

Scriabin Sonata-Fantasy op. 19 n. 2 on Record:

A Comparative Study
of Sound Recordings and Piano Rolls

By

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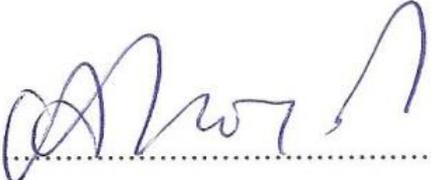
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Date: 13.7.2015

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To my children

ABSTRACT

Since the advent of the record, more than forty recordings of the Scriabin *Sonata-Fantasy op. 19 n. 2* have been produced, as well as two piano rolls, with Igumnov (1911) and the composer himself performing the work (1910). This thesis sets out to analyse the evolution of performance style of this work within the last two centuries, using numerical values and music analysis software, in search of a verifiable analysis of performance traits. This study aims to detect strategies and techniques that performers of the work have used to form their performances. Observation is oriented to register long-scale and short-scale performance details, which are equally valuable in one's preparation when practising a musical work. The actual sound of the sonata has been primarily assessed. The sonata is secondarily viewed as music text (Beliaeff edition) and simultaneously compared to Scriabin's own recorded performance on piano roll, which is valid only to a certain extent, due to recording technical impediments. The final goal of this research is to bring to light some neglected or merely underrated pianistic techniques, so as to inform the contemporary performer on different possibilities of expression. This experimentation could result in a richer musical language.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

84.3	Bar number eighty four, third beat
II.37.1	Bar number thirty seven, first beat, second movement
Bars 37-39(II)	Bars 37 to 39 of the second movement
avT	Average tempo in metronome marks
dB	Decibels
IRR	International Record Review
ARG	American Record Guide
MM	Metronome marks showing tempo
Richter(1955)	Richter, sound recording of 1955
Sofronisky1	Sofronitsky, first sound recording
Tr. 1	CD track number one
Pr	Piano roll

LIST OF CD TRACKS

TRACK NUMBER	FIGURE NUMBER	PERFORMER	BAR NUMBER
1	20	Scriabin	69-70 (II)
2	21	Scriabin	57-59 (I)
3	22	Scriabin	55-57(I)
4	23	Scriabin	50 (I)
5	24	Scriabin	52 (I)
6	25	Scriabin	69-73 (II)
7	31	Scriabin	73-74 (II)
8	41	Scriabin	1-3 (I)
9	44	Scriabin	1-110 (II)
10	46	Scriabin	44-66 (I)
11	47	Igumnov	1-136 (I)
12	56	Scriabin	1-136 (I)
13	In text	Szidon	113-136 (I)
14	In text	Leonskaja	13-57 (I)
15	In text	Leonskaja	62-88 (I)
16	In text	Austbo	113-136 (I)
17	In text	Glemser	38-57 (I)
18	In text	Hamelin	46-57 (I)
19	In text	Ogdon	41-78 (II)
20	In text	Melnikov	79-94 (II)
21	In text	Kasman	1-8 (II)
22	In text	Hamelin	45-66 (II)
23	In text	Kasman	13-36 (I)
24	In text	Kasman	62-88 (I)
25	74	Kocyan	1-13 (I)
26	75	Richter 1955	1-12 (I)
27	78	Kounadi 2003	1-12 (I)
28	78	Kounadi 2009	1-12 (I)
29	78	Kounadi 2014	1-12 (I)
30	In text	Ponti	13-22 (I)
31	In text	Igumnov	13-17 (I)

32	81	Kocyan	13-22 (I)
33	82	Richter 1955	13-22 (I)
34	83	Igumnov	13-22 (I)
35	84	Scriabin	19-22 (I)
36	In text	Kounadi 2014	19-22 (I)
37	86	Richter 1955	89-99 (I)
38	In text	Kounadi 2014	89-99 (I)
39	87	Kocyan	89-99 (I)
40	89	Scriabin	29 (I)
41	90	Kocyan	23-36 (I)
42	91	Scriabin	23-36 (I)
43	92	Austbo	23-36 (I)
44	93	Richter 1955	23-36 (I)
45	94	Kocyan	99-107 (I)
46	95	Richter 1955	99-113 (I)
47	96	Kocyan	37-45 (I)
48	97	Richter 1955	37-45 (I)
49	99	Novitskaya	48 (I)
50	100	Paperno	48 (I)
51	102	Novitskaya	45-57 (I)
52	103	Kocyan	45-57 (I)
53	105	Ashkenazy	45-57 (I)
54	106	Pogorelich	45-57 (I)
55	In text	Kounadi 2009	45-57 (I)
56	In text	Kounadi 2014	45-57 (I)
57	In text	Kounadi 2003	45-57 (I)
58	In text	Kocyan	117-121 (I)
59	109	Kocyan	113-121 (I)
60	110	Richter 1955	113-121 (I)
61	114	Roth	83-84 (I)
62	115	Feinberg	62-88 (I)
63	116	Igumnov	62-88 (I)
64	116	Fiorentino	62-88 (I)
65	117	Sofronitsky1	62-88 (I)
66	118	Pogorelich	62-88 (I)

67	119	Sofronitsky1	83-86 (I)
68	120	Feinberg	83-87 (I)
69	121	Igumnov	83-87 (I)
70	122	Voskresensky	79-80 (I)
71	123	Scriabin	82 (I)
72	124	Fiorentino	60-61 (I)
73	125	Laredo	110 (I)
74	127	Fiorentino	89 (I)
75	128	Fergus-Thompson	120 (I)
76	130	Voskresensky	75-76 (I)
77	131	Kasman	97 (I)
78	132	Leonskaya	1-2 (II)
79	133	Zhukov	1-2 (II)
80	136	Richter 1955	33 (II)
81	136	Feinberg	33 (II)
82	137	Fiorentino	35 (II)
83	138	Scriabin	33-40 (II)
84	142	Kounadi 2003	41-78 (II)
85	142	Kounadi 2014	41-78 (II)
86	144	Kounadi 2014	100-102 (II)
87	145	Rudiakov	101-102 (II)
88	148	Gekic	49 (I)
89	149	Sofronitsky1	48 (I)
90	In text	Fergus-Thompson	37-57 (I)
91	In text	Szidon	89-112 (I)
92	In text	Gekic	89-112 (I)
93	150	Richter 1955	17-24 (II)
94	151	Richter 1972	17-24 (II)
95	152	Richter 1955	53-56 (II)
96	153	Dubourg	1-2 (I)
97	153	Dubourg	58-61 (I)
98	154	Scriabin	20-22 (I)
99	155	Paperno	97 (I)
100	156	Ponti	41-42 (I)
101	157	Sofronitsky1	71-75 (I)

102	158	Ashkenazy	72-74 (I)
103	159	Kounadi 2009	71-75 (I)
104	160	Sofronitsky1	61-63 (I)
105	163	Richter 1955	112 (I)
106	163	Kocyan	112 (I)
107	164	Scriabin	35-37 (I)
108	165	Kounadi 2009	35-36 (I)
109	167	Scriabin	59-60 (I)
110	168	Fiorentino	58-61 (I)
111	169	Kocyan	58-61 (I)
112	170	Richter 1955	58-61 (I)
113	171	Kounadi 2014	58-61 (I)
114	173	Melnikov	88-89 (I)
115	175	Fergus-Thompson	136 (I)
116	176	Scriabin	63-70 (II)
117	177	Kounadi 2014	71-74 (II)
118	178	Kounadi 2003	1-136 (I)
119	In text	Kounadi 2003	86-88 (I)
120	In text	Kounadi 2003	89-105 (I)
121	In text	Kounadi 2003	1-110 (II)

PREFACE

'But why do we want to study performance at all? The *first and best* reason is curiosity' (Brock-Nannestad: 2006, 1). Curiosity was my initial motive for starting to research Scriabin's¹ *Second Sonata-Fantasy*. While practising the work to perform it at my final recital exam for the completion of my Master's Degree Course at Trinity College of Music, London, I realised that college tutors and masterclass pianists were keen on verbally describing Scriabin's sound and style, but that this was not enough technically to allow me to reproduce that sound. This situation guided me towards recordings and other sources of information that would give me answers on how Scriabin's music sounds.

Important changes in the academic world of sound recordings have occurred during my research. Firstly, CHARM² emerged, a music association of scholars that delved into the world of music recordings and approached it from a different angle. I attended its yearly symposia and other activities, at which scholars from all over the world shared their concerns about record production, recordings and performance, methodological tools and software enabling research into recordings with quantifiable results etc. Other sources of information on how to deal with recordings were the seminars organised by AHRC.

In the meantime, important sources came to light in 2007 which proved precious to my recording research into the *Second Sonata-Fantasy*. After three years of research on the internet at piano roll collectors' websites, I received a positive e-mail and finally discovered that a piano roll of the first movement was owned by Julian Dyer, a piano roll collector living in England. I visited his collection and was given a copy of that piano

¹ Even the spelling of the composer's name has become an issue for debate. Scriabin used to sign his name in the French transliteration, 'Scriabine'. His name is found in the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians) thus: 'Skryabin [Scriabin]'. The dictionary's version is closer to the Russian pronunciation of the letter 'я' as well as to the voice accent, in accenting the [a] rather than the [i]. However, as the composer has long since been 'encoded' as 'Scriabin' in the English-speaking world, this thesis uses this spelling.

² Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music has been an AHRC Research centre (www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/index.html, accessed 3 July 2015). AHRC means Arts and Humanities Research Council (www.ahrc.ac.uk, accessed 3 July 2015).

roll. On a visit to Moscow, I also bought the then newly-published Muzyka transcription of these piano rolls by Pavel Lobanov,³ published by the Scriabin Museum in Moscow. Pavel Lobanov's recorded performance from the piano roll on CD of the second movement has been another outcome of this trip. Moreover, Julian Dyer contacted me in 2009 mentioning that he had found and bought a piano roll of the second movement, which he also recorded for the needs of my research. In other words, I finally could listen to two piano roll performances of the second movement; the first one, by Pavel Lobanov; the second one by Julian Dyer, who also gave me a copy of the piano roll. Feinberg and Sofronitsky's performances were also some of the last items added to this study's resources after my visit to Moscow.

Moreover, books and articles published over the last decade along with new technologies gave my study a fresher view and served as stimuli for faster and more efficient results. For instance, although I had reached the middle of this study on technical matters, I decided to move partly away from the Excel sheets of each performance that I had already produced by the "tapping along method" analysed in the chapter on Methodology. Consequently, I had to repeat parts of the research, this time relying more on the Sonic Visualiser software.

A final challenge refers to finding all the resources, such as recordings and piano rolls. Some of these are out of print; others are kept in museums or libraries that do not allow access at all or allow only limited access that excludes computer manipulation. And even when resources are on the market, they may well be unusable or extremely expensive to purchase. For instance, the British Library National Sound Archive offered me a first acoustic experience of many recordings, but I could not overcome serious restrictions: I could not manipulate them using computer software to prove my acoustic impressions through quantifiable data. Fortunately, the University of London's Central Research Fund offered me financial support towards the purchase of those recordings I still did not own which gave my research a major boost as I could now process the recordings using different computer software.

³ Names are written in the form they are worldwide known or written in sound recording covers and music scores.

However helpful all these resources may have been, I still had to deal with the fact that I was seeking to analyse performance issues in writing and only in some instances using acoustical proof provided by CD extracts. Another problem was that I was dealing with performance from the performer's viewpoint, not the musicologist's. For this reason, I had to let myself be free to write my thesis in language that is common in a piano lesson but rare in a musicological context. The quantifiable and confirmable performance data I extracted using modern technology would ultimately be described through this terminology with a view to describing my view as a pianist and performer, not as an academic.

In fact, this study starts from the performer's point of view and aims to detect strategies and techniques that performers of the work have used to form their performances. Observation is oriented to register long-scale and short-scale performance details, which are equally valuable in one's preparation for performing a musical work. The sonata as such has been viewed primarily as a sound object. It is secondarily assessed as printed music text using the Belaieff edition. It is simultaneously compared to Scriabin and Igumnov's own recorded performances on piano rolls, which are valid only to a certain extent due to technical impediments during their recording. The aim of this research was therefore to discover principles governing the performance of Scriabin's *Second Piano Sonata* as heard in sound recordings.⁴ My final objective was to use the outcomes of the scholarly analysis to inform my own approach to performances of this work, as well as other Scriabin works of the same compositional period.

Chapter 1.II gives an initial account of my performance 'journey' through the *Sonata-Fantasy*. Chapter 1.III explains the methodological tools applied. Chapter 1.IV refers to Scriabin's life as a stimulus for composing and gives a brief analysis of the structure of the work. Chapter 1.V refers to the relation of the thesis to the PhD recital programme. Chapter 1.VI analyses Scriabin's piano rolls as documents and extracts conclusions about the composer's style. It also indicates Igumnov's performance style, which was also captured on a piano roll. The core of this study is concentrated in Chapter 2, in which recordings of other performers and of mine are compared in terms of tempo and colour.

4 J. Bowen points out that 'the recent interest in performance, though, has been spurred by the importance and interest of what is well documented on records and that is 20th century performance practice' (*Performance Practice versus Performance Analysis*, p. 17).

Chapter 2.II includes a comparison and evaluation of my own recordings from the 2003 and 2014 performances of the work. Chapter 2 concludes on the existence of various performance styles and the possible existence of Schools of Performance.

Chapter 1

I. INTRODUCTION

Of the many theoretical issues that have arisen during my research, I consider three to be essential to the nature of this study. The first one concerns the notion of performance: is it a performance that is captured in the recording or another type of musical construction? Johnson claims that 'each recording is a unique artistic creation achieved by a synthesis of composition, performance and particular recording methods' (Johnson: 2002, 209). For another scholar, performance may be 'the physical act that is observable by ear and eye' (Brock-Nannestad: 2006, 7). Recordings leave out the visual component, so 'the audience must learn all it can from the sound available' (ibid.). Another criterion to sense that a recording has captured a performance is the notion that the performer's 'persona' or idiosyncrasy can transcend the medium and reach the listener's ears, so that it is translated as 'a Richter recording' or 'a Horowitz recording' (Johnson: 2002, 198).

The role of the 'persona' appearing during the performing act is eloquently tackled by Piers Lane. He does not refer to it directly, but implies it when referring to 'atmosphere'. The pianist states:

One of the problems with Scriabin is that it's so difficult to *record* his music successfully. You really need to play him late at night, surrounded by candles, with the converted hanging on every utterance – it's so hard to create the right atmosphere at 10 in the morning, with inevitable edits to remove aircraft noises or interfering creaks from church roofs! Perhaps that's one of the secrets of Sofronitsky's inspired recordings – so many of them are from live events. I'm sure many artists would say the same thing about lots of recordings – but I think it's particularly pertinent to Scriabin – so much depends on those magical moments, which tend to occur in direct communication with an audience (Siepmann: 2000, 29).

The second dilemma relates to music interpretation. What is the role of the performer in relation to the composer, the work and the music score? What would raise objections today would be to value the performer as the transparent mediator between the 'God-composer' and the work (Cook: 1999c, 32-39). Cook also notes that when we listen to a certain work, 'we hear it against a horizon of expectations established by past

performances and especially by recordings: a new interpretation signifies by virtue not only of what it is, but also of the pattern of differences it establishes with respect to the interpretations' of famous performers (ibid., 39). 'The co-relativity between score and performance lies then, in that 'both score and performance are to be understood performatively, as sites for the construction rather than merely the reproduction of meaning', in interaction and supporting each other (ibid., 39).

The performer is then expected to experiment with a composition, too, adhering to Babbitt's opinion that 'every musical composition justifiably may be regarded as an experiment, the embodiment of hypotheses as to certain specific conditions of musical coherence' (Babbitt: 1972, 148). Just as Babbitt sees the act of composition as a type of experimentation, so too is every performance; it is a performed experiment of that composed experiment. In other words, my primary thought as a performer is that there is no unique or invariable way of conveying one's musical aspirations during a performance. It is widely accepted that not even two performances of the same work by the same performer can be identical. However, what is usually meant is the performer's unspoken duty to understand the score and the composer's intentions on a profound level. In other words, what is expected of a performer is historically-informed preparation during practice and, ultimately, a gradual evolution of a performance strategy that could even vary for the same performer between performances. Horowitz is an example of a performer who seemed to sketch his strategy *ad hoc* during the performance process. Another take on performance strategy is described by Rothstein, for whom a performer could even 'suggest something that [in terms of structure] is 'false' - or more precisely, something which is 'true' only from a certain, partial vantage point - than [...] spell out everything one knows'. From this perspective, 'the performer adopts temporarily the viewpoint of one of the characters in the drama, so to speak, rather than assuming omniscience at every moment' (Rothstein: 1995, 238).

A third dilemma relates to performance analysis, which is still considered a new musical field of study. 'There is as yet no established genre for theoretical writing [about it]', Cook wrote in 1999 (1999c, 42). Fifteen years later, the bibliography has grown considerably. In addition, more performers are trying to add their practical expertise to the field and explain from an analytical point of view the recordings they use in their research. Moreover, the analysis of a performance – documented, for instance, in graphic

representations – raises new perspectives but also new challenges; for instance, how an analytical tool can enable the reader to ‘reconstruct the music experience of the music that motivates it’ (Cook: 1999c, 15). The applicability of methodological means will be partly proved, if they prove capable of letting the reader reconstruct the music experience through them.

Bowen’s writings on performance analysis give the general impression that the author is defending a performer-based analysis of practical and theoretical musical issues. For instance, when reviewing John Rink’s *The Practice of Performance: Studies in musical interpretation*, Bowen still thinks that it is a book for theorists rather than performers. On Cook’s article on Furtwängler’s performance, he asks: ‘does [the article] explain why we like Furtwängler’s performance?’ (1998, 131) Bowen attempts to erase academics’ fear of an improvisatory epistemology on performance analysis. He indicates that ‘our reluctance to study performance has been more practical than phenomenological; as musicians we relish the differences, but as academics, the fear of “subjectivity” and the desire to move our discipline away from journalistic criticism, has kept us focused on the ever-present score’ (Bowen: 1996b, 112). He then goes on to compare temporal features by mathematical means to show that, even in Western art music, minute differences among performances can be quantified, and that these differences ‘can still be studied with meaningful results’ (ibid.)

Performance analysis is often related to performance practice. Bowen’s articles on this matter have influenced my own approach to this study. Factors associated with ‘historical validity’ are often thought of as representing ‘aesthetic validity’, as well. Bowen admits that performance practice research has enriched our musical lives, but it has brought with it a moral and aesthetic obligation on the performer’s part to heed the finding of this research. He arrives at the rhetorical question: ‘would we really want a world without Horowitz?’⁵ The task, then, is not to prescribe a certain performance idiom for performers; rather, it is part of the researcher’s job:

⁵ Bowen gives in footnote (n.16) Michael Steinberg’s attack on Horowitz, written in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: MacMillan, 1980). ‘Horowitz illustrates that an astounding instrumental gift carries no guarantee about musical understanding’.

[...] to convey to performers what nuances were historically available in different styles and why. The aim, then, is not to limit possibilities but to create new ones. This new research will make performers aware of other levels of expression and will enable them to master not only new accents (new sounds) but new languages (and new meanings) (Bowen: 1996a, 35).

The previous paragraph sums up the supreme goal of my research as a music practitioner, which is to provide performers and scholars with clues about performance traditions and styles which will enable future performers to widen their means of expression when interpreting the current sonata or other musical works.

In fact, forty-one recordings from the last hundred years are compared with each other and with performance traits extracted from Scriabin's own piano roll recordings. Scriabin himself had recorded several of his piano works on piano rolls for Welte-Mignon and Hupfeld (the manufacturers of the Phonola and Animatic player pianos respectively). The latter recorded his *Second Sonata-Fantasy*, too. With these particular recorded documents in mind, the thesis explores the different performance features that surround sound recordings, and extracts the principles of these performances with one further objective: to see how performance styles have evolved over time. A more detailed explication of the methodology appears in Chapter 1.III. The oral history concerning Scriabin's pianistic style is also taken into account, as well as previous research into the matter.⁶

In the past, other research projects⁷ have been carried out involving comparisons of large numbers of recordings. The novelty of this research lies in its combining the comparison of solo piano music – the findings from forty-one recordings and piano rolls compared using empirical and traditional methodological tools- with the practical side of the findings, namely the attempt to subconsciously absorb into my own interpretation of the sonata the experience from this study, as a performer who looks for alternatives. Recordings have been used as the primary source of information, whereas other types of source have been cautiously applied, either to support the primary source or to contrast with it.

⁶ See, for instance, S. Randlett (1966), J. A. Gorman (1979) and S. Smith (2004).

⁷ See, for instance, Jose Bowen and Robert Philip's writings.

Several challenges encountered had to be overcome for this type of comparison. First of all, the number of recordings produced during the first decades of the twentieth century is extremely small. For some decades, there are no recordings of the sonata at all. For others, there is only one recording, which prevents the drawing of generalised conclusions on the particular recording era. Thus, if for instance only one recording of the sonata was produced in the 40s, one cannot assert whether the performance traits found in this performance reflect '(1) the style of the individual performers [...], (2) the style of the period or a national style, (3) an unusual series of recording sessions, (4) a change in the performance tradition of the particular piece, or (5) a unique and unprecedented innovation or insight made by the performer. This is particularly problematic for the earliest recordings, where often only a single recording exists...' (Bowen: 1996a, 20). To partly balance out such uncertainty, recordings are assessed, first, in relation to others of the same period, then to others of the previous and following periods, taking into account styles and potential performance traditions. Oral tradition and contemporary written accounts are also important tools that can provide clues to the most obscure recording eras.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to provide the performer with different performance styles that have been registered. These styles could be used as stylistic alternatives for a pianist preparing for the performance of the *Second Sonata-Fantasy*, as well as for other Scriabin works, especially those composed during the same period as this sonata. In addition, I have included case studies referring to specific music passages that had captured my own attention during the reading of this work. Performance issues and questions that I had raised with my piano tutors are thus analysed, with the aim of suggesting ideas to other pianists through other performers' choices. All these ideas have now formed in my own musical personality an important library of data that subconsciously influence me not only when I prepare for a performance of the *Second Sonata-Fantasy* or any other Scriabin work, but in general, when I approach a new work for a first reading. This research, with all its acoustic and empirical components has helped me be in a position not only to prepare for a concert with a broader approach to analysis in my own piano playing, but has changed even the way I simply perceive music.

II. HISTORY OF PRACTICE OF THE SONATA-FANTASY

The *Second Sonata-Fantasy* was the first work of Scriabin that I had ever practised. My journey into the world of Scriabin's colouristic pianistic language was assisted by piano professors, who attempted during private lessons, tutorial courses or masterclasses to provide, often in words and rarely in playing, an idea of how this music should sound. This journey began in 2003 at Professor Martino Tirimo's weekly masterclasses at Morley College. During one session, a postgraduate student presented the work to the class. As I had never heard this piece before, I was astonished by the clarity of Scriabin's musical intentions. The effortless coherence of themes made me feel at ease, and I was thrilled instantly by the delicate multi-layering of the music in the first movement, as well as by the thunderous motor rhythm in the second. Although the quality of sound during the performance did not capture my attention, the outcome of this masterclass was the desire to learn this work.

I immediately started practising the *Sonata-Fantasy* with my tutor, Yonty Solomon, who suggested that I listen to several recordings, including those of Sofronitsky and Zhukov. We worked meticulously on hand position, fingerings and pedalling as necessary parts of the technical aspects, before delving into the interpretation of the work. I saved much time in my practice of fingerings and expression, as Solomon had provided me from the very beginning his own notes on the score. Because one of his students had recently practised the sonata, Solomon offered me the annotated music score with suggested fingerings, written either by him or by the student. Consequently, together with my own musical score, I practised the sonata using a copy of the Belaieff edition that was fully marked with fingerings by Solomon and the fellow student, and other notes on expression. I will refer to these performance elements analytically in the case-studies.

I first performed the *Sonata-Fantasy* during a student lunchtime concert at Trinity College of Music, as part of my preparation for the MMus final piano recital. Originally, I was quite satisfied with its outcome, as I had successfully completed the basic prerequisites for the realisation of its performance. I had not stopped nor had memory lapses, the sound generally was quite pleasant and the polyphonic aspect was

sufficiently expressed.⁸ Nevertheless, Elena Riu, the professor appointed as college adjudicator for the concert, indicated in the notes of her report another important factor: space of time. 'Feel free to take time especially for the first movement' she suggested during a discussion later that year. I then performed the *Sonata-Fantasy* in my final MMus exam with success, according to the report and the mark that I received.

During private lessons, masterclasses, competitions and tutorial classes with professors, including Alexander Ardakov and Tatiana Sarkissova, I began to focus more on sound colour and phrasing. Because I did not receive concrete guidance regarding a unique way of performance, I believe that the professors' primary concern was that I understand the quality of the sound. They preferred to describe the sound verbally through metaphors or similes (e.g. shimmering). Solomon's notes on the score remained a precious guide to me, each time that I went back to practise the work. I had found the fingerings very practical, so I followed them, despite the advent of time. What was more of an inspiration rather than an actual guideline, was his pedalling. I did not take into account Solomon's pedal indications for specific bars, but kept in my mind the words he used to describe it, such as flutter-pedal or half pedal. Solomon's notes finally became more of an 'anchor' to my practice and reminiscence of all the way I have 'walked' with this work.

Mikhail Kazakevich, my PhD piano tutor, also gave importance to parameters already discussed with Solomon, such as the 'star-like' quality of sound for the upper register, the mild layering of voices in the first movement, and the clear motor rhythm of the second movement without excessive pedalling for the beginning. He helped me build more confidence on my sound effects and discussed bars relating to rests, fermatas and sectional endings. His views did not contradict Solomon's, but, once again, I still felt I lacked the listening experience of other performers of the Scriabin repertoire, in order to get a clearer insight of how Scriabin works really sound.

In the following years, I often included this work in my recitals for several reasons. First, it remained during these years a work that I enjoyed practising and performing. Second,

⁸ Parts of this initial performance are presented in the CD tracks and are being compared to other performances of 2009 and 2014.

especially when a concert took place in Greece, my homeland, I aimed to introduce the generally unknown Scriabin to the Greek audience, in order to prove that Scriabin is not 'difficult' even for audiences who are not well informed about his musical style. I did feel the need to take a break occasionally to renew my interest in the piece. Each time that I began to practise it anew, I felt that I was viewing several music extracts with a fresh look, while I maintained the same performance strategy with other extracts. Those which remained stable in my mind, despite the passing time, usually reflected the influence of a recording that I had enjoyed, or were reminiscent of a certain verbal description given during a lesson by a professor (e.g. Solomon, Kazakevitch et al.). These extracts are included as case-studies that assess the performance strategies of other performers as well as my own.

III. METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

As is often the case, the problem arising when one attempts to compare and analyse performances on sound recordings is that the material remains 'unquantifiable'. For instance, while one can claim that *a* and *b* performers of the same musical piece apply a lot or a little rubato, one cannot specify in words with quantifiable precision the amount of rubato and the exact point at which it is applied. Fortunately, there are several techniques that can help the scholar indicate the most quantifiable performance characteristics, e.g. tempo and dynamics.

These techniques include the use of timing techniques and spectrum analysis. Alongside these more or less empirical techniques, the present thesis attempts to incorporate descriptive performance analysis, which is the main code of communication among performers during practice and performance. This is the language that music critics or piano tutors use to transfer their knowledge and instincts of a musical work to their readers or piano students. Such descriptive analytical tools have been applied in the writings of scholars including Robert Philip and Timothy Day. This code of

communication may seem abstract at first sight and restricted to an approximate accuracy in the message it conveys. My ultimate task is to reach this code via empirical techniques in such a way that the empirical backs up the acoustical.

Since musical performance is not simply a combination of charts or spectrograms, one ultimately feels the need to return to traditional music terminology that may be more telling to the ears – the latter being our most substantial tool in the reception of a musical performance. Thus, while the performer or researcher still translates spectra and graphs into words and musical notions, another type of translation is also taking place, this time between words and fingers: words are translated into sound – which is to say into a musical story – in the form of sound examples taken from the assessed recordings.

The main analytical models applied involve quantifiable methods introduced by scholars such as José Bowen, Nicholas Cook and Eric Clarke. Other writings have also proved useful in my own research, including Clive Brown's work on Beethoven metronome markings (1991), W. Crutchfield on vocal ornamentation in Verdi (1983), M. Green on M. Lussy's *Traité de l'expression musicale* (1994), and B. Sherman on Brahms' metronome markings and their relation to the proportions of his works (1997).

Another valuable source for the purposes of this study is Antonio Artese's DMA thesis of 2000, in which he compares the recordings of three interpreters of the Scriabin *Third Sonata*: Sofronitsky, Horowitz and Ashkenazy. The author sheds light on Sofronitsky's interpretative style by placing his performance next to those of two representatives of other music lineages within the Russian School. Although his inclination towards Sofronitsky's performance is evident throughout his study, he defends his view by tracking significant, in his opinion, differences between performances, and by pointing out specific passages for differentiating music ideas among performers. He uses sound tracks to support his findings, avoiding any use of empirical data (sound analysis software or tempo charts).

One can trace useful information on performers' styles in Artese's writings, but one can also find information on Scriabin's compositional technique in his early works, two of which are the *Second Sonata-Fantasy* and the *Third Sonata*. The two works reveal similarities in terms of their musical form, texture and effects, including the placement of

the melodic material in octaves, the use of triplets in the left hand, wide use of registers, sporadic hints of atonality et al. In addition, Artese refers to Scriabin's own pianistic technique, and his pedalling in particular. His insights confirm similar findings from my study. Artese's thesis includes an interview with Sofronitsky's daughter, Roxana Cogan, on her father's idiosyncrasies as a performer and a man. The testimony of a close relative of Sofronitsky's is of great importance, although some of the questions that are posed allow for subjective answers, especially when they refer to Sofronitsky's musical idiom.

As mentioned above, Artese chooses to compare Horowitz and Ashkenazy with Sofronitsky, because they belong to different music lineages within the Russian School. However, the author does not indicate why he wanted to compare representatives from different lineage, and fails to provide any conclusions concerning the performance styles of the different lineages. Could Horowitz's idiosyncratic personality conform to the directives of any such lineage? Or could Ashkenazy's young age compete equally with Sofronitsky and Horowitz's music ethos of a much older generation? By 1975, when Ashkenazy recorded the sonata, he was 38 years old, Sofronitsky had died 11 years before that year and Horowitz was 68 years old. What is the point, then, of dividing performers into musical lineages or sub-schools within the Russian School, if one does not then draw conclusions on the basis of these divisions? And how can one tell that a performance trait that Ashkenazy reveals in his performance relates to the modern ideas of the 70s, to the fact that he recorded a series of Scriabin sonatas or to his piano tutor, Lev Oborin?

Robert Philip's books on recorded performances have been another stimulus for this research. He describes the evolution of performance styles in sound recordings. In the wealth of information on people and works that his earlier book offers, it is evident that what Philip is primarily interested in is describing a small number of performance characteristics (e.g. portamento, rubato, vibrato) in detail with a view to highlighting the evolution of styles in different eras, rather than an in-depth analysis of specific works or performers' tastes. Pianistic issues refer to tempo rubato and Schools of Performance. His writings on tempo, as well as Sarah Martin's (2002) on compensating rubato, have influenced the form of this study's chapter on tempo. That element of Sarah Martin's paper which I have tried to adopt in my own research is the optical verification of acoustic samples by means of their graphic representation. This is something that is

lacking from Philip's writings, although he provides some music scores with notes sketched on them. A more empirical approach is adopted when he mentions McEwen's research on Pachmann's piano rolls.

The main advantage of these books is their scope and the eloquence with which their authors share their own and other scholars' experiences and thoughts. What is particularly valuable about this latter aspect of their writings is that they can be convincing in their argumentation without necessarily being definable in objective terms; according to Cook and Clarke, this phenomenon is 'quite normal in musicology'. They go on to say that if Philip's reports on acoustical experience 'articulate a way of hearing the music that other people can share, then they can be regarded as a discovery procedure resulting in a replication of experience, and hence in a measure of intersubjective agreement' (Cook & Clarke: 2004a, 5). If there is a 'good consensus'⁹ among listeners about the presence of certain musical characteristics, they should be accepted as real, even if we cannot clearly define them.

In the present study, arguments are based on the use of empirically tested results and on the application of descriptive approaches, such as Philip's, that support empirical analyses of the same issue. For Cook and Clarke, empirical musicology is 'musicology that embodies a principled awareness of both the potential to engage with large bodies of relevant data, and the appropriate methods for achieving this' (2004a, 5). Nonetheless, empirical and traditional methodology is combined, since the main goal of this research is to find and apply appropriate methodology in order to understand what principles govern the recorded performances, and to use this knowledge to enrich one's own performances.

Yet, the use of empirical methods in performance analysis has not gone unchallenged by traditional musicology, which has accused empirical musicology of striving to be dryly 'scientific' to the extent that it becomes 'empiricist' rather than 'empirical', reflecting ideas of the 'culture of objectivity in the 1960s and 1970s' (Cook and Clarke: 2004a, 6). The main challenge is to answer what one is 'meant to *do*' with this type of data (ibid., 6).

⁹ This concept is adopted from Lomax's research on nasality in folk songs (Lomax: 1968, 72).

Empirical analysis is applicable, especially in sound-based research, as – unlike paradigmatic analysis, for instance – it frees one’s perceptions of the music text by drawing conclusions from the performance itself through the listening experience. The music text is thus another kind of ‘data’, making the execution of a musical work another type of ‘experiment’. Empirical musicology is also not alone in being ‘empirical’ or ‘experimental’, since all kinds of musicological analysis are ‘(thought) experiments’ (Guck: 1994, 62).

On the other hand, when talking about empirical musicology, most ‘traditional’ academics protest against the exclusivity that empirical musicology seems to have imposed on music research in recorded performances in recent years. The problem with empirical methodology of this kind is that the eyes see numbers, computer images or charts, but music is really meant for the ears; it is intended to guide the senses, not to rationally ‘persuade’ the mind in relation to what is happening in musical time.¹⁰ However, each method provides its results, and a combination of different methods should be a safe way to produce verifiable results. Taking this into account, I have used a number of methods that can cast light on the Scriabin sound recordings by using them independently and in combination as required.

This thesis essays a middle course between empirical and descriptive analysis, the latter being influenced mainly by Robert Philip’s writings on recorded music (1992 and 2004). As stated in the Introductory Chapter, the main models of empirical analysis which have influenced this thesis deal with quantifiable methods analysed in the work of scholars including José Bowen, Nicholas Cook and Eric Clarke. The AHRC’s (CHARM) 2004-2008 Symposia on sound recordings have also provided additional computer-based tools (‘Craig Sapp’s ‘timescapes’, ‘correlation trees’, etc.), with which the researcher has experimented in pursuit of quantifiable evidence that could confirm observations acquired through the acoustical experience.

¹⁰ See McAdams, Depalle and Clarke, p. 159, where they state that ‘perceptual qualities of these sounds [electronic music, own words] are not notable in a score and can only be identified by concentrated listening or by visually examining acoustic analyses such as the spectrogram...’ According to this statement, then, maybe what cannot be easily identified by simple listening, can be first pointed out by spectrum analysis, which will in a way ‘help’ human ears to listen to what the eyes see in the spectrogram.

ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

MODELS OF ANALYSIS: EVALUATION AND PREFERENCES

The researcher has been the observer (or perceiver) of the collected data. Data has been collected via acoustical observation and computer-aided data extraction. This study stands partly close to the 'data-oriented systematic empiricism' described by Huovinen (2006, 15), which is to say an 'empirically oriented discipline that applies methods which are paradigmatically exemplified in the natural sciences' (ibid., 15, quoting Leman & Schneider: 1997, 22). However, this research also relies on narrative to 'explain causation through time, how one state of affairs became another' (ibid., 15, quoting Davies: 2003, 84), relying at times on 'historico-analytical empiricism', i.e. empiricism based on facts (ibid., 15).

I. The listening experience

Whatever results the application of empirical methodology may yield in this study, listening still remains a precious tool that helps the researcher as performer feel how all the above parameters blend during a recorded performance. If one performer plays, for instance, the first movement in 9 minutes, whereas the majority of performers finish in 7:30 minutes, there is a substantial difference in time and it is fascinating for a listener – and for an active performer – to realise through their own observation, i.e. via listening to these performances, how the difference in duration can affect the overall listening experience, but also how sectional performance strategies (rubato, spacing, *allargando* effects, etc.) can influence one's perception of the overall structure.

Taking as a point of departure Dunsby's points on the value of 'musical balance', 'design in music' and the importance of structure for the 'animation of the musical design',¹¹ I first listened to the recordings keeping notes on the musical effects – on which the performer has built their 'performance strategy' – that captured my attention during the

¹¹ See Jonathan Dunsby, in *Performing Music, Shared Concerns* (Oxford, 1995) on musical balance pp. 63-65, on musical structure pp. 80-84, on musical design p. 84.

performance; I then tried to explain why I felt the need to register those moments as 'special'. For this type of approach, it is necessary to trace the occurrence of structural factors, such as points of tension/relaxation, culmination or surprise.¹²

More analytically, keeping notes during the listening experience simply meant that performances were assigned adjectives that attempted to describe their features. This vocabulary was formed as a code that could be further supported by empirical evidence. Some of the words used to describe performances were: conversational, spaced, rushed, *agitato*, *a tempo*, *rubato*, at a fast/slow side/pace, voiced, etc. This verbal code was then confirmed – or not – by empirical methodology.

Finally, with regard to the listening experience and as stated above *re* structure analysis, what matters is what the ears can actually capture during the time limits of a performance. No matter what the more objective/quantifiable parameters reveal as facts to scholars about what actually happened, as if they were encoded in a computer memory that can 'remember' and 'recall' even the most microscopic details of a performance, what the listener understands when listening to a – in this case, recorded – performance is necessarily limited to a shorter time limit which has to be assigned importance when evaluating performances.

In Tanner's experiment, (2000, 188-189) in which he distributed a table with adjectives and asked the subjects to tick the ones they considered appropriate for each section of the Liszt sonata, the analysis that followed was based on a subjective parameter. As Peter Johnson observes, 'aesthetic terms allow us to *communicate* our having had the experience, but not the experience itself, for which there is no sufficient verbal equivalent' (1997, 276). Or, to borrow another quotation from Roland Barthes, it is a challenge to 'talk about a piece of music without using a single adjective' (1977, 179).

I strongly believe that communication of musical meaning to one's audience should be the highest aim of all performances. Since this metaphysical activity is transferred to

¹² See, for instance, Bruno Repp's experiment (p. 241-281) proving the importance of context in music perception: tempo changes in the middle of a phrase were recognized as a point of surprise for the listener and were therefore easily noticed, whereas tempo changes in phrase boundaries (i.e. *ritenutos*) were not, because they appear regularly in those parts of the performance and have been encoded by listeners as a 'normality'.

listeners acoustically, it should be equally suitable to include auditory descriptions in one's study by registering the technical elements that formed the musical experience. Put more simply, what is especially important to know is not 'what it sounded *like*'- which would presuppose the application of the scholarly 'dangerous' world of adjectives- but which technical aspects *made* it sound like that. This model of analysis aims for the latter process.

I believe a link exists between this method and the language that musicians use to describe to themselves and to each other that which they wish to express in certain music passages.¹³ This link is due partly to the fact that, during a rehearsal, musicians are in a constant state of 'self-negotiation' and 'negotiation' with each other (e.g. tutor-student, Chamber Music musicians, et al.). They listen whilst playing a passage and then, they evaluate and describe its technical components (i.e. phrasing, *rits.*, dynamics, direction, etc.), in order to reach an aesthetic 'consensus' regarding its final performance. This circle of actions may occur several times until one is pleased with the musical outcome, and all of these actions greatly depend on attentive listening to one's own sound. Taking into account this basic procedure during practice, I aim to articulate and register this special music code, by now evaluating the listening experience of the forty-one performances of Scriabin's *Sonata-Fantasy*.

II. Application of empirical methods

1. *Spectrum analysis (for tempo, dynamics, tone, texture, pedalling)*

Spectrographic representations (spectrograms or spectrographs) are three-dimensional 'maps' that cover the following aspects of sound occurrence: time, frequency and intensity.¹⁴ These primary elements can be combined to show note frequency, time occurrence, harmonic components, intensity (note dynamics) and so on. Whether the outcome of this procedure can produce easy-to-manipulate data depends on the settings the researcher chooses to provide for the clearest possible results.

¹³ I am referring to musicians working together, i.e. in chamber music ensembles or in the teacher-student relationship.

¹⁴ Intensity is shown on spectral analyses as green/yellow/red hues, according to degree.

Although the use of spectrum analysis in musicology has increased in recent decades, its potential has yet to be fully exploited with regard to the analysis of the solo piano repertoire. The rich polyphonic textures of the Scriabin piano sonatas make them fertile ground for such analysis.

Some of the problems that have occurred in past studies can be resumed in the following points:

- The results of the spectral representation depend on the settings applied, but there are no specific rules governing the choice of settings; this makes things more difficult for the researcher, and the need for experimentation a prerequisite.
- Studies which adopt this analytical technique use it in a relatively intermittent way, in the sense that they have to restrict the analysis to a few bars due to the wealth of information of the spectra. As a result, the research does not investigate the role of sections in the global structure of the performance, and thus fails to show the valuable whole perspective of a performance.

For the purposes of this research, Sonic Visualiser software has been used to show spectrum and waveform analyses.

2. *'Tapping along' method*

This method consists of tapping along on the computer to mark the onset of a new bar or beats in a bar while the sound recording is being played. Three kinds of Excel worksheet result: the first showing the sum of time (in seconds) elapsing from bar to bar; the second, the average tempo of each beat; and the third, the average tempo of each bar.

Although the process is not empirical, since the time-marking depends on the speed of my own reflexes, and thus influences the result, 'the discrepancies are not cumulative', (Cook: 1995, 114) as individual taps do not correlate with the previously registered beats. Additionally, I ran repeated tests for each recording during the data registration process, which revealed that while some values achieved were the same (in 2-decimal numbers) on all attempts, there were many cases in which there were differences in timing between the attempts, although these never deviated by more than 5%. In general, I have

preferred to choose a whole take for each recording, since time is compensated between beats or bars as the performance evolves, showing the flow of the actual performance as if the listener were listening to the performance only once.

Another way to time bar-to-bar, beat-to-beat or note-to-note relations is to use Sonic Visualiser, which provides more precise timings, since the ear (tap) is confirmed by the eye (spectral note onset). This software has been used especially in detailed note-to-note or beat-to-beat assessments of the rubato in specific bars. It has also been used to define the exact onset of notes of different voices in cases of accompaniment-type compensating rubato. With Sonic Visualiser, it is possible to reduce the speed of the performance when tempi are fast in order to time each note or beat more accurately. The tempo retardation button has also been used to detect the different note onset between hands (e.g. left hand preceding the right one) in the case of hand dislocation rubato.

3. Numerical analysis

Findings from the 'tapping along' method are further processed via numerical analysis (using Microsoft Excel) to produce results relating to:

- Average tempo for each performance, all shown on a comparative graph
- Initial tempo for the whole work/movement/section for each performance and comparison between all performances
- Time fluctuation between similar phrases in the same performance
- Graphic comparison of a beat-to-beat tempo map of a certain performance with its average tempo, shown as a horizontal line. This is especially useful when examining whether tempo has been used to underline structural boundaries or to disguise them.¹⁵

¹⁵ Michael D. Green successfully applies this tool in "Mathis Lussy's *Traité de l'expression musicale* as a window into Performance Practice", *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Autumn 1994), pp. 211-212. Through graphic representations of two recordings of Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*, he shows that the representations can show eloquently how variation in articulation affects – or not – the mean pulse of a performance. In Green's case, Elisabeth Schumann's interpretation achieves constancy of pulse through balanced proportion of *ritenutos* and *accelerandos* (which Green characterizes as 'poetic' performance'), whereas Mildred Miller's performance "offers the change in the MQP [mean quarter-note pulse] from cycle to cycle [cycle seen as a part of the song] as the means whereby the same structure is articulated. This performance might be described as 'prosaic' to reflect the declamation of the structure through temporal modulation".

My research has generated a huge numerical and graphic database; the numerical database was also partly created using Sonic Visualiser software, which allows for time values to be exported to Excel worksheets.¹⁶

Although John Rink uses this type of analysis in his own research, he points out a weakness with the tool: 'its limited attention to context, which usually influences a given dynamic marking's meaning' (2002, 48). In other words, a *p* within a generally *f* passage should not be interpreted as the same type of dynamic as a *p* indicated within a *p* dynamics environment. Indeed, the listening experience is then necessary, in order to describe the musical context, and provide additional information that explains the empirically traced data.

EXPLANATION OF FIGURES

The following graph is produced via Sonic Visualiser. Performance note durations are shown in dark and light purple, and beat onsets in purple lines. It is used to show note-to-note rubato; the wider the section, the longer the sound. The current graph shows the note-to-note durations of the middle voice (called 'quaver melodic line') of bars 45 (third beat) to 54 (first beat). Some quavers are performed quite short, but they become even towards the end of the segment.

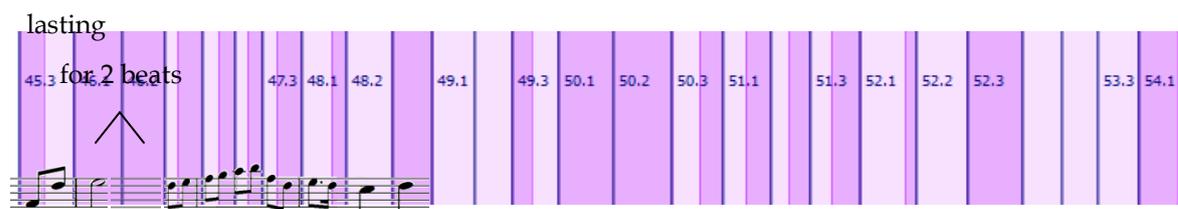


Figure 1 Graph showing note-to-note duration.

The next graph is a tempo map of all the performances of the first movement. Axis x marks the bar numbers and axis y the average tempo of each bar shown as a metronome

¹⁶ A similar approach has been taken by the Chopin Mazurkas Project by CHARM, expanding the empirical analysis by the use of 'Scapes', covering aspects as harmonic and temporal structure. See, for instance, Cook, (2007), Neta, Gold and Rink (2008). See also Cook, N. (2007), 153-4, 183-207, and, by the same author, (2009), 119-39.

markings [MM]. Vertical lines show major (red) and minor (blue) structural points. Lines connecting calculated points from one bar to another show the tempo tendency--i.e. going faster or slower—and do not represent values. Graphs of this type are populated either by a small number of performances, when I aim for a microscopic assessment, or by a large number of performances, when generally shared trends are shown.

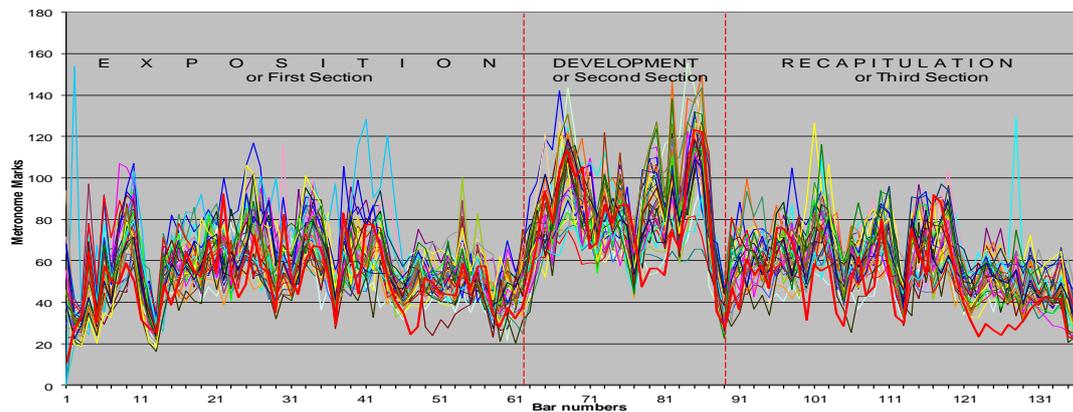


Figure 2 Tempo map of all performances of the first movement. A generalised way of seeing the general consensus among performers regarding tempo.

Another type of tempo map, showing the average tempo of each section along its black horizontal axis, points out the relation between tempo fluctuation within a section and the average tempo of the same section. Beat-to-beat calculation has been used to show a more detailed map of tempo fluctuation within a bar.

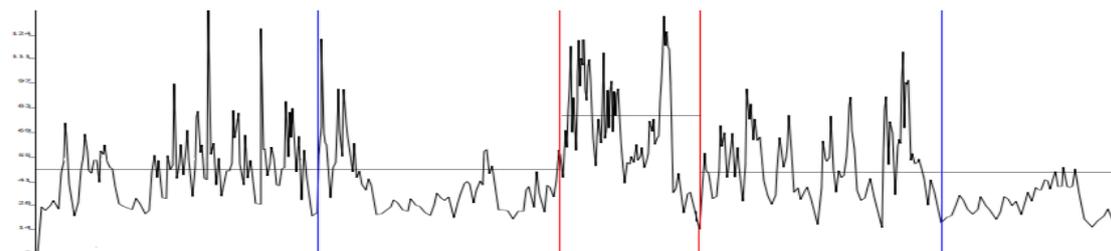


Figure 3 Movement tempo map, showing the three major sections and the avT of each section (horizontal lines).

The following all-in-one spectrogram shows the relation of tempo to dynamics. The three main sections are marked in red lines, four sub-sections are indicated in blue lines, and dynamics are shown in the form of yellow-red traces on the spectrograph.

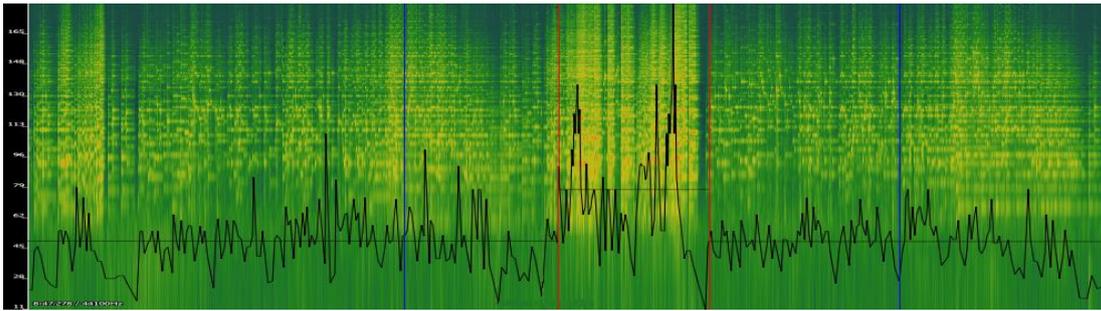


Figure 4 Spectrogram showing dynamics and tempo simultaneously.

The next graph shows the average tempo fluctuation of each performance from one section to another. Axis x shows sub-sections given in bar numbers. Axis y shows MM. The connecting lines are again used to emphasize the tempo difference between points, and do not represent values.

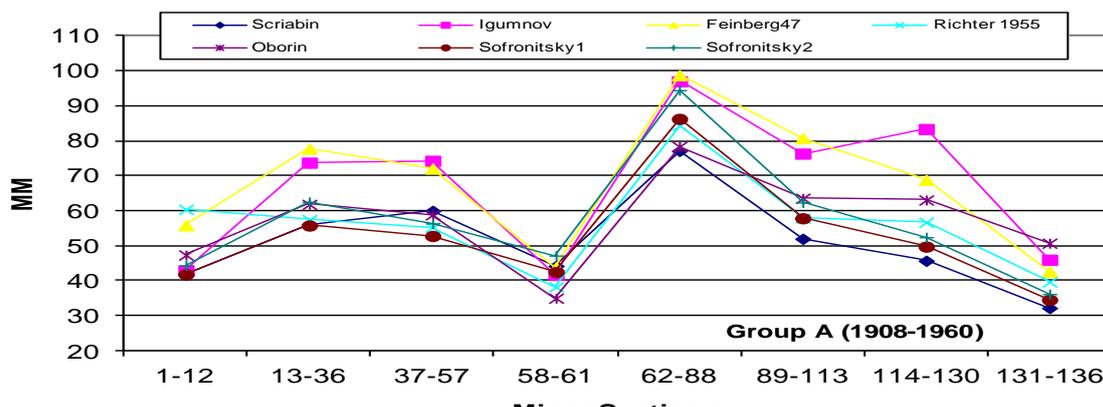


Figure 5 Graph showing tempo fluctuation in different sub-sections.

The orange lines on the next graph show the note onsets, calculated by Sonic Visualiser and verified through attentive listening. It also serves as a beat-to-beat tempo map, with axis x showing bar and beat numbers (e.g. 13.3 means bar 13, beat 3), and axis y showing MM. This type of graph allows the relationship between note-to-note rubato and beat-to-beat rubato to be examined. In the present graph, the material seems to be evenly spread in terms of note-to-note rubato. A sense of within-a-bar compensating rubato is created, as the tempo line returns regularly to the slowest tempo value at the start of each bar.

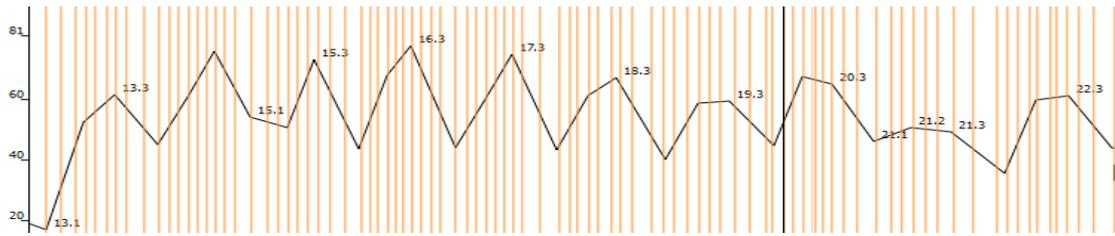


Figure 6 Note onset and tempo line projected simultaneously.

The following graph shows the tempo relationship between three voices calculated literally *on* the spectrogram. The yellow, purple and white vertical lines mark the note onsets of each voice, then each note takes its place on the spectrogram. Finally, red lines are added to show that these notes are aligned in the music score, but not in the actual performance. The left hand is clearly played earlier than the right.

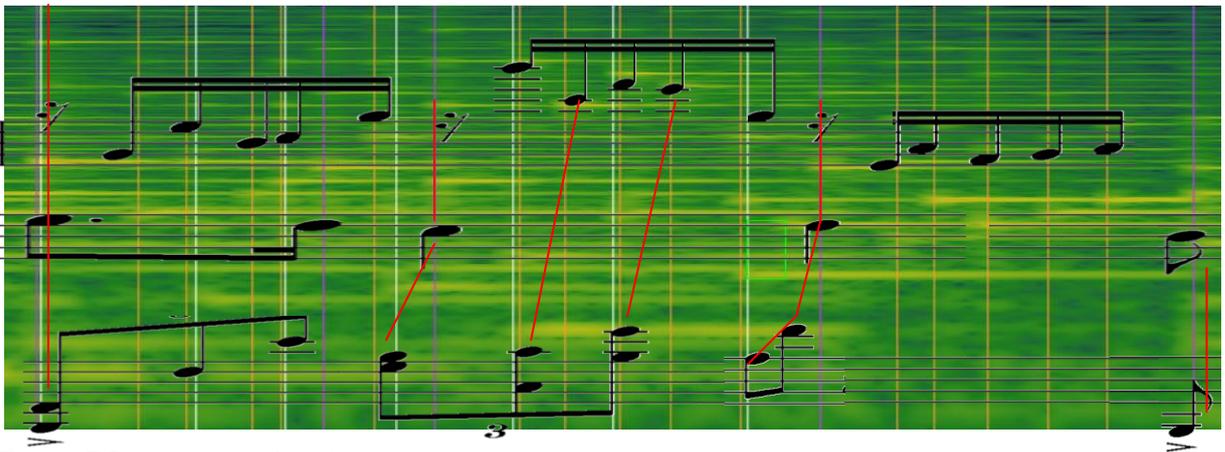


Figure 7 Spectrogram showing note onset.

Note-to-note rubato is shown here, too, with the red lines indicating note onset and the lines in bold red showing the onset of the beat. Instead of a triplet quaver, the performer here plays the two first quavers almost as semiquavers.

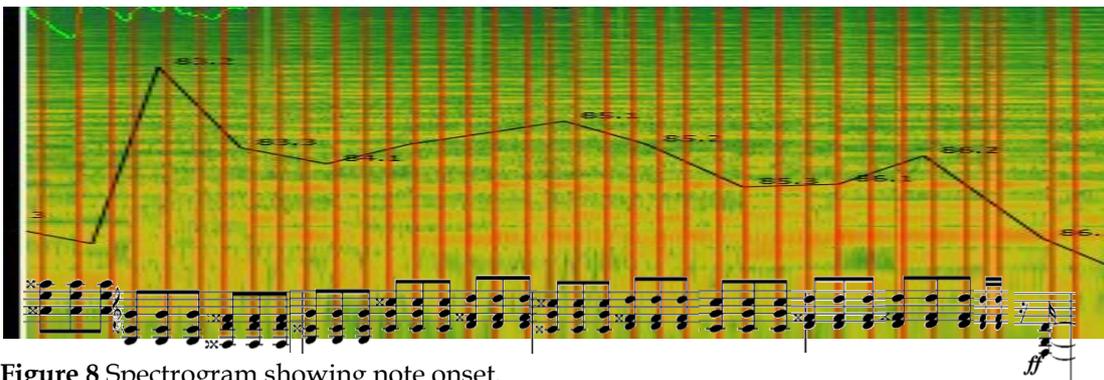


Figure 8 Spectrogram showing note onset.

CONCLUSIONS

A comparative study requires the introduction of a variety of analytical tools that, combined, can support or question each other's authority. Traditional methodology can guide this research in the sense that all the questions and answers should be addressed within the context of what of musical value can be extracted from recorded performances. Musicians' most precious tool could be their ability to listen carefully, to absorb musical notions and then deliver them to the audience, live or through recordings. My study emphasizes the need to rely on what our senses and our ears perceive in terms of sound. The tools with which modern research is endowed can then be applied with the help that empirical musicology now provides. This type of methodology enjoys the advantage of being able to handle data-rich fields like recorded performances of Scriabin's music. However, this methodology's effectiveness depends on the settings that produce the results. Cook and Clarke have a point in saying that 'a contribution that an empirical approach can make is not to be endorsed (or dismissed) simply because of its empiricism, but rather for what it can help to discover or reveal. And in order to discover or reveal anything at all, we need appropriate methods as well as good questions' (2004a, 13). This is what my research is also about: the good questions.

IV. MUSIC ANALYSIS OF THE WORK

COMPOSITIONAL HISTORY

In 1892, Scriabin (1872-1915) had just graduated from Moscow Conservatory, having received the Small Gold Medal for his distinguished ability as a composer and a performer. He started to compose the *Sonata-Fantasy op. 19 no. 2*, a work that can thus be considered as belonging to his first compositional period (1885-1903). Over the course of his life Scriabin's compositional style evolved greatly, causing musicians to divide it in two, three or even four periods of evolution in compositional style. By the end of his

short life, he had embraced Theosophy and his style had already moved towards atonality, combined with a sense of mysticism and sensuality.

Scriabin's *Second Sonata-Fantasy*, although far from his later idiom, already prefigures his later interest in colourfulness and musical 'perfume'. It is thought of a depiction of the sea, calm or wild. As stated in by Fabion Bowers in the composer's biography,

'in 1892 on a trip to Latvia, Muscovite Scriabin saw the Baltic Sea for the first time. The following year he saw it again from Yalta, with the moonlight glittering on the waters. After his first encounter with the sea, he conceived the *Second Sonata Fantasy*, a nature-thought piece, which he developed after the trip to Yalta. It took him five years to finish it, to the frustration of his publisher and mentor, Mitrofan P. Belaieff. In one of his few saved letters to Scriabin, the former writes: "Sasha, you've had the Second Sonata long enough. Don't fuss with it anymore"' (letter of August 1897, Bowers, 1996, 204).

Scriabin worked on the sonata sporadically, whenever he felt inspired, e.g. after his visit to Genoa when he saw another sea, the Mediterranean.

A more complete version of the piece was performed in 1896, when Scriabin gave a major solo recital at the Salle Erard. Scriabin was not only a promising composer, but also a very eccentric pianist, whose talent was recognized not only in his own country but also in Belgium and France. At Salle Erard, he gave the first performance of the whole *Fantasy Sonata*, indicated as being in A flat minor (not G sharp, as published), with Scriabin improvising some still missing passages. The composer's own programme note considers this work as a vision of the sea remembered. One finds in this music work 'the influence of the sea'. 'The first movement represents the quiet of a southern night on the seashore; the middle section shows caressing moonlight coming after the first darkness of night. The second movement, presto, represents the vast expanse of [the] ocean stormily agitated' (Bowers: 1996, 226).

The interaction between sound and light, preoccupied Scriabin during his lifetime. Being used to seeing sounds as colours,¹⁷ Scriabin as well as Rimsky-Korsakov 'saw' in E major

¹⁷ The ability to perceive sounds as colours is usually described as "synaesthesia" or "coloured hearing". However, the whole myth around synaesthetes, especially Scriabin, has been questioned by contemporary researchers (see Galeyev & Vanechkina, in Was Scriabin a Synaesthete?, http://prometheus.kai.ru/skriab_e.htm, accessed on 22 July 2012).

light blue or sea tint. The unusually small number of movements of which the piece is composed as well as the peculiar use of sonata form may be some of the reasons for Scriabin to describe this work as a sonata-fantasy. Indeed, the dramatic texture of both movements supports the title given and the dominant element of the sea gives to the term *fantasy* a context that may refer to the picturesque drama around the work. Moreover, the use of the term *fantasy* could refer to the fact that some of the work's themes preexisted in Scriabin's earlier works.

For instance, during 1894 he gave to the sister of his first lady-love a Waltz in G sharp minor, which was later absorbed into the *Sonata-Fantasy*. He mentioned to her: 'Natalya [his beloved at that time] creates my mood, and I create the music' (Bowers, 1996, 184). Another example of Scriabin performing his unfinished *Sonata-Fantasy* is the debut he had in Petersburg in 1895 as a pianist and composer. During a concert, he performed this piece entitled as *Presto*, i.e. the *presto* second movement of the final composition. Bowers states:

'Nikolai Findeizen's diary corroborates Stassov's enthusiasm: "This morning I went to the office and Stassov told me of a newly rising star - pianist and composer Scriabin". On Friday he played at Belaieff's and Stassov had been invited. Rimsky Korsakoff, Liadov, Blumenfeld, Lavrov and Belaieff and Stassov sat side by side. Stassov said, "At first he played his Nocturne. Very well, it was all right. And I thought, if this is all, then there's nothing new or fine to expect from him. Then he played his Fantasy [*Presto* of the *Sonata-Fantasy*] and Lord, he did well!!! We all shouted and had him repeat it instantly'" (Bowers: 1996, 196).

This premature attribution of the term *Fantasy* may be then linked to the final *Sonata-Fantasy* title of the current work. Given that the pre-existing *Presto* was the one that bore the title of *Fantasy*, it looks plausible that this movement is thought as a *fantasy* by Scriabin, and not to the first one, that was the later one of the two to be composed.

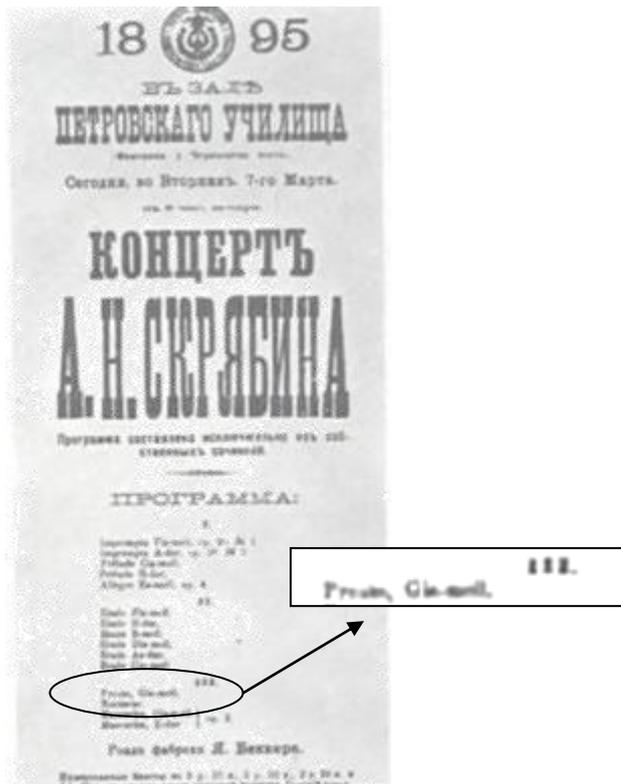


Figure 9 Poster for Scriabin’s Petersburg concert of 7 March 1895. He played the ‘*Presto, Gis-moll*’, i.e. the current second movement of the *Sonata-Fantasy*.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF FORMAL STRUCTURE¹⁸

For a comparison of recordings based on a relatively expansive work such as the *Sonata-Fantasy op. 19 n. 2*, it is vital to first understand its structure. The work’s title already suggests a conflict or ambiguity between two styles: *sonata* and *fantasia*. About the first form, Cook states that ‘there are two aspects of musical form: the surface pattern and the underlying process. And when we analyse traditional forms like sonata, we are not simply talking about the one aspect or the other, but rather about the way in which the two interact’ (Cook: 1987, 260). If one also takes into account the term of *fantasia*, the parameters involved increase dramatically. In addition, if one consults the composer’s own performance on piano rolls (especially his performance of the second movement), the parameters increase once more; Scriabin cuts some bars and alters the music material in others.

¹⁸ For analytical purposes, an annotated score of the Belaieff edition is added as an Appendix.

The work consists of two movements: an *Andante* and a *Presto*. A first impression of its structure is that there is a clear musical plan, through which the musical material is brought out. Simon Nicholls, writing the CD booklet of the Hamelin recording, indicates that Gyorgy Konyus, Scriabin's tutor in piano and composition, 'taught him a respect for form and proportion which lasted throughout his life' (Nicholls: 1996, 6).

Scriabin's devotion to traditional forms is asserted by several writers, who have noted Scriabin's care for filling in strictly numbered bars. For instance, Leonid Sabaneev, a music critic, says:

A great deal in his creative work seems to be not the result of intuition, of inspiration that had suddenly illumined him, but the result of stubborn "research" work, that possessed, if you will, a mathematical character to some extent. The traits of the ecstatic visionary in Scriabin lived side by side with traits of the rational research scholar, and the schematism which is so clear in his philosophic concept of the universe manifests itself no less strikingly also in his music, in the structure of his compositions which are so harmonious, so "rationalised" in their harmony that occasionally their form appears to be some logical conclusion rather than the creative work of their author (Sabaneev: 1975, 51).

Faubion Bowers also mentions that Scriabin often composed around certain sections of a work, specifying only the exact number of measures of material to be inserted at a later time. The composer himself characterised his method as a 'strict style', saying, "'there is nothing by accident [...] I compose according to definite principle'. Unfortunately he never spelled out the operations and premises of his system'" (Bowers, 1974, 128). Scriabin also indicated to fellow musicians Taneyev¹⁹ and Goldenweiser²⁰ that that he composed 'strictly according to "law"' (ibid.) and actually he once had made an appointment with them, in order to show them his compositional theory; however, he never made it to meet them on this purpose' (ibid.).

The score is conventionally notated, and Scriabin also gives some basic information on the character of each theme. There is no evidence of his invented and idiomatic Italian

¹⁹ Sergei Ivanovich (1856-1915), a pupil of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, was a Russian composer, pianist, teacher of composition, music theorist and author.

²⁰ Alexander Borisovich Goldenweiser (1875-1961) was a Russian pianist, teacher, composer and public figure. Rachmaninov's Second Suite Op 17 was dedicated to him.

character terms, such as *con voglia*, etc., found in his later sonatas. Still, in this early work, the presentation of new material is usually followed by a conventional Italian expression that guides a performer in terms of tempo and character, such as *rubato* (bars 23 and 30), *espressivo* (bar 37), etc. These will be considered below in the brief overview of each movement's structure.

Indeed, during my practice, my own perception of the structure of the work was linked to the thematic ideas and the Italian terminology that often accompanied them. I felt that themes were exposed in an operatic layout, as if Scriabin described different scenes of an opera. For this reason, it has been extremely uncomfortable for me to group themes and their variations into a conventional understanding of *sonata* form. I believe that for both movements the notion of *fantasy* prevails. I think that the sonata form is linked mainly to the repetition of themes in different keys and to the middle section that projects contrasting colours in comparison to the beginning and the end of each movement.

Moreover, the *Second Sonata-Fantasy* is a work in which themes are presented in a way that allows for tempo freedom. Motivic imitation, thematic variation and dialogue between themes are common. This sometimes results in performers 'cutting' their longer phrases in order to bring out the short-scale events taking place within a thematic line. On other occasions, performers tend to 'see the wood rather than the trees' and aim for longer lines. In general, there is a variety of phrasing in these performances that creates a degree of ambiguity around the interpretation of particular sections of the work. Ambiguities about the sonata that result from the different interpretations should not necessarily be criticized; on the contrary, these ambiguities are there to be explored by the performers, so the latter can find their own music language (see also Tanner: 2000, 174).

FIRST MOVEMENT: *Andante*

The metronome indication at the top of the music score is $\text{♩} = 60$. It was added on the music score by Lyadov²¹, Belaieff's 'inseparable companion-in-work' (Bowers, 1969, 241) (see Figure 10 for Lyadov's metronome marking on Peters Edition). Scriabin's delay in handing in the autograph for publishing is shown in one of Belaieff's letters to him, also mentioning the 'metronome mark issue':

I note the Second Sonata from beginning to end was in Vera Ivanovna's [Scriabin's first wife] script. This means you have shifted that chore to her. I sent it next day to be set in print. There are, as usual, far too few markings. The metronome was not indicated. In the first measures should the octaves be repeated? They are marked with ties and staccato dots. In the future, if you intend to write jointly cooperating with your wife, play the things over a few times for her. Let her insert the proper markings. These help a performer. I suggested Safonov do this for you a long time ago, but now you can do it under intimate circumstances... (Bowers, 246)

SONATE ~ FANTAISIE
(SONATE Nr. 2)

I

Op. 19 (1892 - 1897)

The image shows a page from a music score. At the top, it reads 'SONATE ~ FANTAISIE (SONATE Nr. 2)' and 'I'. Below this, the tempo is marked 'Andante' with a metronome marking of a quarter note equal to 60. The score is in 3/4 time and F# major. It features a piano introduction with a metronome marking of quarter note = 60. The music includes triplets, ritardandos, and a crescendo. The score is marked with 'p' for piano and 'cresc.' for crescendo. There are also some performance markings like 'x' and 'y'.

Figure 10. Peters Edition, *Scriabin Sonatas*, p. 34. The editor indicates that metronome marks are by Anatoli Lyadov.

At a first assessment of the music score, the first movement seems to adopt the *sonata* form, consisting of a bi-thematic exposition (bars 1-61), development (62-88) and a recapitulation in transposed keys (bars 89 to 136). Nicholls goes further, considering that 'a further device used in the later styles emerges in the *Second Sonata's* opening

²¹ Anatol Anatoly Konstantinovich Lyadov (1855-1914), was a Russian composer, teacher and conductor. He was also a member of the Advisory Board of professionals in M. Belaieff's publishing firm. Together with Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov, he passed on each composition to be published (see Bowers *Scriabin, A Biography*, p. 190).

movement: exposition, development and recapitulation all start with the same music' (Nicholls: 9). Taub, a recorded performer of the work, views the first movement as in Classical *sonata-allegro* form' (Taub: 4). However, ambiguity of form rose from the very beginning of my practice. This may be one of the reasons why Scriabin combined both forms in the title of the work, i.e. the closed *sonata* form and the more open character of the *fantasy*. Because of this double character, I prefer to use the neutral term 'section' in the thesis rather than the terminology of the *sonata* form, i.e. 'exposition, development, recapitulation'.

My own performances are predicated on the idea that there are three major sections formed in the first movement: first section or exposition (bars 1-61), second section or development (bars 62-88) and third section or recapitulation (89-136). The first and last sections include the more subtle themes, played in fragile *p* colours, while the middle section is based on a dramatic shift of the music towards *ff* through *subito* changes of dynamics (e.g. bar 72) and *crescendi* (e.g. bars 78 and 81). Moreover, I tend to divide the first section into two main sub-sections, viewing the beginning (bars 1-12) as an overture to the rest of the movement. The rest of this section (bars 13-62) is seen as a picture divided in three main scenes with themes that are indicated through the use of Italian terminology and different rhythmical effects: bar 13 starts with *pp* and flowing quaver triplets in B major, bar 23 starts a dialogue between voices and bar 45 initiates in the same key a theme of quavers as '*ben marcato il canto*' that is shared among different voices and registers.

Ambiguity of form is created from the very beginning, in the opening theme of bars 1-12, which reappears in different sections of the movement. Janet Levy's (1995, 150) contribution on structural ambiguities finds here an eloquent musical example. Although this theme serves as a first thematic material in sonata form, my impression is that it also sets the initial mood in the form of an obscure introduction to the whole work. I perceive it as an overture with the programmatic notions of a sea picture. In these bars, the basic motif is interrupted by fermatas. The presence of three fermatas (bars 1, 2, 4, 13) in the first four bars lends a reticent character to the presentation of the theme, which then needs to be presented once again, more insistently, in the following bars, until it is well established.

The triplet quavers give bars 13-19 a sense of flow. Bars 23-30 introduce a more introverted theme – indicated as '*rubato*'. Its variation is found in bars 31-37. A dialogue between voices that are constructed with motivic imitation allows one to consider the extract as 'conversational'. In addition, performers' tendency for *accelerando* and *rallentando* within a phrase, and more often, within a bar, supports the improvisatory nature of such a 'conversation'. The material of bar 37 is given a double role, thus creating another 'grey' zone of ambiguity. It is used as the end of the 7-bar variation (bars 31-37), but also as the starting point of a fresh musical idea. This is evident in all recordings. The breath that most performers take between bar 36 and 38 is telling (e.g. Tr. 14, Leonskaja's performance). Indeed, bars 37-45 present variations - marked '*espressivo*' - of the motif that is originally found in bar 29, but also push the music towards a new theme. This theme takes over in bar 45 – indicated '*ben marcato il canto*', lasting nearly until the end of the first section or exposition (end of bar 45-bar 57). In this section, three main voices complement each other by running from the upper registers to the lower ones and the opposite, in B major. The middle voice – indicated and to be played *mf* - is mainly played by the thumbs, ending in the warm tone of the middle register.

The first major section ends in an a cadential – as I perceive it – passage of bars 58-61, which seem of neutral character in terms of dynamics (*pp*) but develop the element of surprise through the shift from B major (end of bar 58) to D major (end of bar 60). In my view, these bars mark the end of the first section and the subtle transition towards the drama that is about to begin in the second section of bars 62-88. However, structural ambiguity can be created if one sees these four bars not as the ending of the first section, but as an early onset of the second section, which uses the same theme in minor mode.

The second major section or development (bars 62-88) is formally initiated at the end of bar 61 with a clear change of key from D major to different chords following the circle of fifths. This part of the first movement is free enough through the use of figuration and variation, which also offer a sense of improvisation, well linked to the notion of a *fantasy*.



Figure 11 Beginning of the middle section in the form of a development to the first movement (end of bar 61 onwards).

Thematic material of the first section is used here, in the form of triplet quavers (bars 62-70) then, as semiquavers and triplet quavers (bars 71-74), then semiquavers (bar 75), *ff* and constant *crescendo*. Ambiguity can once again be seen in the structural boundary of bars 87-88. Does the section – or development, for some performers, as previously indicated – end in bar 86, with the short semiquaver rest announcing the return to the thematic material of the first section (bar 1)? Or does the final major section really start in bar 89 with the theme of bar 13 transposed in E major? I experience both of the above musical ideas during performance. More analytically, while performing, I start bar 86 bearing in mind that in the following two bars I am going to ultimately underline and complete what has just been expressed through *ff* dynamics and tempo fluctuation. However, just after playing the triplet quavers of bar 87, I realise that what I am about to play in bar 88 is not just an end, but rather a compact reminiscence of what happened in the overture-like bars 1-12.

The third section is a copy of the first one, transcribed in other keys. The thematic material that was initiated in bar 13 is now found in bar 89, and the theme of ‘*ben marcato il canto*’ is now situated in bar 121. Both themes are now transposed in E major. This key was connected to the light blue colour of the sea. Some performers and scholars do not hesitate to relate E major to Scriabin’s synaesthetic views and attribute to it programmatic notions of sea pictures. Nicholls, for instance, states:

The second subject [meaning bar 121] is one of Scriabin’s happiest inspirations, a soaring melody placed in the middle of the texture, with glittering figuration around it like sunlight or moonlight playing or dancing waves. Scriabin saw colours when he heard music and erected an elaborate synaesthetic system on this basis. The key of E, in which this movement ends,

an unusual departure from the norm for Scriabin, was to him bluish-white, the colour of moonlight. (Nicholls: 5)



Figure 12 Theme of bar 13 now transposed in E major in bar 89.

Fantasy was distinguished from other forms 'by [its] freedom from the usual prescriptions of key and section lay-out. [It] could move through any orbit of keys and juxtapose figures and textures freely' (Ratner: 1985, 308). In the present section, *fantasy* is not developed as freely as Ratner describes, but there is a general tendency for variation and freedom in the way one material follows the other. Indeed, in my performance of the work in the recent years I tend to underline the improvisatory character of *fantasy* rather than that of the sonata. Put more simply, I always take into consideration the three basic sections of the movement, but prefer to highlight its short-term events within phrases and sub-sections. On the contrary, in my first performances of the work I tried to show the whole, rather than the parts. To use Taub's words, my view is now closer to the element of *fantasy*, which appears 'as plasticity of musical pulse in the ways that the themes are presented and developed in the brooding, improvisatory *Andante*' (Taub: 1994, 4). I thus divide the movement in the following way during practice and performance: an obscure and hesitant start (bars 1-12), a relatively static but lyrical, i.e. of singing quality, second theme (13-36), a third step towards a more flowing but still serene section (bars 37-61), a dramatic climax, i.e. a climax with turbulent contrasts in dynamics and tempo (bars 62-88), and then, the repeat of the first three minor sections in alternative ways (bars 89-136).

SECOND MOVEMENT: *Presto*, ♩ =96-100

The second movement's form is not obviously related to sonata form. Taub writes in his CD sleeve notes that the second movement is 'a rondo' (Taub: 4). However, the close relationship between sections gives the impression that this is written in the form of a

sonata without development or 'Type 1' sonata, as J. A. Hepokoski and W. Darcy, for example, describe:

[...] most elementary type of double-rotational sonata. The essence of the Type 1 sonata lies in the minimal retransitional-link (or lack of a link) between the two large-structural blocks: the expositional and recapitulatory rotations. In this type of sonata the second rotation begins immediately or very shortly after the end of the first with the sounding of P1²² in the original tonic. This immediate rejoining of the tonic and a recapitulatory P1 is a cardinal feature of the Type 1 sonatas. [...]

Nevertheless, even if we allow for ellipses, expansions, and recompositions, the impression given by the second rotation is that of an immediately undertaken, complementary rotation that balances and resolves the expositional layout. Lacking both repeat signs and a development, the Type 1 sonata, often a succession of entertaining melodies or contrasting topics, has connotations of lightness, economy, simplicity of elaboration, and relative brevity. This is especially true of fast-movement Type 1s (Hepokoski and Darcy: 2006, 345-346).

Still, the improvisatory character of the themes and the straightforward manner in which one follows the other is explicit. This may again support the idea of a spontaneously unfolding *fantasy* rather than that of a rigorously constructed *sonata*. The movement can be divided into three main sections: first section (bars 1-40), second section of transitional character (bars 41-78) and third section (bars 79-110).

The second movement starts in *sotto voce*, with the right hand quaver triplets in *moto perpetuo* and the left hand's octaves 'marking the beat with discreet persistence' (Dubourg: 6). *Dolcissimo* is announced at bar 17, with thematic variation in B major. The later return of the original theme in G sharp minor in bar 25 soon gives way once again to a first variation (bar 29), then a second and crucial one in bar 33 that leads the music to the second major section initiating a second theme from bar 41 onwards.



Figure 13 Second movement, first theme in relentless pulse of quaver triplets, starting in *p* played *sotto voce*.

²² Meaning: first module of primary-theme zone, p. xxvi.

This theme is marked '*ben marcato il canto*'. It explicitly contrasts the first *sotto voce* theme with a distinct melodramatic melodic line now in the right hand. This new theme changes suddenly the atmosphere of the urgent triplet motives of the beginning (Figure 14). In relation to the 'programme' of a sea picture, this section gives me the impression that one takes a closer view of the waves and their movement, whereas the first theme gave a panoramic aspect of the scene. Furthermore, the succession of partly differentiated themes without substantial space for development emphasises the character of *fantasy*, in agreement with Ratner's previous words. As stated above, one should not overlook the fact that Scriabin had first composed the second movement and had called it '*Fantasy*'. As with the first movement, the second one too is strongly linked to the idea of *fantasy*, which is supported by a tight juxtaposition of the thematic material, the lack of a development, the sudden change of chords (e.g. bars 53 and 67) and of mode (e.g. bars 67 and 71).



Figure 14 Second movement, second theme, in E flat minor.

During this section (bars 41-78), there is a wide exploration of chords related to the second theme. The final bars of the middle transitional section mark the return to the home key of G sharp minor. Owing to the preceding improvisational character of the second part, the final section of the work sounds as a recapitulation (bars 79-92), especially because of the precise repeat of the first theme in exactly the same key. What differs now is the addition of new material in the sense of a coda (bars 93-110). Bryce Morrison, writing in Fergus-Thompson's sleeve-notes, remarks: 'in the second [sonata-fantasy] it is as if Scriabin, like Shakespeare's Prospero "by his art had put the wild waters in a roar", had briefly subdued, re-energised and finally terminated their

violence' (Morrison: 2). I personally view this coda as the resolution of an unfinished theme, in agreement with Siegfried Schibli,²³ who points out that 'this theme is left incomplete until its final appearance near the end of the movement' (quoted in Nicholls : 9). Or, finally, this end may be another type of 'catharsis' to the work, however obscure that may appear.

CONCLUSIONS

Both movements of the work bear characteristics of *sonata* form, but with an eloquent improvisatory character. The terms *Fantasia* and *Presto* relate eventually to the pre-existence of the second movement as a piece on its own that needed a title in order to be added to Scriabin's recital programmes. Then, when the first movement was composed and Scriabin formed his second *sonata*, it is conceivable that he did not want to overlook the pre-existing title attributed to the second half of his composition. Moreover, the second movement of the *Sonata-Fantasia*, although strictly planned in the way that one theme follows the other, gives the impression of a *sonata* without development with emotional turbulence and the character of freedom of a *fantasia*. The melodic lines are explored not in terms of melodic change, but rather as harmonic transitions. In other words, the basic themes remain stable throughout the movement, although the harmonic background keeps evolving.

If one finally takes into consideration that Scriabin attempts to depict the sea in its calm and agitated versions, with the waves been musically sketched as repetitive, dynamic and multi-dimensional, then maybe the *sonata* and *fantasia* can be more easily related to each other: *sonata* for the strict plan of a returning theme, *fantasia* for an improvisatory, intuitive and freshly self-renewing music material.

²³ Music critic for the Basler Zeitung.

V. SCRIABIN, CHOPIN AND THE PhD RECITAL PROGRAMME

I chose the programme of the PhD recital with two parameters in mind: the application of knowledge gleaned through my study of the *Sonata-Fantasy* to the performance of another Scriabin work (in order to assess the general applicability of my findings); and the application of this knowledge to the performance of repertoire by other composers, especially those who bear affinities with the Scriabin idiom.

For the PhD recital, two Scriabin works were chosen: the *Second Sonata-Fantasy op.19 n.2* and the *Preludes op.11*. An important reason is that both works were composed over the same period of time and belong to the same compositional stage of Scriabin works. Scriabin worked on both nearly simultaneously, from 1888 to 1896 for the *Preludes op.11* and from 1892 to 1897 for his *Second Sonata-Fantasy op.19 n.2*.

In addition, Scriabin's *Preludes op.11* presents a kaleidoscope of tonalities by following the circle of fifths. With reference to texture, one finds specific intervals for the motives of the melodic line within each piece, as well as polyphonic layering and polyrhythm. Metronome markings are indicated for each piece and are considered, although Scriabin perhaps did not approve of them. Indeed, his tempi change constantly, as the music score is full of *rits.*, agogic accents, indications for *rubato* or *accelerando*, all of which inevitably lead the performer to constantly shift rhythm within each prelude. One should rely then on the general performance character of each piece, indicated at its beginning in Italian terminology, next to the metronome marking likely prescribed by his publisher, Belaieff.

Scriabin thus turns these pieces into twenty four studies on style. During practice of the *Preludes*, my experience from all Scriabin recordings gave a new perspective to my perception of the music score. I now had the confidence to rely more on factors such as rests, blurring effects, dynamics, and pedal echoes. I also had new insights into Scriabin's Italian terminology printed in the music score. Having experienced with the *Sonata-Fantasy* how different musicians interpret the printed score and translate it into sound, I felt more at ease translating this new repertoire into sound myself. In addition, as I prepared, I still listened to several recordings, especially those by Sofronitsky,

Horowitz and Richter, all of which helped me to generate a performance strategy. Yet, after listening to the *Preludes*, my general conclusion, at least concerning my own performance of this piece, was that there was still potential for more freedom in my performances, regarding all performance features, especially tempo fluctuation and variety of tone colour.

Other repertoire in my recital included Chopin, in an attempt to assess how this research could influence the practice and performance of repertoire by other composers. According to Bowers (1974, 29), Vasily Safonov, Scriabin's teacher and mentor, had called his student 'Russia's Chopin'. Indeed, the mystical tone colour and the fragile blending of melodic and harmonic lines in Scriabin's idiom remind the listener of Chopin's compositional style. However, Scriabin was also thought of as merely imitating Chopin, mainly due to Scriabin's first compositional period, which follows a 19th century idiom close to the Romantic style.²⁴

In fact, affinities not only concern blending of the sound, but also compositional forms followed by the two composers. Both of them, especially Scriabin, were keen to use shorter forms, such as the mazurka and the prelude. To juxtapose the two composers' idioms and to assess the genuine and distinct character of Scriabin's compositions, my PhD piano recital focused on works of similar musical forms by these composers.

Moreover, my research deciphers techniques of expression that pianists have used while recording Scriabin's *Second Sonata-Fantasy*, such as rubato through agogic accents and tenutos, and the use of dynamics in relation to pedalling. The registration of these techniques contributes to deeper knowledge of alternatives on expression during performance, not only of the *Sonata-Fantasy*, but also of other works by Scriabin and other composers. Taking into account the existence of these alternatives, as a performer, I experimented with Chopin's music, by focusing on works of similar form or length. My goal during practice was the use of performance elements in Chopin's music, including rubato and voicing assessed during my research on Scriabin. Chopin's *Fantasy op. 49* was paired with Scriabin's *Sonata-Fantasy*, in order to compare their hints of fantasy.

²⁴ See, for instance, Lim, Seong-Ae, in *The influence of Chopin in Piano Music on the Twenty-Four Preludes for Piano, Opus 11 of Alexander Scriabin*, 2002, DMA, Ohio State University, Music.

Furthermore, I practised Chopin's *Mazurkas op.24* as a model to compare with Scriabin's *Preludes*. The recital bears the title 'Miniatures and Fantasies', which refers to the compact writing of the *Preludes* and the *Mazurkas*, as well as to the openness of form in the *Sonata-Fantasy* and the Chopin *Fantasy op. 49*. Indeed, Siepmann calls Scriabin 'a miniaturist' (Siepmann: 5) and the same could apply to Chopin because of the similar musical genres that both composers explored.

While preparing for the recital, further affinities became apparent, particularly the programmatic notions underpinning these works. Chopin's opuses 24 and 49 latently or explicitly refer to Poland in a patriotic way. The Scriabin *Sonata-Fantasy* refers to the sea, calm or wild. As with his *Preludes*, they act as a travel postcard, as one can read a specific date and place at the end of each prelude in the music score. Furthermore, Scriabin and Chopin were renowned for their ability to improvise. The use of fantasy thus was a natural choice for both composers, whose inclination for improvisation found a natural affinity in the performance of such an open music form.

The listening experience gained from the Scriabin recordings has enabled me to perform Chopin's *Fantasy op. 49* and *Mazurkas op. 24* with a fresh performance strategy. For the *Fantasy*, I have relied more on the improvisatory character connected with Scriabin's *Sonata-Fantasy*. Having noted the constant tempo fluctuation of the latter's first movement, as well as the verve of the second, I experimented by using these elements analogically in Chopin's *Fantasy op. 49*. Regarding *Mazurkas op. 24*, I practised and performed this piece simultaneously with the *Sonata-Fantasy*. My research on recordings fostered a general rethinking of the music in these four short musical pieces, especially in terms of sound projection, pedalling, agogic accents and rests. My new approach includes 'emptying' the sound in special moments, when rests occur, with discreet blurring effects and time taken for the subtle projection of melodic lines.

Another factor that influenced me in forming the recital programme was that Scriabin's and Chopin's works are often recorded together.²⁵ This shows that other performers relate the music of these two composers or believe that buyers who enjoy Chopin's

²⁵ See, for instance, Richter's Prague recording with the 1972 performance of the *Sonata-Fantasy*, as well as Leonskaja's and Oborin's.

music would also listen to Scriabin's and vice versa. Finally, Barbier's comment on Richter's view of the relation between Scriabin and Chopin is eloquent: 'For Richter, the universe of Scriabin is not the same as that described by Vladimir Sofronitsky or skimmed over by Horowitz, but the ultimate outcome of the art of the piano according to Chopin' (Barbier: 5).

Ultimately my research has influenced my way of reading and perceiving a musical work while practising it. In the past I tended to practise a work without consciously building a performance strategy, even when I felt ready to perform this work, after I thought I had 'understood' it. I thus attributed to its parts a certain musical meaning and stuck to this meaning forever. In reality, it seems that a work 'matured' in my mind and under my hands on its own. What has now changed is my level of openness of thought, and a greater readiness to accept more possibilities in relation to realising different performances. Therefore, the Chopin pieces, as well as the Scriabin *Preludes* of this recital, have been practised with the broad-mindedness of a musician who realises the potential diversity of alternative performances, but who recognises that one must be followed for each performance.

VI. THE SCRIABIN AND IGUMNOV PIANO ROLLS

INTRODUCTION

During his lifetime, Scriabin toured Europe and the USA performing his own works. Although he had relatively small hands, they must have been extremely flexible. He could perform his own sonatas, which are in many cases of transcendental technical difficulty. He recorded his own compositions in 1908 and 1910 for the Hupfeld and Welte-Mignon companies on piano rolls which partly reveal his personal pianistic style. His reputation as a pianist is confirmed by the accounts of his contemporaries, his tutors and the music critics of the time.

Konstantin Igumnov (1873-1948) was taught by famous pianists including Siloti, Taneyev and N. S. Zverev, who also taught Scriabin. He performed a lot, concentrating mainly on the Romantic repertoire, and later became a famous professor at the Moscow Conservatory, where he taught for almost fifty years. He recorded the *Second Sonata-Fantasy* in Russia in 1910 for the Welte-Mignon Company. Lev Oborin, a student of his who would in time tutor Ashkenazy, having recorded the specific Scriabin sonata, says about his tutor: 'Igumnov's performance preferences were quite clearly defined and unchanging. "His authors" were Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Liszt.'²⁶ Jakov Milstein, professor at Moscow Conservatory and another Igumnov student, says: 'It is correct to say that it was Igumnov who revived many compositions of the great Russian author [sic] in concert practice'. He goes on by referring to Igumnov's manner, as 'full of simplicity, nobility and prudence' (ibid.).

THE SCRIABIN PIANO ROLLS

RESOURCES

THE 1998 AND 2007 MUZYKA PIANO ROLL EDITIONS

Scriabin recorded the *Second Sonata-Fantasy* for the Hupfeld company of Leipzig in 1908 and 1910.²⁷ He recorded two versions of the sonata: the first for Phonola-72 (rolls Nos. 13438 and 13439), the second for another Hupfeld model, the Animatic (Nos. 52093 and 52094). Scriabin's opinion of the Phonola is eloquent: 'It is really impossible to imagine anything better than to possess an instrument that combines performing capacities with genius technical means which are so helpful for the performer'.²⁸

²⁶ From Igumnov's biography at <http://igumnov.inlipetsk.ru/en/about/> (accessed 29 June 2015), the website of the 'Open All-Russian Igumnov Competition of Young Pianists'.

²⁷ Hupfeld's letter to Scriabin's manager is dated 17 January 1908 and marked Lausanne (Switzerland).

²⁸ 27 January 1908, quoted after the Catalogue of Hupfeld's phonola rolls (translation from the Muzyka 2007 edition)



Figure 15 Label on the roll containing the first movement, Hupfeld-Animatic piano roll No. 52093 (own piano roll copy).

The piano roll used for the transcription of the second movement was produced in 1910 for the Phonola-72²⁹ player piano. This indicates that the company continued to produce piano rolls for the older Phonola player pianos, despite Hupfeld having already introduced its new DEA Animatic model by 1910.

Muzyka Edition³⁰ published the transcription of the piano roll in 1998. The transcripts were made by Pavel Vassilievich Lobanov, a key-figure in the dissemination of the piano rolls who has worked at reconstructing Scriabin's own piano roll performances using player pianos. He is a pianist, a tutor, and a pupil of Vladimir Vladimirovich Sofronitsky.³¹

Muzyka Edition published the transcript of the Second Sonata in 2007. In its preface, it also analyses the first 1998 edition of the same work. According to the preface to the 2007 edition, the method of transcription used for that edition

'has no precedents. It is precise and, according to Sofronitsky's description, fully objective. In this respect, Lobanov's efforts with regard to Scriabin's heritage are especially important. Lobanov's transcripts provide fascinating information about the composer's own vision of his works; moreover, they allow some questionable

²⁹ The number 72 indicated the number of keys. Thus, the Phonola-72 had 72 keys. However, in this model, the F# is missing from the fourth octave, but included in the Belaieff edition of the *Second Sonata*.

³⁰ The Muzyka 1998 and 2007 editions were produced by the A. N. Scriabin Memorial Museum, Moscow.

³¹ Lobanov worked as a balance engineer for the Melodiya recording company. Other projects involving piano roll recordings include the archival Welte-Mignon recordings of Joseph Hofmann, Anna Esipova and other 20th-century pianists, as well as recordings of Grieg, Ravel, Rachmaninov and Stravinsky performing their own work.

details in both the works' manuscripts and their printed publications to be corrected (which concerns the Preludes op. 11 Nos. 1 and 14 and the Second Piano Sonata, in particular). This was mentioned by the highly authoritative Professor Aleksandr Borisovich Goldenweiser in 1960, when Muzyka was going to publish Lobanov's earliest transcript – that of Scriabin's Poem op. 32 No.1'.



Figure 16 Muzyka's 1998 and 2007 editions of *Sonata-Fantasy No. 2*.

The 1998 Muzyka edition only contained the transcription of the first movement of the sonata. The 2007 version also includes the second movement, interpreted by V. Rubtsova, author of the preface to the 2007 edition, and transcribed by P.V. Lobanov. Thus, the transcription of the first movement is from piano roll No. 52093, and the transcription of the second is from piano roll No. 13439.

A copy of this piano roll has been made for the purposes of this study by the piano roll collector Julian Dyer. The resources accessed so far are: a) a copy of the Hupfeld No. 52093 first movement piano roll; b) a copy of the Hupfeld No. 52093 second movement piano roll; c) Pavel Lobanov's 1998 piano roll transcription of the second movement; d) Pavel Lobanov's 2007 piano roll transcription of both movements; e) recorded performance by P.V. Lobanov of the second movement.

For the purposes of the Muzyka editions, the music has been deciphered:

visually, i.e. immediately from the punch tape, rather than by ear. The parameters of the author's performance reflected in the text are: (1) all the notes (depressed) by the performer; (2) the performance's rhythm and tempo; (3) dynamic nuances; (4) pauses; (5) the sustaining pedal (marked by lines). Above the staff is the diagram of tempo changes with metronome markings (Muzyka, 2007, 9).

Since the musical text is transcribed directly from the punch tape rather than by ear, tempo distortions (detonation) due to mechanical imperfections of the reproducing pianos have been avoided.

Figure 17 shows two bars as they are printed in the *Muzyka 2007* edition. Three systems are simultaneously shown: the piano roll tempo fluctuation as a graph, Lobanov's piano roll transcription, and below it, the original music score (Belaieff edition). I shall be using this method of presentation henceforth.



Figure 17 P. Lobanov's transcription of the *Second Sonata*. The red circles show some differences between Scriabin's piano roll performance and the Belaieff edition of the score.

Finally, Leikin's article in *Performance Practice Review* (Spring 1996) on the Scriabin piano rolls in general is also an important source of information about Scriabin's piano roll performances. This article has served the current study as a model of piano roll assessment. It has also offered important bibliographical references that relate to Scriabin's piano playing. However, the Welte-Mignon recording mechanism, on which Leikin's article focuses, is different from the Hupfeld mechanism used to produce the current Scriabin piano rolls. Only Igumnov recorded this work for the Welte-Mignon. The Welte-Mignon master roll encoded in ink performance features such as tempo, dynamics and pedalling which were then punched and prepared as second masters for copying. In contrast, the Hupfeld recording sessions produced an ad hoc punched piano roll of the note onset, note duration and dynamic accents; the editor then added pedal markings and dynamics by hand.

A controversial aspect of these recording techniques is that the Welte-Mignon company avoided editing the piano rolls after the recording, because of the difficulties inherent in editing dynamic encoding, nor did they encourage performers to attend the editing sessions. If the performer was not happy with the final result, they could repeat the whole session; this term could even be part of the contract.³² Hupfeld, on the other hand, tended to edit wrong notes and add perforations for pedalling and dynamic accents. To conclude, Leikin's work is adjusted to another piano roll mechanism, which shows that Igumnov's recorded performance, if not the others, bears verifiable features such as pedalling, whereas the Scriabin Hupfeld piano roll cannot include such information. Nonetheless, Leikin's work can still be used as a guideline on performance features that may – or may not – stand out after an assessment of the Hupfeld piano rolls.

THE PIANO ROLLS AS VISUAL DOCUMENTS

After prolonged research on the Internet, in museums and piano roll collections, copies of the following piano rolls were obtained: the Hupfeld Animatic Nos. 52093 and 52094. Figure 18 provides an example of the kind of information the piano rolls in question provide: perforations mark note onset, note duration and the sustaining pedal (at the bottom of paper). Dynamics and tempo marks are printed rather than punched into the paper, meaning that their performance relies purely on the pianist's taste.

³²The Pianola Institute website has this to say about the problem: 'Welte dynamic coding is also difficult to edit effectively, since it is based on crescendos and diminuendos, which have an effect on all subsequent notes, until one of the various dynamic limits is reached. Ampico was not dissimilar, but it had an extensive and well-documented editing department, with dozens of musicians and technicians, whose traces remained in existence well into the 1990s, whereas Welte simply did not. And Welte, uniquely amongst the main four roll recording companies, did not encourage its pianists to share in the editing process. Indeed, there was virtually no editing process: pianists could listen to their rolls once perforated, and if they were unsatisfied with them, they could choose to record them again, but there was no suggestion of the original recordings being alterable in any way. The Welte recording contract of the British pianist, Fanny Davies, which has survived at the Royal College of Music in London, spells these conditions out very clearly' (<http://archive.is/W66M>, accessed 2 July 2015).

Dynamic accents

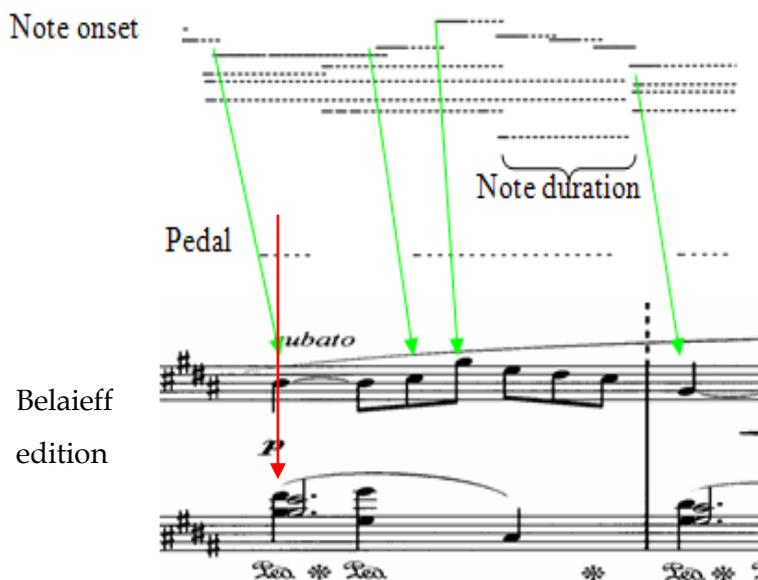


Figure 18 Piano roll perforations for a bar from the first movement.

RECORDED PERFORMANCES OF THE PIANO ROLLS

An informal recording of both movements based on the Hupfeld Animatic piano rolls Nos. 52093 and 52094 has been made by Julian Dyer on a Steck piano. For the purposes of this study, he did not use the tempo lever to change the tempo, so we hear the pulse as the composer played it. The second movement has also been recorded by P.V. Lobanov and recently issued through the A. N. Scriabin Memorial Museum, Moscow.³³

COINCIDENCE OF FINDINGS FROM DIFFERENT RESOURCES

The piano rolls as notational tools (i.e. as perforated text), the Muzyka piano roll transcriptions and the recorded performances seem to coincide in general terms in relation to their performance features. Scriabin's own performance presents differences from the Belaieff music score, but the transcription of the piano roll cannot reveal all the minute discrepancies between the printed text (Belaieff edition) and the actual

³³ This recording is unlabeled. It does not provide any information about the circumstances of its production. It only refers to Pavel Lobanov as its producer.

performance. Lobanov does indeed attempt to register the music text using conventional notation, especially in cases where it appears to be different from the Belaieff edition. However, tempo fluctuations that relate to note-to-note rubato, for instance, cannot be traced in Lobanov's transcription which, despite the use of a tempo indicator over each bar and the *rubato* indication in the form of a line in cases of temporal dislocation between the hands, employs traditional musical notation.

Moreover, the Muzyka edition is not error free. For instance, in bar 70 (II), the left hand triplets do not fall from G# to E, but remain on G# (Figure 19). This 'performance erratum' should normally have been easily discovered, if the piano roll had actually been read as a text – as Muzyka claims it was – and each perforation had been meticulously registered as a note. On the other hand, if one was familiar with the work, the listening experience would also have helped in detecting the difference. In fact, it seems that in both ways the divergent notation could be easily revealed. The existence of twelve consecutive foreign notes would be difficult to go unnoticed.

Nevertheless, Lobanov's transcriptions can still work for the contemporary performer as an alternative tool that sheds light on the shifts in tempo and their nature. However, the limitations of a printed document like the 2007 transcription, lead one to believe that Lobanov's goal is actually a more accurate printed edition of the sonata's text – an edition Scriabin could have rewritten with his own hands – and not a detailed rendering of the subtle qualities of Scriabin's pulse and sound, which could be discernible in part when the piano roll is played.

Figure 19 Bars 69-70 (II). The piano roll shows that Scriabin plays triplets of G# and A#. The Belaieff printed score and Muzyka edition show different notes.

Tempo graph

Lobanov's piano roll transcription

Belaieff music score

Own corrections

Figure 20 The second system is the Muzyka edition, the third the score. Note the misreading in the Muzyka edition in the transcription of bar 70 (II), and my own corrections shown on the fourth and final system (Tr. 1, Scriabin piano roll).

PERFORMANCE PROPERTIES AND IMPEDIMENTS

Before taking into account the piano rolls as texts and the sound produced by their performance as Scriabin's personal choice, it is necessary to confirm which performance features can be objectively registered through the piano roll recording techniques. The rolls' 'objectivity' is related to their ability to be reproduced, which is to say performed each and every time in exactly the same way, given that the performer does not manipulate levers that affect the performance outcome (tempo lever, dynamics lever etc.).

However, the Hupfeld player pianos for which the composer recorded this work present several shortcomings that become a severe obstacle when attempting to decipher invariable performance features from the piano rolls.

EDITING ISSUES

The piano rolls bear witness to Scriabin's spontaneous interpretation of his work. Differences between these performances and the 1898 score can still be evaluated and illuminate different musical possibilities for this sonata which contemporary performers could experiment with and possibly integrate into their own view of the work.

A first editing issue is whether or not to add missing marks that would prolong or reduce sound duration. For instance, in certain bars Scriabin does not repeat a chord, but holds down the notes instead as if the chords were tied. In these cases, especially in the more relaxed sections of the piece, it is plausible that the ties may have been mistakenly omitted by the publisher of the score. In which case, Scriabin's performance strategy could be incorporated into contemporary performances as well as in a newer printed edition of the sonata (Figure 21).

In Lobanov's commentary in the 2007 *Muzyka* edition, he writes about bar 57 (I):

On the first beat, the chord is arpeggiated and begins with a B in the left hand; at the beginning of the third beat, the same chord is not played again by the composer, but sustained using the pedal, although all known editions repeat this chord. We will dare hypothesise here that there has been some kind of misunderstanding: the composer probably forgot to add a tie and the arpeggiato slur, since it is impossible for all the notes in the chord to be played simultaneously, as the left hand is busy in another register. In this bar, there is a substantial delay in the passage to *pianissimo*. There is no need to repeat this broad chord here, and the composer proves that in his own performance. Let's hope the editors will note this in subsequent editions of this sonata, and include this difference as the composer's perspective.³⁴

The idea of editing a printed edition by taking the composer's own performance as evidence is not new in musicological circles. The dangers of such experiments are, however, numerous and multifaceted. Referring to this modern tendency among scholars, Bowen states:

The implication is clear: the composer's performance is privileged in some way and this performance adds to our information *about the work* in a way which another less authoritative performance would not. Recorded performances by composers become performance evidence in the same way as metronome marks or other directions or annotations on the score. The irony here is that, just as Beethoven's multiple and varied metronome marks do nothing to determine an authoritative standard tempo for his works, Stravinsky's multiple and varied accounts of his own works on record are equally unhelpful in establishing a single standard for performance. Surely we value single performances and single sets of metronome marks by composers too highly (Bowen, 1996, 18-19).

Figure 21 The possibility of using the transcription – and of the piano roll that produced it – for editing purposes. In the above bars Scriabin's performance is marked by tied notes which have probably been mistakenly omitted from the printed edition (Tr. 2, Scriabin performing bars 57-59 (I)).

³⁴ Muzyka 2007, p. 57, translated from Russian to Greek, then to English.

Arpeggiated chords are a very common characteristic in Scriabin's recordings. In the *Second Sonata*, he arpeggiates chords in the same passages as the majority of other performers, especially in places where a fairly small hand cannot encompass the intervals (Figure 22).

Figure 22 All the chords are arpeggiated in bars 55-57 (I). The last arpeggiated chord brings the exposition to a close and begins with the bottom note in the left hand (**Tr. 3**).

Most chords are arpeggiated, especially during slow sections. Broken chords are an indication of Scriabin's stylistic preferences (Figure 23), but it is also a performance trait common in Chopin's music, which had been a major influence on the compositional technique in Scriabin's early work.



Figure 23 The chord in bar 50 (I) can be played without being arpeggiated, even by a small hand, meaning that Scriabin is demonstrating his aesthetic preferences (Tr. 4).

Another reason for applying arpeggiated chords may be linked to voicing. For instance, in Figure 24, the delay in the performance of the top F# of the chord reinforces the role of the treble semiquavers that form a second voice; through the slight dislocation of its beat onsets, this melodic line stands out more clearly in relation to the left hand thumb voice. Still, one has to wonder if Scriabin would even think to adjust his technique to the recording limitations of the Hupfeld mechanism; I think not.



Figure 24 Bar 52 (I). An approximate notation of delayed arpeggiated chords. Arpeggiation offers easier voicing (Tr. 5).

A second editing issue relates to the correction of possible wrong notes. For example, in bars 69-70 of the second movement in G# minor, the Belaieff edition contains a controversial A# in the repeated triplets in the left hand (Figure 20). This A# does not match the harmonic skeleton of the passage, which is establishing C# minor and suggestive of E major (bars 71-74 in the Muzyka edition). In addition, there is an A♯ in bar 72 in the right hand (Muzyka edition; bars 72 and 74 (II) in the Belaieff edition) that can be used as an additional argument in favour of a potential correction of the A# to an A♯ (Figure 26 and Figure 27). Performance tradition tends to insist on the choice of A♯ in the debate: Yonty Solomon notes it himself on the piano score (Figure 27), while performers generally perform it as A♯. However, the answer is provided by the composer himself: Scriabin performs these triplets with A#.

300
225
175
132
110

69 *p* *тен.*

71 *p* *cresc.* *m.d.* *f*

73 *p* *cresc.* *m.d.* *f* *dim.*

*) Такты 71-72 текста публикации А.Сcriабин не играет.

Figure 25 The debate over A: is it an A# or A? Scriabin plays A#. (Tr. 6).

тен.

тен.

p *cresc.* *m.d.* *f*

Figure 26 The Compozitor Publishing House has an A#.



Figure 27 Yonty Solomon's specific indication that the student should play an A \sharp , written on Belaieff score.

In his performance, Scriabin tends to alter note values, for instance by turning some quavers of the right hand into triplets, which was originally planned only for the left hand (Figure 28).



Figure 28 Alteration of note duration, Muzyka 2007.

Scriabin sometimes tends to leave out or add notes in the left hand which relate to the harmonic skeleton, whereas he leaves the right-hand melody as it is in the published score; this occurs for instance in bars 34-36 (I) (Figure 29). He also adds and removes some bars towards the end of the second movement: he omits bars 71-72 and 75-76 (II) of the music score, and changes bars 77-78 (II) substantially. It could then be claimed that altering a note, such as in bar 69 (I) could simply be for Scriabin another variation on the originally published printed score.



Figure 29 Minor note changes in the left hand; such changes are quite common in composers' performances of their own works.

Bars 71-78 (II) are also analysed by Lobanov in *Muzyka Edition* (2007), who stresses that these alterations may well be due to the development of Scriabin's compositional style. When he recorded this sonata 11 years after its publication, he was already into his third compositional period. It is natural for composers, especially those whose philosophical and compositional ideals has evolved dramatically, to alter their earliest works, refreshing them with new ideas that bring the work closer to their current views. In this passage (bars 71-78), which repeats the previous one, Scriabin omits one of the two nearly identical phrases: he does not play bars 71-72, but proceeds directly from bar 70 to bar 73 instead (Figure 31). The passage in which he changes some elements and omits others seems to be the result of his not having adequately practised playing the sonata from the score or that he did not care to perform precisely the original version.

300
225
175
132
110

69 *p* *sf* (#)

69 *p* *sf* *ten*

71 *p* *m.d.* *cresc.* *m.d.* *m.d.* *f*

300
225
175
132
110

71 *p* *cresc.* *f* *dim.*

73 *p* *cresc.* *m.d.* *m.d.* *m.d.* *f* *dim.*

*) Такты 71-72 текста публикации А.Сcriabin не играет. 16784

Figure 30 The note at the bottom of the score indicates that Scriabin does not perform bars 71 and 72 at all.

300
225
175
132
110

75¹⁾ *mf* *cresc.* *cresc.*

73 *mf*

77 *sf* *dim.* *sf* *dim.*

*) Такты 75-76 текста публикации А.Сcriabin не играет.

Figure 31 Scriabin does not perform bars 75-76 (II), and changes bars 77-78 (Tr. 7).

Such 'exclusions' also occur in other works by this composer. Lobanov stresses that, for instance:

In the first part of Sonata No.3, Scriabin does not play bars 117-119, which are identical to bars 113-115. In Mazurka op. 40, Scriabin leaves out bars 33-40, thus modifying the work's form from binary to ternary form (with repetition). It is thus clear that the composer has repeatedly attempted such transformations in his works. It is probable that Scriabin felt during the performance of his works what should be cut because of its length. But in our case, the composer did not miss out just two bars (71, 72), he also cuts bars 75-76, in which the development of the previous themes that lead to the climax in bar 77 takes place. In this bar (bar 73 in the printed score), the performer does not reach this climax, does not play the chord *sforzando* or the octaves ascending, and the triplets have been transferred to a lower voice (Muzyka, 2007, 64).

Bar 74 (78 in the printed edition) is also interesting in that it presents new material. The triplets are now interrupted by rests in such a way that the passage appears as a deterioration of the thematic material, as if the second section is 'surrendering' to the third one. The extent of novelty and divergence from the printed score is eloquent. The fight between these sections finally ends in bar 75 (79 of the printed edition). Since it is a studio recording and not a live performance, Scriabin must have desired and prepared these alterations beforehand; either that, or he made them up spontaneously and kept them – if he had not been pleased with the material he was recording, he could have replayed the passages. But he did not.

Nonetheless, as has already been stated, these transcriptions are just two performances of a work by a performer well-known for his tendency to differ from one performance to another and for his freedom of expression. Edits should thus be made with caution given, too, that Scriabin was aware of the Belaieff edition and consented to its publication before, during and after the piano roll recordings.

TEMPO

The recording and midi file produced by Julian Dyer provide reliable information on tempo distribution in Scriabin's performance of the first movement. The indications on

the piano roll mark Tempo 40 for the first movement and Tempo 50 for the second;³⁵ according to the collector, these are also applicable to the Steck piano.

Scriabin's performance is shorter than all forty-one other performances. Across all the performances, the tempo map reveals a rough consensus among performers. In Figure 32, we see a uniform tempo mapping across performances. This form of representation, which counts bars, not beats, inevitably smoothes out subtle tempo fluctuations (i.e. those occurring between beats), but we can still see that Scriabin tends to exaggerate tempi, performing the quiet sections slower than the majority of other recordings, and the faster ones faster than other performers. Figure 33 represents Scriabin's performance of the first movement, but this time marked beat by beat. Rubato and tempo fluctuation in general are evident on this map, where no two neighbouring beats are played at the same metronome mark. In addition, Scriabin's performances – like the five earliest recordings, by Igumnov (1911), Feinberg (1947), Oborin (1955), Richter (1955) and Sofronitsky (1960) respectively, and particularly those by Igumnov and Feinberg – are marked not so much by faster tempi as by the use of tempo fluctuation, with strong and frequent tempo peaks in their playing. For instance, in Figure 34, it is clear that even within this early group, the earliest recordings show more tempo fluctuation than the later ones; Oborin, Richter and Sofronitsky still apply rubato and tempo fluctuation in general, but with considerably more restraint.

The transcription of the score reflects the piano roll recordings in showing great tempo fluctuation in the first movement, varying from crotchet 48 to 120. *Accelerando* usually coincides with *crescendo*; *diminuendo* with *ritenuto*. John Clark agrees in his brief review of a number of Scriabin's other recorded performances: 'For Skriabin, *crescendo* and *accelerando* are usually inseparable; when he plays louder, he plays faster' (Clark: 1983, 265). Clark clearly views it as one more 'mannerism', which 'results in the loss of an important and useful resource in performance: the ability to play louder *without* playing faster and vice versa' (1983: 265). On the other hand, Bowen also indicates that 'for an editor of that period, it was natural for a performance to have tempo variations which were not notated on the score. Even in 1910, it was clearly recognised that a score is not a

³⁵ Tempo 70, for example, indicated a roll speed of 7 feet per minute. These indications are marked at the beginning of the piano rolls.

complete set of instructions and a performer not simply an executant' (Bowen: 1999, 439).

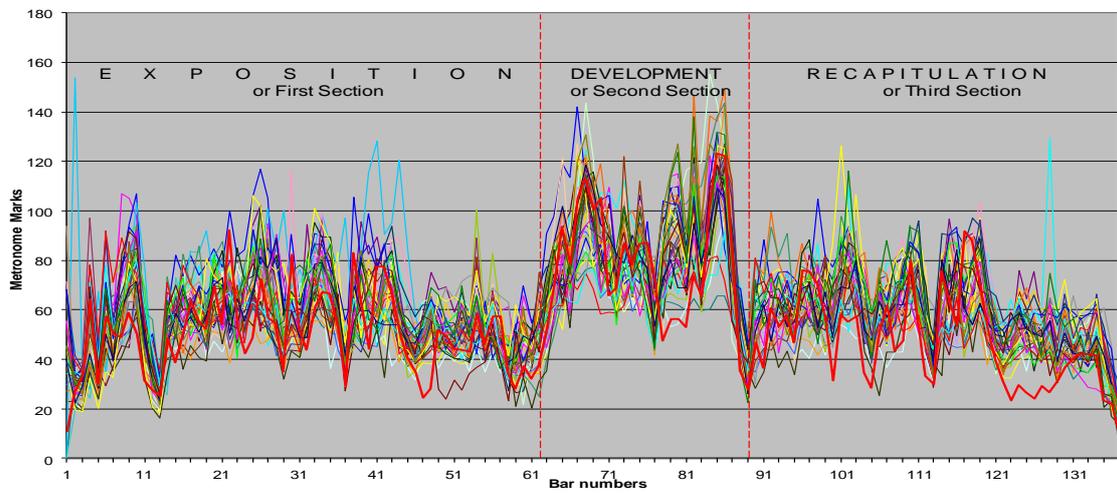


Figure 32 Tempo map charting every recording of the first movement, with Scriabin's performance marked with the bold red line. His performance line is slightly different from that in Figure 33, as the values here count bars (three beats in a bar), not beats.

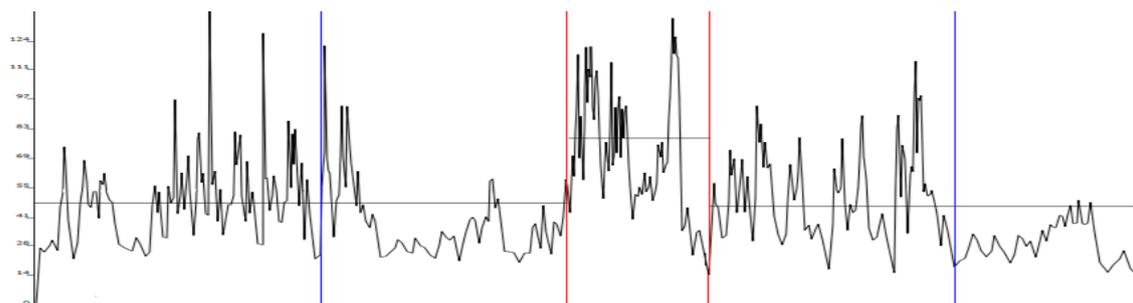


Figure 33 Scriabin's performance. Tempo map of the first movement with the horizontal lines marking his average tempo for each major section in the movement.

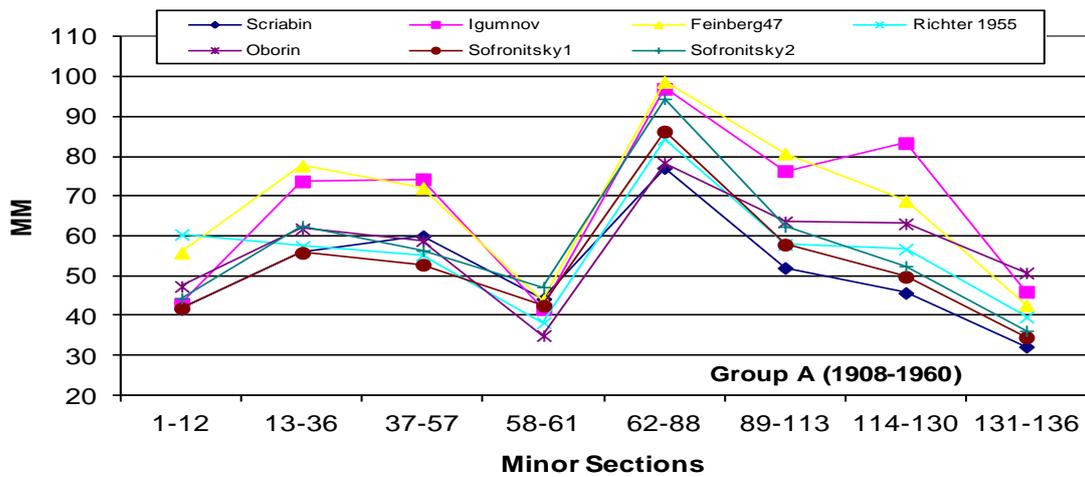


Figure 34 Tempo map charting the seven earliest recordings.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The top system consists of three staves: a vocal line at the top and two piano staves below. The piano staves are marked with a piano dynamic (*p*) and a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The word *rubato* is written above the first staff. The bottom system also consists of three staves, with the piano staves marked with *dim.* (diminuendo) and *pp* (pianissimo) dynamics. Vertical dashed lines indicate bar boundaries across all staves.

Figure 35 The printed dynamics often coincide with tempo fluctuations: *crescendo* with *accelerando*, *diminuendo* with *ritenuto*.

The spontaneous and improvisational character of Scriabin's playing results in changing rhythmic values³⁶ and staggered notes. Leikin refers to this as a 'tempo in a perpetual flux', or a 'motivic asymmetry and rhythmic elasticity through his *rubato*' (1996, 111).

Moreover, as I have already indicated, the composer's polyphonic writing necessitated good voicing that was better projected on the piano roll through the use of *rubato*. This type of technique could separate motifs one from another, so that they are heard more easily on a player piano that could not achieve dynamic differentiation very easily, if at all, when both motifs were in the same register. In any case, desynchronisation between the two hands is equally common in Scriabin's performances as it is in the other

³⁶ This study uses *tempo fluctuation* when referring to longer musical sections, and *rubato* as a motivic temporal fluctuation within the limits of a beat, bar or short phrase.

performers who recorded the work. It is my impression that Scriabin would not compromise in his performance and adapt himself to the restrictions of the player piano in order to overcome the limitations – and bring out the virtues – of the piano roll. This thought is related to the fact that he was famous as a performer for his particular sense of rubato and for the way he kept steady the general pulse of a music work, despite his rubato playing from one beat to another.³⁷ Voicing and other performance properties should thus be related to his general performance style and not to the specific circumstances of the piano roll production. Indeed, in Figure 38, the left hand anticipates the right one, although they are expected to be played simultaneously, according to the score. This type of rubato is typical of performers in the first decades of the 20th century, and imparts a sense of drama and excitement to a performance. Most contemporary performers now neglect – or even avoid – this performance trait.



Figure 36 Desynchronisation between the hands in bar 10; tempo fluctuation with rubato in the left hand.

³⁷ See Leikin, 1996 and 2011, and Hudson, 1994.



Figure 37 Rubato playing in the right hand, bars 37-39 (I).

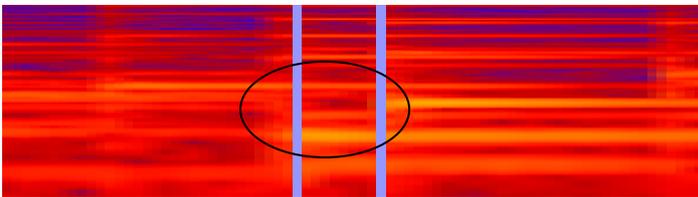


Figure 38 Rubato effect. The double line shows the onset of the G# in the left hand before the E in the right.

PEDALLING - TOUCH AND A SENSE OF FLIGHT

As a performer, Scriabin had been famous for his elegant use of the pedal. Antonio Artese indicates that ‘the effort that the interpreter needs to make in understanding Scriabin’s pedal is similar to the effort one needs to make to understand the meaning of the melodic lines, requiring a great deal of attention’. (Artese: 2000, 31). Sabaneev, a music critic of Scriabin’s time, describes the composer’s presentation during performance.

He walked on stage, looking rather agitated and miniature, though acting rather triumphantly [...]. Sitting at the piano he now fastened his gaze up and forward, now closed his eyes, his face expressing overwhelming languor and delight [...]. He moved along the keyboard as though he were kissing every sound. His masterly exquisite pedal enwrapped those phonations with the strata of some queer recalls. No pianist could ever reproduce this phenomenon. He seemed to be especially excited in forceful culminations. That zeal took listeners’ breath away at once.... (Compozitor Publishing House, quoting Sabaneev, 1)

A famous quotation concerning Scriabin's subtle pedal use was related by the legendary piano tutor, Heinrich Neuhaus. During a class taught by Vasily Safonov - pianist, conductor, tutor and Director of the Moscow Conservatory - in which Scriabin had been invited to perform some works, Safonov told his students: 'What are you looking at his hands for? Look at his feet!' (Neuhaus: 1973, 166)

Commenting on the pedalling in Scriabin's *Third Sonata*, a work belonging to the same compositional period as the *Second* one Samuel Randlett notes:

The pedal enriches, blends, and sustains the sonority. The spacing of the notes is determined largely by the demands of sonority; wide stretches and skips on the keyboard are the result of this spacing. Octaves and double notes intensify the sonority of single lines. Interlocked thumbs solidify the sonority by an overlapping of doublings. It is to suggest certain effects of tonal balance that chords are sometimes marked with staccato dots even though the pedal will be depressed while they are played (1966, 23).

Nonetheless, precious information on the pedalling in this work is provided by Scriabin's own piano roll performances. The piano roll indications for the sustaining pedal seem to precisely match those in the printed score. As Lobanov points out, this is rather peculiar, especially for an intuitive performer such as Scriabin, who would not be keen on repeating his performances precisely, even for recording purposes. It is therefore plausible, Lobanov suggests, that Scriabin allowed Hupfeld to add the same pedalling as in the published edition, to make the differences between the two renditions less obvious. Now, beyond the printed text's pedal indications, there are several sections where additional pedal has been indicated in the Hupfeld piano roll: the additional pedal is marked with the green circle below, whereas matching pedal indications are in red (Figure 39).

Figure 39 Red circles show the pedal indications in the printed score (upper staff) and the piano roll pedal perforations (lower staff). The green circle marks additional pedal used in the piano roll performance.

In general, pedalling is accurately notated by Lobanov; on the piano roll, it is marked at the bottom of the roll (e.g. Figure 43). The pedal marks which are similar in both documents are placed in red circles.

Pedalling is roughly marked in Lobanov's transcription, as it would be in any conventional musical text. Refined pedal indications, such as quarter, half pedal, etc., are not indicated. However, Scriabin used a variety of types for his sustaining pedal. These types were: the 'pinpoint' pedal, the 'vibrating' pedal, and 'pedal mist' (Nemenova-Lunz: 5, 8, 9). As Leikin writes, 'the last two terms probably involved a technique that made the dampers flutter just above the strings without pressing them all the way down. As a result, the strongest vibrations were clipped, while more delicate resonances remained intact' (Leikin: 1996, 103). In recent years, pianists and tutors use the term 'flutter pedal' in their teaching.

However, if Lobanov's suggestion that Hupfeld just took the printed score's pedal markings and punched them into the piano roll is plausible, then a second argument in favour of extra pedal markings that are not notated in the printed edition but are punched in the piano roll could serve this study as Scriabin's own choices. Or, it could have been Hupfeld, working alone, who added the extra pedal marks, applying musical common sense. If one agrees with Lobanov's hypothesis that these extra markings do reflect editorial interference on Scriabin's part, they could be used to define special performance properties in his playing that could not otherwise be traced in the printed edition.

According to the Appendix to the 2007 Muzyka edition, 'the harmonic support in the bass, enriched by pedal allows the composer to perform passages in intervals of a second in one pedal. After the chord at the downbeat, the rest of the bar is played with one pedal (Figure 40).

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The top system is for piano, and the bottom system is for voice. Both systems have a treble and bass clef. The piano part features a bass line with a pedal point marked with a circled 'ped.' symbol. Dynamics include *mf*, *pp*, and *mf*. The voice part includes the instruction *ben marcato il canto*. The score is divided into two measures by a vertical dashed line.

Figure 40 Pedal use for the whole bar, starting on the chord on the downbeat.

Very often, pedal support is given by the last chord of the previous bar or beat (Figure 41).

The image shows a musical score with two systems. The top system is for piano, and the bottom system is for voice. The piano part has a tempo of $\text{♩} = 49$ and a dynamic of *p*. The voice part has a tempo of *Andante* $\text{♩} = 60$ and a dynamic of *p*. The score is divided into two measures by a vertical dashed line. The piano part features a bass line with a pedal point marked with a circled 'ped.' symbol. Dynamics include *p*, *cresc.*, and *rit.*. The score is divided into two measures by a vertical dashed line.

Figure 41 Bar 1-3 (I). Right pedal set on last chord of the previous bar or beat (Tr. 8).

Consistent *crescendo* in bars 66-69 in one pedal. Pedal changes every two octaves in bars 77-79, 81, 83-85 (I).³⁸



Figure 42 According to Lobanov's transcription, bars 65-70 (I) are played in one pedal.

Scriabin's touch and the sense of taking flight which his playing conveys relates to his pedalling, which allows the performer to move their fingers on to the next passage and to visually create a sense of flexible playing. According to contemporary accounts,³⁹ Scriabin did not like lingering on the keys: he maintained the sound with the pedal, while his hands hovered above the keyboard: this action imparted a strong sense of flight, acoustically as well as optically.⁴⁰

³⁸ Muzyka 2007, p. 62, my own translation from the Russian.

³⁹ See Leikin, (1996, 110), where he quotes Leonard Pasternak, a prominent Russian painter (and father of the poet and novelist Boris Pasternak) recalling that Scriabin's fingers seemed to extract sound 'not by falling on the keys, not by hitting them (which in reality they did), but in the opposite way, by pulling them away from the keys and lightly soaring above them'.

⁴⁰ *Russkie vedomosti* (quoted in Leikin p. 103).

Referring to the performer of the Scriabin piano sonatas in the Preface to the Peters Edition of the works, Günter Philip stresses that:

the player should have acquired a basic sense for automatic fingering and knowledge of the interdependence of manual playing and pedal action. Thus a prescribed legato, for instance, should in many cases not be executed by the fingers when a (binding) pedal is simultaneously applied, otherwise there would be an unpleasant blurring of sound, or bass notes with an important function will not be taken up by the pedal (two mistakes only too common and to which some players become addicted without even noticing them). On the other hand, certain notes must be held longer manually than indicated in the score, so that the pedal action may be retarded for as long as possible, for the above-mentioned reasons. This opinion held by the editor is often opposed, yet Scriabin's own performance (with its numerous 'resounding rests') has recently unambiguously confirmed it, after exact reconstructions had been made from the recordings on a mechanical piano [referring to the Welte-Mignon piano rolls for other works by Scriabin].

In the footnote of the above edition, G. Philip asserts that 'from the rolls it may be precisely ascertained when pedal and keys were pressed down and when released'.⁴¹ The composer used the word 'melodiyagarmoniya' ('meloharmony') to show the interrelation between the melody and harmony. Leikin points out that in Scriabin's polyphonic writing, every textural component becomes thematic to the extent that the boundaries between the melody and the accompaniment virtually dissolve (1996, 113). This is how the term "melodiya-garmoniya" came about to characterise the Scriabinesque polyphonic compositional technique. A contemporary critic, Cherkass, who protested against much of Scriabin's performance approach, admitted that the composer 'had an amazing ability' when it came to project the harmonic skeleton at the piano. Scriabin's contemporaries attributed the 'light' quality of his sound to his pedalling (Nemenova-Lunz, 5, 8).

However, player pianos lacked finesse in pedalling, as they could not specify the exact type of pedal that was supposed to be used. They cannot transfer the sense of touch that results in Scriabin's tone colour, a quality much appreciated in Scriabin's live performances. Cherkass, a leading piano teacher of the time, who thought high of Scriabin as a composer but considered him 'a bad pianist' (Bowers: 1974, 200), states: "His innate sensitivity to harmonic clarity kept him in line... He could separate

⁴¹ G. Philip refers to a 'text of execution by the composer, according to a recording of "Welte-Mignon", transcribed by P. Lobanov, State Music Publishers, Moscow 1960 (Russian)', Peters Edition.

voices clearly" (Bowers: 1974, 201-202). According to Sabaneev,⁴² quoted in Leikin, it was his 'virtuosic pedalling rather than psychic forces that "shrouded tones with layers of some strange resonances that no later pianists could reproduce"' (Leikin: 2011, 35).

DYNAMICS

As stated above, a severe shortcoming with regard to dynamic markings is the fact that they are printed on the paper rather than punched. There are no invariable data, then, for further consideration. Printed indications function for the pianolist as suggestions as to what dynamics to perform. Those will differ between performances, and cannot therefore be taken into account in this study as Scriabin's personal choice.

Moreover, volume variation is questionable in general. One has to overcome a narrow spectrum of dynamics, although Scriabin was renowned for his refined variation of dynamics. According to contemporary testimonies, he possessed refined tone colour. In addition, Scriabin's playing has been related to his personality, but also to his body type: he was not a well-built man, and his small hands could not manage intervals beyond an octave; he possessed a refined pianissimo and 'never had a massive sound. One critic, in fact, marvelled at Scriabin's ability to create ethereal sounds that nevertheless continued to reverberate and did not vanish quickly in the hall'.⁴³

However, the Animatic could produce extra perforations that gave a slightly accented result to the preferred notes of the work, resulting in a sense of voicing for the music material.

VOICING

According to Lobanov's comments in the 2007 Muzyka edition, the Animatic's keyboard mechanism was – in the case of dynamics – separated into two registers: the upper register, from F4 upwards, and the lower register from E4 downwards. The ideal

⁴² Sabaneev, 298.

⁴³ *Russkie vedomosti*, 28 Jan. 1915, No. 23, in Leikin, pp. 101,103.

situation for the best voicing is when hands play in different registers. In other words, dynamic differentiation is accomplished mainly between the two registers of the piano. Consequently, if both hands had to play in the upper register, voicing through dynamic differentiation became a challenging performance element to achieve.

For this reason, the Animatic mechanism automatically produces the *marcato* sounds. In order to produce an accent that creates the voicing effect, there are holes at the edge of paper scroll which enhance the sound when they coincide with the note holes as they pass over the tracker bar. If the paper scroll holes coincide with a chord, the whole chord is accented.

The blue circle in Figure 43 is an example of how Lobanov marks the slightly accented melodic material in the right hand. The Lobanov transcription and the same passage on the Hupfeld piano roll are juxtaposed. A closer look at these traits in the piano roll proves that Lobanov does indeed mark the accents punched into the upper part of the piano roll (in the blue circle) with lines over each note.

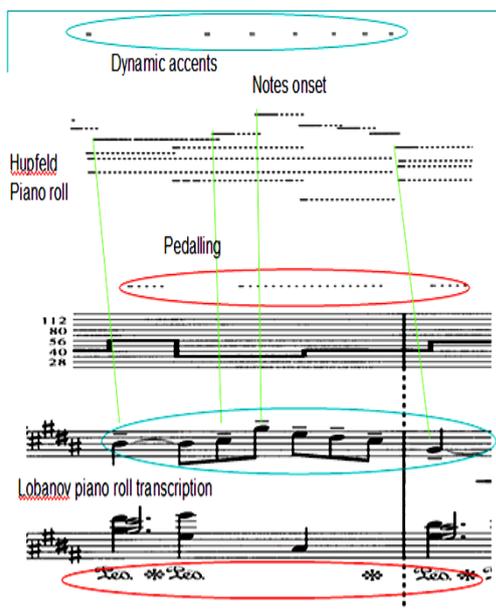


Figure 43 Dynamics on the piano roll and in the piano roll transcription.

Another option for effective voicing is the use of rubato to dislocate the two hands in passages where they would normally be played simultaneously (For instance, see Figure 38).

STRUCTURAL BOUNDARIES

It is remarkable how clearly phrase boundaries and sectional boundaries are formed by tempo fluctuation, particularly in the second movement on the piano roll and in the recordings by Lobanov and Dyer. Beginnings tend to start with accelerando together with a notion of crescendo, whereas endings often result in *ritenuto*, then a fermata, although fermatas are quite rare in the printed edition, especially in the second movement. This is shown in the transcription in passages where Lobanov does not include fermata on the score, but indicates deceleration with metronome markings (upper system) that suddenly grow slower at the bottom of the metronome chart (Figure 45).

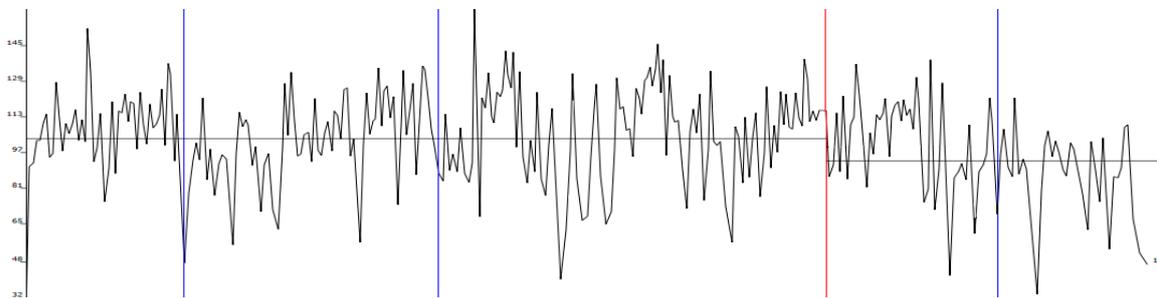


Figure 44 Scriabin's performance via the Lobanov recording: the second movement in a beat-to-beat tempo registration. Vertical lines indicate sectional (red) or thematic (blue) structural boundaries; the horizontal line shows each section's average tempo (**Tr. 9**).

Scriabin's performance tempo map (Figure 44) demonstrates this: he tends not to decelerate considerably at the end of phrases, and gives the new phrase a sudden boost towards an equally fast tempo. In contrast, other performers have the tendency to make a 'statement' of approaching structural boundaries by preparing the listener for a *diminuendo* matching a *ritenuto*. The composer's performance comes as a surprise even to ears accustomed to the *Second Sonata*, with the sudden, dramatic and refreshing *a tempo* character of the musical material that follows such boundaries.



Figure 45 Although there is no fermata in bars 36 and 37, the pulse does decrease dramatically. It is a structural boundary, indicating the end of repeated and the exposition of new material.

Moreover, at some points, Scriabin even gives the impression of accelerating towards the end of a phrase. As viewed in Figure 46, for instance, he keeps the sustaining pedal down and cuts the sound at the end, causing a gap of silence between the ending and the opening phrase of bar 37 (II). In bar 52 (II), the performed fermata does not exist in the printed score. Note the *a tempo* performance of the last three notes before the fermata. In the Lobanov transcription, the pedalling is clearly marked, as is the sudden tempo shift for the duration of one crotchet (6th crotchet of bar 36), before the rhythm returns to its usual speed.

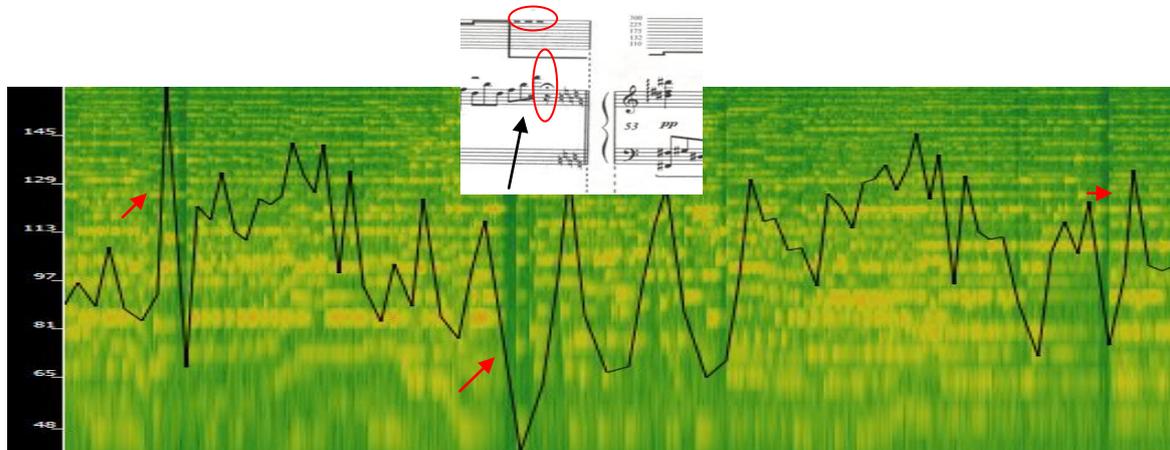


Figure 46 *Accelerando* at the end of bars 44, 52 and 66 (II), then a fermata-type gap which is also noted by Lobanov (circled). The last triplet is played *a tempo* (Tr. 10).

THE IGUMNOV PIANO ROLL

The thirty-seven-year old Igumnov recorded the first movement of the sonata for the Welte-Mignon Player Piano in 1910. The Welte-Mignon mechanism was more advanced,

because it registers more performance aspects – including pedal effects – than Hupfeld. For this reason, Igumnov’s interpretation gives us more reliable information on his style. The resource for this performance is the Pierian all-Scriabin disk containing a recording made from this piano roll, performed by pianolist Charles Ball, in 2003.

Certain points about the Welte-Mignon mechanism have already been analysed in Leikin’s work on the Scriabin performances for Welte-Mignon. The Pierian sleeve notes on Igumnov’s performance also note that Welte ‘always recorded the dynamic level of each note as the artist played for the recording machine. From that point on, the pianist had no editorial say, and no editing of the basic recorded data was allowed even by the Welte engineers. The only exception – wrong notes – were always corrected’ (Caswell: 2003, 11). In other words, performance aspects such as dynamics and pedalling are verifiable as authentic – as having originated from the performer’s physical actions. They were firstly marked on the paper simultaneously with the performance, and were later perforated. Some reviewers of the CD complain that certain aspects sound rather peculiar: Don Satz, for instance, writes: ‘it tends to smooth-out the musical edges and contours’.⁴⁴ Others complain about the unnatural sharpness of certain notes.

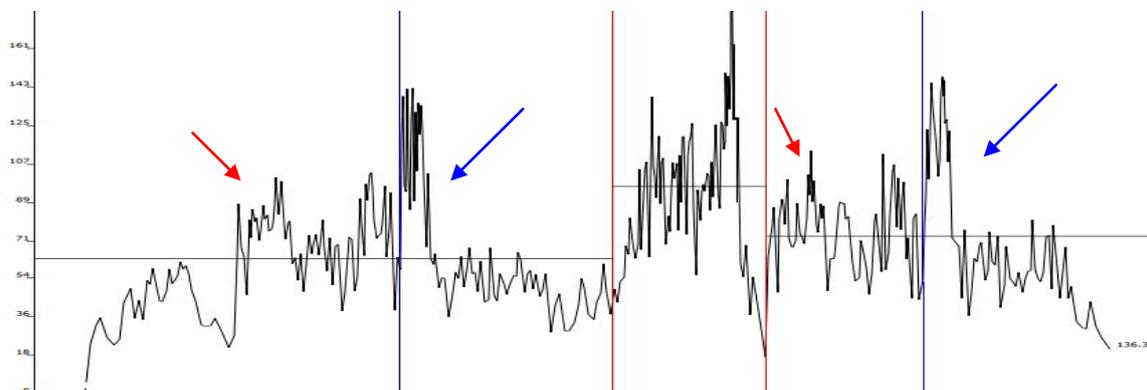


Figure 47 Igumnov: first movement, with horizontal black lines marking the average tempi (Tr. 11).

Igumnov’s performance is analysed in close comparison with the other recorded performances. The performance’s tempo graph shows that Igumnov uses sectional fluctuation and recognises structural boundaries (shown by vertical lines), during which

⁴⁴http://www.musicwebinternational.com/classrev/2005/Aug05/scriabin_piano_Pierian0018.htm#ixzz3egKY1JD8, accessed 2 July 2015.

he moves closer to his sectional average tempo (the black horizontal line). His tempo graph bears important similarities to those of sound recordings: it shows that he follows matching tempo strategies when playing the same thematic subjects in different sections, i.e. first and third sections (arrows in matching colours). Still, as analysed below, his rubato bears characteristics of late nineteenth and early twentieth century trends: i.e. he tends to start his rubato with a sudden *accelerando*. However, he does not generally make use of excessive rubato; at least not to the extent that Scriabin does.

The Pierian recording, our only resource for assessing Igumnov's performance, sounds unnaturally hasty in places. This makes me wonder whether the pianolist has played the piano roll at a faster pace than that recommended.

CONCLUSIONS

The piano rolls are our only testimony to Scriabin's own sound. Other resources simply describe in words what his sound was like, and it is not self-evident that this sound is his sound. However, as already indicated, because of their technical nature, piano rolls provide us with something sound recordings do not: they transfer us, so to speak, *into* the piano and let us explore the mechanism that creates the sound from inside the instrument. In the present case, the data that confirm the signature aspects of his sound are Lobanov's piano roll transcriptions and the piano rolls themselves (as readable documents in the form of perforated text).

Certainly, there are equally substantial limitations resulting in poor sound quality. Dynamics, as analysed above, cannot be fully considered, as the player piano mechanism could not cover that performance aspect automatically, and perforated dynamic accents can only suggest what the leading melodic parts of the work are. Moreover, pedalling has to be approximated after the recording session, again due to the poor construction of the mechanism. However, note onset is accurately registered in the form of perforations, and this type of information can provide clues to performance traits of Scriabin's, such as tempo fluctuation and the work's tempo structure as a whole.

The piano rolls are substantial sources that provide information about Scriabin's pianistic technique as well as his performance style. Conclusions to be drawn from the listening experience and the reading of the data include frequent pedal use, allowing the hands to leave the keys earlier than written on the piano score, or gaps of silence at phrase boundaries during *a tempo* playing.

The general impression Scriabin's recordings give is that it is impossible to capture a definitive unchanging performance by Scriabin, because, 'according to a wide-spread opinion, "Scriabin's performances could differ substantially from one another" – hence, no version can be considered definitive. Even a single transcribed version of the great composer's playing is an important historical document'. (Muzyka: 2007, 5) Rubtsova's comment on the two sets of piano rolls from 1908 and 1910 respectively is eloquent: 'It turned out that Scriabin (at that time, at least) had a "generalized" vision of a given single piece, though his performances differed in many small details, which, according to Lobanov, cannot be fixed by means of conventional notation' (Muzyka: 2007, 6). Clark, whilst reviewing some other piano roll recordings by Scriabin and commenting on Scriabin the performer, opines that

'these recordings are, to some extent, a mixed blessing. There is a strong temptation to consider a composer's recordings of his or her own music as "definitive". But a great composer is not necessarily a great performer; Rachmaninoff was almost certainly the ideal interpreter of his music, but Stravinsky's recordings of his own compositions are notoriously problematic, to say the least. Scriabin [sic] as composer and performer falls somewhere between these two extremes. His recordings should not be regarded as definitive, but they are an important part of the composite picture of Scriabin performances' (Clark: 1983, 265).

Although composers tend to even alter the notes when performing a work of their own, in the present sonata Scriabin generally reveals a remarkable fidelity to the music material published 11 years before the piano roll recordings. The first movement is performed with relatively minor changes in chords, which do not affect the harmonic or the melodic skeleton of the movement. The most eloquent differences are found in the second movement, where the composer omits some bars and alters the pulse of a musical section by 'emptying' a bar and avoiding repetitions of phrases that were

originally included in the printed edition. According to Lobanov, these alterations may be due to Scriabin's compositional style having evolved dramatically by the time the recordings were made (Muzyka: 2007, 65). Despite the fact that Scriabin had experienced a radical change in his philosophical approach to life and music by the time of the recording sessions, the recorded evidence demonstrates considerable fidelity towards a compositional style he had abandoned for a good many years before.

Still, the analysed differences between Scriabin's piano roll performance and the Belaieff printed music are issues that a performer should take into account during practice. Scriabin did not usually send an impeccable fair copy of his works to Belaieff for publishing. Thus, the above paragraphs serve as a guide on alternative readings and performances of the work, supported by equally important documents, in writing and in sound. It depends on the performer to decide which document is more crucial for the practice of the *Sonata-Fantasy*.

Chapter 2

I. COMPARISON OF RECORDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the outcome of consideration of factors that help performers form their own musical sense of the Sonata-Fantasy. It seeks to highlight the musical ‘stories’ conveyed by the assembled recordings, as well as the performance strategies that can be sketched through them over the past century of record production. In other words, this chapter is concerned with the structure of each recorded performance, with structural components relating to tempo, dynamics, articulation, pedalling and tone colour.

This study has manipulated forty-one sound recordings, some of them live, along with two recorded piano roll performances (by Igumnov and Scriabin). The performances cover a period of ninety-seven years of recorded music, with a thirty-seven year gap between the piano rolls production (1910) and the first LPs (1947). The piano roll period is followed by a second, post-war period with five recordings (1947-1960), followed by nine recordings between 1968 and 1974. Production started again ten years later in the 1980s with six recordings, whereas twenty sound recordings have been released by companies or privately since the 1990s. This research has analysed twenty-one sound recordings from this latter period.

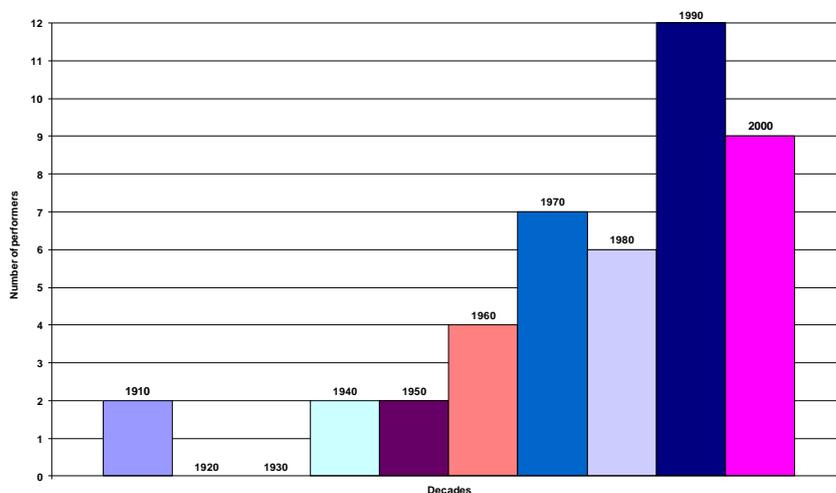


Figure 48 Recordings/piano roll production of the work in decades.

For a detailed comparison of these sound documents, it has been necessary to divide them into groups. There are several ways of grouping them, either chronologically or using other criteria according to the specific goal of each comparison.

The piano rolls actually form a group on their own, as the recording technique of piano rolls is different from that applied to even the first sound recordings. However, while piano rolls are analysed on their own in a separate chapter, they are included here in group A to provide further stimuli for discourse on the first sound recordings of the sonata. Moreover, the sound documents in this group have something else in common: they are generally by performers who belong to a generation near the end of their careers. Thus, Igumnov and Scriabin belong to generations imbued with the traditions of the nineteenth century, while Feinberg, Oborin and Sofronitsky were nearly sixty years old when they recorded it; the forty-year old Richter was the only one to belong to a younger generation.

Group B consists of recordings produced between the years 1968 and 1974, mainly by performers born in the late 1930s. The main characteristics of this group is that almost all the performers are newly established pianists who were given the chance to record at the start of their careers, the most prominent example certainly being the seventeen-year old Novitskaya. Recording technique had also evolved by that time, making it easier for new record companies to come forward with new performers and new productions (ex. Laredo's Nonesuch, Ponti's Vox, etc.). Jed Distler's introduction to his review of Ponti's all Scriabin sonatas CD for 'Classics Today.com' is eloquent:

Small wonder classical music publicists in the late 1960s tried to market Alexander Scriabin as a hippie 50 years before [sic] his time. The composer's penchant for mystical ramblings, evoking multi-coloured images through his music, and plain old "doing his thing" fit right in with the psychedelic era. After all, don't his later music's lurid harmonies and jackhammer trills mirror the feedback distortions of Jimi Hendrix's bacchanalian climaxes and induce the kind of "highs" that recreational drugs can't begin to match, right?

In any event, Scriabin was in with the in crowd, and Vox took advantage of the situation by marching its house pianist Michael Ponti into the studio to record the composer's keyboard music en masse.⁴⁵ (Jed Distler)

⁴⁵ <http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-8688>, accessed 3 July 2015.

Groups C, D and E belong to the most recent recordings, from 1984 onwards. There are twenty seven recordings in total, which have generally been divided in relation to the decade of their production (i.e. 1980s, 1990s and 2000s). Since these decades differ from each other aesthetically in many fields – arts, fashion, music genres, etc. – it is then interesting to assess whether similar trends can be traced in the performance of this sonata, especially by younger performers such as Pogorelich, Hamelin, Grimwood or Giltburg.

A small number of recordings (4-5) have not been acquired, because they were either out of print or could not be traced through collectors' associations. However, my main purchasing criterion was to acquire the oldest ones, and to guarantee a chronological link between recordings by including at least one recording from each decade, if possible.

Another issue regards multiple performances by a single performer. Vladimir Sofronitsky had recorded the work twice during the early 60s, possibly in the same year: 1960. Sviatoslav Richter had his live performances of the sonata recorded on four separate occasions,⁴⁶ but the current study focuses on two of them, because it has been impossible to trace the others. Three out of the four recordings were made in 1972 within two months of one another. Three out of the four were out of print, but Urania has re-released the 1955 performance, which has thus been assessed. The two recordings that are examined offer a variety of stimuli for research, since they were made in different periods (1955 and 1972) and can therefore be seen as proof of the evolution of Richter's performance tastes over time.

Another fact is that twenty-two of the forty-one sound documents were made by ex-Soviet performers who received their musical education in the Soviet Union. The Soviet companies that undertook the recording production were just five in number, though. Appendix A lists the recordings in chronological order of recorded performance, along

⁴⁶ Richter's recordings of the *Sonata-Fantasy* are: 1. Moscow, 20 June 1955-Parnassus PACD 96-003/4 (CD) / 2. Venice, 18 Sept 1972-Rococo 2144 (LP) / 3. Prague, 24 Sept 1972-Praga PR 254 056 (CD) / 4. Warsaw, 27 Oct 1972-Arkadia CDGI 910.1 (CD) and Music & Arts CD-878 (CD).

with basic data relating to the performers' profiles and the companies that released them.

Finally, my own performances of the work from 2003 and 2014 have been included and compared to each other, as well as to recordings by other performers. The aim of this type of comparison is to assess how my own interpretation of the work has evolved, which performance elements have widely changed, and if this change is due to specific recordings.

PERFORMANCE FEATURES

A comparative analysis follows with reference to structural performance features such as tempo and music colour. The latter is influenced by a number of interactive factors including dynamics, articulation, phrasing and pedalling. These parameters are viewed as the forces that produce a performance plan. There is a strong link between these mutually-complementary elements. Most analyses which distinguish performance elements lose a macroscopic view of the music in the process. For this reason, this analysis follows microscopic and macroscopic analytical strategies. For analytical purposes, tempo and colour are partly separated and assessed through case-studies. Tempo case-studies focus on the temporal element, whereas colour case-studies analyse the role of colour in areas of special interest.

TEMPO

Tempo is a quantifiable element, at least in its basic forms of appearance within a musical work, i.e. pulse, beat, and other time units. In this study, time perception is linked to the timing having been registered through the 'tapping-along' method, that relates to the 'tapper's' perception of time and reflexes whilst tapping. The registered performances are therefore assessed as perceived by an attentive listener, not by the performer. According to Edward Cone, one can achieve a 'valid and effective performance' by 'discovering and making clear the rhythmic life of a composition' (1968,

31). As Rink analyses these words, 'they refer to all rhythmic aspects of a work: phrase rhythm, harmonic rhythm, formal rhythm, etc. – in short, the unfolding temporal profile of every active parameter, the composite of which could be thought to constitute the music's "rhythmic shape"' (1995, 256). Rhythmic shape is analysed in the following section on tempo, but the latter's affinity to all other performance characteristics (articulation, phrasing etc.) is unquestionable. The following paragraphs analyse tempo aspects, such as overall duration of the work, movement duration, tempo flexibility between sections, and finally, tempo rubato.

Regarding rubato, Sarah Martin points out that verbal descriptions of musical phenomena are often problematic, and attempts to describe these phenomena may end in 'simplistic formulas' (2002, 95). For comparison purposes, however, and in agreement with Robert Philip's writings on rubato (1992, 44), this study considers three main types of tempo rubato: compensating rubato, agogic accents or *tenutos* and accompaniment rubato, although the distinction is not often that obvious, as 'stolen time' (Hudson: 1997) often occurs as a combination of all three styles. A fourth type is also analysed as a rubato occurring usually on the downbeat in the form of desynchronisation of parts, whereas the rest of the music is played simultaneously.

Compensating rubato

Compensating rubato is meant as 'accelerando and rallentando (either strictly "paid back" or not)' (Philip: 1992, 44). Philip, after assessing a considerable number of solo piano recordings, also states that

the most common use of rubato among late twentieth-century pianists is to linger at points of particular emphasis, any acceleration usually being no more than a gradual return to tempo after such lingerings. In modern performances, therefore, the pulse is almost invariably held back by rubato. In early twentieth-century rubato, by contrast, pianists were equally likely to accelerate *to* a point of emphasis; and, as in broader tempo changes, so in detailed rubato pianists not only slowed down to underline particular turns of phrase, but also speeded up to emphasise the character of more energetic passages. This does create the impression of 'ebb and flow' and 'give and take' recommended in writings of the period, and even if the strict rule of compensating rubato is nothing more than a theory, it can at least be seen as an attempt to rationalize this genuine practice of a rubato which is flexible either side of the basic pulse (Philip: 1992, 46-47).

It has already been stated in relation to tempo flexibility that early performances on piano rolls, as well as Feinberg's performance, tend to use a compensating rubato differently from that used by modern pianists: Igumnov, Scriabin and Feinberg often start with an *accelerando* before returning to the previous tempo in a *rallentando*.

Agogic accents and tenuto

In 1883, Hugo Riemann, writing in the *Musik-Lexicon* on agogic accents, opines that they are used for 'the lengthening of a note for purposes of accentuation. Notes to be lengthened include particularly "notes which form centres of gravity" within a phrase, and "more especially, in suspensions, whereby the harmonic value is rendered clearer" (cited in Philip [1992]: 41). *Tenutos* are similarly viewed, especially when Scriabin himself indicates them with *tenuto* lines over notes or with *ten.* written above the concerned note or passage.

Accompaniment or 'melodic' rubato

Although there is debate among scholars on the definition of this type of rubato, it relates to hand coordination. The hand that is playing the role of the accompaniment is supposed to be keeping a steady tempo, whereas the hand with the 'singing' part is expected to subtly dislocate its line, so that a sense of rubato is created. Franklin Taylor – quoted in Philip (1992, 43), writes, 'it should be observed that any independent accompaniment to a rubato phrase must always keep strict time, and it is, therefore, quite possible that no note of a rubato melody will fall exactly with its corresponding note in the accompaniment, except, perhaps, the first note in the bar'. (1913, 29) Although it is 'quite divorced from the practice of the early twentieth century,[...], this rule can be seen as an attempt to rationalize actual practice' (Philip: 1992, 47-48).

The following case-studies examine segments to see how small-scale performance strategies are formed and how they influence the big-scale plan of recordings. In Long's words, for some interpreters, 'the biggest structural challenge is to understand [the harmonic and melodic] source, and to be able to build the longer line beyond the level of the fragmented motif' (Siepmann: 31). Although this note may refer to Scriabin's later works, there are moments in the *Second Sonata-Fantasy* at which the performer has to

make similar thoughts and, then, artistic decisions; decisions, which will create either a 'conversational' or 'fragmented' temporal layout or a longer tempo line. For a more effective insight into rubato, phrasing and voicing are analysed simultaneously where needed in the paragraphs that follow. Common tendencies are pointed out, as well as idiosyncratic interpretations.

DURATION

OVERALL DURATION

As a starting point, the overall duration of both movements is calculated in relation to recording dates. Timings are generally given in minutes and seconds and as average Metronome Markings [MM]. Excel Worksheets show time in seconds, and the charts produced illustrate the differences as time maps.

The variety of performance tendencies, which do not necessarily relate to a recording's date of production, is confirmed in the following graphic representation (Figure 49), which indicates the overall duration of both movements (*Andante-Presto*). Performances that include only the first movement, such as those by Sofronitsky¹ and Igumnov, are not taken into account at this point; they are analysed in the section on movement performance analysis. At a first glance, this chart shows three main periods of recordings of the work. Scriabin is often viewed on his own as the composer-performer, though he is sometimes placed with Igumnov or in Feinberg's group. The first group is from 1947 (Feinberg) to 1955 (Richter and Oborin); the second starts with Novitskaya and Szidon in 1968 and ends with Richter's Prague recording of 1972; finally, the third period starts with Gasparovic and Rudiakov in 1984 and ends with Giltburg and Melnikov in 2006. The graphic representation shows a general tendency for slower tempi. Feinberg's performance is the fastest (9:36), and if one calculates the average duration of all the recordings of the same period, the results demonstrate an unfailing tendency towards slower tempi.

The graph of Figure 50 presents the average overall duration of recordings of the same period in two versions: the first (blue line) is the representation of the average overall

duration of all the performances, whereas the second (pink line) shows the average overall duration of recordings of the same period, excluding the performances with the most extreme length. The second mode of evaluation aims to smooth out individual extremes and show the most generalized trends in tempo for each period. This type of calculation may seem statistically questionable, because there are only five samples in the first period (1947-1955); however, it is divided in this way because its representatives – Richter and Oborin excluded – belong to a closing generation linked to the nineteenth century music tradition. Their position is therefore valuable for tracing the long-defunct performance practices of nineteenth-century pianism.

Other examinations of performance practice history, such as Robert Philip’s writings (1992) or the Mazurka Project completed by CHARM, have echoed this tendency for slower tempi over the course of the twentieth century.

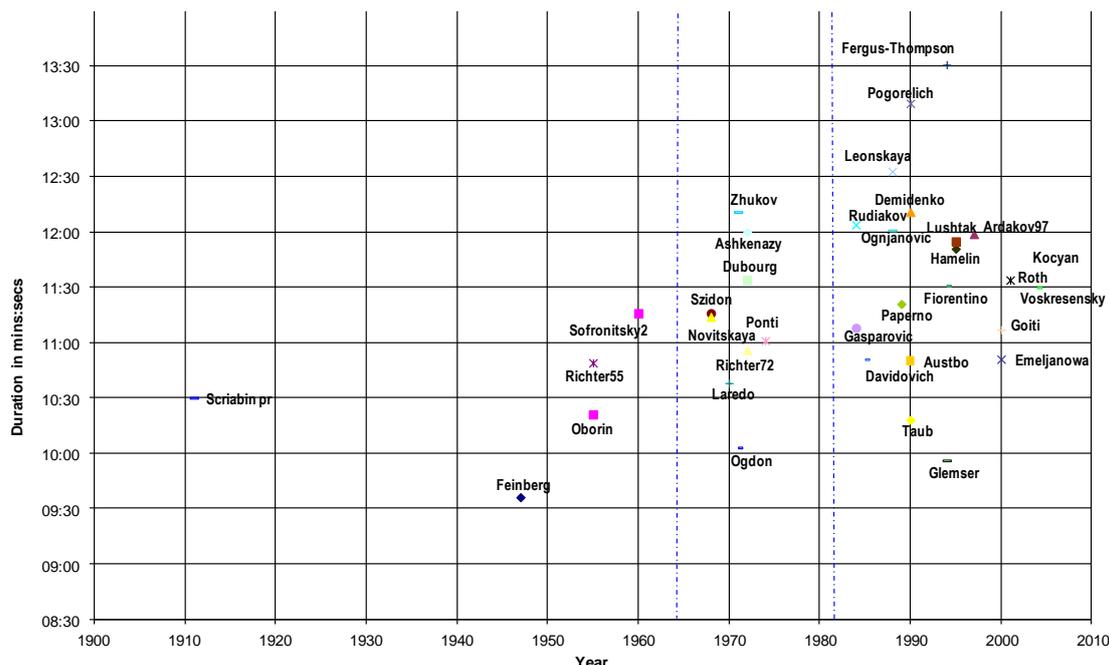


Figure 49 Overall duration of both movements of the 2nd Sonata-Fantasy. Axis x shows the year of the recording production, axis y the duration in minutes and seconds. Blue lines separate the main record production groups.

More specifically, the first period (1908-1960) reveals the fastest tempi, even when Feinberg’s shortest ever performance is excluded. There is a greater difference in tempo between the first and second periods (1961-1980) than between second and third (1981-2006). Even the most smoothed-out calculation (pink line) shows the same result: namely

that, since 1968, tempi have continued to tend to decrease, though in a less drastic fashion. This is also due to the fact that the third group presents great variety in the overall duration of its recordings, even among those in the middle part of the group.

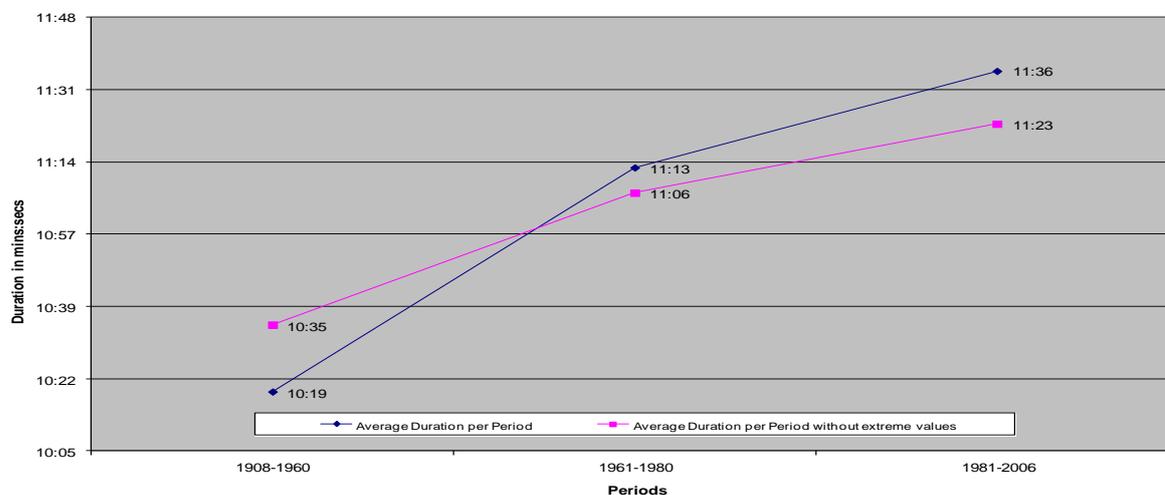


Figure 50 Average overall duration per recording era. The recordings that have been omitted from the calculation of the generalised tempo tendencies are: from 1947-1960 – Feinberg (9:36); from 1961-1980 – Ogdon (10:03), Zhukov (12:11) and Ashkenazy (12:00); from 1981-2006 – Glemser (9:56), Fergus-Thompson (13:31) and Pogorelich (13:10).

MOVEMENT DURATION

Introduction

The next graph (Figure 51) also relates to both movements: sketching in detail each movement performed in chronological order, it also maps the evolution of tempo over the last century. The five columns represent five periods of recording production (1908-1960, 1961-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-today) and are intended to facilitate comparison. In the first movement, two additional sound documents (the Igumnov piano roll of 1910 and Sofronitsky's studio recording of 1960) can provide us with more information about tempo choices, which may be linked to trends.

More specifically, according to the above graph, the tempi for the first movement vary from one recording to another, and the differentiation reaches its peak in the late 1980s-early 1990s. The most antithetical performances regarding duration date from the 1990s,

with Pogorelich providing by far the slowest interpretation of the first movement, but compensating for that in the second movement; Taub, Emeljanowa and Glemser record the fastest interpretations of the first movement. Over time, the first movement's differences in duration could indicate a general tendency among performers to show differentiation, individuality, originality and uniqueness of musical thought. The trendline shows average movement duration per ten recordings. It marks the slowing down of tempi in both the first and second movements. However, the trendline for the second movement presents milder fluctuations, with less variation in duration and milder slowing down of tempo. This is probably due to the fact that the movement directions (*Presto*) make it quite short in duration and fast in tempo, which does not leave much scope for deviation on the part of performers.

It is noticeable that, for the second movement, there are eleven performances that last under 3:30 mins; four out of the five recordings in group A (1908-1960), five out of the 9 recordings in group B (1961-1980); three out of the fourteen recordings in group D (1991-2000: Glemser, Hamelin and Fiorentino); and one out of the six recordings in the contemporary group E. This is impressive, if one considers that modern performers have often been 'accused' of playing fast works at very fast tempi simply to show off their technical skills. In this work, at least, the opposite is true.

In Figure 51 Pogorelich and Fergus-Thompson clearly stand out in duration: Pogorelich plays by far the longest first and one of the shortest second movements and Fergus-Thompson performs the first movement with one of the mildest tempo fluctuations, and his second movement belongs to the longest ones. Igumnov performs the shortest first movement and Feinberg the shortest overall performance of the work. The second movement does not display significant variation in duration, although the listening experience demonstrates tempo flexibility in some sections. For this reason, a closer look at movement structure will be presented in the paragraphs on flexibility.

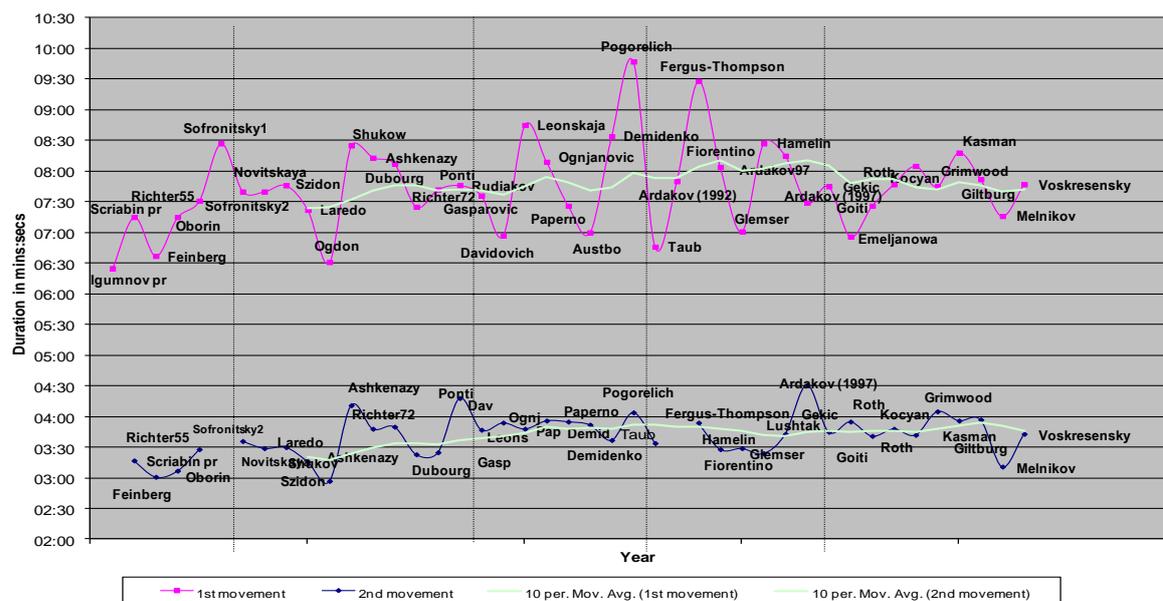


Figure 51 Movement durations from the earliest to the latest recording. The trendline shows average duration per ten sound documents. Connecting lines (blue and pink) between dots do not represent values.

Andante and Presto character

Scriabin indicates Andante for the first movement (MM=60 noted by Lyadov, as already analysed) and Presto for the second (MM=96-100). The actual average tempi of performances vary in the first movement by 3:30 minutes, and in the second by 1:30 minutes. The tempo differences among performances of the first movement are not that obviously audible, even after attentive listening. What usually makes a performance sound long is the constantly slow pulse; this is particularly true in Pogorelich's case. In addition, even if the pulse is not slow, a performance may sound long if notes are spread evenly without excessive rubato, as in both of Richter's performances, whose tempo is average (7:30mins). A third way to impart a sense of a long line is the performance of the bars of rich texture (bars 37-58 and 112-136) in an evenly spread way, without *accelerando* but perhaps with a hint of *allargando*, as in Scriabin's piano roll and Szidon's solid performance. A final option is a performance that shows no musical direction and sounds rather metronomical; Dubourg's performance falls into this category. In contrast, short performances are usually easily felt as such, because some sections are felt to have been played either 'on the fast side' or in complete disagreement with everybody else's slower tendencies. This is audible in Ogdon's performance, which is felt to be hurried,

because many of its sections are performed much faster than in any other recording or without effects (e.g. *tenutos*) present in virtually all the other recordings (e.g. 112-136). His expertise in sight-reading and his readiness in preparing a work for performance may have influenced the outcome of this recording session, too.

The *Presto* of the second movement can easily turn into an *Allegro*, if articulation and pedalling do not contribute to a *presto* feel. Tempo remains the crucial factor, but flexibility and lightness of touch are equally important, especially during the straightforward motivic theme (bars 1-40 and 79-94). In these sections, the performer aiming for a *presto* character can easily push the tempo forward or use a more or less non legato articulation. The theme's role in the average tempo is enhanced by the fact that the movement's dramatic middle section forces performers to slow down to project the melodic line in the right hand. In other words, the notion of *presto* should relate less to tempo than to the hasty, *agitato* character of the music.

TEMPO FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility of tempo relates to tempo variation among different parts within a section (e.g. within a thematic subject) or between different sections of a movement. These fluctuations are perceived as part of a large-scale temporal structure and are calculated in metronome markings [MM] as the average tempo of beats or bars. Results present the general pulse of each section of the performance in a comparative way. In other words, the so-called 'internal fluctuation'⁴⁷ is taken into account in order to sketch the performers' tempo strategies and the effects these have on the work as a whole. This assessment simultaneously raises essential issues, such as how pulse or beat fluctuation relates to other structural components, such as dynamics or phrasing. Tempo cannot be assessed on its own without reference to these factors.

⁴⁷ See J. Bowen, *Tempo, Duration and Flexibility* (p. 120), in which he analyses the recorded performances of different conductors using tempo tables, and shows how initial tempi (or 'haupttempo') fluctuate, causing different durations for the same work. In this table, he states the initial tempo, expected duration and actual duration of the section, and shows that the latter values do not correlate with the initial tempi.

FLEXIBILITY BETWEEN SECTIONS

For the purpose of a large-scale⁴⁸ assessment of tempo flexibility in the first movement, Figure 52 divides the latter into its main sections. A general overview of all the performers' tempo fluctuation provides a first impression on how flexibility relates to structural boundaries. The graph shows all performances of the first movement, with bar to bar avMM. The red line represents Scriabin's piano roll performance by amateur pianolist Julian Dyer. Feinberg's interpretation is the fastest one on the graph (light blue line). Taking a closer look, no matter how chaotic the graph looks or what the actual duration is, there seems to be a general 'consensus' among performers in terms of tempo flexibility.⁴⁹ Tempo shifting coincides unexpectedly well, especially in areas of structural boundaries. This affinity concerns tempo fluctuation between the main sections of the movement, but also in shorter, minor sections within a section. Each one of these sub-sections tends to follow different tempo in comparison to the previous and the following one. For this reason, I use in a number of graphs subdivisions that do not necessarily coincide with the previous analysis of formal structure of the work, but 'work' for the tempo analysis, especially in the field of tempo fluctuation. For the purposes of this study, movements may be divided in five or even six minor sections.

Tempo fluctuation could be 'prescribed' by the composer's indications in the music score, but it rarely is. Although precise directions on expression and time (i.e. *rubato*, *espressivo*, *smorzando*, *tenuto*, *rit.*) or other Italian tempo/expression terminology such as *ben marcato* or *il canto* are rare, when they are used, they occur at points of thematic change. And while Scriabin was famous for the idiomatic language such as *con voglia*, *quietissimo* (*Fourth Sonata*) or *misterioso affanato*, *quasi trombe* (*Fifth Sonata*) which he used to give passages in the sonatas from his middle and late compositional periods a special character that can guide the performer in terms of tempo alteration, in the *Second Sonata-Fantasy*, the main expression markings that can be used as a guide are those referring to traditionally notated dynamic markings (*pp*, *f*, etc.). Scriabin thus provides the pianist with a rather detailed map of dynamics, whose flexibility is related to tempo variation.

⁴⁸ Large-scale assessment means that a number of bars, sub-sections or whole sections are compared.

⁴⁹ A similar approach is indicated by Bruno Repp (1992, 1998, 1999), who points out performers' general agreement on macro-structural elements and divergent interpretations on micro-structural components (short phrases with divergent performance details, etc.).

This is well described in this passage from Hugo Riemann's writings on expression quoted by Robert Philip:

First of all, in the matter of small changes of *tempo*, it may be remarked that hurrying implies intensification, and drawing back, the reverse; hence, as a rule, a slight urging, pressing forward is in place when the musical development becomes more intense, when it is positive; and, on the other hand, a tarrying, when it approaches the close. These changes must naturally be exceedingly minute in detached musical phrases, but can already become more important in a theme of a certain length; while for whole movements they are of such extent as to be seldom ignored in the notation (Philip: 1992, 7).

Indeed, the opening overture-like theme that continues as a mild melodic line (bars 13-36) gives way to a second thematic group with triplet semiquaver flow (bars 37-57) and a decelerating cadence (bars 58-61). The pulse is so far kept at an $avT=50-60$, in keeping with the *andante* indicated by the score. The middle section (bars 62-88) adds an explosive note to the movement. What is striking in this section is that Scriabin does not provide any specific indications on tempo or expression, except for the traditional *cresc.*, *p* and *ffs*, *tenuto* lines or accents on notes and a double line separating bars 74 and 75. However, every single performer accelerates considerably during this part of the movement; what varies is each performance's *point* of tempo transformation. This is followed by a third section with similar thematic material as in the first section, where the tempo returns to its previous speed.

The second movement (Figure 53) shows that performances share other fundamental characteristics. Differences between the straight-forward character of the first theme and the more dramatic one of the second are not easily shown on the tempo map. On closer examination, the first theme is played slightly faster, whether in the exposition or the recapitulation. It seems that performers agree more on phrase boundaries during the first theme than during the second, which allows for more freedom in phrasing, especially during its broader role in the exposition.

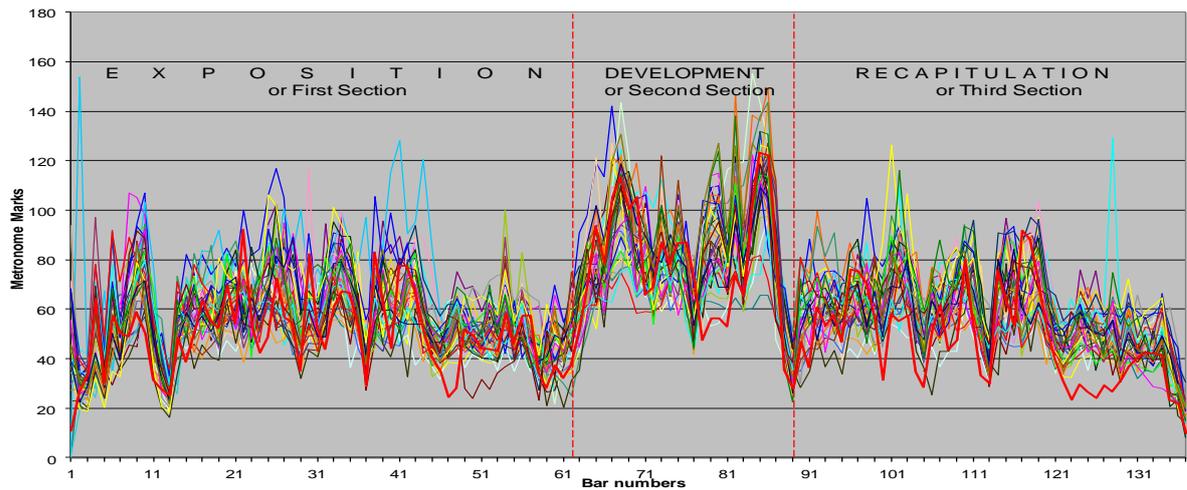


Figure 52 First movement, tempo map of all performances. Scriabin's performance is the red line.

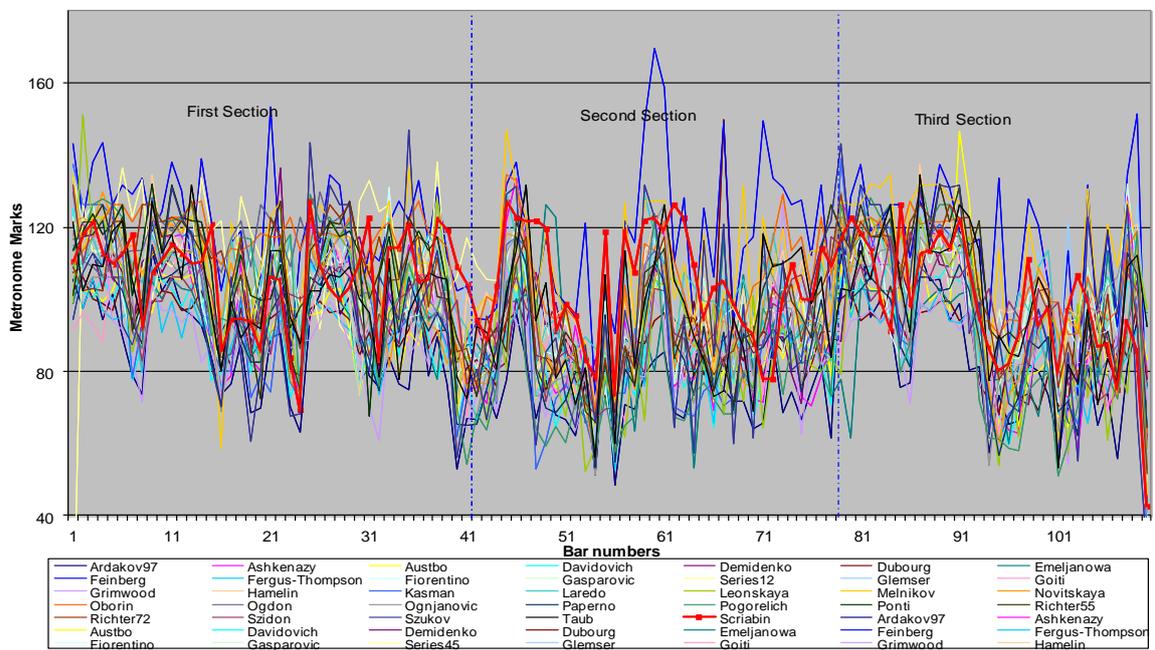


Figure 53 Second movement, tempo map of all performances.

Flexibility per recording era

Does tempo fluctuation relate to recording era? Figure 54 presents a map of all the recordings for a first glance at how average tempo may vary in movement sections. The connecting lines do not represent tempo values; they simply connect the sections' avMM. Minor sections are created here in relation to themes or their development (e.g. variations) that affect the avMM of each segment, aiming for a closer look on tempo fluctuation.

A. First movement

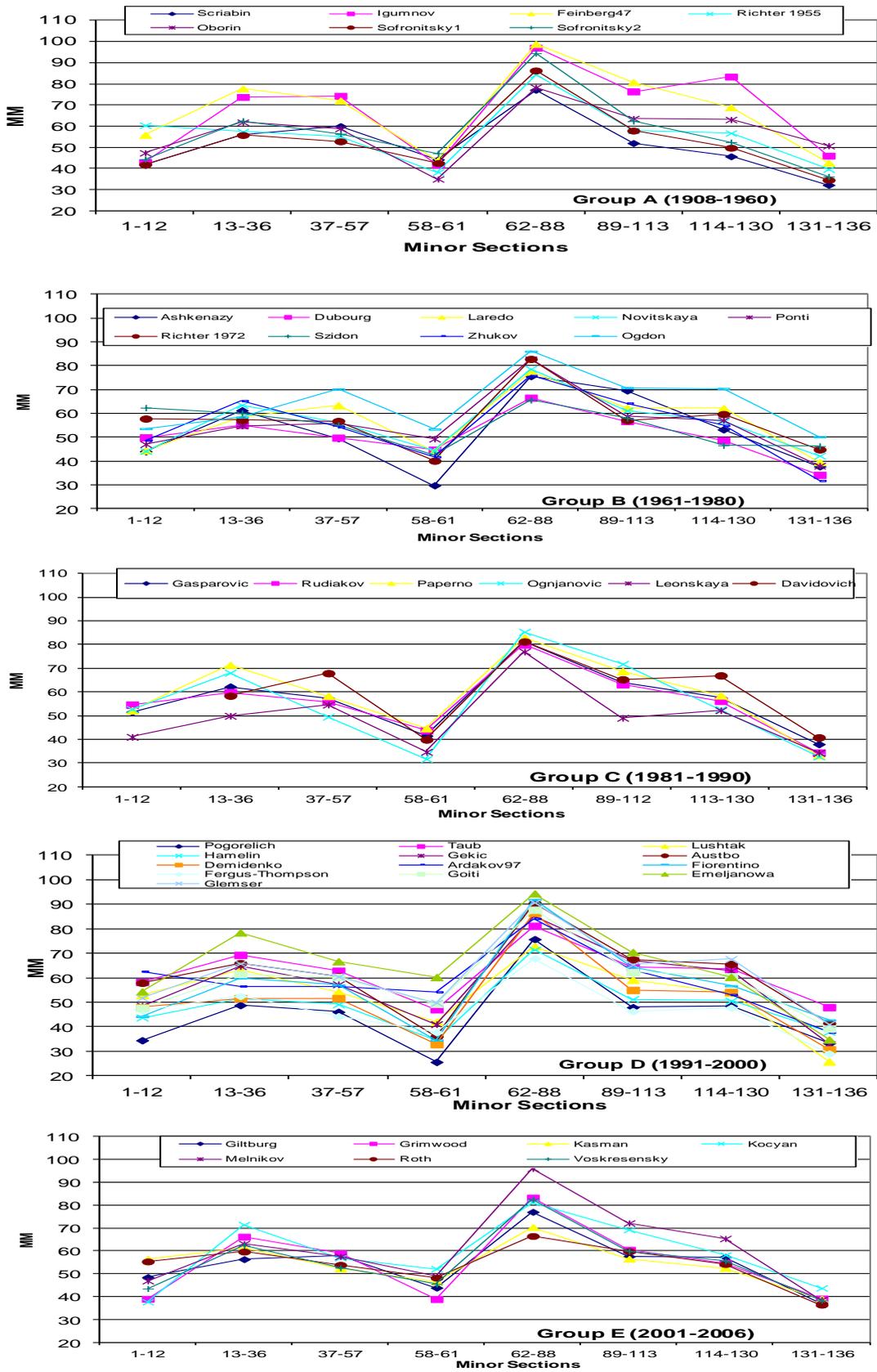


Figure 54 All the recordings of the first movement with the avMM of minor sections marked against the bar numbers.

Group A clearly stands out as the fastest performances recorded. This is clear during the first section (bars 13-57) and the second one (62-88). Outside Group A, only Melnikov (2006) from group E reaches MM=100 during the second section (bars 62-88). Performers also 'agree' in bars 58-61 and the tempo shifting for bars 62-88. Igumnov alone increases the average tempo so considerably in bars 37-57 and 114-130. Equally notable are Sofronitsky's temporally homogenous performances, with their subtle but consistent tempo differences. Richter (1955 recording) is the only one of the group who performs the first section (bars 1-58, excluding the *rit.* of bars 58-61) at an almost decelerating pace, which is unique, at least for that era, and perhaps initiates in the 1950s' the idea of mildest fluctuation between sections, a trend that one finds in the most recent performances of the work (groups D and E, e.g. Hamelin and Fergus-Thompson). Given, too, that Richter's interpretation involves spacing the music without accents (agogic accents or *tenutos*), his performance is one of the most fluent and unforced in terms of rubato, which he uses sparingly. Long, unending lines are the key characteristic of this recording. Oborin adopts a similar strategy.

Taking a closer look within each group, Figure 55 shows the bar to bar average tempo in Group A. In terms of performance strategy, it appears that two groups can be formed, which also differ from each other chronologically: firstly, Igumnov-Feinberg (1911-1947), which are two of the three earliest recorded documents; then, Richter-Oborin (1955)-Sofronitsky (1960) with his two recordings. The first group of performances is faster and wider in fluctuation, the second is milder in tempi and more evenly paced, although there is a wide use of tempo flexibility in both. The earliest recorded performances show a tendency for sudden tempo shifting. They often start a phrase with a great *accelerando* and then return *a tempo*, whereas, as Philip also notes on his own research on recordings, 'it [was] observed that modern performers were much more reluctant to speed up than to slow down' (1992: 46). Compensating rubato in wider sections works for performers of the 1950s onwards mainly as a *rallentando* leading to gaining back the initial tempo, rather than the opposite effect, evident in the piano rolls and Feinberg's 1947 recording.

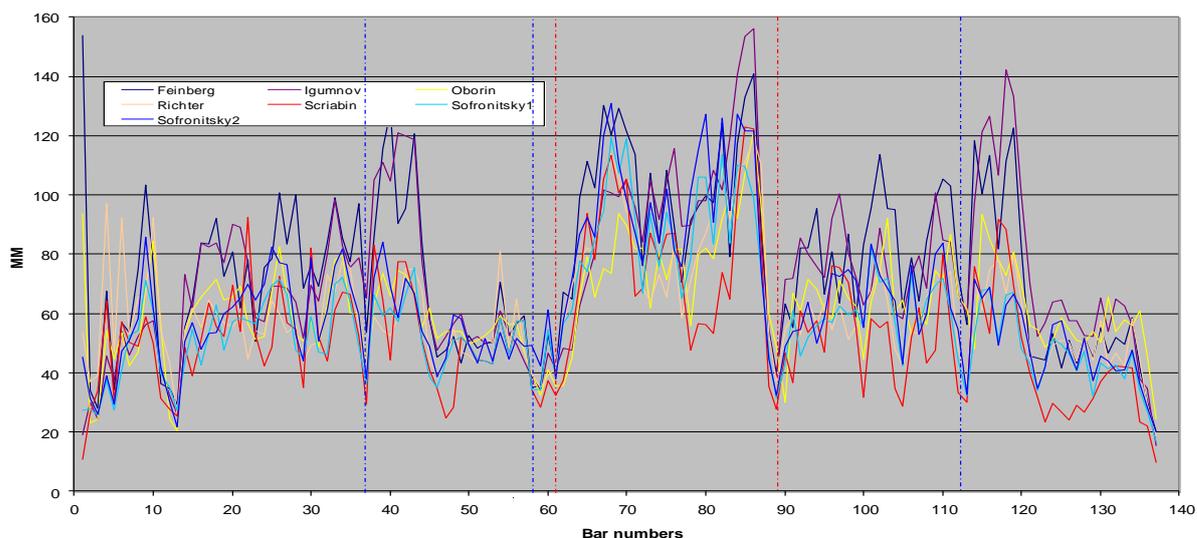


Figure 55 Group A (1908-1960). Average tempo map per bar for the first movement with sectional divisions. Feinberg's performance is clearly the shortest.

Scriabin, with all the limitations imposed by the piano roll recording technique, seems to perform most bars in the movement at the slowest pace. Even if the tempo lever were to be slightly speeded up, his performance would still sound slow and with an unexpected mildness of tempo fluctuation compared to the tendencies of all the other recordings. For example, Scriabin keeps a very slow and steady pulse in bars 36-58, 62-88 and 89-113, whereas every other performer – even the temporally solid Richter – will subtly or openly accelerate in these sections. Oberin's is perhaps the only recording which stands close to the composer's tempo line. This does not necessarily mean that Scriabin does not use significant note-to-note rubato. This is obvious in the graphs that follow.

Scriabin's pulse, although fluctuating from one section to another, seems to return to its average (horizontal lines) in areas of structural significance. Note-to-note rubato reigns in his exposition, and he often returns to his average tempo, which he uses as a point of reference. On the other hand, the same material is shaped in the recapitulation in a wider sense of phrase-to-phrase rubato, which is not necessarily compensating. His recapitulation is played at almost the same tempo as the exposition. Curiously enough, the second thematic group of his exposition and recapitulation is played at one of the slowest tempi, with mild fluctuations.

Richter presents one of the mildest fluctuations of all, underlined by straightforward articulation without tenutos. His tempo lines flirt around the average tempo. Also

noticeable are the abrupt *accelerandos* at the beginning, a truly rare performance strategy for the opening section. His tempo in the recapitulation is slightly faster. The main difference between his and Sofronitsky's performance in terms of tempo fluctuation is that Sofronitsky uses a much wider degree of note-to-note rubato. However, both performers return to their average tempos at points of structural development.

Oborin, as noted above, is close to Richter's approach. Biographical accounts by his contemporaries and later professors at the Moscow Conservatory eloquently describe his performance style. He was a student of Igumnov, and a performer who favoured the Chopin repertoire. Commenting on one of Oborin's historical recordings, Professor Vladimir Chinayev speaks of an 'elevated simplicity of utterance' and of a sense of 'Apollonian Classicism', resulting from the 'balance of the large-scale logical constructions of form and of the perfectly detailed work on all of these'. He goes on to quote Heinrich Neuhaus, who gives his own opinion on what he calls the 'school of Lev Nikolayevich Oborin'.⁵⁰ Neuhaus supposedly said:

I especially value the fact that this school never aspires to simply demonstrate technique "an sich" (by itself), or to brilliance and virtuosic fireworks as the highest achievement of piano performance; the fact that the outward "material" side of performance does not overshadow the music and its meaning, but only enables its greater manifestation. Here music is placed first in importance.

Indeed, Oborin's performances of Scriabin, the so-called 'Russian Chopin', give the listener a clear picture of form and s-scale detail, without excessive beat-to-beat rubato or important tempo flexibility. Note-to-note rubato is generally not a characteristic of his performance style.

⁵⁰ Vladimir Chinayev, writing a detailed description of Oborin's historical recording with recorded music by Schubert, Schumann and Chopin, SMC CD 0092, presented on the Moscow Conservatory official website, <<http://www.mosconsv.ru/ru/disk.aspx?id=22159>> [accessed 2 July 2015].

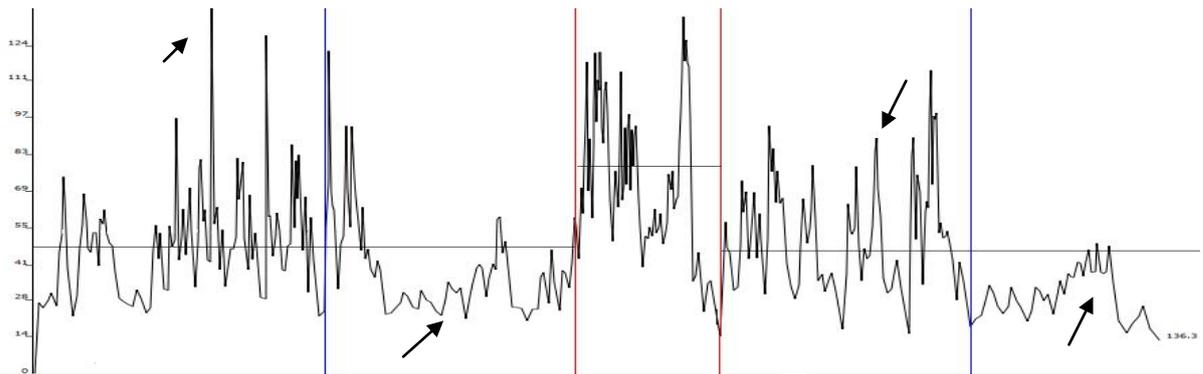


Figure 56 Scriabin. Horizontal lines mark each section's average tempo. Red lines divide the movement to its three main sections (bars 1-61, 62-88 and 89-136). Blue lines mark minor sections 1-36, 37-61 and 89-112, 113-136 (Tr. 12).

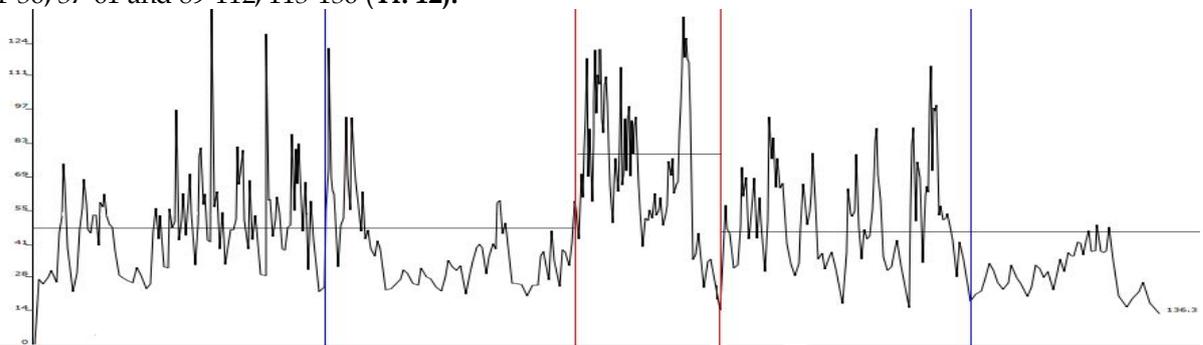


Figure 57 Feinberg, first movement.

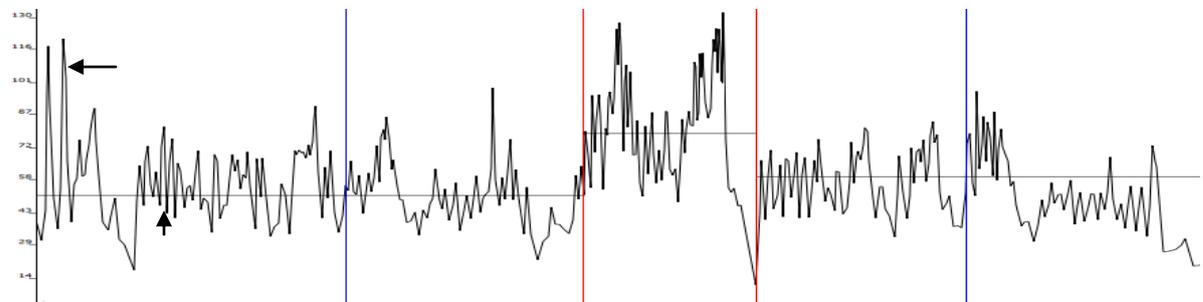


Figure 58 Richter, 1955 performance, first movement.

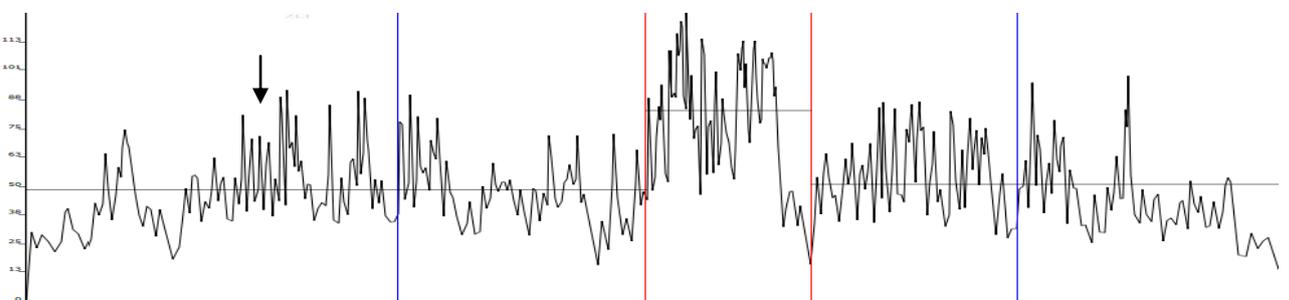


Figure 59 Sofronitsky1. His tempo underlines structural changes.

Nonetheless, it seems that there is a unanimous 'agreement' at points of high flexibility between all the performers in the group, though Feinberg's performance shows the most flexibility and contrary tempo decisions. For instance, the only point of a relatively stable MM in Feinberg's interpretation is in bars 46-60 and towards the end of the movement in bars 121-132; the rest of the performance abounds with sudden tempo shifts and equally unexpected *crescendi*. The approaches closest to Feinberg's are once again the piano roll performances by Igumnov and Scriabin. These sound documents seem to accord more in the slow parts of the movement. In fact, slowing down is much more evident in the earliest and generally faster performances, as pace slows down more abruptly than in the remaining recordings (Figure 60).

Performers broadly link dynamics to tempo flexibility. The more lucid their performance lines are in terms of tempo and dynamics, the more perceptible their phrase boundaries. The general impression for group A is that Scriabin's dynamic indications are also well respected. Sometimes this results in more or less predictable tempo 'games' by performers. Variety still exists in a number of performances, or even opposite dynamic effects which prove certain negligence towards score indications. 'Erratic' approaches sometimes sound more spontaneous, improvisatory and fresh, if not 'raw' in the manipulation of dynamics (e.g. Feinberg's middle section) probably because of the still limited recording technology in a number of recordings. In the first movement, Feinberg sounds rather like a *sui generis* interpreter of Scriabin's music. In terms of dynamics, this diversion from Scriabin's indicated route does not actually come across as a distortion of what Scriabin indicates in the score. Feinberg still builds up his themes in relation to the composer's writing; what differs here is the grade of middle dynamics he applies in order to achieve Scriabin's pointed dynamic climaxes.

Group B (1961-1980) reveals a degree of 'disagreement' among performers with regard to energetic or relaxed tempi. The highest tempo coincidence is located in bars 13-30. Here, the turning point (bars 58-61) is performed closer to the average tempo of the sections that precede and follow it. A similar strategy concerns the coda (bars 131-136), with Szidon showing an insisting steadiness of tempo. He ends the movement in the same pace that he employs in bars 114-130. This gives a sense of acceleration to the end of the movement, because of the rich texture (demi-semiquavers) of the last bars (Tr. 13). Once again, Richter's 1972 Prague recording is reminiscent of his 1955 Moscow

performance, with the whole first section being performed at the same tempo. Szidon starts with the same philosophy – i.e. with the opening theme played rather quickly and the same tempo being applied to the rest of the section.

The recordings are placed in chronological order on the graph in Figure 61, in bluish lines (1968-1971), reddish ones (1971-1972) and pale green-yellow ones (1972-1974). There are no substantial differences in tempo flexibility between early and late recordings from this period. Nonetheless, this group does present some notable differences in time flexibility in comparison to the first group.

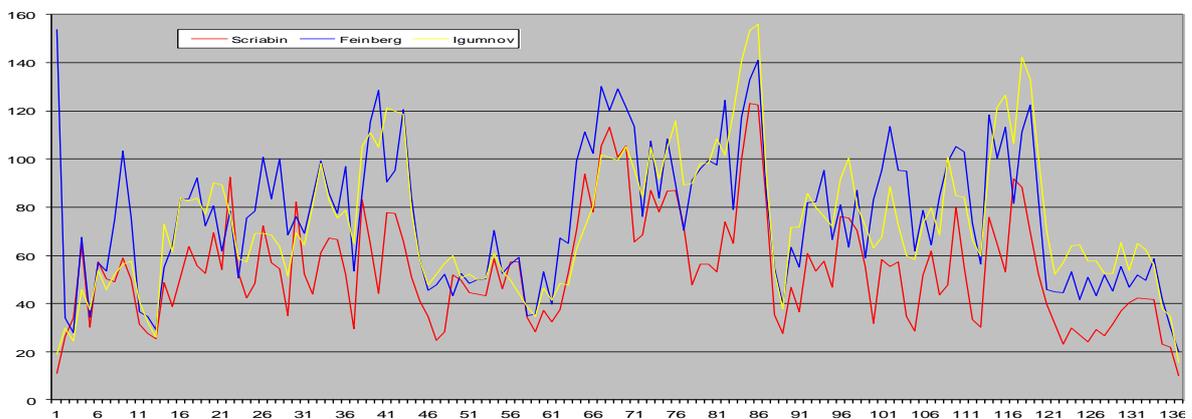


Figure 60 Earliest performances in group A. Scriabin shows the mildest overall tempo fluctuation.

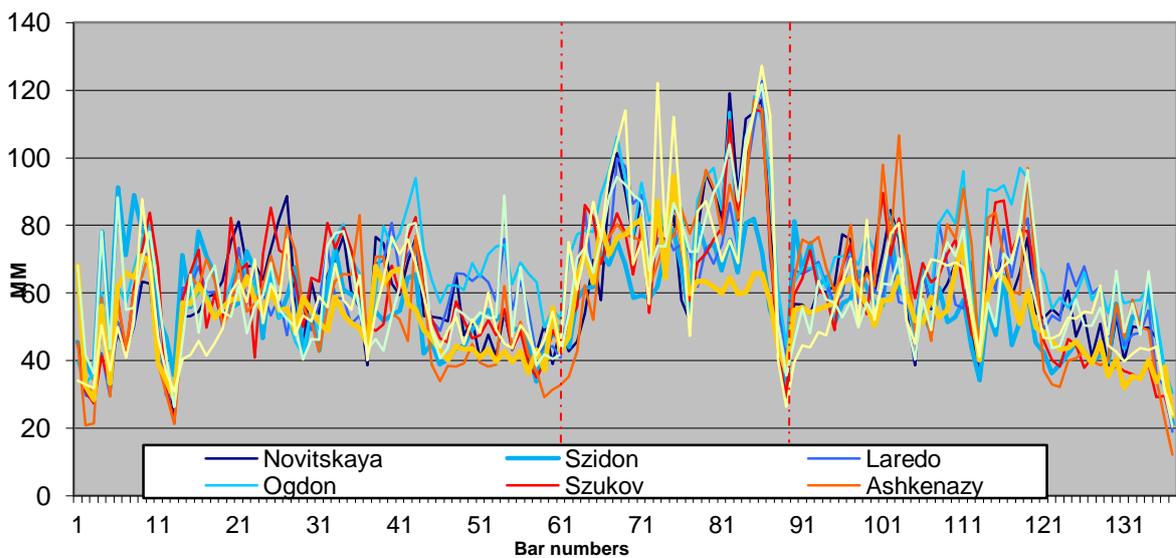


Figure 61 Average tempo map of recordings made between 1968 and 1974 (Group B).

If one compares the recordings from the second period with those of the first, it is clear from the tempo maps that the latter performances (Figure 55) are approximately 20 metronome points wider in tempo choices (MM=40-100/sec) than those of the former, in which the average MM is 40-80. Recordings of this second period present a more homogeneous structure in the tempo evolution of the piece in relation to the dynamics of the printed score and the melodic structure of the movement. Of course, there are some examples of sudden *accelerandi* connected to *crescendi* (Ponti),⁵¹ but in general, the second period recordings are similar in mildness to the last recordings of the first period (i.e. Richter-Oborin-Sofronitsky). Their tempo lines are milder, but the general impression, too, is of unique moments of flexibility in each. These moments are located in areas of small-scale dynamics, at the boundaries of neighbouring phrases, or at occasional peaks.

On the other hand, performers tend to agree at important peaks or climaxes. For instance, in bars 11-13, the fermata of bar 12 is given longer duration in comparison to the preceding ones and performers tend to let the sound die away before proceeding to bar 13 despite the actual general tempo of each performance being very different (Figure 61). In bars 66-71 and 77-89, almost all the recordings reveal considerable *accelerando* combined with a climax in dynamics. Dubourg (dark yellow) is alone in clearly deviating from this strategy, with bars 46-54 and 86-88 performed at nearly the same speed. In general, her interpretation differs substantially from the rest, as she tends to perform each section at a specific tempo every time.

For Group C (1981-1990), Paperno and Ognjanovich seem to deviate from the other performers and reveal a significant affinity to each other with regard to tempo, which may relate to their general tendency for rubato in uncommon areas (e.g. Paperno's accompaniment rubato in bar 48 or Ognjanovich's 'conversational' layout in bars 13-36) and with their *a tempo* delivery of bars 36-58 and 89-130 at a rather fast pace.

⁵¹ See, for instance, Ponti's (yellow line) representing in just one bar length an *accelerando* from MM 56 to 122; or, later, in bb.83-87, from MM 71 to 127.

In spite of the fact that timings range from 7:00 to 8:45, areas of sudden tempo shifting, which are also phrase boundaries, are impressively homogenous (e.g. bars 13 and 89 after fermatas). Even Leonskaja's, the longest performance in the group, is in complete agreement with the rest of the recordings at points of dramatic culmination. However, her interpretation deviates from the others during exposition and recapitulation, during which she maintains a steady pace, with compensating rubato throughout whole sections and subtle tempo fluctuation at phrase boundaries (light blue, Figure 63). Her performance is revealed to be the most 'regular' in terms of tempo shifting, in so far as she often closes her phrases with a slight *ritenuto*.

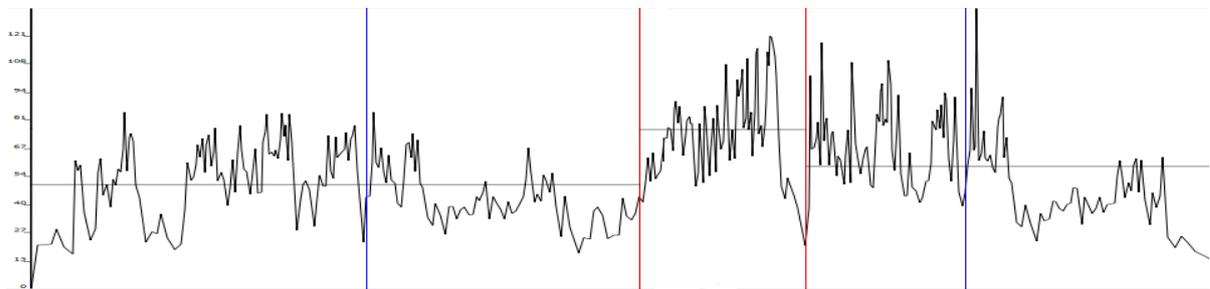


Figure 62 Ashkenazy, first movement.

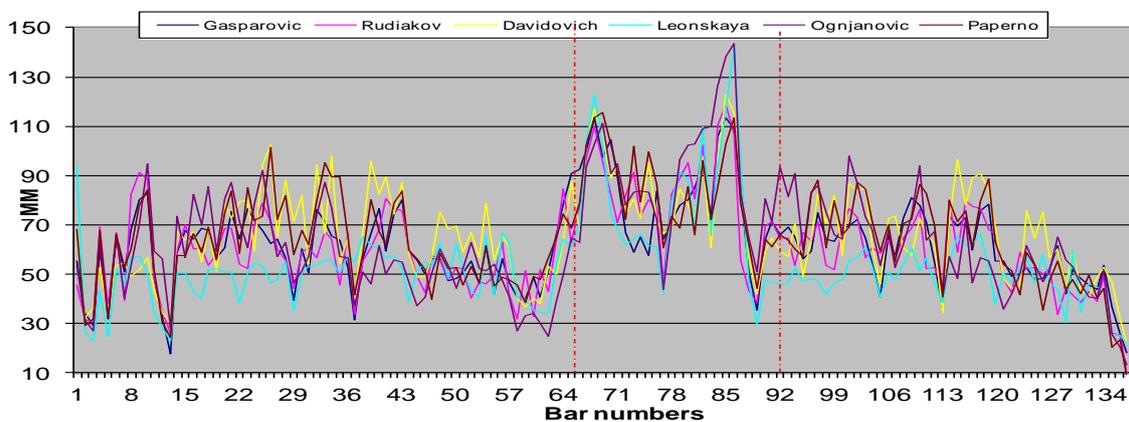


Figure 63 Group C (1980-1989), first movement. There is a strong correlation between recordings in the middle section. Leonskaja (light blue) generally deviates from other performers' stronger sense of tempo flexibility.

Moreover, there are telling affinities between the interpretations of Gasparovic (1984) and Paperno (1989). A first look at Figure 64 shows that the two performances appear

more or less alike. Indeed, the coincidence of their tempo structures is striking, in that they agree in terms of structural boundaries (sectional beginnings and ends), but also in terms of their flexibility during each section. They even employ a similar pace in bars 48-57 that lead to the middle section (bars 62-88).

Gasparovic and Paperno's tempo graph confirms that their interpretations are marked by a slowing down before the middle section (bars 58-61) and towards the end (bars 133-136). During the middle section, there are two points of acceleration, which are also informed by a similar insight. These are the two climaxes of bars 61-73 and 76-89, also seen in the graph in Figure 64. However, the strongest bonds between the two records are their phrase boundaries, which are often linked to fermatas. If one bears in mind that their movements are of approximately the same duration, it is to be expected that new phrases begin in similar tempi.

Leonskaja's recording of the first movement is now presented using spectrum and graphic (tempo) analysis (Figure 65). She generally performs the first movement at a slowish main tempo, and she tends to finish sections and subsections by slowing down. The spectrogram shows that her first and third sections are kept at a slow pace, with a lot of pedal sustaining the sound (Tr. 14). The middle section is, once again, the loudest point of the movement. The fact that she keeps her dynamics low-profile for the rest of the movement makes her climax sound even more dramatic than expected. The two black silence 'gaps' in the middle section (bars 62-88) also contribute to this effect (see red arrow, Tr. 15).

Leonskaja's recording reminds one of Richter's 1955 recording in terms of tempo flexibility. Richter, whose performance is one of the relatively fast ones (7:31 compared to Leonskaja's 8:45), keeps a relatively steady pulse throughout the whole movement, with the exception of the dramatic middle section (part of the development). Although they employ different average tempos, the two performers maintain a relatively steady and spaced layout for bars 31-58 and 89-130 of similar themes, and form two climaxes in the middle section (Figure 66).

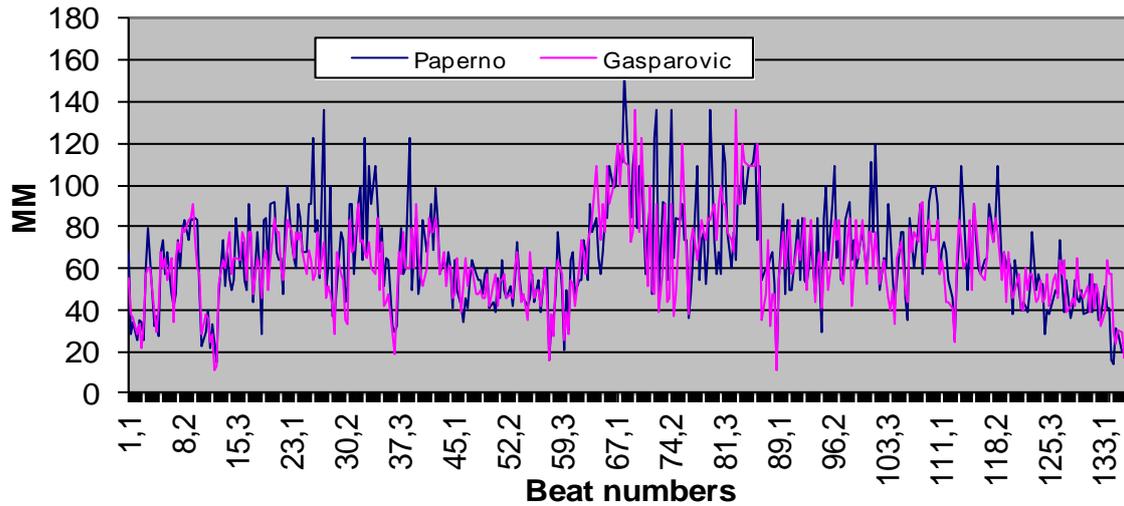


Figure 64 Gasparovic and Paperno (first movement): similar approaches to flexibility.

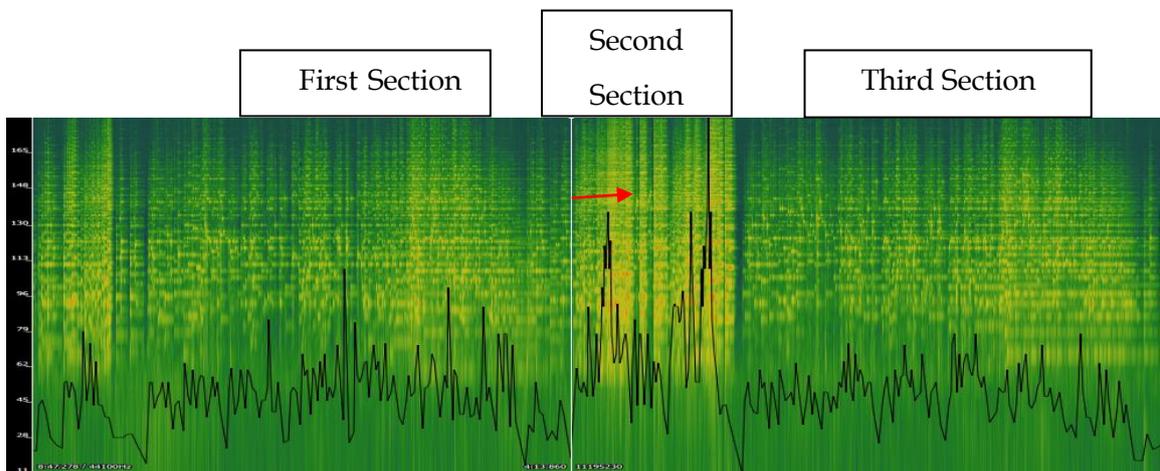


Figure 65 Leonskaja's first movement. First and third sections are kept at a slow and regular pace, whereas the middle section is presented in full *crescendo* (yellow-red colours of dBs) and *accel.*

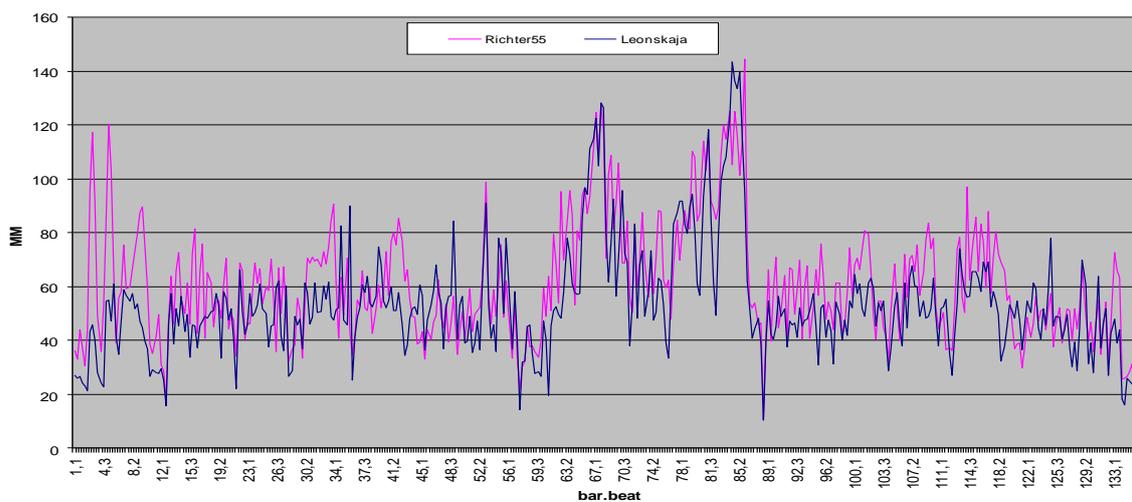


Figure 66 Richter (1955) and Leonskaja, first movement. Although overall movement duration is significantly different (7:31 and 8:24 respectively), first and last sections reveal a similar tempo map.

In Group D, a number of performers see the exposition as an almost straight tempo line that ends in a *ritenuto* in bars 58-61 (Figure 54). With the exception of Pogorelich, and perhaps Demidenko, the performers tend to gradually decrease their tempo as the music becomes busier with shorter note values and added voices (bars 37-57). There is also an agreement among performers in the recapitulation passages, which they play with mild tempo fluctuation. In fact, this group's map reveals the mildest tempo flexibility between sections. This is probably also due to the fact that this decade includes four of the five longest performances of the work.

Nonetheless, the graph below (Figure 67) of bar avMM indicates a tendency in some performers for differentiation. Peaks tend to become sharper edged, indicating abrupt tempo shifting, and some performances blaze their own trails: Austbo, for instance, is the only performer to accelerate at the last minute, just before the close of the first movement (bars 113-136, Tr. 16) while Glemser accelerates in the middle of the theme of bars 46-57 (Tr. 17), at a point which the remaining pianists probably consider an opportunity to take time

Once again, as in the other recording periods, there is a ratio between sections regarding flexibility. In other words, same thematic material often bears similar type of flexibility, no matter in which section it is placed (e.g. bars 13-22 and 89-98). In addition, it is notable that recordings tend to balance between MM=40-85, which is also the case for recordings of groups B and C. However, taking into account that some of these recordings are the slowest ever produced of the work, it is intriguing to find out how these balance their generally long duration with a tendency for acceleration.

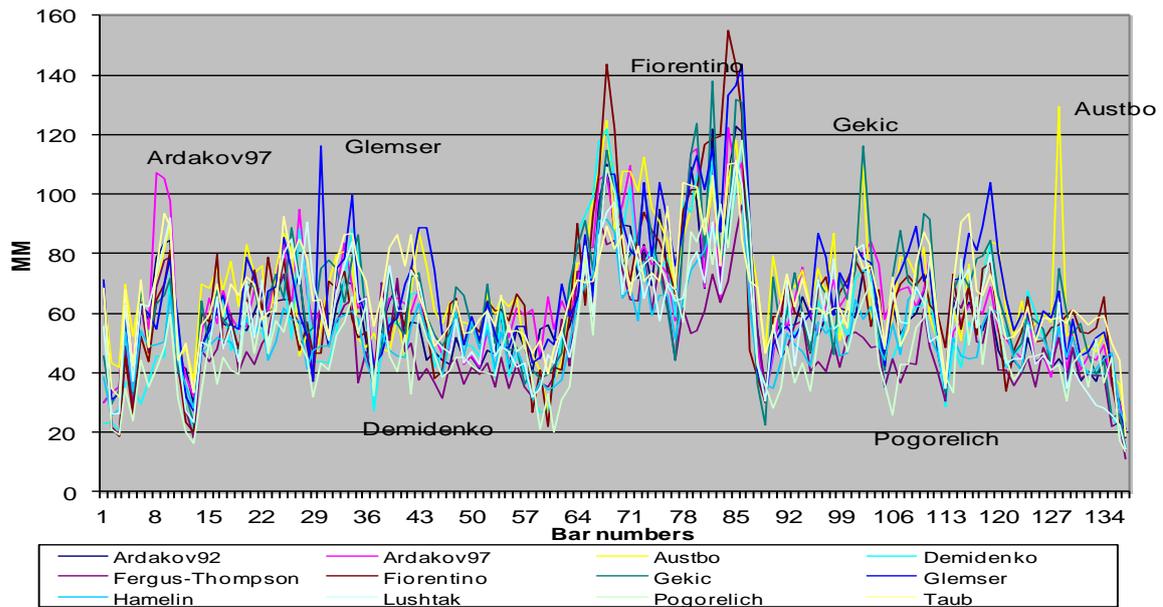


Figure 67 Group D recordings (1990-1999): wider flexibility, sometimes in unexpected places.

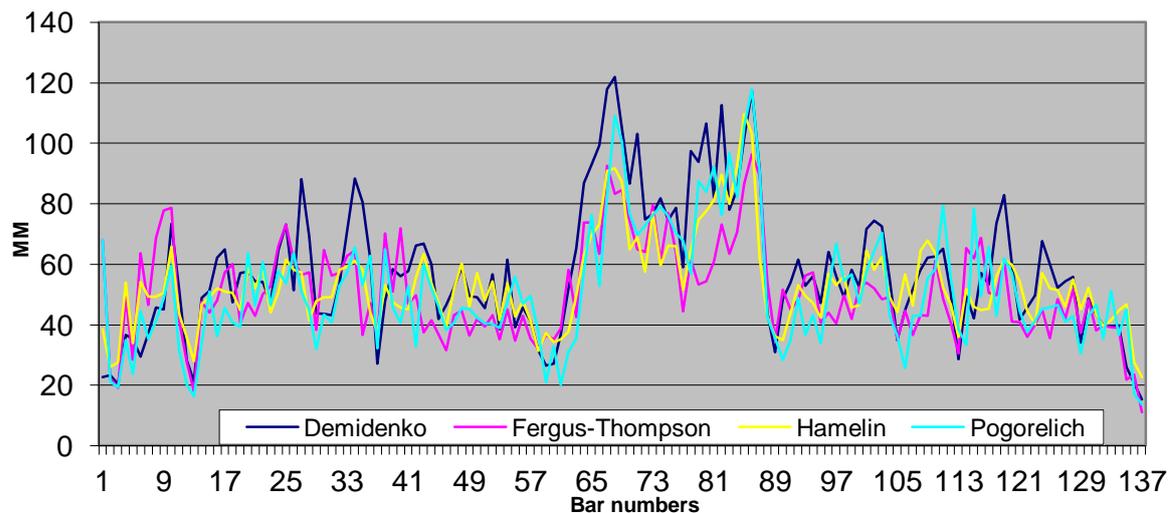


Figure 68 Bar to bar tempo map. Slowest performances from fourth period, and four out of five slowest ever. The main points (tension-relaxation) in each section are performed in a rather homogenous way.

The listening experience of all four recordings shows that the musical material is presented in spaced way, without the rushing of melodic lines or excessive note-to-note rubato. In other words, ‘spaced’ means that a performance stays generally close to the music score in terms of note values and time layout, e.g. they play quavers or semiquaver triplets evenly and do not apply excessive rubato, that would result in a more ‘fragmented’ or ‘conversational’ performance. The above notion relates to small-scale tempo flexibility, measuring note onsets, beat to beat tempo and rubato effects.

Pogorelich gives the impression of a never ending line that connects the movement's parts. His melodic lines of bars 37-57 are played without agogic accents or *tenutos*. His performance comes across as an 'elongated' Richter 1955 recording. Pedal support is a crucial factor here, as it fills the longer duration with a long vibrating bass line and treble line overtones. Fergus-Thompson follows a similar strategy, although he uses agogic accents and *tenuto* playing, especially in busy areas that need good voicing (e.g. bars 45-57). Hamelin also keeps a steady pulse with an even layout of the music, without accents (e.g. bars 45-57, Tr. 18).

Group E shows a remarkable coincidence of average tempo in the exposition. Although there is a variation with slight tempo increases from section to section in Grimwood and Kocyan, metronome values look surprisingly similar. The same applies in the recapitulation, with Melnikov and Kocyan being the exception to the rule.

Group E (2000-2006) shows similar tendencies to Group D, although the latter adopts faster tempi. The slowest performance is by Kasman (8:18), who does not opt for significant tempo fluctuation. Individuality of interpretation is present here, too, as it is in Group D. The main structural points are respected (fermatas, *ffs* etc.), and it seems that almost all pianists now consider the middle section to have two culmination points. For Voskresensky and Goiti, the first climax is assigned even larger tempo fluctuation.

B. Second Movement

Performances of this movement range from 2:57 mins in length (Ogdon) to 4:31mins (Ardakov97). There is a general tendency among performers for a light touch in the straightforward motivic theme and an *espressivo* rendition of the lyrical middle section. Tempo is affected by the character of each section in most, but not all, performances (e.g. Ogdon, who keeps an almost unchangeable pace throughout the whole movement). In the next graph, sectional average tempi show each performer's tempo strategy. The movement is divided in five sub-sections, according to the thematic material and Scriabin's own verbal indications in the score, which announce each time either the onset of a different musical idea or the change of character within the same theme. Connecting lines should not be taken into account, as they do not represent a value. Surprisingly

enough, Scriabin (with the exception of Ogdon) is the only one who shows an almost straight horizontal line for four out of the five minor sections. He seems to slow down only in the coda. Even if the tempo chosen for the piano roll to be played and recorded by Lobanov was inaccurate, the line should still be of the same appearance; the only thing that would change is its position on the graph, i.e. higher or lower to indicate faster or slower tempi, respectively. Scriabin's performance sounds effervescent (Figure 44), with the differentiation of sections through articulation (legato-portando-non legato) being not as obvious as in most other recordings. Unfortunately, as the paragraph on piano rolls explains, one cannot rely on the piano roll recording techniques to decipher that aspect of his performance.

Ogdon is a special case. His performance sounds hurried. Although one would expect lightness and *p* colours for an average tempo as high as MM=114 (all performer's average tempo being MM=97), his sound sometimes feels heavy, especially in the beginning. He seems to be searching for direction at the expense of small-scale expression. This is especially true in the more lyrical passages, e.g. bars 41-78, in which tenutos are non-existent (Tr. 19). He also tends to make mistakes in certain passages (e.g. bars 76-78). Ogdon was famous as a virtuoso and an extremely prolific pianist and composer. He was also admired for his ability to perform and record musical works nearly at first sight. He recorded all Scriabin sonatas in the early 1970s', a difficult period of his life, facing severe health issues, which may have affected this recording. Melnikov's recording, another fast interpretation (3:13 mins), was made in 2006. Despite the sweeping succession of motifs, he points out the movement's structure by shaping his phrasing with clear reference to structural boundaries (e.g. breathing in bar 94, Tr. 20). In reference to his writings in his CD booklet notes, his research on the piano roll performances with the contribution of Lobanov may have influenced him in showing structural boundaries via tempo fluctuation, as Scriabin did.

For the rest of the recordings, initial tempi vary and usually relate to articulation; the heavier the articulation (legato or with sustaining pedal), the longer the first theme. Kasman (3:57) is one of those who make considerable use of the pedal, but maintains a clear articulation (Tr. 21). On the other side, Hamelin's fast (3:24) rendition is marked by milder average tempo fluctuation, long lines and a lightness of sound, but also demonstrates a sense of small-scale virtuosic flexibility (Tr. 22). According to the graph,

there is a certain uniformity in the way performances slow down or accelerate, at least in the first four sections. In other words, tempi seem to slow down proportionally among the majority of performers. Roth (3:38) is an exception. He plays the first and second sections at the same average tempo. This should not be seen as a paradoxical strategy, as the music notation has still not changed dramatically. Pogorelich and Gekic provide two exceptions, slowing by 27 and 28 MM units respectively from the second to the third - and more dramatic- section. Gekic's performance is as idiomatic as in the first movement, especially in its small-scale flexibility and fuzzy articulation.

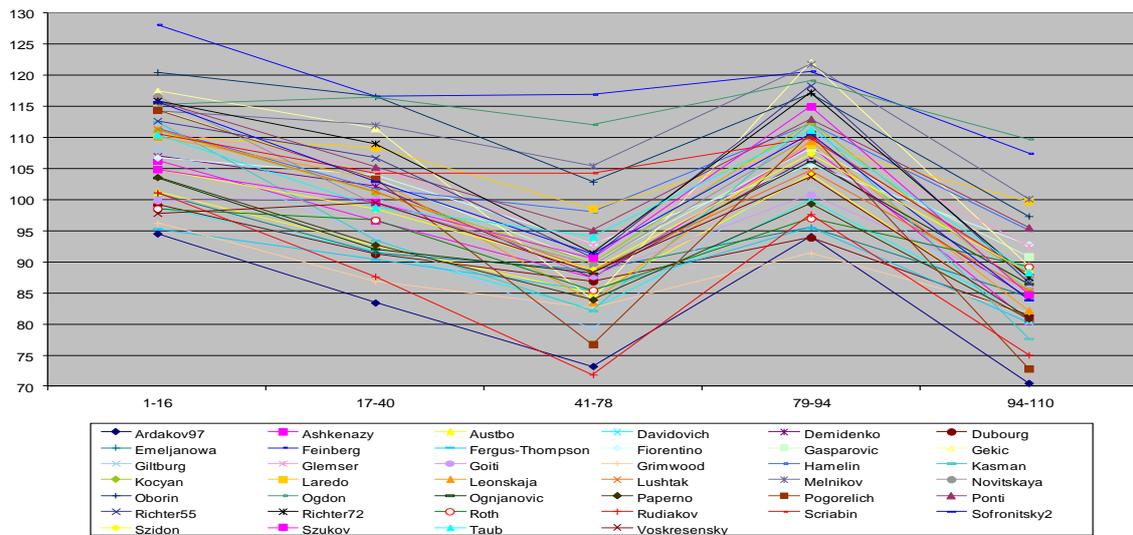


Figure 69 Average tempo per minor sections. Connecting lines should not be taken to indicate a gradual change in tempo between points indicated.

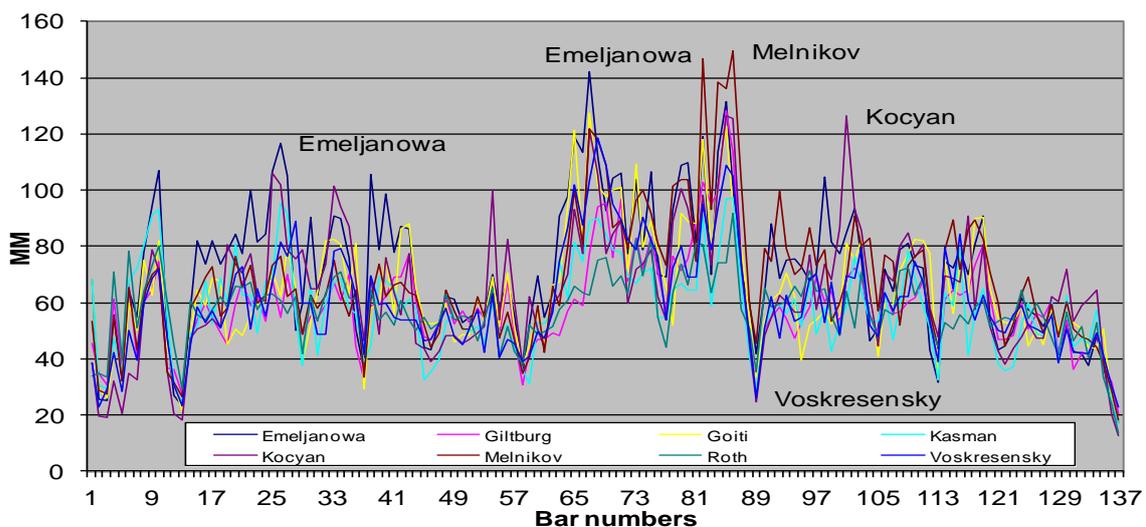


Figure 70 Group E (2000-2006). These recordings are shorter in duration than in the previous period.

Sectional flexibility in relation to rubato

Case-study: Non-rubato or 'strict' performances of the first movement

Figure 71 depicts a case-study on non-rubato or 'strict' performances. These performances observe closely the note values as indicated in the score. The case-study examines the relationship between long movement duration, tempo flexibility and generally non-rubato layout of the notes within a bar, i.e. in a small-scale assessment. The longest performances (> 8 mins) are assembled. On the basis of the author's listening experience, most of these sound non-rubato. It is interesting to see, though, how a generally non-rubato small-scale layout can affect the wider flexibility of entire sections, i.e. of a big-scale view. It is not unusual for recordings that were initially assigned the property of 'non-rubato' interpretations to figure among the longest performances of the work, as well. Non-rubato small-scale slow playing should be expected to result in an equally non-rubato and slow big-scale, i.e. consisting of whole sections of tempo evenness. These recordings start at a slow tempo, accelerate slightly in bars 13-26 and then slightly decelerate in the 'busy' bars 37-58 in an *allargando* but still flowing pace. The middle section (bars 62-88) is in the form of a dramatic tempo shift, and the final section returns to the initial tempo of bars 13-36, though usually with a slightly faster pulse. They maintain a steady pulse for the return of the theme of bars 113-130, although they had slightly decelerated during the first section (bars 36-57) for the same music material. This gives a fresh look to the transposed music and leads the movement to its end with the repetition of the thematic line in the left hand in bars 131-136.

For comparison purposes, performances that had been considered 'non-rubato' are placed in one graph (Figure 71), and the rest in another one. The aim is to see if the overall movement flexibility in 'rubato' interpretations is proportional to the fluctuation shown in the 'non-rubato' or 'strict' performances. It is notable that, in the beginning of the third section (bar 89), non-rubato performances show common strategies toward an explicit lowering of average tempo. This clear change of rhythm is due to the return of the thematic line that copies bars 13-36. In the graph, the movement is divided in many short sub-sections. For each one of these, performers tend to keep a steady pulse. For the assessment of this detailed change of tempo the movement has been temporarily seen in many minor sections.

Long and non-rubato performances look quite close in pulse strategy. The opening theme may differ in proportion to bars 13-36 from one recording to another, but from bars 13 onwards there is a common way of building up the sections. Dubourg's performance presents a special case in maintaining a steady tempo with minor changes, even during the middle section. In fact, her recording sounds rather metronomical, on a small-scale assessment.

On the other hand, the graph of rubato long performances (Figure 72) shows that, although a general consensus exists on the need for average tempo changes from one section to the next, the proportions of this change differ from one recording to another. First, recordings agree on a much faster pace in the quiet thematic section of bars 13-36. Second, the beginning of the final section (bars 89-113) demonstrates a gradual slowing down by 15 metronome units. This tendency attributes to this type of performances a sense of 'unquietness'. On the other hand, the non-rubato performances show a higher degree of deceleration, i.e. by at least 20 metronome units, making the change from the 'robust' section to the 'fragile' third-one clearer. Although Kasman's performance is considered as a 'rubato'-one, he generally presents a more even line that coincides quite well with that of the 'strict' performances. In fact, his interpretation balances between rubato (e.g. bars 13-36, Tr. 23) and 'strict' or even playing (e.g. bars 62-88, played *pesante*, especially in bars 71 and 73 and 77-88, Tr. 24).

A general conclusion drawn from these types of performance argues that non-rubato performances tend to perform similar themes in the same tempo. They tend to change explicitly the pulse between sub-sections of antithetical character. For instance, the transition from the middle section (bars 62-88) to the third one (bars 89-113) is realised in a much more abrupt way for the non-rubato performances than for the rubato ones. On the other hand, rubato performances do not present a unanimous ratio in tempo change. Finally, rubato long performances maintain a sense of rhythmical 'anxiety' throughout the whole movement, whereas non-rubato long performances create the element of surprise and renewal through more sudden shifting of sectional average tempo in areas of contrasting character.

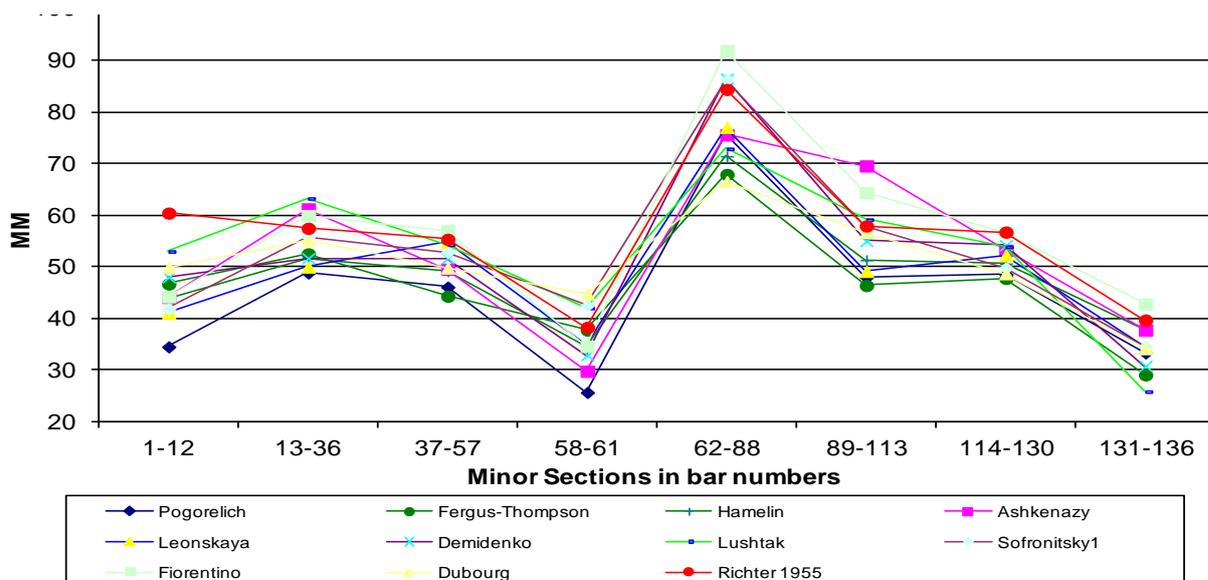


Figure 71 Non-rubato or 'strict' performances, i.e. performances with material evenly presented in terms of tempo, or performances which stay close to the printed score in terms of note values, without much rubato or tempo shifting. The dots describe the avMM of minor sections of the first movement. Connecting lines should not be observed as metronome units, but rather as a proof of the proportionality –or not- of average tempo change among performers. For instance, Dubourg and Ashkenazy are two examples of differentiation to the rest of recordings in tempo shifting in bars 89-113.

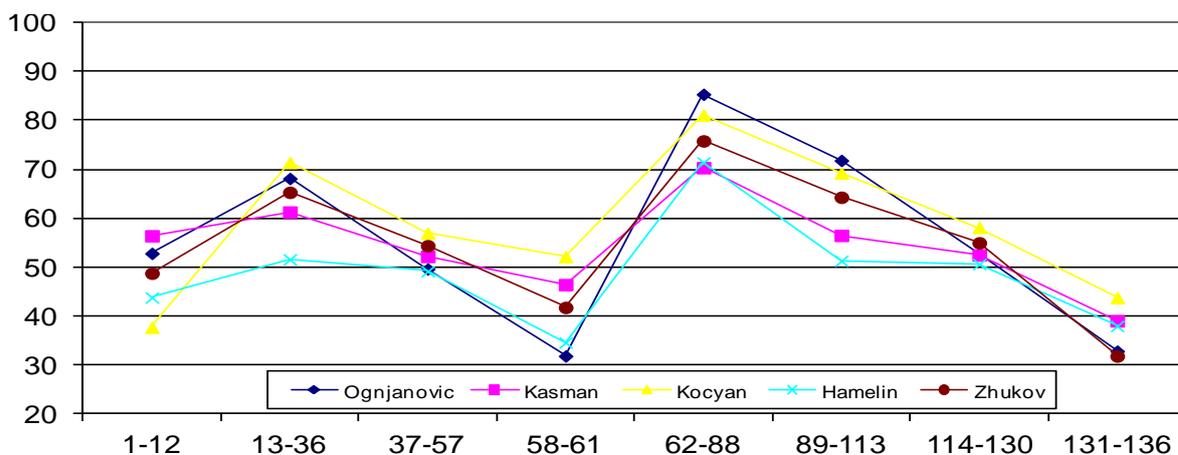


Figure 72 'Rubato' long performances.

TEMPO RUBATO

In reference to rubato, a number of case studies serve as examples on how this performance feature can influence the balance of a phrase. The choice of extracts relate to my own queries on how to perform the related music. They aim to give rise to a detailed reflection on performance alternatives.

CASE-STUDIES

Opening theme

Examples: bars 1-12 (I)

It has been already pointed out that the opening theme (i.e. the first twelve bars) presents such an ambiguity of form and character, which make it possible for varied interpretations. The initial thematic material is introduced in a supposedly static layout with a frequent interruption of tempo flow via three fermatas. Three main types of performance strategy are often sketched: The first one accentuates the fermata pauses and enforces the overture character of the segment. The tempo is kept slow and dynamics quiet. This type clearly shows the obscure development of a scene that is contrasted by the more lyrical bars 13-22. The second type of interpretation sounds more anxious, as it does not lean on the role of fermatas as important time breaks, but rather as short breaths. This type does not hold pauses for long, but always directs itself towards the following passage with growing dynamics, thus anticipating the flow of bars 7-11, as well as bars 13-22. A third type is a combination of the others, with the tempo flowing or interrupted by the fermatas.

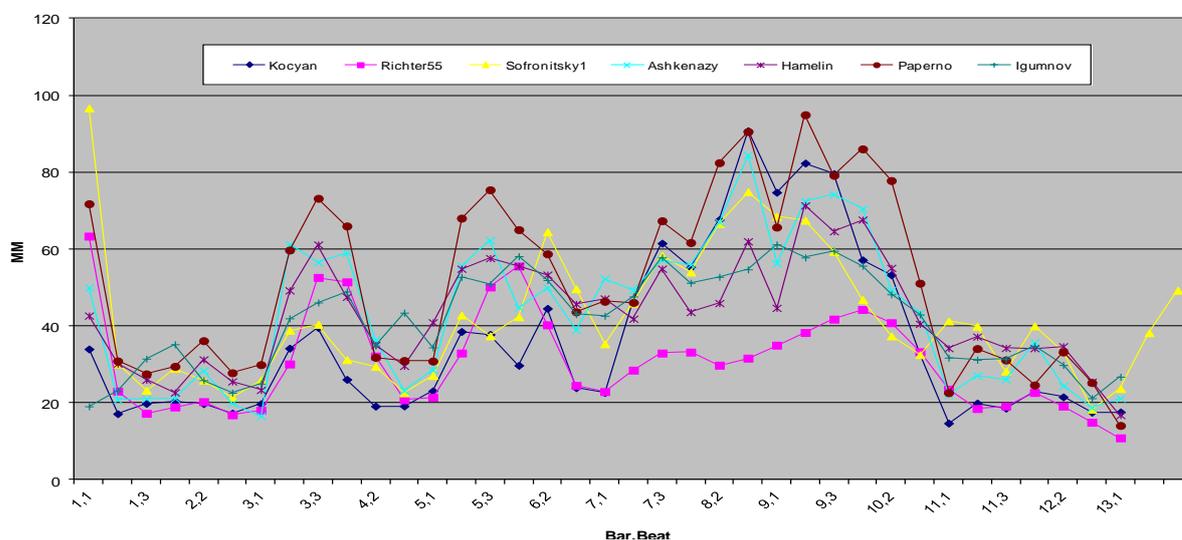


Figure 73 Tempo map of bars 1-12, Igumnov, Sofronitsky1, Richter 1955, Ashkenazy, Paperno, Kocyan, Hamelin.

If one were to follow Scriabin's programmatic notes on the work, it could be claimed that the first bars match his description of a calm sea in the evening light. However, each

performer sketches this image using different means. Kocyan is an example of the first type of performance (Figure 73). He starts with a very quiet and *misterioso*-like tone colour at a very slow pace (MM=37). He concentrates on long vibrating sounds (Figure 74 and Figure 76) and reaches a peak only at the end of the passage, in bars 7-10, where the second motif is introduced. *Ritenuti* before each fermata are performed almost as *smorzandi*, as Kocyan lets the sound disappear naturally, while keeping the sustaining pedal down. His performance gives a shadowy character to the opening bars. It lacks anticipation of what is to follow, opting for the element of surprise instead. It makes a first 'statement' of a rather obscure and mysterious situation, in which the listener becomes immersed in just six bars.

On the other hand, in his 1955 live recording (Figure 75 and Figure 77), Richter starts this section at a rather fast tempo (MM=60), seeing the fermatas as abrupt cuts that need to be overcome in order to reach a first climax in bars 7-11. His drive imparts a sense of anxiety and anticipation about what is to happen next. It also keeps the steadiest pace of all. In this way, it easily connects the first bars to bars 13-22. The third type of performance (e.g. Sofronitsky, Hamelin and Igumnov (MM=44) or Paperno (MM=52A)) features a combination of the above elements. The overall movement duration is not affected by these first bars, as all performers tend to view this section on its own, as if it were an introduction to the lyrical part.

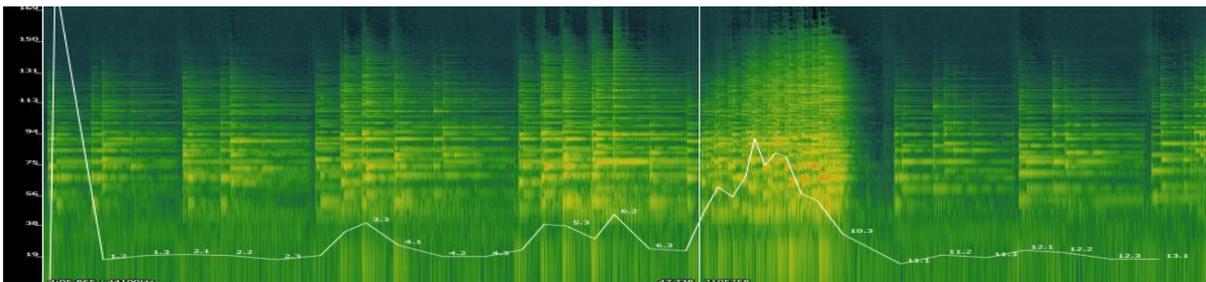


Figure 74 Kocyan 1-12 (Tr. 25), tempo and harmonic graph. He plays at a very slow tempo, with long sustained lines and one climatic point at bars 7-11.

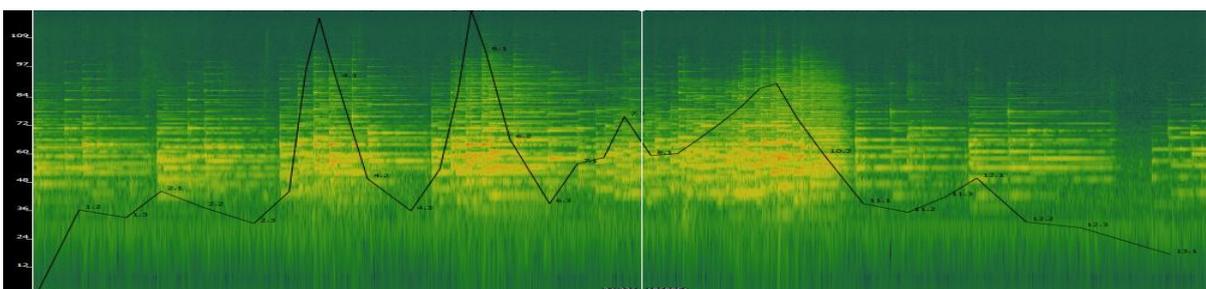


Figure 75 Richter 1955 (Tr. 26), bars 1-12, with a sense of drive towards the next bars and three climatic points. Fermatas are used here as abrupt cuts in a theme that wants to be developed as soon as possible.

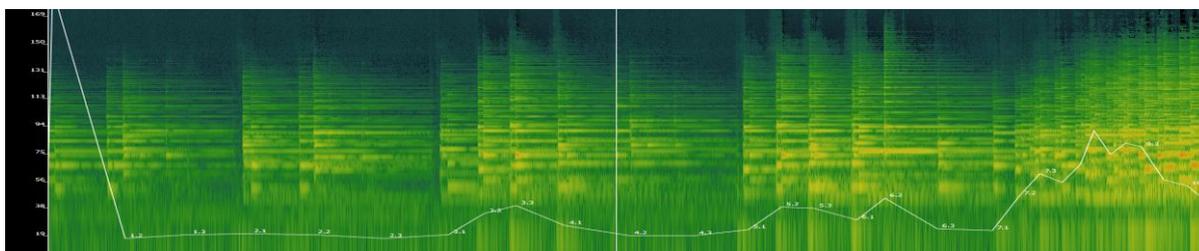


Figure 76 Kocyan, bars 1-6, at a very slow tempo, with long vibrating notes and a rather obscure sound effect.

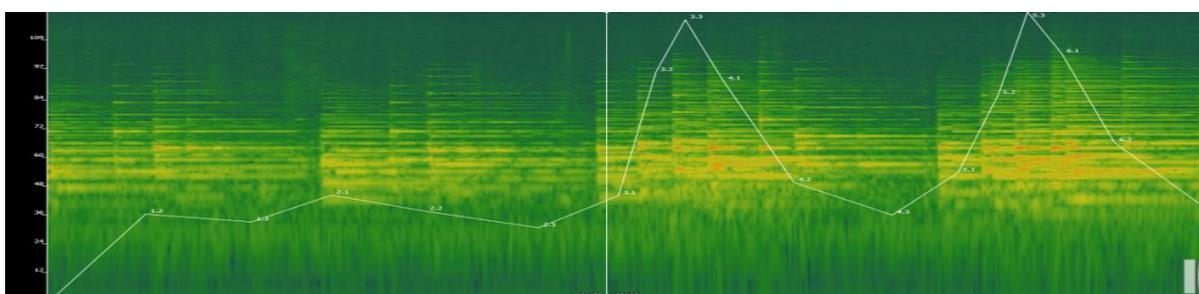


Figure 77 Richter (1955), detail of first bars, showing tempo peaks and short vibrating but loudly played chords.

Indeed, performers tend to see the opening as an independent section in terms of tempo. They usually completely change their tempo after bar 13. 'Strict' - and usually long - performances, such as Pogorelich's (9:47) are an exception to this general rule: he plays bars 1-12 at a very slow pace (MM=34), informed by a similar insight to Kocyan (MM=37). But when he reaches bar 13, he follows a slow pace (MM=46) similar to what came before, whereas the majority of performers, like Kocyan, employ a much faster pulse for the rest of the movement and use a lot of rubato, as well.

My own performances of this extract incline towards the third type of interpretation, i.e. viewing the fermatas as short or long breaths. The 2014 performance leans towards the slow performances (MM=45) with long fermatas and quiet dynamics. The 2009 recording falls more into the third type of approach, as it combines long and short fermatas with abrupt changes in dynamics. The next graph shows that the 2014 performance presents the mildest tempo peaks and long pauses (see arrows). In that performance, I aimed to experiment with the obscurity of the chords and the overture-like character of the segment. The graph depicts my growing confidence in

experimenting with time taken over fermatas. Nevertheless, during a concert, I do not force myself into a certain performance strategy for this segment and usually tend to improvise. I often begin with long fermatas and test the acoustics of the concert hall, which have now changed due to the presence of an audience. I take time from one motif to the next and try to become part of the ambiance, as if I were a member of the audience.

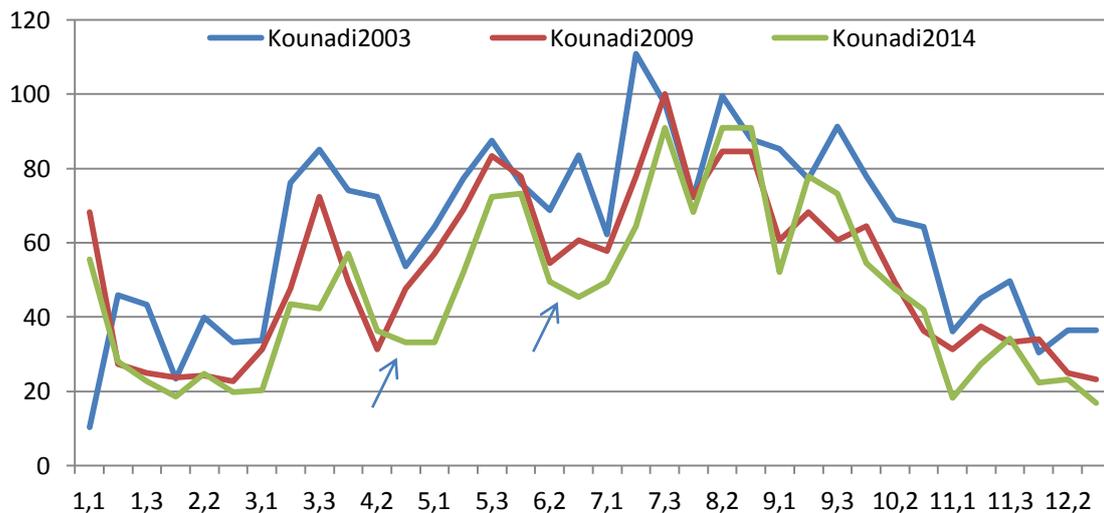


Figure 78 Bars 1-12 (I) of 2003 (Tr. 27), 2009 (Tr. 28) and 2014 performance (Tr. 29), with bar/beat numbers on horizontal axis and MM on vertical axis. Arrows show long pauses for 2014 performance.

During a piano lesson with Philip Fowke, he had pointed out that, during a performance, performers should pretend that they are unaware of the following part. I agree that, if performers take the music text for granted, they risk losing the excitement of a performance. Fowke's approach can help a performer to give greater importance to the 'now' of the music. Indeed, before a performance, a broader view of the work should be practised and stabilised in one's mind. The challenge is to give the music a fresh appearance, even during a live performance. From Fowke's words, I understood that I should perform as if I were improvising the next passage, as the composer of the work would do whilst composing.

Bars 13-22 and 89-112 (I)

Bars 13-22 establish the opening theme in a more lyrical sense, with quaver triplets in the bass line and the triplets' 'overture' motif leading in the right hand. Rubato effects are introduced in both hands during the triplets, sometimes with dislocation between hands on upbeats or downbeats (Figure 79), but mainly through *tenutos*. Although it is not written in the score, performers arpeggiate the right hand chords, as Scriabin does in his own piano roll performance, thus creating an additional sense of desynchronisation between hands. In fact, only Ponti chooses to arpeggiate only those chords marked for arpeggiation in the score (Tr. 30).

The image displays a musical score for three systems of music, numbered 13, 17, and 20. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (bars 13-16) features a bass line with quaver triplets and a right hand with chords and triplets. Dynamics include *pp* and *cresc.*. Red vertical lines indicate desynchronisation between the hands. The second system (bars 17-19) continues the theme with dynamics *mf*. The third system (bars 20-22) shows further development with dynamics *cresc.*, *mf*, and *dim.*. Red lines continue to mark desynchronisation points.

Figure 79 Red lines show desynchronisation of hands with the note shown played before the others.

Performers tend to relate *tenuto* to note values. They linger on longer values for longer and hurry up the shorter ones. Kocyan, for instance, adds agogic accents to the downbeat crotchets of the right hand at the beginning of the section. But as the phrase evolves and a secondary phrase starts at bar 19, he changes his flow, now lingering more on the third beat of each bar (black arrows in Figure 81). There is a sense of compensating rubato that expands to the whole section. This is perhaps explained by the music score layout, as Scriabin writes a long note (dotted quavers or tied notes) on the third beat that does not last for the whole third beat, with the last note of the bar really

being used as an upbeat for the next bar phrase. In the graph, the orange lines mark every note onset. Longer notes tend to be played with a delay, in a sense of *tenuto* (black arrows). This is why the majority of performers tend to interrupt the music flow in this longer-note segment, conveying the sense of an interrupted monologue in the right-hand melody.

Others, such as Austbo, give a different character – and tempo – to short events within these bars. Austbo gives a flowing pulse to the section, but still speeds up in the repeated triplet motifs in bars 14, 16 and 17, as if there are two different characters – or voices –, and underlines them with accents on each note. In Figure 82, Richter (1955) accelerates the first and second beats, but with evenly spaced values, as the regular distances between note onsets show (orange lines). Then, after the third beat onset, Richter delays before the new bar downbeat (black arrows). This effect creates a notion of within-the-bar compensating rubato, which contrasts with Kocyan’s wider span of rubato.

Another example is Igumnov (Figure 83), who opts for a rather fast interpretation of the section and for very mild beat fluctuation but with note-to-note rubato. Igumnov’s ‘tempo’ explosion’ from MM= \sim 50 in bars 1-12 to MM= \sim 70 in bars 13-36 sounds rather strange. Moreover, some of his note-to-note rubato is unique. In the particular passage, at bar 13 and more clearly at bar 15 he turns the last quaver of the triplet into a dotted semiquaver.

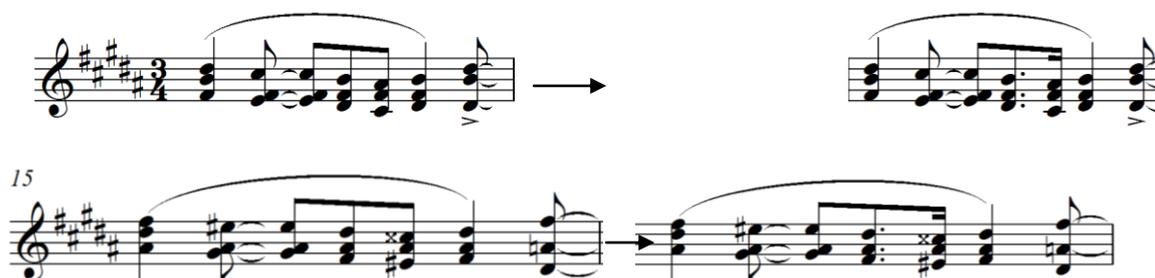


Figure 80 Bars 13-17 (I), Igumnov (Tr. 31).

Kocyan, who started the movement in an obscure mood, gives now an improvisatory quality to the character of the movement with his irregular beats. Richter (1955), who started in a more unquiet mood directing the listener towards these bars (13-20), now

sets the flow of the movement at a more secured pulse that does not need much overall fluctuation to let the music material reveal itself. Both performers agree on the importance of contrasts; that is, if bars 1-11 are quiet, then the next segment will not be, and *vice versa*.

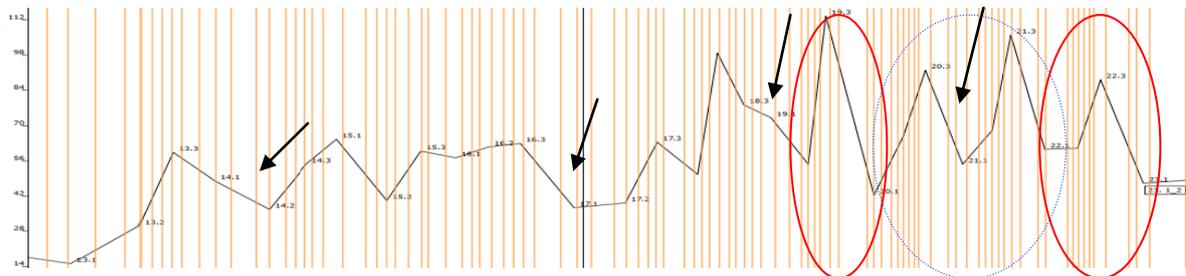


Figure 81 Kocyan, bars 13-22. Some third-beat notes are played *tenuto*, causing tempo delay. Orange lines mark note onsets. The irregular distance between them on this graph is a mark of *tenuto* playing (Tr. 32).

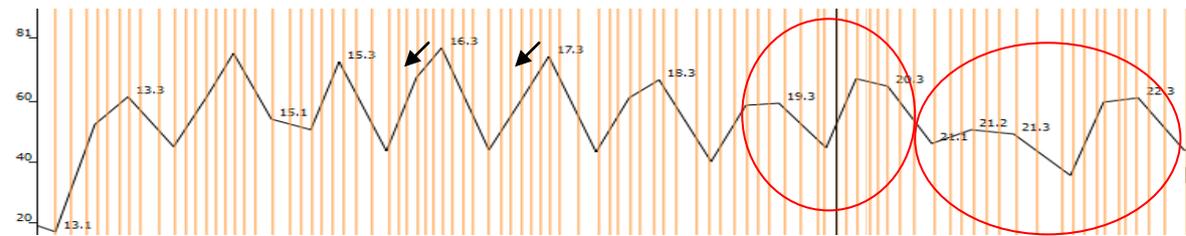


Figure 82 Richter (1955), bars 13-22. Note onsets (orange lines) show more stable beats than Kocyan (Tr. 33).

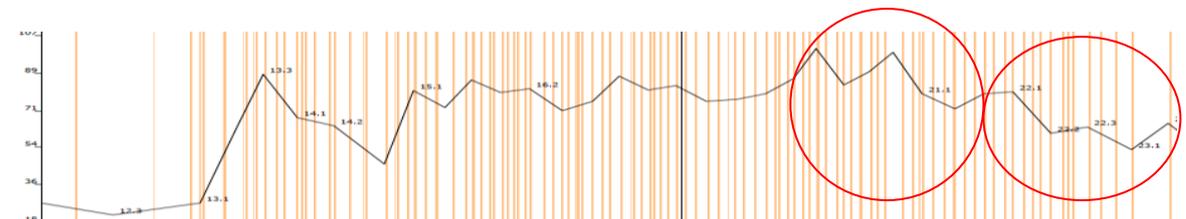


Figure 83 Igumnov, bars 13-22 (Tr. 34).

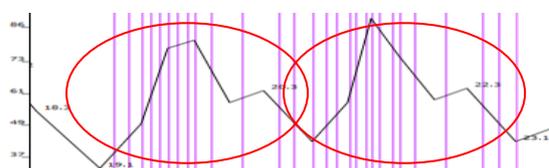


Figure 84 Scriabin, bars 19-22 (Tr. 35).

Circles capture the more 'busy' bars 19-22 of the segment, from a closer beat-to-beat and note-to-note rubato angle. Scriabin gives a similar shape to the two pairs of bars, 19-20 and 21-22, matching his rubato to phrase construction in a sense of I-II | I-II layout. Bars

19 and 21 push the tempo, bars 20 and 22 slow it down. Turning to Igumnov and Richter, each performs his own beat-to-beat rubato, but within a certain self-repeating beat-to-beat tempo formula. However, as already pointed out, Richter plays without note-to-note rubato, whereas Igumnov relies a lot on it. Kocyan, on the other hand, builds in a different tempo philosophy in the same bars, creating a I|II|I tempo structure plan coupled with a lot of note-to-note rubato. These elements imbue his interpretation with an *agitato* feeling, which is counter-balanced at the end of the segment by *ritenuto*.

My own performance stands somewhere in the middle – as do most recorded performances examined in this research – between Richter’s scarce and Kocyan’s excessive fluctuation. In my performance of the segment, I aim for flowing phrases, but use agogic accents when I arrive at bars 19 and 21. I tend to take time on the dotted quaver of the last beat and hurry the next semiquaver. In this way, tempo usually decreases between the third beat and first beat of the next bar (Figure 85, see arrows).

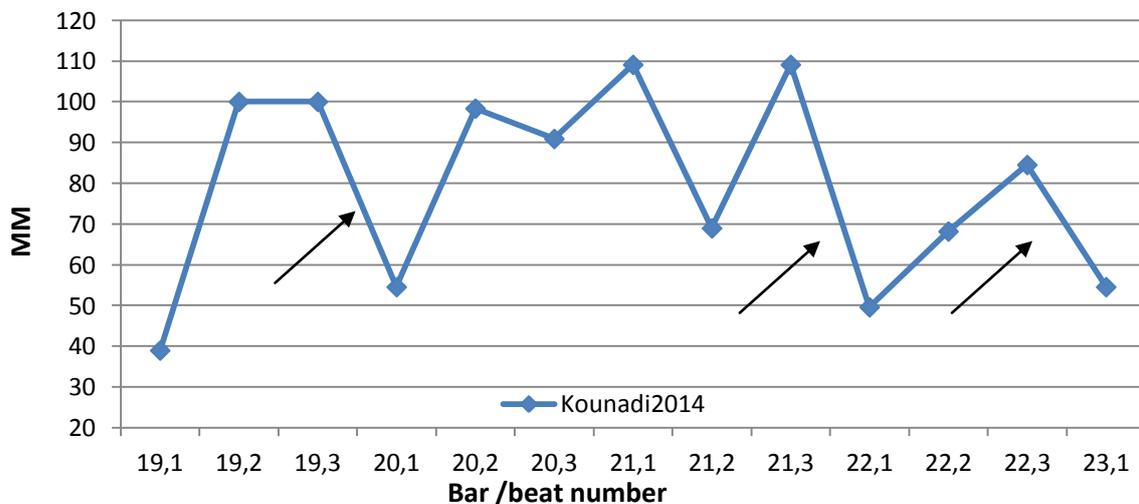


Figure 85 Bars 19-22 (I), own performance of 2014 (Tr. 36).

The last section starts at bar 89. The just ended middle section has instilled excitement, which is now contrasted with the lyricism and calm flow of this last section. As in the first section, the tempo is generally stabilised, though beat-to-beat rubato is still evident. Themes that have already been presented in the first section are often performed now at a slightly different pace from the pulse of the first section, which is normal for long forms, such as the sonata: the repeated theme needs to be replayed if listeners are to

remember it, but it still needs to be refreshed, usually though a different view, either being played more slowly and thoughtfully, in a manner reminiscent of the past theme, or at a refreshing, self-renewing faster tempo (Figure 54). Some performers, including Richter (1955) and Kocyan, perform this passage with mild average tempo fluctuation; Kocyan still uses more note-to-note rubato than most performers.

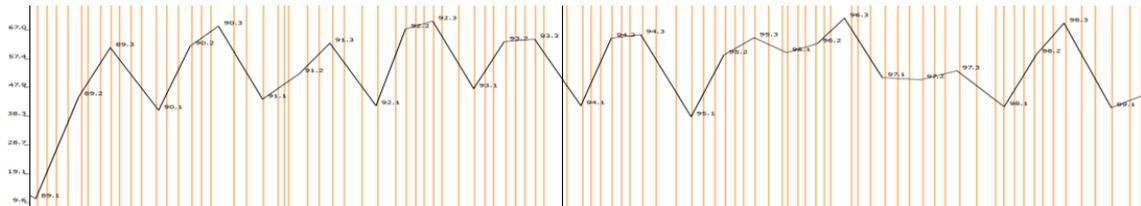


Figure 86 Richter's (1955) pace is slightly slower than in the exposition, but the melodic shaping is similar (bars 89-99, Tr. 37).

I usually perform this section with less rubato than the first and with more concern for musical direction through a rather steady flow. The new key, E major, a perfect fourth higher than B major of bar 13, encourages a new character of warmth and light in the thematic material (Tr. 38).

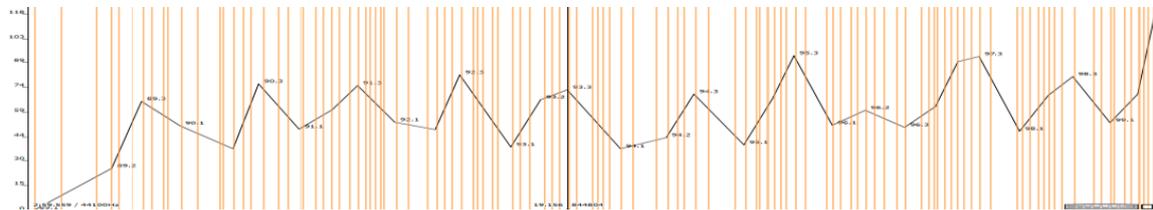


Figure 87 Kocyan's beginning of the last section (bars 89-99) is more temporally symmetrical than in the same theme of the first section, starting at bar 13 (see figure below). His *rubato* and pace are milder, as well (Tr. 39).

Conversational character

Examples: bars 23-36 and 113-130 (I)

Bars 23-36 and their transposed copies 99-113 change the character with a more introverted, quiet theme marked *rubato*. Left-hand crotchets keep the tempo more or less static, whereas the right-hand combination of crotchets and triplets push it forward. In bars 31-36, the rubato is partly directed by the notation itself in the appearance of five-note groups of semiquavers in bars 32, 33 and 35. Six-note semiquavers (bar 34) and

eight-note demi-semiquavers (bar 36) create a *parlando* effect in *pp*. In this passage, the eight-bar phrase of bars 23-30 is repeated, though in variation.



Figure 88 Bars 23-30. Arrows mark speeding up, opposite arrows drawing-back. Some performers slightly anticipate the right-hand onset in their left-hand chords.

A small number of performers play this part with very mild *rubato* (Richter, Pogorelich). The majority rely on Riemann's aforementioned 'centres of gravity', tending to lean on crotchet values with *tenutos*, and to play triplets hurried and with *rubato*, offering a sense of freedom to the section (Figure 88). Their *rubato* may be compensated for in the next beat or within the wider span of the theme. This notion is related to the construction of the theme: phrases and their motifs are repeated with variation (bars 23-26 change into 31-34 and 27-30 into 35-37; as already indicated in Chapter 1, bar 37 is also the stimulus for a new thematic group). This creates a sense of an introspective monologue in the right hand, with moderate interruption by short motivic 'comments' in the left hand (e.g. 23-24, 30-32, etc.).

What mainly differs among these performances is the tempo fluctuation as this is influenced by phrasing. For a number of performers, small note values are hurried and played with *rubato* effects. Hurried motifs are shown in the following figures as dense groups of purple lines. Kocyan, for example, performs bars 23-26 at a relative fast pace, establishing the new thematic subject (bar 23); he then anticipates the end of the four-bar phrase in order to start (in bar 27) the second four-bar phrase, that starts in the opposite way, i.e. *pp*, which Kocyan plays in a rushed and airy tone. The fragility of colour in bars

27 and 28 give the 'glittery' quality to the sound which Scriabin's music is associated with and which most performers seek to achieve in these particular bars. In some bars, metronome marks can double between two consecutive beats (MM=53 and 114 in beats 1 and 2 of bar 35, respectively). He keeps the sustaining pedal down for the long notes (e.g. the crotchet in bar 31), and articulates the short-note motifs (e.g. demi-semiquavers in bar 36) as non legato (Figure 90), like Pogorelich and Fiorentino.

However, Kocyan accelerates abruptly at the beginning of a phrase or motif, whereas most performers will start their accelerando gradually (e.g. bar 24.1, 28.1, etc.). His performance reminds one of trends at the beginning of the twentieth century, and perhaps of Scriabin's style, that would sound rather mannered to contemporary listeners (e.g. Figure 91, bar 29.2). In fact, Kocyan's recording may mark performers going back to past performance practices and applying them to contemporary recordings. In the highlighted beat (Figure 91), Scriabin accelerates to such an extent, that one feels he plays one beat less. Perhaps this is his intention, as his compositional technique has incorporated a good many rhythmic approaches (irregular beats, etc.) by the time he recorded the Second Sonata, one of his earliest works.

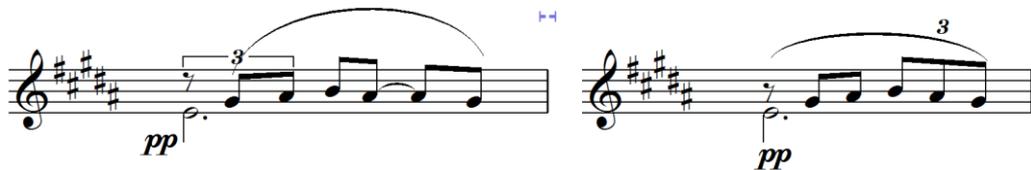


Figure 89 Scriabin's excessive accelerando sounds like a change in time signature, bar 29 (Tr. 40).

Austbo's approach is in the same spirit, though with less excessive note-to-note rubato. It feels 'conversational', because his phrases are built up in the way that one answers the other, because his fluctuations in tempo between consecutive beats are mild, at no greater than 40 units, and because of his slower average tempo. His pedal effects are placed rather evenly for all bars, although tone colour does change. Gradual accelerandos or rallentandos are used in an introspective, natural, unforced way with a warm sound and phrasing. In other words, the point of differentiation from Kocyan's performance is the more sharply sculptured and poised character of the section as performed by the latter in terms of rubato.

The following graphs show that these performers, who have various performance tendencies in common, seem to return to their overall average tempo only at important structural boundaries (Figure 90) such as bar 31, to mark the start of the thematic variation. Kocyan returns to his average tempo, but at less seminal points.

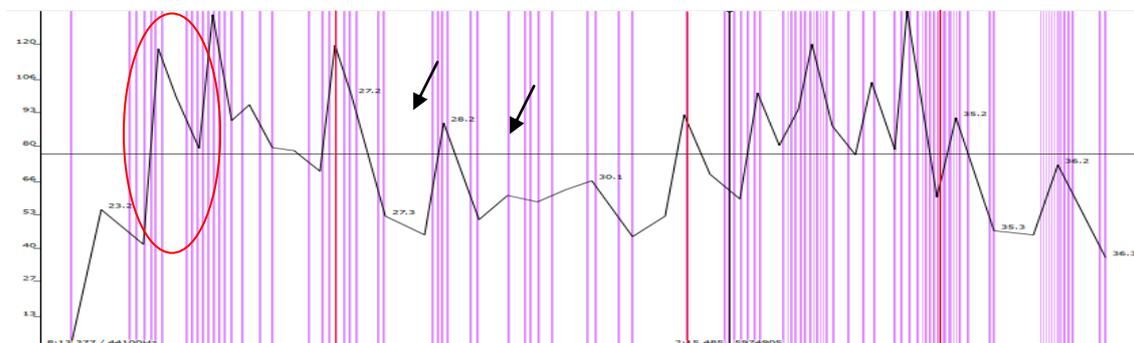


Figure 90 Kocyan 23-36. His avT=77 is marked by the dashed horizontal line, red lines mark phrase boundaries and the purple line the onset of right-hand notes (Tr. 41).

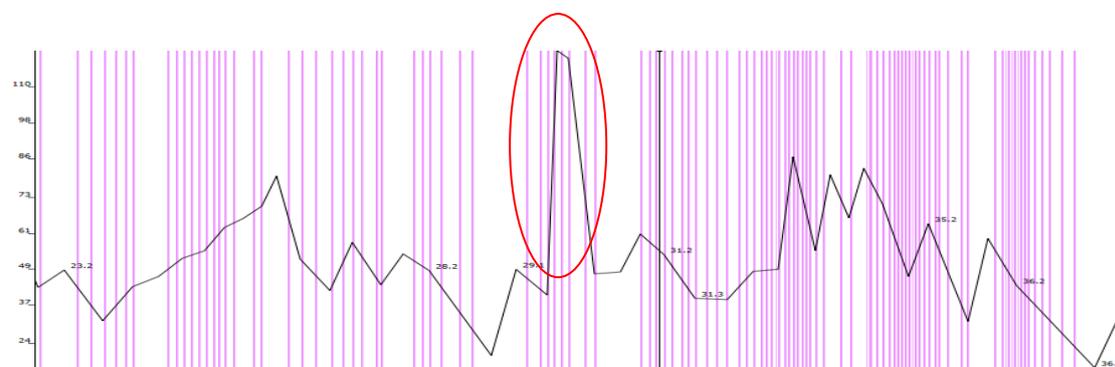


Figure 91 Scriabin, bars 23-36, avT=55 (Tr. 42).

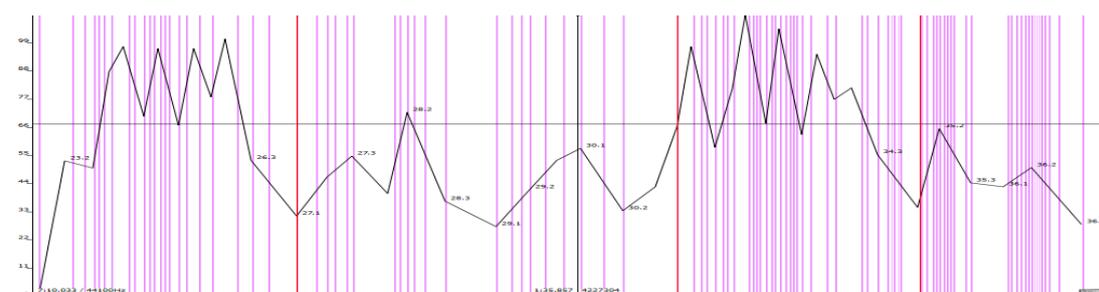


Figure 92 Austbo, avT=67 (Tr. 43).

Richter's 1955 performance of the above passage is much more serene. In this performance, notes are evenly spread. The occasional rubato is reserved for one or two notes, and applied more in the sense of good 'placement' or tenuto in certain notes, rather than in a whole passage. This is evident in the evenly spread note onset (purple lines) in Figure 93. He shows a well measured playing of short values, such as semiquavers and demi-semiquavers. One could even tell from the orange note onset

lines what the note values could be. Richter uses gradual tempo changes, whereas Kocyan's changes are sudden and improvisatory. He prefers to let the notation stand out clearly and create the rubato effect on its own, rather than manipulating the tempo. He generally plays the section in good legato, using discreet pedalling (Figure 162). He still shows areas of acceleration and deceleration, shaping the four-bar phrase with mild tempo variety. Pogorelich follows a similar approach.

Bars 99-106 announce the return of the same thematic subject of the first section (bars 23-30), and bars 107-113 are its variation. Performers tend to start bar 99 by directing the melodic line to its peak on the E in bar 101, which they play *tenuto*; there is a similar approach to the same phrase in bar 25, but in another tonality. Then, they continue the melodic flow into the next bar, where the four-bar phrase ends. Bar 103 starts a new four-bar phrase, but for bars 103 and 104 there is a smaller structural level: each bar's motif is structurally defined by a substantial delay at its end (see arrows in the figures below). As in bars 99-103 with the slight delay on E on the third bar, here too this delay occurs as a breath before the beginning of bar 104; then the musical flow continues up to the middle of bar 106, where one finds a variation of bars 99-106.

Kocyan (Figure 94) lingers on the E in bar 101; Richter does not, as he directs the melodic line without accents to its natural end in bar 102.

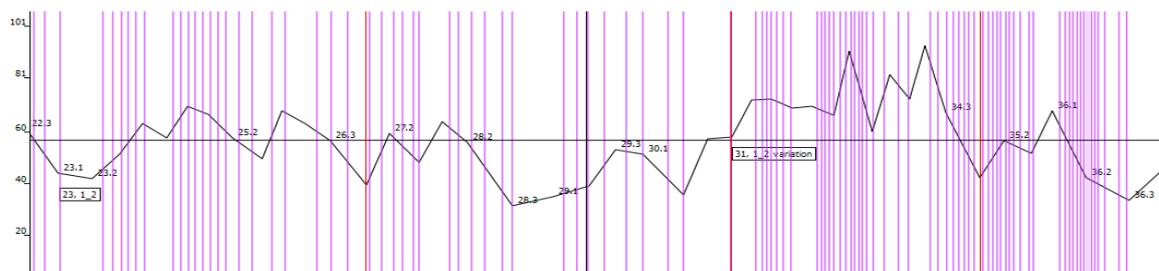


Figure 93 Richter (1955) bars 23-36, avT=58; milder tempo fluctuation and notes that seem to be spread evenly (**Tr. 44**).

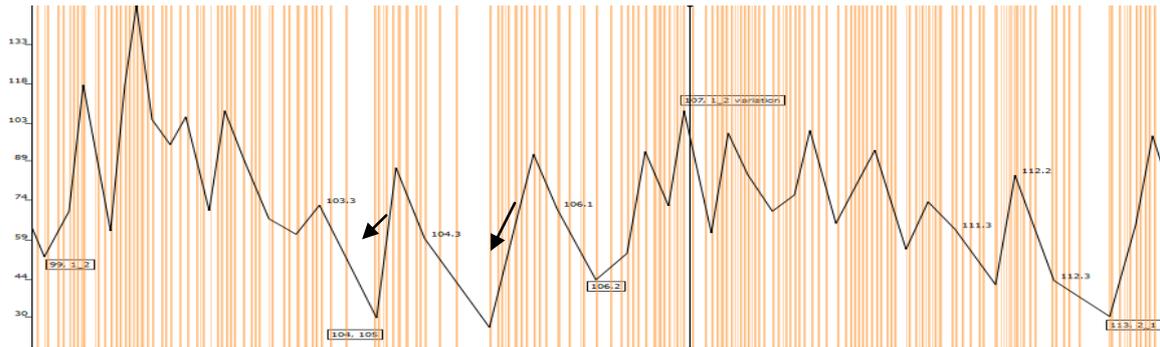


Figure 94 Kocyan 2.1 (Tr. 45), third section (bars 99-107): the beginning of the segment starts with similar flexibility to the exposition. The first four-bar phrase is shaped as a whole (99-102), and *pp* bars 103 and 104 end with the same *tenuto* as bars 27 and 28 in the first section (arrows). Smaller values are hurried, longer values last longer than written (white gaps show the delay between note onsets).

Richter and Kocyan's overall shaping of the thematic subject of bars 99-106 and of its variation (bars 107-114) are similar in the first and third section. The busiest parts in both sections are speeded up. Richter insists on clarity and an even tempo in the case of short notes. For Kocyan, the first four-bar phrase (99-102) is shaped as a whole, and the *pp* bars 103 and 104 end with the same *tenuto* as bars 27 and 28 in the exposition (see arrows in Figures). Smaller values are hurried, longer values last longer than written (white gaps show the delay between note onsets). Kocyan likes to displace the note onset between the two hands, especially in areas of short values, mixing the sounds *and* the beats. This gives a notion of improvisation to the passage. Roth does the same in the corresponding passage from the first section.

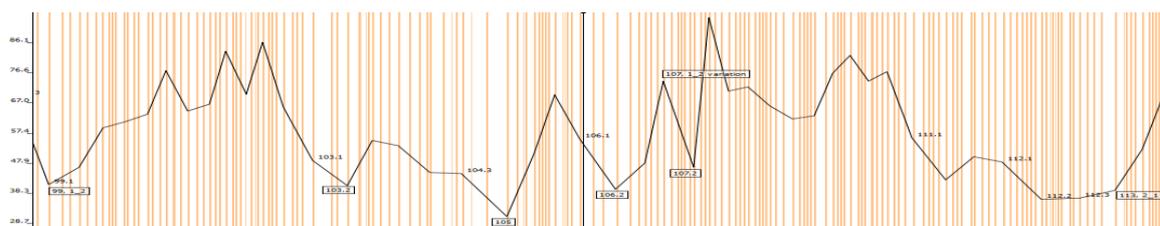


Figure 95 Richter (1955), Third section, bars 99-113: once again, the values – even the shorter ones – are evenly spaced (Tr. 46).

Rubato effects within a three-voice wide register

Examples: bars 37-57 and 113-130 (I)

In my view, bars 37-45 are a link between the theme of bar 13 and that one of bar 45. Bar 37, indicated '*espressivo*', repeats the passing motif of bar 29 and explores it further. It is

sketched in triplets and the main theme is placed at the treble line. At the same time, another line starts a new build-up presented in long lines of semiquavers in four-, five- and six-note groups. A new theme comes in bars 45-57, which Scriabin marks '*ben marcato il canto*'. Here the performer deals with multi-layered voicing with the sustaining pedal often kept down for a whole bar. The three voices have to be clear enough to be projected as well as amalgamated into one sound. They consist of quavers, quaver triplets and semiquaver triplets. They also serve different roles (harmonic or melodic or both), and motifs travel from the bass line to the upper voice (bass semiquaver triplets) and *vice versa* (treble quaver melody).

Scriabin indicates the role of each motif by placing dynamic marks next to it. The main *ben marcato il canto* theme is to be performed with long sustained notes that project the sound through the busy background of other voices. This passage is an example of Scriabin's tendency to mix the melody with harmony into 'meloharmony' or 'melodiye-garmoniya'. Melnikov, referring to the whole first movement, but probably thinking of this specific passage, writes in his sleeve-notes: 'The first movement will always fascinate me with its '3D piano writing', as people would call it now!' (Melnikov: 10).

Kocyan performs the section in a rather fragmented way, generally lingering on the first note of the bar. When the bar begins with triplet quavers, he often sustains the first quaver, then hurries the rest towards a longer note value, which he sustains for longer than written in the score (see arrows in Figure 96). Richter, on the other hand, gives more space to the material and makes a dramatic point in bar 41 by means of a gradual acceleration.

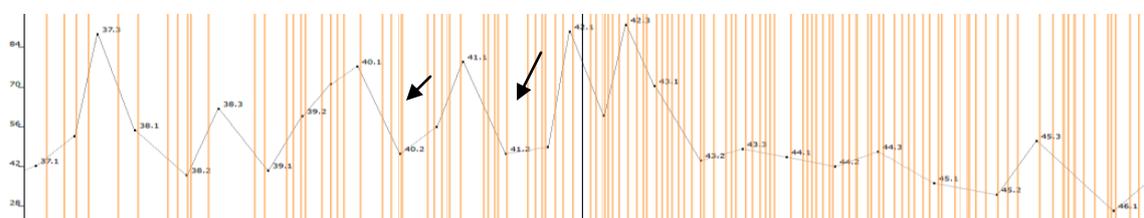


Figure 96 Kocyan, bars 37-45: a temporally fragmented interpretation of this passage, too; delays relate to long note values in one voice during rests in another voice (**Tr. 47**).

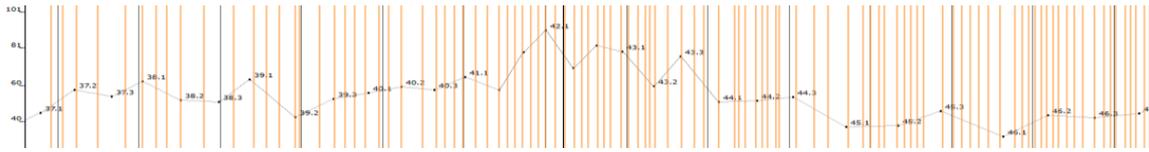


Figure 97 Richter(1955) 37-45. Mild tempo fluctuation, even spacing of the material; tempo increases mainly in the section's most dramatic motif (bar 41), where music starts becoming more busy and fluent by means of short values (Tr. 48).



Figure 98 Examples of rubato playing by Leonskaja, Novitskaya and Kocyan, bars 45-48.

Performers tend to take time in this passage, spacing the layout and focusing on pedal effects via fluttering or other kind of pedalling. They focus on the middle voice (i.e. the quaver melodic line), playing it rubato, thus delaying or hurrying up some beats to achieve compensating rubato or accompaniment rubato (Paperno, bar 48). Most performers play the quaver melodic line as *tenuto* (e.g. Sofronitsky, Ashkenazy, Ferguson-Thompson). The line of semiquaver triplets is, however, the one that affects the overall tempo and character of the section. This is also due to the fact that their onset begins on the second semiquaver of the triplet beat (e.g. bars 47, 48, 50). Performers (e.g. Novitskaya, Glemser) tend to delay the downbeat rest as they play simultaneously the quaver line as *tenuto* (Figure 99). Then they hurry up the semiquavers triplet to make up for the lost time. Others play the quaver line *tenuto*, with the triplet semiquavers

accompanying it, either played *pp* when played simultaneously with it, or speeding up towards its next *tenuto* quaver, when the quaver line rests (e.g. Leonskaja, Kocyan).

An example of accompaniment-type compensating rubato is found in Paperno's performance (Figure 100). In the flow of bars 45-57, he plays the left hand in strict tempo, while the two voices of the right hand are slightly delayed. The effect is smoothed out by the fast pace and the moderate use of *tenutos*. Hands are once again coordinated on the downbeat of the following bar. The passage reminds one of the 'telegraph pole' story that Emile-Jacques Dalkroze, Ysaÿe's accompanist, gives on the former's opinion on accompaniment rubato, quoted in Philip.

In rubato melodic passages, he instructed me not to follow him meticulously in the accelerandos and *ritenutos*, if my part consisted of no more than a simple accompaniment. "It is I alone", he would say, "who can let myself follow the emotion suggested by the melody; you accompany me in strict time, because an accompaniment should always be in time. You represent order and your duty is to counter-balance my fantasy. Do not worry, we shall always find each other, because when I accelerate for a few notes, I afterwards re-establish the equilibrium by slowing down the following notes, or by pausing for a moment on one of them" ... In the train he would try to make up violin passages based on the dynamic accents and cadences of the wheels, and to execute "rubato" passages, returning to the first beat each time we passed in front of a telegraph pole (Philip: 1992, 44).

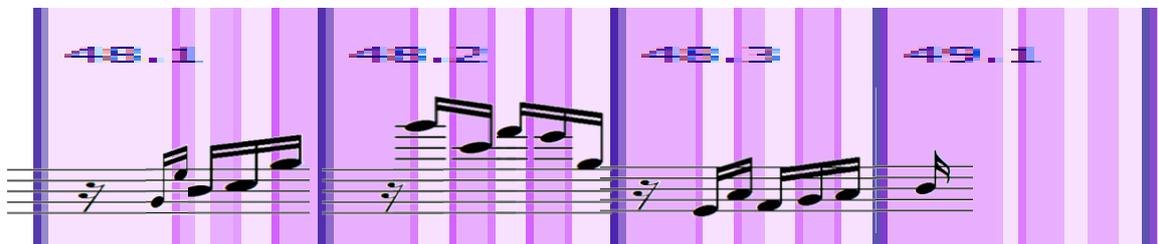


Figure 99 Novitskaya, bar 48, purple-grey showing semiquavers duration. The first semiquaver of the six, which is a rest, is often delayed, due to the middle voice (quaver line) being played simultaneously as *tenuto* (Tr. 49).

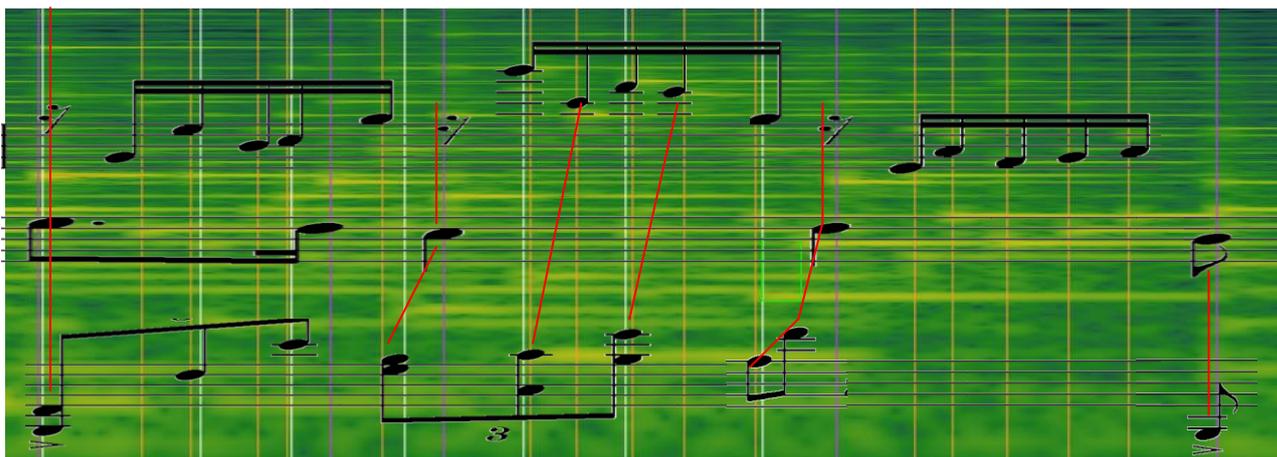


Figure 100 Paperno's accompaniment type of compensating rubato in bar 48 (I) (Tr. 50).



Figure 101 Bar 48, as it is written in the printed score.

Others perform it either at a stable tempo with all the voices playing evenly and quietly, with or without *tenuto* on each note (e.g. Richter⁷², Pogorelich, Ashkenazy, Lushtak, Ponti, Fergus-Thompson, Hamelin); at a much faster but still stable tempo (e.g., Oborin, Melnikov); or hurried and *agitato* (e.g. Laredo, Ogdon, Gekic). Hand dislocation is often heard in this section (e.g. Roth, Kocyan) and the corresponding section in the recapitulation.

Kocyan follows a narrower tempo span, with one major tempo peak towards the end of the section (Figure 104), probably affected by the quaver line *accelerando* (Figure 103). Although his top melodic line is explicitly projected, he starts mixing it up with the ascending short-note bass line (bars 46-47), which passes through the middle and into the upper register. This melodic muddle is probably due, firstly, to the fact that he does not play the bass line in the *pp* marked in the printed text, but rather *mp*, and the treble long-note line *mf*; and, secondly, to his hurried and hence breathless performance of the

short-note melodic line. His interpretation gives the section a slightly agitated movement, just before it reaches its breakpoint in bars 58-61.

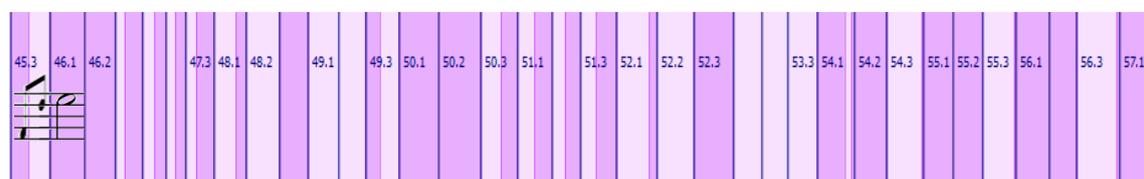


Figure 102 Novitskaya, bars 45-57, middle voice (mainly in quavers); even tempo between beats (blue lines), with a mild delay on the third beat. Purple and grey represent each note and its duration (Tr. 51).

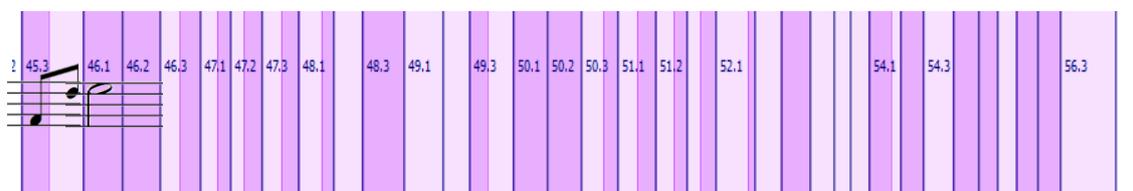


Figure 103 Kocyan, bar 45-57. He starts with a broader layout of the line, but pushes the tempo forward (narrower gaps between blue lines) towards bar 53 (Tr. 52).

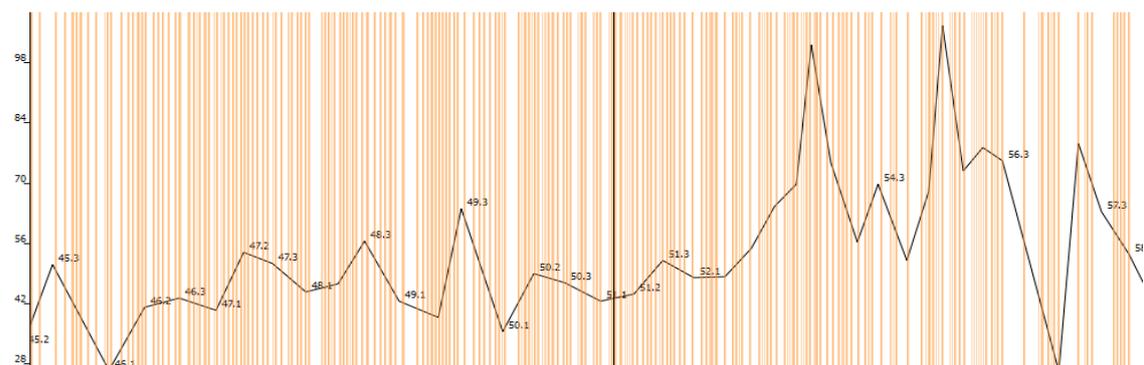


Figure 104 Kocyan 46-57, rubato, note onset.

For his part, Richter (1955), like Ashkenazy, voices each layer discretely. The former often decelerates at the end of each bar in order to place the first note of the next bar well, in a sense of within-bar compensating rubato; but still, the acoustic experience gives one the impression that his melodic building-up accomplishes what is often 'prescribed' by a piano tutor as '*a tempo* and no accent, please'. Indeed, he keeps a very subtle melodic line that does not easily 'favour' any specific note, despite the use of compensating rubato. Ashkenazy also delays between the third and first beat, but the real difference in his playing is the way he 'places' each note; in fact, he applies *a tenuto* playing for each note, but his rubato expands into the section as a whole (bars 46-57). Richter's spacious note layout offers a sense of calm and a subtlety of texture; a hint of a

very slow movement. Because of his relaxed layout, overtones are not packed (as they are in Kocyan), and the overall sound is clearer, despite having been recorded 47 years earlier than Kocyan's performance.

Pogorelich plays the same section with equal clarity and clear voicing, with a *tenuto* similar to Ashkenazy's performance and at a tempo (MM=44) that approaches Richter's (MM=52). What differs between the two performers is the role of the section within the piece as a whole: for Pogorelich, this section is actually one of his fastest in relation to the movement's duration (9:47 mins and avMM=51); for Richter (7:31 and avMM=61), the section it is one of his more easy-going.

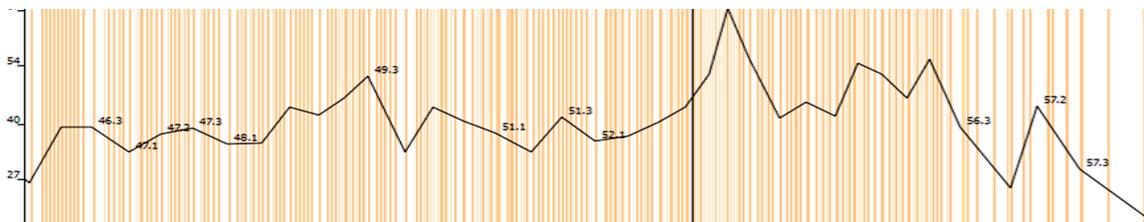


Figure 105 Ashkenazy, bars 46-57, *tenuto* playing of the quaver melodic line, within-section compensating rubato and draw-back before the downbeat, MM=27-68, avMM=43 (Tr. 53).

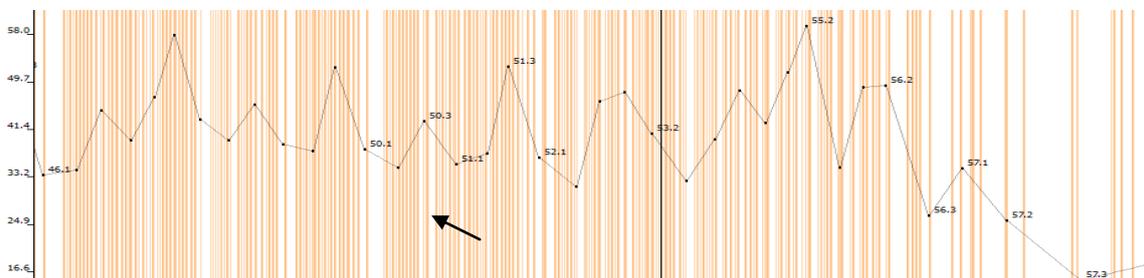


Figure 106 Pogorelich, bars 46-57, with MM=30-60 and average tempo ~45. Short notes are rather evenly spaced. The white gap (arrow) is the downbeat of bar 50 when both hands, having played the first beat, move towards the upper registers (Tr. 54).

In my current view of the first movement, I also aim for expansion of the phrases in bars 46-57 with an *allargando* effect, so as to give more time to each note for the development of sound. Still, recordings of 2009 (Tr. 55) and 2014 (Tr. 56) show, despite my aim, that during live performances, I tend to linger on the first beat of the bar and rush the rest of the other beats, thus using rubato. As already discussed in the previous chapter, my first performance of the work at Trinity College of Music was described by Prof. Elena Riu as a bit rushed, but still in the 'strict' style, i.e. without important note-to-note rubato (Tr.

57). It seems now that my performance of the above bars relates more to the rubato performances than to the non-rubato ones.

More analytically, the next graph (Figure 107) shows that the third beat is generally delayed in these bars, in both performances (see arrows). The 2014 version presents higher beat-to-beat rubato and the pace is much slower (AvT: 50), whereas the 2003 performance had a pace of AvT=61.

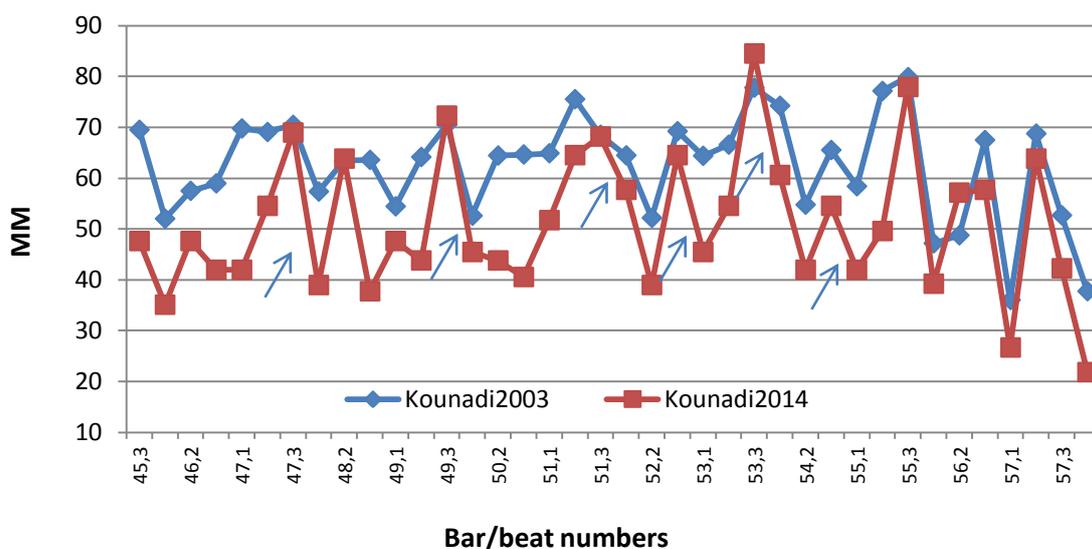


Figure 108 Bars 46-57 (I), own performances from 2003 and 2014.

In bars 113-121, the returning theme is heard. Five- and six-note groups appear once again to prepare the grounds for the next returning theme to be replayed in bar 122. One would expect performers to give the current section more movement than in the exposition, since the busier writing for the left hand seems to incite it. What actually happens, however, is that performers often gently slow down in order to space the sound well temporally, and to prepare the listener for a multi-layered unforced sound universe rather than an explosion of packed voices in bars 121-136.

Kocyan follows this strategy, taking an approach similar to that he takes in the exposition. He now focuses on sharper tempo shifting, but applies it on fewer occasions. He also uses desynchronisation of parts, especially in the busiest part (bars 117-121, Tr. 58). Although more energetic in tempo variation than during the exposition, Richter

(1955) again slows down as he heads for bar 121, in preparation for the broad thematic material in bar 122.

At the beginning of the returning theme in bar 122, Richter (1955) accelerates between the third and first beat of the following bar. During the coda, however, he decelerates between the same beats. This is due to the music material of the sections: in bars 122-130, direction is needed towards the first beat for a uniform shaping of the long thematic line. There is a subtle overall acceleration at the beginning of bar 131. In the coda, the feeling of relaxation is accomplished by the repeated E and G# crotchet motif in the left hand. A contrary strategy is adopted by other performers, such as Kocyan, who decelerates between the third and first beats during this passage, and accelerates during the coda.

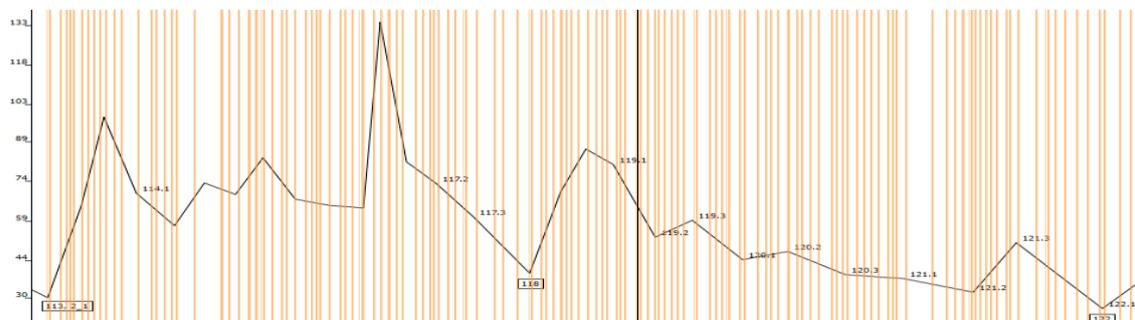


Figure 109 Kocyan, 113-121 (Tr. 59).

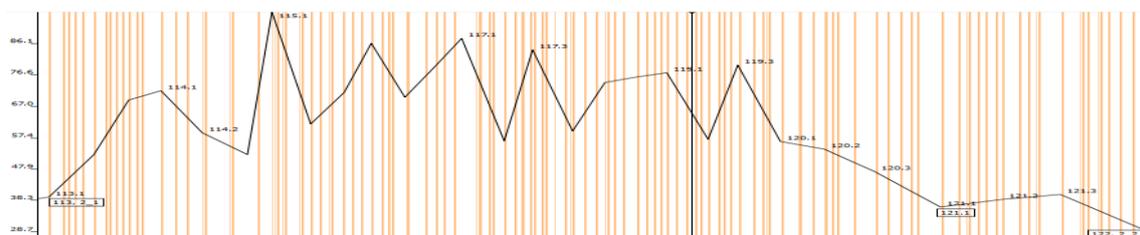


Figure 110 Richter (1955), 113-122, with more tempo variation than during the exposition (Tr. 60).

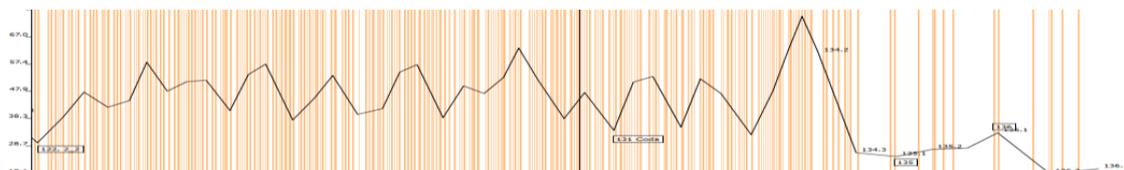


Figure 111 Richter (1955), 122-136.

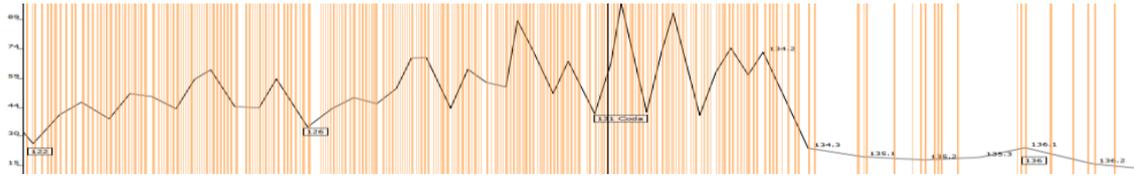


Figure 112 Kocyan, 122-136.

Bars 58-61

Connecting the ending of the exposition with the beginning of the development (bars 62-88), the cadential bars 58-61 mark a turning point in the movement. Most performers tend to fall by 15 MM in their avMM, though there are exceptions (Ponti 56→49, Roth 54→48, Ardakov 57→52, Melnikov 57→49 etc.) who maintain almost the same pulse.

Performance strategies in sections of climax

Example: Bars 62-88 (I)

Bars 62-88 (second section) of the first movement serve to contrast with the exposition and recapitulation. Drama and climax are connected, and all the performers show their stamina in these passages. The section is not given a tempo indication by the composer. It starts rather hesitantly, but soon *crescendi* lead to *ff* in bar 71. By means of two *subito p* (bars 72 and 74), the energy recovers, and the urgency in the music unfolding is evident from bar 75 to bar 88. During this second phase, the quaver triplets turn into semiquavers. The first thematic subject of the overture-like opening is also transformed from quaver triplets into sharp semiquavers. Then eight bars of block quaver triplet chords lead the section to its climax.

Dynamics and the gradual transformation of the musical layout seem to guide performers to adopt generally high tempo flexibility in the section, along with bar-to-bar or note-to-note rubato. The main differences between them concern the actual point of the tempo shift and the build-up to the climax ending in bar 88. Dynamics and pedalling vary in their detail, and some obvious differentiation (Feinberg, Pogorelich, etc.) is due to performers deviating completely from the dynamics marked in the score. There is a consensus on phrase boundaries, which performers mark either with pedal cuts or with end-of-bar 'breathing'.

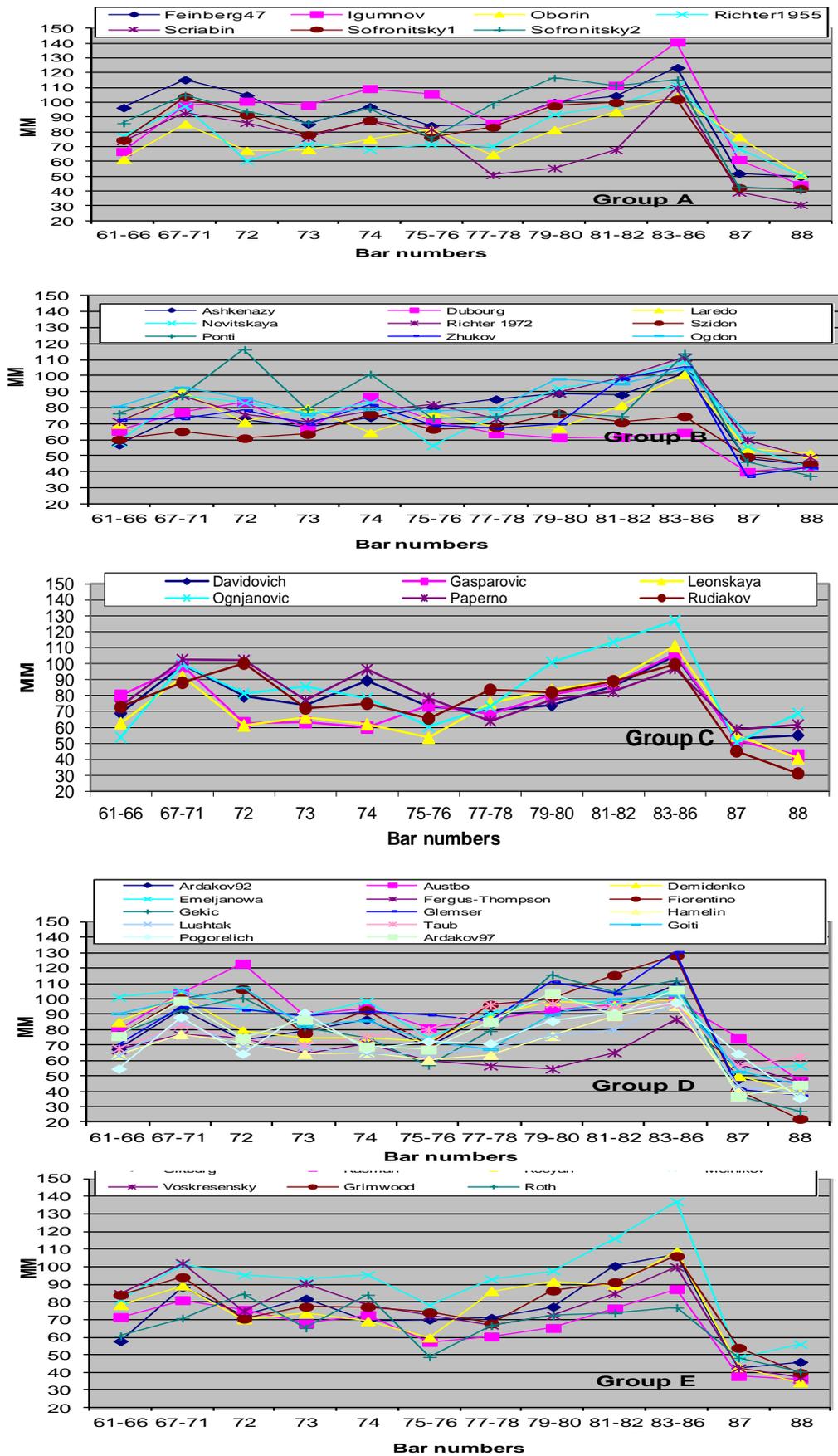


Figure 113 Tempo map showing the avMM of bars linked to motivic or phrase boundaries.

The most idiosyncratic performances are in group A, both in terms of tempo numbers and the degree of rubato. Scriabin's approach is not mirrored in any other recording. His tempo 'dives' from MM=122 to 79 between bars 74 and 77. Moreover, Group A is perhaps the only recording era in which performers mark bars 77-78 as their point of departure for the second climax of the section. For all other groups, the climax seems to start in bars 75-76 – probably because, by starting their climax early, they will have more time to gradually build it up. After all, sudden *accelerandos* have not been much used by performers of the last forty years, as Philip also points out (1992:47). Kasman's insight, with *f* but flexible left-hand phrasing (Tr. 24), is shown in group E while Dubourg's always metronomical rendition of the movement is also shown in her pink line (group B). Another interpretation is by Roth from group E, who does not accelerate much, but rather sounds as though he has been 'hypnotised' by the repeated circles constructed by the triplet quavers. This is felt in bar 83, where he accelerates in the first two beats with *cresc.*, and then draws back on the first quaver of the third beat triplet, in *dim.*; he does the same in the next bar, too.

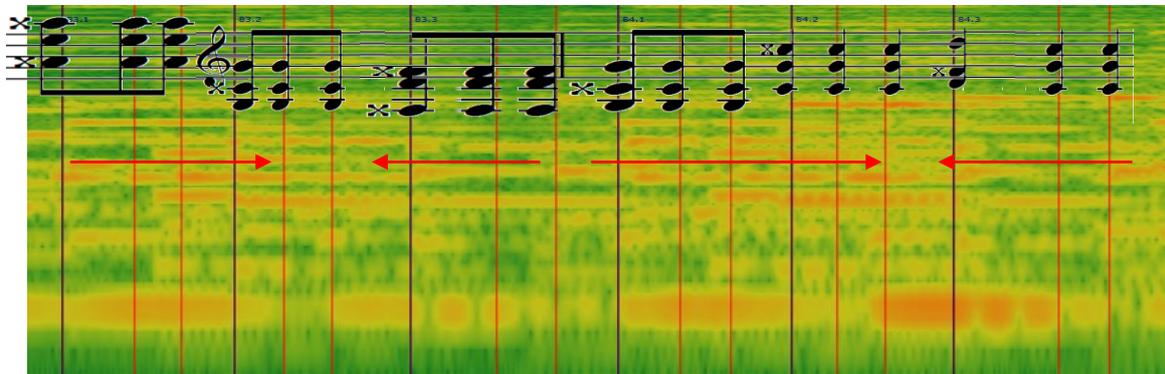


Figure 114 Roth, bars 83-84, playing in a relatively slow tempo with *accel.* and *rit.* in one bar (Tr. 61).

Sudden tempo shifting is often related to sudden dynamics shifting. In Feinberg's case, however, flexible tempo choices do not always match his choice of dynamics. In fact, he generally shows a temperamental reading of the musical text in terms of dynamics. Feinberg seems to improvise on them, as he does not play a single one of the *piano* marks in this section of the text. Even the most supposedly quiet bars (72 and 74) are played with explosive drive heading towards *f*. He 'places' the last right-hand notes of these bars well in *mf*, probably because they are used as an upbeat for the contrasting *ff* in bars

73 and 75. His early crescendos and *fs* are then not brought down after some bars, but relentlessly built up as a solid sound towards the *ffs* of the climax in bars 86-88.

Feinberg's idiomatic acceleration in bar 67 is also shown in the power curve (in dB) in Figure 115. Both tempo and power map divide Feinberg's approach into two sections: bars 62-71 and 86-88. Most performances underline the relation of speed and dynamics in the first, but do not reach a climax of *ff* before bar 86. However, Feinberg plays almost the whole section in *f* and *ff*. This means that, despite Feinberg's unexpected accelerations and decelerations, his dynamics do not necessarily show the same tendency, which is also a rare performance strategy for this section.

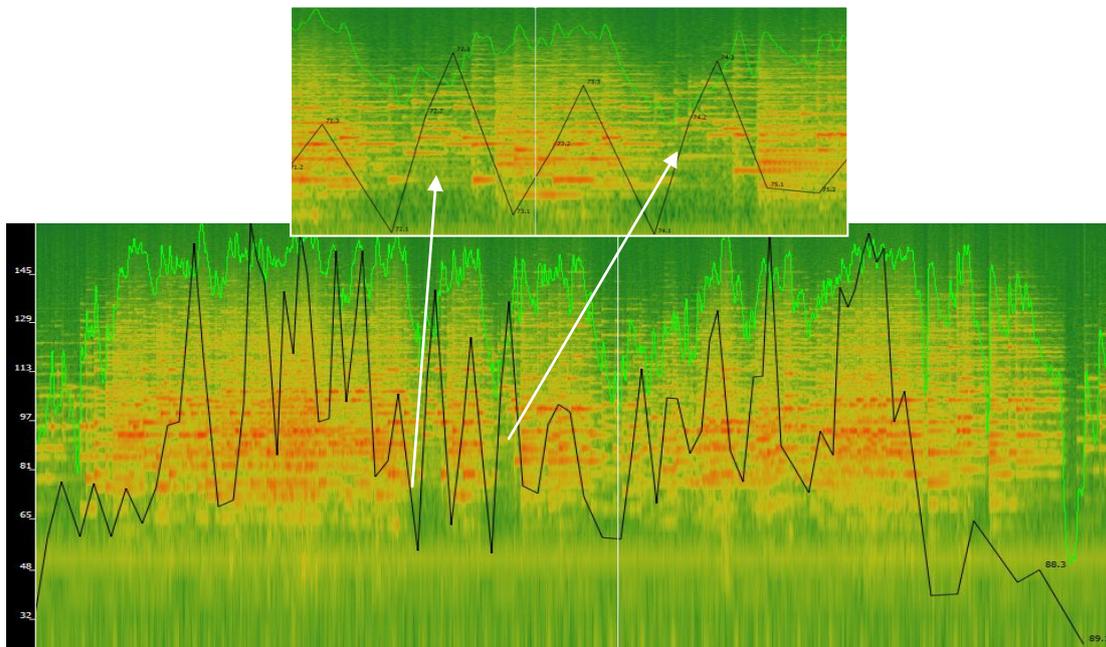


Figure 115 Feinberg, bars 62-88: an intuitive driving force, a purely temperamental performance (Tr. 62). He maintains high power (arrow) even during the supposed *p* spectrum 'gaps'.

Igunnov and Feinberg are two examples of the use of great acceleration, when dynamics lead towards *ff*. Furthermore, it is not surprising to see sixty-six year old Fiorentino performing this passage in the same vein, although he belongs to a much later group than Feinberg and Igunnov. These pianists' common strategy is to constantly push the tempo, without beat-to-beat *tenuto* or expressive 'breathing' that cuts the section into smaller phrases, once they have started building up the passage. Feinberg does cut his pulse for two bars, but comes back to an even faster tempo with even more sudden acceleration.

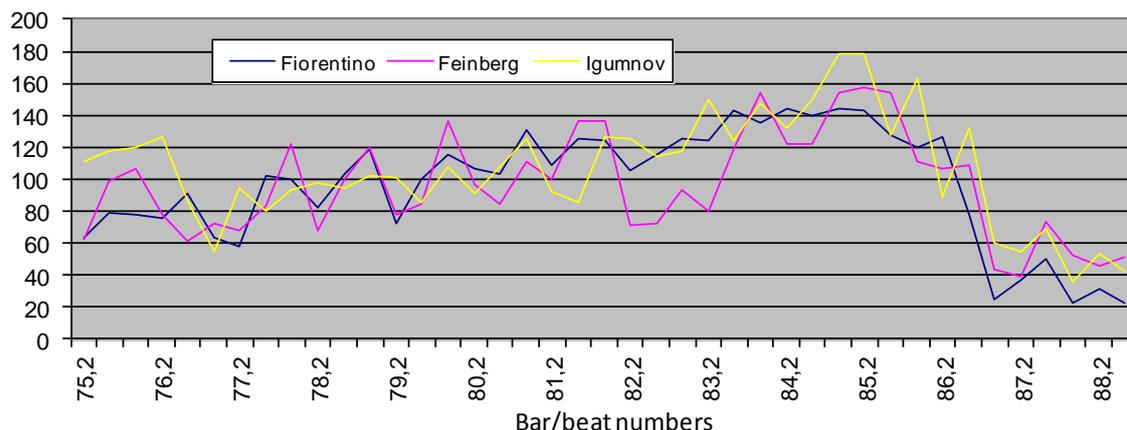


Figure 116 Igumnov (Tr. 63) -Feinberg-Fiorentino (Tr. 64): similar acceleration in bars 62-88 (I). Feinberg cuts the tempo flow in bars 82-83, only to regain his previous pulse from bar 84 onwards.

Feinberg's intuitive tempo flexibility has already been remarked on. What need pointing out now are the bravura style and authoritative sense of direction he achieves, which are rarely encountered in other recordings. It is not without reason then that critics like Allan Evans write thus on this pianist's style: 'It is difficult to imagine that one pianist can adopt such varied approaches' (Allan Evans, 1998).⁵²

Sofronitsky¹ builds up a performance that is close to the printed text in dynamics. He uses discreet rubato and directs the listener towards the climax of bars 86-88 at a steady pulse. The latter are not necessarily the loudest points in the section; instead, Sofronitsky marks them by playing them *allargando*, and spacing them well (Figure 117).

⁵² www.arbiterrecords.com/musicresourcecenter/feinberg.html, accessed 22 July 2012.

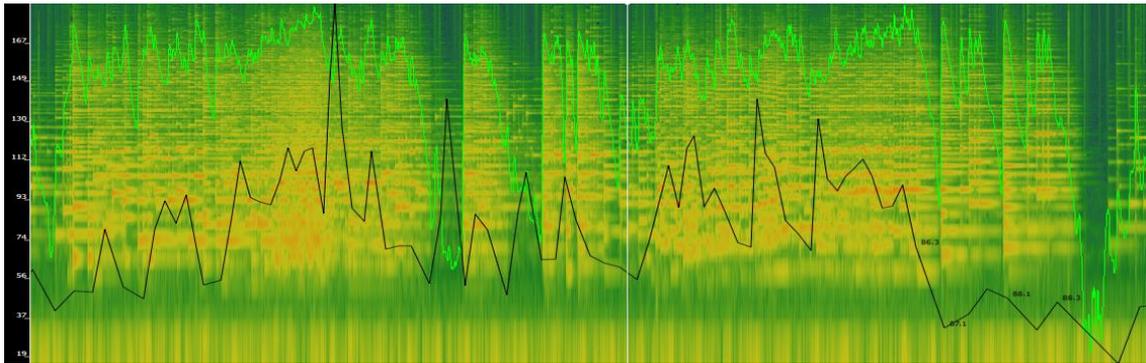


Figure 117 Sofronitsky1, bars 62-88 (Tr. 65).

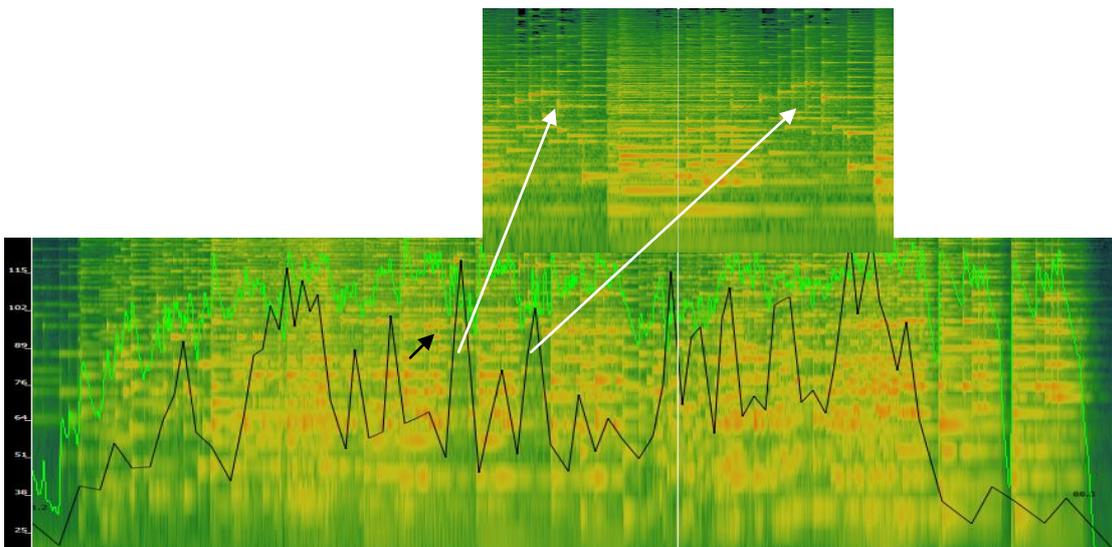


Figure 118 Pogorelich, bars 62-88 (Tr. 66): his tempo is now a long way from that of the exposition (MM=76 compared to 43); he maintains a constant *f* in bars 72 and 74 (see arrow and bars' detailed picture).

Pogorelich's interpretation stands between the two performers. He builds his performance in a manner closer to that adopted by Sofronitsky (Figure 117 and Figure 118), employing a faster tempo (MM=76) than in the exposition and marking the downbeat chords of bars 62, 63, 65 in distinctive, sharp dynamics. He uses them as three levels for gradual overall *crescendo*. However, like Feinberg, he ignores the *subito p* in bars 72 and 74, keeping dBs high and marking each note. In Figure 118, one cannot actually tell where bar 71 (marked *ff*) ends and bar 72 (marked *subito p*) begins.

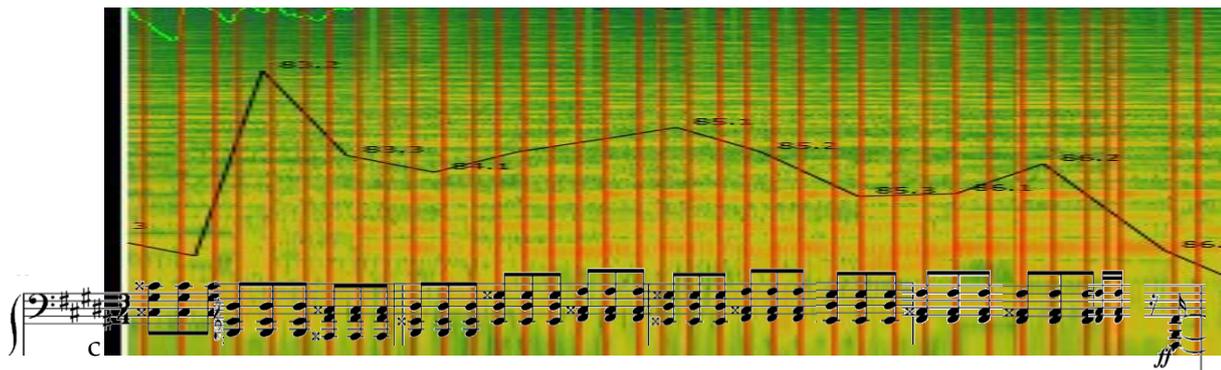


Figure 119 Sofronitsky1, bars 83-86. Orange lines mark note onset; evenly spread chords in terms of time with *allargando* effect. Double lines mark areas of hand desynchronisation– another form of *rubato* (Tr. 67).

The role of quaver triplets is vital for the build-up of this section. Tendencies, once again, vary, with an examination of the oldest recordings revealing areas of *rubato* that differ from those of modern performers. For instance, Feinberg plays some triplets almost as ♪♪ (Figure 120).

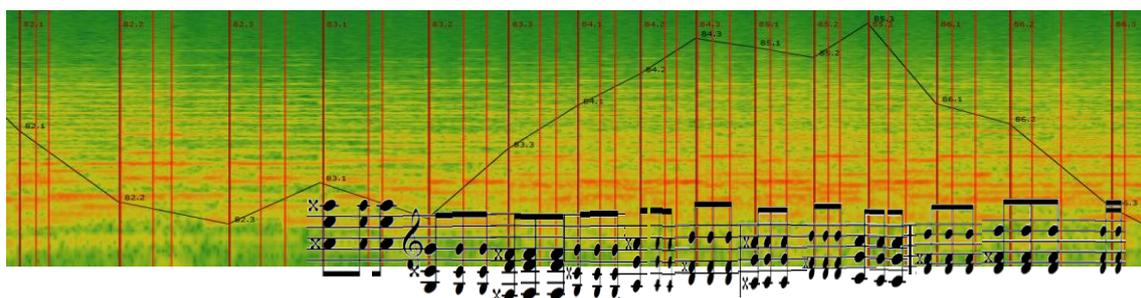


Figure 120 Feinberg, bars 83-87. He plays the quaver triplet chords short, almost as ♪♪ resulting in *rubato* (Tr. 68). See especially beats 84.3, 85.1 and 85.2.

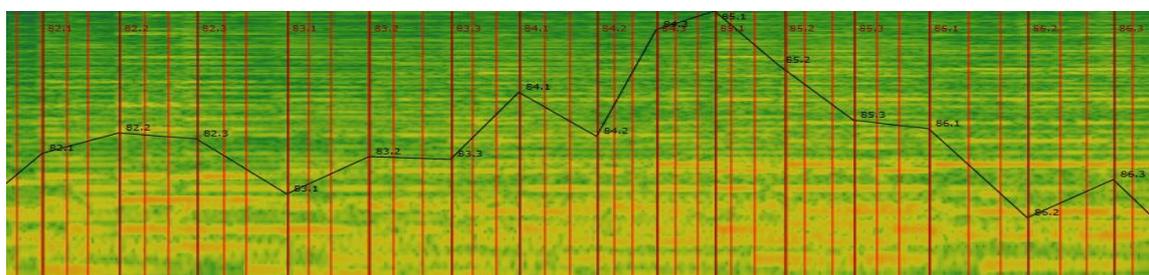


Figure 121 Igumnov's triplets (Tr. 69): more regular but accelerating more gradually and starting one beat earlier (83.1) than Feinberg (83.2).

Gekic provides another example of idiosyncratic playing. He seems to perform bars 62-64 according to the music score, i.e. with left hand *portando* and little pedal. He lets the

voices stand out more clearly than most pianists. Austbo also seeks subtle voicing through the use of *portando* in the same bars. However, Gekic does not play the upbeat quavers (bars 61.3, 62.3, 64.3) as accents, although they are marked thus on the score, and their absence affects the whole character of the segment. He also shortens beats (bar 80.3) to let the music breathe before the sudden burst of *sf*, which he marks in his left hand (e.g. bars 75, 81, etc.).

Of particular interest are the areas of hand desynchronisation, which is sometimes applied when open chords cannot be easily played by a relatively small hand. One example is the chord in bar 80.3, which is either arpeggiated or broken into two in many recordings. However, Voskresensky desynchronises his downbeats on almost every beat from bar 76 on (beats 76.1, 80.2-3, 83.1, etc.). His left hand anticipates the right hand triplets to give an even more dramatic boost to his accentuated *f* chords. Scriabin does the same in bar 82.2, as shown in Figure 123.

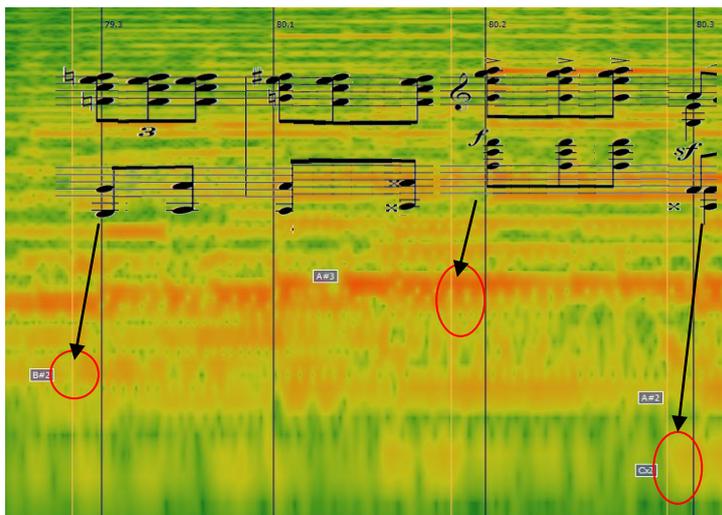


Figure 122 Voskresensky, desynchronisation of hands in bars 79.3-80.3 (I). The orange lines show the anticipated note onsets (Tr. 70).

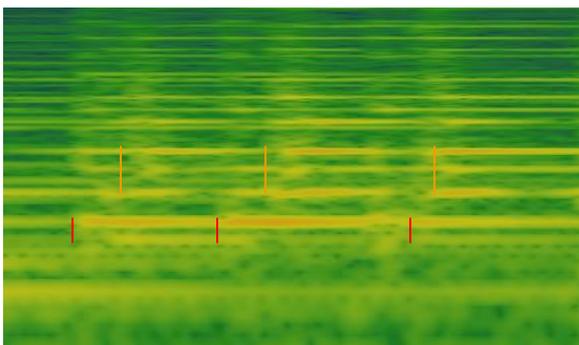


Figure 123 Scriabin, bar 82.2, desynchronisation of hands, left hand preceding (red) (Tr. 71).

Arpeggiated chords

Whilst referring to the accompaniment type of compensating rubato, Philip speaks of cases, in which 'the separation of melodic note and accompaniment [...] was softened by spreading a chord' (1992, 47). Spreading chords is a common trait in Scriabin's music. The composer himself used to play open chords, especially, *arpeggiato*. He had a relatively small hand, after all. Hamelin underlines the pedal's role in compensating for Scriabin's small hand somatotype (Siepmann 2000, 23). Kissin points out another aspect: i.e. that 'what his music *absolutely* requires is a flexible hand, as with Chopin' (*ibid.*) A flexible hand playing arpeggiated chords can turn a somatic deficiency into a performance trait by giving more space to the music. Lane, another performer of the Scriabin repertoire – though not of the specific sonata – points out Scriabin's tendency to 'spread chords at various tempi for harmonic piquancy – so the odd musical spread could conserve dignity in dire straits' (*ibid.*). Performers tend to arpeggiate chords in their performances, with varied effects on rubato and accent points. Only Ponti seems to overlook this widely used parameter: he only arpeggiates the chords thus indicated in the score, following Scriabin's guidelines 'by the book'. A final example is Fiorentino's performance. The sixty-six year old pianist performs most chords in an arpeggiated form, with a tendency to add extra notes not written in the score. Even if one overlooks this aspect of misreading, his idiom of arpeggiating or – if it is seen as a type of rubato – gradually unfolding a chord, is not heard to this extent in any other recording. One cannot resist the thought that this performer, who had retired as a concert pianist for a long period, may be publicly and anachronistically reviving an old-fashioned pianistic technique.

While analysing early recordings, Johnson concludes in similar vein:

Most pianists prior to 1925 seem perverse in the license they take with the composer's notation, yet it is fascinating to hear the multiplicity of ways in which a chord can be arpeggiated, or to observe the improvisatory nature of much of the playing [...]. Our modern rule that we should play only what is written in the score becomes irrelevant when the composer's notation was not intended to be so restrictive (Johnson: 2002, 200-201).

A. Spreading the chord upwards

The onset of the left hand coincides with the highest note onset of the right. This occurs mainly in sections where the chord's highest note belongs to a melodic line, and the note is delayed in the form of a *tenuto*. Bars 15, 16 and 17 provide an example of such an approach (Figure 126). Chords of a tenth are difficult to reach for the average hand. Spreading them is a common way to sort this potential problem effectively and add to one's expressive means. Fiorentino often spreads chords in this way. Laredo nearly invents a grace note, or spread chord, simply by dislocating the hands in bar 110.3 (I). She plays the B of the third beat before the right hand G# without any *tenuto*. The B sounds rather thin and hurried, as a grace note often sounds when the main note is played on the downbeat. The close onset of B and G# without the onset of the left-hand A makes one think that Laredo probably plays the left-hand B with her right hand, probably because of narrow hand size

Figure 124 Fiorentino, bars 60 and 61 (Tr. 72).

Figure 125 Bar 110, the printed score and what Laredo plays (Tr. 73).



Figure 126 Bars 15-18, arpeggiated chords.

B. Dividing the chord in two

Although they are very rarely applied in this sonata, there are still a couple of recordings, even from the last 15 years, in which this device is used. Fiorentino (bars 89.3 and 90.3 (I)).

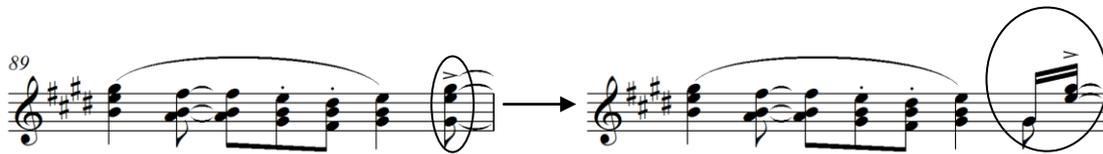


Figure 127 Original compared with Fiorentino's chord breaking, bar 89 (I) (Tr. 74).

C. Spreading the chord and repeating one of its notes

Fergus-Thompson spreads the right-hand chord in bar 120.3 (I) and repeats its middle note.



Figure 128 Fergus-Thompson's bar 120 (I). (Tr. 75)

D. Adding more arpeggiated chords than indicated in a motif

A slightly different example occurs in bars 62-65 (Figure 129). Here Scriabin indicates that some chords should be arpeggiated and others not. Once again, most performers will arpeggiate all the open chords, either because of the difficulty of stretching one's hand to catch them, or for *tenuto* effects. The character of the passage is affected by the dynamics and the tempo that accompany the spreading. Oborin, Sofronitsky¹ and

Pogorelich, for example, play the arpeggiatos short and sharp in dynamics, with the latter two also accelerating considerably from the very beginning of the section.

Figure 129 Bars 62-68.

E. *Tenuto* on the middle voice of the chord

In the above example, chords are sometimes voiced in such a way that the accent is placed on the middle note of the chord. Fiorentino, Goiti and Roth accentuate Bb in the spread chord of 62.1 (I), and Roth the Eb in 63.1 (I) (Figure 129). This effect usually coincides with the performer taking care to voice the passage and employing a more gradual *crescendo* than in other performances that overlook the middle voice.

F. Spreading the left-hand octave or other two-note chord

Played fast or short, the spreading of octaves in the left hand adds drama to the music. Voskresensky uses this device in bars 75.1 and 76.1 in pursuit of an even more *cresc.*, explosive character. Austbo does so in bar 120, another point of important *cresc.*

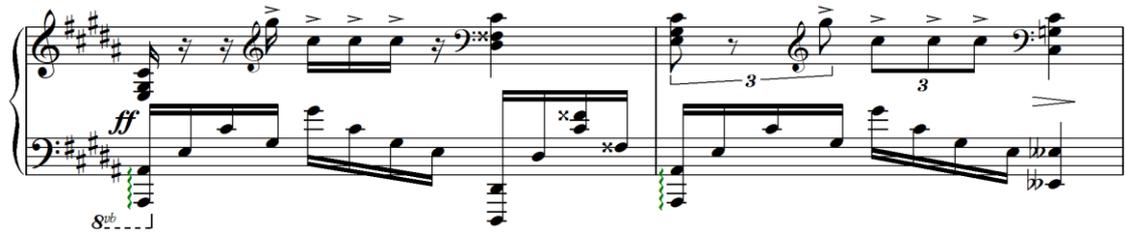


Figure 130 Voskresensky, bars 75-76 (I) (Tr. 76).

Kasman arpeggiates the left hand chord in bar 97.1 in the sense of rubato with desynchronisation of hands.

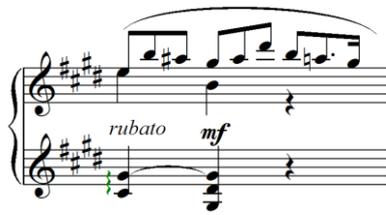


Figure 131 Kasman's bar 97 (I). (Tr. 77)

Articulation, dynamics and tempo character

Examples: bars 1-16 and 79-94 (II)

As already indicated in the paragraph on movement sectional flexibility, the opening theme of bars 1-16 is written in triplet quavers in a motivic build-up, and is felt as a somewhat disguised melodic line within repeated short notes. Performers need to balance this line, marked legato in the score, with a *portando* self-repeating bass line in the sense of a *basso ostinato*. All this takes place in a movement marked *presto*, with a suggested metronome mark of $\text{♩} = 96-100$. Faster recordings usually combine a fast pace with a very light, almost non legato articulation; faster performances tend to underline the wider structural plan of the theme with varied types of articulation. In these cases, the pedal is used very selectively to highlight 'centres of gravity' within long eight-bar phrases. The pedal is used as a tool for disguised *tenuto* effects over a certain note or octave. For instance, Leonskaja starts *sotto voce* and from the first bar reaches a first peak on the downbeat of the second bar, performing the opening theme in a manner very close to the score.

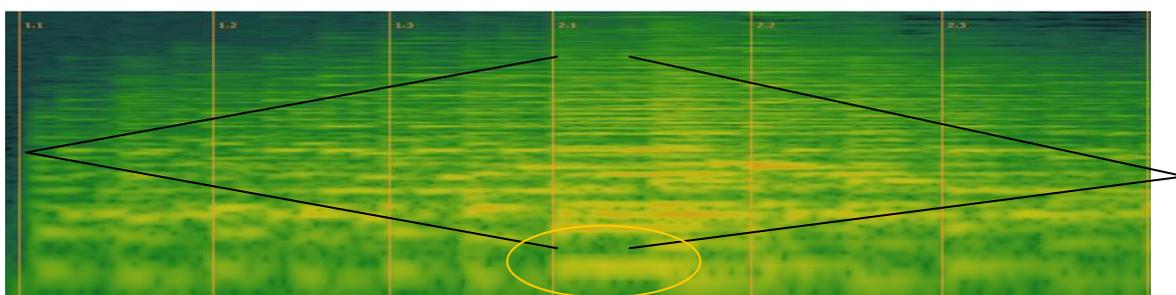


Figure 132 Bars 1-2 from the music score and Leonskaja's effective *cresc.* and *dim.* with an emphasis on beat 2.1 via pedal use (circled) (Tr. 78).

It seems that the general character of the whole piece is affected by the initial tempo of the movement, given that all performers are expected to slow down during the most melodic, second theme. During that theme (bar 41 onwards), the listener's attention is focused more on the shaping of a new melodic line than on the *moto perpetuo* of the quaver triplets.

Consequently, non legato articulation and economical pedal use during the opening will often result in a *presto* character and a sense of restlessness. On the other hand, heavier or longer pedal use will make the right hand sound more legato but less volatile, and the left hand more *portando* (e.g. Zhukov) or, in some cases, *pesante*. The result will probably be an allegro feeling for the movement: i.e. a fast tempo, but not as unquiet, exciting or hasty and 'uncomfortable' a feeling as the *presto* would attribute to the piece. In fact, even in recordings which use a lot of pedal, the latter is short and frequent, not long.

Zhukov, for instance, seems to build-up the broader two-bar dynamic turbulence via longer pedalling than Leonskaja. His right hand may be felt to be as light as Leonskaja's, but the results are different. In fact, Leonskaja creates dynamics by relying mainly on the phrasing of her hands, whereas Zhukov relies more on the pedal to create dynamics. Although their initial tempi are very close to each other (Leonskaja's MM=110 and

Zhukov's MM=105), Zhukov sounds even less energetic, probably because of his pedalling and less clear triplets.

Some bars later, Leonskaja unifies her phrasing via longer pedalling (bars 5-6) to reach the desired *mf*, which is also indicated in the score. Her pulse sounds as though played *in uno*, i.e. viewing each bar's three beats as one falling on the bar's first beat. The same applies to most other performers, especially to those who take the section at a fast tempo. Laredo follows a different strategy, possibly appearing as a physical necessity, such as hand size: in bars 5-6, and their copies 13-14, she puts accents in the middle of the bar, creating paradoxical *tenutos* which sound like syncopations. Her left hand does the work here. Here, her performance sounds more static than, for instance, Leonskaja, who shapes phrases extending over several bars in a more uniform way.

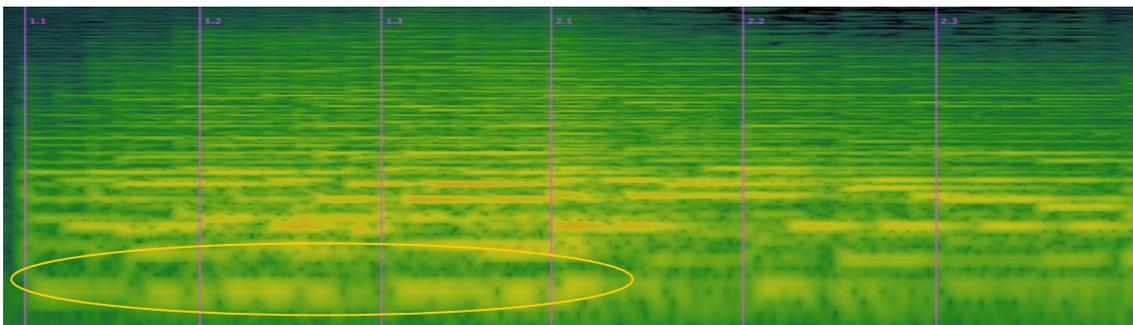


Figure 133 Zhukov's longer pedal line, bars 1-2 (Tr. 79).

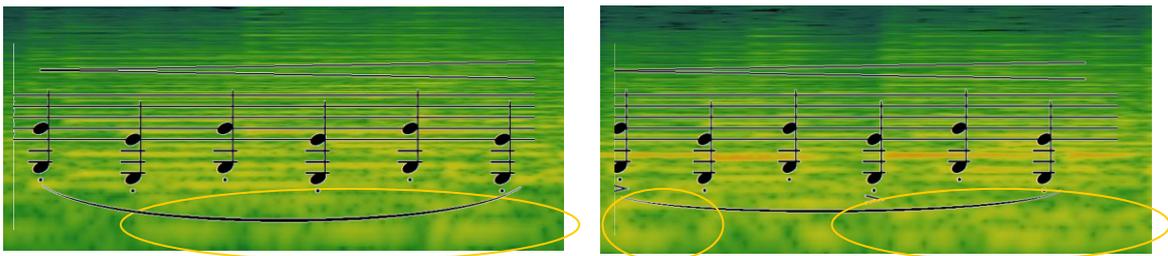


Figure 134 The different pulses Leonskaja and Laredo achieve in bar 5 through accents and pedalling.

It is interesting that the most recent groups include the slowest performances, which coincide with the slowest interpretations of this section. Yet, the same recording periods are marked by very fast tempi and a volatile right-hand non legato articulation (e.g. Glemser, Giltburg, Melnikov). Giltburg and Melnikov are actually the most recent recordings assessed in this research. Could they be initiating a trend? Still, they do differ in overall duration, with their performances lasting 3:57 and 3:13 minutes respectively. It

is the middle section (bars 41-78) that causes their tempo differentiation, although both performers return to the initial tempo – indeed, Melnikov plays it even faster – at the start of the third section in bar 79.

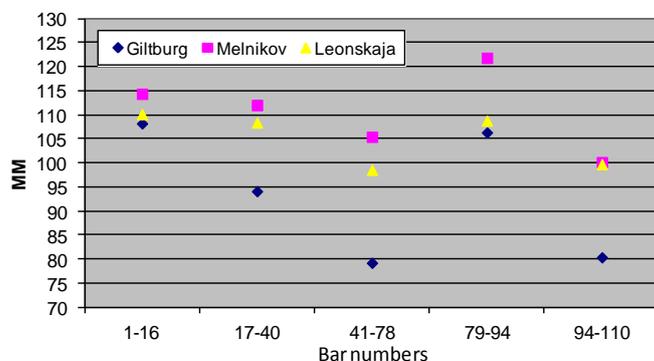


Figure 135 Starting from a similar tempo.

The third section or recapitulation is marked by a return to the initial tempo and, in some cases, to an even faster one. Leonskaja’s temporally balanced performance is used in the above graph to show how the middle section (bars 41-78) impacts on the overall duration, even if the initial tempo is on the fast side. At 3:49 mins long, her performance leans slightly towards the slow ones. The broad range of dynamics she uses, though, keeps the character of her performance in *moto perpetuo*. The same articulation is usually applied, but pedalling becomes longer in bars 93 and 94 in preparation for the upcoming coda.

Tension and relaxation

Examples: bars 33-40, 41-79 and the coda (95-110) (II)

The common feature in these bars is the presence, along with the triple quaver line, of new melodic lines of longer note values (minims and crotchets) and bass motifs. Longer values are often highlighted using *tenutos*. Bars 33-40 are a bridge to the new material of the second main theme of the movement, starting in bar 41. The sharper chords in the left hand have the first say here, and are marked with accents in the score. A subito *p* passage in bars 35-36 cuts their flow, however. What performers generally do is play the left hand stronger, but in a variety of ways. For instance, Richter (1972) plays it sharp but *a tempo*, as do Oborin, Feinberg and Sofronitsky. Richter uses prolonged pedalling to

accumulate the *f* sounds. Even in the *p* of bars 35-36, one can hear the blurring effect, probably due to the long pedal. Glemser gives a similar insight, with brilliance in his sound, a non legato articulated left hand and economical use of the pedal. Szidon relies on the left hand as well, articulating it as non legato at the beginning of the section, but also bringing out the melodic shape in the right hand occasionally (bars 35-36) under pedal.

Giltburg, on the other hand, builds the segment in a gradual warm crescendo with *rit.* His slight *dim.* before the *subito p* in bar 35 spoils the *subito* effect in a way. He shows interest in the right-hand motivic melodic line, and takes time over occasional note-to-note rubato. It sounds more contemplative and hesitant with a never sharp *f*, in comparison to Richter's straightforward *a tempo* playing that clearly leads the music towards its next 'big' moment: the dramatic second theme. In other words, Richter gives a zoomed-out overview, Giltburg a zoomed-in focus.

Zhukov's slower, heavier version is less flexible, though more straightforward in character than Giltburg's. Ardakov (1997) is closer to Giltburg's approach, lingering on the melodic peaks in the right hand. Gekic does not make it clear which hand has the leading part; his left hand is not that distinct in terms of *f*. The same applies to Ferguson-Thompson's performance. A kind of leading uncertainty is felt.

Sometimes, the left-hand crotchet triplets are played rubato. Richter and Feinberg do that, Sofronitsky as well, although their beat-to-beat tempo remains stable.

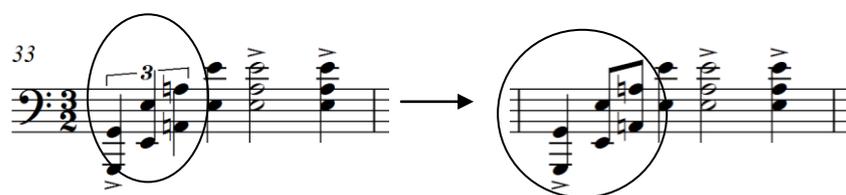


Figure 136 Bar 33 (II). Richter 1955 (Tr. 80) and Feinberg, rubato, printed score and actual performance (Tr. 81).

Amongst some wrong notes, Fiorentino phrases his left hand in bar 35 as follows, probably by adding pedal as well on the *tenuto*-like notes.

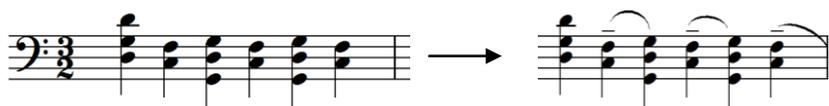


Figure 137 Fiorentino's performance of bar 35, left hand (Tr. 82).

The early recordings show in this section that their primary concern is to mark the wider role of a bridge that this segment represents, rather than starting the drama before it is officially initiated: i.e. in bar 41. Later performances, on the other hand, support the melodic part in the right hand, as well the dramatic tone in the left. They seem to immerse their music narrative in the detail rather than its wider, long-term goals.

Another difference refers to the lack of strict *a tempo* playing after a breath. More specifically, after breathing (e.g. on the onset of the *subito p* in bar 35), earliest performances take the same tempo they had reached before cutting. This is the case in the Feinberg, Oborin, Richter and Sofronitsky as well as the Scriabin recordings. In contrast, modern performances start the next phrase by gradually accelerating towards their initial tempo. Scriabin, as already mentioned in the chapter on piano rolls, is a special case once again, although he shows a similar approach to the earliest performances. He seems to breathe more often than they do at the end of shorter phrases. More specifically, he not only breathes at the beginning of bars 37 and 40, as happens in most other recordings. He also seems to cut the segment into even more pieces, adding breaths at the end of bars 33, 36, 37, 38, and breathing by means of a short rest, though without taking any more time than it is written in bar 35, where many performers, especially modern, would breathe. This is evident in the next figures.

Lobanov captures this fragmented approach in the following excerpts from Scriabin's piano roll transcription. His tempo transcription is confirmed by a tempo graph of the segment (Figure 139). The graph counts the six crotchets of each bar, which is written in 3/2 time, to show in detail the tempo of crotchets 5 and 6 in particular, and their relation to the new bar starting with crotchet 1. Indeed, Scriabin starts the new bar almost *a tempo*, regaining his pulse within the first beat (crotchet 2), or even within the previous beat (e.g. crotchet 6, bars 36 and 38, see arrows). All this happens within a fraction of a second. The recorded performance is at a very fast *circa* five crotchet beats per second. The immediate return to his average pulse is shown in crotchet 2 of each bar, which is

circled for this reason. Crotchet 2 is accelerated to compensate for the lost time between crotchet 6 and 1.



Figure 138 Bars 33-40 (II). Lobanov's tempo graph with Scriabin's piano roll performance transcribed into conventional notation. Circles mark the drawing back in tempo at the end of bars (Tr. 83).

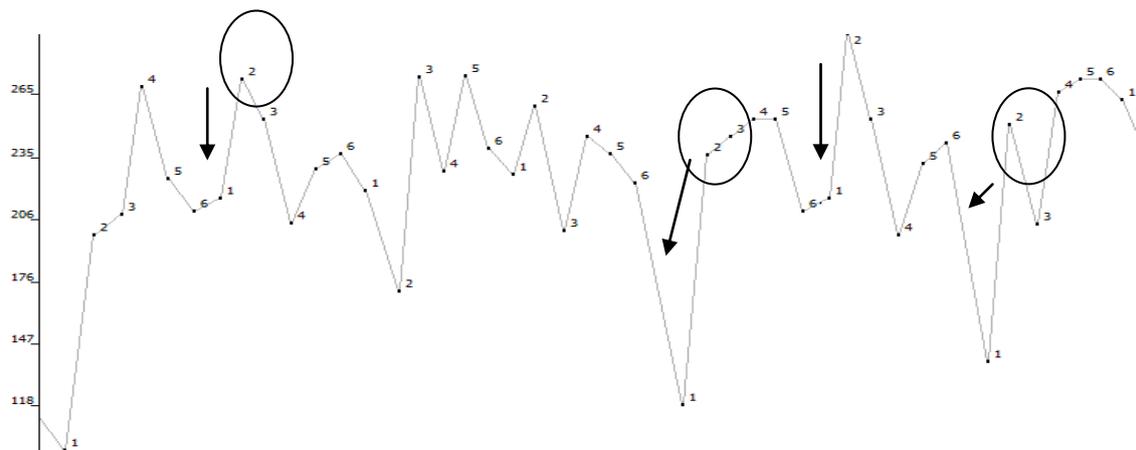


Figure 139 Scriabin, bars 33-40, tempo graph showing crotchet beats. The time signature of the movement is 3/2, so each bar includes six crotchet beats, which are measured here in order to detect in detail the tempo fluctuation at the end of each bar. The segment is played at a very fast *circa* five crochets per second.

In bar 41 onwards, the treble melodic lines are connected by a legato line and they are often played with the fifth finger, and need to be connected under pedal. They create a contrast to the straightforward motivic character of the first thematic subject, and pedalling is an effective mediator towards that goal.



Figure 140 Bars 41-42 (II), marked *ben marcato il canto*.

The main point of differentiation in this section is thus not directly related to pedal, which reigns in these bars anyway. What makes each performance sound different here is the general expression applied in phrasing and dynamics. Some performers, including Richter (1972), keep a fast pace throughout almost the entire movement. They play the triplet quavers lightly and non legato, with expressive *tenuto* phrasing of the melodic lines. Nevertheless, even in fast recordings (with the exception of Ogdon) there is a slowing down of tempo during the second thematic subject (bars 41-79) indicated *ben marcato il canto*. Performances generally give space to the treble line, so that it unfolds through *tenutos* and subito *f* or *p* contrasts (e.g. bars 71-74). Breathing between phrases is also important, and is noted by Scriabin in the score and in his performance. Articulation and pedalling often mark areas of tension, whereas breathing reveals their counterbalancing aspect – points of relaxation. What differs is each performer’s way of revealing these points of tension and relaxation.

Starting with Group B, recordings have been getting slower in this section too, with pianists tending to approach phrases in a more fragmented way that results in more areas of tension and relaxation than in the older recordings’ wider structural lines. Leonskaja and Kasman, for instance, are two of the slowest performances (at 3:49 and 3:57, respectively). They often pay attention to short-scale dynamics, with variations in colour from one motif or phrase to another, and point out minor structural boundaries, using *dim.* with *rit.* at bar ends. Richter (1955) on the other hand, unifies shorter phrases under mild fluctuation and with discreet *ritenuto* at bar ends to indicate phrase ends.

In the next graph, Richter (1955), Sofronitsky and Hamelin’s more straightforward performances are charted on a comparative beat-to-beat tempo graph. The similarities

between their two-bar and four bar phrasing are in some areas striking in terms of its flexibility. Hamelin's flexible, light, virtuoso-like interpretation interacts with his overall fast performance and the way he phrases these bars. His tempo map is compared with Leonskaja and Kasman's recordings, which belong to the slowest ones, but also with more modern groups (C and E respectively). However, he seems to relate tension and relaxation to more important structural boundaries, such as closing and opening bars between sections, than to temporary changes in dynamics (e.g. *cresc.* – *dim.* within a beat), motif or bar ends (e.g. bars 41-45, 48-52).

Still, there is affinity among all performers in terms of important boundaries. Kasman and Leonskaja also point them out. Moreover, there is a consensus on which notes are to be played as *tenuto*, even if they are not marked as such on the score. For instance, starting in bar 63 (Figure 143), the first bar beat is delayed in both graphs. This is due to the minim in the treble line generally being played *tenuto* by most performers.

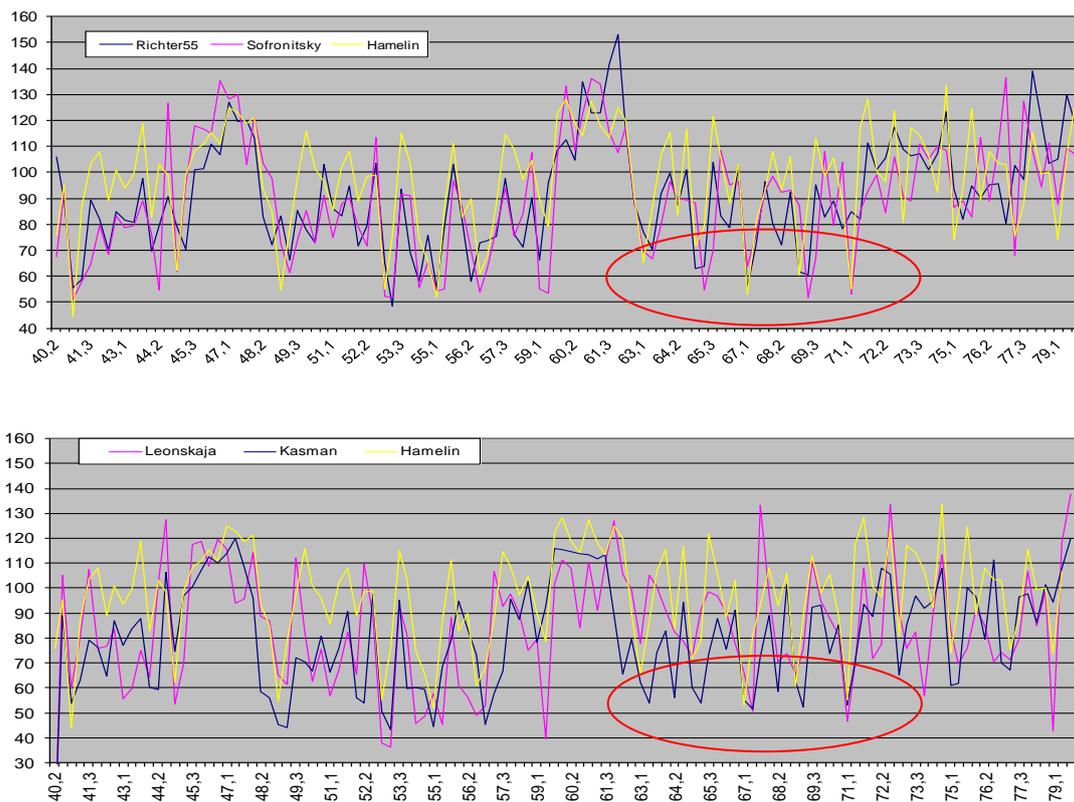


Figure 141 Old recordings (first graph) and modern ones (second graph) 'linked' by Hamelin's modern but more straightforward performance, which slows down at important structural boundaries, such as the closing and opening bars between two sections or themes.

I approach these bars with a similar view on *tenuto*, although it seems that my performance of the segment has changed over the years in terms of rubato. There is a complete ‘disagreement’ between my 2003 and 2014 performances in terms of rubato. The areas of acceleration and deceleration do not coincide at all.

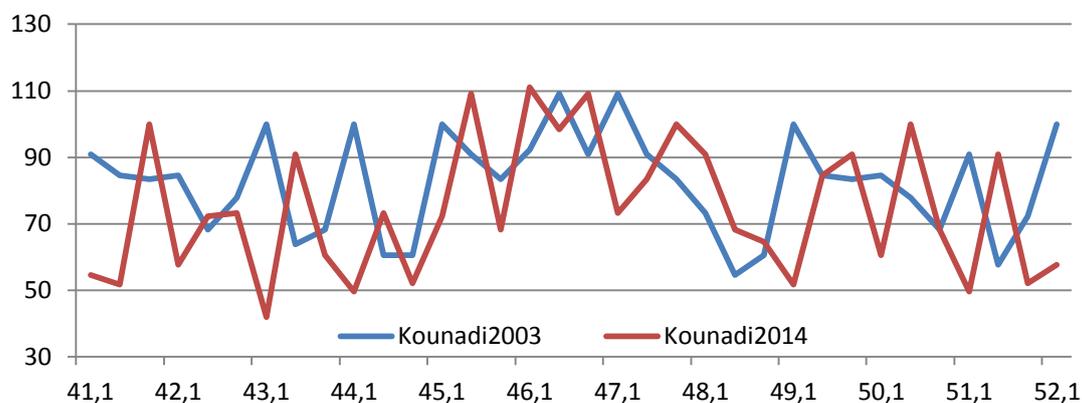


Figure 142 Bars 41-52 (II), own performances of 2003 (Tr. 84) and 2014 (Tr. 85). The difference in beat-to-beat rubato between performances is striking.



Figure 143 Bar 63, *tenutos* marked on the score and played.

The coda (bars 93-110) is another example of tempestuous élan with simultaneous *tenutos* in the right hand. Performers use the pedal to unify the different roles held in each hand; roles which are partially in conflict, because the right hand plays bar-length chords in *tenuto*, while the left hand continues the *moto perpetuo* of the quaver triplets. Two types of interpretation usually occur here. The first relies on the right hand, playing each first beat *tenuto* and the end of each bar *ritenuto*. After the initial crescendo of bars 95-97, the music sounds repeatedly explosive at the beginning of each bar. Each ‘placed’ chord creates this effect. Scriabin’s repeated score indication of *ff* in each of bars 99-101 may be thought of as supporting such an approach. With its introverted *p* in clear contrast to the previous consecutive *ffs*, bar 102 is the first hint that the piece is reaching its end. To prepare for the end, most performers end bar 101 *ritenuto*. Rudiakov goes even further by, for instance, pausing on the last note of bar 101 in the left hand, as

though it had a fermata. My own performance intentions are to support the expressive phrasing of the right hand melodic line, together with a vigorous left hand which displays the everlasting motor rhythm of the movement. My aim to project more the right hand upper line generally allows me to take my time, with the use of mild *ritenuto* in bar 101.

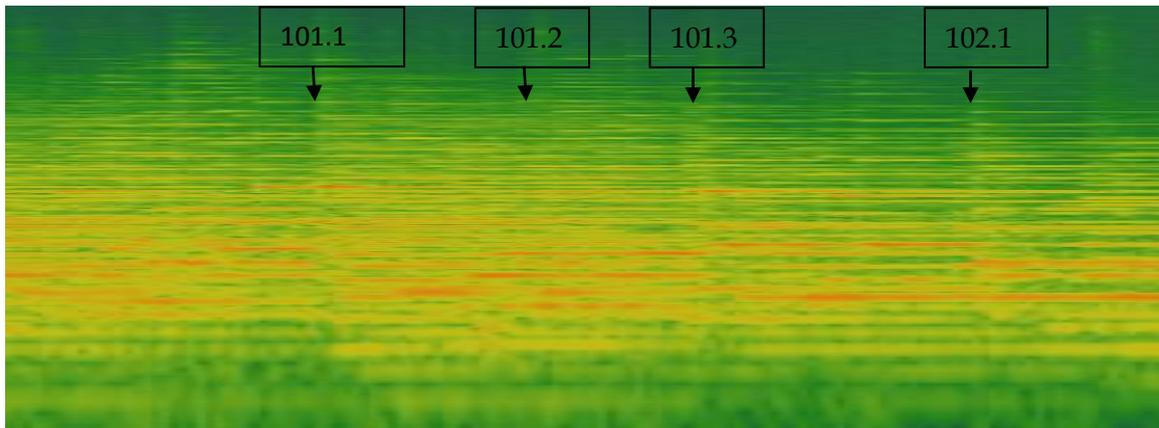


Figure 144 Bar 101, own performance from 2014 (Tr. 86).

The second approach follows the left hand's straightforward *con fuoco* pace, paying less attention to the right. These performances finish the section without considerable *ritenuto* before the *p* of bar 101, and convey a misty restlessness.



Figure 145 Performers often slow down at the end of bar 101, which would be necessary, especially if they are playing the last triplet with their left hand. Rudiakov pauses on the last D# in the left hand (Tr. 87).

The final bar is also open to debate. An initial disagreement among performers relates to dynamics, with some performers playing it *sf* within *f*. However, before this bar, the whole section has been marked *pp*, with the indication in bar 108. Some other performers take the latter indication as a hint that they should play the last bar not as an explosive

subito *f*, but as an accentuation within *p*. Richter is an eloquent example, playing the bar in the first manner in his 1955 recording, and in the second in his 1972 recording; in other words, he ends the first recording with a *subito sf* within *f*, while seventeen years later, he not only ends quietly, but also decelerates considerably.

Connected to the last remark is the second element of this debate: tempo. Most performers play the bar with *tenuto* on its two chords, thus taking some time. Another group, however, keeps rushing breathlessly all the way to the end, playing the last bar absolutely *a tempo* (sometimes even in *accelerando*), and finishing the work unexpectedly without announcing its end in a way that can take the listener by surprise.

A last issue to consider is the pedal mark, which is indicated to last for the entire bar. There is no unanimous opinion among performers here, either. A number do not want to miss the opportunity for the second explosion the *sf* on the second chord offers them. Others stay close to the score, playing both chords and their *sf* character under the same pedal. The crotchet rest is then interpreted as a sign of a short first chord, rather than as a hint for pedal change.



Figure 146 Bars 108-110 are debated in relation to dynamics, character and pedalling.

COLOUR

INTRODUCTION

Pedalling is connected to Scriabin as a composer and a performer. As has already been analysed in the chapter on his piano roll performances, the composer explored a variety of pedal effects which he used in his own performances. The score contains pedal

markings that indicate his intentions. The recordings show that almost all performers take these indications into serious consideration. Beyond this fact, a common pedalling code unifies these performances in many respects. Pedalling is often so openly evaluated as a prerequisite in Scriabin repertoire that any attempt not to use the pedal tends to be viewed as an absence: i.e. as a non-pedal action. In other words, pedalling is viewed as the regular quality of a Scriabinesque sound, its absence as an uncommon performance trait.

The opposite happens during practice for some performers, as pedalling is often the last action added to one's interpretation. Pondering on his practice habits, Piers Lane notes: 'I almost always find I start out with way too little pedal when learning a new Scriabin piece, and only gradually (hopefully) discover just how much you can subtly shade harmonies, or overlap harmonies and connect ideas with clever pedalling' (Siepmann: 2000, 27). Pedal effects may also be applied in sections of fermatas or rests. For this reason, part of the following paragraphs concerns the performance of fermatas and rests within – or without – pedal action.

Dunsby writes, 'it is not the sound that makes the music. It is something *about* the sound' (62). Other factors that influence sound's 'about' include articulation, phrasing and tone colour. It is considered essential to assess these aspects in tandem with pedalling, in order to highlight the degree to which they are interrelated.

A core issue in the interpretation of this work is that it was written by a composer whose views on aesthetics and musical language changed dramatically over the years. Performers of his complete sonatas are thus confronted with at least three different styles which they have to assimilate and interpret. What usually happens with CD box sets of the complete sonatas is that the performer will be at ease with a part of them, as the character of each period places different interpretative challenges. For instance, Clark points out Ashkenazy's 'mixed results' in his recordings of seven out of ten Scriabin sonatas, that could also have to do with the hand compass that these works demand from the performer. The author states that 'clearly this pianist is most sympathetic to the "romantic" elements in Scriabin', while appraising his interpretation of the *Third Sonata*, which bears similarities to the second. He goes on to say, 'but Ashkenazy seems to feel less comfortable with the neurotically alternating moods of

Scriabin's later music' (Clark: 1983, 267). Charles Hopkins, reviewing an all-Scriabin CD, points out a 'trap' into which such recordings can fall. Commenting on the set in question, he writes: 'such generalised readings as the music receives here add nothing substantive to our understanding of Scriabin's febrile imagination, nor do the limited dynamic scope and restricted tonal palette they employ give any real impression of the colour and range of the composer's kaleidoscopic sound-world' (Hopkins: 62).

Dynamics are an equally important element, which are highly dependent on the above structural components, as well as on tempo. As already stated in the chapter concerning the tempo mapping of this work, a crescendo is usually followed by an *accelerando* and vice versa. The interdependence of these parameters suggests that all these are viewed simultaneously in the following paragraphs.

CASE-STUDIES

Sofronitsky

Next to the composer's performance style, Sofronitsky is an important pianistic testimony to Scriabin's era and its performance habits. Sofronitsky is a special case, being a widely celebrated pianist, a 'living legend' during his lifetime,⁵³ Scriabin's son-in-law and having performed the composer's music regularly in Russia, and especially at the Scriabin Museum. He performed all major Scriabin works publicly, and his interpretations show important similarities to the aural tradition around Scriabin's own performance skills, which are also partly deciphered through his piano roll recordings. Sofronitsky has often been referred to as the crucial link between Scriabin's music and the modern world, who 'imposed an intelligible - and intelligent - shape' on the composer's most obscure or 'aphoristic' miniature or longer works (Clark: 1983, 265).

Sofronitsky's global knowledge of Scriabin's works and style may have influenced his performance style, especially in terms of pedalling and tone colour. Indeed, even in works from the first period (Mazurkas, Preludes, the current sonata, etc.), his pedal effects and tone colour are technically similar to those applied in recordings of Scriabin's

⁵³ See Sofronitsky official website, <http://www.sofronitsky.ru/en/>, accessed 12 July 2015.

later works. This results in a performance of the *Second Sonata-Fantasy* that combines anachronistic characteristics; i.e. a musical layout which belongs to a more or less Romantic compositional style, and colour which belongs to a later compositional era and style. In other words, Sofronitsky's technical means would normally be meant for Scriabin's later works. His state of health could also have played a role to a certain extent in the creation of hazy coloristic effects through dissonance in his last recordings, one of which includes the *Sonata-Fantasy*. However, he was famous for this type of performance effects since the beginning of his career, long before 1960, when he recorded the work. The result is still unique, despite of the poor recording circumstances.

On the other hand, what is felt from recordings of modern performers is that they differentiate their pedalling a lot in relation to each Scriabin period: early sonatas are played with clearer pedalling, whereas later sonatas feature more perplexing or 'chaotic' pedal effects – though not as perplexing as in Sofronitsky's recordings of these works. Most performers treat the *Second Sonata-Fantasy* as 'romantic' Scriabin, with crystal-clear use of the pedal. In other words, modern performers allow themselves to experiment with pedalling in the later works, and keep themselves to more conventional pedalling with clear harmonic effects in this work, hesitating to use the pedal to produce dissonant effects. Sofronitsky, on the other hand, has no qualms in this regard. Some performers tend to experiment with more 'unconventional' or plain dissonant pedalling – letting 'foreign' notes penetrate a harmonic background and slightly obscure the harmonic identity, for instance – but they are few in number.

Performing on a bright piano in his first recording and on a partly out of tune instrument in his second, Sofronitsky's sound nevertheless demands attentive listening. When his melodic lines pass into the treble register under pedal, there is a glittering quality of refined *pp* effects. The quality of the sound is far from being acceptable for a recording being sold in the contemporary market, but what captures one's attention is not the sound itself, but rather the alchemy that surrounds it. Its echo lasts long and lets the listener imagine how a phrase could have evolved further, were Sofronitsky not 'forced' to move on to the next one by the score.

Below, Sofronitsky's performances are analysed in tandem with others featuring special coloristic effects. Notably, despite the liberties in tempo that are usually connected with

the creation of Sofronitsky's sound effects, his overall tempo structure is one of the most balanced, i.e. with a good sense of compensating rubato and a pulse that returns to the average tempo at structural boundaries. Although he 'hated recordings and regarded them as "my corpses"',⁵⁴ his musical ideas registered on these recordings provide precious 'food for thought' to the modern performer.

Richter

Richter's multi-faceted idiosyncrasy is revealed here with a warm and even legato in the first movement and an impassioned but still clear second movement. Richter's sound idiom is perhaps the most difficult to define. As Jed Distler writes,

'Great pianists usually have one or two facets that dominate their performances in ways that beget adjectives: Horowitzian thunder, Gouldian staccato, [...]. What made Sviatoslav Richter's piano playing Richterian, though, remains a tough nut to crack. His large recorded legacy reveals numerous Richters at work. The pianist could be delicate or brusque, withdrawn or optimistic, scrupulous or cavalier, an architect or a miniaturist, a poet or a pedant. One consistent factor was Richter's distinctive tone. The beauty and clarity of his sound shimmered with prismatic transparency at all dynamic levels. Chords were translucent and well aligned, and he had one of the most ravishing legatos in the profession' (Distler: 1995).

Richter's general tendency for very mild fluctuation and a warm sound without important *tenuto* may explain why Peter J. Rabinowitz speaks of Richter's 'capacity for elegance' in relation to this particular recording, and how his *Second Sonata-Fantasy* 'can be extremely lush' (Fanfare: May/June 1997).⁵⁵ In fact, for others it is almost striking how his feverish performance of other works can transform so naturally into unpretentious introspection in this work. Alexander Morin, a reviewer of Richter's live recordings of the 1950s, points out that Richter's repertoire and style, especially in those years, were 'more those of a concert virtuoso than the thoughtful and deeply probing musician he became. But even then, he never displayed his prodigious technical skills merely for their own sake; he always used them, with utter naturalness and total commitment, to make wonderfully romantic and very beautiful music'⁵⁶ (Morin: 1997).

⁵⁴ [Http://www.sofronitsky.ru/en/](http://www.sofronitsky.ru/en/), accessed 12 July 2015.

⁵⁵ Dr Peter J. Rabinowitz is Professor of Comparative Literature at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. He is a contributing editor of *Fanfare*, and a reviewer for *International Record Review*.

⁵⁶ Alexander Morin is a regular reviewer for *American Record Guide* and *Classical Net*.

For instance, as already remarked upon in the paragraphs concerning *tenuto* effects, Richter voices the melodic lines in bars 45-57 of the first movement discreetly with mild tempo fluctuation, depending more on each voice's uniform dynamics (*pp*, *mp* or *mf*) with mellow but still transparent sound, but without depending on *tenutos*. His non-accented voice layering results in uniformly phrased but clearly distinct voices, whereas most performers will also use *tenuto* effects in some voices (e.g. Hamelin and Ferguson-Thompson).



Figure 147 Bar 47 of the 45-57 three-voice subject.

Pierre-E. Barbier, writing the sleeve notes for the Praga CD re-release of Richter's 1972 recording, makes a similar comment: Richter's 'aim is not to enter immediately into a state of ecstasy, seeking rather a density of sound at the centre of which a fantastic, near-hidden velocity and constantly changing harmonies becomes classic and spiritual evidence' (Barbier: 2004, 4).

The two recordings that are assessed in this study are live performances. Because of that, the adrenaline rises even more as the listener is transferred closer to the circumstances of a real audio-visual environment, close to that described by Brock-Nannestad as the definition of a performance. The 1972 recording provides much better sound quality. The 1955 one is mellower: Richter seems to use more sustaining pedal here, with longer lines at certain areas (e.g. bars 17-24 (II), analysed later). The sound may have also been affected by the particular venue (i.e. its acoustic, and by the size of the audience).

Recordings of the past twenty-five years

Recordings since 1980 seem to aim for a warm, ultimately mellower sound. Bass and middle registers are rich, giving body and audible overtone properties to the

performance. However, the upper register may sound too mellow for a Scriabinesque timbre.

Blurring effects

In this work, Sofronitsky¹ lets tones ring on from one bar to the other, even though the harmonic skeleton may change. In the quiet section of bars 23-36 (I), he often lets treble overtones expand after the note onset, whilst pedalling. His bars 47-48 (like Gekic's bars 45-46 and 48-49) sound as though the pedal has been held down for even two consecutive bars. From an interview published on his official website, Gekic believes in an uncompromised experimentation with sound, deliberately performing the same work in different ways before going into the recording studio.⁵⁷ Both performers sometimes hold the pedal down, even when the harmony changes from the dominant to the tonic. Sager does not find this trait unusual in the context of Scriabin's music. In fact, he says that Scriabin himself indicates such pedal markings, 'like in the Seventh Sonata or the opening of the Fifth Sonata, or the second movement of the Third Sonata, [which] will often incorporate the dominant in upbeats to the tonic' (Siepmann: 2000, 27).

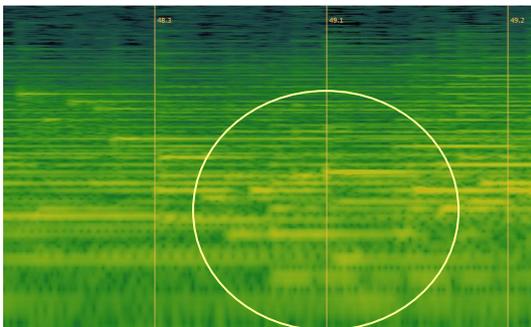


Figure 148 Gekic in bar 49.1 (I) changing from the dominant to the tonic in bar. His pedalling allows notes from the previous bar to vibrate in the new one (Tr. 88).

⁵⁷ [Http://www.kemalgekic.com](http://www.kemalgekic.com), accessed 15 June 2012.

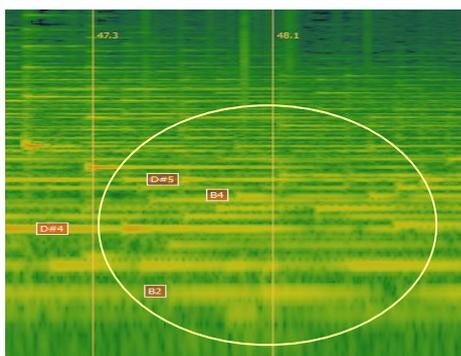


Figure 149 Sofronitsky1 (bar 48.1) mixing ‘foreign’ notes under scarce pedal changes that transcend the barline (Tr. 89).

Gekic is an example of a pianist who uses dissonance as an aspect of his interpretation of the sonata-fantasy. For instance, in an interview published on his official website, he points out that one of his primary goals is differentiation, stating:

I play it [a music work] in many different ways, trying to achieve two goals: firstly, to be faithful to the spirit of the work, and secondly to be faithful to our time. [...] Then I listen to all the available recordings of the work that I can find to see what has been accomplished to date, and to see the piece from different perspectives. Finally, I prepare several interpretations of the work, without favouring any of them, leaving room in my spirit for some new idea that might appear during the recording session. I listen to the recorded sound and try to judge it. I make several versions of every piece and only decide much later which will go on the CD.⁵⁸

It is telling that his website begins with a quotation by Liszt on the virtuoso:

The virtuoso is not a mason, chiselling his stone conscientiously according to the architect’s sketches. He is not a passive tool for reproducing feelings and thoughts, without adding anything of his own. He is not a more or less experienced “interpreter” of works which leave him no scope for his own comments... For the virtuoso, musical works are in fact nothing but tragic and moving materializations of his emotions; he is called upon to make them speak, weep, sing and sigh, to recreate them in accordance with his own consciousness. In this way, he, like the composer, is a creator, for he must have within himself those passions that he wishes to bring so intensely to life (Badura-Skoda: 1962, 2).

His performance makes it clear from the start that he is in pursuit of alternatives, bringing out musical discourses in ways different from those indicated in Scriabin’s score. But why? To be different for the sake of being different? Debates in musicological circles concern the expressive means that performers adopt, especially when these means influence structure. For instance, Levy asks questions about the performers’

⁵⁸ [Http://www.kemalgekic.com](http://www.kemalgekic.com).

liberty to form their performance freely. She asks what degree of freedom a performer should have in choosing the relationships and patterns on which to build his or her performance, 'on what basis and to what degree? Most importantly, with what consequences for the way in which experienced listeners apprehend a musical work or part of a work?' (Levy: 1995, 150).

A good story, though, can be told in many ways: a pianist – especially an experienced one – can successfully convey their musical purposes to the audience. In fact, when a performance (live or in a recording studio) takes place before an experienced audience, special colours of expression – 'special effects' – will also be evaluated and appreciated. This is where an individual or idiomatic interpretation finds its *raison d'être*, with individuality coming across as an intellectually thought-out sound. Otherwise, if the audience did not approve of their alternative way of thinking, performers who became famous for their eccentricity would never exist.

Pogorelich is another example of a highly individual interpretation, concentrating on colour and sense of pulse. His overall performance of the work is the longest, with his first movement being the longest first movement recorded (9:47) and his second (4:04) one of the slowest. Anthony Tommasini wrote of this performer's idiosyncrasy: 'When he emerged in the 1980s, Mr. Pogorelich galvanized the concert world with his technically astounding, deeply personal and unabashedly eccentric playing (Tommasini : 2006).. Eccentricity emerges in the interpretation of this work too, through a very stretched interpretation in terms of tempo and a subtle use of rubato. In the CD sleeve notes, Pierre Jasmin (translated by Christopher Whyte) writes: 'Pogorelich offers us a contemplative reading, in which the fullness of the harmonies is clearly revealed' (Jasmin: 2).

Over the years, Pogorelich and his performances – and not just of the specific work – have been controversial according to concert reviewers: 'creates provocative programs, then plays in a highly individual manner', 'a probing musical mind', 'no mere weirdo' (Cariaga: 1990), 'unorthodox' (Thornton: 2009), 'piano in an unnatural key', 'deconstruction of the music' (Page: 2006). His often extreme stretching of tempo has been a major element in criticism of his interpretations in recent years.

Kocyan is another case of a contemporary performer who uses an unusual type of note-to-note rubato more associated with much earlier Group A recordings. In his review of Kocyan's CD, Jed Distler writes: 'All I can say is that if you pass up this disc, you're missing a goldmine in pianist Wojciech Kocyan. He's got it all: a complete technique, a beautiful sound, wonderful musicianship, and real individuality'.⁵⁹

Establishing a homogenous harmonic background – Sostenuto pedal effects

Pedalling is very often connected to bass line. In bars 1-6 (I), the right pedal helps the left hand resonate for longer, creating *sostenuto* pedal effects. Most performers, with the exception of Dubourg, apply pedal in these bars, agreeing with Scriabin's music score indications. From bar 13 onwards, pedal changes become more frequent as the harmonic background evolves faster. However, the pedal is sometimes sustained for whole bars (e.g. bars 14, 16-18) by most performers.

Melnikov sees Scriabin's idiom as '3D music'. *Sostenuto* pedal effects create this effect especially in bars 37-57 (I), with pedalling lasting for a whole bar as the composer himself indicates. The left-hand bass notes C#1 or B1 are generally treated as ostinatos by most performers, such as Fergus-Thompson (Tr. 90), Szidon (Tr. 91) who uses this effect also in bars 89-112 (I), and Gekic (Tr. 92). In my own performances, I do not particularly project the bass line of the above bars, but make sure that the notes are played, as they are vital in forming the harmonic background of the segment. Fergus-Thompson points out in relation to Scriabin's art of voicing that one important performance priority 'is the layering of voices, and the pedal shouldn't be allowed to obscure this. Scriabin was in many ways a very contrapuntal composer, and counterpoint is often one of the important sources of his ravishing tonal palette' (Siepmann: 27).

Bars 17-24 (II), marked *dolcissimo*, are another example of long pedalling, indicating the common harmonic background in a series of bars; most performers choose to underline this. Feinberg sounds as though he is renewing it every two bars, coinciding with

⁵⁹ [Http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-9494/?search=1](http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-9494/?search=1), accessed 2 July 2015.

Scriabin's pedal score indications more closely than others, and even more than the composer's own piano roll performance. In his first live recording (1955), Richter follows similar pedalling to Feinberg's, with long pedal lines and consistent reverberation of previous notes and their overtones.

The graph below shows this in the long vibrating notes in red. Richter does cut the pedal, but the sense of one long line is still felt. However, the same performer recorded the same work seventeen years later with completely different pedalling. This is not a paradox. Venue and instrument demand a performer to be flexible and to adjust their pedalling according to the circumstances. Richter (1972) thus changes the pedal on beats 17.1, 18.1, 19.1; then in 20.2, he probably 'corrects' the wrong harmony that has invaded due to a E# played instead of an E. It is a recorded live performance, after all. He then pedals beats 21.1, 22.1, 23.1 and changes again on 23.3. The last strategy was probably supposed to be used in the first four bars, as well, but the wrong note (beat 20.1) forced him to renew his pedal earlier than planned. Oborin follows a similar strategy, changing pedal almost every bar in a fast, straightforward manner. Although the particular pedal directions of the score look logical, the piano roll transcription would indicate that the composer himself does not follow them.

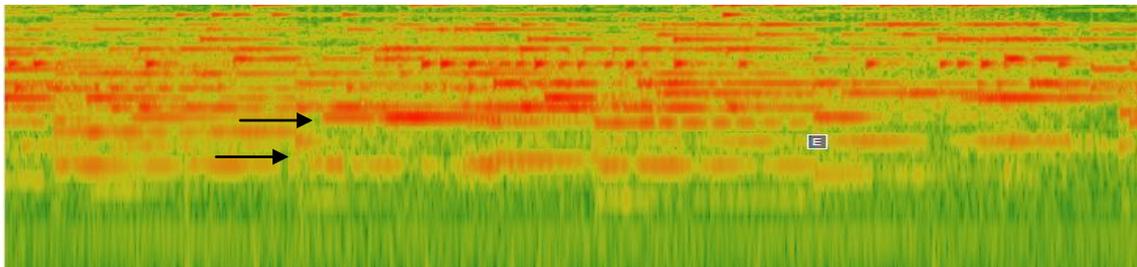


Figure 150 Richter (1955), bars 17-24 (II), with a much more legato sound and longer pedal, probably also due to the particular piano and recording engineering (Tr. 93).

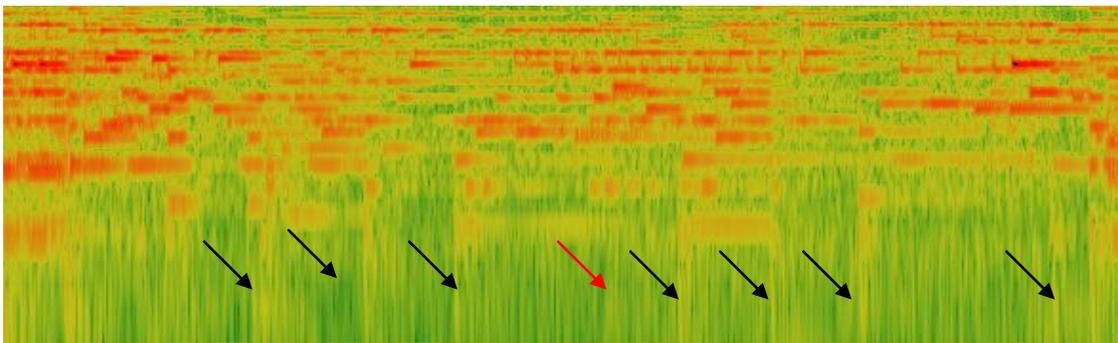


Figure 151 Richter (1972), bars 17-24 (II), changing pedal almost every two bars (Tr. 94).

Another area where long pedal creates similar effects is the segment in bars 53-56 (II). Although pedalling is not indicated in the music score, the position of the F# octave explains what its use is for. More specifically, it always appears at the same register, at the beginning of each of four bars. In addition, just after the onset of the F# octave, the left hand has to jump to catch the next note, which is set approximately an octave higher. This unusual frequent change of hand position orientates the performer to see this octave as a tone that insists on existing within an ever-evolving environment. Richter (1955) underlines this role by applying long pedal and creating a harmonic background to connect one bar with the next. Gekic and Sofronitsky follow a similar approach. Leonskaja also aims for prolonged reverberation, although at a more relaxed pace, with note-to-note rubato on certain beats.

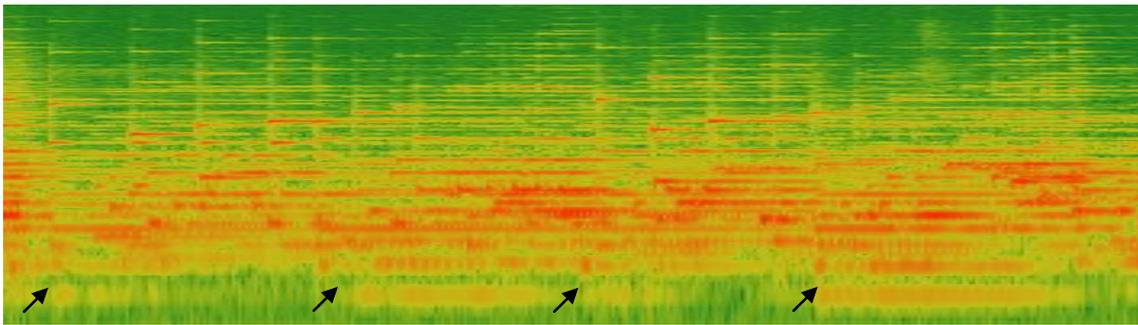


Figure 152 Bars 53-56 (II). Richter (1955), long right pedal that creates a *sostenuto* pedal effect for the F# octave in the bass line (**Tr. 95**).

In contrast, Dubourg provides a unique case of short pedal use, even when the in any case rare pedal marks are indicated for the passage. Two examples of this are the opening bars (1-2) and cadential bars 58-61 of the first movement. In bars 1 and 2, she pedals each quaver of the quaver triplet, losing the bass line's voice and *sostenuto* effect. She does the same in bar 58.2, changing pedal on the onset of 59.2, which is supposed to be sustained under a single pedal starting in bar 58.3.

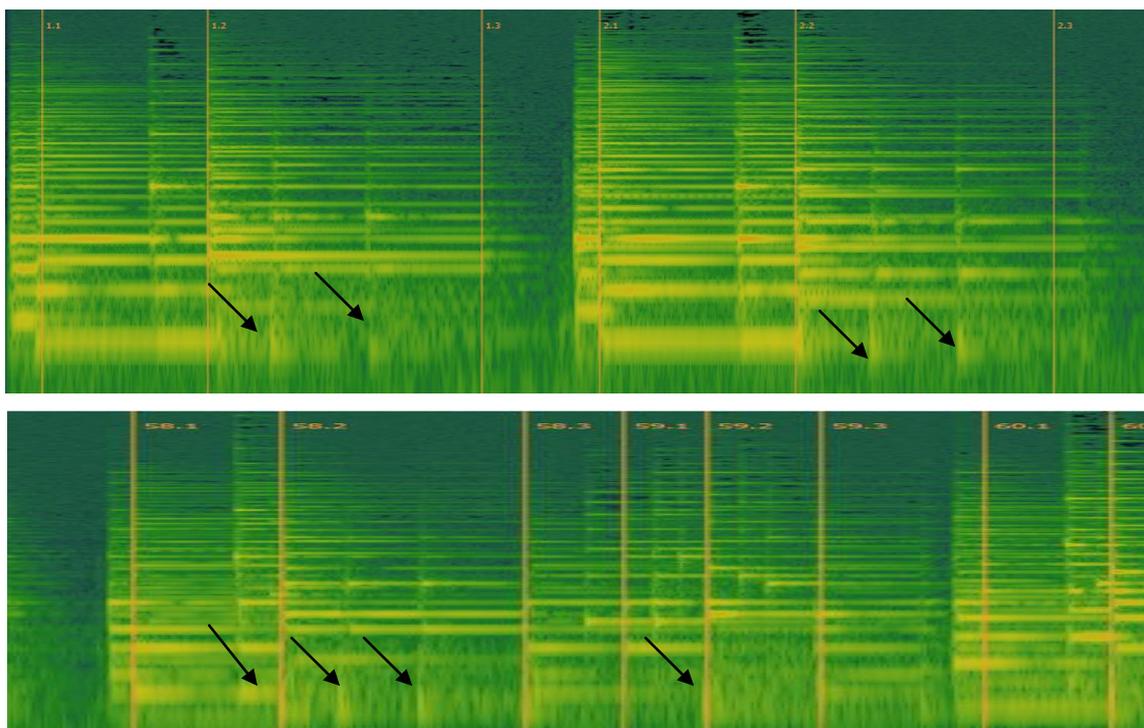


Figure 153 Dubourg, bars 1-2 (I) (Tr. 96) and 58–61(I) (Tr. 97): the pedal action is audible.

'Emptying' beats as a contrast to pedalled ones

Pedal effects are a *sine qua non* quality in Scriabin's music. Therefore, the absence of pedalling is immediately noticeable. Performers tend to 'empty' their sound of it to form contrasting timbres. In the first movement, this mainly occurs in bars 13-36 (I), in which there are a plethora of rests and long note values which can be held manually or with little pedal. For instance, Ponti's bar 19(I), as well as Taub and Ogdon's bars 20-23 (I), are left 'empty' of the sustaining pedal, marking the short rests written in the score but probably also making a first statement of the thematic change that is to occur in the bars that follow. In another section, Ponti plays the first two beats of bar 42 without pedal and non legato in the left hand. In fact, this particular segment sounds as though it were borrowed from a performance of an eighteenth-century work. Neither Ponti nor Ogdon's approach is emulated by many other performers, all of whom add at least some very subtle pedalling to these bars. Scriabin's piano roll includes a direction to the performer to apply right pedal to bars 20-22 (Figure 154).



Figure 154 Scriabin's performance of bars 20-22 (I), adding pedal that was not originally written in the score but was newly added in the recording. Lobanov's piano roll transcription, *Muzyka* 2007 (Tr. 98).

Bars 23-36 are performed in various ways, because of the rubato quiet character of the section. The motivic layout of music here, with one-bar motifs and their variation after eight bars, makes it possible for performers to take their time. *Tenutos* are broadly applied, and some performances focus on these short-scale events as the main role of the section. Rests and *pp* indications are also interpreted as an opportunity for temporarily 'emptying' one's sound, performing the section with sparing pedal. Ponti, for instance, changes his pedal beat by beat; but he changes it late, so that sound overlaps with the next beat, creating a subtle blurring effect that very soon clears out. The effect comes off, although the overall recording circumstances do not sound ideal. Ponti applies a similar strategy in bars 95, 101 and 106 (I). There is an impression that this recording, as well as another set of shorter Scriabin works, were made in a hurry. The recording quality is poor, and the piano sounds harsh, while Ponti's performance seems choppy, with spasmodic changes of character. As one of the reviewers writes, '[The boxed sets] flinty, harsh, dynamically contrasted sonics were well below the 1960s' highest standards, and sound no better digitally remastered. [...] If you can get past the sound, it's hard not to be drawn into Ponti's raw, elemental energy and to the feeling of live performance he generates in the studio, as opposed to an elaborately finished product'.⁶⁰ What is missing is perhaps the polish that modern recording standards demand from recording companies and performers. Ponti, as Ogdon, was equally famous for his sight-reading skills. He probably did not have a lot of time to prepare for the *Second Sonata-Fantasy*, since he recorded all Scriabin sonatas, as Ogdon. Another reviewer finds the Bechstein instrument used for the recordings to be 'unusually bright', which works in some sonatas ('trills' or 'crystalline sonorities' (Clark: 1983, 267). However, the *Second Sonata*

⁶⁰ <http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-8688/>, accessed 3 July 2015.

does not require that kind of brightness; despite some treble lines which sound more 'luminous' when played on a bright piano, it calls for a warmer sound.

Paperno (bars 89-136 (I), in Figure 155 also clears his sound of pedal during rests. However, other performers, such as Sofronitsky¹, use beat-to-beat overlapping pedal more often, regularly creating areas of blurred and areas of clear sound. Sofronitsky¹ tends to pedal for two beats in these bars.

In the second movement, Ponti once again gives an alternative approach to the opening of the dramatic - but *p* - section of bar 41 onwards. He does not apply pedal, and articulates the left hand as non legato, as shown in the spectrograph below. The left circle in bar 41 is played without pedal; the right circle shows pedalling on the downbeat of the following bar, 42, by way of contrast.

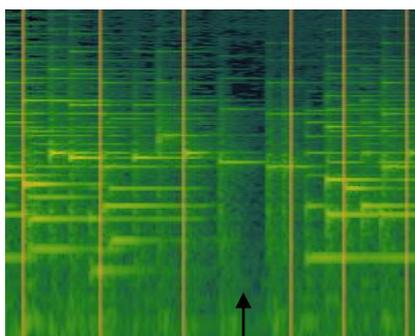


Figure 155 Paperno, bar 97 (I) (Tr. 99).

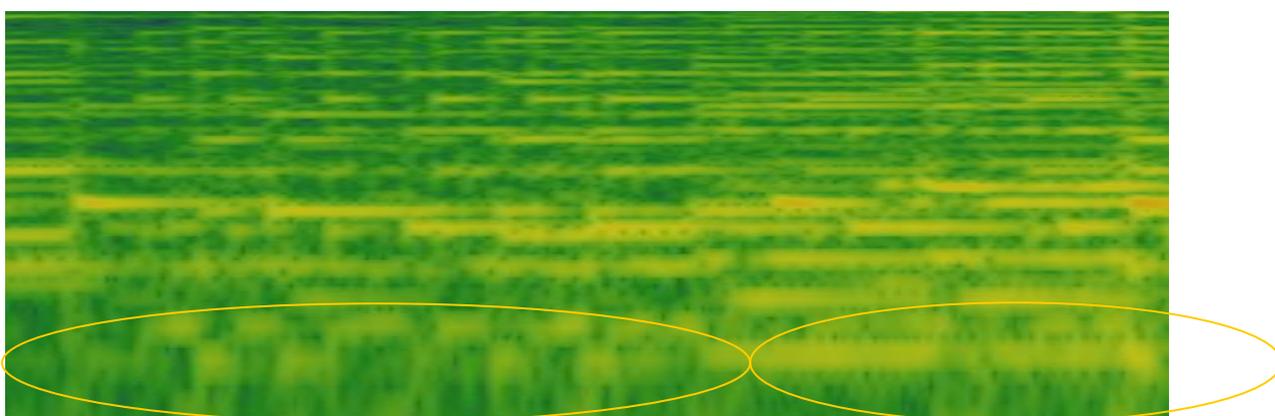


Figure 156 Ponti's pedalling in bars 41-42 (II) (Tr. 100).

Marking harmonic changes

Another point of interest is the harmonic background in bars 58-61 (I). It leads the movement to a turning point: the start of the middle section (bars 62-88), marked by subtle harmonic changes,, first in B, then in D major. Examples are given on page 192 in the discussion on the role of fermatas and rests.

Pedal illusions

It is possible to make certain notes reverberate in successive bars through half or quarter pedal. An illusion of this technique is also achievable, if the note that needs to 'reverberate' has just been played. By changing the (sustaining) pedal whilst holding the note in question down with the finger, the note will stand out from the previous 'pedal cloud' as a clear tone, and will be captured under the new pedal. This, in my opinion, is what Sofronitsky does so impressively in bar 72 (Figure 157). In both bars 72 and 74, he creates an illusion of reverberating sounds; the Bb3 in bar 71 is not actually played at all, even though it is written in the score and is supposed to provide the downbeat to bar 72. In the next *subito p*, in bar 74, the performer plays Bb3 early, before the 'official' downbeat of bar 74. It is perhaps a similar notion to what Glemser describes as a 'quality of "light" which is so much a part of his visionary imagination - especially by adding the pedal after the initial resonance has begun to fade, which can often give the illusion of a crescendo on one note' (Siepmann: 2000, 27).

Sofronitsky's coloristic effect in bars 72 and 74 has influenced my own performance of the extract. Therefore, I always attempt to use this feature in my own interpretation of those bars. It is an effect that I would not easily disregard, as it has become a part of my own perception of that particular segment (Figure 159).

Ashkenazy probably does the same, but for the treble Bb in the same bar (72), which he has just played in bar 71 but does not replay on the downbeat again, although it is indicated in the score (red circle). In addition, his left hand leaves the keys later than the

right before starting bar 74 (blue circle). This connects the bass line, although he plays the Bb downbeat on bar 74 simultaneously with the right-hand onset (orange line).

Like Feinberg, Sofronitsky plays these bars with distinctive tempo fluctuation. But his hurried playing does not seek to build the section up faster, but rather to provide a time-out for the music to space itself within time. In other words, he quickly gives the listener all the notes in each bar, as though throwing all his cards on the table, and then lets the piano overtone background flourish and expand naturally.

Another quality in Sofronitsky's pedalling technique is evident in bars 62-68 (I): he makes the most of the bass line, often letting the bass octave or note vibrate for a long time while the material in the treble clef may change. In the particular sonata, Scriabin almost prescribes that the bass line pedal on the upbeat be sustained throughout the next bar (e.g. bars 45-49 (I)). He does not include any pedal marks in the middle section of the movement, however. Sofronitsky follows the composer's general pedal practice, applying it in this section too. He creates a temporary blurring of left hand octaves, which easily lead the section to a first climax; Feinberg does the same. Although Sofronitsky's recording does not always imbue this type of pedalling with a clarity of tone, the effect produced is impressive, if not unanimously accepted by modern performers as consistent with their sense of tonal clarity. However, through this ephemeral timbre chaos, the *subito p* in bars 72 and 74 soon clears the picture by imbuing the whole passage with space and glittering treble sounds. Some other pianists, including Austbo, prefer to play bar 71 without pedal and *a tempo f*, and to continue on to the *subito p* with minimum pedal.

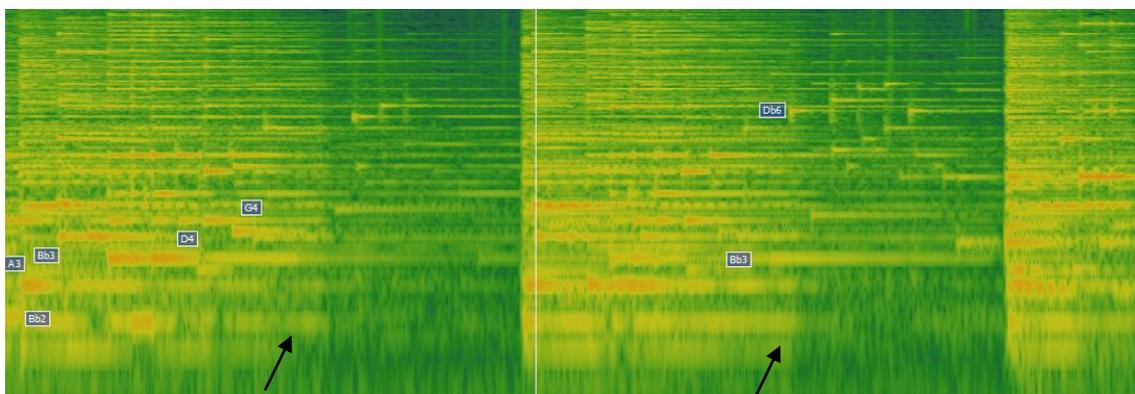


Figure 157 Sofronitsky1: pedalling detail (bars 71-75). This is a surprising *subito p* effect (arrow), although it is indicated on the score with Bb held down and pedal change (Tr. 101).

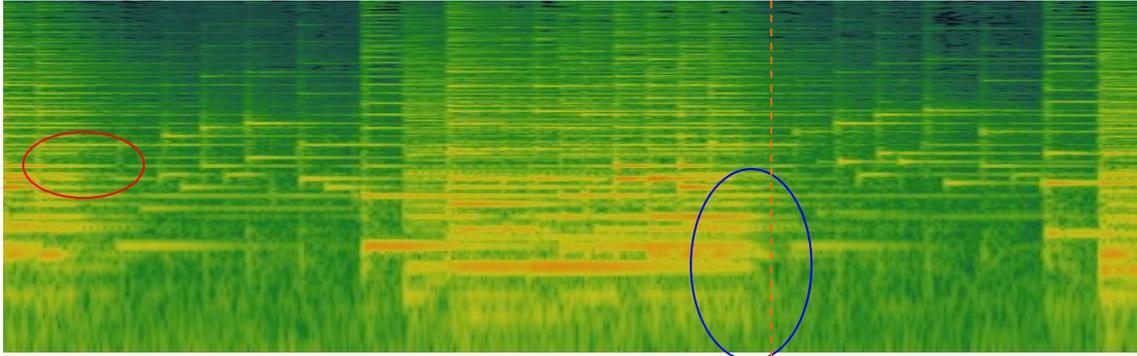


Figure 158 Ashkenazy, bars 72-74 (I), tied note detail (Tr. 102).

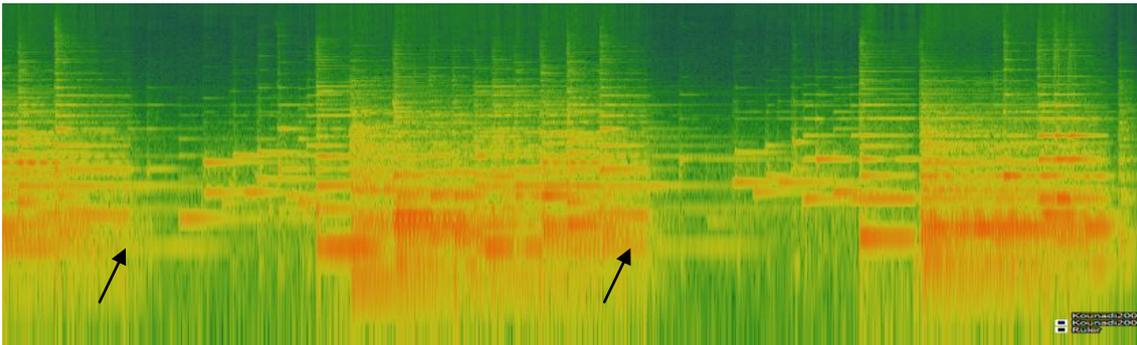


Figure 159 My 2009 performance of bars 71-75 (I), with the left hand Bb anticipating the right; a musical idea 'borrowed' from Sofronitsky's interpretation of the segment (arrows) (Tr. 103).

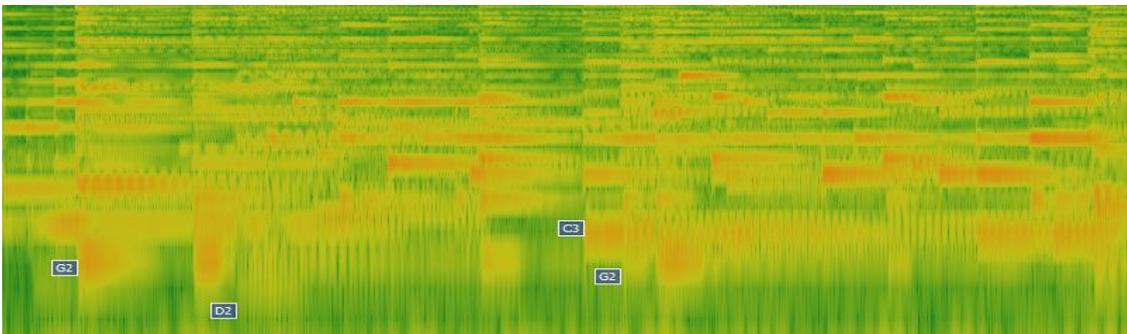


Figure 160 Sofronitsky1, pedal detail from bars 61-63. He tends to accumulate sounds under one pedal change (Tr. 104).

Fermatas, rests and breaths

Fermatas and rests – whether indicated in the music score or not – can pose serious questions for a performer at the practice stage. They may lead to differentiation of interpretation, and their role in delimiting phrase boundaries is usually decisive for the entire structure of the piece, relating as they do not only to tempo, but also to character and colour, as performers use them for pedal and tone colour effects. For this reason,

this paragraph is included in the assessment of pedalling and articulation rather than tempo. The following cases are fermatas and rests which have been paid attention to by performers, although the means applied are different or, in some cases, totally antithetical from one performance to another.

A. First movement

a. Bars 1-12(I)

The fermatas and rests in these bars have already been analysed in the analysis of tempo. They play an important role in creating an atmosphere in which the listener is immersed from the beginning. They also affect the overall sense of structure and character between the different sections of the movement.

b. Bars 35-36 (I)

Bars 35-36, i.e. the embellished copies of the initial bars 27-28, are given importance not only as a variation, but also as a latent and early boundary that distinguishes this section from the next theme of *bel marcato il canto* in bar 45. As already analysed in Chapter 1, although bar 37 does belong to the previous theme of bar 23 as its end, it is also used to lead towards new thematic material, i.e. that of bar 45. Performers tend to linger over bars 35-36, and take time for different phrasing and tone colour. For Scriabin, as for Ponti, Glemser, Giltburg, Szidon, Austbo, Gekic, the same bar is played *ritenuto* (Figure 162 and Figure 164). Like Sofronitsky and Fiorentino, Richter keeps a relatively stable pulse; whereas, the composer's *rall.* performance announces the use of the bar as a structural boundary early on. Scriabin holds one of the longest pauses of all the performances in beats 35.3 and 36.3. Ponti is alone in cutting the flow on 36.2 beat by slowing down during the demi-semiquavers.

My own performance of the bars stands closer to the majority of pianists, as I take time, though not in the form of a *ritenuto* over the whole bar, but rather in a pause on the third beat of the bar. I play the demi-semiquavers almost on time, but I then linger on the

crotchet of the third beat. This effect announces an ending section and a necessary breath before introducing bars 37-57.

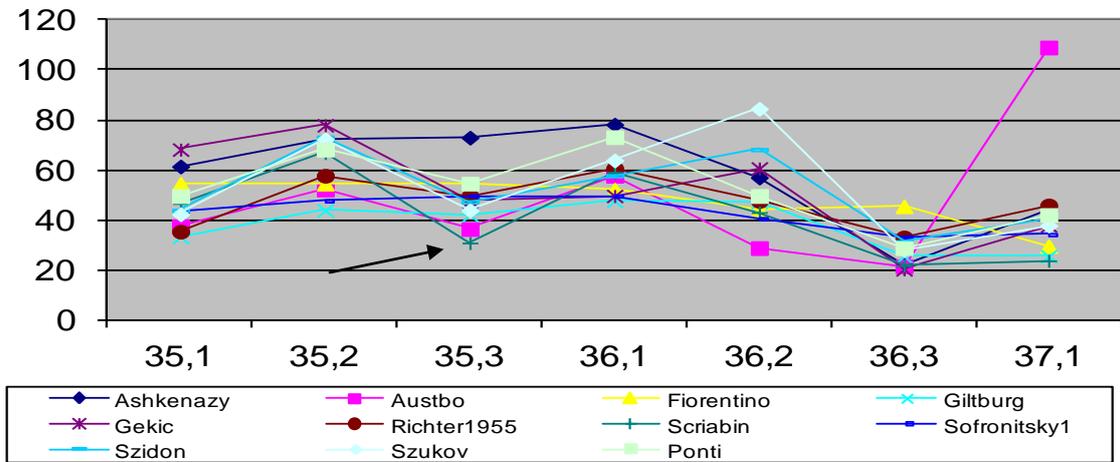


Figure 161 Performances that decelerate considerably in bars 35-36.

Richter’s left-hand chord is well placed on the downbeat before the treble demi-semiquavers are played (red arrow). The left hand (blue) is also played with a hint of pedal, as the sound of the left-hand chord overlaps into the second and into the third beat (black).

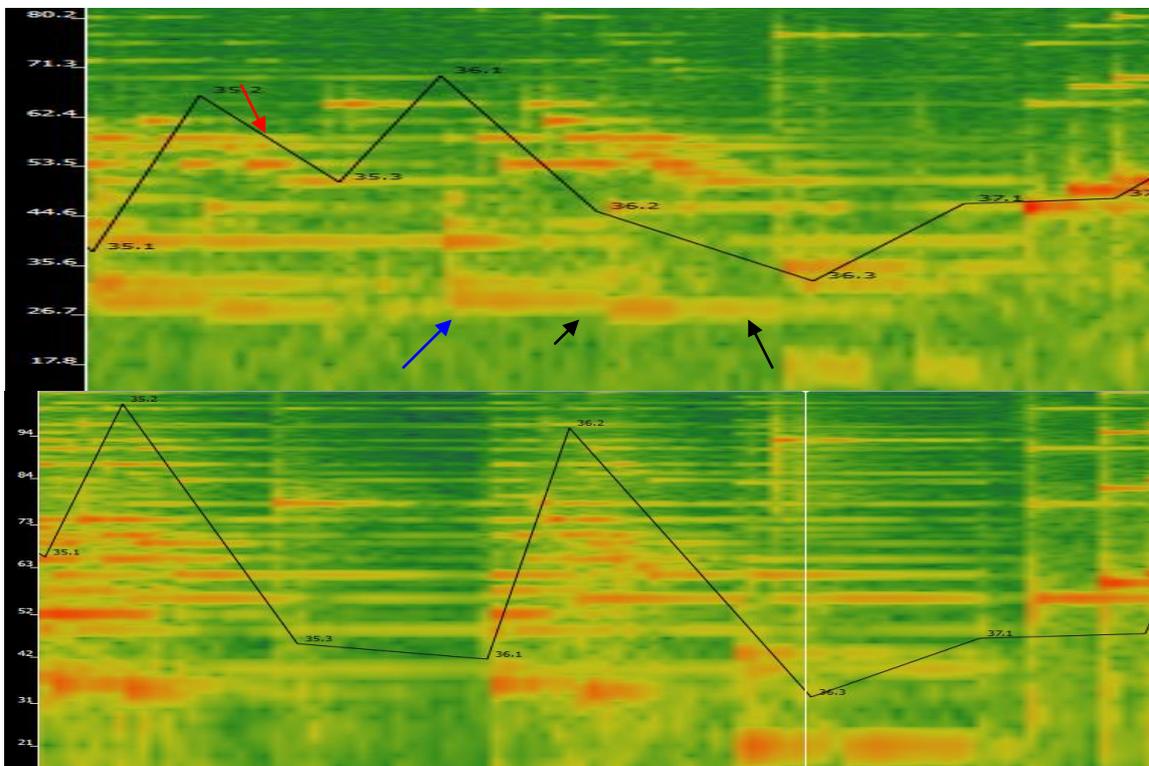


Figure 162 Legato sound in Richter (1955), bar 36 and Kocyan’s rapid (MM=42-94), non legato articulation of the demi-semiquavers.

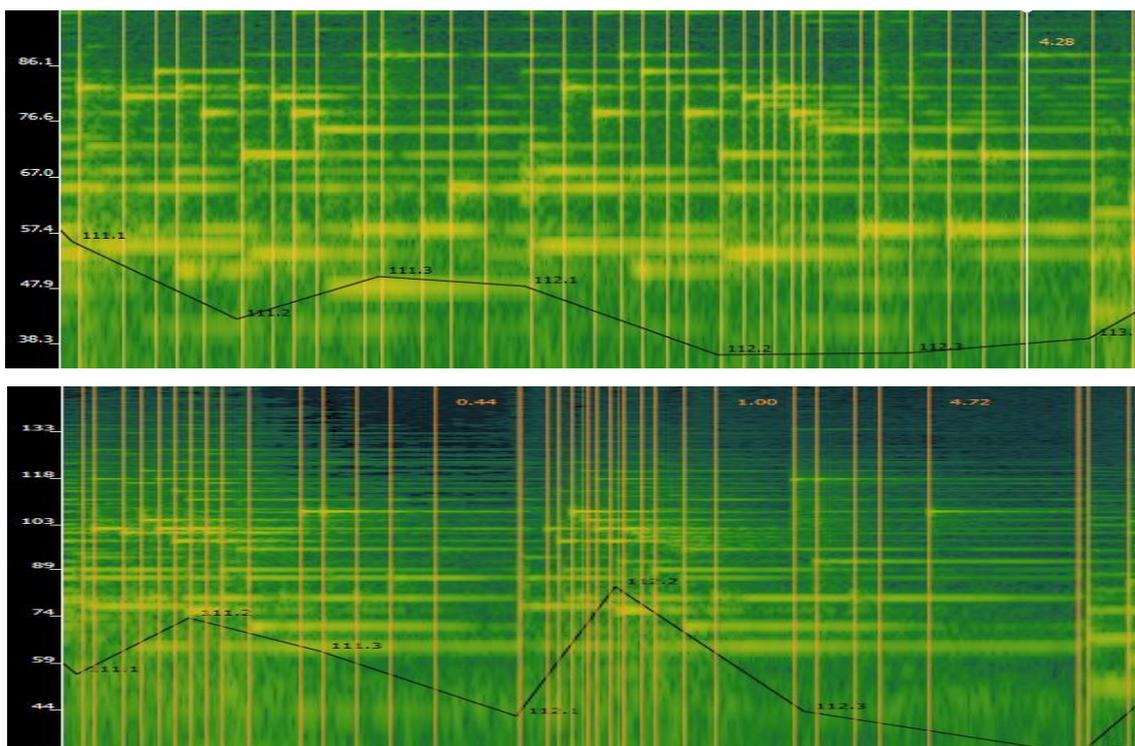


Figure 163 Richter (1955) (Tr. 105) and Kocyan (Tr. 106): evenly spaced *ppp* in bar 112 (I) for Richter, an *accel.* for Kocyan. Note the distances between note onsets, marked in orange lines, and the tempo line (black) showing mild slowing down and a stable tempo for Richter, or speeding up for Kocyan.

Lobanov's
tempo graph



Lobanov's
Piano roll transcription



Belaieff
Music score (1898)

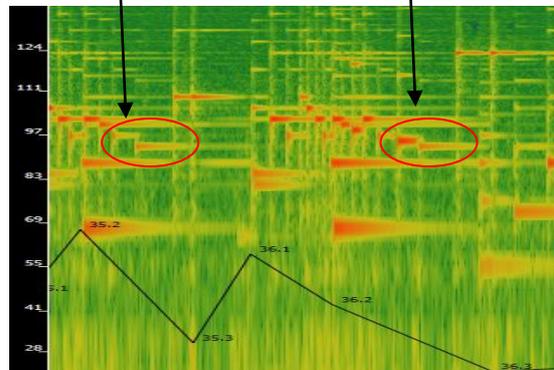


Figure 164 Scriabin's bars 35.2 to 37.1 from the Lobanov piano roll transcription. Note the pedal from 35.2 to 36.1, then no pedal during the articulated demi-semiquavers and the very slow pace (MM=28-60), which slows down considerably towards the end of the bar. Lobanov even adds a fermata on two notes in his piano roll transcription to illustrate the length of the performer's pause (Tr. 107).

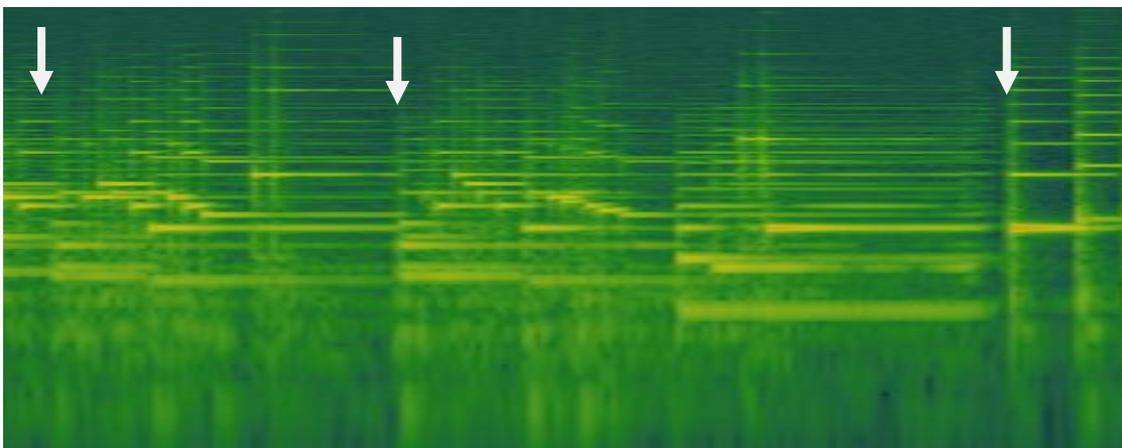


Figure 165 Bars 35-36 (I), own performance from 2009. The first two arrows mark the bar onset. The third one indicates a clear pedal cut for the quaver rest initiating bar 37 (Tr. 108).

c. Bar 59 (I)

This semiquaver rest, albeit written short, plays an important role in the form of the movement, as it prepares for the onset of the D chord, which is the dominant to the G minor development or second section that is about to start in bar 62. It is equally interesting to hear the long-established B major universe suddenly being changed into a D major one by the beginning of bar 60.



Figure 166 Bars 58-61 (I).

Although Scriabin indicates that the pedal should be cut on the rest, performers do not stick to the score. Moreover, the motif before the rest is usually played *rallentando*, and some performers play the chord before the rest as a fermata. In his own performance, Scriabin seems to be releasing the pedal. However, the piano roll pedal perforations were added after the recording session, and their credibility is therefore questionable. He keeps a very slow pace, but he does not *rit.* substantially before the rest. He thus structurally connects the motif in B to its repetition in D.

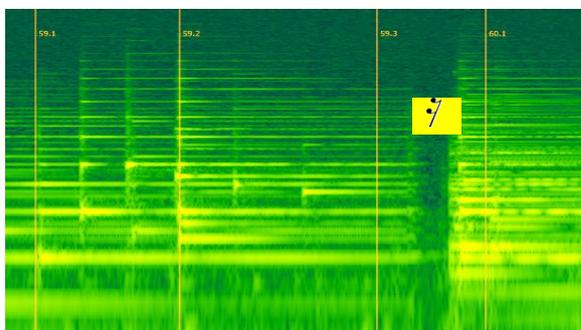


Figure 167 Scriabin's pedal cut, bars 59-60, with ongoing pulse (Tr. 109).

Performers play the segment in a variety of ways, usually by letting the 59.3 chord vibrate with the sustaining pedal and decelerating (Melnikov) or not (Kasman), and by briefly cutting the pedal during the semiquaver rest. Fiorentino and Ognjanovich are divergent examples: Fiorentino's chord before the rest lasts for five seconds, as if it had a *fermata* on it. It is as if the first section ends for him there, instead of in bar 57, as it does for most performers, or that, abandoning himself to the music, he sees the cadential passage in bars 58-61 as a timeless part of the movement – an idea embraced by other performers, too. In terms of dynamics, most performers tend to play the second *pp* even thinner than the first one; there are exceptions – Glemser, for instance, plays the second one (in bars 60-61) louder.

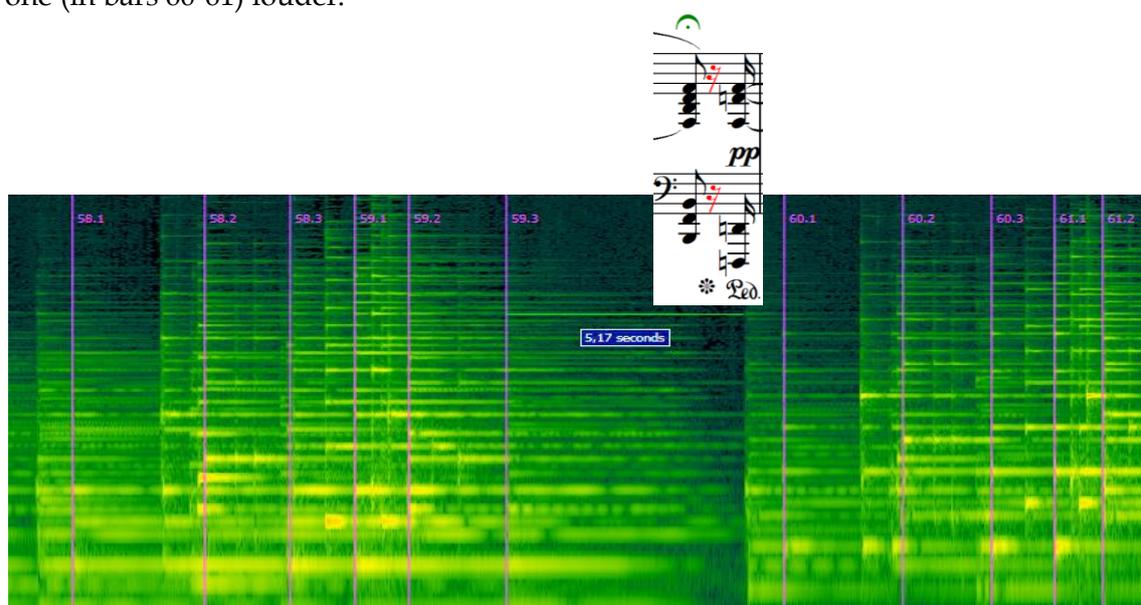


Figure 168 Fiorentino, bars 58-61 with spread chords and a very long fermata effect in bar 59.3 (added here by the author, but not indicated on the score) which lasts for more than five seconds (Tr. 110).

Kocyan's approach is similar to that taken by Richter (1955). He accumulates sound from the upbeat to bar 59 by holding down the sustaining pedal, but cuts it clearly in bar 59 before changing the harmonic background to D major. The D major material is played in a different, warmer timbre. The same approach is heard in Richter's D major segment. However, Richter does not accelerate as much as Kocyan in bars 59 and 61, nor does he cut the sound before starting again in D major; his is more a half-pedal effect, which lets some notes reverberate in the new, D major background.

Despite the variety of alternatives given by the recordings that I have heard, my approach to this segment has been influenced by a verbal description of these bars. The

remark likely belongs to Yonty Solomon, who had mentioned the ‘timelessness’ of the moment. Indeed, bars 58 and 59 in *pp*, seem neutral in character, merely confirming the B major key established in the previous bars. The sudden but mild change to the relative key of D major of bars 60 and 61 is a point of surprise.⁶¹ As with the majority of performers, I tend to perform the segment quite statically, and attempt to change the B major to D major with good *legato* and momentary overlapping pedal (Figure 171).

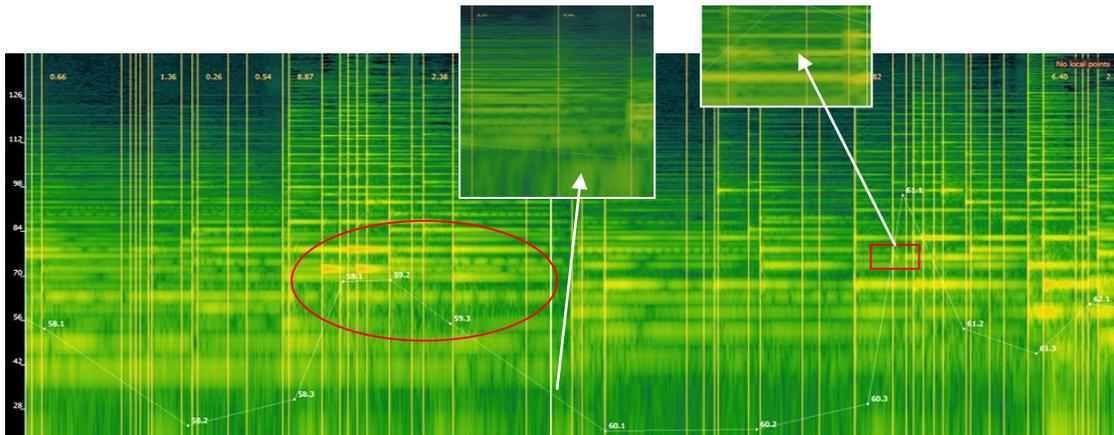


Figure 169 Kocyan, bars 58-61, cadence. Clear pedal cut (bar 59, c.a. 0.15 sec) marking the shifting from B towards a different harmonic background in D major. The chord (circle) is allowed to vibrate until the pedal cut. The pedal change occurs just before bar 61 (square). Considerable *rubato* occurs at certain points (**Tr. 111**).

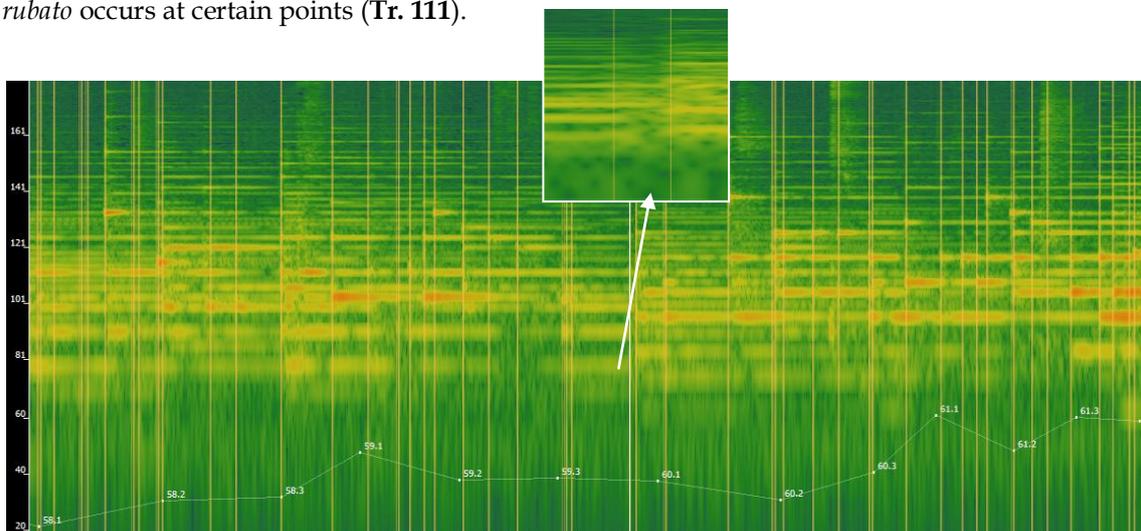


Figure 170 Richter (1955), bars 58-61, cadence. Very brief half-pedal cut (c. 0.005 sec), as some notes are left to vibrate into the next bar (**Tr. 112**).

⁶¹ See annotated score in Appendix C. Solomon has written ‘D major, surprise’ over these bars.

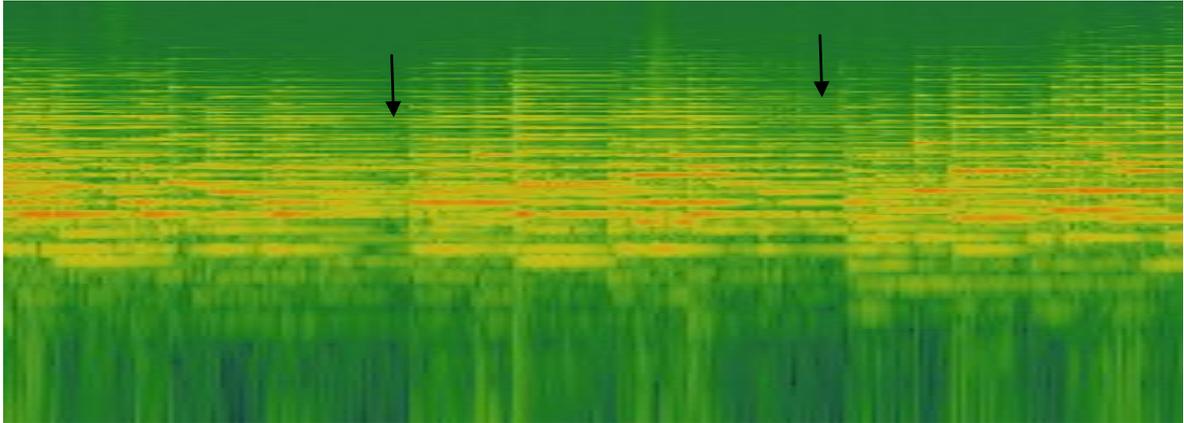


Figure 171 Bars 58-61 (I), own performance from 2014. The arrows show the onset of different harmonies, i.e. B major and D major (Tr. 113).

d. Bar 88 (I)

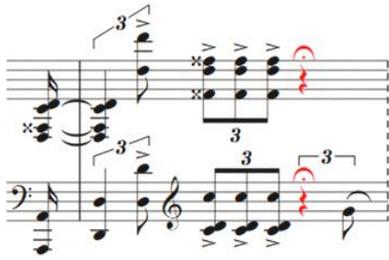


Figure 172 Fermata in bar 88 (I), between second and third sections.

Melnikov blends one harmony into the other during the fermata in bar 88. He plays the fermata short and his sound has not disappeared as he moves towards bar 89. In this way, the conflicting harmonies of V7 and I are blended into a temporary harmonic chaos lasting for a quaver, although the effect seems to ‘work’. The scene changes, as a sea-storm disappears, giving way to calm. Most recorded performances (and mine) take a less extreme approach, by letting the pedal vibrate during the third beat rest and fermata. Differences mainly concern the time that a performer will spend on the fermata.



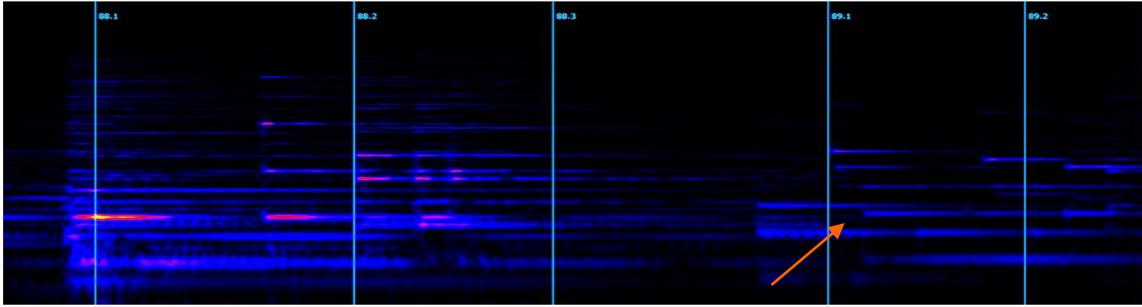


Figure 173 Melnikov blends the last chord in the left hand in bar 88 into the first beat of bar 89 (Tr. 114).

e. Bar 136 (I)

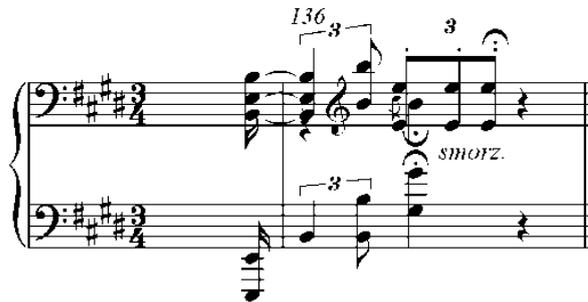


Figure 174 First movement's last bar. Could Scriabin be prescribing an almost *attacca* start of the second movement?

The bar bears the indication *smorzando*. Performers let the sound disappear before starting the next movement. However, Scriabin's notation of the bar is intriguing, as it seems to be giving some directions on when and how to start the *finale*. The last note is written on the second beat with a fermata on it. Then, the third beat is just a crotchet rest. Why did Scriabin not write a tied note and a fermata for the third beat? His notation could be a hint that the next movement is to start *attacca*, after a short breath of a crotchet rest. The *smorzando* indication has already implied that the sound should die away before one finishes the end of the first movement.

This link between movements suggests a sense of coherence in the music and a gradual change of direction. Indeed, Donald Garvelmann, who signs Ponti's CD sleeve notes, suggests the close link between the movements. They are 'fittingly linked together, without a break. There is little thematic relationship between the two movements... rather, a psychological bond' (Garvelmann: 9). Still, one cannot be entirely sure that it is Scriabin who wrote the rest and fermata at the end of the first movement. From his correspondence with his publisher Belaieff, already indicated in Chapter 1.IV, it is clear that he was dilatory in providing an adequate fair copy of the *Sonata-Fantasy*, at least in

terms of metronome markings and articulation signs. It could equally have been Lyadov – or the composer’s wife – who completed the last bar’s ‘extras’, i.e. the *smorzando* indication, and possibly, fermatas and rests, too.

Moreover, CD tracks or vinyl silence gaps between movements do not let us extract definite conclusions as to the performers’ timings between movements. What is interesting is that performers seldom let the sound disappear on its own and let the recording register that. Only Fergus-Thompson (13 secs with sound + 5 secs without) takes the time required for the effect. Gekic lets the echo vibrate for a long time (11 secs), too.

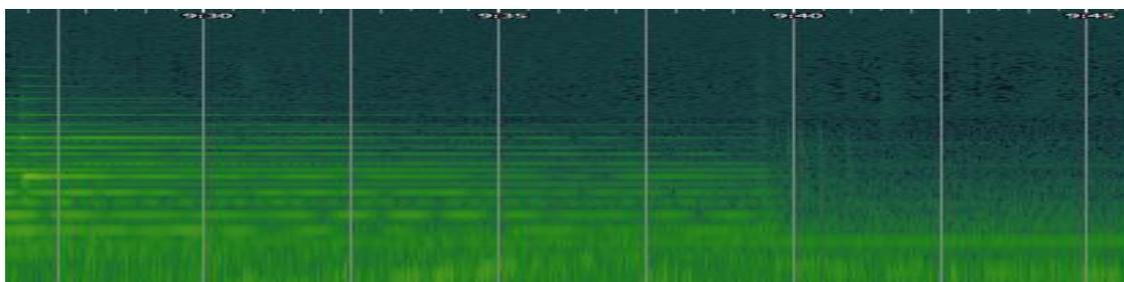


Figure 175 Bar 136 (I), the end of Fergus-Thompson’s first movement. How thought-out was his decision to let the sound reverberate in his recording for 13 secs + 5 secs for the CD track transition to the second movement (Tr. 115)?

B. Second movement

There are no fermatas in the second movement of *presto* character in *moto perpetuo*. As stated, areas of breathing usually coincide with a phrase or other more important structural boundaries (e.g. bars 40, 45, 52-53, 66-67). Such areas have been already pointed out during the broader analysis of the work in terms of tempo and colour.

a. Bar 40 (II)

Performers find an opportunity to breathe and give a fresh impetus to the next section, i.e. the second theme initiated in the same bar. The pedal is in many cases cut completely, though other performers keep the pedal, allowing the full downbeat chords to reverberate throughout the whole bar.

b. Bars 63-70 (II)

Scriabin performs bars 72 and 74 cutting the phrase and the sustaining pedal at the end of bar 63, 65, 67 and 69. His musical breathing is also visible on the spectrogram (Figure 176). His interpretation has influenced my approach to this segment. I tend to finish two-bar phrases of bars 71-74 with pedal cut and breathing, 'borrowing' Scriabin's idea (Figure 177).

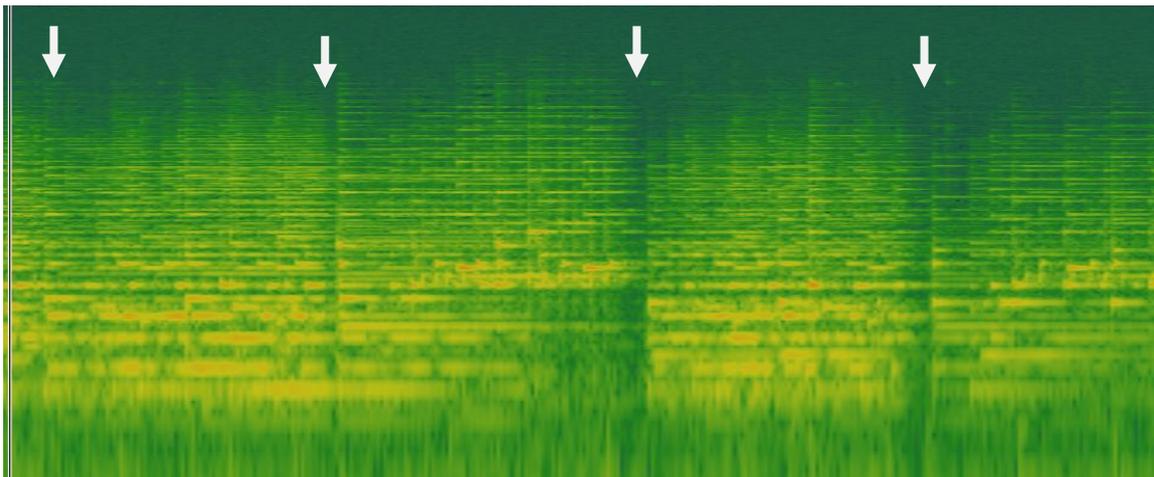


Figure 176 Bars 63-70 (II), Scriabin's performance by J. Dyer. Arrows mark the onset of bars 63, 65, 67, 69. Pedal cuts are clear and music seems to be breathing every two bars (**Tr. 116**).

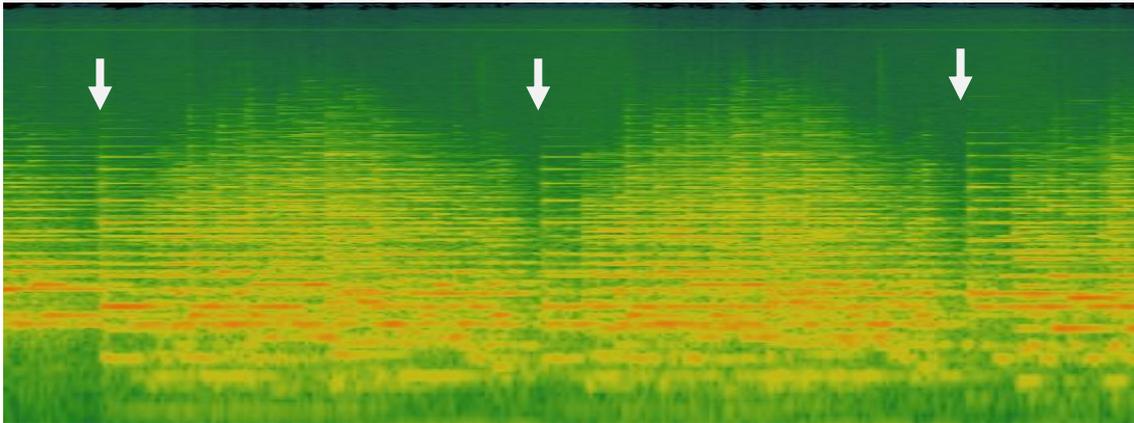


Figure 177 Bars 71-74 (II), own performance from 2014, with pedal cuts at the end of bars 72 and 74. The idea has been given by Scriabin's performance of bars, such as 63-70 (II) (Tr. 117).

II. PERSONAL RECORDED PERFORMANCES OF THE WORK

Having examined the recorded performances of other artists it is insightful to apply the same methodology to some of my own performances. I have chosen recordings from 2003 and 2014 of live performances of the *Sonata-Fantasy*. The comparison mainly concerns the first public performance in 2003 and the last performance in 2014 of the work. As eleven years separate the extremities, differences between them involve major performance strategies, including use of tempo, phrasing and colour.

Regarding tempo, the following graphs present a comparison of the two performances in each movement.⁶² The first movement of the 2003 recording explicitly bears a much faster pace. Its duration, 6:09 mins, is one of the fastest performances. The 2014 performance has a length of 7:44 mins and coincides in tempo with a variety of recordings from all eras. At structural boundaries, tempi slow down proportionally in each recording.

The short duration of the 2003 performance is due partly to the generally fast pace linked to an *andantino* character, rather than *andante*. This version of the work relies on the steadiness of tempo, without exaggeration of *rubato* effects. This steadiness offers a sense of coherence to the unfolding of themes and emphasises the unity of the

⁶² For a small-scale comparison of my own performances to other performers, see previous paragraphs on case-studies.

movement in a spontaneous manner. On the other hand, points of relaxation are lacking, especially within a phrase. In other words, even in the most quiet and lyrical sections (bars 13-36 and 89-112), the pace never changes to allow more spacious phrasing that involves note-to-note *rubato* or realisation of agogic accents. This effect creates an impression of constant movement in the music also related to the *sonata* character of the work. More specifically, one thematic group seems to lead to the next and offers a sense of direction to the movement. The 2003 performance seems to bear affinities to non-*rubato* or 'strict' performances, rather inflexible performances.

Different perspectives appear in the 2014 recording. Tempi are generally slower, perhaps with the exception of the middle section (bars 62-88). The graph of the first movement shows that this performance presents higher *rubato*, as the blue line tends to move in the same areas as the red, but also covers tempo areas at a lower level. The 2014 recording relies on a much more 'relaxed' presentation of the thematic material, with note-to-note *rubato*, especially in the most lyrical sections. This version emphasises the 'now' of music rather than the anticipation of what will follow, i.e. the opposite of the 2003 recording. Consequently, it presents the musical material in a more improvisational character than the 2003 performance, thus underlining the open compositional form of *fantasy*, also attributed to the work by Scriabin.

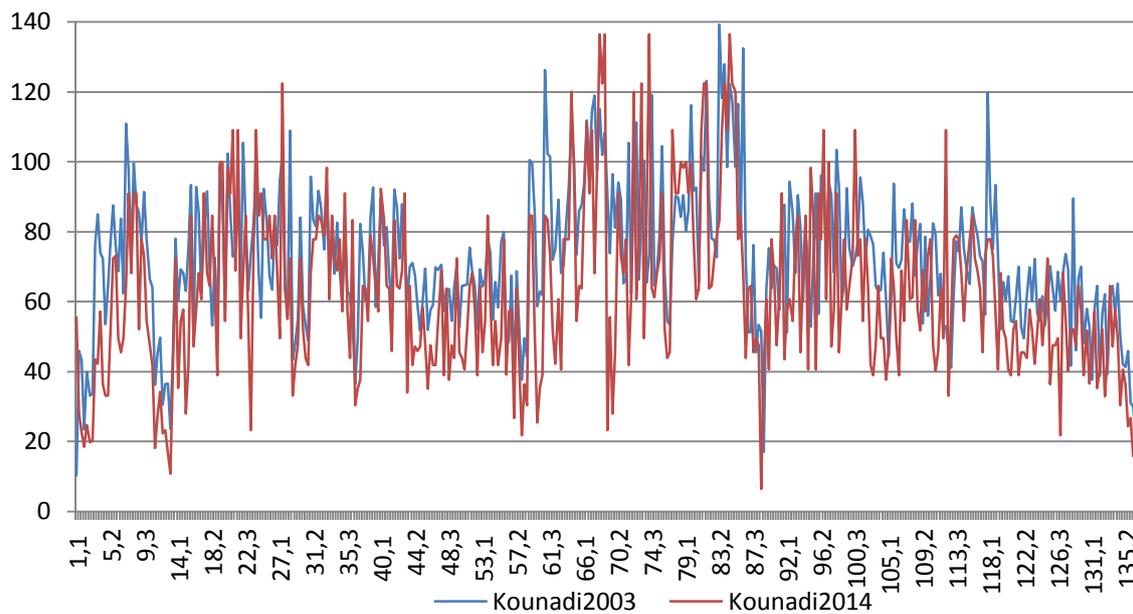


Figure 178 Own performances from 2003 and 2014 of the first movement, map of beat-to-beat average metronome markings.

In terms of colour, the 2003 recording (Tr. 118) shows a wide use of pedalling in conjunction with the character of each section. The sustaining pedal is used according to the needs of the thematic material, but with less possibility for experimentation with special effects, including blurring sonorities or ‘emptying’ pedal in rests. Perhaps the most telling extract, bars 86-88 (Tr. 119) demonstrates abrupt pedal cuts. Pedal is used secondarily for phrasing purposes. For instance, bars 89-105 (Tr. 120) are performed first with attention to stressing the harmonic background of the extract (bars 89-96) and then to the conversational character of voices without excessive *rubato* (bars 97-105). Furthermore, the expansion of pedalling has been obstructed by the hurried general tempo. If more time was taken, even in an *allargando* effect, without much *rubato*, pedal effects would have been instantly emphasised. In summation, the pedalling of the 2003 recording contributes to the accomplishment of a musically meaningful performance. Nevertheless, it does not create excitement to a listener familiar with Scriabin performances who may more usually seek elegant ‘parfumées’ and ‘timeless’ sonorities.

For the second movement, the overall duration is once again shorter for the 2003 recording, with a length of 3:45 minutes (Tr. 121), whereas the 2014 recording lasts for

4:15 minutes. The first performance is closer in duration to the majority of recordings by other performers. The following graph indicates that differences appearing primarily in parts of the movement with melodic material of long values and agogic accents, such as the middle section of bars 41-78, as previously analysed. The graph shows that the 2014 performance presents high tempo fluctuation within these bars, with a further tendency for a less *presto* character. On the other hand, the 2003 performance gives priority, as in the first movement, to the unity of tempo by emphasising the left hand motor rhythm.

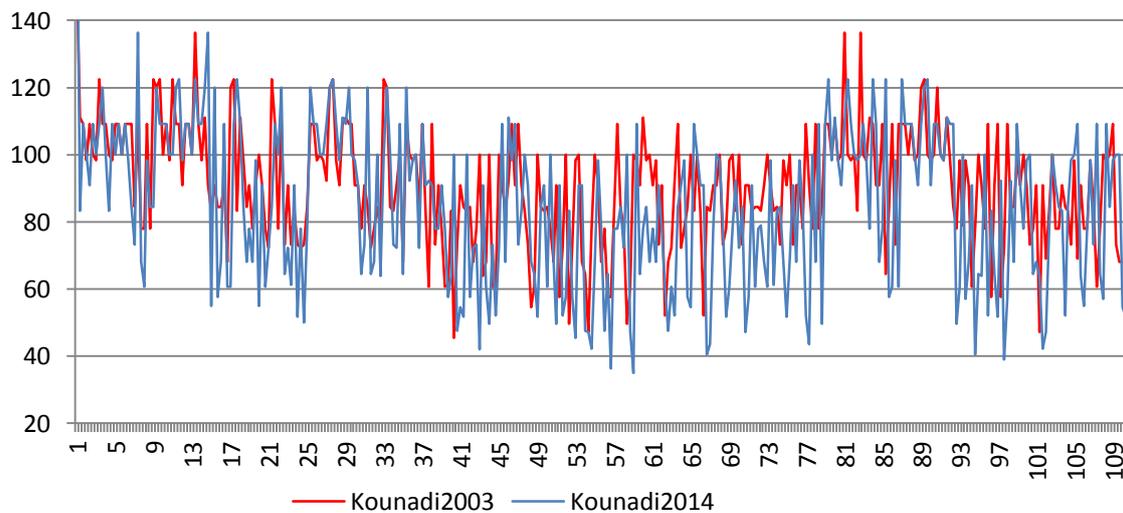


Figure 179 Second movement, own performances from 2003 and 2014.

Moreover, my intentions for the 2003 and 2014 performances were completely different, and they were realised in very different contexts. The 2003 performance, by aiming for a first complete rendition of the work, relies more on the expressive building of thematic material and less on colour or rubato, in order to present it convincingly to fellow students of Trinity College of Music. Indeed, as already stated in the previous chapter, my aim was to give a 'rounded' first performance of the work, aiming for direction of the musical material, in a way that one theme is well connected to the next. Having focused on this aspect I was perhaps less ready to take the time to underline the detailed musical events within phrases.

III. CONCLUSIONS-PERSONAL OUTCOME

John Clark was not exaggerating when he stated that ‘Scriabin’s [sic] music seems to provoke an unusually wide spectrum of responses from performers and analysts as well as audiences. It is unlikely that any group of his admirers could reach a consensus concerning the merits of a given performer or performance’ (Clark: 1983, 264). One of the initial aims of this study was to sort recorded performances into groups, if possible, to demonstrate stylistic evolution over time. Far from attempting to negotiate who is or who is not the best performer of Scriabin’s *Second Sonata-Fantasy*, the following paragraphs seek to sum up the extent to which the traced performance qualities relate to the factors assessed, which included recording era, style and even the performer’s nationality or artistic aspirations.

My experimentation with recordings partly sought to explore the possibility of forming performance groups according to artistic or historical affinities between recordings. One way of grouping recordings was to relate them to recording date, and this type of categorisation did indeed play a vital role at the start of this study. Recordings were presented in chronological order and initially viewed as historical documents of potentially evolving performance trends. They were divided into five groups (A to E) according to the decade of production, with the intention that each group should be reasonably populated (ideally, up to 15 recordings in each) for easier assessment. This is the main reason why the recordings from the last three decades, for example, which constitute more than half of all assessed recordings, have been divided into three groups.

As already indicated in the main chapter, some styles do relate to recording eras, especially when performances are divided into two larger groups: i.e. performances before 1960 and those after 1960. On the other hand, differences do not necessarily relate to recording dates for recordings made after 1980. In other words, one cannot tell with certainty whether a certain recording belongs to the 1980s or 1990s or the 2000s. However, there *are* some common characteristics in the performances of these last decades, beyond the fact that their sound quality is much better than in the earliest decades. These affinities are the reason why the initially sketched groups C, D and E are

often referred to globally in this research as 'modern' recordings/performers/performances. Their most common characteristic is that they often sound like an 'extension' of the style of the preceding decades. This means that they apply performance elements originally found in the earlier recordings – meaning those made prior to 1980. In other words, performance elements that can be traced in older recordings are used more systematically in more recent ones. Perhaps the new element that the latter add is the idea of long and non-rubato performances that count on pedal effects rather than rubato. Summing up, 'modern' recordings seem more or less like a collection of the performance strategies of past decades. It is only the earliest – piano roll – performances that seem – for the time being – to have partly 'escaped' modern performers' attentions.

More analytically, the data indicate that there are differences within recording eras, though these are not dramatic. Group A seems to show the highest differentiation, which is to be expected, since it covers fifty-two years of recording production and features a lot of artists whose careers had begun in the pre-recording era. Despite their technical limitations, the piano rolls and first sound recordings of the work cast some light on performance features that modern recordings do not. Differences mainly relate to the overall duration, structure, tempo fluctuation, pedalling and, in some cases, dynamics.

As already indicated in the previous chapters, Group A (1911-1960) seems to include some of the fastest interpretations. In addition, four out of five of the fastest second movements are in Group A. Calculation of overall and movement durations have shown that tempi slow down in successive groups, with a tendency for diverse durations in the later groups, ranging for the first movement from 6:46 (Taub) to 9:45 (Pogorelich) and for the second one from 3:11 (Melnikov) to 4:31 (Ardakov, 1997).

The second type of sound recording grouping referred to tempo structure, with performances of longer or shorter overall duration being compared with one another. Then, a second parameter has been added: the influence of note-to-note or beat-to-beat rubato on the overall duration. Sectional flexibility has also been taken into account, and the average pulse in each major movement section is shown. Another performance element for the formation of groups relates to coloristic features such as articulation,

tone colour and pedalling. The role of fermatas, rests and breaths is also pointed out during the analysis of the former parameters. As the variety of such performance elements has been great in many instances, it was necessary to present them in the form of case-studies which concentrated on particular sections of interest and took recordings as examples of performance alternatives.

Recordings from all groups show a coinciding sense of big-scale tempo structure. The similar building up of sections relates to the structural boundaries of each movement. Indeed, performances indicate beginnings and ends of thematic subjects via tempo changes (*accelerandos* and *rallentandos*, breaths, fermatas, etc.) with the musical score being used as a common point of reference. Indeed, Scriabin indicates what his music intentions are, especially in terms of dynamics, despite his use of conventional notation, while he often points out the particular role of each voice and provides some pedal directions in areas of interest. However, he does not provide tempo directions for subsections within movements. For instance, one has to guess and feel after a good reading of the score, that in bar 62 or, later, in bar 75 of the first movement, the musical layout will eventually push the tempo to a much faster pace than in the previous section. The composer does not give an Italian term for the character bars 62-88 should bear. Rather, he leaves them to the performer's discretion, though this does seem to coincide in the assessed recordings, at least. This is not that surprising in most recent recordings, when record production allows performers to listen to other pianists' recordings before going into the studio to record their own. However, not all performers listen to recordings of the work they are about to record. Moreover, even Scriabin and Feinberg's performances coincide in many aspects at moments of structural importance which are not drawn attention to in the score. Consequently, a consensus seems to exist among performers around the general structure of the *Sonata-Fantasy*.

However, the means used for shaping the form of each movement often vary according to recording era. For instance, the piano rolls and Feinberg's earliest recording show more sudden tempo shifts at structural boundaries than post-1960 recordings. For example, group A's *a tempo* endings with a breath before the new section, are not encountered in modern recordings, while its sudden, unexpected changes of tempo are also absent from the more recent discography. A small number of modern recordings (e.g. Kocyan 2002, Ognjanovic 1988) seem to include this trait on occasions, not

specifically in structural boundaries but everywhere, in the form of *tenuto* or agogic accents. Referring to Russian Scriabinists of the past and this quality of their interpretations, the pianist Piers Lane notes that 'the sense of freedom and nuance that they achieve is not just a matter of period differences, nor a lack of attention to the written score – but rather, a profound understanding of the specialized idiom that is great Scriabin playing. The writing is supremely pianistic, but there are many rhythmic subtleties and niceties of tone and rubato that haven't been notated by Scriabin – a minefield for well-meaning Brits!' (Siepmann: 2000, 31).

Rubato, whether beat-to-beat or note-to-note, is a common feature in most recordings. It appears in different shapes, but pianists apply a similar philosophy to each use in each section. Their points of reference for such a coincidence are the general directions including in the score. Rubato is cautiously applied in particular performances, which do not reveal great note-to-note rubato, but rather beat-to-beat fluctuation alone (e.g. Pogorelich) and compensating for the discreetly 'stolen time' in the same bar (e.g. Richter's performances). Rubato seems to affect the overall duration. The longest performances are usually the ones with lines that are evenly spread and performed in close relation to the note values in the score. In this study, they have been termed 'strict'. Richter is an important exception to this rule, with his relatively short but nonetheless exemplarily 'strict' interpretation. On the other hand, performances tend to become shorter if the rubato used in quiet sections (e.g. bars 13-36 (I)) cuts longer phrases into shorter ones, thus creating a 'conversational' or fragmented sense of phrase succession. The fragmented temporal arrangement of phrases results in a counterbalancing type of fluctuation in the busiest parts that follow (e.g. bars 37-58 (I)): rubato in one voice affects all the voices as well as the general tempo of the section, and the tempo usually increases. Increased tempi may occur because performers feel the need to 'compensate' for the time they have lavished on the previous 'conversational' passages, but do so by pushing the tempo even more forward rather than just covering for what is lost. As a result, the performers' 'lost time' over a *tenuto* is not equally compensated for, which is how the average tempo increases for the section as a whole. Such examples support Paderewski's thought on rubato and the theory of its compensation:

Some people, evidently led by laudable principles of equity, while insisting upon the fact of stolen time, pretend that what is stolen ought to be restored. We duly acknowledge the high moral motives of this theory, but we humbly confess that

our ethics do not reach to such a high level... the value of notes diminished in one period through an *accelerando*, cannot always be restored in another through a *ritardando*. What is lost is lost (quoted in Philip, 1992, 40).

The various rubato techniques seem to find adherents in every recording era. Compensating rubato, left hand anticipation, accompaniment-type compensating rubato, and tenutos or agogic accents are used in all eras, with some types used more rarely over the last quarter century. More specifically, compensating rubato is widely used in all recordings. Left hand anticipation, usually at the beginning of a bar or a phrase, is another type of rubato which is widely used in recordings from the earliest groups and which was revived in recordings of the 1990s and 2000s. Accompaniment rubato is rarely met in these recordings. In the few recordings that hint at it, it is in the busiest parts of the score, where one voice may be slightly delayed (e.g. bars 45-50 (I) and 17-24 (II)). On the other hand, tenutos or agogic accents seem to be a *sine qua non* and are used frequently in virtually all interpretations. However, while 'strict' performances in the sense detailed above do use tenutos, they do so with minimum note-to-note rubato; in other words, the music is performed evenly and remains close to the score (e.g. Hamelin).

Pedalling styles seem to relate to recording era and pianists' idiosyncrasy. Scriabin's reputation as an imaginative user of the sustaining pedal as well as Sofronitsky's recordings serve as historical references for a performer wishing to play Scriabin's works. Both pianists make constant and prolonged use of the sustaining pedal, accumulating tones and letting them vibrate before releasing the pedal or simply renewing it. However, Scriabin's piano rolls cannot provide us with definite answers, as the pedalling was punched onto the roll manually after the recording session, probably not by Scriabin himself. Still, the Scriabin piano roll directions can serve as an indication of the pedalling practice of those times, especially when combined with the tempo structure of this particular performance.

Performances of the 1990s and 2000s (groups D and E) show a particular concern for pedalling in combination with a strict reading of the score (*legato*, *staccato*, pauses, composer's pedal marks etc.). A plausible explanation is that discourse since the late 1980s has centred on performance practice authenticity and fidelity to the composer's intentions as indicated by the score. For a performer's recording debut, differentiation is

one thing, but a sense of 'political correctness' is quite another. Many performers from this recording period seem to have studied the details of the musical score thoroughly, and perform certain aspects of it more faithfully than performers of other eras would do, at least for this particular work of music. In other words, they seem to take Scriabin's score indications literally, as they would for a Beethoven sonata. More specifically, some pianists give substance to short rests and perform them without pedal (e.g. Taub, Leonskaja). On the other hand, in bars 19-30 (I), the Scriabin piano roll marks a right pedal for the same bars, whereas Sofronitsky stands somewhere between the two tendencies. Rests are important, if not for Scriabin then at least for the pedal editors of his piano roll performance. This usually manifests itself in areas of structural change (e.g. bar 52(II)), in which the piano rolls show no right pedal; otherwise, in areas of minor structural interest, rests are usually performed with the right pedal sustained. One cannot say whether it is Scriabin or his pedal editors who chose the registered pedalling, but the findings are still a source of information on the style of the era.

Modern sound recordings present similar holistic sound qualities. Pianists usually play on a Steinway piano and the recording engineer seeks to enhance a brilliant sound together with a uniform mellow background. In addition, when the harmonic background does not result in consonance, pianists seem at ease to pedal through whole beats and bars for music concentrated in the upper registers, but not for music written in the middle or lower registers. They usually pedal simple bass lines to create harmonious pedal sostenuto effects (e.g. bars 122-127 (I)). A small number of pianists, including Gekic, seek to experiment more daringly with the pedal, creating areas of dissonance as a blurring effect. These performers may have been influenced by Sofronitsky, who skilfully balances his pedalling between dissonance and consonance. After listening to such interpretations, one cannot resist the thought that most modern renditions of the work 'play it safe' in terms of pedalling. As clarity of sound increasingly becomes a *sine qua non* of modern piano playing, it also tends to become the opposite of dissonance, as well as a prerequisite for a 'good' sound that the recording market would approve of on first listen.

Clark's quotation at the beginning of this chapter also means that Scriabin's music appears to give performers a licence for free expressive experimentation. Performers of the last two decades, in particular, have used expression in different ways to leave their

personal hallmark. Some – Gekic, Pogorelich and Kocyan, for example – seize the opportunity to produce eccentric interpretations. Others explore the work in a manner more directly related to the composer's indications of phrasing, appearing thoughtful but reserved in the performance elements they use, such as carefully balanced rubato (e.g. Taub). Others aim for differentiation by expanding the tone colours in *allargando* to produce long interpretations (e.g. Hamelin, Fergus-Thompson). Another type of interpretation relies on rubato phrasing and voicing (e.g. Kasman). Reviews of Kasman's concerts (of other music works) include: 'tempo liberties that dance around a solid beat, the virile technique and voluptuous sound' (Susan Bliss: 1998), 'demonstrated the effectiveness of some original ideas about the workings of inner voices' (Henken: 1997).

However, this research has not attempted to conscientiously relate interpretational differences between performers to geographical or educational characteristics such as nationality, country of study, particular educational institution or piano tutor.⁶³ It has been noted that a performer's nationality and educational background can relate to the particular repertoire choices a performer makes for a recording. More analytically, it is natural for former Soviet pianists to feel closer to Scriabin's idiom and incorporate his work into their recordings. It is clearly not down to chance that at least half of the performers who recorded the work are of former Soviet origin. It is questionable however – though it is not something this study seeks to investigate – whether national schools of performance do exist, given also that most of the recordings were made in the second half of the twentieth century. During this period, musicians had already started travelling to perform, and also to receive further tuition in their performance studies. Picking and choosing styles and exchanging knowledge is a common characteristic in most performers' pursuit of more expressive performances. Nowadays, performers are exposed consciously or subconsciously to such a range of stimuli that it would be paradoxical to relate one's idiom purely to under whom or where they studied.

Still, some conclusions can be drawn from the fact that most performers of the sonata-fantasy come from Eastern European countries, mainly from the former U.S.S.R. On the other hand, his music was not discovered and equally appreciated by music-lovers in

⁶³ On 'piano interpretation schools', see Lourenco Sofia, p. 187-192 with reference to relevant bibliography on the issue.

countries like the United Kingdom and the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century. Even music students, performers and piano tutors were unfamiliar with his idiosyncratic style, and would rarely choose a Scriabin work to perform in concert, let alone to record. This lack of familiarity may go a long way towards explaining why his works are so rarely recorded even by contemporary performers, and especially by performers beyond Scriabin's homeland. This sonata has suffered the same fate, even though it is one of Scriabin's easiest works to understand for a performer not especially well-versed in the composer's idiom.

Recordings from the last decades have also orientated my study towards trying to understand what performers' intentions might have been for choosing to record this work. For instance, as already noted, Gekic is one of the performers who claim to be trying to trace alternative expressive possibilities. They study what is already available on the market and try to offer the work to the listener – and CD buyer – from a new and different angle. Performers' motives for recording this work may also be linked to factors that are not purely artistic: marketing. More specifically, an interesting fact about the production of the assessed recordings is that one in three are from collections of Scriabin sonatas. Curiously, the decades containing most recordings of this type were the 1960s and 1970s (Group B), possibly because those decades favoured innovative compositional styles. Record companies may have seen in Scriabin's idiosyncratic style an opportunity to sell music that combines Romantic elements with sensuality and mysticism. An all-Scriabin collection would immerse both older and younger 'hippie' listeners more efficiently into the composer's music than a recording including just one work by Scriabin. The opposite occurred in the 1980s, when many debut recordings included a variety of composers. Box sets appear again in the 1990s and 2000s, especially in the 1990s (six out of fourteen).

Performers who produce debut recordings in these decades prefer to offer a variety of compositional styles – and a wider picture of what they can do with their piano playing – rather than focus on one composer's repertoire. Still, another plausible answer is that companies may have simply dictated what the performer should record with a view to marketing. Taub is an exception to this rule; he recorded all of Scriabin's sonatas within a two-year period which were released in a debut recording box set in 1990. Another reason for the production of box sets may be a trend discernible during recent decades

for classic music lovers to build up informed personal CD collections including all the works of a certain type by a given composer. Schubert, Mozart or Beethoven sonatas or symphonies were often sought in the music stores and bought as a whole, to allow the music lover to acquire a broader idea of the evolution of a composer's style. This may also have occurred in Scriabin's case. The emergence of this trend may also be linked to the marketing strategies adopted by record companies, who enriched their back catalogues at low cost by acquiring recordings by performers from Eastern Europe or elsewhere when historical recordings came into vogue. Reproduction costs also became dramatically lower, so companies were able to afford to put out these large collections at cost levels that consumers could afford.

In relation to the influence of recordings, it evolved as I became more familiar with the *Sonata-Fantasy*. For the 2003 performance I had just listened to the Sofronitsky¹, Zhukov and Ardakov recordings. The general outcome from this experience was that I formed an initial idea of what the Scriabin sound could be like. At that time, I was not interested in registering specific performance ideas and incorporating them in my performance. Especially since Sofronitsky was considered by my tutor Yonty Solomon the definitive Scriabin performer, I did not seek other recorded performances of the work.

Nonetheless, when the PhD research started, I had to deal with more than forty performances. This inevitably provoked attentive listening to many recordings, and built in my mind a complex database of information on performance strategies. Sofronitsky still remained my most precious source of information on the style. After having listened to all other performers, I listened to his recordings in a fresh manner, looking now more meticulously to his rubato and to sound effects based on pedalling and dynamics. His performances still were of highest importance to me, but, bearing in mind all other performers, I now had realised that alternatives did exist and that I could even listen to them. For instance, his phrasing of the melodic theme in bars 13-36 (I) was simply another alternative next to Richter or Ashkenazy.

Performers from group A (1910-1960) played a vital role on my view of the style of the work. Sofronitsky offered to my view of the Scriabin sonata precious information about style. Although his recordings bore severe technical limitations and were realised during a period when the performer experienced health problems, his intentions come out

clearly from his recordings, not only of the *Sonata-Fantasy*, but of other works too, such as the *Preludes op. 11* that are included in the PhD piano recital. The historical recorded performances on piano rolls by Scriabin and Igumnov offered major contribution in terms of tempo aesthetics. The composer's own interpretation of his work gives a plausible explanation of his musical intentions that could be equally or even better clarified through sound than through a printed score. Given that he was well-known as an eccentric performer, his performance of the sonata brings to light special effects, such as long breaths before structural boundaries, which could not be deciphered from his writings. Furthermore, Igumnov's sense of rubato was an important source on alternative reading of the music. Feinberg's approach, again especially on tempo characteristics, offered me food for thought. Richter's recordings were also influential, for the performer's simplicity of expression, sense of direction, and warmth of sound.

From the more recent generations of performers, I recollect being captivated by Leonskaja's sound quality, Pogorelich's eccentricity in musical direction, Kocyan's extreme application of rubato, Hamelin's *allargando* effects on never-ending lines and Gekic's thoughts on how he prepares himself for a performance, as well as his peculiar pedalling. In general, all performers provided new ideas to the music score that I practised as a MMus student and a professional pianist. Additionally, they helped me feel a sense of musical freedom or allowance that 'unlocks' the hands of a performer, so as to articulate more confidently the musical material not only of the particular *Sonata-Fantasy*, but of any other musical work. Other factors, such as the advent of time with or without the practice of the *Sonata-Fantasy*, as well as the occasional performance of this work at concerts, provided another perspective. During performances, I now possess a variety of ways of expressing myself through this music, which then are chosen for each occasion. My performances now are based on the improvisational character of the *fantasy*, rather than any planned aspect of the sonata form. Having practised to 'see the forest', I feel more free to enjoy the momentum and to 'see the trees' as well through various elements, such as colour through voicing and pedalling, tempo through *rubato* or flexibility between sections.

Nevertheless, this great variety of recordings and artistic aspirations has provided invaluable experience that has helped me enrich my own expressivity. This study has helped me in another fundamental way: it has made me aware of the plethora of

alternatives this particular work offers in terms of interpretation. Tools – and intentions – differed in these recordings: some performers followed a fragmented, rubato approach (e.g. Kocyan), others sketched the work as a whole in search of a broader picture of the work (e.g. Richter). They showed a clear plan with regards to musical direction. Other performers tended to enlarge the whole work, giving space to pedalling and overtones so that the latter are developed naturally (e.g. Pogorelich). Others counted on building up a powerful contrast between tension and relaxation (e.g. Feinberg), using *crescendo* with *accelerando* intuitively on the way up to phrase peaks, and *diminuendo* and *ritardando* on the way down.

Moreover, the acoustic experience of the study has ‘trained’ me in evaluating my own playing when practising a work. Parameters such as colour or a structural plan of tension and relaxation which sometimes had only begun to take shape when the work had started to mature, can now come forward much faster than before. In other words, my research has helped me construct the macroscopic and microscopic plan of my interpretation more methodically. One could claim that this might affect the spontaneity and intuition that should also figure in the preparation – and performance – of a musical work. However, taking Feinberg’s performance, for example, it is clear that intuition and imagination that sound improvisatory are simply another alternative. The only difference now is that I can perceive when and where this performance element features in my performance, and consciously let it grow during my performance.

On the other hand, this research has not tried to identify either a definite Scriabinist approach or axioms regarding ‘correct’ or ‘wrong’ performances of this sonata-fantasy. The case-studies included have also been used to cover different perspectives of my knowledge of the work, not to detect who is playing well or not. The case-studies cover passages that have attracted my attention either as a listener or as a pianist preparing the work for performance. In other words, as a listener I found that some performances deviate from the majority and I felt the need to listen more carefully and to describe what elements were crucial in effecting this deviation with a view to possibly applying the technique in this or other works in the future.

As a pianist preparing the work for performance, I had to determine my approach to certain ambiguous passages which, when performed in different ways, could affect the

overall form of the work. I was interested to see how other performers dealt with them. For instance, the shape of the first 12 bars of the first movement allows the performer to sketch different performance plans. I personally have performed the segment in various ways, sometimes rushing with a sense of anxiety towards the next bar, sometimes with a slow pace that would underline the uncertainty of what comes next. My performances of 2003 and 2014 are examples of alternative interpretation. Another example of ambiguity is traced in the transition from the first section to the second of the first movement (bars 58-61). Are these bars the end of the first section with the repetition of the overture-like theme in a state of calmness, or are they the beginning of a dramatic second section that is initiated in complete calmness? In addition, the tempo shifting in the second section (bars 62-88) occurs in all performances, without Scriabin having indicated anything on the score that would guide performers towards such a decision. Performers develop the section, building it up with a more or less similar strategy as far as dynamics are concerned, but with different goals in relation to tempo fluctuation and note-to-note rubato.

Scriabin the pianist was another performer who added precious information to my general acoustic knowledge of the work and of the Scriabinist style. In the chapter that referred to his piano roll performances, it has been evident that the technical limitations are such that one can only be partly sure that what one hears is what Scriabin actually performed. Lobanov's transcriptions and the readable nature of piano rolls as texts still serve, however, as alternative resources with regard to various quantifiable performance features. One such element is tempo distribution and its complements—tempo fluctuation, rubato, and tempo as a structural boundary. With regard to the editing of the piano rolls, Scriabin often performs arpeggiated chords not marked as such in the Belaieff printed edition, or ties notes which are not tied in the score. This does not seem to be an error in the perforation process, and even if it were, editors could—and surely would—have corrected it. In fact, this performance element adds credence to Leikin's argument based on similar findings in his own research into other Scriabin piano rolls (Leikin: 1996). As already mentioned, Leikin argues that Scriabin had the tendency to lift his hands off the piano freely whilst pedalling the musical passage. In this way, elements that could be quantified through the piano rolls have allowed reflection about, or even verification of, other elements such as pedalling and dynamics, which could not be deciphered through the piano rolls because of recording limitations.

All these parameters, together with historical discourse on Scriabin's performance style, have given me a broad picture of this composer's pianistic technique. They have also revealed performance features that would otherwise have been lost without the piano rolls. Scriabin's unique way of conveying structural importance while opening or closing certain music sections, is a fine example of a performance idiom not encountered in any other interpretation of the *Sonata-Fantasy*, except—partly—in Feinberg's earliest recording of this work from 1947. Besides, the piano rolls have demonstrated that Scriabin, like many other composers who perform their own works, would not give a sole and definitive performance of the *Sonata-Fantasy*. He liked improvisation, and his sense of freedom often allowed him to deviate from what he had written, especially by the time of his piano roll recordings; this aspect of his personality is captured in his these performances.

On recordings and their capacity to provide information for the contemporary performer, as already stated, during my research I tried several methods of registering my findings. For a certain period of time, I listened to each recording, registering via the 'tapping along' method and, later, through Sonic Visualiser, a beat-to-beat temporal map for all performances. I also kept notes on the score about their basic performance strategy (tempo, dynamics, pedalling, etc.). I came to realise that this way would not provide easily manipulated data, as there were more than forty recordings. I thus decided to repeat the listening experience by noting down just the special effects that would attract my attention in each recording. Their assessment led me to create the case-studies on tempo and colour. Indeed, these studies involve all the surprising details that caught my attention as a listener and that I had discussed with my tutors as a performer.

Another way that helped me realise tempo strategies was the comparison of recordings that, according to my listening experience, bore affinities with each other. For instance, Ashkenazy and Leonskaja had shown similar warmth of sound, so my aim was to detect the element that made each performance unique.

The methodology I followed to decipher these details relied on quantifiable and non-quantifiable tools. My concerns mainly involved the fact that I was attempting to deal with performances, as a performer, in writing; and that I was having to counter a

musicological tendency tradition whereby as Leech-Wilkinson states in his e-book: ‘the piece became its notation to the extent that in English “the music” came to mean “the score”’ instead of its sound.⁶⁴ It took the music community a long time to accept that research into sound could relate primarily to the sound itself, and secondarily to a printed rendition of that sound in the form of a score, not vice versa.

To borrow Leech-Wilkinson’s words, I aim to experience music as sound rather than as a score. Bearing that in mind, a precious source of information on the work is given by the assessed recordings, not only by other performers, but also by my own recorded performances. They prove to be valuable testimonies of my effort to express myself through this work. From time to time it is intriguing to go back and listen to them, in order to realise what performance elements I tend to re-use, and how these stand in relation to performances by other pianists to which I enjoy listening.

In general terms, if one could suggest a methodology of preparing a work for performance through the use of recordings, the steps of my study can prove helpful to other performers. It is evident from the above paragraphs that I find old recordings very important for my understanding of the style of a work. Additionally, a performance by the composer himself (e.g. Scriabin) and others of his time (e.g. Igumnov), can help the contemporary performer to get a contextual knowledge around the interpretation of the work during the time of its composition. Recordings of more recent generations of performers can then become the link to modern traits of performance. Old and recent recordings may provide ideas in specific areas of interest. In my research, the case-studies provide examples on technique-expression that I still consult before starting again to practise the *Sonata-Fantasy* or any other work, either by Scriabin or other composer with similar style (e.g. Chopin). A final point of interest is tempo distribution in a work. Naturally, a performer would not create graphs and spectrograms while preparing for a performance. Though, it could still be intriguing for a pianist to take a holistic approach to a musical work, by defining a big-scale tempo map of a recorded performance. Where does tempo slow down? Where does the performer push it forward? What can be achieved in this way? How can rubato or the absence of rubato affect the whole duration of the work? This broader assessment of a recording could

⁶⁴ Leech-Wilkinson, 1.1, paragraph 5.

help performers make decisions on how tempo fluctuation is going to be formed in their own performances. The same steps can be followed in terms of colour.

Ultimately this study answers questions which relate to my need as a performer for a more thorough understanding of this work. My primary aim was to solve practical issues relating to my knowledge of the work, which is why I had been consistently interested in finding out what is played and, then, if possible, how it is played. The research was inspired by practical performance issues, and the answers provided have been incorporated into my piano practice. This feedback loop (i.e. practice > questions > acoustical/theoretical experience > possible answers > practice) has given me a satisfying understanding of Scriabin's style and thus more confidence as a pianist. I am now able to produce more assured performances of the *Second Sonata-Fantasy*. Taruskin refers to his circle of knowledge and the problems it produces and – ideally – answers thus: 'music has to be imaginative in order to be retrieved, and here is where conflicts are likely to arise between the performer's imagination and the scholar's conscience, even (or especially) when the two are housed in a single mind' (Taruskin: 1995, 56). The reconciliation of these two parameters has been my final objective for performances of this work. My detailed analysis of the piece now gives me the opportunity of taking into account the implementation of many other performers' imaginations.

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APPENDIX A:

Recordings assessed

	PERFORMER	OTHER DATA (date of birth & nationality)	RECORD COMPANY	GROUP
1910	Igumnov pr	1873-1948, Lebedyan-Ex-USSR	WM2063-Pierian0018-recorded performance by pianist Charles Ball	A
1910	Scriabin pr	1872-1915, Moscow-Ex-USSR	Hupfeld piano roll-recorded performances by piano roll collector Julian Dyer (both movnts) and Pavel Lobanov (2 nd mov. only)	
1947	Feinberg	1890-1962, Odessa, Ex-USSR	Melodiya Russian Disc Mono R1001071	
1955	Oborin	1907-1974, Moscow, Ex-USSR	Melodiya 1974, BMG Classics 1996	
1955	Richter	1915-1997, Zhitomir, Ex-USSR	Urania SP 4241	
1960	Sofronitsky	1901-1961, St Petersburg, Ex-USSR	Melodiya D 019639/40	
1960	Sofronitsky	1901-1961, St Petersburg, Ex-USSR	Melodiya D 013699/700 PHILIPS Classics(cd)/ Harmonia Mundi (LP))	B
1968	Novitskaya	1951-, Moscow, Ex-USSR	Melodiya CM 03533-4	
1968	Szidon	1941-2011, Porto Alegre, Brazil	DG LC0173-DG 2004	
1970	Laredo	1937-, Detroit, USA	Nonesuch 7559-73035-2(LP for Connoisseur Society)	
1971	Ogdon	1937-1989, UK	EMI SLS 814- EMI 5726532	
1971	Zhukov	1936-, Nizhny, Novgorod, Ex-USSR	Melodia Eurodisc 86594XGK	
1972	Ashkenazy	1937-, Ex-USSR	Decca 452 961-2	
1972	Dubourg	1929-, Paris, France	Tudor 793	
1972	Richter	1915-1997	Le Chant du Monde-Praga, PR 54056	
1974	Ponti	1937- Freiburg, Germany	Voxbox CDX 5184 (reissue of the Vox 1974 recording)	
1984	Gasparovic		Jugoton LSY-66211	

1984	Rudiakov	1952?- Latvia, Ex-USSR	CDP 9501		
1985	Davidovich ⁶⁵	1928-, Baku, Ex-USSR	PHILIPS 412 742-1 PH		
1988	Leonskaja	1945, Georgia, Ex-USSR	Teldec 244 185-2		
1988	Ognjanovic	Zagreb, Ex-Yugoslavia	Helidon FLP 10-038		
1989	Paperno	1929-, Kiev, Ex-USSR	Cedille CDR 90000001		
1990	Austbo	1948-, Kongsberg, Norway	Brilliant Classics 6137-2	D	
1990	Demidenko	1955-, Anisimovo, Ex-USSR	CDCF 204		
1990	Pogorelich	1958-, Belgrade	[DG] 429 391-2 GH		
1990	Taub	1955-, USA	Harmonia Mundi USA HMX 2907366.67		
1992	Ardakov	Ex-USSR			
1994	Fergus-Thompson	1952-, England	ASV CD DCA 882		
1994	Fiorentino	1927-1998, Italy	APR 5552 Appian		
1994	Glemser	1962-, Durbheim, Germany	Naxos 8.553158		
1995	Hamelin	1961-, Canada	Hyperion CDA67131/2, CDA67132		
1995	Lushtak	Ex-USSR	CRC2287 (Centaur)		
1997	Ardakov	Ex-USSR	HFS 97007		
1998	Gekic	1962-, Croatia	Palexia		
2000	Emeljanowa	Nizhny Novgorod, Ex-USSR	(private recording?)		E
----	Goiti	1968-, Resita, Rumania	Symposium Records 1277		
2001	Roth	1969?-, USA	BGR103 (Blue Griffin Recording)		
2002	Kocyan	Poland	DUX0389 (Poland)		
2003	Grimwood	1976-, UK	SOMMCD 041		
2003	Kasman	1967-, Otel, Ex-USSR	Calliope CAL3254		
2004	Voskresensky	1935-, Berdyansk, Ex-USSR	Classical Records CR-038		
2006	Giltburg	1984-, Ex-USSR (-Israel)	EMI 094635323221		
2006	Melnikov	1973-, Moscow, Ex-USSR	Harmonia Mundi		
?	Brownridge	1944-, Goole, Yorkshire, UK			

⁶⁵ In bold letters are recordings that could not be purchased for the above stated reasons. However, these recordings belong to libraries, such as British National Sound Archive or the Jerwood Library of the Performing Arts, Trinity College of Music. Therefore, the researcher has had the opportunity of listening to the performances, but with a limited access to an empirical assessment of these ones, due to the restriction policies (e.g. restrictions regarding the assessment of the recordings in own PC using Sonic Visualiser and other sound analysis software).

APPENDIX B:

PhD Piano Recital Programme Notes

GOLDSMITHS
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Miniatures and Fantasies

A piano recital
at Goldsmiths, University of London
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



Anna Kounadi | Piano

TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2013

7.30 p.m.

DEPTFORD TOWN HALL

Council Chamber

LONDON

PROGRAMME

ALEXANDER Scriabin (1872-1915)

Twenty-Four Preludes op. 11

(1888-1896)

No. 1 in C major - Vivace

No. 2 in A minor - Allegretto

No. 3 in G major - Vivo

No. 4 in E minor - Lento

No. 5 in D major - Andante cantabile

No. 6 in B minor - Allegro

No. 7 in A major - Allegro assai

No. 8 in F-sharp minor - Allegro agitato

No. 9 in E major - Andantino

No. 10 in C-sharp minor - Andante

No. 11 in B major - Allegro assai

No. 12 in G sharp minor - Andante

No. 13 in G flat major - Lento

No. 14 in E flat minor - Presto

No. 15 in D flat major - Lento

No. 16 in B flat minor - Misterioso

No. 17 in A flat major - Allegretto

No. 18 in F minor - Allegro agitato

No. 19 in E flat major – Affettuoso

No. 20 in C minor - Appassionato

No. 21 in B flat major - Andante

No. 22 in G minor - Lento

No. 23 in F major – Vivo

No. 24 in D minor - Presto

INTERVAL

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Fantasy op. 49 in F minor

(1841)

Marcia –

Doppio Movimento –

Lento Sostenuto – Assai Allegro

Tempo Primo

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

Four Mazurkas op. 24

(1836)

No. 1 in G minor - Lento

No. 2 in C major - Allegro non troppo

No. 3 in A flat major - Moderato con anima

No. 4 in B flat minor – Moderato

ALEXANDER Scriabin

Sonata-Fantasy op. 19 no. 2

in G sharp minor

(1892-1897)

Andante

Presto

Scriabin and Chopin

Scriabin's teacher and follower Vassily Safonov had once said that Scriabin was 'Russia's Chopin' (Bowers: 1974, 29). He based this metaphor on the wittiness of sound and thought, and the improvisational style that the composer's works bear. However, this comparison did not always end in favour of Scriabin and his music. Some commentators have simplistically conceived Scriabin as an imitator of Chopin's authentic idiom. To demonstrate the opposite, this recital involves works of these two composers exclusively. Works of short form, which both composers favoured, have been chosen, such as prelude, mazurka, fantasy and sonata-fantasy. The latter is also relatively short, unfolding in two movements. These pieces show the originality of Scriabin's musical language, even at this early stage of his compositional life.

The Twenty-Four Preludes op. 11 were composed over a period of eight years (1888-1896), which almost coincides with the years that took Scriabin to compose the Second Sonata-Fantasy (1892-1897). He kept working sporadically on the sonata-fantasy, whilst also composing the preludes. This is why this collection was chosen for this recital. In my research I argue that a primary objective was to register pianistic techniques of expression that are generally applied in Scriabin's early compositions and to apply these techniques in all Scriabin works, especially those of his first compositional period. Both the Preludes and the Sonata-Fantasy belong to that period, thus the knowledge learned about Scriabin's style from the sonata is here applied also to the Preludes. My research has investigated performance features such as rubato, arpeggiated chords, rests and fermatas, voicing and pedalling and, in general, sound and time distribution. In addition, Scriabin's own recorded performances on piano rolls of a number of these preludes also provide important information for the contemporary pianist, just like the piano rolls he recorded of the Sonata-Fantasy. Possible impediments of the printed score have also been detected through Scriabin's own performance and the corrections have been taken into account for tonight's recital.

The short form of the Mazurkas op. 24 and the Fantasy characterisation of Chopin's op. 49 were the initial stimuli for incorporating them in this recital. Another point of affinity among all works arises from their programmatic connotations. The Scriabin Preludes op.11 are mainly musical travel postcards, and his Sonata-Fantasy a hymn to the sea and its various faces; on the other hand, Chopin's opuses 24 and 49 bear an evident Polish inflection and a sense of patriotism. The Fantasy is also endowed with improvisational and lyrical segments, typical of Chopin's charismatic approach to building lyrical themes and improvising. The same qualities characterise Scriabin the composer and performer. Moreover, during the comparative research on Scriabin recordings and piano rolls of the Sonata-Fantasy, my primary goal, to use Jose Bowen's words, was 'to convey to performers what nuances were historically available in different styles and why. The aim, then, is not to limit possibilities but to create new ones' (Bowen: 1996, 35). My aim is then, through this research, to create new possibilities of pianistic expression with all works that I perform.

Scriabin Twenty-Four Preludes op. 11

Bowers refers to this set as 'musical postcards' and 'travel preludes' (1995: 203). At the bottom of each of the Preludes a place and a date are indicated. Heidelberg's Castle and natural environment inspire Scriabin on Nos. 3, 19 and 24. At Bastei-Dresden 'he watches a rushing mountain stream pounding against rocky boulders' (Bowers: 1996, 203) and composes the bursting E flat minor Prelude No.14. In Switzerland's Witznau he finds his way to Nos. 12, 17, 18 and 23. Back to Moscow, he completes the series with Nos. 1, 2, 9, 11 and 18. The final one to be composed is No. 22 in 1896, in Paris. The only prelude that refers to the melancholy of Scriabin the teenager is No. 4 in E minor, composed in 1888.

Belaieff, his advisor and editor, kept pressure on him to deliver the missing preludes. Scriabin's answer is telling: 'Of course I could write the four missing pieces today, that is, I could *devise* them, which I would have to do, since I haven't the faintest inclination to compose. But I really don't want to do that, as none of the other pieces are invented. Yet, when I say this, you won't believe that I am *tired* of composing. I simply have to have a month or so without any composing at all, and not force at all' (Bowers: 1974, 48).

Indeed, one finds in these twenty-four miniatures a kaleidoscope of tendencies that the composer went on to explore in his following opuses. The Preludes cover all spectrum of tonalities, following the cycle of fifths, ex. C major, A minor, G major, E minor, etc. Scriabin's initial plan was to compose forty-eight preludes, but he finally delivered these twenty-four as a set. He did however compose further pieces which were incorporated later in several shorter collections of preludes. Scriabin uses fourths and fifths of all sorts to build themes or the harmonic skeleton (e.g. Nos. 1, 2, 9), or octaves (Nos. 6, 14, 18, 20), triplets (No. 11), polyphonic layering (No. 7), broken chords and unusual polyrhythm in time signatures or as note values (Nos. 16, 19, 24). Another aspect of the Preludes is their sense of narrative, of a conversational character between voices. This variety of character turns these pieces into twenty-four short studies in musical style. Their structure often follows the binary form, with a coda at the end.

The composer has a controversial relationship with metronome markings. In his letters to Belaieff, he notes that they are practically useless, as the tempo shifts constantly. In fact, sometimes he marks three metronome markings for a piece and then indicates *rubato* or *accelerando* and *ritardando* for specific motifs or phrases. Scriabin marks agogic accents in several passages. It is then more enlightening for the performer to rely on the Italian terminology given on the top of each piece, ex. *lento*, *andante*, *affetuoso*, *misterioso* etc.

Chopin Fantasy op. 49 in F minor

"Today I finished the Fantasy - and the sky is beautiful, a sadness in my heart - but that's alright. If it were otherwise, perhaps my existence would be worth nothing to anyone. Let's hide until death has passed".⁶⁶

Patriotism, heroism, devotion and self-sacrifice are attributes often invested in this work.. Contemporary scholars find in the work the allusion to a Polish song, 'Litwinka' by Karol Kurpiński. This song was composed during the Polish revolution of November 1830. The Polish composer and music critic Józef Sikorski writes in the *Biblioteka Warszawska*: 'Phrases characteristic of our music can be found already in the march that opens the Fantasy', and 'each of the work's themes is more or less marked by our national character'.⁶⁷

Indeed, the Polish tint is notable in this fantasy. Chopin may have chosen to name it as 'fantasy', because of the variety of themes that appear and reappear in different tonalities, which get interrupted by short improvisations. Three main sections can be identified. The first opens with the marches, one in F minor, the other in F major. The second one may refer to the song 'Litwinka'. This is followed by a short, arpeggiated motif performed in different keys that keeps ending on fermatas, and which culminates in the development of this phrase and the direct addition of dramatic and lyrical themes. The middle section of the fantasy is a chorale to be performed as 'adagio sostenuto', written in a warm and nostalgic B major. It is a timeless moment, reminiscent in its emotional effect of the middle part in D flat major of Chopin's Marche Funèbre in his Second Sonata op. 35. The third section opens with the bursting of the arpeggiated theme and reaches its climax through the repetition of all themes in different keys. The end approaches with a parlando motif of sweet nostalgia that is cut by the accumulative force of the arpeggiated theme that rises up but soon subsides.

⁶⁶ [Http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/genre/detail/id/21](http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/genre/detail/id/21), quoting a letter to J. Fontana, October 1841.

⁶⁷ [Http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/genre/detail/id/21](http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/genre/detail/id/21).

Chopin Four Mazurkas op. 24

Chopin's Mazurkas in general and this specific set are often thought of as music stories. The composer relies on a simple 3/4 rhythm which is made more complex through the addition of dancelike accents. Moreover, Chopin builds contrasting themes in features and character, and accompanies them usually in antithetical tonalities. In the Mazurkas op. 24 tonalities mark the shift from one scene to another.

This collection of pianistic miniatures starts with a mazurka in an elegiac G minor key. Chopin uses here a simple melodic skeleton and harmonic background. Then, via the shift of tonalities from minor to major, he presents a variety of moods, from 'doric' heroism to nostalgic playfulness. It is thought that the Mazurka op. 24 No.1 alludes to the kujawiak⁶⁸ folk melody 'Czemu nie orzesz, Jasieńku, czemu nie orzesz?' [Why aren't you ploughing, Johnny, why aren't you ploughing?]).⁶⁹

Mazurka No. 2 in C major is thought of as a fairytale. The structure of this piece could be seen as an introduction to the story, in C major; the presentation of the heroes and their aspirations, in C major; the departure towards adventure, in D flat major; the return back home, where calmness is established, in C major, once again; and an epilogue, in C major. The interplay between fifths and thirds of this mazur dance, as well as the brilliant accents that are indicated on the printed music, invite the performer to come closer to the Polish countryside and the folk spirit.

The humble warmth of the Mazurka No. 3 makes it a convenient stepping stone towards the harmonically captivating No. 4. The former is composed in A flat major, one of Chopin's favourite keys. The piece follows binary form, although the second subject, in duple rhythm, acts more as an interval in the main motivic theme, which is repeated towards the end. The third mazurka, based on a kujawiak dance, ends with a coda fading out with a *smorzando* effect.

The most famous of the set, Mazurka No. 4, is composed in B flat minor. The overture-like opening sounds obscure with the subtle harmonic progression towards the actual beginning of the piece, which starts on the dominant. The pulse refers to a kujawiak dance, in its various versions. The initial obscurity of the overture-like opening returns now with the scarce harmonic movement of the left hand chords. The last phrase is felt as speaking of self-abandonment, played by the right hand alone with a *smorzando* feel.

⁶⁸ The kujawiak is a Polish folk dance from Kuzawy, a region in central Poland.

⁶⁹ [Http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/genre/detail/id/21](http://en.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/genre/detail/id/21).

Scriabin Sonata-Fantasy op. 19 no. 2 in G sharp minor

Scriabin shared with Liadov in 1895 the problems he was encountering with the Sonata-Fantasy. "The sonata [Sonata-Fantasy] is almost finished. There remain only certain details and doubts about procedure. I have two ideas: one is better logically; but the other is more beautiful. Write me please, whether logic or beauty should have priority". (Bowers: 1996, 208) It took Scriabin five years to finally send the sonata-fantasy to his editor, Belaieff, to the frustration of the latter.

The interaction between sound and light, and the interplay between these two, preoccupied Scriabin during his lifetime. Being used to seeing sounds as colours, like Rimsky-Korsakoff Scriabin 'saw' in E major a light blue or sea tint. The unusually small number of movements of which the piece is composed, as well as the peculiar use of the sonata form, may be some of the reasons Scriabin to describe this work as a sonata-fantasy. The dramatic texture of both movements supports the title given and the dominant element of the sea gives to the term 'fantasy' an intellectual context, which may refer to the picturesque drama around the work.

Moreover, the use of the term 'fantasy' could refer to the fact that some of the work's themes preexisted in Scriabin's earlier works. For instance, during 1894 he gave to the sister of his first lady-love a Waltz in G sharp minor, which was later absorbed into the Fantasy Sonata. He mentioned to her: "Natalya [his beloved at that time] creates my mood, and I create the music" (Bowers: 1996, 184). Scriabin performed his unfinished Sonata-Fantasy in his Petersburg debut as a pianist and composer in 1895. During one concert, he performed this piece titled as 'Presto', i.e. the presto second movement of the final composition. Bowers states: 'Nikolai Findeizen's diary corroborates Stassov's enthusiasm: "This morning I went to the office and Stassov told me of a newly rising star – pianist and composer Scriabin". On Friday he played at Belaieff's and Stassov had been invited. Rimsky Korsakoff, Liadov, Blumenfeld, Lavrov and Belaieff and Stassov sat side by side. Stassov said, "At first he played his Nocturne. Very well, it was all right. And I thought, if this is all, then there's nothing new or fine to expect from him. Then he played his Fantasy [Presto of the Fantasy Sonata] and Lord, he did well!!! We all shouted and had him repeat it instantly"' (Bowers: 1996, 196). This premature attribution of the term 'Fantasy' may be then linked to the final 'Sonata-Fantasy' title of the current work. At first it looks plausible that Fantasia could be actually referring to the second movement, i.e. the above indicated Presto, and not to the first one, that was the later one of the two to be composed.

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BIOGRAPHY

Anna Kounadi graduated with a Soloist's Diploma in Piano Performance from Athens Conservatory, Greece, with Distinction and First Prize. She acquired the Postgraduate Advanced Diploma in Piano Performance and Master's Degree in Performance with Distinction at Trinity College of Music, with Philip Fowke and Yonty Solomon as her tutors. She participated in Martino Tirimo's tutorials at Morley College, performed in various masterclasses, and has worked at Trinity College of Music as a member of the professorial staff. She continued her studies at Goldsmiths University of London, pursuing research on Scriabin, with Prof. Mikhail Kazakevich and Dr Stephen Cottrell as her supervisors.

Anna has won several college awards for her performances during exams, as well as prizes in Greek and international piano competitions, such as the Panhellenic H.O.N. Competition, KonzerTEAM International Piano Competition and Josef Weingarten Schumann Piano Competition. She has performed in important venues in Greece and the United Kingdom. Her academic activity includes participation in international conferences, presenting papers on her research into Scriabin's *Sonata-Fantasy op. 19 n.2 in G sharp minor* through sound recordings and piano rolls. Her private collection includes copies of the Igumnov and Scriabin performances on piano rolls.

Anna has also taught music at the Hellenic College, London, and is presently Professor of Music at the Greek-French School of Ursulines, Athens. She is also a piano professor at Pythagorion Conservatory and teaches pianists for the ABRSM exams in Greece. Anna Kounadi is also a lawyer. Her present life includes the joy being a mother.

*Authorised reproduction of painting *Λάλον Φως* [Lalon Fos – Speaking Light] by Apostolos Kilessopoulos.

Many thanks are due to my piano supervisor, Prof. Mikhail Kazakevich for his pianistic insight, and to my academic supervisor Dr Stephen Cottrell for his precious and constant guidance through this research.

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APPENDIX C:

Annotated score⁷⁰ of the Sonata-Fantasy

First Movement: *Andante*

SONATE-FANTASIE Nr.2

Bar 1-12: Theme as triplet motif in an overture-like opening, in G sharp minor
Alexander Scriabin (1872-1918)

Andante M. M. ♩ = 60

Bar numbers: 1, 4, 8, 12, 16

Bars 1-61: First Section or Exposition

M. P. Belaieff Nr. 196 1605

⁷⁰ For the analytical purposes of the study, the original version of the score has been used (Belaieff Edition).

19

mf *cresc. mf* *dim.*

Bar 23-30: Theme in *p* marked *rubato*

23

p rubato *cresc.* *p cresc.* *dim.*

27

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

Bar 31-37: Variation of theme in rubato of bar 23

31

p *p* *p*

34

p *p* *p* *p*

Bars 37-45: Variation as *espressivo*, based on motif of bar 37, originally found in bar 29

37 *espress.*

40

43 *cresc.*

Bar (end of) 45-57: Theme as *ben marcato il canto* in B

45 *mf* *pp* *pp* *mf* *ben marcato il canto*

47

M. P. Belaieff 1905

Bars 62-88: Use of thematic material of the First Section:

a. In triplet quavers (bars 62-70)

Musical score for bars 62-70. The score is in two staves (treble and bass clef). It features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. Dynamics include *m.d.* (mezzo-dolce) and *cresc.* (crescendo).

Bars 62-86 (or 88):
Second Section or
Development

Musical score for bars 66-70. The score is in two staves. It features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. Dynamics include *m.d.* and *cresc.*.

b. In triplet quavers and semiquavers (bars 71-74)

Musical score for bars 70-74. The score is in two staves. It features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and sixteenth notes in the left hand. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano).

c. In semiquavers (bar 75)

Musical score for bars 73-74. The score is in two staves. It features sixteenth notes in both hands. Dynamics include *p* and *ff*.

d. In triplet quavers and semiquavers (bar 76)

e. In triplet quavers and quavers, with constant *cresc.* towards *ff* (bars 77-85)

Musical score for bars 76-85. The score is in two staves. It features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* and *cresc.*.

M. P. Belaieff

79

cresc. *sf* *cresc.*

* Ped. * Ped.

82

cresc. *sf*

* Ped.

Bars 87-88: End of Second Section and 'announcement' of Third Section or Recapitulation

85

ff

Bar 89-98: Theme in E major (transposed theme of bar 13)

88

pp

Bars 89-136:
Third Section or
Recapitulation

91

94

cresc. *mf*

Bar 99-106: Theme in *p* (transposed theme of bar 23)

Musical score for bars 97-106. The score is written for piano and includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *dim.*, *p*, *cresc.*, and *pp*. It features a *rubato* marking and a *rit.* marking. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and ornaments.

Bar 107-112: Variation of theme in *p* of bar 99 (transposed variation of bars 23-30)

Musical score for bars 106-109. The score is written for piano and includes dynamic markings such as *pp*. It features a *rit.* marking and a *tr.* marking. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and ornaments.

Bars 113-120: Variation based on motif of bar 105 (transposed variation of bars 37-45)

Musical score for bars 109-112. The score is written for piano and includes dynamic markings such as *ppp*. It features a *rit.* marking and a *tr.* marking. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and ornaments.

115



118



Bar 121: Theme as *ben marcato il canto* in E (transposed theme of bar 45 in B major)

121



123



(Bar 125: Same theme in lower register)

125



127

129 shimmering

131

132

Bars 135-136: Ending with the repeat of the first theme of bar 1, now in E

134 pp smorz.

Second Movement: Presto

Bar 1-16: Theme in *sotto voce* in G sharp minor
Presto M.M.♩ = 96-100

1 *sotto voce*
p

3 *cresc.*

6 *mf*
dim.

9 *p*

12 *cresc.*

15 *dim.*
p

Bars 1-40:
First Section

L. P. Belaieff 1605

Bars 17-24: Thematic variation in B, marked *dolcissimo*

Musical score for bars 17-24. The score is written for piano in a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of four systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The first system (bars 17-18) is marked *dolcissimo* and *pp*. The second system (bars 19-20) is marked *pp*. The third system (bars 21-22) is marked *pp*. The fourth system (bars 23-24) is marked *pp*. The music features a melodic line in the treble clef and a harmonic accompaniment in the bass clef, with various articulations and dynamics.

Bars 25-40: Return of theme of bar 1

Musical score for bars 25-40. The score is written for piano in a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of two systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The first system (bars 25-28) is marked *p*. The second system (bars 29-32) is marked *p* and includes the annotation "Bars 29-32: Thematic variation". The music features a melodic line in the treble clef and a harmonic accompaniment in the bass clef, with various articulations and dynamics.

M. P. Belaieff

1605

Bars 33-40: Thematic variation

Bars 41-78: Theme as *ben marcato il canto* in various keys, starting in E flat minor

Bars 41-78:
Second
Section

45

p *cresc.*

Measures 45 and 46 of a piano piece. The music is in a minor key and features a melodic line in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The piece starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking.

47

dim.

Measures 47 and 48. The melodic line continues with a decrescendo (*dim.*) marking.

Bar 49: Same theme in B flat minor

49

p *cresc.*

Measures 49 and 50. The piece returns to the same theme in B-flat minor, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking.

51

cresc.

Measures 51 and 52. The music continues with a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking.

53

pp

Measures 53 and 54. The music is marked piano-piano (*pp*).

55

pp

Measures 55 and 56. The music is marked piano-piano (*pp*).

M. P. Bédoff

1806

57 *cresc.* *cresc.*

59 *pp* *cresc.*

62 *cresc.* *ten.* *m.d.* *m.d.*

65 *ten.*

Bar 67: Same theme in C sharp minor

67 *sp* *m.d.* *m.d.* *P*

70 *ten.* *p* *m.cresc.* *m.d.* *m.d.* *f*

73

m.d. cresc. m.d. *m.d. f* *dim.* *mf* *m.d. cresc. m.d.* *m.d.*

Musical score for bars 73-75. The music is in G sharp minor. It features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands, including sixteenth-note runs and dynamic markings such as *m.d. cresc. m.d.*, *m.d. f*, *dim.*, *mf*, and *m.d. cresc. m.d.*.

76

cresc. m.d. *m.d.* *m.d.* *m.d. sf* *dim.* *sf* *dim.*

Musical score for bars 76-78. The music continues in G sharp minor with dynamic markings including *cresc. m.d.*, *m.d.*, *m.d.*, *m.d. sf*, *dim.*, *sf*, and *dim.*.

Bars 79-92: Return of first theme in the original key (G sharp minor)

79

p

Musical score for bars 79-80. The first theme returns in G sharp minor, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

81

Musical score for bars 81-82. The first theme continues in G sharp minor.

83

pp

Musical score for bars 83-84. The first theme continues in G sharp minor, with a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic.

85

Musical score for bars 85-86. The first theme continues in G sharp minor.

Bars 79-110:
Third Section in G
sharp minor

87

89

91

cresc.

cresc.

Bars 93-110: Coda

93

mf *cresc.* *f*

95

p *cresc.*

97

cresc. *f* *cresc.*

99 *ff*

101 *ff* *cresc.*

103 *ten.* *mf* *dim.*

105 *ten.* *p*

107 *ten.* *pp*

109

M. P. Belaief

1605