger of inadvertent imitation. However, these recordings provide valuable clues to the composer’s own concept of the works. A responsible interpreter would understand that “there can be no real return to the performance practices and aesthetic ideals that he [Rachmaninoff] espoused and demonstrated without a thorough and diligent knowledge of the composer’s own interpretive ideas.”

Many scholars have noted the tendencies of a modern performer to focus on the technical demands of the work. Technical difficulties in the transcriptions are, undoubtedly, plentiful and diverse, as they reflect Rachmaninoff’s own impressive pianistic skills. Reasonable care and time should be devoted to such considerations, to be sure, but no concerns of technique can stand above the musical context in which it is employed. In words of Benno Moiseiwitsch: “The problem facing the young pianist is not how to play faster and louder, but how to play music in moving and musicianly fashion. This he can accomplish by breaking away from a preoccupation with mechanics, and by concentrating earnestly, devotedly, independently upon musical thought - as was the habit in the ‘grand’ days.”

Developing an informed, attentive, and imaginative interpretation should be deeply rooted in the profound knowledge of the Rachmaninoff’s style. Particular

127. Hershberger, 163.

compositional features for which Rachmaninoff’s original compositions are so widely recognized and loved are easily discernable and readily found in the transcriptions. Through meticulous analysis of these features and realization of the meaning that they carry, a performer can build an attentive and imaginative interpretation that convincingly combines individual musical personalities of the composer and the interpreter, effectively bringing the magnificence of Rachmaninoff’s music to the public.
APPENDIX A

LIST OF RACHMANINOFF’S TRANSCRIPTIONS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Dedication</th>
<th>Date of composition</th>
<th>Original Composer</th>
<th>Name of Original Composition</th>
<th>Discography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minuet</td>
<td>1900, revised 1921</td>
<td>George Bizet</td>
<td>Minuet, <em>Allegro giocoso</em>, second movement from <em>l’Arlésienne Suite no. 2</em></td>
<td>Ampico, April 6, 1922; Victor, February 24, 1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polka de V. R. (dedicated to Leopold Godowsky)</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Franz Behr</td>
<td>Lächtäubchen (Scherzpalka) in F major, Op. 303</td>
<td>Edison, April 24, 1919, (three takes); Ampico, March 17, 1919; Victor, October 12, 1921 and April 4, 1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilacs</td>
<td>1913 (published 1919), revised 1938</td>
<td>Sergei Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Song op. 21, no. 5</td>
<td>Ampico, April 6, 1922; Victor, December 27, 1923; Victor (Bell Telephone), February 2, 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liebesleid</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Fritz Kreisler</td>
<td><em>Alt-Wiener Tanzweisen</em> no. 1</td>
<td>Ampico, April 6, 1922; Victor, October 25, 1921</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daisies</td>
<td>1922? 1923?</td>
<td>Sergei Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Song op. 38, no. 3</td>
<td>Victor (Bell Telephone), March 18, 1940</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hopak</td>
<td>1924 (manuscript date)</td>
<td>Modest Mussorgsky</td>
<td>Hopak from the opera <em>Sorochinsky Fair</em></td>
<td>Ampico, March 5, 1921; Victor, April 13, 1925</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liebesfreud</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Fritz Kreisler</td>
<td><em>Alt-Wiener Tanzweisen</em> no. 2</td>
<td>Ampico, December 22, 1925; Victor, December 29, 1925; Victor December, 26, 1942</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Brooklet (alt. title &quot;Wohin?&quot;)</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Franz Schubert</td>
<td>“Wohin?” no. 2 from the song cycle <em>Die schöne Müllerin</em></td>
<td>Victor (Bell Telephone), December 22, 1925</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Bumble-Bee</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov</td>
<td>from Act I of the opera <em>The Tale of Tsar Saltan</em></td>
<td>Ampico, February 1, 1929; Victor, April 16, 1929</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piece</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Recording Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scherzo</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Felix Mendelssohn</td>
<td><em>Scherzo from A Midsummer Night’s Dream</em>, op. 61</td>
<td>Victor (Bell Telephone), December 23, 1935</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preludio</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Johann Sebastian Bach</td>
<td>from Partita No. 3 for Violin Solo in E Major, BWV 1006</td>
<td>Victor (Bell Telephone), February 26-27, 1942</td>
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<td>Gavotte</td>
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<td>Gigue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lullaby</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Peter Tchaikovsky</td>
<td>Song Op. 16, no. 1</td>
<td>Victor (Bell Telephone), February 26, 1942</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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