

# THE STYLE

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## Changes in Interpretative Styles

Biases in style and performer interpretation inhibit the natural free development of the musical art. What an army of prejudices one has to fight starting with the school dogmatism and ending with the salon rumors! If one recalls all the phantasmagoric views bordering on superstition, all unjustified theories regarding the performing art, one has to appreciate the bravery and confidence of a performing artist who is able to overcome all the hurdles on the road to the technical and artistic perfection.

A critic or an amateur, who is not necessarily ready to judge the specifics and style of a composition, still judges its interpreter with a re-enforced confidence forgetting the unbreakable connection between composition and performance.

On the other hand, school dogmatism dictates a standard type of playing which conforms to a generic concept of the “right” way of performing the works of a given author, especially one of a high stature. Excessive dogmatism is as dangerous for a good performance as the dominating whims of passing fashion. Both fashion and dogmatism govern with unassailable arbitrariness. They paint the style of all composers with one color and interpret compositions of any era and any author with the same cold indifference.

Sometimes one hears Beethoven played with crude accents and rigid phrasing, or overly tender Chopin robbed of his metric base. What is even worse – shadings and performance directions are passed from one style to another or one author to another. An unperformed sforzando of a Beethoven sonata emerges suddenly in a Chopin mazurka while a virtuoso brilliance absent from a Liszt rhapsody vanquishes the most refined expression in a Mozart passage.

Various theoretical views which consider the issues of musical interpretation from different angles are often thought to comprise a performing style. However, we should understand a playing style to be a collection of expressive and technical means characteristic of an instrumentalist’s mastery, and typifying individual phrasing, inimitable manner of interpretation and all the special ways of treating the instrument.

Many features of performance are as inseparable from the physical apparatus as voice timbre: specifics of hands, their size, stretch, muscle strength and weakness.

On the other hand, the playing of an artist-performer may carefully and precisely reflect the composition text or freely and even arbitrarily deviate from it.

A pianist playing may be united by common tendencies: romantic and classical, impressionistic, realistic, etc.

Performance technique may be closely intertwined with the stylistic features of a composition, the principle of form construction, polyphonic or homophonic, colorful or linear, expanded or laconic.

Finally, each epoch is dominated by one or another manner of playing. Expressivity typical for one period may outweigh the extent of expressive means common in another epoch. Even the very notion of “an interpretation of a musical composition” changes with time. For instance, many performers of the past considered it necessary to enhance and modify the author text; they were convinced that the creative qualities of an artist-performer are found only in such “collaboration”.

We understand the performing style loosely to be all the qualities, specifics and principles of an interpretation. This includes both conscious, theoretically justified tendencies and individual subconscious features. Many undetectable details which may not be subjected to an analysis, nevertheless specifically distinguish an artist’s playing.

Thus we should make a distinction between an artist playing and a performing style characteristic of a certain school, country or period. Not all in a virtuoso playing is the result of his own efforts: many features of his style are connected to the common style of his school and time.

Performing style also depends on the content and form of the interpreted composition. But it is similarly utterly clear that the dominating tastes and technique of playing are always related to the artistic tendencies and general character of the compositions of the artist’s time. One should not forget that a musical composition is created in complete conformity with the existing means of performing technique. Still, in some instances a composer may exceed an average level of the contemporary performing art: he may stimulate new performing accomplishments.

The composer’s art is not an abstracted process of isolated sound in a mind: it is a live creation of material musical images.

Most often the guiding role falls on the shoulders of the strong artistic personality of a composer-performer. His preeminence is due not only to his compositions but also to brilliant performances intricately related to new creative ideas. The clarity and precision of a composer’s artistic goals help him find the necessary expressive means; a creative personality brings to life previously unknown virtuosic perspectives. Even a long and meticulous training cannot engender the steep and unexpected ascent born out of a creative will, combined with carefully thought out artistic intent. The virtuosic achievements of an expert, obtained by prolonged and hard work, may turn out to be old-fashioned when confronted with an ingenious solution of a creative and technical problem. The old, accepted, and traditional techniques of even the most exceptional

instrumentalists should be reconsidered and reworked under the stream of new creative ideas.

These stimuli possess a different character in various areas. While in the piano domain they require constant technical improvement of the very instrument, the violin remains without the slightest changes since the times of Stradivarius. Could we imagine a pianist who would claim that there is no better instrument than Mozart clavichord for the performance of the whole piano literature!

Even a competition in virtuosity between a performer and a composer is settled in favor of the stronger creative personality. Let us recall Beethoven and Steibelt, Chopin and Kalkbrenner, Liszt and Thalberg, Scriabin and Hofmann. Long training and natural abilities may give an advantage to the pianist in a specific technical area, for instance, in a special quickness with octaves, in tremolo, and so on. However, new techniques, new qualitative changes in performing technique are inaccessible to even the most outstanding experts until they possess a deep comprehension of the creative necessity of the new, developing style.

Beethoven's first performances of his early sonatas surprised the specialists not only with the new qualities of the compositions but also with the unfamiliar, seemingly unperformable piano technique. Chopin had nothing to learn from Kalkbrenner; the famous pianist could only study the new methods of pianistic virtuosity from Chopin. As for the recent past, we may recall that such a remarkable pianist as Hofmann, in possession of an enormous virtuosic arsenal, had trouble overcoming the technical difficulties in Scriabin's style. Now when Scriabin's compositions are performed by almost every pianist it seems strange to recall that Anton Rubinstein considered Scriabin's first sonata unplayable.

Powerful creative personalities who reigned not only in the creative aspects of music but also in the art of performance - such as Paganini in the development of violin technique, Liszt, Chopin, Rachmaninov, Scriabin, Prokofiev in the area of pianism, and Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Wagner in the conducting art - remained stylistic standard-bearers for a long time. Composers, even those who rarely performed in open recitals, were far ahead of the professional performers, the kings of the concert stage.

New characteristics of interpretation were applied not only to the compositions that brought to life these previously unknown means of expression but also to other works which were historically separate and differed significantly in style from the art of the composer's own period. Creating a new style of exposition, the composer influences both the future and the past.

Such overlapping and crossing of the boundaries of historically separate stylistic forms of technique and expressive means is to a certain extent inevitable. It is equally difficult sometimes for a lion to hide his claws as it is for a pianist possessing a shattering power of chords and octave passages to adjust to the transparent technique required in Mozart. Having acquired a new technique one may lose much of the old.

It is possible that, as an interpreter, a composer has less sympathy for another author's stylistic individuality than a professional performer, who must inevitably adopt an unbiased view. Hence a composer's playing may be more passionate and even biased, while a performer may possess a greater diversity of expressive means and stylistic possibilities.

No matter what a composer plays, in the end, in a sense, he is playing himself. However, it may be easier for a composer to master the new creative positions of another author, especially one close to him in spirit and artistic tendencies. Still, when he tries to interpret a composition foreign to his style, a composer is sometimes akin to a lion trying to build an eagle's nest.

As an illustration to this thesis one recalls a less than successful first performance of Scriabin works by Rachmaninov and as a counterexample – the remarkable performance of the Beethoven Fourth Concerto and Piano Sonata Op. 53 by Medtner.

It is easier for a professional performer to adapt himself. He trains daily to interpret various authors and usually builds his program in the chronological order, passing from one period to another.

However, even a most talented and flexible performer belongs to his time and in his artistic dispositions he is tied to the dominating tastes and moods of the era. At the time when listeners were won over by the playing style and expressive technique necessary for the interpretation of the compositions of Schumann, Liszt, Chopin, the works of Haydn, Mozart - and even more so of Bach and Handel - essentially disappeared from the programs of concert pianists, or were supplied with Romantic features foreign to their style.

Such conforming of performing technique to the prevailing creative ideas is also reflected in the entire concert practice. As we have already mentioned, a new performing style affects the interpretation of compositions belonging to a different period or based on other artistic concepts.

Such influence may be witnessed in our time as well. The appearance of a great number of impressionistic pieces in Western concert programs, especially works of a type, clearly

affected the style of many modern pianists and their interpretation of not only the Romantics, but also of the Classical composers.

Most often, a performing style becomes the captive of a brilliant and powerful artistic school in a dire need of new expressive means. Sometimes it also happens that the talent of outstanding individual artists-performers pushes the art forward, creates a new technique for the instrument, and brings to life new ways of presenting a composer. Then, new horizons of pianism open up possibilities unavailable to preceding performance styles and so exercise an enormous influence on the contemporary art of composition and on its further development. Of course such a situation may be considered to not be quite normal, since the means temporarily become more important than the goal.

Almost every concert pianist in the second half of last century, in the period of unmeasured enthusiasm for the octave technique that, in an unfortunate manner, marked many compositions (including the genial Liszt “Dante” sonata), would introduce octave doublings everywhere, whether necessary or unnecessary.

Let us recall the tasteless doubling in one of the variations in Schumann’s “Symphonic Etudes” (Backhaus and many others). Provincial performers held on to this trick even when the development of pianistic presentation got rid of this rapidly outdated effect. We do not see the Liszt octaves in Scriabin, Medtner, Debussy, or Ravel – those have long since departed into the realm of narrowly technical etudes and exercises, along with the Alberti figurations and passages for five fingers.

Thus, one may not speak of the development of performance style on the piano in separation from the history of the art of the composers who wrote for the instrument and who, in the majority of cases, were outstanding pianists themselves.

## **Beethoven and Chopin**

Let us focus now on some issues of piano presentation. This side of composition is directly related to the instrumental realization of composer’s ideas and depends on the playing technique and piano construction of the author’s time.

It is customary to treat the historical process that led from the Mozart-Haydn presentation to the pianism form of Chopin, Liszt and Schumann as a continuous evolution from the simple to the complex, from the primitive presentation forms to more developed and complex. The keyboard diapason is increased; the sound power and expressivity grow.

A comparison of the Chopin etudes to the Clementi figuration constructions convinces that the latter misses much in the intricacy of presentation. Juxtaposing similar techniques

one notes the enormous evolutionary development of the piano figuration – from the Bach preludes to the most difficult modern forms. Compare, for instance, the first prelude from Bach’s “Well-Tempered Clavier” to Chopin’s First Etude, or the D-Minor Bach prelude to Rachmaninov’s C-Minor Etude-Tableaux, Op. 39.

A great number of other parallels – Schumann and Bach, Mozart and Chopin, and, finally, the rise of the technical means that led to the style of Rachmaninov, Scriabin, Debussy – the all show a picture not of a simple growth but a deep growth of complexity, a stunning enrichment of the piano texture.

Along with the development of complexity, the piano presentation style separates itself from other sounds, as it encapsulates the specific sound images characteristic only of this instrument. After Beethoven, not only the piano but also string and other instruments go through a period of rapid discovery of the unknown potential of the expressive and technical means. However, as the natural abilities of the instrument are discovered, the presentation style is limited to the range of favorite and specific sounds. Piano separates from the orchestra and confronts it in the form of a piano concerto. The violin also loses its universality and is restricted to a narrower domain.

Despite the keyboard growth, the Chopin-Liszt style avoids register changes, preferring the most advantageous position and only adding to it the sounds of higher and lower octaves. Chopin always adheres to the middle of the keyboard that is the most typical for the piano. He almost never transposes the same idea from one register to another avoiding a technique typical for the organ.

Chopin’s piano art style is the most crystallized post-Beethoven piano style. One may find many remnants of the past technique in Liszt. Along with the aristocratically refined sounds of the Mephisto Waltz, the Spanish Rhapsody, many episodes of the B-Minor sonata, the middle movement of the Dante Sonata and many other piano compositions, one finds in his works some heavy and old-fashioned techniques of piano presentation. The cumbersome octave technique, excessive sounds in chords, primitive figures in the accompaniment (the secondary line in the B-minor sonata), extraneous tremolo, noisy and viscous figuration forms (the Sixth Rhapsody, Fantasy on Mozart’s “Don Giovanni”). These outlived techniques might be explained by the excessive virtuosity that, evidently, allowed the ingenious pianist to smooth out the roughness and cumbersomeness of the texture. Probably, this very Liszt virtuosic playing made him less discriminating in matters of the style of piano presentation.

All these excesses of virtuosity, all piles of heavy figurations may not be considered as an orchestral expression. More likely, they form unsuccessful texture techniques similar to an average klavierauszug, that is, a presentation that serves as a mere replacement but does not express the essence and color of the orchestral sound.

Some of the Schumann technique connect his style to Beethoven, despite his refinement and his own, very special and delicate lyrical presentation: [two examples follow, one from Beethoven Sonata Op. 101/ii, another from Schumann Fantasy Op. 17/ii].

The most refined techniques of Beethoven serve as a precursor of the character of the Schumann style. One may compare the episodes from Adagio of the C-Major Sonata op. 2, No. 3 to the presentation techniques in the Scherzo of Schumann Op. 106.

The relation of the Schumann style to Beethoven was not only direct but also through some influence of the Mendelssohn art. At the same time the Mozart influence on some aspects of the Chopin style was realized through the intermediate link of Field and Hummel concerti.

Even if one accepts that many features of Chopin's style were born in the depths of Beethoven pianism, the qualitative difference of the two styles allows us to consider them as opposed phenomena.

Beethoven realizes in his sonatas the principle of a widely developed musical form, energy of the thematic material, economy of means and precision in the characterization of the thematic material. He is characterized by the wide use of contrasting registers, and various shades of timbre, independent of the specific piano sound palette. There are no "bad sounds" for Beethoven in the Rimsky-Korsakov terminology, as he finds in the multitude of timbres the compensation of the differentiated sounds of the orchestra in the piano presentation. Beethoven uses in his sonatas collisions of contradictory ideas, sharp antitheses; he introduces a great number of participants into the dramatic development, preferring a dialogue to a monologue or a single lyrical expression.

One finds the opposite in the Chopin music. Chopin is laconic. The expressive means of his style at each moment are intricately related to the overall structure of the composition. Chopin opens up more in the vertical than in the contrasting horizontal lines of development. His musical ideas are found more in the texture than in the juxtaposition of themes.

Chopin's presentation avoids sharp register changes; it adheres to the most pleasantly sounding middle section of the keyboard, introducing the higher octaves only in passages and colorful effects. The complex and refined texture of Chopin's figurations, either pathetically exalted or carrying smoothly the airily floating melody, immediately introduces the mood of the lyrical story. Melody shines through the complex and refined embroidery of the accompaniment. We encounter nothing unexpected or contradictory even over a prolonged development.

Chopin never crosses the boundaries of pleasant piano sounds. His style is anti-orchestral. Only reluctantly does he leave a discovered texture. The colors of his piano presentation are more homogeneous than varying. Chopin's music often assumes the prelude or etude form as this allows him to preserve a discovered method of realization of the main idea over a long time. It is impossible to separate the thematic material from the accompaniment in Chopin's works. The melody is so inseparable from the texture of the accompaniment that sometimes it seems that it is carried outside of the energy and hidden poetic dynamics of figurations.

One often encounters the idea of the evolution of Beethoven's style toward the new emerging piano forms. This opinion is usually based on some specifics of the late Beethoven style. Still one should point out Beethoven's adherence to the stable forms of Haydn-Mozart presentations enriched by Clementi's virtuosity. Indeed, Beethoven approaches the expressivity of the Field-Chopin texture in the character of presentation of some slow movements, such as in the middle section of the Emperor Concerto, or Adagio of Op. 106 Sonata. However, one may not consider this style as the mainstream of Beethoven's pianism. Rather, this is another evidence of the strength of the flow of Beethoven's style that sweeps along and absorbs the artistically close ideas of accompanying streams.

A stunning feature of Beethoven's piano style is the unfailing stability of the pianism form. He is characterized by a passionate conservatism in the manner of presentation, if one is allowed to say so, and at the same time the strife to provide new expressivity and new artistic content to the old piano technique. Beethoven comes to some cumbersome textures (op. 111, op. 106) – especially in the late works. Sometimes this is reflected in strange “ingenious peculiarities” of presentation. The bass voice steps far away from the melody. The middle registers are empty at the expense of thick saturation of the low registers.

Interestingly, this side of Beethoven's piano style has remained for a long time as a broken line of the historical development without a following, being considered as an evidence of “non-piano-ness” of Beethoven pianism. The features of Beethoven's “archaism” were re-born only in the techniques of the XX century composers, and remained for a long time rejected at the previous stages of development of the piano style.

As it often happens with the historical concepts that treat the changes in artistic directions as one continuous line of development, the Beethoven style has been seen as precursor and a preparation for the Chopin-Liszt piano forms, missing the tendencies and features that contradict this point of view.

The reason for Beethoven's classicism that guarded his piano style against the influence of ideas foreign to his art was the orchestrality of his piano compositions, or symphonism in a wide sense. Naturally, the symphonism of Beethoven's piano art should be understood not only as the extensive thematic development of his sonatas but also as the related colorful contrasting presentation.

The piano sound may not emulate precisely the orchestral colors from an acoustician's point of view: it contradicts the sound of any of the orchestral groups in its very foundation. The short, rapidly dissolving piano sound is unable to reproduce either the expressivity of a string quintet or the prolonged sound of brass and wind instruments. However, in some rare cases a successful presentation creates an illusion of the orchestral sound.



The goals of the Beethoven pianism did not include sound imitation. He strived to establish the whole palette of sounds that could confront the multifaceted sound of an orchestral score, within the scope of the contemporary piano.

Beethoven realized instinctively that a one-sided goal of pleasant sounds will inevitably lead to the isolation of the piano texture. The deceiving richness of the typical instrument qualities, subjugation of music to the narrow bind of its features leads to a narrow specific sound and specific forms of presentation. This road has its advantages. It may have its accomplishments and unexpected discoveries. Nevertheless the possibilities of each instrument are restricted. The more music depends on the piano build, the more its sound is restricted to the realm of the narrow piano style.

And so Beethoven's pianism, searching for the widening of the borders of the instrument, seeks the foundation in the methods of Mozart and Haydn. It suffices to recall the ingenious presentation of the secondary line in Adagio of Sonata op. 106 to realize the multitude of possibilities discovered by the Beethoven style on the road of old systems and guarding tendencies.

The peculiarities of the Beethoven piano style are especially interesting when – in the piano concerti – he juxtaposes the piano to the massive orchestral sound. Beethoven opens up the soul of the piano in these episodes, such as in the already mentioned second movement of the Fifth Concerto. Naturally, this makes his style closer to the forms of the Field-Chopin pianism.

Along with the compositions where the symphonic way of development is followed for a long time Beethoven counterbalances the two methods of presentation in the dialogues typical for his art. Independently of the elements developing symphonically in the slow movement of Sonata Op. 2 No. 3, the “piano dialogue part” achieves a refinement far ahead of the development of the XIX century pianism, reaching the heights of the most sophisticated techniques of the piano style of the future.

The technique of playing with crossed hands is often used by Beethoven. This technique comes from the old masters and has its origins partly in the two-manual harpsichords and the organ. Not only the playing “across hands” enriches the texture, as the presentation is transposed to the higher part of the keyboard or to the lower registers, it changes psychologically the attitude of the pianist, switching the harmonic and melodic functions of the left and right hands. This technique is foreign to the Chopin-Scriabin pianism. It almost never appears in the piano works of these authors.

Resisting the emerging forms of the new pianism, Beethoven finds a great wealth of timbre shades and means of thematic development. One is astonished by his infinite imagination and creativity – within the boundaries of the guarding tendencies of the grand piano style, an outgrowth of the symphonic methods of development of his piano sonatas.

Beethoven's pianism strives to break through the boundaries of the narrow specific piano sound. His imagination discovers values that lie beyond the purely piano presentation. The sound of his sonatas transcends the restrictions of the piano style while Chopin's music lives completely within the boundaries of the instrument pleasant sound.

One of the greatest pianists once remarked that "The pedal is the soul of the piano". Indeed, the pedal allows the piano to exhibit its most characteristic and pleasant sides. It is quite natural that the sounds that use the pedal are the most "pianistic". No instrument except for the harp possesses the ability to prolong the sound passively, on the vague border between the still sounding and already silent.

The pedal markings in Beethoven are either of a schematic character or contradict the new concept of the pedal use to such an extent that they are not taken into account in performance (*senza sordini* in the "Moonlight" sonata, the pedal marking before the coda of the first movement of "Appassionata", in the recitative of the D-Minor Sonata Op. 31, No. 2 etc.).

The pianism distinguishes two formulas of pedal use: "only the notes held by fingers on the keyboard sound" and "the sound attributed to the pedal should be held on the keyboard". All the complex practice of the pedal use may be placed between these two opposite statements, each of these used under the corresponding precise conditions.

There is no need to point out that no pedal principle may be encountered in isolation. Complex pedal techniques in various cases create the necessary timbre and prolonged sound by different means. A refined artistic competition takes place between the notes held on the keyboard and those prolonged by the pedal. I will talk in a great detail about the pedal and various means, goals and effects of the pedal use in a different part of this book [in the chapter "The Pedal"]. I present here only several theses related to the comparison of the piano styles of Beethoven and Chopin.

No author has left precise pedal markings in his compositions. Pedaling is an unconscious vegetative process, as breathing and heartbeat. Hence, naturally, it is most difficult to fix and so far has no accepted precise system of notation.

One may point only to the closeness of style to one of the presented extreme formulae. Beethoven's style undoubtedly leans toward the first formulation. The presentation of most of his sonatas follows the principle "only the notes held by fingers on the keyboard sound". The *senza sordini* direction, that is, with the right pedal, in the title of the "Moonlight" sonata, assumes, of course, the sound, softly enveloping the movement of trioles. This very direction tells us that such a continuous triole sequence could be treated by pianists of that time without the pedal or with its minimal use.

A modern pianist uses the pedal effects performing Beethoven. However, the thread of Beethoven's presentation may be imagined to sound without the pedal use. His piano presentation may be relegated to an ensemble of other instruments without dramatic

texture changes. It would be unthinkable if Beethoven assigned harmonic or melodic prolongation of individual sounds to the pedal.

The beginning of Largo of A-Major Sonata Op.2 No. 2 may be easily imagined in a presentation for a quartet. Each sound will be held by the bow instrument as it is written, which corresponds quite well to the finger position on the keyboard. The same may be said of the Adagio of Sonata Op. 7 (E-flat major) with the only difference that in this case the string group of an orchestral quintet would work better.

However, a transcription of any of the Chopin nocturnes for an instrument ensemble that really holds the prolonged sound would require modifications in the note text or changes in the texture, as the pedal use turns the material written metrically as figuration motions into prolonged sounds. Thus, the D-flat major Chopin nocturne transcribed without changes for other instruments, would end up being musical nonsense.

A modern pianist performing Chopin and Beethoven uses the pedal in both cases but the principle of its use changes depending on the piano presentation. The pedal helps fingers in a Beethoven presentation. It does what fingers may not do in Chopin,

Of course, one may find sufficiently many examples in Beethoven's works where the piano presentation style has some features typical for the future evolution of the style, bridging the gap between the two principles. However, in this case one considers the typical textures of both composers that differ the most from each other.

It is interesting to follow the gradual changes in the fixation of the prolonged sounds. Beethoven usually writes out the long sound in a precise metrical notation. Beethoven's passages and figurations assume generalizing echoes of the pedal, as in his direction at the beginning of the "Moonlight" sonata. However, we may transpose Beethoven's presentation to any group of instruments with a prolonged sound. Then the pedal softening typical for the piano sound will be dropped and each sound will preserve its note length.

Chopin's note text hides the duration of individual sounds in figurations. The duration of sound is determined by the dynamics of the performance and the pedal. Long and short sounds are written graphically as they are incorporated in the rhythmical ornament. The pianist assigns the required length to each sound with the pedal use. Chopin note writing is full of sounding pauses and short notes that a performer makes sound for long time. A whole area of harmonic layers and hidden voices is not reflected in the graphics of Chopin note writing. The border between staccato and legato is erased. The sound picture opposes the sound. The finger touch of the keyboard obtains a double complex nature as the hand passes the further sound to the pedal.

A dot over a note or under it is accepted as notation of uncertain duration. Thus, a dot – a staccato sign – denotes a long sound held by the pedal in Chopin. Such is the dialectic process of the development not only of the piano style but also of the very note signs.

Each pianist is familiar with the illusion of the pedal-less piano sound. The sound loses the purely piano features and gains the ability to reflect the shades of the orchestral sound. A pianist uses this ability to exhibit the orchestral colors in performances of orchestral scores on a piano. We may call this quality of piano sound transcendental, that is, being beyond the specific timbre of the instrument.

Piano is not the only instrument able to produce hints of nearby and sometimes distant timbres. When one speaks of “violin singing”, this points to violin’s ability to remind other timbres. However, piano possesses an advantage in its ability to modify its sound into other timbres, as one may preserve the whole texture of a presentation intended for a different group of instruments. Such is the illusory sound of the natural horns played on the accompanying piano in Beethoven’s Fifth Concerto.

Clearly perceived pedal sounds almost always break the illusion. The pedal sound is so typical for the piano that it immediately betrays itself hindering the imagination suggesting orchestral timbres.

Beethoven’s piano presentation combines the pedal work with an almost pedal-less sound. Hence the infinite diversity of the sound colors of the thirty two sonatas, the complexity of the musical images brought to life by his piano art, the diversity of his textures.

Some elements in the last Beethoven sonatas may pose difficulties for a pianist. The meaning of the music radically changes depending on the texture interpretation and pedal use. If one accepts here (we are talking about the episode before the secondary line in the first movement of Sonata op. 106) the formula “only the notes held by fingers on the keyboard sound” – the music obtains a shifting linear kind that reminds a two-voice harpsichord presentation. On the other hand, the use of the forming Chopin pedal reveals the hidden polyphony. The organ point appears on the D-note. Not only the color but the whole score of the piano presentation changes.

This is one of the mysteries of Beethoven’s style. Though the wealth and unusual color of this episode make us prefer the second of the above interpretation one may not deny that the first one has the right to exist, especially so, given that in the same period Beethoven carefully writes out all the details of hidden voices in the beginning of Sonata Op. 109. It is likely that in this case the interpretation may rely on the peculiarity of Beethoven’s presentation that we defined as alternating between strictly pianistic and symphonic elements.

I considered some of the individual issues without any attempt to study completely the most difficult issues of the interpretative styles of Beethoven and Chopin. Post-Beethoven development of pedal use technique leads to confusion and arbitrariness in accents of hidden voices. Along with the artistically unquestionable examples of voices held by the pedal, say, in a performance of the second theme in Chopin’s Third Ballade, where the separation of the high voice as an individual melodic move is quite logical and is confirmed by the truly written voice in the further development of this theme – one

may present examples of unnecessary and artistically unjustified assignment of melodic force to random harmonic notes. As an example of an unsuccessful accent one may recall the stress of the low note in the right hand figuration in the C-sharp-minor waltz by Chopin. Josef Hofmann played in this manner and his example was followed by many others.

The new style of piano presentation and pedal use brought about a hunt for hidden voices in the texture by the concertising pianists. Many performers see signs of originality and independence in those “finds” in interpretation of works that are well known and frequently performed on the stage.

This heightened interest in discovering the hidden polyphony coincides with the simultaneous tendency in the presentation of some composers who tend to over-saturate the texture of piano compositions by additional voices that have no thematic importance. These “lost” voices appear most frequently in various piano transcriptions (for instance, in the Godowsky arrangements).

One may conjecture that the interpretations of many classical compositions “with participation of additional voices” was the basis for the Rachmaninov remark that “Pianists like to stress voices”.

## **Scriabin**

The next stage of style development leads to the modern forms of pianism. The evolution of Chopin style may be traced clearly in Scriabin’s compositions. Scriabin was able to extend the line of Chopin artistic principles far while incorporating some of the features of Liszt pianism.

Piano plays the dominant role in Scriabin art as well as in Chopin’s and the pedal mostly takes part in the formation of harmonic and polyphonic fabric. The pedal techniques assume a refined and complex character. The sound of Scriabin piano as in Chopin remains within the boundaries of purely melodious piano sounds. As Chopin, Scriabin confines himself to the middle of the keyboard only adding on the sounds of the upper and lower octaves and also avoids the technique of playing “across hands”.

One needs not enumerate all the common elements. The common goals of the two authors, that make us unite them historically as a live branch of the Chopin-Scriabin pianism, are all too clear. One should rather detail some particulars of Scriabin’s piano style, deeply original, defining his historic role as one of the most remarkable and unique composers, mostly writing for the piano. Scriabin has almost achieved an utmost perfection of style in this direction.

Were there any radical reforms in Scriabin’s style that may be classified as deep qualitative changes in the piano style? Unquestionably so, despite the obvious Chopin influence on young Scriabin. History knows examples when some similarity of artistic

personalities underlines their differences. A degree of closeness only stresses the internal contradiction and strife for different artistic goals.

Of course, Scriabin, as Chopin, opens the secrets of new sounds within the limits of the piano style. Chopin discovered new piano techniques with ease, as the whole area of piano sound had been insufficiently studied and each step in a new direction would yield new discoveries and accomplishments.

Scriabin's artistic method is more refined and sophisticated. His view studies the chosen sound elements with even greater detail.

Scriabin brings many presentation techniques to the utmost degree of perfection and refinement so that his touches the limits that hide either the mystery of the undiscovered sounds or, in a failure, the emptiness of the material form – an artistic nether land. Scriabin is led to this border by such techniques as complex polyrhythm, hidden themes, taking place of the additional voices of Chopin's presentations, refined measure in the pedal use, so sophisticated and elusive that a simple pedal change seems becomes too primitive if not crude. Hence any precision in pedal markings that was hardly possible already in Chopin's piano style is almost unthinkable for Scriabin's sounds. The refinement of pedal shadings makes Scriabin refrain from including them in the note text.

Hidden thematism is typical for Scriabin's pianism. What seems to be a figurative accompaniment at the first glance, exhibits sound fabric under a more attentive analysis. Each face of a figuration in a Scriabin work reflects the construction of the musical form. One may follow the logic of these tiny melodic turns accompanying – in the direct or inverted presentation – the wider thematic melody of the main voice. One of the most perfect examples of this style is found in the secondary part of the Second sonata. Hidden thematism is an extremely valuable technique of polyphonic development.

If one acknowledges that a conscious analysis inevitably lags behind the creative intuition, one may still distinguish various degrees of the active participation of artistic intentions and the degree of their influence on the result of composition.

A careful analysis often discovers a hidden participation of the main thematic motives in the figurative and polyphonic fabric of the composition. This phenomenon is related to the saturation of the texture and figurative accompaniment by elements or intonation turns of the main musical themes.

Such thematism may be called "hidden" as its appearance in the accompanying elements of the presentation does not depend on a conscious expression of composer's will. The figuration movement, that appears to the performer as purely harmonic support of the melodic voice, in reality reflects elements of the thematic material, usually in a smaller form. A detailed study may reveal the existence of such elements. A similar feeling is experienced by an explorer who discovers that an amorphous mass possesses a crystalline structure. One should mention that the author himself is often unaware of the additional thematic aspect until a later analysis of an already created composition.

Hints of a thematic accompaniment in some Chopin compositions (C-Minor Etude Op. 10) are more of an exception than a rule for his style. However, this technique grows into a special expressivity of the sound fabric saturated with the thematic material in Scriabin.

Scriabin rhythm is even less attached to the traditions of the strong measure time than Chopin's. The typical flight and direction of his music are based on this. The strong time in the construction of Scriabin's melodicity may be often defined as a result of a take-off or wave-like movement. His style avoids fixation and material base; it is all in dynamics that spills over the precise metric boundaries. The metric steadiness of the main line of the Third Sonata is slowly dissolved in the wave-like development. The turns of the melody expand, destructing the metric static and the rebellious play of thematic fragments leads to a flying concluding theme.

The swift musical stream is some times born within the boundaries of slow tempo. Scriabin's prestissimo, his fastest textures are built of elements created in the stressed expressivity of slower constructions. The speed of Scriabin tempos grows out of the fabric typical of the penetration of an andante. The first prelude, Op. 11 is thought of as a slow composition that does not lose its expressive qualities even at a very fast tempo.

The expressive fabric of F-Sharp-Minor Etude Op. 42 also maintains various tempo interpretations. The thematic and emotional saturation of each individual element of the melodic line and each presentation detail are typical of Scriabin's compositions, even those that assume the fastest performing tempo.

The slow melody develops gradually in Scriabin without sharp accents and distinct support in the bar meter. One may achieve the feeling of detachment of the materialistic foundation, the very soaring that is so needed in a realization of Scriabin's ideas. Prestissimo volando of the Fourth Sonata is not so much a fast tempo but an andante raised to a new power. It was this quality of Scriabin's music that allowed one of performers of this sonata to remark to characterize its swiftness and flight of its movement: "One should play first slowly and expressively, gradually increasing the tempo. The correct tempo is achieved when the pianist feels that the music soars and floats above the ground."

The harmony and timbre color are inseparable in Scriabin. A slightest perturbation of equilibrium and precise distribution of force in simultaneously or successively performed fragments in his late works is perceived as a forgery and excessive nervousness.

Scriabin's piano style develops the Chopin style, encompassing the whole keyboard in the accompanying figurations treating the middle of the keyboard as the most suitable register for the development of the main musical ideas. However, Scriabin allows an even greater hand span on the keyboard. Great distances that were considered as jumps before Scriabin (for instance, the widely spread notes in the accompaniment of the D-Sharp-Minor Etude) are thought to belong to the same hand position in Scriabin's piano style.

Scriabin does not transcribe the melody and accompaniment for the instrument transposing the same elements of musical form from one register into another, but rather makes a full use of the colorful effects of the extreme registers. His style sometimes approaches and modernizes the Liszt manner of presentation in this and other aspects.

The most essential distinction of the post-Beethoven development of pianism that led to the Scriabin piano style via Liszt and Chopin lies in the completely new principles of rhythm interpretation. The real shift of rhythm not only in the playing of other performers but of the author himself deviates from arithmetic relations of his own note text. The note meter and the real movement of music become distinctly separated in the musical rhythm. Their relation takes a special form of deviations or “mutations”. The rhythmic tension depends not only on its specific properties but also on its relation to the metric formulas. The freedom of rhythmic interpretation is perceived as expressivity in an unwitting comparison to the precise meter-note base.

A special chapter [“Rhythm and Meter”] is devoted to the issues of rhythm and meter and thus we restrict ourselves to this brief remark.

### **Concrete and Abstract Elements in Music**

There are many reasons to consider the classical symphonism as the most concrete, materially complete area of musical art.

The most deep and penetrating melody, given all the importance of the emotional content, may still lack a real directivity. However, a true expressivity of a musical phrase has the same objective force as a thought formulated in words. It is common for a word to concretize music or for music to concretize a word. This happens in a song, romance, and musical drama.

Those who do not accept the right of music to have a concrete content are in a deep error. Rather, it is sought not where it manifests itself in full force. Mendelssohn seems to be the author of the aphorism that he does not know “why one should explain music in words while music is clearer than words.”

If only the part of our intellect that may be related completely by words alone is deemed existing then the reality of all unsaid or lying beyond the system of notions is denied.

Many times the poets, whose duties include verbal expression of the live content, themselves stop in front of an image, thought or feeling whose meaning eludes the boundaries of verbal forms.

Does a word in poetry not become more truthful and expressive as it is accompanied by the sound expressivity of a poem? One may recall what the poets say of the boundaries of the domain accessible to a word: “A thought emitted is a lie.” (Tyutchev, “Silentium”) – “... With a measured verse and an icy word you shan’t transmit its meaning.” (Lermontov, “Do not believe yourself”)



Reading Pushkin's "Verses Written during Insomnia" we feel the poet's strife to express in a word an elusive meaning. And this is not only the images and feelings of a sleepless night. This is one of the deepest reflections on life addressed to what is hidden behind a word and may not be completely expressed in it.

The music concreteness is confirmed by singing of a word. A word is accompanied by music for the total expression. Not only may a word not be thrown out of a song but a sound as well.

The concreteness of a musical form should be understood as the ability of music to express and invigorate the live content merging with an image, idea and emotion. Not all musical works are blessed with this power: the musical form itself should possess a certain material completeness and concreteness. The coordinate system defines concreteness, reality of music as if plastically cutting the musical form. This is not only the pitch and metric data but the texture, dynamics, timbre – in other words, everything that may concretize various qualities of sound.

One may think of a melody outside of a certain timbre or even outside of the functionally related harmony. Rhythm may be subjected to an excessive deviation. The sound of a musical interpretation – in an unsuccessful interpretation – may experience superfluous oscillations. The music invariably misses a degree of its wild real power as if losing a complex traction mechanism connecting it to reality and life.

A classical orchestral score defines most fully all the sound aspects. The importance of the collectivity in a performance, the choral element is more essential than is commonly acknowledged. Eight or ten violin stands performing the same melody free its rhythm and expressivity of arbitrary deviations common for an individual interpretation. Given all the precision, flexibility and charm of a solo instrument an individual performer does not have the power and wild influence of a symphonic composition. The reality and concreteness of the orchestral sound is not limited to the timbre color brought by the score to the music. It is essential that a composer may hear a realization of his ideas already in the score, that it is no longer subjected to further random oscillations.

Abstractness and concreteness are diametrically opposed to each other. The meaning and character of the music change in turn approaching the complete reality of a plastic form and shaking its material base turning to the boundaries of spontaneous expressivity that is better captured by the inner hearing. Recall the "inner voice" that does not sound but is just hinted at in Schumann's "Humoreske".

Poetry is satisfied with a "minimal" sound. Verse euphonics is nearly discrete. Poetry lovers read in their heads gladly. Many prefer such reading to a loud declamation. Musical coordinates are absent in poetry or are supplemented by the imagined metric values. The music of the verse is better perceived by the inner hearing. It sounds more distinctly in the imagination than in a realized interpretation of an actor.

One may feel the melodic line, its form and direction before its realization in the metric-pitch coordinates. (According to Kurt (?-spelling?) the linear energy precedes the concrete forms of musical sounds.)

The birth of a melody is preceded by a vague feeling of expressive possibilities, an unclear predecessor of its future metric-pitch form. Initially it is just a sketched contour of its musical sound that lives mostly in the imagination as in image perceived by the inner hearing.

The further development of a musical idea leads to its first metric-pitch realization that may also happen in the imagination or require a real writing. Sometimes we may follow the whole creative path of the birth of a musical image – to its total concretization, from the first inner movement – to the “material” binds and bases of an orchestral score, from the original unformed idea – to the most colorful and effective sounds.

A musical form realized in a certain metric-pitch system, undergoes characteristic deviations in an individual interpretation, be it vibrato in strings or rhythmic flexibility of a piano performance. It is in the power of a performer to provide the musical images with an objective material force or strive to discover their source and lead the lyrical stimulus of the work to the foreground.

Beethoven symphonism has solidly occupied the whole wide scale of sounds. The ideological and emotional stimuli of his art found their complete and unquestionable realization in the concreteness of his images. Thus the Beethoven vision of the artistic world and the nature of the material-musical form that he has created, are always ideologically and morally justified. One may rarely find images in Beethoven music that transcend in their phantasm the boundaries of reality or lyrical expressions that are separated from a concrete artistic impulse. His musical ideas, swift and free, are realized in clear and un-muddled forms.

Nevertheless one may point to some episodes of the Beethoven symphonism that exhibit some features that destroy the wholesomeness of the musical method. When we hear the coda of the first movement of the Ninth Symphony we experience the feeling of violation of the wholesomeness of the creative conscience and the fragility of the cosmic foundations. Not only this ingenious episode but the short bass theme in the coda of the first movement of the Seventh Symphony has the same effect of alarm and split of conscience.

These examples, as well as the vague chromatic bass shift in the first movement of the Fifth Concerto, show a development of the action on the dimmed background of the musical stage far removed from the bright footlights, which is parallel to the crossing of the fate of the main characters. These musical forms are related to the irrational images, slowly changing reminiscences. Episodes follow one after another as pictures of life and reflections flying through a torpid tired mind. They appear sometimes even in the early Beethoven works such as Allegretto of Sonata Op.2 No.2, or some episodes of the C-

Major quartet Op. 58 [should this be Op. 59?] (“Thought after a thought, wave after a wave ...”).

Despite all the diversity of ideas and texture, a strict logical development is typical for Beethoven. However, every once in a while his art tries to escape the world of the stable forms of the Viennese classicism. The boundaries of the historically established harmonic techniques are too tight for his imagination. Sometimes he splits apart and recombines the familiar form elements with an impetuous freedom, finding a new meaning in their unexpected combinations. A mix of dominant and tonic functions appears, as may be seen at the end of the first movement of Sonata Op. 81a.

We find a remarkable example of such “artistic chaos” in the coda of the first movement of the Fifth Concerto in the piano accompaniment of natural horns where the mixing of harmonic functions produces a special color of the passages. Seemingly random but essentially justified discrepancies in figuration appear also in the first variation of the second movement of “Appassionata”. One may find many similar examples – up to the famous natural horn entry in the repeat of the first movement of the Third Symphony on the second of the dominant sept-chord [CHECK!!].

These elements of the whole harmonic system literally “broken” by Beethoven point to his desire to go beyond the boundaries of the traditional style, overcome its binding canon. Their symptomatic character is important to us. As if some moments, which may not be exhausted by the ideological wholesomeness of a conscious creative will, have appeared in the completed concreteness of Beethoven’s symphonism. Their “independence” has many more features taking their origin in the spontaneous energy of sounding matter, it has more of “blind” fate character, than of logical development and gradual creative process.

Each artist overcomes the resistance of material means. The final finished form of a composition always has “independent” features added by the unconquered inertness of the material.

An artist creates an aesthetic object of comprehension. He may assume the position of an outside observer regarding the finished form. The freer the sketches of the future form the greater the role of the material resources, the features that depend on the last stage of the creative process. Sometimes, for instance, the description of nature is more expressive and exhibits its individual traits more colorfully if an artist steps away from an overly detailed drawing of all details. The final moment of realization of the concept invariably brings about qualitative changes that depend on the stubbornness of the expression means or willfulness of the artistic material. The discrepancy between the lines of conscious intent and of the final result often underlines the concreteness of the real conditions, the essence of willfulness of the sound world.

Mozart art is more harmonious. The thematic characteristics of his compositions predetermine the development of the ideas and the artistic result of the composer intentions more precisely. The themes of Mozart symphonism develop their expressive

possibilities logically and gradually. Their exhaustion leads the Mozart form to slowly extinguish them as opposed to the burst of inner energy as in many Beethoven's developments and codas. The Beethoven art is more fatalistic. His symphonism has more finalism than gradualism. His form is often shaped by the cutter of an idea out of the sound stone. Beethoven animates inanimate.

Thus, the reasons for the existence of a "material remainder" emerge - as a result of the shift of the trajectories of concept and realization, as a result of the violation of equivalence of the inner and outer forms.

## **Weber**

Post-Beethoven symphonism extends the shift and split in the depths of the musical form. "The material remainder" leads to further stratification of the symphonic monolith. It is no longer united by the cohesion of Beethoven's ideological-moral world view. The images grow more fantastic leaning toward the artificial light of the theater stage. The fatalistic elements of the musical form develop further opening the door for the Romantic forces and mysterious images of nature. The nature is comprehended now not only in its being but also in its arbitrariness. It turns into beckoning visions of "Midsummer Night Dreams" or the frightening images of "Freischutz".

Weber's piano style also acquires theatrical qualities. The first movement of his A-flat-Major Sonata is constructed as a dramatic overture. The second movement of this sonata precedes the shepherd elegies of Meyerbeer's "Le Prophete" and of the third act of Wagner's "Tristan". His sonata development is built not only on thematic contrasts, this is rather a parade of images - light and dark, elegiac and fantastic.

The D-Minor sonata is also dramatized. The variations of the second movement, starting with the forms typical for a classical development, are theatricalized and culminate in the remarkable final variation. An unusual harmonization of its melody attracts our attention. Compared to the original, manifestly parsimonious and functionally primitive accompaniment of the theme, the harmonic functions are so shifted and mixed in the last variation that this finale of the variational cycle should be considered as an example of the most complex and refined harmonization.

The Weber piano presentation is closer to the classical model of his predecessors. The form of Mozart's passages is often encountered along with the principles of Beethoven's pianism. Weber's piano style is enhanced by the techniques borrowed from his own orchestral scores. Weber interprets the piano sound in analogy to the characteristic techniques that he had introduced into the scores of his operatic overtures.

Weber's style, his pianism, colorful and virtuosic has undoubtedly exerted an important influence on Chopin and especially on Liszt. The latter is close to Weber in the phantasm of their virtuosity. As I have already said, the Weber pianism continues many traditions of the Mozart-Beethoven piano style. He is not juxtaposed to it, as are Chopin piano forms that are radically different from the classical techniques.

The difficulties posed to a pianist by Chopin compositions depend on the originality and organic development of individual components of his technique. Chopin's technical difficulties are overcome from inside through the understanding of the artistic stimuli of his art and Chopin's interpretation of the piano sound. The difficulties of Weber's presentations as well as those of the Liszt technical barriers are overcome from the outside – through the search for an impressive and charming virtuosity.

Chopin does not transpose the inner energy and temperament of the created sound images to the artist-super-virtuoso performing in front of an awed and deafened audience. Weber, as well as Liszt, provides the very persona of the performer with phantasmagoric qualities: he appears in front of the public as a magician possessing the means unavailable to the common folk.

This was the time when the concert stage was possessed by "Paganinism", worship of the technical bravura and artistic perfection far exceeding the limits of the feasible. The primitive and dry sixteen-measure Paganini theme has not lost its symbolic meaning until now. It is related to the idea of the "infernal" virtuosity. It enters the pieces by Liszt, Brahms, Rachmaninov, along with the sounds of the medieval "Dies irae" as a fetish of technical bravura.

The 'super-human' pathos of virtuosity, so symptomatic for the post-Beethoven development of pianism, had to move to the foreground the Romantic images of the dark exalted fantasies. The outer image of an artist that had been a mandatory uniform stayed in the past. The long hair of Liszt, falling onto the shoulders, an unfocused wondering look, unnatural face paleness, reckless wide movements – all these signs should have hint to the terrifying "other-worldly" forces helping - and not always gratis – the performer to overcome super-human difficulties.

We know of the persecution of Paganini by the church as the most impressive figure of this super-virtuosic trend. Hence our minds have difficult time facing the obviously good-natured, light and unsophisticated genre of the compositions not often performed then in a recital. Indeed, such compositions as "Campanella" and Paganini Etudes, as well as their numerous arrangements, may rather serve as an example of an attractive, superficial, though brilliant but thoughtless art.

However, such compositions as the Liszt B-Minor Sonata, the "Mephisto Waltz", the Faust Symphony, appeared along with the enormous amount of content-free music. Chopin was creating the new piano forms blessed with a truly enlightened pathos. The deep Schubert lyrics and truly Romantic Weber's and Mendelssohn's images have been already created. However, many of these works have not taken their place on the performing stage until much later.

## **Schumann**

The reader of these notes will probably notice that neither do I solve nor pose the problem of a detailed study of interpretations of one composer or other from all possible angles. I am rather interested in individual symptomatic features related to the intervals of an historical perspective, with the problem of passing the torch of the “style relay”.

The issues of performing style are considered here not in the static but in a dynamical development. Schumann’s music belongs to one of the most lyrical and inspired creative directions of the post-Beethoven period. In order to understand correctly the role of Schumann’s art in the development of piano style, one has to define the qualities of his lyrics and the characteristic divide between the concept and its realization in sound, that accompanied Schumann during his whole artistic life.

Schumann was stricken by a enormous misfortune for a musician at the beginning of his artistic path: a incurable hand illness. Schumann, who promised to become one of the greatest pianists of his time, has “overplayed” his hand, exercising, and could no longer be a performer and interpreter of his piano compositions. He was deprived of the ability to develop his virtuosity. Evidently, the illness itself was caused by a passionate strife for the most perfect forms of piano identification.

If one takes into account that this was the time of great composers who happened to be remarkable performers, such as Chopin, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Weber, that Schumann was not satisfied with the usual presentation techniques but created his own special world of piano sounds; that the artistic elation and impulse typical for his art lead his style far away from the common forms and assign additional virtuosic difficulties to the majority of his works, - one may then comprehend how tragic the inability to interpret and perform his compositions was for Schumann. The drama of the situation of the genius composer who was predicted the fame of a great virtuoso artist since his very first steps was deepened by the unusual difficulty and complexity of the piano style of the first Schumann compositions. His Toccata, “Carnaval”, “Kreisleriana”, Fantasy, “The Symphonic Etudes”, “Humoreske” – all these compositions created during the early period of his work, required new pianism forms and unusually treatment of the instrument. They waited their performer while their creator had to remain on the sidelines having lost the ability to realize his musical ideas with the hand illness.

Thus, Schumann’s turn to chamber and orchestral compositions was natural. However, disappointment awaited Schumann in this area of musical art.

Given all the depth and significance of his symphonic art that had an enormous influence on the ways of the historical development of the musical art, Schumann’s symphonism often lacks the last degree of realization, the total material concreteness, that tenacity and practical skill that are characteristic of a born master of instrumentation.

There is no reason to think that Schumann lacked the craft and professional experience in chamber or orchestral instrumentation of his compositions. The detached and incorporeal images characteristic of his art are born out of the very concept and inner essence of his musical ideas. As if Schumann does not gather the full strength of the violin sound in

finalizing the composer's concept of the two ingenious violin sonatas. He lacks the last link in the creative process. It seems that the sincerity and spontaneity of his artistic soul suffer from interaction with reality. It is hard to explain why these two remarkable compositions could suffer from such detail as a skillful and beneficial presentation of the violin part that is a purely technical matter for each, even an average musician.

The violin part was rather an abstract lyrical voice for Schumann, the "voice from afar" that appears sometimes in his works. An unforeseen force derails Schumann art from the completion, the concrete sound. These abstracted musical voices despite their penetration and truthfulness contradict the reality and material support of sound.

We have to take Schumann's word in order to understand completely Schumann's instrumental music. We have to go toward him, enrich the last concretizing data with our imagination, and hear that which does not sound or sounds simply as a hint or reflection.

A simple touch of the semantic categories would provide an abstract musical form with the concreteness of a poetic image. The attraction of Schumann's music toward poetry and expressivity of a word is organic. Poetry equilibrates the instability of musical elements. Without a complete material completeness in sound Schumann's art finds support in a poetic idea.

Schumann's strife toward outside support in his art is symptomatic. He searches everywhere for a support: in poetic images, surrounding reality, personal presence of his dear ones, in the world of childish fantasies. He needs titles for his pieces, imaginative epigraphs. He has easier time writing from life: he finds there a respite from generality and bodilessness of his music.

We are stunned that the music sounds more distinctly in his mind when his view is taken by subjects strange and fantastic. His music gains the missing material completeness exactly at the moments when he may concentrate his attention on vague poetic images.

This artistic path full of an inner split must have been contradictory and painful. Schumann seems to avoid a direct view in his art. He turns his eyes away at the moments when the last step of the creative process is being completed, when the fate of the musical concept is being decided. Too fixed a look kills the links of the creative process that fall under his eye. Hence the heaviness of some of the forms of Schumann's piano presentation.

The heavy chord masses in the finale of the "Symphonic Etudes", the next to last piece in "Humoresque", in the beginning of the "Faschingsschwank aus Wien" are overwhelmed by extraneous loads that outweigh the creative ideas. One feels that composer imagination is far from these deadly forms. The airy expressive melodic lines of "Kreisleriana" are overtaken by the intrusive metric repeats with a pointless monochromatic development.

Schumann's use of the illusory qualities of the piano sound is unparalleled. Syncopated melody movement weaves without touching the measure divisors.

This independence of the melodic line from the measure net is remarkable. The bass voice lags behind the melody movement in the last piece of "Kreisleriana" as a thought of a man engrossed in his reverie, a dispersed thought that is not synchronized with the outside flow of life.

Thus Schumann manages to create a movement inside a musical form that creates a bodiless musical image, deconstructing the real power and unity of rhythm.

The rhythm of Schumann's musical texture attains such a degree of refinement and bodilessness that the appearance of the episodes with the usual technique of the metric-rhythmical texture creates an impression of a violation of the style unity. Sometimes not only one voice but two voices move syncopated as, for instance, at the conclusion of one of the pieces in "Humoresque".

The naturalness and originality of Schumann's piano style emerge distinctly in comparison to Chopin's. It is hard to imagine even two measures of the two composers that would not exhibit the difference in style. The famous piece in "Carnaval" entitled "Chopin" only underlines this incongruity betraying the clear failure of style imitation. Chopin occupies firmly the position opposing the style of Vienna classicism. Schumann is rather inclined to continue the line of classical evolution. He preserves some classical traditions in many respects.

Schumann also paid his dues to the infatuation with Paganini's virtuosity. Some of his etudes and caprices are of rather an historical interest as they turned out to be a deviation from the mainstream of Schumann's piano style not only in their artistic quality but rather more importantly in their technical goals. These are the same outlived forms of the Clementi-Hummel pianism. The author seems to have posed the first goal of attaining the perfection in the domain of the usual virtuosity before confidently taking his own position.

Creation of etude cycles was one of the most immediate expressions of Chopin's artistic genius: this genre is intricately connected to his perception of sound and performing temperament. Schumann, as he was creating his etudes, was a prisoner of a somewhat abstract dream of the all-overcoming force of virtuosity, of the utmost stress of technical practice. It was the stress of this dream that led the ingenious composer to the technical catastrophe. The degree of musical perfection that was denied to him due to the hand illness always haunted his imagination as an unrealized youthful dream.

Schumann is taken by the Hofmann phantasm of virtuosity, by its "Kreislerianity", in these exercises and etudes. We may distinguish there his strife for an unattainable technical perfection as well as in such images as "Paganini" in the "Carnaval", or in the stressed texture of the last movement of the F-Minor Sonata, or in the well known contradiction in the performing markings in the E-Minor Sonata: "as fast as possible" and then "even faster". Schumann's exercises and etudes are as far removed from reality as many of his "practical" steps and actions of his Romantic dream.



The attention of every pianist is invariably drawn to the exercise with the accents on various metric parts of a passage recommended by Schumann. This technique is almost unplayable by the means of the usual pianism. Schumann introduces it as a technical challenge in some compositions: “The Gust”, the finale of the F-Minor Sonata, “Paganini”. The last of these pieces may be realized only in an imprecise playing or by a conscious deviation from the author directions.

We should pay attention to the strange but by now familiar names of the Schumann compositions. Why did Schumann call his C-Sharp-Minor variations “The Symphonic Etudes”? For some reason, it was exactly this composition where the originality and power of Schumann’s style were revealed so fully and emotionally, that was called “symphonic” by the author? The variations still remain in the repertoire of performing pianists to this day due to the richness of the technique of piano presentation, contrasting transitions from one variation to another, and, most importantly, thanks to the most grateful and impressing sound of the instrument.

“The Symphonic Etudes” is unquestionably one of the most pianistic of Schumann’s works. Evidently, here, as well as in other instances, Schumann purposefully concentrates his attention on a remote goal. Hence, typically for Schumann’s art, the most perfect forms of Schumann’s pianism are realized when the author is concentrated on something else ...

Schumann uses many techniques of the classical heritage providing them with new means of expression. He romanticizes the polyphonic technique in several variations of the “Symphonic Etudes”. Some episodes are presented with the help of a canon: the theme is presented in the bass while the main melodic line is contrapuntal. The closeness of the seventh etude to the form of a polyphonic prelude is characteristic. However, each of these techniques, be it the anxiety of the repeating chords, the weightlessness of the fast punctuated rhythm, the transparent lightness of the quasi violin passages of the third etude, or the flickering tremolo of the next-to-last variation, - the ingenious artist-creator introduces his own features into the variational form, his own lyrical, “Schumann” penetration and pathos.

Schumann’s art absorbs the very diverse vital content reinterpreting it in his own manner. It encompasses widely all the trends close to him – those of the past as well as the contemporary ones. Schumann adopts much of the technique of Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn. Despite his sincere admiration of the Chopin genius, the aristocratic reserve of the Chopin art remains foreign to Schumann’s art. Schumann’s piano style may be divided into several significantly distinct periods. Almost all of Schumann’s compositions that use widely and freely the rich palette and diversity of the piano sound belong to the beginning of his composing career. The last Schumann piano compositions such as the “Waldszenen” are less original. One notes some forcefulness in the piano texture: the repeat of similar techniques, sometimes pointless arpeggios, such as in the beginning of the E-major Concerto, heavy chord moves.

At the same time, not only the poetry of the images and depth of the inner penetration of many compositions of that period, the mastery of sound painting do not decrease but increases further. The world of the refined romantic sounds gains some features in its transparent illusion that have even greater intimate closeness and conviction than the images of the “Fantasiestücke” and “Carnaval”. This is the last enormous creative Schumann’s stress. It seems that one may not be more sincere and truthful. Another step in this direction - and art will leave the reality.

Probably, such refined-truthful images that turn phantasm into reality, as “Prophetic Bird”[??] and “Damned place”[??] already reach the border of musical expressivity. One feels the presence of the danger of an artist encountering the boundary beyond which lies either visionary or creative solipsism.

Sincerity and penetration may also turn out to be excessive: they require the support of stable elements of style as an artistic method. This path led Schumann to the solitude and de-concretization of his last piano compositions.

Schumann’s rhythm strives to avoid measure principles. Some constructions not only lack support in the metric base but remain hanging in the air. They are discerned only by the performer and do not reach the listener. The melodic moves of the right hand in the finale of the F-Minor Sonata are built of a syncope and two weak tacts. Thus the movement is disconnected from the metric fractions of the measure. It is weightless. The rhythm of the secondary part of the finale of the Piano Concerto may be hardly discerned by the listener.

Schumann’s marking in one of the piece in the “Humoreske” is typical: “out of tempo” – for the right hand and “in tempo” – for the left hand. The power that deviates the rhythm movement – this is the expressivity of a word whose sound is almost heard in his music. While many of the forms of Schumann’s rhythm deny the positive base of the musical meter, they may find the support in the positive elements of speech constructions: in its expressive logic, the characteristic word structure.

It is the word that a pedagogue uses to help a student comprehend some complex forms of Schumann rhythm. How else may one transmit the penetrating expressivity of the melody in “Kreisleriana”?

Some expressive turns of the musical phrase are repeated in various Schumann compositions. These are “melody-words”. Schumann transmits them from one composition into another as embryos of the lyrical movement that unite a thought, image and emotion.

This clarifies the sources of the perfection of Schumann’s song lyrics. A pianist with little knowledge of Schumann’s vocal cycles will have difficulty finding the key to the piano art.

A pianist studying Schumann's compositions should be prepared to overcome the internal contradictions and contrasts of his style. A Schumann interpreter should combine in his playing an utmost virtuosity and deep lyricism. He should master both the tight metric constructions and most refined arbitrary rhythm oscillations. He should be alternating between strict adherence to the concrete performing logic and search in his soul for the special individual resonator in order to distinguish the hardly reaching "voice from afar".

One has to attain the organic unity of the heavily material constructions and the refined-dreamy forms in a Schumann performance. Heaviness – and airiness, power – and tender fragility, clarity – and illusion, reality – and phantasm ... These juxtaposed categories have to be joined and melted together. This is the only possible way search for the correct approach to Schumann performing style.

### **Sergey Prokofiev**

At the start of our century, around the year 1911-12, when the piano style has reached the utmost refinement in the last Scriabin's compositions; when the winds of the colorfully painting and spiritless movement that was named musical impressionism; when the open and full-blooded Rachmaninov temperament seems to be overly direct and real against this background, - at this time appears the figure of a young composer presenting his First Piano Concerto. This was Sergey Prokofiev. He was destined to produce a complete turnaround in the fate of the pianism and piano style.

It would be difficult to imagine a more contrasting phenomenon in art denying all the previous values and accomplishments. Even the most predisposed attention toward everything new in art would have difficulty catching positive qualities in this stormy militant nihilism.

A significant time has passed before the constructive elements, a firm foundation for new forms of melody, harmony and rhythm were recognized in the Prokofiev struggle. It is possible that with time the critics have fallen into an opposite trap, overestimating some deconstructing tendencies of the emerging style and underestimating the tender shoots full of original lyricism that were endangered to be steamrolled by the irrepressible and stormy development of the new principles of musical aesthetics.

What an enormous effort had to accompany this sharp turn away from the refined and complex forms, the last links in the evolution process – in the direction of archaism, resurrecting the primordial forces of musical influence. Prokofiev has brought back to life the forces of the primitivism, of the original elements of the musical style.

The mysterious smile of the ancient sculpture is reborn in the crudely cut stone. The sound, rhythm, energy regain the original spontaneity. In the heavy and clumsy jumps, blown diatonic sequences, seemingly borrowed from a collection of grotesque exercises, in the stubbornly repeated metric sequences of the First Piano Concerto, one first and foremost feels the power. This is the strength of a pilot turning the ship toward the wind.

Prokofiev's art has been allowed to have this excessive temperament power for a long time. The features of the art of the young composer that most shocked the musical tastes used to the most refined forms of musical expression – the primordial elements, storminess, the pressure of the stubborn metric forms, the obsession of primitive, unrelenting, rectangular musical images, everything that may be united by the notion of Prokofiev's skyphness, - these qualities of his composer's gift became attractive to the aesthetic conscience of many connoisseurs before others.

All those tired of contemplating of the most refined details and miniscule deviations and shifts in the dying down movement of the evolutionary process. Prokofiev's music became the symbol of an untamed and stormy creative temperament.

The majority of other composers fall under Prokofiev's influence. Their thoughts are subsumed by the simplicity and square-ness of Prokofiev's rhythm.

A new style cuts through the refinement and complexity of late virtuosity. Scriabin's excessive neurosis is no longer needed: motorics and technique become so primitive that the performer simply applies his well-oiled apparatus of speed and technical precision to the prepared metric clichés. The form of one-movement sonata that absorbed all the tempos of the four-part cycle in a single continuous but flexible and changing development leaves its place to a sonatina and toccata. All these forms do not allow for qualitative shifts, deviations, flexibility of tempo inside its once and for all defined dynamics. They are motoric in their very essence. The synthetic sonata of Romantics splits into tiny sonata parts. The piano style is ruled by infantilism.

As a large rock falling onto the smooth surface of a lake, Prokofiev's art generates smaller and smaller waves dying on the shore. Not only compositions for children are included into the concert programs but also the children themselves become their performers and interpreters.

Infantilism, clavecinism, a sort of "pre-Beethovenianism" became so unshakingly fashionable in the recent decades that they have almost become the required elements of a musical composition. Every composer with any claims to originality, "modernity" and good taste pays them a tribute in one way or other. The snobbism of modern experts does not notice that it is fed not by the fresh juices of the main stem of art but only by echoes of style, remnants of its transformation.

A sensitive seismograph of the modern taste feels these weak signs pointing toward the true origin of a great stylistic shift. But this epicenter is located far in the depths of the true art and has little resemblance of the small eclectic forms that float toward the surface. Thus it is not always possible to recognize the principles of Prokofiev's powerful style in the numerous epigone pieces that have flooded the piano literature recently.

Prokofiev sought support in the classical examples even during the first period of his art when an attraction to the negative tendencies and denial of everything foreign to his artistic credo would have been natural for the young composer. At the same time his

piano style had firm support in the virtuosic accomplishments of the rapidly developing Russian pianism.

Grotesque overstatements of his piano style merge suddenly with the harpsichord virtuosity of Scarlatti sonatas, with the grotesque jumps, bared linearity of polyphony, with the utmost alive voice movement.

At the time when the most refined search of new harmonic complexes went along the path of study of sounds forming in the heights of the natural scales, and Scriabin strived to justify acoustically the appearance of new unfamiliar combinations, when the techniques of Chopin's presentation were considered "the minimum of euphony", - Prokofiev's music resurrects the tight chord position completely ignoring the means of Romantic presentation and the overtone scale with its predisposition toward the most comfortable location of sound. Prokofiev's music is far removed from the arpeggized passages that touch the notes of the highest octaves in a complex and perfected manner, from the refined efforts to combine for the horizontal and vertical textures into a single, finest sound fabric.

Prokofiev's style returns the harmony to the original forms of the chordal sound. He tries to assign them with the functional definiteness and compactness. In order to counter the harmonic complexes that form in time, on a pedal, Prokofiev's presentation often attaches foreign contradicting sounds to a chord. Hence the appearance of poles as if inserted into the harmony and of disharmonic notes piercing the chord.

At the same time the colors of the classical palette and diversity of the piano registers are re-born. The piano sounds with the shades of an orchestral score once again. It stops being simply itself. The hidden illusority of the Romanticized style is revealed compared to the colorful and clear neo-primitivism. And Chopin's euphony that governed the piano style half a century had to yield the way to the new methods.

At the same time as the lost colors reappear the world of old tale images is awoken. They are drawn by the imagination even more vividly than the mythical heroes of Rimsky-Korsakov. Their brightness competes with the immediate and naïve truth of a Viatka toy.

Never before did the piano sound possess such a realistic fantasy and gripping images. However, this is achieved at the expense of schematization of the emotional content.

The emotional colors of Prokofiev's music are bright and saturated but its content is often based on constant epithets as in the folk poetry.

The psychological world of Prokofiev's images is presented only in several shades without a detailed differentiation. The enormous, almost hypnotic influence of his music is related to the aggregation of homogeneous impressions and addition of identical characteristics. One and the same experience sometimes reaches the utmost dimensions, constantly increased by the unrelenting forms of musical development.

Prokofiev's images lack the live flexibility. The expressivity of movement of his figurations depends not so much on the plasticity but rather on the static of the already built forms. A similar impression is produced by a folk marionette theatre that transmits a static image at every moment: not the movement but its result.

The eternal antinomy of statics and dynamics, formation and finality lies at the core of artistic comprehension. A work of sculpture, staying unchanged, swims in the world of constant development. The permanent-ness of the sculpture form contradicts the evolving real world.

A similar impression is left by many refined-alive images of Prokofiev's music on the background of intentionally marionette surroundings. As images of a mysterious dream they permeate the rigid unyielding plasticity of life. One might think that the presence of contrastingly-old-tale images was required to better underline the lyrical ray of his art.

The antithesis of a theatrical mask – and a live face, two-dimensionality of a theatre set – and fullness of live content, sharp contrasts – and soft color shades, reminds of the fate of the beautiful women images in Rimsky-Korsakov's opera-tales. As if two natures of the musical art compete for the right for reality on this new stage. If the high, charming sounds of Prokofiev's melody are true, then the rest of his characters are the images of the dead, conditional reality. As the Astronomer says in "The Golden Rooster":

Only the Queen and I  
Were the live faces here,  
The rest – phantom, a dream,  
A ghost pale, the emptiness.

A performer of Prokofiev's piano compositions has to take a special care that the inertia of the invariably growing clear figurations, the edgy chord articulation would not transplant itself into the interpretation of the wonderful lyrical moments. The pianist should be ready for spontaneous changes of the musical sets. The Columbine appearance – as a magic wand – immediately changes the mood on stage. The interpreter has to find in himself the strength to be fully prepared for these "pure changes" so typical for Prokofiev's style.

The tender lyrical images in Prokofiev's music gain a special inimitable expressivity from the new way of melody accompaniment that differs drastically from the arpeggized harmonies of the Chopin-Field style. When a lyrical middle episode appears in Prokofiev's First Piano Concerto, the orchestral part is presented by means of the usual harmonization as broken chords. However, the piano accompaniment of the same melody reveals one of the most marvelous, expressive and original sides of Prokofiev's pianism. The figuration movement does not accumulate the harmony – this would be overly static for Prokofiev's method - but presents it in a constant development. The broken chords move constantly up and down along the steps with uniformly moving tenacity.

The accompaniment of the C-major theme in the middle movement of the Fourth sonata is presented in a similar way. Possibly, the treble movement has a remote reminiscence of the first movement of the "Moonlight" sonata but the Prokofiev trebles shift continuously and graciously as if obeying the magic will of the yet unexplored laws of euphony. These are yet untouched layers of harmonic thought. The chord movement undergoes a barely noticeable influence of the functional dependence: the continuous shift prevents their formation in immovable static sound combinations. Prokofiev presents examples of original harmonic thought in this uniform movement with diatonic transitions that remind the legend of the shepherd Pan flute. He is a master of harmony that stimulates the continuous dynamics and at the same time grows out of a persistent movement.

Prokofiev uses all means to dynamise the harmony. One of those powerful means is the technique of contradiction. Prokofiev intentionally introduces the contradiction into the theme of the Sixth sonata to avoid the statics of the A-major sound. One may find an unbounded number of examples of contradictions in his compositions.

Classicism techniques get hold of Prokofiev thoughts only for a short time. After the "Classical Symphony" and close to this style examples Prokofiev creates his Second Piano Concerto - a grandiose tale, where the saturation and unusual scale of images attribute to them the fantastic features of a mythical epopee.

Prokofiev's style underwent a series of changes later but at the very core this remarkable composer remains true to himself. The middle period of his art is the most complex. The harmonic texture will then attain the utmost sharpness and saturation.

The last third of Prokofiev's art reminds the spirit of his earlier compositions to a great degree. His style regains the classical features and composer returns to the strong, clear and powerfully colored forms and contrasting characteristics typical for the first half of his art.

## **The Search for the Style. Tradition and Habit**

A performer who sets the goal of presenting the author text honestly and fully to the listener may be concerned that he might be accused of lack of originality and excessive modesty of artistic intentions. He is supported in this concept not only by the critics' pronouncements but by the widespread judgment of concertgoers. Unfortunately, one encounters music lovers, bent on seeing importance and originality only in intentionally mannered, pretentious or fashionable (for one reason or other) performance techniques. The superficial attention is attracted by the details of an artist's playing that stand out independently of the performed work, while in reality a performer may exhibit a true originality or depth only on the road of realizing the true composer's concept.

However, is the task of fulfilling the requirements of the author's text, so modest? Is it easy to master all aspects of a composition? Is it simple to continue and finalize the directions of the composer intentions?

One may agree with a remark by Josef Hofmann: “I am willing to prove to every pianist that he is playing not more than written in the score but rather less.”

Indeed, in order to transmit all the details of the composition to the listener, give the correct idea of the rhythm, harmonic logic, polyphony, convexly characterize the thematic material, underline the sequential development of the form, stress the appearance of new elements of the music, soften the repeated episodes, neither distort nor compress a single sound or note – this requires a great mastery, a big talent, taste and meticulous work. An ancient expression “a clear playing” evidently denotes exactly such a convex and precise interpretation of the author’s text. Glinka liked to use this expression.

The performing methods that have the foundation in the note text are not only logical but also the most expressive. A close causal relation appears between the performer’s interpretation and the composition: all the details, the dynamic and tempo shadings depend on a precise and accurate reading of the text.

The independence and originality of a performer reveal themselves not only in *what* he does, in his interpretative ideas but also in *how* he realizes his intentions. One may agree with the interpretative concept but at the same time disapprove the artist playing: the best intentions of a performer may be poorly realized.

In another case one may dispute the interpretation but be captivated by the temperament and conviction of the playing.

The advantages of playing may not be weighted on the precise scale and be completely understood theoretically. Hence the interpreter’s road to perfection may not be hurdle-free and direct. Sometimes it is hard to define the secret of the charm of a serious artist.

Despite the clarity of the artistic concept, the precise adherence and following of all the intricacies of the text, and may be precisely because of that, the playing of a great artist leaves the impression of inimitable uniqueness and true originality. The power of impression increases with the truthfulness and logic of the presentation of the content. The conviction of the artist-performer in the correctness of the chosen interpretative plan plays an enormous role: it seems that the performer is playing his own composition. Such illusion was reached by the remarkable performances by Medtner of some Beethoven compositions or Rachmaninov’s interpretation of the Tchaikovsky Concerto.

The true originality is achieved not by the means of text modification or distortion of author’s intentions. The playing by a pianist who strives to exhibit his originality independently of the composer intentions is unlikely to leave a deep impression. An interpretation does not replace the composition itself.

Even the most exceptional playing technique should not replace the ideas and images of the composer. If the composition itself is of little significance then the very best



interpretation will be unable to save it: it will simply underline its emptiness and lack of content.

A performer should not position himself so that a critic would have to defend the piece from the interpreter. However, the strictness of criticism is quite adequate when it defends the author accomplishments from distortions and a superficial, not thought-out attitude of the performer.

The reality of recitals shows that it is common for a performer to have no sin in his artistic intentions but possess too few technical means to fulfill the original plan. One should mention that the technical shortcomings are especially disturbing in the performances of a well known and familiar composition.

Both the performers and music teachers, as well as amateurs and listeners gradually acquire a certain understanding of the style of playing appropriate for one composition or another. In that case the critical remarks note not only the shortcomings of a performance and not so much the deviation from the text and the author's performing directions but rather the violation of the principles that supposedly correspond to the style requirements.

When such a conclusion on the performing style that is appropriate or inappropriate for a given author is based on a careful study of his compositions - it may be either theoretical or practical – one has to take seriously the reason and logic of many established artistic views. There exist many useful and thought-out traditions of an academic or even scholar character that are based on the great examples, on the comments of outstanding artists, finally, on the experience of playing of the composers themselves or on the reminiscences of their playing.

However, many ideals that are justified by the notions of style and tradition have in reality been created randomly thanks to fashion, wrongly interpreted examples or far fetched stories of “witnesses”, as a result of a superficial and simplistic approach to the composer art.

The “traditions”, that have their origin in the frequent hearing of the classical compositions that invariably show up in the student examinations and school recitals, deserve even lesser respect. These “laws of style” are often deduced empirically, summing up as an average the student performances that lack a creative drive.

There is no doubt that truly talented playing differs dramatically from this “canon of average quality”. However, unfortunately, a bright creative playing by a true artist is often criticized exactly from these “inductively” formed points of view.

A pianist that includes into his program a Beethoven sonata or a Bach fugue frequently performed by students, has to overcome the familiar but not necessarily correct idea of the rules of their interpretation. A familiar but poor performance sometimes closes the way to the concert stage to many compositions. That happened to some compositions by

Haydn, Mozart, Bach and Beethoven that have been relegated to the category of so-called “instructional” pieces.

The chase after a false originality gives rise to the tendency common to many performers to underline as much as possible the uniqueness and creative disorder of their art. As if fragility, tentativeness and even randomness of the interpretative plan are inseparable from a creative inspiration accompanying a public performance by an artist. How often one hears of these magical mood changes, these sudden – under the influence of the appreciative public – overflowing emotions! The victorious elation breaks powerfully into the performing process calling onto the artist to solve instantly a previously insurmountable creative problem.

One may assume that the creative improvisation method that is denied to the modern composing practice, moved completely into the domain of the performing art. A true virtuoso performing compositions by others “must improvise”. Many pianists consider a thoughtful, logical completion of a creative idea to be incompatible with an inspired artistic playing. Firmness and conviction of the performer in his chosen way is often confused with a hollow study. Such a “craftsman” performance is left to the “low” of the artistic world who lack the true talent and genius.

Of course, each performance is unique. It is as impossible to play a piece twice in an identical fashion, as to enter the same stream twice, as Heraclites said. However, can one assume that the inspiration visits an artist only during a concert recital? A performer must traverse a significant creative road before this last link when the composition finally sounds from the concert stage, beginning with the first acquaintance of the note text, through all the stages of the long work on all the unyielding technical difficulties – until the complete and perfect command of the creative ideas of the composer and of the means that are necessary for their fulfillment. Had the inspiration never visited the performer during this long creative process whose fruits should be transmitted to the listeners thoughtfully and carefully, and possibly with a wise parsimony, common to the owners of a true treasure?

Playing quality depends on many factors: health, mood, stage scares. There may also be positive factors conducive for the best realization of the performing task: a creative inspiration, a good instrument, a wonderful hall acoustics. Possibly, the performer and the public may notice and remember one of the cases of a special success of an artist under the optimal outside and psychological conditions. However, it is unlikely that these circumstances may change the artist’s attitude toward a composition, shatter his conviction in the correctness of his chosen interpretation.

Labor is often mistakenly juxtaposed to inspiration. Indeed, a special attractive force is always lurking in a spontaneous, thoughtless solution of an artistic problem. Freedom and dare of an interpretation excite a surprise and sympathy with its seeming ease and unexpectedness.

The idea of boundless freedom and variability of the performing process is a remnant of the not yet forgotten reminiscences of the improvisation that was considered a necessity for an artist in the bygone days. However, it is more logical to consider improvisation only as an original seed, the beginning rather than the ultimate goal of the creative process. An artist intellect starts with an improvisation, but further sums up, organizes and transmits the chaotic elements of the artistic imagination.

We may just consider as a “Salierism” the over-analyzed art where all the elements are deftly calculated and a theoretician is the sole tsar of the creative process. However, lack of conscientious control of the fruits of the imagination, obtained by means of an improvisation, by the organizing creative wisdom, is also a shortcoming.

A thought-out and deeply felt way from the first encounter with the note text by a composer till the final realization of the sound images and a concert recital, the road in search of a truthful expression and a careful technical training is seen to an artist differently than to a listener who sees it in a reverse perspective. Hence the last step – the concert performance on stage – seems the most significant. In reality the originality and artistism may appear most vividly in the moment of the first reading of the note text. An immediate emotional response to the first encounter with an expressive theme, an unusual composer’s idea, a powerful development of the concepts may be a sign of deep sincerity and an inspiring power.

The careful and inevitable in our days memorizing of a composition, and playing without the notes rob the performer of the possibility to improvise and deviate from the familiar interpretative plan. He has to strictly follow the predetermined path of the performing plan. Otherwise (take into account also the stage fright) he risks to lose the governing thread and break the continuity of the musical images that is necessary for the memory.

Playing without the notes became a common requirement for a performing pianist. Even if one accepts that the sight of a pianist staring attentively into the note text breaks the illusion of the independence of the performing art, even if one acknowledges that playing from memory the pianist seemingly completely possesses the musical composition, - it is impossible to deny that playing without the notes prevents a performer from solving the artistic problems in a new way each time and robs his playing of the interpretative freedom.

In essence, playing from memory frequently misleads a naïve listener. This creates a semblance of freedom and independence of the artist on stage while he himself experiences an extra and far removed from the artistic goals stress fearing to lose his way and forget. For how many talented and experienced pianists this suffering becomes a hurdle in their performances and hinders a free and stress-less playing.

The playing in an ensemble and conducting from memory are completely unjustified. Why worry the others? A member of an ensemble, no matter how well he knows his part, will be less sensitive to the music making of his partners if he plays without the notes, as he will be in danger of losing the thread of his part.

Playing without the notes of course simplifies the virtuosic difficulties on stage. The pianist has an easier time orienting himself looking on the keyboard. Though, some performers rob themselves of this advantage, finding a blank stare into the space to be more effective.

The technical advantages related to playing from memory do not always justify the rigidity of a firmly learned interpretative plan. A teacher requiring his student to reinterpret an episode, or suggesting a new fingering or a new performing technique, would be wise to put the notes in front of the student. No matter how one resolves the problem of the mandatory playing from memory, one has to note the essential influence of this playing method on the modern style of concert performances. However, what is even more important, the composers have created in the last hundred years piano compositions keeping exactly this interpretative style in mind.

Thus, we may not imagine a modern virtuoso who uses the notes in an important concert.

At the same time we have difficulty imagining the whole charm of an ancient concert performance. This performing art had a much greater freedom, improvisation and even sincerity. It had less of the sport-like stress. Performances of this time had more in common with what we now call music-making. Of course, that was related to a simpler texture of the compositions.

Another thought. A modern pianist who spends so much energy memorizing a piece is not used to cultivate the art of sight reading. In the old days this ability was necessary for a pianist.

Meanwhile, the free sight reading opens to a pianist the wide expanse of the whole music literature. The art of sight reading is such a valuable asset that it should be taught from the first years of musical studies.

A pianist who possesses a virtuosic technique sometimes underestimates its artistic value. Important artists do not always like to pay attention to the craftsman-like aspects of the performing art. They forget the enormous effort that was put into the foundations of the artistic mastery, as a wealthy man neglects his treasures.

Nevertheless, one may endlessly perfect his art and each level of mastery opens up the new horizons of the performing possibilities.

An interpretative plan may not be created with a complete freedom; it depends on the technical means of the performer. This plan is not an unchanging ideal goal but is modified depending on the character and perfection of mastery of a pianist.

The singer's voice, brightness, timbral rigidity or flexibility, his expressive qualities determine the overall impression. A performed vocal piece is colored into tones that

depend on the physical qualities and emotional mind of the performer. A singer presents the composer with a gift earned by the mastery and developed by natural talents.

The same is done a by a violinist or a pianist. His virtuosity, control of the instrument, masterful qualities – are a gift to the composition. The final result depends mostly on these qualities. No matter which performing principles are adopted by the interpreter-instrumentalist, the individual traits of his playing, the sound technique, the force and softness of timbre, character qualities create a special performing style.

A composer who plays his own compositions may limit himself to the minimal means that correspond to his creative ideas. No performing professional performer may afford to restrict himself to one-sided technical means. The range of his stylistic possibilities should be sufficiently broad to include diverse techniques for the performances of various authors and compositions from various periods that enter his repertoire. Undoubtedly, he may like or dislike various artistic trends, divide the composers into those close to him and “strangers”. But narrowness of stylistic possibilities robs a performer of the advantages of a widely performing professional.

A pianist should take care of expanding his repertoire. The art of a performer is enriched with each new mastered important composition. Each new author introduces new pianistic techniques into the circle of the familiar methods.

The free control of the instrument, the pianism perfection and virtuosity all increase with the enrichment of programs. The repertoire is the basis of mastery. The musical wealth of a pianist is the compositions that may sound under his fingers at any time.

One should not emulate the person who has only the past and the future but no control of the present.

One should perfect oneself also in the already mastered material: there is always a possibility to pass from one level of perfection to the next.

However, the ability to quickly digest a new complex composition is no less important. The pianist studies should be organized so that the results would not be moved to the distant future. One should not accumulate unpaid bills.

Not only the perfection of the mastery but the expansion of the technical and expressive possibilities is important for a performer; more so, as one affects the other – all kinds of technique interact in a complicated manner.

Overcoming the Clementi difficulties is easier after the Chopin etudes. The polyphonic Bach style still serves as a key to the later piano forms. Chopin said that he considered the work on the “Well-Tempered Clavier” as the best preparation for a concert.

It happens that a pianist, who restricts himself to a narrow technical range, plays only authors of a single trend, has not tried himself in other forms of technique and piano

style. It is too early for a young pianist to declare himself a Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, or Scriabin expert. It is better to attempt to apply his forces more completely and diversely.

We will not discuss in detail the exaggerations of the so-called academic playing style. We had to warn beforehand of the necessity to distinguish between the text and the performing directions, as a non-critical and overly literal adherence to the latter may detach the music from the composer intentions. Possibly, one should not reveal this to his students, but an artist-performer often confesses to himself that in order to preserve the composer ideas one has to deviate from an exact execution of his directions. Otherwise, one may easily fall into the extreme of the dangerous behavior of some characters of old tales and fables.

An over servility should not replace the true service to the art. Unfortunately, quite often an accidentally omitted author's direction or carelessly indicated shading misleads even the most highly qualified musicians. For instance, some pianists unnecessarily robbed themselves of the natural accelerando in the beginning of the Tchaikovsky concerto before the first small cadence only because there is no such direction in the notes. Indeed, it is not in the *clavier* but it was added by the author to the score, which the performer might accidentally not know.

Schumann's Toccata has almost no performing directions. There is only a general note on the intentional omission of such dynamic and tempo directions by the composer with the purpose of giving the maximal freedom to the performer. Unfortunately, many pianists have not used this freedom, interpreting this direction as a composer's call to play "without shadings".

In any case, a talented pianist should realize that he is not just an "executor" but also a musician. He should not behave as a naïve student who plays a definitely wrong note and then replies to a teacher's question that this is how it is printed in the notes.

Some of the most "academically inclined" teachers who follow the original editions, the so-called *urtext*, see their advantage relative to the performers in their strict adherence to the "author's text" despite the obvious misprints.

Of course, one should follow the author directions and shadings. However, they should be refracted in the individual mind of the performer. Each shade should become an inseparable part of the particular organically united interpretation. I have already said that an author's direction should not become a foreign impulse that simply makes a performer play *sforzando* at a given moment.

There is a significant difference between the tasks of an editor who is responsible for the precision and preservation of the author's text and a concert performance by a pianist for whom the artistic conviction of the interpretation is the main criterion of success. After all, other performers need not follow his example. They may adhere to different principles of the text interpretation and have an opportunity to prove their case by their playing.

However, there exist “performer editions”, “instructive editions”, “concert” versions of the classical compositions and, on the other hand, simplified editions provided with additional versions for all kinds of technique and for all cases of artistic practice of a pianist.

There is no reason to scrutinize here all the principles that form the basis of these editions or try to second-guess the motivation of their editors. In the best cases, the editor tries to help the composer by modifying the text and providing special directions. An editor is convinced that an inspiring creative process does not allow the author to concentrate on details of the note text. Carefulness, precision and specifics of the note text – these all are “the needs of the lowly” from which the editor tries to protect the composer. As if the intensity and spirit of art are related to practical helplessness and signs of infantilism. Thus, the editors sometimes remind the staff of interpreters and scribes of a Delphi oracle.

In other cases a performer tries to record in his edition his personal attitude toward the author and the composition and thus make his interpretation a common knowledge. This desire is quite understandable especially given that before the time of the mechanical recordings the performer comments were the only means of fixing one’s interpretative principles.

It is unfortunate that many outstanding artists of the past left relatively few such annotated editions. However, these interesting and valuable editions disappear in the sea of editions where the editor motivation is barely comprehensible.

One feels that the editor has to express his opinion on the edited composition at any price, and this usually leads to a disrespectful treatment of the author’s text.

Of course, a performer may not restrict himself to a servile role of a copyist mechanically reproducing existing standards and norms. The playing process is continuous; the live interpretation is constantly subordinated to the active artistic will. One may not play from a marking to a marking, from one conditional term to another, remaining indifferent and artistically passive in between. Is it at all possible to *copy* the note text with all, even most detailed author’s instructions?

One may copy the playing of another pianist. Unfortunately, thanks to the recordings, many are accustomed to this method. However, copying the note text is akin to drawing portraits based on a written description. Even the metric coordinates, despite their precision, may not be copied, since the real sound attains features not fixed in the note text in any performance, no matter how formally one treats the text.

However, the sound-pitch coordinates should not be modified by the pianist: their oscillations do not depend on the performer. But then the rhythmic relations oscillate even to a greater degree as a consequence of the solo character of the piano. One needs

not mention other aspects of the note text that may be reproduced only with a certain degree of approximation. Actually, all the additional directions may not hope for more.

Nevertheless, one encounters an expression “copying the note text” in the literature on the performing questions. If one does not consider the lack of wrong notes as copying then this expression has no sense.

The principle of following the note text, that is, the deep attention to the sequence in which the interpretation of the composition is built, based on the metric-pitch coordinates, has a completely different meaning.

As we have already mentioned, exactly these coordinates should be taken as a basis, as they have the greatest precision in the construction of the musical image. All other nuances may only complement or approximately detail the sound intended by the composer.

If one follows the musical text with a sufficient attention and natural inspiration then all the other directions are perceived as signals, important but already anticipated by the performer. Similarly, a traveler familiar with the road needs no extraneous signs and directions. Definitely, one should watch the road attentively rather than rely only on the directional signs. The musician’s intuition may suggest a better way to the final goal than the notation sometimes added in error or accidentally omitted.

## Examples

It would be useful to consider a note text where all directions are marked especially carefully and masterly. Consider an example from the Beethoven compositions.

In the first movement of “Appassionata” where the triple theme turns into the continuous movement of the eighths, there is a general marking *p* for ten bars. If one attentively follows the sequence of musical images that creates the transition to the secondary part, then one might see a much greater differentiation in the changes and contrasts than would correspond to a sole change of the sound force.

It is natural to underline the beginning of the continuous movement by a small *rinforzando*. Then, after Beethoven’s *sforzando* on the sixth accord (??) in the right hand, a theme enlarged by the thirds follows in the left hand. These three blows are not at all conceived as *piano*. There is almost no doubt that accent signs, so characteristic for the Beethoven style, are omitted in this place.

Later, the theme splits into light syncopated thirds that would be most suited for a *pp* marking. The three blows of the enlarged theme return after a new *sforzando*, and the gradual *diminuendo*, notated by Beethoven, starts the transition to the secondary part. Is it conceivable that (not counting the *sforzando*) this whole segment may be performed with just one sound force within the limits of the notated *piano*? Then the three blows of the



enlarged theme are moved onto the secondary plan and take the form of a poorly presented harmonic accompaniment. The scherzo-like lightness of the syncopations is lost then, and the whole episode sounds monotonous and inexpressive. The musical spirit is sacrificed for the sake of the literal execution of the notated shading, as may be often observed in the interpretations by pianists who follow the author directions *al rigore* with an unflinching pedantism.

Consider Chopin's First ballade. The first sixteen eighths are written in one tempo *largo* without any deviation. However, no pianist would allow playing this introduction without using *tempo rubato* and not "hold together" the movement of the eighths with a slight tempo deviation. One should make a slight stress on the eighths, elongated with additional styles (??) downward, in the main theme of the ballade, following the note picture precisely. This remarkable phrase, which sounds simultaneously as the beginning and the end of a musical expression, always begins with a pause. A pianist usually increases slightly the sound force when it arises in the strong part of a measure, from the E-flat note. Further, in the theme development some of its elements are united into sequences that, naturally, require from a pianist a tight tempo in the form of a slight acceleration. This *accelerando* is compensated in several measures by the author's direction of *ritenuto* before a passage written with small notes.

The next four quarter-measures where the second construction modifies the first, is performed with a gradual acceleration, as the texture of the second four-measure is simplified (it lacks the syncope on the last eighth) that leads to a new tempo denoted by Chopin as *agitato*. The *sforzando* notation before the second theme in the right hand comes before that in the left, where the new French horn-like intonation appears with underlined changes of quarts and quintas.

If one does not take into account the author directions this whole outlined performance plan is based solely on the metric-pitch data of the note text. Almost any pianist who follows them carefully will most likely arrive at the conclusions that do not significantly differ from those suggested above. One may present a countless number of similar examples.

Every performer knows well that, encountering a new composition, he learns the most from studying the main text. He only seeks a confirmation of his impressions in the author directions. If they differ drastically from the dynamic, tempo and other composer markings, then the performer would be wise not to perform a work that is either misunderstood by him or is foreign to his style.

What should one do if a performer thinks that he has a marvelous understanding of the music but is hindered by an author direction? Sometimes one has to sacrifice a composer's direction to preserve his style. That happens not so rarely. For instance, it is hard to imagine a performance of Beethoven's string quartet Op. 59 in E minor in the *allegro* tempo as it was prescribed by the author.

Having chosen a certain interpretation plan the performer should not react too nervously to each direction accompanying the note text. Indeed, the author could not take into account all the possibilities and abilities of the future performers. The pianist should not be jumpy in his intentions. He should remain true to a degree to himself and to the character of his talent. This serves the author better than fitting an alien costume.

How often a performance charms us with its sincerity and we value the artist's ability to transfer the composition into his own world, into the domain of his expressive means. Hence, as I have already mentioned, the author directions should be comprehended deeply and organically so that they would become the performer's "own": they should coincide with his own artistic intentions and become an expression of his creative will. Carefully and deeply studied, the directions, that have helped determine the interpretation plan, should in the future blend with the performer's own ideas and will. The author remarks are perceived not from a side but from inside as performer's own instincts. They have already exerted their stimulating influence on the interpretation plan and are no longer necessary.

Thus, even with the most precise adherence to the composer's desires the player may forget of them. The performing plan of a concertising pianist should be thought through and logical to the end. It is unwise to consult even the author on the music style and character before a concert performance.

## **Virtuosity**

One may not finish even an approximate review of various performing principles and stylistic specifics of piano playing, diverse approaches to interpretation of a musical composition, without a mention of virtuosity, the technical gloss that is so appealing to the concert hall, and that sometimes forms the very foundation of an artist's popularity.

A most serious musician exhibits a degree of ignorance when he rejects this area of performing art as its purely superficial side that is not worthy of the attention of a serious music lover. One may encounter the patronizing attitude toward virtuosity in the often repeated opinions on the superficial gloss of playing, performing style that is accompanied by stormy and appealing to dilettantes display of narrowly technical perfection.

However, can one assume a high position in the hierarchy of the performing art without exceptionally high achievements in the pure pianism? Is it possible for a gifted musician to attain a high level of performing art skipping the work on the technical perfection, purely through the penetration into the composer ideas and musical content and only thanks to the knowledge of the general artistic culture?

Naturally, a true artist-performer needs all these qualities. Virtuosity and the playing perfection are needed only to reach the goals set by a serious musician and artist. However, the high artistic problems may rarely be solved along the road of the least resistance. They require concentration, collection of all the spiritual and intellectual

forces, as well as the purely physical ones in playing. As if the gates to the world of high aesthetic values are tightly guarded and only heroism will allow one reach this area. Hence, the technical perfection and virtuosity are a must for a performer. Still, virtuosity is the means and should not become the tasteless end goal – the pure bravura.

Indeed, are there many remarkable musical compositions that do not require effort and work? Does the composer himself need not overcome the greatest difficulties on the creative way? Isn't the unrelenting and logical development of the thematic material seen as one of the most difficult problems whose solution requires a kind of virtuosity?

The features of a great composition appear to us as if created by a perfection that exceeds the possibility of the human craft. Hence the myth of a muse. She is the carrier of both the inspiration and the perfection.

One sees as naïve the division of musical compositions into easy and difficult ones depending on the tempo or special technical requirements. An excessive speed or sound force often hide substantial playing shortcomings. They are revealed when the performer passes to a moderate tempo.

The slow movement of the bow may express no less mastery and technical ability than in the quick passages. Instrument control is revealed in subtle pedaling, convex phrasing, and multitude of colors in the slow tempo as much as in the utmostly fast moments.

It would be a mistake to underestimate virtuosity as solely the superficial gloss of playing. Then, by virtuosity one means simply overcoming the technical difficulties by the most appealing to the audience and visually impressive means. Most often, these are by far not the most difficult. On the contrary, many greatest difficulties remain unnoticed and their free handling may be appreciated only by an expert.

A piece may have exceptional technical difficulties but it is called virtuosic only if the efforts and gymnastics of the pianist are sufficiently visible and do not remain a secret from the general audience. Therefore, on one hand there exist very difficult “non-virtuosic” compositions, while on the other, there exist those that are not very difficult but are “virtuosic”.

The greatest degree of performer mastery turns all compositions into “non-virtuosic”, as it makes the encountered difficulties almost disappear. Nevertheless, if one imagines the total absence of the performer efforts, if one equates the physical energy spent in heavy chords of Rachmaninov Third Concerto to Mozart light passages, if you switch off any resistance of the technical difficulties, the musical thread loses the tension that is necessary for the artistic impression. Music ceases to be materially felt: it loses the weight, volume, density. Hence it sometimes happens that a remarkable virtuoso that easily overcomes the technical difficulties may consciously allow the audience to feel the difficulty of one passage or other.

How distinctly our aesthetic conscience perceives the increasing distances of the octaves in the beginning of the B-flat major Liszt Concerto. How expressive is the downward movement of the light passages in Chopin's Third Scherzo or the pathetic of the jumps of the introduction to Beethoven's Op. 111 sonata. But not only such examples - each sound, every chord is marked by one visual image or another that stimulates the musical perception.

The impression from virtuosity is not always superficial: it is associated to the musical images and stimulates perception of music. There are listeners who are eager to get the seats on the left side of the main floor. They are not satisfied with the pure sound: they want to see the artist hand movement. They do not betray their "non-musicality" as it is sometimes labeled. They would like to get a more wholesome impression of all the components of the performing process.

A person who is otherwise indifferent to the exhibits of physical ability, speed and precision, may follow virtuoso playing with admiration. Aesthetic pleasure from music partly depends on the exhibited technical perfection.

A high goal enriches the means that lead to its accomplishment. A special, if one may say so, an ethical side of virtuosity, is in attaining spiritual values by means of a physical effort.

One may relate the notion of virtuosity to the root of this word – *virtus*, that may denote both prowess and virtue. Such as in the folk tales when a favorite hero performs ethical heroism by means of physical strength and ability.

Music may not sound among small feelings and lowly thoughts. Listener's conscience should be prepared for the hearing of the grand and penetrating ideas and emotions of the best compositions of the world musical literature. It is not necessarily the fault of the artist-performer if his sound does not reach the heart and mind of the listener. However, if he has perversely interpreted the composer ideas, if he replaced the pure service to the art by a vain decision to impress with the outward technical bravura, originality or fashionable technique, - then, his playing will sound intrinsically insincere.

A listener finds an answer in music only to the extent of his spiritual demands. The purest source may satisfy only the thirsty. The degree of musical influence is equally divided between the performer and the listener and equally depends on both participants of the creative act.

Having lost the correct way, the forces of musical influence may turn into an undesirable direction. The conditions of the performance, whether it is playing in a small circle of friends, or a performance in a concert hall, may be both sympathetic and unfruitful. Insincerity appears not only in the sound but also in the listening. A performer passes through a special school and receives a fundamental musical preparation. However, both the listener and the performer are prepared by life and social conditions.

An artist himself is a carrier of the ideas and emotions of a composition. The personality of the artist-performer is united in the listener's mind with the images emerging from the music. A performer, as an actor, is responsible for the joy and grief, love and hate, contemplation and elation – the whole live musical content. He concretizes it and makes it real in sound.

## **The style of Soviet pianism**

How may one define the specifics of playing of a Soviet pianist? Finding such a definition is not an easy task. I do not dare to give an all-encompassing list of the attributes of the Soviet style in the performing art. I would simply like to present some considerations.

One might not doubt the great success of the Soviet pianism. The great number of our remarkable pianists performing successfully inside the Soviet Union, as well as the high esteem and acceptance abroad of the art of the best representatives of our pianism serve as a proof of the high level of achievement in this area.

We are accustomed to the frequent wins of our young pianists in foreign competitions. Meanwhile, our young virtuosi, who have often not even graduated from the conservatory, have to compete with the best pianists coming from every end of the world to such competitions.

One of the significant advantages of the Soviet pianism is the great diversity of various artistic individualities and whole schools. Simply within the walls of the Moscow Conservatory alone one may note several directions that differ both in the theoretical guidelines and pedagogical practice. May one then at all speak of the Soviet piano style as a unified phenomenon that encompasses such different individualities?

As a member of the jury of the international competitions in Vienna and Brussels, I have met the representatives of the foreign art. Many of them, while highly appreciative of the school and style of performance, noted unifying aspects of our pianism. It might be that they have a better view from the outside. The performing style of our pianists became overly familiar to us. We are sometimes inclined to point out this or that defect of playing rather than acknowledge the valuable aspects of style of many of our masters.

The same phenomenon may be observed in other domains of art. How different is the choreographic charm of Galina Ulanova from the perfect mastery of Maya Plisetskaya. Meanwhile, the common trends of Soviet ballet style are noticed in the individual accomplishments of both of the remarkable ballerinas abroad.

Speaking of the features of the Soviet pianism one should first of all note that it is fed by the grand tradition of the Russian pianism. One should immediately point to another common and extremely valuable detail: the tradition of our pianism has been created first and foremost by the greatest Russian composers-performers.

It suffices to recall such names as Balakirev, Liadov, Rachmaninov, Scriabin, Medtner, Prokofiev, Shostakovich - and we see clearly that the main stylistic accomplishments pass from generation to generation, from one great composer-pianist to another.

Rachmaninov's pianism owes much to Tchaikovsky. Of course, Rachmaninov's piano technique is related to the piano texture of his own compositions, melody realization, figurations and passage structure. However, we may find the prototypes for most of Rachmaninov's presentation forms in Tchaikovsky's piano compositions.

Every Soviet pianist continues to perfect his art studying Rachmaninov's piano heritage. However, within the limits of the traditions of the Russian pianism, we may find examples of extreme diversity. The piano principles of Scriabin and Medtner are as different as are diametrically opposed the lines of their piano art.

Is there much in common between the art of Rachmaninov and Prokofiev? However, to the same extent, differ the presentation forms, and texture techniques in their piano compositions, and hence the specifics of their pianism.

In order to understand how one may find the common trends of the Russian pianism in the interweaving of various tastes, schools and individualities, one should discuss another issue: the *realism* in the performing art.

If one defines realism as the true reflection of reality then one would have difficulty applying this notion to a performance. A performer does not play the role of an artist who is reflecting the immediate life that surrounds him. He deals with the circle of the completed musical compositions and has to interpret already created forms.

This leads to a process of double refraction. On one hand, a musical composition is a reflection of the real life, true emotions. On the other, - a performer has to be able to uncover the full content of a composition, should truthfully and flexibly transmit the main system of musical forms, ideas, images, finalized by the author in the written notes.

Realism in the piano art may be summed up as deep penetration into the author's text and perfect transmission of the whole content of the composition. This is the problem of sincerity, mastery and depth of approach to the composition. In that sense, we have the right to expect that it is exactly a pianist who also happens to be a remarkable composer, who will exhibit the special sensitivity and will be able to elevate the performing style to the highest degree of perfection.

We often see a pianist who possesses a good technique, is capable to produce on the piano all the notes written by the author in the text and varies the sound force almost precisely. The composition is forced to emerge under his fingers. However, this is only an honest reproduction that gives us a sufficient impression of the original.

The true feeling may be absent under such a formal interpretation while the artist's will is directed purely toward the outward mastery. However, it is difficult to deceive the listeners and make them accept dead as alive, though the audience is sometimes inclined to applaud an outside virtuosity.

A pianist-composer is more prone to avoid the formalistic tendencies – conscious or unconscious. A composer knows in his own experience what the composition in all its depth is. He understands the process that each work undergoes from its start to completion.

A composer-pianist should pose a creative task in his interpretation: expose fully to the listeners the inner life of the musical form, all depth of the artistic concept, all images, and all ideas of the piece. He strives to transmit all the basic and typical that is contained in the composition. Of course, this is possible only if the composer also has the perfect control of the instrument.

A composer-pianist is not simply performing the piece, or reproducing the composition. He recreates, resurrects. He is capable of bringing the new life into the note text. He has the power to turn a “concept” into a breathing and talking creation blessed with an active life.

At the same time the desire for a stylization dies. Musical tendencies rarely attract a pianist-composer: they will inevitably seem to him deadly, minuscule and conditional.

The essence of the process of a realistic interpretation is to deeply penetrate the row of the musical phenomena and then vividly represent them as a strong concrete image.

The outward virtuosity as the main goal is left on a side. We know how eagerly, with how much creative passion many Russian composers tried to attain the heights of the piano art. However, this persistence was based exactly on the desire to open to the listeners the very essence of the composition.

This is how the foundation of the Russian piano tradition was built. Its base was the realism and concreteness of the performance related to the highest technical perfection. Its very base was directed against the stylization, deadness and show of virtuosity.

The Soviet pianism continued and deepened the realistic traits typical for the Russian tradition. This is why one may speak of the principle of the socialist realism as applied to the Soviet performing art.

One should not close his eyes to the difficulties associated with such definition. The danger appears not only when we try to find creatively the true features of the Soviet style or when we find support in the great achievements of the Soviet pianism. It is dangerous to depart from an abstract point of view, try to impose dogmatically the features that seemingly must mark the Soviet performing style.

Hence I refuse to state a priori how a Soviet pianist should interpret one or another composition. One should not turn into a dogma a process that by its nature and purpose should always remain creative and dialectically flexible. The Soviet performing style may not be subjected to a dogmatic regulation because of its realism; it should remain a process of life-full recreation that depends on the specifics of the composition itself, performer's individuality and surrounding influences.

It is not only important for a Soviet pianist to remain true to himself in the hour of a concert performance. It is not only important to relate correctly all the details of the note text. It is necessary to find and bring to life the very basic and typical that is deeply hidden in the composition and is waiting to be discovered. Of course, it is very valuable to express meticulously every detail and finest shading. However, the details should be subordinated to the law of generalization, grand form, and wide perspective.

An appropriate combination of power, precision and refinement is typical to the great phenomena in art.

A Soviet pianist is called to perform in front of a large people's audience that expects a high art and creatively fruitful emotions from him. Hence he should first and foremost distance himself from all the sentimental, minutely capricious, arbitrarily broken, all that is commonly known as "salon".

Thus, the style of the Soviet pianism should be based on the high technical perfection, true artistic feeling, and monumental form, combination of the broad line and fine details, sincere and truthful development of the main images and ideas of the composition.

A performer may consider himself as an honest servant to his calling only when his art is intended for a wide audience of listeners, when he considers himself a participant in the creation of a new society, when he presents the creative ideas and emotions to the audience simply, truthfully and with unblemished perfection.

Then his pianism gains a creative strength that penetrates the realistic style of the Soviet art.