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The Motivic Economy in Nikolai Medtner's *Sonata Romantica*

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THE MOTIVIC ECONOMY IN
NIKOLAI MEDTNER’S SONATA ROMANTICA

by

NELLIE SENG-QUINN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts,
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2016
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by

Nellie Seng-Quinn

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Music to satisfy the dissertation
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

The Motivic Economy in Nikolai Medtner’s *Sonata Romantica*

by Nellie Seng-Quinn

Adviser: Professor Philip Ewell

This dissertation focuses on the motivic aspect of Medtner’s *Sonata Romantica* Op. 53, No. 1.

Medtner, in his book, *The Muse and the Fashion*, has stressed through numerous statements why the initial theme is of utmost importance to him and how the entire work should be derived from the theme. The goal is to trace the journey of Medtner’s themes through the course of the sonata. Using various methods of musical analysis, I will determine whether the theme is indeed the source of latter material found within the sonata.
Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to thank Prof. Philip Ewell for his guidance and wisdom, without which, this dissertation would have been impossible. I would also like to thank my first reader, Prof. Kahan, for all her invaluable advice, not just towards my dissertation, but in all my years at the Graduate Center. To Prof. Carey, I am forever indebted. The level of care and support that you showed me gave me the strength to go on even when everything seemed impossible. To Jackie Martelle, I am beyond grateful. Thank you for always being there! To my piano teacher, Thomas Sauer. Thank you for showing me the way. You have been such an inspiration for me to be a better musician! It has truly been an honor to study with you.

To my parents, thank you for everything.

Thank you for believing in me, even in my darkest moments.

To my husband, thank you for putting up with my eccentricities and keeping me balanced.

I love you.

To my son Olly, you are my strength. This dissertation is for you, my love. Happy 1st Birthday!

In Memoriam: Nero 2003-7.15.2015

For being with me every step of the way, through my smiles, anguish, laughter and tears.
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Introduction

I first heard Medtner’s music when a fellow pianist played his Sonata Reminiscenza in our weekly performance class at college. It was about the same time that the International Medtner Foundation was formed in New York City in hopes of “popularizing” Medtner’s works. In collaboration with Dover Publications, all fourteen piano sonatas were published in two volumes, as well as Medtner’s thirty-eight Fairy Tales.

Sonata Romantica has a special place in my heart as it is the first of Medtner’s work that I studied. When I first heard the piece, I was immediately drawn to the beauty of its melodic line. A sense of pathos was also conveyed, that being a reflection of his life at the time of the composition. During the learning process, I was fascinated by the extent to which the rich textures were saturated by the various themes through different guises. This essentially led me to the title of my dissertation, The Motivic Economy of Medtner’s Sonata Romantica. I had started out thinking that Medtner’s repeated use of his themes in different, albeit recognizable guises, was his way of being motivically economical. By that, I mean that he had constructed an entire work based off a theme and that the theme has not been developed in the sense that each recurrence of the theme is instantly recognizable. My initial thought was that the theme was cleverly constructed in that whole themes, as well as fragments could be used as counterpoint against each other.

But, what does “motivic economy” actually mean? Is there such a term? If so, can it be applied to Medtner’s work? As I learned more about Medtner and his works, it was clear that he had very strong views about his own works as well as the works of other composers both past and present. These opinions led to many correspondences with his peers and ultimately culminated into his book, The Muse and the Fashion. The book may be viewed as his artistic credo, his compositional ethos. Several quotes from the book helped shape my approach and methodology of the analysis of this sonata.
Medtner considered himself a student of Beethoven, and regarded the works of both Bach and Beethoven as his inspiration. He felt that their works, though complex, can be understood due to the simplicity of their theme. Medtner considered the theme as the most important part of a work. In his book, Medtner states that, “the theme is the most simple and accessible part of the work, it unifies it, and holds within itself the clue to all the subsequent complexity and variety of the work.”¹ He also states, “it must be clear to anyone that no artistic creation can begin with the development of a theme, that has not yet appeared.”²

From the quotes above, my understanding is that the theme, being the basis of the work, must be presented at the beginning. Medtner also likens the development of a theme to the “opening up of a kernel.”³ In his book, The Thematic Process in Music, Rudolph Reti also uses the term “kernel” to describe a theme.⁴

Besides using the word kernel to describe a theme, both Reti and Medtner believe that the opening of a piece is key to the understanding of the rest of a work; that is, the entire work is derived upon the opening.⁵ Reti in his own analyses, states that the opening of a piece, for example, the introductory Grave in Beethoven's Pathetique Sonata, forms the basis of the entire work—including the structure of the work, its tonal plan. Although Medtner writes on many occasions that the development of a work cannot begin without a theme, and that a theme should be presented at the beginning of a work; Medtner does not make a distinction as to whether an introduction is considered a theme.

In developing a theme, Reti points out two key compositional techniques used in doing so, the first being “contrapuntal imitation.” As mentioned previously, Medtner uses repetition and

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² Ibid., 14.
³ Ibid., 43.
fragments of themes in counterpoint extensively throughout the work. The idea of tracing these varied thematic repetitions itself drives my analysis, to what extent can this theme be traced through the work?

The second technique that Reti mentions is “thematic transformation.”6 Since much of the work consists of both sequential repetition and counterpoint, do any of the themes (especially the opening theme) in this sonata go through a transformation? After all, Medtner does write, “the more faithful the artist has remained to the theme that appeared to him by intuition, the more artistic is this fulfillment and the more inspired his work.”7 How dogmatic is Medtner in his own beliefs to stay true to his theme, thus achieving artistic satisfaction? Does he go as far as only generating musical material that retains its original thematic identity? Does a lack of transformation constitute motivic economy? Part of my methodology also includes referencing Medtner’s own ethos against his own work; whether or not he has held himself up to the laws that he laid down in his book. Firstly, I will show through annotated examples, how thematic material are woven through the texture of the work. I will also break down the themes into smaller motivic units. By doing so, I will explore this sonata beyond the surface level to see if themes within the work are interconnected, and whether subsequent themes and ideas are derived from the opening theme—the “kernel” of the work.

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6 Ibid., 57
Chapter One-Biography of Nikolai Medtner

Nikolai Medtner was a Russian pianist and composer whose contemporaries included Rachmaninov and Scriabin. Today, his music is rarely presented in concert, and he remains relatively unknown to present-day audiences. However, during his lifetime, he was a highly sought-after pianist and pedagogue, and a respected composer. In 1921, Rachmaninov proclaimed Medtner “the greatest composer of our time.”\(^8\) Though Medtner composed primarily for piano solo, all of his works include a piano part.

Born in 1880 in Moscow, Russia, Medtner was the youngest of five children. A sixth child passed away at a very early age, leaving Nikolai as the youngest. Medtner’s family was of Germanic descent. Many of his relatives were musicians or otherwise artistically inclined. Medtner’s parents thought it was important to instill a sense of culture in their children. Therefore, from a young age, the Medtner children were exposed to art, music and literature. Medtner’s father held a well-paying job in a lace factory, which afforded the family a comfortable lifestyle along with cultural indulgences. His mother was a housewife who gave him his first piano lessons at the age of six. Medtner showed an affinity for the instrument and even more dedication towards practicing, so much so that he had to be pried away from the piano for his meals. Precocious in nature, Medtner scoffed at music typically assigned to children of his age group. Instead he demanded to learn the works of great masters such as Bach and Beethoven, both of whom he idolized. Along with piano playing, Medtner also improvised and composed from an early age. Later in life, Medtner’s wife Anna would later reminisce about how her husband, as a child, would be overwhelmed with musical ideas, jotting them down on any little piece of paper he could find.

Two years after Medtner began piano lessons, his maternal uncle Fyodor Goedicke, who was on the faculty of the Moscow Conservatory, took over Medtner’s musical education. By this point, Medtner was adamant about studying music seriously and asked to be formally enrolled at the

\(^8\) Barrie Martyn, Nicolas Medtner: His Life and Music (Vermont: Aldershot and Brookfield, 1995), 145.
Conservatory. His parents were against the idea, but were persuaded by one of the older Medtner children, Emil (with whom Medtner was closest). Aided by his uncle, Medtner prepared and auditioned for the Conservatory, and was accepted. In 1892 Medtner began his studies at the junior division of the Conservatory with Nikolay Kashkin (theory), Anton Arensky (harmony), and Anatoly Galli (piano). Galli was a student of Nikolay Zverev, who also taught Rachmaninov and Scriabin, both of whom graduated in the same year that Medtner entered the Conservatory, 1892.

Medtner graduated from the junior division in 1894 and moved on to the senior division. Upon passing the senior-division entrance exam, students were required to choose a major or an instrument. Though today Medtner is known as a composer, his major at school was piano performance. Medtner never received any formal training in composition but had studied analysis and history as part of the curriculum at the Conservatory. He had also taken counterpoint with Sergei Taneyev but did not complete the course. Medtner, who felt slighted by Taneyev’s solution to a counterpoint exercise, viewed the growth of a musical idea as being of the utmost importance. However Taneyev compared the solution of the problem to “rearranging furniture in a room,” an idea that Medtner could not comprehend. Despite their disagreements, they remained close, and Taneyev continued to offer to look at Medtner’s compositions informally. He later commented, “until now I thought that it was impossible to become a real composer without having thoroughly learnt counterpoint, but now I see from your example that I was mistaken in this.”

In the senior division of the Conservatory, Medtner worked with Paul Pabst on the piano. Pabst was German and had studied with Liszt. Besides teaching and concertizing, Pabst was also known for his transcriptions (notably a paraphrase of Tchaikovsky’s Evgeny Onegin) and a composer of salon pieces. Although Pabst was known to offer little advice on technique, Medtner enjoyed working with him; appreciating his input on his compositions and interpretative ideas on the compositions that he was working on. Unfortunately their work together came to an early end.

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9 Ibid., 6.
due to Pabst’s unexpected death in 1897, leaving Medtner in shock and without a piano teacher. Medtner continued his piano studies with Vasily Sapelnikov and, later, with Vasily Safonov who had earlier turned Medtner down as a student due to other commitments and time constraints. As Medtner’s last teacher, Safonov was a substantial influence in his life, helping him to mature and develop into a highly accomplished pianist. Medtner graduated from the Conservatory in 1900 and was bestowed the Conservatory’s highest honor—the small gold medal. Safonov stated that Medtner, with his talent, was deserving of a diamond medal.

In the same year, Medtner met with his first professional disappointment. Under Safonov’s encouragement, Medtner entered the Rubinstein Competition. The competition had two categories—piano and composition. Medtner had initially planned to enter both categories, but felt that his compositions were not up to par. Under Safonov’s advice, he withdrew his compositional entry and concentrated his efforts on the piano. Medtner was considered a favorite to win but eventually did not. It was speculated that the first prize was awarded to a non-Russian pianist, as a Russian had already been awarded the top honor in the composition category.

In the latter part of 1900, Medtner was poised for his debut as a professional concert pianist with a series of concerts organized by Safonov, with a concert tour of Europe to follow. It is uncertain whether Medtner’s failure in the Rubinstein Competition played a part in his decision but, when faced with the unsatisfying prospect of playing the same repertoire in each of the upcoming concerts, Medtner decided to embark on a different career path. To everyone’s dismay, he withdrew from concertizing completely. With the same conviction he showed in his early teens in wanting to study music, Medtner decided that he wanted to be a composer instead of a virtuoso pianist. His

\[\text{\^{10}}\text{Ibid., 9.}\]

\[\text{\^{11}}\text{The remark about a diamond medal, made by Safonov, was that if one did exist, Medtner would be deserving of it.}\]

\[\text{\^{12}}\text{Ibid., 11.}\]
decision met with renewed parental disappointment, but his brother Emil, along with Taneyev, lent their unwavering support.

The year 1902 was a turning point in Medtner’s life. It was a contradictory year in that his professional life as a composer started to show signs of success, whereas his personal life met with heartbreak. In the fall of that fateful year, his brother Emil married Anna Bratenshi, but this was not without controversy. Unbeknown to many, Anna and Nikolai had feelings for each other. The trio had met back in 1896 while on holiday in Kuntsevo, a town outside of Moscow and a favorite vacation destination among artists and musicians. Emil and Anna struck up a friendship which continued after the holidays. They went out to the theatre and concerts, and on many occasions, brought the younger Nikolai with them. Sensing that Medtner was growing fond of Anna, his mother deemed the relationship inappropriate and ordered Medtner to cease all interaction with Anna. Medtner respected his mother’s wishes, which plunged him into a state of depression. It was some time before he overcame the dejection. Later he met a girl (her name remains unknown) to whom he got engaged at the behest of his parents. When Emil graduated from law school, he proposed to Anna in hopes that she would agree and that they would move to the town of Nizhny-Novgorod, where his new job was located. Anna did have feelings for Emil, but those of friendship and not romantic love. With Nikolai already engaged to someone else, Anna agreed to marry Emil. But she made it clear to him that she had feelings for his brother and that never could she be “a proper wife to him.”

Meanwhile Medtner arranged for a meeting with the Polish pianist Josef Hofmann after hearing him in a concert. Medtner had hoped to play his works for Hofmann, seeking his input and advice. He played the first movement of his first sonata for the older pianist, who was so impressed by the work that he asked for Medtner to play it again and to send him a copy of the music.

Hofmann quickly spread word about the young Medtner and his work. Among Hofmann’s friends

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13 Ibid., 15.
was Rachmaninov, who invited Medtner to come play for him. It was with this meeting, in December of 1902, that the lifelong friendship between the two men began. Medtner completed his first piano sonata in August of 1903. With Taneyev’s help, a meeting between Medtner and the committee of the Belyayev publishing company was set up. Medtner’s work was accepted for publication by the committee, and in the spring of 1904, his first sonata was published by Belyayev as Op. 5. That fall, Medtner returned to the concert stage to premiere the work himself, using the occasion as a platform to promote his compositions rather than as a showcase for his pianistic abilities.

In late 1906, Medtner along with Emil and Anna, moved to Germany; they remained there until 1909. During his time in Germany, Medtner tried to concentrate on his compositions. This proved to be difficult, as he was worried about his financial situation. Little money was coming in from the publishers from the sale of his music. To supplement his income he did some private teaching on the side. Judging by the genre of works completed during his three years abroad, Medtner was perhaps inspired by Germany and its culture. He completed seven opuses, of which four were sets of songs. Three of the sets were set to texts by Heine and Goethe. He was later awarded the Glinka Prize (1912) back in Russia for his sets of Goethe songs.

In January of 1909, Medtner returned to the Moscow Conservatory for a concert that featured first performances of his new works. He was invited by the Conservatory director, Ippalitov Ivanov, to join the faculty. Medtner was hesitant to accept the post, fearing that the responsibilities would leave him insufficient time to work on his compositions. However, the prospects of a steady income prompted him to accept the appointment. Only a year later, in the Spring of 1910, feeling overwhelmed at the Conservatory, Medtner handed in his resignation. Finding the hustle and bustle of Moscow too distracting, Medtner moved to the countryside in 1911. He concertized occasionally and continued his work as an editor with the Russian Musical Press.
War broke out in 1914 between Russia and Germany. Medtner felt torn in his allegiances between his motherland, Russia, and his ancestral homeland, Germany. Many men were enlisted to serve in the army but, like most artists and musicians, both Rachmaninov and Medtner were exempt. Medtner was able to continue composing and teaching amid the devastation and uncertainty of war. With the passing of Medtner’s mother in 1918, there was finally a resolution to the relationship between Nikolai, Emil and Anna. Emil and Anna had remained married to please Medtner’s parents. In June of 1919, Nikolai and Anna were finally married.

With the unrest and political uprisings in Russia, Medtner, like many artists, toyed with the idea of immigration. Rachmaninov, who had already made a name for himself in America, managed to negotiate some concerts and piano roll recordings for Medtner. This was key in securing a visa to leave Russia. In October of 1920, Medtner and Anna left Russia for Berlin. Their time in Germany was difficult. Concert opportunities were scarce, and Medtner did not find the German cultural scene to his liking. The financial situation for Medtner was also precarious. He was unable to negotiate a suitable fee with the publishers of his music and, in desperation, had to accept what he was offered.

In 1922, Medtner met with an admirer of his music. Bernhard Schwarz was a Muscovite living in Berlin. He managed to arrange a concert for Medtner in the Beethoven-Saal. Among those in the audience were Glazunov and other Russians who were appreciative of Medtner’s music. However, the Berlin critics were not as kind. One of them wrote of Medtner’s *Forgotten Melodies* that “they will quickly be forgotten.” The critics also described his music as being “incessant without purpose and moderation, without heights and depths, without rising to a culminating point.”

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14 Ibid., 149.
15 Ibid., 149.
Medtner was naturally upset by the criticisms, although audiences responded well to his music. To make matters worse, contracts for the American concert tour fell through. With few prospects in terms of concert engagements and the less than desirable cultural scene, the Medtners decided to leave Germany in 1924. They travelled around Europe, visiting friends and finally settling in Erquy, France, in northwest Brittany, for the summer months. Aside from working on his compositions, Medtner started to learn the repertoire for his long-delayed American concert tour. Medtner and Anna left Erquy in late September and finally arrived in New York City on October 9, 1924. Considering their inability to speak English, the couple’s transition into life in their temporary home base in America was smoother than expected. Rachmaninov had found the Medtners a fully furnished apartment near his own on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. During their six-month stay, Medtner also developed a strong friendship with the musicologist Alfred Swan, who later translated Medtner’s *The Muse and The Fashion*. Aside from the concerts, the other major engagement in America was the recording of several piano rolls of Medtner’s own music for the company Duo-Art. This was a bonus for Medtner, as it brought much needed financial relief along with the concerts. At that time the concerts were well received by both audiences and critics in terms of his own music and also his playing. A review by the *Musical Courier* noted that “there were expressions of wonder that this man’s works were not already better known in America” and that “Medtner is one of the world’s great classic masters, and it is to be hoped that America will realize it.”

In February of 1925, Medtner played a recital in New York’s Aeolian Hall. This recital featured only his own music and he considered it to be the most important concert of all that he had presented during his six-month stay in America. This concert also featured the soprano Elizabeth Santagano. The recollection of this recital from several viewpoints was very inconsistent. Anna had in her opinion, thought the concert to be a success as noted in her diary, but Medtner’s friend Alfred

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16 Ibid., 168.
Swan, gave a startlingly different viewpoint. Swan noted that Medtner had “slammed down the lid of the piano and left the hall” after he had finished performing the last piece on the recital. The English critic and musicologist Ernest Newman was in America at the time and also present at the concert. He wrote that “Medtner’s music does not make an immediate appeal to the man in the street but it certainly grows on the musician” and that “it is sad to think of the réclame that has come to fifty mediocrities in the last decade or so, while a fine mind like Medtner’s goes on its way almost unregarded by the crowd.”

The American tour ended in frustration as some concerts that were more financially lucrative or that Medtner thought of as being more artistically satisfying were cancelled for reasons unknown. After spending six months in America, the Medtners returned to France on April 1, 1925.

Upon their return to France, the Medtners decided not to stay in Paris. They found a cottage for rent in a town forty minutes outside of the city. Although the cottage was picturesque, it was without electricity. The lack of modernism (in this case, electricity) was something that Medtner appreciated. For Medtner, the modernism found in daily life served as a reminder of America’s social environment, which he thought to be “artistically contaminated and spiritually commercialized,” a plight that also plagued Paris and other major cities. Here at the cottage, he felt protected from the “subversive influences” of city life as he held onto his “artistic idealisms.”

After the time that he spent in Germany and America, Medtner started to reminisce in letters to friends and relatives about his homeland. In a letter to his sister Sofiya, he wrote, “With each day I love Russia and everything Russian more and more.” Medtner yearned to return to his homeland, to an audience that were responsive and appreciative of his works. During the recent concerts in Germany and America, Medtner never felt a sense of reciprocity between the audience and himself.

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17 Ibid., 169.
18 Ibid., 173.
19 Ibid., 174.
As noted by his friend, Albert Swan, during one of Medtner's recitals in New York: Medtner feeling a disconnect and lack of appreciation from the audience, “slammed down the lid of the piano and left the hall” after playing the final work.\textsuperscript{20}

More bad news was to follow: shortly before the end of 1925, his publisher August Zimmermann announced a change to his fees due to low sales of his music. Adding insult to injury, Zimmermann had suggested that the lack of sales of Medtner’s music was due to the fact that his music was old-fashioned and that the buyers of sheet music wanted modern music like that of Stravinsky. Medtner had little choice but to accept the new terms of the contract. Rachmaninov, who served as Medtner’s advisor in contractual matters, noted that the music-publishing business was not as robust as it used to be.\textsuperscript{21}

Between 1925 and 1926, Medtner’s contempt for the tastes and trends of modern music intensified. The disdain that he had for modern music was further stoked by letters sent to him by a former pupil, Panteleymon Vasilyev. Vasilyev’s letters prompted a series of correspondences between the teacher and pupil, contemplating the aesthetics of music. They also reminisced about the development of music and its journey through history. Ultimately, the discussion led to the topic that perhaps vexed Medtner most—contemporary music.

Medtner had always considered himself a “student of Beethoven,” and like Beethoven he kept notebooks of his musical ideas and developments. He believed in the “eternal” musical values of the past masters and considered that “contemporary music, having strayed from those values, did not represent progress but instead, decadence.”\textsuperscript{22} In addition to the composition notebooks, Medtner also kept notebooks of his philosophical thoughts such as those quoted above. Many of the issues raised in various correspondences (with his brother Emil, colleagues, students such as Vasilyev and

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 169.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 174.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 175.
friends), along with those in his own notebooks, formed the basis of Medtner’s book, *The Muse and the Fashion*, considered to be a manifesto of his compositional ethos.\(^{23}\)

In early 1927, Nikolai and Anna finally returned to Moscow for a series of concerts. The audience responded with warm appreciation. While in Moscow, Medtner was able to attend the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of his alma mater and sat in on a “contemporary harmony” class that was taught in the Conservatory. To say the least, Medtner was disappointed by the direction that his country’s politics and music scene has taken. In a congratulatory note sent to the Conservatory, he expressed his wish for the school to “boldly lead the fight against the demands of fashion, which, unfortunately, like an epidemic, has affected a large part of the musical world.”\(^{24}\)

Nikolai and Anna bade Moscow farewell once again after the concert series ended, and returned to Paris in May.

In late 1927, Medtner was invited by a soprano, Tatiana Makushina, to join her in London for a concert of his songs. This would be Medtner’s first visit to London. The concert, performed in Aeolian Hall in February 1928, was reviewed favorably by Ernest Newman in the *Sunday Times*.\(^{25}\)

The renowned English pedagogue Tobias Matthay was also in the audience, along with many of his students. He wept as he met Medtner backstage, inviting him and Anna to his home. Later during the tour, Medtner visited the Royal Academy of Music in London where he was inducted as an honorary member. He also visited the BBC studio to record a recital for radio broadcast. The setup for the recording induced panic in Medtner who started to perspire profusely and forgot the order of program. A second visit to London was planned for Medtner; he would play his Second Piano Concerto for a concert organized by the Royal Philharmonic Society. This lifted Medtner’s spirits;

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 175.  
\(^{24}\) Ibid., 187.  
\(^{25}\) Ibid., 192.
as he felt that his music had finally found an audience and was appreciated in London. He returned
to France with a sense of renewed energy.

In September 1929, Nikolai and Anna left for America for another series of concerts. This
trip included some concerts in Canada organized by his close friend Alfred La Liberté, to whom he
had dedicated some of his works and, most importantly, it also included a recital at Carnegie Hall.
After the tour had ended, the Medtners travelled to London to attend the British premiere of
Medtner’s First Piano Concerto, performed by English pianist Edna Iles. Bad news awaited them in
London, where they received a letter that the check for the North American tour had bounced. After
they returned to France, they sought legal help in an attempt to recoup some of the money from the
tour. The agent who had issued the check was an embezzler. No legal proceedings could be initiated
in the French court, since the offense was committed outside of France. Anna secretly approached
Rachmaninov for help and he generously gave them the money.

In 1931, the publisher Zimmermann wrote a letter informing Medtner of the firm’s
reluctance to publish his set of two sonatas (now catalogued as Op. 53, Nos. 1 and 2). The reason
was that the sonatas were simply too large in scale in terms of length and technical difficulty.
Instead Zimmermann asked for Medtner to send him some pieces that were suitable for amateurs,
which could potentially be more lucrative. The pieces that Zimmermann was referring to were
Medtner’s *Romantic Sketches for the Young*, subsequently published as Op. 54. In a letter to Emil,
Medtner referred to the set of pieces to be “rubbish unwanted by me.”

In 1932, Medtner began compiling all the notebooks and correspondence of philosophical
writings that he had accumulated over the years, putting them in a cohesive order to be published as
a book. During this time, his compositional efforts dwindled as the book took precedence. The
scope of this project proved so wide that it took him over two and a half years to sort out, arrange
and annotate. It was finally published in 1935 as *Muza i moda: zashchita osnov muzykal’nogo*
iskusstva\textsuperscript{26}. Again, the publication was made possible by Rachmaninov’s generosity. This book will be discussed in Chapter 2.\textsuperscript{27}

Nikolai and Anna made a permanent move to England in October 1935. They were offered a low-rental house in London that was owned by their friends, the Braikevitches, whose daughter Medtner had given lessons to when he was last in London. Braikevitch recognized the fact that the British audiences appreciated Medtner more as a pianist than a composer, and convinced him to exploit that to his advantage. Medtner performed in London’s Aeolian Hall in February of 1936, playing only works by Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt and none of his own. The concert was reviewed by several newspapers with comments such as “Medtner is every bit as great at the keyboard as he is at his writing desk,” and that he had “roused a crowded audience to a quite unusual display of enthusiasm.” At the end of the year, six albums of Medtner playing his own music were recorded and released by HMV.

In April 1936, Emil made a visit to Nikolai and Anna in London. It was the last time that the trio was to see each other. Before his arrival in London, Emil had sent them a lengthy letter outlining his wish to commit suicide. After spending a month with them, Emil went to Germany to visit some other friends. There he contracted pneumonia and passed away on July 11, 1936. Emil’s death was devastating for Medtner. His brother had been a constant pillar of strength and support for Nikolai’s endeavors and was more than gracious in regards to his relationship with Anna.

When war broke out in 1939 between Britain and Germany, the Medtners’ financial security was once again threatened because of the lack of demand for piano lessons and concerts. During the war, Medtner was unable to compose due to the noise and distractions. The Medtners temporarily moved to Birmingham in search of solitude. When their accommodations at Birmingham were


\textsuperscript{27} I will refer to Medtner’s book as \textit{The Muse and the Fashion} and any citations of Medtner’s book will be from the English translation.
bombed, they moved to Warwickshire. Medtner was also disturbed by news of the invasion of
Moscow by the Germans in June 1941. Although he no longer lived in Moscow, his heart was still
there. In the fall of 1942, Medtner suffered a series of heart attacks, and he was confined to a period
of bed rest. In March of the next year, Rachmaninov passed away. Medtner, in his condolences to
Rachmaninov’s widow, wrote, “For me he was, and continues to be, the only oasis in the
contemporary musical desert.”

By 1945, Medtner was making infrequent but regular radio broadcasts for the BBC. In the
fall of the next year, Medtner and HMV came to a contractual agreement for Medtner to make three
recordings. Around the same time, the Maharaja of Mysore, a great enthusiast of Medtner’s music,
wrote to the London Trade Commissioner in an attempt to sponsor the creation of a Medtner
Society. The Maharaja first heard one of his Tales in Berlin when visiting his sister. He was so
enthralled by what he heard that he made it his mission to have Medtner’s music reach a wider
audience. Upon hearing the news, as a token of his appreciation, Medtner dedicated his Third Piano
Concerto to the Maharaja. The Medtner Society, in conjunction with HMV, released a total of three
albums. Digitally remastered versions of these recordings are still available today.

Medtner’s last major work was his Piano Quintet in C Major, opus posthumous. The quintet
was completed in 1948, some forty-four years after its initial conception in 1904. Medtner had
considered it to be his most important composition and remarked to his friend Edna Iles that “the
work is dedicated to God.” The composition is filled with religious elements. For example, in the
first movement, the Dies Iraes plainchant is used, followed by another chant, Christ is risen. In the
autograph score, Medtner quotes verses from religious texts such as the gospel of St. Luke. Soon
after the completion of the quintet, Medtner suffered yet another heart attack. He was determined to

28 Ibid., 239.
29 Ibid., 248.
30 Ibid., 249.
record the quintet before he died. In May 1950, he recorded the quintet for the BBC with the Aeolian Quartet.

Feeling that he was near the end of his life, Medtner sat down in September 1951 to put all his written work in order. Manuscripts of his completed works were numbered and ordered. All the rest of the writings—the sketches and notebooks—were burnt by Anna at Medtner’s request. In the early morning of November 13, 1951, Medtner passed away. He was buried the next day in a cemetery close to his home in London, and on his tombstone lay an urn with Emil’s ashes.

Without Medtner, Anna found her life to be without meaning. She returned to Moscow in 1958, taking with her all the manuscripts and other written works by Medtner. These are now housed in the Glinka Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow. In 1965, a complete edition of Medtner’s work, in twelve volumes, was published by the Soviet Ministry of Culture.
Chapter Two

This chapter discusses the first half of Medtner’s book, *The Muse and the Fashion*. In it, Medtner outlines what he believed to be the “laws” of music and is most pertinent to understanding his compositional process and ethos. The inspiration for *The Muse and the Fashion* came from Medtner’s contempt for some of his contemporaries’ music. Towards the end of 1925, Zimmermann, Medtner’s publisher, contacted him to renegotiate his contract due to the lackluster sales. With good intent, Zimmermann suggested to Medtner that his music would fare better with audiences if it were composed in the stylistic vein of the “fashionable” Stravinsky. Feeling insulted, Medtner engaged in an exchange of letters with his former student, Panteleymon Vasilyev, philosophizing about the aesthetics and language of music. Most importantly, in these letters, Medtner made his stand against the so-called “progress” (modernism) and waged his “defence of the foundations of the Art of Music.”

In order to understand Medtner’s disdain towards the musical trends of his time, his musical attitude and compositional beliefs must be understood in a historical context. Medtner lived and composed in a time when the expressionist movement (in music and art) were all the rage, and Stravinsky was considered by many to be the forerunner of musical trends. What others saw as progress in the music of their day, Medtner saw as the decline of the musical values he believed in. In a letter to an acquaintance, Grigory Beklemishav, he wrote, that he was born “a whole hundred years late.” In his book, Medtner did not name any specific “modernist” composers when discussing the issues in question. However, he did do so in letter to friends and family, naming specific composers such as Prokofiev and Schoenberg. The negative feelings he had were clear; both in his letters, and as noted by others such as his wife, Anna in her own letters.

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32 This quote is the subtitle of *The Muse and the Fashion*.
33 Ibid., 174.
34 Ibid., 175.
The book is divided into two halves, and each half is preceded by a poem. In the first half, Medtner breaks music down into its defining elements—what each element strives for as separate entities and as a totality. The second half is titled “Mirror of the Muse” and opens with a poem of the same title by Goethe. From the title of the second half, one can assume that the discussion in the first half of the book is on the “Muse.” Despite being a key word in the title, Medtner never explains conclusively as to who the “Muse” is or what it refers to. From the title itself, one would expect the “Muse” to be the protagonist but yet, the term is rarely mentioned except in a handful of passages within the work. Medtner comes the closest to describing “who” the “Muse” is in the opening chapter of the second half of the book, where he refers to the “Muse” as the “caretaker of the spirit and the everlasting laws of art,” and in the eyes of “Fashion” (modernism), “Muse” is the “former inspirer and teacher of poets and musicians.” In a less florid manner of speech, “The Muse and the Fashion” is simply “The Old and the New.” However, this does not explain who the “Muse” is or what it means to Medtner. If the “Muse” is the “former inspirer and teacher of musicians” and “Fashion” refers to modernism, “Muse” in the context of this book, can be understood as the laws of music of the past that Medtner believed in; the same laws followed by past masters such as Bach and Beethoven, whose works Medtner idolized and referenced in his book.

Medtner described music as being the ultimate expression of thought and feeling, and that music is itself, a language. In spite of all that expressiveness, he states that music cannot be spoken about. Music with its long history, must have definable elements. The elements of the musical language, like any language, are governed by law. Medtner has broken down the musical language into nine fundamental elements, which he calls “senses.” These “senses” replace words as Medtner

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36 Ibid., 100.
37 Ibid., 6.
states, “Music intones the inexpressible, and for the inexpressible we need not words, but the SENSES themselves.”\textsuperscript{38} Before listing the “senses,” it must be noted that Medtner believes that these “senses” exist in pairs and are “correlative conceptions.”\textsuperscript{39} Each pair consists of a “center” and “encirclement” (gravitation). There is a “preeminence” within the pair, and “all analogues (pairs) are united in a common gravitation towards the centre.”\textsuperscript{40}

In the creative process towards expression, Medtner believes “unity” to be the governing body of “emotion and thoughts.” He believes in the dichotomy of each “analogue” pair and that unity is in itself “a coordination of diversity.”\textsuperscript{41} To Medtner, I believe that the key to the dichotomy is \textit{simplicity and complexity}. Neither can exist without the other. The sum of simplicity is nothingness, and the sum of complexity is anarchy.\textsuperscript{42}

The “senses” themselves are as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 8.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 12.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 12.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 7.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 16.
\end{itemize}
All these senses reach their culmination in the theme, which Medtner refers to as “the most primary, fundamental, supreme ‘sense’ of music.” To Medtner, the theme is the “kernel,” the basis of the entire work. It is a vessel in itself. Within the theme is the principle content of the work from which the ensuing complexity is derived. A theme must be presented at the beginning of a piece, for “no artistic creation can begin with the development of a theme that has not yet appeared.”\textsuperscript{43} He compares the development of a theme to the “opening up of a kernel.”\textsuperscript{44} Since Medtner considered the theme as the key to the rest of the work it must also be the “most simple and accessible part of

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Center} & \textbf{Encirclement (gravitation)} \\
\hline
The contemplated sound (heard by the inner ear) & The emitted or affixed sound \\
\hline
Time, the plane of music (The horizontal line of harmony—the placement of musical sounds) & The movement in time of all musical sense and elements (The vertical line of harmony—the capacity of musical sounds) \\
\hline
The tonic (The root note of the mode, scale, tonality) & The mode, the scale, the tonality \\
\hline
The diatonic scale (diatonicism) & The chromatic scale (chromaticism) \\
\hline
Consonance & Dissonance \\
\hline
The tonic (The fundamental triad) & The dominant (A triad that is the coordinate of tonality) \\
\hline
Tonality & Modulation \\
\hline
Prototypes of consonant chords—the triads and their inversions & Prototypes of dissonant chords—four note formations (chords of the seventh) and five note formations (chords of the ninth) and their inversion \\
\hline
Prototypes of consonant and dissonant chords and their inversions & Casual harmonic formations (suspensions, anticipations, passing auxiliary, and sustained notes) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 43.
the work. A theme does not need to be complex in order for it to be abundant with ideas. As a matter of fact, a theme should be filled with a sense of repose and contemplation, and is developed through motion and action. The organic growth of a theme was so important to him that early on in his education, he rejected Taneyev’s concept of “rearrangement.” The complexity of a work is “genetically tied to the simplicity of the song form (theme); the song form is tied to the construction of a period the period-to a phrase; the phrase to the cadence; the cadence to the construction of the mode; the mode to the tonic.”\(^{46}\) In this statement we see the development of an idea, comparable to the growth of a story from words to sentences and beyond to paragraph and chapters. Medtner felt that the ultimate test of a composer is how true the composer has kept to the boundaries of the material of the theme. He stated, “the more faithful the artist has remained to the theme that appeared to him by intuition, the more artistic is this fulfillment and the more inspired by his work. His whole action and work is justified by an uninterrupted contemplation of the theme.”\(^{47}\) It is interesting to note that Medtner felt that a theme is an “intuition that is acquired and not invented.”\(^{48}\) If the theme did not appear out of intuition, then the “composer is forced to invent the greatest possible number of interesting details which by their complexity can cover the nakedness of the theme.”\(^{49}\)

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 44.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 49.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 43.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 43.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 44.
Chapter 3—Medtner’s *Sonata Romantica* Op. 53, No. 1

**Approach to the Analysis**

In his book, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music*, Kofi Agawu states, “First and most obviously, a musical work is conceived as a sequence of events. An event may be a gesture, an idea, a motive, a progression, or, more neutrally, a building block, phrase, segment or unit.”

Using this phrase as a jumping-point, the objective of this analysis is to trace the journey of the themes through the course of this work, Medtner’s *Sonata Romantica*, both on the surface level (i.e. the themes still being in a recognizable guise) and beyond. In doing so, this thematic exploration will determine whether or not latter themes are derived (from the initial theme) through transformation or other methods.

Medtner, in his book, has stressed through numerous statements why the initial theme is of utmost importance to him; that the initial theme is the one that potentially bears the most weight in terms of its contents and later references. Simply said, to quote Medtner, “no artistic creation can begin with the development of a theme that has not yet appeared.”

For Medtner, music is the ultimate form of expression as “Music intones the inexpressible.” To a Russian musician, the word *intonate*, or the term *intonation*, took on different meanings and is a substantial field of study in Russian musicology. It is a term that evolved through the years and bears considerable weight in what it stands for. The term *intonation* is credited to several Russian theorists: Boleslav Yavorsky (1877–1942), Sergei Protopopov (1893–1954), and Boris Asafiev (1884–1949). Yavorsky attended the Moscow Conservatory and was also a student of Sergei Taneyev. He was later considered a possible replacement for Taneyev’s position at the

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52 Ibid., 7.
Conservatory but refused. Yavorsky introduced the concept of intonation in the early 1900s. The term intonation was defined by Yavorsky in 1908 as being “the smallest basic tonal form in time.” In an article written in 1929, “The Construction of the Melodic Process,” Yavorsky defines intonation as “the disclosing of the expressive possibility of a tonal cell.” For Boris Asafiev, his definition of the term intonation, changed with time. His major opus, “Musical Form as a Process” consists of two parts. The first part was published in 1930. The second part, published in 1947, is titled “Intonation.” There he states, “a thought, in order to be expressed aloud becomes an intonation—is intoned.” All the above statements are crucial in understanding the importance of a theme in Medtner’s music; for the term intone, is significant in its various definitions and only serves to underscore the importance of the theme, which is when the music begins. To Medtner, before the music is “intoned,” the theme is simply metaphysical—an idea in the mind of a composer, or just a theme on the page of a manuscript. It is only when the theme (song) is intoned, that the idea is realized and brought to life.

Medtner regards a theme to be like the trademark of a composer, in that “it is the brightest seal of the individuality of the composer.” The merit of a composer may also be measured by how true he or she is to his or her theme. “The more faithful the artist has remained to the theme, the more artistic his fulfillment, the more inspired his work.” After all, the theme being the “clue” to all ensuing “complexity and variety of the work,” should be “the most simple and accessible part of the work.” The theme is also the most fundamental element of a work, and Medtner alludes to the

54 Ibid., 129.
57 Ibid., 43.
58 Ibid., 44.
fact that his themes are not a haphazard collection of notes. Instead, every “inspired theme” should contain all the “senses” (concepts) that constitute the language of music. A theme, without these “senses,” will thus be lacking in “content” and not lend itself to development.

How does Medtner create variety in his musical material if he has already set such strict boundaries for himself? What does “faithful” mean in this context? Does it mean that he will use only the “one” theme as a source for generating further material?

Medtner likened the “development of a theme to the opening up of a kernel.” Rudolph Reti, in his book *The Thematic Process in Music*, also used the word kernel to describe a theme. A theme consists of contents to be developed. Reti, in his book, points out two compositional techniques used to develop a theme, the first being contrapuntal imitation. As mentioned in the Introduction, Medtner subjects his various themes to a multitude of varied and fragmented repetitions, often in counterpoint against each other. That approach, evidently constitutes as contrapuntal imitation. Contrapuntal imitation, along with varied repetition are considered and accepted as methods of thematic development. However is there “real” development being made? This brings us to Reti’s second compositional technique used for thematic development—thematic transformation. What then, is the definition of thematic transformation? A simple answer is offered by Walter Frisch, in his book, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, “a transformed theme retains its original melodic outline but may change its mode, harmony, tempo, rhythm, or meter.” Frisch states this to describe the method of transformation often used by Liszt. However he also goes on to state that this particular method of transformation does not result in

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59 Ibid., 41.
60 Ibid., 45.
61 Ibid., 43.
63 Ibid., 57.
actual thematic development.\textsuperscript{64} So when is a thematic transformation actually considered developmental? Reti states that the “new” theme must be unrecognizable, but when analyzed is found to possess “the same essence and kernel” as a former theme.\textsuperscript{65}

On the surface level, there are multiple varied repetitions of the various themes throughout the sonata. Different themes appear simultaneously within a passage, almost like a stretto in a fugue. Themes are also interpolated between the different voices, with thematic fragments often being repeated sequentially and used as counterpoint against each other. In fact, there is a high level of melodic saturation by the various themes throughout the work. How does one then go about examining whether Medtner’s themes are derived through thematic transformation?

Before delving into the content and origin of Medtner’s themes, the term \textit{theme} must be defined, as well as identifying the components that make up a theme. According to Jonathan Dunsby, a theme is a term most commonly used to denote the principal melodic passages of tonal music, and of non-tonal music which retains the feature of melodic continuity. ‘Theme’ usually refers to complete phrases or periods, in contrast to the terms ‘idea’ or ‘motif’, and is used typically of the most important melodic passages.\textsuperscript{66} A theme may be comprised of multiple phrases.

Schoenberg, in his posthumously translated and published book, \textit{The Musical Idea and the Logic, Technique, and Art of its Presentation}, sums up succinctly the elements that make up a theme. He orders the elements in a way similar to a table. I have stated Schoenberg’s table in a linear fashion below, in hierarchical order:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Theme} > \textbf{Period/Sentence} > \textbf{Phrase} > \textbf{Motive (Features of a Motive)}\textsuperscript{67}
\end{center}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{64} Walter Frisch,\textit{ Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variations} (U.S.A.: University of California Press, 1990), 36.
\end{itemize}
Now that the components of a theme has been identified, they shall also need to be defined. Beginning with period and sentence, in the broadest view and without getting into the specifics of theory, a period or sentence may be understood as a pair of phrases. The term, phrase, however requires more thought and insight when attempting to define it.

William Rothstein, in his book, *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music*, writes “a phrase is first of all a unit of tonal motion; if there is no tonal motion, there is no phrase.”68 There has to be a sense of direction from one tonal element to another that unfolds in time.69 With directed motion, there has to be a goal. In the case of a phrase, that goal is a cadence. However, the goal may also be a new beginning, hence the situation of phrase overlapping.70 A phrase (if large) may be divided into subphrases. This is dependent on the tonal content of the phrase. The distinction between a phrase and a subphrase lies in the wholeness of their tonal content.

As my analysis deals particularly with Medtner’s themes and motives, Schoenberg’s definition of the term, phrase, sums it up most succinctly. Schoenberg wrote, “when referring to a phrase in a compositional context, a phrase is the more or less connected stringing of motives.”71 The next questions to ask then is, how is a motive identified and defined?

Schoenberg considered a motive to be “the smallest common multiple” and also the “greatest common factor.” A motive is established and identified through repetition. The repetition may not necessarily be exact as repetition leads to “monotony” and that repetitions have to be modified in order to create variety, thus “overcoming monotony.”72 Schoenberg’s statement of a

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69 The tonal elements that Rothstein cites as examples are harmonies and melodic tones.

70 Ibid., 28.


motive being established through repetition is echoed by Schenker; this is particularly noteworthy considering that many theoretical issues were matters of contention between the two men.73

A motive is defined by its “features,” be it an interval or rhythm. Schoenberg considered an interval or a rhythm as a motive, so long as “it is treated as such.”74 Reti, in analyses shown in his book, broke down melodic shapes into shorter motivic elements of varying lengths. In his own definition of a motif, he was not specific in regards to the length. Any musical element may be a motif, even rhythm and dynamics. He likens a musical motif to that in the field of fine art, in that it is a crucial part of the overall design as it goes through a series of repetition and variation through the course of a work.75 However, Reti’s analytical approach is not without its fair share of criticisms, notably by Roger Sessions and Nicholas Cook. Both Sessions and Cook fault Reti for placing too much emphasis on his “thematic concept” and not taking into regards other musical elements such as phrasing, texture and rhythm.7677 Reti defends his stance by stating that, if one were to analyze a melodic shape according to the composer’s phrase markings, there would be “frequent discrepancy between the manner in which shapes seem to be divided,” or if one were to follow the path taken by a motivic element. Reti also states that “the conscious phrasing and grouping of a work’s shape” as found on a score, may not be a reflection of the initial shapes developed from the “mold of motivic ideas” found in a composer’s mind.78 Thus, Reti often enough chose to ignore the composer’s phrase markings.

Reti was also criticized by Cook, for being convenient in his choice of notes when analyzing a melody. According to Cook, Reti “picks out the evidence that fits his interpretations and ignores

what does not." Sessions denounced Reti’s method as “note-juggling.” Sessions reproached Reti for bolstering his case by adding or omitting notes, and also extending twelve-tone theory with a concept he termed *interversion*, which simply disregards the order of the notes.

Cook also makes a case against Reti allowing a single interval to serve as a motive. To be fair, Schoenberg, Reti’s teacher, permitted intervals to be considered motives, or, of course, as parts of them. However, Cook says, Reti uses intervals as motives in far too broad a way. For example, in his analysis of Beethoven’s Pathétique Sonata, Reti calls the interval of a third a “prime cell,” using the term “prime cell” as an umbrella term and capturing in it any third whatsoever, whether it be falling or rising, major or minor, open or filled in stepwise.

I have applied a similar approach in my analysis of this sonata, in that, by breaking down a theme into smaller definitive units similar to those defined by Schoenberg and Reti, I will be able to trace the motives through the course of the work. As I break the theme down into smaller units, I have taken into consideration, phrase markings, slurs, accents, downbeats and other rhythmical elements. The issue then is to determine the hierarchical order of these units, and the nomenclature used to term each one.

Through the course of the sonata, motives found within the themes are identified through repetitions. Citing the initial theme as an example, as the first few motives within the opening theme are being traced through the sonata, they appear to be non-transformative, in that each motivic recurrence is simply varied and still recognizable. Fragments of the first motive are repeated immediately after its initial presentation. Therefore, to analyze the thematic development of the work, each theme will be broken down in the following order:

*Theme > Phrase (subphrase if necessary) > Motive > Submotive.*

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80 Ibid., 109.
What I have termed as a submotive, is the parallel of what Schoenberg and Reti termed as “features of a motive.” Following themes will be examined in the same manner. In doing so, all identified motives and submotives will be compared and a conclusion drawn as to whether the latter themes are derived from the initial theme through transformation. This will ultimately show the level of interconnectivity between all the themes, thus proving whether Medtner abides by the laws he himself set in his book.

In order to process all the motivic/submotivic units (be it melodic or rhythmic) in a clear fashion, the motives and submotives found in each movement will be named in the order that they chronologically appear. Motives will be noted as uppercase characters and preceded by the theme from which it was derived, for example Theme 1, Motive A. Submotives will first be identified by a theme, followed by a lowercase character which denotes the motive from which they are derived, followed by a number, which identifies them by the order which they appear within a motive, for example, Theme 1, submotive a.1. In an effort to maintain uniformity in naming the motives and submotives, the initial motive and submotive in each individual movement will be identified as A or a, and following motives or submotives will be named chronologically as the letters of the alphabet. If an example is referring to a motive or submotive from an earlier movement, the movement number will be noted before the motive or submotive discussed.
Synopsis of *Sonata Romantica* Op. 53 No. 1

*Sonata Romantica* is the first of a pair of sonatas published under Op. 53, by the Zimmermann Publishing Company in late 1933. It is the twelfth sonata out of fourteen that Medtner composed in his lifetime. The sonata is in four movements, with each movement linked to the next. Although it is unknown when or where Medtner began composing *Sonata Romantica* Op. 53, No. 1, the work was completed in Paris in late 1930 and dedicated to A. M. Henderson. Henderson was a contemporary of Medtner. Born in Glasgow in 1879, Henderson studied the piano with Cortot and organ with Widor. He edited and published many volumes of piano repertoire, along with his own piano transcriptions of Bach's works.

The mood of the sonata is a reflection of the turmoil and financial uncertainty in Medtner’s life at that time. Medtner had just returned to his home in Paris after a concert tour of America and England. The agent that was in charge of Medtner's earnings and finances from the concerts in America was a convicted criminal found guilty of embezzlement. Unfortunately, no charges could be filed against the agent due to international laws. The sonata was premiered by Medtner himself, in Glasgow in late 1931.

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82 Ibid., 205.
Movement 1

Movement 1 is titled Romanza, and is set in sonata form (see Table 3.1)

### Table 3.1: Movement 1, Form chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exposition</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Recapitulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mm.</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>tr</td>
<td>T2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>3+3</td>
<td>2+2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*T: Theme
*tr: transition
*CM: Closing Material
*pl: phrase length

Here in Movement 1 of Sonata Romantica, the simplicity of Theme 1 lies in the brevity of the subphrases that make up the theme and its melodic material. The opening of Theme 1 (Phrase 1, Subphrase 1) is an unaccompanied six-note gesture (without the grace notes) which I will call Motive A. Subphrase 2 of both Phrases 1 and 2 are varied repetitions of Motive A (Phrase 1, Subphrase 1) that are harmonized. I will call them Motives A1 and A2 respectively. Phrase 2, Subphrase 1, will be termed as Motive B as its melodic material is not a repetition of Motive A (see Example 3.1). Although Motive A is an unaccompanied melodic line, the tonic harmony of B-flat minor is implied as the motive begins and ends on scale degree five, outlining a descending triad in the first four notes with a passing tone (PT). The incomplete neighbor tone (INT) within Motive A can be thought of as representing a subdominant harmony. The end of Motive A is then accompanied by tonic harmonies.
Example 3.1: Medtner, Op. 53, No. 1, First Movement, Theme 1, mm. 1-6, showing phrase and subphrase structures, motives, melodic similarities and implied harmonies
In the opening six measures that is Theme 1, Motive A has already been presented three times; once in its original form and two variants (see Example 3.1). All three guises of Motive A share a similar melodic contour due to the last four pitches of the motive. The three repetitions presented in the opening six measures firmly established the motive as both a compositional element and main thematic material. Motive A can be broken down into three submotives (see Motive A in Example 3.2). These submotives and its variants will serve as the building blocks of following new motives and other musical material.

Example 3.2: Forms of Motive A and its submotives
Theme 1, Motive B, is made up of variants of submotives found in Motive A, except for the first four pitches (without the grace notes). I will call these four ascending notes Submotive B (see Example 3.3).

**Example 3.3: Analysis of Motive B showing the derivation of motivic material**

![Example 3.3: Analysis of Motive B showing the derivation of motivic material](image)

Fragments of both motives can also be found in the accompaniment of Theme 1 (see Example 3.4). The first two pitches of Motive A1 is echoed twice in the left hand immediately after in m. 2, rising in register each time. The top line of the first three chords in m. 4— B♭, A♭, and E♭ is an intervallic rearrangement of the last three pitches of Motive B— E♭, B♭ and A♭.

Submotive a.1 is present in the top line of the left hand as noted by the bracket in the bass clef in m. 5. Like the repetition of the first two pitches of Motive A1 between voices in m. 2, the voicing in m. 5 (as shown by the arrow) may also be brought out by a performer to show the analogous “echo effect” in m. 2 and m. 5.
The transition from Theme 1 to Theme 2 begins with three eighth-note anacrusis to m. 7. The passage is predominantly made up of submotives a.2 presented in pairs, constituting three sets of six-note descending figure. From the beginning of the transition (three eighth-note anacrusis to m. 7) to the second eighth-note of m. 8, the starting pitch of each six-note descending figure makes up submotive a.2. A pair of chromaticized submotives a.2 in the left hand (at the end of m. 8) interrupts the end of the series of submotives a.2 in the right hand. An embellished repetition of mm. 7-8 is presented from m. 10 onwards, followed by a filigree passage leading to Theme 2 (see Example 3.5).
Example 3.5: Annotated score of transition from Theme 1 to Theme 2, mm. 7-16, showing Medtner’s use of various manipulations of submotive a.2 in a simultaneous fashion to generate melodic material.
Beginning with the anacrusis to m. 17, Theme 2 is made up of a pair of two-measure phrases (see Example 3.6). The first phrase is made up of two subphrases which will be termed as Motives C and C1 respectively as both motives share similar melodic contours.

Example 3.6: Movement 1, Theme 2, mm. 17-20, showing phrases, subphrases and motives within Theme 2

Similarities can be drawn between Motive C and Motive B from Theme 1 (see Example 3.7). Both Motives C and B share the same opening contour of a stepwise ascending fourth with a repetition of the third note; in the case of Motive B, the repeated note is the grace note.
Example 3.7: Comparison between Theme 1, Motive B and Theme 2, Motive C, showing the similarity in melodic contour

After the initial stepwise ascent from C to F in Motive C, there is a four-note stepwise descent, returning to C. This will be termed as submotive c. The last three pitches of Motive C bear semblance to Theme 1, submotive a.3 in terms of its melodic shape, but inverted (see Example 3.8).

Example 3.8: Motivic breakdown of Motive C and comparison to Theme 1, submotive a.3
Theme 2, Phrase 2 is made up of a series of submotives c with a motivic parallel to Motive C at the end of the phrase. The last six pitches of Theme 2, Phrase 2, is a transposition of a minor 2nd above the last six pitches of Motive C (see Example 3.9).

**Example 3.9: Motivic breakdown of Theme 2, Phrase 2**

The transition from Theme 2 to the closing material begins with the anacrusis to m. 21 with the reiteration of Motives C and C1, followed by fragments of Motive C. The transitional passage here resembles the transitional passage between Themes 1 and 2 (see Example 3.5), especially from the anacrusis to m. 7 to the end of m. 8. Mm. 7-8 makes use of a series of submotive a.2 (three pitches descending stepwise) as melodic material (see Example 3.10a). In the transitional passage from mm. 21, a series of modified submotive a.2 (now descending chromatically) is used as an accompaniment figure (see Example 3.10b).
Example 3.10: Comparison of transitional passage from Theme 1 and Theme 2 (mm. 7-8), and transitional passage from Theme 2 and closing material (mm. 21-26), showing the similarities in its use of submotive a.2

Example 3.10a: Transitional passage from Theme 1 to Theme 2, mm. 7-8

Example 3.10b: Transitional passage from Theme 2 to closing material, mm. 21-26

The closing material continues in the same vein as both transitional passages discussed previously in Example 3.10. Here in the closing material, the modified submotive a.2 is used as
melodic material rather than as an accompaniment figure (see Appendix, Movement 1, Example 1, for an annotated score of the closing material, mm. 26-33).

Movement 1, Theme 1, consists of two motives—A and B. Motive A can be broken down further into three submotives— a.1, a.2 and a.3. Motive B, when compared to Motive A, is more florid in its melodic contour and has a quicker surface rhythm. Except for the first four pitches, Motive B is largely made up of variants of submotives from Motive A (see Example 3.11). The transition from Theme 1 to Theme 2, mm. 7-16, also consists of varied repetitions of submotives a. 2.

Theme 2 is made up of Motive C, its varied repetition and sequences made up of melodic fragments from Motive C. Like Motive B, Motive C is also florid in its melodic contour. Motive C is also largely made up of inversions of Motive A’s submotives. Again, there are four pitches in Motive C that are not derived from the submotives of Motive A. These two pairs of (four) pitches in Motives B and C are thus termed as submotives b and c respectively. Both submotives, with four stepwise ascending (submotive b) and descending (submotive c) pitches, are also inversions of each other (see Example 3.11).
Example 3.11: Flow chart showing the motivic derivations from Theme 1 and Theme 2
The level of motivic saturation by submotives derived from Motive A in the exposition alone (see Table 3.2) show Medtner’s drive towards his credo of having the variety of the work stem from the opening theme.

**Table 3.2: Thematic and motivic form chart of exposition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>transition</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>transition</th>
<th>Closing Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phrase 1</td>
<td>Phrase 2</td>
<td>Phrase 1</td>
<td>Phrase 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motive</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submotive</td>
<td>a.1</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a.3</td>
<td>a.2 inverted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a.1 modified</td>
<td></td>
<td>a.2 chromaticized</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a.2 modified</td>
<td></td>
<td>a.3 modified</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a.3</td>
<td>a.1 inverted</td>
<td></td>
<td>a.2 inverted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a.2 inverted</td>
<td></td>
<td>c</td>
<td>a.2 modified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a.3 modified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Medtner, in his book, *The Muse and the Fashion*, states that “the theme is the most simple and accessible part of the work, it unifies it, and holds within itself the clue to all the subsequent complexity and variety of the work.” Medtner has stayed true to his words thus far as all the melodic material, as well as the contrapuntal imitation used in the accompaniment has been developed from the opening motive.

---

The development section of Movement 1 is again highly saturated with all the motives presented in the exposition. Using the motives as counterpoint, Medtner creates a rich contrapuntal texture (see Appendix, Movement 1, Example 2 for an annotated score of the development section). The recapitulation of Movement 1 is very much similar to the exposition except for harmonic modulations.

The development section begins with the most recognizable element of the work thus far—Theme 1. Theme 1 is presented in its entirety (with a slight intervallic modification as shown in m. 38) in the right hand. The left hand echoes with the first half of Theme 1 (Motives A and A1), followed by a series of modified submotives a.2; both in its original and modified form. When discussing modified submotive a.2, I am referring to the 3-note motive that descends chromatically. After Theme 1 has been presented in the right hand, Motive B is used in both hands simultaneously, followed by a passage analogous to the end of the closing material from the exposition. A series of Motive As (some incomplete, utilizing only submotives a.1 and a.2) are presented simultaneously in both hands, resulting in a rising sequence in half steps. The passage ends with Motive A interpolated with Motive B in m. 48 in the right hand. Motive B takes over, beginning a new passage, pitting Motive B in the right hand against both submotives a.1 and a.2, along with snippets of Motive B in the left hand. Motives A and A1 make a return with emphatic statements in m. 55. The interplay of both motives between left and right hand ends with Motive B at the end of m. 59 in a reminiscent fashion followed by both original and modified submotives a.2 with an increase in surface rhythm, thus bringing the section to a close.

The development section is an amalgamation of motives from the exposition. Here, the motives are used as counterpoint between both right and left hands. With a section this saturated with motives, choices have to be made from a performer’s viewpoint as to which voice to bring out more than the rest. The question then is, how are those choices made? Looking at the development section, there is not so much an interplay of motives; instead a single motive is being featured in
varied repetitions (i.e. transposition, inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion) like in a fugue.

When different motives are being pitted against each other, attention has to be drawn to the passage.

For example, modified submotives a.2 are used in m. 36 in the left hand as Theme 1 is presented in the right. Tension is also created when submotive a.2 appears as it is in contrary motion to the melodic direction of the right hand.
Movement 2

Movement 2 is titled *Scherzo* and is composed in ABA’ form (see Table 3.3). The form of this movement is difficult to define due to its fluidity in the sense that there was lack of periodicity and definitive sectional divides, resulting in a moto perpetuoso. Form is defined through the repetition of themes. Since there are no exact repetitions, this movement has been concluded to be in ABA’ form based upon the following factors:

1. Melodic materials from the introduction of the movement mark the start of each section.
2. New themes are presented in sections A and B.
3. All themes from both sections are then reprised in section A’.
4. Both A sections are identical in length.

**Table 3.3: Movement 2, Form Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A (mm. 1-94)</th>
<th>B (mm. 95-170)</th>
<th>A’ (mm. 171-265)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>tr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm.</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>8-19</td>
<td>20-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>3+4 (3+1)</td>
<td>4+4+4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The introduction to Movement 2 is made up of a pair of asymmetrical phrases (mm. 1-8). Although the length of both phrases are not equal, they are identical in their melodic material. Phrase 1 (mm. 1-3) features a heavily chordal texture, followed by a monophonic line ending the phrase in m. 3. The end of Phrase 1 is interrupted by the anacrusis (three-note ascent in the left hand) to the next phrase. Phrase 2 begins with a chordal texture, but with fewer pitches in each
chord and softer in dynamics. The monophonic line at the end of Phrase 2 is extended in a
descending sequence, making Phrase 2 longer than Phrase 1 (see Example 3.12).

Example 3.12: Medtner, Op. 53, No. 1, Movement 2, Introduction, mm. 1-8

Parallels can be drawn between the melodic material of the introduction here in Movement
2, and the opening (Theme 1) of Movement 1 (see Example 3.13). As shown in the melodic
breakdown of Phrase 1 of the introduction, the melody of m. 1 and m. 2 are highly chromaticized,
centered around the pitch B♭. The other pitches are diatonic and chromatic neighbor tones that
function as embellishments. M. 3 is very different from the previous measures in terms of melodic
shape and rhythm. Here in m. 3, the pitches G♭, F and E♭ are outlined through repetition and
accentuation (see Example 3.13a). Comparing the opening of both Movements 1 and 2, the melodic outline of Movement 2, mm. 1-3 (without the first note) is a transposition of the opening pitches of Movement 1, Theme 1, Motive A (see Example 3.13b).

Example 3.13: Comparison of the melodic outline of Movement 2, Introduction, mm. 1-3 to the opening of Movement 1, Theme 1

Theme 1 is comprised of a trio of four-bar phrases from mm. 8-19 (see Example 3.14). The texture of the theme is chordal with accents in the bass line showing the melodic pitches. The melody is offset by tonic chords in the right hand. In Phrases 2 and 3, the melody is now in the tenor line as well as in the outer tones of the chords in the right hand. Two motives are derived from Theme 1–Motives A and B. Motive A is a five-note line ascending stepwise, spanning a fifth. Motive B is a descending six-note line, featuring disjunct motion and spanning a seventh (see Example 3.15). A transitional passage follows after the statement of Theme 1, leading to Theme 2 in m. 56 (see Movement 2, Appendix Example 1). Theme 2 is comprised of a pair of asymmetrical phrases, four and six measures in length respectively, and is marked by a key signature change.
Compared to Theme 1, Theme 2 has a much quicker surface rhythm with its series of florid sixteenth notes over syncopated chords in the left hand (see Example 3.16).

**Example 3.14: Movement 2, Theme 1, mm. 8-15**

Phrase 1

Phrase 2

Phrase 3
Example 3.15: Melodic outline of Movement 2, Theme 1, showing Motives A and B

Example 3.16: Movement 2, Theme 2, mm 56-66
Theme 2, Phrase 1, is made up of three sequential melodic groups. The first two sequential groups consist of twelve notes that can be broken down into four groups of three according to their contour, which is descending. Sequence 3 is an extended sequence that begins in the same fashion, with the first twelve notes following the same melodic structure as the previous sequences. The melodic outline formed by the first note of each group in the sequence—F, F, E♭, D♭ is reminiscent of submotive a. 2 from Movement 1, with its three-note stepwise descent spanning a third. The first notes of each sequence also form the same melodic outline without the first repeated note, as do the top note of the off-beat chords in the left hand. The melodic shape of the second and third group in the Sequences 1 and 2, and the second to fourth group in Sequence 3 use the same intervallic structure as the first three pitches of Movement 1, Theme 1 (see Example 3.17).

84 The lines denoting the sequences in the examples shown are according to the phrase markings in the score of music itself.
Example 3.17: Theme 2, Phrase 1, mm. 56-60 showing the sequential breakdown of the phrase and melodic outline of each sequence

Although Theme 2 begins in m. 56, the melodic shape of the sequence presented in Theme 2 was already present at the end of the transitional passage from mm. 52-55, leading into Theme 2 itself (see Example 3.18).
Example 3.18: Comparison of the melodic sequence between the end of the transitional passage between Theme 1 and Theme 2 (mm. 52-55) and Theme 2, Phrase 1; showing the derivation of melodic material

Like Theme 2, Phrase 1, Theme 2, Phrase 2 is also made up of a series of sequential twelve-note groups (see Example 3.19). Theme 2, Phrase 2, has four sequences when compared to Theme 2, Phrase 1, with three sequences. The sequences used in Phrase 2 has an ascending contour with the first three sequences being identical repetitions. The melodic outline formed by the first of every three notes is a retrograde of the melodic outline of the sequence in Phrase 1 (see Example 3.20).
Example 3.19: Theme 2, Phrase 2, mm. 60-66, showing series of sequences

Example 3.20: Melodic outline of Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 1

Retrograde of the melodic outline of sequence in Theme 2, Phrase 1

Melodic outline of sequence in Theme 2, Phrase 1
As shown in Example 3.19, Theme 2, Phrase 2, is made up of four sequences, with the first three sequences being identical repetitions. The fourth sequence is an extended version of the previous sequences. Although not denoted by slurs in the score, Sequence 4 consists of three subsequences with twelve notes each. Here, the same melodic outline as the previous is created with the first pitch from every three notes. The third subsequence is not identical to the other subsequences in terms of its melodic contour, but its melodic outline (transposed) is still the same (see Example 3.21). A transitional passage follows after the presentation of Theme 2, leading to Section B in m. 66 (see Appendix, Movement 2, Example 2, for an annotated score of transitional passage from Theme 2 to Section B, mm. 66-94).

Example 3.21: Comparison of melodic outlines found within Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 1 and melodic outlines of subsequences within Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 4

Example 3.21: Comparison of melodic outlines found within Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 1 and melodic outlines of subsequences within Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 4

Melodic outline of sequences within Theme 2, Phrase 2

Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequences 1, 2 and 3  Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 4, subsequence 1  Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 4, subsequence 2  Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 4, subsequence 3
Section B begins in m. 95 with melodic material from the introduction in the left hand, juxtaposed with descending sequences from Theme 2, Phrase 1, in the right hand. This is followed by Theme 1, Motive A in the bass line and a transitional passage leading to Section B, Theme 3 in m. 114. The transitional passage from mm. 103-113 is analogous to the transitional passage between Themes 1 and 2, mm. 43-55.

Theme 3 is comprised of a trio of phrases in D major marked *cantando* and *dolce*.

Beginning in m. 114, Theme 3 offers a moment of respite from the *scherzando* character of both Themes 1 and 2 (see Example 3.22).

**Example 3.22: Section B, Theme 3, mm. 114-125**
The melodic material of Theme 3 is not derived from either Movement 2, Themes 1 or 2, nor from any existing motivic material in Movement 1. The main melodic motive in Theme 3 is presented in Phrase 1, with Phrases 2 and 3 being varied repetitions of the initial phrase (see Example 3.23). This is the first instance thus far, that a theme has seemingly no relevance to any of the preceding themes. Further analysis after all the movements and themes have been presented may show parallels or derivations that are not apparent at this moment.

Example 3.23: Annotated score of Theme 3, showing the melodic structure and varied repetitions of phrases

On the surface level, the introduction, Themes 1, 2 and 3, are vastly different in terms of its melodic content in terms of melodic contour and surface rhythm. Correlations or derivations from previous themes within Movement 2 are non-existent; this, seemingly going against Medtner’s compositional credo. In actuality, much of the melodic material in this movement is generated by varied repetitions and sequences. Motivic ideas found within the main themes and subsequent melodic material of this movement are made up of submotives from Movement 1. When broken
down, the melodic outline of sequential passages are also found to be made up of submotives from Movement 1; thus the sequences are embellishments of submotivic ideas. The introduction outlines submotives a.1 and a.2 from Movement 1. From Theme 1, Motives A and B were derived. Theme 1 can be summarized as being repeated presentations of Motive A, followed by new melodic material that is Motive B closing both Phrases 2 and 3. Motives A and B are easily distinguishable from each other. Motive A uses only ascending stepwise motion whereas Motive B is a descending melodic line and features disjunct motion within the gesture. Motive B is a juxtaposition of Movement 1, submotive a.2 followed by the first three pitches of Movement 1, Motive A.

Theme 2 is largely sequential with each sequence being an embellishment of submotive a.2 from Movement 1, Theme 1, with the first pitch being repeated. The two phrases that constitute Theme 2 are in a sense, inversions of each other in that the sequences in Phrase 1 are descending and those in Phrase 2 are ascending. The accompaniment figures in both Themes 1 and 2 feature syncopated chords. In Theme 1, the melody is in the bass line with syncopated chordal accompaniment in the right hand. With Theme 2, the approach is the opposite with the melody in the right hand accompanied by syncopated chords in the left hand.

Although Theme 3 is not melodically derived from any material earlier in the work, it does keep to the idea of using a syncopated accompaniment figure and the phrases of the theme being varied repetitions of the previous.
Movement 3

Movement 3 is titled *Meditazione*, and is composed in a two-part through-composed form with a coda. Although the movement is in two parts, it is not in binary form (AB) as the second section does not begin with nor feature any new or distinctly different melodic material. For the sake of clarity, the second section will be termed as section A’ as it does open with the same theme as the opening of the movement; it also contains an amalgamation of other motivic snippets found in section A (see Table 3.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A (mm. 1-32)</th>
<th>A’ (mm. 33-58)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>tr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm.</td>
<td>1-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>4+4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Movement 3 begins with the same melodic material as Movement 2, albeit in a different rhythmic arrangement, key and time signature (see Example 3.24). The first measures of both movements, (like in a turn) begins with a central pitch and is followed by neighbor tones.
Example 3.24: Comparison of the melodic material in both first measures of Movements 2 and 3

Movement 2, m. 1

Movement 3, m. 1

Movement 3, Theme 1, is made up of both varied and non-varied repetitions of subphrases. These subphrases consist of motives and submotives used to generate melodic material later in the movement. Three motives can be found within Theme 1—Motives A, B and C (see Example 3.25).
Example 3.25: Movement 3, Theme 1, mm. 1-9, showing phrases, subphrases and motives

Two melodic submotives (a.1 and a.2) and one rhythmic submotive (RM. A) are derived from Movement 3, Motive A (see Example 3.26). Rhythmic motive A (RM. A) is a key rhythmic structure to this movement as much of the melodic material in this movement will use this rhythmic figure or one bearing likeness to it.
Example 3.26: Submotives derived from Movement 3, Motive A

The submotives, along with the melodic outline of Motive A, are used in a contrapuntal fashion in the accompaniment of Theme 1. The melodic outline of Motives A (and A1) was determined through repetition, length of note and placement of note (on strong beats of the measure, see Example 3.27).

Example 3.27: Melodic outlines of Motives A and A1

Theme 1, mm. 1-4

Melodic outline of Theme 1, mm. 1-4
The melodic outline of Motive A can be found in the tenor line of m. 1 to the downbeat of m. 2. But instead of a four-note descent, it only uses a three-note descent. The three-note descent is echoed (now chromatically) in the tenor then the bass line. Accompanying Motives B in mm. 5-6 is submotive a. 2 in the bass line (see Example 3.28).

Example 3.28: Movement 3, Theme 1, mm. 1-9, using the melodic outline of Motive A and fragment of submotive a.2 as motivic derivation of the accompaniment figure
After the presentation of Theme 1, a transitional passage leading to Theme 2 follows. This transitional passage is made up of a juxtaposition of Motive C, RM. A, submotives a. 1 and a. 2 (see Example 3.29).

**Example 3.29: Annotated score showing the juxtaposition of motivic material from Theme 1 used in the transitional passage between Themes 1 and 2, mm. 9-13**

Before Theme 2 is presented, it is preceded by a two-measure introduction (or lead-in) from mm. 13-14 consisting of motivic ideas derived from Theme 1 (see Example 3.30).
Example 3.30: Annotated score of introduction to Theme 2 (mm. 3-4), showing derivation of motivic ideas from Theme 1

Theme 2 is comprised of a pair of three-measure phrases, with the second phrase eliding into a two-measure extension (see Example 3.31). The melodic material and accompaniment figure presented in Theme 2 was already anticipated by the preceding two measures, mm. 13-14 (compare Examples 3.30 and 3.31). The accompaniment figure from mm. 13-14, using a modified RM. A, is continued throughout Theme 2. The melody of Theme 2, Phrase 1, is also derived from the melodic line in mm. 13-14 (see Example 3.32a and b). Both the melodic lines in mm. 13-14, and Theme 2, Phrase 1, feature the five-note stepwise descent used in Theme 1, Motive C (see Example 3.32c). Due to the slurs as marked in the score, the pitch, A, at the end of m. 16 in Theme 2, Phrase 1, is considered an extension to the five-note stepwise descent or an incomplete neighbor tone, rather than an anacrusis to the next measure (see Ex. 3.32a).
Example 3.31: Movement 3, Theme 2, mm. 15-23
Example 3.32: Theme 2, Phrase 1, with annotations showing its motivic derivations

Ex. 3.32a

Theme 2, Phrase 1, with annotations and slurs as noted in the score

Ex. 3.32b

2 measure lead-in to Theme 2, mm. 13-14

Ex. 3.32c

Theme 1, Motive C

Phrase 2 begins with the same melody as Phrase 1 until the end of the measure as marked. Instead of a descending contour from the marked point in Phrase 1, Phrase 2 ascends in a stepwise fashion before a descent to the end of the phrase, eliding into the two-measure extension (see Ex. 3.33). Continuing with the same accompaniment as Phrase 1, the melody in Phrase 2 is now in the
soprano line, accompanied by arpeggiated harmonies in sixteenth notes in the alto line (see Ex. 3.31).

Example 3.33: Theme 2, Phrase 2, mm. 18-23

The accompaniment in the phrase extension to Theme 2, Phrase 2, uses motives and submotives from Movement 3, Theme 1, as counterpoint (see Example 3.34).
Example 3.34: Extension to Theme 2, Phrase 2, mm. 21-23, showing the melodic derivation from Theme 1 used as counterpoint in its accompaniment figure

![Example notation](image)

Theme 2 segues into a transitional passage from mm. 23-32, maintaining the rhythmic lilt created by the use of modified RM. A. Submotive a. 1 and Motive C (without the first pitch) are used in juxtaposition in both hands from mm. 27-29 (see Appendix, Movement 3, Example 1). The passage ends with a cadenza-like flourish, leading into Section A¹ in m. 33 (see Appendix, Movement 3, Example 2).

To summarize, Theme 1 is made up of two phrases, with each phrase divided into two sub-phrases. Three melodic motives have been presented in Theme 1, with two submotives and a rhythmic motive derived from Motive A. The motives are all different in their melodic contours. Motive A moves predominantly in stepwise motion and Motive B features more disjunct motion with wide leaps. Motive C is florid in its melodic shape compared to Motives A and B. Theme 2 is akin to Theme 1 as it uses motivic ideas from Theme 1. Theme 2 is made up of a pair of three-bar
phrases, and the second phrase features an extension consisting of motivic ideas derived from Theme 1.

Like in Movement 2, motives presented after Theme 1 are not strictly derived from Theme 1 itself. Again, it uses the melodic outline of an earlier motive as a foundation upon which new melodic material is generated. Also, Theme 1 uses the same opening melody as the introduction in Movement 2. In changing the meter, key signature, tempo and rhythm, Medtner reuses melodic material by portraying it in a different character.
Movement 4

Movement 4 is titled *Finale* and is set in a tripartite form with coda. It is similar to ternary form in that the last section before the coda is a returning A prime signaled by the presentation of Theme 1 (see Table 3.5). It is not in a traditional sonata form, as what would have been the exposition and recapitulation are vastly different in length, nor are all themes brought back in A prime (in its entirety or otherwise fragmented). However, the B section here does function like a development section as it works through melodic material presented earlier in the movement. For the sake of clarity, the three sections will be termed as ABA’.

Table 3.5: Movement 4, Form Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A (mm. 1-65)</th>
<th>B (mm. 66-130)</th>
<th>A’ (mm. 131-231)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1 tr T2 tr T3 tr CM T1 tr Mvt 3, T1 T1 T1</td>
<td>tr T1 (partial) T2 (partial) coda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 1-9</td>
<td>16-23</td>
<td>35-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl</td>
<td>3+5 (3+2)</td>
<td>4+4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Movement 4 begins with a sixteenth note anacrusis from the end of Movement 3. Theme 1 is made up of a pair of asymmetrical phrases (see Example 3.35), beginning with a gesture which will be termed as Motive A. Two submotives found therein, submotives a.1 and a.2, generate much of the remainder of Theme 1, and the rest of the movement. After the presentation of Motive A, variants of both submotives are used in succession to create the rest of Theme 1, Phrase 1, and also the accompaniment figure used as counterpoint in mm. 2-3. To be specific, the variants of submotive a.1 are derived from transformations akin to a tone row operation in twelve-tone theory i.e. transposition, inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion (see Example 3.36).
Example 3.35: Movement 4, Theme 1, mm. 1-9

Phrase 1

Phrase 2

Extension to Phrase 2
Example 3.36: Motivic breakdown of Theme 1, Phrase 1, mm. 1-4, showing Motive A and its submotives within; along with the subsequent make-up of melodic material and accompaniment figures generated from the submotives and their different permutations.

The origins of Motive A (and its submotives) can be traced back to several motives and passages from the previous movements (see Example 3.37).
Example 3.37: Motivic breakdown and derivation of Movement 4, Theme 1, Motive A

Example 3.37a: Movement 4, Theme 1, Motive A and its submotives

Movement 4, Theme 1, Motive A

Example 3.37b: Movement 4, Theme 1, Motive A, submotive a.1 and its derivations from motives from previous movements

Movement 3, mm. 23-24

Movement 3, mm. 53-55 — series of 3-note segments used in Movement 4, Theme 1, submotive a.1

Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive C

Movement 4, Theme 1, submotive a.1, is an intercyclic inversion of the 3-note segment from Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive C.
Movement 4, Theme 1, submotive a.2 is identical to submotive a.2 from Movement 1. Movement 4, Theme 1, submotive a.1 is derived from several points in Movement 3. The particular melodic shape that is Movement 4, submotive a.1 (three notes that span an interval of a perfect fourth, featuring a descending second followed by a third), can be found in two transitory passages in Movement 3—mm. 23-24 and mm. 53-55. The intervallic structure of this particular melodic shape itself is derived from a three-note segment within Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive C. Movement 4, submotive a.1 is a variant; specifically, an intervallic inversion of the three-note segment from Movement 3, Motive C (see Example 3.37b).

Movement 4, Theme 1, Phrase 2, is very different from Phrase 1 in that it is not a composite of submotives nor is it melodically derived from any of the submotives from Motive A. Instead it is made up of two sets of rising sequences (see Example 3.38). The first set of rising sequences (in Phrase 2) is more florid in melodic shape. The second set of rising sequences (in Phrase 2, extension) is based upon intervals of rising fourths.
Example 3.38: Movement 4, Theme 1, Phrase 2, mm. 4-9, showing sequences found within the phrase

After Theme 1 has been presented, a transitory passage made up of Motive A and submotive a. 1 follows, leading to Theme 2 (see Example 3.39). The passage ends with a series of thirty-second notes that outlines F and C, a perfect fourth, an interval featured prominently at the end of Theme 1.
Example 3.39: Transitory passage between Theme 1 and Theme 2 (mm. 9-15), using Motive A as melodic material
Beginning with the anacrusis to m. 16, Theme 2 is made up of two phrases and continues with the same melodic idea seen in m. 14—series of thirty-second notes outlining a perfect fourth. It also maintains the rhythmic motive that was in the accompaniment figure of Theme 1, but in a slightly altered fashion (see Example 3.40).

Example 3.40: Movement 4, Theme 2, showing motivic derivations

- compare the end of m. 16 vs m. 14 of transitory passage between Themes 1 and 2
- compare the rhythm of the accompaniment figure in mm. 4-6 vs the rhythm used in m. 17
Theme 2 is followed by another transitory passage, composed largely of fragments of Theme 1 in both its original guise and its melodic inversion. The fragments are also used as counterpoint between both hands (see Example 3.41). A third theme follows after this passage. The third theme is a rhythmic reinterpretation of Movement 3, Theme 2 (see Example 3.42).

Example 3.41: Annotated score of transitory passage between Themes 2 and 3, mm. 23-35, using fragments of Theme 1 and submotive a.2 in counterpoint
After Theme 3 has been presented, a transitory passage made up of further reiterations of Theme 3 follows, leading to the closing material of Section A (see Example 3.43). Section B begins in m. 66. It functions like a development section in sonata form in that it uses thematic material from the exposition and modulates back to the tonic key of B-flat minor by the end of the section. Section B may be divided into three sections with a recurring theme from earlier in the work in each section (see Appendix, Movement 4, Example 1).

Section A’ begins in m. 131. As previously mentioned, section A’ is shorter than the first A section. The Coda follows immediately after the presentation of Theme 2 in section A’. It continues with the same chromatically descending and ascending groups of thirty-second notes used in the right hand of Theme 2. Multiple themes (as well as submotives) from the preceding movements can be found in the Coda. As the coda progresses, the themes are presented in quicker successions, like in the stretto section of a fugue. Thematic material are also used simultaneously as melody and accompaniment (see Appendix, Movement 4, Example 2).
Example 3.43: Transitory passage using reiterations of Theme 3, mm. 42-51
Summary

All the themes used within the four movements of this sonata are shown in Examples 3.44-3.53. Also shown are the motives and submotives contained within the themes, as well as the melodic outlines if relevant.

Example 3.44: Movement 1, Theme 1
Example 3.45: Movement 1, Theme 2

Example 3.46: Movement 2, Introduction

Example 3.47: Movement 2, Theme 1
Example 3.48: Movement 2, Theme 2

Example 3.48a: Movement 2, Theme 2

Example 3.48b: Melodic Outline of Movement 2, Phrase 2

Example 3.49: Movement 2, Theme 3
Example 3.50: Movement 3, Theme 1

Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive A

Melodic Outline of Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive A

submotive a.1

submotive a.2

Movement 3, Theme 1

Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive B

Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive C

Melodic Outline of Motive C

Rhythmic Motive A (RM. A)
Example 3.51: Movement 3, Theme 2

Example 3.51a: Movement 3, Theme 2

Example 3.51b: Melodic Outline of Movement 3, Theme 2

Example 3.52: Movement 4, Theme 1
By comparing all the themes in the work against the opening theme of Movement 1, Theme 1, it would be difficult to draw parallels or see any semblance among the themes. Even when looking at the motives within the theme, any attempts to draw similarities between them will still be a stretch. Yet, it is in this very opening theme that Medtner believes, “holds within itself the clue to all the subsequent complexity and variety of the work.”

The opening theme of Movement 1 consists of two motives—A and B, along with two variants of Motives A (A1 and A2). Within these two motives, there are four submotives; three from Motive A and one from Motive B. Motive B begins with submotive b—a four-note stepwise ascent that spans a fourth. The rest of the motive can be broken down to show that it is made up of, or is a rearrangement (play) of submotives from Motive A. The last three notes of Motive B—E♭, B♭, and A♭ can be argued that it is a rearrangement of submotive a.3. The melodic shape of the two groups of notes (E♭, B♭, A♭ and submotive a.3—B♭, E♭, F) may be different, but similarities can be drawn between them. Although the last two pitches of both groups move in contrary motion

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to each other, both group of notes begin with a leap (disjunct motion) followed by a step (conjunct motion) and feature the intervals—perfect 4th, perfect 5th and major 2nd.

In Example 3.54, I have labelled a group of three notes in the middle of Motive B as “seed.” These three notes are the same pitches as the opening three notes of the work. I consider the opening three notes of the work to be the most important group of pitches (its pitch content and intervallic make-up) as they form the basis of many subsequent submotives, motives and even extended passages later on in the work; hence the term seed. This essentially supports Medtner’s statement about his belief on the importance of the theme, and even more effectively considering that these are the first three pitches of the work! The large scale use of the seed (as extended passages) will be discussed after the parallels between all the motives and submotives have been presented (see Examples 3.44, 3.45, 3.54 and also in the analysis of Movement 1).

**Example 3.54: Movement 1, Theme 1, with annotations showing motivic and submotivic levels**

Movement 1, Theme 1

![Example 3.54 Diagram](image-url)
Following this train of thought, these four submotives from Theme 1 can be traced through all the subsequent submotives or melodic outlines of later themes in some way, shape or form. In Motive C from Movement 1, Theme 2, the general melodic movement is in stepwise motion. The pitches here are in groups of three moving in one melodic direction except for a stepwise descending group of four-notes which I have labelled as submotive c. Note that submotive c is akin to submotive b in that they are both groups of 4-notes in stepwise motion spanning a fourth; the difference between the two being that submotive b is ascending and submotive c is descending. Motive C begins with an intervallic inversion of submotive a.2 (original submotive a.2 is descending). The last three pitches of Motive C harks back to the melodic shape of submotive a.3 but in contrary motion. Both begin with a leap and resolves by step (see Example 3.55).

**Example 3.55: Movement 1, Theme 2, Motive C with annotations**

Movement 2 begins with an introduction that is an embellishment of the melodic outline shown below. The outline (without the first pitch) is a transposition of the first four notes of Movement 1, Theme 1, consisting of both submotives a.1 and a.2. This of course features the seed of the work (see Example 3.56).
Movement 2, Theme 1, consists of two motives—A and B (see Example 3.57). Motive A is a five-note group ascending stepwise. This can be analyzed as an extension of submotive b. Motive B is a six-note gesture that can be analyzed as being made up of submotive a.2 followed by the seed.

Movement 2, Theme 2, is made up of a series of sequences. After breaking down the sequence to its bare bone melodic outline, we can see that the outline is actually Movement 1, submotive a.2 in Theme 2, Phrase 1, along with its retrograde in Theme 2, Phrase 2 (see Example 3.58).
Movement 2, Theme 3, was analytically the most puzzling of all. It hardly bears any semblance to the previous two themes of the movement, let alone any of the other themes in the work; yet there was something about this theme that struck a sense of familiarity. As I played or hummed this theme, my attention was always drawn to the groups of notes with disjunct motion as noted in Example 3.59a below. It was not till much later into my dissertation process that I realized that the melodic shape of these groups of notes were actually an intervallic retrograde-inversion to the melodic shape (intervallic structure) of the seed. It was also then that I realized that the seed plays a much bigger role as an individual entity on a larger scale compared to all the other motives and submotives. I have also included in the example below the “transformations” of the seed below if we were to subject it to the operations like in a twelve-tone matrix in order to get the inversion, retrograde and retrograde-inversion (see Example 3.59b).  

Note that the first iteration of the seed motive in Example 3.59a may be considered as an example of what Reti would term as interversion. This is the only occurrence of such an example in the entire work.
As previously mentioned in my analysis of Movement 3, both Movements 2 (Introduction) and 3 (Theme 1) share the same opening 5-notes with its melodic shape comparable to a nachschlag. Variants of submotives a.1 and a.2 (of Movement 1) can also be found in the melodic outline of Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive A (see Example 3.60) and its corresponding submotive a.2 (see Example 3.61) The melodic outline of Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive A begins with an inverted submotive a.1 of Movement 1, followed by submotive a.2 (of Movement 1) with an added CPT. In submotive a.2 of Movement 3, Theme 1, the last four pitches share the same contour as the opening four pitches of Movement 1 (submotive a.1, followed by a chromaticized variant of submotive a.2).
The retrograde of the seed can be found in Motive C of Movement 3, Theme 1 (see Example 3.62). The motivic outline of Motive C, being a 5-note stepwise descent is also a retrograde of Movement 2, Motive A. Note that Movement 3, Theme 2, Phrase 1, also share the same 5-note melodic outline as Motive C in Theme 1 (see Example 3.62b).
In my analysis of Movement 4, I had termed the opening gesture as Motive A. The first two pitches, D♭ and F, are in reverse to the first two pitches of Movement 1 (submotive a.1, F and D♭). This is followed by the two submotives found in Motive A of Movement 4. Submotive a.1 here is a retrograde-inversion of the seed and submotive a.2 is identical to the original submotive a.2 of Movement 1 (see Example 3.63).
In Movement 4, Theme 2, the interval of a perfect fourth is featured prominently. This is significant as both submotives b and c of Movement 1 span a perfect fourth.

My initial finding was that Medtner’s melodic material is generated by contrapuntal imitation, thematic fragments used as counterpoint and melodic interpolation between voices. Indeed it was fascinating to note the multitude of imitative voices being tightly woven into the rich textures of his music. Perhaps Medtner’s contrapuntal approach was an homage to Bach, thus paying reverence to the laws of music set by the old masters. After all, Reti notes in his book, The Thematic Process in Music, that the purpose of a fugue or contrapuntal work is to preserve the identity of the subject’s melodic shape. Repetition and imitation is expected, therefore any attempt to mask the melodic shape through alteration defeats the purpose. Though it may be that this very same methodology employed by Medtner prompted William Newman (in his book The Sonata Since Beethoven) to make a comment about Medtner’s music being “discursive.” To be fair, the comment was not directed at Medtner alone, but at the late-Romantic composers, including Rachmaninoff. Newman notes that the goal of the early Romantic era was to have a motive running through as an organic thread through the themes of a work, achieving motivic unity. However, the motive often ends up being overworked, resulting in “over assimilation, or excessive oneness.” By the late Romantic period, that mentality still remained. Composers pursued the same goal, with “the motive dominating all else and works getting lengthy and monotonous.”

Logically, a fugue or any contrapuntal writing best exemplifies Medtner’s aim in composition—to have all following material stem from the first theme. In fact, what Newman wrote as a critique, is what Medtner aimed for in order to achieve his sense of artistic fulfillment. But beyond the subject and answers, which Schoenberg states as “practically unchangeable and all the

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89 Ibid., 156.
necessary contrasts are produced by the addition of one or more voices,” just how pervasive are the motives, and how high is the level of motivic unity?90 The table below shows the motivic make-up of the themes found in this sonata and how they are actually the same submotives from Movement 1, Theme 1.

All but two themes are motivically “sourced” from the opening theme. The remaining two themes—Movement 3, Theme 2, and Movement 4, Theme 2, are not completely unrelated from the rest of the themes. They are intra-connected to other motivic material found within the individual movements (see Table 3.6).

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### Table 3.6: Motivic derivation chart—chart showing themes and motives from Movements 2, 3 and 4 being derived from Movement 1, Theme 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Motive from movement</th>
<th>Submotive used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movement 2</td>
<td>Outline of introduction</td>
<td>a. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 1, Motive A</td>
<td>b + extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 1, Motive B</td>
<td>a. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outline of Theme 2</td>
<td>a. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. 2 (retrograde)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motives, submotives derived from Movement 1, Theme 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement 3</td>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outline of Theme 1</td>
<td>a. 1 (inversion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ chromatic passing tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 1, submotive a. 2</td>
<td>a. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. 2 (chromaticized)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme 1, Motive C</td>
<td>seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement 4</td>
<td>Theme 1, Motive A</td>
<td>a. 1 (inversion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>seed (retrograde-inversion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The motive known as seed, which are the first three pitches of the work, is of particular interest. As mentioned earlier in the summary, I consider these intervallic structure of these three
pitches to be the most important in the work. The seed in its various transformations akin to the operations used in a twelve tone row, forms the basis of many large scale passages in this sonata. The seed motive was not immediately apparent during the analysis process. It was not till much later that I came to recognize the motive and the extent of its “reach” throughout the piece. The motive is distinct due to its melodic shape, positioning within a melodic line and the fact that it is often used in extended passages that appear as sequential repetitions. But it also “disguises” itself well, as a series of seeds can be easily overlooked as alternating intervals of seconds and thirds.

In Movement 1, the large-scale use of the seed is found in the closing material from m. 108 to the end of the movement (see Example 3.64). As mentioned in the analysis of Movement 1, pairs of modified (chromatic) submotive a.2 are used in transitory passages, as it is here in the right hand. The accompaniment in the left hand is a series of seed in its different transformations akin to that of a twelve tone operation—prime, inversion, retrograde and retrograde-inversion.
Example 3.64: Movement 1, closing material featuring the seed from mm. 108-115
In the second movement, the use of the seed begins four measures before the presentation of Theme 2 from m. 56 (see Example 3.65). From mm. 52-55, transpositions of the seed in its original melodic shape is used one after another, resulting in a descending sequence. Movement 2, Theme 2, is made up of two phrases (Phrase 1, mm. 55-60, Phrase 2, mm. 60-65). Both phrases are a series of sequences, with the sequences of Phrase 2 being a retrograde to the sequence in Phrase 1. As shown in Example 3.65, the sequence used in Theme 2, Phrase 1, begins with submotive a.2 (of Movement 1) followed by two iterations of the seed. After Theme 2 has been presented, a transitional passage of sequences made up largely of the seed in its various transformation follows until the reappearance of the introductory material in the left hand from mm. 95-98. The sequence featured in Theme 2, Phrase 1, is used as accompaniment in the right hand.
Example 3.65: Use of seed in Movement 2, mm. 52-102
The use of the seed motive seems to be more intermittent in Movement 3, appearing in three passages and spanning fewer measures. However, the use of the motive is still considered large
scale as Movement 3 is a relatively short movement, and the seed motive is used prominently in transitional passages. The final use of the seed motivic idea is carried through to the end of the movement, gaining prevalence and used as melodic material in both hands (see Example 3.66 showing the three passages featuring the seed).

Example 3.66: Use of the Seed in Movement 3

Example 3.66a: mm. 23-26
Example 3.66b: mm. 41-48
Example 3.66c: mm. 53-End of Movement
The seed motive is not used in any large scale passages in the fourth and final movement. It may be that the seed motive was not used in large scale passages in the fourth movement as thematic homogeneity was already achieved by Medtner.

The transitory passages in both A sections of the fourth movement are built upon Movement 4, Themes 1 and 3. As mentioned in the analysis of Movement 4, the B section of the movement functions like the development section in sonata form in that it uses themes from the exposition and modulates back to the tonic key by the end of the section. The B section here in Movement 4 also sees the return of both Theme 1s from Movements 1 and 3. In the coda, Medtner restates almost all of the themes from the preceding movements. The return of the themes is comparable to the ensemble finale at the end of a comic opera. The movement ends with two melodic statements. First, a statement of Movement 1, Theme 1, followed by a melodic line that is an amalgamation of Movement 4, Motive A and Movement 1, Motive A; thus making this sonata a cyclic work.

Medtner’s motivic use in this work may be viewed as a prime exemplar of thematic transformation as defined by Reti. Reti considers a thematic transformation to be a success if a composer were to be able to “form a theme from a preceding one without it being recognized from the surface.” Medtner achieves this “motivic incognito” by rearranging his submotives from his opening theme, his “kernel.” I believe that Medtner was able to develop a larger variety of material because his opening motive (Movement 1, Motive A) was made up of very short submotives that lent itself well to various juxtaposition.

The use of small motives (or in this case, submotives) to generate a new theme, is of course reminiscent of Brahms and his method of developing variations. As Walter Frisch quotes Schoenberg in his book, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, “Brahms builds a theme by means of a very free, but recognizable, reinterpretation of the intervals and rhythms of a

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91 The following themes do not make a return in the fourth movement: Movement 1, Theme 2 and Movement 2, Themes 1, 2 and 3.  
brief motive.” 93 The difference between Brahms and Medtner then would be that in the case of Brahms, Schoenberg notes that “as the compositional principle behind developing variations is that repetition is avoided due to the work itself being a result of the initial idea going through a constant and progressive series of changes.”94

In the case of Medtner, his motives (or submotives) are modified, but within strict confines as that of a twelve tone operation. He rarely develops a motive as laid out by Schoenberg in Fundamentals of Musical Composition or those described in Chapter 4 of Reti’s The Thematic Process in Music, such as interversion, i.e. “interchanging the notes of a thematic shape in order to produce a new one.”95 Not counting Medtner’s use of contrapuntal imitation, his method of development is still repetitive in the form of sequences for example, in lengthy transitional passages. These repetitions are simply strung together and barely modified. This is not to downplay Medtner’s form of motivic development. No doubt, there may only be little transformation in Medtner’s motives itself, but his motives transcends the work at every level. For example, in Movement 2, Theme 2, the outline of the sequence is submotive a.2 from Movement 1, the melodic line itself is a series of the seed motive, and the accompaniment is a series of submotives a. 1 and a. 2 from Movement 1.

Therefore the question remains, is Medtner’s Sonata Romantica motivically economical? What does “being economical” itself stand for and what does it mean to be economical in music in terms of motives? “Economical—giving good value, careful not to waste money or resources, using no more of something that is necessary.” Does that mean that Medtner uses as few motives as possible and the motives used are utilized as much as he can? If that is indeed the way to define a work/composer being motivically economical, then Medtner and his work certainly is a prime

94 Ibid., 9.
example of the term. As shown in the numerous examples, Medtner uses a few themes and motives. They are all varied slightly throughout the work and are kept recognizable. The majority of the motives are derived from the opening, Motive A. Using the three submotives (four if the seed motive is included) that make up Motive A, Medtner rearranged them to form new motives and themes. Therefore, how is Medtner’s music developmental? His motives, themes and melodic material are built upon submotives like in a theme and variation form. His new themes are unrecognizable, or they are seemingly unrelated to previous themes. On the other hand, the argument can be made that Medtner’s work is non-developmental as there are negligible changes in his motives inter-movement; they may be varied, but are still kept recognizable. On the submotivic level, there is also negligible change. Arguably, since the submotives are so short, there are limits to the way they can be varied. Indeed, he rearranges his submotives to form new motives, therefore, from that perspective, yes he does develop his submotives. There is nothing new nor innovative per se in this sonata, yet this has been the most fascinating aspect about the work. His own statement from his book, “The Muse and the Fashion,” that, “the more faithful the artist has remained to the theme, the more artistic is this fulfillment and the more inspired his work,” and that “the theme is the most simple and accessible part of the work, it unifies it, and holds within itself the clue to all the subsequent complexity and variety of the work.” Both of these statements are perfect summations of the methodology behind his work. Concurring with both these statements, his steadfastness to the opening theme is his own inspiration that enabled him to attain artistic fulfillment.


97 Ibid., 44.
Conclusion

Medtner in his own lifetime was highly lauded as a pianist and sought after as a teacher. However his compositions did not fare as well with the general public. It is perhaps simply because Medtner's piano works, especially his sonatas, are long and difficult that these works are still so rarely performed.

I hope that my dissertation will provide an insight into Medtner; not just his music, but also his character and how it influenced his work and compositional process. Along with this knowledge, I hope that by analyzing his compositional process, it will reveal the intricacies of his motivic use. It is also due to this motivic intensity and level of saturation that my interpretation of the piece (as a performer) has not changed. In terms of interpretation, if one were to bring out certain motives (or all of the motives!), rhythmic integrity may be compromised or unnecessary accentuation will occur especially if one is trying to bring out interpolated motives. However this is not to deter anyone from simply enjoying the beauty of Medtner’s melodies amid its contrapuntal texture. Beyond merely reveling in the beauty of his melodies, one might marvel at the tightly-woven motivic craftsmanship so evident in Medtner's music. It is with hope that a deeper understanding of his music will create awareness, thus bringing about a more widespread appreciation of his music.

After analyzing the Sonata Romantica, I have gained greater appreciation for Medtner, who, clearly, is someone deeply committed to his art and to the musical laws he propounded in The Muse and the Fashion. Perhaps it will be of interest to do a comparative study of several of his piano sonatas from different points in his life. Is he as stringent about having his material being derived from the opening theme earlier in his life as he is later in life?
Appendix, Movement 1, Example 1: Annotated Score of Closing Material, mm. 26-33

Series of modified submotives a.2 in pairs (2 sets of 3 note group) (submotive a.2 now descending chromatically)

modified submotive a.2
(submotive a.2 now descending chromatically)

modified and extended submotive a.2.
Submotive a.2 is now a 4 note submotive instead of 3, and descending chromatically instead of stepwise motion

Series of modified submotives a.2 in pairs (2 sets of 3 note group) (submotive a.2 now descending chromatically)

submotive a.2
(submotive a.2 now descending chromatically)

submotive a.2 in reverse ascending instead of descending
submotive a.2 in reverse ascending instead of descending
Series of modified submotives a.2
in pairs (2 sets of 3 note group)
(submotive a.2 now descending chromatically)

modified
(enharmonic rising 3rd)
submotive a.1

modified
(rising 3rd)
submotive a.1

modified submotive a.2

modified submotive a.1

original submotive is a falling 3rd. Gesture is now a falling 6th, inverse interval to a 3rd

modified submotive a.2
in middle voice (submotive a.2 now ascending chromatically)

modified submotive a.2
in lower voice (submotive a.2 now descending chromatically)

Series of modified submotives a.2
in pairs (2 sets of 3 note group)
(submotive a.2 now descending chromatically)

modified submotive a.2
(submotive a.2 now descending chromatically)

modified (rising 3rd)
submotive a.1

modified (rising 3rd)
submotive a.1

modified (rising 3rd)
submotive a.1
Appendix, Movement 1, Example 2: Annotated Score of Development Section, mm. 34-67

Theme 1

Motive A

Motive A1

modified submotive a.2 in lower voice (chromatically descending 3-notes)

36

submotive a.2

modified submotive a.2

modified submotive a.2

37

submotive a.2

modified submotive a.2

modified submotive a.2

minor modification here: interval of falling 4th instead of falling 5th
Motive B in both left (top voice) and right (lower voice) hand without the last note

From here to m. 43, material is analogous to passage from end of mm. 30-33; end of closing material

Motive A

Motive A (with minor modification)

Motive A (with minor modification, first to second note is a falling 4th instead of a 3rd)

falling 6th instead of a 5th

submotive a.1

Motive A
Appendix, Movement 2, Example 1: Annotated score of transition from Theme 1 to Theme 2, mm. 20-55
Appendix, Movement 2, Example 2: Annotated score of transition from Theme 2 to Section B, mm. 66-94

see descending sequence from mm. 52-55 using 3-note groups
featuring the same interval structure from first 3 notes of Movement 1

see rhythm of accompaniment in mm. 43-44

see Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 1

series of repetitions of segment from Theme 2, Phrase 2, Sequence 1

(8)

Theme 2, Phrase 1
Appendix, Movement 3, Example 1: Transitional Passage between Section A and B, mm. 23-30

First 5 notes of Motive C

Motive C without opening pitch

submotive a.1

submotive a.1
Appendix, Movement 3, Example 2: Section A’

Mm. 33-36: analogous to mm. 1-4

Motive A

LH in RMA

submotive a.2 elliding into accompaniment in RMA

Motive A1

In 3 pitches of submotive a.2

Motive B

Motive B here is analogous to mm. 5

In section A, Motive B is repeated twice. Here, Motive B is transposed down a 3rd after its initial instance.

submotive a.2

Motive B

40
Extension to Theme 2, Phrase 2. The melodic shape used here is analogous to m. 25 in the transitory passage at the end of section A.

CODA

Melodic ostinato of material segment from mm. 53-54.

*Melodic segment used as ostinato in coda.

Reiterations of partial Motive C, each descending in register.

Melodic ostinato of material segment from mm. 53-54, now used as accompaniment.

Motive C

Melodic ostinato of material segment from mm. 53-54 now in different rhythm.

Melodic ostinato of material segment from mm. 53-54 in retrograde.

Melodic ostinato of material segment from mm. 53-54 now in modified RM A.
Inversion of Movement 4, Theme 1

Melody following the melodic contour and rhythm of the opening of Movement 4, Theme 1

Left hand accompaniment figure in rhythmic augmentation
Movement 3, Theme 1, Phrase 1

Movement 3, Theme 1, Motive B (mm. 102-105)
Sequence following the melodic contour and rhythm of Movement 4, Thème 1, Motive.

Sequence using the left hand accompaniment figure from the closing material.
Movement 1, Theme 1, Motive A
Appendix, Movement 4, Example 2: Annotated Score of Coda, m. 165-end

Coda
see Movement 4, Theme 2—chromatically descending
and ascending group of 8 notes (used from mm.165-177)
170

171

172

173

see Movement 4, Theme 3, mm. 35-36

174
Melody following the contour and rhythm of Movement 4, Motive A

Inversion of Movement 4, Motive A

Movement 1, opening 3 notes (seed)

Inversion of Movement 4, Motive A

Movement 4, Theme 3, Phrase 1

Compare to Movement 4, Theme 3, Phrase 2
Movement 3, subnotive a.1
with rhythm analogous to Movement 4, m. 84
Movement 3, submotive a.1

L.H. rhythm from mm. 199-209 is analogous to mm. 84-96

Movement 3, Motive A

Movement 3, Motive B

Movement 3, submotive a.1

Movement 3, Motive B

Pair of chromatic submotive a.2 from Movement 1
(see analogous passage in Movement 1, mm. 8-9)
see Movement 4, Theme 2

see L.H. of Movement 1, m. 2

Movement 3, submotive a.1

analogous to m. 220
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