

LIVES OF RACHMANINOV'S THIRD AND FOURTH PIANO CONCERTOS

by

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Dedicated to my Mother Onajonim and Father Adajonim

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INTRODUCTION

*What is music? It is peaceful moonlit night; it is the rustling of living leaves; it is the distant evening bell; it is that which is born of the heart and pierces the heart; it is love! The sister of music is poetry but its mother is a heavy heart!*¹

Sergei Rachmaninov was one of the most impressive authentic versatile musical figures of the XX century. He was an extraordinary master of three: pianist, composer and conductor. “Combining in one face a genius composer, great pianist and monumental conductor, Rachmaninov, like Liszt, was a unique case of the ‘tripartite’ artistic activity, balanced in its all demonstrations.”²

Being a perfectionist and lifelong critic to himself and his art, Rachmaninov shared his doubts, expressed his thoughts on his creative art (in 1930): “Today, when the greater part of my life is over, I am constantly troubled by the misgiving that, in venturing into too many fields, I may have failed to make the best use of my life. In the old Russian phrase, I have ‘hunted three hares’. Can I be sure that I have caught one of them?”³

Rachmaninov’s lifelong friend, cousin and sister-in-law Sophia Satina finishes her memoirs with the doubtlessly true thought: “in order to understand Rachmaninov-person, one should listen, without philosophizing, to his music.”⁴ Rachmaninov himself reflects about Rachmaninov-composer: “I am a Russian composer, and my motherland left an imprint on my character and my views. My music is a fruit of my character, and that is why it is Russian music. I never deliberately attempted to write (exactly) Russian music or music of some other kind...

¹ Andreas Wehrmeyer, *Rakhmaninov* (London: Haus, 2004), 114-115.

² E. N. Rudakova and A. I. Kandinskiĭ, *S. V. Rakhmaninov* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1982), 6 (translated by the author)

³ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), Introduction, xiii.

⁴ Z. A. Apetiān, *Vospominaniĭa o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:115 (translated by the author)

The only thing I try to do when I compose is to compel it to express directly and simply what is in my heart. Love, bitterness, sorrow, or religious moods – all these constitute the content of my music.”⁵

Rachmaninov’s output in piano music is immense. He gave the world some of the greatest piano music ever written. His works for piano and orchestra combined all his forces in one masterpiece genre in music: Rachmaninov-pianist composed highly pianistic works, and being a magnificent conductor, he created a brilliant orchestration in those works.

The aim of this essay is to explore two of his piano concertos: no. 3 op.30 and no.4 op.40, to discover their history and role in the composer’s life and his art, examine their differences and similarities. We will investigate what features connect both works, and what was special in each. It was noteworthy to learn particularly these concertos in depth because they mark different stages of the composer’s life. To analyze and compare these two works is crucial in understanding of Rachmaninov’s compositional style during this period. In fact, by exploring their similarities and differences, we can answer the question about the composer’s writing change.

We have explored the biographical, historical and personal facts surrounding his two concertos, have read numerous Rachmaninov’s letters in the original language and various sources in both English and Russian languages. Our extensive research covers and includes a lot of findings, and is uniquely enriched with the material in Rachmaninov’s native language.

One can point that the Third concerto belongs to the composer’s life in Russia, and the Fourth concerto is a product of his foreign life. In the book by Nikitin *Dve Zhizni* the author titled his book *Two Lives* referring to the composer’s two lives, completely different with their

⁵ Sergei Rachmaninoff and Z. A. Apetian, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* (Moskva: Sov. kompozitor, 1978), 1:147 (translated by the author)

atmosphere and priorities: one in Russia, another in America.⁶ Rachmaninov wrote his Concerto no.3 in Russia, in his estate Ivanovka for his American concert tour in 1909, while Concerto no.4 was conceived in 1913-1914 in Russia but completed abroad: first in New York and then in Dresden in 1926. The period when one of them was written is particularly interesting because the composer went through one of the biggest changes in his life: emigration. The Fourth concerto was the first work Rachmaninov composed after the long break from the composition that lasted for eight years after he left Russia in 1917.

To summarize, here are the main reasons why these works specifically inspired me to write my essay *Lives of Rachmaninov's Third and Fourth Piano Concertos*:

Since the concertos are written in different countries and at different times of the composer's life, one can draw parallels between their historical backgrounds and the composer's life circumstances during their composition. We will 'voyage' into the history of creation of these precious masterworks.

Other existing books and dissertations review all Rachmaninov's concertos. Our goal is to compare only Third and Fourth concertos, and explore their certain aspects in depth.

Our discussion will inquire both concertos' forms, themes, texture, harmonic and melodic components, climaxes, piano writing and orchestra's role. Scrutinizing those aspects in the Third and Fourth concertos will show their differences and common features. Our main focus will be directed at the first and second movements of both concertos. Their close study will help us understand what had changed in Rachmaninov's style of the concerto genre. One should remark that the final 1941 edition of the Fourth concerto is reviewed in the essay with some references and notes about the original first edition.

⁶ B. S. Nikitin, *Sergeĭ Rachmaninov: Dve Zhizni* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Znanie", 1993), 2 (translated by the author)

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND. HISTORICAL- BIOGRAPHICAL PATHS OF OP.30 AND OP.40

Rachmaninov's creative life can be divided into 3 periods. Martyn distinguishes the first period from 1890-1896, which includes the student years and afterwards "Free Artist" years.¹ Some of his principal works of the first period are the First Piano Concerto, opera Aleko, Five Fantasy Pieces for piano op.3, First Symphony, Six Moments Musicaux for piano op.16.

The second period, lasting for 17 years: 1900-1917, was prolific. Rachmaninov created the most of his important compositions such as the Second Concerto op.18, First and Second Piano Sonatas (op.28 and op.36), symphonic poem *The Isle of the Dead* op.29, Third Concerto op.30, Thirteen Preludes op.32, Etudes-Tableaux op.33 and op.39, choral symphony *The Bells*. In this period he worked in Moscow, then in Dresden and lastly in his estate Ivanovka.² In fact, one can say that this period was a heyday for the composer's art.

Rachmaninov's third period, which started in 1921 and continued until 1941, covered twenty years. This period brings a big change in Rachmaninov's life, and launches after he leaves Russia forever. The "New World"³ period turned the wheels to a different direction in composer's lifestyle: the most of his time he dedicates to one of his three talents, being a concert pianist. In this final period he composed notably less than in his 17 years of the middle period, namely: the Fourth Concerto op.40, Three Russian Songs op.41, Variations on a Theme of Corelli for piano op.42, Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini op.43, Third Symphony op.44 and Symphonic Dances op.45. On the top of these six original works, he also made piano transcriptions, revised the Second Piano Sonata and the Fourth Concerto.⁴

¹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 19.

² Ibid, 20.

³ Ibid, 21.

⁴ Ibid.

As we see, the Third piano concerto op.30 belongs to his middle period while the Fourth concerto op.40 is one of his six pieces composed in his last period. There are nine works separate these concertos, and 17 years divide them. The Fourth concerto is the first piece appearing in his third period, almost like a gateway to the new period in the New World.

History of the Third Concerto op.30

From autumn of 1906 to spring of 1909 Rachmaninov lived in Dresden, where he found silence and peace, which were so necessary for him to compose. While living in Dresden during three seasons in a year, Rachmaninov would spend summers in Russia, his estate Ivanovka.⁵ His Dresden years were fruitful: in 1907-1908 he finished his Second symphony op. 27 and First piano sonata op. 28 (based on Goethe's *Faust*), in 1909 – the symphonic poem *The Isle of the Dead* op. 29. His First piano sonata written in D minor (the key of the Third piano concerto) was the piano work preceding the Third concerto. And the symphonic poem *The Isle of the Dead* was the work composed before the concerto in the same year of the op.30's composition.

Rachmaninov had some sort of inspiration for his compositions, although he rarely would unveil it. "When composing, I find it of great help to have in mind a book just recently read, or a beautiful picture, or a poem. Sometimes a definite story is kept in mind, which I try to convert into tones without disclosing the source of my inspiration."⁶ The Swiss symbolist Arnold Böcklin's painting inspired the composer to write *The Isle of the Dead*. Rachmaninov saw the painting for the first time in black and white reproduction, and he said: "If I had seen the original first, I might not have composed my *Isle of the Dead*. I like the picture best in black and white."⁷

⁵ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 179.

⁶ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 156.

⁷ Ibid.

In 1908 Rachmaninov received an invitation to tour in the USA, but he was reluctant to go on this trip. After some hesitations and negotiations the contract was set up. Rachmaninov with his wife and daughters left Dresden in spring of 1909, and as before, they spent the summer in his estate Ivanovka, where he composed his concerto no.3 op.30, which would be premiered in New York. Rachmaninov wrote to Nikita Morozov that he began composing a new work but did not share what (6 June 1909).⁸ On 15th July of 1909 he wrote to Morozov: "...What is not consoling is that I'm going to America after all. Devil take it! I think I'd even give up the secretary if I could get out of going there. That's how much I don't want to go. But then, perhaps, after America I'll be able to buy myself that automobile. So it may not be so bad!"⁹

The place of birth of the Third concerto was unique for Rachmaninov's heart. He loved Russian nature, and he had a special affection for his estate Ivanovka where he would not only compose and work but also managed the estate. "I grew fond of this broad landscape and, away from it, would find myself longing for it... This steppe was like an infinite sea where the waters are actually boundless fields of wheat, rye, oats, stretching from horizon to horizon. Sea air is often praised, but how much more do I love the air of the steppe, with its aroma of earth and all that grows and blossoms..."¹⁰ The Ivanovka's nature would inspire and ignite composer's poetic imagination: "I go for a long walk in the country. My eye catches the sharp sparks of light on fresh foliage after showers; my ears the rustling undertone of the woods. Or I watch the pale tints of the sky over the horizon after sundown, and they come: all voices at once. Not a bit here, a bit there. All."¹¹

⁸ Sergei Rachmaninoff and Z. A. Apetian, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* (Moskva: Sov. kompozitor, 1978), 1:478-479 (translated by the author)

⁹ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 159.

¹⁰ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 25.

¹¹ Calvin Dotsey, "Russian Romance: Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3", Houston Symphony, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://houstonsymphony.org/rachmaninoff-piano-concerto-3/>.

“I was always drawn to that place, whether for complete rest and quietude, or, on the contrary, for the hard work for which that surrounding quietude serves.”¹²

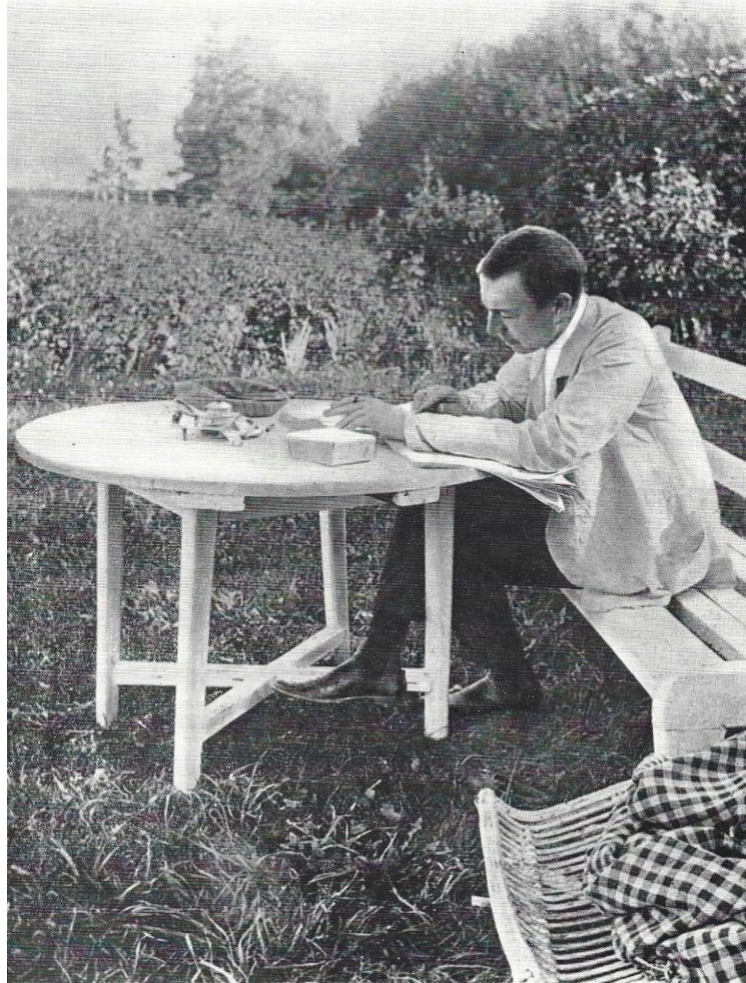


Figure 1. S. V. Rachmaninov in Ivanovka proofreading the Third concerto (1910)¹³

Sophia Satina, who was very close to the composer, wrote that simple quite life in the countryside after the city's noise and bustle always favorably influenced the artist who would get tired from concerts. From her memories we find out that Rachmaninov gradually got involved in

¹² O. I. Sokolova, *Sergei Vasil'evich Rakhmaninov* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1983), 18 (translated by the author)

¹³ E. N. Rudakova and A. I. Kandinskiĭ, *S. V. Rakhmaninov* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1982), 90 (translated by the author)

agricultural rural life, and his free hours he would spend on the fields among peasants, observing their work.¹⁴ “In 1910 the estate of Ivanovka became mine. And from then on I became passionately interested in its management. During the winter I would work very hard, give recitals, earn money – and in the summer most of my earnings would be invested in the land, in livestock, in machinery, mostly of American manufacture”.¹⁵ His deep connection with the land and nature was expressed in his affection for horses. He enjoyed training horses for races, and he was “an excellent rider”.¹⁶ Rachmaninov also had a passion for an automobile, and he loved driving the car on spacious roads. In his 1913 letter to Marietta Shaginyan, Rachmaninov writes: “...when the work becomes unbearable, I sit in the automobile and fly far as fifty versts* (around fifty three kilometers) from here to the vastness (spaciousness), to the big road. I breathe the air and bless the freedom and blue skies. After such air bath I feel again fresher and stronger.”¹⁷

Later in his life, away from his motherland, Rachmaninov would seek to recreate Ivanovka-alike home place, and he found something akin at the shore of Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. In 1930 he bought an estate there and named it after the first letters of his and his wife’s initials: Sergei and Natalia Rachmaninoff – *SeNaR*.¹⁸

Martyn calls Ivanovka “the prime source of spiritual renewal” for the composer.¹⁹ As a matter of fact, during the period from 1909-1917 Rachmaninov wrote major works in his beloved estate: the Piano Concerto no.3 op.30 (1909), Thirteen Preludes for piano op.32 (1910), choral

¹⁴ Z. A. Apetian, *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:39 (translated by the author)

¹⁵ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 167.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Sergei Rachmaninoff and Z. A. Apetian, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* (Moskva: Sov. kompozitor, 1980), 2:61 (translated by the author)

¹⁸ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 270.

¹⁹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 209.

symphony *The Bells* op. 35 (1913), Piano Sonata no.2 op. 36 (1913), *All-Night Vigil* op.37 (1915), two sets of Nine *Études-Tableaux* for piano op.33 (1911) and op. 39 (1916).²⁰

Rachmaninov finished his new concerto right before his trip to the New World, and had to practice it on a silent piano on the ship sailing to America. In a letter to his dear friend and fellow Matvey Presman (who was Zverev's pupil at the same time with Sergei; later on Rachmaninov dedicated to him the Piano sonata op.36)²¹ on 2 October of 1909, he wrote: "...for all the last days I worked like a man doing hard labour in order to finish my new piano concerto on time before the departure."²² On the same day he left overseas to the country, which a decade later would become his new residence.

His 1909-1910 American journey was successful, during which "he made 26 appearances, 19 as pianist, seven as conductor."²³ On 28 November 1909 Rachmaninov debuted his concerto no.3 in New York, with the New York Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Walter Damrosch, and played it again on 30 November. "A third and final New York performance took place on 16 January 1910 under Gustav Mahler."²⁴

Rachmaninov highly thought of Mahler: "At that time Mahler was the only conductor whom I considered worthy to be classed with Nikisch. He touched my composer's heart straight away by devoting himself to my Concerto until the accompaniment, which is rather complicated, had been practiced to the point of perfection, although he had already gone through another long rehearsal. According to Mahler, every detail of the score was important – an attitude which is unfortunately rare among conductors."²⁵

²⁰ Ibid, 20.

²¹ M. L. Presman, "Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove" (Moscow, 1938), accessed October 21, 2021, <https://senar.ru/memoirs/Presman/> (translated by the author); Z. A. Apetian, *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:156 (translated by the author)

²² Sergei Rachmaninoff and Z. A. Apetian, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* (Moskva: Sov. kompozitor, 1978), 1:483 (translated by the author)

²³ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 160.

²⁴ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 210.

²⁵ Andreas Wehrmeyer, *Rakhmaninov* (London: Haus, 2004), 63-64.

American critics did not write flattering reviews about the Third concerto. Here is one of the New York critics' reactions to the new concerto: "Sound, reasonable music ... though not a great nor memorable proclamation."²⁶ In addition, the critic found the concerto too long.

After Rachmaninov returned to Russia, he reflected his thoughts about the American trip: "America was a strain. Imagine giving an almost daily concert for three whole months. I played only my own works. The success was great. They forced me to play as many as seven encores, which is quite a lot for that audience. The audiences are astonishingly cold, spoiled by the tours of first-class artists and forever looking for novelty, for something they've never had before. Local papers are obliged to note the number of times you are recalled to the stage, and the public regards this as a yardstick of your talent."²⁷

The Russian premiere of the concerto took place in Moscow on 4 April 1910 under Eugene Plotnikov.²⁸ The Russian critic Grigori Prokofiev shared a different view on the Third concerto, disagreeing with his American colleagues: "The new concerto mirrored the best sides of his creative power - sincerity, simplicity and clarity of musical thought. ... it has a freshness of inspiration that doesn't aspire to the discovery of new paths, it has a sharp and laconic form as well as simple and brilliant orchestration - qualities that will secure both outer success and enduring love by musicians and public alike for this new composition."²⁹

The Third concerto was dedicated to the great pianist Josef Hofmann, however Hofmann never performed it. In 1911 Rachmaninov even played his concerto to Hofmann, but the latter criticized the work: "a short melody which is constantly interrupted with difficult passages; more

²⁶ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 160.

²⁷ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 165.

²⁸ Robert Matthew-Walker, *Rachmaninoff: His Life and Times* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Midas Books, 1980), 68.

²⁹ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 166.

a *fantaisie* than a concerto. Not enough form.”³⁰ Some musicologists suspect that Hofmann’s small hands hindered to play Rachmaninov’s arduous concerto.³¹

Here one should deviate from the concerto in order to note some parallels and relationship between these two titanic artists, Rachmaninov and Hofmann. They admired each other’s playing. For instance, “in 1911, after a performance of his Second Concerto by Hofmann in Tiflis, Rachmaninoff commented that his playing had revealed beauties in the work he had not known existed.”³² In point of fact, “when Rakhmaninov was asked who he considered to be the most important pianists of the age, he replied, Hofmann ... and myself!”³³

When Rachmaninov moved to the USA, according to Andreas Wehrmeyer, “Hofmann recommended him to his agent Charles Ellis of Boston, with whom he signed a contract, ... Rakhmaninov was very happy with Ellis’s management.”³⁴ On the other hand, Rachmaninov’s sister-in-law Satina in her memoirs recalls that Hofmann indeed advised several managers “not to miss this Russian artist”, but later Hofmann with the laughter told that Rachmaninov listened to all his advices with gratitude but did not take any of them and made his own decisions. Satina indicates that Sergei Vasilievich decided to choose the concert agency of Charles Ellis.³⁵

Paradoxically enough, Hofmann and Rachmaninov became “the two most highly paid pianists of their time”.³⁶ Another interesting fact is that at the end of his life, Rachmaninov was Hofmann’s neighbor in Beverly Hills.³⁷

³⁰ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 216.

³¹ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 162.

³² Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 379.

³³ Andreas Wehrmeyer, *Rakhmaninov* (London: Haus, 2004), 58.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 88.

³⁵ Z. A. Apetian, *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:53 (translated by the author)

³⁶ Andreas Wehrmeyer, *Rakhmaninov* (London: Haus, 2004), 91.

³⁷ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 379.

After Rachmaninov left this world, Hofmann wrote: “Rachmaninoff was made of steel and gold; steel in his arms, gold in his heart. I can never think of this majestic being without tears in my eyes, for I not only admired him as a supreme artist, but I also loved him as a man.”³⁸

Coming back to the historical ‘journey’ of the opus 30, one should inform that during his lifetime Rachmaninov performed his Third concerto 86 times,³⁹ in Russia and elsewhere. In 1923, before the Fourth concerto’s appearance, he shared: “With my own concertos I much prefer the third, because my second is uncomfortable to play and therefore not susceptible of equally successful effects.”⁴⁰ Rachmaninov believed his only successful performance of the Third concerto was with Mahler. “Musicians loved it but not the audience or the critics. ‘They thought it was too complicated’.”⁴¹

The fame and success of this concerto reached the higher level thanks to Vladimir Horowitz who met Rachmaninov for the first time in New York in 1928. He played the concerto for him in the basement of Steinway Hall, while Rachmaninov played the orchestral part on a second piano. After that historical meeting, according to Abram Chasins’s words, the composer told him: “Horowitz pounced upon the fiendish piece with the fury and voraciousness of a tiger. ‘He swallowed it whole!’”⁴² “He had the courage, the intensity, and daring that make for greatness.”⁴³ Horowitz himself quite openly and confidently declares: “Without false modesty, I brought this concerto to light. I brought it to life, and everywhere! Rachmaninoff had not won the

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, 395.

⁴⁰ Andreas Wehrmeyer, *Rakhmaninov* (London: Haus, 2004), 94.

⁴¹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 217.

⁴² Robert Matthew-Walker, *Rachmaninoff: His Life and Times* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Midas Books, 1980), 102.

⁴³ Stuart Isacoff, “A Meeting of Titans – The Day Vladimir Horowitz and Sergei Rachmaninoff Arrived Together at Steinway Hall”, accessed September 30, 2021, <http://www.steinway-piano.com/steinway-news/a-meeting-of-titans-the-day-vladimir-horowitz-and-sergei-rachmaninoff-arrived-together-at-steinway-hall/>.

recognition with the concerto that he thought he deserved.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, according to Patrick Piggott, Rachmaninov admired Walter Giesecking’s performance of the Third concerto “more than any others.”⁴⁵

History of the Fourth Concerto op.40

The Fourth concerto has a remarkable biographical ‘path’, unusual lifelong timeline in creating, ‘crafting’ this work: 1914-1941. It was conceived in Russia as early as 1914, and composed and completed abroad: in New York and Dresden in 1926. For the first time news about the composer’s launch of the new concerto was mentioned in a Russian musical periodical in 1914.⁴⁶ The musical evidence that Rachmaninov thought of the new concerto around 1913-1914 is the unpublished Etude op.33 no.3 (1911): the composer used the Etude’s episode in the slow movement of the Fourth concerto. Barrie Martyn assumes that it was not accidental that Rachmaninov did not publish the *Étude-Tableau* in C minor, and thinks that the new concerto’s “original conception, or at least slow movement, must therefore predate the publication in 1914 of the other *Études-Tableaux*.”⁴⁷ Rachmaninov revisited the concerto two more times: unsatisfied, he edited in 1927 and then many years later in 1941, two years before his death. Therefore, unlike its predecessor, the Fourth concerto has three full versions of the work: original 1926, 1927 (published by *TAIR* in 1928) and 1941. Nowadays the last revised version (1941) is mostly performed.

In order to delve into Rachmaninov’s state of mind at the time of composing this work, one need to look back at his life, especially from 1917-1926, because those preceding years were

⁴⁴ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 217.

⁴⁵ Patrick Piggott, *Rachmaninov Orchestral Music* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1974), 49.

⁴⁶ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 298.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 297.

significant in the composer's life. That period was a bridge between Rachmaninov's old life and new life where he confronted one of the most important decisions of his life.

As mentioned earlier, in Russia Rachmaninov was a landowner, and he loved managing his land. He invested his money on his estate, as he wrote to Siloti in June 1917: "I've spent almost my entire earnings on the Ivanovka estate."⁴⁸ However, living in Ivanovka did not last. The country, where Rachmaninov had lived and created his art, would come to an end: the Russian Empire was defeated by the Soviet Russia. Slogans against landlords and capitalists were heard in every corner. After the October Revolution of 1917 Bolsheviks confiscated all private lands and estates. Rachmaninov predicted his estate's fate. Even before the October events, in March 1917 he would confess to his friends that he was afraid for his estate, for his children's destiny, feared to become poor.⁴⁹ Deeply concerned about his family's future and being on the edge of losing his estate, where he put almost all his money, he was contemplating to move out of the country at this scary time until things would get better, awaiting for more peaceful times. (His last visit to the estate was in spring of 1917.) Looking at the memories of Sophia Satina, we learn that while many people considered the Russian coup of 1917 temporary, Rachmaninov thought it was the end to the old Russia, and that the artistic life would cease for many years, and in this atmosphere there was no other option for him than to leave the country.⁵⁰ That summer his decision to leave became so firm that he started to seek the ways to get the passport, although his attempts did not succeed. Ironically, only after the October Revolution, he got an opportunity to leave: he received the invitation to play concerts in Stockholm, and permission from the government to travel.⁵¹ On the 23rd December 1917 Rachmaninov with his family were leaving

⁴⁸ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 205.

⁴⁹ B. S. Nikitin, *Sergei Rachmaninov: Dve Zhizni* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Znanie", 1993), 11 (translated by the author)

⁵⁰ Z. A. Apetian, *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:47 (translated by the author)

⁵¹ B. S. Nikitin, *Sergei Rachmaninov: Dve Zhizni* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Znanie", 1993), 11-12 (translated by the author)

Russia.⁵² Sadly, it turned out to be his last farewell to his beloved native land. Only one person, Rachmaninov's niece Zoya Pribytkova, was seeing them off that day.⁵³ "A gloomy autumn evening in Petrograd. The Finland Station. The platform... In front of the carriage Rakhmaninov stands with his family. He is leaving Russia. Once again I am seeing him off, now for the last time... A final farewell – scant anguish and tears ... The third signal for departure ... He kisses me and climbs into the carriage. The train has stolen away... Leaving was hard for him ... Especially during his last years he was overwhelmingly haunted... by a huge, active longing for his native land ..."⁵⁴

Leaving Russia was a life-changing experience for Rachmaninov. He had to choose which of his three forces, composing, performing or conducting, to prioritize on a foreign land. He decided to build his new life as a concert pianist. Rachmaninov rigorously dedicated himself to learn a wide range of new repertoire and to scrupulously refine his technique. According to his sister-in-law Satina: "It became clear to him that he would have to give up composition for a long time, because he needed the financial means to provide a life for his family and to give his daughters an education".⁵⁵

In 1918 Rachmaninov received three offers from the USA: two proposed the post of conductor and one suggested 25 piano recitals. Among those offers the invitation from the Boston Symphony orchestra to conduct 110 concerts in 30 weeks was attractive but Rachmaninov did not take it, moreover, he rejected all three offers.⁵⁶ Hoping he would find more opportunities in America, he decided for his big step – traveled to New York with his family reaching the new

⁵² N. Bazhanov, *Rachmaninov* (Moscow: Raduga, 1983), 257.

⁵³ Z. A. Apetian, *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 2:88 (translated by the author)

⁵⁴ Andreas Wehrmeyer, *Rakhmaninov* (London: Haus, 2004), 85-86.

⁵⁵ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scholar Press, 1990), 291.

⁵⁶ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 212-213.

land on November 10, 1918.⁵⁷ Many musicians welcomed Rachmaninov, some offering advice, others money, and some giving recommendations of managers. Four weeks after his arrival in the United States, in spite of just starting to recover from the Spanish flu, Rachmaninov gave his first recitals in Providence and then in Boston.⁵⁸

At the age of forty-five not only did Rachmaninov settle in the new country but also chose his primary occupation to be “a full-time virtuoso pianist”.⁵⁹ His recital programs consisted of his works as well as other composers’ works. “Every year without exception until the end of his life, Rachmaninoff introduced fresh repertoire into his programmes for the new season. He prepared his new material during the summer holidays...”⁶⁰

Briefly summing up about his new concert life, according to Martyn, “Rachmaninoff averaged about fifty concerts a year... By the end of his career Rachmaninoff had made 1457 appearances as a pianist, of which 1189 were from the time of launching his career in America in 1918.”⁶¹ In other words, until 1918 he had played 268 concerts as a pianist, noticeably less than in his new life as an émigré. Presenting the detailed statistics, another author Nikitin pointed out that “for 25 years in immigration Sergei Vasilievich performed in 1221 concerts, from which 1020 were given in more than 200 cities of the USA. For comparison one can mark that for 30 years of his concert activity in Russia from 1888 to 1917, he performed in 422 concerts, but here are also included nearly 70 concerts abroad and more than 100 opera performances, which he conducted in Mamontov’s Private Opera and the Bolshoi Theater.”⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid, 213.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 215.

⁵⁹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 378.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 381.

⁶¹ Ibid, 383-384.

⁶² B. S. Nikitin, *Sergei Rachmaninov: Dve Zhizni* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Znanie", 1993), 143 (translated by the author)

Soon after settling in the new country, Rachmaninov completely paid off all debts and gained financial stability. In spring of 1921, after three years he arrived in America, he bought a house, “a splendid five-story mansion on the banks of the Hudson”⁶³. Piano playing and performing became his solid source of income. His golden hands indeed became his principal capital as his Russian friend admonished him earlier.⁶⁴

Understandably, one of the main reasons why Rachmaninov did not compose since his departure at the end of 1917 until 1926 (when the Concerto op.40 was written) was his full shift to concertizing and devotion of his energy on piano playing. He was one of the rare unique individuals who possessed equally magnificently many talents, three so to speak. Moving to the foreign country, he focused mainly on one of these talents, tackling a performer’s path. His name already was recognized when he arrived in America. But he went much further and higher, achieved outstanding success and wealth, and became the first in this path. He loved performing concerts, loved the stage, expressing his own words: “I am a stage person, that is, I love the stage, and unlike many artists, do not wither from it but get strength, and from just one sound of the piano I am capable for new and unexpected for myself inventions and discoveries.”⁶⁵

Rachmaninov considered playing a successful concert (along with writing music) as the utmost happiness: “I do not know what gives me a bigger enjoyment – to compose music or to perform it. If I worked a lot on a phrase, and completing it, I know that it is well done, I feel the deepest satisfaction. When I play in the concert and I have a lucky day (and you know, that some days are not so good), then I think this is the greatest happiness.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Z. A. Apetiān, *Vospominaniā o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:62 (translated by the author)

⁶⁴ B. S. Nikitin, *Sergei Rachmaninov: Dve Zhizni* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Znanie", 1993), 141 (translated by the author)

⁶⁵ Sergei Rachmaninoff and Z. A. Apetiān, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* (Moskva: Sov. kompozitor, 1980), 2:269 (translated by the author)

⁶⁶ Sergei Rachmaninoff and Z. A. Apetiān, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* (Moskva: Sov. kompozitor, 1978), 1:142 (translated by the author)

Reading Rachmaninov's letters and memories, one can assume probable reasons of his silence in composition. He describes himself as not being able to do different things at the same period of time. For him a double life, in other words, the dual activity was not manageable: "If I play, I cannot compose, if I compose, I do not want to play..."⁶⁷ "Perhaps it is that I am lazy; perhaps the incessant practice and eternal rush inseparable from life as a concert artist takes too much toll of my strength; perhaps I feel that the kind of music I care to write is not acceptable today. And perhaps my true reason for adopting the life of an interpreter rather than that of a creator in recent years is none of these."⁶⁸

The composer himself is giving us a few possible causes among which we should deepen into his feelings about others' attitude towards his music. Modernist musical critics regarded it as "old-fashioned", backward,⁶⁹ going against the modern music era. Rachmaninov was aware of criticism of his music. He pondered over the contradictory attitude of musicologists and concert audience, and once he noticed that the musicians and critics always aspired "to eat him", however, the audience always and everywhere treated him with the amazing warmth.⁷⁰ Perhaps this kind of a negative attitude and critique subconsciously suspended his compositional process, made him too careful to write his music?

Rachmaninov himself never liked the modern music of his days and did not play it: "My taste is very conservative. I do not like modernism."⁷¹ "The new kind of music seems to come, not from the heart, but from the head. Its composers think rather than feel..."⁷² One thing is definite: he stayed true to himself, his musical values and his unique style.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 1:130 (translated by the author)

⁶⁸ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 26.

⁶⁹ A. Solovtsov, *Fortepiannye kontserty Rakhmaninova* (Moskva: Gos. muzykal'noe izd-vo, 1961), 13 (translated by the author)

⁷⁰ B. S. Nikitin, *Sergei Rachmaninov: Dve Zhizni* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Znanie", 1993), 4-5 (translated by the author)

⁷¹ Andreas Wehrmeyer, *Rakhmaninov* (London: Haus, 2004), 105.

⁷² Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 351.

Undeniably, one can discuss other reasons for Rachmaninov's silence in composition and overall the fact that in his foreign life after the immigration he composed only six original works. Some musicologists wrote about his post-emigration depression in addition to his intense concertizing life as factors of the hiatus from composition for many years. Others were convincingly affirming that Rachmaninov lost his inspiration after leaving his motherland. In Soviet Russia before the World War II Rachmaninov was perceived controversially. The official attitude to his persona was negative for a long time, and the main reason was his emigration. For instance, Soviet scholars generally tended to see Rachmaninov's leaving Russia as a heavy mistake and even a catastrophe for the composer's creative art. They based their point of view on the fact that for the quarter century Rachmaninov spent in a foreign land, he composed so much less than for the previous years in Russia. Some biographies ended his life's presentation in Russia, only covering until 1917. Even some of his relatives and friends who remained in Russia, in their memoirs only reached until 1917, and considered Rachmaninov's leaving abroad as a mistake, or they thought that he had not understood the revolution. Those who truly knew the true matter of things modestly supported the general opinion, because it was impossible to take another position at that time.⁷³

According to the Soviet musicologist Keldysh, Rachmaninov "stayed forever a voluntary exile, bereft of the soil and close environment, outside of which he felt lost and homeless."⁷⁴ Another Soviet author Solovtsov believed the reasons of the silence and creative block lay deeper than Rachmaninov's concertizing career intruding his compositional activity. Solovtsov reasons his opinion even further, that while living in Russia, Rachmaninov concertized a lot, but it did not prevent him to create his best works. The musicologist concludes: "The great Russian artist who

⁷³ B. S. Nikitin, *Sergeĭ Rachmaninov: Dve Zhizni* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Znanie", 1993), 9 (translated by the author)

⁷⁴ Ī. Keldysh, *Rakhmaninov i Ego Vremĭa* (Moskva: "Muzyka", 1973), 431 (translated by the author)

in his creative activity with strong threads is connected with his country, cannot leave his motherland without punishment.”⁷⁵

Some of these strong biased opinions could have been supported with Rachmaninov’s own thoughts: “Leaving Russia, I lost the desire to compose. Losing my motherland, I lost myself. For the exile who lost the musical roots, traditions and native soil, there leaves no desire to create, and no other consolations except for the unbreakable silence of his undisturbed memories.”⁷⁶

Truly, Rachmaninov was longing for his motherland. He dearly missed the Russian soil, yearned for the beloved Russian nature. He had his mother, relatives and friends left behind in Russia many of whom, sadly, he would not see again...

In his foreign life until his final days Rachmaninov would meet with Russian emigrants, friends and artists; only among Russians he would feel at ease and could have a complete rest for his soul. He always looked for hiring Russians, would have Russian chauffeurs, cooks and house servants. Russian meals were cooked in his house. Predominantly Russian doctors would treat him. He surrounded himself with Russian culture, loved reading Russian books, especially his favorite Chekhov. He closely followed up the new Russian literature in Russia and abroad, and also visited Russian lectures. “In a word, anything which bore the Russian imprint was always preferred by Sergei Vasilievich”, - writes Satina.⁷⁷

Rachmaninov helped very many people, familiar and unfamiliar, his family, relatives, acquaintances, colleagues, musicians and artists in Russia. The profits from his concerts would be transferred to the needs of Russian people, including Russian students in America, Russian charitable organizations, and would be sent in favor for hungry people in Russia. Rachmaninov

⁷⁵ A. Solovtsov, *Fortepiannye kontserty Rakhmaninova* (Moskva: Gos. muzykal’noe izd-vo, 1961), 5 (translated by the author)

⁷⁶ Sergei Rachmaninoff and Z. A. Apetian, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* (Moskva: Sov. kompozitor, 1978), 1:131 (translated by the author)

⁷⁷ Z. A. Apetian, *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:63 (translated by the author)

helped his fellow artists who toured in the USA.⁷⁸ Deeply worried for his homeland in the horrible days of the World War II, he, who hated advertising, organized and played a public concert in New York where all collected money he gave to charity for the Soviet army.

The contemporary author Nikitin strongly opposes to the one-sided opinions of the older Soviet authors. He objects to the view that leaving Russia, Rachmaninov stopped composing because he lost inspiration away from home, and secondly, because he would spend all his time concertizing. Although it seemed Rachmaninov's words above would prove this opinion, Nikitin thinks deeper, revealing that Rachmaninov spoke out so in 1934, paradoxically right before composing the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, and two years later creating his Third Symphony, two great masterpieces.⁷⁹ Nikitin continues remarking that it was convenient to talk about the crisis of the composer's oeuvre in the emigration based on Rachmaninov's quotation, while he opposes Rachmaninov's own words about the absence of desire to create just before the creation of his two phenomenal works.

Nikitin does not deny that after arriving at the United States, Rachmaninov concentrated all his energy to conquer an American stage, because it was clear for him by composing the serious music he would not earn for a good life, and he had the family, two daughters he adored, thought of and wanted to establish a strong base for their future. Despite all circumstances and visited at times "gloomy thoughts of an exile", Rachmaninov never stopped dreaming of the composition, and continued to write as soon as he could. In 1941 glancing at all his life in emigration Rachmaninov said: "To compose music for me is the same vital need as to breathe or eat: it is one of the necessary life functions. The permanent desire to write music is an existing

⁷⁸ Ibid, 1:63-65 (translated by the author)

⁷⁹ B. S. Nikitin, *Sergei Rachmaninov: Dve Zhizni* (Moskva: Izd-vo "Znanie", 1993), 138-139 (translated by the author)

thirst inside me to express my feelings by means of sounds, the same way as I speak in order to express my thoughts.”⁸⁰

S.A. Satina in her memoirs wrote: “To many, it seemed that Sergei Vasilievich’s talent for composition faded away. In reality it did not; mostly his concertizing, lack of time, and a wanderer’s life prevented him, but his desire to compose never faded. There was a struggle in him between the desire to continue performing, where he reached perfectionism, and the desire for creative activity.”⁸¹

In 1923 Rachmaninov wrote to Nikita Morozov: “... About my creative work I must answer as follows: whether from over-tiredness or lack of habit (it’s five years now since I worked on composition) I am not drawn to it or only rarely drawn. The latter happens when I think about the two large compositions of mine I began not long before leaving Russia. When I think of these, I long to finish them. This seems to be the only possible way of shifting me from this dead-lock. To begin something new seems to me unattainably difficult... So, your advice and new subjects will have to go for the time being into my portfolio and lie there until my ‘awakening’ or rebirth.”⁸² The Fourth concerto was one of those compositions Rachmaninov yearned to finish! One should realize this work’s huge importance since Rachmaninov’s way back to composition happened through and thanks to this concerto and his desire to continue and finish this composition.

In 1924 Rachmaninov replied to Medtner’s question why he would not compose: “How can I compose,” ...“when there is no melody? ...“When I have not heard for so long the rustling of the rye and the wind in the birches...”⁸³ These words speak for themselves, how much Rachmaninov missed those images of the Russian nature and how important they were for his

⁸⁰ Ibid, 140 (translated by the author)

⁸¹ Z. A. Apetian, *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:87 (translated by the author)

⁸² Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 296.

⁸³ N. Bazhanov, *Rachmaninov* (Moscow: Raduga, 1983), 271.

compositional creativity. The following year Medtner stated that Rachmaninov played for him various fragments of the new concerto.⁸⁴

In 1925 August became tragic for Rachmaninov's family - his daughter Irina's husband passed away, before their baby's birth. The death of his beloved son-in-law deeply affected Rachmaninov. That summer Rachmaninov founded a publishing company and named it *TAIR*, after his daughters' names (their names' first two letters): Tatiana and Irina. *TAIR* was created to publish Russian works and "became the European publisher of Rachmaninoff's later works and transcriptions for the piano"⁸⁵, including his Fourth concerto.

After seven vigorous years of concertizing, Rachmaninov decided to cut the 1925-26 season short in order to devote himself to composition. Rachmaninov's sister-in-law recollects about that short season when he performed only 22 recitals (from 29 October to 11 December), after which he did not concertize for a year, a period from January 1926 - January 1927.⁸⁶ The composer's 'rebirth' finally happens in 1926: his Fourth concerto that he yearned to finish would come to life! He worked on it in his New York apartment, and finished it in Dresden. The Fourth concerto's "manuscript score is dated 'January - 25 August [1926] New York - Dresden'."⁸⁷

In a letter to the concerto's dedicatee Medtner from September 9, 1926 Rachmaninov wrote that he received "Klavierauszug" of his new concerto, and was "horrified" at its length of 110 pages.⁸⁸ In this letter Rachmaninov shares his thoughts and concerns:

"Out of cowardice I haven't yet tried it for time. It will probably be performed like 'The Ring' on several evenings in succession. I recalled my conversations with you on the theme of

⁸⁴ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 299.

⁸⁵ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 240.

⁸⁶ Z. A. Apetian, *Vospominaniia o Rakhmaninove* (Moskva: Muzyka, 1988), 1:72 (translated by the author)

⁸⁷ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 254.

⁸⁸ Sergei Rachmaninoff and Z. A. Apetian, *Literaturnoe Nasledie* (Moskva: Sov. kompozitor, 1980), 2:197 (translated by the author)

length and the need to cut down, compress, and not to be long-winded, and I was ashamed! Apparently the whole trouble is in the last movement. I've heaped up something there! In my mind I've already begun to track down cuts. I've found one, but only of eight bars in all and that in the first movement, which is the one which has not scared me by its length. Moreover, I have already spotted that the orchestra is almost never silent, which I consider a big fault. That means that it is not a piano concerto but a concerto for piano and orchestra. I also noticed that the theme of the second movement is the theme of the first movement of Schumann's concerto. How is it that you didn't tell me this?"⁸⁹ Medtner did not agree with Rachmaninov's opinions about the concerto and its length: "...Actually, your concerto amazed me by the fewness of its pages, considering its importance..."⁹⁰

The Fourth concerto was premiered on 18 March 1927 in Philadelphia, Rachmaninov soloing and Stokowski conducting.⁹¹ Another new work, the Three Russian Folk Songs for chorus and orchestra, which the composer completed in autumn of 1926, was also presented at this concert. On March 22, the New York audience heard Rachmaninov's new works.⁹²

The new concerto received unfair, harsh, negative criticism. One reviewer unjustly described the concerto as "long-winded, tiresome, unimportant, in places tawdry", and referred it to "super-salon music".⁹³ Even the composer's friend Alfred Swan was not positive about it: "The opening movement ... is able only to revive some of the images of the past and hold them together by a tried technique ... a lack of spontaneity is felt in this concerto" (writing this in 1944, after Rachmaninov's passing).⁹⁴ Some critics attacked the work labeling it as the nineteenth

⁸⁹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 299.

⁹⁰ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 246.

⁹¹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 299.

⁹² Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 247-248.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 249-250.

⁹⁴ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 255.

century's piece.⁹⁵ For the sensitive composer who had had a terrible experience of the catastrophic premiere of his Symphony No.1 (in 1897)⁹⁶, such harsh critical evaluation of his new concerto had to be painful, with certain consequences. From the following Rachmaninov's letter to his friend Yuli Conus, one can only guess if Rachmaninov was actually pondering to stop composing: "It is a wise arrangement that death clears away the older generation, making way for the young. Just think what might happen otherwise, what uproar and unpleasantness! The old must retire to one side and be content with each other and ponder the mistakes of their youth."⁹⁷

Many Soviet musicologists as well as some Western scholars considered the Fourth concerto as a weak work, and weaker than the Second and Third concertos, and many of those authors blamed this on Rachmaninov's detachment from his motherland. Yuriy Keldysh in his book did not review and excluded the Fourth concerto and other compositions written after Rachmaninov's emigration, covering only the works he composed until 1917.

John Culshaw, one of the Western authors about Rachmaninov, called the Fourth concerto the weakest of Rachmaninov's concertos. "It shows the composer in an uncertain state of mind. There are certain stylistic changes which reveal something of the bitterness and harshness that is apparent in the later Third Symphony, but Rachmaninov seems to be in an interim stage... The Fourth Concerto shows Rachmaninov writing more in the style of an improviser than a genuine composer."⁹⁸

On the other hand, the Fourth concerto had great supporters in Rachmaninov's time, for instance, "George Gershwin admired it".⁹⁹ Hofmann after hearing it expressed his thoughts in a letter to Rachmaninov: "... I like your new concerto extremely well. Although it seemed to me

⁹⁵ N. Bazhanov, *Rachmaninov* (Moscow: Raduga, 1983), 274.

⁹⁶ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 96.

⁹⁷ N. Bazhanov, *Rachmaninov* (Moscow: Raduga, 1983), 275.

⁹⁸ John Culshaw, *Sergei Rachmaninov* (London: D. Dobson, 1949), 92.

⁹⁹ Andreas Wehrmeyer, *Rakhmaninov* (London: Haus, 2004), 103.

that it would be rather difficult to play with an orchestra; particularly because of its frequent metric changes. I sincerely hope that this won't be an obstacle to other performances of the concerto. It certainly deserves them from a musical as well as a pianistic point of view!"¹⁰⁰

In summer of 1927 Rachmaninov revised the concerto: "After 1 ½ months of hard work I have finished the corrections to my concerto... The first twelve pages have been rewritten, as also the whole coda."¹⁰¹ The self-critical composer cut 114 bars in his first revision. Then in 1941 he returned to the concerto once more and reduced additional 78 bars. This time he mainly focused on the third movement and revised the concerto's orchestration.¹⁰² On October 17, 1941 Rachmaninov played his revised concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Ormandy conducting. The critics' reactions were unwelcoming once again. "The revision, which is extensive, was made last summer and yesterday's performance was the concerto's first anywhere in its present form. It turned out to be nobly-meant and darkly romantic music, somewhat fragmentary in shape and typically Rachmaninovian in spirit. And, with all due respect to the great artist who wrote it, and for all its fine pianism, a trifle dull..."¹⁰³ Even though the composer made revisions two times by reducing the length and editing other details, unfortunately, the Fourth concerto did not gain better success.

Rachmaninov performed his Fourth concerto 19 times: 12 performances of the original version and 7 - of the revised version.¹⁰⁴ His last performance of the concerto was his exquisite recording of its final version in December 1941.¹⁰⁵ One of the best interpretations of the Fourth concerto is assuredly by magnificent Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli who also played the 1941

¹⁰⁰ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 248.

¹⁰¹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 300.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime In Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 367.

¹⁰⁴ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 395.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 300.

version. In 2001 Alexander Ghindin with Vladimir Ashkenazy conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra performed and recorded the original manuscript version of 1926 (the first recording),¹⁰⁶ bringing it back to audiences after so many years. Thankfully, the original uncut version has been published and revived.

Sergei Rachmaninov's Third and Fourth piano concertos are separated by seventeen years, of which eight were a complete hiatus from composition. As we already know, the Fourth concerto was the first work to be written after the long break from composition. It is very significant to look how the composer's writing had changed after such a big gap. The fact that he was living in the new country away from his beloved homeland, and that he was only performing and came back to composition after so many years of silence, must have brought a new wave in his art, something had to be changed. Max Harrison notes: "Even if aspects of Concerto No.4 had their roots in his Russian life it was written mainly in New York, finished in Western Europe and the composer, as a sensitive and intelligent man, had naturally been affected by the sights and sounds of the country in which he had chiefly lived for several years. The romantic haze had gone forever".¹⁰⁷

In the next chapter we begin our exciting journey to the 'hearts' of these concertos, their unfolding music, and we will unveil many different aspects of these works. After absorbing the composer's biographical and historical context surrounding these works, now we will discover the musical lives of these concertos, and will endeavor to juxtapose these two beautiful 'ships'!

¹⁰⁶ Sergei Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 40: Original Version, 1926*, full score (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2003), Publisher's note.

¹⁰⁷ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 255.

CHAPTER 2: FIRST MOVEMENTS OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH CONCERTOS

Expositions of no.3 and no.4's First movements

First themes

The orchestral accompaniment begins the Third concerto, *Allegro ma non tanto*. These beginning two measures contain an essential seed for the First theme: three notes D-F-E foreshadow the theme. Amazingly, this intervallic motive is not an only important element of this orchestral introduction - its rhythmic figure of the bass comprises a crucial kernel for the entire work. The Second theme's first element opens with this rhythmic figure. The development is penetrated with this rhythmic motto. Moreover, the opening notes in the bass (D-A-D) literally come back at the beginning of the Finale in addition to being based on this dotted leitmotif, in both orchestra and the piano's main theme. "The themes of the first movement reappear in the second and third, and the dotted rhythmic motto which sets the work in motion is a unifying factor throughout."¹ Further, we will trace the influence of this rhythmic value overall in the cycle, and also we will draw a chain for the main themes and their appearances and transformations in the other movements.

The First theme (*commodo*) is a beautiful long melody lasting for 24 measures. The octave unison of the piano solo is unfolding through a gradual intervallic expansion. First, the melody is based on stepwise and circular motion surrounding the center note D, which intensifies the feeling of the home key. When the melody reaches G, it is the first interval of the fourth. In measure 12 there is a surprising twist - II flat - E flat orbited in C minor harmony. Serving as a passing note here, it comes back later on the downbeat that gives more importance to it. And at

¹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 210.

the end of the theme E flat is reminded once more: it sadly hangs on the weakest beat for two beats, the second beat being the tied downbeat of the next measure. The theme reaches B flat, after which slides back and gradually returns to the tonic D, creating a beautiful arch shape for the overall melodic picture.

This endless melody is a real song, which could be sung by the singer: it is natural for a voice with its stepwise melodiousness and gradual accumulation of the higher notes. According to the musicologist Josef Yasser, the First theme has roots in an "...Orthodox Church chant sung in the Pecherskaya Lavra (Monastery of the Caves) in Kiev."² However, Rachmaninov said: "the theme was borrowed neither from folk song forms nor from church sources. It simply wrote itself! ... If I had any plan in composing this theme, I was thinking only of sound. I wanted "to sing" the melody on the piano as a singer would sing it, and to find a suitable orchestral accompaniment or one that would not muffle this "singing". That is all!"³

The theme's harmonies help the melody to create a genuine sad soulful song. The tonic is reinforced with shifts to the dominant and back; we also hear C minor, G minor and a glimpse of poignant B flat major. The dynamics of the theme starts with the ingenuous *p* and does not go beyond *mf*. The singing style and legato makes this theme especially sincere and genuine. The orchestra repeats the theme while the piano develops complex pianistic figurations enriched with melodic motifs.

The Fourth concerto's *Allegro vivace (Alla breve)* starts in the orchestra as well, which within six bars grows from *p* crescendo to *f* and *sf*, and followed by the First theme. Like carrying a glorious torch it marches through *pesante*. Noticeably, the composer gave specific instructions for both themes, exactly above the piano solo: in the Third concerto is *commodo* (comfortable), and in the Fourth concerto marks *pesante* (heavy). The Fourth concerto's First theme has a

² Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), 115.

³ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 211.

singing quality but closer to the declamation, and consists of the beautiful chords while the orchestra has the active triplets. The melody extends for long 16 bars (plus 16 bars of the second time varied version of the theme). Martyn draws a line between a certain element of the main theme and a phrase from *Vocalise*: this similarity would support a belief that the Fourth concerto's opening was conceived around the same time as *Vocalise* was written, in 1914.⁴

The chordal texture of the main theme of the Fourth concerto reinforced with the *forte* dynamics is richer and fuller in comparison with the simple octave unison theme in *piano* dynamics of the Third concerto. In contrast to the Third concerto First theme's section where the orchestra repeats the main theme after the soloist, in the Fourth concerto the orchestra does not reiterate the theme, but the soloist plays a slightly different version of the theme.

While in the Third concerto the D minor tonic is established from the beginning, in the Fourth concerto one cannot identify the G minor tonic as an anchor for a long time. The orchestral opening has a rhythmic ascending line consisting of D major triads for four bars, and then introducing the C minor, and on this harmonic setting the First theme is presented by the piano. G minor is heard for the first time in measure 9 but it is a passing chord in the long melody. When the theme finishes on the suspension – D major, we could technically refer it as a dominant chord of G minor but still not feel the G minor tonic. When the theme is repeated the second time the chords change, somewhat giving a feeling of the tonic key, in particular, in measures 29-30, the dominant chord sharply leans toward G minor, and so for a split moment we recognize the home key.

The sense of a tonality is uncertain; one even might not tell whether the theme is in minor or major key since it has many major chords: A flat major, E flat major, D flat major. The beginning of the concerto starts in D major, and the theme finishes in D major with suspension,

⁴ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 300.

this creates the organic harmonic arch, though not establishing the concerto's home key. On the other hand, in the Third Concerto the organic harmonic arch linking the beginning and the ending of the theme gives a solid sense of the home key, there, D minor is a magnet and gravity center.

We can see that the Third concerto's primary theme mostly have minor keys with only one B flat major at the top of the phrase, versus the various major keys in the Fourth concerto's theme that give major 'flavor' in the ambiguous G minor. We could perhaps describe that the minor keys' dominance in the Third concerto's theme creates the sad song, whereas intertwined with major keys the ambiguous minor makes the Fourth concerto's theme somewhat nostalgic.

The melodic line of no.4's First theme has much broader expansion than in no.3's main theme. It ascends to the top A and then descends to A two octaves lower, thus, the melodic line covers a range of two octaves, while the First theme in the *Allegro ma non tanto* weaves the melodic line within the octave. Along with the differences described above, we can track similarities: both First themes have a general big outline of the phrase - an arch shape, with climbing the tops and descending. In the Fourth concerto the peak of the phrase is reached much sooner, at the beginning part, and then the theme gradually slides back down, whereas in the Third concerto the peak is achieved slowly and towards the end of the theme. The ending of the theme in no.4 is descending chromatic for three measures, having one lingering syncopated offbeat D flat on the weakest fourth beat of the measure and the following tied downbeat. Looking at the ending of the theme in no.3, we can hear a beautifully vague resemblance in the melodic line and rhythm: the descending slightly chromatic line and lingering E flat on the weakest fourth (also!) offbeat followed by the held downbeat. In both times the suspended fourth beats are unexpected notes and harmonies, and both are lowered flat pitches.

5

dim.

mf *p*

poco rit. *a tempo*

Example 1. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, First theme's ending

mf *p*

Example 2. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, First theme's ending

The differences of the orchestral accompaniments for the First themes in no.3 and no.4 perfectly support the soloist's emergence and the themes' characters. The Third concerto opens with only two measures of the repeated figurations, consisting of two elements: one element,

melodic, played by the violins and violas *con sordino* and another, rhythmic element played by timpani, clarinets, bassoons, cellos *con sordino* and bass *pizzicato*. The soft dynamics combine with the clear rhythm, and this accompaniment stays in one firm motion. In the Fourth concerto the opening six measures depict a different picture: the orchestra grows dynamically and harmonically, as well as in numbers: instruments join (oboes in the second measure, flutes crescendo in the following measure). This *tutti* buildup on D major, like the stairs to the sky, reaches its own peak shifting to C minor and reinforcing this sudden harmonic change on *sf* and *ff*. We can boldly speak that this concerto's orchestral introduction is active and dynamic. One might not even call it as an accompaniment because of the growing energy and the mini apex within a short interval of time.

The orchestral beginning of the Fourth concerto is rhythmically important for the whole work. The energetically intense triplets urge the rest of the 'engine'. The first movement is woven with the triplet figurations: the Second theme, Development, moreover, in the climax (in C major) the piano's triplets are transformed into the expressive augmented note values. Further, in the second movement the main rhythmic values are triplets. In the Finale the D flat major section (*Al tempo meno mosso*) is consisted of triplets. And lastly, Rachmaninov brings back the musical material of the opening in the section *L'istesso tempo* of the last movement: the orchestral introduction of the first movement rises up once again towards the end of the composition (there in C major). Rachmaninov ambiguously hides and magically sows the rhythmic seed right at the beginning of the work, in the orchestral energetic accompaniment, and it is one of the crucial unifying factors for the cycle.

The importance of the orchestral introduction in terms of the rhythmic figuration perhaps more obviously appears in the Third concerto. Besides, not only the rhythmic influence but also the melodic / motivic impact is huge and astounding. As a reminder, the Third concerto's theme is grown from the initial motif in the orchestra (D-F-E). The dotted rhythmic leitmotif of the beginning in no.3 passes through the whole first movement: the Second theme is based on this

rhythmic motif, which creates a different emotional mood for the first element of the Second theme. In the Development this motto plays an important role in building up the momentum and climax. Furthermore, this dotted rhythmic motto penetrates the Finale: starting from the beginning till the end and marking victorious D major climax of the Finale and of the whole Third concerto. Rachmaninov masterfully and brilliantly created the ‘simple-looking’ orchestral accompaniment of the Third concerto’s beginning, consciously or subconsciously generating the rhythmic ‘denominator’ of the whole work.

Needless to say, all these factors, which are discussed above: harmonic, textural, melodic, dynamical and orchestral, depict completely different emotional characters of the First themes in the Third and Fourth concertos’ *Allegros*. The Third concerto’s theme is the beautiful genuine lyrical heartfelt song, perhaps with notes of nostalgic feeling, whereas the Fourth concerto’s theme resembles a dramatic declamation with the various shades of emotions such as will, belief in victory, inspiration, hope and nostalgia.

Transitions

The transition between the First and Second themes in no.4’s *Allegro* structurally and texturally different from the transition section between those themes in no.3’s *Allegro*. First of all, no.4’s transition is smaller and does not have a cadenza; two measures of the orchestral silence and the piano solo improvisation at the transition’s beginning is not regarded as cadential. Meanwhile, no.3’s transition is bigger, longer, and could be divided into 4 sections: *Piu vivo*, *Allegro*, solo cadenza (first mini cadenza of the movement) and orchestral *Moderato*. In the *Allegro* section an important element emerges in the orchestra: a fanfare motif, which forecasts the Second theme. After the brilliant cadenza (*veloce*), which covers almost the entire keyboard, the orchestra plays a variant of the First theme with the tempo change to *Moderato*.

In no.4’s transition we can make a link with the concerto’s First theme although it is more subtle and can be easily missed or misheard: the ascending scales in the woodwind

instruments solo (C. Ang., Cl. and Fl.) as well as in the piano most likely flow out from the main theme. Fascinatingly, at first, the solo English horn plays the ascending scale in eighths notes, and then before the Second theme's arrival the same English horn presents it in quarter notes (the same as the First theme's note value):



Example 3. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, Transition, solo English horn

Example 4. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, Transition before the Second theme, solo English horn

Rachmaninov masterfully integrates the main theme in the transition, almost dissolves it, through speeding-up note values: eighths and sixteenths.

The piano silences before the Second theme in both no.3 and no.4, only in the former the orchestral narration expands for longer (12 measures) than in the latter which is just three measures of a little 'bridge'. In the orchestral 'bridge' in no.4 there is a delicate glimpse of the First theme's ending, its chromatic descending line.



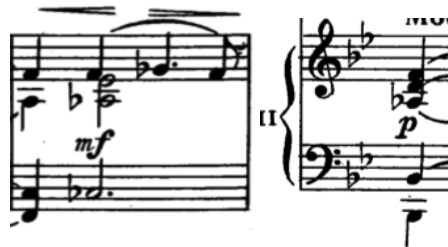
Example 5. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, before the Second theme



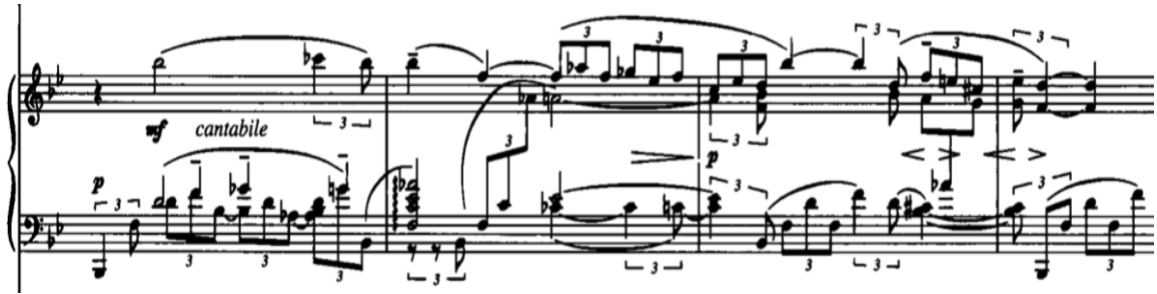
Example 6. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, First theme's ending

In comparison to this, in no.3's orchestral *Moderato* the First theme comes through more obviously by means of a varied melody where the intervallic pitches of the theme slightly changed but rhythmically precisely reproduced the theme's first measure. This version of the main theme embraces the lower strings and bassoons. In both movements Rachmaninov links the orchestral 'bridges' to the First themes, although in different ways.

Going deeper, we find how brilliantly Rachmaninov sets not only no.4 First theme's beginning (the ascending line) and the ending (the descending line) in the last seven measures before the Second theme, but goes even beyond when in the last measure before the Second theme the solo horn foreshadows the Second theme's first measure.



Example 7. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, before the Second theme



Example 8. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, Second theme

“...As in the Third Concerto, the arrival of the second theme is neatly heralded, here by presentiments on cor-anglais and horn.”⁵ These seven measures create a truly beautiful refined channel connecting the First and Second themes. In no.3, as mentioned earlier, the *Allegro* section of the transition, with clarinets and horn first and oboes and trumpet second, bring the fanfare motif that heralds the upcoming Second theme, subconsciously preparing or ‘teasing’ our ears beforehand. This is forward-looking and magnificent.

Example 9. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, Transition’s *Allegro*, the fanfare motif

⁵ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scholar Press, 1990), 300-301.

rhythmic motto. Thus, although the movement's two themes are contrasted, the one grows organically from the other."⁷

There are two elements / subjects of the Second theme, which are different in character, but directly linked with the same melodic line. The first element of the theme is a marvelous integration of two figures from earlier, the rhythmic motto of the concerto's beginning and the fanfare motif from the transition. The playful charming conversation between the orchestra and piano continues for 14 bars, and mainly dances around the B flat major and F major. The second element of the Second theme, evolved from the playful march subject, could be seen as a true Second theme - it starts purely in the solo piano and sings for four measures, and then the instruments join and duet with the piano. What a great transformation of moods Rachmaninov invented using the same thematic seed: from the dancing march to the beautiful expressive warm poetry. The lyrical theme has the *espressivo* marking, and it is a long endless melody for 18 measures after which the piano texture becomes fuller.

When we enter the Second theme's world in the Fourth concerto, Rachmaninov changes the tempo from *Allegro vivace* to *Moderato*; also the meter becomes 4/4. The theme in B flat major features an exotic sounding mode, with its lingering C flat and unusual for B flat major – A flat and G flat. This theme is lyrical, pondering and improvisatory sounding, with notes of melancholy, at moments nostalgic, perhaps with a hint of longing. In addition to all these emotions, the 'stranger' notes in B flat major and ornamented patterns could depict some distant exotic tale or rather a dream. The embellished ending of the theme could convey a gypsy improvisatory 'aroma'.

This theme has intricate voices with the braided-in middle voice. The chromatic and descending lines vaguely echo the 'tail' of the concerto's First theme. The 10-bar long theme has

⁷ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 211.

the *cantabile* marking. The theme's beginning is reminiscent of Rachmaninov's Prelude op.32 No.7 (1910).⁸



Example 11. Rachmaninov, Prelude op.32 No.7

In contrast to the Second theme of no.3, here there is only one subject of the theme, which later is unfolded into a slightly different variant of the theme: Rachmaninov moves to G major so smoothly where the soloist plays the chords in triplets and two desks of cellos carry the melodic line (with other instruments continuing). It is like a breeze of fresh air, lovely, warm and dreamy. Shortly after, the tender G flat major in *pianissimo* makes this sweet dream dreamier.

Rachmaninov chose B flat major key for his Second themes in both concertos. So it makes even more breathtaking to compare those themes back to back. (In no.3 the B flat major key selection for the Second theme is the VI major in D minor while in no.4 is the relative major for G minor.) The Third concerto's Second theme (lyrical part) sounds smoother, steadier and clearer in terms of harmonic and melodic / modal arrangements as well as more consistent with the flow than the Fourth concerto's Second theme. In the former the harmonies are diatonic with some passing minor keys, and the dominant sevenths of B flat major and then of E flat major stretch for many bars and lead the theme to E flat major.

⁸ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scholar Press, 1990), 301.

In no.4's Second theme the harmonic essence seems capricious mainly because of the 'foreign' and chromatic melodic notes. Although to our surprise, we find that B flat becomes like an anchored pedal point throughout ten measures of the theme. Interestingly, we also discover the pedal points in no.3's area of the Second theme: F (V of B flat) for five measures, B flat for four measures, then E flat for seven measures in the theme's development.

The beautifully chromatic 'knitting' of no.4's Second theme, flickering 'spicy' notes and 'flirting' pauses within the theme create capricious ambiguity and improvisatory narration. One can hear how the key of B flat major is embodied differently in the Second themes' worlds of two concertos.

The melodic line in no.3's *espressivo* Second theme is more diatonic and pure comparing to its corresponding theme in no.4. Already the second note (C flat in B flat major) in no.4's theme strikes you with its yearning quality, à la Phrygian element, and the following notes sketch the minor mode until C and D natural appear, at which point we cannot make a total claim for neither minor or major key, more likely inclining towards the major key, with the minor and Phrygian 'flavor'. And the rest of the theme, soaked with chromaticism, complicates the picture with major-minor exchange or ambiguous modes. We do not encounter such 'blue' notes' sophistication in no.3's Second theme, which mostly sings on the diatonic 'correct' pitches of the key. Furthermore, the *cantabile* Second theme of no.4 is interlaced with the embellished quality of the melody and even has the fast ornamented, highly chromatic pattern, in opposition to the absence of such decorations in the *espressivo* theme of no.3.

The circular motion of the melody and a broad diversity of its intervals as well as syncopations enrich the melodic line of the Third concerto's Second theme. Its shape is well balanced, picturing wavy 'tides' striving up and gliding back and forth via syncopated sequences. In contrast, in no.4's Second theme the melodic outline starts at the top and gradually climbs down or slides down, and embraces back the top B flat, after which it seems drawing two separate ornamented weaves.

Another difference of melodic assets of both themes is that the *espressivo* theme of no.3 is long and endless, confluent and without pauses, whereas in no.4 the Second theme overall is shorter and has dividing pauses within itself.

As far for the piano textures of the Second themes, no.3's *espressivo* and no.4's *cantabile*, the considerable difference is in their structure's consistency and clarity of voices. The melody on the top, sixteenth notes' flow in the middle and the expressive melodic bass line create a beautifully proportioned three-part structure in the *espressivo* theme, and it pours throughout the theme with a very slight variation of the bass line that becomes melodically less active. On the other hand, the triplets' figurations in no.4's *cantabile* theme permeate all voices, sometimes contouring the harmonic line and other times continuing the melodic line. The voices are more intertwined there. Wavering three and four voices at times are not clearly separated from the melodic line; and all this create a sensation of elusiveness.

Certainly we should mention that the piano texture in both cases alters throughout the Second theme's sections. In the Third concerto from the three-part 'song without words' the soloist later enhances the range, enriched by the thicker chordal texture in both hands. Shades of imitative voices take turns with the flourishing and vivid passages of sixteenth notes. There are also decorating double notes in-between the sequential melodic octaves in the right hand while the left hand's triplets draw an accompaniment:

The image shows a musical score for Rachmaninov's Concerto no. 3, First movement, from the Exposition. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano texture with a 'poco a poco accel.' marking. The right hand plays a melodic line with triplets and double notes, while the left hand plays a triplet accompaniment. The score is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and includes fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) and slurs.

Example 12. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, from the Exposition

In the Fourth concerto's Second theme the lighter texture is imbued with the polyphonic duets after which follows the floating chordal writing. The contrasting shift happens in the next section *Allegro assai*: the scalar runs singly in the right hand change to rapidly altering textures, including the hemiola 'roll call' of both hands, unison sixteenth notes, poking chords of both hands and the right hand's fast florid notes with jazzy offbeat chords of the left hand.

Example 13. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, from the Exposition

Both Second themes (no.3's *espressivo* and no.4's *cantabile*) start with the solo piano for four bars, and then are joined by instruments; in both themes chamber duets with the soloist emerge. In no.3 these are the solo bassoon, then solo horn and later solos oboe and clarinet. The Third concerto's first element of the Second theme (the orchestra - piano dialogue) begins with the strings, and then woodwinds with horns play the fanfare motif.

In no.4 after the strings accompanying, an oboe duets with the piano, and the Cor Anglais continues that duet. In the modulated G major two desks of cellos and bassoons warm our souls. Then they pass the motif of the theme to two desks of violas with a horn. In G flat major shift two

desks of the first violins combine with an oboe. As we observe, in both concertos' Second themes we submerge into the beautiful orchestration.

If we trace the Second themes' territories in both concertos in terms of the form and size, we realize that the Third concerto has a bigger section, with two elements of the theme, going through a few tempo changes, diverse piano texture as well as the dynamics' evolution. The big picture shows a dynamic arch: $p \rightarrow ff \rightarrow p$. On the Second theme's territory we also find a mini cadenza (before *Tempo precedente, ma un poco piu mosso*).

However, the Second theme's section in no.4 is more compact and shorter than in no.3 (twice shorter: 36 measures versus 73 measures). It does not have any kind of a cadenza. The dynamic plan fluctuates between *mf, f, p, pp*; in the *Allegro assai* the *ff* 'explosion' on a weak beat passes too swiftly like a quick lightening, and the rhythmic accents on *forte* run by in a bustling rush. Therefore, we do not hear a real continued climax here like we do in the Second theme's section of no.3. It is rather a climactic flash that flares up and rapidly extinguishes or washes away.

The Second theme's world in no.4 turns to a very contrasting following section with the tempo change to *Allegro assai*; the Second theme is clearly separated from it. This definitely stands out in comparison to no.3's case where there is no harsh change, so we would not differentiate another contrasting section within the Exposition of the Second theme. Actually, on the contrary, no.3's *espressivo* theme 'shines' through an altered variation towards the end of the Exposition (unlike the new turn of events in no.4's). The Second theme's material is melodically and motivically developed in no.3's Exposition and generally stays in the close range of emotional states, of course with two elements of the theme being different. The dotted rhythm of the first element 'peeks in' somewhere. Meanwhile, in no.4's Exposition one could label the *Allegro assai* section as something different - as a closing transition, for instance, - since the mood is new, totally altered to agitated, scherzo-like and abrupt, with the harsh direct intonations. One can imagine that it is like a sudden wakening from a dream.

From the first sight it seems that the *Allegro assai* section brings a totally new material, but fascinatingly, its main leaping ninth motif – the four-note motto (played by the solo bassoon first, then by the trumpet) is derived from the Second theme’s beginning!

Example 14. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, Exposition’s *Allegro assai*, the leaping motif

In fact, in the *Allegro assai* the Second theme is not recognizable, only its element turns into a short but imperative motif, which is developed here in the Exposition. And furthermore, this motif takes part in the Development of the movement and also will return in the concerto’s Finale in a new transformed ‘face’ and various shapes. Thus, this motif plays an important role in the whole cycle as one of the unifying factors.

Now let us take a closer look at the linking measures of both Expositions to their Developments. In no.3 after the piano’s brilliant passage the orchestra takes the lead, playing the main dotted rhythm of the beginning and smoothly modulating from B flat major to the home key of D minor. Rachmaninov uses the main rhythmic motto to connect the end of the Exposition with the beginning of the Development section. In no.4 the piano’s florid passage of sixteenth notes flows and melts into the tonic G minor (*perdendo* marking in the piano – fading away / dying away), where the Development starts to ‘boil’ (*Tempo come prima (Alla breve)*). One can

find the merging of two sections more organic and somewhat anticipated in the Third concerto whereas more unexpected and definitely not prepared in the Fourth.

Development sections of no.3 and no.4's First movements

Comparing the Development sections of both first movements, we will trace important aspects like what material Rachmaninov uses and how. We will also look for and track any similar characteristics and evident dissimilarities. Another task includes discovering and witnessing climaxes as well as defining their importance.

The beginning of the Development in the Third concerto brings back the First theme in D minor in the piano, the orchestra accompanying, but the theme soon alters, surprising us with the C natural in the melody (instead of C sharp) and modulates to C minor, then to B flat major. On the other hand, the orchestra starts the Fourth concerto's Development, also in the tonic key G minor, although there we do not hear the First theme's beginning but only a certain melodic motif of the theme in the orchestra and flourishing ornamented response in the solo piano.

The First theme is the core of the intense thematic development in the Third concerto. Only at the beginning of the Development the First theme (its beginning) is heard like in the Exposition, later in the Development it loses the clear melodic contours but its separate partial inflections are transformed in many ways. Another important aspect of the Development in no.3's *Allegro* is the First theme's firm dynamic rhythm – the rhythmic motto passing through the orchestra and piano (to a lesser degree). Increasing anxiety follows the calmness of the Development's beginning. The tempo gradually speeds up towards the climax: "...the development section, one long crescendo and accelerando..."⁹ The *Piu mosso*, where the melodic and rhythmic material of the First theme is used, goes to the *Piu vivo* with the soloist playing an

⁹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 211.

elaborated variation of the main theme. In the following dramatic *Allegro* we recognize the rhythm of the First theme in the orchestra; their stern energetic chords clash with the angrily protesting chords of the piano. The agitation and tension reach the climax in the *Allegro molto Alla breve*. The tragic climax of the Development as if cries out of the relentless power of doom. The ominous basses, formidable exclamations of the brass and impetuous despaired *martellato* of the piano, diminished harmony and *fff* dynamics create this turbulent picture. Here the dotted rhythm of the main theme in the orchestra pursues in a slightly modified way as if declaring the fate.

20 *Allegro molto. Alla breve.*

The image shows a musical score for the climax of the Development section of Rachmaninov's Concerto no. 3, First movement. The score is in 2/4 time and features a piano part with a dotted rhythm and a string part with a similar dotted rhythm. The piano part is marked 'fff molto marcato' and the string part is marked 'ff molto marcato'. The tempo is 'Allegro molto. Alla breve.'

Example 15. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, Development, climax

After the climax the 'high temperature' subsides, the piano texture abruptly changes to the counterpoint, and expressive 'sighs' sound in the orchestra and piano: those intervals of seconds are perhaps the shortest motivic use originating from the First theme.

Example 16.1. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, Development, 'sighs' in the orchestra

Example 16.2. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, Development, 'sighs' in the piano

Example 17. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, from the First theme

Rachmaninov wrote two versions of the Cadenza (*Allegro molto*) – originally written first is marked as *Ossia*, with the colossal chordal texture, and the second version is shorter, with the lighter texture, fast finger figurations and the toccata-like staccato. Both the majestic *Ossia* and vortex *Scherzando* fantastically and differently transform the First theme of the movement. By treating the main theme significantly differently in the cadenza's two versions, Rachmaninov created two completely diverse characters of the thematic conversion. Along with this, one could juxtapose the symphonic texture of the *Ossia* with the pianistic texture of the *Scherzando*. The *Ossia* cadenza is 16 bars longer than the lighter *Scherzando* version. Both cadenzas merge in their last half, sharing the same ending: the rich and thick texture with the biggest powerful avalanche of chords, perhaps reminding of the bell sounds, and reaching the triumphal climax in D major *fff*. Rachmaninov generously embraces almost the whole range of the keyboard registers.

The composer himself played the lighter cadenza, perhaps he was concerned with the overall form of the concerto in order to save the most powerful buildup and climax for the ending of the concerto and not to have a massively epic and dramatic peak already in the first movement? Horowitz who also played the *Scherzando* version advocated for the similar thought: “The alternative cadenza is like an ending in itself. It's not good to end the concerto before it's over!”¹⁰ Another hypothesis of Rachmaninov's selection of the shorter cadenza for the recording is based on “the necessity to fit the concerto conveniently on to 78 rpm records...”¹¹

Walter Gieseking and Van Cliburn are among the first pioneers who played the *Ossia* longer cadenza (1939 and 1958 respectively).¹²

The meaning and value of the outstanding Cadenza in the *Allegro*'s dramaturgy is huge, and goes much beyond the traditional demonstration of the pianistic virtuosity and mastery. One

¹⁰ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 212.

¹¹ Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), 118.

¹² Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 212.

could interpret it as a second wind of the Development with the second tremendous climax. Walker points at the first movement's "daring and highly successful formal innovation: ... an immense two-pronged development section – the first is with orchestra, but the second is the cadenza, the longest and most difficult in these works."¹³ Solovtsov emphasizes an important emotional role of the Cadenza: it leads us out from the troublous turmoil and tragically sorrowful sphere of characters reigning in the first part of the Development.¹⁴ Rachmaninov opposes the life-affirming triumph of light and exultation of the second climax to the tragedy of the first climax. The Cadenza's D major climax not only brings a great contrast to the dramatic climax of the Development but also envisages the whole outcome of the entire concerto. The glorious D major will win at the end of the cycle and journey, and the Cadenza's climax of the first movement sheds light on it and foresees the ending of this beautiful 'novel'.

Now let us turn our attention to the Fourth concerto: in the Development of the *Allegro vivace* the First theme receives further growth and transformation. The sudden appearance of the dark A flat minor in the piano's lower register in a slower tempo (*a tempo meno mosso...*) drastically changes the character and pace. One can distantly recall the First theme in the orchestra (played by soli horns and solo tuba) but it is a vague resemblance and more of a transformed character of the theme:

¹³ Robert Matthew-Walker, *Rachmaninoff: His Life and Times* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Midas Books, 1980), 66.

¹⁴ A. Solovtsov, *Fortepiannye kontserty Rakhmaninova* (Moskva: Gos. muzykal'noe izd-vo, 1961), 54 (translated by the author)

The image shows a musical score for the development section of Rachmaninov's Concerto no. 4, First movement. The score is written for piano and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'a tempo meno mosso e poco' and 'a poco accel.'. The dynamics range from 'mf' to 'p'. The score includes triplets and a 'pesante' section.

Example 18. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, Development

The preceding episode grows from the Exposition's leaping motif. The section *A tempo meno mosso e poco a poco accelerando* gains power but suddenly shifts to the *Sempre accelerando Agitato*, where the soloist starts a willful motion in the lower register (in *piano* dynamics). The texture, registration and dynamics abruptly switch. From this point Rachmaninov starts to build up to the climax. The short ascending two-note motif might be derived from the Second theme's beginning (interval of a second), however here it is fast, sharply rhythmic and acquires a resolute character. Thinking little further, we remember that this rhythmic formula (two-note motif on triplet figurations) reminds the orchestral beginning of the concerto. The triplets' movement rises to almost dancing chords followed by saturated chordal texture. Agitation and speed accelerate towards the *Allegro vivace* which brings the familiar arising chords of the First theme's beginning in A major. It does not present the full theme but climbs to the highest register of the piano. The orchestra enriches with the ascending chords in the augmented rhythm also linking to the main theme. The big splash of chords creates a powerful pathway to the beautiful climax in C major. The short but sweet climax sounds as a rapturous hymn, ode to joy. Surrounded with *tutti*, the strings proclaim a grandiose melody, an unobvious

variant from the part of the First theme. In my opinion this melody with its unexpected lingering on F sharp and the presence of flats and sharps has some influence of the Second theme as well. The piano supports the melody with the ringing chords and gorgeous octave C in the lowest bass in *fortissimo*, creating a generous sonority of the instrument.

The image shows a musical score for the climax of the first movement of Rachmaninov's Concerto no. 4. It is written for piano and orchestra. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano part with a melody in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'a tempo rubato' and the dynamics are 'ff' and 'f'. The score includes triplets and a final chord marked '8'.

Example 19. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, Development, climax

The orchestra ‘blows up’ in the *Tempo precedente* followed by the pianist’s virtuosic *martellato* chords, all reinforcing the splendid C major.

The C major climax is significant for the Fourth concerto: its melody comes back in the Finale in G major, the key of the whole cycle’s ending. There it is slightly altered and expanded, and combined with the soloist’s chordal exultance.

Example 20. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, Finale, climax

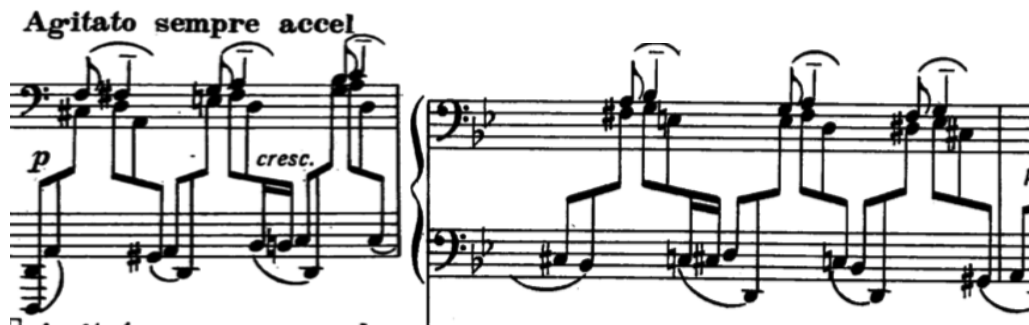
In other words, the first movement's C major climax foretells the outcome of the whole journey. As we can conclude, this arch of jubilant climaxes between the outer movements is one of the wonderful attributes to unify the Fourth concerto.

Generalizing characteristics of both first movements' Developments, we see that in both concertos their First themes serve as the main musical material for evolution in different ways and levels. In the Third concerto the Development grows from the First theme's melody and accompaniment's dotted rhythm. In the Fourth concerto the Development is built on the First theme's melodic and rhythmic components as well, but also has a slight touch of the Second theme (and derived from it the leaping motif). The common feature of both concertos' Development sections is multiple various sequences, sequential waves. Another mutual trait of no.3 and no.4's Developments is the gradual *accelerando* toward their climaxes as well as tempo changes.

We found obvious similarities in outlines of chords, rhythmic and textural resemblances of the development episodes of two concertos. Let us take a look at the *Piu vivo* in the Third concerto and the *Agitato sempre accelerando* in the Fourth:



Example 21. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, Development, *Piu vivo*



Example 22. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, Development, *Agitato sempre accelerando*

That persisting chain of two notes of no.4's episode remind us the section from the Third concerto with its rhythmical similarity and somewhat textural too – the layers of triplets and melodic top notes in the insisting rhythm. Little later the succession of three ascending chords *forte marcato* in both hands in the Fourth concerto is analogous to the variation of three descending then ascending chords in the Third concerto (4 bars before the *Allegro* section). These energetic buildups of both concertos' sections lead to the climaxes.

Climaxes of both concertos' first movements are different in the structural, textural and emotional senses as well as in terms of the pianist and orchestra's role. The Third concerto's *Allegro ma non tanto* has two massive climaxes, especially stands out the second climax in the Cadenza. The first climax is with the orchestra playing the altered rhythmic motto and the soloist

‘thundering’ the fierce *martellato*. It is intensely dramatic, ferocious and despaired. The second climax is purely on the soloist’s shoulders, and it has a long vital buildup where the main theme almost in full receives the stupendous transformation. In particular, the *Ossia’s Allegro molto ff* is epic, and sounds already like a culmination before the highest climax further. The soloist’s D major climax is life-affirming, gives hope for light and triumph. One could say that the first climax of the movement shows the rhythmic side of the First theme while the second climax, rather its approach / buildup, expresses the thematic side of the opening theme via the outstanding metamorphosis.

The Fourth concerto’s *Allegro vivace (Alla breve)* has one big climax reached through the collaboration of the orchestra and the piano. Its buildup and the climax itself incorporate the thematic material of the First theme. The A major ‘reminder’ of the First theme prior to the climax does not reward with a complete or almost complete adaptation of the main theme like it happens in no.3’s Cadenza prior to its climax. In that sense the leading buildup toward the culmination lasts longer in no.3. Perhaps because of this the climax in no.4 seems flying by fast. The Fourth concerto’s C major climax manifests beautiful ‘flight’ of joy and hovering, boundless elation and freedom.

As we observe, the dramatic first climax of the Third concerto’s movement (in *Allegro molto Alla breve*) and the radiant climax of the Fourth concerto’s movement (in *tempo precedente*) have something in common: *martellato* technique of the piano which serves differently to emphasize diverse atmospheres of music.

Let us view now from another angle and glance at the Cadenza’s D major climax of no.3 and no.4’s C major climax. First, they both are in the major keys. Second, they both take a significant place in the overall picture of both concertos. On the one hand, the final apotheosis of the Third concerto in the Finale confirms and celebrates D major, the key of the first movement’s climax.

Example 23. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, Finale, climax

On the other hand, the climax of the Fourth concerto's Finale brings back the musical material of the first movement's C major climax, only there it is in G major and more elaborated and expanded way. Finally, we can reveal an unexpected astonishing similarity of the melodic pitches of no.3's D major and no.4's C major culminations (see Ex.19) – VI flat decorates both melodies. But that is not all: the melodic silhouettes of both those climaxes bear a remarkable resemblance.

Example 24. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, Cadenza's climax

We cannot pass by the marvelous parallels of post-climaxes in both *Allegros*. First of all, the affinity manifests in the same dynamics' change: after the D major climax, the Cadenza of no.3 and after the C major climax of no.4 music diminuendos and calms down till *piano*.

Secondly, the tempos in both examples slow down: *Meno mosso* in no.3 and *Poco meno mosso* in

no.4. Thirdly, the piano role after both climaxes fulfills the same function – accompanying the orchestra. Even figurations of both piano parts have a certain resemblance – supporting arpeggios. The full blocked chords of the right hand are carried away by the arpeggiated figurations of the left hand in no.4, whereas in no.3 the delicate arpeggiated figurations with additional decorated notes are set on the rhythmic ‘swing’. One more analogous trait of both places is that various instruments play a theme – either it is the Second theme in no.4 or a variant of the First theme in no.3. Lastly, the solo flute is the pioneer in both sections, and the oboe solos in both too.

The image shows a musical score for Rachmaninov's Concerto no. 3, First movement, *Meno mosso*. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features three staves: Piano (P-no), Flute (Fl.), and Piano (P-no). The Piano part has a complex texture with arpeggiated figures and blocked chords. The Flute part has a melodic line with a 'Solo' marking and a 'legato sempre' instruction. The Piano part has a 'Meno mosso' marking and a '19' measure marker.

Example 25. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, *Meno mosso*

Structures of no.3 and no.4's First movements, Development-Reprise boundaries

Our next step is to expand our understanding about both *Allegros*' structures and their various ways of interpretation. Subsequently, we will observe how both Recapitulations transpire in the whole picture of the concertos' first movements.

Structures and shapes of both first movements' development and post-development sections considerably differ: the monumental piano Cadenza in op.30 and an absence of a

cadenza in op.40, two contrasting climaxes of the former and one climax of the latter. Moreover, in order to have a deeper understanding of the movements' complete forms, one should figure out the borders of Development and Reprise in both movements. There are different approaches for defining how long Development lasts and where Recapitulation comes in both instances.

As we already mentioned earlier, according to one view, the Third concerto's Cadenza is a part of the huge Development, its continuation, or "serves as the rest of the development section"¹⁵. In that scenario the Reprise is concise and begins when the initial theme-song comes back in the piano in the home key of D minor, in the initial shape and character. This reprise plot does not see the lyrical Second theme in the Reprise. In Harrison's analysis the Coda sets in with "the little trumpet fanfare..."¹⁶ The dancing march element of the Second theme is hinted at the end.

On the other side, Solovtsov supports an idea that the Cadenza has two sections, the first section of which untraditionally finishes with wind instruments playing the variant of the First theme accompanied by the tender 'murmur' of the piano passages, and the second section varies the romantic melody of the Second theme played by the solo piano (*Moderato*, E flat major). Hereby, the Cadenza not only develops but also states two main themes of the movement in varied forms, so to a large extent it takes over the Reprise's function. That is why for "the real" Reprise Rachmaninov leaves the role of a Coda: it can be named the Coda-Reprise. It also gives the impression of an Epilogue, concluding the dramatic narration.¹⁷

Another interpretation of the op.30's *Allegro* is that a Reprise starts in the Cadenza when the First theme gets the colossal transformation whether it would be the dramatic *Ossia* version (on *ff*) or playful *Scherzando* version (on *p*). One can interpret the emergence of this transformed

¹⁵ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 154.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 155.

¹⁷ A. Solovtsov, *Fortepiannye kontserty Rakhmaninova* (Moskva: Gos. muzykal'noe izd-vo, 1961), 55 (translated by the author)

and varied First theme as the Recap since it arrives in the tonic D minor. Perhaps the grandly passionate transformation of the *Ossia's* First theme claims to act as the Reprise more than the transformed *Scherzando's* theme.

In this recap plot the Reprise would be fully presented: the Second theme's lyrical sphere sounds in the Cadenza *Moderato*, though in an altered way. In contrast to the view earlier, here a Coda begins with the full precise statement of the opening theme. In this case the Coda brings back the whole melody of the First theme, fulfilling an indispensable role. It can be called the Coda-Epilogue. Piggott might be a closer advocate of this structural plot. He refers to "a very important formal innovation - the replacement of the normal recapitulation by an enormous and very difficult cadenza", and describes it as "an essential part of the structure".¹⁸

The Fourth concerto's *Allegro vivace* also projects several interpretations of the development-recapitulation boundaries, consequently, the form. In one of them the Reprise takes place after the C major climax with the Second theme's appearance in the orchestra and the soft arpeggiated texture of the piano accompanying. Further the altered introduction material (in E flat major) heralds the First theme, which surprisingly is given not to the piano but to the orchestra: the first violins beautifully sing the melody while the piano pours caressing arpeggios. Unlike the First theme's exact return at the end in the op.30, here the initial theme is totally transformed texturally, dynamically, as well as the timbre and character change. Indeed, the opening theme metamorphoses in the Recapitulation into the dreamy *cantabile Tranquillo*.

This plot version means a 'mirror' Reprise, the nonstandard denouement of the events and of the whole movement. Both Piggott and Martyn endorse this scenario: "In the recapitulation, unusually for Rachmaninoff, the two themes appear in reverse order..."¹⁹

¹⁸ Patrick Piggott, *Rachmaninov Orchestral Music* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1974), 50.

¹⁹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 302.

In contradiction, one can consider a divergent analysis where the Second theme's arrival is not the Recap but still the continuation of the Development. In this setting the Reprise begins where "the movement's opening texture, though with modifications, returns *allegro vivace*", and the first violins play the primary theme's "wonderful *tranquillo* transformation."²⁰

Lastly, Solovtsov presents a similar interpretation with a slightly expanded nuance. He draws parallels between the Developments of no.4 and no.3's first movements: both to a certain extent execute the Recap's function. In his opinion the Second theme's emergence in no.4 is regarded as the second part of the Development, even though it seems that the impetuous development has ended. After the contemplative Second theme sounds two times, the worrying character of the Development comes back, and once more the material grows from the initial theme. In this interpretational 'path' the Reprise starts with the soothing transformation of the First theme (like in the preceding plot). Besides, in Solovtsov's view the Recap, contented with the laconic transformed primary theme, has a character of a Coda. Similarly to his thought about the *Allegro's* Reprise of the Third concerto, he considers the Fourth concerto's Reprise as the Coda-Reprise as well.²¹

The endings of the concertos' first movements are unique in their own way. In D minor concerto the fanfare motif and then a slight 'surprise' of the Second theme's march element lead to the First theme's rhythmic leitmotif in augmentation. D minor key is anchored in the Coda, the pedal point D asserts on downbeats total for 14 bars. The movement ends quietly.

G minor's *Allegro vivace (Alla breve)* has an unusual Coda with the sudden ending. The meter is changed to $\frac{3}{4}$, which has not occurred anywhere else in the first movement ($\frac{3}{4}$ - the Finale's time signature). Pierced with syncopations, this drastic change creates the shaky stressful 'awakening'. The dreamy world is abruptly fallen into stern reality. The short Coda ends on G

²⁰ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 258.

²¹ A. Solovtsov, *Fortepiannye kontserty Rakhmaninova* (Moskva: Gos. muzykal'noe izd-vo, 1961), 69-71 (translated by the author)

minor on the weak second beat, which gives you the startling feeling. Factually, we barely feel the confirmation of G minor in the entire first movement, and even at its ending we do not get the stable G minor affirmation on the downbeat. This unexpected and jarring Coda illustrates Rachmaninov's innovative writing and differs from the Third concerto's ending.

Key points for no.3's *Allegro ma non tanto* and no.4's *Allegro vivace (Alla breve)*

The big difference between the first movements of the Third and Fourth concertos is that the former has one essential Cadenza and three other cadenzas (one bigger – *Moderato* and two short), whereas the latter does not have any cadenza. Rachmaninov in the letter to Medtner wrote about the Fourth concerto: "I have already spotted that the orchestra is almost never silent, which I consider a big fault. That means that it is not a piano concerto but a concerto for piano and orchestra."²² Besides, in the *Allegro ma non tanto* the First and Second themes (lyrical theme) in the Recapitulation are given to the solo piano while in the Fourth concerto the orchestral instruments play those corresponding themes in the 'mirror' Recap.

In general, the sections in the Third concerto's first movement are bigger, longer development of the material, in contrast to the fragmental and motivic development in the Fourth.

In the Third concerto the First theme is sung three times: in the Exposition, in the beginning of the Development in its slightly altered way and in the end (Recap or Coda/Epilogue). This creates three-part symmetrical proportion of the movement: beginning-middle-end, and the tonic D minor unites all three times. This song establishes three big focal points of the first movement, and the final third appearance in the original untouched shape closes the big arch for the movement. The Fourth concerto reveals a different story. We do not hear the First theme in its initial shape anymore throughout the movement. Even in the Recap it is so

²² Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 299.

transformed into a different character, almost integrating dreaminess and tenderness of the Second theme (note that the *cantabile* marking of the Exposition's Second theme is likewise written for the transformed First theme in the Recap!). In contrast to the Third concerto's narrative, here in the Reprise our hero, the First theme, going through a journey, experiences the inner change. Another special peculiarity draws our attention in the 'mirror' Reprise: the Second theme follows the ascending 'shadow' of the First theme, that implies the merging of those themes in the Fourth concerto's Recapitulation.

The image displays a musical score for Rachmaninov's Concerto no. 4, First movement, Recap. The score is in D minor and 3/4 time. It features two systems of piano and violin parts. The first system (measures 24-31) shows the piano playing a descending melodic line with 's' (sforzando) markings and the violin playing a marcato accompaniment. The second system (measures 32-39) shows the piano playing a more active melodic line with 'p' (piano) dynamics and the violin playing a sustained accompaniment. The page number 31 is in the top right corner.

Example 26. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, First movement, Recap

Overall, the arch form is created beautifully by the similar material of the Third concerto's beginning and ending: the First theme fully reiterated at the end of the movement in the same key of D minor, as well as the *piano* dynamics start the movement and finishes it (going

to *pp* at the end). The symmetry of the shape in the Third concerto's first movement does not happen in the corresponding movement of the Fourth concerto. There, however, the main characters evolve by the end of the movement and even subtly fuse with each other.

Thematic transformation in both cycles

In concerto no.3:

The First theme of the *Allegro ma non tanto* is important for the whole concerto and unifies the cycle. The first movement's Development is built on its melodic motives. The theme is transformed in the Cadenza, the *Scherzando* and *Ossia* versions in drastically various ways. The main theme also comes back in the second movement's *Piu vivo* section and metamorphoses in the *Intermezzo*'s waltz. Furthermore, the primary theme finds a melodic reflection in the concerto's Finale before the *Lento*.

The rhythmic and intervallic significance of the First theme's accompaniment is immense for the entire concerto. The dotted rhythmic leitmotif of the beginning goes through the first movement: the Second theme's first element, Development section, *Ossia* Cadenza, Coda. In the Finale the rhythmic leitmotif commands the First theme, generates and motors the galloping Second theme. Moreover, it is imbued in the *Scherzando* section, transformed in the *Vivace* buildup section, and lastly, it triumphs in the climax of the Finale. Besides, the rising fourth interval sounds victorious in the Finale's climax. The last statement of the concerto confirms the leitmotif's fourth interval, making the enormous vault over the whole composition: from its first measures till the last.

The Second theme of the *Allegro ma non tanto* also contributes to the concerto's integrality and unity. Its first dancing element beautifully reincarnates in the *Scherzando* section of the Finale, and the Second lyrical theme magically appears in the Finale's *Lento* in the unforgettable E major. That is the only section in E major in the whole concerto, so the Second

theme there sounds exquisitely and stands out from the rest (note the marking of the theme there becomes *molto espressivo*).

In concerto no.4:

The First and Second themes of the Fourth concerto's *Allegro vivace (Alla breve)* are substantial in the overall picture of the composition. The First theme's melodic impact and transformation happen in the first movement's transition, Development, climax. The chordal variant of the theme's beginning takes place in the *Allegro vivace* buildup before the climax. Stemmed from the First theme, the ascending line surprises with its appearance in the 'mirror' Reprise, as if it opens the door to the Second theme. Further, the second movement's main theme originates from the previous movement's initial theme, rather its descending part. Also, the lyrical melody of the slow movement's middle part gets a poignant transformation of the same First theme. Moreover, in the Finale's *Pesante e ritenuto* we encounter the rising chords reminiscent of the concerto's opening theme. They lead to the G major climax, reverberating with the first movement's climax.

Earlier in the chapter we discussed the rhythmic influence of the First theme's motoric triplets for the whole concerto. The theme's orchestral opening not only brings the certain rhythmic unification for the cycle but also reappears in the Finale's *L'istesso tempo* in C major. As seen, all these create the unity of the cycle.

The Second theme of the Fourth concerto's *Allegro vivace (Alla breve)* produces a crucial leaping motif in the *Allegro assai* section. This motif slowly sneaks in the second movement's ending. Then it 'roars' in the beginning of the Finale and transforms into its main theme. And that's not all. The leaping motto serves greatly as a development material in the Finale. Additionally, it stunningly and confidently affirms at the very end of the concerto.

In closing, the thematic integration and metamorphosis in both concertos are outstanding and exquisite. Rachmaninov beautifully and uniquely exploits, incorporates, imbues and transforms the First and Second themes throughout both cycles.

CHAPTER 3: SECOND MOVEMENTS OF THE THIRD AND FOURTH CONCERTOS

Concerto no.3, Second movement, *Intermezzo*

The *Intermezzo, Adagio* begins with the orchestra playing a longing sad theme, and narrating and elaborating it for 30 bars before the soloist comes in. According to Martyn, the title *Intermezzo* points out that this movement is “an interlude between two thematically interrelated movements. Its main theme, not picked up in either of the other movements, is, even by Rachmaninoff’s standards, exceptionally sorrowful.”¹ However, Norris finds in the *Intermezzo*’s beginning reminiscences of the concerto’s first movement. Indeed, the *Adagio*’s orchestral opening has some resemblance to the four bars of the *Allegro*’s primary theme (measures 19-22)².



Example 27. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, Second movement, orchestral beginning

¹ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 212.

² Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), 118.

Example 28. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, First movement, from the First theme

It is distinctive that one cannot tell which key is the opening of the *Adagio*. The first chord indicates D minor, but it immediately shifts to A major. The key signature has three sharps inherent to A major or F sharp minor, both appear in this movement at some point. Looking closely at the harmonies of the main theme/phrase, we can consider A major serving as the V function of D minor, and that the music is revolving around D minor. Besides, we hear the passing G minor that could be the subdominant. The greatness and subtlety of the beginning is that the composer does not establish the tonic; D minor is not confirmed, and it is A major the music is leaned towards. In my opinion, this ambiguity creates minor-major ‘flavor’ and gives a certain poignant character to the music.

When the piano enters (*Piu mosso*), with the anguished dissonances, a key is not definite again, although F sharp minor is implied, but kept only for several measures after which surprisingly leads to a key change - D flat major. This wild piano entrance is full of chromaticism, dissonances and dense texture.

Now it is the soloist's turn to sing the main theme of the *Intermezzo*, in D flat major. Here we feel the clear tonality for the first time with the anchored tonic D flat. The main theme of the orchestral beginning is quite transformed: now being clearly in the major key, juicy, luxurious, noble as opposed to the sad lingering beginning in the mixed major-minor. This section could be called a variation of the theme, and, in fact, the main theme goes through different variations throughout the movement. Rachmaninov develops the main theme in the piano traveling into different keys. He drives to F minor, passionate and anxious, and for a while the music floods between the minor and major highlighting a variety of emotions. One variation, or episode, brings back a reminiscence of the previous movement's primary theme. The soloist's intense variation in B flat minor/major (with the lowest B flat in the bass) gives the dramatic feeling to the music, and becomes an onset for the long buildup to the climax.

After the beautiful buildup the music reaches the climax where Rachmaninov masterfully combines the piano and orchestra singing joyfully together the main theme in D flat major, the magnificent peak of the movement. The climax is rich and majestic with the dense luscious chordal texture.

After the powerful climax we enter into a different world. Like in Tchaikovsky's second movement of the piano concerto no.1, Rachmaninov inserts a fast spinning waltz in this movement, in F sharp minor with the brisk whirlwind *perlé* figurations in the piano and a new theme in the orchestra. This is a middle part lasting for 54 bars; the meter changes to 3/8. The composer incorporated the main theme from the first movement once more, but he transformed it into a new character – the fast whirling elegant dance. In fact, it is a beautiful rhythmic transformation of the *Allegro ma non tanto*'s theme, which shows a genius stroke of the masterpiece.

Example 29. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, Second movement, middle part

Before the *Adagio* ends, the soloist plays a virtuosic cadenza-like passage (*L'istesso tempo*), serving as a coda and bridge-transition to the Finale. The last chord of the movement, V chord of D minor, needs to be resolved in the first measure of the Finale, which starts *attacca subito*.

Overall, the movement pictures an arch shape in terms of the orchestral narration at the beginning and ending, when we hear the main theme of the *Intermezzo*. Harrison defines the *Intermezzo* as a theme and four variations.³

Concerto no.4, Second movement

The Fourth concerto's slow movement *Largo* opens with the piano solo narration, which leads to the theme in the orchestra. We do not feel a definite key in the beginning measures until

³ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 155.

the orchestra comes in C major. The improvisatory quality of the concerto can be seen in the *Largo*'s opening. Martyn compares the *Largo*'s piano introduction to the opening of the Second sonata's slow movement (1913). He also connects it with the opening theme of the op.40's first movement, "another example of the high degree of integration of material evident in the concerto".⁴

The movement is based on a short theme, which varies from key to key, adding some tones and embellishments and alternating the piano with orchestra entrances. Rachmaninov creates a beautiful unfolding dialogue between the soloist and orchestra, which structurally reminds the second movement of Beethoven's piano concerto no.4. However, in Rachmaninov "the music passes from one group to the other, each carrying the theme off into a different key"⁵, smoothly continuing the lyrical calming meditative atmosphere of the music, whereas in Beethoven the piano solo 'confession' brings a drastic contrast to the orchestra's unyielding dramatic character.

Rachmaninov's two-bar theme of the *Largo* consists of three descending notes, and comprises of a thematic cell and its varied repetition. First played by the orchestra, marked *misterioso* and *pianissimo*, it creates mysterious and magical slow march-like atmosphere. After two measures, the piano responds *espressivo*, one octave higher than the orchestra's entrance, and develops the melody further. The concerto's dedicatee Medtner "suggested that it might have some extra-musical inspiration, such as a solemn religious procession."⁶ Solovtsov writes that the main theme acquires a different character when the piano plays it: "sadly pensive recitative",

⁴ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 303.

⁵ Geoffrey Norris, *Rachmaninoff* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), 112.

⁶ Patrick Piggott, *Rachmaninov Orchestral Music* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1974), 55.

while “the sternly slowly moving chords in the orchestra sound like steps of a funeral procession”.⁷

The theme is developed harmonically, rhythmically, dynamically, and less texturally as well as through changing the registers. Martyn states that it could be originated from the first movement’s primary theme, particularly, its final descending phrases.⁸

The *Largo*’s theme has a fascinating similarity with the main theme from the Third concerto’s *Intermezzo*: both themes have the similar rhythmical formula, triplet figurations, and moreover, the direction of the melody in both themes is descending.

The sudden burst of *fortissimo* in *L’istesso tempo, ma agitato* is turbulent and dramatic, and hugely contrasts with the previous music, however, it is short, only five measures long. The material seems new, but closer we learn, we can see a link with the *Largo*’s theme: it is also based on three descending notes, but different tones, and rhythmically completely transformed. Harrison refers to this section as “simply a speeding-up of the movement’s initial theme, here shown in an entirely new light.”⁹

Example 30. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, Second movement, *L’istesso tempo, ma agitato*

⁷ A. Solovtsov, *Fortepiannye kontserty Rakhmaninova* (Moskva: Gos. muzykal’noe izd-vo, 1961), 71 (translated by the author)

⁸ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 303.

⁹ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 258.

We hear the accented chords supported by the lowest Cs on the piano, stormy ascending scales and dissonant harmonies, which all in all portray an image of abrupt inevitable fate. The following lyrical melody in the piano - 'afterthought' - has a resemblance with the opening theme of the first movement: likewise based on an ascending melodic line.

Starting from the rehearsal no.39, the strings (first violins and cellos) introduce a new melody (*cantabile*), special and hopeful. It serves as a clue that Rachmaninov conceived the Fourth concerto in Russia, in 1913-1914. The beautiful and poetically expressive climax in the *Largo*'s last section, with magical sonorities played by the soloist and freely floated melody in the strings, is surprisingly identical to the fragment from Rachmaninov's unpublished Etude op.33 no.3 in C minor of 1911. The melody, harmonies and even the key of C major are matching. Remarkably, this Etude was removed by the composer from 1914 publication of op.33, and was published only after Rachmaninov's death.¹⁰

¹⁰ Max Harrison, *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings* (London: Continuum, 2005), 258.

cresc.
poco tranquillo
mf
dim.
p

Example 31. Rachmaninov, Etude op.33 no.3, fragment

39
 Bsn. 1. 2
 Hn. in F
 1. *mf cantabile* 3
 3. 4
 Pno.
mf pesante *cresc.*
39 *sul G*
 VI. I *cantabile* *p* *cresc.*
 VI. II *p*
 Vla. *p*
 Vc. *cantabile* *unis., arco* *cresc.*
 Db. *p*

Example 32. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, Second movement, Episode

The original version of the Fourth concerto (1926) has more elaborated texture in the piano in this episode while in the last version (1941) the piano part is simplified to the triplet chords in both hands. Initially the piano part was comprised of a different material for both hands, both going up and down, as if ‘drawing’ a picture of waves. It was more flowing and florid. The presence of dissonances in the original episode made it somewhat jazzy; chromatic and ‘lacy’ figurations sounded improvisatory.

Rachmaninov decided to change this weaved texture and figurations of both hands for his latest revision to make it rhythmically unified by repeating the triplet chords in both hands simultaneously. By this revision perhaps he wanted to emphasize the generous beauty of the long melodic line, and to concentrate on the theme in the orchestra among the supporting harmonies of the piano.

Looking back at the first movement's climax (see Ex. 19), we realize that the *Largo*'s Episode has the similar plot - the melody in the orchestra, triplet chords in the piano (here eighths triplets) and the key of C major. This might be more ambiguous unifying connection between two movements, subconsciously vague and beautiful thread.

In addition to all of that, this heartfelt theme depicts the similar arched silhouette of the first movement's main theme – at first the melody ascends, reaches the top, and then descends.

In the Coda timpani and horns hint at the *Largo*'s ending and forecast the beginning of the Finale. The falling seconds in major and for the last time in minor (E flat - D) sound like a question hanging in the air, and bind with the Finale's 'burst' of *tutti*.

Example 33. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, Second movement, ending

Example 34. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, Finale, beginning

Thus, the second movement is not finished on the resolved harmony but on V65 and goes into the Finale *attacca subito*, similarly to the ending of the Third concerto's *Adagio*.

Parallels and differences between no.3's *Adagio* and no.4's *Largo*

Based on our observations of both concertos' second movements, we deduce certain pivotal points (for convenience we will call no.3 *Adagio* and no.4 *Largo*):

Form and size:

No.3 *Adagio* is a longer movement than no.4 *Largo*: the *Adagio* has 217 bars total whereas the *Largo* has 77 bars. Overall form of no.3 *Adagio*: big A → B → A1 → Coda/cadenza-transition. Overall form of no.4 *Largo*: A → B → A1 → C (Episode) → Coda. Proportions of no.3 *Adagio* and no.4 *Largo*'s sections are different. Further, both movements imply the theme and variations.

Climax and buildup to climax:

No.3 *Adagio* has a great longer buildup to climax, as well as momentum and flow, whereas no.4 *Largo* has an abrupt contrast intruding the main atmosphere, however, this drama lasts not for a long. In no.3 *Adagio* the music develops for a longer time and gradually climbs to the majestic climax in D flat major, previously already reaching the climactic top in D major. On the other hand, the sudden interference of the middle section in no.4 *Largo*, like fate hitting you, can serve as the dramatic unexpected climax. In this case the climax is not built up, but rather invaded the general flow. Furthermore, the new theme – the Episode appearing at the *Largo*'s ending is an emotional highlight of the movement. In my view, this is a different kind of a climax, more like the emotional climactic phrase, which conveys hope and heartwarming nostalgia. As a matter of fact, this Episode flows for longer than the dark forces in the middle

section. It does not derive from the *Largo*'s main theme, but totally new, fresh and self-sufficient. This unique Episode towards the end of the movement marks the different peak and fabulously stands out in the *Largo* and the whole composition.

Harmonic language:

No.3 *Adagio* has a lot of chromatic lines, juicy dense harmonies, sometimes spicy and dissonant, or luxurious and bold. The *Adagio* goes through the diverse range of keys - D minor, A major, F sharp minor, D flat major, F minor and F major, B flat minor and B flat major, D major. Let us note that the powerful climax is in D flat major, which is enharmonically C sharp major, V of F sharp minor. The key of the middle part is F sharp minor. The cadenza-transition changes the key signature to D minor, which can be seen as a direct preparation to the Finale.

Significantly, the movement is full of the ambiguous minor-major 'flavor' from the start. My observations show that the *Adagio* beautifully hides the mixed major-minor, particularly, a major scale with VI flat and VII flat.

The image displays a musical score for Rachmaninov's Concerto No. 3, Second Movement. It features two systems of piano music. The first system begins with a tempo marking of 'rit.' (ritardando) and a dynamic of 'mf' (mezzo-forte). It includes a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note run. A bracket indicates a section of 'Tempo come prima.' (return to the original tempo) starting at measure 32. The second system starts at measure 32 with a dynamic of 'pp' (pianissimo) and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The score is written in a key signature of three flats (B-flat major/D minor) and a 3/4 time signature.

Example 35. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.3, from the Second movement

The harmonies in no.4 *Largo* play an enormous role. The movement's frequently changing harmonies support and illuminate the repetitive theme in a different lighting, they give various coloring. The *Largo* also sees the shifts into different keys, sometimes functioning like

passing chords, and other times carrying the theme in a new key. We hear A minor, C sharp minor, A major, D flat major, F minor and F major, E major. The *Largo*'s middle section is harmonically unstable and tense. We do not really know the key; there are diminished-based harsh chords. The sad lyrical part of the middle section implies F minor, then C minor, and only gets a restful resolution to C major in the recapitulation (*Come prima*).

Finally, we can consider an outstanding feature that brings these concertos' second movements closer to each other: the minor-major 'flavor'. No.4 *Largo* also reveals this special characteristic from the movement's beginning. The main theme's harmonies do include VI flat and VII flat, and give a peculiar unexplainable feeling, somewhat nostalgic perhaps. The gliding scale (C major with VI flat and VII flat) at the *Largo*'s ending is a bright proof for this major-minor 'zest'. On top of this, Rachmaninov also gives us the mixed major/Phrygian 'touch'.

Example 36. Rachmaninov, Concerto no.4, Second movement, ending

We can't help looking back at the Fourth concerto's *Allegro vivace*, where the Second theme in B flat major also contains II, VI and VII flats.

Piano writing:

We can hear the obvious difference of no.3 *Adagio*'s richer and thicker piano writing, with brilliant virtuosic passages, diverse technical means: octaves, chords, double notes, *perlé* buoyant figurations as opposed to no.4 *Largo*'s more intimate, transparent, almost non-virtuosic piano writing. The *Adagio*'s piano part draws our attention to the wider registers, using a vast range of the keyboard. It is thrilling that the lowest note in the movement is the lowest B flat, while the highest one is the highest B flat, thus, covering all seven octaves on the piano. Also, notably, an abundance of notes in both hands creates more powerful sounds and complex webs. The *Largo*'s piano part is rhythmically less sophisticated, and concentrated almost on one chordal texture throughout the movement. Additionally, the narrower registers, mostly in the middle or lower range of the keyboard (particularly in the first and middle sections) as well as a tighter space between the hands indicate more austere writing. Unlike no.3 *Adagio*, the total coverage of the registers in the *Largo* lies between the lowest C and C7, which constitute six octaves. Lastly, in comparison, no.3 *Adagio* frequently shows the moments of bravura and brilliant virtuosity while no.4 *Largo* mostly excludes those elements.

Orchestra:

The orchestra role is immense in both Third and Fourth concertos' slow movements. No.3 *Adagio* has the orchestral beginning (30 bars) and orchestral closing of the movement (20 bars) that precedes the Coda-transition. This symmetry creates the orchestral arch. At the beginning of the movement the solo oboe presents the complete main theme, while the solo clarinet duets four measures later. In the closing section both instruments play the theme together right away, then the clarinet continues with the solo horn.

String instruments start the movement, and after the main theme's display from the oboe and clarinet, the violins continue playing the theme. In the *Piu vivo* section the first violins 'remind' the initial theme from the Third concerto's first movement whereas the piano passionately elaborates this theme. Approaching the climax, the strings play a variation of the

Adagio's main theme in D major. Both piano and orchestra build up to the powerful climax where horns, clarinets and oboes together with the piano play the triumphal theme in D flat major, while the strings beautifully unfold an outline of the theme.

In no.3 *Adagio*'s waltz section the solo clarinet and solo bassoon play the transformed theme from the concerto's first movement. In addition, the solo flute and solo oboe appear at one moment playing the parts of the long theme. In the Coda *L'istesso tempo* the whole orchestra explodes, including the bass drum and cymbals.

In no.4 *Largo* after the soloist's introduction, string instruments play the main theme after which the piano takes over and continues the theme solo. In general, in the first section the orchestra is like an equal partner of the soloist, they alternate each other, taking turns in continuing variations of the theme in different keys, sometimes overlapping the phrases. In the middle section (*L'istesso tempo, ma agitato*) the orchestra 'bursts' together with the piano, and the horns carry a 'torch' of the motif (*marcato* indication for the horns). In the following lyrical *cantabile* the clarinets with bassoons at first, and then the English horn with bassoons support the soloist, creating motivic sorrowful 'sighs'. The composer specified *marcato* for the bassoon and then for the English horn in the score. They take turns playing the same motif. In the Reprise the string players bring us back to the *Largo*'s main theme, this time joined by timpani in *pianissimo*. Afterward, the romantic theme is given to the strings, merged with horns two measures later. In the Coda horns play the important descending motif in *piano* and *pianissimo*. As we know, this motif turns into the outburst by *tutti in fortissimo* at the Finale's beginning.

The distinctive feature of the orchestral instrumentation for the *Largo* and for the Fourth concerto in all is the English horn. There is no English horn in no.3 *Adagio* and in the whole Third concerto. Another instrument, which shows up and sparkles in the Fourth concerto's Finale, but does not participate in the Third concerto, is the piccolo. The percussion family plays a huge role in the op.40's Finale. Triangle and tambourine fantastically decorate the music of the Finale. They enrich and make it authentic, whereas they are absent in the Third concerto.

Overall texture:

Largely speaking, no.3 *Adagio*'s saturated pianistic-symphonic texture contrasts with no.4 *Largo*'s chamber-like texture. The *Adagio*'s more sophisticated writing opposes the *Largo*'s simpler, more ascetic, minimalist-like writing. The abundance of notes, either in chords or short fast flowing notes, or polyphonic voices, and general fluidity of no.3 *Adagio* differ from no.4 *Largo*'s mainly austere, ostinato-like procession and chordal transparency. In fact, the *Largo* has mostly longer note values, the scarcity of the passing fast notes and transparent writing, in contradiction to the *Adagio*'s dense and liquid texture as well as richness of the running sixteenth notes.

Other similarities and differences:

In terms of structure, both no.3 *Adagio* and no.4 *Largo*'s beginnings have somewhat a similar plan: the role of exposing the main theme is given to the orchestra, after which the pianist solely displays the theme. Stunningly, the scope of the orchestral main theme in the *Largo* is 2 measures versus 30 measures of the orchestral narration in the *Adagio*. The piano entrance in the *Adagio* is not at the beginning like in the *Largo* but comes after the long orchestral exposition. However, it is noteworthy that both *Adagio* and *Largo*'s piano entrances have the improvisatory quality, despite of the different placing.

The similar contour of both movements' themes is exquisite. Let us remind of three unifying parameters we found for both themes: the descending direction of the melody, triplet figurations and rhythmic similarity. No.3 *Adagio*'s theme sounds longer than no.4 *Largo*'s theme, which is more like a short motto. In addition, we can point that the *Adagio*'s theme is wider in terms of the intervallic embrace than the *Largo*'s motto. Generally, the lines of dynamic buildups of no.3 *Adagio* develop for more extended period of time than in no.4 *Largo*. The theme

development in the *Largo* stays longer in one emotional state. Diversity of the musical ‘painting’ is reached by dint of the colorful alterations of the theme.

Both slow movements’ endings have the same indication - *attacca subito* to their finales; and each in its own way imposes a question mark that has to find an answer at the beginning of the next movement. Moreover, two other means bond the second and third movements in both concertos. In the case of no.3 *Adagio*, it is a clear harmonic link: the V chord at its end is resolved into D minor at the beginning of the Finale. In no.4 *Largo*, it sounds more like a motivic link: the horns’ descending motif in the last measures unexpectedly ‘explodes’ by the whole *tutti* at the Finale’s beginning.

Lastly, let us examine one important shared aspect for both slow movements. They both have connecting ‘threads’ with their works’ first or both outer movements. In no.3 *Adagio* there is a clear use of the primary theme from the first movement, two times, both in the orchestra: once rhythmically almost untouched but pitches being altered, and another time - rhythmically totally metamorphosed plus pitches changed. To the contrary, in no.4 *Largo* the linkage is more concealed and intricate. The movement hides certain connections with both first and last movements. We will remind several of them: firstly, the *Largo*’s main theme has its roots in the final phrase of no.4 *Allegro vivace*’s First theme. Next, the lyrical melody in the *Largo*’s middle section reflects the beginning of the first movement’s primary theme. Finally, the falling minor second’s motif at the end of the *Largo* dimly echoes the first movement’s motif from the *Allegro assai* section. Furthermore, this motif ‘lives on’ and acts in a radical change in the Finale. Therefore, the short motif bonds the whole Fourth concerto.

In conclusion, let us portray the overall picture for both concertos’ second movements. The Third concerto’s *Intermezzo/Adagio* seems more self-spoken, more extroverted in some way, and deeply romantic. It beautifully shows the contrasts. Meanwhile, the Fourth concerto’s *Largo* has somewhat a quality of being introverted, meditative. It is undeniably deep and intimate, and

together with that it encompasses the raw unexpected outbreak-conflict. Both concertos' movements reveal drama, although in two different ways.

The Fourth concerto's *Largo* mirrors the new Rachmaninov. It moves away from the big romantic abundance, virtuosity and 'skyscrapers' of sounds and sonorities toward the concise inner strength and powerful expressions with less means.

CONCLUSION

Rachmaninov's Third and Fourth piano concertos are phenomenal works and momentous concertos for piano and orchestra. The Third concerto was composed within several months. The Fourth concerto had a long path spanning 27 years and resulting in three complete versions. The Third concerto is an opus born at the composer's zenith, and the Fourth concerto marks a watershed moment in his creative art.

In this essay we journeyed to places and events around these two concertos, beheld their birthdays and premieres. We witnessed Rachmaninov's thoughts, feelings, concerns and actions. Further, we scrutinized and compared the concertos' first two movements, revealing multilateral aspects and illuminating diverse facets. Along with the concertos' differences, we discovered their similar features.

On the whole, the Third concerto's pianism differs with its dramatic scope, multilayer texture, exceptional virtuosity and sweeping brilliance. The Fourth concerto's piano writing embraces different sides, more transparent, a lighter texture overall. It accommodates brilliant and urgent passages in the outer movements and surprises with austere beauty in the slow movement. The richness, spaciousness and width covering longer distances on the keyboard in the Third concerto juxtapose with the gorgeous compactness of sonorities in the Fourth concerto.

In the Third concerto the soloist, mostly playing a leading role, delivers important moments like the stupendous climax in the Cadenza and its buildup, the Second theme in the *Moderato* Cadenza and the returning initial theme at the end of the first movement. In the Fourth concerto the pianist and orchestra tend to integrate, and sometimes the orchestra transports the principal themes, like it happens in the first movement's Reprise.

Both first and second movements of the Third concerto have certain symmetry in the overall arch form whereas the corresponding movements of the Fourth concerto create unexpected turns and fresh ideas, namely the complete transformed First theme in the Recap and

the brusque ending of the first movement, as well as the new theme in the slow movement's Episode.

We hear how Rachmaninov's style has changed over the years separating two concertos; a new wave entered his music. The Third concerto is a massive work of his prime years in his beloved country, and the Fourth concerto symbolically expresses search, struggle and hope. It is a beautiful 'rebirth' of the composer integrating voices from his past, absorbing experiences of his present and looking forward to the future.

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