

A “Misleading” Opus Number: Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 1

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**Abstract**

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This study evolves as an analysis of the two versions of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 1, focusing on aspects such as theme, harmony, structure, rhythm, and texture, based on the two-piano scores. Composed twenty-six years apart, this concerto underwent some of the most extensive revisions among all of his revised works. By examining the composer’s different choices in the two versions of the concerto, this study aims to shed light on the evolution of Rachmaninoff’s musical style as well as provide a deeper understanding of the final version of the work.

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# Introduction

## Background

Rachmaninoff's first attempt at writing a piano concerto dates back to November of 1889. The State Central Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow (named in honored of Glinka in 1954) holds fourteen pages of sketches for a piano concerto in C minor in the Rachmaninov Room.<sup>1</sup> Although his initial attempt at writing a concerto only remained as sketches marked with corrections and crossing-outs, in the summer of 1890, the 17-year-old composer completed the first movement of his first piano concerto in F-sharp minor.<sup>2</sup> In March of the following year, Rachmaninoff premiered it as a soloist in a student concert with the orchestra of the Moscow Conservatory.<sup>3</sup>

In May 1891, following the resignation of Siloti, Rachmaninoff's cousin and piano teacher at the conservatory, Rachmaninoff also sought to exit his piano study a year early. He passed his piano exam successfully in a few weeks of preparation.<sup>4</sup> In July of 1891, Rachmaninoff completed the remaining two movements of his first concerto in haste.<sup>5</sup> Upon his graduation in 1892, Rachmaninoff was awarded the highest honor in the conservatory, the Great Gold Medal, for his successful completion of both piano and composition degrees.<sup>6</sup> Recognized

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 98; Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 106.

<sup>2</sup> Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 41.

<sup>3</sup> Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda, and Sophia Satina. *Sergei Rachmaninoff: a Lifetime in Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 43.

<sup>4</sup> Morley Grossman, *The Revision Process in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp Minor, Opus 1* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Bertensson, Leyda and Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 36.

<sup>6</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 15.

by publisher Gutheil as an outstanding young composer and graduate of the conservatory, the two-piano arrangement of Rachmaninoff's concerto was published in 1893.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the hiatus of his composition output between 1897-1900 due to the unsuccessful premiere of his First Symphony, Rachmaninoff continued to receive numerous performance invitations. In 1898, Rachmaninoff's worldwide fame began to soar after Siloti performed Rachmaninoff's C-sharp minor prelude during his tour to Europe, England, and America. This led to Rachmaninoff's opportunity to debut in London in 1899. Following his successful concerts, in which the young and rising composer performed his piano works and conducted his orchestral compositions, the Philharmonic Society extended an invitation to Rachmaninoff to return in the following season and perform his first concerto. Not satisfied with his "old student work", Rachmaninoff promised to return with a better one [Concerto No. 2].<sup>8</sup> It was almost another decade later, in 1908, when Rachmaninoff expressed again his desire to revise the First Concerto in a letter to his former conservatory fellow Morozov, "I have three pieces that frighten me: the First Concerto, the Capriccio and the First Symphony. How I would like to see all of these in a corrected, decent form!"<sup>9</sup>

However, it was not until November 10, 1917, that Rachmaninoff completed his revision of the first concerto, marking it as the last work he finished before leaving his home country. In March, Rachmaninoff had expressed concern and contemplated leaving Russia, but the closed borders prevented him from doing so. The suspension of public musical activity until the return of 'normal' conditions left all three dimensions of his career—composer, pianist, and

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<sup>7</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 46; Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 48; Bertensson, Leyda and Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 50.

<sup>8</sup> Bertensson, Leyda and Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 87.

<sup>9</sup> Bertensson, Leyda and Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 145.

conductor—blocked, with no clear indication of when they would resume.<sup>10</sup> Rachmaninoff experienced depression and worry, while revising the concerto brought him peace. Finally, after the October Revolution, Rachmaninoff was able to secure visas for him and his family, allowing them to leave for his performance engagement in Sweden in December 1917.<sup>11</sup> Following further performances in Copenhagen, during which he received additional invitations to perform in the United States, Rachmaninoff and his family embarked on a steamship from Oslo to New York City on November 1, 1918.<sup>12</sup> In 1919 he finalized the definitive version of his First Concerto in New York City, preserving its original opus number.

Rachmaninoff is contented about his revised concerto:

I have re-written 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 any 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.<sup>13</sup>

Due to the significant changes made in the revised concerto, its original opus number could be misleading. In his recording review, Morrison even remarked that its opus number was “highly misleading”.<sup>14</sup> Grossman cited Robert Threlfall’s idea of a more convincing opus designation:

“A Prokofiev would doubtless have more appropriately labeled so far reaching a revision Opus 1/39B”.<sup>15</sup> Although the themes and organization of the first two movements are little affected, on the whole, the revisions reflect the thinking of the composer, who had so recently conceived the *Etudes Tableaux*, Opus 39.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bertensson, Leyda and Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 206.

<sup>11</sup> Bertensson, Leyda and Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Bertensson, Leyda and Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, 213.

<sup>13</sup> Katherine Swan and A. J. Swan. “Rachmaninoff: Personal Reminiscences--Part I,” *The Musical Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1944): 8.

<sup>14</sup> Bryce Morrison, “Rachmaninov’s Concertos,” *Music and Musicians* 24 (October 1975): 34.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Threlfall, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: His Life and Music* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1973), 45.

<sup>16</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 48.

## Resources

One of the latest extended studies on Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 is Khachatryan's dissertation in 2021. As part of his entire study of all Rachmaninoff's piano concertos, Khachatryan discussed the original version of the First Concerto with comparison to Grieg's concerto as a model, and how the revised version evolved stylistically in two separate chapters<sup>17</sup>. Published in 2006, Grossman's study focused on comparing all the details between the original, interim and the final version of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, with a lengthy chapter of Rachmaninoff's biography<sup>18</sup>. Similar to what Gosden included in his PhD dissertation in 2012, Khachatryan also provided a brief discussion on the existing scholarship, including arguments on the authority of Rachmaninoff's biography between Oskar Rieseemann and Sergei Bertensson, as well as other analytical journal articles.

Besides the extended analysis by Khachatryan and Grossman, this research project also involved discussions with analytical examples, such as Barrie Martyn's *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* and Geoffrey Norris's *Rachmaninoff*, Jeremy Norris's *The Russian Piano Concerto*, and Michael Roeder's *A History of the Concerto*. Other inspiring and informative journal articles that are frequently cited include Carruthers's "The (Re)Appraisal of Rachmaninov's Music: Contradictions and Fallacies", Coolidge, Richard. "Architectonic Technique and Innovation in the Rakhmaninov piano Concertos", Geoffrey Norris's "Rakhmaninov's Second Thoughts" and Yasser's "Progressive Tendencies in Rachmaninoff's Music".

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<sup>17</sup> Varazdat Khachatryan, "Re-assessing Rachmaninoff's Legacy: The Piano Concertos and Evolution of His Musical Style" (PhD Diss., Technological University Dublin Conservatoire, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.21427/rv1f-qb86>

<sup>18</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*.

Lastly, Cunningham's *Sergei Rachmaninoff: a Bio-Bibliography* provides a comprehensive catalog of various materials for research purposes, as well as a summary of the composer's life and brief discussion on his work. Some of the categories include the general surveys of Rachmaninoff's life and works, book-length biographies, extended discussions, and brief discussions and analyses of selected works, and collections of other valuable material, such as Rachmaninoff's interviews and letters, reviews of Rachmaninoff's performances, reviews of the books written about him, and discography as well.

## Editions

(currently available in the U.S.)

	Two-piano score	Full score
1891 (online available by imslp <sup>19</sup> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gutheil (1893)</li><li>• Muzyka (1987, a reprint of Muzgiz 1961 or earlier) ed. by Roizman</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Muzyka (1971) ed. by Kirkor<sup>20</sup></li></ul>
1891 (physical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kalmus (a reprint of Belwin)</li></ul>	
1917 (interim)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Muzgiz (1920, later name changed to Muzyka)</li><li>• Kalmus (1970s, based on a 1965 reprint of Muzyka)<sup>21</sup></li></ul>
1919 (online available by imslp)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gutheil (1919)/ Breitkopf</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gutheil (1921)</li></ul>
1919 (physical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schirmer</li><li>• Boosey and Hawkes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kalmus</li><li>• Dover</li><li>• Boosey and Hawkes</li></ul>

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<sup>19</sup> International Music Score Library Project

<sup>20</sup> Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 65.

<sup>21</sup> G. Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 106.

# Chapter 1. First movement

## Introduction

The heroic and virtuosic opening of the F-sharp minor concerto seems to immediately recall the openings of Grieg's and Schumann's concertos. The structural scheme of these openings is similar, comprising a brief orchestral lead-in and a florid piano passage that leads into the first statement of the first theme by the orchestra.

Schumann's opening is the most concise, spanning three measures. It features a dominant prolongation that prepares for a perfect cadence (ex. 1).

Ex. 1 Schumann, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54 (1841), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 1-4

Grieg's opening has seven measures, including a tonic prolongation leading to a half cadence (ex. 2).

Ex. 2 Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16 (1868), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 1-6

Rachmaninoff's opening spans fifteen measures, making it the most extensive (ex. 3).

Similar to Grieg, Rachmaninoff concludes the introduction with a half cadence that is approached by a flourishing arpeggio (mm. 13-15).

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, measures 1 through 15. The score is written for piano and is in F-sharp minor (three sharps) and common time (C). It is marked *Vivace*. The first system (measures 1-5) features a complex, multi-layered texture with triplets and sixteenth-note patterns in both hands, marked *ff*. The second system (measures 6-9) shows a more rhythmic, march-like texture with a *ff marcato* dynamic, followed by a *rit.* (ritardando) and a return to *a tempo* with *ff*. The third system (measures 10-15) begins with a *rit.* and concludes with a half cadence, marked *ff pesante*. A flourish of arpeggiated chords is shown in measures 13-15, marked *ff*. Measure numbers 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, and 14 are indicated at the start of their respective systems.

Ex. 3 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 1-15

Upon examining the scores side by side, it is remarkable to see within a similar structural scheme between Grieg's and Rachmaninoff's introductions, the latter's innovations, and unique personal touches.

### **i) Structure and lead-in**

Rachmaninoff's opening begins with a propelling, fanfare like lead-in in the orchestra part. It uses a repeated tonic in a dotted rhythm and spans two measures (ex. 3, mm. 1-2). Similarly, Grieg's opening utilizes a single measure of timpani roll that also builds on the tonic as a lead-in (ex. 2, m. 1). The following piano parts in both introductions consist of a mix of chords and double octaves that range from the highest to the lowest register on the piano, showcasing the instrument's full range. Finally, both introductions culminate in a brief cadenza and a half cadence concluded by the piano. (ex. 2, mm. 6-7; ex. 3, mm. 13-15).

However, these features or borrowings are subtle and minor and may not be immediately discernible, because even if Rachmaninoff indeed was influenced by Grieg's concerto, he skillfully integrates a variety of distinct and original musical ideas into this scheme, effectively reducing the overt resemblance to Grieg's. In addition, the two lead-ins project different images. Rachmaninoff's revised lead-in is marked *ff, marcato*, resembling an assertive horn call, while Grieg's timpani roll marked *pp* and *crescendo* sets up for the piano part in the next measure creating the impression of a curtain opening and a spotlight shining on the solo instrument.

### **ii) Thematic contour**

Despite some shared similarities, the solo piano entrances in Grieg's and Rachmaninoff's concertos exhibit differences. Grieg's passage primarily consists of tonic and dominant chords arranged in a rhythmic pattern of one eighth-note followed by two sixteenth-notes. This pattern repeats three times, maximizing the number of repetitions on the piano and producing a majestic

and impactful effect (ex. 2, mm. 2-4). In contrast, Rachmaninoff's passage exhibits a linear contour characterized by predominantly stepwise motion and a rhythmic pattern of constant eighth-note triplets. The melody is primarily diatonic, yet adorned with chromatic embellishments. Two longer chords, situated in m. 3 and m. 5, act as anchoring points. Spanning six measures, this passage extends the impact of the expansive melody, intensifying its power.

### **iii) Measure 9-12**

Grieg's chordal and octave passage reaches its culmination with a long tonic, leading into a captivating cadenza of virtuosic arpeggios. This improvisatory cadenza adds a touch of flourish to the end of the section, which was a common practice during the classical period. In comparison, Rachmaninoff delays the cadenza with a series of chords in the piano part. The chord progression from half-diminished vi<sup>7</sup> to chord iv makes up a four-bar phrase (ex. 3, mm. 9-12). To complement the piano chords, Rachmaninoff reintroduces the horn call on the tonic in the orchestra part, employing a varied rhythm of triplet quarters and dotted rhythms. This rhythmic variation propels the momentum forward, contrasting with the steady rhythm in the piano part. Nonetheless, there are two elements that string these chords in the piano part together. The first one is the common tone F<sup>#</sup>, the tonic, that is included in all the chords in this progression. The second one is the melodic voice-leading that forms a descending chromatic line in mm. 9-11, despite the unconventional harmonic progression.

The textural pattern of the piano part creates a symphonic effect, as if four hands were playing the piano simultaneously. This pattern recurs in the cadenza of this movement, along with other motivic material used in the introduction, emphasizing its significance in the piece. Notably, a similar pattern is observed in Rubinstein's Piano Concerto No. 4 at the beginning of the first movement of (ex. 4, mm. 27-28). Historical records indicate that Rachmaninoff

performed “the first movement of the Fourth [Rubinstein] in February 1891 in a student concert and again in September the following year at the Moscow Electrical Exhibition.”<sup>22</sup>

#### iv) Influences from Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky

Besides the similarities to Grieg’s concerto, Varazdat Khachatryan also finds the solo entrance of Rachmaninoff’s concerto and Rubinstein’s fourth concerto alike. “This concerto [Rubinstein Fourth] may also have influenced Rachmaninoff’s musical ideas...the piano starts with similar passages (Rubinstein, bar 25-38 and Rachmaninoff, bars 3-15).”<sup>23</sup> (ex. 4)

Ex. 4 Rubinstein, Piano Concerto No. 4 in D minor (1864), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 25-31

For the same piano entrance, Jeremy Norris draws a parallel to Tchaikovsky’s Concerto No. 2. There are moments where these two passages sound very similar (ex. 5).<sup>24</sup> Both openings feature double-octave passages with chords filling in on the downbeat. Specifically, Tchaikovsky’s m. 196, beats 3-4, and Rachmaninoff’s m. 4, beats 1-2, are enharmonically almost

<sup>22</sup> Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 49.

<sup>23</sup> Khachatryan, “Re-assessing Rachmaninoff’s Legacy”, 71.

<sup>24</sup> J. Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto*, 98-99.

identical. Despite this resemblance, the two passages differ in their thematic contour.

Tchaikovsky's passage descends chromatically, while Rachmaninoff's intertwines diatonic and chromatic scales in complex, undulating patterns.



Ex. 5 Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major (1880), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 195-197

### v) modifications

The revised introduction showcases significant changes in dynamics and articulations (ex. 3 and ex. 6). In the original version, numerous accents are used, and it is marked *ff* throughout with occasional *fff* and *sfff* markings. Conversely, the revision features fewer accents and relies on *marcato* and *pesante* to enhance the expression within the *ff* marking. These alterations contribute to a more nuanced and refined musical expression, highlighting Rachmaninoff's meticulous attention to detail and precision.



Ex. 6 Rachmaninoff, Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 1-15

Despite the modifications in dynamics and articulations, the structure of the revised introduction remains unchanged. However, there are some thematic refinements in the flourishing piano passage in mm. 5-8 (ex. 6). Firstly, Rachmaninoff introduces a rhythmic modification in mm. 5-6, transforming it into a sequence of mm. 3-4. Furthermore, he incorporates a three-note segment from the triplet motive A—G<sup>#</sup>—F<sup>#</sup>—F<sup>#</sup> and utilizes this segmented motive four times for a descending movement in m. 7. In m. 8, he adjusts the intervals to ensure a smooth connection to D<sup>#</sup>, maintaining the same destination as in the original version. The use of the segmented motive to achieve an accelerated effect is reminiscent of a technique employed by Beethoven in the initial eight measures of his Piano Sonata in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1. As a result, the revised piano flourish becomes a six-bar phrase with three sub-phrases, illustrating a more pronounced thematic unity and economy.

The original introduction, despite certain parallels to Rachmaninoff's predecessors, showcases sophisticated musical writing and a well-developed structure from the 18-year-old

composer. Furthermore, Rachmaninoff extensively utilizes several motives from the introduction in the rest of the revised first movement, which also indicates the significance of these motivic materials. Examples of this can be found in the ritornello after the exposition and the recapitulation, as well as in the first part of the cadenza. By understanding what Rachmaninoff retains from the original version, we gain insight into what he considered to be the most important and successful aspects of his original work.

## Exposition

### First theme

#### i) The derivative

Grossman proposed that the first theme of the opening movement in Rachmaninoff's concerto is derived from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. "From the former [Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto*], the composer derived the shape of the principal theme of the first movement to the *f-sharp minor Concerto*..."<sup>25</sup> Although Grossman does not provide further explanation or a musical example to support this claim, his identification of motives X, Y, and Z in Rachmaninoff's principal theme offers a plausible answer (ex. 7a).<sup>26</sup> Motive X, "F<sup>#</sup>—G<sup>#</sup>—A—C<sup>#</sup>", can be considered a retrograde of the orchestra's opening motive in Tchaikovsky's concerto, which consists of the notes "F—D<sup>b</sup>—C—B<sup>b</sup>". Additionally, the first theme of Tchaikovsky's concerto begins with the transposed version of these four notes, now in the key of its relative major, D<sup>b</sup> major (ex. 7b).



Ex. 7a Grossman's marking of the motives X, Y, and Z<sup>27</sup>



Ex. 7b Tchaikovsky, Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor (1875), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 1-2 (left), and mm. 25-26 (right)

<sup>25</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 41.

<sup>26</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 115.

The question of whether Rachmaninoff purposefully referenced Tchaikovsky's theme or if it was a mere coincidence remains a mystery. If it is indeed an intentional borrowing, it is remarkably subtle, as the retrograde of the four-note motive in Rachmaninoff's theme starts on the second note. If someone were to first hear Rachmaninoff's tune and identify the note C<sup>#</sup> as an important part of the theme, even though it serves as a pick-up on a weak beat, it could be challenging to uncover its indirect connection to Tchaikovsky's theme. On the other hand, scholars widely recognize Tchaikovsky as a significant "role model" for Rachmaninoff, describing him as "Tchaikovsky's real successor"<sup>28</sup> and "spiritual father".<sup>29</sup> Similar to the resemblance of the structural scheme to Grieg's introduction, once this connection is revealed, it becomes challenging to ignore, especially since the intervallic relationship of the motive is solidly evident. Furthermore, it would not be surprising if this deliberate hidden quote serves as a homage to Tchaikovsky, given the numerous instances of Tchaikovsky's direct or indirect influences found in Rachmaninoff's work.

## **ii) Two revisions of the first theme in the piano part**

In addition to the melodic shape, the accompaniment of the first theme in the piano part also evokes scholarly attention and discussions. This is the only place where Rachmaninoff makes substantial changes between the "interim" revision and the final copyrighted revision.<sup>30</sup> Geoffrey Norris and Morley Grossman both include the discussion of the three versions of the accompaniment in their books. Khachatryan, while quoting Grossman's source, provides a detailed discussion on the revised orchestra's first theme. After investigating the various versions of the accompaniment, we can discern the different effects and gain insights into the composer's

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<sup>28</sup> John Culshaw, *The Concerto* (London: M. Parrish, 1949), 53.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Layton, *A Companion to the Concerto* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1989), 197.

<sup>30</sup> G. Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 106.

ultimate preference. These findings provide fascinating insights into this passage, as well as hints regarding the composer's artistic taste.

In the original four-bar phrase, the accompaniment consists of diatonic arpeggios while the melody incorporates a few non-chord tones (ex. 8a). These non-chord tones include the passing tones (G<sup>#</sup>, C<sup>#</sup>, in mm. 1 and 3, respectively) and the appoggiaturas (E and B, in mm. 2 and 4, respectively). The octave doubling in the bass makes the sonority thicker and more symphonic.



Ex. 8a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 24-27

In the interim version, the simple arpeggios are embellished with more non-chord tones, and the figuration in the second and the fourth bar becomes linear. The octave doubling in the bass is eliminated, making the texture thinner than before (ex. 8b).





Ex. 8b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (interim), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 24-27

In the final version, the figuration in the odd-numbered measures is simplified by shortening the 7<sup>th</sup> interval in the right hand. In the even-numbered measures, the smaller undulating patterns within a single octave are transformed into a grand wave spanning a two-octave span. Additionally, in the fourth measure, the original sextuplet and octuplet give way to quintuplets, reducing the overall number of notes played. This alteration contributes to a more regular rhythm and imparts a smoother contour to the vocal line. (ex. 8c).



Ex. 8c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 24-27

The revisions reveal Rachmaninoff's attempt to thin the accompaniment's texture as well as "chromaticize the fabric" — embellishing the arpeggios or counter melodies with more chromatic or non-chord tones. However, the interim version presents some drawbacks that lead to more revision. Geoffrey Norris comments, "...the figuration in the right hand is more fluid but

also more cluttered.”<sup>31</sup> Grossman considers the accompaniments “...while more interesting in terms of regularity and occasional chromatic/ registrar alterations, suffer from somewhat awkward hand-crossing which make the projection of the theme difficult.”<sup>32</sup> Norris’s comments are consistently brief yet highly valuable. Upon trying the passage on a keyboard, it becomes apparent that the left-hand crossing is more awkward on beat 3 than on beat 2. Keeping the left arm above the right hand while attempting to maintain control of the numerous notes in the right hand, while keeping them quieter than the sustained note in the left hand, demands incredible skill. Furthermore, the proximity of the two voices makes projecting the theme challenging.

In addition, the excessive use of nonharmonic tones in the interim version overly decorates the harmony, causing the effect of the original chords to be unclear. This situation mirrors the effect of over-seasoning a dish to the point where the original flavor of the main ingredient is lost. This issue pervades all four measures of the phrase. In the first and third measures, the dissonance from the 7<sup>th</sup> interval muddles the simplicity of chord I and a half-diminished vi<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, the other two measures exhibit a hyperactive wavy figuration. Although this figuration primarily consists of diatonic tones, their excessive repetition obscures the “intended counter line”, which is supposed to form a 6<sup>th</sup> interval below the notes in the melody. For instance, in m. 2, it is G<sup>#</sup> on beat 2 that pairs with E in the melody, and F<sup>#</sup> on beat 4 that supports D<sup>#</sup>. However, none of them are projecting clearly due to their short duration within the figuration (ex. 8b).

In the final version, Rachmaninoff simplifies the accompaniment in mm. 1 and 3. The 7<sup>th</sup> interval in the first two beats of these measures is shortened to a 5<sup>th</sup>. It straightens the undulating shape of the arpeggio and reduces the dissonance. The chord I and the half-dim. vi<sup>7</sup> can fully

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<sup>31</sup> G. Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 109.

<sup>32</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 54.

express their characters and the chord progression has a stronger forward momentum. In the other two measures, he employs a figuration that ascends a full octave, primarily using 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> intervals, while adorning these pure intervals with occasional 2<sup>nd</sup> intervals for decoration. The dissonance, created by a series of 2<sup>nd</sup> intervals spaced either a 4<sup>th</sup> or a 5<sup>th</sup> interval apart in this high register projects a clean and exquisite effect, much like the sight of a shooting star in the night sky or a luxurious piece of jewelry. Geoffrey Norris favors the final version, “the melody is tastefully decorated without being overpowered”.<sup>33</sup> This modification tremendously improves the passage from its interim version.

### **iii) Different orchestrations of orchestra’s first theme**

Rachmaninoff revises the orchestra’s first theme by transforming the broken chord accompaniment into a linear arpeggiation in the viola section, reducing the texture by eliminating the clarinet doubling in the melody, and reorganizing a significant portion of the woodwind parts (ex. 9). Khachatryan presents a detailed analysis of this section in his dissertation.<sup>34</sup> These alterations exemplify principles akin to those discovered in the revised piano part.

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<sup>33</sup> G. Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 110.

<sup>34</sup> Khachatryan, “Re-assessing Rachmaninoff’s Legacy”, 164.



Ob. I. **Moderato.**

Clar.

Fag.

Cor.

**Moderato.**

*espressivo*

*espressivo*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

Fl.

Ob.

Clar.

Fag.

Cor.

Ex. 9b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 16-19

## Transition I (section 1 and section 2)

### i) Structure — similar to Grieg's

Transition I comprises two sections labeled “trans-s1” and “trans-s2” (mm. 32-47, mm. 48-56 of the 1917 version, respectively, ex. 10a). Its structure exhibits a striking parallel to the same transition in Grieg’s first movement (mm. 31-42 and mm. 43-48, ex. 10b). The tempo of the first part in both transitions is faster than in the first theme. Conversely, the second part of these transitions is lyrical and slower, which leads smoothly into another lyrical section — the second theme.

Vivace.  
*leggiero*

*p*

*m.g.*

Vivace.  
*pp leggiero*

*rubato e rit.*  
*a tempo meno mosso*  
**5** *a tempo meno mosso*

Ex. 10a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 32-35 and 47-51

*(♩ = 112)*  
*p animato e molto leggero*  
*animato*  
*a tempo cantabile*  
*mf* *f molto cresc.*  
*cresc.*



Ex. 10b Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 31-34 and 43-48

## ii) Motivic relationship

### a) Trans-s1 — motive and its revisions

This is one of the instances in which studying the first version gives us a deeper understanding of the thematic relationship between sections. In the original trans-s1, a motive in the orchestra part derives from the first theme.<sup>35</sup> This one-bar motive consists of six notes F<sup>#</sup>—G<sup>#</sup>—A—B—D—C<sup>#</sup> (ex. 11), and the middle four notes form a similar contour to the “four-note

motive” (or Grossman’s motive X) of the first theme (ex. 7a). Composed of arpeggios and scales, the figuration in the piano part is a diminution to the one-bar motive in the orchestra part. Additionally, the outline in the right-hand piano part G<sup>#</sup>—E<sup>#</sup>—F<sup>#</sup> is a counterpoint to the melody B—D—C<sup>#</sup> in the orchestra part despite a rhythmic delay.

Ex. 11a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, m. 32

<sup>35</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 56, 115.

In the original trans-s1, the one-bar theme in the orchestra part appears eight times. In each of the four-bar phrases, the one-bar motive restates in the second measure. While its initial appearance at the beginning of the phrase effectively establishes its motivic connection to the first theme, it starts to feel repetitive very quickly. In the revision, the number of appearances is reduced to two. Additionally, the placement of the one-bar motive in the sixth bar of the eight-bar phrase, or the second bar of the second four-bar phrase, makes it less prominent or noticeable (ex. 11b). It gives way to the new pattern in the orchestra part, a series of chords in a soft and crisp manner (ex. 10a and 11b). Despite the thematic relationship being less noticeable and weaker in the revised trans-s1, the new textural pattern in the orchestra part generates increased contrast and a diverse range of characters between sections, enhancing its overall excitement.

Ex. 11b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 36-39

Khachatryan gives a great account of Rachmaninoff's revision regarding the texture, theme, and orchestration:

The revised first part of the first transition (bars 32-48, 1891 and bars 32-47, 1917) is much lighter compared to the original, due to the elimination of the pianist's *pesante* left-hand chords and the *staccato* articulation of the orchestral instruments. In the revised version the secondary motif [ex. 11], previously played by first violins and repeated over and over from the first bar of the transition, is reduced to a single appearance in strings supported by oboe (bar 37, 1917) and one further iteration by flute (bar 45, 1917). This amendment helped the composer achieve a transparent and lighter *leggiero* feeling and eliminated the repetitiveness of the material. It also enhanced the gradual progression of the first transition to the culmination by including more instruments and adding

secondary elements on the way. The unification of the last two bars of the original transition resulted in a single bar in the revised version.<sup>36</sup>

**b) Trans-s2 — motivic relationship with the first theme and the second theme**

The theme of trans-s2 begins with a short motive of four notes, D—C#—C#—B, descending by steps in m. 48 (ex. 12a). These four notes are the scale degrees 3, 2, and 1 in B minor. In the following phrase, this motive repeats with an additional note at the beginning. The added note F# is the scale degree 5 in B minor. This variation of the motive, F#—D—C#—C#—B, intriguingly resembles the initial four notes of the Tchaikovsky First but transposed upward by a half step. Alternatively, it can be considered as the retrograde of the “four-note motive” in the first theme.



Ex. 12a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 48-52



Lastly, this segment of the theme F#—D—C#—C#—B recurs at the end of the second theme section, evoking reminiscence (ex. 12b).

Ex. 12b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, m. 56

<sup>36</sup> Khachatryan, “Re-assessing Rachmaninoff’s Legacy”, 165-166; Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 56.



The theme in trans-s2 continues to evolve. In m. 50, the note F# is replaced by G, giving rise to a new motive B—C#—D—G (ex. 13a). This motive is a transposition of the four-note motive of the first theme, F#—G#—A—C#, with the final note extended by a half-step, stretching the outer interval to a minor 6<sup>th</sup>. This motive appears to be a prototype for the second theme.

Ex. 13a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, m. 50

The second theme also evolves from the first theme similarly. In mm. 57-59, there are three short phrases (ex. 13b). The first one is composed of notes E#—F#—G#—B#—C#. The following phrase echoes the first starting from note A. The third phrase, also beginning with A, is an exact transposition of the first phrase up a 4<sup>th</sup> interval. The first three notes of this phrase are the same as the first theme but in a major mode. The outer interval expands to a major 6<sup>th</sup>. In conclusion, the outer interval of the first theme motive progresses from a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> in the first theme, to a minor 6<sup>th</sup> in the trans-s2, and ultimately a major 6<sup>th</sup> in the second theme.



Ex. 13b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 57-59 (orchestra reduction)

### c) Trans-s2 — the counter melody in the orchestra part

In trans-s2, the orchestra plays a counter melody. In the 1891 version, there is an F<sup>#</sup> on beat 1, which is omitted in the revision (ex. 13c). The contour of this motive F<sup>#</sup>—G<sup>#</sup>—A<sup>#</sup>—B—C<sup>#</sup>—D includes the same three starting notes and a 6<sup>th</sup> outer interval as in the second theme. Furthermore, its contour is similar to the orchestra theme of the trans-s1 in example 11a.



Ex. 13c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 49-50

### iii) Harmony

Transition is typically where the modulations occur in a sonata form. In the exposition, transitions commonly feature passages and melodies, which may have motivic connections to the first theme. Additionally, in movements written in a major key, the transition commonly modulates to its dominant key. For the pieces in a minor key, it is most common that the modulation leads to its relative major. In the Romantic era, composers began to explore more freedom and diversity in the use of transitions and modulations, which allowed them to make unique and individual choices based on their material. Notable examples of unconventional key changes in transitions can be found in Beethoven's piano concertos No. 4 and No. 5.

In this transition, trans-s1 begins in F-sharp minor and modulates to its subdominant key, B minor. Trans-s2 continues in B minor and concludes on chord V of A major. This forms a half

cadence, serving as a lead-in to the second theme, which is in A major, the relative major of the F-sharp minor first theme.

**a) The ambiguity of tonality in trans-s2**

The tonality of trans-s2 is ambiguous. While there are no strong cadence defining the key of the trans-s2, there are hints that it could be in B minor or B-centered. The lyrical theme evokes a sense of longing or a wistful sigh. Different from the short theme of trans-s1, this melody lacks a leading tone, preventing it from forming a conclusive cadence on its own. Despite the repetitions and developments it undergoes, this yearning theme does not establish any prominent cadences. The melody revolves around the notes B, later D, and then F<sup>#</sup>, further contributing to the tonal ambiguity.

The second half of trans-s1 also hints that the key of the trans-s2 can be B minor. In m. 40, when the theme of trans-s1 transposes up a 4<sup>th</sup>, its recurring leading tones establish the new key of B minor. However, since the transposed theme is part of a sequence, the cadential effect is weakened and more like a temporal tonicization. In addition, at m. 47, the phrase concludes with a brief cadenza on a half-dim. vi<sup>7</sup>, or a B minor chord (chord i) with an added 6<sup>th</sup> interval in the bass. The modified deceptive cadence creates a sense of “openness”.

**b) The dominant pedal and the use of 7<sup>th</sup> chords** — another parallel to Grieg’s

The chordal accompaniment in trans-s2 also contributes to the tonal ambiguity by utilizing extensive 7<sup>th</sup> chords and 9<sup>th</sup> chords, which weaken the tonality in the melody. In m. 48, the first chord is E<sup>9</sup>, followed by A<sup># dim7</sup> as the second chord. These chords alternate for three measures until the center note of the melody shifts from B to D in m. 51 (1917 version, ex. 12a). Additionally, the recurring note E in the left hand serves as a pedal point.



Ex. 13d Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 46-48, 55-57

**c) Rubinstein's quote**

At the conclusion of the second theme, another cadenza passage emerges, bearing similarities to the second theme in the first movement of Rubinstein's Fourth (ex. 14a and 14b). In the revision, Rachmaninoff introduces changes to the metered rhythm, rendering it free, and alters the pitches in two pairs of chords (ex. 14c). This sequence of chords, along with the preceding two measures, creates a dreamy atmosphere evocative of a fairy tale.

Ex. 14a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, m. 56

Ex. 14b Rubinstein, Piano Concerto No. 4 in D minor, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 105-106



Ex. 14c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 57-59

## Second theme

Rachmaninoff deviates from the traditional approach of alternating between the orchestra and solo piano in playing the melody of the second theme. Instead, he assigns the melody exclusively to the orchestra, while the piano part takes on a dazzling accompaniment in a high register, serving as a counter melody. In the original version, the violins and first clarinet present the first statement of the theme, while the clarinet presents it again in the second statement with the addition of the flute and soft harmonies from the strings. Rather than competing with one another, the orchestra and the solo piano collaborate as a duet. This feature of orchestration resembles that of a symphony.

### i) Intriguing new figuration in the piano part in the revision

In the two statements of the second theme, Rachmaninoff employs different orchestration and accompaniment techniques to produce contrasting colors. It is like creating two costumes for the same performer. In the 1917 revision, he further enhances the effect by making the second statement more vivid and contrasting compared to its earlier appearance. For the first statement, he lightens the texture by removing the clarinet and the second violin's doubling on the tune and marks the general dynamic as softer (ex. 15a and 15b). In the second statement, he replaces the piano part with a *staccato* pattern and matches it with the *pizzicato* effect in the violins (ex. 15c and 15d).

59 Allegro moderato

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fag.

Cor.

Piano

*mf*

*ppp*

**Doubling**

Allegro moderato

Archi

*mf*

*p*

*div.*

*p*

Ex. 15a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 59-60

57 **6** Poco meno mosso.

Pno.

*cantabile*

*p*

**Strings only**

*ppp*

*div.*

*ppp*

*div.*

*ppp*

*ppp*

*ppp*

**6** Poco meno mosso.

Ex. 15b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 57-58

Ex. 15c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 69-71

Below is Grossman's summary of both Rachmaninoff's original and revised second statement on the second theme:

The piano writing suffers from cluttered rhythmic subdivisions (sextuplets against triplets), and a low-lying relatively unvaried bass line.....The wind doublings and rhythmically static string writing do little to vary and/or lighten the orchestration. (ex. 15c)

[The revised version].....Intra-phrase variety is provided by contrasting articulations between winds (legato), upper strings (pizzicato), and piano (staccato eighths and legato triplets). Inter-phrase variety is produced by means of a revised piano figuration that features a linear, more

stratified approach to part writing.....[The piano part] is replaced by a more contrapuntal voice-leading featuring a closed position and common tones. The lower octave of the bass is deleted, and the upper range is extended.<sup>37</sup> (ex. 15d)

Ex. 15d Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 66-68

### Transition II — Another Quote of Grieg's and its two revisions

There is a significant change towards the end of the revised second theme. In the original version, following the second statement of the second theme, a series of sequential phrases leads towards a cadential climax, concluding the section (1891: mm. 69-78, 78-92, ex. 16a). The cadential passage exhibits notable resemblances to Grieg's concerto in terms of thematic contours, chord patterns, and harmonic progressions (ex. 16b).

<sup>37</sup> Grossman, *The Revision Process*, 58.

Ex. 16a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 78-82

Ex. 16b Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 162-171 and 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, after H, mm. 25-26

In the revision, Rachmaninoff removes the sequence completely and redesigns the closure for the second theme section.<sup>38</sup> In the exposition, he writes four measures of new material for the solo piano (ex. 16c). While the new phrase does not seem to be related to the first

<sup>38</sup> J. Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto*, 102.

theme, it might be inspired by Rubinstein’s Fourth Concerto again (first movement at m. 71, ex. 16d). In the recapitulation, he rewrites another brief transition and assigns it to the orchestra.



Ex. 16c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 71-74



Ex. 16d Rubinstein, Concerto No. 4 in D minor, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 99-102

Intriguingly, these four measures of piano solo have also undergone two versions of revision, much like the first theme in the piano part. Notably, the latter revision demonstrates greater refinement (ex. 16e). In the final version, the left-hand part in the opening two measures features fewer notes, resulting in a thinner texture. Additionally, the reduction of the rhythmic activity in those two measures creates a “written-out *accelerando*” effect. The gradual increase of the number of notes in the same unit of time generates a sense of acceleration. Furthermore, despite this passage’s limited diatonicism and challenging voice-leading, it is ergonomically

well-suited for the hands. Rachmaninoff achieves a more intense *crescendo* with the revised four-bar phrase, which leads into the orchestra ritornello.

Ex. 16e Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (interim), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 71-74

### Ritornello I

The ritornello I of the 1891 version consists of two sections with the first one comprising three phrases. The opening phrase introduces a descending stepwise four-note motive “A—G<sup>#</sup>—F<sup>#</sup>—E”, which is new and unrelated to any existing thematic material. The following two phrases are a sequence of the first, incorporating a motive derived from the fanfare horn call (ex. 17a). In the second section, the upward direction of the phrase is achieved by utilizing the motive from the second theme. While both sections feature eighth-notes, the strings play them as repeated sixteenth-notes, indicated by double strokes, in the second section. This technique creates a driving force and intensifies the musical expression, which is further enhanced by the tempo change (ex. 17b).

Ex. 17a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 82-88

Ex. 17b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 99-105 (violins)

Martyn finds the four-note motive “.....a somewhat uninteresting figure of four descending semi-quavers, recalling Chopin’s A flat Polonaise in its insistent repetition.....”<sup>39</sup> (ex. 17c). Below is the middle section of the Polonaise.

<sup>39</sup> Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 51.



Ex. 17c Chopin Polonaise in A-flat major, Op. 53, mm 83-85

In addition, both motives presented in examples 17a and 17b exhibit resemblances to Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, despite their distinct tempos (ex. 17d and 17e). Furthermore, towards the end of the second section of Rachmaninoff's original ritornello (mm. 101-114, ex. 17b), there is a notable similarity in both orchestral sonority and thematic contour to the later section of Tchaikovsky's ritornello (mm. 328-343).



Ex. 17d Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 346-349





Ex. 17e Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 326-335

**i) The replacement of the descending four-note motive**

Rachmaninoff makes numerous significant revisions to the ritornello I of the concerto. The revised version now comprises three sections, with two of them being newly composed. The first section reintroduces the vigorous “triplet” motive from the piano part of the introduction section (ex. 18a), while the second section incorporates motivic ideas from both the second theme and the “vigorous” triplet motive (ex. 18b). As the only retained section from the original ritornello, the third section receives minor improvements. In addition, Rachmaninoff extends the transition at the end of the ritornello by utilizing the fanfare motive in augmentation, which makes a smoother transition to the development section (ex. 18c). Although the new middle section of the ritornello may not seem necessary, it enriches the ritornello with its contrasting mood, contrapuntal writing, and exotic harmonies. In the end, the newly composed sections, incorporating additional motivic elements, contribute to a heightened thematic unity within the first movement and result in a more diverse and captivating ritornello.

Vivace (♩ = ♩) Doppio movimento.

*m.g. ff ad libitum*

Vivace (♩ = ♩) Doppio movimento.

Ex. 18a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 75-78

10 a tempo

*m.g.* *m.d.* *mf* *f* *dim.*

Ex. 18b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 93-100

13

*ff* *ff* *m.d.* *dim.* *p*

Breit.

*rit.*

Ex. 18c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 117-124

## Development

The development comprises of three distinct sections and a retransition. Each section has its unique character created by different patterns, which Rachmaninoff revises to varying extents. Some modifications are interesting, while others are captivating. Although some alterations in the development may not seem vital, they make the entire section more exquisite.

In the first section, Rachmaninoff employs material from the second theme. Both the orchestra and the piano parts are recognizable like their respective parts in the second theme (ex. 19a). Rachmaninoff utilizes the second segment of the second theme, where the long note is approached by a half-step instead of a major 3<sup>rd</sup> as in the first segment (ex. 19b). Additionally, the added eighth-note in the following two statements makes its rhythm the same as the first segment of the second theme. Lastly, the contour of the counter melody in the piano part is a modified inversion of its corresponding part in the second theme.

The image displays a musical score for the development section of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2, marked *Allegro moderato*. The score is presented in two systems, each with piano and orchestra parts. The piano part is written in G major, and the orchestra part is in the same key. The tempo is *Allegro moderato*. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo). Annotations include a blue box highlighting a complex rhythmic pattern in the piano part, a red oval highlighting a specific melodic phrase in the piano part, and another red oval highlighting a counter-melody in the piano part. The score is written in standard musical notation with treble and bass clefs, and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Ex. 19a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 112-117 (Dev)

Ex. 19b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 57-59 (2<sup>nd</sup> theme)

In his revision, Rachmaninoff introduces some noteworthy changes. Firstly, he sets the first phrase of the three in a different key, originally in B minor and now in C<sup>#</sup> minor. Moreover, the interval in the orchestra's theme differs in the second and the third phrases. The added eighth-note at their beginning approaches from a major 3rd below instead of a half-step (ex. 19c).

Lastly, the pattern in the piano part differs in each phrase in the new version, while in the 1891 version, the pattern stays the same (ex. 19d). These changes, while subtle, render section 1 more enjoyable to play, easier to distinguish and remember.

The image shows a musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 1st movement, measures 124-130. The score is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a piano part with a complex, rhythmic accompaniment and a vocal line. The piano part includes markings for *dim.*, *pp*, *rit.*, and *a tempo*. The vocal line includes markings for *leggiero* and *m. d.*. Blue boxes highlight specific passages in the piano part, and a red oval highlights a passage in the vocal line.

Ex. 19c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 124-130 (Dev)

While Rachmaninoff only makes minor revisions in the following two sections, they are worth investigating. Section 2 consists of two ideas derived from the first theme and one idea from the second theme. The phrase is like a question followed by a consolatory, open answer (ex. 20a). In the revision, Rachmaninoff replaces the chordal accompaniment with a linear voice, and alters the melodic contour of the answer by dividing it into one-bar phrases displaced by an octave, removing one of the motives (ex. 20b). The mood in this section bears resemblance to that of the second part of ritornello I.

Ex. 20a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 129-133

Ex. 20b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 138-141

Constructed entirely from material of the first theme, section 3 exhibits a series of patterns that progressively intensify. These patterns culminate in a climax that leads to the recapitulation. Two motives are the basic elements here. The first one is a variation of the “four-note” motive of the first theme presented in the major mode. This motive also plays a vital role in the forthcoming retransition (ex. 21a).

Ex. 21a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 141-142, 147-148

The “major-mode” motive consists of three of the four notes that form a major triad, which can easily be modified to create a V7 chord, which is a versatile modulation tool. The arpeggio figuration in the piano part recalls the first measure of the first theme, for which the composer makes similar alterations in the revision. The second measure is also important, as it introduces a new pattern - a melody in octaves with chords underneath for harmonic and rhythmic support. This pattern is later used in the cadenza to mark the most significant climax of this movement. Finally, the second motive combines the orchestra motive in trans-s1 and the dotted rhythm in the first theme (ex. 21b).

The image displays three excerpts of a musical score. The top excerpt shows measures 150 and 151, marked 'Moderato'. The piano part features arpeggiated chords, with two red circles highlighting specific notes. The middle excerpt shows measures 156 and 157, also marked 'Moderato'. The piano part has a melodic line in octaves with chords underneath, highlighted by a blue box. The bottom excerpt shows measures 28 and 29, marked 'mf' and 'dim.'. It features a 'Rhythmic motive' highlighted by a blue box, consisting of a sequence of notes with a dotted rhythm.

Ex. 21b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 150-151, 156-157, 28-29

When section 3 reaches its climax, the vigorous triplet motive from the introduction makes a triumphant return and initiates the retransition. In the 1891 version, the triplet motive is followed by two sequential statements, after which the major-mode first theme motive joins in to complete the retransition. It creates a seamless transition into the first theme of the recapitulation

(ex. 22a). Note that this is the only instance where the triplet motive returns in the old version, while in the new version, the triplet motive is used multiple times to replace all three instances of the “less attractive” four-note motive, including the two orchestra ritornellos and the start of the cadenza.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1. The first system (measures 153-156) shows a piano part with a complex sixteenth-note texture and triplet figures. The tempo is marked 'Vivace'. The second system (measures 160-163) shows a transition with a 'ritard.' (ritardando) marking and a 'dim.' (diminuendo) instruction. The piano part continues with rhythmic patterns, while the right hand has sparse accompaniment. Dynamics like 'p' and 'pp' are used.

Ex. 22a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 153-156, 160-163

In the revision of the retransition, Rachmaninoff eliminates the subsequent triplet motive phrases. Instead, he composes new material to complement the “major-mode” motive. This alteration makes the only recurrence of the triplet motive more focused, memorable, and powerful. Additionally, it recalls the famous cyclic return of the horn call at the climax in the finale of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4. The newly composed material is equally appealing, evoking the lively and dance-like atmosphere of trans-s1. The piano part in particular shines with its sixteenth-note passages, providing a diverse contrast and better balance to its previous section (ex. 22b).

162 *Vivace.*  
*ff* *m.g.* *sf* *mf* *p scherzando*  
 A new pattern  
 Scale  
 19  
*Vivace.*  
*ff*  
*pp*  
*mf leggiero* *pp*  
 ritard. Moderato cantabile  
 20  
 ritard. Moderato.  
*p*

Ex. 22b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 162-172

## **Recapitulation**

It is naturally vital for performers to study and compare the exposition and the recapitulation in a sonata-allegro movement, since these two sections are often very similar. While the recapitulation typically follows the exact track of the exposition with the expected key changes, it is also common for the composers to vary the recapitulation to express their creativity through different compositional techniques.

### **First Theme and Transition I**

Compared to a piano sonata, a piano concerto provides composers with a greater flexibility in beginning the recapitulation differently than the exposition. Renowned examples of this include Beethoven's piano concertos and Rachmaninoff's Second. In some instances, only portions of the first theme recur, as seen in Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 and Tchaikovsky's First. The choice of who gets to first play the opening theme, whether it is the piano solo or the orchestra, is often determined by how the retransition concludes. In many of these concerto movements, it seems to be instinctive to switch the orchestration at the shift of large sections. For instance, if the orchestra plays alone at the ending of the retransition, it is likely that the piano will play the first theme upon the entrance of the recapitulation. Conversely, if the piano leads the finish of the retransition, the orchestra will then take over to reintroduce the first theme in the recapitulation. Some of the examples exhibiting this feature include Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 and No. 3, Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1, Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, Schumann's piano concerto and Grieg's piano concerto.

In Schumann's piano concerto, the piano leads the conclusion of the retransition, followed by the restatement of the first theme twice, first by the orchestra and then by the piano, as in the exposition. In contrast, in Grieg's concerto, the orchestra plays a four-measure bridge at

the end of the retransition, then the piano plays the first theme only once in the recapitulation. Rachmaninoff's plan is similar to Grieg's, but the orchestral bridge is only two measures.

One change Rachmaninoff makes in the 1917 revision is to replace the arpeggio figuration in the piano's first theme with a waltz-like chordal accompaniment.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, transition I begins the same way as that of the exposition, establishing an expected modulation to G-sharp minor at m. 186 of the 1917 revision, and its second statement becomes half as long.<sup>41</sup> In the following lyrical section, the octave doublings in the melody of the piano part in the original version are simplified to a single-line in the 1917 revision.

### **Second Theme**

Both the 1891 and 1917 versions maintain the same structure for the second theme as in the exposition, but with slight differences in orchestration and piano figuration. In the 1891 version, the piano part features a cross-rhythm of thirty-second notes with sixteenth-note triplets, which can be very challenging at tempo (ex. 23a). In the 1917 version, Rachmaninoff simplifies it by reducing the rhythmic activity and using only triplet sixteenth-notes, resulting in a clearer and more transparent passage. Furthermore, he raises the register by an octave, creating a shimmering effect. However, the revised passage still presents challenges for the performer due to the broken chord pattern in each hand changing at different times, the abundance of nonharmonic tones, and numerous accidentals including several different double sharps (ex. 23b). Lastly, Rachmaninoff introduces freshness by varying the second statement with a cross-rhythm to create a similar but different effect as that of the exposition (ex. 23c).

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<sup>40</sup> Khachatryan, "Re-assessing Rachmaninoff's Legacy", 171.

<sup>41</sup> Khachatryan, "Re-assessing Rachmaninoff's Legacy", 171.

Allegro moderato

*p*

Allegro moderato

Ex. 23a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 203-204

Allegro.

*p*

*mf*

17

Allegro.

*p cantabile*

Ex. 23b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 201-203

*dim.*

*pp*

*mf*

*mf*

a tempo

25

a tempo

*dolce*

Ex. 23c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 210-211

## Transition II and Ritornello II

In the 1891 version, transition II remains the same as that of the exposition but in the home key. Additionally, ritornello II begins in the same way as ritornello I by using the descending four-note motive. It is conventional for ritornellos to share the same thematic material (ex. 23d).

The musical score for Ex. 23d is presented in four systems. The first system shows the beginning of the transition with a forte (ff) dynamic. The second system features a more complex texture with a descending four-note motive in the right hand and a supporting bass line. The third system shows the continuation of the music, with a change in dynamics to f. The fourth system concludes the passage with a final chord and a '2da Piano tacet.' instruction.

Ex. 23d Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 225-230

In the 1917 revision, Rachmaninoff modifies the transition II and ritornello II in a similar way as in the revised exposition. However, after removing the sequential passages and the “Grieg’s cadential ending”, he reassigns the transitional phrase to the orchestra, which leaves the virtuosic passage in the piano solo as a unique ending to the exposition. Moreover, one can also regard this transition as part of the ritornello II instead of a separate transition. Ritornello II follows the revised ritornello I, using the vigorous triplet motive (ex. 23e).

Piano II. *Vivace. Doppio movimento.* *mf cresc.* *ff* *rit.*

220 *a tempo marcato* Piano I. *ff*

26 *a tempo* *ff* *Cad.*

Ex. 23e Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 215-224

### Ritornellos and Cadenza in the Grieg concerto

Grieg uses an unconventional and remarkable approach to the orchestra ritornellos in the first movement of his piano concerto. While he uses a variation of the motive from the introduction in the first ritornello, he employs the motivic idea of the first theme in the second one, resulting in two unrelated ritornellos. Furthermore, at the beginning of the second ritornello where the recapitulation concludes, Grieg uses an altered chord vi (German 6<sup>th</sup>) as the deceptive cadence (ex. 24a). Lastly, he sets up the cadenza on chord iv<sup>6</sup> instead of the traditional i<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> chord. Here are some examples of other Romantic composers who also prepare the cadenza of their first movements untraditionally. Tchaikovsky sets up the cadenza in his First Concerto with chord VI. Rubinstein uses a German 6<sup>th</sup> chord before the cadenza in his Fourth Concerto, and Schumann also uses a German 6<sup>th</sup> chord to get into the cadenza. These variations to begin the cadenza appear to be a new trend deviating from the Classical-era.

Furthermore, the first section of Grieg's first movement cadenza may have influenced the second movement of Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 1. In the style of a recitative, the first section of Grieg's cadenza begins with an improvisatory arpeggio that slowly evolves from the chord  $iv^6$  of A minor. It is followed by a virtuosic running passage and then a meditative, lyrical recitative, from which Rachmaninoff may have drawn inspirations. In the revised second movement of his Piano Concerto No. 1, Rachmaninoff composes an improvisatory lyrical recitative at m.9, which evokes a similar atmosphere to Grieg's cadenza (ex. 24b and ex. 37b). Lastly, the entire first section of Grieg's cadenza mainly prolongs the predominant harmony, with the awaited  $i^6_4$  arriving right after to begin the second section, and the second section of the cadenza is also impressively built on a dominant prolongation with an E pedal (ex. 24c).

Ex. 24a Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 73-76, 171-174

Musical score for Ex. 24b, showing two systems of piano music. The first system features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with accompaniment, marked with dynamics *ff* and *p*. The second system is enclosed in a blue box and includes tempo markings: *meno presto*, **Recitative**, *più moderato*, *Andante*, and *Lento*, along with performance instructions like *molto rit.* and *ppp*.

Ex. 24b Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 175-176

Musical score for Ex. 24c, showing two systems of piano music. The first system is marked *Tempo I* and includes dynamics *pp*, *legato*, and *sempre*. The second system includes dynamics *poco*, *a*, *poco*, and *molto cresc.*

Ex. 24c Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 177-180

## Cadenza and Coda

The most extensive and significant alterations of the first movement take place in the cadenza and the coda of the 1917 revision. In the cadenza, the first half is entirely new while the second half receives some refinements. Similarly, reduced from the original twenty-six measures to eighteen, the coda retains only three measures from the original idea. Even though sharing a similar character, tempo, rhythmic pattern and underlying harmonic scheme with the original version, the coda undergoes a thorough transformation in its thematic material, textural, and overall structure.

### First Half of the Cadenza

The orchestra's ritornello that precedes the cadenza in the 1891 version creates a stately and grand atmosphere, setting the stage for the concerto movement's pinnacle. The first half of the cadenza consists of a four-bar lead-in and two sections. The lead-in echoes mm. 9-12 of the introduction of the movement and its chromatic descending octaves in the bass form a powerful leading voice (ex. 25).

The image shows a musical score for the first half of the cadenza in Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), measures 230-235. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano part with a chromatic descending line in the bass and a chordal melody in the treble. The dynamics are marked 'ff' (fortissimo) and the tempo is 'con agitazione'.

Ex. 25 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 230-235

The first section maintains the same character with an increased rhythmic activity and even stronger dynamics. Its chordal theme projects a declamatory appearance, featuring an arch-shaped melody derived from the piano part of the second theme (ex. 26).



Ex. 26 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 236-239

After some sequences, the chordal themes gradually transition into the second section, which is based on the recurrence of the four-note descending motive accompanied by arpeggiations. Marked with different expression markings, *commodo* and *dolce*, the second section creates a calmer, dreamy mood with a softer dynamic (ex. 27). This theme begins in F-sharp major, modulates to B-flat major and D major in two sequences and settles in D-flat major at the end.

Although the first half of the 1891 cadenza features clear and contrasting characters and motivic relationships, there are noticeable drawbacks. The themes lack in aesthetic appeal and memorability while the harmonic direction is ambiguous. Furthermore, both sections exhibit limited rhythmic variety.



Ex. 27 Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 248-251

In comparison, the first half of the revised cadenza exhibits a better plan of achieving culminations with a vast diversity of rhythmic patterns and more distinct thematic contours. Replacing the lead-in with the orchestra fanfare from the introduction, the new opening of the cadenza becomes emphatic and declamatory. More thematic material from the introduction is incorporated into the rest of the phrase, including the chordal pattern in mm. 9-12 and the triplet motive in m. 3 (ex. 28a). Additionally, the ending of this phrase creatively uses a dotted-rhythm motive that first appears right before the cadenza (ex. 28b). Rachmaninoff gives this dotted-rhythm motive two recurrence in the cadenza (ex. 28a). Featuring four different motives with distinct characters, the soaring theme creates a breathtaking, powerful, and intense atmosphere. Through restatements in sequence, the tension builds and leads to the first climax of the cadenza with the strongest intensity.

Ex. 28a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 224-237



Ex. 28b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 220-224

The second section of the revised cadenza is impressive in an opposite way. The intense chordal passage of the former section transformed into a single line of fluid, steady triplet arpeggios (ex. 29a). In a slower tempo it creates a serene atmosphere. The arpeggio is composed of five notes  $D^\sharp-F^\sharp-G^\sharp-A-C^\sharp$ , which form a half-diminished  $D^\sharp 7$  chord with a passing tone  $G^\sharp$ . The half-diminished  $D^\sharp 7$  chord subsides the tonal color of the  $F^\sharp$  minor triad. Using the half-dim.  $7^{\text{th}}$  chord instead of chord  $i$  creates instability and an ambiguous harmony. While  $G^\sharp$  is initially introduced as a nonharmonic chromatic lower neighbor to  $A$ , it is frequently omitted in subsequent arpeggios, leaving behind a four-note pattern  $C^\sharp-D^\sharp-F^\sharp-G^\sharp$ . The equal weight of the major  $2^{\text{nd}}$ s in this planing effect creates a sense of ambiguity, contributing to the overall impressionistic harmony.

In addition, this arpeggio  $D^\sharp-F^\sharp-G^\sharp-A-C^\sharp$  coincidentally contains the four-note motive  $F^\sharp-G^\sharp-A-C^\sharp$  from the first theme. Despite the planing effect which makes it less noticeable, the recurrence of the first theme in a different form, set with new harmonies in augmentation at m. 244, comes as a surprise (ex. 29a). This version sounds nothing like the original theme and the mixing of the half-dim. chord  $vi^7$  with the first theme motive is ingenious. These elements make the second section an impressionistic interlude between the first section and the third, which is an extraordinary centerpiece of the cadenza. Lastly, the last three bars of the second section exemplify a far-stretched unconventional modulation with the use of

chromatic voice-leading (ex. 29b). This technique is further used to a greater extent in the revised second and third movements.

Ex. 29a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 241-247

Ex. 29b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 248-252

### Second Half of the Cadenza

Comprising of two sections, section 3 and section 4, the second half of the cadenza leaves an immediate impression of success. Derived from the second theme, the main theme in section 3 shares three similarities with it. Firstly, both themes begin with the same rhythmic motive, a three-note pick-up with a long note in ascending stepwise motion (ex. 30a, m. 260). Secondly, both phrases end with four ascending chromatic steps. Finally, the third restatement of this theme in m. 262 is an exact transposition of the second theme a 4<sup>th</sup> higher (ex. 30a and 30a’).

260 *Con moto.*

**Second theme**

Ex. 30a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 260-262

253 *Allegro moderato.* **Chromatic fourth**

**Second theme**

Ex. 30a' Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 253-256

The theme in section 3 not only quotes the second theme but also incorporates the four-note motive from the first theme B $\flat$ —C—D $\flat$ —F, along with another chromatic fourth. This occurs when the outer interval of the theme extends to a perfect 5th in m. 253 (ex. 30b).



Ex. 30b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 253

A significant enhancement of this section 3 is the improvement of the left-hand accompaniment. Khachatryan believes that this left-hand arpeggio accompaniment of the 1891 version is influenced by Grieg.<sup>42</sup> In the 1917 revision, Rachmaninoff infuses the accompaniment with “extensive chromatic elements”<sup>43</sup>, as well as rests and ties, to create a thematically and rhythmically more irregular texture. This turns the original arpeggio accompaniment into an intensely embellished soloistic countermelody (ex. 30c). This technique is previously used in the second statement of the second theme in the 1917 recapitulation (ex. 30d). In conclusion, these modifications tremendously enhance the beauty and impact of the lyrical centerpiece of the cadenza, elevating the overall effect of the section to new heights.



Ex. 30c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 253-255

<sup>42</sup> Khachatryan, “Re-assessing Rachmaninoff’s Legacy”, 76.

<sup>43</sup> Khachatryan, “Re-assessing Rachmaninoff’s Legacy”, 172.



Ex. 30d Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 210-211

The theme in the revised section 3 intensifies into a heightened phrase at m. 263 (ex. 31a). The second measure of this phrase reintroduces the same pattern from the development section, but this time the theme is in the minor mode. In the 1891 version, Rachmaninoff employs a rapid arpeggio flourish, which, together with the entire phrase, resembles a passage in the cadenza of Grieg’s concerto in a comparable location (ex. 31b and ex 31c). Notably, this phrase is the only instance in the 1917 revision where Rachmaninoff marks *fff*, which he uses much more often throughout the 1891 version. Although the revised section 4 marks the fully realized recurrence of the first theme at mm. 269-276 and serves as the ultimate climax for both the cadenza and the first movement, it is only marked with *ff* and *maestoso* (ex. 32a). The dynamic difference between the “pre-climatic” phrase and the climax defines clearer characters: the “pre-climatic” phrase is more dramatic and turbulent, while the climax is majestic and heroic as the resolution to the dissonance and tension (ex. 31a and ex. 32a).



Ex. 31a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 263-266

Ex. 31b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 271-272


Ex. 31c Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 187-188

The climactic *maestoso* receives minor modifications in addition to the dynamic revisions. The phrase spans nine measures with simplifications in the accompaniment in the second and the fourth measures. In the final four measures, Rachmaninoff adjusts the register of the repeated chords and refines the chromatic voice-leading in the harmonic progression, which culminates in an addition of a French 6<sup>th</sup> (ex. 32a and ex. 32b).



## Coda – 1891

After the grandiose ending of the cadenza, the movement concludes brilliantly with a lively, scherzando coda. The coda has twenty-six measures and follows the structural scheme outlined below: (2, 2) + (2, 2) + (4, 4) + (2, 3, 3, 2) [number of measures]. The first phrase consists of a two-bar phrase and its echo while the second phrase is a transposition of the first (ex. 33a). Although the opening of the coda evokes the mood and rhythm of Transition I - S1, the reappearance of the actual transition theme towards the end of a grand initial movement is unexpected (ex. 33b). After two measures of “an unexpected return”, the coda prepares the final ending with repetitions of a perfect cadence and a settlement on chord *i* that lasts for five measures (ex. 35b). Martyn comments on the last two measures of the ending as “empty rhetoric”<sup>44</sup>, which is a typical way of ending in the Classical—Romantic era (ex. 33c). Overall, the coda is a fairly well-written closure for the movement exhibiting some virtuosity in the piano part with a refreshing, light and vivid character. However, it is not as exciting or substantial as it could be due to a lack of a forward drive caused by the slow harmonic rhythm, a square phrasal structure, a lack of rhythmic variety, and a perhaps old-fashioned ending.



Ex. 33a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, mm. 286-289

<sup>44</sup> Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 51.

Musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, mm. 302-303. The score is in D major and 2/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic pattern in the left hand. The dynamic marking is *mp*.

Ex. 33b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, mm. 302-303

Musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, mm. 310-311. The score is in D major and 2/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic pattern in the left hand. The dynamic marking is *fff*.

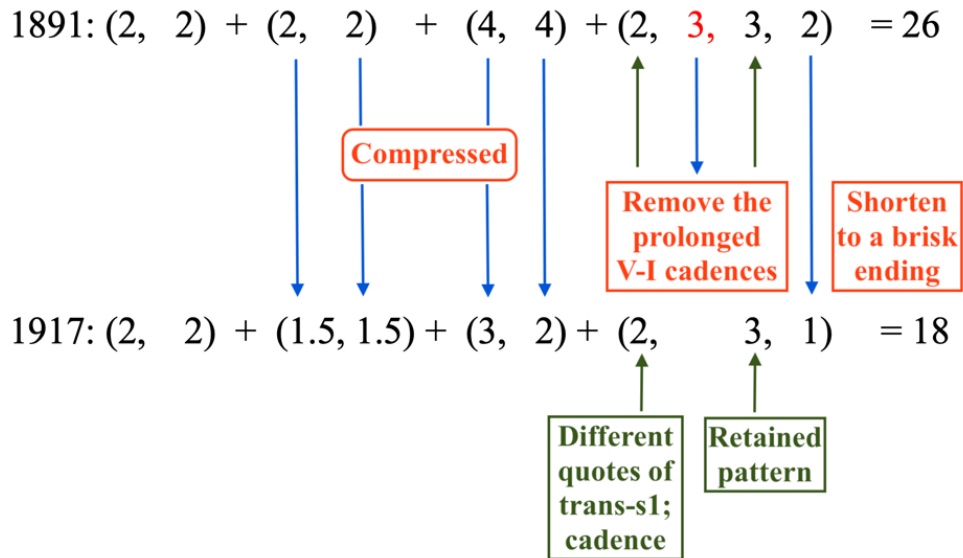
Ex. 33c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1st movement, mm. 310-311

### **Coda – 1917**

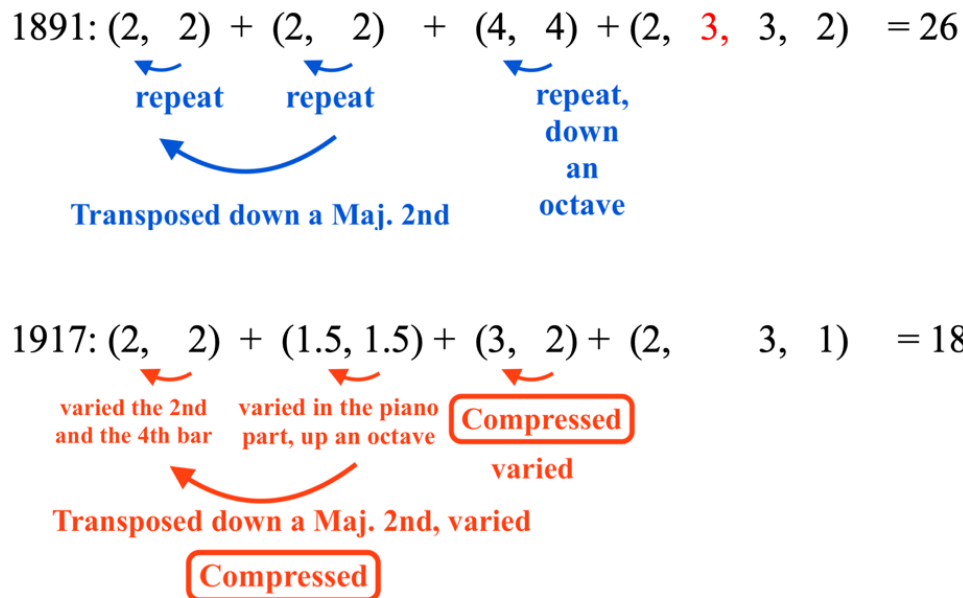
After undergoing extensive and innovative modifications, the revised coda is a strikingly different version that is almost unrecognizable compared to the original. It exhibits novel and sophisticated compositional techniques in an exquisite, neo-classical style, foreshadowing a similar revision approach in the lively finale.

#### **i) Same harmonic scheme but a more condensed structure**

Both codas employ the same harmonic structure. The new coda is eighteen measures long: (2, 2) + (1.5, 1.5) + (3, 2) + (2, 3, 1), eight measures shorter than the original one. The parentheses show the four corresponding phrases to the 1891 version. Keeping the same harmonic scheme and the light, *scherzando* character, Rachmaninoff manipulates factors significantly in other parameters: themes, rhythm, texture, and structure. Structurally, two layers of compression and an omission of three measures result in a difference of eight measures. Ex. 34a demonstrates the structural compression between the revision and the original version while ex. 34b showcases the compression between the phrases in the 1917 revision, which creates a sense of forward momentum. The strongest effect of the compression happens in the third phrase. The phrase has four measures in the original version, which is shortened to three in the 1917 revision and further compressed into two in its following variation. It creates a forward momentum by hurrying into the cadence (ex. 34b and ex. 35a). Ex. 35a and ex. 35b illustrate the retention of the basic harmonic scheme between the two versions. The concise structural design is one of the characteristics of neo-classical music in the twentieth century.



Ex. 34a Structural compression between the 1891 version and the 1917 revision



Ex. 34b Structural compression within the coda of the 1917 revision

278 *Vivace.* *ff*

*Vivace.* *ff*

Piano II. *ff*

The triplet motive

Parallel 6<sup>th</sup>

*f*<sup>#</sup>: F<sup>#b9</sup> iv<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> b<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> g<sup>#ø</sup>(<sup>4</sup>)<sub>2</sub>

282

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

27

E<sup>b9</sup> III<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> A<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> b<sup>#ø7</sup>

285

*< sf* *mf* *p* *m.g.*

*mf* *dim.* *p*

∞ G<sup>#7</sup> b<sup>#ø6</sup><sub>5</sub> c<sup>#6</sup><sub>v6</sub> a<sup>#ø6</sup><sub>5</sub> b<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V C<sup>#</sup>

288

**28** (Compressed Restatement)

*p* *pp* *p* *cresc.*

$\frac{V}{V} G^\#$   $v G^\#-c^\#$   $\frac{V}{iv} F^\#-b$  *iv*  $G^\#$   $C^\#$   $V$   $i f^\#$   $i$   $i$   $V$

(The 1st Perfect Cadence) (Stronger Perfect Cadence)

292

*ff* *ff* *ff*

*accel.* *accel.*

$i$

Ex. 35a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 278-295

**Presto.** *scherzando*

286

*ppp*  $i$

**Presto.** *scherzando*

$f^\#$   $F^\#\flat 9$   $iv_4$   $b_4$   $g^\#\circ_2$

290

*mf* *ppp*

**Transposition**

*f* *mf* *ppp*

$E$   $III_4^6$   $A_4^6$   $b^{\#07}$  (on E pedal)

294

*f* *mf* *ppp*

*mf* *ppp*

$V$   $G^{\#(-9)}$   $b^{\#07}$   $C^{\#}$   $a^{\#07}$   $F^{\#(b-9)}$   $iv$   $V$

298

*mf* *p* *ppp*

*mf* *p* *ppp*

Deceptive Cadence  $\dots VI D$

302 **Transition I**

*ppp* *cres.*

Cadence Cadence Cadence

$i$   $ii^{\circ 5}$   $V$   $i$   $ii^{\circ 5}$   $V$   $i$   $V$   $i$   $V$   $i$   $V$

Ex. 35b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 286-311

## ii) Dramatic transition

Despite having the same harmonic structure, the transitions into both codas are drastically different. Instead of ending the cadenza with a *fermata* and resolving to chord *i*, the revised ending is marked with *attacca subito senza fermata*, indicating that the music continues immediately without a pause on any specific chords. This is followed by an evaded cadence, where the orchestra “interrupts” (*attacca subito*) the ending of the cadenza with the vigorous triplet motive on a dominant minor 9<sup>th</sup> of chord *iv*. The grandiose ending of the cadenza is intercepted by a fast-paced, thrilling rhythmic figure with the tension generated by the harmonic dissonance from the dominant minor 9<sup>th</sup>. This high-energy transition is so dramatic that it leaves no time for a breath, making this type of coda opening highly effective and captivating. Additionally, using the triplet motive from the introduction further strengthens the thematic unity (ex. 35a).

## iii) Delaying the cadence

The design of cadences in the 1891 coda displays elements of the Classical—Romantic style. In the Classical era, it was typical to include repeated perfect cadences, known as “extended cadences”, to confirm the closure of a large-scale work. For example, the prolongation of perfect cadence at mm. 304-306 in the 1891 coda occurs at an appropriate place after the preceding harmonic progressions (ex. 35b). In the revised coda, not only are these three

measures removed, but the strong final cadence is also delayed until m. 292 (ex. 35a). The constant avoidance of cadence reflects the musical trend in the late-Romantic era. A notable example of the evaded cadence is the substitution of the chord VI in the traditional deceptive cadence at m. 298 of the 1891 version (ex. 35b) with a secondary dominant in the revision. While chord VI and chord i share two common notes out of three, the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> of chord V uses the tonic of the chord i (F<sup>#</sup>) as its 7<sup>th</sup> note, creating an unstable dissonance that requires resolution by step. This heightens the sense of instability in the deceptive cadence. Lastly, the sense of “unfinishedness” created by these unstable cadences helps to propel the music forward momentum.

#### iv) Motivic relationships

The revised coda features not only the vigorous triplet motive but also the motives from trans-s1. Considering Rachmaninoff’s intention of a direct quote of trans-s1 at mm. 302-303 of the original version (ex. 33b), in the revision he reflects it more subtly in a few instances. Firstly, the piano part has a graceful recurrence of trans-s1 material at m. 287 (ex. 36a). Secondly, in the orchestra part, the cadential preparation at m. 290, as well as the melody with the chordal accompaniment at mm. 285-286, exhibit similarities to that of trans-s1 (ex. 36b). Lastly, the dance-like pattern in the right-hand piano part at mm. 288-289 also bears a resemblance to a similar pattern in mm. 166-167 of the revised retransition (ex. 36c and ex. 22b).

Ex. 36a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 287-288

Ex. 36b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 285-287, 290

Ex. 36c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 288-290

### v) More linear voicing

In addition to enhancing the motivic relationship, Rachmaninoff introduces more linear voices in the revised coda. For instance, in the second and the fourth measure of the first phrase, Rachmaninoff infuses the B minor harmony with rhythmic complexity and a chromatic parallel 6<sup>th</sup>, creating a multi-layered texture. Furthermore, the fast notes in the piano part of those two measures, played alternately between the hands an octave apart, also contribute to the richness of the texture. In the following phrase, rather than using another diminished 7<sup>th</sup> arpeggio like in the first phrase, Rachmaninoff utilizes the planing technique to create a different figuration. Upon its restatement, the piano part ascends an octave and undergoes another slight variation in the right hand, resulting in a different and more attractive sound effect than a mere repetition (ex. 35a).

On the whole, these details not only make the piece more appealing but also reveals Rachmaninoff's thorough consideration.

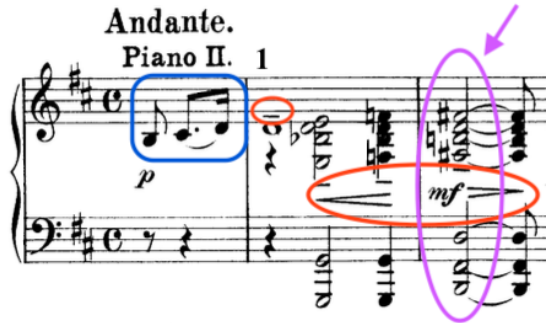
Lastly, in the revised coda, the rhythmic pattern changes more frequently in both the piano and the orchestra parts. The orchestra has more lyrical themes than simple harmonies. Overall, the revised coda is more vibrant and substantial due to these new features.



Ex. 37b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 1-9

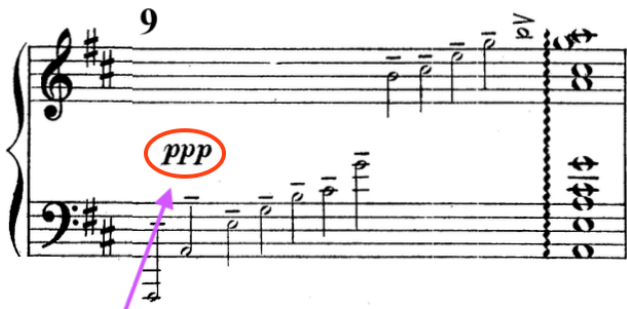
In the first phrase of the 1891 version, the sharp rhythm in the pick-up, the accent, and the *pp* on the chords, all contribute to emphasizing the note D as the peak of the phrase. In the revised version, the pick-up is longer, the accent is replaced with a *tenuto*, and the *cresc.* and *mf* replace the *pp*. These subtle markings indicate a shift in the phrase's apex to the first beat of the second measure in the revised version (ex. 38a and 38b).

Ex. 38a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 1-2



Ex. 38b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 1-2

The elaborated “improvisatory” cadenza replaces the dreamy, harp-like arpeggio as the piano entrance (ex. 39a and 39b).



Ex. 39a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, m. 9



Ex. 39b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 8-9

It is intriguing to note that the introduction of the second movement contains a stepwise thematic feature found in the first theme of the first movement. This theme appears only in the introduction of the second movement in the 1891 version and quotes the four-note first theme motive B—C<sup>#</sup>—D—F<sup>#</sup>. Additionally, it integrates the dotted rhythm found in the initial theme of the first movement (ex. 39c).

Ex. 39c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 1-2; 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 28-29

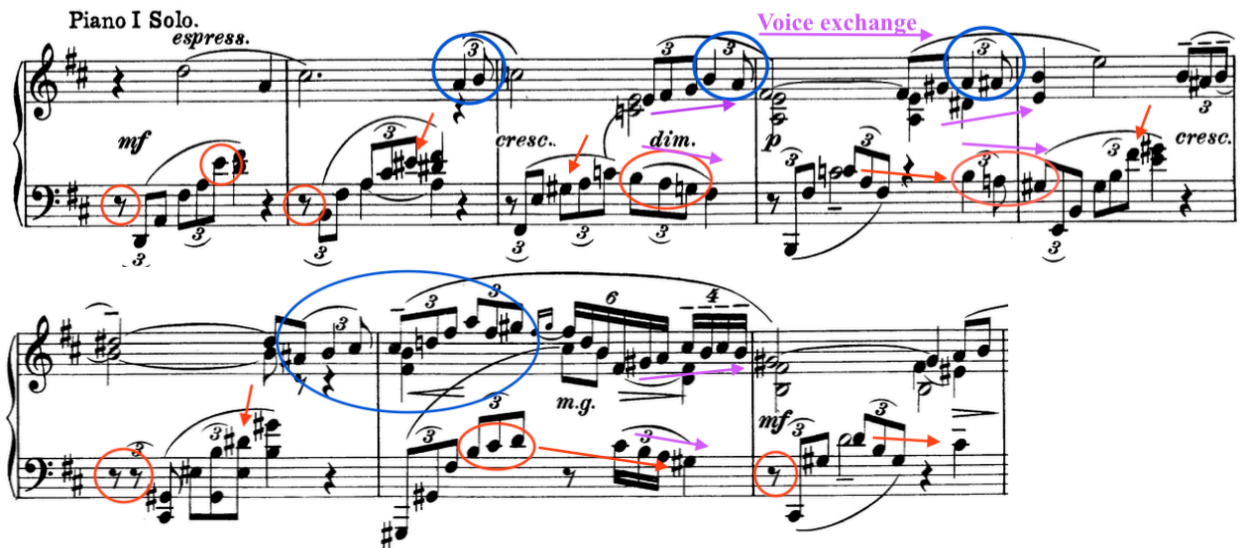
**Section A**

After the brief cadenza, the piano alone continues to introduce the first theme. In the revision, Rachmaninoff modifies the rhythmic elements in the melody and refines the accompaniment figuration. He replaces the groups of duplet and dotted rhythm with triplets in the melody to reduce the “stop-and-go” effect from switching between duple and triple subdivisions. This change gives the pianist more freedom to express *rubato* smoothly and easily.

In addition, the revision of the accompaniment figuration is similar to that in the cadenza of the first movement. Chromatic notes and linear voice-leading are added, while the bass notes are delayed to the second triplet eighth-note. The resulting voice exchange demonstrates a more sophisticated counterpoint, adding substantial melodic elements to the groups of angular arpeggios. As a result, a soloistic counter melody is created.(ex. 40a and ex. 40b).



Ex. 40a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 10-17



Ex. 40b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 10-17

### Section B, its substantial recasting, and harmonic elision

After the eighteen-measure first theme, the orchestra joins the piano for an interlude. This theme of the interlude is built upon a one-bar motive. It is initially presented in four measures, repeats once, and further develops into a climactic area of the movement. This simple and diatonic melody is a great contrast to the more expressive first theme. Its original accompaniment is a typical arpeggio figuration frequently found in the works of Romantic and late-Romantic composers.

The revised accompaniment uses broken chords with embellishing tones instead of arpeggios. This modification enables the doubling of the counter melody in the orchestra part and

creates two voices in the piano part. Additionally, the broken-chord figuration results in a thinner texture, which better suits the simple and tranquil atmosphere (ex. 41a and ex. 41b). Overall, this modification provides a more balanced and refined accompaniment to the theme in the interlude.

Ex. 41a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 27-31

Ex. 41b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 27-31

In the 1891 version, following the orchestra's conclusion in m. 35, the piano launches into another solo episode. This passage consists of sequences until m. 45, where the cadenza settles on the dominant prolongation and quickly transitions to the return of the A section – Section A'. Notably, the four-note motive from the first theme of the first movement continues to be used as part of the thematic elements throughout (ex. 42a and 42b). The section culminates in the movement's climax at m. 45.

Ex. 42a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 35-38

Ex. 42b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 43-47

The newly written section in the revised second movement, beginning at m. 35, initially appears overwhelming and disconnected from the preceding sections (ex. 43a). The piano part becomes more elaborate with sophisticated rhythms and frequent chromatic modulations, but despite its apparent awkwardness, Rachmaninoff had a remarkable plan.<sup>45</sup> Firstly, he reintroduces the orchestra's part from the introduction, thereby providing the piano part with

<sup>45</sup> G. Norris, "Rachmaninoff's Second Thoughts," *The Musical Times* 114, no. 1562 (April 1973): 365.

thematic, harmonic, and textural support. Moreover, in the following A' section, he employs a more complicated texture in the accompaniment figuration, making the contrast between the simplicity of the A section and the complexity of the B section not as strong.

The image displays a musical score for the second movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, specifically measures 35 through 41. The score is written for piano and is in G-flat major (three flats) and 3/4 time. It features complex textures with triplets, sextuplets, and octuplets. Dynamics range from *mf* to *pp*. A blue box highlights a chord in the lower right of the second system, with the text "G-flat major instead of g minor" below it.

Ex. 43a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 35-41

## Harmonic elision

As a trending style in the late-Romantic era, hearing harmonic elisions at the introduction of the second movement may not be surprising. However, it is Rachmaninoff's extensive use of it in the first theme that truly sets this movement apart and makes it extraordinary, unique, and personal. In harmonic elisions, chords do not progress in traditional functions, but rather share some common tones while other voices move stepwise, by a whole or a half step. This system allows for free modulation, with chromatic modulation being a common example. An example of this popular tool can be seen in the introduction of the second movement, where Rachmaninoff modulates in a mediant relationship (ex. 37a and 37b).

As for the second part of the B section, beginning at m. 35, Rachmaninoff combines an improvisatory piano counterpart with the transposed orchestra introduction theme, which explains the numerous and unexpected modulations in the thriving piano part (ex. 43a and 43b). It was an exact transposition harmonically except for the  $G^b$  major chord in m. 39, where a G minor chord is expected. This alteration enables the passage to remain in  $E^b$  minor, a remote key from D major, the home key of this movement. The juxtaposition of D major and  $E^b$  minor harmonies projects an image of the sunshine and a rainy day, which is further emphasized when the "rainy"  $E^b$  minor returns at mm. 45 after the three measures of the climax – the "sunshine"  $D^6_4$  chord at m. 42. At measure 48, the orchestra theme returns, but this time in its unaltered form, resolving to G minor and serving as a bridge to modulate back to D major. The harmonic progression  $I^6_4$ – $ii$ – $iv$ – $V$ , is used here, borrowed minor chord  $iv$  and the less common minor Neapolitan lending the phrase an expressive and distinctive character.

Khachatryan also mentions that “Rachmaninoff’s use of the lowered supertonic as passing key traces back to the second and third piano concertos.....the key of E-flat minor again acts as a chromatic temporary ascend that eventually returns back to the home key of D major.”<sup>46</sup>

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 2nd movement, measures 42-51. The first system (measures 42-43) shows a dense texture of sixteenth-note triplets in both hands, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *dim.* (diminuendo) instruction. The second system (measures 44-46) features a more varied texture with triplets and chromatic voice-leading in the right hand, marked with piano (*p*) and pianissimo (*pp*) dynamics, and includes a *rit.* (ritardando) and *a tempo* marking. The third system (measures 47-51) continues with complex piano textures, including triplets and chromatic voice-leading, marked with *pp* and *rit.* dynamics. Annotations in blue include 'Chromatic voice-leading' with arrows pointing to specific lines in measures 44 and 47, and chord symbols 'bii' and 'V(F#6)' in blue. Performance markings include 'f', 'dim.', 'rit.', 'a tempo', 'p', 'pp', 'dolce', and 'm.d.'.

Ex. 43b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 42-51

<sup>46</sup> Khachatryan, “Re-assessing Rachmaninoff’s Legacy”, 178.

## Section A' and Coda

In the return of the A section, the orchestra presents a simplified version of the first theme. In the 1891 version, the piano part features a waltz-like accompaniment with an impressive contrapuntal writing, outlining a long, ascending stepwise countermelody (ex. 44a).

The image shows a musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 2nd movement, measures 48-51. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features a piano part with a waltz-like accompaniment and a long, ascending stepwise countermelody. The countermelody is circled in blue in the original image. The score is marked 'ppp' and 'pp'.

Ex. 44a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 48-51

However, in the 1917 revision, a higher level of contrapuntal techniques is evident in the same passage, making it more dazzling, decorative, and intricate. The revised left-hand piano part creates a distinct layer within the thinner chordal texture due to the sixteenth-note rhythm and a wide range of motion. Coolidge describes this section of the second movement as:

...an example of contrapuntal skill beyond any dispute...nearly flawless (but not necessarily continuous) 8 or 9-voice counterpoint, but the passage may also be regarded as two sets of harmonies (piano and orchestra) that happen to fit together contrapuntally;

and this sort of “harmonic counterpoint” is not an isolated inspiration peculiar to this work but a feature of Rakhmaninov’s style used with apparent ease in all his large-scale works.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, finer control of voicing from the performer is crucial to deliver the delicate, multi-layered texture of this revised passage, not to mention that it also requires dexterity to handle two voices moving in contrary motion within one hand at mm. 54-55. Lastly, the lower strings takes over the sixteenth-note chromatic line in m. 55 is a beautiful touch (ex. 44b).

The image shows a musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 2nd movement, measures 52-55. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a piano part with complex textures and a lower string part with a chromatic line. Annotations include 'a tempo (non allegro) leggiere', 'pp', 'dolce cantabile', 'poco cresc.', 'mf', 'dim.', '“double” chromatic voice-leading', and 'Chromatic voice-leading'. Blue arrows point to specific musical features in the piano part.

Ex. 44b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 52-55

Another feature that makes the revised A' section irresistibly enchanting is the continuing variations of patterns in the piano part. In the 1891 version, the section features a repetitive chordal texture that persists until the end (ex. 45a, 46a, and 47a). In contrast, the 1917 version

<sup>47</sup> Richard Coolidge, “Architectonic Technique and Innovation in the Rakhmaninov piano Concertos,” *Music Review* 40, no. 3 (Aug 1919): 182.

employs various patterns in the piano part to enrich the tone colors, and no pattern is used for too long. For example, in the piano part at m. 60, Rachmaninoff uses a simpler broken-chord pattern in sixteenth notes, where the two hands play the same pattern two octaves apart from each other. Its echo at m. 61 is even more charming and elegant, using a slightly varied pattern in a natural minor tonality, evoking the sound of bells or windchimes (ex. 45b).

Ex. 45a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 56-57

Ex. 45b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 60-61

In ex. 46b, he continues to vary the pattern, using enticing hemiolas in a descending broken-chord arpeggiation. In ex. 47b, the closing phrase reminisces the waltz-like chords with the vivid flowing line from the beginning of the A' section. The chromatic line added in the

revision makes the ending less bland than the original version. Lastly, Rachmaninoff enriches the coda with 7<sup>th</sup> chords and diatonic passing tones, which makes the closure of this movement ethereal and nostalgic. (ex. 48a and 48b).

Ex. 46a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 60-61

Ex. 46b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 64-65

Ex. 47a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 62-65

Ex. 47b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 66-69

Ex. 48a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 65-69



## Chapter 3. Third movement

The third movement of the concerto witnesses the highest extent of revision of the entire work. This chapter is organized in the following order: form, sections with minimal thematic revisions, Grieg's stylistic similarities, and finally, side-by-side examples of the revisions. Rachmaninoff infuses extensive use of harmonic elision, tritone intervals, augmented triads, and mediant relationship. Additionally, the movement incorporates hemiolas and irregular phrase lengths, adding further complexity and interest to the composition. These characteristics, typical of the modern style or prevalent in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century, distinguish the revised concerto from Rachmaninoff's earlier works.

### Form

The third movement of the concerto is cast in a modified sonata form or a ternary form - A B A' with a Coda.<sup>48</sup> The two A sections correspond to the exposition and the recapitulation of a regular sonata form. The middle B section, referred to as Ba, Bb, and Ba' in the following text, is a contrasting section rather than a development and is in a rounded binary form. Both A and A' sections include a brief introduction, a first theme and its transition, and a second theme and its transition or conclusion. The original coda has two sections and concludes with thematic ideas from both the A section and the contrasting B section. In contrast, the revised coda is a fast and festive ending, reminiscent of the end of the first movement. Each coda fits its movement adroitly in a balanced way. In the original version, the B section presents lyrical ideas, which are then developed into a grandiose culmination in the coda. In contrast, the revised third movement

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<sup>48</sup> Michael Roeder, *A History of the Concerto* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1994), 302; Coolidge, "Architectonic Technique and Innovation", 186.

has a fully matured middle section with huge climactic moments, and therefore requires no further mention at the end.

### Sections with minimal thematic revisions

The retained parts or ideas in the third movement from the original version were less than that of the first movement. For instance, the revised coda is completely unrelated to the original version. It only has a reference of rhythmic pattern to the transition II of the original version, which is then removed in the new transition. Furthermore, half of the first theme is newly made, due to the brevity of its thematic idea. Then, the transitions after the first theme and the second theme both trace little to no resemblance to the original version.

Example 49a and 49b demonstrate the two versions of the first theme. They are the closest to each other among all. As for the second theme, there are a few major changes here, but the basic contour of the theme remains recognizable. One intriguing discovery is that the second theme consists of the “not-so-interesting” descending four-note motive from the ritornello I of the first movement of the 1891 version (ex. 50a and 17a).<sup>49</sup> In the revision, the third measure of the theme is very different, and the orchestra’s cheerful counter melody is removed (ex. 50a and 50b).

The image displays a musical score for the first theme of the third movement, comparing two versions. The score is written in 3/8 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows the piano part with a triplet in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand. The second system shows the piano part with a triplet in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'con brio', 'f', and 'p', and tempo markings 'Listesso tempo.'

<sup>49</sup> Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 51.

Ex. 49a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 6-10

Ex. 49b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 9-13

Ex. 50a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 32-35

Ex. 50b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 38-41

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the B section is its key change to a distant key. It is transposed from D major of the original version to E $\flat$  major, which is a more foreign key to F $\sharp$  minor, the home key of the third movement. Despite the retention of its theme in a different key, the revised accompaniment is now an imitation in diminution of the theme (ex. 51a and 51b).<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the dynamic growth to *mf* in the middle of the phrase in the piano figuration indicates more involvement and significance between the piano part and the orchestra melody, while the former accompaniment stays more decorative and less prominent.

<sup>50</sup> Geoffrey Norris, "Rakhmaninov's Second Thoughts," *The Musical Times* 114, no. 1562 (April 1973): 365; Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 285.

Ex. 51a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 76-84

Ex. 51b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 70-78

## Grieg's stylistic similarities

There are at least four similarities between Rachmaninoff's third movement of the Concerto No. 1 and Grieg's piano concerto. The first occurs at the beginning of both third movements, with both orchestra's openings using repeated chords in a similar rhythmic pattern, being in a similar register and dynamic level.<sup>51</sup> They are followed by an arpeggio in the piano part, and both piano parts use a German 6<sup>th</sup> chord (ex. 52a and 52b).

The second instance is the theme at transition I in Rachmaninoff's concerto. The same rhythmic pattern can also be found in the transition I of the first movement of Grieg's concerto (ex. 52c and 52d). Additionally, another rhythmic pattern found in the same transition I of Rachmaninoff's concerto can be heard in the same transition I of Grieg's (ex. 52e and 52f). Rachmaninoff's pattern in ex. 52e is a modified retrograde of the pattern in Grieg's.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piano part of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 3rd movement, measures 1-2. The top system shows the piano part with a German 6th chord (Gr+6) and a dynamic marking of 'pp'. The bottom system shows the piano part with a dynamic marking of 'p' and a German 6th chord (Gr+6). The tempo is marked 'Allegro scherzando.' and the key signature is D major.

Ex. 52a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 1-2

<sup>51</sup> J. Norris, *The Russian Piano Concerto*, 103.

Allegro moderato molto e marcato (♩ = 108) SOLO

TUTTI

Allegro moderato molto e marcato (♩ = 108)

TUTTI

pp

SOLO

a:  $G7^{\#6}$   $Fr^{\#6}$

Ex. 52b Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 1-6

18 L'istesso tempo 3

p scherzando

Ex. 52c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 18-19

31 (♩ = 112)

p animato e molto leggero

Ex. 52d Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 31-32 (piano part only)

20

ff

ff

p

mf

Ex. 52e Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 20-22



Ex. 52f Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 33-34 (piano part only)

The last similarity here is particularly interesting. In Rachmaninoff's third movement, every small section concludes with a short cadenza-like passage, including after the first theme, transition I and transition II. The middle B section includes two instances of that and there are eight in total in the third movement. In contrast, while Grieg also employs a scale or a fast passage to conclude some sections in his third movement, he does so less frequently than Rachmaninoff.

Ex. 52g, 52h and 52i showcase the three instances in the A section of Rachmaninoff's third movement. Some of them are just a scale for a semi-glissando effect. Ex. 52j is at the end of Section Ba, the first one of the two in B Section. This one has a decorative harp-like effect. Ex. 52k and 52l are first two examples of the cadenza ending in Grieg's third movement.



Ex. 52g Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 13-15

Ex. 52h Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 30-31

Ex. 52i Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 66-68

Ex. 52j Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 84-85

Ex. 52k Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 7-9

Ex. 52l Grieg, Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 37-38

## The revisions

### i) Introduction

In the first half of the introductory phrase, the revised version adds a new rhythmic motive to the basic idea of the 1891 version, which reduces its similarity to Grieg's concerto. The new motive is placed at the beginning of both the orchestra and piano parts. Together with the new dynamic marking *ff*, the new motive gives the revised opening phrase a declamatory character, recalling the fanfare motive at the beginning of the first movement. Additionally, the length of the phrase is expanded to seven beats, resulting in the use of a combination of 9/8 and 12/8 meters. The revised piano part is rhythmically related to the orchestra part, and the two  $V^9$  chords ( $G^9$  and  $A^9$ ) in the piano part are related to the voice-leading in the bass line of the

orchestra part. The first voice-leading is G—G<sup>#</sup>—C<sup>#</sup> and the second one is A—G<sup>#</sup>—C<sup>#</sup>, with G and A serving as the upper and lower half-step neighbor of G<sup>#</sup>.

The second half of the introduction (mm. 5-9) exhibits two impressive features in harmony and figuration. The first feature is a repeated chord progression consisting of C<sup>#</sup> major, A minor, and F minor. This marks the first example of the triadic progression or chromatic mediant relationship in this movement. The second impressive feature is the diversity of figuration over the same harmony and rhythm. This variety is achieved through the compression of the harmonic rhythm, which is the same technique used by Rachmaninoff in the coda of the first movement. The four different patterns in mm. 5-8 demonstrate this diversity. In the first pattern, each chord lasts three eight-notes long, with m. 6 being a variation of m. 5. The second and third patterns, both in m. 7, feature shortened chords lasting two eight-notes long, with the third pattern being a variation of the second. This results in the use of hemiola and the 12/8 meter. In the fourth pattern, the length of the chord is shortened to one eight-note, and it is repeated once. The compression of the harmonic rhythm creates the impression of acceleration without altering the tempo, and it also bears the responsibility of approaching the cadence without using functional harmony (ex. 53a and 53b).

The image displays a musical score for piano, measures 5 through 9. The tempo is marked "Allegro scherzando." The key signature is C# major. The score is written for piano and includes a melodic line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a repeated chord progression of C# major, A minor, and F minor. The melodic line includes a fermata and a "red. pp" marking. The piano part includes a "p" marking and a "mf" marking. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system covering measures 5-6 and the second system covering measures 7-9. The piano part in the second system shows a hemiola and a 12/8 meter.

Ex. 53a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 1-6

Ex. 53b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 1-9

## ii) First theme and Transition I

One major difference between the two versions of the second half of the first theme is that the revised version continues to use a similar rhythmic pattern in the initial part of the first theme, with the phrases consisting of primarily sixteenth-notes (ex. 54a and 54b). In addition, the cadential phrase of the revision employs a series of parallel dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords with the outer voices progressing in contrary motion (ex. 54b, mm. 18-19). Following the cadential phrase, there is an orchestra echo, in which the same harmonic progression is transposed down a 4<sup>th</sup> (ex. 54b, mm. 20-21).

The image displays a musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 3rd movement, measures 11-18. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features a piano part with a prominent sixteenth-note rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (mm. 11-18) shows the piano part with a forte (ff) dynamic and a series of parallel dominant 7th chords in the bass. The second system (mm. 19-21) shows the piano part with a piano (p) dynamic and a series of parallel dominant 7th chords in the bass, followed by an orchestra echo in the right hand.

Ex. 54a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 11-18

Ex. 54b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 13-21

Example 52c and 52e display the two thematic ideas of the original transition I. In the revision, the meter of the transition I remains in 12/8 meter, allowing for a more extensive use of hemiolas. The figuration in this section closely follows the introduction and the first theme. Additionally, Rachmaninoff employs contrasting *legato* and *staccato* articulations in mm. 22-25 to create variety within the same phrase (ex. 55a).

The cadential phrase at mm. 32-33 is structured by a descending chromatic scale from note B to E, with chords that share some common tones but do not follow the expected tonal hierarchy. The modified half cadence  $bII-V$  at mm. 34 and 36 implies the Phrygian mode,<sup>52</sup> which also creates a tritone between  $Bb$  and E. In m. 34, a pair of augmented triads are used, following a similar progression to mm. 32-33, but this time with a descending sequence of a

<sup>52</sup> Khachatryan, “Re-assessing Rachmaninoff’s Legacy”, 48.

three-note motive. This technique, the harmonic elision, is pervasive throughout the movement and particularly prominent in the coda (ex. 55b).

21

*p* *cresc.*

Hemiola linear

*f* Hemiola

*p* dance-like *pp*

Ex. 55a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 21-26

30

Hemiola

*p* *cresc.*

linear + dance-like

41

*p* *pp*

Ex. 55b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 30-36

**iii) Second theme and Transition II**

Despite the retainment of the thematic idea, there are two major revisions to the second theme section of this movement. Firstly, there is a structural change in which the original rounded binary form is shortened in the revised version, allowing for a direct transition to the conclusion of the section. This results in a reduction of twelve measures in the revised second theme section. The new structural design improves the fit of the second theme section into the “sonata design” because it is uncommon for a second theme section to be in a rounded binary form. Additionally, having three rounded binaries in the movement may be redundant since the middle section already follows a rounded binary structure. Secondly, the revised version enriches the second part of the second theme by transforming the sustained notes played by the orchestra

in the original version into a captivating melody, resulting in a wonderful highlight of the section (ex. 56a and 56b).<sup>53</sup>

[a tempo]

Long notes,  
Rhythmically  
inactive

Ex. 56a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 40-43

45

*mf*

*p*

43

New  
Counter melody

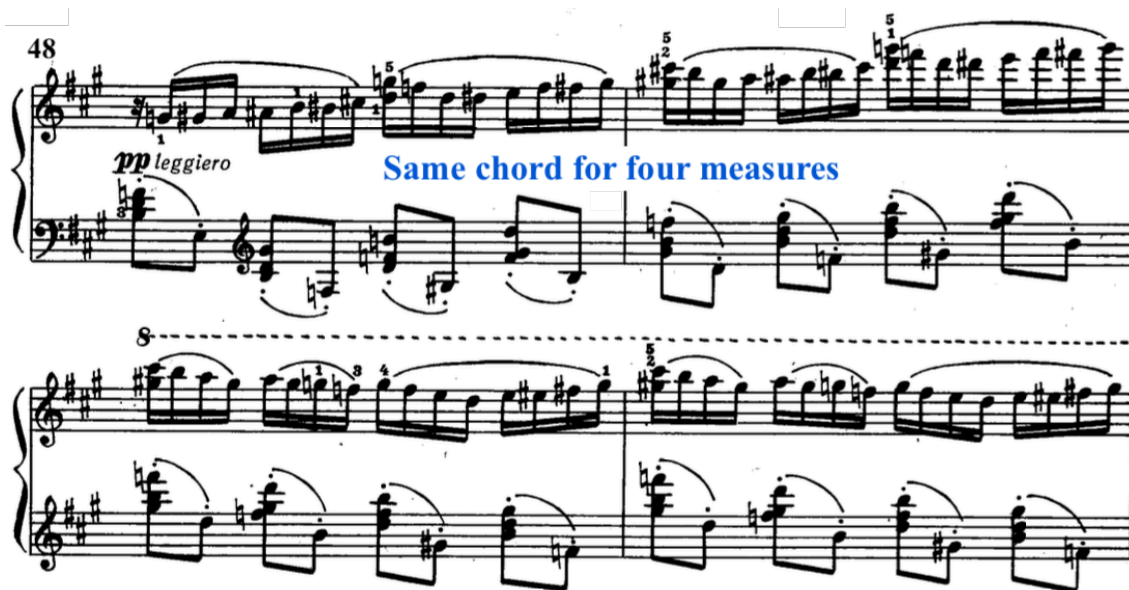
*dolce*

<sup>53</sup> Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 284.



Ex. 56b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 45-50

Furthermore, the revised transition II employs the use of harmonic elision, as opposed to the original version which uses scale patterns in the right-hand part and the same diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord in the left-hand part (ex. 57a). The revised transition II progresses with chromatic voice-leading, as demonstrated in mm. 54-55 and 56-57 (ex. 57b). The cadence at mm. 61-62, where the A<sup>#</sup> diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord moves to an A major chord, once again emphasize the use of harmonic elision.



Ex. 57a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 48-51

54 *mf* *cresc.* *p* *mf*

57 *ff* *cresc.* *f*

60 *ff* *ff*

44 45

G# → A  
 E → E  
 C# → C#  
 A# → A  
 o7 → I

Ex. 57b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 54-62

iv) B section

In addition to the previously mentioned key change, the Ba section features modifications to the accompaniment figuration of the piano part (ex. 51a and 51b).

In the revised Bb section, the original theme from the 1891 version receives both intervallic and rhythmic modifications (ex. 58a and 58b). The accompaniment in this section is revised in a similar way to that of other revised lyrical sections in earlier movements. The restatement of the theme is also different from the original version, as it does not reach the same peak twice, leaving m. 91 as the only climax in the Bb section.

93  
cantabile  
cresc.  
rit. [ a tempo ]  
mf

Ex. 58a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 93-101

a tempo  
Piano I. *espressivo*  
87  
mf  
dim.  
f

Ex. 58b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 87-95

The revised Ba' section displays even more elaboration. Firstly, the piano is assigned as the leader of the theme, as in the 1891 version. Then, the orchestra is given an imitation of the piano part. As the orchestra plays the imitation of the theme as an echo, the piano plays arpeggiated decorative figurations as an accompaniment. This results in three parts rather than two in the 1891 version, with the piano part covering two voices. It also makes the collaboration of this section more challenging (ex. 59a and 59b). Coolidge refers to this as “a harmonic canon at the unison (not just a melodic one, but two harmonic “sets” reproduced and blended at one-measure intervals—another instance of Rakhmaninov’s innovational and afore-mentioned harmonic cpt.)...”<sup>54</sup>

Ex. 59a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 108-112

<sup>54</sup> Coolidge, “Architectonic Technique and Innovation,” 187.

Ex. 59b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 102-106

The ending of the B section witnesses another enchanting touch from the composer. In the original version, the same two-bar phrase is repeated three times with slight variations, depicting a farewell scene (ex. 60a). On the other hand, in the revision, the last phrase is a long series of descending chords led by a descending E $\flat$  major scale in the piano left-hand. Its inner voices are filled with chromatic scales, which is similar to the A' section of the second movement. The chromaticism in the low register creates a darker and mysterious atmosphere, in contrast to the brighter and sweeter character of the original (ex. 60b). In the arpeggio flourish at the very end (m. 115), while the same-length phrases in each hand begin three eighth-note apart as in a (rhythmic) stretto, the end of the lower voice fits the beginning of the upper voice harmonically, resulting in a wonderful sound effect of two independent voices fitting together in a “zig-zag” way as their repetitions ascend.

Ex. 60a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 115-123

Ex. 60b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 110-115

## v) The revised A' section/ Recapitulation

### Introduction, First theme and Transition I

It is impressive to see how Rachmaninoff avoids making the recapitulation a mere repetition of the first theme and an exact transposition of the second theme. In the return of the introduction in the A' section, he incorporates a lead-in at m. 116, a scale beginning on the note Eb. This serves as a transition between the B section and the A' section as Eb is the last note and

the home key of the B section. Then the first note of the introduction in the orchestra part is changed from C<sup>#</sup> to D, which delays the arrival of C<sup>#</sup> until m. 121. This creates an underlying large-scale downward stepwise motion E<sup>b</sup> —D —C<sup>#</sup> (ex. 61a).

The image shows a musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 3rd movement, measures 116-121. The score is in 9/8 time and features a piano part and an orchestra part. The piano part is marked "Tempo I (Allegro vivace)" and "Piano II." with dynamics "ff" and "f". The orchestra part is marked "Tempo I (Allegro vivace)" and "ff". The score shows a large-scale downward stepwise motion in the piano part: E<sup>b</sup> in m. 116, D in m. 117, and C<sup>#</sup> in m. 121. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Ex. 61a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 116-121

The first theme of the A' section exhibits another part swapped between the piano and the orchestra and some minor variations (ex. 61b). Although the modulation occurs unusually at the end of the first theme, the first part of the transition I is transposed as expected. Additionally, Rachmaninoff further varies the last part of the transition I. While the cadential descending chromatic voice-leading in the orchestra part recurs in mm. 148-149, the figuration in the piano

part is different. Despite the difference in figuration, the augmented triads at m. 152 and the modal cadence at m. 154 are retained from the A section (ex. 61c).

127

*dim.*

*p*

*m.g.*

**Hemiola**

*p*

*f*

*p*

*f*

Ex. 61b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 127-131

148

*p*

**A Phrygian**

**Cadence**

8.....

The image shows a musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 3rd movement, measures 148-154. The score is in F# minor, 3/4 time. It features a piano part with a melodic line and a bass line. The score includes dynamics such as *pp*, *mf*, *ff*, and *cresc.*, and markings like *rit.* and *sf*. A blue box highlights a cadence in the piano part at the end of the section.

Ex. 61c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 148-154

## Second theme and Transition II

In the 1891 version, the second theme section in the A' section is a typical transposition of the earlier one with a few minor variations, similar to that of a recapitulation. It leads directly into the coda, without a transition or orchestra ritornello.

In the 1917 revision, it follows the same structural plan as the revised second theme section. It is cast in the same key as in the original version. The key used for the second theme is a further example of the mediant relationship. The home key of the movement is F# minor, while the key of the first occurrence of the second theme section is A major, its relative major. The subsequent occurrence of second theme section is in D major, a major third below F#, instead of typically in the home key.

Instead of simply transposing the same material from the first occurrence of the second theme section, Rachmaninoff composes a new pattern for the piano and orchestra parts, which adheres to the unchanged theme and harmony (ex. 50b). The new piano pattern features triplet eighth-notes instead of sixteenth-notes, creating a pull-back effect in tempo that contrasts beautifully with the previous fast-paced transition I and the following coda (ex. 62a). Meanwhile, the orchestra part changes from a short and lively character to a slower and more singing character (ex. 50b and 62a), with *p* and *staccatissimo* markings helping to create a refreshing effect in this movement.

The second part of the second theme is led by the beautiful orchestra melody while the piano figuration is varied (ex. 62b). This figuration further evolves into transition II, which features an abundant use of augment triads and chromatic voice-leading (ex. 62c). While similar to the transition I, there are some different patterns employed here, and sequences are again used to gradually build up to a climax, which is also the arrival of coda.

The image shows a musical score for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 3rd movement, measures 156-159. The score is in D major and 3/4 time. It features a piano part with a triplet eighth-note pattern and an orchestra part with a slower, more melodic character. The tempo is marked "Allegro man non tanto." and the piano part is marked "p staccatissimo". The orchestra part is marked "Allegro ma non tanto." and "sempre cantabile".

Ex. 62a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 156-159



Ex. 62c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 180-193

**vi) Coda – one fast section instead of two**

There are two sections in the 1891 coda of the third movement. The first section is a fast section constructed using the motive of the first theme and the two-note rhythmic pattern of the transition I (ex. 63a). The second section elaborates on the Ba section and is marked in *maestoso*, with *ff* and lots of accents on the piano octave passages (ex. 63b). It prepares a grand closure of this movement and the entire concerto (ex. 63c).

Ex. 63a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 191-196

220 **Maestoso.**

**Theme of the B section**

**Maestoso.**

**F#:**

Ex. 63b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 220-225

**Più vivo.**

**Più vivo.**

**ff**

**ff**

**ff** *Fine.*

**ff** *Fine.*

Ex. 63c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1891), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 231-238

In the 1917 revision, the festive, fast coda consists of one section. It employs sequences in triadic progressions (an augmented triad) and cadential phrases based on scales (ex. 64a and 64b). The added 6<sup>th</sup> interval in mm. 214-215 infuses a subtle flavor of the pentatonic scale (ex. 64c). One of the most striking aspects of this movement, and indeed the entire concerto, is the unconventional handling of the cadence in this coda. However, the use of chromatic mediant relationships and harmonic elisions throughout previous transitions makes a great preparation for this unique, and powerful conclusion of the movement.

194 *Allegro vivace.*

*Allegro vivace.*

**F#** **D**

*ff*

60 **B**

8

**G**

*Chromatic fourth*

*Cadence*

*mf*

*ff*

Ex. 64a Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 194-204

204

*mf*

*cresc.*

*p*

*cresc.*

*ad libitum*

8

*B<sup>b</sup> enharmonic of A<sup>#</sup>*

*Half step*

*Same note*

*ff*

$F^{\#6}$

$(ii^{\#6}/vi)$

$(v^7/vi) - E^b/D^{\#}$

Ex. 64b Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 204-209

210

*ff marcato*

Chord I prolongation

*ff marcato*

(vi) I

214

8

(pentatonic flavor)

Detailed description: The image shows two systems of musical notation for Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, 3rd movement. The first system (measures 210-213) is a grand staff with piano and right-hand parts. The piano part features a 'Chord I prolongation' in the right hand and a bass line with a '(vi) I' annotation. The right hand has a melodic line with a dotted line above it. The second system (measures 214-218) continues the piano part with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line. A blue box highlights a pentatonic scale in the right hand, with the annotation '(pentatonic flavor)'. A fermata is placed over the final measure (218).

Ex. 64c Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1917), 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, mm. 210-218

## Conclusion

Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 exists in two versions, each capturing unique aspects of the composer's musical style and reflecting the musical conventions of its time. The 1891 version of the concerto reveals noticeable influences from Grieg's concerto, along with compositional techniques and stylistic characteristics reminiscent of esteemed composers preceding Rachmaninoff, such as Tchaikovsky, Rubinstein, and Arensky. The sequential passages in the transitions, the thick chordal passages creating a dense texture with rich sonorities, the abundant use of strong dynamics (*fff* and accents), and the inclusion of numerous cadenzas showcasing pianistic virtuosity are notable features that reflect the characteristics of the late-Romantic era.<sup>55</sup>

Martyn has high praise for the original version of the concerto:

Rachmaninoff's First Concerto is not only a remarkable achievement for a seventeen-year-old, a work which can stand on its own feet and be judged on its own merits, but proof that the composer had come of age and that his own musical personality was emancipating itself from youthful influence. The nature of the concerto's themes, and particularly the 'pathos' of the main theme in the first movement, fixed a characteristically Rachmaninoff imprint on the work ten years before the Second Concerto confirmed the composer's image in the public's mind as a purveyor of sentiment and grand gesture. Though the revision twenty-six years later improved the work in every way, the fact that Rachmaninoff returned to this youthful piece at all and retained most of the original material and structure is witness to the worth of the first version."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ewen, David. "Music Should Speak from the Heart: A Conference with Sergei Rachmaninoff," *The Etude* 59, no. 12 (December 1941): 848. <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/etude/60>

"In my own compositions, no conscious effort has been made to be original, or Romantic, or Nationalistic, or anything else. I write down on paper the music I hear within me, as naturally as possible. I am a Russian composer, and the land of my birth has influenced my temperament and outlook. My music is the product of my temperament, and so it is Russian music; I never consciously attempted to write Russian music, or any other kind of music. I have been strongly influenced by Tchaikowsky and Rimsky-Korsakoff; but I have never, to the best of my knowledge, imitated anyone."

<sup>56</sup> Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, 53.

On the other hand, the 1917 revision of the concerto showcases a stronger thematic unity, greater structural economy, and more sophisticated rhythmic events, textures and harmonies. Notably, the use of chromatic and contrapuntal linear writing, along with harmonic elisions, is already evident in No. 2 and No. 6 of Rachmaninoff's *Moment Musicaux*, Op. 16, which he composed in 1896, five years after the original version of the Op. 1. Furthermore, the increased use of altered chords, extended chords and dissonances, as well as rhythmic asymmetry, rhythmic and harmonic compression, particularly in the cadenza and coda of the first movement and in the entire finale, reflects influences from neo-classicism and jazz.<sup>57</sup> These features of the modern style surpass Rachmaninoff's earlier compositions, such as Op. 16 and his Suite No. 2, Op. 17. Therefore, labeling the revised concerto as "Op. 1" would be misleading. Similar to Threlfall's idea of a more precise opus number designation, "Op. 1/39B", Riesemann believes that Rachmaninoff's revised Op. 1 should not be classified as part of his early work, but it "must be placed between the Third and Fourth Piano Concertos—somewhere amongst the first numbers of the fourth dozen of his compositions."<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, the less attractive transitions from the earlier version are removed and redesigned, while the second movement and the middle section of the third movement exhibit how the "less intense or complicated" segments can still be enriched and raised to a fanciful level of sophistication.<sup>59</sup> Geoffrey Norris notes:

Of the several works which Rachmaninoff revised at various stages in his career, the First Concerto was perhaps his greatest success, for he transformed an early immature essay into a concise, spirited work, using the greater knowledge of harmony, orchestration,

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<sup>57</sup> Cunningham, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Bio-Bibliography*, 7-8. "Increased harmonic and rhythmic boldness and jazz influences are apparent in these compositions. The continuing evolution toward increased chromaticism and Neoclassical clarity and concision is evident in revisions to the Second Piano Sonata, First and Fourth Concertos, and Third Symphony; the revised versions achieve greater structural economy by eliminating unnecessary passages, and the texture is generally thinner and clearer."

<sup>58</sup> Oskar Riesemann, *Rachmaninoff's Recollections*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934), 214.

<sup>59</sup> Coolidge, "Architectonic Technique and Innovation," 182. "...his contrapuntal technique borders on the incredible."

piano technique and musical form which he had acquired throughout his most prolific period of composition.<sup>60</sup>

Rachmaninoff is a keen reviser. Among the large-scale works of his early period, he finished revisions of the *Trio élégiaque*, Op. 9 besides the first concerto. His later significant revisions, such as the second piano sonata, the third symphony, and the fourth piano concerto, “do not involve such distinct stylistic changes [as the first concerto] but are mainly concerned with matters of piano technique, details of orchestral scoring and inordinate length.”<sup>61</sup> Op. 16, No. 2 is one of the short pieces Rachmaninoff revised in 1940, for which he mostly cut out some doubling and simplified the texture. He played these works in his recitals and for recordings and he revised them as he saw the room for improvement.

Alfred Swan’s reminiscence records Rachmaninoff’s perspective on revisions, his “power of self-criticism”<sup>62</sup> and humility:

I look at my early works and see how much there is that is superfluous. Even in this sonata [he was referring to his Sonata No. 2 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...

...I have also changed the Variations on a theme of Chopin. It is incredible how many stupid things I did at the age of nineteen. All composers do it. Only Medtner has, from the beginning, published works that it would be hard for him to equal in later life. He stands alone in this.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> G. Norris, *Rachmaninoff*, 111.

<sup>61</sup> G. Norris, “Rakhmaninov’s Second Thoughts,” 364.

<sup>62</sup> G. Norris, “Rakhmaninov’s Second Thoughts,” 368.

<sup>63</sup> Katherine Swan and A. J. Swan. “Rachmaninoff: Personal Reminiscences--Part I,” 8.

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