

Artistic Fusion in the Piano Concert

The Piano Recital and Concepts of Artistic Synergy

Includes two multimedia projects: Picturing Rachmaninoff & Picturing Ravel

by

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A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved April 2012 by the
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May 2012

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the origins of the piano recital as invented by Franz Liszt, presents varying strategies for program design, and compares Liszt's application of the format with current trends. In addition it examines the concepts of program music, musical *ekphrasis*, and Gesamtkunstwerk and proposes a new multimedia piano concert format in which music combines with the mediums of literature and the visual arts; Picturing Rachmaninoff, and Picturing Ravel provide two recent examples of this format.

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my beautiful wife Bridget and my best buddy Kane.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Robert Hamilton who has provided me with educational guidance and support over the course of 17 years. With his expertise, artistry, enthusiasm, and selflessness, he has contributed enormously to my professional development.

I would also like to thank the additional members of my committee including Professor Walter Cosand, Professor Russell Ryan, Dr. Caio Pagano, as well as Dr. James DeMars who provided invaluable assistance in shaping this document.

I owe Dr. Alyssa Gillespie a great deal of gratitude for her marvelous translations of the Russian Poetry included in my *Picturing Rachmaninoff* concert and book.

I would like to thank Paul Harvey Jr. for his artistic insight and for writing *Picture Rachmaninoff*.

I would like to thank my brother, Ryan Cook for providing translations of Bertrand's *Gaspard de La Nuit*.

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SUMMARY OUTLINE

The summary outline includes key elements to be addressed in this paper. Part I deals with the unfolding evolution of the piano recital as a concert format. Part II deals with the artistic convergence and features descriptions of two concerts based on the phenomenon.

FRANZ LISZT'S PIANO RECITAL

According to Alan Walker, Franz Liszt invented the piano recital. His recitals possessed the following 6 characteristics:

1. Memorized programs.
2. Programs spanning the full historic range of piano music from Baroque to Contemporary.
3. Placement of the piano in the center of the stage with the lid open toward the audience to project the sound outward.
4. Concert tours of international scope involving large audiences.
5. Only one performer for the full duration of the concert.
6. Audience interaction with the performer including socializing between works and improvisation on themes given by the audience.

These above mentioned elements helped to transform the piano concert into a dramatic event that elevated the pianist's role in society. Liszt's recital format remains the predominant concert structure utilized by modern pianists.

TYPES OF PIANO RECITALS

Several strategies for modern piano recital design include:

1. The 'musical menu' recital
2. The 'chronological' recital
3. The 'themed' recital
4. The 'one-composer' recital

Selection of pieces for these categories has developed into a subtle art and involves considerations of harmonic relationships, contrast, unity, and balance.

TRENDS OF THE CONTEMPORARY PIANO RECITAL

The typical modern piano recital maintains 5 out of the 6 innovations of Franz Liszt. The 21st Century application of the format tends to emphasize

a ‘formal’ element while the earlier recitals of Liszt tended to emphasize ‘theatricality’.

MUSICAL EKPHRASIS

The term *ekphrasis* deals with the phenomenon of artistic convergence. Siglind Bruhn has written much on the topic and provides a definition in relation to music. The chapter introduces the term and compares several contrasting definitions. The contrasting nature of the provided definitions reveals the flexibility of the term and its usefulness to the topic of artistic synergy.

PROGRAM MUSIC

The term *program music* was invented by Franz Liszt to categorize a type of music, which referred to extra-musical sources of inspiration. Some have criticized the concept of *program music*. These proponents of absolute music suggested that references to extra-musical material weakened music’s aesthetic purity. However, Liszt did not advocate for representative music. He simply felt that arts could enrich one another other while still fully maintaining their independent strengths.

GESAMTKUNSTWERK

Richard Wagner spoke of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in his writings on music. He believed that the Greek Tragedy represented the perfect art form because it unified all the artistic disciplines. For him, music could not reach its full potential in isolation from the other arts.

THE CONTEMPORARY MULTIMEDIA PIANO CONCERT

Through the convergence of musical, visual, and literary aesthetic elements, the *multimedia piano concert* highlights the concepts of musical *ekphrasis*, *program music*, and *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This new format based on artistic fusion could provide an alternative to the traditional piano recital.

PICTURING RACHMANINOFF: 9 Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39

Picturing Rachmaninoff strives to attain what Richard Wagner called a “stately minuet of art” by connecting the *9 Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39* of Sergei Rachmaninoff with poetry and visual art. The project materialized in three different forms including a multimedia stage work, a book/cd, and a play written by Paul Harvey Jr. entitled *Picture Rachmaninoff*. The

chapter also reveals Rachmaninoff's thoughts on inspiration and lists descriptions for all of the 9 *Etudes*.

PICTURING RAVEL: Gaspard de la Nuit

In his preface to *Gaspard de la Nuit: Fantasies in the Manner of Rembrandt and Callot*, Aloysius Bertrand compares art to a medallion with two contrasting faces. The multimedia stage work *Picturing Ravel: Gaspard de la Nuit* takes Bertrand's idea as its theme. Two works of Maurice Ravel, *Gaspard de la Nuit* and *Sonatine*, were selected for their antithetical nature. *Gaspard de la Nuit* represents the Romantic tradition and structurally resembles a sonata. In contrast, the *Sonatine* represents the Classical style. *Picturing Ravel* presents Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* with readings of Bertrand's poetry selected by Ravel himself. Ravel did not provide sources of inspiration for his *Sonatine*. *Picturing Ravel* presents possible inspirations for the three movements of Ravel's *Sonatine* using poetry from Bertrand's *Gaspard de la Nuit*.

CONCLUSION

Franz Liszt's recital remains an effective model for contemporary piano concert design but the *multimedia piano concert* could serve as an alternative format based on artistic convergence. Some have argued that music should be experienced as an independent art with no external reference but Liszt and Wagner among others believed that the arts could 'fertilize' one another. The *multimedia piano concert* highlights artistic cross-fertilization. *Picturing Rachmaninoff* and *Picturing Ravel* represent examples of this format.

FRANZ LISZT'S PIANO RECITAL

In a letter to Princess Belgiojoso, Franz Liszt revealed that he had developed a revolutionary new type of piano concert. He first called his performances “*musical soliloquies*”¹ telling the Princess in an 1839 letter:

... (I do not know what other name to give to this invention of mine) with which I contrived to gratify the Romans, and which I am quite capable of importing to Paris, so unbounded does my impudence become!²

Liszt's *musical soliloquies* later acquired the name *recital* when the composer was performing in Great Britain. The London “press made a big deal of calling the concerts ‘Mr Liszt’s Recitals’, and within a week or two a new musical term had been coined.”³ This term, which still survives, first appeared in the plural form in an advertisement for a Liszt performance in London on June 9, 1840, at the Hanover Square Rooms. The advertisement read:

Liszt's Pianoforte Recitals

¹ La Mara, Ed., *Letters of Franz Liszt V. I* Trans. Constance Bache (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969), 31.

² Mara, 31.

³ *Concert Programmes 1790-1914: Case Studies by William Weber*, Center for Performance History, <http://www.cph.rcm.ac.uk/Programmes1/Pages/BtoR9.htm>

M. Liszt will give, at Two o'clock on Tuesday morning, [sic]
June 9, 1840, Recitals on the PIANOFORTE of the following works:

1. Scherzo and Finale from Beethoven's
Pastorale Symphony
2. Serenade by Schubert
3. Ave Maria by Schubert
4. Hexaméron
5. Neapolitan Tarentelles [sic]
6. Grand Galop Chromatique

Tickets 10s 6d each. Reserved Seats, near the Pianoforte, 21s.⁴

Alan Walker suggests that "The very term "recital" was [Liszt's]"⁵ but points out that Willert Beale claimed his father Frederick had invented it:

Franz, as I afterwards learned, gave performances at the Hanover
Square Rooms, which my father for the first time called Recitals.

⁴ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt Vol. 1* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1983), 356-357.

⁵ Walker, 286.

The title was much discussed, G. F. Graham being the only one of our home circle who supported my father in approving it.⁶

Both the terms *recital* and *soliloquy* call to mind the spoken word and, more specifically, the theatre. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a Soliloquy as “an instance of talking to or conversing with oneself, or of uttering one's thoughts aloud without addressing any person.”⁷ The plays of William Shakespeare feature many examples of soliloquies and the term is usually understood in its literary sense. In addition, *recital* is defined as “the action or process of reading aloud or repeating from memory a poem, passage, prayer, etc., esp. before an audience;”⁸. It makes sense that the term *recital* was finally settled upon as the ideal label for Liszt's concerts. Not only did the term account for the theatrical nature of his performances; it distinguished them as a memorized solo events.

Along with inventing the term recital for his piano concerts, Liszt's performances possessed 6 major characteristics, of which most have now become

⁶ Walker, 356-357.

⁷ “Soliloquy.” OED Online. Second edition, 1989; online version December 2011. Source. Oxford University Press. 26, 2, 2012 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>.

⁸ “Recital.” OED Online. Third edition, June 2009; online version December 2011. Source. Oxford University Press. 26, 2, 2012 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>.

a “musical institution”.⁹ Alan Walker lists some the characteristics of a Liszt recital below:

Liszt’s career remains the model which is still followed by pianists today. The modern piano recital was invented by Liszt. He was the first to play entire programmes from memory. He was the first to play the whole keyboard repertory (as it then existed), from Bach to Chopin. He was the first consistently to place the piano at right angles to the platform, its open lid reflecting the sound across the auditorium. He was the first to tour Europe from the Pyrenees to the Urals, and that at a time when the only way to traverse such distances was by post-chaise, a slow and often uncomfortable mode of travel.¹⁰

Additionally, Liszt performed the entire programs alone with no additional support from other musicians. He also interacted with the audience in “lively conversation during the intervals”.¹¹ This element of audience interaction included portions of free improvisation on themes provided by the public.

Though Walker claims that Liszt was the first to perform full programs from memory, Leschetizky believed Clara Schumann first pioneered the

⁹ Walker, 356.

¹⁰ Walker, 285-286.

¹¹ Mara, 31-32

innovation.¹² In either case, both performers ignored a long-standing social convention of playing without notes. “Up through the 1840s it was held that to perform the works of a master without the notes was bad form: it showed disrespect to his art.”¹³ Stephen Hough points out that Chopin:

... chastised a pupil once for playing a piece from memory, accusing him of arrogance. In the days when every pianist was also a composer, to play without a score would usually have meant that you were improvising. To play a Chopin ballade from memory might have seemed as if you were trying to pass off that masterpiece as your own.¹⁴

Additionally, Beethoven’s friend Bettina von Arnim criticized Clara Schumann for her practice of memorization:

With what pretension she seats herself at the piano and plays without the notes! How modest in comparison is Döhler, who places the music before him!¹⁵

¹² Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present*. (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1987), 237-238.

¹³ Schonberg, 238.

¹⁴ Stephen Hough, “Liszt: the man who invented stage fright,” *The Telegraph* [UK], June 8, 2011. <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk> (accessed March 11, 2012).

¹⁵ Schonberg, 238.

For Liszt, performing from memory emphasizes his dramatic image as an “artist who walks with God and brings fire down from heaven with which to kindle the hearts of mankind”¹⁶ He championed the image of pianist as a romantic hero. The presence of the score may have proved a visual barrier to this cause and therefore, called for elimination.

Presenting repertoire of a broad historical range also may have contributed to this purpose. By calling on the spirits of Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Liszt created a herculean aura for himself. “The emotionally charged atmosphere of his recitals made them more like séances than serious musical events.”¹⁷ He fostered a mystical atmosphere of communion with the great masters of the past.

Most significantly, a Liszt *recital*, or *soliloquy*, as implied by the name, featured only one performer, (Franz Liszt), throughout the course of the concert. By declaring: “*Le concert, c’est moi!*”¹⁸, Liszt revolutionized the way piano music was presented to the public. His historic 1839 letter to Princess Belgiojoso reveals what is believed to be the program for the first solo piano concert in history (at the time, called *soliloquy*):

¹⁶ Walker, 317.

¹⁷ Walker, 289.

¹⁸ David Dubal, *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*. (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 2004), 157.

I have ventured to give a series of concerts all by myself, affecting the Louis XIV. style, and saying cavalierly to the public, “the concert is-myself.” For the curiosity of the thing I copy one of the programmes of the soliloquies for you:-

1. Overture to William Tell, performed by M. L.
2. Reminisces of the *Puritani*. Fantaisie composed and performed by the above-mentioned!
3. Etudes and fragments by the same to the same!
4. Improvisations on themes given-still by the same.

And that was all; neither more nor less, except lively conversation during the intervals, and enthusiasm if there was room for it.¹⁹

Liszt was aware that the public would view his one-man shows as surprising and unusual. Perhaps flabbergasted by Liszt’s invention, the *Musical World* called his performance a “curious exhibition”.²⁰ Henry Chorley’s more perceptive review in the *Athenaeum* holds greater historical value as it attests to the novelty of Liszt’s solo concept:

We cannot call to mind any other artist, vocal or instrumental, who could thus, by his own unassisted power, attract and engage an

¹⁹ Mara, 31-32.

²⁰ Walker, 357.

audience for a couple of hours. The critics may not understand M. Liszt, but the musicians in the crowd listened to him.²¹

Liszt knew very well that his “unassisted power” was more than enough to engage an audience and, in fact, his transcendental abilities called for a solo format. After all, he had recently been crowned the finest pianist in the world in an 1837 piano duel against Sigismond Thalberg at the residence of the Princess Belgiojoso.²²

Liszt’s new type of concert was not merely designed to showcase his legendary abilities; it was also created, as suggested by Alan Walker, to elevate the social status of the performing artist. Before Liszt even the greatest of composers did not enjoy a high standing in society.

Haydn and Mozart had been treated like servants; whenever they visited the homes of nobility, they had entered by the back door. Beethoven, by dint of his unique genius and his uncompromising nature, had forced the Viennese aristocracy at least to regard him as their equal. But it was left to Liszt to foster the view that an artist is a superior being, because divinely gifted, and that the rest

²¹ Walker, 357.

²² Walker, 238-240.

of mankind, of whatever social class, owed him respect and even
homage.²³

With his theatrical sense and monumental talent, Liszt used the concert stage as a platform to champion his cause. “When he walked on stage wearing his medals and his Hungarian sword of honour, it was not out of vanity but rather to raise the status of musicians everywhere.”²⁴ He even bravely defended his profession against royalty, who attempted to belittle his social rank. When Tsar Nicholas I of Russia disrespected Liszt by arriving late and talking during his performance.

He stopped playing and sat at the keyboard with bowed head.
When Nicholas inquired the cause of the hushed silence, Liszt
replied, “Music herself should be silent when Nicholas speaks.”²⁵

Walker suggests that these accounts do not merely serve as entertaining anecdotes illuminating Liszt’s bold personality; they also reveal his deeper purposes for changing the recital format. The solo piano concert was not created by Liszt simply to entertain the public; rather, it was purposely designed to elevate the rank of all musicians.

²³ Walker, 287.

²⁴ Walker, 287.

²⁵ Walker, 289.

No artist before Liszt, not even Paganini, succeeded so completely in breaking down barriers that traditionally separated performing artists from those who were grandly called their “social superiors.” After Liszt, all performers began to enjoy a higher standing in society.”²⁶

His placement of the piano in the center of the stage further emphasized his point that pianists would no longer play a secondary role.

Though Liszt fostered a god-like image on stage, he also made efforts connect with his audience in a welcoming and familiar manner with “lively conversation during the intervals”.²⁷

At the conclusion of each piece, Liszt would leave the platform and descend into the body of the room, where seats had been arranged in such a way that he could move about and chat with the audience.²⁸

In addition, he would strengthen his bond with the audience by improvising freely on themes provided from its members. John Orlando Parry recalls Liszt’s efforts in his diary:

²⁶ Walker, 287.

²⁷ Mara, 31-32.

²⁸ Walker, 356.

Liszt played for the first time... extemporaneously, and a most wonderful performance it was. When Lewis²⁹ asked the audience if they had any themes ready written-one was handed only-but Mr. Pigott gave him the Russian Hymn in addition. This was not enough-so after *talking to the audience in the most familiar manner and making them laugh* very much because he had got no lively air to work on-he turned round suddenly and said-"I play de Wanted Governess!" And off he started with the Irish air and then the Russian Hymn and last my song, which he played most wonderfully. Not all the way thro'-but the waltz part of the first symphony. He played it at least 12 different ways and then wound up with the 3 together in a manner truly extraordinary!-'Twas received as it deserved with tumultuous applause.³⁰

This charming anecdote demonstrates Liszt's striking ability to maintain a balance between high art and entertainment.

The scope of Liszt's piano tours also requires special note. Between the years of 1838-1847, Liszt traveled extensively and internationally from Gibraltar

²⁹ Louis Lavenue was a British entrepreneur, cellist and composer. He organized a troupe of musicians including Franz Liszt for a four-month tour of Britain.

³⁰ Walker, 360-361.

to Constantinople, from Moscow to Limerick.³¹ and “In Milan and St. Petersburg he played before audiences of three thousand people or more, the first time a solo pianist appeared before such vast assemblies.”³² He performed in such venues as the the Theatre La Scala in Milan, the Saal Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, the Teatro de S. Carlos in Portugal, the National Theater in Kolozsvar, the Hanover-square Rooms in London, etc.³³

Liszt’s pioneering efforts created a new performance medium. Once introduced, the piano recital became the established format for professional piano concerts. This format continues as the mainstream performance genre for 21st Century pianists.

³¹ Walker, 292-293.

³² Walker, 285-286.

³³George Kehler, *The Piano in Concert*. Vol. 1. (Metuchen, NJ): Scarecrow, 1982), 762-767.

TYPES OF PIANO RECITALS

Modern pianists follow many different formats when programming their recitals. Some of the more popular strategies include the ‘musical menu’ recital, the ‘chronological’ recital, the ‘themed recital’ and the ‘one composer’ recital.

Alfred Brendel defined the ‘musical menu’ recital as “old-fashioned”.³⁴ In this format, pianists “treated a program like a menu: starter (or soup) and main course, followed by various salads and puddings, and topped by omelette flambée.”³⁵ This strategy resulted in a tastefully balanced program:

³⁴ *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 22, 1990.

³⁵ *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 22, 1990.

1963 Eighty-fifth Season 1964
UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY
 THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
 Charles A. Sink, President
 Gail W. Rector, Executive Director Lester McCoy, Conductor

Second Concert Eighty-fifth Annual Choral Union Series Complete Series 3394

GYORGY SANDOR
 Pianist

TUESDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 24, 1963, at 8:30
 HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

“Now Come the Gentiles’ Saviour . . .” BACH-BUSONI
 Vivace (from Sonata VI for Two
 Keyboards and Pedal) BACH-BARTÓK

Sonata in E minor HAYDN
 Presto
 Adagio
 Molto vivace

Sonata in B minor LISZT

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Mazurka in C minor, Op. 56, No. 3 CHOPIN
 Mazurka in A-flat major, Op. 41, No. 4 CHOPIN
 Mazurka in C-sharp minor, Op. 6, No. 2 CHOPIN

Andante Spianato and Polonaise, Op. 22 CHOPIN

Etude in B-flat minor SZYMANOWSKI
 Etude No. 1 (1918) BARTÓK
 Etude (pour les degrés chromatiques) DEBUSSY
 Etude in D-sharp minor (Pathétique) SCRIBIN

The University Musical Society has presented Gyorgy Sandor on two previous occasions: May 3, 1958 and May 6, 1962.

The Steinway is the official piano of the University Musical Society.

A R S L O N G A V I T A B R E V I S

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Gyorgy Sandor’s 1963 recital demonstrates the ‘musical menu’ strategy but goes one step further than Brendel’s description. He offers Bach’s Chorale, *Now Comes the Gentiles’ Savior*, as a musical prayer to ‘bless’ the musical feast. After ‘saying grace’, Sandor proceeds with another Bach arrangement presented as an appetizer. This leads into a presentation of the Sonatas of Haydn and Liszt as the

³⁶ *UMS Concert Program, September 24, 1963: Gyorgy Sandor.*
http://ums.aadl.org/ums/programs_19630924e (accessed March 11, 2012).

‘main course’. Following the intermission, Sandor offers various musical “salads and puddings” to close out the recital.

Brendel describes the, *chronological* recital as proceeding “ in a roughly historical order.”³⁷ The placement of the works on the program would correspond with a historical timeline. The chronological recital could suggest lineages between composers or, in contrast, highlight changes in trends.

Pianists have also expanded the ‘musical menu’ and ‘chronological’ formats to include recitals focusing on specific themes. These ‘themed recitals’ contain works selected based on a shared unifying element. Examples of such recitals could include all-sonata programs, all-ballad programs, works with the theme of water, etc.

The example below demonstrates effective use of both the ‘chronological’ and the ‘themed’ recital strategies. Emil Gilels has selected works, which demonstrate the development of music in historical order from the Classical period to the 20th Century. By doing so, he has suggested parallels in compositional style between the sonatas of Mozart, Schubert, and Prokofiev. Additionally, the presentation of works from the same genre of *sonata* helps to bind the works together. Gilels has also worked to establish a sense of unity through tonality. Both Mozart’s and Prokofiev’s sonatas were written in the key

³⁷ *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 22, 1990.



N.B.C. Artists Service
of the
National Broadcasting Company
presents
**SERGEI
Rachmaninoff**

PHILHARMONIC AUDITORIUM
Los Angeles

Monday Evening, February 13, 1933
8:30 p. m.

PROGRAM

1. Sonate Fantaisie, Opus 29	<i>Scriabine</i>
Andante	
Presto	
2. Fantaisie, C Major	<i>Haydn</i>
3. Phantasiestücke	<i>Schumann</i>
(a) In the Night	
(b) Wägen	
(c) Table	
4. Fantaisie	<i>Chopin</i>
5. Sonate Quasi una Fantasia	<i>Beethoven</i>
(C Sharp Minor)	
Adagio sostenuto	} Without intermission.
Allegretto	
Presto Agitato	
6. Fantasia Quasi Sonata	<i>Liszt</i>

Steinway Piano

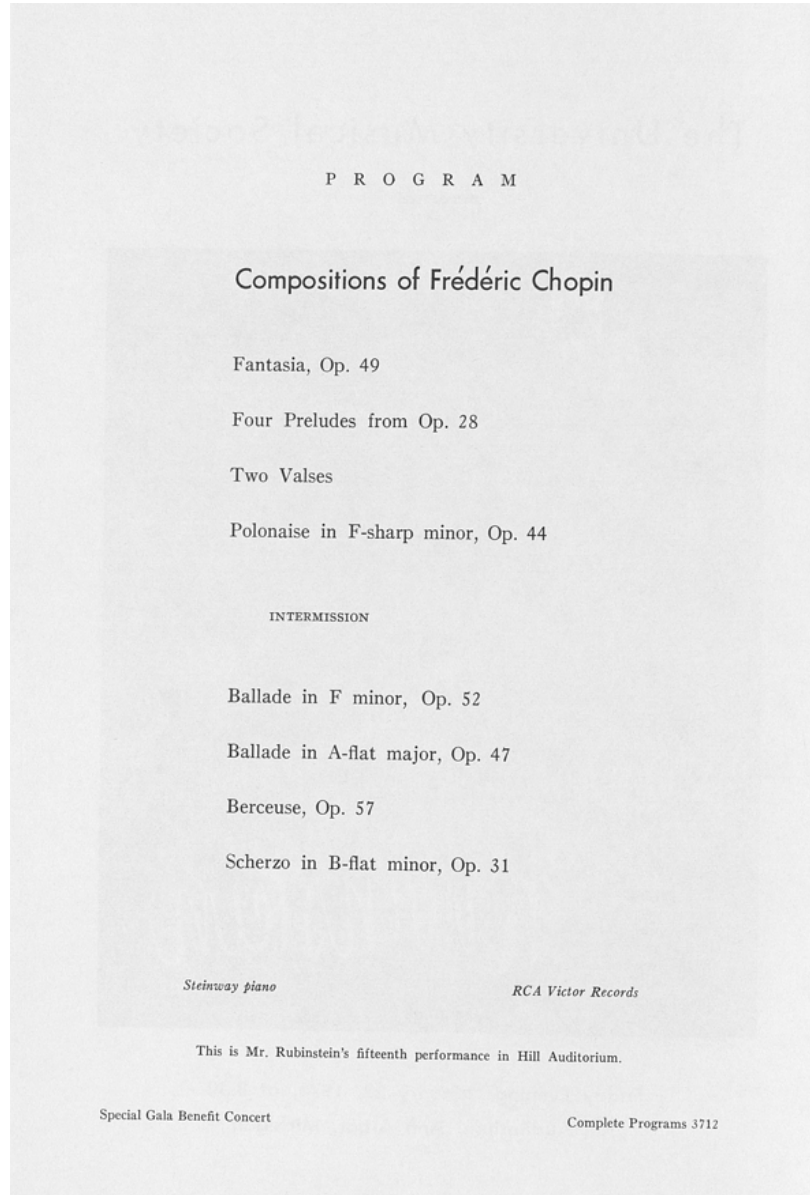
Management N.B.C. Artists Service
GEORGE ENGLE, Managing Director
By arrangement with Chas. I. Foley

S. Rachmaninoff

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In addition to the ‘musical menu’, the ‘chronological, and the ‘themed strategies, the ‘one-composer’ recital has become increasingly popular as a performance format. When programming such recitals, pianists often attempt to emphasize variety in order to highlight the flexibility of the composer:

³⁹ *LA Times*, Dec. 15, 2008
<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/thedailymirror/2008/12/found-on-eba-14.html> (accessed March 11, 2012).



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As demonstrated above, Arthur Rubinstein carefully avoids monotony in his all-Chopin recital by programming works, which represent seven different genres

⁴⁰ *UMS Concert Program, Jan. 22, 1971: Artur Rubinstein.*
http://ums.aadl.org/ums/programs_19710122e (accessed March 11, 2012).

from the composer's oeuvre. This arrangement effectively demonstrates Chopin's compositional versatility.

Well-designed programs include works selected based on their content, key relationships and ability to provide variety or, in contrast, cohesiveness. Pianists may choose to utilize a single strategy or, they may blend several strategies in the pursuit of a meaningful concert experience. Whatever strategy they employ, they play the role of creative artists when designing their recital programs.

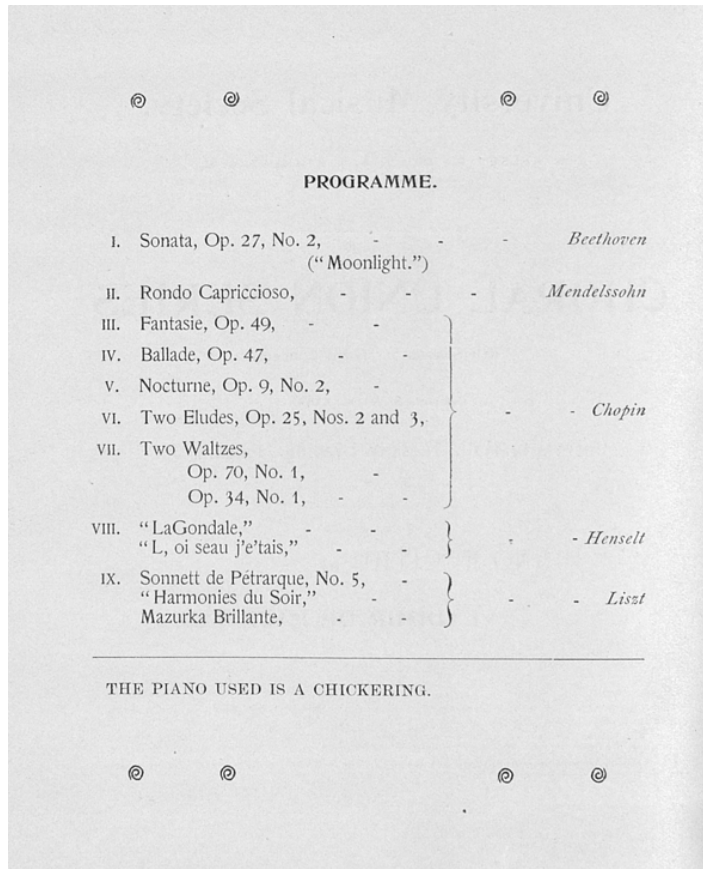
TRENDS OF THE CONTEMPORARY PIANO RECITAL

Of the six characteristic innovations of a Franz Liszt recital, five survive to this day. Pianists still perform programs spanning the history of the repertoire. They also play entire concerts alone and are expected to perform their works from memory. In addition, the most successful pianists perform internationally for large audiences. Only the characteristic, of audience interaction with the performer has not survived to this day as a typical trait. This characteristic included improvisation on themes given by the audience and conversation with the crowd between works.

21st Century pianists rarely include improvisation as a component of their recitals. This may relate to the pianist's altered role in the 21st Century. In Liszt's day, pianists often composed music as well. Throughout the generations, the disciplines of pianist and composer have become increasingly specialized and independent of one another. This specialization of roles could account for the disappearance of improvisation from the contemporary recital. The art of classical improvisation may have become increasingly rare because the pianist/composer has become increasingly rare.

In addition, pianists rarely descend into the hall between programmed pieces to converse with the crowd. This could reflect a growing trend of 21st Century recitals toward gravity. Liszt's practice of engaging in "lively conversation at the intervals" might seem overly casual to contemporary

audiences, who expect a passive recital experience. The 21st Century audience member has grown accustomed to experiencing recitals in silence, as if separated from the performer by an invisible wall. Applause is the only common form of audience interaction in a contemporary recital. Because of the diminishing element of audience interaction, the contemporary recital has developed an increasingly ‘formal’ atmosphere when compared to the recitals of Liszt’s day. Contemporary recital *programs* also demonstrate this ‘formal’ quality. In his first true ‘recital’, Liszt included only two movements from his transcription of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony. Such an arrangement would scarcely appear on a professional 21st Century recital. The omission of the other three movements would be taken as amateurish and disrespectful to the composer. When contemporary pianists program multi-movement works, they nearly always present the work as a whole. In addition, contemporary pianists tend to strive for comprehensiveness by programming complete opera such as the 8 *Klavierstücke*, *Op. 76* of Brahms or complete genres such as the 4 *Ballades* of Chopin. In contrast, 19th Century recitalists often programmed varied combinations of smaller works as demonstrated by Vladimir De Pachman’s program for an 1893 performance for the Anne Arbor Choral Union Society:



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De Pachmann's programming was typical for his time but might seem piecemeal by today's standards.

While contemporary concerts emphasize sobriety, Liszt's recitals stressed elements of 'theatricality'. Liszt's "lively conversation" and improvisations on themes given by the audience could have helped foster a casual and welcoming environment in the concert hall. In addition, his physical demeanor and on-stage approach likely contributed to the effect. Many have written about this theatrical quality. Hans Christian Andersen dramatically recounts his impressions:

⁴¹ *UMS Concert Program, Jan. 30: Choral Union Series- Vladimir De Pachman.* http://ums.aadl.org/ums/programs_18940130e (accessed March 11, 2012).

As Liszt sat before the piano, the first impression of his personality was derived from the appearance of his wan face, so that he seemed to me a demon nailed to the instrument whence the tones streamed forth—they came from his blood, from his thoughts; he was a demon who would liberate his soul from thralldom; he was on the rack, his blood flowed and his nerves trembled; but as he continued to play, so the demon vanished. I saw that pale face assume a nobler and brighter expression: the divine soul shone from his eyes, from every feature; he became beautiful as only spirit and enthusiasm can make their worshippers.⁴²

According to the dramatist Ernest Legouvé, Liszt emphasized theatrical elements with physical gestures as well: “constantly tossing back his long hair... With lips quivering, he swept the auditorium with the glance of a smiling master.”⁴³

In contrast to Liszt’s approach, the contemporary recital upholds a standard of objectivity and artistic subtlety. The programs present works in their entirety without distraction or spectacle. This trend away from theatricality may have arisen from the functional application of the recital format as a means of student assessment in music education. The recital is an excellent pedagogical

⁴² Walker, 290.

⁴³ Dubal, 157.

tool as it provides the student with a challenging mission. It cultivates artistry, technique, and an understanding of aesthetic experience within an historical perspective. This functional recital has helped countless pianists hone their skills and build repertoire, technique and artistry. The 'academic' environment requires a sterile and objective approach. Audience interaction would only distract from the academic environment. In addition, exaggeration and presentation of incomplete works would further detract from the substance of the event. The public recital may have mirrored the trend present in academia resulting in performances emphasizing substance over spectacle.

In contrast, Liszt's approach to concertizing represented the dramatic elements of the Romantic style and emphasized audience interaction and the grand gesture. Franz Liszt seems to have considered entertainment a priority in his performances. For him, audience interaction may have proved essential in breaking down the barrier between performers and the public. Exaggeration and programming of palatable works may have helped strengthen the entertainment factor of his performances.

Both approaches to concertizing possess strengths and weaknesses. The contemporary 'academic' recital provides a sophisticated presentation of music without artificiality or distortion. The format draws strength from its formal qualities. However, the formality of the contemporary recital could result in an alienation of the public if not balanced carefully. If taken too far, the 'academic'

form could resemble a *lecture* rather than a *recital*. Conversely, the ‘theatrical’ approach of Liszt likely produced marvelously effective, inspiring musical events. The Liszt concert drew strength from drama and spectacle. However, if not applied with genuine meaning, the spectacle of a Liszt recital could give way to cheap effects and empty showmanship.

While modern performers avoid the ‘theatrical’ qualities of a Liszt recital, they still maintain the form as a whole. This form, because of its effectiveness and flexibility, will likely survive for generations to come.

MUSICAL EKPHRASIS

Much has been written about the combinative power of the arts however; the English language does not seem to possess a suitable term describe the phenomenon. *Multimedia* and *Synergy* generally serve as the functional terms describing but neither captures the true meaning with adequate specificity. The pianist and professor Siglind Bruhn has written of the Greek term *ekphrasis*. For her, musical *ekphrasis* “narrates or paints stories to scenes created by an artist *other* than the composer of the music and in another artistic medium...”⁴⁴ Bruhn’s definition of the term refers to a musical work of art based on another independent work. However, other definitions of the term exist. Ranging from general to specific, the descriptions listed below reveal no true consensus.

Leo Spitzer defines the phenomenon in literary terms, saying it has been:

... known to Occidental literature from Homer to Theocritus to the Parnassians and Rilke, [as] the poetic description of a pictorial or cultural work of art, which describes implies, in the words of Théophile Gautier, ‘*une transposition d’art,*’ the reproduction,

⁴⁴ Siglind Bruhn, *Musical Ekphrasis: Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendrago Press, 2000), 552.

through the medium of words, of sensuously perceptible *objects d'art*.⁴⁵

Spitzer clearly defines *ekphrasis* as a literary process but generalizes when identifying what is to be transformed. A pictorial work of art is specific but a cultural work of art suggests quite a broad range of possibilities. To what does a cultural work of art or sensuously perceptible *object d'art* refer? Is instrumental music included in his idea of a cultural work of art or is he just referring to art of a visual nature?

Claus Clüver offers yet another definition for *ekphrasis* as “the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system.”⁴⁶ Clüver avoids limiting the possible sources of inspiration to include only the plastic arts and certainly allows that instrumental music could be an example of a “non-verbal sign system” but he clearly states that the resulting work would be a “verbal representation of a real or fictitious text”, i.e. literature.

The most specific definition comes from Murray Krieger who defines *ekphrasis* as “the imitation in literature of a work of plastic art”.⁴⁷ Here, no mistake can be made. For Krieger, *ekphrasis* involves translating visual arts to

⁴⁵ Bruhn, 552.

⁴⁶ Bruhn, 552.

⁴⁷ Bruhn, 553.

literature. Krieger's definition of *ekphrasis* is unique among the examples for its specificity.

Jean Hagstrum and George Saintsbury take a more general viewpoint on the term. According to Hagstrum, *ekphrasis* is "that special quality of giving voice to an otherwise mute art object."⁴⁸ This definition leaves room for interpretation. Does "giving voice," mean adding description with words, or can the voice take the form of musical sound or visual imagery? In addition, does the term "*mute*" refer to visual arts? That is likely the case however, one could argue that instrumental music is a mute "art object" because it does not express with words. In that case, Hagstrum's definition could refer to both instrumental music and visual arts as possible art objects. Essentially, Hagstrum's definition could be understood as specifically as translating pictures into words or as generally as translating pictures or music into words, music, or paintings/sculpture. George Saintsbury describes *ekphrasis* in a similar broad sense as "a set description intended to bring person, place picture, &c., vividly before the mind's eye." A set description does not necessarily imply the literary and could possibly refer to visual or musical depictions of a person, place picture, etc. It is not clear whether Saintsbury intentionally left these parameters vague but this definition comes closest to a holistic term describing cross-medium synergy.

⁴⁸Bruhn, 552.

As demonstrated above, the definitions of the term *ekphrasis* range from general to specific. Ultimately, the contrasting definitions suggest a flexibility of the term. The description of *ekphrasis* could refer to the translation of ideas from one art form to the other or it could account for the overall phenomenon of artistic synergy.

PROGRAM MUSIC

Franz Liszt originated the term *program music* and defined it as a:

... preface added to a piece of instrumental music, by means of which the composer intends to guard the listener against a wrong poetical interpretation, and to direct his attention to the poetical idea of the whole or to a particular part of it.⁴⁹

In addition to offering prefaces for his symphonic poems, which divulged literary or pictorial inspirations, he also provided descriptive titles for his works. By revealing his sources of inspiration, he believed that he could help the interpreter and listener better understand his compositions.

Some have criticized the concept of program music in favor of ‘absolute music’. Oxford Music defines absolute music as “Instrumental music that exists, and is to be appreciated, simply as such, in contradistinction to programme music.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Roger Scruton. "Programme music." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. 11 Mar. 2012
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22394>>.

⁵⁰ "absolute music." *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Ed. Alison Latham. *Oxford Music Online*. 9 Mar. 2012
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e25>>.

‘Absolutists’ believe that extra-musical sources of inspiration weaken the role of music as an independent art and that music’s power and uniqueness lies in the abstract and aesthetic beauty created from the sonic organization of “appropriate patterns and forms. These forms satisfy us because we have an understanding of the structural relations which they exemplify.”⁵¹ For them music is an objective art form. Its beauty lies in its abstract structural components. They do not attempt to explain music in terms of images or stories because, for them, it is already a “complete language” with its own unique set of aesthetic properties. Any attempts to apply extra-musical suggestions would only result in weakening music’s powerful abstract quality. The French philosopher Denis Diderot speaks of the abstract nature of music:

How can it be [...] that of the three arts that imitate nature, it is the one whose expressions are the most arbitrary and the least precise that speaks most powerfully to the soul? Could it be that, being less concerned with depicting objects, it allows more free play to our imagination?⁵²

Similarly, the influential 19th Century author Mme de Staël calls music an art “superior to all others” because the “delightful reverie in which it immerses us

⁵¹ Scruton, “Programme Music.”

⁵² Peter Vergo, *The Music of Painting: Music, Modernism and the Visual Arts from the Romantics to John Cage* (London: Phaidon, 2010), 9.

annihilates all thoughts that can be expressed in words, at the same time awakening in us feelings of infinity.⁵³ Even the poet, composer, and visual artist E.T.A. Hoffmann suggests an absolutist mindset in his masterful review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony:

When music is spoken of as an independent art the term can properly apply only to instrumental music, which scorns all aid, all admixture of other arts, and gives pure expression to its own peculiar artistic nature. [...] how dimly was this peculiar nature of music perceived by those instrumental composers who tried to represent such circumscribed sensations or even events, and thus to treat sculpturally the art most utterly opposed to sculpture! [...] [music] reveals to man an unknown realm, a world quite separate from the outer sensual world surrounding him, a world in which he leaves behind all feelings circumscribed by intellect in order to embrace the inexpressible.⁵⁴

These observations emphasize music's singular ability to express directly without the obstacle of specificity. This unique and powerful characteristic of music has

⁵³Vergo, 8.

⁵⁴ E. T. A. Hoffmann, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism*. Trans. Martyn Clarke. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 236.

often been considered the envy of all the arts. It served as inspiration for the painter Wassily Kandinsky in his search for an abstract visual form of expression. Though he succeeded in creating a powerful new movement in visual arts, Kandinsky never fully realized that elusive trait inherent to music.⁵⁵

While Diderot, de Staël, and Hoffmann make the case for isolation of music as a pure aesthetic, they all speak of music as an expressive art. Diderot admires the abstract quality of music but also implies that it “imitates nature”⁵⁶ and allows “free play to our imagination”.⁵⁷ If music expresses nature and allows us “free play of our imagination”,⁵⁸ isn’t he suggesting that the listener will ultimately call on other senses to understand the objective art? After all, don’t we experience nature through all the senses including sight, sound, smell and touch? It seems that Diderot does not advocate pure abstraction but rather implies that music, more than any other art form, can lead to a powerful sensory experience for the imagination. The claim of de Staël’s that music “annihilates all thoughts that can be expressed in words”⁵⁹ and that it only expresses the unnamed “infinite”⁶⁰ could possibly be viewed as a contradiction to Diderot’s idea that music expresses the tangible “nature”. Nature can be named and experienced through all the senses. Mme de Staël seems to suggest that music only expresses

⁵⁵ Interestingly, Kandinsky designed a stage work based on Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

⁵⁶ Vergo, 9.

⁵⁷ Vergo, 9.

⁵⁸ Vergo, 9.

⁵⁹ Vergo, 8.

⁶⁰ Vergo, 8.

the vague and indescribable. Still, she identifies music as an *expressive* art. Ironically, the composer, artist, and, above all, poet E. T. A. Hoffmann provides the most direct argument for pure absolute music saying that it “scorns all aid, all admixture of other arts, and gives pure expression to its own peculiar artistic nature.”⁶¹ Here, Hoffmann carefully avoids any extra-musical reference. For him, music only expresses itself and should not make reference to other mediums. He even scolds the composer Dittersdorf and calls his *Trois symphonies, experiment trois metamorphoses d’Ovide* “ridiculous aberrations.”⁶² One would not expect Hoffmann, the author of so many great works, which have benefitted from synergistic applications, (Schumann’s adaptation of *Kreiseriana*, Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker* Ballet, Offenbach’s *Tales of Hoffmann*), to take such a hard-line against *program music*.

While Diderot, de Staël, and Hoffmann’s viewpoints on the expressive power of music differ, they all suggest that music *expresses* something whether involving nature, the infinite, or just itself. In contrast, the composer Igor Stravinsky considers:

...music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, or psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc...Expression

⁶¹ Hoffmann, 236.

⁶² Hoffmann, 237.

has never been an inherent property of music. That is by no means the purpose of its existence.⁶³

Stravinsky's complete dismissal of the expressive qualities of music is perplexing. His international fame as a composer was largely built on the success of his three Diaghilev ballets. *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring* were all written for the Ballets Russes between 1910 and 1914 and were revered as astounding examples of artistic synergy. "The whole point of the Ballets Russes was that it was a fusion of art forms"⁶⁴ and brought about collaborations with great visual artists and choreographers including Alexander Benois, Michael Fokine, and Vaslav Nijinsky, and Nikolai Roerich. The French playwright and poet "Henri Ghéon called *The Firebird* 'the most exquisite marvel of equilibrium we have ever imagined between sounds, movements and forms'."⁶⁵ How could Stravinsky, who created these wonderful examples of artistic "equilibrium", deny the expressive potential of music? Perhaps he was guarding against those who would seek to diminish the role of music to a representative art. He argued that,

⁶³ Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*. (London: Calder and Boyars ed, 1975), 53.

⁶⁴ Stephen Walsh. "Stravinsky, Igor." *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, 21 Feb. 2012
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22394>>.

⁶⁵ Walsh, "Stravinsky."

When people have learned to love music for itself, when they listen with other ears, their enjoyment will be of a far higher and more potent order, and they will be able to judge it on a higher plane and realize its intrinsic value.⁶⁶

Should Stravinsky's rather severe statement that music expresses nothing be taken at face value, or should we consider that, by advocating for music as purely aesthetic, he was guarding against any notion that music's role should be diminished as representative? If he *were* suggesting that music had no meaning at all and that it could not express, then he would be representing a minority viewpoint. Frederic Chopin said, "... nothing is more hateful than music without meaning".⁶⁷ Franz Liszt described his journeys as a an artistic experience and highlighted artistic connections:

Art appeared before my eyes in all its glory, it revealed itself to me in all its universality, all its unity. As regards my own feelings and reflections, every day I was struck more and more by the hidden affinities between works of genius. Raphael and Michelangelo helped me to understand Mozart and Beethoven...the Coliseum

⁶⁶ Walsh, "Stravinsky."

⁶⁷ Deborah Mawer, *The Cambridge Companion to Ravel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 49.

and the Campo Santo are not as far removed as one might think from the 'Eroica' Symphony or [Mozart's] Requiem."⁶⁸

Even Diderot, de Staël, and Hoffmann, his fellow absolutists define music as an expressive force. Perhaps the absolutists were concerned with protecting the position of music as a respected art.

Stravinsky's hard-line viewpoint may have resulted from his work in the motion picture industry. Music has historically played a subsidiary role in this powerful modern medium. Stravinsky was aware of this growing trend:

What is the function of music in moving pictures? What, you ask, are the particular problems involved in music for the screen? I can answer both questions briefly. And I must answer them bluntly.

There are no musical problems in the film. And there is only one real function of film music – namely, to feed the composer! In all frankness I find it impossible to talk to film people about music because we have no common meeting ground; their primitive and childish concept of music is not my concept. They have the mistaken notion that music, in "helping" and "explaining" the cinematic shadow-play, could be regarded under artistic considerations. It cannot be.

⁶⁸ Vergo, 90.

Do not misunderstand me. I realize that music is an indispensable adjunct to the sound film. It has got to bridge holes; it has got to fill the emptiness of the screen and supply the loudspeakers with more or less pleasant sounds. The film could not get along without it, just as I myself could not get along without having the empty spaces of my living-room walls covered with wall paper. But you would not ask me, would you, to regard my wall paper as I would regard painting, or apply aesthetic standards to it?⁶⁹

Stravinsky's thoughts on film music may provide the key to understanding his initial statement regarding the expressive quality of music. It could be that Stravinsky simply wanted to defend music against being reduced to "wallpaper". If that is the case, Stravinsky is not much different than de Staël, Diderot, and Hoffmann. They all took care to single out music as a complete language needing no additional support.

Franz Liszt was aware that his application of program music could be misinterpreted. He pointed out that music could not and should not attempt to literally represent an image just as a painting could never completely represent a piece of music. For him, the arts existed in their own space with their own unique

⁶⁹"Part I: Igor Stravinsky on Film Music: As Told to Ingolf Dahl" *The Film Music Society*, Oct. 10, 2003.
http://www.filmmusicsociety.org/news_events/features/newsprint.php?ArticleID=101003 (accessed March 11, 2012).

characteristics and neither *represented* the other. Alan Walker explains Liszt's attitude toward program music, saying that Liszt believed one art could "fertilize" the other but neither should be reduced to a representation of the other.⁷⁰ Instead, the works complemented each other through their shared spirit. Liszt clearly explained his position:

It is obvious that things which can appear only objectively to perception can in no way furnish connecting points in music; the poorest apprentice landscape painters could give with a few chalk strokes a much more faithful picture than a musician operating with all the resources of the best orchestra. But if these same things are subjectivated to dreaming, to contemplation, to emotional uplift, have they not a peculiar kinship with music; and should not music be able to translate them into its mysterious language?⁷¹

The Russian piano teacher Heinrich Neuhaus often called on extra-musical sources to help achieve musical meaning in his student's performances.

Seemingly informed by Liszt, he was also careful to clarify his approach:

Please remember that I never "illustrate" music [...] I do not say the music represents the flower; I say that that it can create the

⁷⁰ Alan Walker, *Liszt* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1971), 59.

⁷¹ Walker, *Liszt*, 59.

spiritual and visual impression given by a flower, it can symbolize it, and call forth in the imagination the image of a flower. Any music is that particular music only, A=A, by virtue of the fact that music is a complete language, a clear expression, that it has a definite immanent meaning and hence its perception and understanding do not need any additional explanations or interpretations in word or picture [...] for people who have the gift of imagination all music in its entirety is program music (even so-called pure music devoid of programme) and at the same time does not need any programme, since it expresses in its own language the whole of its content.”⁷²

Liszt and Neuhaus agree with absolutists on a fundamental issue. They both see music as a “complete language”, which needs no extra-musical support. However, absolutists believe that extra-musical suggestions weaken the power of music. Liszt and Neuhaus, while maintaining that music speaks for itself, believe that familiarity with a work’s inspiration can enhance the interpretation and execution thereof. By providing extra-musical details about their works, composers such as Liszt can aid interpreters in their quest for authenticity. Similarly, a teacher, such as Neuhaus can help his student attain a meaningful interpretation by applying a literary or pictorial reference. For Liszt and Neuhaus, musical imagery enhances

⁷² Heinrich Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*. Trans. K. A. Leibovitch. (London: Kahn & Averill, 1993), 26.

the artistic impact and leads to a higher level of interpretational authenticity. By revealing his inspirations, Liszt built a stronger connective bridge to the interpreter of his works.

GESAMTKUNSTWERK

For Richard Wagner the only perfect form of art was one, in which all the mediums coexisted on an equal plane. He called this aesthetic ideal *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This German term, meaning total art-work, referred to an art form created through the unification of the “arts of *Dance*, of *Tone*, and *Poetry* to create a “trinitarian utterance of human art”.⁷³ For him, the Greek Drama was the ideal form of expression. In his essay titled *Art and Revolution*, Wagner made clear his thoughts on this culture.

With the Greeks the perfect work of art, the Drama, was the abstract and epitome of all that was expressible in the Grecian nature. It was the nation itself—in intimate connection with its own history—that stood mirrored in its art-work, that communed with itself and, within the span of a few hours, feasted its eyes with its own noblest essence. All division of this enjoyment, all scattering of the forces concentrated on *one* point, all diversion of the elements into separate channels, must needs have been as hurtful to this *unique* and noble Art-work as to the like-formed State itself; and thus it could only mature, but never change its nature.⁷⁴

⁷³ Richard Wagner. *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*; Ed. William Ashton Ellis. Trans. William Ashton Ellis. Vol. I. (New York: Broude Bros., 1966), 95.

⁷⁴ Wagner, 52.

Drama was the “loftiest” example of human expression and the “three artistic faculties”⁷⁵ were “by their nature [...] inseparable...”.⁷⁶ Greek Drama was like a “stately minuet of Art” whose “primeval sisters” were

... so wondrous closely interlaced with one another, [...], so mutually bound up in each other’s life, of body and spirit: that each of the three partners, unlinked from the united chain [...], [could] only carry on an artificially inbreathed and borrowed life...⁷⁷

Unlike the absolutists, Wagner felt that art forms were *less* pure when separated from their “sisters”. Wagner’s “stately minuet of art” represented an ideal aesthetic partnership in which, each member contributed equally without changing its meaning or essence. Neither art should merely represent the other. On the contrary, each element, (music, dance, and poetry), should utilize the full range of her characteristic respective powers in concert to create a “great united utterance”.⁷⁸ The true magic of Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* lies in the interplay between three complete and powerful expressions and isolation of artistic mediums was an unnatural aberration.

⁷⁵ Wagner, 95.

⁷⁶ Wagner, 95.

⁷⁷ Wagner, 95.

⁷⁸ Wagner, 53.

Wagner believed that the arts were destined to reunite because that is how they originally existed before they were detached at the fall of the Greek Empire:

With the subsequent downfall of Tragedy, Art became less and less the expression of the public conscience. The Drama separated into its component parts; rhetoric, sculpture, painting, music, &c., forsook the ranks in which they had moved in unison before; each one to take its own way, and in lonely self-sufficiency to pursue its own development. And thus it was that at the Renaissance of Art we lit first upon these isolated Grecian arts, which had sprung from the wreck of Tragedy. The great unitarian Art-work of Greece could not at once reveal itself to our bewildered, wandering, piecemeal minds in all its fullness; for how could we have understood it? But we knew how to appropriate those dissevered handiworks of Art; for as [53] goodly handiwork, to which category they had already sunk in the Romo-Greek world, they lay not so far from our own nature and our minds. The guild and handicraft spirit of the new citizenship rose quick and lively in the towns; princes and notabilities were well pleased that their castles should be more becomingly built and decorated, their walls bedecked with more attractive paintings, than had been

possible to the raw art of the Middle Ages; the priests laid hands on rhetoric for their pulpits and music for their choirs; and the new world of handicraft worked valiantly among the separate arts of Greece, so far at least as it understood them or thought them fitted to its purpose.

Each one of these dissevered arts, nursed and luxuriously tended for the entertainment of the rich, has filled the world to overflowing with its products; in each, great minds have brought forth marvels; but the one true Art has not been born again, either in or since the Renaissance. The perfect Art-work, the great united utterance of a free and lovely public life, the *Drama, Tragedy*,—howsoever great the poets who have here and there indited tragedies,—is not yet born again: for reason that it cannot be *re-born*, but must be *born anew*.

Only the great *Revolution of Mankind*, whose beginnings erstwhile shattered Grecian Tragedy, can win for us this Art-work. For only this Revolution can bring forth from its hidden depths, in the new beauty of a nobler Universalism, *that* which

it once tore from the conservative spirit of a time of beautiful
but narrow-meted culture—and tearing it, engulfed.⁷⁹

His artistic mission was to reconnect the severed arts and build a new art-work of
the future based on the lost principles of the Greek Tragedy.

⁷⁹ Wagner, 52-53.

THE CONTEMPORARY MULTIMEDIA PIANO CONCERT

Designed as an expansion of the Liszt recital, the *multimedia piano concert* combines piano music with projected paintings and spoken poetry. This hybrid performance format fuses a piano recital, an art exhibition, and a poetry reading. This convergence of musical, visual, and literary aesthetic elements highlights the concepts of musical *ekphrasis*, *program music*, and *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Théophile Gautier called *ekphrasis* “une transposition d’art”.⁸⁰ In line with the concept of *ekphrasis*, the *multimedia piano concert* transposes creative elements from one medium to the other. Through suggestion by proximity, three unrelated artworks can take on a new meaning when combined. The Romantic painter Eugene Delacroix spoke to George Sand about this phenomenon:

Give me that blue cushion and that red blanket. Place them side by side. You will see that, where the two colors touch, they steal something from one another. The red becomes tinged with blue; the blue is bathed in red and, in the middle, violet is created.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Bruhn, 552.

⁸¹ Vergo, 65.

By implying connections between art forms, the *multimedia concert* designer steals something from each work. However, that *stolen* element does not disappear; it *blends* with its partner creating a new aesthetic built from a new contextual environment. This new aesthetic arises from the synthesis of varied artistic mediums, a synthesis, which highlights artistic unity.

Naturally, some would argue against imposing an image or poem on a musical work. Hoffmann might call designers of such concerts “who tried to represent such circumscribed sensations or even events, [foolish for trying to] treat sculpturally the art most utterly opposed to sculpture!”⁸² If applied carelessly, the artistic components could take on a ‘representative’ role. The pianist must take present all elements harmoniously without reducing either to a supporting role. Possible criticism for the *multimedia concert* format recalls the debate between proponents of *program music* and those of *absolute music*. Much of the debate arose from a misunderstanding of the term.

Richard Wagner provides the strongest argument for the *multimedia* format. While *absolutists* argued that, for the sake of aesthetic purity, music should exist in isolation of the other art forms, Wagner considered the arts part of the same body. The “dissevered” arts could never fully realize their potential. Only artistic reunification could reproduce the original glory of the Greek Tragedy.

⁸² Vergo, 236.

Following Wagner, the *multimedia piano concert* reconnects the severed arts to achieve a “stately minuet” based on connective bridges and shared inspirations. The piano assumes the position of leader and helps the paintings and poetry follow gracefully ‘in-step’. This format explores of various aesthetic combinations and could provide a meaningful alternative to the traditional piano recital. Two examples of contributions to this format include *Picturing Rachmaninoff* and *Picturing Ravel*.

PICTURING RACHMANINOFF: 9 Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39

In the spirit of Wagner's "graceful minuet of art", *Picturing Rachmaninoff* was conceived as a synergistic display of music, art and poetry. It attempted to draw attention to the interrelationship between the arts by displaying images and poetry, which shared a connection to the *Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39* of Sergei Rachmaninoff. The project included writings of literary masters such as Alexander Pushkin and Ivan Tyutchev as well as paintings by such artists as Mikhail Vrubel and Arnold Böcklin. Rachmaninoff himself experienced music in proximity to the other arts, and drew inspiration from poetry and painting in particular. In a 1926 interview for the *Musical Observer* Rachmaninoff shared his feelings on artistic inspiration:

It is most difficult to analyze the source of inspiration for compositions. So many factors work together in creative work. Love is certainly a never failing source of inspiration. Love inspires as nothing else does. To love is to gain happiness and strength of mind. It is the unfoldment of a new vista of intellectual energy. The beauty and grandeur of nature helps. Poetry inspires me much. Of all the arts I love poetry the best after music. Our Pushkin I find admirable. Shakespeare and Byron I read constantly in the Russian. I always have books of poetry around me. Poetry

inspires music for there is so much music in poetry. They are like twin sisters.

Everything of beauty helps. A beautiful woman is certainly a source of perpetual inspiration. But you must run away from her, and seek seclusion, otherwise you will compose nothing you will accomplish nothing. Carry the inspiration in your heart and mind; think of her, but be all by yourself for creative work.

Real inspiration must come from within. If there is nothing within, nothing from outside can help. The best of poetry, the greatest of painting, the sublimest of nature cannot produce any worthwhile result if the divine spark of creative faculty is lacking within the artist.⁸³

Rachmaninoff's revealing statement offers a valuable glimpse into the creative process. He further elaborates on his feelings about the arts saying: "After music

⁸³ Basanta Koomar Roy. "Rachmaninoff is Reminiscent." *Musical Observer* 26 (May 1927: 16.)
<http://www.rachmaninoff.org/board/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=437&start=0&st=0&sk=t&sd=a&sid=50f5446764fd2232d28a3c9c47205d1a>
(accessed March 11, 2012).

and poetry, I like painting best.”⁸⁴ Rachmaninoff’s interest in the arts served as a springboard for this creative venture.

Though Rachmaninoff divulged some scenes to the composer Ottorino Respighi, he did not publish titles for the *Etudes* because he wanted the listeners to “paint for themselves”⁸⁵ what the tableaux suggest most for them. The composer’s suggestion could be viewed as a challenge to the interpreter. This stage-work attempts to meet Rachmaninoff’s challenge by ‘painting’ the Etudes with poetry and visual arts that share a mood image or pathos alive in the works.

The *9 Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39* of Rachmaninoff were first published in 1917 by Edition Russe de Musique⁸⁶ however, the first performance of the set predated the publication. Rachmaninoff performed the entire collection at the Hall of the Tennis College at Petrograd in 1916.⁸⁷ Below is a description of each of the *9 Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39* as well as examples of possible artistic convergence:

Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 1 in C minor: Allegro agitato

⁸⁴ Roy, “Rachmaninoff.”

⁸⁵ Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda. *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music*. (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 218.

⁸⁶ Valentin Antipov, Preface. *Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 33 1st and 2nd Versions, Op. 39*. By Sergei Rachmaninoff. (Moscow: Russian Music Publishing, 2006), X.

⁸⁷ Antipov, IX.

This etude provides a striking opening to the group with its violent and demonic quality. Rieseemann suggests that Arnold Böcklin's painting entitled *The Waves* inspired this etude.⁸⁸ It would be no stretch to imagine that this work was meant to depict an Arnold Böcklin painting. Rachmaninoff made no secret about his admiration for the painter. He even wrote a symphonic poem based directly on Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead*. Though the character of *The Waves* certainly matches, Rieseemann does not provide enough information to support his claim. In addition, he confuses the keys of the etudes listed. He wrongly labels the key of this work as F minor but it was actually written in C minor.⁸⁹ This oversight on such a basic level causes one to question whether Rieseemann's research can be trusted. Was he unclear about which Etude Rachmaninoff was referring to, did he mistype, or worst of all, was he not able to recognize the proper tonality of the work? Also, because we have no source other than Rieseemann to support his claims, there is no way to validate them. Whether or not Rieseemann was correct, Böcklin's strange imagery would very effectively complement Rachmaninoff's Etude.

⁸⁸ Oskar von Rieseemann, *Rachmaninoff's Recollections: Told to Oskar von Rieseemann*. Trans. Dolly Rutherford. 1934. (Freeport, NJ: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 237.

⁸⁹ Rieseemann, 237. "His new piano pieces are called *Etudes-Tableaux*. Many of these take their origin from Böcklin's paintings: No. 8, Op. 39 (G minor), can be traced back to *Morning*. No. 1, Op. 39 (F minor), to *The Waves*. Sometimes inspiration for the *Etudes-Tableaux* has been taken from pictures of real life or from fairy-tales; as, for instance, No. 7, Op. 33 (E flat minor), which represents a gay bustle of a Russian fair, or No. 6, Op. 39 (A minor), the fairy tale of *Red Riding Hood and the Wolf*."



90

Mikhail Vrubel's *The Demon Downcast* could also serve as a striking partner for the *Etude*. Vrubel's masterful brush strokes spread shards of colors across the canvass. Those jagged markings infuse the work with incredible energy. Through all the chaos, the face of the demon peers out in an ominous punctuation. Vrubel's *Demon* effectively transmits the dramatic soaring quality of Rachmaninoff's work. Vrubel's painting was based on a scene from Lermontov's epic poem *The Demon*. Lermontov's powerful writing intensifies the mood even further. Partnered with Rachmaninoff's music, the imagery and poetry of the *Demon* create an unforgettable expressive force.

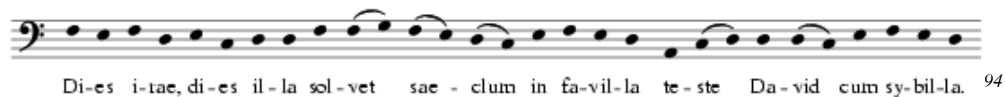
⁹⁰ Böcklin, Arnold, "Playing in the Waves" (1883), Neue Pinakothek, oil on canvas. <http://www.pinakothek.de> (accessed March 11, 2012).

Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 2 in A minor: Lento assai

Original sketches for this etude were “contained in the preliminary manuscript materials for the *poema The Bells*,”⁹¹ and date back to 1913 before publication of Rachmaninoff’s Op. 33 Etudes.⁹²

Rachmaninoff’s told Respighi that this etude represented “the Sea and Seagulls. [This program was suggested by Mme. Rachmaninoff.]”⁹³ The description perfectly captures the placid, lonely atmosphere of the *Etude*. Rachmaninoff’s use of the Dies Irae plainsong requires special mention here as it provides the foundation for this particular *Etude*.

Ex.1 LU, 18 10



This chant can be found in nearly all of Rachmaninoff’s works as a somber musical signature. Here, he transforms the theme into a hypnotic *idée fixe*, which incessantly repeats throughout the work. He never allows the theme to complete itself and, instead, loops the first three notes of the head motive together in a

⁹¹ Antipov IX

⁹² Antipov IX

⁹³ Bertensson and Leyda, 262-263.

⁹⁴ John Caldwell and Malcolm Boyd. "Dies irae." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. 1 Mar. 2012

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40040>>.

continuous cycle. In a compositional technique calling to mind Igor Stravinsky's style, Rachmaninoff varies the patterns of this three-note pitch collection throughout the work. The example below demonstrates his manipulation of the motive.



Rachmaninoff's pitch collection creates a never-ending chain of notes, which emphasize the fatalistic quality of the *Dies Irae* in an infinite cycle. The first line of Fyodor Tyutchev's poem makes use of a similar circular effect:

Just as the oceans compass all the earth,
So earthly life is compassed by illusions;

Tyutchev creates a particularly powerful comparison between the ocean and dreams. The poem continues by comparing the journey of life with a boat adrift on an ocean of dreams.

Already in the port the magic bark

⁹⁵ Serge Rachmaninoff, *Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39*. <http://cosandscores.com> (PDF version of document downloaded April 15, 2012), 9.

Has roused; the tide flows in and soon will speed us
Into the measureless roiling dark.

Ivan Aivazovsky's magical painting, *A Ship in Moonlit Waters*, complements the expansive and lonely atmosphere of the work. Aivazovsky's ship appears dwarfed by the vastness of the ocean and the sky above. This theme of a lonely journey through the infinitely large permeates the music, poetry, and painting.

Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 3 in F# minor: Allegro molto

Sviatoslav Richter enthusiastically described the 3rd Etude-Tableau as a dramatic and icy landscape.

The *Étude-tableau* in F sharp minor is one of my favourites. These fiery escarpments, these waterfalls with shards of ice seem almost to have been caught in a single inspired breath. And the way he suddenly applies the breaks in the final bars...⁹⁶

Richter's imagery powerfully captures the essence of this work. He suggests a frigid world and the elemental force of nature. From the very opening, jagged

⁹⁶ Bruno Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 290.

musical fragments, forcefully hammer away until they explode a spray snow into the dizzying heights.



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Alexander Pushkin's poem *The Snowslide* takes place in the Darial Gorge of the Caucasus Mountains. Icy boulders tumble down from forbidding altitudes to crash into mighty Terek River. The C# Major ff chord could be interpreted as a depiction of the exact moment of impact.



98

The passagework immediately following the chord suggests a massive upward surge of water, a reaction to the force of the crushing boulder. J.M.W. Turner's painting *The Fall of an Avalanche in the Grissons* captures the jagged rocks and the icy, elemental force of nature. J.M.W. Turner was a master of the depiction motion in painting. His *Avalanche* crystallizes the precise moment when the

97 Rachmaninoff, 16.

98 Rachmaninoff, 19.

boulder crashes down. As Richter points out, Rachmaninoff does not build the work to a climax at the end. Instead, he suddenly “applies the breaks”.



99

This subtle ending emphasizes the fleeting quality of the tableau, which, to Richter, seems “almost to have been caught in a single inspired breath.”¹⁰⁰

Interestingly, Richter takes the opportunity to compare the writing styles of Rachmaninoff’ with Serge Prokofiev when describing this work.

this phenomenal study looks forward to the whole of Prokofiev’s art of piano writing, but this is true of all these *Études-Tableaux* (Prokofiev would be furious if he heard me say this).¹⁰¹

The *Etudes-Tableaux* resemble Prokofiev’s style more closely than any other works of Rachmaninoff. Prokofiev certainly could have been inspired by their rhythmic vitality, and barbaric, sometimes grotesque elements.

⁹⁹ Rachmaninoff, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Monsaingeon, 290.

¹⁰¹ Monsaingeon, 290-291.

Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 4 in B minor: Allegro assai

Russian fairytales powerfully influenced creative works from Russia throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries. They inspired some of the greatest works by composers such as Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Modest Mussorgsky, and Igor Stravinsky. Sergei Rachmaninoff's B minor Etude calls to mind an antique fairytale atmosphere with a rugged, folk-like flavor. Structurally, this etude stands out from the group with its two repeated sections. The binary structure coupled with its stately rhythmic motion recalls the baroque dance suite. As the example shows, Rachmaninoff further enforces this Neo-Baroque quality with carefully planned and tastefully indicated articulation, one of the defining characteristics of Baroque keyboard music.



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Sviatoslav Richter recounted that “A batty old lady said [...] on hearing the B minor Study: ‘I can just see the French aristocracy leaving the country (in carriages, of course) before the *great* revolution. I can imagine their state of mind’.”¹⁰³ This ‘batty old lady’ provides a charmingly rich picture. The stately rhythmic accents certainly could suggest the trotting of horses through the countryside. Boris Pasternak’s poem *Fairy Tale*, also possess an equestrian

¹⁰² Rachmaninoff, 24.

¹⁰³ Monsaingeon, 291.

quality. His poem tells the tale of a brave horseman embarking on a perilous journey. Ivan Bilbin, the master of fairy tale illustration, also captures the uniquely Russian fairytale landscape with his painting entitled *Vassilisa and the White Horseman*.

Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 5 in Eb minor: Appassionata

Heinrich Neuhaus points out that “the hardest, purely pianistic, task is to play very long, very loud and very fast.”¹⁰⁴ The *Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 5 in Eb minor* qualifies for all of Neuhaus’ prerequisites. It demands that the performer create gargantuan orchestral sonorities on the piano at a fast pace for an extended period of time. While this should be enough of a challenge, Rachmaninoff asks the performer to accomplish an even bigger feat. He demands that a melody scored mostly in one voice and rarely doubled at the octave, lead the entire piece. This melody can easily be dwarfed and trampled by the massive chords on either side. The highpoint of this *Etude* perfectly demonstrates this challenge as can be observed below:



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¹⁰⁴ Neuhaus, 91.

¹⁰⁵ Rachmaninoff, 33. (with added fingerings)

Projecting the accented tenor line in such a texture is an extraordinarily difficult pianistic challenge. Few, if any recordings exist that achieve a perfect balance between melody and accompaniment. Those attempting to master this passage should consider the fingering provided in the example above. The fingering takes advantage of the natural weight of the thumb and gives the melody a fighting chance against its goliath partner.

The character of this *Etude* suggests an event of epic proportions and Ivan Aivazovsky's painting titled *Chaos: Creation of the World* measures up. As suggested by the title, Aivazovsky took his inspiration from Genesis 1:2 in the Bible. His painting emphasizes the tempestuous side of creation. The contrasting middle section of the *Etude* calls to mind the depiction in the painting and Bible verse of the parting of the clouds and 'spirit of God' hovering over the waters. After a brief period of calm, the storm returns leading to a massive climax. Finally, the work closes quietly suggesting the task of creation has been accomplished.

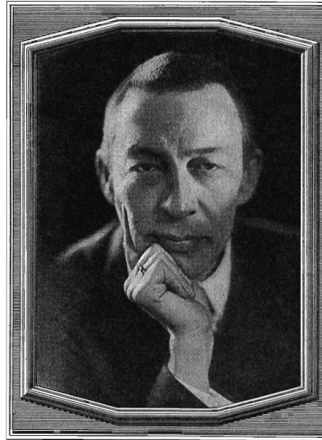
Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 6 in A minor: Allegro

In Rachmaninoff's letter to Respighi, he famously stated that "The second Etude in A minor [Op. 39, No. 6] was inspired by the tale of Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf."¹⁰⁶ Though this letter was written in 1930, an earlier account

¹⁰⁶ Bertensson and Leyda, 262.

of the tableau can be found below in the 1925 catalogue of the Ampico Corporation.

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(Pronounced *Rach-mah-e-noff*)

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60891H ETUDE TABLEAU, Op. 39,
No. 6 *Rachmaninoff* 2.00

While Rachmaninoff calls this recording a "Study Picture," he does not disclose what

he had in mind in composing it. It has been suggested that it depicts the meeting of Little Red Riding Hood with the wolf. The wolf's savage growl is heard in the opening phrase as he moves stealthily into the road seeing the approach of the scarlet clad little lady. She responds with frightened protest which alternates with the panting and growling of the wicked animal, who cannot wholly conceal his evil purpose, try as he will.

He walks by her side and converses with her as pleasantly as he can, but he is a wicked, dreadful wolf and would eat her up then and there if he dared.

[146]

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The 'savage growl' of the wolf described in the Ampico Catalogue can be seen below:

¹⁰⁷ *A Catalogue of Music for The Ampico* (New York: The Ampico Corporation, 1925) 146. <http://members.shaw.ca/paud122/Catalogs.htm> (accessed March 11, 2012).



Rachmaninoff utilizes a similar effect in the finale of his 4th Piano Concert, Op.

40:



After the ominous introduction, the chase proceeds as Little Red Riding Hood attempts to escape the snapping jaws of the bloodthirsty wolf. Rachmaninoff displays his masterful ability to generate intensity and excitement in his pianistic depiction of the primal chase:

¹⁰⁸ Rachmaninoff, 37.

¹⁰⁹ Sergei Rachmaninoff, *4th Concerto pour Piano et Orchestre Op. 40* (Paris: Grandes Editions Musicales, 1936), 72.



110

Interestingly, this passage bears a striking similarity to the technique used in the Finale of his 4th Piano Concerto:



111

This technique can also be found in the Finale to the 3rd Piano Concerto, Op. 30:



112

Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy's atmospheric poem, *Wolves* does not depict the chase but rather; slowly, and meticulously builds a frightening atmosphere. Wladislaw Wankie's painting *Alone in the Park*, (A whimsical play

110 Rachmaninoff, 37.

111 Rachmaninoff, *4th Concerto*, 74.

112 Sergei Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*.

<http://cosandscores.com> (PDF version of document downloaded April 15, 2012), 65.

on the expression *Alone in the Dark*), also emphasizes atmosphere over action. Both the painting and the poem set the stage for the action depicted in the *Etude*.

Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 7 in C minor: Lento lugubre

The *Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 7 in C minor* is the strangest and also the most fascinating of the group. Rachmaninoff took care to describe this *Etude* in great detail in his letter to Respighi.

The fifth Etude in C minor [Op. 39, No. 7] is a funeral march. Let me dwell on this a moment longer. I am sure you will not mock a composer's caprices. The initial theme is a march. The other theme represents the singing of a choir. Commencing with the movement in 16ths in C minor and a little further in E-flat minor a fine rain is suggested, incessant and hopeless. This movement develops, culminating in C minor chimes of a church. The Finale returns to the first theme, a march. That is all.¹¹³

Despite Rachmaninoff's specific description, he did not mention whose funeral he was referring to. Barrie Martyn suggests the funeral depicted was that of Alexander Scriabin "for not only did that event take place on a bleak and rainy

¹¹³ Bertensson and Leyda, 262-263.

day, but Rachmaninoff himself later recalled the great effect the funeral had on him.”¹¹⁴

I am still conscious of the deep and soul-stirring impression I received at Scriabin’s funeral. All the literary, musical, and artistic celebrities of Moscow were assembled there, and filled not only the little church situated opposite to Scriabin’s flat, but the whole vast square in front of it. The Archbishop of Moscow gave a beautiful address extolling the divine will to freedom, which attracted general notice. The Synodical Choir sang with an almost unearthly beauty, for Danilin was well aware of the public that would attend the funeral: the cream of the Moscow musical world was united there. As the church was not large enough to hold the whole choir, he had chosen only the most beautiful voices and the best singers. Apart from one or two modern works by Kastalsky and Tchesnokov, they sang the lords prayer from *Oktoechos*, which in reality consists only of the D major triad and its dominant chord, but the lovely sound of these nine- or ten-part harmonies in all grades of strength was so indescribably beautiful that it must

¹¹⁴ Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, (Brookfield, VT: Gower Publishing Company, 1990), 275.

have reduced the most obstinate heathen to tears and softened the heart of the most hardened sinner.¹¹⁵



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Rachmaninoff's recollections of the Synodical Choir at Scriabin's funeral may have inspired him to include a choral element in his *Etude*.



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¹¹⁵ Riesemann, 180-181.

¹¹⁶ (A photo of the funeral procession of Alexander Scriabin) Queens College, CUNY website, <http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/hhowe/music784/images/index.html> (accessed March 11, 2012).

¹¹⁷ Rachmaninoff, 45.

This choir seems to materialize out of nowhere and creates a strange, ghostly effect.

Though Rachmaninoff provides a complete description of this tableau, other interpretations are possible. Rachmaninoff admired the works of Arnold Böcklin and composed a symphonic poem based on his painting entitled *Isle of the Dead*. This *Etude* could portray Böcklin's famous painting, depicting a journey in Charon's boat across the River Styx. The initial theme could depict lost souls wandering on the banks of the river.



118

The poco meno mosso section could depict the beginning of a journey aboard Charon's boat,



119

and the tolling of bells could signify arrival at the Kingdom of the Dead.

118 Rachmaninoff, 44.

119 Rachmaninoff, 46.



120

Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius' chilling poem, *There*, powerfully describes such a journey.

Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 8 in D minor: Allegro moderato

Riesemann suggests that another Böcklin painting inspired the *Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 8 in D minor*:

Many of these take their origin from Böcklin's paintings: No. 8, Op. 39 (G minor), can be traced back to *Morning*.¹²¹

Unfortunately, Riesemann has, once again mixed up the *Etude* number with the key. Op. 39, No. 8 is in D minor, not G minor. There is a G minor *Etude* in Op. 33. It is unclear whether he is referring to Op. 39 in D minor or Op. 33 in G minor. Furthermore, he does not provide a context to support his claim.

This beautiful *Etude* possesses an improvisatory character with its many changing moods and atmospheres. Boris Pasternak's *Improvisation* supports the

¹²⁰ Rachmaninoff, 49.

¹²¹ Riesemann, 237.

imagery and Vrubel's *Pearl Oyster* captures the fluid, mysterious quality of the work.

Etude-Tableau, Op. 39, No. 9 in D Major: Tempo di marcia

Rachmaninoff called his *Etude-Tableaux, Op. 39, No. 9 in D Major* “an oriental march.”¹²² The opening passage suggests the pealing of Russian church bells.



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The golden sonority conveys a majestic, victorious atmosphere. It was the only *Etude* in the group written in a major key. When performed as part of a complete opus, the 9th *Etude* serves as a triumphant and satisfying finale.

[Barrie] Martyn wonders whether Hans [Christian] Andersen's Garden of Paradise was the inspiration for this etude.

Rachmaninoff was interested in a possible ballet on the subject in 1916 which Shaginyan suggested to him. (The East Wind visited

¹²² Bertensson and Leyda, 262-263.

¹²³ Rachmaninoff, 57.

China and danced around a porcelain tower so the bells began to ring,¹²⁴

The fact that Rachmaninoff labeled his work as an “oriental march” seems to support Martyn’s compelling connection.

Despite the intriguing suggestion, *Picturing Rachmaninoff* suggests a completely different parallel. The themes of Russian Nationalism and nostalgia are emphasized through the selection of Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva’s *Cupola’s are Burning* and Wassily Kandinsky’s *Moscow. I*. These works allude to the majestic character of the march in an ode to Rachmaninoff’s homeland.

Materializations of Picturing Rachmaninoff

Picturing Rachmaninoff took the form of live performances and a multimedia CD/book. The original stage-work was performed in Chicago at DePaul University, in Indiana at Notre Dame University, at Arizona State University, in Beverly Hills, Manhattan Beach, CA, and Tempe Center for the Arts. The work also took the form of a multimedia book with poetry and paintings combined with an audio recording of the *Etudes* and poetry readings. Work on the book led to a meaningful collaboration with Dr. Allyssa Gillespie, Notre Dame University Professor of Russian Literature who provided translations of Russian poems. Paul Harvey Jr. also further expanded the theatrical elements of the project into a one-man show entitled *Picture Rachmaninoff*, which I premiered

¹²⁴ Martyn, 275.

at Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts on September 19th, 2011. Harvey recognized two specific challenges present in the original *Picturing Rachmaninoff* production. First, the poetry recitations were difficult to fully absorb on first hearing at a live performance. As a result, he created paraphrases of the poems, which focused on directness and clarity. He made audio recordings of these translations and incorporated them into his script. Secondly, he wanted to develop a greater sense of unity between the 9 *Etudes*. As a solution, he created a theatrical storyline, which helped lead one *Etude* to the next. Harvey's script effectively merged the 'play' format with the 'recital' format. The resulting work represented a uniquely effective, hybrid concert.

PICTURING RAVEL: Gaspard de la Nuit

Aloysius Bertrand's masterpiece *Gaspard de la Nuit: Fantasies in the Manner of Rembrandt and Callot* contains 66 prose poems, which depict Gothic scenes of humor, fantasy, and the macabre. In the introduction to the book, Bertrand identifies *Gaspard de la Nuit* as the Devil and claims that he is the true author of the volume:

“Spare me, please, your malice, and show me where I may find Monsieur Gaspard de la Nuit.”

“He is in Hell, supposing that he is not someplace else.”

“Ah! At last I presume to understand! So! Gaspard de la Nuit would be?...”

“Oh, yes... The Devil!”

“Thank you my good man! If Gaspard de la Nuit is in Hell, may he burn there. I shall print his book,”¹²⁵

Though Bertrand took great pains to promote *Gaspard*, the collection was not published until 1842, over a year after his death.¹²⁶ The author would never

¹²⁵ Aloysius Bertrand, *Gaspard de la Nuit: Fantasies in the manner of Rembrandt and Callot*. Trans. Donald Sidney Fryer. (Encino: Black Coat Press, 2004), 85.

¹²⁶ Donald Sidney-Fryer, Introduction. *Gaspard de la Nuit: Fantasies in the manner of Rembrandt and Callot*. By Aloysius Bertrand, Trans. Donald Sidney Fryer. (Encino: Black Coat Press, 2004), 13.

know how influential his work was destined to become. It inspired a generation of French symbolist poets including Baudelaire and Mallarme. In addition, the book prompted Maurice Ravel to write one of his finest piano works, also entitled *Gaspard de la Nuit*.

Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* consists of three fantastical movements based on poetry selected by the composer from Bertrand's collection. The first, *Ondine*, depicts the splashing of waves and the dark seductive song of a water nymph. Olivier Messiaen provided an especially interesting analysis of the three movements of *Gaspard* in which he examines the structure, harmony, and poetic aspects of the work. Olivier Messiaen identifies the structure of *Ondine* as a "sonata form of slow tempo"¹²⁷ and lists the three general parts:

- 1) Exposition of the first and second themes (melodic and slow).
- 2) Central development including a third theme, melodic and slow, modulating.
- 3) Reprise of the first theme and Coda.¹²⁸

More specifically, he lists the structure as follows: exposition from bars 1-45, the development from 56-80, the reprise from 81-88, and the coda from 89-92.

¹²⁷ Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen. *Ravel: Analyses of the Piano Works of Maurice Ravel*. Trans. Paul Griffiths. (Paris: Éditions Durand, 2005), 27.

¹²⁸ Messiaen, 27.

He also relates Bertrand's poetry to structural sections of Ravel's work.

According to Messiaen:

The opening refers to the beginning of the poem: 'Listen! Listen!

This is me, this is Ondine, skimming we these water drops
resonant lozenges of your window, lit by the dull rays of the
moon...'¹²⁹

In the development section, he distinguishes five separate sections¹³⁰ of which, the third illustrates "in particular the second paragraph of the poem:

'Each wave is an ondine swimming in the current;
each current is a path snaking towards my palace; and
my palace is of fluid build, at the bottom of the lake, in
the triangle of fire, earth and air.'"¹³¹

¹²⁹ Messiaen, 27.

¹³⁰ Messiaen, 32.

¹³¹ Messiaen, 33.



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As demonstrated above, the arch-like shape of the melody creates the impression of swelling waves, which Bertrand depicts in the above second paragraph of his poem. These swelling waves gradually build to a massive climax and a “great descent on the second theme [including piano] writing covering all the registers.”¹³³ After a magical section recalling “Debussy’s *Prélude à ‘L’ Après midi d’un faune*”¹³⁴ the main theme returns. The recapitulation leads to a D minor chord, which Messiaen calls “strange because it stops the background (like a theatre curtain that rises on an agonizing silence).”¹³⁵ The D minor chord must be sustained with the pedal through the next “murmured dialogue”,¹³⁶ which recalls the passage:

¹³² Maurice Ravel, *Gaspard de la Nuit*. <http://cosandscores.com> (PDF version of document downloaded April 15, 2012), 7.

¹³³ Messiaen, 35.

¹³⁴ Messiaen, 37.

¹³⁵ Messiaen, 38.

¹³⁶ Messiaen, 39.

‘And when I replied that I loved a mortal, she, sulky and piqued,
let fall some tears,...’¹³⁷



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The eerie calm of the *très lent*, leads into the coda, which dramatically depicts the splashing of waves and follows the final lines of the poem. In reaction to the mortal's decision not to follow her, the ondine:

‘...burst out laughing and vanished in showers that streamed white
the length of my blue panes.’¹³⁹

The work closes as it began, in a quiet shimmer.

The second tableau, *Le Gibet (The Gallows)*, evokes the static and lugubrious atmosphere of Bertrand's poem with the *idée fixe* of a repeated Bb; a

¹³⁷ Messiaen, 39.

¹³⁸ Ravel, 11.

¹³⁹ Messiaen, 39.

single bell incessantly ringing and accompanied by astonishing harmonies. For Messiaen, this *idée fixe* represents:

‘the bell ringing against the walls of a town’, the unbearably repeated buzzing of the fly on the hunt sounding its horn to ears that cannot hear’ (i.e. those of the hanged man) and death going on inexorably about its work with the patience of the ‘spider embroidering’ its cloth.¹⁴⁰

In addition, Messiaen identifies three main motives of the work:

Motif 1 : ‘the setting sun’: night and death that fall on all things.

[sic]

Motif 2 : ‘the night’s north wind yelping’ and ‘the hanged man who pushes out a sigh on the sinister looking fork’: an expressive motif necessitating a feminine rhythm of anacrusis-accent-mute.

Motif 3 : bunch of chords in converging march: [sic] the spider’s cloth spread over the hanged man’s neck.¹⁴¹

Examples of the three motifs identified by Messiaen are listed below:

Motif 1:

¹⁴⁰ Messiaen, 41-42.

¹⁴¹ Messiaen, 42.

Musical score for Motif 1, measures 142-143. The score is written for piano in G major and 3/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The melody in the treble staff consists of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

Motif 2:

Musical score for Motif 2, measures 143-144. The score is written for piano in G major and 3/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The melody in the treble staff is marked *p* *expressif* and consists of quarter and eighth notes. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

Motif 3:

Musical score for Motif 3, measures 144-145. The score is written for piano in G major and 3/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The melody in the treble staff is marked *ppp* *très lié* and consists of quarter and eighth notes. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The instruction *un peu en dehors* is written above the treble staff.

142 Ravel, 13.

143 Ravel, 13.

144 Ravel, 14.

These three motifs occur in varied tonalities and registers until the texture thins again to the incessant Bb octaves, which close the work. The ringing of this bell “calms down, blurring the landscape in the gloom of night.

Silence, total engulfment.

The resonance has disappeared...”¹⁴⁵

In his final tour de force, *Scarbo*, Ravel portrays a nasty little goblin that haunts bedchambers at night. This work is one of the most difficult in the piano literature and extraordinarily effective in performance. Messiaen calls this work a “brilliant peak of the piano literature”¹⁴⁶ and reveals the work’s complex structure as consisting of 11 sections containing 4 themes.¹⁴⁷ He outlines the sections as follows:

Section 1 from mm. 1-31: Introduction

section 2 from 32-120: Introduction of themes A, B & C

section 3 from 121-214: Theme D

section 4 from 215-255: Development of theme B

section 5 from 256-313: Theme C and B combined, head of D

section 6 from 314-365: Theme A along with appearances of C

section 7 from 366-394: First climax and “shattering” of theme D and A

section 8 from 395-429: Introduction recapitulated with them A

¹⁴⁵ Messiaen, 50.

¹⁴⁶ Messiaen, 53.

¹⁴⁷ Messiaen, 53.

section 9 from 430-476: augmented theme B

section 10 from 477-579: Climax of the piece using theme D

section 11 from 580-627: recap and coda, themes A and B¹⁴⁸

Messiaen's analysis suggests that the three movements of Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* resemble a sonata. The first movement recalls the sonata-allegro form, the second provides the contrast of a slow movement and the third resembles a rondo structure.

In the preface to his *Gaspard de la nuit*, Bertrand describes art as resembling a two-sided medallion.

Art always has two antithetical faces, like a medal of which, for example, one side reveals the resemblance of Paul Rembrandt, and the reverse, that of Jacques Callot. Rembrandt is the white bearded philosopher who withdraws himself snailwise into his shell, who absorbs his thought with meditation and prayer, who closes his eyes in order to collect his thoughts, who holds converse with the phantoms of beauty, science, wisdom and love, and who wastes his strength in order to penetrate the enigmatic symbols of nature.

Callot, on the contrary, is the lancequenet swaggering and obscene

¹⁴⁸ Gérald Hugon. Introduction. *Piano Works II*. By Maurice Ravel. Trans. Jeremy Drake. (Paris: Editions Durand, 2005), XII.

who proudly struts around in the public square, who raises a commotion in the tavern, who caresses the daughters of gypsies, who swears only by his rapier and his blunderbuss, and who has no other concern except to wax his mustache. Accordingly, the author of this book has envisaged art under this double personification, but he has not been too strict about it, and therefore here are, beyond the fantasies in the manner of Rembrandt and Callot, studies from Van-Eyck, Lucas de Leyde, Albert Dürer, Peeter Neef, Breughel de Velours, Breughel d'Enfer, Van-Ostade, Gérard Dow, Salvator-Rosa, Murillo, Fusely and several other masters of different schools.¹⁴⁹

Picturing Ravel exploits Bertrand's two sided medallion theme by presenting two contrasting works. Ravel called his *Gaspard de la Nuit* a "caricature of Romanticism".¹⁵⁰ The three poems portrayed in *Gaspard de la Nuit* embrace the Romantic tradition and bear the likeness of *Callot*. Conversely, the three movements of the *Sonatine* recall the Classical tradition and represent the contrary face of the medallion resembling *Rembrandt*. While still fantastical in character, the *Sonatine* demonstrates clarity, balance, and a philosophical quality. The extremes of *Gaspard* contrast the clarity and subtlety in the Neo-Classical *Sonatine*.

¹⁴⁹ Bertrand, 87-88.

¹⁵⁰Hugon, XII.

Unlike *Gaspard de la Nuit*, Ravel did not reveal his poetic inspirations for the *Sonatine*. Therefore, *Picturing Ravel* presents poetry, selected from Bertrand's volume, which complements the musical expressions of the three *Sonatine* movements. The resulting stage work features two significant compositions by Maurice Ravel, bound together with poetry from Aloysius Bertrand's *Gaspard de la Nuit*.

Picturing Ravel follows the format developed for *Picturing Rachmaninoff*. It represents the second installment in the *Picturing Music* genre and contributes to the development of a larger body of *multimedia piano concerts*.

CONCLUSION

Pianists *recreate* when they perform the works of composers other than themselves. In that role, their specialty lies in the subtle art of interpretation. However, when pianists serve as ‘concert designers’, they *create*. ‘Concert designers’ build piano recitals using the stage as their canvas and the existing piano repertoire as their palette. With each new program, pianists *create* new musical experiences through varied combinations of works selected from this ‘palette’ consisting of repertoire ranging from the earliest examples of keyboard music to works of present day. Because of the massive range of the keyboard repertoire and endless combinatorial possibilities, the traditional recital will likely continue as the dominant piano performance format for generations to come.

Though most pianists have thoroughly explored varied recital-programming options, less have ventured away from the traditional recital mold. Pianists could take greater advantage of their role as ‘concert designers’ by creating new formats independent of the traditional ‘Liszt’ recital. One possible avenue for development could include the *Multimedia Piano Concert*.¹⁵¹ Based on

¹⁵¹ Some explorations of this format include: *Spectral Scriabin* of Eteri Andjaparidze, which combines the piano music of Alexander Scriabin with lighting designs by Jennifer Tipton. Anthony Tommasini of the New York Times recently hailed the performance.

Leif Ove Andsnes also recently developed *Pictures Reframed*, which presented Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* with the visual art of Robin

the concepts of musical *ekphrasis*, *program music*, and *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the *multimedia piano concert* develops meaningful cross-discipline connections between the arts. The multimedia concert designer's 'palette' not only includes piano repertoire but also literature and the visual arts. The multimedia concert designer achieves artistic synthesis through binding music, poetry, and painting together in a "stately minuet of art". While the *multimedia concert* includes full performances of varied piano repertoire, it also features projections of paintings and readings of poetry, which aesthetically relate to the music. This 'stately minuet', requires that the piano assume the position of leader so that the paintings and poetry can follow gracefully 'in-step'. The synthesis of varied artistic mediums highlights a unified aesthetic creating a new hybrid work based on connective bridges and shared inspirations. *Picturing Rachmaninoff* and *Picturing Ravel* represent two contributions to a larger body of work emphasizing artistic fusion.

Rhode. (Interestingly, Wassily Kandinsky also created visual a stage show/ballet based on *Pictures at an Exhibition*.)

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APPENDIX A

PICTURING RACHMANINOFF BOOK (SEE SUPPLEMENTAL AUDIO)

Picturing Rachmaninoff

music, poetry and painting in concert

featuring 9 Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39 of Sergei Rachmaninoff

compiled and performed by Stephen Cook
poetry translations by Alyssa Gillespie

This book was made possible through a scholarship from the Arizona Community Foundation
recording engineer: Charles Szczepanek - *Winding Road Studios*

Picturing Rachmaninoff
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ISBN (978-0-615-33841-5)

Printed in U.S.A.

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Dedications

To Robert Hamilton
for his selflessness and inspiration as a mentor and role model

To Eteri Andjaparidze
for her commitment to artistic integrity and excellence

To Dayton Fowler Grafman
for inspiring generations of Arizona musicians with his Virginia G. Piper concert series

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In loving memory of Eugene "Pop-Pop" Lewin
(January 22, 1922 - September 30, 2009)

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Foreword

As a preamble to these three-dimensional *tableaux* of Stephen Cook, I would like to congratulate the artist on the successful completion of his creative undertaking, and offer my brief introduction to the roots of this exciting endeavor that embraces music, art, and literature in concert.

Stemming from the legendary Heinrich Neuhaus piano lineage that perceives the art of piano performance as a poetic idiom, fascinating inspiration, and cultural component to express a broader spectrum of emotional, intellectual, and philosophical experience, I impart these principles in my teaching. It makes me proud to recognize that while carving out his professional profile as a member of my AmerKlavier Studio, Stephen Cook has followed some core values of the Neuhaus aesthetics. It has been very rewarding to observe Stephen searching for meaningful metaphors for his artistic impressions while shaping up this multifaceted project.

Stephen's natural flair and imagination along with his unlimited pianistic facility and artistic curiosity have found comprehensive realization in associating some true gems of painting and poetry with music of Sergei Rachmaninoff. Through scrupulous research, Stephen has exposed himself to inexhaustible spheres of the performing and visual arts as well as literature, and developed a fresh approach to exploring original ideas in connecting particular works of his choice as prompted by his own artistic intuition. With great enthusiasm, I endorse this insightful presentation most wholeheartedly.



Eteri Andjaparidze

Introduction

Conceived in 2003, *Picturing Rachmaninoff* is a multisensory experience combining the 9 Etudes-Tableaux Op. 39 of Sergei Rachmaninoff with masterpieces of painting and Russian Literature. This work presents the writings of Russian literary masters linked with paintings from which I have taken inspiration throughout my own artistic immersion in the piano music of Rachmaninoff.

Though he titled these pieces *Etudes-Tableaux*, Rachmaninoff did not publish specific descriptions of the images he meant to evoke in the music. However, in a letter to Ottorino Respighi, Rachmaninoff did offer some words to describe four of the etudes included in this performance. Here, he referred to his second etude as "The Sea and Seagulls" and his sixth as "Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf". His seventh etude, marked *Lento Lugubre*, was envisioned as a "funeral march" and the ninth depicted an "Oriental March". Despite these descriptions, they were not applied as titles because Rachmaninoff wanted listeners to "paint for themselves" what the tableaux suggested most.

I have taken the composer at his word and, though inspired by his own imagery, have "painted" the etudes for myself. I have collected paintings and poetry, which I feel as a listener and performer, seize a mood, image or pathos alive in the works. With my selections, I hope to inspire listeners to explore connections of their own as they discover the immeasurable potential of these great works of art.



Stephen Cook



“Of all the arts I love poetry the best after music.”

“I always have books of poetry around me. Poetry inspires music for there is so much music in poetry.”

“After music and poetry, I like painting the best.”

-Sergei Rachmaninoff

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Etude-Tableau No. 1



Mikhail Iurevich Lermontov

from "The Demon (An Eastern Tale)"

Part 1

III.

And heaven's outcast soared on past
The Caucasus' majestic heights:
Beneath him like a diamond facet
Gleamed Mount Kazbek's eternal ice.
And far below, a blackened furrow,
A fissure like a serpent's burrow,
The twisting Darial Gorge entwined
The depths, and River Terek, leaping,
Fierce, lioness-like, with tangled mane,
Roared loudly! Beasts and birds that steeply
Flew circles in the azure plain
All harkened to her watery vowels;
And lustrous golden clouds propelled
From southern lands, from distant realms
Accompanied her northbound travels;

And cliffs that thronged the river's banks,
Suffused with a mysterious drowse,
Inclined above her, foreheads bowed,
Kept watch upon her flashing waves;
And on the cliff tops castle turrets
Peered threateningly through the fog –
The vast Caucasian Gates are girded;
Those giants stand on sentry guard!
And wild and wondrous all around
Was God's world; but the angel proud
Surveyed with loathing God's creation
And on his blank and towering brow
No thought was written, no elation,
No mark of caring could be found.





Mikhail Vrubel. *The Demon Downcast*. 1902. Oil on canvas. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

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Etude-Tableau No. 2



Fedor Ivanovich Tyutchev

Just as the oceans compass all the earth,
So earthly life is compassed by illusions;
The night descends – and ocean's blue profusion
Flings resonant waves upon the shore.

That elemental voice: it nags, beseeches...
Already in the port the magic bark
Has roused; the tide flows in and soon will speed us
Into the measureless roiling dark.

The vault of heaven burns in starry glory;
It gazes out mysteriously from the depths –
And, steeped in the abyss's flaming fury
On every side, we journey forth.





Ivan Aivazovsky. *Night on the Black Sea*. 1879. Oil on canvas. Art Museum, Odessa.

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Etude-Tableau No. 3



Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin

The Snowslide

The breakers surging in the gloom
Pummel the cliff face, foam and boom,
As high above the eagles scream
 And pine trees swish,
And frigid mountain summits gleam
 Through drifting mist.

From thence a snowslide once broke free
And with a dreadful crash careened,
Cascaded, clogged the gorge between
 Two rock-faced walls,
And River Terek's mighty stream
 Leapt to a halt.

Abruptly chastened and demure,
O Terek, you choked off your roar,
But latter billows' stubborn ire
 Burst through the snows...
You rushed your banks in fierce despair
 And overflowed.

Long afterward, the snow lay deep,
Unmelting in a massive heap;
The Terek, frenzied, ran beneath,
 And made assault
With foam and spray upon the steep
 And icy vault.

Across it led an ample track:
Horses would canter, oxen lag,
Steppe merchants with their laden packs
 And camels wend
Where none but Aeolus now walks,
 Lord of the wind.





J.M.W. Turner. *The Fall of an Avalanche in the Grisons*, 1810. Oil on canvas. Tate Gallery, London.

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Etude-Tableau No. 4



Boris Leonidovich Pasternak

from A Fairytale

Once upon a legend,
In a land of yore,
Through the steppe and burdock
Came a mounted horse.

Hasting into battle,
Brave the horseman rode
But the dusty distance
Raised a darkling wood.

Something keen was nagging,
Scraping at his heart:
Fear the water hollow,
Gird the saddle taut.

No heed paid the horseman,
And with gallant gall
Down he galloped brashly
To a forest knoll.

Turning from the hummock,
Next he toured a dell,
Passed around a meadow,
Crossed over a hill.

Then he found a gully,
And a forest path
Showed him to the woodland
Water hole at last.

Deaf to any warning,
Blind to danger's brink,
Down the crag he led his
Stallion to drink.

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Ivan Bilbin. *Yasilissa and the White Horseman*. 1900. Water-colors, Indian ink. Goznak Museum, Moscow.

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Etude-Tableau No. 5

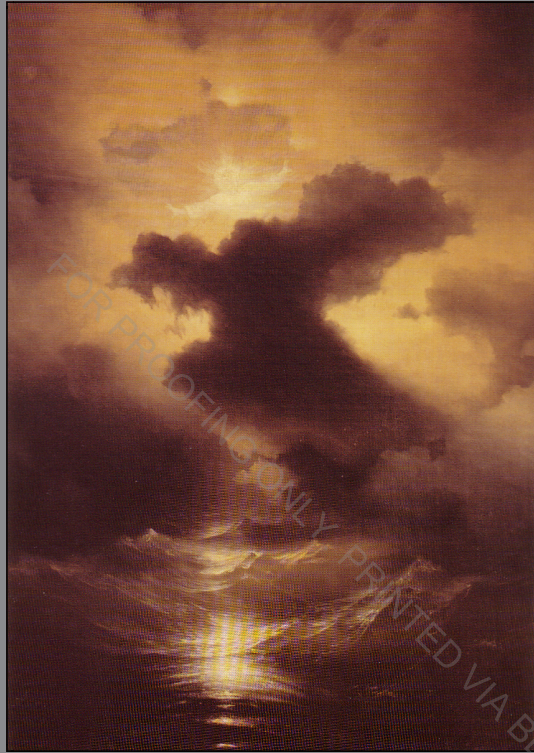


And the earth was without form, and void;
and darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:2



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Ivan Aivazovsky, *Chaos: Creation of the World*, 1841. Oil on canvas. Monastery of Saint Lazarus, Venice.

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Etude-Tableau No. 6



Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy

from *Wolves*

When the village streets grow vacant,
And the villagers' songs hush tight,
And a grayish fog of vapor
Above the swamp burns white,
Then stealing out from the forest
Wolf after wolf comes to forage
The sleeping fields on a mission for spoils...





Władysław Wankie. *A Lonely Woman in the Park*. 1900. Oil on canvas. Mazovian Museum, Plock.

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Etude-Tableau No. 7



Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius

There

I'm in Charon's boat with an uncaring oarsman.
The onerous water is viscous as tin.
Above voiceless Styx is a nebulous dankness.
The vault of the heavens is made of dark stone.
Here's Lethe. I don't hear the babble of Lethe.
The strokes of the spreading oars noiselessly dip.
Our lackluster, flickering lantern illumines
The heavenly stone with a deep, purple glint.
The water is murky, by languor constrained...
Aroused by our light, and alarmed by our shades,
A slow-witted owl, two bats, and a vampire
Who's legless and grizzled, of delicate wing
All follow our vessel in soundless foreboding...

Nor faster nor softer, our boat glides along.
The vampire caressed me with vaporous wingtips...
I mindlessly watch the obedient flock,
And everything here seems so queerly unmeaning:
My heart, here as there, back on earth, is a blank.
Remember how sometimes we longed for the finish,
And waited, had faith in the promise of endings...
But death, it turns out, is the same empty chore,
I'm equally bored now as I was before.
No pain, and no peace, and no fear, and no gladness,
Nor even oblivion Lethe bestows...
Above voiceless Styx is a nebulous dankness,
And scarlet reflections roam over the stones.





Arnold Böcklin. *Isle of the Dead*. 1880. Oil on canvas. Kunstmuseum Basel.

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Etude-Tableau No. 8



Boris Leonidovich Pasternak

Improvisation

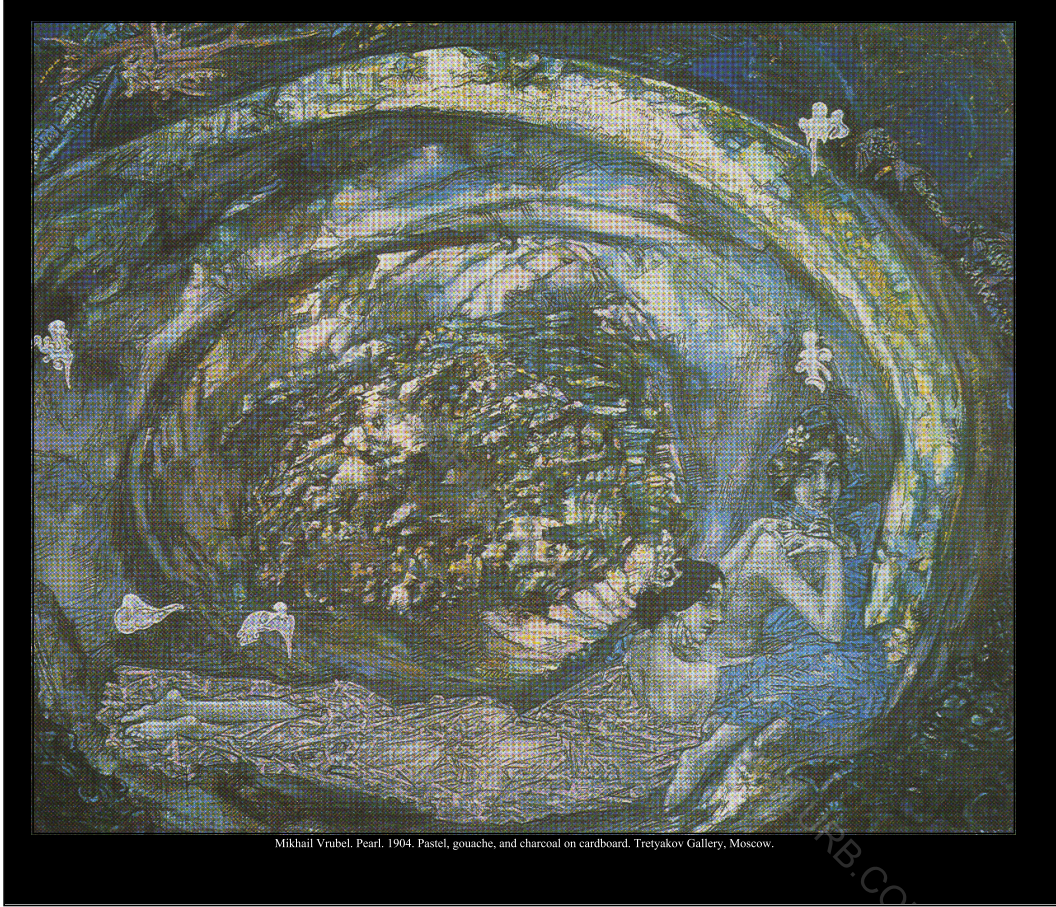
I fed a flock of piano keys
To the tune of wings flapping, screeching, and bubbles,
I stretched out my arms, stood on tiptoe, my sleeves
Rolled up, as night harassed my elbows.

And it was dark. And this was a pond
With waves. – And birds of the breed that's called love-you
Would rather kill than be killed, by the sound
Of their screaming, black, sharp beaks above you.

And this was a pond. And it was dark.
The hull of my lurching boat was gobbled
By waves. And boxes of midnight tar
Grew flames. At my elbow birds were squabbling.

In the gullets of dams there gurgled night.
By the sound of the fledgling it still was famished,
And mother birds sooner would kill than let die
The roulades in a throat that was screaming and damaged.





Mikhail Vrubel. Pearl. 1904. Pastel, gouache, and charcoal on cardboard. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

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Etude-Tableau No. 9



Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva

from Poems to Blok

5

In my Moscow, cupolas burn so bright,
In my Moscow, bell towers ring at night,
And my tombs stand stolidly side by side –
Sleeping kings and queens who have gone.

And you don't know how in the Kremlin dusk
Breath comes mellower than in all earth's musk,
And you don't know that in the Kremlin dusk
I will pray to you until dawn.

But you roam along your Neva's steep banks
At that time when I bend my head in thanks
As I stand above my Moskva on planks
And the streetlamps smolder beyond.

With my sleeplessness I do love you true,
With my sleeplessness I reach out to you
At that time when all through the Kremlin blue
The bell ringers start to yawn.

But my hand in yours will not rest, alas,
But my river never through yours will pass,
We won't join together, until, at last
The dusk overtakes the dawn.





Vasily Kandinsky. Moscow I. 1916. Oil on canvas. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

CD TRACK LIST

Stephen Cook, piano and poetry recitations

1. Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov, *The Demon*
2. Etude-Tableau No. 1 in c minor: Allegro agitato
3. Fyodor Ivanovich Tyutchev, *Just as Oceans Compass all the Earth*
4. Etude-Tableau No.2 in a minor: Lento assai
5. Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin, *The Snowslide*
6. Etude-Tableau No. 3 in ff minor: Allegro Molto
7. Boris Leonidovich Pasternak, *Fairy Tale*
8. Etude-Tableau No. 4 in b minor: Allegro assai
9. Book of Genesis 1:2
10. Etude-Tableau No. 5 in eb minor: Appassionato
11. Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy, *Wolves*
12. Etude-Tableau No. 6 in a minor: Allegro
13. Zinaida Nikolaevna Gippius, *There*
14. Etude-Tableau No. 7 in c minor: Lento. *Lugubre*
15. Boris Leonidovich Pasternak, *Improvisation*
16. Etude-Tableau No. 8 in d minor: Allegro moderato
17. Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva, *In my Moscow Cupolas Burn*
18. Etude-Tableau No. 9 in D Major: Allegro moderato; Tempo di Marcia



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APPENDIX B

PICTURING RAVEL PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

PICTURING RAVEL: GASPARD DE LA NUIT

[Introduction for live presentation]

[preface from *Gaspard de la Nuit*]

Art always has two contrary faces, like a medallion, for example, whose one side bears the likeness of the painter Rembrandt and the other that of the illustrator Jacques Callot.

Rembrandt is the white-bearded philosopher who retreats snail-like into his hovel, who devotes his thought to meditation and prayer, who closes his eyes in order to commune with himself, who consorts with the spirits of beauty, science, wisdom and love, and who preoccupies himself with penetrating nature's mysterious symbols.

Callot, by contrast, is a transparent and boastful foot soldier who goes posturing in public, who causes commotion in the taverns, who caresses the daughters of bohemians, who swears only by his sword and his musket, and who worries about nothing but waxing his moustache.

[end of preface]

Aloysius Bertrand's Gothic masterpiece entitled *Gaspard de la Nuit*, contains some 66 poems; vignettes', which present art through this double personification.

I have selected two works by the French composer Maurice Ravel, which I believe represent the two contrary faces of Bertrand's artistic "medallion".

Ravel's Sonatine, bears the likeness of Rembrandt. In contrast, the second work, Gaspard de la Nuit, bears the likeness of Callot.

I call this collection of poetry and music:

Picturing Ravel: Gaspard de la Nuit (Enchanter of the Night)

I.

Here begins the first triptych of
the Fantasies of Gaspard de la Nuit.

Fantasies in the manner of Rembrandt, the white bearded philosopher.

Sonatine for Piano by Maurice Ravel accompanied by *my* selections from the
poetry of Bertrand.

Sonatine

I. Modéré- *The Angel and the Fairy* [book 7-II from *Gaspard de la Nuit*]

A fairy perfumes my fanciful sleep by night with the freshest, mellowest breaths
of July—the same good fairy who guides the cane of the lost blind traveler back
to its path, and who wipes away the tears and cures the suffering of the little crop
picker whose bare foot has been wounded by a thorn.

Here she is, rocking me like the heir of some valiant sword or of some magical harp, and removing from my bed, with a peacock feather, the spirits who haunted my soul to drown them in a ray of moonlight or in a dewdrop.

Here she is, telling me one of her stories of valleys and mountains, whether of the melancholic loves of funeral flowers, or of the joyous pilgrimages of birds of Notre-Dame.

* * * * *

But while she watched over me asleep, an angel, who descended with trembling wings from an epoch brilliant with stars, placed a foot upon the banister of the gothic balcony and pounded with its silver palm against the stained glass of the high window.

A seraphim and a fairy who once both fell in love at the bedside of a dying maiden, she who had blessed the girl at birth with all the graces of virgins, and he who carried her once expired into the delights of paradise!

The hand that lulled my dreams retreated with them. I opened my eyes. My room, as deep as it was deserted, silently brightened in the haze of the moon; and upon

morning, there remained with me nothing more of the affections of this good fairy but this silver spindle; still, I am not sure whether it might not be from some relative of mine.

II. Mouvement de menuet- *My Thatched Cottage* [book 6-I from *Gaspard de la Nuit*]

My thatched cottage in summer will have the foliage of the wood as its canopy, and in Autumn, as its garden, some moss at the windowsill, inlaid with pearls of rain, and some wallflowers exuding the scent of almonds.

But in winter, what pleasure, when the morning will have shaken its bouquets of frost at my frozen windows, to behold in the distance, at the edge of the forest, a traveler and his horse who move ever more wearily away into the snow and the fog!

What pleasure, in the evening, to leaf through chronicles of knights and monks so marvelously portrayed that they seem still to joust and to pray under the mantle of my glowing fireplace and in the juniper laden perfume of a glass of gin!

And what pleasure, at night, during the pallid and misty hour that precedes daybreak, to hear my rooster crow in the henhouse and the faint reply of a rooster from a farm, a sentinel perched at the edge of the sleeping village.

Oh, if only the King were reading, ensconced in his palace- O my muse, unsheltered against the storms of life! —-then surely that lord of so many fiefs that he forgets the number of his castles would not begrudge me a thatched cottage!

III. Animé- *Jean des Tilles* [book 6-II from *Gaspard de la Nuit*]

“My ring, my ring,” and the cries of the washerwoman frightened a rat who was threading his spindle in the stump of an old willow tree.

Jean des Tilles is at it again, the impish and malicious water sprite who lives and swims in the Tille River, who complains and who laughs beneath the repeated blows of the laundress’ plunger.

As if it were not enough for him to pluck from the dense clumps of trees along the river bank, the ripe medlar apples that he wastefully flings into the current.

“Jean the thief! Jean who fishes, and who will be fished himself! Little fritter
Jean, whom I shall smother in a white shroud of flour, and hurl into the blazing oil
of my skillet!”

But just then, the crows balancing on the green arrowheads of the poplars cawed
at the moist and rainy sky.

And the washerwomen, fleeing the downpour, hurried across the stream strewn
with pebbles, with foam, with herbs and with gladiolas.

II.

Here begins the second triptych of the *Fantasies of Gaspard de la Nuit*.

Fantasies in the manner of Callot, the marauder.

Gaspard de la Nuit for Piano by Maurice Ravel

accompanied by poetry of Bertrand

selected by Ravel *himself*.

Gaspard de la Nuit

I. Ondine [book 3-IX from *Gaspard de la Nuit*]

“Listen! Listen! It is I, Ondine

Who caresses your window with drops of water...

resonating lozenges illuminated by gloomy rays of moonlight;
and here,
in a rippled dress,
the lady of the manor stands at her balcony contemplating the beautiful starry
night and the lovely sleeping lake.”

“Each wave is an Ondine swimming in the current,
each current is a path that snakes toward my palace,
and my palace is a liquid structure, at the bottom of the lake, in the triangle of fire,
of earth and of air.”

“Listen! Listen!
My father beats the croaking water with a green alder branch,
and my sisters caress with their arms of foam the cool islands of grass, of water
lilies and gladiolas, or taunt the willow, decrepit and bearded, who dangles his
fishing line.”

Having murmured her song, she begged me to take her ring on my finger,
to be wed to an Ondine, and to accompany her to her palace to be the king of the
lakes.

And as I responded that I loved a mortal, she appeared sullen and vexed,
she shed a few tears,

burst into laughter,
and disappeared in a fine shower that streamed white down my blue window
panes.

II. Le Gibet [book 7-XI from *Gaspard de la Nuit*]

Oh! What is that I hear? Could it be the nocturnal wind screeching, or the hanged
man who heaves a heavy sigh on the sinister pitchfork?

Could it be some cricket singing hidden in the moss and sterile ivy; greenery with
which, out of pity, the forest lines the soles of its shoes?

Could it be some fly on the hunt, sounding its trumpet around ears now deaf to
the fanfare of hunting horns?

Could it be some scarab beetle which, in its uneven flight, picks a bloody hair
from his rotting skull?

Or could it be some spider lacing a half-length of muslin for a necktie around this
strangled throat?

It is the bell that tolls against the walls of a city below the horizon, and the corpse
of a hanged man reddened by the setting sun.

III. Scarbo [book 7-XII from *Gaspard de la Nuit*]

Oh! How many times I have heard and seen him, Scarbo,
when the moon shines in the midnight sky like a silver shield
on a banner of blue strewn with golden bees!

How many times I have heard the buzzing of his laugh
in the shadow of my alcove, and the scrape of his nails
on the silk of my bed curtains!

How many times I have seen him set down on the floor,
pirouette on one foot and roll around the room like
a spindle fallen from a witch's distaff!

and just then, as I thought he had vanished, the dwarf
expanded from me to the moon like the bell tower of a
gothic cathedral, a little golden bell swaying in his pointed hat!

But soon his body turned blue, diaphanous like
candle wax, his face turned pale like the wax at the candle's end,
and suddenly he was extinguished.

APPENDIX C

PICTURE RACHMANINOFF SCRIPT (SEE SUPPLEMENTAL VIDEO)

PICTURE RACHMANINOFF

by Paul Harvey Jr.

The Play
Copyright 2011 by Paul Harvey Jr.

The Poetic Paraphrases
Copyright 2010 by Paul Harvey Jr.

PICTURE RACHMANINOFF

- IN ONE ACT -

(A CONCERT GRAND PIANO STAGE RIGHT; A SIMPLE, BLACK, WOODEN CHAIR DOWNSTAGE CENTER, FACING AWAY FROM THE AUDIENCE; A SMALL, SHORT, WOODEN TABLE STAGE LEFT OF THE CHAIR WITH A BUD VASE ON IT IN WHICH THERE IS A SINGLE, LONGSTEM RED ROSE; A LARGER TABLE UPSTAGE LEFT ON WHICH THERE IS A 1930S STYLE BLACK TELEPHONE; AN EASEL WITH AN ELABORATELY FRAMED PAINTING ON IT UPSTAGE OF THE CHAIR; A STACK OF FRAMED PAINTINGS STAGE RIGHT OF THE EASEL.)

(THE PLAY OPENS WITH THE ART COLLECTOR, ELEGANTLY AND FORMALLY DRESSED, SITTING IN THE CENTER STAGE CHAIR, LEANING BACK SLIGHTLY WITH ARMS FOLDED, ENTHUSIASTICALLY ADMIRING THE PAINTING IN FRONT OF HIM.)

(PROUDLY) My latest acquisition! What do you think! (PAUSE) Be honest, now, don't spare my feelings. (LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER, RIGHT PROFILE TOWARD THE AUDIENCE, ALMOST REVERENTLY) Magnificent, isn't it. (TURNING BACK TO THE PAINTING) It's Mikhail Vrubel. Russian artist. Cost a fortune. He mixed bronze powder with his oil paints to make his paintings—*glisten*. (WITH GREAT ADMIRATION) Just—*look* at it! The energy! The chaos! And here...

(HE STANDS ABRUPTLY AND TURNS, POINTING TO THE CENTER OF THE PAINTING.)

The *face*—of the demon. The demon cast down from Heaven, as the title suggests. The face is rather hidden but then suddenly you see it, right there. (TURNING TO THE AUDIENCE, THOUGHTFULLY) Like, perhaps, the solution to a mystery? (PAUSE) The artist was quite mad, you see. And he painted *this* canvas (GLANCING BACK AT THE PAINTING) the very *year* he began losing his mind. Kept painting the demon's face over and over, each version on top of the last one. This *final* face was done (TURNING TO THE AUDIENCE AGAIN) when the painting was finished and on exhibition! And you know what?...

(HE WALKS SLOWLY DOWNSTAGE.)

The painting's even *more significant* than all that. You see, I have it on good authority that *this* was this very artwork that inspired the great Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff when he wrote his wonderful Etude Tableau in C Minor. (SMILING) I have your attention now, don't I. (PAUSE) Yes, it was that painting, right there, that very one, on which the composer gazed as those incredible strains first raged through that incredible brain. (JOYOUSLY, ALMOST SHOUTING) Such an occasion calls for a Russian poem, don't you think? (LOOKING UPWARD, TO HIS RIGHT) Mr. Lermontov?... (WITH A FLOURISH OF HIS HAND) Something appropriate!

(THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE ART COLLECTOR DIMS AND HE FREEZES IN PLACE.)

(AUDIO CUE: "THE DEMON")

*Once, on a day not unlike this, an angel fell from heaven.
And having fallen, said he, "I'll survey my new domain..."
So he soared over the lofty Caucasus with its icy, diamond summits,
Then swooped down into Darial Gorge where the sun shines through the
rain.*

*He listened as the rapids rushed and skyborne eagles cried...
He whiffed the fragrance of the wildflowers on the evening breeze...
He watched the grazing cattle near the windswept mountainside...
He touched the dewy leaves at dawn as they fluttered in the trees...*

*For wild and wondrous all around did God's creations shine!
But the angel's face—reflected not the slightest admiration...
In fact, it was with loathing that he viewed this world divine.
Because for some the earth is Eden. But for others—it's damnation!*

(THE ART COLLECTOR'S SPOTLIGHT RETURNS AND FOLLOWS HIM AS HE HURRIES ENTHUSIASTICALLY TO THE PIANO. HE STANDS IN FRONT OF THE KEYBOARD, FACING THE AUDIENCE.)

(WITH A GRAND GESTURE TOWARD THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL) Behold! The demon!

(HE SITS DOWN AND PLAYS OPUS 39, NO. 1 AS THE STAGE LIGHTS GRADUALLY DIMINISH AND A GRAND-SCALE PROJECTION OF THE ELONGATED PAINTING SLOWLY APPEARS HIGH ON THE BACK WALL CENTER STAGE. THE PAINTING SLOWLY SCROLLS

FROM RIGHT TO LEFT. AS THE ETUDE CONCLUDES, THE PROJECTION DISSOLVES TO A CLOSE-UP OF THE FACE IN THE CENTER OF THE PAINTING AND THEN THE FACE ITSELF SLOWLY FADES. THE ART COLLECTOR QUARTER-TURNS ON THE PIANO BENCH TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUDIENCE, SMILING, BUT PRESSES ONWARD.)

Now—I know what you’re thinking. You’ve heard that the *visions behind* Rachmaninoff’s mysterious Etudes Tableaux were never revealed! There *was* a letter in which he tantalized *another* composer with an image or two, but—not *much* more—in other words, no *details*, so (A SUSPENSEFUL PAUSE) how do *I* know that that painting over there is the *soul* of the C Minor Etude. Well, let’s just say—I *know*. And I know something else...

(HE RISES AND MOVES QUICKLY TO THE STACK OF PAINTINGS BESIDE THE EASEL.)

I know that *this* painting right *here* (REPLACING THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL WITH THE PAINTING ON TOP OF THE STACK) “Ship in Moonlit Waters”—inspired the *second* etude in the group. (TO THE AUDIENCE, QUIETLY, DELIBERATELY) And no, it’s *not* a print. Like the other—it’s the original. The *particular* canvas which filled the composer with the eerie calm which spills over into Opus 39, No. 2.

(HE SLOWLY MEANDERS BACK TO THE KEYBOARD.)

(PENSIVELY) And when I merely *think* of this masterwork by Russian painter Ivan (*ee-VAHN*) Aivazovsky...

(HE STOPS AND, WITH ONE ARM WRAPPED AT HIS WAIST AND THE OTHER ELBOW AT HIS WRIST, PLACES HIS HAND AT HIS CHIN.)

I hear the words of the Russian poet Tyutchev. He wrote...

(AUDIO CUE: TYUTCHEV, TRACK #1)

As the oceans encompass the earth...
So is life encompassed by illusions.

(QUITE SERIOUSLY AND SINCERELY) It’s so true!

(THE SPOTLIGHT ON HIM STAYS UP BUT OTHER STAGE LIGHTS GRADUALLY DIM. THE ART COLLECTOR FREEZES.)

(AUDIO CUE: TYUTCHEV, TRACK #2)

For though night falls all around us...
And the vastness beyond us cannot be seen...
We still hear the *waves* as they crash on the shore...
In fact...

Our *journey* through life is like that of a tiny *boat* on the ocean...
Something *calls* to it from beyond the horizon as it rests by its
dock...
And soon the ebb tide urges it out into the boundless swirling dark.

So here we are...
Staring up at the vault of *heaven* as it burns in starry glory...
Yet despite its foreboding...
Though surrounded by the flaming *fury* of the abyss...
We, nonetheless, journey on...

(BECOMING ACTIVE AGAIN, THE ART COLLECTOR SITS AT THE
KEYBOARD.)

(TO THE AUDIENCE, QUIETLY) And *this*—is how Rachmaninoff heard
it.

(HE BEGINS PLAYING OPUS 39, NO. 2. A PINLIGHT STAYS FOCUSED
ON THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL AS A MUCH-ENLARGED
PROJECTION OF IT SLOWLY MATERIALIZES ON THE BACK WALL.
THROUGHOUT THE PLAY, EACH LARGE PROJECTION SHOULD
APPEAR IN A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT LOCATION. AS THE ETUDE
CONCLUDES, THE PROJECTION DISSOLVES TO A CLOSE-UP OF THE
MOON ALONE, WHICH ITSELF THEN FADES AWAY. THE ART
COLLECTOR QUARTER-TURNS TO THE AUDIENCE ON THE PIANO
BENCH.)

(SMILING A LITTLE BUT STILL QUITE SERIOUS) By now you've
guessed, haven't you. And you are right. I have *discovered* the long-lost
secret *diary* in which composer Sergei Rachmaninoff *unveils* the details—
the specific inspirations for his Opus 39 etudes. And they are *all paintings*.
(PAUSE) And I have bought for my collection yet *another*. (SMILING A
LITTLE MORE) Want to see it?

(HE GETS UP AND STROLLS TO THE EASEL.)

It's title is "The Fall of an Avalanche in the Grissons." *Wonderful* piece by
Turner. Rachmaninoff saw it in a *London* exhibition of great English artists.
(REPLACING THE AIVASOVSKY PAINTING WITH THE TURNER ON
THE EASEL) It reminded him of a Russian poem called "The Snowslide."
He loved poetry, you know. (FOLDING HIS ARMS) So perhaps—he was

thinking of both?—the painting *and* the poem?—when he composed his third etude in Opus 39?

(THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE ART COLLECTOR DIMS. HE FREEZES.)

(AUDIO CUE: “THE SNOWSLIDE”)

Once upon a time, high above the mighty Terek River,
Towered a mountain covered with snow.

The mountain sat there *peacefully* as the river raged below,
But one night, as the moon rose,
The sound of a terrible *storm* swelled in the distance...
But it was not wind...
It was an avalanche!
Imagine!
The entire mountain slope, gleaming white in the moonlight,
Rushing down into the gorge,
Into the river!

The snow piled *high* between the cliffs on either side...
And the waters downstream grew still...
But the river *upstream* swirled and rumbled
And churned, determined to break free.

No way to *surmount* the new mountain of snow in its path...
But beneath?—the smallest stream had survived!
And the stream became wider...
And wider again...
Until the roaring Terek *itself* had tunneled through.

It was a long time *ago*, that of which I’m telling you...
The snow is long melted...
But it’s nonetheless *true*...
That, for a wonder winter, a great, wide, icy *bridge* lay there!
Though where *journeys* were made is now nothing but air.

Where merchants and ox carts once crossed?...
And *camels* once trod, bearing incense and damask and sweet
tamarind?...
Only *Aeolus* now walks...
And *he’s* Lord of the Wind!

(THE ART COLLECTOR’S SPOTLIGHT RETURNS AND HE REANIMATES.)

Quite a story, isn’t it?

(HE STRIDES TO THE PIANO.)

Now! Let's see how Rachmaninoff tells it!

(HE PROMPTLY BEGINS PLAYING OPUS 39, NO. 3 AS THE PROJECTED VERSION OF TURNER'S PAINTING APPEARS ON THE BACK WALL, FIRST IN SUCCESSIVE SMALLER PORTIONS AND AT LAST IN ITS ENTIRETY. THE PROJECTION FADES AND THE ETUDE CONCLUDES, AT WHICH POINT THE ART COLLECTOR LEAPS UP, ACKNOWLEDGES THE AUDIENCE, AND MOVES QUICKLY DOWNSTAGE CENTER WHERE HE STANDS POISED WITH ONE HAND RESTING ON THE BACK OF THE CHAIR.)

(RATHER PROUDLY) I can tell by that look in your eyes... (NODDING TOWARD A NEARBY INDIVIDUAL IN THE AUDIENCE, SMILING A LITTLE) yours, over there, in particular... (TO THE AUDIENCE IN GENERAL) I can tell that you know, now, what's going on. The great Rachmaninoff has *his* secrets, as now we realize—but—I have mine as well. And I'm going to let you *in* on it because (GRINNING SLYLY) I *like* you and—after all, I can *trust* you, can't I? Anyway you're *on* to me, so—I confess.

(HE SLOWLY MAKES HIS WAY BACK TO THE EASEL.)

I have purchased—all of the inspirational paintings—the ones which *moved* Sergei Rachmaninoff in that dark, quiet place where music is born (TURNING TO THE AUDIENCE) and bestowed upon the world the immortal Opus 39. (SELF-SATISFIED) Of course, the *sellers* were quite oblivious, I am sure, which made the—"pickings easier," as it were. In any case—now *I* have them. *All* of them. And *you*—are the first to know! (HEARTILY, HUMOROUSLY) Congratulations! And the profit motive aside, what I have found *most* endearing in this surreptitious process are the *stories* the paintings and the music tell. As in this *next* now-evident synergy between *this* painting, by Ivan Bilibin... (EXCHANGING THE FRAMED PAINTING ON THE EASEL WITH A SLENDER OPEN BOOK, ONE PAGE OF WHICH DISPLAYS AN ILLUSTRATION) and the once-cryptic Etude Tableau in B Minor. The composer first *saw* the painting as a *print* in book of Russian fairytales! (POINTING TO IT) This *particular* book, I should say. Remember? I'm not especially interested in originals—only in *the* individual artworks, in whatever form they appeared, on which Rachmaninoff laid his eyes as his first step on the way to opening *ours*. So—*this* is the book itself—which the composer read to his firstborn child one winter's night...

(HE STROLLS BACK TO THE KEYBOARD.)

...and in which he encountered *this* most whimsical, *wonderful*—story.

(HE SITS DOWN.)

(WITH A SMILE) It begins like this.

(WITH A PINLIGHT BLOOMING ON THE OPEN BOOK ON THE EASEL, THE ART COLLECTOR BEGINS PLAYING OPUS 39, NO. 4, QUIETLY AT FIRST. SHORTLY AFTER HE BEGINS, THE FIRST STANZA OF “THE FAIRYTALE” IS HEARD OVER THE MUSIC.)

(AUDIO CUE: “A FAIRYTALE” TRACK #1)

Over the grassy plain a *horseman* galloped, reckless, headlong,
Dust and burrs a’flying from the heels of his hearty steed...
But *neither* saw, it seemed, the *forest* looming in the distance,
Nor did the horseman his odd feeling of *foreboding* heed.

(AS THE ART COLLECTOR BEGINS THE REPEAT OF THE FIRST SECTION OF THE ETUDE, BY WHICH POINT TRACK #1 WILL HAVE ENDED AND THE PIECE MAY BE PLAYED MORE LOUDLY, THE LARGE PROJECTED VERSION OF THE ILLUSTRATION IN THE BOOK GRADUALLY COMES TO LIFE ON THE BACK WALL. AS THE ART COLLECTOR BEGINS THE SECOND SECTION OF THE ETUDE, AT BAR 16, THE PIECE IS PLAYED QUIETLY AGAIN AND THE POEM RESUMES.)

(AUDIO CUE: “A FAIRYTALE” TRACK #2)

Still...
Deep inside a *voice* was warning...
Go not farther! Turn! Depart!
In the wood your foe is lurking!
Hear the wisdom of your heart!

But the horseman thundered onward,
‘Cross a meadow, down a dell,
Ever closer to the forest,
Out of heaven—into hell.

And soon the towering leaves and branches blotted out the sky,
And darkness gathered ‘round them, but still the steed did fly...
Through a gulley, over brier, over fallen limbs awry...
And why?

Not for valor...
Nor for honor...

Nor for battle to be first...
But the horseman risked his *own* life.
Grabbed the reins and risked his *own* life.
Heading for the woodland *stream* wherein
His *horse* might quench his thirst!

(THE POEM CONCLUDES AS THE SECOND SECTION OF THE ETUDE CONCLUDES, SO THAT THE SECOND REPEAT OF THE SECOND SECTION MAY BE PLAYED LOUDER AGAIN. AS THE THIRD AND FINAL SECTION OF THE ETUDE BEGINS, ALL OF THE STAGE LIGHTS GRADUALLY GROW DIM, BUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE ART COLLECTOR AND THE PINLIGHT ON THE BOOK ON THE EASEL GROW SLIGHTLY BRIGHTER. AS THE ETUDE CONCLUDES, THE PROJECTED ILLUSTRATION FADES AWAY. THE ART COLLECTOR QUARTER-TURNS, ACKNOWLEDGING THE AUDIENCE.)

(SMILING AND FORCEFUL) I distinctly heard somebody say—"Secret diary, eh? Now where on God's green earth might our old friend the art collector have discovered *that*." Well, it so happens that I did *not* find it on God's green earth. (PAUSE) I found it in Chicago! Room 914 of the Auditorium Theatre Hotel on Michigan Avenue.

(HE RISES AND STROLLS DOWNSTAGE LEFT.)

I was in town on *art* business, not far down the street from the Art Institute, no less. At any rate, a *cufflink* had rolled behind the *radiator* in the hotel room. But as I struggled to retrieve it (DEMONSTRATING WITH AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM) reaching deeply into those recesses—my fingers grazed the spine of what *felt* like an old book—but what *was*—this!

(HIS EYES SPARKLE AS, FROM AN INSIDE JACKET POCKET, HE DEFTLY PRODUCES A SLENDER BOUND VOLUME.)

Pages all blank—except for those many on which small and precise *handwriting* appeared—handwriting *unmistakable* to scholars as that of Sergei Rachmaninoff himself. Heaven knows *how* many years it may have sat there in the dark, waiting to be discovered. But the *important* thing is that (GRINNING SLYLY) *I* have it now. And *having* it—*knowing*, as no one *else* in the art world knows, what it contains—I will host an exhibition—and an auction—such as no one in *my* lifetime has seen. A collection purchased, unobtrusively, for thousands. Sold, dare I hope, for—millions? (SIGHING, THEN WAGGING THE BOOK) And the "winning *lottery* ticket" is right here. Well...

(HE REPLACES THE BOOK IN HIS INSIDE JACKET POCKET AND HURRIES BACK TO THE EASEL.)

...rather puts one in the mood for a creation! "The Creation of the World," as this next painting is humbly entitled. (REPLACING THE BOOK ON THE EASEL WITH THE NEXT PAINTING) It's Ivan Aivasovsky again. Remember *him*? "Ship in Moonlit Waters"?

(HE RETURNS TO THE DOWNSTAGE CENTER CHAIR.)

Well, *this* time he paints a *grander* theme.

(HE SITS AND LEANS BACK IN THE CHAIR, ADMIRING THE PAINTING.)

When Rachmaninoff saw it *exhibited*, he thought, as did *many* visitors at the time, that the painting was *backlighted*, so *luminous* as it seemed. And the astonished composer, famously religious, heard in his head...

(AUDIO CUE: GENESIS)

And the earth was without form, and void;
And darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

(HE RISES AND QUICKLY RETURNS TO THE KEYBOARD.)

And Rachmaninoff ran back to his apartment, and sat down at his piano...

(HE SITS AT THE KEYBOARD.)

(TO THE AUDIENCE) ...and wrote *this*. His most *revered* Etude Tableau in E-Flat Minor.

(THE ART COLLECTOR BEGINS PLAYING OPUS 39, NO. 5 AND THE LARGE PROJECTED VERSION OF THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL SLOWLY MATERIALIZES ON THE BACK WALL. AT BAR 53, "TEMPO I," ADDITIONAL PROJECTIONS OF SWIRILING GALAXIES BEGIN SAILING ABOUT THE THEATER AND CONTINUE UNTIL FADING AWAY THROUGH BAR 73. THE ETUDE CONCLUDES, THE LARGE PROJECTION OF THE PAINTING FADES, AND THE ART COLLECTOR RISES AND STANDS AT THE KEYBOARD, ACKNOWLEDGING THE AUDIENCE.)

(BUOYANTLY) All right now, who's afraid of the big bad wolf. (PAUSE) *Rachmaninoff* is. Or at least he made us *think* he is, as we hear his frantically animated Etude Tableau Opus 39, No. 6 in A Minor. He *did* confess, in that *letter* I mentioned earlier, that the piece rather portrayed the Little Red *Riding* Hood story.

(HE WALKS TO THE EASEL.)

But it was a *painting* that *sparked* his imagination. A painting by *Wankie* somewhat *chillingly* called (REPLACING THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL) “Alone in the Park.”

(HE VERY SLOWLY MAKES HIS WAY BACK TO THE KEYBOARD.)

The composer was twenty-seven when *Wankie* *painting* it. (DELIBERATELY) It was—the emotion of *isolation* in the gathering dark that stuck *with* him—that *pursued* him until at last he committed to *music* the painting—and what was about to *transpire*—the snapping jaws and the savage chase through the woods... (LOOKING UP AND AWAY WHIMSICALLY) *and* perhaps the old Russian *verse*.

(THE ART COLLECTOR LISTENS WITH DELIGHTED INTENSITY TO THE BEGINNING OF THE POEM.)

(AUDIO CUE: “WOLVES” TRACK #1)

Now the village streets are empty...
And the songs of the villagers echo in their dreams...
And the gray, phantom *fog* sweeps in over the fields...
And then!...

(THE ART COLLECTOR, BY NOW SEATED AT THE KEYBOARD, PLAYS BARS 1 AND 2 OF THE ETUDE, BEAMING WITH EXCITEMENT.)

(AUDIO CUE: “WOLVES” TRACK #2)

Drifting like ghosts, one by one, from the forest...

(HE PLAYS BARS 3 AND 4.)

(AUDIO CUE: “WOLVES” TRACK #3)

The *wolves* appear...

(HE PLAYS BAR 5.)

(AUDIO CUE: “WOLVES” TRACK #4)

Prepared to plunder...
To range and to roam and to conquer the night...
Then vanish long before morning's light.

(HE PLAYS BAR 6 AND ONWARD AS THE ENLARGED PROJECTION OF "ALONE IN THE PARK" SWELLS ON THE BACK WALL. SEVERAL BARS FROM THE END OF THE ETUDE ALL OF THE LIGHTS IN THE THEATER, INCLUDING THE PROJECTION OF THE PAINTING, SLOWLY GROW DIM UNTIL, FULLY FOUR BARS FROM THE END, THE LIGHTS ARE ALL OUT.)

(AUDIO CUE: PRERECORDED FINAL THREE BARS OF OPUS 39, NO. 6)

(IN THIS TOTAL DARKNESS, AS THE PRERECORDED CONCLUSION OF THE ETUDE IS PLAYING, THE ART COLLECTOR UNOBTRUSIVELY MOVES TO THE UPSTAGE-LEFT TABLE AND BRINGS THE TELEPHONE RECEIVER TO HIS EAR. WITH THE FINAL CHORD OF THE ETUDE, PLAYED LOUDLY IN THE RECORDING, THE LIGHTS SUDDENLY GO UP WITHOUT FADING, REVEALING THE ART COLLECTOR APPARENTLY IN THE MIDST OF A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE ON THE PHONE.)

(WAITING FOR APPLAUSE, THEN, ALMOST HAUGHTILY) That's right, my dear Hamilton, *all* of the paintings. (PAUSE, RAISING A FINGER AND HIS EYEBROWS, AS IF TO INFORM THE AUDIENCE THAT HE WILL BE ONLY A MOMENT LONGER) Yes, I can *assure* you the diary is *quite authentic*. And might I *suggest* that you proceed with *publicity posthaste* and then schedule the showing, say—next month? (PAUSE, NODDING, SMILING) I *also* am looking forward to it, sir. Let's stay in touch. (PAUSE) Right. Goodbye.

(HE HANGS UP THE TELEPHONE, SMILING EVEN MORE BROADLY, AND ALMOST ARROGANTLY WALKS DIRECTLY DOWNSTAGE.)

(TO THE AUDIENCE) Well! The wheels are in *motion*, as you may surmise. All that fame and fortune, just for me! Although it's *your* victory as *well*—I mean—(SLYLY) *we are partners*, aren't we? (UNDER HIS BREATH) If not *quite financially*. (BUOYANT AGAIN) I'm *reluctant* to break the *mood* but—the *stories* Rachmaninoff and all these artists and poets are telling us—they are all *about* "mood"—atmosphere...

(HE RETURNS TO THE EASEL.)

And none *more* so than the tale you are *about* to see—and hear. (REPLACING THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL WITH THE NEXT ONE) Ah, *there* it is. (TO THE AUDIENCE) You've seen *this* before, *haven't* you. You *may* even know that it inspired Rachmaninoff's orchestral piece "The Isle of the Dead"! He was quite *open* about that. Even told us that it was a black-and-white *print* of the painting that *ignited* his creative spark.

(LOOKING AT THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL, GRIMLY) But when he saw *this* one—in the artist Arnold Böcklin’s full and original *color*—it filled him with sadness—reminding him of a Russian poem entitled, simply, “There.” (TO THE AUDIENCE) And it *haunted* him. All that day and into the *night*.

(HE WALKS BACK TO THE KEYBOARD.)

Until he had retrieved from the darkness that embraced his soul the desolate Etude Tableau Opus 39, no. 7.

(HE SITS AT THE KEYBOARD.)

(QUIETLY, SERIOUSLY) Which goes like this.

(HE BEGINS PLAYING OPUS 39, NO.7 WITH NO PROJECTION ON THE BACK WALL, ONLY THE PINLIGHT ON THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL. THEN, ON THE LAST BEAT OF BAR 13, THE POEM BEGINS.)

(AUDIO CUE: “THERE”)

It does no *good* to die...
Take *me*.
Languishing in the hull of a phantom boat on the River of Death...
The atmosphere all around me, heavy as a shroud.

The shadowy figure at the oars won’t speak...
Not even the oars *themselves* make a sound...

What *would* be the *sky*, is dark, cold stone.
And it reveals its ominous *purple* color
In the dim, grim light of my boat’s lantern...
And this cannot be *water* through which we row...
So *murky* and *thick* and *resisting*...

There’s a flapping of *wings* above us...
From somethings *following* us...
One strange creature in particular, legless and gray...
Looks *human*, a bit, I’d have to say...
Except for its fangs
And those delicate wings...
You’d think my *amazement* would come of such things,
But I’ve told you, haven’t I...
That if something *wondrous* is what you desire,
Then it does no *good* to die...

For *I* am *bored* as I was before!

You see, *death*, it turns out, is the same empty chore.

No pain...
No peace...
No *fear*...
But no *more*...

Because when life is done...
It's the same empty chore!

(BY NOW THE ETUDE IS APPROACHING BAR 39, "POCO MENO MOSSO," AT WHICH POINT THE ENLARGED PROJECTION OF THE PAINTING EERILY AND EVER SO SLOWLY APPEARS ON THE BACK WALL. THE PROJECTION WILL HAVE FADED AWAY BEFORE THE ETUDE'S FINAL CADENCE. WHEN THE PIECE IS FINISHED THE ART COLLECTOR QUARTER-TURNS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUDIENCE. BUT JUST AS THE APPLAUSE IS FADING, THE AUDIO TRACK OF "IMPROVISATION" IS HEARD, AND THE ART COLLECTOR, STILL SITTING ON THE PIANO BENCH, WISTFULLY LOOKING UP AND AWAY, PAUSES TO LISTEN TO IT. THE SPOTLIGHT ON HIM DIMS A LITTLE. AT THE SAME TIME THE ENLARGED PROJECTION OF THE PAINTING "PEARL" FADES UP ON THE BACK WALL, WHERE IT REMAINS THROUGHOUT THE READING OF THE POEM AND THEREAFTER, EVEN THOUGH THE BÖCKLIN PAINTING, ALTHOUGH NO LONGER PINLIGHTED, IS STILL ON THE EASEL.)

(AUDIO CUE: "IMPROVISATION")

Tonight... when I sat down at my piano...
The piano *keys* looked *back* at me like hungry birds!
So I stretched out my arms and fingers to *feed* the flock
Of flapping wings and screeching cries...
That's what it *means* to improvise...
But you know...

As night closed in around all but me and them,
Visions came...
Of a small, dark pond somehow swelling with waves.
And a boat in which *I* trembled as the waves engulfed the hull.
And all the while—in the midnight air above—the screaming birds.
For even as I fed them, they cried for more!
More fiery truth...
More sweet, soft lies...
You see...
That's what it *means* to improvise...

(THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE ART COLLECTOR BECOMES BRIGHTER AGAIN.)

(REPEATING THE PHRASE WITH ADDED EMPHASIS) That's what it *means*. To improvise...

(HE RISES AND SLOWLY MAKES HIS WAY BACK TO THE EASEL, NEVER LOSING EYE CONTACT WITH THE AUDIENCE.)

Art *is* improvisation, you know. At least in its *purest* form. It's not *planned* with abstract precision; it merely—*arrives* disguised as the joy of reunion or the sting of loss or—simply the *wonder* of it all. It coalesces and enlarges, inevitably, presenting itself in one medium or other. But ideally, it *improvises* its way to wherever it's going... (REPLACING THE BÖCKLIN PAINTING ON THE EASEL WITH THE SMALL, FRAMED VERSION OF THE PAINTING ALREADY PROJECTED ON THE BACK WALL) ...as did the artist Mikhail Vrubel, whom you've already met.

(HE STARES AT THE NEW PAINTING ON THE EASEL FOR A MOMENT, THEN, HANDS IN HIS POCKETS, HE SLOWLY WALKS DOWNSTAGE LEFT.)

His spontaneity led him to *some marvelous* places—a glamorous marriage, a prestigious career as a stage and *costume* designer. But as you know, he had become mentally *unstable* by the time he created the *first* painting I showed you. And two years later, when he did this?... (GESTURING TOWARD THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL) ...he was locked in a madhouse.

(HE WALKS TO THE KEYBOARD.)

Composer *Rachmaninoff* was on the verge of world *fame* when he first beheld Vrubel's "Pearl," as the painter called it. What an *homage* it was!—of sadness—and madness—when the composer wrote, in the painting's shadow, his yearning etude Opus 39, No. 8.

(HE SITS AND PLAYS THE ETUDE. THE LARGE PROJECTED PAINTING ON THE BACK WALL GROWS MORE INTENSE. TOWARD THE END OF THE ETUDE THE PROJECTION FADES AWAY AND ALL THE LIGHTS IN THE THEATER DIMINISH. BUT JUST AS THE ETUDE CONCLUDES IN A BREATHELESS HUSH, AND BEFORE THE AUDIENCE BEGINS APPLAUDING...)

(AUDIO CUE: OLD-FASHIONED TELEPHONE RINGING VERY LOUDLY)

(THE MOMENT THE TELEPHONE RINGS, THE SPOTLIGHTS ON THE ART COLLECTOR AT THE PIANO BENCH AND ON THE UPSTAGE-LEFT TABLE ON WHICH THE TELEPHONE SITS COME UP SUDDENLY. AT THE SOUND OF THE TELEPHONE, THE STARTLED ART COLLECTOR JUMPS WILDLY AND COMICALLY ON THE BENCH.)

I *hate* when that happens!

(HE LEAPS UP AND HURRIES TO ANSWER THE TELEPHONE.)

(PICKING UP THE RECEIVER) Hello? (PAUSE, THEN SMILING) Ah, yes! Mr. Hamilton! (TO THE AUDIENCE HE SILENTLY MOUTHS “THE ART DEALER”) What may I *do* for you! (A LONGER PAUSE) You’ve done *what* now? (PAUSE, LOOKING A LITTLE CONCERNED BUT TRYING NOT TO LET ON VOCALLY) You’ve spoken with *Sergei Rachmaninoff himself*? (CUPPING A HAND OVER THE RECEIVER TO ADDRESS THE AUDIENCE, URGENTLY HALF-WHISPERING AND AGITATED) Yes, of *course*, he’s still alive! What year do you think this *is* anyway! (ANIMATEDLY POINTING TO THE RECEIVER WITH THE OTHER HAND) Just *look* at this—anvil! (TO THE CALLER AGAIN, IN A NORMAL AND CALMER TONE OF VOICE) Yes, I’m here... (PAUSE) Yes, I see. (PAUSE) Yes. *I* see. (PAUSE) He says there never *was* a diary. (PAUSE) He says the inspirations for the Etudes Tableaux were *meant* to be mysteries. (PAUSE) But I... (PAUSE) But I... (A LONGER PAUSE) But I... (A STILL LONGER PAUSE) I understand. But I think the word “criminal” is a bit... (PAUSE) Yes, it’s quite appropriate. (PAUSE) No, I won’t. (PAUSE) Not ever again. (PAUSE, THEN HALFHEARTEDLY TRYING TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD) Scout’s honor? (PAUSE) No, it’s *not* very funny, I suppose. (PAUSE) Yes, I’m sorry. (PAUSE) Right. (PAUSE) Goodbye. (GENTLY REPLACING THE RECEIVER ON THE HOOK, THEN, TO THE AUDIENCE, SUDDENLY LOUD AND INDIGNANT) Well, I hope you’re happy!

(HE WALKS BRISKLY DOWNSTAGE CENTER TO THE LITTLE TABLE WITH THE BUD VASE ON IT.)

(TRYING TO APPEAR ANGRY) This is *your* fault, after all! I mean, we were partners, weren’t we? What a *scheme* you had! And you thought we’d get *away* with it? (PUTTING UP A HAND, A BIT QUIETER) No, no, it’s quite all right. I forgive you. *This* time. (SMILING A LITTLE) Just don’t try anything like that *again*.

(HE WALKS TO THE EASEL.)

Or you might wind up like the painter Kandinsky! You know. (SLYLY TURNING TO THE AUDIENCE) Rich and famous? (LIFTING THE

SMALL, FRAMED PAINTING “MOSCOW” AND ADMIRING IT) He *loved* the city of Moscow, which he represented here in the abstract. (TO THE AUDIENCE) He was the *father* of abstract art, in fact. (REPLACING THE PAINTING ON THE EASEL WITH KANDINSKY’S) And Rachmaninoff certainly *could* have seen it, as I like to imagine he did.

(HE WALKS TO THE PIANO.)

Could have portrayed it in his magnificent and *final* etude, in the key of D. (HESITATING AT THE KEYBOARD, LOOKING UP AND AWAY) And—he *may* have been thinking this!

(HIS SPOTLIGHT DIMS A LITTLE AS HE STANDS THERE LISTENING.)

(AUDIO CUE: “POEM TO BLOK”)

Why do I think you can *hear* me!—somehow...
As I talk and walk the streets this night...
In Moscow...
Though *you* are in St. Petersburg.

I wish you were *here*...
I wish you could see, with me, the city’s domes gleaming
And hear the bells ringing
And echoing amid the tombs of sleeping kings...

I wish you’d seen the *Kremlin* at dusk!
And drawn breath with me as the night air grew heavy.
And could walk with me as the streetlamps smolder on.
Oh, well...

But should you question, someday, my love for you...
Or doubt, at least, that my love is true...
Remember the night I couldn’t sleep...
And strolled with you.
Till dawn.

(THE ART COLLECTOR’S SPOTLIGHT SWELLS AGAIN.)

(WITH BUOYANT ENTHUSIASM) Ladies and gentlemen? May I present to you—in all its glory—(GRANDLY GESTURING TOWARD THE BACK WALL) Moscow!

(THE LARGE PROJECTED PAINTING SURGES TO LIFE AS THE ART COLLECTOR SITS AT THE PIANO AND BEGINS PLAYING OPUS 39, NO. 9. AS THE ETUDE APPROACHES ITS EXCITING CONCLUSION, FURTHER LIGHTING EFFECTS DAZZLE THE STAGE. WITH THE

FINAL CRASHING DOUBLE-OCTAVE, ALL OF THE LIGHTS IN THE THEATER SUDDENLY GO OUT. BEFORE ANY COME BACK ON, THE ART COLLECTOR HAS LEFT THE STAGE AND A PEN-AND-INK SKETCH OF RACHMANINOFF FADES UP ON THE BACK WALL. UNDER THE SKETCH, THE ARTIST'S SIGNATURE WRITES ITSELF OUT IN ANIMATION. THE LIGHTS COME UP AND CURTAIN CALL.)

—THE END—

APPENDIX D
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Date 3/20/12

Stephen Cook
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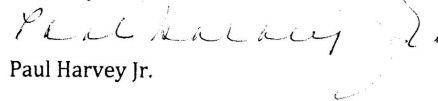
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Stephen Cook
Arizona State University

March 28, 2012

Dear Steve:

With this letter I grant permission to include my translations of Russian poetry that accompanied your "Picturing Rachmaninoff" multi-media piano concert as an addendum to your DMA research paper.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alyssa Dinega Gillespie". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Alyssa Dinega Gillespie
Associate Professor of Russian, University of Notre Dame

