Rachmaninoff and the Flexibility of the Score: Issues Regarding Performance Practice

Tanya Gabrielian

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

9-2018

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

Part of the Music Performance Commons

Recommended Citation
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/2762

This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
RACHMANINOFF AND THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE SCORE:
ISSUES REGARDING PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

by

TANYA GABRIELIAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, The City University of New York

2018
Rachmaninoff and the Flexibility of the Score: 
Issues Regarding Performance Practice

by

Tanya Gabrielian

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

Date

Anne Swartz

Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Norman Carey

Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

Geoffrey Burleson

Sylvia Kahan

Ursula Oppens

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Rachmaninoff and the Flexibility of the Score: Issues Regarding Performance Practice

by

Tanya Gabrielian

Advisor: Geoffrey Burleson

Sergei Rachmaninoff’s piano music is a staple of piano literature, but academia has been slower to embrace his works. Because he continued to compose firmly in the Romantic tradition at a time when Debussy, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg variously represented the vanguard of composition, Rachmaninoff’s popularity has consequently not been as robust in the musicological community. He left a rich legacy of recorded material which provides a first-hand account of his approach to musical interpretation. Few have analyzed Rachmaninoff’s recordings in great detail, and there are even fewer studies addressing Rachmaninoff’s performances of works by other composers.

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the discrepancies between the printed score and Rachmaninoff’s recordings of his own works and works by other composers, and to explore the reasons for these differences. By charting these variations from the printed scores in his recordings of Schumann’s *Carnaval*, Op. 9 and Chopin’s Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, two recordings that Rachmaninoff identified as some of his finest work, these differences can be shown to reflect his prioritization of the architectural vision over the smaller details written in the score. Rachmaninoff’s revisions to his own scores have direct connections to his interpretive choices and priorities, and his edits aimed to improve the structural projection of the piece as a whole. By examining these differences, the reader can also begin to anticipate what interpretive goals Rachmaninoff might generally have throughout
his compositions, thereby deriving a deeper understanding of Rachmaninoff’s compositional and interpretive aesthetics, and, for pianists, better and more authentically informing their own interpretive choices.
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ................................................................................................................................. 1
  - General Statement .................................................................................................................. 1
  - State of Research .................................................................................................................. 3

**Chapter I: Rachmaninoff as a Pianist** .......................................................................................... 7
  - Early Influences .................................................................................................................... 7
  - Rachmaninoff’s Studies in Moscow ....................................................................................... 8
  - Professional Career ............................................................................................................... 10
  - Programming Choices ............................................................................................................ 14
  - Musical Preparation and Interpretation ................................................................................. 17
  - Summary .................................................................................................................................. 23

**Chapter II: Recordings** .................................................................................................................. 25
  - History ....................................................................................................................................... 25
  - Editions ...................................................................................................................................... 35
  - A Note on Performance Analyses of Recordings .................................................................. 36
  - Schumann *Carnaval*, Op. 9 ................................................................................................. 37
    - Recording History .............................................................................................................. 37
    - *Préambule* ......................................................................................................................... 37
    - *Pierrot* ............................................................................................................................... 41
    - *Arlequin* ............................................................................................................................ 42
    - *Valse noble* ......................................................................................................................... 43
    - *Eusebius* ............................................................................................................................. 44
    - *Florestan* ............................................................................................................................ 45
    - *Coquette* ............................................................................................................................. 47
    - *Réplique* ............................................................................................................................. 48
    - *Sphinxes* .............................................................................................................................. 49
    - *Papillons* ............................................................................................................................. 50
    - *Chiarina* ............................................................................................................................. 52
    - *Chopin* .................................................................................................................................. 54
    - *Estrella* .................................................................................................................................. 55
    - *Reconnaissance* ................................................................................................................... 56
    - *Pantalon et Colombine* ...................................................................................................... 57
    - *Valse allemande* ................................................................................................................. 58
    - *Intermezzo: Paganini* .......................................................................................................... 60
    - *Aveu* ..................................................................................................................................... 61
Promenade ................................................................. 62
Pause ................................................................. 64
Marche des “Davidsbündler” contre les Philistins ............................. 64
Chopin Sonata No. 2 in Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35 .............. 68
Recording History ......................................................... 68
Movement I: Grave – Doppio movimento ........................................ 69
Movement II: Scherzo .................................................... 73
Movement III: Marche funèbre ............................................... 79
Movement IV: Finale: Presto ................................................ 84
Summary ........................................................................ 85

Chapter III: Rachmaninoff’s Compositions: Revisions and Interpretations ........ 88
Overview ................................................................. 88
Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 1 ....................................... 91
Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 36 ......................................... 95
Concerto No. 4 in G Minor, Op. 40 ........................................... 98

Chapter IV: Conclusion ....................................................... 104

Appendix ................................................................. 110
Score of Schumann’s Carnaval, Op. 9 ......................................... 110
Score of Chopin’s Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35 ................. 138

Bibliography .................................................................... 157
List of Tables and Examples

Table 2.1: Rachmaninoff’s Complete Recordings ........................................... 28
Example 2.2: Schumann *Arlequin*, printed version, measures 25-29 .................... 43
Example 2.3: Schumann *Arlequin*, Rachmaninoff’s version, measures 25-29 .......... 43
Example 2.4: Schumann *Réplique*, printed version, measures 4-5 ....................... 48
Example 2.5: Schumann *Réplique*, Rachmaninoff’s version, measures 4-5 .......... 49
Example 2.6: Schumann *Sphinxes*, Rachmaninoff’s version, complete ................... 50
Example 2.7: Schumann *Valse allemande*, printed version, measures 1-4 .............. 59
Example 2.8: Schumann *Valse allemande*, Rachmaninoff’s version, measures 1-4 ...... 59
Example 2.9: Chopin Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, *Scherzo*, printed version, measures 81-84 ................................................................. 75
Example 2.10: Chopin Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, *Scherzo*, Rachmaninoff’s version, measures 81-84 ................................................................. 76
Introduction

General Statement

Rachmaninoff’s piano music has long been a staple of piano literature. However, his popularity has not been as robust in the musicological community. As stated by David Butler Cannata in the keynote speech at the University of Maryland on a retrospective of Rachmaninoff:

In the spectrum of Music History there seems little problem in evaluating the importance of many of Rachmaninoff’s contemporaries…However, this is not the case with Rachmaninoff: in many ways, he remains an enigma to this day, at best, a semi-present figure on the larger musical scene. . . . Pianists still cannot live without his music, and audiences still adore it. The music has a remarkable appeal, even on first hearing, and this explains why it became part of the standard repertoire overnight. As for his reputation in intellectual circles, again some things don’t change…Rachmaninoff’s music proves too popular to be taken seriously by most professional musicologists.1

Because Rachmaninoff’s music is so firmly founded in the Romantic tradition, filled with luscious textures and nineteenth century melodies, his compositions were largely dismissed by critics during his lifetime because they differed so drastically from works that displayed the new techniques and developments in music of the time.2 However, there is quite a disparity between the demeanor and style of Rachmaninoff the performer and the perception of his music as unabashed romanticism.

Rachmaninoff presented himself as quite the paradox. His music displayed elements of both reverence and excess. He presented a stone-faced demeanor on stage while performing some of the most emotionally visceral piano music in the repertoire. He was thought by many to be aloof and arrogant, but he showed extreme preoccupation with critics and his own

---


2 Ibid., 6.
insecurities. Although he was often perceived as an anti-intellectual due to his compositional style, he was decreed by critics of his time to be an academic in interpretation. He was averse to live radio broadcasts, yet he embraced the vanguard of technology at the time and created a substantial number of recordings. By exploring these and other dichotomies associated with Rachmaninoff’s life and musical style, a greater understanding of his stylistic choices and musical predilections will be ascertained.

There is no other pianist-composer who left so rich a legacy of recorded material. Rachmaninoff’s commanding use of newly created recording technology provides invaluable information as to his musical beliefs. His freedom of interpretation, as demonstrated in his recordings, showed a creation of his own unique vision applied to music beyond his own compositions. Furthermore, his constant self-criticism led to multiple editions of his own works, in which pieces were constantly cut in length in order to maintain a straight-forward, direct approach without any excessive moments.

In this dissertation, I will show that Rachmaninoff’s revisions to his own scores have direct connections to the interpretive choices he made in repertoire by other composers, as well as in his own compositions. Furthermore, through an analysis of his recordings, both of his own compositions and those by others, I will demonstrate that his interpretations in all repertoire was characterized by prioritizing conveyance of the larger structure over the smaller details of written nuances as notated in print. The revisions of his works also followed suit, with the various edits serving to improve the strength of the structural projection. This study will add to performance practice research, and it will hopefully contribute to both pianists and teachers who wish to understand Rachmaninoff’s motivations and conceptions surrounding music, in hopes of creating
stylistically informed interpretations of Rachmaninoff’s music.

State of Research

Although there is now a substantial amount of literature regarding the life and works of Rachmaninoff and his position as a powerful figure both as a pianist and composer is no longer debated, there is very little research specifically relating to analysis of his own recordings.

There are three dissertations specifically regarding performance practice, the findings of which have been arrived at through a study of Rachmaninoff’s recordings of his own compositions: Jay Alan Hershberger’s “Rachmaninoff on Rachmaninoff: An Interpretative Analysis of his Piano/Orchestra Recordings,”3 Natalya V. Lundvedt’s “Rachmaninoff and Russian Pianism: Performance Issues in the Piano Concerto in C Minor, Op. 18,”4 and Xiao-Li Ding’s “Rachmaninoff Plays Rachmaninoff.”5 The first two focus exclusively on Rachmaninoff’s concerti repertoire, while the third, by Ding, looks at Rachmaninoff’s recordings of his shorter pieces. There have been no dissertations specifically focused on Rachmaninoff’s interpretation of works by other composers.

There has been some research regarding Rachmaninoff and his recordings. Gregor Benko wrote an article titled “Rachmaninoff on Records,”6 giving an overview of Rachmaninoff’s


output. Barrie Martyn not only wrote a biography, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor,* which contains references to Rachmaninoff’s recordings, but also has written an article specifically about performance practice titled “Rachmaninoff Performing Practice and the Third Concerto.” Jan Holcman specifically references Rachmaninoff’s recordings of Chopin in an interview with Donald Manildi. Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda’s biography, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music,* also contains much information regarding the circumstances surrounding the recordings.

Rachmaninoff himself also gave many interviews and wrote articles on his own thoughts about performance. He wrote an article for *Etude* titled “How Russian Students Work,” and in James Francis Cooke’s *Great Pianists on Piano Playing,* Rachmaninoff lays out ten main points about general musical values and the role of a student and teacher in practice and preparation. Oscar von Riesemann was Rachmaninoff’s official biographer and

---


wrote *Rachmaninoff’s Recollections* after a number of interviews. An article by Katherine Swan and Alfred Swan, “Rachmaninoff: Personal Reminiscences” provides great insight directly from Alfred Swan’s conversations and friendship with Rachmaninoff.

Articles and dissertations addressing the subject of revisions include Geoffrey Norris’ “The Piano Sonata No. 2: A Cut Too Far,” David Butler Cannata’s “Rachmaninoff’s Final Verdict on Revisions: The Precedent of the First Concerto Manuscript,” and Kim Andrei Lasarenko’s dissertation “A Style Change in Rachmaninoff’s Piano Music as Seen in the ‘Second Piano Sonata in B-flat minor, Op. 36’ (1913 and 1931 Versions).” Lee-Ann Nelson also tackled the subject in a thesis entitled “Rachmaninoff’s Second Piano Sonata, Op. 36: Towards the Creation of an Alternative Performance Version.” Again, the biographies by Bertensson and Leyda, and Martyn, contain invaluable material about Rachmaninoff’s beliefs, and much can be gleaned from analyzing the scores through the various edits.


Rachmaninoff was proud of his recordings of Chopin’s Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35 and Schumann’s *Carnaval*, Op. 9. He proclaimed his recording of the Chopin Sonata to be “the best of all I have ever made.”\(^{19}\) Rachmaninoff also praised his own recording of Schumann’s *Carnaval*.\(^ {20}\) Because these recordings were considered to be of exceptional merit by Rachmaninoff himself, they can be counted as true indications of his own musical concepts. Focusing on his treatment of the written score, alterations to notation, and interpretive decisions will be a powerful way to analyze the methods and the ideas that he brought to his own performances and will lead to an understanding of how he treats the written score. These ideas can then be brought to his own music.


Chapter I: Rachmaninoff as a Pianist

Rachmaninoff’s Early Influences

Sergei Vasilyevich Rachmaninoff was born in 1873, the fourth of six children, into a musical family in the Novgorod Oblast. His paternal grandfather was a musician and had taken lessons with John Field, and his father was an amateur pianist. Rachmaninoff’s mother was his first music teacher when he began the piano at the age of four, and she was immediately impressed with his natural ability and ease of memorization. When news of his talent spread through the family, his paternal grandfather suggested that they hire Anna Ornatskaya as his next teacher. Ornatskaya moved into the family home and began teaching Rachmaninoff formal lessons.

Rachmaninoff came from a troubled family; his father had to auction off the estate after squandering his fortune. When Rachmaninoff was nine years old, the family left their home in Oneg and moved to Saint Petersburg. Ornatskaya helped to prepare him for entry into the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, where he was granted a scholarship for his studies in 1883. There, he studied piano with Vladimir Demyansky and harmony with Aleksandr Rubets.

Rachmaninoff’s family experienced a number of difficulties in 1883. His parents separated, his father moved to Moscow, and his sister Sofia died of diphtheria. At this time, his maternal grandmother came to help raise the children and brought Rachmaninoff to church for the first time; the sounds of the Russian Orthodox church later colored and inspired Rachmaninoff’s compositions. Two years later, Rachmaninoff’s sister Yelena died from anemia. Yelena had influenced Rachmaninoff’s early musical development by introducing him to the music of Tchaikovsky. Following the spate of accumulating traumas, Rachmaninoff began to detach himself from his studies and was nearly dismissed from the Saint Petersburg...
Conservatory for failing all of his academic exams. Rachmaninoff’s mother consulted her nephew (by marriage), Alexander Siloti, a noted pianist, conductor, and composer, who was well aware of his talents. Siloti recommended that Rachmaninoff move to Moscow and study at the Conservatory with his own former teacher, Nikolai Zverev.

*Rachmaninoff’s Studies in Moscow*

Rachmaninoff studied with Zverev for the next three years and moved into his apartment. Zverev was a disciplinarian, and Rachmaninoff was given a strict practice regime that began at six in the morning. During his time with Zverev, Rachmaninoff gained the discipline he had been lacking, and he was instilled with a rigorous work ethic that persisted throughout his career. Zverev also was responsible for introducing many of Russia’s most prominent musicians to Rachmaninoff during his Sunday afternoon gatherings, and it was here that he met Anton Arensky, Anton Rubinstein, Sergei Taneyev, and Tchaikovsky. These titans of Russian music did not come to Zverev’s home to perform, but rather to be part of the audience for Zverev’s students.

Rubinstein, who had founded the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, was another profound influence on Rachmaninoff. In 1886, Rachmaninoff attended Rubinstein’s series of seven historical recitals in Moscow. Each concert was repeated twice, and Rachmaninoff was so

---

taken by the recitals that he attended all fourteen performances. Rubinstein was not note-perfect at these performances. During a performance of Mily Balakirev’s Islamey, Rubinstein improvised in the style of the piece for four minutes until he was able to continue. However, Rachmaninoff believed that “for every possible mistake [Rubinstein] may have made, he gave, in return, ideas and musical tone pictures that would have made up for a million mistakes.” This statement demonstrates that Rachmaninoff valued compellingly presented musical content, elements, and textures.

Two of the pieces that Rachmaninoff singled out for praise from Rubinstein’s concerts became part of his core repertoire—Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57 and Chopin’s Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35. Rachmaninoff told his biographer, Oskar von Riesemann:

I remember how deeply I was affected by his playing of Beethoven’s Appassionata, and Chopin’s Sonata in B-flat Minor. Once he repeated the whole finale of the Chopin Sonata, perhaps because he had not succeeded in the short crescendo at the close as he would have wished. I could have listened to this passage over and over again.

Another focus of Rubinstein’s playing that appealed to Rachmaninoff was his control of the pedal. He himself very happily expressed his ideas on the subject when he said, ‘The pedal is the soul of the piano.’ No pianist should ever forget this.” Speaking of the soul of the

---


23 Harvey Sachs, Virtuoso (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 82.


25 Ibid.
instrument and a coloration device as of the utmost importance, it is clear that Rachmaninoff valued sound quality and production highly.

At Zverev’s urging, Rachmaninoff entered the senior division of the Moscow Conservatory in 1888 as both a composer and pianist, studying piano with Siloti, counterpoint with Taneyev, and harmony with Arensky. Rachmaninoff had created his first composition, Etude in F-sharp Minor in hopes of entering Arensky’s class; after admission, Rachmaninoff began composing more regularly.

In 1891, Siloti resigned from the Moscow Conservatory after years of disagreements with the director, Vasily Safonov. Rather than being assigned to another teacher for his last year at the Conservatory, Rachmaninoff was allowed to take the piano exam a year early in 1891, and only took lessons in composition for his final year. In 1892, Rachmaninoff received his diploma from the Conservatory and was awarded the Great Gold Medal after receiving the highest possible mark for his one-act opera, *Aleko*.

**Professional Career**

While living in Russia, Rachmaninoff never felt that his calling was to be a concert pianist. In 1912, he wrote a letter to Marietta Shaginyan, a poet and friend, where he reveals somewhat sarcastically that he thought his principal career should be that of a composer: “No wonder if I should, after a while, make up my mind to abandon composition altogether and become, instead, a professional pianist, or a conductor, or a farmer, or even, perhaps an automobilist.”

---

In his discussions with Riesemann, Rachmaninoff revealed that he felt that it was his destiny to be a composer, an idea that was implanted in his head since his days at the Moscow Conservatory after being awarded a “5-plus” rating on an exam that allowed him to enter the special theory section:

The board had granted me a “5 plus,” the highest rating, and Tchaikovsky had added three plus signs to this mark—over it, below it, and beside it. It was decided that in the early autumn that I should enter Taneyev’s first-year counterpoint class, and thus my fate as a composer was, as it were, officially sealed.27

Rachmaninoff felt great difficulty balancing his role as a composer with other musical activities. In addition to his performances as a pianist, Rachmaninoff began conducting when he was offered the position of assistant conductor of the Moscow Private Russian Opera Company for the 1897-98 season. Despite his struggle to balance the demands of composing, performing, and conducting, he was productive on all three fronts. Between 1888 and 1917, he made 422 appearances as pianist or conductor, and he also completed thirty-nine of his forty-five works with opus numbers. His extreme focus was evident, as he revealed to Riesemann:

The whole time of my musical activity thus far—some twenty-four years—might be divided roughly into three periods of approximately eight years each, of composing, concert work, and conducting. When I am concertizing, I cannot compose…when I feel like writing, I have to concentrate on that—I cannot touch the piano. When I am conducting I can neither compose nor play concerts. Other musicians may be more fortunate in this respect; but I have to concentrate to such a degree on any one thing I am doing that it does not seem to allow me to take up anything else.28

One of the most influential experiences in Rachmaninoff’s career came as a result of the disastrous reception to the premiere of his Symphony No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 13 on March 28,


28 Ibid., 110.
1897. The premiere was held in Saint Petersburg, and the politics of the musical scenes between Saint Petersburg and Moscow led to tensions between the musicians based at the two locations. Furthermore, Alexander Glazunov, the conductor of the premiere, was possibly drunk during the performance and showed little dedication to the work during rehearsals.\textsuperscript{30} Regardless of the reasons for the harsh criticisms that the work received, the piece was panned by critics. César Cui wrote in the \textit{Novosti} that the symphony had a “poverty of themes and a sick perversity of harmony.”\textsuperscript{31} Unable to cope with the failure of the premiere, Rachmaninoff spiraled into a deep depression. He later reflected on the occasion when speaking to Riesemann and said: “I returned to Moscow a changed man. My confidence in myself had received a sudden blow. Agonizing hours spent in doubt and hard thinking had brought me to the conclusion that I ought to give up composing.”\textsuperscript{32} Rachmaninoff was unable to compose until 1899, and during his hiatus, he received hypnotic therapy with Nikolai Dahl, who as a result was the dedicatee of the Second Piano Concerto.

Rachmaninoff’s main performance opportunities in Russia were as a conductor. During his depression after the First Symphony, Rachmaninoff conducted both the Moscow Private Russian Opera Company and the Bolshoi Theater.

The \textit{Manchester Guardian} remarked on his ability to bring his own unique interpretations to the score as a conductor, noting his role as both a composer and performer, and the overall effect of the reading. The sense of structural integrity was noted to be particularly significant:

\begin{quote}
It was Rachmaninoff’s achievement to make these standard works seem fresh from the forge, every note vital and full of meaning. Incidentally he caused us to
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{31} César Cui in \textit{Novosti}, March 17, 1897, in Bertensson and Leyda, \textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff}, 108.

\textsuperscript{32} Sergei Rachmaninoff, quoted in Riesemann, \textit{Rachmaninoff’s Recollections}, 102.
think that we had before heard them played, save in a mild commonplace fashion…He has the composer’s instinct for what is important in a structure: he seems to see the end in the beginning and to lay out his proportions accordingly. Yet we never get the effect of a merely studied interpretation; the sense of form is quick and instinctive with Rachmaninoff.33

In 1917, Rachmaninoff left Russia with his family to escape the Russian Revolution. Three weeks after the October Revolution, Rachmaninoff accepted an offer to play in Stockholm, obtaining permits for himself and his family to leave the country. From Sweden, Rachmaninoff made his way to the United States, where he was immediately offered principal conductor positions at both the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. He declined both offers but realized that outside of Russia, his career would have to be based in performance, rather than composition, in order to support his family. Rachmaninoff expressed horror at the conditions for composers in the United States. Besides the lack of opportunities for the publication of his compositions, he disliked the American public’s taste, which he found restricting.34

Rachmaninoff maintained a heavy performing schedule up until his death. By 1943, Rachmaninoff was diagnosed with pleurisy while on tour, but insisted that he continue his performances. On February 17, 1943, Rachmaninoff gave his last concert in Knoxville and became so ill that he was immediately brought back to his family in Los Angeles, where he died on March 28, 1943.

33 Neville Cardus in Manchester Guardian, November 23, 1929, in Bertensson and Leyda, Sergei Rachmaninoff, 369.

34 Ibid., 224.
In an interview published in *The Etude*, Rachmaninoff said:

I believe in what might be called indigenous music for the piano; that is, music which the Germans would describe as *klaviermässig*. So much has been written for the instrument that is really alien. Brahms is a notable example. Rimsky-Korsakov is possibly the greatest of Russian composers; yet no one ever plays his concerto in these days, because it is not *klaviermässig*. On the other hand the concertos of Tchaikovsky are frequently heard because they lie well under the fingers! Even with my own concertos I much prefer the third, because my second is uncomfortable to play, and therefore not susceptible of so successful effects. Grieg, although he could not be classed as a great master pianist, had the gift of writing beautifully for the piano and in pure *klaviermässig* style.\(^\text{35}\)

Rachmaninoff performed only the repertoire that he felt the most affinity for, rather than a range encompassing a more representative selection of piano repertoire. He played very few original works by Baroque composers: Handel’s “Harmonious Blacksmith,” a few sonatas of Scarlatti, a variation by Rameau, and three unnamed Bach suites. Instead, he usually chose to program transcriptions of music from the Baroque era by composers such as Busoni, Liszt, and Tausig. Rachmaninoff also transcribed three movements from Bach’s Violin Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006.

As for classical repertoire, Haydn and Mozart were seldom programmed, but Beethoven’s works were a staple of Rachmaninoff’s repertoire. In the course of his career, Rachmaninoff performed over a third of Beethoven’s Sonatas and two sets of variations, perhaps because he felt an attraction to the romanticism inherent in Beethoven’s works.

Romantic music made up the bulk of Rachmaninoff’s performance material. Chopin was the most frequently performed. In an interview with *Etude* magazine, Rachmaninoff said:

It seems somewhat astonishing that since the time of Chopin no master has arisen to enrich the literature of the piano in such magnificent manner. With all due respect for Liszt, whose works form such a very important step in the advance of

pianistic art, Chopin still remains at the zenith. His exquisite sense of tone color, his gorgeous harmonies and his always pianistic realization of the possibilities of the keyboard make his works a kind of Bible for the pianists. When you know Chopin you know practically all that can be done in the way of producing pianistic effects of high artistic value…Would that another Chopin might arise to bring new pianistic beauties to the world. Notwithstanding all the playing I do during the course of the year, I find myself continually playing Chopin at home, just for the sheer pleasure of the thing. There is a delight in letting one's fingers run through his perfectly molded passages.36

Rachmaninoff programmed many of Chopin’s major works: half of the Preludes, Op. 28, the Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, Fantasy, Op. 49, the Barcarolle, Op. 60, the Polonaise-Fantaisie, Op. 61, Ballades, Scherzos, eight of the Etudes, and several waltzes and nocturnes.


Rachmaninoff also performed many piano pieces by Liszt, including the Transcendental Etudes, Paganini Etudes, Hungarian Rhapsodies (especially the second, which he performed with an original cadenza), and the Dante Sonata.

Although Brahms was a composer that he considered “alien,” Rachmaninoff did perform a small selection of his pieces from Op. 10 and Op. 118. As a student, he had performed the Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel. He performed the E-flat Major Intermezzo on a concert in New York on February 19, 1927, on which occasion Olga Samaroff wrote:

Rachmaninoff has a curiously complex personality. Reserved and inscrutable as a man, he is singularly frank and simple as a pianist. Presenting music with a magnificent pianism and imposing general mastery, but with a sometimes almost matter-of-fact directness, as in the E-flat Minor Intermezzo of Brahms…Brahms clearly indicated the establishment of [the] general mood in the opening section of

36 Ibid.
the said work by marking the first four measures “piano,” “sotto voce” and the repetition of the phrase beginning at the fifth measure pianissimo in the treble with a triple pianissimo in the bass. Mr. Rachmaninoff played all these measures forte or mezzo forte, thus throwing a clear, decisive light on the outlines of the music.\(^{37}\)

It is clear from this description that Rachmaninoff’s interpretation, which was not a spontaneous reading, differed from the printed score, and he took no hesitation to deviate from the writing to ensure his own vision would come across.

Rachmaninoff avoided works by contemporary composers who wrote in then avant-garde idioms, including impressionism, neo-classicism, serialism, and atonality. He strongly expressed his objection to these techniques and believed that audiences were duped by the new styles of composition, which Rachmaninoff felt lacked in substance. He wrote a letter to Leonard Liebling after he was asked to comment on a symposium on modern music. In this, not only did he reveal his thoughts on the state of music by his contemporaries, but also his insights as to what he looks for in music:

The new kind of music seems to come, not from the heart, but from the head. Its composers think rather than feel. They have not the capacity to make their works “exult,” as Hans von Bülow called it. They meditate, protest, analyze, reason, calculate, and brood—but they do not exult. It may be that they compose in the spirit of the times; but it may be, too, that the spirit of the times does not call for expression in music. If that is the case, rather than compile music that is thought but not felt, composers should remain silent and leave contemporary expression to those authors and playwrights who are masters of the factual and literal, and do not concern themselves with soul states.\(^{38}\)

Rachmaninoff’s repertoire selection was limited and when performing music of the present time, rather than selecting music from the current modernist trends, he focused his own

---


works and those by Russian contemporaries writing in a post-Romantic idiom and strongly identifying as Russian in spirit. Rachmaninoff consequently programmed works by such composers as Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Medtner, Balakirev, and Liadov. After Alexander Scriabin’s death in 1915, Rachmaninoff performed a number of Scriabin concerts that were met with disappointment by the press. Joseph Yasser offered an explanation for the criticism:

One of Rachmaninoff’s corrections of established attitudes can be seen in his interpretation of Scriabin who at one time used to be viewed as a musical descendant of Chopin, Liszt, Wagner and even, partly, of Debussy. To the dismay of Scriabin’s numerous disciples, Rachmaninoff transformed him, with justice, into a fundamentally Russian composer with all the characteristics of the Moscow school trained in the tradition of Tchaikovsky.\(^{39}\)

Yasser touches upon the idea that Rachmaninoff felt that he as an interpreter had the right to perform pieces in the manner in which he deemed to be ideal, even if these ideas were in opposition to the composer’s expressed wishes. Though Scriabin was believed to share the aesthetics of more Western, rather than Slavic, compositional influences, Rachmaninoff still decided to interpret him in the strong Russian tradition that resonated with his own artistic views. Consequently, he brought his own specifically determined musical sensibilities to the pieces that he played, as he crafted all of his interpretations as if they were his own original compositional experiments.

Musical Preparation and Interpretation

Rachmaninoff despised teaching piano, and he did everything he could to avoid it.\(^{40}\) With great reluctance, he taught early in his career in order to maintain a steady income, but as soon as

---

\(^{39}\) Joseph Yasser in *Russkoye Slovo*, March 7, 1915, in Ibid., 197.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 64.
he left for the United States and had a successful career as a pianist, he no longer gave lessons.\textsuperscript{41} Consequently, there is only a small amount of material available on his own pedagogical methods and his interpretive approaches and revisions; scholars are limited to anecdotes from friends, articles, and interviews to find such information.

Even within his intimate circle, Rachmaninoff was reticent to speak about music. Nikolai Medtner always longed to speak to Rachmaninoff about his musical process and compositional analysis, but the issue was always evaded. Alfred Swan relayed Medtner’s desire to speak to Rachmaninoff about his composition beliefs in his article, “Rachmaninoff: Personal Reminiscences”:

I know Rachmaninoff from my early years…All my life has passed parallel to his, but with no one have I talked so little about music as with him. Once I even told him how I wanted to discuss with him the subject of harmony. Immediately his face became very distant and he said, “Yes, yes, we must, sometime.” But he never broached the subject again.\textsuperscript{42}

Rachmaninoff strongly believed that musicians should communicate with the audience through music alone.\textsuperscript{43} Even as a composer, he was often inspired by nonmusical sources, but was completely unwilling to reveal the motivation for his music.\textsuperscript{44} He gave an explanation of his method:

When composing, I find it of great help to have in mind a book just recently read, or a beautiful picture, or a poem. Sometimes a definite story is kept in mind,

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{43} Bertensson and Leyda, \textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff}, 269.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 153.
which I try to convert into tones without disclosing the source of my inspiration...If there is nothing within, nothing from the outside will help.\textsuperscript{45}

Because of Rachmaninoff’s reluctance to share his innermost thoughts about his musical approach, much of the description of his methods come from friends observing him practicing, performing, and from the small amount of information he did share through interviews and writings.

In 1915, Shaginyan wrote a description of arguably the most important idea that shaped Rachmaninoff’s own interpretations. She described her interaction with Rachmaninoff after a performance:

…The reception of Rachmaninoff was so tempestuous that it was difficult for us to push our way through the crowd. We finally reached the artists' room, where we saw at once from the expression on Rachmaninoff’s face that he was in an awful state: he was biting his lip furiously, his complexion was yellow. As we opened our mouths to congratulate him he exploded in complaint—he must be losing his mind, he’s growing decrepit. Better to discard him altogether, prepare his obituary; once there was a musician, but that’s all over now, he could never forgive himself, and so on. “Didn’t you notice that I missed the point? Don’t you understand—I let the point slip!” On a later occasion, he explained that each piece he plays is shaped around its culminating point: the whole mass of sounds must so be measured, the depth and power of each sound must be given with such purity and gradation that this peak point is achieved with an appearance of the greatest naturalness, through actually its accomplishment is the highest art. This moment must arrive with the sound and sparkle of a ribbon snapped at the end of a race—it must seam a liberation from the last material obstacle, the last barrier between truth and its expression. The composition itself determines this culmination; the point may come at its end or in the middle; it may be loud or soft, yet the musician must always be able to approach it with sure calculation, for if it slips by, the work goes soft and fuzzy, and cannot convey to the listener what must be conveyed.\textsuperscript{46}

This description of “the point” is invaluable when discussing performance practice in Rachmaninoff’s compositions. It is clear that his interpretive principle of this “culminating

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 156.

\textsuperscript{46} Marietta Shaginyan in Bertensson and Leyda, \textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff}, 217.
point” was a defining characteristic of his musicianship, and similarly must have comprised a fundamental tenet in his own compositions as well.

Rachmaninoff’s use of the “point” resulted in predetermined musical phrasings and architecture, which led many of the critics of the day to disparage him. James Huneker, writing for the *New York Times*, critiqued Rachmaninoff’s first New York recital in 1918:

> The oldsters were reminded of von Bülow. The same cold white light of analysis, the incisive touch, the strongly marked rhythms, the intellectual grasp of the musical ideas, and the sense of the relative importance in phrase-groupings proclaimed that Rachmaninoff is a cerebral, not an emotional artist. Not Woodrow Wilson himself could have held the academic balance so dispassionately. Even the staccato Princeton touch was not absent. 47

There is a certain irony to the fact that Rachmaninoff was viewed as an academic in his performances but was criticized by critics and composers alike for his compositions, which remained firmly set in the Romantic traditions, untouched by the compositional trends of the time. In an interview for the *New York Times* in 1932, Rachmaninoff said:

> The poet Heine once said, “What life takes away, music restores.” He would not be moved to say this if he could hear the music of today. For the most part it gives nothing. Music should bring relief. It should rehabilitate minds and souls, and modern music does not do this. If we are to have great music we must return to the fundamentals which made the music of the past great. Music cannot be just color and rhythm; it must reveal the emotions of the heart. 48

Despite this focus on emotional exaltation, Rachmaninoff was fastidious in his work, as evidenced by his manner of practicing; he made sure to prepare his interpretations through thorough repetition and investigation. Rachmaninoff’s process for learning a new piece was

---


methodical to the point of obsessiveness. Friend and pianist Abram Chasins listened to Rachmaninoff practice Chopin’s Etude No. 25, No. 6 after arriving at his home for an appointment:

I stood outside the door, unable to believe my ears. Rachmaninoff was practicing Chopin’s etude in thirds, but at such a snail’s pace that it took me a while to recognize it…Fascinated, I clocked this remarkable exhibition; twenty seconds per bar was his pace for almost an hour while I waited riveted to the spot, quite unable to ring the bell. Perhaps this way of developing and maintaining an unerring mechanism accounted for his bitter sarcasm towards colleagues who practice their programs “once over lightly” between concerts.49

For Rachmaninoff, planning and preparation of a worked to be performed was of the utmost importance, and nothing was left to chance. According to Rachmaninoff, it was the interpreter’s responsibility to work as a machine to uphold the structure and emphasize the “point” of each piece. This extreme focus on the architecture of the piece led to a strong continuity throughout the work as a whole. Donald Manildi characterized this unyielding unity of conception as resulting in a “despotic authority which was irresistible, whether or not his ideas correspond with usual preferences.”50

Besides his demanding practicing habits, Rachmaninoff felt that the interpretation of a new piece involved knowledge of the creative process, particularly to understand music written by other composers. He also felt that interpretation should be focused on creating the correct sound quality, and he expressed the importance of color in music in an interview in 1936 in *Musical Opinion*:

If you are a composer you have an affinity with other composers. You can make contact with their imaginations, knowing something of their problems and ideals. You can give their works color. That is the most important thing for me in my


pianoforte interpretations, color. So you can make music live. Without color it is
dead…The great interpreters in the past were composers in most instances.
Paganini, so we understand, was a king of virtuosity…but he was a composer too.
Liszt and Rubinstein; and in our time Paderewski and Kreisler. Ah! I know what
you are thinking. But it doesn’t matter. It makes no difference whether these are
first- or fourth-rate composers. What matters is, they had the creative minds and
so were able to communicate with other minds of the same order.\(^51\)

Rachmaninoff possessed enormous hands, an incomparable technique, and he displayed
his power and endurance in his performances. Despite his ability, Rachmaninoff never wanted to
show virtuosity for the sake of virtuosity. He believed that technique existed to serve the music;
in his interview with Cooke, Rachmaninoff specifically warned students against “superficial
exhibition at the keyboard.”\(^52\)

Rachmaninoff did write specifically on interpretation in the \textit{Etude}, in which he disclosed
revealing information regarding this subject:

As the talented student grows older he must seek within himself his interpretation.
Does he wish to know how to play the \textit{cantilena} of Beethoven or of Chopin? He
must feel it himself! Talent is feeling, the feeling that every player experiences in
his innermost consciousness…It takes years of work to understand and think out
problems in music. Every player must ponder them and decide them for himself
after his conservatory training is finished.\(^53\)

Rachmaninoff felt that the performer had the final say in interpretation, and that s/he
must have the ability not just to perform and reiterate, but instead create a new work of art. He
spoke to Cooke about the need for creativity as both a composer and performer:

While we must respect the traditions of the past, which for the most part are
very intangible to us because they are only to be found in books, we must,

14-15.

\(^{52}\) James Francis Cooke, \textit{Great Pianists on Piano Playing} (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, Co.,
1917), 216.

\(^{53}\) Sergei Rachmaninoff, “Interpretation Depends on Talent and Personality,” \textit{Etude} 50 (1932),
239.
nevertheless, not be bound down by convention. Iconoclasm is the law of artistic progress. All great composers and performers have built upon the ruins of conventions that they themselves have destroyed. It is infinitely better to create than to imitate.\textsuperscript{54}

In December 1940, Rachmaninoff gave an interview in Havana before a recital. He was asked about different interpretations of his works, where he admitted that he enjoys hearing what other musicians can bring to the table: “[Rachmaninoff] was asked if he was disturbed by the way other musicians play his works. ‘To be quite honest, no,’ he answered. ‘It is interesting to see how some other pianist will give a piece you have written yourself an entirely different musical color.’”\textsuperscript{55}

Summary

Rachmaninoff’s values as a pianist give us insight into his interpretations. First and foremost, the concept of the structural point of the piece as an entirety shows his dedication to the overarching scope of a work. His preoccupation with architecture leads to desirable uniformity, in his view, and a careful plan regarding pacing and preparation. Rachmaninoff maintained a strict work ethic throughout his professional life, instilled upon him from his childhood lessons with Zverev and the austere training from the Moscow Conservatory, and he left nothing in his preparations to chance. Perhaps it is his fundamental grounding as a composer that led him to this viewpoint—understanding the piece as a complete entity and possessing the insight from a compositional point of view gave him the freedom to be expressive on top of a solid foundation. Rachmaninoff also clearly and explicitly believed color was vital to

\textsuperscript{54} Cooke, Great Pianists on Piano Playing, 215.

\textsuperscript{55} V. Spence in Havana PM, January 8, 1941, in Bertensson and Leyda, Sergei Rachmaninoff, 362-363.
interpretation, and admired profundity, originality, and creativity in performance. Balancing these values with his strict rigor and planning led to performances that were personal yet unsentimental, maintaining a large-scale view without over-indulging in the moment.

Rachmaninoff’s unwillingness to disclose information regarding his inspirations and specific views on his own compositions leads to the opinion that he wanted to limit control of interpretations of his music to traditional indications in the score, rather than providing guiding prose on what he felt were the most important parameters in any specific composition, or pictorial imagery. Furthermore, Rachmaninoff was open to differing interpretations of his own works and found it interesting to hear what other musicians would find in his own music.

The parameters of music that Rachmaninoff explicitly found most important—color and architecture—provide listeners a basis for understanding Rachmaninoff’s own interpretive choices and an idea of what he expected from others in their performances of his works. An awareness of his background can provide the listener with some preliminary preparation of what to expect from his recordings, which will be examined in the next chapter.
Chapter II: Recordings

History

When Rachmaninoff arrived in America, he realized that he would have to support his family as a concert pianist, rather than a composer. Consequently, with the new advances in recording, it was logical that Rachmaninoff would begin recording with his new career trajectory. The Edison Company did not have any significant pianists on its label, so the company was eager to sign Rachmaninoff.

The Edison Company had a recording process that they quite subjectively claimed to have the best audio fidelity in sound at the time, placing themselves over their competitors, including Victor and Columbia. However, the recording engineer placed the piano far away from the recording horns, and consequently, the sound was distant. Edison owned a few pianos, including a Steinway model B and two Lauter pianos (a 9-foot model and an upright). The sounds that were transferred with the best quality were made with an upright piano, which was very limited in possibilities for the pianist in both quality and sound.

Thomas Edison was extremely opinionated, despite his lack of knowledge about music and being partially deaf. He was vocal about his unhappiness about Rachmaninoff as a musician, referring to him as a pounder, and he believed that Rachmaninoff ruined pianos by overstraining the strings and hardening the felts. Edison also did not think highly of

56 Gregor Benko, “Rachmaninoff on Records,” in International Rachmaninoff Festival-Conference: Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of Sergei Rachmaninoff’s Birth, ed. Shelley G. Davis (College Park, MD: University of Maryland Press, 1998), 36.

57 Benko, “Rachmaninoff on Records,” 36.

58 Hershberger, “Rachmaninoff on Rachmaninoff,” 25.
Rachmaninoff’s compositions.\textsuperscript{59} Nevertheless, the staff at the Edison Company convinced Edison to reconsider. Rachmaninoff’s recording sessions took place on April 18, 19, 22, and 23 1919 at Edison’s recording studio in New York City, and eight pieces were released.\textsuperscript{60} For each piece, three separate takes were recorded, and Rachmaninoff requested that he have final approval for the commercial release. However, Edison ignored Rachmaninoff’s wishes and issued all the versions of each recording. There is not much variation among the takes.\textsuperscript{61}

Rachmaninoff’s recordings with the Edison Company were released to the public at the end of 1919 and immediately sold out; requests for more recordings quickly followed.\textsuperscript{62} There were many requests specifically for Rachmaninoff’s celebrated Prelude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 3, No. 2 to be released, which Edison had withheld for nameless reasons. Consequently, as Rachmaninoff’s potential profitability for the Edison Company began to be obvious, vice-president William Maxwell encouraged Edison to release the Prelude and other withheld selections that Edison had previously deemed unworthy for release.\textsuperscript{63}

In late 1919, unhappy with his previous interactions with the Edison label, Rachmaninoff began negotiations with RCA Victor. He demanded a written contract, but the


\textsuperscript{60} Rachmaninoff signed a contract with the Edison Company on April 24, 1919, after the four recording sessions had taken place; $500 for each selection was typewritten in the contract but crossed off and changed in pencil to $2,000.

\textsuperscript{61} Benko, “Rachmaninoff on Records,” 36.

\textsuperscript{62} Sales representatives informed Edison that the Rachmaninoff recordings were all sold out and required more shipments to satisfy their customers’ demands; for example, the first order of Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 came from thirty-six cities and 13,690 records in all.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
negotiations were drawn out. Meanwhile, the Edison Company realized how valuable an ongoing relationship with Rachmaninoff would be and submitted a competing contract that reflected all the provisions that Rachmaninoff had requested of RCA Victor, quadrupling the fees from their first contract. But the Edison Company was too late, and Rachmaninoff signed a five-year contract with RCA Victor on April 21, 1920. The contract was for twenty-five pieces and guaranteed an annual advance against royalties of $15,000.\textsuperscript{64}

Rachmaninoff was contracted to be an exclusive RCA Victor recording artist, a status that he maintained for the rest of his life (with the exception of his recordings on piano rolls, which were recorded by the Ampico Company). At the time, the recording industry was continuing to evolve towards an electronic technique to replace the previous reliance on a recording horn and diaphragm, and by 1925, electric recordings made with microphones and amplifiers took over the industry. Rachmaninoff’s post-1925 recordings were made using the electronic technique, which might be why Rachmaninoff re-recorded many of his previous compositions that had already been released using the older technology.

In his first six years with RCA Victor, Rachmaninoff recorded sixty pieces. Forty-two tracks were recordings of short character pieces, and only six were large scale works, which fit onto two sides of a 78-rpm record. Rachmaninoff took a year off from recording in 1926, and when he resumed in 1927, only four more of his own compositions were recorded in the next three years. For the most part, the remainder of Rachmaninoff’s recordings were made after 1938, when he started to devote his time in the studio to his own compositions.

Rachmaninoff usually played by memory for his recording sessions, regardless of the composer of the piece, and he made sure to coordinate his recordings with his concert

\textsuperscript{64} Benko, “Rachmaninoff on Records,” 35.
programming. He used two Steinway D grand pianos for most of his RCA Victor recordings, and individual recording horns were used for the treble and bass sections of the strings. All of the pre-1930 recordings were made in Camden, New Jersey, and the rest were either recorded in New York or Hollywood.

Table 2.1: Rachmaninoff’s Complete Recordings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Title of Work, Other Performers</th>
<th>Recording Date(s)</th>
<th>Record Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J.S. Bach</td>
<td>Sarabande, from Partita No. 4 in D Major, BWV 828</td>
<td>December 16, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.S. Bach</td>
<td>Prelude, Gavotte, and Gigue, from Violin Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006</td>
<td>February 26-27, 1942</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>32 Variations in C Minor, WoO. 80</td>
<td>April 13 and May 14, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Turkish March, from The Ruins of Athens, Op. 113</td>
<td>December 14, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beethoven</td>
<td>Violin Sonata No. 8 in G Major, Op. 30, No. 3, with Fritz Kreisler, violin</td>
<td>March 22, 1928</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bizet</td>
<td>Minuet, from “L'arlésienne” Suite, No. 1</td>
<td>February 24, 1922</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borodin</td>
<td>Scherzo in A-flat Major</td>
<td>December 23, 1935</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 42</td>
<td>April 18, 1919</td>
<td>Edison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 64, No. 3</td>
<td>April 19, 1919</td>
<td>Edison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in F Major, Op. 34, No. 3 “Valse brilliante”</td>
<td>November 4, 1920</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in E-flat Major, Op. 18 “Grand valse brilliante”</td>
<td>January 21, 1921</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in D-flat Major, Op. 64, No. 1 “Minute”</td>
<td>April 2, 1921</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in G-flat Major, Op. 70, No. 1</td>
<td>April 2, 1921</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in D-flat Major, Op. 64, No. 1 “Minute”</td>
<td>April 5, 1923</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in B Minor, Op. 69, No. 2</td>
<td>October 24, 1923</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Mazurka in C-sharp Minor, Op. 63, No. 3</td>
<td>December 27, 1923</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Nocturne in F-sharp Major, Op. 15, No. 2</td>
<td>December 27, 1923</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Scherzo in C-sharp Minor, Op. 39</td>
<td>March 28, 1924</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Ballade in A-flat Major, Op. 47</td>
<td>April 13, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Title and Details</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in C-sharp Minor, Op. 64, No. 2</td>
<td>April 5, 1927</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 64, No. 3</td>
<td>April 5, 1927</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Sonata in B-flat Minor, Op. 35</td>
<td>February 18, 1930</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Waltz in E Minor, Op. posth</td>
<td>February 18, 1930</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopin</td>
<td>Return Home, and The Maiden’s Wish, from Polish Songs</td>
<td>February 27, 1942</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daquin</td>
<td>Le coucou</td>
<td>October 21, 1920</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debussy</td>
<td>Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum, and Golliwog’s Cakewalk, from Children’s Corner Suite</td>
<td>January 21, 1921</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dohnányi</td>
<td>Etude in F Major, Op. 28, No. 2</td>
<td>October 25, 1921</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grieg</td>
<td>Waltz, and Elfin Dance, from Lyric Pieces, Op. 12</td>
<td>October 12, 1921</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gluck</td>
<td>Melodie, from Orfeo ed Euridice</td>
<td>May 14, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handel</td>
<td>Air &amp; Variations (“Harmonious Blacksmith”)</td>
<td>January 3, 1936</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henselt</td>
<td>Si oiseau j’étais (Etude in F-sharp Major, Op. 2, No. 6)</td>
<td>December 27, 1923</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreisler</td>
<td>Liebeslied (arr. Rachmaninoff)</td>
<td>October 25, 1921</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreisler</td>
<td>Liebesfreud (arr. Rachmaninoff)</td>
<td>December 29, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kreisler</td>
<td>Liebesfreud (arr. Rachmaninoff)</td>
<td>February 26, 1942</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liszt</td>
<td>Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2</td>
<td>April 22, 1919</td>
<td>Edison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liszt</td>
<td>Polonaise No. 2 in E Major</td>
<td>April 13, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liszt</td>
<td>Gnomenreigen</td>
<td>December 16, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Spinning Song, from Songs Without Words, Op. 67</td>
<td>November 4, 1920</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Scherzo, from A Midsummer Night’s Dream (arr. Rachmaninoff)</td>
<td>December 23, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Etude in F Major, Op. 104b, No. 2</td>
<td>April 5, 1927</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Etude in A Minor, Op. 104b, No. 3</td>
<td>April 5, 1927</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Spinning Song, from Songs Without Words, Op. 67</td>
<td>April 25, 1928</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moszkowski</td>
<td>La jongleuse, Op. 52, No. 4</td>
<td>March 6, 1923</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozart</td>
<td>Theme and Variations, from Sonata in A Major, K. 331</td>
<td>April 18, 1919</td>
<td>Edison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozart</td>
<td>Rondo alla turca, from Sonata in A Major, K. 331</td>
<td>May 14, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Piece</td>
<td>Date and Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussorgsky</td>
<td>Hopak, from Sorochintsy Fair (arr. Rachmaninoff)</td>
<td>April 13, 1925, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paderewski</td>
<td>Minuet in G Major, Op. 14, No. 1</td>
<td>April 5, 1927, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18, with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski, conductor</td>
<td>April 10 and 13, 1929, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Isle of the Dead, Op. 29, with the Philadelphia Orchestra</td>
<td>April 2, 1929, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14, with the Philadelphia Orchestra</td>
<td>April 20, 1929, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Barcarolle in G Minor, Op. 10, No. 3</td>
<td>April 23, 1919, Edison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Polka de W.R.</td>
<td>October 12, 1921, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Prelude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 3, No. 2</td>
<td>October 14, 1921, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Serenade in B-flat, Op. 3, No. 5</td>
<td>November 4, 1922, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Polichinelle in F-sharp Minor, Op. 3, No. 4</td>
<td>March 6, 1923, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Lilacs, Op. 21, No. 5</td>
<td>December 27, 1923, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 18, with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski, conductor</td>
<td>January 3 and December 22, 1924, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Etude-tableau in A minor, Op. 39, No. 6</td>
<td>December 16, 1925, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43, with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski, conductor</td>
<td>December 24, 1934, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Serenade in B-flat, Op. 3, No. 5 (revised version)</td>
<td>January 3, 1936, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 1, with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy, conductor</td>
<td>December 4, 1939 and February 24, 1940, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30, with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy, conductor</td>
<td>December 4, 1939 and February 24, 1940, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 44, with the Philadelphia Orchestra</td>
<td>December 11, 1939, RCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Piece Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Etude-tableau in C Major, Op. 33, No. 2</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Etude-tableau in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 7</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Moment Musical in E-flat Minor, Op. 16, No. 2</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Oriental Sketch</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Prelude in G-flat Major, Op. 23, No. 10</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Prelude in E Major, Op. 32, No. 3</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Prelude in F Minor, Op. 32, No. 6</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Prelude in F Major, Op. 32, No. 7</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Daisies, Op. 38, No. 3</td>
<td>March 18, 1940</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Minor, Op. 40,</td>
<td>December 20, 1941</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy, conductor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachmaninoff</td>
<td>Lilacs, Op. 21, No. 5</td>
<td>February 26, 1942</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rimsky-Korsakov</td>
<td>Flight of the Bumblebee, from Tsar Sultan</td>
<td>April 16, 1929</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(arr. Rachmaninoff)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Saëns</td>
<td>The Swan, from Carnival of the Animals</td>
<td>December 30, 1924</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarlatti</td>
<td>Pastorale (after Sonata in D Minor, L. 413) (arr. Tausig)</td>
<td>April 19, 1919</td>
<td>Edison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schubert</td>
<td>Das Wandern, from Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795 (arr. Liszt)</td>
<td>April 14, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schubert</td>
<td>Wohin?, from Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795 (arr. Rachmaninoff)</td>
<td>December 29, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schubert</td>
<td>Impromptu in A-flat Major, D. 899, No. 4</td>
<td>December 29, 1925</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schubert</td>
<td>Violin Sonata in A Major, D. 574, with Fritz Kreisler, violin</td>
<td>December 20-21, 1928</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schubert</td>
<td>Serenade, from Schwanengesang, D. 957 (arr. Liszt)</td>
<td>February 27, 1942</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schumann</td>
<td>Carnaval, Op. 9</td>
<td>April 9, 10, and 12, 1929</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schumann</td>
<td>Der Kontrabandiste, from Spanisches Liederspiel, Op. 74</td>
<td>February 27, 1942</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scriabin</td>
<td>Prelude in F-sharp Minor, Op. 11, No. 8</td>
<td>April 16, 1929</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strauss</td>
<td>One Lives But Once (arr. Tausig)</td>
<td>April 5, 1927</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tchaikovsky</td>
<td>Troika (November), from The Seasons, Op. 37b</td>
<td>May 3, 1920</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tchaikovsky</td>
<td>Waltz in A-flat Major, Op. 40, No. 8</td>
<td>April 5, 1923</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tchaikovsky</td>
<td>Humoresque in G Major, Op. 10, No. 2</td>
<td>December 27, 1923</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tchaikovsky</td>
<td>Troika (November), from The Seasons, Op. 37b</td>
<td>April 11, 1928</td>
<td>RCA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to his recordings for Edison and RCA Victor, Rachmaninoff made thirty-four piano rolls for the Ampico piano roll company between 1919 and 1928. These recordings were mechanically recorded on a 6’6” Mason & Hamlin grand piano. Ampico aimed to reproduce tone, touch, and dynamic through their piano rolls.\(^6\) However, before 1926, the rolls were only able to replicate notes, rhythm, and articulation. Dynamics were inserted into the rolls later by the editor, and the artist was allowed to listen to the inserted dynamics to approve the authenticity.\(^6\) The range of dynamics was limited: the keyboard was divided in half, and each side of the keyboard had its own regulator. If changes in dynamic levels were desired on individual notes, this was only possible by changing the timing of that individual note in order for the dynamic distinction to be made. Given Rachmaninoff’s acute attention to voicing and other such details that are audible on his other recordings, the lack of dynamic range was very restricting. Furthermore, for playback of these rolls, a suitable piano was required. Transfers of the rolls were difficult, due to the absence of appropriate pianos for this purpose. Often, the playback occurred on many different models, thus further distancing the sonic result from the initial conception.

Radio broadcasts of concerts were popular during Rachmaninoff’s time. However, Rachmaninoff gave strict orders to the radio network that transmission must be switched from

\(^6\) Ibid., 36.

the live broadcast to the RCA Victor recording of his Second Concerto, regardless of which concerto he was performing on the occasion.\textsuperscript{67} Contrasting with his public image of aloofness and arrogance, Rachmaninoff had a deep lack of confidence. The decision to ban broadcasts of concerts could have been due to his feelings of insecurity regarding his own performances. Consequently, there are no recordings of live concert performances. Rachmaninoff gave an interview while in Paris in 1928 and discussed his thoughts on the radio:

\begin{quote}
Radio is not perfect enough to do justice to good music. That is why I have steadily refused to play for it. But my chief objection is on other grounds. It makes listening to music too comfortable. You often hear people say “Why should I pay for an uncomfortable seat at a concert when I can stay at home and smoke my pipe and put my feet up and be perfectly comfortable?” I believe one shouldn’t be too comfortable when listening to really great music. To appreciate good music, one must be mentally alert and emotionally receptive. You can’t be that when you are sitting at home with your feet on a chair. No, listening to music is more strenuous than that. Music is like poetry; it is a passion and a problem. You can’t enjoy and understand it merely by sitting still and letting it soak into your ears.\textsuperscript{68}
\end{quote}

Rachmaninoff was exceedingly nervous while recording. He despised the signal light on his eyes so much that he insisted that it be removed from the studio. Rachmaninoff was so agitated by all possible disturbances that he did not want anyone to stay in the studio during the sessions.\textsuperscript{69}

Rachmaninoff spoke of the recording process to his friend Alfred Swan:

\begin{quote}
I get very nervous when I am making records, and all whom I have asked say they get nervous too. When the test records are made, I know that I can hear them played back to me, and then everything is all right. But when the stage is set for the final recording and I realize that this will remain for good, I get
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 37.


\textsuperscript{69} Ding, “Rachmaninoff plays Rachmaninoff,” 46.
nervous and my hands get tense. I am very pleased with the Schumann *Carnaval*. It has come out very well. Today I recorded the B-flat Minor Sonata by Chopin, and I do not know yet how it has come out. I shall hear the test records tomorrow. If it is not good, I can always have the records destroyed and play it over again. But if everything has come out well, I am going back to New York tomorrow. You know how severely I judge myself and my compositions. But I want to tell you that I have found some old records of mine. They are very well played, without a hitch. There is some Johann Strauss, Gluck, I think. They are very good.70

Despite his nerves, Rachmaninoff was very pleased with the artistic quality of his recordings. He believed that artistic perfection was able to be approached through the process of making records.71

However, recordings did prove to be limiting in many ways because the technology was still so new. Twelve-inch 78-rpm record sides ranged in length from four to six minutes, which could be the reason why Rachmaninoff omitted variations 15 through 18, 20, and 21 in his recording of Beethoven’s Thirty-Two Variations in C Minor.72 Other cuts attributed to the limitations of side length include the coda of Liszt’s E Major Polonaise, Chopin-Liszt’s *Maiden’s Wish*, and the cadenza of Rachmaninoff’s arrangement of Kriesler’s *Liebesfreud*.73


Rachmaninoff’s recording of his Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30 contains numerous cuts. The recording was issued on nine sides, with a blank tenth. Some of the sides are quite short, and only three exceed four minutes. There is a recording of the slow movement of his First Concerto from the same session that lasts five minutes and twenty seconds, which indicates that there was extra space available if needed on a single side.

Sources have suggested that the recorded revisions of his Second Symphony, Isle of the Dead, and Third Piano Concerto were made to accommodate the constraints of the recording industry. However, revisions to the Second Symphony predate Rachmaninoff’s recording career, and it is clear that revisions were not made just for this purpose. Rachmaninoff’s revisions were an important part of his compositional process and, as evident from his republications of published works, were not just made to pieces that he recorded.

**Editions**

Reverence for an Urtext edition was not a central perspective for Rachmaninoff’s generation. There are no written records of which editions Rachmaninoff used; inquires to the Taneyev Research Library at the Moscow Conservatory and the Rimsky-Korsakov St. Petersburg State Conservatory Library were unanswered. It is highly doubtful that

---

74 Sergei Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30, with Sergei Rachmaninoff, piano, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy, recorded December 4, 1939 and February 24, 1940, RCA Victor 028947883166, 1940, LP.


Rachmaninoff used an Urtext edition. The tradition of editors adding expressive indications not in the Urtexts of these works is prevalent, and it is plausible that editors’ markings were incorporated into Rachmaninoff’s interpretations.

Consequently, the editions used during the recording analysis are not Urtext editions, but instead, versions that existed during Rachmaninoff’s lifetime: Schumann’s Carnaval was compared to the Breitkopf & Härtel edition, published in 1879, and the G. Schirmer edition from 1883 was used for Chopin’s Second Sonata.

A Note on Performance Analyses of Recordings

In my detailed analysis of Rachmaninoff’s recordings throughout this dissertation, I will focus on Rachmaninoff’s many significant and pertinent deviations from the printed score, which will illuminate the central points of my thesis. I will focus on the projection of “the point,” highlighted by Rachmaninoff’s phrasing choices, extreme tempo shifts that reside outside of what is usually understood as expressive rubato, even by pianists of his generation, rhythmic alterations, metric modulations, note discrepancies, and dynamic choices. Please refer to the appendix at the end of the dissertation for the scores of both the Schumann Carnaval, Op. 9, and the Chopin Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35. If necessary, scores will need to be obtained by the reader for the performance analyses of Rachmaninoff’s Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 1, and Concerto No. 4 in G Minor, Op. 40 in Chapter III.
Schumann Carnaval, Op. 9

Recording History

Rachmaninoff frequently performed Schumann in his recitals, and he had heard Rubinstein play Schumann’s *Carnaval*, Op. 9 in his renowned historical concerts that had had an immense influence on Rachmaninoff’s early impressions as a musician.\(^7^7\) Rachmaninoff recorded *Carnaval* in Camden, New Jersey in April 1929.\(^7^8\) He had a three-hour session for *Carnaval* on April 9, 1929, followed by a morning session the next day. Two days later, he spent one more hour in the studio. The sessions were relatively short, and he took no more than seven hours to record the entire piece.\(^7^9\)

The length of Rachmaninoff’s recording is significantly shorter than other versions. He plays the piece in 23:04 minutes, omitting many of the repeats; other notable performances include Claudio Arrau, 30:42, Arthur Rubinstein, 28:28, Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, 33:38, and Grigory Sokolov, 27:25.

Préambule


\(^7^8\) Robert Schumann, *Carnaval*, Op. 9, with Sergei Rachmaninoff, piano, recorded April 9, 10, and 12, 1929, RCA Victor 10-43771, 1929, LP

\(^7^9\) Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 256.
In the opening *Quasi maestoso*, Rachmaninoff quickly establishes a strong pulse of one beat per measure. He creates quick and dramatic *accelerandi*, moving in the first two measures from a tempo of $\frac{3}{4}=100$ to a final speed of 132, measures 8-9 ranging $\frac{3}{4}=108$-132, measures 11-12 from $\frac{3}{4}=100$-132, and measures 16-17 going from $\frac{3}{4}=104$-132. The return to the same ending tempo in these small sections establishes a sense of rhythmic unity, and the sudden shifts of tempi create a strong sense of momentum within a unified whole.

Furthermore, Rachmaninoff changes the lengths of note values in this opening section; quarter-notes are changed to eight-notes with eight-rests in measures 3-6, 9, 13-14, and 17-24. Similarly, he alters the half-notes in the left hand to quarter-notes with quarter-rests in measures 4-5, 18, and 22. Drier articulations in general arguably make this interpretation more dance-like.

Rachmaninoff makes more changes to the printed score, apart from the rhythmic gestures. In measures 11-12, rather than the marked *crescendo*, Rachmaninoff tapers off and creates a *diminuendo*. In fact, he starts the phrase after the second ending with an increased dynamic, despite the lack of indication. This is one of Rachmaninoff’s trademarks: he often starts a phrase with great energy, shown through the volume at the start, and after the great surge, he backs away at the end of the phrase. In both measures 15 and 16, he brings the left-hand chord on the second beat down an octave and accentuates it with an accent, increasing the rhythmic energy, dynamic contrast, and range to the score.

In the *Più moto*, Rachmaninoff increases the tempo in the repetition of measures 28-35, the first time with a dotted half-note at $\frac{3}{4}=96$, and the second slightly faster at 100. Although these measures were written *sempre fortissimo*, he plays them with a light, delicate touch, saving any fortissimo sound for the *sforzandi* in measures 31-32 and 35, with huge, sudden
accents that immediately diverge from the sound world he creates otherwise. Measures 37 and 43 feature a *rinforzando*, which Rachmaninoff ignores and changes to a *subito piano* before following the *crescendo* written in the left hand. However, rather than going to the written accents in the left hand on the first beats in measures 39 and 45, Rachmaninoff changes the peak of the line to the preceding measures of 38 and 44, which are the registral high points of the melodic line. It is interesting to note that measures 38 and 44 do not have any accents written on them, but both measures preceding them have a *rinforzando* and are followed by a measure with an accent in the left hand. A dramatic *ritardando* is put in measure 46 to the double bar, and the quarter notes, the last two of which are slurred in the right hand, are changed to eighth notes with eighth rests afterwards, creating even more emphasis to the *ritardando* that he added. Rather than beginning the new section at the double bar, Rachmaninoff finishes the phrase in the same dynamic marking and delays the *mf* to the second beat of measure 47, rather than at the start of the measure where it is marked.

After the double bar, further changes are made. The *crescendo* in measure 50 is changed to a *diminuendo*. Rachmaninoff adds an octave above the line to the second beat of measure 54 in the right hand. The accents in the left hand that begin in measure 55 overpower the right-hand melody, and the rhythm is shifted to sound like the following twelve measures are in four, rather than three, due to the *hemiola* that Schumann creates in the section. A dramatic *ritardando* is added at the end of the *diminuendo* of measures 63-66. The *accelerando* written at the end of the section is changed to a further *ritardando* and the music nearly comes to a full stop.

The *Animato* section remains fairly faithful to the score; however, the *pianissimo* and *piano* markings are never met and the sound remains quite full through the section.
In the *Vivo*, Rachmaninoff suddenly picks up in tempo and changes moods dramatically, and the tempo continues to accelerate up until the last four measures of the section. The four-measure phrase at the start of the section, indicated by the *crescendo* from measures 88-90, is changed to two phrases of two measures, with a *crescendo* for the first measure and a *diminuendo* for the second, in a stylized dramatic swell that is a prevalent trait among Rachmaninoff’s deviations from score indications. Measures 99-101 have added accents in the right hand, bringing out the top notes of the broken chords of the line as the melody. An octave is added to the bass note at the start of measure 110, creating more drama and sonority to the climax of the section.

The final *Presto* begins with the right hand thickened with an additional C and E-flat added an octave higher than the notated line to fill out the harmony in the right hand, as well as an additional bass octave added to the left hand. The accents in the left hand are removed; rather than accents on every beat, the A-flat pedal point is not accented throughout. The right hand *staccati* are so short that they are changed nearly to the length of eight notes. The *crescendo* in measures 115-118 and again in measures 124-125 are ignored, as well as the accents in measures 120 and 128 and the *sforzando* in measure 121. Instead, Rachmaninoff inserts a large accent at the start of measure 122. He does not honor the *stringendo* written in measure 123.

By the end of the *Préambule*, Rachmaninoff has already established that he is willing to deter from the printed score. Harmonies are filled in with additional bass and treble notes, adding to the range, accents are changed freely, indicated dynamics are freely altered, and Rachmaninoff’s choices in rhythmic emphasis sometimes change the feeling of the meter.
**Pierrot**

Rachmaninoff brings out two contrasting moods throughout the movement, which sometimes contradict the dynamic markings. At the start, the line is marked with *staccati* under a large slur, implying a *portato* for the melody in both hands. However, Rachmaninoff plays the opening melody *legato*. He removes the hairpin dynamics throughout the opening two phrases, as well as the *crescendi* in measures 16-17 and 20-21, and keeps a constant dynamic through the line. In measure 3, when the *subito forte* is marked for the three-note outburst, Rachmaninoff plays these three notes, and all the corresponding manifestations of this sub-phrase, *staccato*. To further create contrast in these two parts of the phrase, he removes the pedal point E-flat marked in the bass-line during this second voice. A relationship between the three-note figurations of the sub-phrase is noticeable from the gradual *diminuendo* of each subsequent appearance of the sub-phrase from measure 3 until measures 23-24. Through these changes in articulation and dynamics, Rachmaninoff projects a long-term plan regarding structure and line continuity, which effectively links the fragments throughout the larger line.

Rachmaninoff begins the first sub-phrase at measure 3 arguably at *fortissimo* and continues bringing the phrase down dynamically until the end of the first half of the movement at measure 24. From measures 16-24, to help taper off the B section of the movement, Rachmaninoff adds a *ritardando* throughout.

At the return of the A material (pickup to measure 25), Rachmaninoff brings out the tenor voice in the left hand and adds a new dimension to the line. To maintain the differentiation between the two sub-phrases, he ignores the *fortissimo* (measure 40) and continues at the dynamic of the preceding measure, saving the *fortissimo* for the second sub-phrase’s octaves in measures 41-42. He treats the material in measures 42-43 the same way.
and also plays the articulation consistently as a quasi-staccato, regardless of whether the notes are marked legato or staccato. Rachmaninoff adds a dramatic ritardando in measures 45-46 and does not observe the pedal marking at the end of this measure, thereby creating a separation before the final tied note at the end of the movement. The second repeat is ignored.

In *Pierrot*, Rachmaninoff creates a huge distinction between two contrasting moods throughout the movement. In order to accomplish this, he changes the markings in the score to bring extra emphasis to his differentiation of the two characters.

*Arlequin*

Rachmaninoff does not play the repeat in *Arlequin*, and the movement only takes 33 seconds. The opening beat of the piece is a motif which rhythmically appears as the first beat of every other measure (measures 1-23, as well as measures 29-44), and every first beat in measures 24-28. The motif is written as an eight note, followed by a sixteenth note under one beaming, with a sixteenth rest immediately following. Rachmaninoff changes the first note to feel like a grace note, played as quickly as possible, and the sixteenth-note rest is expanded to add to the stylized nature of this gesture.

In measures 25-29, Rachmaninoff takes a significantly slower tempo and drastically alters the rhythm, doubling the speed for the second two beats of each measure, creating four measures of duple meter, rather than keeping the 3/4 time indicated for the entire movement.
Rachmaninoff’s interpretation in *Arlequin* shows that he is willing to change the meter and the rhythm of the piece in order to accurately convey his intended character. Changing the meter completely alters the pulse and flow of the movement, and Rachmaninoff does not shy away from these bold decisions.

*Valse noble*

Rachmaninoff begins the movement *attacca*, creating a strong link between *Arlequin* and *Valse noble*. He ignores the dynamic markings in the first eight measures, taking out the *forte*, reversing the *crescendi* with his signature tapering of the phrase towards the end, and eliminating the *sforzando* marking in measure 4 and the accent in measure 8.
The B section is marked \textit{piano}, but Rachmaninoff goes up a notch in dynamics for this part. He also increases the tempo for this section, adding energy and motion to this change of character.

The return of the A section at measure 25 mirrors the opening style: the \textit{crescendo} is ignored and the volume is low. The final phrase (measure 33) is rhythmically flexible, and after the high point of the line is reached (measure 36), Rachmaninoff applies a dramatic \textit{ritardando}, infused with \textit{rubato}, to the end. In measure 39, he plays the final two eighth notes in the right hand in a dotted rhythm, matching the characteristic rhythms seen both in this movement and in the preceding \textit{Arlequin}. An octave is added below the first note in the left hand of the final measure.

By maintaining the same interpretation and alterations of the score for both iterations of the A material, Rachmaninoff shows that he carefully plans out his decisions and maintains consistency for parallel sections.

\textit{Eusebius}

\textit{Eusebius} is marked \textit{Adagio}, but Rachmaninoff’s tempo is full of momentum. The opening of the movement is marked \textit{sotto voce}; conversely, Rachmaninoff plays the opening with a full tone and a directness of character until the fourth measure, where he ends the phrase with his signature tapering. He ties the top E-flat in the left hand from the first measure into the second measure, and also changes the left hand in measures 6-7 to match the corresponding passage in measures 13-14.

After the double bar, Rachmaninoff makes the second half of each measure more expansive that the first half, creating a large variation in the movement of the sixteenth notes.
versus the eight notes. To match this pacing, Rachmaninoff inverses the written crescendi to diminuendi.

Although measure 17 is marked più lento, Rachmaninoff makes only a minute change in overall tempo differentiation, even though the following four measures are very free in time with significant ritardando added in measure 20. Rachmaninoff brings out a hidden line of E-flat–G–F–E-flat–D–E-flat in measures 21-24 that is created from a combination of the inner voice of the right-hand octaves mixed with the bottom notes of some of these same octaves to fill out the line. The dynamics, apart from the final diminuendo in the last two measures of the movement, are readily ignored. The final E-flat in the right hand is accented to serve as a connecting point to the next movement.

By playing the movement with a full tone, Rachmaninoff appears to change the introverted character that Schumann’s composition implies. Freedom of rhythm, literal interpretation of markings, and changing of dynamics all contribute to his unique version of Eusebius.

Florestan

Eusebius and Florestan are strongly linked in Rachmaninoff’s rendering, since he brings out the final E-flat of Eusebius and connects it to the first D in the left hand in Florestan. The D is essentially played as a grace note, coming before the beat and attaching the two movements rather overtly. This connection demonstrates that Rachmaninoff thought of the movements as parts of a larger structure, and the importance of the connection between each of the sections is integral to portraying the architecture of the entire piece.
Schumann’s markings of *sforzandi* and regular accents throughout are ignored in favor of a smooth line throughout the movement. The *leggiero* marking, along with the lack of slur at the first *Adagio*, is ignored for a weighted legato touch, and the *crescendo* is substituted with a *diminuendo*. The second *Adagio* (measures 19-22) is also altered from the written markings. Rather than a shift downward in tempo to an *Adagio*, measure 19 lurches forward with impetus, an upward motion to the high point of the phrase at the first note of measure 20. At this point, Rachmaninoff backs away from the line and immediately applies a *diminuendo*, rather than continuing with the written *crescendo*. Measure 20 is played *leggiero*, with the three right hand octaves played *molto staccato*, but Rachmaninoff returns to *legato* for the continuation of the octave line in measure 21. There is a dramatic *ritardando* in measure 23, with the quarter note slowing down from a speed of 120 to 69, also matched by a reversal of the written *crescendo* to a *diminuendo*. The forward momentum continues again in measure 23 with a strong dance-like feel, which turns manic by measure 37, with $\downarrow=96$ and up to 108 at measure 43. By measure 44, Rachmaninoff reduces the tempo back to $\downarrow=176$. A small pause is inserted at the end of measure 44 to provide a break before the last statement of the first theme.

The final section is broken up into two phrases, measures 45-52, and measures 53-56. The first phrase is marked *accelerando – sempre più*; inversely, Rachmaninoff slows down towards the end of the phrase. The second phrase features a very sudden *accelerando* at the start that reverses itself just as dramatically for the final measure of the movement.

Rachmaninoff freely changes articulation markings and brings mercurial changes in tempo to *Florestan*, often ignoring or enhancing Schumann’s many written instructions.
Coquette

Coquette has dramatic dynamic contrasts marked throughout the movement, ranging from pianissimo to fortissimo. However, in Rachmaninoff’s interpretation, the dynamics of the entire movement are uniform, and the line never has the dramatic changes in volume that are marked in the score. The way Rachmaninoff plays it, the volume of the entire piece ranges from mezzo-forte to forte. With the resulting uniform dynamic range, Coquette sounds calm and settled, even though it is marked Vivo.

Rachmaninoff begins Coquette attacca, with only a slight release of the pedal before the start to make audible the rest that begins the movement. He totally eliminates the fermata at the end of the introduction at measure 3 and even rushes through the quarter note rest that fills out the measure.

Schumann indicates a shift to the waltz feeling of the entire piece by emphasizing the second beat with either accents or changes in dynamics, but Rachmaninoff strongly negates these indications and keeps the feeling of the dance with the main pulse on the first beat.

Rachmaninoff pedals through the rests on the second beats of measures 5, 9, 11, 21, 25, 27, 45, 49, and 51. In measures 13, 15, 53, and 55, however, the rests are respected; in these measures, the harmonic change immediately before the rest is much more dramatic and is also doubled in the bass with an octave.

Mirroring the opening three measures and the pacing for the introduction, Rachmaninoff takes the same rubato for the final three measures, which are a restatement of the beginning, showing that the timing was carefully worked out, rather than a spontaneous decision.
Shifting the dynamics to a fuller volume, as well as shifting the feeling of the pulse from the marked second beat to the first beat, Rachmaninoff changes the character of the movement from the indications that Schumann left for the performer.

Réplique

The connection between Coquette and Réplique is marked by the indication of L’istesso tempo in the latter; Rachmaninoff does establish the continuity of tempo, although he is coming from a ritardando at the end of Coquette and follows the push and pull of the line with additional rubati. Similar to the previous movement, he ignores all of the dynamic marks and continues the general volume at mezzo piano to mezzo forte.

In measure 5, Rachmaninoff removes the first beat of the measure, creating one measure of two throughout the rest of the movement, which is in triple meter.

Example 2.4: Schumann Réplique, printed version, measures 4-5
Example 2.5: Schumann Réplique, Rachmaninoff’s version, measures 4-5

Consequently, Rachmaninoff alters the feeling of the constant pulse by changing the meter of this measure, creating a moment of differentiation.

*Sphinxes*

*Sphinxes* is often omitted from performances. Clara Schumann wrote in her edition of *Carnaval* that the movement should not be played.\(^8\) Since the piece is a set of scenes based on four notes, as shown by the subtitle *Scène mignonnes sur quatre notes* (cute scenes on four notes), *Sphinxes* features the four pitches as double whole notes in three statements without any expressive indications. The first spells S-C-H-A, the second A-S-C-H, and the third A-S-C-H. As these notes comprise the unifying motif across the work, the significance of this movement can be architectural; given Rachmaninoff’s interest in compositional architecture, it might explain his decision to play the movement. Naturally, he takes the liberty to reinterpret the movement by departing from the written score.

Other performers who have included the movement are Vladimir Horowitz, Alfred Cortot, Walter Gièseking, Mitsuko Uchida, and Sergio Fiorentino. Their respective realizations

of the movement are strikingly similar; although they have different interpretations of the dynamics and phrasing, the notes are always played with added octaves below.

Example 2.6: Schumann *Sphinxes*, Rachmaninoff’s version, complete

Rachmaninoff does add octaves below the written line, as do the other pianists that include the movement in their recordings, but he differentiates himself by adding trills in the right hand. The effect of this addition is one of terror; the trills in such a dark and low sonority add to the mystery of the movement and create a frightening drone. Additionally, his constantly changing dynamic markings create a dramatic effect that heightens the already cryptic quality of *Sphinxes*. The total effect of the changes makes it feel as though Rachmaninoff recomposes the entirety of the movement.

Papillons

For the first time in the entire piece, Rachmaninoff observes an indicated repeat at the conclusion of this movement. In the first eight measures, Rachmaninoff delineates the four phrases of two measures by starting with a strong impetus and phrasing away with a *diminuendo* in his typical style. Schumann marks *sforzandi* in the left hand at the start of each mini-phrase, but Rachmaninoff instead plays the accent in the right hand.
Rachmaninoff also does not drop to piano for measure 25, keeping the volume at a mezzo forte to match the volume of the start of all of the phrases of the movement; nor does he observe the hairpin crescendo and dimiuendo in measures 27-28. To end the movement, Rachmaninoff adds a dimiuendo and a ritardando to measures 15-16.

In summary, Rachmaninoff once again alters the marked dynamics to bring his signature phrasing to Papillons.


Schumann marks D.C. sin’ al Fine senza replica at the end of the movement, strongly implying that the two repeats he writes must be respected in the first repetition. Rachmaninoff does not observe any of the repeats in either repetition, although he does follow the da capo marking.

Rachmaninoff begins the movement attacca, almost slurring the last note from Papillons to the first note of the movement, which he separates from the rest of the phrase with a breath afterwards. For both repeats of the first measure, Rachmaninoff adds an octave below to the left hand for the first note. It is accented more strongly in the repeat than at the start.

Rachmaninoff does not observe the piano written at the start. He also takes out the accent on the third beat of the first measure, but he does mildly show the sforzandi in the rest of the opening phrase from measures 2-8. In measure 4, he suddenly pushes the tempo from $\frac{d}{\text{m}}=92$ to 116.

The sforzando in measure 12 serves as an obvious focal point, and Rachmaninoff extends the crescendo in measure 9 to lead up to the downbeat of measure 12. The consequent phrase of measures 13-16 have a similar direction, but a different method of production. The
piano marking in measure 13 is ignored, and Rachmaninoff breaks the sound before the downbeat of measure 16, ignoring the slur into the measure, and for the sforzando measure, he slows the tempo down to $\frac{q}{\text{beats per minute}}=66$ and places a ritardando through the entire measure.

There is another break of sound before measure 17 to highlight the end of the phrase. The pianissimo at measure 17 is ignored, as well as the sforzandi written in measures 18-20, 22, and 23.

The pianissimo at measure 25 is played instead with a slight increase in volume with the impulse demarcating the new phrase. The second pianissimo at measure 29 is ignored again, and Rachmaninoff places a diminuendo starting at measure 30 until the end of the movement. He moves the ritardando written in the last measure up to begin at measure 29.

Rachmaninoff starts the repetition of the opening material at a pianissimo and changes the character this time from his opening iteration to match Schumann’s dynamic indication of pianissimo leggiero. He adds a small crescendo to lead through the first eight measures, and shapes the section beginning at measure 9 similarly to the first time through. Measures 17 drops down to a mezzo-piano and he slows down and gets softer until the ending at measure 24.

Throughout the entirety of the movement, Rachmaninoff breaks from the written markings to bring extra character emphasis to the movement and continues to focus on linking movements together via launching into this movement attacca.

**Chiarina**

Apart from the final measures in both halves of the movement, the second beats of every measure in Chiarina are dotted. Through the entirety of the movement, Rachmaninoff
changes the sixteenth note that precedes the third beat of each measure to an eight note. This rhythmic change makes the movement feel less frenetic and arguably lends a more noble feel to its character.

Schumann also usually marks two accents per measure, on the first and third beats. Rachmaninoff ignores the stresses on the first beats and only realizes the third beat accents, making the pick-ups much more emphasized than the downbeats.

The movement is marked *passionato*, but Rachmaninoff’s interpretation is much more Eusebius than Florestan. He plays the piece with a lot of flexibility in tempo, and with these *rubati*, the effect is a much lighter approach to the material, strengthened by the change in rhythm as previously mentioned. The *forte* to *fortissimo* markings of the movement are also withdrawn, and Rachmaninoff instead stays within a *piano* to *mezzo forte* range, in keeping with his gentler interpretation.

Rachmaninoff begins the piece by essentially adding a fermata to the first note and effectively doubles its length. In measure 7, he changes the second beat of the left hand from a major third, G-B, to a tritone, F-B. In measure 8, he begins the second phrase of the movement without any detectable increase in dynamics to *fortissimo*, as written. He also eliminates the *crescendo* in measure 9-13.

The timing in measures 17-24 is extremely free and much slower than the opening material. Again, Rachmaninoff emphasizes the characteristics of Eusebius with this new interpretation, playing softly and intimately rather than adhering strictly to the *Passionato* indication at the start of the movement. The section begins with a marking of *mezzo forte*, and continues up to *forte* in measure 18, with *crescendi* throughout. Instead, Rachmaninoff plays
piano to mezzo piano and inserts a diminuendo towards the end corresponding with his slowing of the line.

Measures 24-32 are similar to the opening, although in measure 31, Rachmaninoff drops the first beat of the left hand down the octave, and he raises the bottom G up an octave in the first beat of measure 32.

For the final phrase (measures 25-32), Rachmaninoff finally rises above the piano and mezzo piano dynamics that he had employed until this point, despite the written dynamics ranging from forte to fortissimo. He finally increases the volume to what could be perceived as a mezzo forte, and he follows the crescendo as written until measure 37. At the top of the line, he applies a dramatic diminuendo and ritardando to end the piece, shying away from the passionato sentiment he had just built to and returning to a more gentle, introverted character.

Rachmaninoff takes a marked departure from what is usually projected by other pianists as a kind of coiled intensity in this movement, manifested via its dotted rhythms and forte-fortissimo dynamics throughout the score. He instead plays the movement in a contemplative voice, stressing introspection and reflection rather than active motion and passion.

Chopin

Chopin is marked agitato, but Rachmaninoff takes a delicate and held back approach to the movement. He begins Chopin with the bare minimum of sound, although the opening is marked forte. He does make a small crescendo upwards to the top of the left hand arpeggiation but ignores all of the sforzandi markings at the top of the arpeggios throughout the movement. Rachmaninoff never reaches a sound above mezzo forte anywhere in Chopin.
In both measures 1 and 4, Rachmaninoff alters the rhythm of the melody. Schumann writes a quarter note, followed by an eighth rest and an eighth note, for the start of the line. Rachmaninoff brings the eighth note in early and nearly ignores the rest, and the rhythm ends up being closer to two quarter notes than the written notation, much like the start of the phrases in measures 5, 7 and 11.

Measure 6 is written with a crescendo in the score, but Rachmaninoff instead backs away from the line, adding both a diminuendo and a ritardando. In measure 8, he eliminates the sforzando in the melody line. For the final phrase of the piece, Rachmaninoff disregards the accent written in the melody in measure 12. He ignores the dal segno written at the end of the movement.

Rather than adhering to the written instructions that stress motion and extroversion through Schumann’s markings of forte, sforzandi, and agitato, Rachmaninoff instead conveys a tender, elegant character for the movement, changing the character entirely to fit his own interpretation.

Estrella

Schumann marks the movement con affetto. In Rachmaninoff’s version, the overall feeling is more agitato than anything else. He plays with the tempo and takes rubati to such an extreme that the speed of the first phrase in measures 1-12 range from $=120$ in measures 7-8 to $=60$ in measures 12. He disregards the accents on the second beats of measures 4, 8, and 12, as well as the staccati in measures 3-4, 7-8, and 11-12; instead, he smooths out the line to help give it the ebb and flow necessary to carry out to his dramatic and restless interpretation.
The next section, from measures 13-28, is marked più presto, but Rachmaninoff instead remains at l’istesso tempo. The section still possesses momentum, though, and Rachmaninoff holds off from playing significant rubati until the ending of the phrase, maintaining the same tempo range as in the first section. He adds a significant ritardando at the last four measures (measures 33-36), which is the first demonstration of the molto espressivo that Schumann writes much earlier (measure 13). The rest of the section is not redolent at all of molto espressivo: there is more of a precipitato feeling throughout, pushing steadily ahead until Rachmaninoff’s ritardando begins in measure 25. By departing from the expressive markings that Schumann writes, Rachmaninoff changes the mood of the middle section, and consequently a different character emerges than the one generally produced when a pianist follows Schumann’s instructions.

The final section, comprising measures 29-36, is marked Tempo I; Rachmaninoff provides no significant shift in tempo, but instead he returns to more extreme rubati. He again smooths out the line by removing the staccati in measures 31-32, and the accent in measure 32. He plays the last two measures out of time, much slower than the rest of the material, adding a declamatory feeling to the conclusion of the movement.

Reconnaissance

Surprisingly, Rachmaninoff takes both repeats in Reconnaissance. He begins the piece slightly slower than the tempo he finally settles into, starting at $\frac{3}{4}=116$ and slowly pushing to $\frac{3}{4}=132$ by measure 7. After the first repeat, he increases the tempo to $\frac{3}{4}=138$. He adds rhythmic interest by accenting the second beats of measures 1-16 in the left hand, emphasizing the pulse
in two. He also ignores the crescendi in measure 3-4 and 5-6, as well as the accent in measure 5. In the repeat, he adds a ritardando to measure 15-16.

For the middle section, from measures 17-44, the timing is free. Rachmaninoff emphasizes the dialogue between the soprano and bass voices and plays with the tempo to an extreme, reshaping the lines at his leisure, ignoring the dynamics and accents written throughout. By the time the written ritardando is reached in measures 43-44, although it is still respected, it sounds inconsequential, because the tempo has been so free up until this point.

In sum, Rachmaninoff adds a great deal of rhythmic flexibility to a movement that is often played much more straightforwardly, adding a great deal of expressive freedom, and resulting in a different character than the quasi-scherzando showpiece that is much more commonly heard in numerous recorded interpretations.

Pantalon et Colombine

Rachmaninoff begins this movement attacca and l’istesso tempo, creating a strong link in character and drive between the two sections. Surprisingly, he does not take advantage of the upper voice of G-F in measures 2 and 4 and barely differentiates this line from the rest of the texture. By the time that this material is repeated (measures 9-12), the line is indistinguishable from the other voices. Rather than following the slur marked on the second beat of measures 2, 4, 10, and 12, Rachmaninoff slightly stresses the beat with an accent on the first sixteenth note of each slur. To match this metric emphasis, he takes the sforzandi on the second beats of measures 6 and 8 in the left hand and makes them the strongest out of the phrase.
In the *meno presto* (measures 13-20), Schumann marks a dynamic range of *piano* to *fortissimo*. Rachmaninoff keeps the section in the *mezzo piano* to *mezzo forte* range. He reverses the dramatic *crescendo* written in measure 19 that leads to the *fortissimo*, creating a *diminuendo* and a *ritardando*, both which are exaggerated in the second repetition.

Rachmaninoff takes the repeat in this movement, but he shifts the starting point: Schumann puts the repeat in measures 9-20; Rachmaninoff instead only repeats measures 13-20.

The accents on the second beats are no longer discernable at the *Tempo I*. Again, articulation markings are not distinguished from each other, particularly where Schumann writes slurs throughout measure 33. The *crescendo* in measure 34 is reversed to a *diminuendo*.

In the coda, the *ritenuto* (measure 36) is delayed until the final three notes of measure 37. The sixteenth note rest at the end of measure 37 and the eight-note rest that begins measure 38 are prolonged to last two seconds. The final two chords are played at a considerably slower tempo, with an eight note at 58. The final chord is played *tenuto*, and Rachmaninoff puts a *fermata* on the last chord, holding the notes down with pedal, effectively eliminating the *staccato* marking and the pedal release that is marked in the measure before.

---

*Valse allemande*

In this movement, Rachmaninoff alters the rhythm of the main motif. Rather than a sixteenth note to start, he instead transforms the first note to a grace note, starting before the downbeat. This timing continues for the figure throughout the entirety of the movement. He also changes the left hand to begin on the first beat of the first measure, adding an extra chord to fill out the additional beat and matching the shape of the rest of the left-hand
accompaniment. The articulation marks are also changed, from Schumann’s written legato and slurs to a more jovial character with *staccati* as the main articulation.

Example 2.7: Schumann, *Valse allemande*, printed version, measures 1-4

Example 2.8: Schumann *Valse allemande*, Rachmaninoff’s version, measures 1-4

Through these changes, Rachmaninoff takes the liberty not only to re-write the accompaniment figure, but also to change the character that Schumann indicated through the *staccato* articulation markings.

In the middle section, Rachmaninoff begins *più mosso*, deviating from the gracious opening tempo and creating a more driven character. He takes out the *sforzandi* on the second beats of the left hand in measure 9-12 and moves the emphasis to the first beats of the measures, alternatively stressing the traditional waltz rhythm. Instead of dropping down to the written *piano* in measure 13, he maintains the *forte*. In measure 15, the bottom note of the tenor for the second beat is changed from a D-natural to a D-flat, and the *ritardando* written in
measure 16 is started a measure early to draw attention to this chromatic alteration. In measure 16, he gets rid of the two written crescendi written simultaneously for the left and right hands, and instead applies a diminuendo, bringing the line down to the softest possible dynamic by the end of the measure.

In the return to the opening material at the end of the movement in measure 17, Rachmaninoff keeps the same alteration to rhythm in the main motif, playing grace notes instead of sixteenth notes, and keeping the light, staccato touch. He again changes the bass line to match the opening, playing an A-flat on the downbeat of measure 17 and two chords of A-flat in second inversion for the second two beats. In the repeat, he plays measures 17 and 18 out of time in a much slower tempo of dotted half note at 54. He then accelerates back to his original tempo of dotted half note at 80. He holds the last note for the entire measure, rather than a quarter note with a staccato.

Intermezzo: Paganini

Rachmaninoff interjects additional rhythmic interest by playing strong accents throughout the entirety of Paganini. He accents the bass notes throughout, particularly in measures 9-16 (when they are no longer indicated in the score), adding emphasis to the low A-flats and highlighting them as a pedal point. He also does not drop to piano as marked (measure 9), and instead plays mezzo forte; he keeps the imbalance between the hands, as marked in the opening with the left-hand fortissimo and the right-hand piano.

Rachmaninoff overemphasizes the sforzandi written in the right hand (measures 25-28, and 29) by preempting them with a sforzando in the left hand on the preceding sixteenth note. However, for the sforzando in measure 31, he changes tactics, taking time, rather than
increasing the volume in either hand. The beamed eight notes in the left hand, accentuated with accents, are also not brought out in the texture. He slows down to $\frac{\text{bpm}}{\text{mid}} = \frac{80}{\text{mid}}$ for the final four \textit{sforzandi} quarter notes in measures 35-36, accenting the left hand as well. Rather than creating a new attack for the final note, Rachmaninoff keeps the pedal down through measures 35-36 and, as far as can be determined via careful listening to the recording, depresses the keys silently for the chord in measure 37, allowing the resonance of the low pedaled minor thirds in the previous measure and the resulting sympathetic vibrations of the higher strings to generate the sound.

The recapitulation of \textit{Valse allemande} at the end of \textit{Paganini} exactly matches the first time through, with all of the changes in score, highlighting the fact that his decisions were essentially premeditated.

\textit{Aveu}

Rachmaninoff regularly desynchronizes the attack of the right and left hands throughout the movement, particularly at the start of the phrases. Besides the staggering of the hands, Rachmaninoff takes full liberty to play with \textit{rubati} throughout the movement. For example, he double dots the third in the right hand in measure 4 for both repeats, and again for the repetition of the phrase at the end in measure 12. He also changes the left hand to bring out the bassline, changing all of the lower eight notes on the beats to quarter notes, so that the sound suspends through to the next bass note. This creates a new line, and he voices towards this new bassline particularly in measures 9-10.

Schumann writes careful dynamic markings and accents throughout \textit{Aveu}; Rachmaninoff ignores the two hairpin \textit{crescendi} and \textit{diminuendi} in the opening phrase of
measures 1-4, as well as the sforzandi and accents written in the left and right hands respectively and follows this precedent for the return at measures 9-12. He ends the piece with a diminuendo and a ritardando, rather than the written crescendo. Rachmaninoff takes the first repeat but omits the second.

Promenade

Rachmaninoff begins the movement attacca. He stretches the melodic line, holding the B-natural in measure 2, and he eliminates the grace note on the second beat of measure 4. The sforzandi on the first beats of measures 5-7 and 13-15 are played with an aggressive character and a significantly louder dynamic that one would expect for sforzati within a mezzo-forte dynamic. Breaking up the line with extreme emphasis on the sforzandi is contrary to Rachmaninoff’s usual approach, which is the creation of long, uninterrupted lines. However, Rachmaninoff here forges a connection between measures 5-7 and 13-15 with the phrases in measures 21-27 and 29-32 by adding sforzandi that aren’t in the score to the two latter passages, on the first beats of measures 23 and 24, as well the first beat of measure 32. This imbues these two passages with a similar character, and the result is that they project a more unified whole. Rachmaninoff sustains the B-flat octave quarter note in the first beat of the right hand in measure 7 throughout the next two measures. In measure 10, he smooths out the rhythm of the line to be three quarter notes, rather than a dotted quarter note and an eight note on the second two beats.

Rachmaninoff switches the dynamics in measures 17 and 19, starting the phrase piano, eliminating the crescendo in measures 17-18, and getting to a mezzo forte by measure 19, creating a larger crescendo to the fortissimo in measure 21. He continues the sforzandi in the
bassline past the marked notes in measures 21 and 22, highlighting beats one and three in measure 23, beats one and two in measure 24, and beat one in measure 25. He pauses on the second beats of measures 24 and 28, keeping the rhythm stylized as he does in measure 2, and he eliminates the piano marked on the second beat of measure 27, continuing the line through the measure. In measure 31, he adds a sforzando to the second beat of the left hand and also changes the articulation, slurring the first two notes, and separating the final note.

After the repeat, which he omits, Rachmaninoff does not drop down to piano. He connects the staccato bass notes in measures 33-40 and holds them through the measures, effectively turning them into dotted half notes. He also eliminates the crescendo in measures 34-35, the accents found in both hands on the third beat of measure 36, and the diminuendo in measures 39-40. When the left hand has the melody in measure 41, marked piano in the score, Rachmaninoff plays the line with a full sound to respond to the previous treble melody, and he also eliminates the accents on the second beats of the right hand from measures 41-44. The ritenuto in measures 45-46 is stretched over four measures, and the crescendo in measures 47-48 is switched to a diminuendo. By measure 49, he returns to the original tempo and character of the start of the movement, ignoring the crescendo and diminuendo in the bass in measures 49-50.

By writing a fortissimo in measure 64, Schumann implies that the measure should be a climax. Rachmaninoff takes a different approach; he puts in a diminuendo and starts slowing down where the fortissimo is marked in measure 64. He also plays the three notes legato, eliminating the rests that are written. The character of the climax is grazioso, also demonstrated by the additions of stacchi to the right-hand octaves on the first beats of measures 67 and 69 which add lift to the line.
In the coda, Rachmaninoff omits the *crescendi* in measures 71-72, 75-76, ad 79-80, the accents in measures 73, 77, and 85, and the *pianissimo* in measure 73. For the second repetition of the line starting at measure 79, he brings out the tenor voice significantly, highlighting the A-flat-B-flat-C-flat line in measures 80-81, and he rolls the downbeat of measure 81 for extra emphasis. He continues to highlight the tenor line until the end of the movement.

The level of detail and the sheer number of alterations from the score that are condensed in such short passages shows the degree to which Rachmaninoff will “re-compose” all of the parameters at times to get across his own distinct interpretation. Even if the result produces a musical and pianistic character different from the one intended by Schumann, Rachmaninoff does not hesitate to deviate from the score and adjust the instructions to fit his own voice.

*Pause*

*Pause* is a repetition of the *Vivo* section of the *Préambule*, measures 87-113 of the introduction. Rachmaninoff makes the same interpretive decisions and changes to the score as he does in the *Préambule*.

*Marche des “Davidsbündler” contre les Philistins*

the opening *Non Allegro*, the entire movement sacrifices clarity and details for a greater overall sweep and momentum.

Schumann writes *pedale grande* at the start of the *Non Allegro*, but Rachmaninoff begins with a detached feeling and uses the pedal sparingly. He shortens the quarter notes on the last beats of the measures, creating additional emphasis on the third beats to counteract the *sforzandi* on the first beats of measures 1-8. He adds an E-flat between the A-flats in the left hand on the first beat of the first measures, and a C octave in measure 7, changing the last quarter note on the third beat to two eight notes.

Rachmaninoff begins measure 9 at *poco forte* rather than *fortissimo*, and he makes a *diminuendo* to measure 14, ignoring the *sforzando* in measure 12, but stressing the third beat of the measure instead. He suddenly slows the tempo down in measures 15-16, slurring only the first two notes in the left hand at measure 15, rather than all three. Rather than the accents occurring in the right hand as marked, Rachmaninoff brings out the left hand for all six beats in these two measures. He also eliminates the slur linking the right-hand chords from measure 16 to 17. In the final measure of the first section, Rachmaninoff already anticipates the new tempo and leaps ahead in speed.

In the *Molto più vivo*, Rachmaninoff ignores the marking of *sempre e sempre accelerando* and begins at a rapid speed. He adds a huge *sforzando* to the first beat of measure 36 to match the marking in the downbeat of measure 40. He also accents the first beats of the left hand in measures 54 and 58. The *fortissimo* written on the last beat of measure 58 is changed to a *mezzo forte*, a step down in dynamics from the preceding phrase. He takes out the *sforzando* in measure 64, the *diminuendo* in measures 66-67 and the *piano* in measure 67, keeping the line continuous through these measures and at the same dynamic level. For the
final measures of the section, he slows down to the new tempo of the following section a
measure before any change is marked.

At the start of the *Animato*, Rachmaninoff does not drop down to a *pianissimo* as
marked, remaining instead at a *mezzo piano*. He condenses the marking of *stringendo sempre
più e più* to just the first two measures of the section, rather than from measures 83-89 as
written. He keeps the volume of the entire section uniform throughout, ignoring the crescendo
in measure 90, as well as the *piano* marked in measures 91 and 95.

The *Vivo* is played at such a fast tempo that the articulation markings—such as the left-
hand slurs in measures 100 and 104—are undiscernible. Rachmaninoff places a break in the
sound before the downbeat of measure 111, resting for just a breath before continuing on at his
manic speed. The accents on the downbeats of measures 112-116 are swallowed up and
unnoticeable. He takes a breath before the new section at measure 121, rolling the chord on the
downbeat. He maintains the volume level and doesn’t observe the *mezzo forte* marking with
any change to his volume, also ignoring the two *crescendi* marked from measures 122-123 and
125-128; he plays a *subito forte* on the last beat of measure 128, one beat before the *forte* is
written. He decreases the volume by the final beat of measure 132. By measure 137 until the
double bar at measure 146, Rachmaninoff adds an accent to the third beat of every measure,
obscuring the tactus and creating a new point of interest, without changing the dynamics as
written with the *crescendo* in measures 139-146.

After the double bar, Rachmaninoff returns to the waltz feeling with the main stress on
the first beat of the measure from 147. He also adds additional accents to the downbeats of
measures 149-150 and 153-154. The *fortissimo* in the final beat of measure 154 is actually
played a step downwards in dynamics, and with a lighter *leggiero* touch. The accents are also
omitted and he continues to stress only the first beats of the measures. Another step downward in dynamics occurs in the pickup to measure 163 for the start of the new phrase. The sz\textit{f}orz\textit{andi} in measures 173 and 177 are indistinguishable from the repetitive stresses of the first beats throughout the phrase. Again, Rachmaninoff anticipates the new section by slowing down in measure 177, before the tempo change is marked in measure 178.

The \textit{Animato molto} is parallel to the earlier \textit{Animato} section, with the same changes to the score as earlier in the movement. The section serves as a bridge to the \textit{Vivo}, and Rachmaninoff ignores the dynamics and expressive markings in order to drive through the section.

The second \textit{Vivo} is similar to the first in pacing and direction. He adds a \textit{molto ritardando} to the final three measures of the section, nearly coming to a stop by measure 224 and adding a fermata to the third beat.

In the \textit{Più stretto}, Rachmaninoff offers a frantic dash to the end, and in doing so, he sacrifices smaller details like articulation and accents for a greater sense of line. The changes in written dynamics, accents, and \textit{sforzandi} are swallowed up in the sweep of the motion. The \textit{sempre stringendo} that begins at measure 244 is observed, since Rachmaninoff has already reached his top speed at the start of the section. He brings a small bit of relief with a \textit{poco ritardando} by measure 277 when the chords are augmented, and he adds an extra grace note to the final chord for additional emphasis.
Chopin Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35

Recording History

Chopin’s Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35 was among the works programmed in Anton Rubinstein’s historical concerts in 1886. There are written accounts of Rubinstein’s interpretation of the sonata, and the stylistic and pianistic traits described in these accounts mirror Rachmaninoff’s performance practices and interpretive decisions in his recording of the same piece; these are especially apparent in the third movement, where there are dramatic digressions from the printed score.81

The Chopin B-flat Minor Sonata became a staple in Rachmaninoff’s repertoire. He gave a performance of the work in New York on February 15, 1930. W. J. Henderson wrote a review of the performance in the Sun:

The third number on his list was Chopin’s B-flat Minor sonata, and the distinguished master played it entirely in his own way. He threw overboard all the old fashions and he even made adaptations of the composer’s marks of expression. What he gave us was Sergei Rachmaninoff’s translation of the text, and a tremendous version it was…For one listener this interpretation of the B-flat Minor sonata—in which even the funeral march was played differently—closed itself with a magisterial quod erat demonstrandum [what was to be demonstrated] which left no ground for argument. The logic of the thing was impervious; the plan was invulnerable; the proclamation was imperial. There was nothing left for us but thank our stars that we had lived when Rachmaninoff did and heard him, out of the divine might of his genius, recreate a masterpiece. It was a day of genius understanding genius. One does not often get the opportunity to be present when such forces are at work. But one thing must not be forgotten: there was no iconoclast engaged; Chopin was still Chopin.82


Three days after this performance, Rachmaninoff recorded the sonata at the Camden studios for the Victor Company on two consecutive days, completed in three takes or less.\(^{83}\) After listening to the recording, he wrote in a letter to Alfred Swan: “I think it is the best of all I have ever made.”\(^{84}\)

In Rachmaninoff’s recording, the duration is 18:52 minutes. As was the case with Schumann’s *Carnaval*, this is quicker than most other versions—although, admittedly, the omission of the repeats in the first and second movements also contributes to the relatively short duration. Other pianists include Horowitz (21:35), Argerich (22:47), Emil Gilels (23:05), Michelangeli (27:10), Sokolov (26:25), Leopold Godowsky (21:45), Arthur Rubinstein (21:31), and Krystian Zimerman (25:06).

*Movement I: Grave – Doppio movimento*

In the *Grave*, Rachmaninoff begins the first measure at \(\textit{\textfrac{3}{4}}=70\). He also changes the rhythm in the first measure: rather than double dotting the first note, he changes it to just a dotted half note; the following note becomes a full quarter note. In the second measure, he slows down the tempo so much that a quarter note becomes the same length as the half note in the first measure, with \(\textit{\textfrac{3}{4}}=70\). The accented right hand in the second measure is also kept at the same volume as the opening chords. For the third measure, he does not *crescendo* into the measure as written and rolls the octave Fs in the left hand before the grace notes, bringing out

\(^{83}\) Frederic Chopin, Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, with Sergei Rachmaninoff, piano, recorded February 18, 1930, RCA Victor 71-751500, 1930, LP.

the bass line harmony. He keeps the third and fourth measures in time, but at a slightly slower speed of \( \frac{\text{dotted}}{\text{straight}} = 65 \).

At the start of the *doppio movimento*, the tempo is not precisely doubled, but the pulse feels close to the designation. Rachmaninoff establishes the first four measures at \( \frac{\text{dotted}}{\text{straight}} = 118 \). He omits the *sforzando* at the start of the fifth measure but keeps the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* in the opening four measures. Rather than the pedal being held down for these four introductory measures, he keeps a clean sound with minimal pedal.

Rachmaninoff continues to ignore the pedal markings at the start of the *agitato* marked at measure 9, keeping the sound clear and precise with little resonance, and minimal detectable use of the damper pedal. In measures 13-14, Rachmaninoff accents the tritones in the left hand, bringing out the dissonances and amplifying the *agitato* written four measures earlier. The *crescendo* in measures 14-15 is transformed into only a slight increase in volume at the upward sixth in the right hand at measure 15, and the *diminuendo* in measure 16 is ignored and instead marked with an accent on the second beat. The *forte* and *piano* contrasts for measures 17-20 are present, but not at a dramatic level as the marking would imply: Rachmaninoff instead drops barely to a *mezzo forte* to contrast with the *forte* measures. At the *forte* at measure 21, he expands the first beat with a *tenuto*. Rather than the dynamic markings of a *diminuendo* to piano by measure 22 and a *crescendo* up to measure 25, Rachmaninoff incorporates a slow *diminuendo* throughout the four measures, as well as a *ritardando* in measures 23-24.

The repeat of the opening of the entrance of the right hand of the *doppio movimento* at measure 25 is marked in the score with new accents in the right hand and a *forte*. Conversely, Rachmaninoff keeps the volume the same as the opening and shows no indication of the
accents. He keeps the volume steady until measure 33, where he drops down to a _mezzo forte_, matching how he treated the parallel section in measures 17-18. He adds a slight _tenuto_ to the first note of measure 33. In measures 35-36, he reverses the _crescendo_ and applies a dramatic _diminuendo_ and _moltò ritardando_. Consequently, measure 37 is a big surprise; it is performed _fortissimo_ as marked and _a tempo_.

In measure 39, Rachmaninoff abruptly stops the momentum by changing the half note pulse into a quarter note pulse; he plays measures 39-40 at half tempo, with a _poco ritardando_ at the end of measure 40. When the second theme begins at measure 41, he doubles the tempo to return to the original speed.

Rachmaninoff plays measures 41-56 simply, eliminating the rolls across the tenths in measures 52 and 53, and he reverses the _crescendo_ in measures 55-56 to a _diminuendo_. The _forte_ in measure 57 is changed to a _mezzo piano_, with the right hand singing over a barely audible left-hand accompaniment. He also ignores the _diminuendo_ in measure 80.

In measure 96, Rachmaninoff changes the left-hand downbeat to an F octave, rather than the written E-natural. In the next measure, he again changes the pulse abruptly, playing the next four measures (97-100) in half tempo. He then goes straight to the second ending, omitting the repeat. Rather than playing the F-sharp in the right hand in the second ending as a sixteenth note, he reinterprets the F that begins the measure as a half note, lengthening the following F-sharp into a half note and dividing the measure evenly.

In measure 105, Rachmaninoff keeps the volume _forte_, rather than dropping to a _piano_ as written. The _sotto voce_ in measure 106 is not reflected with any change of sound or volume until the second half of measure 107, where he changes the character by adding a _molto ritardando_ and a _diminuendo_. There is a _crescendo_ and _diminuendo_ written through measures
108-109, which Rachmaninoff changes to a *diminuendo* over three measures, from 108-110, creating a strong unit. In measure 111, he returns to his tempo from measure 105 and begins the *crescendo* in measure 114 much earlier, in measure 111. At this point, he also shifts the pulse to make the beat feel an eighth note off, accenting the G-natural, rather than the first beat. This continues for the next few measures until measure 114. In measure 115, he again adds a *ritardando* and a *diminuendo*. The next five measures continue at half tempo, matching the speed reached by the end of the *ritardando* in measure 115. Rachmaninoff adds a *forte* and *diminuendo* in measure 118, where he also separates the tie over the barline in the right hand by reiterating the downbeat. In measure 119, he changes the rhythm of the left hand to match the right, adding an eight note F-sharp before the half note on the second beat, and he continues to slow down until the end of measure 120.

Measure 121 is played *a tempo*, and Rachmaninoff adds a *ritardando* to measure 124. Measure 125 is again performed *a tempo*, and the forward momentum starts to come back in the next four measures. In measures 129-131, he removes the *diminuendo* and continues to drive forward both in pacing and volume, only taking a slight pause at the end of measure 132 for the *diminuendo* on the final A-natural octave in the right hand. The forward motion continues ahead, preparing for the *fortissimo* arrival in measure 137.

Rachmaninoff maintains the *fortissimo* in measure 137 until measure 150, remaining faithful to the score. He adds an accent on the final eighth note octaves in the left hand in measures 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, and 147. In measures 151-152, he adds a *poco diminuendo* and a *ritardando*. Rachmaninoff omits the *crescendo* written in measures 153-156 and also eliminates the accents in the right hand. The repetition in measures 157-161 is played quieter and with a *diminuendo* and an added *molto ritardando* leads to the *stretto* in measure 161.
The *fortissimo* arrival in measure 161 is switched to a *pianissimo*, and Rachmaninoff marks the *stretto* by first beginning in a slower speed. The accents in the left hand in measures 166-168 are omitted.

At the start of the recapitulation in measure 169, Rachmaninoff omits the B-flat whole note in the left hand. He also removes the grace note in the right hand, rolling the chord instead. In measures 185-192, Rachmaninoff adds accents to the first and last notes in the left hand in each measure, creating a new bassline to add a countermelody to the right hand. In measure 193, he lowers the first note of the left hand down an octave for additional sonority. In measures 201-204, Rachmaninoff continues to highlight the bass line and adds accents the on every beat, creating contrary motion to the right-hand melody. He also marks the downbeat of measure 209 with an additional B-flat down the octave in the bass. The parallel material in the recapitulation is played with the same interpretive decisions as in the exposition. Similarly, he suddenly shifts the pulse to half speed in measures 225-228 and returns *a tempo* at measure 229. From here until the end, he plays strictly in time, doing nothing to observe the *stretto* in measure 230.

Rachmaninoff’s free rhythmic interpretation results in tempo changes beyond mere *rubato* and contrary to the written indications. Again, he freely breaks from written dynamics and makes his own decisions regarding dynamics throughout, and connects parallel sections with similar choices, showing the consideration and lack of spontaneity behind these changes.

*Movement II: Scherzo*

Rachmaninoff plays the *Scherzo* at $\frac{1}{2}=78$. In measures 2 and 4, he adds accents to the third beats to match the written accents in measures 1, 3, and 5. In measure 8, he removes the
accent on the third beat and takes out the slur connecting the third beat to the downbeat of measure 9. The ascending line in measures 9-10 is marked with a crescendo, but Rachmaninoff instead plays a molto diminuendo, very much in line with his tendency to begin a phrase with an impulse and decrease in dynamic until the end of the phrase. These two measures are also marked with pedal throughout, but he plays the two measures leggiero and with the utmost clarity of sound without any audible pedaling. He continues this lightness through the next four measures, eschewing use of the pedal until measure 14 and separating the third beats by eliminating the three note slurs. In measure 14, he contradicts the written diminuendo and instead adds a crescendo. When the left hand enters in measure 17, the tempo drops markedly to \( \frac{3}{4} = 65 \). The left hand does not enter pianissimo as marked, but rather with mezzo forte and with accents on the first beats of measures 17-21. Instead of accenting the third beat of measure 28 as marked, he shifts the accent to the first beat of measure 29.

Rachmaninoff omits the pedal markings in measures 40-41 and 44-45. The sequence in measures 45-49 is forte throughout, despite being marked with a piano to start. The pedal is completely omitted in measure 55, as is the crescendo marked through the measure. Rachmaninoff adds an accent to the first beat of measure 57 and another on the first beat of measure 58, and he eliminates the diminuendo marked through these two measures. Instead, he begins the diminuendo in measures 59-60, where a pianissimo is marked in the score, and he also adds a ritardando through these two measures. He changes the articulation from staccato to legato in measure 60, and he connects the D-flat on top on the first beat to the C-natural on the third beat, altering the quarter note to a half note. Rachmaninoff slows down to \( \frac{3}{4} = 56 \) in measures 61-63 and places a diminuendo through measures 61-64, contradicting the written crescendo.
In measure 65, Rachmaninoff does not observe the accents where they are marked on the third beats of measures 65 and 67 but adds accents to the third beats of measures 66 and 68. In measures 69-71, he again accents the third beats and does follow the measure long crescendi in these three measures, unlike the first time through. He adds a tenuto to the last beat of measure 76, accentuating the pedal marking connecting that note to the downbeat of measure 77. He also omits one of the quarter rests before the più lento, resulting in the shortening of the measure to two beats.

Entering the Più lento section of this movement, Rachmaninoff accents the first beat of measures 81. The downbeats of measures 82-84 are barely audible, and the marked accents on the third beats are omitted. There are pedal markings through this melody line and for the rest of the section whenever the melody returns; where pedal throughout the whole measure is indicated, for the entirety of the più lento, he changes the pedal often to avoid any blurring of the line.

Example 2.9: Chopin, Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, Scherzo, printed version, measures 81-84
Example 2.10: Chopin, Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, Scherzo, Rachmaninoff’s version, measures 81-84

Rachmaninoff lowers the G-flat in the bass line on the first beat of measure 88 down an octave. He again lowers the B-flat on the first beat in the bass line down an octave in measure 93, and on the first beat of measure 96. There is a pedal marked from measures 97-100; instead, he opts to use no pedal at all throughout the section, resulting in an emphasis on clarity of the line. Rachmaninoff also adds a *diminuendo* in measure 101, playing the downbeat of measure 102 *pianissimo* as the focal point of the phrase. The G-flat on the first beat of the bassline in measure 104 is lowered an octave. In measure 109, instead of lowering the dynamic to *piano*, as written, he plays the entrance of the melody *più forte* and staggers the left hand before the right hand on the downbeat for extra emphasis. The *diminuendo* marked in measure 116 begins a measure early, where it is written to be *forte* and the peak of a *crescendo* starting in measure 113. The G-flat in the bass line on the first beat of measure 124 is brought down an octave. In measures 129-132, Rachmaninoff accents the F-flat on the second beats of each measure in the left hand, stressing the dissonances and adding a *tenuto*. The A-flat in the left hand on the downbeat of measure 132 is dropped down an octave. Rather than continuing the *diminuendo* written through measures 133-136, he adds a *poco crescendo* to the end of the
phrase to lead into measure 137. The *portato* articulation in measures 141-143 is changed to *legato*, and the *crescendo* is reversed to a *diminuendo*, as is the *crescendo* written in measure 159.

The return at measure 161 is much slower than the start of the *più lento* back at measure 81. Rachmaninoff applies a *diminuendo* in measure 161 and makes the E-flat in the melody of measure 162 the low point of the phrase. The G-flat on the first beat of the bass line in measure 164 is brought down an octave. The repeat in measure 183 is omitted. In measure 184, Rachmaninoff adds an extra chord in the left hand on the third beat to copy the previous measure, changing the dotted quarter note on the second beat for a quarter note, followed by an eighth note repetition of the same chord. Also, Rachmaninoff changes the length of the octaves on the second beats in measures 185-187, replacing the dotted quarter notes with an eighth note and two eighth note rests. He slurs the first two beats together but separates them from the pickup in the previous measure, which is written as slurred in the score.


![Musical notation image]

The *tempo primo* in measure 189 marks the return of the *scherzo*. Measures 189-259 are an exact repetition of measures 1-27, and Rachmaninoff makes the same choices in the repeat as he does in the first time through.

Rachmaninoff removes the slur connecting the last beat of measure 260 to the first beat of measure 261. He also removes the accents marked on the octaves through measure 261-264; instead, he accents the chords on the beats that are not accented in the score, shifting the implied *hemiola* back a beat.


![Musical notation image]
Example 2.14: Chopin, Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, Scherzo, Rachmaninoff’s version, measures 261-264

Rachmaninoff does not drop to a subito piano at the end of measure 265, as indicated, but rather continues the diminuendo through to the lento marked in measure 273. The last two measures are played essentially at a third of the tempo of the rest of the movement, with $\frac{1}{4}=56$. The quarter note staccato in the left hand in measure 284 is played tenuto and changed to a half note. The final note in the left hand is also tenuto and slightly longer than the written length of a quarter note with a staccato.

In summary, Rachmaninoff freely changes the dynamics and changes accents as he deems fit throughout the movement, unconcerned with the written score’s limitations to fit his own specific interpretation.

Movement III: Marche funèbre

In the first thirty measures of the Funeral March, Chopin writes multiple slurs that indicate phrasing, as well as various dynamic levels throughout the section. The first two measures are slurred into one-measure units, followed by four measures of two-measure phrases. Following the opening, there are two repetitions of a pattern of two one-measure
phrases, followed by one two-measure phrase. The dynamic in the score is raised to a forte in measure 15. By measure 21, the dynamic drops back to a piano for nearly two measures, interrupted with a fortissimo. This arcs back to a piano for the final two measures of the section before the trio at measure 31.

Rachmaninoff takes a different approach to the opening. He plays the first thirty measures as one continuous phrase with a gradual crescendo throughout the entire section. The left hand remains a constant drone through measures 1-15. The right-hand melody is barely audible amongst the rest of the texture and is essentially overpowered by the left hand in the opening until measure 7. The grace notes in measures 7-8 are altered to imitate the indication of the grace notes in measures 11-12; he adds the bottom third of the chord in the right hand to the grace note, rolling the chord before the beat. In both measures 7-8 and 11-12, the diminuendi are omitted, as are the sforzandi in measures 11-12. Rachmaninoff also repeats the D-flat on the first beats of measures 11 and 12 twice, adding a third note to the second octave of both measures.

Rachmaninoff ignores all of the dynamic markings that counteract the overriding crescendo occurring over the first thirty measures. The forte in measure 15 is ignored, since, at this point, the pianist is just at the middle of his dynamic growth. The change of pattern in the left hand is not played with any of the indicated dynamics, and the crescendi and diminuendi in measures 15-16 and 17-18 are ignored. Instead Rachmaninoff merely takes a slight tenuto on the downbeat of measure 16.

In measures 19-20, Rachmaninoff alters the length of the half-note trill in the left hand to a dotted quarter note, and the nachschlag becomes transformed into two prominent sixteenth
notes. The pickups in measures 19 and 20, accented in the score, are played legato and without any accents.

The piano in measure 21 is omitted; instead, the preceding forte is maintained. Consequently, the fortissimo motive in measures 22-23 is ignored, and the line continues to gradually move forward with no discernable change in dynamic. Measures 23-30 are a repetition of measure 15-22, and Rachmaninoff again stresses the downbeat of measure 24, but otherwise plays this passage with no inflection, as he did before.

Rachmaninoff does play the accents in the left hand in measure 28, and the thirty-measure crescendo comes to a peak by measure 29 with a fortissimo, despite the indication of piano in the score. He drops down an octave in the left hand at the start of measure 29, and he adds sforzandi to the first and third beats of measures 29 and 30 by adding the extra octave below. He adds a ritardando in measure 30, and he adds a fermata to both the third and fourth beats of measure 30. The third beat is held for nearly four seconds, which fades dramatically to a subito pianissimo on the final A-flat octave in the measure, which is also held for approximately three seconds.

The first half of measure 37 is stretched out considerably, and Rachmaninoff adds a fermata to the last note in the left hand on the second beat. By the second half of the measure, he begins to get back to tempo and adds a dotted rhythm to the last beat of the right hand. The repeat at measure 38 is omitted.


Rachmaninoff omits the *crescendo* that begins in measure 40. He also adds a secondary line in the left hand, bringing out individual notes in the left hand to create a new voice. He begins by bringing out the E-flat on the fourth beat of measure 40, leading to the E-natural on the second beat of measure 41, followed by the F on the fourth beat of measure 42. Rachmaninoff converts the final two eighth notes in measure 43 into a dotted rhythm and adds in a *diminuendo* and a *molto ritardando*, leading to a *meno mosso* in measure 44. In measures 44 and 45, he stresses the fourth beats even more with additional time, and measure 46 is *piu*
lento. The final two notes in the right hand of measure 53 are also converted into a dotted rhythm.

The return of the funeral march is treated similarly to the opening of the movement, with one continuous phrase from measures 55-84. Contrary to the opening thirty measures, the final section is an encompassing diminuendo, starting fortissimo, which completely contradicts the indicated piano dynamic, and ending pianissimo, with legato throughout. To achieve this, Rachmaninoff ignores all of the dynamic and phrase markings from the score, and consequently, there is consistency in this movement from the start to finish.

Rachmaninoff begins measure 55 fortissimo and with great intensity. The left hand is louder than the right hand, so the feeling of the march overpowers the melody. Every note of the left hand is accented in measures 55-59, and the intensity is heightened by dropping the B-flat down an octave on the first and third beats. The melody for measures 55-58 is double-dotted. By measure 60, he only accents the first and third beats of the left hand and adds an octave below the written bassline. The grace notes in measures 61-62 are treated the same way as in measures 7-8, with the entire chord rolled rather than just the grace note. Rachmaninoff continues dropping the bass down an octave for the first beats of measures 61 and 62, creating additional accents, but he ceases with these changes by measure 63 to accommodate the continuing diminuendo of the entire section. In measures 65 and 66, he changes the D-flat quarter note to two eight notes, adding a repeated D-flat to the second note of the measures, just as he does in measures 11-12. The intensity finally begins to drop by measure 67, and the dynamic at this point drops down to a mezzo forte, matching the indication in the score at this point. Rachmaninoff ignores the accent stressing the pick-up to measure 69 and continues down dynamically when the forte is marked in the same measure.
The *diminuendo* that Rachmaninoff has applied throughout this section continues even where the *fortissimo* is written in measure 76. As before, the top of the line on the downbeat of measure 78 is played as an anticlimax, non-accented and with a *tenuto*. Again, for the first and third beats of measures 83-84, he drops the bass down an octave for extra emphasis, but in a *pianissimo* dynamic.

The overwhelming impression of the movement is of Rachmaninoff’s striking symmetrical phrasing at the start and finish of the march, with a continuous *crescendo* for the first thirty measures, and an unremitting *diminuendo* for the final twenty-nine measures. In doing so, he completely overlooks all of the written indications that counteract this greater momentum.

**Movement IV: Finale: Presto**

Markings in the finale are minimal; Chopin writes *sotto voce e legato* at the start of the movement, *crescendo* in measure 14, *diminuendo* in measure 15, and a *fortissimo* in the final measure, with both the initial B-flat octave and the following B-flat minor chord marked with accents, both sustained with one pedal.

Since the markings are sparse, it is expected that pianists will play the movement with inflections, although none are indicated in the score. Consequently, Rachmaninoff’s addition of dynamics and accents to the music is not unusual. As is his practice, he is concerned with the overarching structure of the entire sonata, and thus he begins the movement *attacca,*
connecting the last note of the third movement into the start of the Finale. He also plays the entire movement extremely quickly, with a duration of one minute and twenty-one seconds.\textsuperscript{85}

Rachmaninoff treats the fast running triplet eighth notes not as melody but as gesture, and the individual articulations of the notes are lost for the greater sweep of the line. The shape of the line is mirrored with dynamic changes; as the line goes up, a crescendo occurs, and downward motion of the line is followed by diminuendi. The impression of the line is more impactful than the individual elements.

At the end of the movement, Rachmaninoff adds two extra measures. Measures 71 and 72 are identical, and Rachmaninoff repeats measure 72 two additional times, resulting in four repetitions in total of this measure, when there are only two in the score. He puts a fermata on the last D-flat in both measures 73 and 74. For the final measure, he adds an extra bass note down the octave on the first beat of measure 75 and pedals through the measure as written.

Summary

In his recordings of Schumann’s Carnaval and Chopin’s Second Sonata, Rachmaninoff displays certain consistent performances practices. He often chooses to take fast tempi and omits repeats. To continue momentum throughout the piece as an entirety, Rachmaninoff often plays movements attacca, creating new relationships between movements that are otherwise freely separated. In order to achieve clarity, he creates extreme contrast between different voices, thereby thinning the texture. He consistently projects the melodic material with great distinction, and inner voices are brought out in a similar manner, voicing the music to reflect

\textsuperscript{85} Somewhat slower timings in recordings by other notable pianists include Horowitz (1:30), Argerich (1:27), Michelangeli (1:38), Evgeny Kissin (1:30), Leopold Godowsky (1:32), and Krystian Zimerman (1:35).
the hierarchy of the material, and often ignoring the dynamics marked in the score. The significance of this style of projection is seen in the resulting clarity of the lines, keeping with his aesthetics of simplicity and directness. Thus, the paradox of finding simplicity within dense structures is resolved, since thick textures can be reduced to audibly identifiable component parts. Similarly, transparency of texture is accomplished through precise differentiations of articulation. Often, this textural differentiation is achieved by changing the articulations in the printed score, altering the pedaling, and creating new articulations to add clarity and create uniformity to the phrases. Rachmaninoff employs a wide range of tone colors through his precise articulation, giving additional definition to the musical line.

Rachmaninoff’s phrasing is readily identifiable. He often begins phrases emphatically, starting with a strong tone and trailing off towards the end of the phrase. More specifically, he often follows a strong tone at the beginning of shorter melodic or motivic gestures with swift diminuendi, and this quick tapering parallels the natural decay from the percussive nature of the piano. Written dynamic markings are sometimes seemingly ignored in order to more consistently apply this approach to phrasing. Dynamically, Rachmaninoff’s range was vast and evident on the recordings, despite the limiting quality of the recording technology of the time. Even through his pianissimos, Rachmaninoff’s prowess with voice leading and differentiation is striking.

Rachmaninoff also employs forward momentum throughout all phrases. This sweep is accomplished in a number of ways, including creating larger units within technical passages and accelerating through the subordinate passagework that serve to elaborate on the motivic gestures. Nevertheless, he maintains rhythmic stability by using the motives as a foundation for the structure, with the forward sweep adding to the effect of the apex of the phrase, which he
felt was the absolute goal of every interpretation.\textsuperscript{86} This sweep is fundamentally based on the musical architecture of the piece, and Rachmaninoff used this technique to ground his interpretations within a strong structural foundation and his preoccupation with a long line.

\textsuperscript{86} Bertensson and Leyda, \textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff}, 217
Chapter III: Rachmaninoff’s Compositions: Revisions and Interpretations

Overview

Rachmaninoff was a pupil of Siloti, who was a student and close friend of Liszt. Liszt was a prolific transcriber, and part of the genre of transcription involves taking liberties with the original composition. Siloti, coming from this practice, once took Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsody No. 14 to a lesson with Liszt and boldly asked for his approval to change the written score, a request to which the composer agreed. As a teacher, it is conceivable that Siloti passed on this attitude to his pupils.

Liszt himself made corrections to his compositions after their initial publication. For example, in 1826, at the age of fifteen, he wrote a set of pieces originally titled Étude en douze exercices, S. 136. Eleven years later, in 1837, he revised these youthful pieces to create the Douze Grandes Études, S. 137. This second version was extremely technically demanding, and in 1852, Liszt revised these pieces for a third time, stripping away excessive and/or awkward elements, and creating the version of the Transcendental Études, S. 139 that is most frequently performed today.

Rachmaninoff undoubtedly took this approach to his own compositions. He frequently made revisions to his works after their original publication. Already highly critical of his own compositions, Rachmaninoff was always concerned with the reception of his works, as evident from his reaction to the premiere of the First Symphony in 1897. The unifying factor among the pieces that he altered after their initial publication was that they didn’t obtain immediate approval from audiences and critics; interestingly, the revised versions were always shorter than

---

the originals. Rachmaninoff went so far as to establish a publishing house called Tair, named after his daughters Tatiana and Irina. He intended to print worthy works by Russian composers who could not find a publisher; subsequently, Tair became the European publisher of his later works and transcriptions.  

In his correspondence with Nikolai Medtner, who also struggled with professional success, Rachmaninoff offered advice and suggested that he compromise as needed just to get things published. In one letter, he wrote:

> Now I can explain myself in greater detail. There are three categories of composers: 1) those who compose popular music, that is, “for the market”; 2) fashionable music, that is, modern; and finally 3) “serious, very serious music,” as the ladies say, to which category you and I have the honor to belong. Publishers are very willing to print works in the first two categories, for this is easily marketable merchandise! And very unwilling to touch the last category—this merchandise moves very sluggishly. The two first are for the pocket. The last is more “for the soul!”…The world has many publishers exclusively for the music of each of the first two categories; there are publishers exclusively for popular music, or exclusively for modern music. But there isn’t one publisher in the world who prints exclusively “serious music.” [Mitrofan] Belayev seems to have been the sole exception to this rule, but it cost him his entire fortune…

Rachmaninoff did not make cuts lightly. When speaking to Eugene Ormandy, Rachmaninoff said: “You don’t know what cuts do to me, it is like cutting a piece out of my heart.” However, Rachmaninoff was always concerned with the length of his pieces, and there is not a single revised version that is longer than the original.

---


89 Sergei Rachmaninoff to Nikolai Medtner, January 14, 1926, as quoted in Ibid., 242.

In performance, some alterations to the score were made spontaneously. Critical responses to the *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, Op. 42 were not particularly positive. Rachmaninoff sent Medtner a copy of the score, along with a letter:

I’ve played them here about fifteen times, but of these fifteen performances, only one was good. The others were sloppy. I can’t play my own compositions! And it’s so boring! Not once have I played these all in continuity. I was guided by the coughing of the audience. Whenever the coughing increased, I would skip the next variation. Whenever there was no coughing, I would play them in proper order. In one concert, I don’t remember where—some small town—the coughing was so violent that I played only 10 variations (out of 20). My best record was set in New York, where I played 18 variations. However, I hope that you will play all of them, and won’t “cough.”

Pianist Konstantin Igumnov premiered Rachmaninoff’s Piano Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 28, in 1908. Upon receiving the manuscript, he examined the score with Leonid Nikolayev, another pianist and composer, and created a list of comments to give to Rachmaninoff. Igumnov worried that his suggestions would be considered tactless, but when he received the revisions that Rachmaninoff made to the score, there were changes made that reflected his ideas. Rachmaninoff replied after a long delay: “When you see the music you will, of course, notice [the changes that] I agreed with and all in which I didn’t. The only thing left for me is to thank you heartily for your comments.” Igumnov commented on the changes:

It was apparent that the most essential part of my comments had been taken into consideration by the author. A considerable part of the recapitulation in the first movement had been recomposed, shortening it by more than fifty bars; some cuts had been made in the finale, mostly in the recapitulation, about sixty bars.

---


92 Ibid., 143.

93 Sergei Rachmaninoff to Konstantin Igumnov, April 12, 1908, in Ibid., 145.
Changes of treatment were only in the finale. The second movement was unchanged.\textsuperscript{94}

The First Sonata was still in a working format when Rachmaninoff sent the score to Igumnov. Rachmaninoff viewed the piece as problematic from its inception. In a letter to Nikita Morozov, he again focused on the length of the piece and worried about the reception of the work:

Two days ago, I played the sonata for Riesemann, and he \textit{doesn’t} seem to like it. Generally I’ve begun to notice that no matter what I write lately—nobody likes it. And I myself often wonder; maybe it \textit{is} all nonsense. The sonata is certainly wild and interminable. I think it takes about 45 minutes. I was lured into this length by its guiding idea. This is—three contrasting types from a literary work [\textit{Faust}]. Of course no program will be indicated, though I begin to think that the sonata would be clearer if the program were revealed. Nobody will ever play this composition, it’s too difficult and long and possibly—and this is the most important—too dubious musically. At one time I wanted to make a symphony of this sonata, but this seemed impossible because of the purely pianistic style in which it is written. I hope you’ll now be satisfied with my lack of vagueness.\textsuperscript{95}

There are three major pieces in which Rachmaninoff published revised versions after the original publication: Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 1, Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 36, and Concerto No. 4 in G Minor, Op. 40.

\textit{Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 1}

Composition students at the Moscow Conservatory were advised to tackle new compositional forms by basing their efforts on existing models. In 1890, during the summer before Rachmaninoff composed his first piano concerto, Siloti had been practicing Grieg’s Piano Concerto at Rachmaninoff’s family home for his upcoming performances. The piece was one of

\textsuperscript{94} Konstantin Igumnov in \textit{Russkiye Vedomosti}, October 19, 1908, in Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{95} Sergei Rachmaninoff to Nikita Morozov, May 8, 1907, in Bertensson and Leyda, \textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff}, 138.
Rachmaninoff’s favorites, and, not surprisingly, the outer movements of Rachmaninoff’s first foray into concerto form were adapted from Grieg’s model. \(^{96}\)

Rachmaninoff finished his First Piano Concerto in 1891, and the piece was published the following year. Although he did perform the first movement of the concerto in 1892 at the Moscow Conservatory, conducted by Vasily Safonov, the first complete performance was delayed for eight more years, until October 4, 1900, when pianist Evelyn Suart played the work under the baton of conductor Henry J. Wood with the Queen’s Hall Orchestra in London.

But, as late as 1908, Rachmaninoff was still dissatisfied with the work, as he expressed in a letter to Morozov:

Now I plan to take my first concerto in hand tomorrow, look it over, and then decide how much time and work will be required for its new version, and whether it's worth doing anyway. There are so many requests for this concerto, and it's so terrible in its present form, that I should like to work at it and, if possible, get it into decent shape. Of course, it will have to be written all over again, for its orchestration is worse than its music. So tomorrow I decide this question, and I should like to decide it in the affirmative. I have three pieces that frighten me: the first concerto, the Capriccio [Op. 12], and the first symphony. How I should like to see all of these in a corrected decent form!\(^{97}\)

In 1917, twenty-six years after the genesis of the work, Rachmaninoff revised the First Concerto. The new version was performed for the first time in New York in 1919, with Rachmaninoff as soloist with the Russian Symphony Society Orchestra, conducted by Modest Altschuler. The changes reflect his evolution in compositional technique and his more mature musical style. Both the orchestral texture and piano writing are whittled down and thinned, and in accordance with Rachmaninoff’s desire to create efficiency in musical communication, the

---


\(^{97}\) Sergei Rachmaninoff to Nikita Morozov, June 29, 1908, in Bertensson and Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 145.
material that contributed to the episodic nature of the original was removed. The piece never obtained the popularity achieved by his Second or Third Concerti, and, as late as 1931, Rachmaninoff was still expressing his dissatisfaction with audiences’ reception of the work, as he wrote to Alfred Swan:

I have rewritten my First Concerto; it is really good now. All the youthful freshness is there, and yet it plays itself so much more easily. And nobody pays attention. When I tell them in America that I will play the First Concerto, they do not protest, but I can see by their faces that they would prefer the Second or Third.

Rachmaninoff continued to revise the First Concerto for almost another decade, and these additional revisions are evident in Rachmaninoff’s 1940 recording of the work.

Rachmaninoff first planned to record the final version of the First Concerto in 1937 with the Philharmonic Orchestra in London, but due to an unsatisfactory amount of rehearsals with the orchestra, he cancelled the session. He eventually recorded the work with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1939 but was still dissatisfied with the final result. Rachmaninoff recorded the piece a second time in 1940, and four of the six 78-rpm sides were taken from the latter session. The final product was released in 1940 on the RCA label. Rachmaninoff wrote a letter to the record producer, Charles O’Connell: “These recordings are far from being perfect,

---


but the others are even worse. For God’s sake, don’t make any mistakes. This threatens to be my very downfall.”

Whether the specific modifications in the score featured on the recording were mistakes or planned is unknown, but the finished recording included several small departures from the score. Rachmaninoff allowed himself the freedom to alter the music by adding and omitting notes, as well as digressions from the written dynamics.

In the first movement (Vivace), Rachmaninoff changes the dynamic markings in measure 26 from poco crescendo to quasi diminuendo. He also changes the left-hand in measure 74 on the final beat of the measure: he turns the duplet to a triplet, adding an extra E dominant seventh chord to finish the beat. In the score, measures 75-79 feature a two-handed trill in the score, which Rachmaninoff omits in the recording. Measures 135-136 include a diminuendo, which Rachmaninoff switches to a crescendo. In measure 144, Rachmaninoff alters the rhythm of the right-hand octaves to match the consequent rhythms in the next four measures. Measure 186 has a diminuendo written, which Rachmaninoff interprets as a sudden crescendo. He adds a significant ritardando to measure 179, which is not marked in the score. In measure 214, Rachmaninoff takes out the last three notes of the measure, and instead plays a B major 6 chord (in first inversion). He plays the chord with an accent, even though it occurs at the end of a diminuendo. In the score, measure 246 features a trill starting on the second beat in the right hand, which Rachmaninoff chooses to begin earlier in the measure.

In the second movement (Andante cantabile), there are no changes to the actual notes, but there are changes to the dynamic markings. At measure 27, rather than the diminuendo to

---

pianissimo indicated in the score, Rachmaninoff plays the right-hand melody forte and maintains this dynamic until measure 32. The pianissimos in measures 39 and 50 are changed to forte. In fact, the dynamics written throughout the piece seem to be treated as relative markings, compared to the other markings around them, rather than specific indications. Especially at the start of phrases, Rachmaninoff has a tendency to start with a strong impulse, and then the sound eventually fades away towards the end of the phrase. This hallmark tapering of the phrase can be heard throughout Rachmaninoff’s recordings, not just in this concerto. As shown in the analyses of Schumann’s Carnival and Chopin’s Second Sonata (Chapter 2), Rachmaninoff likes to shape his lines in this manner even when the score indicates otherwise.

The recording of the third movement (Allegro scherzando) also has a few alterations in the music. In measure 115, Rachmaninoff plays the right hand of the final E-flat major chord in the cadenza an octave higher than written, and he deepens the bass with an additional octave E-flat below in the left hand, rolling the final chord of the measure. Rachmaninoff also adds significant accents on the first note of measures 162 and 170.

These changes might either be fleeting decisions or predetermined alterations, but regardless of their intent, they do not distract in any way from the musical architecture, voicing, articulation, phrasing, or sweep. They do in fact show that Rachmaninoff felt the freedom to digress from the score.

Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 36

Rachmaninoff began working on the Second Piano Sonata in 1912 but was delayed because both his daughters had become ill with typhoid fever. Thus, the composition of the piece
was suspended until the girls had recovered. The twenty-five-minute sonata was finally finished and premiered in St. Petersburg on December 3, 1913, with Rachmaninoff at the piano.

Although the piece was generally well received, Rachmaninoff was not satisfied with the work. The sonata also had the misfortune of being composed in between two pieces that Rachmaninoff considered to be the pinnacle of his inspiration and expression: an orchestral work, *The Bells*, Op. 35, and an *a cappella* choral work, *All-Night Vigil*, Op. 37.\(^{102}\)

With the composition of the Second Piano Sonata, Rachmaninoff again returned to his obsession with length and, speaking with Alfred Swan, compared the work to one of his favorite pieces, Chopin’s Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35. Chopin’s sonata also happened to be in the same key as his sonata. Swan recollected:

[Rachmaninoff] criticized the great length of some of Medtner’s works—for example, the length of his sonata developments—and sometimes urged him to cut them. Rachmaninoff was himself at that time cutting and rewriting some of his early compositions. This is what he said: “I look at my early works and see how much there is that is superfluous. Even in this sonata [referring to his second Sonata in B-flat Minor] so many voices are moving simultaneously, and it is too long. Chopin’s Sonata lasts nineteen minutes, and all has been said.”\(^{103}\)

In the reference to voices moving simultaneously to negative effect, it may be noted that Rachmaninoff must have wanted the music to possess a clarity that could not be achieved if there were too many lines moving at once. This leads to the conclusion that, for Rachmaninoff, clarity and the guarding against excessive length in compositions were of the utmost importance.

Scholar David Butler Cannata has suggested that textural alterations in revisions were due to performance issues that were discovered through Rachmaninoff’s own performances, with these

\(^{102}\) Riesemann, *Rachmaninoff’s Recollections*, 208.

alterations adding both clarity and technical finesse.\textsuperscript{104} However, these textural alterations were also in line with Rachmaninoff’s aesthetic of pairing down his works to the simplest possible form for the ultimate directness of expression. In the sonata, Rachmaninoff chose to thin the texture by eliminating repetitive chords and reducing rhythmic complexities and thicker chromatic accompanying passages.\textsuperscript{105}

It comes as no surprise that the revised version of this sonata, which was published in 1931, was pared down to a work that could reasonably be performed in about nineteen minutes, roughly the same duration of performances of Chopin’s Second Sonata. To remove six minutes of material, Rachmaninoff made significant cuts in the sonata. In the first movement, the transitions in the exposition and recapitulation were shortened, and the development section was also condensed; only the coda remained the same. The revisions to the second movement mainly had to do with textural changes, but the third movement featured significant revisions in the transitions; much material was completely deleted.

Rachmaninoff himself never performed the revised version of this sonata, and there has been much debate over the quality of the changes. In 1940, Vladimir Horowitz created his own version. Horowitz frequently performed Rachmaninoff’s compositions, but he strongly disagreed with the 1931 revisions. As a close friend of Rachmaninoff, Horowitz asked for permission to create his own version, resulting in a hybrid of both the original and revised versions; this version takes about twenty-two minutes to perform. Rachmaninoff gave his consent for this new version shortly before his death. Whatever the reasons for Rachmaninoff’s approval may have

\textsuperscript{104} Davis, ed., \textit{International Rachmaninoff Festival-Conference}, 16.

\textsuperscript{105} Kim Andrei Lasarenko, “A style change in Rachmaninoff’s piano music as seen in the ‘Second Piano Sonata in B-flat minor, Op. 36’ (1913 and 1931 versions)” (DMA diss., The Ohio State University, 1988), 59-60.
been, the decision was in keeping with his flexible attitude towards the printed score and indicated that Rachmaninoff’s own versions were not the only forms that he found acceptable.

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Minor, Op. 40

Rachmaninoff began working on the Fourth Piano Concerto in 1913 but only completed the piece thirteen years later in 1926. Rachmaninoff was in communication with Medtner, who is the dedicatee of the work, throughout the compositional process. As usual, Rachmaninoff was worried about the length of the piece. In a letter to Medtner written in September 1926, Rachmaninoff voiced his concerns: “Perhaps it will have to be given like Wagner’s Ring cycle, over the course of several consecutive evenings.” Even at this stage, he had already started to look for possible cuts and only found one of eight measures. Moreover, Rachmaninoff was concerned with the denseness of the texture and believed it to be “less like a concerto for piano and more like a concerto for piano and orchestra.” As a response, Medtner tried to reassure Rachmaninoff that length was not the only defining feature of a work:

I cannot agree with you, either in the particular fear that your new concerto is too long, or in general on your attitude to length. Actually, your concerto amazed me by the fewness of its pages, considering its importance…Is it possible that music in general is so unpleasant that the less of it the better? Naturally there are limitations to the lengths of musical works, just as there are dimensions for canvases. But within these human limitations, it is not the length of musical compositions that creates an impression of boredom, but it is rather the boredom that creates the impression of length…A song of two pages lacking inspiration seems longer to me that Bizet’s Carmen, and Schubert’s Doppelgänger seems to me more grandiose than a Bruckner symphony. I can hear you explain, “Why

106 Martyn, Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor, 297-299.

107 Bertensson and Leyda, Sergei Rachmaninoff, 246.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.
does he say all this!”—Of course you know all this better than I, and this is really what you are speaking about, except that you speak in that strange language of figures, pages, minutes.\textsuperscript{110}

The concerto was premiered on March 18, 1927 with Rachmaninoff at the piano, with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. After the performance, Rachmaninoff received his worst reviews since the disastrous response to his First Symphony. Samuel Chotzinoff, writing for The World, disparaged the piece:

When Mr. Rachmaninoff last night launched into his "Fourth" concerto...the first theme, after a few introductory measures, seemed like an assurance that the eminent Russian was only taking up a thread where he had left off, all seemed so right and true for the moment. Here were the same characteristics, the vaulted architecture of phrase, the undercurrent of romantic sadness, the harmonic solidity. But as the movement progressed the artistic tension began slowly to relax. Succeeding parts did not attain a natural fusion, new material appeared without the sanction of a musical necessity, piano and orchestra went skirmishing afield. One's attention began to wander. The first movement came to a close with unexplained abruptness. One's hopes were centered on the largo. Rachmaninoff is always at home in slow movements in which his long, supple melodies move luxuriantly, albeit with aristocratic dignity. But the melody of the largo of the new concerto was not even characteristically Rachmaninoff. It was reminiscent, but only of Schumann's piano concerto, the opening theme of which appeared in the Rachmaninoff like a pale emanation of itself. The last movement had even fewer movements of inspiration than the preceding two, and left one with the impression that a lot was said, but not of any particular importance...\textsuperscript{111}

Lawrence Gilman from the Herald Tribune decried the work and was harsh in his assessment:

...For all its somewhat naive camouflage of whole-tone scales and occasionally dissonant harmony, Mr. Rachmaninoff's new concerto (his Fourth, in the key of G Minor) remains as essentially nineteenth century as if Tchaikovsky had signed it. Somber it is, at times, but it never exhibits the fathomless melancholy of such authentic masters of tragical speech as Mussorgsky. There is a Mendelssohnian strain in Rachmaninoff which relates him more intimately to the salon than to the steppes; and this strain comes out in his new concerto, as it does in all his music, sooner or later. The new work is neither so expressive nor so effective as its

\textsuperscript{110} Nikolai Medtner to Sergei Rachmaninoff, October 9, 1926, in Ibid., 246-247.

famous companion in C Minor. Nor is it so resourceful in development. There is thinness and monotony in the treatment of the thematic material of the slow movement, and the finale begins to weary before its end. The imposing, the seductive Rachmaninoff is still the unashamed and dramatizing sentimentalist of the Second Concerto.112

Rachmaninoff was immensely disappointed with the critical responses. The original version hadn’t been published, so Rachmaninoff immediately began his first revisions to the work. The alterations cut all three movements, removing 114 measures of music in total. Rachmaninoff published the shortened score in 1928 under his publishing company Tair. The new version was premiered in Manchester, England on December 2, 1928, performed by Leff Pouishnoff, with Sir Henry Wood conducting the BBC Orchestra. Unfortunately, the revisions made no effect on the critical reception of the piece, and Rachmaninoff regarded the concerto as a failure and withdrew the work.

A decade later, Rachmaninoff was ready to revisit the concerto and wrote to his friend Yevgeni Somov in 1938, where he relayed details of the work that he would need to do to make the necessary improvements to the piece: “...This summer I should also like to correct my 4th Concerto, and this would not be difficult for the first two movements. But the catch is in the last movement, where a whole episode has to be recomposed anew, and I don’t feel up to that.”113 Consequently, Rachmaninoff waited until 1941 to begin the second set of revisions. For this version, he revised the orchestration throughout the piece, simplified the piano texture, and completely overhauled the final movement. He also made even more cuts and disposed of unnecessary themes, thereby creating a more compact structure.


113 Sergei Rachmaninoff to Nikolai Somov, May 11, 1938, in Bertensson and Leyda, Sergei Rachmaninoff, 343-44.
The new version was premiered again in Philadelphia with Rachmaninoff performing Ormandy as conductor on October 17, 1941. Edwin Schloss reviewed the concert for The Philadelphia Record:

The Fourth Concerto as heard yesterday is a revision of a work first heard here 14 years ago from Rachmaninoff’s hands. The revision, which is extensive, was made last summer and yesterday's performance was the concerto's first anywhere in its present form. It turned out to be nobly-meant and darkly romantic music, somewhat fragmentary in shape and typically Rachmaninoffian in spirit. And, with all due respect to the great artist who wrote it, and for all its fine pianism, a trifle dull. Its playing, however, added up to news in any season — news that becomes increasingly miraculous as the years go by, namely, that for all his 68 years, Rachmaninoff is still one of the most virile and brilliant young pianists before the public today.114

Rachmaninoff was still unsatisfied with the concerto and continued to make changes to the orchestration up until his recording of the piece with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra in December 1941. Rachmaninoff lamented that he never had time to fully re-orchestrate the piece to his satisfaction, and the recording was his final performance of the work. The third version of the work was published a year after Rachmaninoff’s death in 1944.

In Rachmaninoff’s recording, he made further minor changes that were not reflected in the final version of the printed score. In the first movement, the last two quarter notes in measures 17, 29, and 38 are changed to a dotted rhythm. In measure 42, the right hand in the last two beats are changed to two quarter notes, rather than the dotted quarter note and eight note figuration. A forte is added to measure 79 at the start of the crescendo at the end of the third beat. The ties connecting the two B-flats in the right hand at the start of the third and fourth beats of measure 86 are removed. Measures 170 and 172 have two more accents inserted on the second and fourth beats to match the measures immediately preceding them. Measures 233 slightly...

---

intensifies, rather than continuing to wind down with the *diminuendo* that begins two measures earlier at measure 231.

In the second movement, Rachmaninoff takes out the middle note (B-flat) of the left-hand triplet on the second beat of measure 11, thereby maintaining rhythmic consistency with the rest of the beats in the measure in the left hand, all of which consist of a triplet quarter note followed by a triplet eighth note. The *crescendo* in measure 14 does not continue for its entirety but instead changes to a *diminuendo* that leads into the following measure. In measure 31, Rachmaninoff changes the melody to match the orchestra’s line in the preceding measure, and the top line in the second beat is changed from D-C-D to D-C, and from a triplet to a quarter note and eighth note within the triplet timing. The first two sixteenth notes of measures 45 and 46 are dotted. In measure 51, Rachmaninoff changes the D-flat on the third beat to a D-natural and the following E-flat on the fourth beat to an E-natural. The right hand in the first beat of measure 61 is rolled. In measure 66, the last note of the triplet in the second beat does not change chords and remains with the same notes as the preceding two members of the triplet; the same triplet is repeated in the fourth beat of measure 68, where the last two notes do not change from the original first note of the triplet. Measure 69 features the same changes, and the final two notes of the triplet on the fourth beat do not alter from the first. The final double trill starting in measure 75 is played together, rather than the left hand beginning a beat after the right hand as written.

The third movement had the fewest deviations from the 1941 version of the score. In measures 133, 135, and 137, the first beats are changed to a dotted rhythm in the right hand, and the same alteration happens for all three duplets in measure 139. In measures 180 and 181, the notes are slightly altered—the third beat of measure 180 is changed to G-flat and B-flat, and the following first beat of measure 181 is F and A. The ending of measure 191 does not *diminuendo*
but instead rises in a quick *crescendo* to a ringing top note, a typical phrase shaping in Rachmaninoff’s music. The downbeat of measure 301 is removed, and measure 316 is omitted.

Many of the changes, such as rolled chords without written indications, were stylistic and do not justify mentioning as specific alterations to the score, but rather can be seen as interpretive decisions. Overall, these changes might be minimal in total effect, but they are worth noting to illustrate the distinct alterations that Rachmaninoff makes from the published score when performing his own works.
Chapter IV: Conclusion

Rachmaninoff’s values as a pianist and composer give insight into his interpretations. First and foremost, his concept of the culminating point of the piece shows his dedication to structural design. His preoccupation with musical architecture leads to a certain uniformity in both conveyance of the phrase and of larger sections, and a careful plan regarding pacing and preparation. Rachmaninoff maintained a strict work ethic throughout his professional life, instilled upon him from his childhood lessons with Zverev and the austere training from the Moscow Conservatory. From written observations from friends and colleagues, Rachmaninoff’s fastidious practice methods left nothing to chance.

Rachmaninoff chose repertoire that reflected his sensibilities, and he was careful to only play music that he felt that he could perform with sincerity. He also possessed the soul of a romantic, believed that color was vital to interpretation, and admired profundity, originality, and creativity in performance. Balancing these values with his strict rigor and planning led to performances that were personal yet unsentimental, maintaining a large-scale approach to the music without over-indulging in the moment.

Rachmaninoff was unwilling to disclose information about his own specific views on his compositions. As a performer, Rachmaninoff spoke clearly about the perils of imitation. Rather than controlling his music through literal explanations of what inspired him, he wanted the performer to arrive at individual interpretive decisions. Since the concepts of being genuine and direct were always of the utmost importance, the idea of crafting a specific idea or concept for the performer to follow would be counterintuitive to this approach.

Furthermore, Rachmaninoff was open to other interpretations of his own works and found it interesting to hear what other musicians would find in his own music. Gina Bachauer
had the opportunity to work with Rachmaninoff in the 1930s and asked about interpretation. She recounted his response: “If [the interpreter] can convince me, then it is right...there are several ways to [interpret] the same phrase, as long as it is convincing, as long as this comes from one’s own judgement.”\footnote{Gina Bachauer, “My Study with Rachmaninoff,” \textit{Clavier} vol. 12, no. 7. (October 1973): 12.} Also, by approving Horowitz’s version of his Second Sonata, Rachmaninoff seems open to inviting new ideas that were not only his own, as long as the final result was convincing.

The attitude of Liszt and Siloti, regarding the freedom of the interpreter to change the score, surely seems to be passed on to Rachmaninoff, particularly evident from the recordings that he made of works by other composers. Perhaps it was Rachmaninoff’s fundamental grounding as a composer that led him to this viewpoint: understanding the piece as a complete entity and possessing the insight from a compositional point of view gave him the freedom to be expressive on top of a solid foundation as a performer. Rachmaninoff’s commanding use of newly created recording technology provides invaluable information as to his musical beliefs. He was proud of his recordings of Schumann’s \textit{Carnaval}, Op. 9 and Chopin’s Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, specifically singling out both recordings in his own self-assessments. He readily praised his own recording of Schumann’s \textit{Carnaval}.\footnote{Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, \textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956), 265.} He also proclaimed his recording of the Chopin Sonata to be “…the best of all I have ever made.”\footnote{Geoffrey Norris, “The Piano Sonata No. 2: A Cut Too Far,” in \textit{International Rachmaninoff Festival-Conference: Celebrating the 125\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of Sergei Rachmaninoff’s Birth}, ed. Shelley G. Davis (College Park: University of Maryland, 1998), 26.} Because these
recordings were considered worthy by Rachmaninoff himself, they can be counted as true indications of his own musical conceptions.

There isn’t a single page in his recordings of either Schumann’s *Carnaval* or Chopin’s Second Sonata in which Rachmaninoff doesn’t alter the written articulations, phrasings, note durations, dynamics, pitches, or metric groupings. In *Carnaval*, for example, he gives himself the liberty to change metric patterns in pieces, as evident in the *Préambule* (measures 55-66, 99-101, and 114-135). He sometimes completely modifies the meter by rewriting the rhythm and skipping beats, as he does in in measures 25-29 in *Arlequin*. Sometimes, he alters the very rhythm of the melody, shown in the opening of *Valse allemande*. He also adds measures of music, as he does in the Chopin Sonata by repeating measure 72 three times in the final movement. Tempo relationships are also created that are not written in the scores, such as the addition of sections at half tempo in measures 39-40 and 97-110 in the Chopin Sonata’s first movement. Despite these alterations, Rachmaninoff maintains a connection to the original tempo and generates rhythmic continuity by exactly halving the tempo in these sections. Dynamic markings are liberally changed throughout both the Schumann and the Chopin, and the implied characters of specific movements, as shown though tempo markings and other written instructions, are often transformed to fit Rachmaninoff’s own unique interpretations, demonstrated in *Carnaval* in *Eusebius, Coquette, Chiarina, Chopin*, and *Estrella*.

In *Carnaval* and in the final two movements in Chopin, Rachmaninoff links specific movements together, indicating that he was thinking architecturally of the piece as a whole, not just as individual segments. Larger architectural structures are also evident in the third movement of the Chopin, in which symmetry is created in the opening and closing passages of the *March funèbre* with opposite dynamics and contrasting directional movement.
Rachmaninoff’s concept of the structural high point of the piece is clearly shown by such interpretive choices. Rachmaninoff’s interpretations in all repertoire, as well as his goals with revisions of his works, are characterized more by prioritizing conveyance of the larger architectural structure over the smaller details of written nuances as notated in print, which were susceptible to change from the urtext in order to fit his greater aim.

Rachmaninoff was meticulous in his preparation of his interpretations, and despite the specificity of his own approach, his recordings show that his readings are not faithful to the printed score. His role as a composer and pianist allowed himself the freedom to create new interpretations that digressed from the scores; in his own way, he recomposed every piece he performed, regardless of whether the work was his own or composed by someone else. Because of this attitude, the specific articulation marks, dynamics, phrasings, and even the notes themselves all bended to his will and were changed to fit into his own conception of the work. His ways of diverging from the printed scores of works by other composers connects to his interpretations and revisions of his own music with striking consistency, and his constant changes to his own scores show that there is no definitive version for his own compositions.

Throughout Rachmaninoff’s career as a composer, he was a frequent recipient of criticism. Although he came across to many of his peers as arrogant and proud, he was deeply affected by negative reception. Consequently, bad press was a reactive force for him to make changes to his compositions, as well as his perceived impression of the audiences in the moment of performance. Because of these insecurities, his motivations for new versions of his own compositions were not solely limited to his own musical taste.

The common elements linking the alterations of his own compositions is 1) the fact that the revised pieces often received less than positive feedback from audiences and critics, and 2)
the revised versions were always shorter than the originals. There does seem to be an emotional connection, not just a musical one, to these changes. His revisions aimed to improve the strength of the structural projection, and the character and style remained constant through all of the various versions.

Besides the textual changes, there are variations to note in Rachmaninoff’s recordings of his own compositions from the written score. For example, in both the First and Fourth Concerti, two pieces that Rachmaninoff dramatically altered after their first publications, he changes both notes and dynamics in their final versions. These divergences from the scores are less significant in his own works than in his interpretations of pieces by other composers; this comes as no surprise, since he took the time to specifically mark his scores with his own revisions, altering both dynamics and phrasing marks in his music over time. However, these changes also show that nothing was unalterable, and he felt the liberty to change his previous decisions in order to convey his inspiration.

It is clear that Rachmaninoff was not a spontaneous performer. Repetitions of sections are performed with parallel interpretations and alterations. For Rachmaninoff, interpretation in itself was a type of composition, and his resulting renditions were methodically thought out and carefully executed. The compositional element of interpretation means that the written text was subordinate to his greater concept of phrasing, articulation, and structure. Deviations from the score resulted in the strengthening of his ideals of musicality, and consequently, Rachmaninoff felt the justification and the authority as a composer to break from the printed page. The written score was never considered to be a finished product, but rather as an entity that could be further perfected. However, the aesthetic ideals that such aberrations suggest can
inspire pianists to look beyond the score and decide what values will uphold one’s own principles.

In conversation with James Francis Cooke, Rachmaninoff said:

Every piece is a piece unto itself. It should, therefore, have its own peculiar interpretation…a successful performer must have a strong individuality, and all of his interpretations must bear the mark of this individuality, but at the same time he should seek variety constantly…Each piece must stand apart as possessing an individual conception, and if the player fails to convey this impression to his audience, he is little better than some mechanical instrument.\(^{119}\)

Rachmaninoff cherished individualism, and at the end of the day, he was searching for “the vital spark”\(^{120}\) in interpretation. This spark will differ from pianist to pianist, and it is not something that is achieved without a careful conception of the piece that must be worked out through thorough examination. However, it seems evident that Rachmaninoff would not believe that there is only one way to play a specific work and finding an interpretation that is honest and true for an individual is a task that must come from searching within.


\(^{120}\) Ibid., 217.
Appendix

CARNIVAL
Scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes
für das Pianoforte
von
ROBERT SCHUMANN.
Carl Lipinski gewidmet.

Préambule.

Quasi maestoso.

Pedale

Più moto

brillante

sempron ff

1.

2.

Annalen 1878.
Valse noble.

Un poco maestoso.
Eusebius.

Adagio.

sotto voce

senza &c.

Più lento molto teneramente.

rit.

pp
Florestan.

Passionato.
(Lettres Dansantes)

Presto.

Chiarina.

Passionato.

D.C. sin al Fine senza replica
Chopin.

Agitato.
Molto vivace.

Valse Allemande.
SONATE II.

Op. 35.

Doppio movimento.

Grave.
Diese beiden Takte, die sich in der Originalausgabe befinden, sind nach Angabe Nukleus später von Chopin gestrichen worden.
Bibliography

Primary Sources


Dissertations and Theses


Articles


**Books**


Scores


Discography and Liner Notes


