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IVAN D. HURD III
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A PEDAGOGICAL AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO
PROKOFIEV'S *FOUR PIECES*, OP. 32

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY

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Dr. Jane Magrath, Chair

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the score used for all musical examples is *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 by Sergei Prokofiev, copyright 1921 by Hawkes & Son (London) Ltd., reprinted by permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.

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A PEDAGOGICAL AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO PROKOFIEV'S *FOUR PIECES*, OP. 32

ABSTRACT

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The University of Oklahoma, 2017

Chair: Dr. Jane Magrath

This document provides a pedagogical and performance guide to Sergei Prokofiev's *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, a Twentieth Century work for solo piano that is appropriate for late-intermediate to early-advanced piano students. Context and support are provided for the placement of this work as a transitional set between Prokofiev's *Music for Children,* Op. 65 and his advanced and virtuosic solo piano repertoire such as the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, the nine *Piano Sonatas*, the *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, and the *Toccata in D minor*, Op. 11. Teachers and students are introduced to the composer's compositional style and the theoretical underpinnings of his modern harmonic language prior to a formal analysis of each of the *Four Pieces* which include technical and performance suggestions for each piece.

The first chapter provides an overview, explains the purpose and need for the study, the procedures used, and the organization of the study. This is followed in chapter 2 with a review of related literature including the composer's autobiographical writings, relevant historical and biographical studies, dissertations, journal articles, and selected recordings of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. The third chapter discusses Prokofiev's compositional style and his unique harmonic language before providing an overview of his solo piano literature. This review of his solo piano repertoire includes available

information on the level of difficulty and an assessment of the works, and individual pieces within sets, which have pedagogical value. The principal portion of the document is provided in chapter 4 and presents historical context for the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. A formal analysis for each individual piece in the set: *Dance*, *Minuet*, *Gavotte*, and *Waltz* is provided. In addition to the formal analyses, this document includes a discussion of selected technical challenges and suggestions for performance.

The study concludes with a summary of key topics including the pedagogical significance of the work, a list of Prokofiev's teaching repertoire for solo piano, and significant issues and suggestions regarding each of the *Four Pieces.* The author's recommendations for ways that the subject matter may be extended through further study are provided, followed by the bibliography and appendices. Many aspects of Prokofiev's modern harmonic language and his unique compositional style are evident in the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, making it an important study work for late-intermediate to early-advanced pianists wishing to prepare for the composer's extensive solo piano repertoire for advanced and virtuoso performers.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Prokofiev's unique musical style is demonstrated in his most popular works for solo piano, including the nine *Piano Sonatas*, the *Toccata in D minor*, Op. 11, the *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, and the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, all of which are advanced works requiring a virtuoso technique. Intermediate to late-intermediate pianists are introduced to elements of his musical style in the twelve pieces of *Music for Children*, Op. 65, but for pedagogues and performers, the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 is one of only a few late-intermediate to early-advanced works by Prokofiev that serves as a transition to the composer's advanced works.[1] In the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 students are challenged by Prokofiev's lyrical quality of melody, the toccata or motoric elements of rhythm, the composer's modern harmonic language, his neo-Classic forms, and the grotesque—all of which are emblematic of Prokofiev's style.[2] This study provides a pedagogical and performance guide to this important transitional work that allows teachers and students to become acquainted with the unique and personal style of Prokofiev's music prior to studying the advanced works.

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[1] Other transitional solo piano works are identified in chapter 3 of this study, Compositional Style and Overview of Solo Piano Literature.

[2] Sergei Prokofiev, "Autobiography," in *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Oleg Prokofiev (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 248-49.

Overview

Sergei Prokofiev exhibited musical talent from a young age, which his mother, Maria, a committed amateur pianist, helped to cultivate during his youth. In his autobiography,[3] Prokofiev wrote, "Mother achieved the best possible performance of the pieces she studied, regarding this work with love, and she was interested in serious music only. This played a significant role in the evolution of my own musical taste: from birth I heard Beethoven and Chopin, and I remember, at the age of twelve, consciously despising light music."[4] Maria continued to provide her son with the best musical experience possible, and in 1901, Prokofiev visited Moscow for the first time. During this visit he met Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915), a well-respected composer who saw significant potential in the young Prokofiev. Taneyev helped Prokofiev's parents choose a tutor, and, during the summers of 1902 and 1903, Reinhold Glière (1874-1956) gave Prokofiev his first formal lessons in composition, as well as lessons in theory, instrumentation, and piano.

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[3] Sergei Prokofiev's autobiographical writings, including his diaries and other materials, are described in detail in chapter 2, Related Literature. Over an extended period, between 1937 and 1951, Prokofiev wrote two separate autobiographies, one that is long and one that is short. The short autobiography was written in 1941, published in 1956, and is available in his *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings* as "Autobiography" published in 1992, translated and edited by Oleg Prokofiev. The long version was published in an abridged form in Russia in 1973, and a later English translation was published as *Prokofiev by Prokofiev: A Composer's Memoir* in 1979. When used in this study, the term "autobiography" refers generally to both Prokofiev's long version and short version unless the context specifically indicates otherwise.

[4] Sergei Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev: A Composer's Memoir,* ed. David H. Appel (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1979), 12.

Lessons with Glière helped prepare Prokofiev for entrance to the St. Petersburg Conservatory in the autumn of 1904. During his conservatory days, Prokofiev encountered other important musicians such as Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936), Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), and Anatoly Lyadov (1855-1914). Prokofiev did not begin to experiment with the harmonic language of his compositions until 1908 at age seventeen when he began attending the "Evenings in Contemporary Music," a concert series promoting new music. In St. Petersburg, three influential figures, Alfred Nurok, Vyacheslav Karatïgin, and Walter Nouvel, were music lovers and critics who fueled the Evenings in Contemporary Music. Prokofiev first played an audition including selections of his own compositions from the *Four Pieces,* Op. 3, and *Four Pieces*, Op. 4, and performed these works on December 18, 1908.[5] The Evenings in Contemporary Music were held in Hermann and Grossman Hall at the headquarters for the Steinway and Sons and K. Bechstein piano firms,[6] and these venues brought early recognition to Prokofiev as a new and bold composer.[7]

Prokofiev completed his composition studies at age eighteen in 1909, and then continued at the St. Petersburg Conservatory with more focused studies in piano and conducting. His piano lessons with Anna Yesipova, an esteemed pedagogue and performer, focused on the repertoire of Classical composers as well as technical

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[5] David Nice, *Prokofiev—A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891-1935* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 56.

[6] Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev,* 342.

[7] Boris Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008), 3-4.

exercises. Despite Prokofiev's initial aversion to studying Classical works, he grew to appreciate the formal structures of composition, which added to his predilection toward a neo-Classic style in his own works.[8] His studies with Yesipova pushed his pianistic abilities, which aided in his later success as a performer.

After graduating from the conservatory in 1914, Prokofiev continued to compose, writing important works such as an early ballet, *The Tale of the Buffoon*, Op. 21 (1915), the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 (1915-17) for piano, an opera, *The Gambler*, Op. 24 (1915-16), the *Symphony No. 1 in D* "Classical," Op. 25 (1916-17), and continued work on *Piano Sonata No. 3 in A minor*, Op. 28 (1907-17), and *Piano Sonata No. 4 in C minor*, Op. 29 (1908-17). Such works were important to the development of Prokofiev's compositional style. The ensuing Russian Revolution of 1917 caused much turmoil in the composer's homeland, and Prokofiev decided to leave Russia for the United States, where he arrived in 1918.

Prokofiev did not experience the success he imagined for himself in the United States. His first public piano recital took place in New York on November 20, 1918, where he programmed his own compositions in addition to works of Scriabin and Rachmaninoff. Rachmaninoff gave recitals in the United States as early as 1909, programming more Classical works with only one or two of his own compositions, which provided him some success. Furthermore, Rachmaninoff was the most well-known Russian pianist in the United States, and this provided some difficulty for Prokofiev when he arrived in 1918. After his first season in America, Prokofiev wrote,

[8] Anthony Phillips, trans., *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915-1923: Behind the Mask* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 354-55.

"The public here is not used to listening to the works of a single composer for a whole evening. People want a varied program as a showcase for popular pieces. Rachmaninoff has accepted this compromise. I could not even dream of the overwhelming success he has with his concerts."[9]

Although Prokofiev viewed his career in America as one that did not have much success, he performed regularly as a pianist. His compositions were programmed with orchestras in Chicago and New York, and when he was 27 years old, Prokofiev gained interest from American publishers, which led to the composition of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 in 1918. While the pieces in opus 32 are not considered to be among his most well-known works for piano, they represent the late-intermediate and early-advanced levels of his piano literature.

Overall, Prokofiev's most popular works for solo piano include the nine *Piano Sonatas*, the *Toccata in D minor*, Op. 11, the *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, and the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22. These works are among the most advanced within all of his output, and in some ways prevent students from experiencing Prokofiev's unique musical style until reaching mature levels of piano playing. These works require a virtuoso technique capable of fast passagework, the execution of large leaps with ease, clear voicing of melody over thick accompanimental textures, a wide range of dynamics, and a sophisticated sense of musical structure, phrasing, and sensitivity.

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[9] Dorthea Redpenning, "Prokofiev, Sergey." in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed June 24, 2016, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22402.

Prokofiev's solo piano works which are accessible to less advanced students begin with the *Music for Children*, Op. 65 (1935), a collection of twelve piano pieces for intermediate to late-intermediate pianists. The *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 is one of a small number of works or individual pieces within sets that are accessible to late-intermediate and early-advanced pianists. In these works we find examples of all five elements Prokofiev described as hallmarks of his style: the lyrical quality of melody, the toccata or motoric elements of rhythm, the modern harmonic language, the neo-Classic forms, and the grotesque.[10] A student interested in studying the works of Prokofiev should explore his late-intermediate to early-advanced pieces including the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, to help ensure a smooth transition from the *Music for Children*, Op. 65 to more advanced works.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a pedagogical and performance guide to Sergei Prokofiev's *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. This work is appropriate for late-intermediate and early-advanced piano students, and acts as a bridge between his intermediate and advanced works. The study serves as a reference for teachers and students by discussing pedagogical applications and performance recommendations for each piece. Practice suggestions for technical and musical challenges are provided. Additionally, this study highlights the value of this work within Prokofiev's output for solo piano, encouraging study and performance for teachers and students alike.

[10] Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927*, 248-49.

Need for the Study

Sergei Prokofiev is recognized as a major composer of the twentieth century having produced important works in a variety of mediums including orchestral music, chamber music, concerti, and vocal music. Prokofiev composed for the piano throughout his entire career, and despite the fact that he composed numerous character pieces and transcriptions, the nine piano sonatas are his primary masterpieces for the piano.[11] In addition to the piano sonatas, Prokofiev's *Toccata*, Op. 11, *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, and the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 have gained a place in the standard performance literature. Aside from the *Music for Children*, Op. 65, the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 is one of the few pieces suitable for late-intermediate and early-advanced students.[12]

It is important for students and performers to become acquainted with the unique and personal style of Prokofiev's music prior to studying the advanced works. The pieces found within opus 32 highlight several of the typical features Prokofiev identified as hallmarks of his style. The five classifications (or "lines") of Prokofiev's musical style as self-identified in his autobiography include the classical, the modern, the toccata, the lyrical, and the grotesque.[13] Numerous studies have analyzed the advanced solo piano works. Those that mention the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 only briefly discuss each piece.

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[11] Neil Minturn, *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 74.

[12] Other pieces in this category are identified in chapter 3, Compositional Style and Overview of Solo Piano Literature, subsection, Summary of Pedagogical Implications.

[13] Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927*, 248-49.

Stephen Fiess's *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev*[14] is the most comprehensive publication on Prokofiev's entire output for solo piano. Fiess discusses elements of harmony, melody, rhythm and meter, texture, form, and pianistic technique for the major works, which he organizes into three periods: the Russian period (1891-1917), the foreign period (1918-1935), and the Soviet period (1935-1953).[15]

According to Fiess, *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 aligns with the stylistic qualities of Prokofiev's pieces written during the Russian period, despite being composed during his first year in the United States. Fiess does not include the work in his discussion of the Russian period works or the foreign period works. In a later chapter on pedagogical works, *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 is mentioned briefly with regard to basic formal analysis. The *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 has not been a major focus of any previous study, and yet this work presents substantial pedagogical and performance implications worthy of an in-depth study.

Procedures

This study provides a pedagogical and performance guide to Sergei Prokofiev's *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 which represents the composer's late-intermediate and early-advanced works, and can supplement the period of a student's pianistic growth between studying his easier set, *Music for Children*, Op. 65, and his more difficult works such as the *Ten Pieces,* Op. 12, the *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, and the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22.

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[14] Stephen C.E. Fiess, *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994).

[15] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 7.

Historical context for the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 includes information from Sergei Prokofiev's diaries[16] and correspondence, which provide primary source information surrounding the composition of this work, as well as details on its publication, performances by the composer, and Prokofiev's general remarks on the work. Other sources providing relevant historical information derived from the biographies written by Harlow Robinson[17] and David Nice[18] were consulted.

According to Maurice Hinson's broad grading system, the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 is intermediate to moderately difficult.[19] Jane Magrath's leveling system is more specific, grading pieces as levels 1 to 10, and places Op. 32 at levels 8 to 10.[20] Analysis of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 in chapter 4 of this document is organized into the following sections for each piece: (1) form and analysis; (2) technical problems and solutions for pedagogical application; (3) and performance suggestions. The form and analysis sections discuss applicable deviations from tonal harmony as identified by Patricia Ruth Ashley. The five primary elements of composition as defined by Prokofiev—the lyrical, toccata, modern, neo-Classic, and grotesque—are highlighted in this analysis. The

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[16] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*.

[17] Harlow Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* (New York: Viking, 1987).

[18] Nice, *Prokofiev*.

[19] Maurice Hinson, *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*, 4th ed. (Bloomington: IN, Indiana University Press, 2013), 500-01.

[20] Jane Magrath, *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature: An Invaluable Resource of Piano Literature from Baroque through Contemporary Periods for Teachers, Students and Performers* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1995), 470.

technical and musical challenges inherent in the pieces are identified, followed by suggestions for practice and ideas on performance.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes an overview, the purpose of study, need for study, procedures, and organization. Following the introductory material, chapter 2 provides a review of literature directly related to the present study, as well as sources surrounding the topic derived from books, theses and dissertations, journal articles, and selected recordings. Chapter 3 considers the significance and placement of *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 within Prokofiev's output for solo piano by first reviewing his compositional style. This review is followed in chapter 3 by an overview of solo piano works that includes key historical facts, musical aspects, and comments on level of difficulty for each piece. Chapter 4 provides an historical and musical sketch of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 as well as a pedagogical guide that provides for each piece: (1) a formal analysis; (2) a discussion of selected technical problems and solutions; and (3) performance suggestions. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the historical and musical context of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, and Prokofiev's compositional style. The pedagogical significance of opus 32 and Prokofiev's other important teaching repertoire are discussed, followed by final commentary on each individual piece of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32. Suggestions for further study are provided at the end of the chapter. A bibliography and appendices conclude the study.

Chapter 2

RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

The aim of the author in this chapter is to contextualize material related to the topic by surveying information regarding Prokofiev's biography, musical style, theoretical analyses of his works, and pedagogical studies on additional teaching literature of the composer, as well as studies of a similar nature written on the works of other composers. Primary source information regarding Prokofiev's biography includes his autobiography, several diaries, and interviews.

Research material in books, journal articles, and dissertations and theses generally focus on biographical information on Sergei Prokofiev. This material falls into two main categories: (1) biographical information of which much focus is directed toward the changing political climate in Soviet Russia during the twentieth century and its effects on his life as a composer; and (2) formal analyses of his musical works. In addition to traditional analyses, studies detailing Prokofiev's evolution of musical style are also available. Studies that focus on the pedagogical value of Prokofiev's piano works are virtually absent within the literature, however, Kelly M. Freije published a study on the *Music for Children,* Op. 65, and Wenjing Liu published a study on the *Tales of an Old Grandmother,* Op. 31.

Books

Prokofiev's life events, musical style, and compositions are discussed in a variety of books. Primary sources include the extensive diaries Prokofiev kept from 1907-1933. Anthony Phillips translated the diaries into three volumes: *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907-1914: Prodigious Youth*,[1] *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1915-1923: Behind the Mask*,[2] and *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1924-1933: Prodigal Son*.[3] The second volume includes the most pertinent information from the years 1918-1921 in which Prokofiev's entries detail the conception of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, his attempts to have the pieces published, and his performances of the works. A more extensive diary was written after Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1927.

On February 25, 1927, Prokofiev wrote in his diary, "Here my shorthand diary comes to an end, and I have based my account of my ensuing stay in Moscow on Ptashka's [Prokofiev's wife] notes and other documents."[4] Prokofiev's son, Oleg, states in his introduction to the published diary, "This indicates it was Prokofiev's intention to keep an unusually detailed diary right from the beginning of his visit to the Soviet Union, as if he considered this particular journey to be special and in a totally different

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[1] Anthony Phillips, trans., *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907-1914: Prodigious Youth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[2] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923.*

[3] Anthony Phillips, trans., *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1924-1933: Prodigal Son* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

[4] Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927*, 118.

category from his everyday itinerant life in the West."[5] In addition to the 1927 diary, the compiled writings include several of Prokofiev's short stories, as well as his short autobiography.

Prokofiev wrote two autobiographies. The *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings* includes a short autobiography written in 1941. Prokofiev details his early years of childhood until the age of seventeen in the second and more extensive autobiography. S. I. Shlifstein compiled *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*,[6] which also includes the short autobiography written in 1941. In addition to the autobiography, articles, and reviews written by Prokofiev, it also includes articles about Prokofiev written by important Soviet musicians, artists, and other individuals associated with his life. The second autobiography written during two different time periods, 1937-1939 and 1945-1951, is available as *Prokofiev by Prokofiev: A Composer's Memoir* edited by David Appel.[7] *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews*,[8] compiled by Vladimir Block, provides additional primary source information including interviews with Prokofiev, writings on Prokofiev by other composers such as Shostakovich and Kabalevsky, and other articles on Prokofiev's music.

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[5] Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927*, ix.

[6] S. I. Shlifstein, ed., *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, trans. Rose Prokofieva (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.).

[7] Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev.*

[8] Vladimir Block, compiler, *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews* (USSR: Progress Publishers, 1978).

Many biographies have been written on Prokofiev focusing on various time frames of his life. Harlow Robinson's *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* is one of the first comprehensive biographies written without any political bent toward pleasing the Russian government. In chapter nine, Robinson discusses Prokofiev's life concertizing and composing in America and provides contextual information regarding other works composed during the same time as *Four Pieces,* Op. 32.[9] David Nice's *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891-1935* provides a more complete account of Prokofiev's life prior to his return to Russia in 1935. Nice discusses Prokofiev's compositional efforts while in the United States in 1918 and offers a brief description of the *Tales of an Old Grandmother,* Op. 31. While there is no description of *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, Nice contextualizes Prokofiev's failed attempt to have both opus 31 and 32 published in the United States.[10] Both sets were published three years later in Moscow by Koussevitzky. Simon Morrison's *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years*[11] is dedicated to the last part of Prokofiev's life from 1935-1953, and may be considered as the counterpart to Nice's biography of Prokofiev's career until 1935. Additional biographical studies include Simon Morrison's *Sergey Prokofiev and His World,*[12] Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson's *Prokofiev: The Prodigal Son; An Introduction to his Life and Works in Three*

[9] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*.

[10] Nice, *Prokofiev,* 155-56.

[11] Simon Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[12] Simon Morrison, ed., *Sergey Prokofiev and His World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Movements,[13] and Rita McAllister's "Sergei Prokofiev" in *The New Grove Russian Masters 2*.[14]

A broad range of scholarship has been written on the musical compositions of Sergei Prokofiev. *The Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev*[15] by Stephen C. E. Fiess offers a comprehensive guide discussing harmony, melody, rhythm and meter, texture, form, and technique for each of Prokofiev's major works for solo piano. Feiss's third chapter is dedicated to pedagogical works and is divided into four categories: (1) works written for pedagogical use; (2) advanced-intermediate level works; (3) advanced level or concert works, and (4) transcriptions. Fiess provides general comments on each piece regarding basic form and musical elements. Commenting on the first piece in the set, *Dance*, Fiess writes, "Technically, some of the later passages call for left-hand leaps and control of a melody and pedal-point, or of two independent lines played by the same hand."[16] Fiess's comments on each piece are kept to a minimum and are rather general.

Neil Minturn's *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev*[17] discusses Prokofiev's orchestral music, chamber music, concerti, and vocal music in addition to piano music. The author

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[13] Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson, *Prokofiev: The Prodigal Son; An Introduction to his Life and Works in Three Movements* (London: Cassell, 1964).

[14] Rita McAllister, "Sergei Prokofiev," in *The New Grove Russian Masters 2*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986).

[15] Fiess, *Piano Works*.

[16] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 125.

[17] Minturn, *Music of Prokofiev.*

provides a detailed description of the composer's characteristic style elements (the five musical lines), often analyzed in Prokofiev's music, which include the lyrical, grotesque, Neo-classic, modern, and toccata elements. The *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 is mentioned in passing in the chapter on piano music, and yet Minturn's book as a whole provides an understanding of Prokofiev's overall musical style.

An additional account of Prokofiev's evolution of musical style is viewed through the lens of Boris Berman in his book *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas: A Guide for the Listener and Performer*.[18] While the piano sonatas are not the focus of the present study, Berman offers his insights and understanding of the composer's musical style through his experience gained by recording the entire output of Prokofiev's solo works. The second chapter, "Prokofiev the Pianist," discusses the influence that Prokofiev's career as a pianist had on his own compositions as evidenced by the idiomatic style of writing for the instrument.

Several books on piano literature include concise information on Prokofiev's style and solo works for piano. These include David Burge's *Twentieth-Century Piano Music,*[19] Stewart Gordon's *A History of Keyboard Literature: Music for the Piano and its Forerunners,*[20] and F. E. Kirby's *Music for Piano: A Short History*.[21] Two additional

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[18] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*.

[19] David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

[20] Stewart Gordon, *A History of Keyboard Literature: Music for the Piano and its Forerunners* (New York: Macmillian, 1996).

[21] F. E. Kirby, *Music for Piano: A Short History* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Amadeus Press, 1995).

guides, Maurice Hinson's *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire*,[22] and Jane Magrath's *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature: An Invaluable Resource of Piano Literature from Baroque through Contemporary Periods for Teachers, Students and Performers*[23] provide pedagogical information on solo piano literature. Hinson grades literature in general terms as easy, intermediate, moderately difficult, and difficult. Magrath categorizes each piece according to levels of difficulty 1-10 and lists various teaching and performance qualities for each piece of music.

Peter Deane Roberts has written an important study on theoretical practices of Russian composers. Roberts's *Modernism in Russian Piano Music: Skriabin, Prokofiev, and their Russian Contemporaries*[24] does not solely apply the analytical techniques of tonal or post-tonal music. Instead, Roberts discusses in a general context the polyphony, harmony, and tonality of Prokofiev's piano music. While Roberts does not discuss the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, several examples from important works written directly before or after opus 32, such as *Sonata No. 2*, Op. 14, *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, and *Sonata No. 5*, Op. 38, provide a context of theoretical trends in Prokofiev's music that can be applied to the analyses of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. Roberts also includes chapters dedicated to topics such as tonality, bitonality, musical form, and non-tonal techniques used in modern Russian piano music.

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[22] Hinson, *Pianist's Repertoire*.

[23] Magrath, *Pianist's Guide.*

[24] Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music: Skriabin, Prokofiev, and their Russian Contemporaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

Relevant historical context to the present study includes composers that influenced Prokofiev and the trends in music composition and performance which are important to a full understanding of Prokofiev and his music. Stanley D. Krebs's *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music*[25] traces the development of Soviet music through the compositional efforts of Reinhold Glière, Dmitri Shostakovich, Aram Khachaturian, and Dmitri Kabalevsky. More importantly, Krebs examines the influence and impact that political events, such as the Revolution of 1917, had on the musical output of Russian composers, which greatly affected Prokofiev.

James Bakst's *A History of Russian-Soviet Music*[26] is a more comprehensive study compared to Krebs's contribution, which focuses on composers that aligned themselves with the ideals of Soviet Russia. Bakst traces Russian musicology from Medieval times through the twentieth century, and discusses composers such as Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov, Taneyev, Rachmaninoff, and Scriabin. Each had direct relationships with Prokofiev or influenced the development of his compositional style and career as a composer-pianist.

Dissertations and Theses

Several dissertations and theses focus on different facets of Prokofiev's writing for the piano. The studies can be categorized as pedagogical, historical, theoretical, or

[25] Stanley D. Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970).

[26] James Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music* (1962; reprint, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977).

those defining Prokofiev's compositional style. The most relevant documents to the present study are those that focus on pedagogical value of Prokofiev's works for piano. Historical studies aid in understanding the events associated with the completion of various compositions, and those on Prokofiev's compositional style are important for understanding the most important aspects of his works and how his style developed over time. Theoretical studies are helpful for this study to the extent that they aid in understanding Prokofiev's unique harmonic language, use of melody, and rhythmic importance. In addition to dissertations that focus on the life and work of Prokofiev, studies on pedagogical works of various composers are included as similar examples to the present study.

Kelly M. Freije's dissertation, "A Pedagogical Analysis of Prokofiev's *Musique d'Enfants*, Opus 65," presents a discussion of the pedagogical importance of each piece within the set.[27] The analyses focus on the physical technique required for each piece, provide ideas for interpretation, suggests a sequence of instruction, and includes practice suggestions. Freije identifies the *Music for Children* as an important collection for intermediate students as it introduces pianists to the unique style of Prokofiev and prepares them for his more difficult compositions.

"Prokofiev's *Tales of Old Grandmother,* Op. 31: A Performance and Pedagogical Guide," by Wenjing Liu focuses on Prokofiev's interest in the fairy tale as a genre, provides practice strategies and performance interpretations, and compares the *Tales of Old Grandmother*, Op. 31 to Prokofiev's advanced piano works and the *Music*

[27] Kelly M. Freije, "A Pedagogical Analysis of Prokofiev's *Musique d'Enfants*, Opus 65" (D.M.A. doc., Ball State University, 2011).

for Children, Op. 65.[28] One unique aspect of Liu's analysis compares selected recordings by Prokofiev as well as other noted pianists such as Boris Berman, Oleg Marshev, Matti Raekallio, and Frederic Chiu. The studies by Freije and Liu are most pertinent to the present study regarding their approach to the analysis and review of pedagogical significance of Prokofiev's teaching literature.

Prokofiev's *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 is discussed in Brian Marks's dissertation, "Sources of Stylistic Diversity in the Early Piano Sets of Sergei Prokofiev."[29] Marks surveys Prokofiev's early piano works: *Four Etudes,* Op. 2; *Four Pieces,* Op. 3; *Four Pieces*, Op. 4; *Ten Pieces,* Op. 12; *Sarcasms,* Op. 17; *Visions fugitives,* Op. 22; *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31; and *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. The study describes the variety of compositional techniques employed by Prokofiev and their importance in understanding his evolution of style in these early works. Marks's primary focus is on the progression of harmonic language over the course of each set of pieces, as well as a formal analysis of each piece. His theoretical analysis focuses on Prokofiev's harmonic language, use of thematic material, and formal structure. Furthermore, Marks discusses these early works of Prokofiev in relation to those of Scriabin and Stravinsky. The theoretical analyses provided by Marks are particularly helpful in understanding Prokofiev's compositional style.

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[28] Wenjing Liu, "Prokofiev's *Tales of Old Grandmother,* Op. 31: A Performance and Pedagogical Guide" (D.M.A. doc., University of Iowa, 2016).

[29] Brian Robert Marks, "Sources of Stylistic Diversity in the Early Piano Sets of Sergei Prokofiev" (D.M.A. doc., University of Texas at Austin, 1994).

Gary O'Shea's dissertation, "Prokofiev's Early Solo Piano Music: Context, Influences, Forms, Performances," does not analyze the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 but it is mentioned in the context of Prokofiev's musical compositions written upon arriving in the United States in 1918.[30] Perhaps most important to this study, O'Shea discusses the context surrounding the time in Prokofiev's life the *Four Pieces* was written. Prokofiev wrote about his opera *The Gambler,* Op. 24 (1915-17), "My whole aim is to make [*The Gambler*] as simple as possible."[31] His attempt to write in a simpler style in *The Gambler* is carried over to the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. O'Shea believes that the simplicity was to garner popularity from the American public and for Prokofiev to make a name for himself in the United States. The intended simplicity of the *Four Pieces* is important, for without this compositional goal in mind, Prokofiev may not have written works appropriate for late-intermediate and early-advanced students. O'Shea also provides a discussion on Prokofiev as a performer, the ways in which composers such as Stravinsky, Debussy, and Beethoven influenced his own compositions, and a succinct summary of Prokofiev's musical style.

Laryssa Davis's dissertation "Visions Fugitives: Glimpses into Prokofiev's Compositional Development from 1915-1917," details Prokofiev's progression of compositional style within one solo work for piano.[32] Davis highlights the progression

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[30] Gary O'Shea, "Prokofiev's Early Solo Piano Music: Context, Influences, Forms, Performances" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 2013).

[31] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923,* Appendix 5.

[32] Laryssa Davis, "Visions Fugitives: Glimpses into Prokofiev's Compositional Development from 1915-1917" (D.M.A. doc., University of Nebraska—Lincoln, 2011).

of compositional style by ordering the 20 pieces of the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 chronologically by date of composition. Prokofiev composed the *Visions fugitives* between 1915 and 1917 but did not publish the pieces in the order he composed them, instead reordering them to emphasize the musical intensity. Davis claims that by examining the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 by year of composition one can identify Prokofiev's progression of harmonic language from a primarily tonal scheme to one that is increasingly chromatic. The set was completed in 1917, and is an important work in understanding Prokofiev's style of writing for the piano directly preceding the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32.

Steven Moellering's dissertation, "Visions Fugitives, Opus 22: Insights into Sergei Prokofiev's Compositional Vision," is primarily a theoretical study.[33] The theoretical parameters set forth by Moellering provide additional considerations when analyzing the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. His work differs from Davis's. Davis provides an understanding of Prokofiev's compositional evolution within opus 22 over the course of three years, whereas Moellering analyzes the pieces in the order which they are presented focusing on the five lines of composition as identified by Prokofiev (lyrical melody, motoric rhythm, modern harmony, neo-Classic form, and the grotesque), as well as ten additional characteristics: (1) dissipating endings, those that do not end emphatically; (2) sharp dynamic contrasts; (3) disjunct melody; (4) chromatic melody and free counterpoint; (5) homophonic accompanimental figures; (6) structures based

[33] Steven Moellering, "Visions Fugitives, Opus 22: Insights into Sergei Prokofiev's Compositional Vision" (D.M.A. doc., University of Nebraska—Lincoln, 2007).

on the tritone; (7) frequent use of the third; (8) use of the seventh which creates an unstable harmonic function; (9) ternary form which provides contrast; and (10) abrupt shifts to distant tonalities.[34] Additionally, Moellering analyzes Prokofiev's recording of the *Visions fugitives,* Op. 22 to better understand the composer's interpretation of these works.

In addition to his recording of the *Visions fugitives,* Op. 22, Prokofiev also recorded the *Ten Piano Pieces*, Op. 12. Jung Hee Park's dissertation, "A Performer's Perspective: A Performance History and Analysis of Sergei Prokofiev's *Ten Piano Pieces*, Op. 12," analyzes Prokofiev's interpretation to provide ideas on performance practices of the early twentieth century.[35] A recording of the third piece (*Gavotte*) from the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 by Prokofiev also exists. The interpretative analyses of Prokofiev's recordings conducted by Moellering and Park aid in the performance analysis of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. Furthermore, the technical analyses found in Park's study highlight performance considerations for Prokofiev's piano works. In order to properly analyze opus 32, one must consider the theoretical aspects of Prokofiev's musical language. Studies conducted by Thibodeau, Rifkin, and Ashley aim to describe elements of Prokofiev's writing that cannot be explained by traditional theoretical models.

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[34] Moellering, "Visions Fugitives, Opus 22," ii.

[35] Jung Hee Park, "A Performer's Perspective: A Performance History and Analysis of Sergei Prokofiev's *Ten Piano Pieces*, Op. 12" (D.M.A. doc., Boston University, 2009).

Prokofiev's music is not easily described by common tonal or post-tonal methods of analysis. While highly chromatic and dissonant, Prokofiev's music is not easily analyzed using methods of post-tonal analysis. At the same time, his harmonic language is not always functional, and therefore, traditional tonal analysis is not a perfect model. Patricia Ruth Ashley's dissertation, "Prokofiev's Piano Music: Line, Chord, Key," provides a theoretical analysis of Prokofiev's compositional style as discussed in a survey of the all the major solo piano literature excluding the transcriptions.[36] Ashely's main goal was to identify elements of Prokofiev's style that were innovative, and excluded elements such as instrumentation, form, and rhythm. The study focuses on three main style characteristics including harmonic sonority, melodic line, and usage of key relationships.

The term "wrong-note" has become synonymous with Prokofiev's harmonic language. As Deborah Anne Rifkin points out in her dissertation, "Tonal Coherence in Prokofiev's Music: A Study of the Interrelationships of Structure, Motives, and Design," the term "wrong-note" is problematic when used to describe Prokofiev's music. She states:

> Using the term "wrong" seems to imply that these chromatic excursions are incorrect substitutions for the "right notes," which would be notes that conform to conventional tonal expectations. Most studies interpret Prokofiev's music as tonal, yet they relegate the "wrong notes" to an insignificant structural status. Other analyses consider "wrong notes" integral

[36] Patricia Ruth Ashley, "Prokofiev's Piano Music: Line, Chord, Key" (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 1963).

elements of an atonal structure and approach wrong-note music using pitch-class set analysis.[37]

Rifkin aims to demonstrate how "wrong notes" participate within a tonal framework, rather than acting as a disruption. Michael Thibodeau's dissertation, "An Analysis of Selected Piano Works by Sergey Prokofiev using the theories of B.L. Yavorsky," is a similar study that seeks to explain "wrong-note" phenomena within a tonal framework by applying Yavorsky's theories to Prokofiev's music.[38] The studies conducted by Rifkin and Thibodeau assist in the understanding of Prokofiev's harmonic language.

Two major studies conducted by Thomas Fritz and John Rego aid in providing historical context surrounding Prokofiev as a composer and pianist. In his dissertation, "The Development of Russian Piano Music as Seen in the Literature of Mussorgsky, Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Prokofiev," Thomas Fritz discusses the development of Russian piano music and piano teaching from 1860 to 1959, providing a framework for the time periods before and after Prokofiev's life.[39] John Rego's dissertation, "Skryabin, Rakhmaninov, and Prokofiev as Composer-Pianists: The Russian Piano Tradition, Aesthetics, and Performance Practices," renders a more in-depth study of

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[37] Deborah Anne Rifkin, "Tonal Coherence in Prokofiev's Music: A Study of the Interrelationships of Structure, Motives, and Design" (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 2000), iii.

[38] Michael James Thibodeau, "An Analysis of Selected Piano Works by Sergey Prokofiev using the theories of B.L. Yavorsky" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1993).

[39] Thomas Lee Fritz, "The Development of Russian Piano Music as Seen in the Literature of Mussorgsky, Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Prokofiev" (D.M.A. doc., University of Southern California, 1959).

Prokofiev as a performer than previously mentioned dissertations. The first chapter of Rego's study centers around the Russian piano school and provides a background on the performance and pedagogical practices of Russian pianists. Rego later details Prokofiev's career as a performer which helped to shape a "Soviet brand of pianism."[40]

Beyond the studies listed above relating directly to the pedagogical importance, compositional style, and theoretical and historical studies regarding Prokofiev, several dissertations on the works of other composers provide examples for pedagogical and performance guides on intermediate and early-advanced piano literature. These include the following dissertations: "Clara Schumann's Character Pieces: A Pedagogical Approach to Selected Works" by Olivia Ellis,[41] "A Pedagogical Guide to the *25 Études Mélodiques* Opus 45 of Stephen Heller" by Larissa Kiefer,[42] "Selected Solo Piano Collections of Alexander Gretchaninoff: An Analysis for Teaching and Performance" by Yeeseon Kwon,[43] "The Dances for Solo Piano of Paul Creston: A Pedagogical and

[40] John Anthony Rego, "Skryabin, Rakhmaninov, and Prokofiev as Composer-Pianists: The Russian Piano Tradition, Aesthetics, and Performance Practices" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2012), v.

[41] Olivia D. Ellis, "Clara Schumann's Character Pieces: A Pedagogical Approach to Selected Works" (D.M.A. doc., University of Oklahoma, 2016).

[42] Larissa Marie Kiefer, "A Pedagogical Guide to the *25 Études Mélodiques* Opus 45 of Stephen Heller" (D.M.A. doc., University of Oklahoma, 2001).

[43] Yeeseon Kwon, "Selected Solo Piano Collections of Alexander Gretchaninoff: An Analysis for Teaching and Performance" (D.M.A. doc., University of Oklahoma, 1998).

Performance Overview" by Francis Leach,[44] and "The Solo Piano Music of Gian-Carlo Menotti: A Pedagogical and Performance Analysis" by Sylvia Ryan.[45]

Journal Articles

The only journal articles written on the teaching aspects of Prokofiev's technically accessible literature generally focus on the *Music for Children*, Op. 65. While the *Music for Children*, Op. 65 is not the focus of the present study, it provides insight into the analytical parameters of pedagogical writing. Ruth Burnham's article, "Prokofiev's *Music for Children*, Op. 65,"[46] emphasizes a variety of benefits students will gain by studying these pieces such as note-reading skills, understanding terms, accent markings, and grace notes, which are additional points of analyses not found in Freije's or Liu's dissertations. The *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 will help develop similar skills as analyzed by Burnham such as note-reading, musical terms, and accent markings.

Peter Daniel Klein's article, "Sergei Prokofiev's Children's Pieces, Op. 65: A Comprehensive Approach to Learning about a Composer and His Works: Biography,

[44] Francis Orrin Leach, "The Dances for Solo Piano of Paul Creston: A Pedagogical and Performance Overview" (D.M.A. doc., University of Oklahoma, 1994).

[45] Sylvia Watkins Ryan, "The Solo Piano Music of Gian-Carlo Menotti: A Pedagogical and Performance Analysis" (D.M.A. doc., University of Oklahoma, 1993).

[46] Ruth Burnham, "Prokofiev's *Music for Children*, Op. 65," *Clavier Companion* 3, no. 2 (March/April 2011): 46-50, accessed May 31, 2016, EBSCOhost.

Style, Form and Analysis,"[47] is a unique analysis which relates Prokofiev's biographical information to formal description of the pieces. Klein writes,

> I intend to use Prokofiev's biography, along with style, form, and analysis in an instructive fashion to aid in analyzing his lesser known *Children's Pieces*, Op. 65 for piano. I believe this can assist piano teachers in providing comprehensive instruction which uses the lessons and experiences of the composer, in part, as lessons to guide us to an informed performance.[48]

Encouraging students to consider the events that took place during a composer's life while writing a work will help frame their interpretation. Klein's article provides an example of how one can also tie the historical events into the teaching of Prokofiev's *Four Pieces*, Op. 32.

Several articles explore musical theories in further attempts to understand Prokofiev's distinct musical language. Richard Bass's article "Prokofiev's Technique of Chromatic Displacement"[49] sets forth an explanation for the frequent chromaticism within a tonal framework. Courtenay Harter identifies common twentieth century cadential patterns in Prokofiev's piano sonatas using common-practice analysis in her article, "Bridging Common Practice and the Twentieth Century: Cadences in

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[47] Peter Daniel Klein, "Sergei Prokofiev's Children's Pieces, Op. 65: A Comprehensive Approach to Learning about a Composer and His Works: Biography, Style, Form and Analysis," *SpringerPlus* 3, no. 23 (January 2014), accessed June 22, 2016, http://www.springerplus.com/content/3/1/23.

[48] Klein, "Prokofiev's Children's Pieces," 1.

[49] Richard Bass, "Prokofiev's Technique of Chromatic Displacement," *Musical Analysis* 7, no. 2 (July 1988): 197-214, accessed May 31, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/854056.

Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas."[50] Other articles for reference include Deborah Rifkin's "A Theory of Motives for Prokofiev's Music"[51] and Ken Stephenson's "Melodic Tendencies in Prokofiev's 'Romeo and Juliet."[52] While these articles do not directly mention the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, the theoretical descriptions benefit the analyses in this document.

Several remaining articles provide a summary of Prokofiev's musical style and provide an overview of his piano works. These include Daniel Jaffé's "Prokofiev at the Keyboard"[53] and Frank Merrick's "Prokofieff's Works for Solo Piano."[54] Marion Bauer's article, "Prokofieff Distinguishes Between Modern and Contemporary,"[55] reports Prokofiev's definition of the terms 'modern' and 'contemporary' and describes why his music is considered 'contemporary' rather than 'modern.' He felt 'modern' was best used to describe atonal music. Finally, Prokofiev himself discusses his ideas on

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[50] Courtenay L. Harter, "Bridging Common Practice and the Twentieth Century: Cadences in Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 23 (October 2009): 57-77.

[51] Deborah Rifkin, "A Theory of Motives for Prokofiev's Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 265-90, accessed May 5, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/mts.2004.26.2.265.

[52] Ken Stephenson, "Melodic Tendencies in Prokofiev's 'Romeo and Juliet'," *College Music Symposium* 37 (1997): 109-28, accessed June 1, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40374307.

[53] Daniel Jaffé, "Prokofiev at the Keyboard," *International Piano* (May/June 2005): 18-21.

[54] Frank Merrick, "Prokofieff's Works for Solo Piano," *Tempo,* no. 11 (Spring 1949): 26-29, accessed June 22, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/944057.

[55] Marion Bauer, "Prokofieff Distinguishes Between Modern and Contemporary," *The Musical Leader* (3 February 1930).

melody, chromaticism, and operatic music in his article, "Prokofiev Explains,"[56] published in the *Musical Times* in 1948.

Selected Recordings

Several recordings of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 are available. Recordings are a useful tool for performers and teachers to glean interpretative ideas. Prokofiev recorded several of his own works including the third piece of the set, *Gavotte*, which is available on the Naxos label. The *Gavotte* was recorded March 4, 1935 in the Salle Rameau in Paris.[57] In addition to the *Gavotte*, Prokofiev recorded the *Suggestion diabolique*, Op. 4, No. 4; the *Toccata*, Op. 11; the *Ten Pieces*, Op. 12, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 7, and 10; *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, Nos. 1 and 2; *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, Nos. 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, and 18; and the *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31, Nos. 2 and 3. The recordings by Prokofiev are included in a discography collected by Stephen Fiess as part of his book on the piano works of Prokofiev. Fiess's discography includes all major recordings, categorized by opus, made prior to the book's publication in 1994.[58] In addition to the recordings by the composer, a number of pianists have recorded the complete works of Prokofiev. The best recordings of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 are found in these complete

[56] Sergei Prokofiev, "Prokofiev Explains," *The Musical Times* 89, no. 1226 (August 1948): 233-34, accessed May 31, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/933828.

[57] Sergei Prokofiev, *Prokofiev Plays Prokofiev*, recorded March 4, 1935, Naxos Historical, EC, 2001, CD.

[58] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 216-242.

recording sets by Boris Berman,[59] György Sándor,[60] Frederic Chiu,[61] and Oleg Marshev.[62] Other notable artists have recorded the complete piano sonatas including Barbara Nissman,[63] who studied with György Sándor, Anne-Marie McDermott,[64] and Matti Raekallio.[65]

[59] Boris Berman, *Prokofiev: Complete Piano Music,* Chandos, Essex, UK, 1990-1995, Volumes 1-9, CDs.

[60] György Sándor, *Gygory Sandor Plays Prokofiev: Complete Solo Piano Music*, Vox, Hauppauge, NY, 1994, Volumes 1-2, CDs.

[61] Frederic Chiu, *Prokofiev: Complete Music for Solo Piano*, Harmonia Mundi, Paris, 2001, CD.

[62] Oleg Marshev, *Sergei Prokofiev: Piano Music*, Danacord, Copenhagen, 2004, Volumes 1-5, CDs.

[63] Barbara Nissman, *Prokofiev by Nissman*, Sony, New York, 1989, CD.

[64] Anne-Marie McDermott, *Prokofiev—The Sonatas for Piano*, Bridge, New Rochelle, NY, 2009, CD.

[65] Matti Raekallio, *Prokofiev: Piano Sonatas Nos. 1-9*, Ondine, Helsinki, 2011, CD.

Chapter 3

COMPOSITIONAL STYLE AND OVERVIEW OF SOLO PIANO LITERATURE

For teachers and performers, this chapter highlights the significance of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 within Prokofiev's output for solo piano, providing context that will encourage study and performance of this late-intermediate and early-advanced work. The chapter begins with a discussion of Prokofiev's compositional style including the musical influences seen in his work, his five lines of composition, and some key tools for identifying and understanding his harmonic language. Following the review of compositional style, this chapter provides an overview of the composer's output for solo piano that includes selected historical facts, notable musical aspects, and comments on level of difficulty for each piece. Given Prokofiev's compositional preference for advanced and virtuosic piano works, particular emphasis in this overview is given to identifying the level, harmonic attributes, and technical challenges of works with some pedagogic value such as the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32.

Compositional Style

Prokofiev's compositional style reveals Classical and Romantic influences as well as particular aesthetic values that emerged in the twentieth century. This subsection identifies these stylistic influences before reviewing Prokofiev's five lines of

composition, using the composer's own descriptions as well as other commentary as the basis for understanding these lines. Finally, this subsection concludes with a review of the theoretical analyses of Prokofiev's harmonic language since these analyses play a part in the detailed descriptions of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 in chapter 4.

Influences

Much of the success of Prokofiev's music rests in his ability to combine innovation with the familiar. Prokofiev's works have been labeled as neo-Classical and neo-Romantic. His use of Classical forms such as ternary, sonata-allegro, scherzo and trio, and rondo are prevalent. Like many other twentieth century composers associated with neo-Classical aesthetics, Prokofiev used many dance forms from the Baroque including the gavotte, rigaudon, allemande, and minuet.[1] In fact, two of these dance forms, the minuet and gavotte, appear in the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. Neil Minturn has also cited traditional tendencies in the tonal aspects of Prokofiev's harmonic language including triads, diatonic scale fragments, and stepwise motion.[2] While many twentieth century composers involved in the neo-Classic movement rejected Romantic ideals, Prokofiev's writing has also been referred to as neo-Romantic.

Prokofiev's ability to craft lyrical melodies is the most common reference to Romantic aesthetics. Stephen Fiess describes Prokofiev's melodic writing as

[1] Fiess, *Piano Works,* 2.

[2] Minturn, *Music of Prokofiev,* 11.

"sentimental, sometimes deeply Romantic in feeling."[3] Berman characterizes Prokofiev's lyrical writing into two types. The first type of melody uses widely spaced intervals. These types are of significant length, are often accompanied by secondary contrapuntal voices, and have a reflective quality. The second use of melody is naïve and timid in nature, and consists of simple themes.[4]

Impressionism, expressionism, surrealism, mysticism, primitivism, and folklorism are some of the aesthetic trends that developed during the twentieth century. Prokofiev adopted some of these aesthetic ideals and rejected others. He abhorred impressionism, and once described Debussy's music as "jelly…absolutely spineless music…except perhaps, it's very 'personal' jelly and the jellymaker knows what he's doing."[5] Prokofiev also avoided ties to surrealism, mysticism, and folklorism. Stephen Fiess argues that Prokofiev "preferred a musical aesthetic that was down-to-earth and robust rather than musical or ethereal,"[6] and that "the creation of folkloristic Russian music was not one of Prokofiev's major goals."[7] Of these trends, Fiess believes that expressionism and primitivism influenced Prokofiev's work, particularly compositions characterized as toccata-like or motoric.

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[3] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 2.

[4] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 11.

[5] David Gutman, *Prokofiev* (London: Alderman Press, 1988), 84.

[6] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 3.

[7] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 4.

Expressionism in music can be characterized by extreme dissonance and rhythmic energy, both of which are compositional elements found in works such as Prokofiev's *Suggestion diabolique*, Op. 4, No. 4 and the *Toccata in D minor*, Op. 11. Expressionism is a term used primarily to describe visual arts in Austria and Germany before, during, and after World War I that depict anxiety and disorder. The term is sometimes used to portray music of the time that appears chaotic on the surface in order to express the turbulent psyche of the composer.[8] In order to substantiate Fiess's belief that expressionism impacted Prokofiev's work, it is necessary to examine his life while composing the *Suggestion diabolique* and the *Toccata in D minor* to determine if any difficult live events may have inspired the composition of these works.

Prokofiev composed the *Suggestion diabolique* on a return visit to his childhood home in Sontsovka during the summer of 1908. In his autobiography, Prokofiev comments on the events occurring in his life at the time. Prokofiev was primarily living in St. Petersburg while studying at the conservatory. Prokofiev's friends had grown up and moved away, just as Prokofiev had done. His parents were growing older and they discussed their views on death. Perhaps, Prokofiev's thoughts were turbulent in some way during this time as he reflected on his changing life, moving from adolescence into adulthood. In one entry, Prokofiev wrote,

> In September we went back to Petersburg. It is clear with the passing years that my relations with Sontsovka were fading. Or rather, I was losing my interest in it. Petersburg was gradually claiming me—because of both friends and music. At that age I was still indifferent to nature, although I must say that a summer in Sontsovka offered many marvelous things. But Morolev had

[8] David Fanning, "Expressionism," in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed January 20, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09141.

> left, and my childhood friends had flown off in different directions, like flocks of sparrows.[9]

The tone of Prokofiev's writing is sentimental. While not a direct depiction of the dark energy of the *Suggestion diabolique*, it is clear that he was experiencing some inner turmoil as this chapter of his life was coming to an end.

A look at Prokofiev's life during the composition of the *Toccata in D minor*, Op. 11 reveals events that might explain an inner turmoil that aligns with the motivations of expressionism. Prokofiev completed his opera, *Maddalena*, at the end of August in 1911. The work has been compared to Strauss' *Salome* in style and difficulty. The extreme complexity of the vocal parts prohibited the work from being staged at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and future attempts to stage the work failed.[10] Certainly, this would have been upsetting to Prokofiev. Furthermore, Prokofiev seemed to lack support from his teachers at the Conservatory. Harlow Robinson writes, "Lyadov and Glazunov had written him off as an impudent rebel who did not want to be taught; he regarded them as unimaginative and old-fashioned. Esipova [his piano teacher] thought him demanding, arrogant and inflexible, and he found her lessons for the most part unenlightening."[11] Perhaps the *Toccata* provided a means for Prokofiev to express any frustrations he may have been experiencing during this time. Related to expressionism, primitivism is another twentieth century influence found in both the *Suggestion diabolique* and *Toccata in D minor*.

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[9] Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev,* 267-8.

[10] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev,* 81-3.

[11] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev,* 84.

Stravinsky's ballet, *The Rite of Spring*, composed between 1911 and 1913, is the iconic musical example of primitivism from the early twentieth century. Primitivism developed in the arts out of an interest in primitive cultures. In music, elements of primitive music used include short motives, *ostinato* patterns, and dissonant intervals of a limited range. While Prokofiev's *Suggestion diabolique* and *Toccata in D minor* were composed prior to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, they certainly exhibit some of these primitivistic qualities. Driving rhythms and dissonant intervals of a primitive influence are found in additional piano works such as the second movement of the *Piano Sonata No. 2 in D minor*, Op. 14 and the final movement of the *Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major*, Op. 83. Additional works of this nature include *Four Etudes*, Op. 4, No. 4, *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, Nos. 3 and 5, and *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, Nos. 14 and 15. In addition to the neo-Classic, neo-Romantic, expressionist, and primitivistic influences that Prokofiev drew upon for his compositions, Prokofiev highlighted five lines of composition used throughout his output.

Prokofiev's Five Lines of Composition

Like other composers, Prokofiev's musical language evolved throughout his lifetime. Despite any changes that occurred over time, Prokofiev identified five elements of his compositional style that pervade his output: classical, modern, toccata (or motor), lyrical and grotesque. He referred to these elements as compositional lines and described them in detail in his autobiography.

The music of Beethoven played a role in shaping Prokofiev's use of Classical forms and it is not surprising that it is the first compositional line identified by the composer in his own writing:

> The first was the classical line, which could be traced back to my early childhood and the Beethoven sonatas I heard my mother play. This line takes sometimes a neo-classical form (sonatas, concertos), sometimes imitates 18th century classics (gavottes, the *Classical symphony*, partly the *Sinfonietta*).[12]

Prokofiev was exposed to Classical music in his childhood, hearing his mother, who was fond of Beethoven, practice the piano for up to six hours per day. Prokofiev was able to play easy pieces of Mozart and Beethoven by the age of nine.[13] Harlow Robinson also mentions Prokofiev's interest in organizing and categorizing anything from counting the number of measures in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* to collecting stamps, and later organizing his own opus numbers. Robinson goes on to describe Prokofiev's obsession with organization as a means to control his experiences and to arrange his feelings.[14] Perhaps Classical form provided a vehicle for Prokofiev to innovate within the confines of an organized structure.

The modern aspect of Prokofiev's compositional style is exposed in his harmonic language. Prokofiev goes on to discuss this modern trend in his autobiography, and the composer had more to say about this modern line in his musical work:

> The second line, the modern trend, begins with that meeting with Taneyev when he reproached me for the "crudeness" of my harmonies. At first this

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[12] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography,* 36-37.

[13] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev,* 8, 13.

[14] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev,* 22.

> took the form of a search for my own harmonic language, developing later into a search for a language which to express my powerful emotions (*The Phantom, Despair, Diabolical Suggestion, Sarcasms, Scythian Suite*, a few songs of the Op. 23, *The Gambler*, *Seven, They Were Seven*, the Quintet and the Second Symphony). Although this line covers harmonic language mainly, it also includes new departures in melody, orchestration and drama.[15]

Early in Prokofiev's training he was encouraged to experiment with harmony. The meeting Prokofiev referred to with Taneyev took place when he was eleven years old. Prokofiev played a four-hand version of his *Symphony in G minor* with Taneyev, later writing about this meeting:

> When we had played the symphony, Taneyev said, "Bravo! Bravo! But the harmonic treatment is a bit simple. Mostly just… heh, heh…I, IV, and V progressions.
>
> That little "heh, heh" played a very great role in my musical development. It went deep, stung me, and put down roots. When I got home I broke into tears and began to rack my brains trying to think up harmonic complexities. …Only four years later my harmonic inventions were attracting attention. And when, eight years later, I played one of my most recent compositions for Taneyev, he muttered, "It seems to have a lot of false notes…"[16]

The false notes Taneyev referred to became what many today call "wrong notes" and "wrong-note writing" or "wrong-note harmonies" when discussing Prokofiev's harmonic language. While his harmonic language is quite dissonant, it can still be characterized as tonal since harmonies lead to the tonic in most cases. Prokofiev strongly opposed atonality, expressing that it felt cold, mathematical, and excessively rational. His harmonic language uses triads, which at times are polytonal, and features a great deal of chromaticism. In addition to harmony, melody was a component of the modern line. Prokofiev had a particular ability in composing melodies, for both their

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[15] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography, 36-37.*

[16] Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev,* 59.

lyrical quality as well as the interesting tonal colors created by adding chromatic tones. In addition to chromaticism found in melodic lines, Prokofiev often writes large leaps which are modern in comparison to melodies of the Romantic period which are more restricted in range due to their vocal nature. In his melodies, Prokofiev used chromatic tones to add interest, particularly if the melody was stated a second time. He thought that melodies should be conceived as one line despite any large leaps.

The third compositional line identified by Prokofiev is the motor or toccata line. Neil Minturn suggests that the toccata line is most prevalent in Prokofiev's keyboard works given the history of the toccata and its association with the keyboard and Prokofiev's career as a pianist.[17] Prokofiev describes this line as follows:

> The third line is *toccata* or "motor" line traceable perhaps to Schumann's *Toccata* which made such a powerful impression on me when I first heard it (*Etudes*, Op. 2, *Toccata,* Op. 11, *Scherzo,* Op. 12, the *Scherzo* of the Second Concerto, the *Toccata* in the Fifth Concerto, and also the repetitive intensity of the melodic figures in the *Scythian Suite*, *Pas d'acier* [*The Age of Steel*], or passages in the Third Concerto). This line is perhaps the least important.[18]

The word toccata derives from the Italian *toccare* for 'to touch.' Toccata can be used to describe pieces of a virtuosic nature that display manual dexterity. Early toccatas of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were free in form with contrasting rhapsodic and contrapuntal sections. The toccata fell out of fashion during the Classical period but resurfaced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by

[17] Minturn, *Music of Prokofiev,* 40.

[18] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography*, 36-37.

composers such as Schumann, Debussy, and Ravel.[19] It was Schumann's *Toccata in C Major*, Op. 7 that Prokofiev believed ignited his interest in the genre.

The toccata line can be characterized by driving rhythms, often as rapid *ostinato* figurations. "The active passages of Prokofiev's music, his 'toccata line', are based on relentless movement of similar rhythmic values, usually non legato; they often contain an *ostinato* motive. Emotionally, they range from fierce and aggressive to vigorous, and from mysterious to humorous."[20] Furthermore, Stephen Fiess relates Prokofiev's toccata line to a mechanistic style characterized by "repetitive figures that suggest imaginative associations with the movement of pistons, clockwork mechanisms, and other mechanical actions."[21] In addition to piano works such as the *Suggestion diabolique*, Op. 4, No. 4, the *Toccata in D minor*, Op. 11, and movements from the *Sonata No. 2 in D minor*, Op. 14 and *Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major*, Op. 83, the toccata element appears in the *Scythian Suite* and *Le Pas d'acier*, as mentioned by Prokofiev, as well as the scherzo movements of the *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major*, Op. 19 and the *Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Major*, Op. 94a.

Melody is of key importance in describing the lyrical or fourth compositional line, one that determined the quality of a composition for Prokofiev. The composer explains his thoughts in this way:

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[19] John Caldwell, "Toccata," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed January 30, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/28035.

[20] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 11-12.

[21] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 4.

> The fourth line is lyrical; it appears first as a thoughtful and meditative mood, not always associated with the melody, or, at any rate, with the long melody (*The Fairy-tale*, Op. 3, *Dreams, Autumnal Sketch* [*Osenneye*], *Songs*, Op. 9, *The Legend*, Op. 12), sometimes partly contained in the long melody (choruses on Balmont texts, beginning of the First Violin Concerto, songs to Akhmatova's poems, *Old Granny's Tales* [*Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31]). This line was not noticed until much later. For a long time I was given no credit for any lyrical gift whatsoever, and for want of encouragement it developed slowly. But as time went on I gave more and more attention to this aspect of my work.[22]

Boris Berman argues that the importance of melody for Prokofiev is evidenced by his criticism of others' work. In his letters and diaries, Prokofiev often commented on the quality of a composition, mentioning a noteworthy harmony or compelling orchestration, but that the primary material, or melody, of a work was lacking.[23] The high regard Prokofiev displayed for melody is not only apparent in his works, but also his writings.

Prokofiev wrote a response article for *Pioneer* magazine in 1939 to the question "Will there come a time when all melodies, all harmonious combinations of sound come to an end?"[24] Prokofiev begins his response by comparing melody to the game of chess, for which he had a particular fondness, and mentioning a chess player he knew who wanted to write a book with solutions to any problem in chess. He points out that this would be impossible for there are over sixty million ways for the players to move by the fourth turn alone. The combination of notes to form melodies are equally vast.

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[22] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography*, 36-37.

[23] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 14.

[24] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography*, 115.

Prokofiev calculates six billion ways to combine eight notes of any given melody. He goes on to say,

> But that is not all, notes have different lengths and the rhythm changes the melody completely. Besides this, harmony, counterpoint, accompaniment also change the character of the melody. Hence the six thousand million [or six billion] can be multiplied still more for all the possibilities to be exhausted.[25]

For Prokofiev, melody is the primary material of importance. The rhythm, harmony, counterpoint, and accompaniment appear to be secondary. For this reason, listening to a professional recording of a work by Prokofiev is much different than learning to play it yourself for the first time. The dissonant and chromatic language, difficult reading of the score posed by accidentals and intricate rhythms, and technical challenges make it difficult to understand Prokofiev's music upon first reading. Voicing of the melody and attention to phrasing are of prime importance when learning to play the piano works of Prokofiev.

The final compositional line identified by Prokofiev, the grotesque line, is the most difficult to define. Prokofiev objected to this characterization of his music, preferring instead to reference identifiable qualities of the Scherzo:

> I should like to limit myself to these four "lines," and to regard the fifth, "grotesque" line which some wish to ascribe to me, as simply a deviation from the other lines. In any case I strenuously object to the very word "grotesque" which has become hackneyed to the point of nausea. As a matter of fact the use of the French word "grotesque" in this sense is a distortion of the meaning. I would prefer my music to be described as "Scherzo-ish" in quality, or else by three words describing the various degrees of the Scherzo—whimsicality, laughter, mockery.[26]

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[25] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography,* 115-16.

[26] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography,* 36-37.

Several authors on Prokofiev's music addressed the grotesque line in various ways. Boris Berman taps into the quality of humor to describe the grotesque line. Berman writes, "humor, in particular, comes in many shades, encompassing gentle teasing, a hearty joke, or cruel and grotesque mockery," and "to express a broad gamut of humorous emotions, Prokofiev built an impressive vocabulary that included incisive rhythms, wide melodic leaps or panting, stuttering melodies, and sharp dynamic contrasts."[27]

Neil Minturn relates the grotesque to Prokofiev's ability to combine tradition with innovation. Minturn highlights this interaction in the *March* from *Love for Three Oranges* which is traditional in the use of the militaristic rhythm in the bass, and the opening sixteenth-note pattern that recalls a drumroll, yet innovative in the use of "wrong-note" writing.[28] Both Berman and Minturn indicate that the grotesque line in some ways is a combination of the first four lines described. Berman mentions the use of rhythm and melody, and Minturn the combination of modern harmony with traditional or neo-Classic forms. In the performance notes to Matthew Edwards edition of Prokofiev's *Music for Children*, Op. 65, he eloquently writes that the grotesque line "is something like the image of a gargoyle, in which the carving and craftsmanship may be pleasing to the eye, but the face is frightening; a sort of combination of the beautiful and the beastly."[29]

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[27] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 12.

[28] Minturn, *Music of Prokofiev*, 31.

[29] Sergei Prokofiev, *Music for Children Opus 65*, ed. Matthew Edwards (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2009), 5.

In reviewing all five of Prokofiev's compositional lines, it is interesting that Prokofiev seems to undermine the importance of the toccata line ("[t]his line is perhaps the least important") and contest the characterizations of his grotesque line ("I strenuously object to the very word 'grotesque' which has become hackneyed…").[30] Neil Minturn argues that Prokofiev felt his style was regarded by others as primarily rhythmic, and in his autobiographical writings, Prokofiev wanted to depict an image that displayed a diverse set of compositional abilities.[31] While Prokofiev seems to highlight the importance of the lyrical, modern, and classic lines of composition, the toccata and grotesque lines should be viewed as equally important.

Harmonic Language

While the primary purpose of the present study is not one of a theoretical nature, it is important to examine some of the theories used to analyze Prokofiev's music since such analyses are used in the detailed descriptions of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 in chapter 4. Specifically, this review identifies and highlights nine recognized ways in which the composer's harmonic language diverges from common practice harmony.

The harmonic language of Prokofiev's music is not easily analyzed by either tonal or post-tonal methods exclusively. His music cannot be analyzed solely by twelve-tone set theory, nor can common practice analysis account for his use of "false notes." Most music theorists appear to use a tonal basis in their approach to analyzing

[30] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography,* 36-37.

[31] Minturn, *Music of Prokofiev*, 26.

Prokofiev's harmony, but due to the highly chromatic and dissonant nature of his music, traditional harmonic analysis does not always allow for a full explanation of his unique harmonic language. Therefore, the popular solution to harmonic analysis is to use a tonal approach with the application of some post-tonal techniques. The combination of tonal and post-tonal techniques allows for a more comprehensive understanding of Prokofiev's language than the single use of common practice or post-tonal analytics.

One of the most widely referenced theoretical studies on Prokofiev's piano music is Patricia Ruth Ashley's dissertation, "Prokofiev's Piano Music: Line, Chord, Key."[32] Ashley identified nine categories to explain the ways in which Prokofiev departed from common practice harmony. Those categories are,

1. Harmonic side-slipping and substitution
2. Creation of new chords by chromatic motion of one or more lines against a pedal point
3. Harmonic elision
4. Parallelism
5. Harmonies based upon unusual scales
6. Unexpected modulations to foreign keys and unusual key relationships
7. Chromatic harmony
8. Polychords and superimposed chords
9. Creation of new chords through added tones[33]

Ashley's categories serve as effective theoretical tools to describe Prokofiev's inventive harmonic techniques and are used in the analyses of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 presented in chapter 4. Stephen Fiess summarized Ashley's nine categories as follows:

(1) Harmonic side-slipping is defined as the "use of neighbor chords in place of

[32] Ashley, "Prokofiev's Piano Music."

[33] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 14-15.

traditional chords, sometimes effecting a brief transition to a distant key."[34] (2) New chords are created when one line moves chromatically against sustained notes as seen in the second movement of the *Sonata No. 2 in D minor*, Op. 14. Such chromatic motion is common in Prokofiev's earlier works, but rarely found after the *Sonata No. 4 in C minor*, Op. 29. (3) Harmonic elision describes a technique of removing a chord that one expects to be present but is missing from the progression. (4) Prokofiev used many intervals and chords in parallel motion such as fourths, perfect fifths, minor sevenths, minor ninths, augmented triads, and major triads. (5) In addition to regular major and minor modes, Prokofiev also used whole-tone scales and modal scales. (6) Prokofiev arrived in new keys by chromatic, enharmonic, and common-chord modulations. At times, he would even begin a section in an entirely new key after a brief pause.
(7) Chromatic harmony expanded beyond borrowing chords from the parallel major or minor key, augmented-six chords, and secondary dominants to include uncommon chromatic sonorities such as chords based on tritones, chords built on flatted or sharped scale degrees, and chords with added intervals such as ninths and elevenths.
(8) Bitonality and polychords are common in the earlier works of Prokofiev. Examples include the *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, No. 3 in which the right hand has a key signature with three sharps and the left hand has five flats. (9) Lastly, Prokofiev adds notes to chords, taking a regular triad and adding tritones and seconds.[35]

[34] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 15.

[35] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 15-26.

Overview of Solo Piano Literature

Sergei Prokofiev composed numerous works for solo piano including sonatas, etudes, several sets of character pieces, and transcriptions. The great majority of these works require a technical command of the instrument which most advanced pianists can execute. In addition to his solo works, Prokofiev composed five piano concertos, several songs for voice and piano, and chamber works where the piano plays a central role. Prokofiev's affinity for the piano is evidenced by his significant output for the instrument as well as his career as a pianist. This overview of the composer's solo piano literature presents, for each work, selected historical facts, notable musical aspects, and comments on level of difficulty. The author's comments on level of difficulty are primarily intended to differentiate and highlight those pieces from Prokofiev's solo piano works that may be considered intermediate to early-advanced. It is this more limited category of pieces in this overview that serves a similar pedagogical purpose as the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32—that is, to introduce late-intermediate to early-advanced students to the challenges and harmonic language found in the balance of the composer's solo piano literature. But this categorization presents its own challenges, so a discussion on the level of difficulty of Prokofiev's works as defined by Maurice Hinson and Jane Magrath is appropriate before the works are reviewed.

Maurice Hinson is the only author to categorize the difficulty of each piece in Prokofiev's output for piano. In the preface to Hinson's *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire,* he identifies pieces as easy (Bach *Anna Magdalena Notebook,* Schumann *Album for the Young,* Op. 68), intermediate (Beethoven *Ecossaises,* Mendelssohn

Children's Pieces, Op. 72), moderately difficult[36] (Bach *French Suites* and *English Suites*, Mozart *Sonatas*, Brahms *Rhapsody* Op. 79, No. 2), and difficult (Bach *Partitas*, Beethoven *Sonata in F minor*, Op. 57, Chopin *Etudes*, and Prokofiev *Sonata No. 4 in C minor*, Op. 29).[37] The level categories identified by Hinson are general and broad in scope. Jane Magrath uses a more specific system to categorize the level of difficulty by identifying pieces as levels 1 to 10 in *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* while excluding more advanced concert works.[38] Comparing, for example, the selections from Bach's *Anna Magdalena Notebook* which Hinson grades as easy, Magrath grades the pieces as levels 4 to 7. Hinson levels the Beethoven *Écossaises* as intermediate, yet they are levels 3 to 7 under Magrath's system. Using the *Music for Children*, Op. 65 as an example of Prokofiev's, Hinson grades the collection as easy to intermediate, and Magrath places them at levels 6 to 8. Hinson places the Brahms *Rhapsody*, Op. 79, No. 2 in the moderately difficult category, and Magrath grades it at level 10.

In comparing these two prominent repertoire guides, it is apparent that for Prokofiev's piano works, systems used to describe level of difficulty are either limited or somewhat general given that comparisons must be made between composers, genres,

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[36] This study uses the term early-advanced which is equivalent to Hinson's term, moderately difficult, in most cases.

[37] Hinson, *Pianist's Repertoire*, xi-xii.

[38] Magrath, *Pianist's Guide*, v. Magrath explains her book as one which provides "information on a wealth of serious piano solo teaching literature which can pave the way to musical and technical advancement" and to present piano literature for those "…who are not yet able to perform the Chopin *Etudes*, the Beethoven *Sonatas* or the Copland *Variations*."

and time periods. For example, Hinson's more general approach ascribed one level to entire sets of pieces by Prokofiev rather than to individual pieces. Both the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, which contains twenty short pieces, and the *Sonata No. 2 in D minor,* Op. 14 are graded as moderately difficult, while the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 are given a range of intermediate to moderately difficult by Hinson. Despite grading this set as moderately difficult, the *Visions fugitives,* Op. 22 includes selections that could also be considered intermediate such as the *Visions* 1, 8, 13, 16, 17 and 18.

The descriptions found in the following overview incorporate information from Hinson and Magrath (when available) on level of difficulty, and also present the author's observations, including more specific comments on the sets and individual pieces with pedagogic value.[39] These comments are guided by the fact that this study focuses in part on the harmonic language of Prokofiev as seen in the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, and aspects of the composer's departure from common practice harmony which create technical and performance challenges. For this reason, special emphasis in this overview is given to the harmonic attributes and technical challenges in pieces that may prepare students and performers for Prokofiev's more advanced and virtuosic keyboard repertoire.

[39] References in this document to Hinson's levels for Prokofiev's works can be found on pages 781-83 of Hinson's *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire;* and references to Magrath's levels used in this document can be found on pages 468-71 of Magrath's *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*.

Sonatas and Sonatinas

Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 1

At the age of fifteen, Prokofiev began work on the *Sonata No. 1 in F minor*, Op. 1 in 1906. An early, one-movement work, *Sonata No. 1* is written in a Romantic style much different from the sonatas that would follow. Neil Minturn writes, "Its one-movement form also shows a spiritual kinship to the kind of organicism aimed at by many Romantic composers, such as Liszt (in the B-minor Sonata, for example) and Scriabin (as in the Piano Sonatas nos. 5-10)."[40] Stephen Fiess argues that Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 1* is not like the Liszt B minor sonata citing that Prokofiev intended the piece to be the first movement of a four-movement sonata.[41] Furthermore, Fiess compares the Romantic writing in this first sonata to the style of composers such as Schumann, Brahms, and Rachmaninoff.[42] Prokofiev felt that his *Sonata No. 1* was not representative of his mature style, and in his autobiography wrote, "As a rule the publication of his first opus is a landmark for the composer, a sort of dividing line between his early work and his mature compositions. With me it was different: the Sonata No. 1 a naïve and simple little piece, marked the end of my early period; the new began with the Etudes, Op. 2."[43]

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[40] Minturn, *Music of Prokofiev,* 74.

[41] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 49.

[42] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 1.

[43] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography,* 32.

Hinson reports the level of *Sonata No. 1* as moderately difficult. Magrath does not rate this or any of Prokofiev's sonatas noting generally about his piano works that "Much of the music is sophisticated, suited best to the mature musician."[44] The sonata is characterized by an energetic accompaniment in triplets which supports a lyrical chordal melody in the right hand. Despite the composer's characterization of the piece as "naïve and simple," this sonata is better suited for the advanced pianist. The piece is attractive due to its contrast between both dramatic and expressive characters.

Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14

The *Piano Sonata No. 2 in D minor,* Op. 14 is a significant departure from the style and form used in *Sonata No. 1*. *Sonata No. 2* is written in a neo-Classic structure with four movements. The first movement, an *allegro* (*Allegro ma non toroppo*), features two contrasting themes, the second of which is a lyrical melody with a Chopinesque accompaniment of arpeggiated chords. The second movement, a *scherzo* (*Scherzo – Allegro marcato*), is a prime example of the toccata element found in Prokofiev's writing characterized by driving eighth notes throughout the movement. Works written prior to the *Sonata No. 2* such as the *Suggestion diabolique*, Op. 4, No. 4 and the *Toccata,* Op. 11 are likewise rhythmically intense. This second movement features the left hand crossing over the right hand which is both fun to play and to watch in performance. The third movement is a languid *andante* (*Andante*) with a calm character. The harmonies are dissonant and mysterious, which are perhaps a good representation of the grotesque quality Prokofiev used to describe some of his music.

[44] Magrath, *Pianist's Guide*, 468.

The final movement (*Vivace*) is a fast and humorous tarantella with many contrasting ideas. Prokofiev uses the lyrical second theme from the first movement in the development of the fourth movement, creating a cyclic relationship.

Prokofiev's compositional style becomes apparent in *Sonata No. 2* which uses a dissonant harmonic language in a neo-Classic structure of form and presents contrasting ideas. Boris Berman writes,

> Compared with the conservatively homogeneous music of the First Sonata, the Second astonishes with its huge variety, even incongruity, of styles, presented in a paradoxical, carnival atmosphere. In fact, this work pushes the limits of contrasts more than any other Prokofiev sonata. It covers a huge emotional range: from Romantic lyricism to aggressive brutality, from Schumannesque soaring to a parody of the cabaret or of musical automatons.[45]

As with *Sonata No. 1*, Hinson rates *Sonata No. 2* as moderately difficult. While the work is less difficult than later sonatas, it is still a work for advanced pianists. Its varying moods, styles, textures, themes, and technical flare are attractive to the performer and make this sonata an effective addition to a recital program.

Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 28

One of the most effective of the sonatas, the *Sonata No. 3 in A minor*, Op. 28 written in 1917 is also the shortest in the length. Besides *Sonata No. 1,* it is the only other sonata by Prokofiev written in one movement. The popularity of the work stems from the consistent triplet rhythm that creates an exciting drive through much of the piece, a contrasting lyrical second theme, and passionate climaxes. Hinson levels this sonata as difficult and indeed it is. Advanced pianists will enjoy tackling technical

[45] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 57.

challenges found in the work such as fast hand position changes, large chords, rapid arpeggios, and melodic voicing.

Sonata No. 4 in C minor, Op. 29

Prokofiev also wrote the *Sonata No. 4 in C minor*, Op. 29 in 1917 and it is the last work composed prior to his departure from Russia for America in 1918. Prokofiev first performed the sonata at a concert in Petrograd in April 1918 and was unsure how the sonata would be received. In his diary Prokofiev wrote,

> I had not predicted a great success of the Fourth Sonata, but I was quite wrong: the serious elements of the audience all immediately appreciated the second movement, while the others liked the finale, which I played for the first time as it should be played, taking the crescendo leading up to the final statement of the main theme to the very top. Hitherto I had been afraid that I had produced a finale with too abruptly docked a tail, but now it became clear to me that it is good, and that if the final climax is done correctly it represents precisely that culminating point of the sonata after which it must swiftly come to a conclusion.[46]

The opening of the first movement, *Allegro molto sostenuto,* has a foreboding quality written in the depths of the low register. Prokofiev explores contrast of register throughout this movement with quick shifts from low to high. Rapid arpeggiated figures in the right hand are dissonant and shrill adding to its ominous character.

The second movement, *Andante assai,* is marked *serioso* and begins with an *ostinato* accompaniment in the left hand and a slow-moving melody played by the right hand in the low register of the instrument. Interestingly, the second movement is a transcription of an *Andante* movement from an earlier symphony in e minor.[47] It is

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[46] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923,* 269.

[47] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 146.

evident that Prokofiev enjoyed transcribing orchestral works for solo piano as seen in his many transcriptions based on themes from the ballets *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*, which are discussed later in this subsection.

The final movement, *Allegro con brio, ma non leggiere,* is a brilliant sonata-allegro in a neo-Classic style. Boris Berman notes that this sonata was composed at the same time as the *Classical Symphony,* Op. 25 which imitates conventions of the Classical style.[48] One example of this imitation in the sonata is the *Alberti* bass accompaniment. Prokofiev writes a more expansive version of the accompaniment pattern with tenths against a melody in the right hand with Prokofiev's hallmark wrong-note writing. The middle section is simple and lyrical giving the listener a sense of relief before the recapitulation returns with great energy. Hinson rates this sonata as difficult. Suitable for advanced pianists only, the sonata closes with a series of runs before the final forceful chords.

Sonata No. 5 in C Major, Op. 38 (revised as Op. 135)

Completed in Paris in 1923, the *Sonata No. 5 in C Major*, Op. 38 is the only sonata completed while Prokofiev lived outside of Russia. The *Sonata No. 5* is played less often than the others perhaps because of its calm nature, which differs from the first four sonatas and their experimental harmonic language. Prokofiev uses parallel chords with tritones, parallel diminished triads, whole-tone scales, polychords, and quartal chords in the harmonic language of this sonata.[49] Primary technical challenges found

[48] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 90.

[49] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 56-60.

throughout the sonata include large leaps, counterpoint in one hand, polyrhythms, and hand crossings. Prokofiev later revised this sonata and felt that the changes were significant enough to give the sonata a separate opus number. The revised edition is published as *Sonata No. 5 in C Major,* Op. 135. Berman concludes that the revisions are miniscule yet clean up the texture and make the melody more expressive.[50] *Sonata No. 5* is an advanced work, yet Hinson hedges his level categorization somewhat by referring to the work as moderately difficult to difficult. But it is the following three sonatas, Nos. 6, 7 and 8, which are the most noteworthy works by Prokofiev in this genre.

Sonata No. 6 in A Major, Op. 82

Collectively, the three works, *Sonata No. 6 in A Major*, Op. 82; *Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major,* Op. 83; and *Sonata No. 8 in B-flat Major*, Op. 84 are referred to as the "War Sonatas." The term War Sonatas is one used in the West and is not a reference used in Russian musicology.[51] Prokofiev began work on all ten movements of the three sonatas in 1939, and the sonatas were completed before the end of the Second World War. As noted by Berman, "it is difficult to tell whether it was the events in western Europe, Prokofiev's home during 1922-35, or the increasingly repressive climate in the Soviet Union that influenced the composer's mood."[52]

[50] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 103.

[51] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 129.

[52] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 129.

Sonata No. 6 in A Major, Op. 82 was finished in 1940, performed by Prokofiev via radio broadcast in Moscow in April of that year, and in recital by Sviatoslav Richter in November, all before Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941. The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is threatening with the punctuated first and second beats, tritone relationships, and *fortissimo* dynamic of the opening theme. Later, Prokofiev writes *col pugno* indicating the performer is to use their fist on the piano, almost in an outcry of anger. The middle two movements, a light scherzo (*Allegretto*) and a slow waltz (*Tempo di valzer, lentissimo*), provide relief from the agitated first and fourth movements. The fourth movement, *Vivace*, is ominous in character and toccata-like with a sixteenth-note pattern in perpetual motion. Like *Sonata No. 2*, Prokofiev uses material from the first theme and the development of the second movement to tie this sonata together in a cyclic nature. This sonata is listed as difficult by Hinson and the author agrees that it is suitable only for the advanced pianist.

Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major, Op. 83

Sonata No. 7 in B-flat Major, Op. 83 is often regarded as the most effective and most challenging of all the sonatas written by Prokofiev. The structure of the sonata is extremely clear and focused. This sonata was completed in 1942, and Richter first performed the work in January of 1943. After intimately studying and performing the sonata, Richter wrote this poignant remark:

> With this work we are brutally plunged into the anxiously threatening atmosphere of a world that has lost its balance. Chaos and uncertainty reign. We see murderous forces ahead. But this does not mean that what we lived by before thereby ceases to exist. We continue to feel and love. Now the full range of human emotions bursts forth. Together with our fellow men and women, we raise a voice in protest and share the common grief. We sweep everything before us, borne along by the will for victory. In the tremendous

> struggle that this involves, we find the strength to affirm the irrepressible life-force.[53]

Richter's words apply to the emotions drawn out in the sonata. The first movement, *Allegro inquieto*, is in 6/8 with a stately theme reminiscent of a march. A thin texture and the *staccato* touch required for this movement add to the march-like character. The sharp contrasts in dynamics, range, and character might represent the chaos Richter describes. The second movement, *Andante caloroso*, opens with a lighthearted, lyrical melody that creates a sense of calm before exploding into the almost frightening climax in the *Piú largamente* section. It is easy to understand why Richter writes that all human emotions are expressed in this sonata. The final movement, *Precipitato*, is an unrelenting toccata in 7/8 that requires immense energy from the performer. While the movement is exceedingly difficult with large ninth chords, rapid leaps, and repeated notes, a great deal of tension is created until the triumphant ending. Perhaps the tension created depicts the struggle Richter describes, but the jubilant ending represents the human strength to continue on. *Sonata No. 7* is rated as difficult by Hinson and it is most certainly an advanced work suitable for the virtuosic performer.

Sonata No. 8 in B-flat Major, Op. 84

The last of the War Sonatas, *Sonata No. 8 in B-flat Major*, Op. 84 was composed between 1939 and 1944, and first performed by Emil Gilels on December 30, 1944. Prokofiev began a relationship with Mira Mendelson, to whom the sonata is dedicated, in 1939, which might explain the overtly lyrical and reflective character of

[53] Bruno Monsaingeon, *Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, trans. Steward Spencer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 79-80.

the sonata. Harlow Robinson writes that the sonata is "a gentle and romantic tribute to the love that had helped him survive and create during the difficult years of the war."[54] The temperament, as indicated by the first and second movements, marked *Andante dolce* and *Andante sognando*, respectively, is sweet and dreamy.

Berman writes that the first movement "conveys both tenderness and a nostalgic regret, as if the composer has allowed himself to look back to the war's tragic events and to the happiness that preceded them and was shattered."[55] The two primary themes of the first movement are reminiscent of Schubert's long, expansive melodies. The first theme is borrowed from earlier music found in Prokofiev's *The Queen of Spades*; it is stately in the slow-paced bass line with an expansive melody. The second movement is the shortest in length of the three, acting as a point of rest between the two large outer movements. Similar to the first movement, Prokofiev also borrowed from earlier compositions using material from the minuet of *Eugene Onegin*. The movement is comprised of a melodic statement that is heard three times in various keys and registers of the piano. Written in sonata-allegro form, the final movement, *Vivace*, conveys confidence and energy, and while Prokofiev uses seconds and tritones throughout, there are numerous major triads that are unaltered with additional notes that add to the triumphant quality of this movement.[56] Despite its gentle and romantic nature, *Sonata*

[54] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 430.

[55] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 171.

[56] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 171-180.

No. 8 is an advanced keyboard work and Hinson categorizes this sonata as a difficult work.

Although there has been no direct reference by Prokofiev, Richter, or any Russian musicologist that these sonatas are a reflection on the events of World War II, one might consider *Sonata No. 6* as a frenetic anticipation of the war, *Sonata No. 7* a depiction of the events as they occurred, and *Sonata No. 8* as a reflection on the aftermath of the war.[57]

Sonata No. 9 in C Major, Op. 103

The final *Sonata No. 9 in C Major,* Op. 103 was completed in 1947 and premiered by Sviatoslav Richter in April 1951. Since the performance of the *Sonata No. 8,* Richter had become the foremost interpreter of Prokofiev's works. Richter met with Prokofiev on his birthday in 1947 at which time Prokofiev introduced Richter to his new sonata. About his *Sonata No. 9,* Prokofiev said to Richter, "This will be your sonata. But do not think it is intended to create an effect. It's not the sort of work to raise the roof of the Grand Hall."[58] At first, Richter felt a little "disappointed" with the simplistic work, but later remarked that it was "a radiant, simple and even intimate work…the more one hears it, the more one comes to love it and feels its magnetism. And the more perfect it seems. I love it very much."[59]

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[57] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 151.

[58] Monsaingeon, *Richter: Notebooks,* 83-84.

[59] Monsaingeon, *Richter: Notebooks,* 87.

The political climate was changing in Soviet Russia during this time. In 1948, Prokofiev, along with composers such as Shostakovich and Khachaturian, was targeted as a formalist which the Communist Party condemned. Andrey Zhdanov was in charge of cultural affairs under Stalin and he organized the attack on Prokofiev and others identified as formalist composers whose music was considered to focus on the individual rather than music intended for the masses.[60] Perhaps the simplicity and more conventional harmonic language of *Sonata No. 9* was a response to the repression Prokofiev faced.

The first movement, *Allegretto,* features a diatonic melody in C major that is intimate and lyrical. In addition to the naïve nature of the movement, the end features a false recapitulation which was common during the Classical period. Surely this device would have pleased Prokofiev's oppressors. Triplet runs are written at the end of the movement which preview the material used at the beginning of the second movement. The second movement, *Allegro strepitoso*, is a *scherzo* in ABA form that begins with fleeting triplets followed by dissonant chords which then dissipate into an extended slow section. The melody in the return of the A section is written in unison in both hands, and again is material that previews what is to come in the third movement. The third movement, *Andante tranquillo,* is dreamy in character until the end when a sudden burst of energy previews the material of the last movement before returning to the main *andante* theme. Lively rhythms create a sense of exuberance in the opening of the

[60] Jonathan Walker, "Formalism," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online,* Oxford University Press, accessed February 5, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e2625.

fourth movement, *Allegro con brio, ma non troppo presto*. Somewhat cyclical in nature, the theme from the first movement concludes the sonata in a similar manner of simple serenity.[61]

Sonata No. 9 might be appropriate for an advanced student lacking in virtuosic technique. Hinson considers the level of this work to be moderately difficult. This sonata is often forgotten among the other Prokofiev sonatas due to its lack of technical flair and the characteristic sound of Prokofiev. However, upon study and listening to the work several times, one will discover value in this final sonata. According to Stephen Fiess, Prokofiev had plans to expand the *Two Sonatinas*, Op. 54 into larger works that would become sonatas ten and eleven, however, such projects were never completed prior to Prokofiev's death in 1953.

Two Sonatinas, Op. 54, and Three Pieces, Op. 59, No. 3 "Pastoral Sonatina"

Prokofiev wrote a total of three sonatinas. The first two were written between 1931 and 1932 and are published as opus 54; and the third sonatina is the last piece in *Three Pieces*, Op. 59. Sonatinas, particularly those by Classical composers such as Clementi and Kuhlau, are generally thought of as teaching pieces for intermediate students. While this may be partly true for the sonatinas of Prokofiev, the first two sonatinas, opus 54, are graded as moderately difficult by Hinson and are deemed more difficult than Prokofiev's *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31, which he grades as intermediate. The *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 and *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet*, Op. 75

[61] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas*, 193-202.

are given a range of intermediate to moderately difficult by Hinson, and are of comparable difficulty to the *Two Sonatinas,* Op. 54.

The *Two Sonatinas,* Op. 54 were composed during a time when Prokofiev was aiming to write more simplistic music. While the thematic material may be simple, complicated compositional techniques such as changing meters, bitonality, and irregular phrases are employed in the first movement (*Allegro moderato*) of *Sonatina No.1*. The second movement, *Adagietto,* is slow and has odd cadential points, and the third movement, *Allegretto*, seems illogical in its presentation of thematic material. Stephen Fiess regards the third movement as an "intriguing experiment, rather than a particularly good choice for a student to learn or an artist to memorize and perform."[62]

The first movement, *Allegro sostenuto,* of *Sonatina No.2* is the most effective movement of all the sonatinas as Prokofiev adhered to the Classical form more closely than in other movements. There are two contrasting themes, a balance of climactic material and resolution, as well as traditional triadic harmony. The second and third movements, *Andante amabile* and *Allegro, ma non troppo,* are less successful.

The single movement sonatina from opus 59, *Pastoral Sonatina,* is the most attractive of the three pieces in the set and is better suited as a teaching piece. Hinson grades this sonatina as intermediate and Magrath rates it as level 8. A sonata-allegro movement, this lyrical sonatina has primarily a single line melody and Prokofiev writes a variety of rhythmic patterns. Although the piece has a thinner texture and more confined range, intermediate pianists will enjoy occasional leaps, hand crossings, grace

[62] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 129.

notes and chords. Taken together, the three sonatinas may be appropriate for a late-intermediate student, however, there are other more appealing pieces by Prokofiev at that level.

Sets and Other Works

Four Etudes, Op. 2

The *Four Etudes,* Op. 2 were composed in the summer of 1909. Earlier that year Prokofiev informed his piano teacher, Alexander Winkler, that he wanted to change teachers and study with Anna Yesipova. Prokofiev was very loyal to Winkler and to try and ease his guilt, he dedicated the *Four Etudes* to Winkler,[63] writing

> Nevertheless, the memory of Winkler is sacrosanct. During the summer, in memory of the good years I had spent under his tutelage, I composed four studies especially for him, dedicating them to 'my deeply respected teacher.' I brought them in to Winkler the day before yesterday, so tomorrow I must contrive to meet him 'accidentally' in the Conservatoire to find out how he likes them. Myaskovsky considers them a great success and a step forward. Personally, I think they are a little crude, a first attempt at this form, but still they are more successful than I thought they would be when I first began writing them.[64]

Of the early works, opus 2 is the only collection of pieces conceived as a set until Prokofiev composed the *Sarcasms,* Op. 17 in 1912. The pieces in between were not conceived as sets but were individual pieces organized into sets for publication.

The etudes are studies in perpetual motion. The first challenges the pianist with arpeggiated blocked chord patterns, octaves, double thirds, fast hand position shifts, and large leaps. The second is more lyrical with scalar passages and polyrhythms, however,

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[63] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 38.

[64] Phillips, *Diaries 1907-1914,* 119.

the scales are rapid in both hands and there is voicing of the alto line against the scalar patterns. The third etude includes rapid double thirds, octaves, thick textures with inner chromatic lines in both hands simultaneously, scales in chromatic double thirds, reading in three staves, and rapid changes of hand position. The fourth etude gives the left hand a workout with fast broken octaves.[65] In addition, the fourth etude has position shifts for chords in both hands, multiple voices in one hand, rapid scalar passages, and hand crossings.

Prokofiev was experimenting in these works which may explain why he described them as crude. He writes new chords by means of chromatic motion, and uses whole-tone and modal scales. Other experimentations are found such as cycles through several keys (E minor, G-sharp minor, B minor, G minor, and D minor) in the second etude, and in the third etude the unusual time signature of 18/16 is used in the right hand against 4/4 in the left hand.

The technical requirements to perform these etudes are extensive, making these etudes suitable only for advanced pianists. Hinson agrees and grades these etudes as difficult. The performer must have a command of arpeggios, fast scales, hand crossings, double notes, fast changes in hand position, and the ability to play two voices in one hand. Effective in performance, the etudes are a welcome change among other standard virtuosic etudes by Chopin, Liszt, and Rachmaninoff.

[65] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 132-33.

Four Pieces, Op. 3

Composed prior to the *Four Etudes*, Op. 2, three of the pieces of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 3, *Fairy Tale, Badinage,* and *March*, were written in 1907. The fourth piece of the set, *Phantom*, was added before the set was published in 1912. Prokofiev received an excited response when he played the *Fairy Tale* among other pieces of his own at the Evenings of Contemporary Music in St. Petersburg in the spring of 1908.[66] Brian Marks finds the pieces in opus 3 to be more sophisticated than those in opus 2 as "Prokofiev felt more constrained in the Études because of the necessity to create a technically virtuosic and unified effect in each piece and, to some extent, the cycle as a whole."[67]

The four pieces are similar in form, the first in five-part song form (ABABA) and the other three in ternary (ABA) form.[68] Outside of form, the pieces are contrasting. The first piece, *Fairy Tale*, begins with a lyrical melody and builds to a difficult chordal climax. *Badinage*, the second piece, is a humorous scherzo with *staccato* double-notes in the right hand. Here Prokofiev adds interest to the harmonic language by taking notes of diatonic harmonies and replacing them with neighboring sonorities.[69] This is an example of substitution identified by Ashley (category 1). The third piece, *March*, could be regarded as grotesque in the traditional march rhythms that are paired with dissonant

[66] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 49, 53.

[67] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 58.

[68] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 59.

[69] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 16.

harmony, polychords, and parallel augmented triads. *Phantom*, the fourth piece, is written in an odd meter of 5/8. The chromatic melody is written over an *ostinato* pattern in the left hand.[70] *Phantom* is the most successful piece in the set.

Hinson grades this set as a whole as moderately difficult and Magrath does not level this opus, implying that its technical challenges make this an advanced set. This characterization is confirmed by the following aspects of the pieces. The first piece, *Fairy Tale,* has thick textures, right hand leaps, arpeggios, and large rolled chords in the left hand. The voicing is complex and at times the right hand must carry two voices. *Badinage*, the second piece, has rapid leaping fourths in the right hand, broken tenths in the left hand, and is even harder than *Fairy Tale*. The third piece, *March,* features rapid hand position shifts in the right hand chords and right hand voicing. The forth piece, *Phantom*, challenges with its odd meter (5/8), right hand chords and double thirds. These pieces are best suited for advanced pianists.

Four Pieces, Op. 4

Forging ahead with his compositional experiments, Prokofiev wrote the *Four Pieces*, Op. 4 over the course of a year in 1908. The set includes, in order, *Remembrance*, *Elan*, *Despair,* and *Suggestion diabolique*. The last two pieces of the set, *Despair* and the *Suggestion diabolique,* were played on the same concert program in St. Petersburg as the *Fairy Tale* from opus 3 in the spring of 1908 at the Evenings of Contemporary Music. The audience was quite receptive of the *Suggestion diabolique* as

[70] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 101-103.

"there were certain passages that made them laugh out loud and jump up and down in their seats."[71]

As the most popular piece in the set, *Suggestion diabolique* is commonly played by concert pianists yet is also appropriate for advanced students. Hinson grades the piece as moderately difficult. Technical challenges include rapid arpeggios and scalar figures, fast hand crossings, perpetual motion repeated chords and octaves, left hand leaps, large left hand intervals, double thirds, glissandi, and brisk hand alteration. Opening tritones and chromatic lines in the bass register of the piano followed by minor second tremolos suggest a brooding tone. After the introduction, a toccata-like rhythm permeates the rest of the work that requires a *staccato* touch. Harmonically, Prokofiev also writes successive chromatic chords, minor ninths, modulations to keys based on notes from the whole-tone scale, and polychords.[72] Marks argues that the *Suggestion diabolique* is one of the first pieces that validates Prokofiev's unique musical voice. The members of the Evenings of Contemporary Music encouraged Prokofiev's innovations which gave him the confidence he needed as he faced criticism from his professors at the Conservatory.[73]

The first three pieces of the set are less inspired. The first piece, *Remembrance*, marked *tranquillo,* has a lyrical, chromatic melody that colors otherwise conventional harmonies. Polyrhythms of two-against-three are featured in the last half of the piece.

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[71] Phillips, *Diaries 1907-1914*, 66.

[72] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 20-24.

[73] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 73.

Stephen Fiess notes that while the piece might sound outdated to modern ears, it would serve as an appropriate study piece.[74] Challenges for students will be found in large intervals or hand expansions, double thirds, chordal textures, difficult left hand accompaniment in triplets, and polyrhythms in one hand.

Elan, the second piece in the set, contains several harmonic experiments such as chromatic melody lines and chromatic modulations. The pianist will need to possess the ability to execute fast leaps and properly balance two voices in one hand, such as right hand voicing of melody in the soprano voice against *ostinato* accompaniment in the alto. The third piece, *Despair*, is an emotional work with a chromatic *ostinato* pattern in the right hand. There are left hand crosses between the bass and treble registers, with leaps of a fifteenth in the left hand. The piece also features polyrhythms, four-note right hand chords, and large hand expansions in the right hand. Because of the hand crossings, the pianist must be able to carefully voice the melody and control the pacing of the dynamics.

Toccata in D minor, Op. 11

Written in 1912, but not performed until 1916 by the composer in Petrograd, the *Toccata in D minor*, Op. 11 is a hallmark example of Prokofiev's toccata line filled with rhythmic vitality, a representation of expressionist influence, and has become known as a popular virtuosic show piece within the repertoire of many concert artists. Repeated notes open the work that propel us into forward motion which is relentless throughout the piece. The repeated notes act as a motive that is developed throughout the work and

[74] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 106.

require a lot of stamina from the pianist. The technical challenges in this piece include leaps, hand crossings, fast repeated chords, broken octaves, double notes, right hand voicing of soprano melody which is on top of fast moving double thirds in the alto voice, contrary motion arpeggiated figures, repeated notes, scales in octaves, parallel first inversion chords, and a glissando. In addition to these technical challenges, the pianist faces the daunting tests of maintaining an even tempo and balancing the dynamics throughout. The *Toccata* is graded as difficult by Hinson and it should be considered accessible only to those pianists who possess a highly developed piano technique. For those performers, the *Toccata* is an extremely effective concert work.

Ten Pieces, Op. 12

Composed between the years of 1906 and 1913, the *Ten Pieces*, Op. 12 is a set of simple character pieces for the most part, many of which use dance forms, and do not require an overtly virtuosic technique. The ten pieces were composed at various times and later compiled as opus 12 for publication. *March* (No. 1) was composed in 1906; *Gavotte* (No. 2) and *Scherzo* (No. 10) were composed for Lyadov's class at the Conservatory in 1908 followed by *Mazurka* (No. 4) in the summer of 1910, the *Humorous Scherzo* (No. 9) in 1912, and *Rigaudon* (No. 3), *Legend* (No. 6), *Prelude* (No. 7), and *Allemande* (No. 8) all in 1913.[75] The fifth piece in the set, *Capriccio*, does not have a clear composition date. Brian Marks believes that the *Capriccio* was likely

[75] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 75.

not composed before 1910 as the "Études, Op. 2 and the Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 1 were his major piano projects in 1909."[76]

Like other early works of Prokofiev, the pieces in opus 12 are primarily in ABA form. Jung Hee Park believes that these pieces represent the elements of Prokofiev's style during his student years including "clarity of phrasing, structure, and tonality, motoristic rhythmic patterns, simplicity of texture, characteristic melody and line, ironic humor, and progressive harmony."[77] Hinson grades the full set of pieces as moderately difficult. Magrath provides levels for four of the ten, rating three of these (No. 2, *Gavotte*, No. 4, *Waltz*, and No. 7, *Prelude*) as level 10 while giving No. 6, *Legend*, a level of 9 to 10. The author believes that the *Ten Pieces*, Op. 12 are mostly appropriate for an early-advanced student and, like the *Four Pieces, Op. 32*, also serve as an introduction to the most important elements of Prokofiev's style.

The second piece, *Gavotte*, is a favorite in the set and represents Prokofiev's lyrical line which is juxtaposed against a left hand accompaniment with dissonant grace notes. Technical and performance challenges arise from left hand leaps, grace notes, right voicing of melody within chords, rolled chords in the left hand, large expansions in the left hand up to a tenth, and left hand crossings. The *Prelude* (No. 7) is a charming work that features a rapid right hand broken chord accompaniment, requiring hand position shifts, descending broken chord patterns, and a light melody in thirds in the left hand. Rolled chords add to its appeal. The B section features several glissandi, before

[76] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 76.

[77] Park, "Performer's Perspective," 9.

returning to the A section. Despite some challenges, this piece could be appropriate for intermediate students with good finger independence. A transcription originally written for harp, this piece is fun to play.

The neo-Classic line is present in the traditional rhythms of the *March* (No. 1) as well as the dance form of the *Rigaudon* (No. 3). The modulations to several keys and chromaticism are also elements of the modern line in *Rigaudon*. The *March* (No. 1) offers fast scalar passages, dotted rhythms, octaves, left hand chordal leaps, and the right and left hands widely spaced apart. The *Rigaudon* (No. 3) presents left and right hand thirds, fast hand position shifts, and right hand broken octaves.

The fourth piece, *Mazurka*, is a prime example of Prokofiev's use of parallelism as both the right and left hand move in parallel perfect fourths. This piece might be viewed as a study of fourths in various figurations—*legato* double fourths, arpeggiated double fourths, dotted rhythms in fourths, and left hand leaps in fourths. Despite the unique use of fourths, the *Mazurka* is not particularly interesting. The *Cappricio* (No. 5) could represent the toccata element in the continuous use of eighth notes, however, it is a less aggressive example compared to the *Suggestion diabolique*, Op. 4, No. 4 and the *Toccata*, Op. 11. Performers of *Cappricio* will have to deal with scalar passages, *ostinato* left hand accompaniment, chordal two-note slurs in the right hand, left hand leaps, thick textures, arpeggios in both hands simultaneously, and large left hand leaps to octaves.

A lyrical and emotional work, the *Legend* (No. 6) features parallel fifths and chromatic harmony. Technical demands are minimal but include voicing of chordal texture and some large hand expansions. Legend is a useful piece to teach students

rubato due to the numerous markings that indicate slight tempo changes and it is one of the easier pieces in the set. The *Allemande* (No. 8) is another effective piece in the set that highlights the bass register with a quality that is somewhat pedantic and humorous. Attractive and challenging elements in this piece include grace notes, hand crossings, scalar passages in thirds, octaves, left hand leaps, voicing of alto melody in the right hand, first inversion triads, rapid scales, and a variety of dynamics and textures which are fun to play.

The *Humorous Scherzo* (No. 9) was originally written for four bassoons which are depicted in the low register of the piano with *staccato* and accented notes. The piece features left hand *ostinato* accompaniment with grace notes and hand position shifts. The final *Scherzo* (No. 10) is the most difficult work in the set due to the left hand leaps and fast right hand scalar passages scales that go on for long stretches of time. The piece also requires the pianist to deal with double notes, octaves and two voices in the right hand (soprano against scalar alto accompaniment). The *Scherzo* could serve as an exciting conclusion to a recital.[78]

Sarcasms, Op. 17

Prokofiev's *Sarcasms*, Op. 17, a five-piece set, composed between 1912 and 1914, represents a departure in harmonic language from earlier pieces. Hinson grades the set as difficult and each of the five pieces contain technical challenges that make these pieces suitable only for advanced pianists. In his autobiography, Prokofiev writes, "The pieces were a big success with the 'modernists,' perhaps because the search for a

[78] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 106-111.

new musical language was more strongly evident in them than in other works of the same period."[79] The *Sarcasms* are often regarded as emotional works evidenced by Prokofiev's programmatic description for *Precipitosissimo*, the fifth piece in the set:

> We often indulge in malicious laughter at someone or something, but when we pause to look we see how pitiful and sad is the object of our ridicule; and then we grow ashamed, the mocking laughter rings in our ears, but it is we who are its object now.[80]

The opening chords are accented and abrasive, written in the upper register of the piano. Changing meters from 2/4 to 3/8 sound like the cruel laughter described. What follows is an *andante* section of *staccato* notes and rests that sound meek and reflective. The primary technical challenges in this piece arise from the wide hand expansions.

The first piece in the set, *Tempestoso*, has two primary themes. Accented notes and a strong rhythmic pulse illicit the tempestuous character of the first theme, and the second theme is lyrical in the Lydian mode.[81] Technical and performance challenges are found in octave leaps, rolled chords, syncopated rhythms, an *ostinato* pattern in inner voices with different articulation and rhythms in the outer voices, and scalar passages.

The second *Sarcasm, Allegro rubato*, uses material from the first six measures to create a small variation form by means of transposition and by isolating certain ideas in the first theme.[82] Parallel seventh chords alternate with fast arpeggiations that are difficult to execute. Harmonies are tertian yet non-functional. There are four-note

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[79] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography,* 43.

[80] Shlifstein, *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography,* 43.

[81] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 134.

[82] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 90.

chords, rapid passagework, hand crossings, large hand spans (chords), difficult rhythms, and leaps. The character of this piece is harsh and almost barbaric.

Fast and toccata-like, the third *Sarcasm, Allegro precipitato,* begins with an *ostinato* pattern of repeated chords in the right hand and a chromatic motive in the left hand. *Fortissimo* outbursts interjected within the texture are meant to make the listener jump out of their seat. Some harmonic innovations include parallel major thirds and sixths, and two different key signatures (three sharps in the treble clef, five flats in the bass clef). The performer will also have to deal with left hand octaves, thirds in both hands, arpeggios broken between the hands, fast repeated chords, and hand position shifts. The B section is a contrasting lyrical theme marked *singhiozzando* (sobbing) brought out by the accented descending melodic line in the right hand. The energy dissipates in the final measures as the repeated thirds from the beginning are augmented, slowing down gradually, ending softly.

In place of a traditional tempo indication, Prokofiev provides a more descriptive term, *Smanioso* (raving), to indicate a frenzied tempo for the fourth *Sarcasm.* The piece opens with *fortissimo* chords, rapid scalar passages, dotted rhythms and grace notes, all of which create a sense of frenzy. Other challenges are found in large leaps after rapid figurations and in syncopated chords. As a result, the rhythms in the A section are complex adding to the unsettling nature of this piece. In the B section, melodic notes are to be sustained against repeated *fortissimo* triads which require strong fingers and careful voicing from the pianist. While the pieces in this set are triadic in nature, the intense dissonance and chromaticism obscure any sense of functional harmony, which represent a significant experiment in Prokofiev's output up to this point.

Visions fugitives, Op. 22

Konstantin Balmont's poem, "I Do Not Know Wisdom," inspired the title of Prokofiev's set of twenty piano miniatures. The poem reads, "In every fugitive vision I see worlds: They change endlessly, flashing in playful rainbow colors."[83] The pieces in Prokofiev's twenty-piece set are brief and harmonically colorful, representing the changing colors in Balmont's poem. Prokofiev began composing the set in 1915 and completed the opus in 1917. The pieces are not organized by date of composition, but are purposefully organized by Prokofiev to elicit their contrast and character.[84]

New harmonic devices appear in the *Visions fugitives* such as octatonic and modal scales. While Prokofiev has written other pieces in modes, modal writing is more prevalent in this work. The brevity of these pieces lend themselves to simple forms such as binary (No. 5), ternary (Nos. 6, 8, 11, 13, and 16), ternary with coda (Nos. 2, 3, 18, 19, and 20), and ternary with an introduction and coda (Nos. 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, and 17).[85] Laryssa Davis organizes the pieces into three characteristic groups: scherzo (Nos. 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 11), lyrical (Nos. 1, 2, 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, 18, and 20), and dramatic (Nos. 4, 13, 14, 15, and 19).[86] Hinson grades opus 22 as a whole as moderately difficult. While the majority of the pieces are indeed suitable for late-intermediate to early-advanced

[83] Israel Vladimirovich Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, trans. Florence Jones (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), 20.

[84] Davis, "Visions Fugitives," 8.

[85] Davis, "Visions Fugitives," 19.

[86] Davis, "Visions Fugitives," 19.

pianists, some may be considered accessible to intermediate pianists, including Nos. 1, 8, 13, 16, 17, and 18, as indicated in the following discussion.

Examples from the scherzo grouping include *Vision* No. 3, "Allegretto," in which Prokofiev achieves humorous characters with *staccato* notes, leaps, and an *ostinato* pattern comprised of major seconds. There is a syncopated right hand chordal accompaniment, left hand melody, left hand leaps, and rapid passagework. Fiess writes that the "polytonality, leaps, and syncopations combine to create a sense of mischievous and sometimes noisy fun" in *Vision* No. 5, *"*Molto giocoso."[87] The piece features hand position shifts, arpeggios, broken octaves, and alternating hands. *Vision* No. 10, "Ridiculosamente," is march-like and is on the verge of mockery enhanced by the bitonal harmony. Its left hand leaping thirds, right hand fast figurations as well as its leaps will challenge the pianist. The short and light rhythmic motive of *Vision* No. 11, *"*Con vivacità," sounds like laughter which is accentuated by the emphasis on weak beats. Challenging elements include right hand passagework with dotted figurations, left hand leaps, trills, and unison figurations.

Several of the *Visions* are lyrical, contrasting those of a more humorous quality. *Vision* No. 1, "Lentamente," is delicate and simple. Its characteristics make it accessible to intermediate pianists including its slow tempo, single line melody for the most part, chordal accompaniment, and confined range. *Vision* No. 2, "Andante," is mysterious with its expansive broken chords. The piece is slow yet has left hand leaps, difficult right hand rhythms and passagework, and three staves make for difficult reading. *Vision*

[87] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 115.

No. 7, “Pittoresco,” is reminiscent of a harp with right hand rolled chords and challenges pianists with left hand leaps, voicing of alto melody, and passagework that includes scalar figures. *Vision* No. 8, “Commodo,” is a relaxed, yet flowing piece. The repetitive accompanimental figures underneath a single line melody makes this piece appropriate for an intermediate pianist. The relaxed tempo of *Vision* No. 16, “Dolente,” allows intermediate pianists to tackle the left hand leaps and occasional double notes of this pensive work. “Poetico,” *Vision* No. 17, presents a mysterious, single-note chromatic melody in the left hand against an *ostinato* accompaniment in the right hand. This piece is accessible to intermediate students provided they can handle some right hand finger independence. “Con una dolce lentezza,” *Visio*n No. 18, might appeal to late-intermediate pianists searching for a lyrical piece. The leisurely paced tempo eases any difficulty faced in executing left hand leaps, scalar passages in the right hand, and grace notes. *Vision* No. 20 which concludes the set, “Lento irrealmente,” has an expansive range creating a calming mood. It challenges the pianist with left hand leaps, hands often spread far apart into the extremities of the keyboard, and left hand repeated chords.

The humorous and lyrical pieces in the set are balanced with more dramatic works such *Vision* No. 13, “Allegretto,” which is emotionally driven with a sense of agitation depicted in the trills in the alto voice. The texture is thin with a single note accompaniment, and the melody is confined to smaller range which make this piece suitable for intermediate pianists. *Vision* No. 14, “Feroce,” represents Prokofiev’s toccata element with its boisterous rhythms, exciting hand crossings, and rapid arpeggios. Notable elements also include repeated chords, alternating hands, and a top

soprano voice against rapid alto accompaniment in the right hand simultaneously. *Vision* No. 15, "Inquieto," is anxious in character due to the repeated four-note accompaniment in the left hand, *pianissimo* dynamic, hand position shifts, hand crossings, and octaves. *Vision* No. 19, "Presto agitassimo e molto accentuato," has an agitated sense created by significant chromaticism, a wide dynamic range, syncopated rhythms, left hand thirds and fourths, fast tempo, leaps, octaves, held notes and double trills. Prokofiev explained this piece as a depiction of the agitated crowds during the Russian Revolution.[88]

The largest set written by Prokofiev, the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 offer a wide range of technical and musical challenges, in a variety of textures and moods. While the set as a whole may be considered advanced, some individual pieces, Nos. 1, 8, 13, 16, 17, and 18 may be considered intermediate to late-intermediate. The work is effective in recital as a complete set or as a smaller selection of pieces from the set.

Tales of an Old Grandmother, Op. 31

Prokofiev composed the *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31 in 1918 during his stay in America. There are several speculations as to why Prokofiev wrote these pieces. Wenjing Liu suggests the inspiration may have been to gain a greater reputation as a composer, for financial reasons, or perhaps he was homesick for his native Russia.[89] In his diary Prokofiev writes,

> I need some little pieces for a publisher, something not too demanding, a sonatina or some 'Fairy Tales'. My inclination is for some 'Tales of an Old

[88] Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 52-53.

[89] Liu, "Prokofiev's *Tales,"* 20.

> Grandmother', whose senile rambling through the mists of her decrepitude yields glimpses of far-off memories.
>
> The old grandmother tells her story, coughing and mumbling, muddling up much of how things really were, but with occasional flashes of clarity that bring back precious moments as if they had happened yesterday. From time to time the tale she tells is veiled by a profound serenity or wisdom.[90]

His mention of the grandmother bringing back memories of the past could be a reference to his own reminiscences of Russia. David Niece writes, "No. 2 needs only a few bars to reveal a whiff of homesickness for the Russia left behind."[91] The end result is four *Tales* that Hinson grades collectively as intermediate. Magrath grades No. 1 *Moderato* as level 8 and No. 4 *Sostenuto* as level 9.

The *Tales* have a folk quality given their simple, diatonic melodies, and triadic sonorities based on modes. *Staccato* chords in *Tale,* No. 1 *Moderato,* create a march-like quality in the A section. The B section is lyrical with chromatic passing tones in the right hand against low *ostinato* chords in the bass. Pianists will encounter left hand leaps, rolled chords, right hand voicing of melody in chordal textures, and variety of articulations. A simple melody is featured in *Tale* No. 2 *Andantino,* that needs to be carefully balanced against the eighth-note accompaniment throughout. Challenges are found in rolled chords, right hand voicing of melody against moving alto line, and left hand leaps. *Tale* No. 3, *Andante assai,* is a simple piece with a slow, *ostinato* accompaniment in the left hand. Groups of five notes (pentuplet figurations in the right hand) and dotted in the rhythms might pose a challenge for the intermediate pianist as well as left hand broken octaves, two-voice texture in the right hand, and left hand

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[90] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923,* 336, 338-9.

[91] Nice, *Prokofiev,* 156.

octaves. Despite Prokofiev's distaste for impressionism, the fourth *Tale, Sostenuto,* makes use of parallel chords, which at one point are written in a similar fashion to those found in Debussy's *La cathedral engloutie*. The piece offers challenges such as four-note chords in the left hand, held notes that require careful pedaling, arpeggiated right hand accompaniment, left hand melody, and a long melodic line of held notes in tenor and alto voices with moving bass and soprano voices. The *Tales of an Old Grandmother,* Op. 31 is an appealing set appropriate for the late-intermediate pianist.

Choses en soi (Things in Themselves), Op. 45

The *Choses en soi* (*Things in Themselves),* Op. 45 are not well-known pieces within Prokofiev's output. First conceived on March 13, 1928, Prokofiev writes in his diary,

> If God is the unique source of creation and of reason, and man is his reflection, it is abundantly clear that the works of man will be better the more closely they reflect the works of the Creator. I must unflaggingly hold on to this thought all the time I am working. One should not work unless one feels oneself sufficiently pure.
>
> Today, thinking about this, I managed to compose something: material for some piano pieces I want to write as an interlude before settling to the Third Symphony. I might perhaps call them 'Things in Themselves.'[92]

In September of the same year, Prokofiev played the two pieces for Boris Asafyev, recalling, "I was nervous playing the work for him. He agrees that it represents a new side to me."[93] The two pieces are long and serious, and the title of the work alone suggests that these pieces fall into the category of absolute music. Prokofiev's mention

[92] Phillips, *Diaries 1924-1933,* 699.

[93] Phillips, *Diaries 1924-1933,* 720.

of his desire to write works that are a reflection of the Creator also indicates that he wished to compose pure music without any outside associations.

The first *Chose en soi*, *Allegro moderato*, contrasts motoric against lyrical themes and offers an abundance of mood, tempi, and dynamics. Parallel diminished triads, groups of minor seconds, extended and altered chords are of harmonic interest in the first piece. While the technical requirements of the piece are not extremely difficult, the pianist will encounter octaves, broken chords, contrasting articulations played simultaneously in the same hand, and dense textures. Interpretation is also a challenge in this piece. The second *Chose en soi*, *Moderato scherzando*, like the first, is long and intricate. Initial themes are developed and varied throughout, and chromatic writing is of greater focus in the second piece of the set. Large hand expansions including chords in tenths, hand crossings, hand position shifts, and a variety of articulations are some of the technical requirements. Neither piece requires the technical command of the instrument as with the composer's earlier works, and therefore, might be appropriate for an early-advanced student of the serious type.[94]

Three Pieces, Op. 59

Composed between 1933 and 1944, the *Three Pieces,* Op. 59 represent Prokofiev's search for a simpler style of writing. The third piece of the set, *Pastoral Sonatina,* was described in the subsection on Prokofiev's sonatas and sonatinas[95] and is

[94] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 137-39.

[95] See chapter 3, Overview of Solo Piano Literature, subsection Sonatas and Sonatinas, subpart *Two Sonatina*s, Op. 54, and *Three Pieces*, Op. 59, No. 3 "Pastoral Sonatina".

not addressed here. The other two pieces of the *Three Pieces* are more homophonic in texture and less chromatic in harmony than the *Pastoral Sonatina*.[96] *Promenade* unfolds at a moderate tempo, is rhythmically modest, and the tonality is clearly understood. In order to draw attention to the motives of this work, Prokofiev uses parallel octaves between the soprano and bass.[97] An early-advanced piece, pianists will be challenged by many leaps, hand position shifts, octaves, and variety of articulations in the right hand. The primary interest of the second piece, *Landscape*, is the lyrical melody in the B section. Rapid scales and arpeggios will entice students with good finger dexterity, as will some passages in octaves and occasional four-part writing. Late-intermediate students will be encouraged to experiment with interpretation as indicated by several tempo changes.[98]

Pensées* (*Thoughts*), *Op. 62

The *Pensées* (*Thoughts*), Op. 62 were the last pieces written in Paris between 1933 and 1934 before Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1935. Similar to the *Things in Themselves,* Prokofiev continued to experiment with a simplistic style in the *Pensées*. The first piece, *Adagio penseroso – Moderato,* is chant-like and the melody is found in the inner voices of the opening chords. Passagework at the unison, as well as arpeggios and octave chords challenge the pianist. Despite the non-functional harmonies of the second *Pensée*, *Lento,* the rhythms in this piece are uncomplicated.

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[96] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 292.

[97] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 69.

[98] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 130.

Although difficult, once mastered, the rapid ascending and descending scalar passagework, which alternates between the hands, is fun to play. The third *Pensée, Andante,* is bitonal, combining major and minor thirds. The climax recalls Prokofiev's humor found in earlier works. The texture is dense at times, and further difficulty lies in the rapid broken octaves and tenths, as well as double thirds and sixths. Although the pianist is posed with some technical challenges, the *Pensées* are not of extreme difficulty nor are they musically impactful. It is important to know of Prokofiev's experimentations during this time in his compositional life, as these pieces, along with the *Two Sonatinas*, Op. 54, the *Things in Themselves*, Op.45, and the *Three Pieces*, Op. 59, bridge the gap between the Fifth and Sixth Sonatas.

Transcriptions and Arrangements

While not originally intended as solo works for piano, the transcriptions represent an interesting area of Prokofiev's output for the piano. The earliest of the transcriptions, the *"Classical" Symphony in D Major,* Op. 25 was published in 1922 and the last, *Six Pieces for Piano from "Cinderella",* Op. 102, were written in 1944. The importance of the transcriptions is evidenced by the number Prokofiev produced, and are vital to understanding Prokofiev's style. There are eleven sets of transcriptions, most of which are from his ballets, but a few are taken from orchestral works or other composers. The transcriptions include the following works:

"Classical" Symphony in D Major, Op. 25 (1922)
March and Scherzo from The Love for Three Oranges, Op. 33bis (1922)
Divertimento, Op. 43bis (1938)
Six Transcriptions, Op. 52 (1930-31)
Peter and the Wolf, Op. 67 (1936)
Ten Pieces from "Romeo and Juliet", Op. 75 (1937)

Gavotte from Hamlet, Op. 77bis (1938)
Three Pieces from "Cinderella", Op. 95 (1942)
Three Pieces from "War and Peace" and "Lermontov", Op. 96 (1941-42)
Ten Pieces for Piano from "Cinderella", Op. 97 (1943)
Six Pieces for Piano from "Cinderella", Op. 102 (1944)
Organ *Fugue in D minor by Buxtehude* (1920)
Waltzes by Schubert (1923)

The transcriptions allow pianists to become familiar with Prokofiev's ballets, operas, and orchestral works. An understanding of orchestration can be gained by studying the transcriptions which may also assist with interpretation. Studying the original works, a pianist will expand their interpretation drawing particularly from the choreography of the ballets. Several transcriptions are effective in recital and may provide added interest to audience members familiar with Prokofiev's more famous works such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*,[99] the transcriptions of which are further discussed in the following two subsections. Furthermore, the transcriptions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella* are representations of entire works. The other transcriptions are selected pieces from a variety of other compositions. While many of the selections from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella* are advanced, there are also pieces suitable for pianists at a late-intermediate to early-advanced level.

Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet, Op. 75

Romeo and Juliet, written from 1935 to 1936, is Prokofiev's most well-known ballet. The transcriptions were composed a year later in 1937. The *Folk Dance* (No. 1) is a charming, lyrical dance in 6/8 that features parallel intervals in the opening theme and broken chords. An early-advanced work, leaps, double note scales, and unison

[99] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 160.

passagework are some of the technical challenges pianists face. Unassuming and simple, the *Scene* (No. 2) has added interest with surprising modulations and irregular phrasings despite the simple melodic material. The *Arrival of the Guests* (No. 3) is less successful as a transcription due to the widely-spaced intervals that require a large hand span. Furthermore, pianists must address octave passages, hand crossings, leaps, hand position shifts, and grace notes. It is not as attractive as some of the other pieces in the set.

Young Juliet (No. 4) is one of the most recognizable themes from the ballet featuring fleeting scalar passages and light *staccato* chords. A lyrical melody contrasts the lightness of the opening theme. The transcription of *Masks* (No. 5) also requires a large hand span similar to *Arrival of the Guests*. Wide leaps, fast scalar passages, and a jump bass are the primary technical challenges of this advanced work.

Another popular selection, *The Montagues and the Capulets* (No. 6), a march, highlights the low register of the piano. The pedantic nature of the left hand against the dotted rhythms of the right hand are particularly enjoyable. A lyrical trio contrasts the opening theme. This piece is technically accessible but does features a few difficult arpeggios and left hand leaps. *Friar Laurence* (No. 7) features a melody in the right thumb that requires careful voicing. The moderate tempo eases the challenge of executing left hand octaves, double notes, and chords.

Contrasting the calming quality of *Friar Laurence*, *Mercutio* (No. 8) is an energetic dance with fleeting rhythms and dissonant harmonies that depict the mysterious dance in the ballet. *Mercutio* is a particularly challenging piece due to the alternating hands, unison passagework, four-note chords, and grace notes. The *Dance of*

the Girls with Lilies (No. 9) is one of the more accessible selections of the set appropriate for late-intermediate pianists. The left hand plays rocking chords and a graceful melody is heard in the right hand.

The concluding piece, *Romeo Bids Juliet Farewell* (No. 10), has an emotional melody yet is challenging in some of the figurations that are better suited for the orchestra.[100] Such figurations include rolled chords, a melody written in octaves, ascending and descending arpeggios, and a chordal accompaniment. The set could work in recital, however, the most effective pieces are *The Montagues and the Capulets* and *Mercutio*.

Pieces for Piano from Cinderella, Opp. 95, 97, and 102

A total of 19 transcriptions based on Prokofiev's ballet *Cinderella* were written between 1942 and 1944. The *Three Pieces from "Cinderella",* Op. 95 are three dances, *Pavane*, *Gavotte*, and *Slow Waltz*, which are more traditional than the dances from *Romeo and Juliet*. Marked by thick textures and difficult rhythms, the dances are technically challenging. The *Pavane* and the *Gavotte* require a consistent rhythmic pulse which is hard to execute due to rapid leaps, broken octaves, and arpeggiated figures. The *Slow Waltz* has a typical waltz-style accompaniment in the left hand with complex rhythms and texture. Such difficulties are less daunting due to the moderate tempo.[101] The key signature of five flats and several accidentals makes for difficult

[100] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 167-72.

[101] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 173-75.

reading. Pianists are challenged with hand crossings, leaps, rolled chords, arpeggios, and grace notes. The three pieces are early-advanced.

The *Ten Pieces for Piano from "Cinderella",* Op. 97 also include dances such as *Passepied* (No. 7), *Capriccio* (No. 8), *Bourrée* (No. 9), but also non-dance types including *Spring Fairy* (No. 1), *Summer Fairy* (No. 2), *Autumn Fairy* (No. 3), *Winter Fairy* (No. 4), *Grasshoppers and Dragonflies* (No.5), *Orientale* (No. 6), and *Adagio* (No. 10).

The *Spring Fairy* (No. 1) is a fast scherzo with hand crossings, unison passagework, arpeggios, and broken chord figurations. A slow, dreamy movement, the *Summer Fairy* (No. 2) has challenging scales at a *pianissimo* dynamic. The *Autumn Fairy* (No. 3) "suggests pictorial associations with the howling of autumn winds"[102] with sudden contrasts of dynamics, chromaticism, and rapid scales and arpeggios. *Winter Fairy* (No. 4) has a melodic theme that ascends and descends in the upper register of the piano. Passing chromatic tones color this melody.

The title *Grasshoppers and Dragonflies* (No. 5) suggests that Prokofiev's humor will be at play, which it is, with its many leaps, contrary motion arpeggios, and rolled chords. Winding, melismatic melodies and quintal chords give *Oritentale* (No. 6) the flair suggested by the title. A leaping left hand accompaniment, alternating hands, and several octaves challenge the pianist in this work. Similar to *Grasshoppers and Dragonflies*, the *Passepied* (No. 7) is a humorous work with leaping figurations across registers.

[102] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 177.

A sensitive student will be well-suited to the changing moods in *Capriccio* (No. 8), an intermediate work, featuring some leaps and octaves written in a relatively thin texture. Prokofiev did well in these transcriptions to translate orchestral figures to the piano, however, in *Bourrée* (No. 9), the pianist will tackle intervals of ninths and even one twelfth that will likely have to be rolled.

The final piece, *Adagio,* is reminiscent of a *pas de deux* for Cinderella and her prince. Like the *Bourrée,* the textures are not as pianistic as the other pieces in the set due to the awkward rolled chords and fast shifting of chordal positions in the right hand.[103] The most accessible selections are Nos. 8 and 9, yet most pieces in the set are appropriate for early-advanced pianists.

The selections in *Six Pieces from "Cinderella"*, Op. 102 are longer in length than Opp. 95 and 97 of *Cinderella*. A variety of compositional techniques are used such as melodies comprised of displaced octaves between various registers (*Waltz,* No. 1), alternating meters from 2/4 to 3/4 (*Cinderella's Variation*, No. 2), syncopated chords and shifting registers (*Quarrel*, No. 3), polyrhythms and octave displacement (*Waltz*, No. 4), energetic rhythms alternating between 6/8 and 4/4 meters (*Pas-de-châle*, No. 5), and lush, harp-like arpeggios (*Amoroso,* No. 6).[104]

It is clear that Prokofiev expressed great interest in his works for ballet, as well as orchestral and operatic works, as exemplified in his many transcriptions. The variety of transcriptions provide great depth to the pianist's understanding of Prokofiev's

[103] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 175-180.

[104] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 181-84.

musical language. *Quarrel* (No. 3), *Waltz* (No. 4), and *Pas-de-châle* (No. 5) are the most advanced pieces in the set featuring four-note chords, leaps, scalar passages, hand position shifts, hand crossings, and broken octaves. *Amoroso* (No. 6), which also includes leaps and scalar passages, is a bit more accessible. The first two pieces, *Waltz* and *Cinderella's Variation*, are the easiest pieces at a late-intermediate to early-advanced level and require some arpeggios, scalar passages, and leaps.

Pedagogical Literature

Music for Children, Op. 65

Prokofiev's *Music for Children*, Op. 65 is a set of 12 pieces written in 1935. In her *Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature,* Jane Magrath writes, "this opus provides Prokofiev's most accessible music for the pianist."[105] Magrath grades the pieces at levels 6 to 8. Descriptive titles aid in the interpretation of each work, and the set as a whole is somewhat programmatic in nature with the first piece titled *Morning* and the last two pieces titled *Evening* and *The Moon Strolls in the Meadows*. As a set, Hinson grades *Music for Children* as a set as easy to intermediate.

Music for Children is ideal for the intermediate student. The first work, *Morning*, opens with expansive chords that explore the full range of the keyboard. The mood is tranquil and requires sensitivity to a variety of touches. Hand crossings are the main technical challenge in this work. The second piece, *Promenade*, is lively in character, features hand crossings, and differing articulations between the hands. The

[105] Magrath, *Pianist's Guide*, 468.

third piece, *A Little Story*, includes several techniques such as balance of melody and accompaniment, scalar passages, hand crossings, similar and contrary motion, and control of dynamics and articulations, all of which will benefit students who study this piece. *Tarantella* (No. 4) is a well-known piece from the set and represents the motoric element of Prokofiev's style with the continuous eighth-note pattern throughout. Modern elements of his harmonic language are also present with the shifting key areas of D minor, D-flat major, A-flat major, C minor, and E-flat major. Fast hand-position changes and leaps are technical challenges for the student. The fifth work of the set, *Regrets*, encourages students to work on their voicing technique. *Waltz* (No. 6) is one of the more difficult pieces as it combines several techniques such as large leaps, hand crossings, arpeggiated figures, and shifting hand positions. The piece is also difficult to read with multiple clef changes.

The seventh piece of the set, *March of the Grasshoppers*, has a stately character due to the dotted rhythms. This work features passages in unison, as well as varied articulations played simultaneously in one hand. Here students will also improve their ability to play a left hand melody. *The Rain and the Rainbow* (No. 8) is an excellent piece to work on expression in the interpretation. The dissonant cluster chords give the piece an Impressionistic flair, and can also represent the rain. As the piece unfolds, the dissonant chords disappear and the melody is clearly stated, representing the emerging rainbow. Students explore the full range of the keyboard, and a variety of touches encourage students to experiment with colors of sound. The most difficult piece of the set is *Playing Tag* (No. 9) due to the fast tempo, repeated notes, and leaps. A study of articulations and dynamics, the tenth piece of the set, *March*, is another popular

selection. *Evening* (No. 11) is a waltz that exemplifies Prokofiev's "wrong-note" style of writing. The twelfth and last piece of the set, *The Moon Strolls in the Meadows*, depicts a calm evening. Students will develop a variety of touches and refine balance between the hands. Prokofiev's *Music for Children* provides many technical feats for students to master as well as opportunities to develop musical playing, and is the ideal set to introduce students to Prokofiev's compositional style.

Summary of Pedagogical Implications

Prokofiev's output for the piano is vast, and a large number of compositions are for the advanced performer and require a solid command of piano technique. While these concert works propelled Prokofiev to prominence as one of the main composers for the piano of the twentieth century, his limited output at intermediate, late-intermediate, and early-advanced levels deters pianists studying pieces of Prokofiev during this developmental stage prior to acquiring a virtuosic technique required for the well-known concert works. Teachers should be aware of collections such as the *Music for Children,* Op. 65 for their early-intermediate students. Very few pieces from Prokofiev serve the late-intermediate to early-advanced levels to bridge the gap from intermediate to advanced levels of playing.

Several independent selections from the sets and transcriptions are worthwhile additions when building repertoire for late-intermediate and early-advanced pianists. These include *Four Pieces*, Op. 4, No. 2 (*Elan*) and No. 3 (*Despair*); *Ten Pieces*, Op. 12, No. 6 (*Legend*) and No. 7 (*Prelude*); *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, No. 1 ("Lentamente"), No. 8 ("Commodo"), No. 13 ("Allegretto"), No. 16 ("Dolente"),

No. 17 (“Poetico”), and No.18 (“Con una dolce lentezza”); *Tales of an Old Grandmother,* Op. 31; *Three Pieces,* Op. 59; *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet*, Op. 75, No. 1 (*Folk Dance*), No. 7 (*Friar Laurence*), and No. 9 (*Dance of the Girls with Lilies*); *Pieces for Piano from Cinderella,* Op. 95, No. 2 (*Gavotte*) and No. 3 (*Slow Waltz*), Op. 97, No. 8 (*Capriccio*) and No. 9 (*Bourrée*), and Op. 102, No. 1 (*Waltz*), No. 2 (*Cinderella’s Variation*), and No. 6 (*Amoroso*). These pieces are often overlooked as they are contained within sets that are known as advanced works requiring formidable piano technique.

The focus of chapter 4 is to demonstrate to teachers and students how the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 serve as a platform for building that bridge for intermediate students seeking to delve further and more effectively into Prokofiev’s advanced repertoire.

Chapter 4

FOUR PIECES, OP. 32

This chapter begins with an historical sketch of Prokofiev's *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 including its conception, significance, publication, and original performance. Special insight on this topic is available from the composer's diaries, correspondence and autobiographical efforts. Following the historical sketch, this chapter presents, for each of the individual pieces of opus 32, (1) an analysis of the musical form, relying in part on theoretical tools from Ashley's categories[1] to address Prokofiev's departure from common practice harmony, (2) a discussion of the technical challenges and suggested solutions, and (3) performance suggestions. In addition to the use of musical examples, this chapter also includes images depicting hand positions or movement on the keyboard to address key technical and performance challenges.

Historical Sketch

Prokofiev left for America in May of 1918 due to the changing political climate in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, which led to the eventual

[1] See chapter 3, Compositional Style and Overview of Solo Piano Literature, Compositional Style, in the Harmonic Language subsection; and Ashley, "Prokofiev's Piano Music."

establishment of a Communist government and the rise of the Soviet Union. The new Communist system did not prioritize the arts and culture, and therefore, the most well-known artists left Russia. Literary figures such as Nabokov and Bunin, the painters Chagall and Kandinsky, and other composers including Stravinsky and Rachmaninoff had all left Russia by the early 1920s.[2] Traveling the trans-Siberian railway, Prokofiev made his way to Vladivostok on the Pacific coast, then to Tokyo, Hawaii, and eventually San Francisco. By September of 1918 he was in New York where he began his new career in America.

Prokofiev's success in America fluctuated, but his business sensibility helped stabilize his life through concerts as a pianist, the first of which took place on October 29, 1918 at the Brooklyn Museum.[3] A second concert took place on November 20, 1918 where Prokofiev performed a program including works by Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, and his own *Four Etudes*, Op. 2 at Aeolian Hall. The audience was enthusiastic about his playing so much so that he performed several encores including selections from the *Ten Pieces* and the *Suggestion diabolique*.[4] In addition to performing, Prokofiev composed several works while in America including the popular opera *The Love for Three Oranges*, Op. 33, the *Overture on Hebrew Themes*, Op. 34, and an additional opera *The Fiery Angel*, Op. 37.

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[2] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 142.

[3] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 145.

[4] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 145.

Conceived and written alongside the *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31, Prokofiev composed the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 in 1918. Both works were primarily motivated by the need to support himself financially. On September 21, 1918 Prokofiev writes, "I need some little pieces for a publisher, something not too demanding, a sonatina or some 'Fairy Tales.' My inclination is for some 'Tales of an Old Grandmother', whose senile rambling through the mists of her decrepitude yields glimpses of far-off memories."[5] Prokofiev seemed inspired by the idea of writing the *Tales of an Old Grandmother* and wrote this narrative on September 26, "The old grandmother tells her story, coughing and mumbling, muddling up much of how things really were, but with the occasional flashes of clarity that bring back precious moments as if they had happened yesterday. From time to time the tale she tells is veiled by a profound serenity or wisdom."[6] It is clear that Prokofiev did not have the same inspiration for the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32.

The entries that follow in Prokofiev's diary from October 1918 clearly indicate he composed the *Four Pieces* for the sole purpose of generating income. On October 9, Prokofiev commented that the publisher, Carl Fischer, "had indicated to ensure wider distribution of my music (and more profits for his firm) they would like to publish a few more pieces in addition to the *Tales*, perhaps more accessible, like for example the 'Gavotte', today I jotted down some ideas for a set of dances to keep the rogues quiet."[7]

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[5] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 336.

[6] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 338.

[7] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 343.

On October 10, he wrote the *Minuet* but recorded in his diary that he "would much prefer to be working on an opera or finishing [his] dear 'white' quartet."[8] Prokofiev started writing the *Waltz* on October 11: "In the end the music will be quite good, but the Waltz is sugary-sweet and boring. If I did not need the money I would not be writing any of this rubbish."[9] Work continued the next day on the *Waltz*, but Prokofiev seems to have been particularly disgusted, writing, "There's nothing good in any of these dances. But I want to get this opus finished whatever happens."[10] On October 13, Prokofiev wrote of his financial situation,

> I am at the end of my tether sitting around with no money, unable to afford anything, skimping and saving, counting every cent—it's enough to make a cat sick. And it's not helped by hearing on every side how famous I am, reading about myself every other day in the newspapers, waiting three months to get, if not tens of thousands, at least a thousand dollars. So just give them to me now, you fools![11]

By October 18, Prokofiev had finished writing all four dances stating that "they are a little boring; I have no particular preference for one over the other."[12] However, Prokofiev must have had a particular fondness for the *Gavotte* as it is the only piece from the set that he recorded. It was also the first piece he sketched after deciding to write a set of dances, and perhaps the piece he felt most inspired to write. Despite his

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[8] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 343.

[9] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 343.

[10] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 345.

[11] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 344.

[12] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 345.

efforts, the *Tales* and the *Four Pieces* were never published by Fisher, and they were not published until 1921 in Moscow by Serge Koussevitzky. The *Four Pieces* were premiered by Prokofiev in New York on March 30, 1919.[13]

Notwithstanding the lack of inspiration outside of financial reasons for Prokofiev to write these pieces, each exhibit qualities of his compositional style and are valuable teaching pieces for pianists at a late-intermediate and early-advanced level. Perhaps Prokofiev felt disdain toward the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 because he was in a dire financial situation and preferred to be working on an opera and a string quartet. However, the pieces are regularly heard in competition and recital today. In some ways, the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 are equally, if not more impactful when compared to the *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31, due to their variety of character, musical quality, and technical demands.

Four Pieces, Op. 32, No. 1 *Dance*

The first piece in the set, *Dance*, introduces pianists to several of Prokofiev's harmonic eccentricities and includes examples of bitonality, borrowed chords, and parallelism. These harmonic elements introduce the pianist to Prokofiev's modern compositional line. Pianists will tackle technical challenges such as hand crossing and overlapping, hand position shifts, executing two articulations in one hand simultaneously, and large hand spans. Choosing effective fingering and pedaling will be necessary. The *Dance* is a humorous work highlighted by *staccato* articulations, rests,

[13] Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 151.

and grace notes which must be included in the interpretation of the work. The humor here is somewhat mischievous and is an example of Prokofiev's "scherzo-ish" or grotesque line.

Form and Analysis

The formal structure of *Dance* can be divided into the following sections:

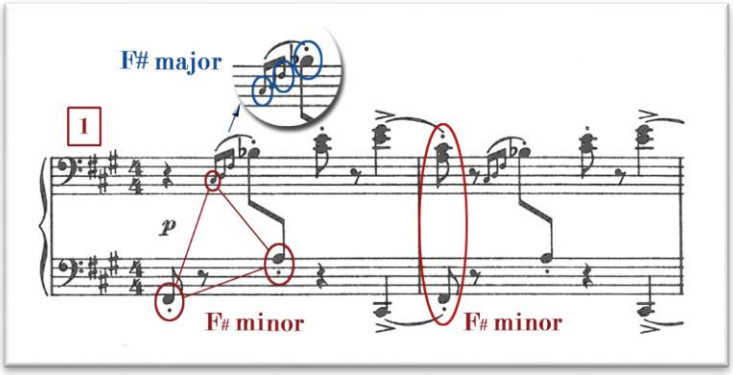
Section	Measure
A	1-12
B	13-23[14]
A'	24-31
B'	32-39
C	40-55
A'	56-63
B	64-75
Coda	76-87

Most of the harmonies used in *Dance* are tertian, yet non-functional. Furthermore, these harmonies are colored with additional chromatic tones which exemplify Prokofiev's modern compositional line. Prokofiev's use of chromaticism gives the music a quality that mixes major and minor modes, an example of bitonality (category 8) that Ashley refers to as "Polychords and superimposed chords." The use of both major and minor tonalities can also be explained by the composer's use of borrowed chords in his chromatic harmony (category 7). Prokofiev further deviates from traditional harmony with brief uses of parallel chords (category 4).

[14] The B section of *Dance* is properly viewed as beginning on beat 4 of measure 12, but in this case, and with other section references in this document, the author identifies the first full measure and the last partial measure of each section for convenience.

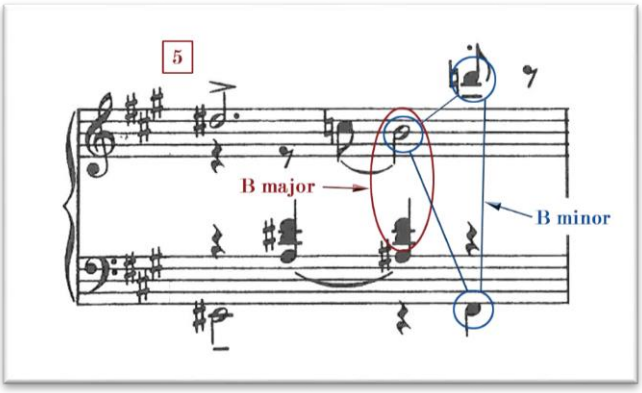
From the outset, the pitch collection of the first three beats in measure 1 is a combination of major and minor tonalities. Specific pitches can be isolated to create an F-sharp minor triad or an F-sharp major triad using enharmonic spellings. The B-flat on beat 2 can be respelled as an A-sharp to create the F-sharp major triad. The following measure (m. 2) begins on an F-sharp minor triad implying the tonal center of the first A section, as seen in example 4.1, and therefore, the F-sharp major triad is a borrowed tonic chord from the parallel major key.

Example 4.1. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 1-2, F-sharp major and minor tonalities.



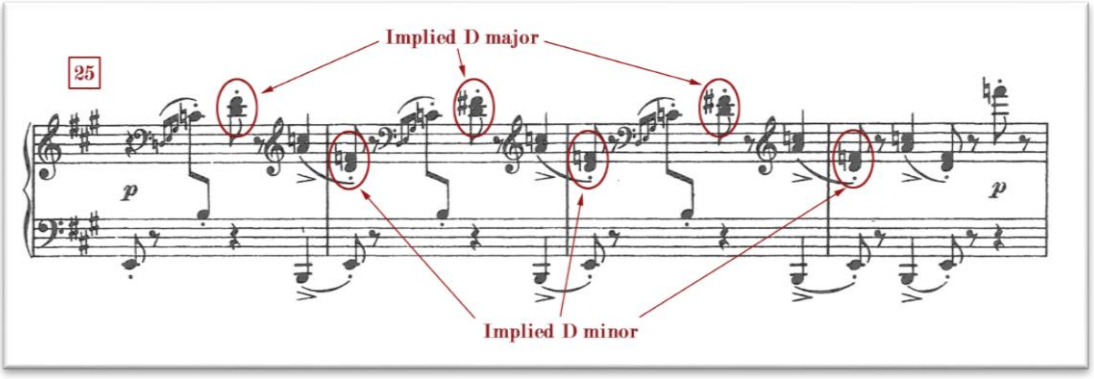
A second combination of major and minor tonalities occurs in measure 5 on beats 3 and 4 where pitches combine to create a B major or B minor triad, shown in example 4.2. The B-minor triad is the subdominant in the key of F-sharp minor, and the B major triad is a borrowed subdominant chord in the parallel major key, F-sharp major.

Example 4.2. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Dance*, m. 5, B major and minor tonalities.



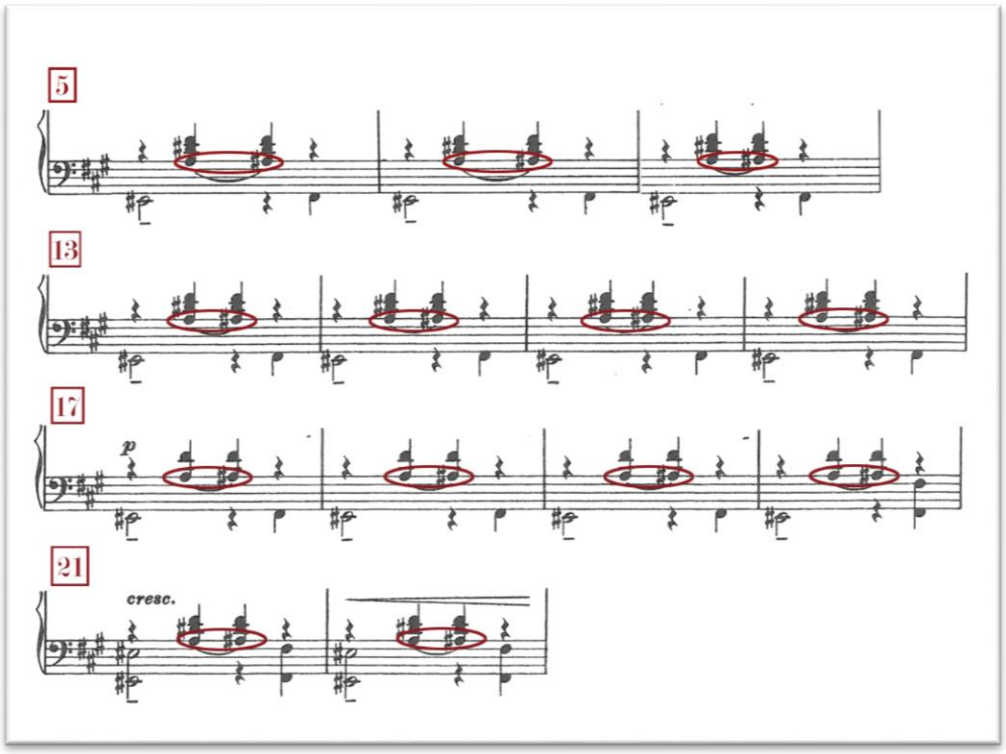
The return of the A section in measure 25 implies a modulation to A major, the relative of F-sharp minor due to the E dominant seventh chord on beats 1 and 2, however, this is never confirmed with a cadence in A major. The play on major and minor tonalities is also alive in this A section as beat 3 of measures 25 to 27 implies a D major triad, yet D minor is implied on beat 1 in measures 26 to 28 (see example 4.3). Similar to the borrowed subdominant chord found in measure 5, if one considers the A section in measure 25 to be in A major, the D minor chord would be the borrowed subdominant from the parallel minor key of A minor. Half-step motion is a second feature of chromaticism used harmonically by Prokofiev.

Example 4.3. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Dance*, m. 25-28, implied D major and minor chords.

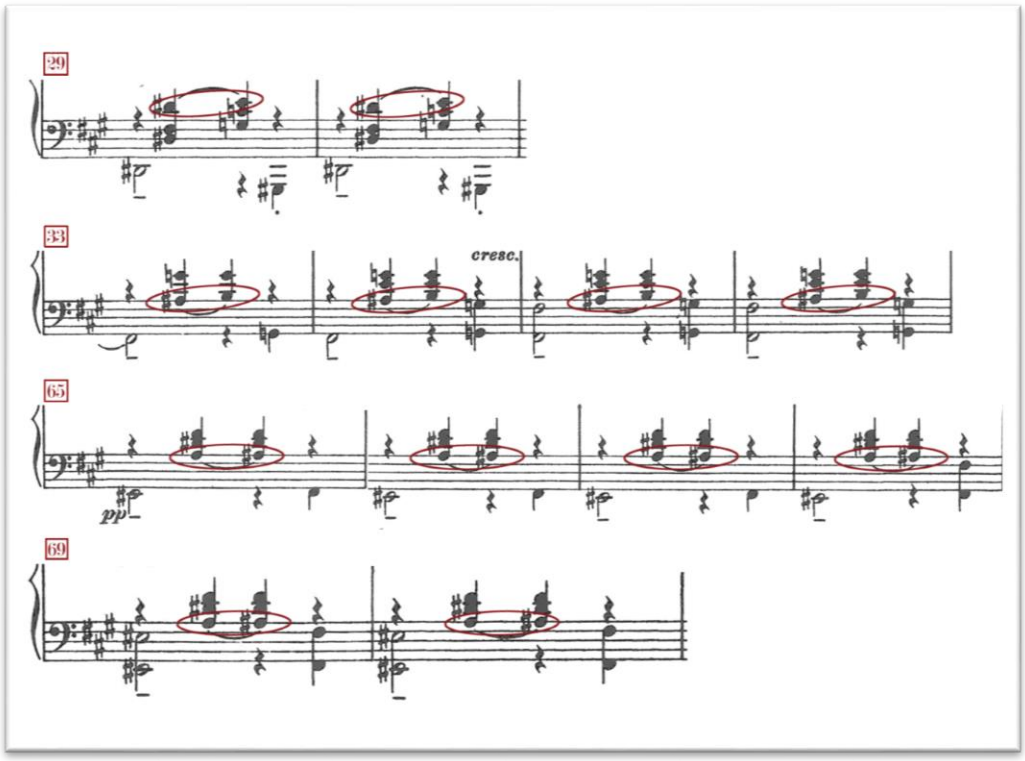


The chromatic motion from A-natural to A-sharp that first appears in measure 5 is found throughout the work. Because of its prevalence throughout the piece this chromatic motion becomes a sort of two-note motive. The two-note motive is prevalent in the entire piece in the left hand, and is highlighted in example 4.4 (mm. 5-7 and 13-22) and example 4.5 (mm. 29-30, 33-36, 61-62, and 65-70). In addition to chromatic tones used to create mixed major and minor sonorities, chromaticism is also used melodically.

Example 4.4. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 5-7, 13-22, two-note motive, left hand.

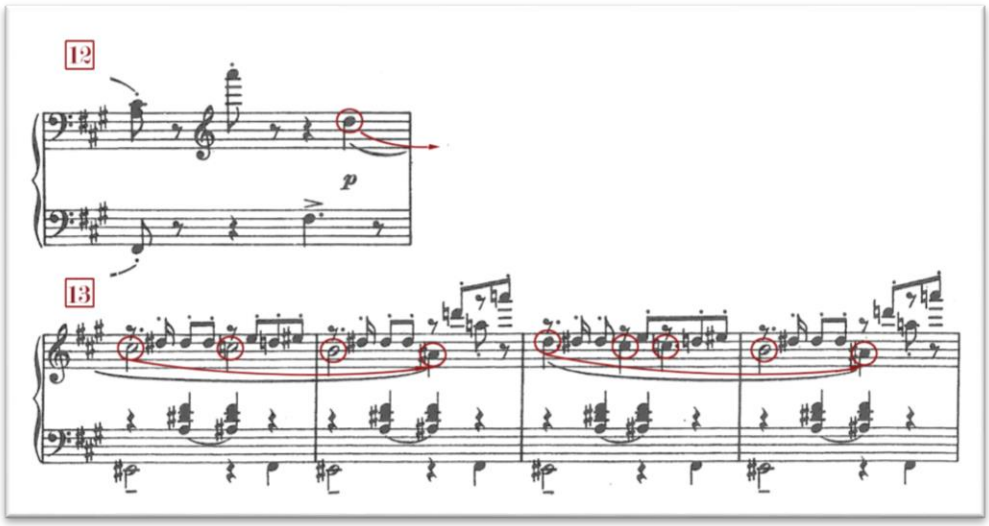


Example 4.5. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 29-30, 33-36, 65-70, two-note motive, left hand.



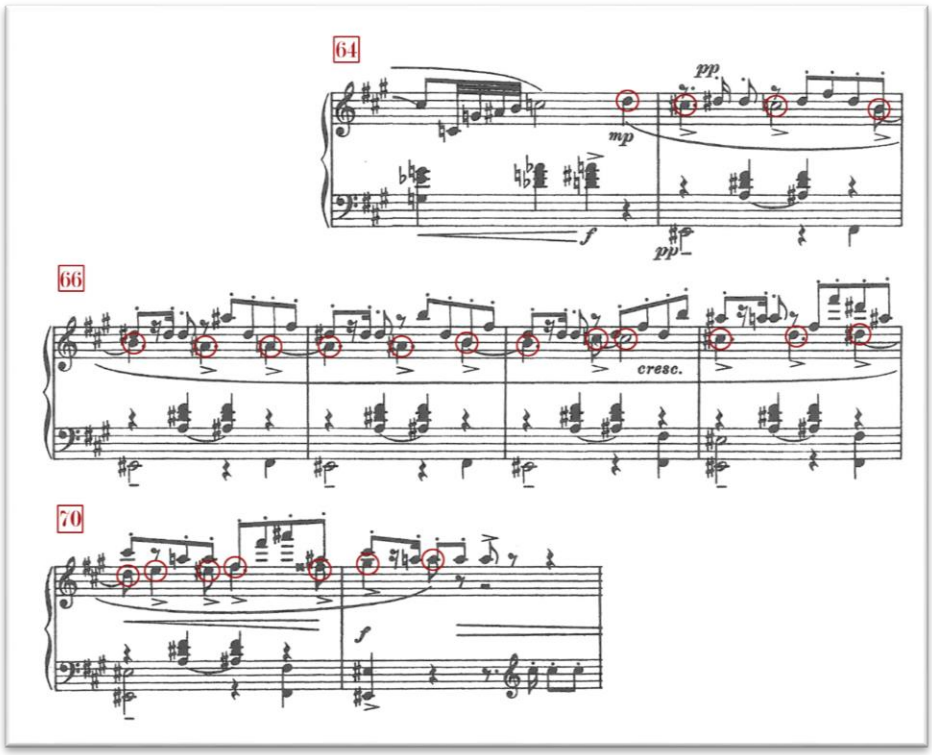
The alto voice in the right hand carries the melody in the B section beginning on beat 4 in measure 12 (see example 4.6). The melody descends chromatically in half-notes as highlighted in example 4.6.

Example 4.6. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 12-16, descending chromatic melody, right hand.



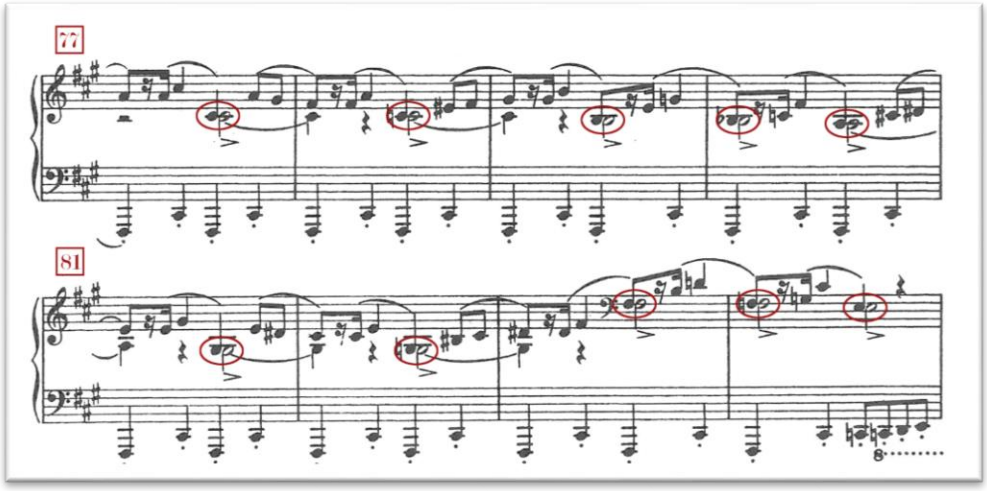
When this melody returns in measure 64 it first descends from D to A, and then ascends chromatically an entire octave from measures 67 to 71. See example 4.7.

Example 4.7. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 64-71, chromatic melody, right hand.



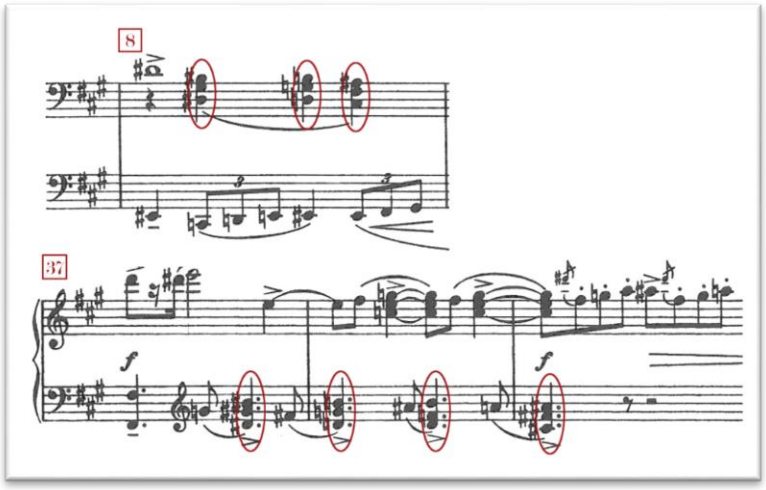
The same technique is used in the coda in measures 77 to 84 (example 4.8). This melodic line is interesting as it might not be heard over the soprano melody which the ear is drawn to, due to its rhythmic character, but the chromatic line can be brought to the listener's attention through careful voicing.

Example 4.8. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 77-84, descending chromatic melody, right hand.



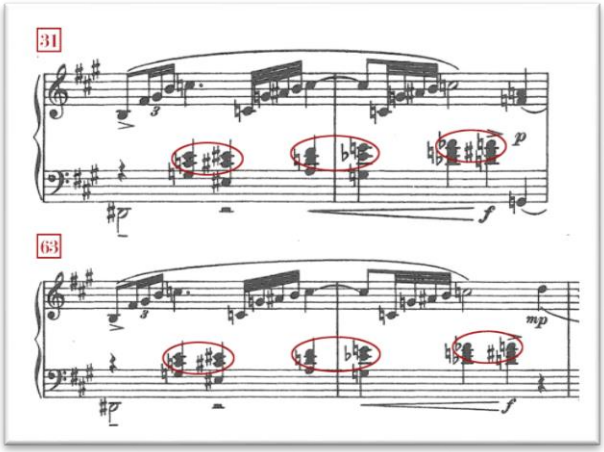
In addition to examples of chromaticism, a few instances of parallel chords are found in *Dance.* Parallel major chords in first inversion are written in the right hand in measure 8. The chords in this passage descend chromatically from G-sharp major, to G major, and end on F-sharp major, shown in example 4.9.

Example 4.9. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 8 and 37-39, parallel chords.



The same chords appear a second time in the left hand and in second inversion in measures 37 to 39. There is an additional chord in this passage that does not occur in the passage that begins in measure 8 (see example 4.9). Here a first inversion B diminished triad occurs on beat 3 of measure 38. Two examples of ascending chromatic parallel thirds occur in the left hand in measures 31 to 32 and again in measures 63 to 64, shown in example 4.10.

Example 4.10. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 31-32, 63-64, ascending chromatic parallel thirds.



The chromatic thirds appear in the top two notes of each chord. The first third is major in quality and begins on beat 2 of measure 31 on the notes C—E. Major thirds ascend chromatically until beat 2 of measure 31. The last two thirds, F—A-flat and F-sharp—A, are minor in quality. The same passage is repeated in measures 63 to 64.

In a way, the *Dance* whets one's palette for Prokofiev's harmonic language as only three of Ashley's categories are present in this piece. Combining major and minor sonorities creates a sense of bitonality (category 8), however these chords can also be explained as borrowed harmonies from parallel keys (category 7). Short instances of parallel triads and thirds are used chromatically as well (category 4).

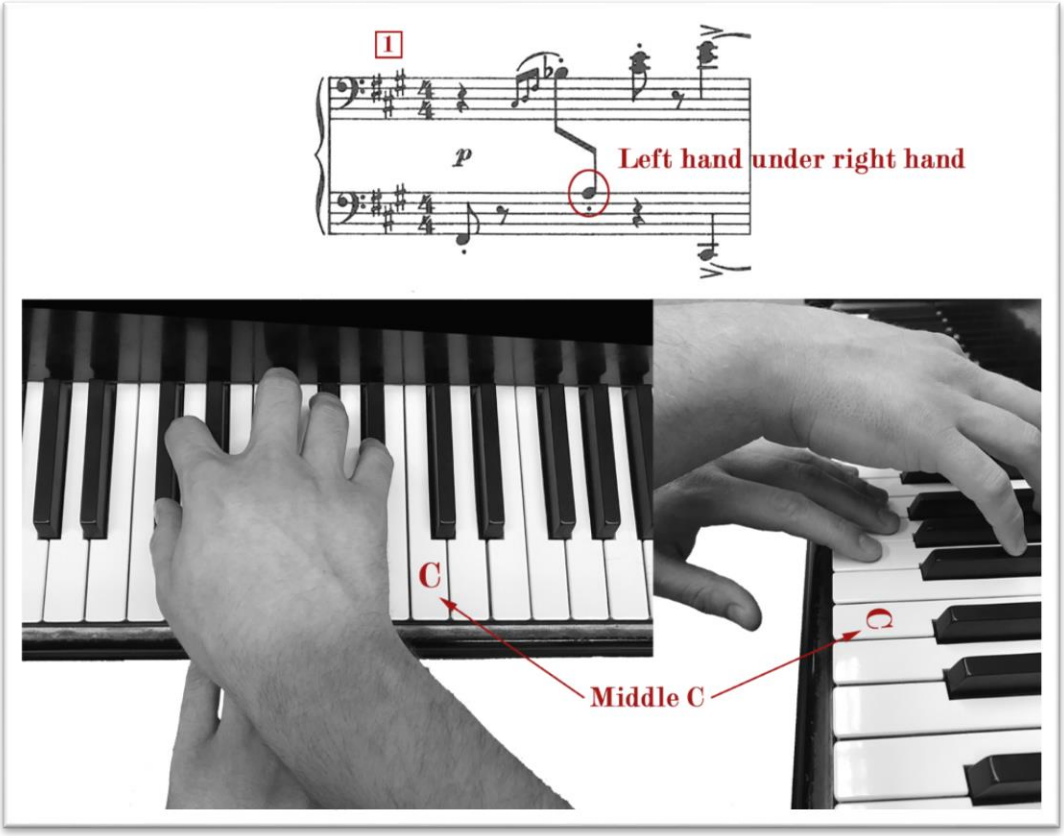
Technical Problems and Solutions

Dance, the first work in *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, presents several technical challenges for the pianist. These include hand crossings and passages with the hands on top of one another, fast shifts in hand position, held notes which create two articulations in one hand, and large spans for the hand. Careful choices for fingering are necessary as well as attention to pedaling. The variety of techniques required of the pianist in this piece are suitable for those at a late-intermediate level. As with any discussion of technique it is best for the reader to have the score in hand and try the solutions at the piano while reading the following descriptions. Images of hands on the keyboard are included in some cases to highlight and address key technical issues.

The main theme in the A sections requires the left hand to cross over or under the right hand. The hands are on top of each other and a decision needs to be made concerning placement of the hands. In measure 1, the author recommends crossing the

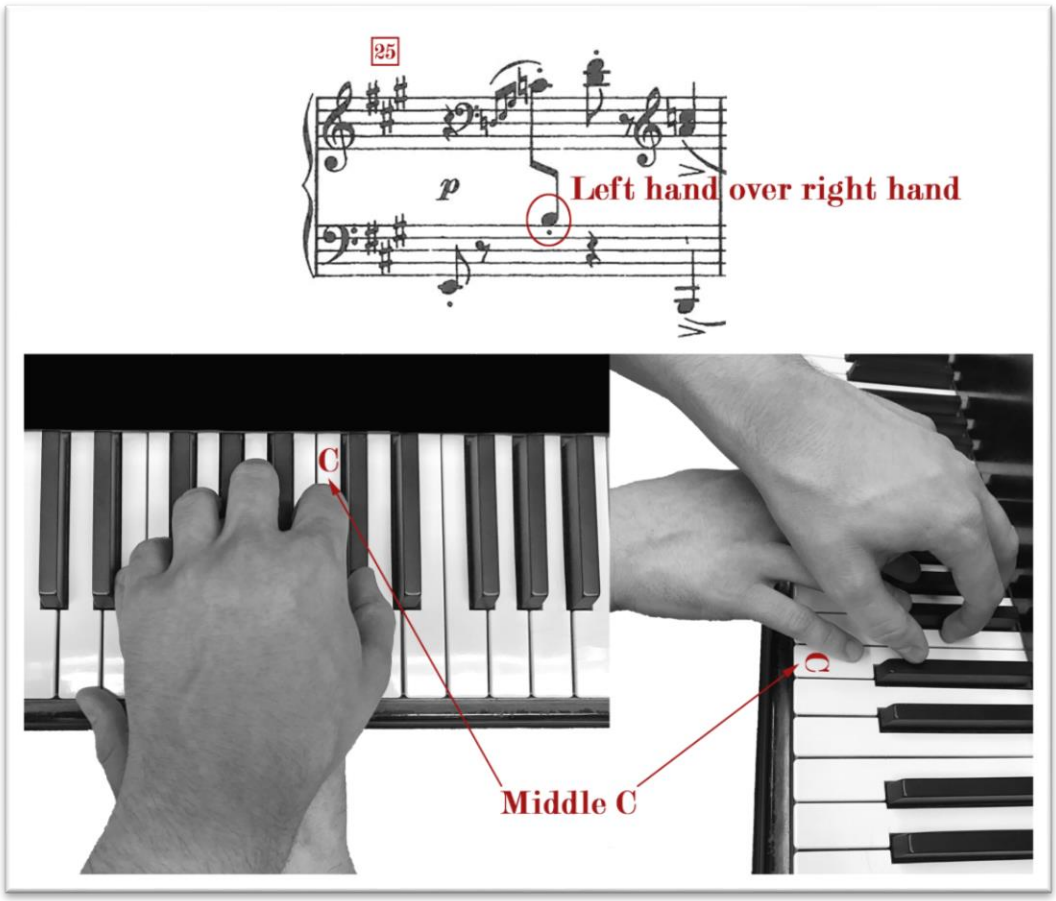
left hand under the right for the A on the “and” of beat 2, allowing both hands to move freely to the following notes on beat 4. This approach is depicted in example 4.11.

Example 4.11. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Dance*, m. 1, left hand crosses under right hand.



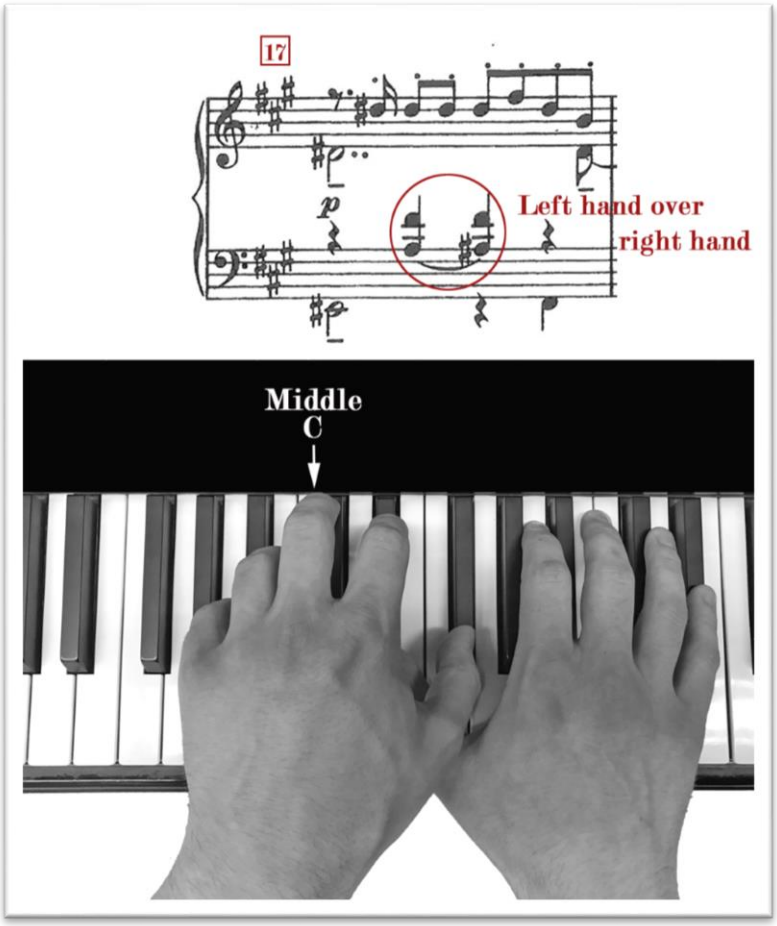
While it is possible for the left hand to cross over the right hand in this passage, the transition does not feel as smooth, as the left hand must search for the A and the right hand gets in the way because it is on top of the black keys. Since the right hand covers mostly black keys, it is easy for the left hand to fit under the right. The left hand does not get in the way when the theme is transposed in the first return of the A section in measure 25 as the right hand covers more white keys and it is easier for the left hand to find the B when it crosses over the right hand, as shown in example 4.12.

Example 4.12. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, m. 25, left hand crosses over right hand.



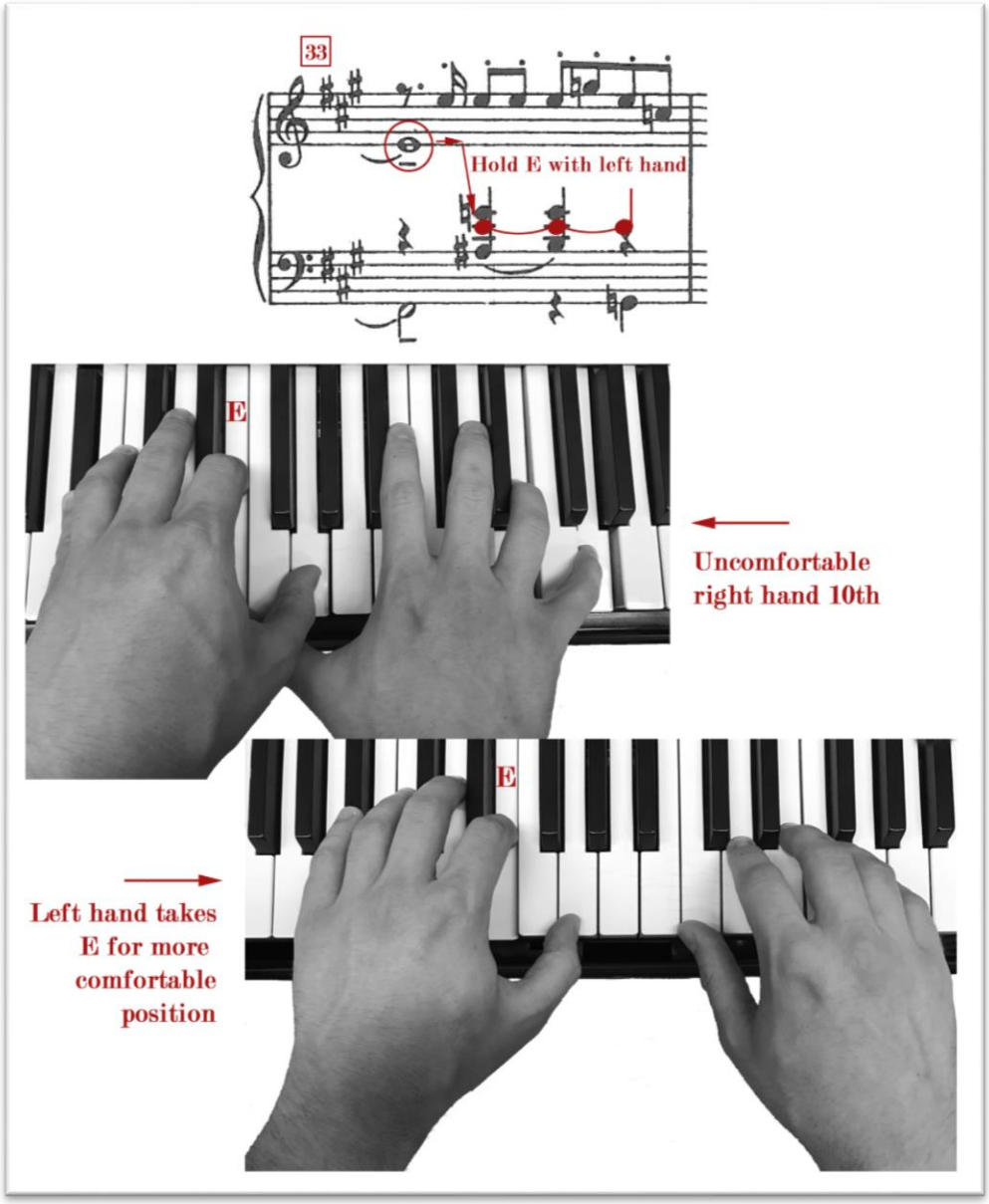
The hands are also on top of each other in the B section in measure 17 and here it is best for the left hand to be over the right hand. See example 4.13. For those pianists with larger hands, this allows the right hand to hold on to the D-sharp in the alto voice while playing the *staccato* notes in the soprano voice.

Example 4.13. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, m. 17, left hand crosses over right hand.



A solution for pianists with smaller hands, or possibly a more comfortable solution for those with large hands, is to hold the D-sharp with the right thumb and then smoothly transition to holding the D-sharp with the second finger of the left hand which fits nicely between the left hand chords on beats 2 and 3. This solution is effective in measure 33 (first return of the B section) when the pianist is asked to hold an E in the alto voice with the right hand and play the *staccato* passage in the soprano voice. See example 4.14.

Example 4.14. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, m. 33, left hand takes over E.

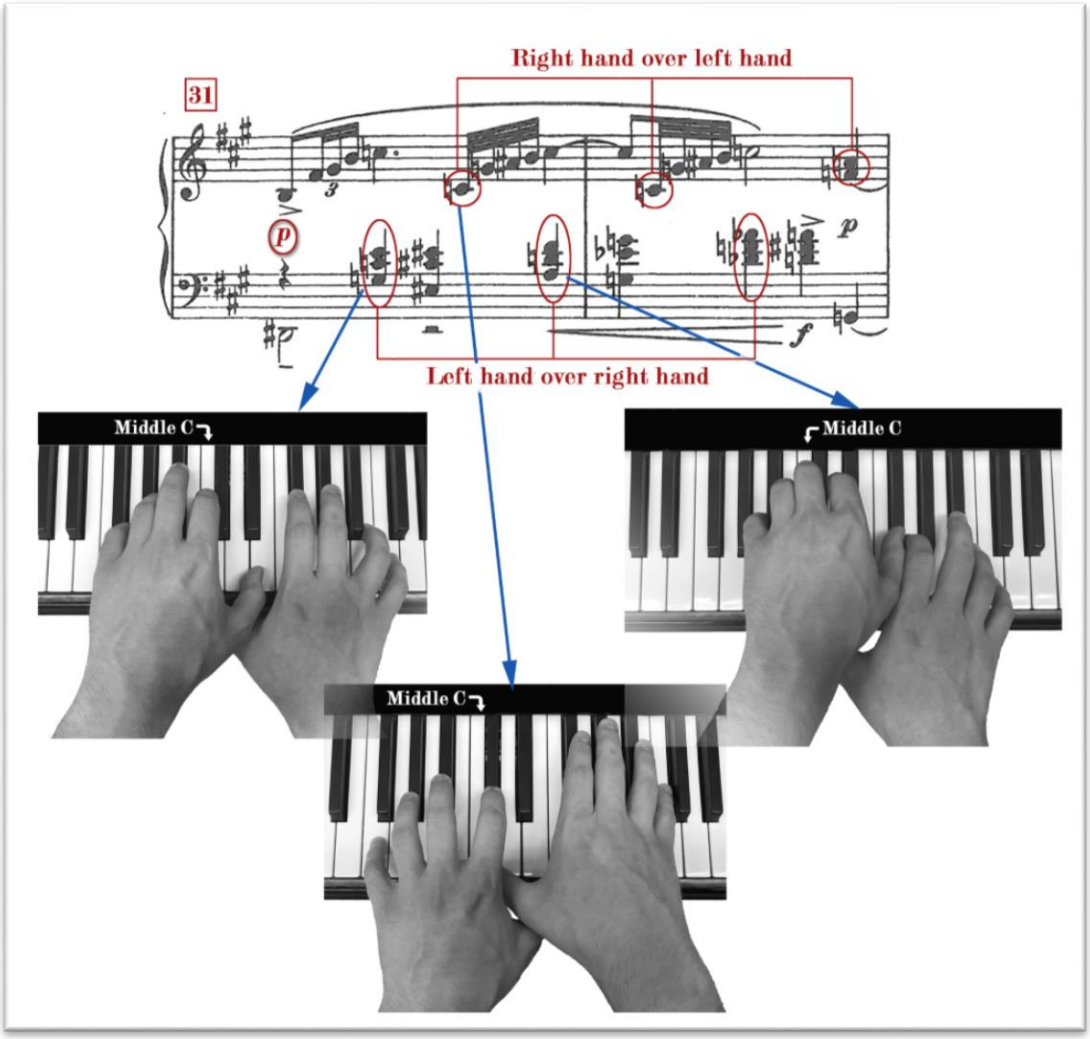


This is uncomfortable even for pianists who can easily reach a tenth. By holding the alto E with the left hand, it is easier to execute the *staccato* notes with more character in the right hand. Just because a pianist can reach a large interval does not always mean it is the best solution!

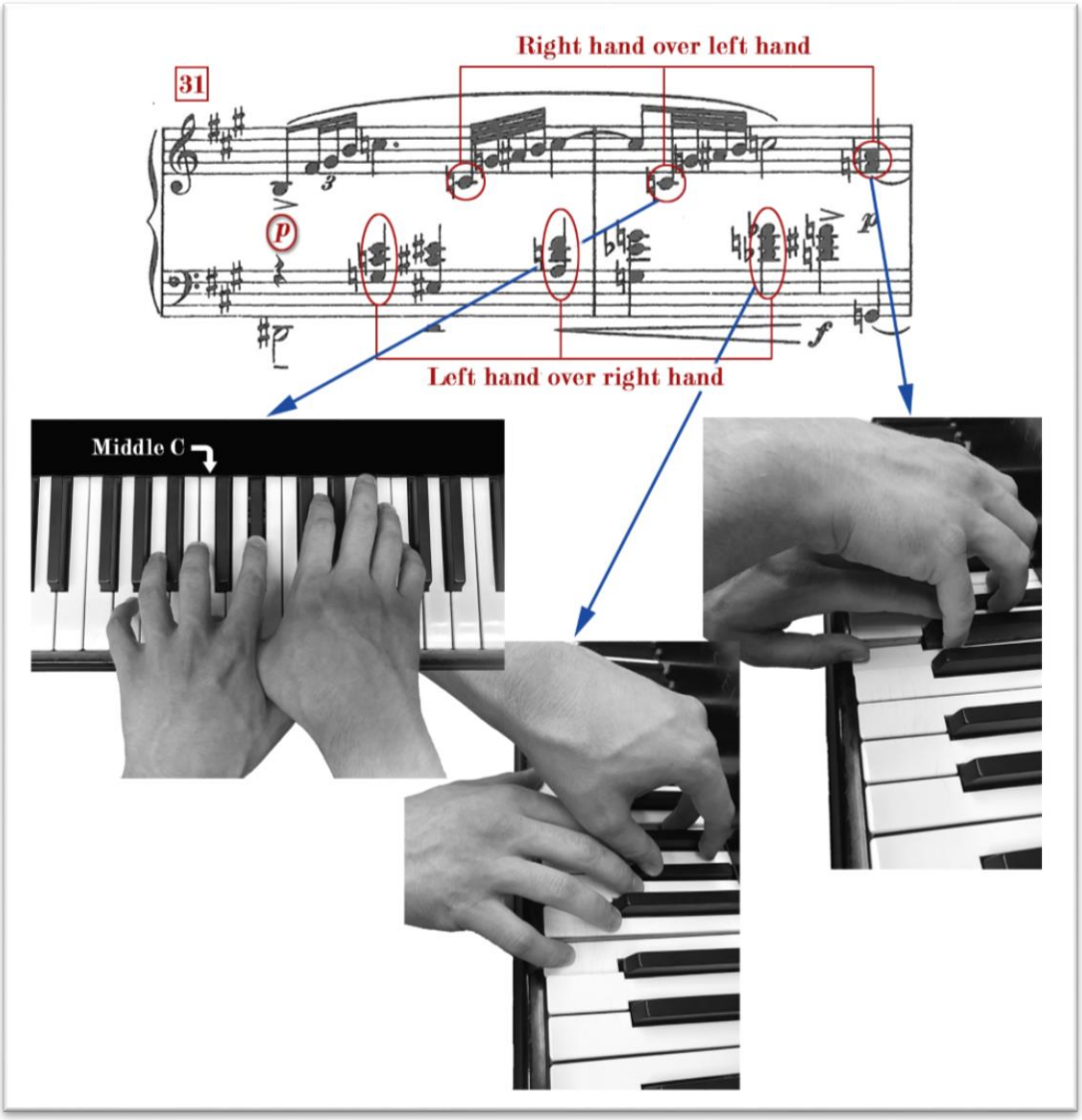
The transition (mm. 29-32) back to the thematic material of the B section requires a lively dance between the thumb of each hand, in measures 31 to 32, in order to execute this tricky passage smoothly. See examples 4.15a and 4.15b. Beginning in measure 31 (example 4.15a), the left hand will go over the right hand when playing the chord on beat 2. Then the right hand must get out of the way so the left hand can play the chord on beat 3 before the right hand can sneak back on top of the left hand to play the C on the "and" of beat 3. The right hand must get out of the way a second time to allow the left hand (now on top of the right hand) room to play the chord on beat 4. This dance of thumbs continues in measure 32 (example 4.15b) where the right hand must get out of the way to allow the left hand to play the chord on beat 1 of measure 32; and then the right hand will go over the left hand to play the C on the "and" of beat 1 in measure 32. The hands alternate positions again—the left hand now on top of the right hand—in order to play the chord on beat 2 in measure 32. Finally, the right hand comes out from under the left hand to play the chord on beat 4 of measure 32. Essentially, the right hand is moving in circles to navigate itself between the left hand as it alternates playing chords under or on top of the right hand. The pianist should be careful to execute this passage at a *piano* dynamic, making sure that the circular motion of the hands does not add extra speed to the attack of the keys. For smaller hands, when the right hand plays the fifth finger on beats two and four in measure 31 and beat two of measure 32, the hand will supinate, or turn outward, and get out of the way for the left hand. Therefore, the circular motion might be reduced for easier execution of the *piano* dynamic. Regardless of hand size, the tempo of this section might still require pianists

to use circular motions so that each hand can get out of the way when the other needs to play the next beat.

Example 4.15a. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Dance*, m. 31-32, thumb dance begins as depicted for m. 31.



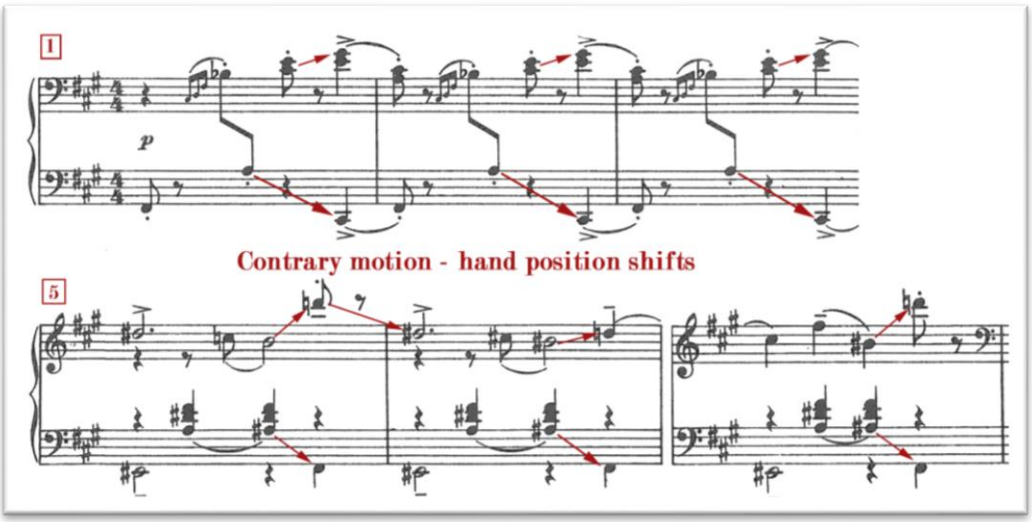
Example 4.15b. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, m. 31-32, thumb dance continues as depicted for m. 32.



In addition to hand crossings, fast shifts in hand position are also a technical challenge for the pianist. In fact, the entire first page of the *Dance* is an exercise in shifting hand positions from one register of the piano to another. The hands are moving in contrary motion outward and then back in towards each other. Prokofiev writes *staccato* notes on beats 1 and 3 in measures 1 to 3 (see example 4.16) which help

facilitate changes in hand position. The same hand position shift is required in measures 25 to 28 when the A section returns.

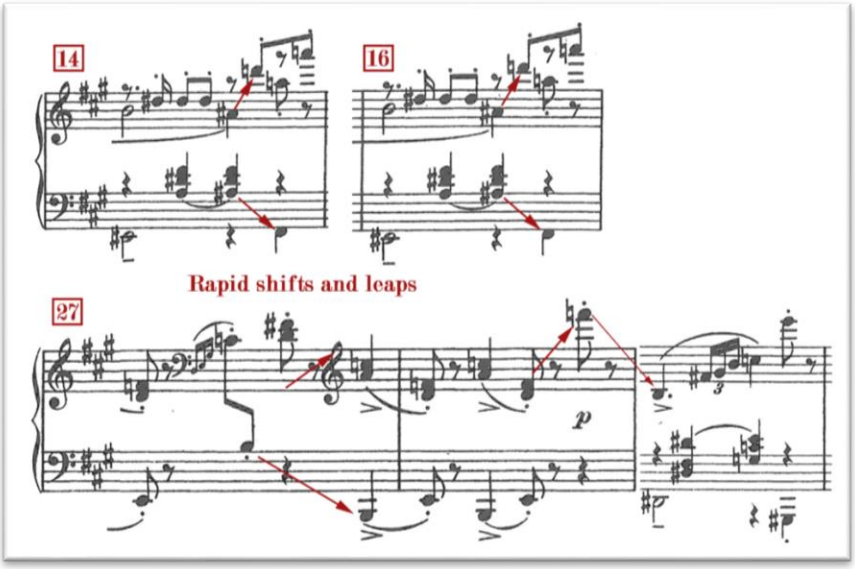
Example 4.16. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 1-3 and 5-7, contrary motion hand position shifts.



Similar motion between the hands occurs in measures 5 to 7 but there the notes are sustained except for the *staccato* articulations on beat 4 of the right hand in measures 5 and 7. Thankfully, and perhaps to make the pieces more accessible,[15] Prokofiev writes the same accompaniment in the left hand which is easy to memorize and allows the pianist to focus attention on the leaps in the right hand. Other rapid shifts in hand position, or leaps, occur in the right hand, usually on beats 3 and 4, in measures 14, 16, and 27 to 29 seen in example 4.17.

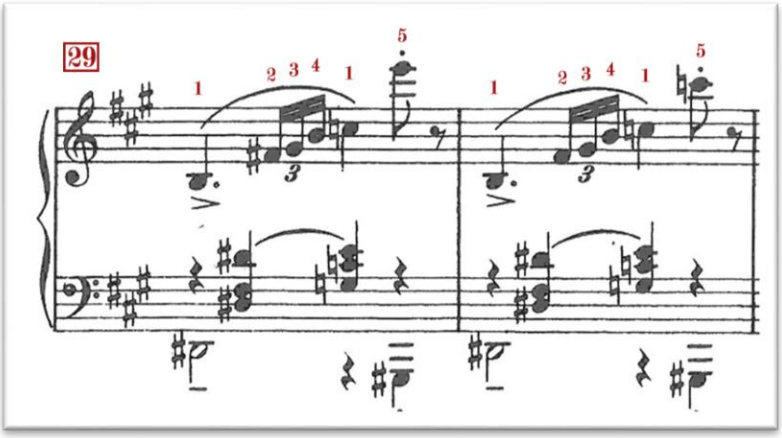
[15] Speaking of intended publisher Carl Fischer, Prokofiev wrote about what would become his Op. 32, "… they would like to publish a few more pieces in addition to the *Tales*, perhaps more accessible…." From Phillips, *Prokofiev Diaries 1915-1923*, 343.

Example 4.17. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 14, 16, and 27-29, rapid shifts and leaps.



A possible solution of fingering might ease the leaps in measures 29 to 30, shown in example 4.18, by crossing the thumb to the C on beat 3 allowing the hand to expand and reach the tenth, if possible, on beat 4 in measure 28 and the octave in measure 29.

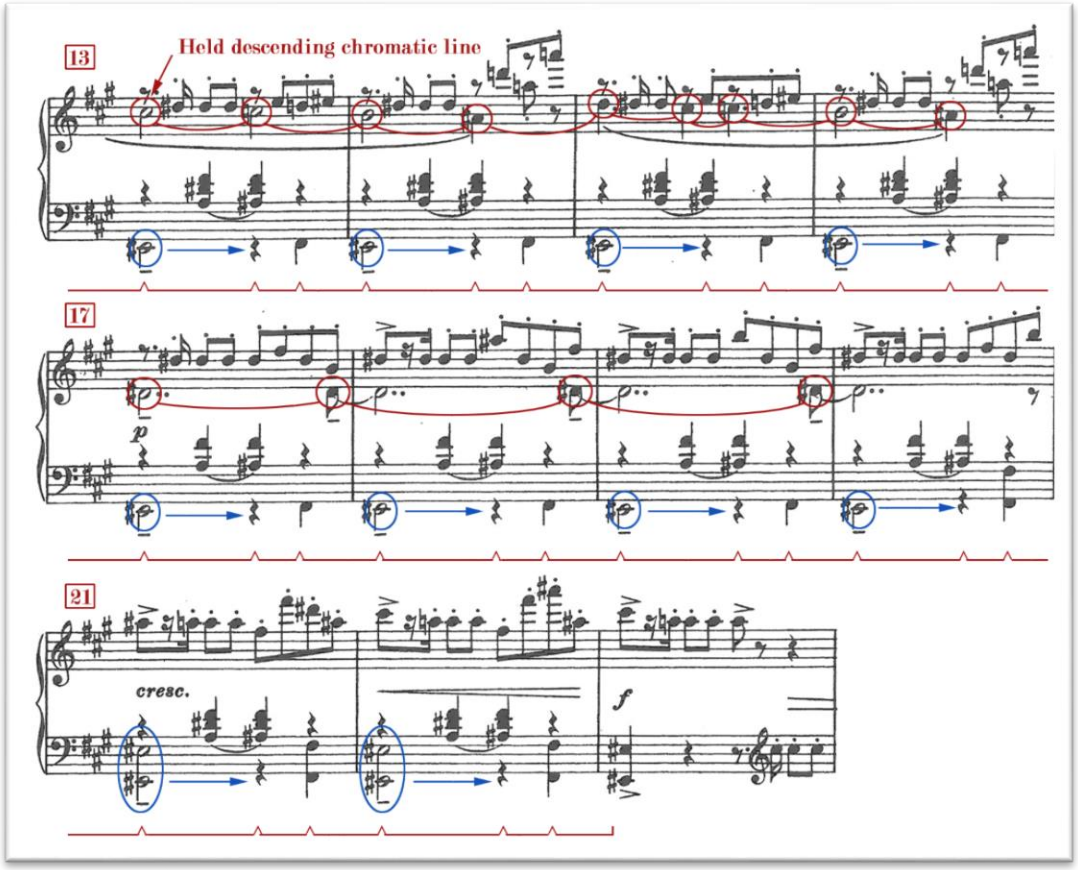
Example 4.18. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 29-30, fingering for rapid leaps.



Creative fingering has already been suggested to avoid some of the issues requiring a large hand span. Some are possible for pianists with large hands but others need to be addressed with pedaling choices.

Careful pedaling choices are required in measures 13 to 23 in order to execute large hand spans and leaps in the right hand while maintaining held notes in the alto and bass voices. Pedaling suggestions for these measures are included in example 4.19. These large spans are possible for pianists who can comfortably reach a tenth; however, in measure 18, Prokofiev marks for the pianist to hold on to the D-sharp while playing an A-sharp a twelfth above, which for most, is impossible to reach. One solution suggested earlier (see measure 17 as depicted in example 4.13) was to take the D-sharp with the left hand to give the right hand freedom to play the *staccato* passages in the soprano voice. Additionally, the *sostenuto* pedal might be used to sustain the bass notes, however, one will have to be careful to avoid catching the sustained notes in the alto voice, which will cause additional blurring.

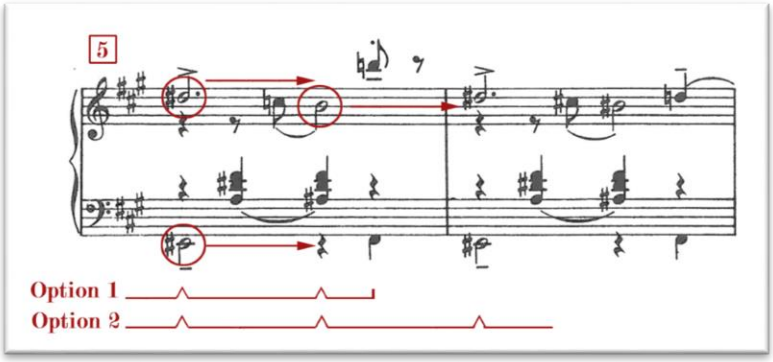
Example 4.19. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 13-23, held notes and suggested pedaling.



The issue is further complicated upon examination of the left hand. Left hand textures found throughout the piece (mm. 5-7, 13-22, example 4.4; and mm. 29-30, 33-36, 61-62, and 65-70, example 4.5), indicate the left hand should hold a bass note for two beats while playing chords in the tenor voice nearly two octaves higher. It is simply not possible to execute this voicing with the fingers alone, and therefore, pedaling must be addressed in these sections. See example 4.19. Furthermore, the alto voice must be sustained by the fingers to properly execute the texture written in measures 13 to 20 (see example 4.19). A suggested fingering for the right hand is provided in the following Performance Suggestions section, in example 4.23.

Prokofiev writes a four-voice texture in measure 5 with notes that are to be held in the bass, alto, and soprano for various lengths of time as highlighted in example 4.20. Some of the voicing is possible if the pianist can reach a tenth, but more likely, the notes will need to be sustained with the pedal. Example 4.20 identifies this four-voice texture and shows two pedaling options depending on the reach of the pianist.

Example 4.20. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 5-6, two pedaling options.



First, the E-sharp in the bass cannot be held by the fingers when the left hand leaps two octaves to play the chord on beat 2. Therefore, the pedal must be held for the first two beats and then changed on beat 3. If the pianist can reach a tenth in the right hand to hold the B on beat 3 and play the *staccato* D on beat 4, the pedal can be released on beat 4 (see example 4.20, Option 1), but if a tenth is not possible the pedal change must occur on beat 1 of the following measure (example 4.20, Option 2).

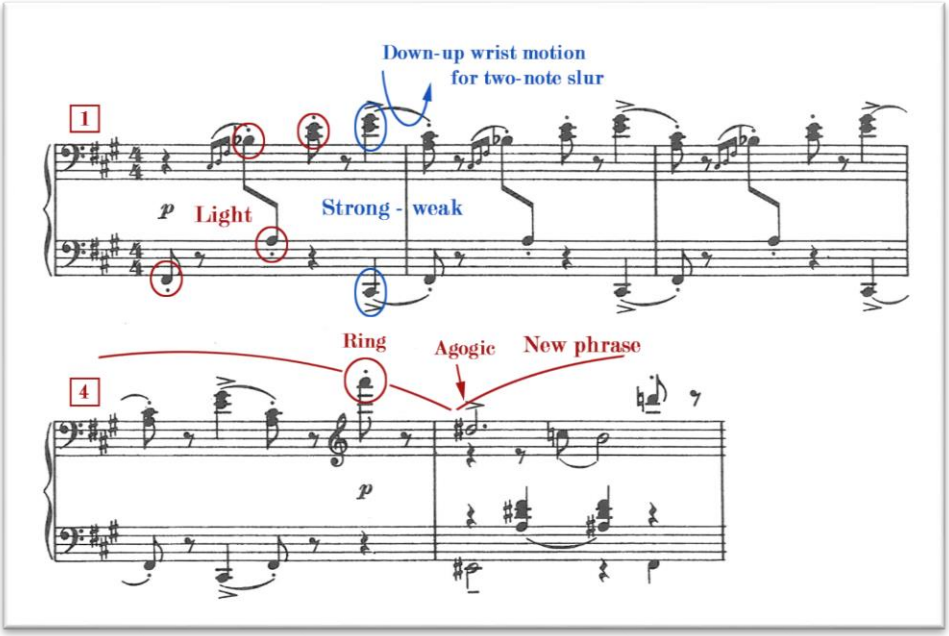
The most challenging pedaling issues occur in the B sections (mm. 13-23, 33-36, and 65-70). See example 4.19. The same texture is written in the left hand as was seen in measure 5, but the right hand has a sustained melody in the alto voice against *staccato* notes in the soprano. The pianist should experiment with touches of pedal and various pedal depths to include half and quarter pedal. The pedaling choices will depend

on the fingering used in the right hand, the pianist's hand span, as well as one's personal choice for the desired effect. The pianist must decide whether to render the *staccato* notes completely dry or whether to allow for some of the *staccato* articulations to be held under the pedal. Example 4.19 shows one suggestion for the pedaling in this passage (mm. 13-23). Some performance suggestions overlap with the discussion on technical solutions, particularly pedaling. Many of these choices are interpretative. Additional suggestions for the performer include phrasing, articulation, voicing, and dynamics, all of which contribute to the character of this piece.

Performance Suggestions

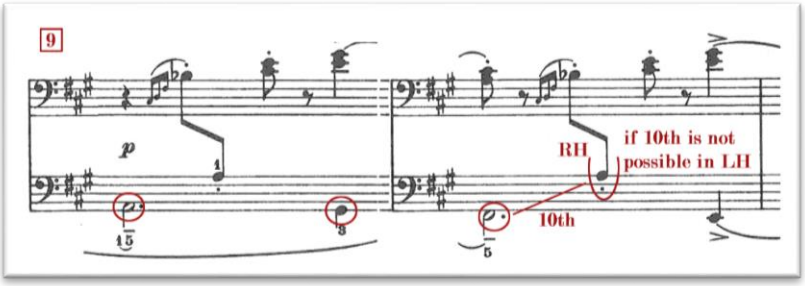
Rolled chords and *staccato* notes in the A sections of *Dance* give the music a humorous quality. The *staccato* notes need to be articulated with a lightness of touch which contrasts the accented two-note slurs that occur at beat 4 of measure 1. See example 4.21. Beat 4 is typically weak and the accents obscure the beat. The articulations here are important to express the humorous character that Prokofiev described as "scherzo-ish" which he preferred over the term grotesque.

Example 4.21. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 1-5, articulations.



The end of the first four-bar phrase can be clearly indicated if the *staccato* A in the right hand on beat 4, measure 4, is allowed to ring. An *agogic* accent on beat 1 of measure 5 indicates to the listener that a new phrase has begun. A repetition of the first phrase begins in measure 9 but is slightly varied as the bass notes are now held, in measures 9 and 10, requiring careful fingering as suggested in example 4.22.

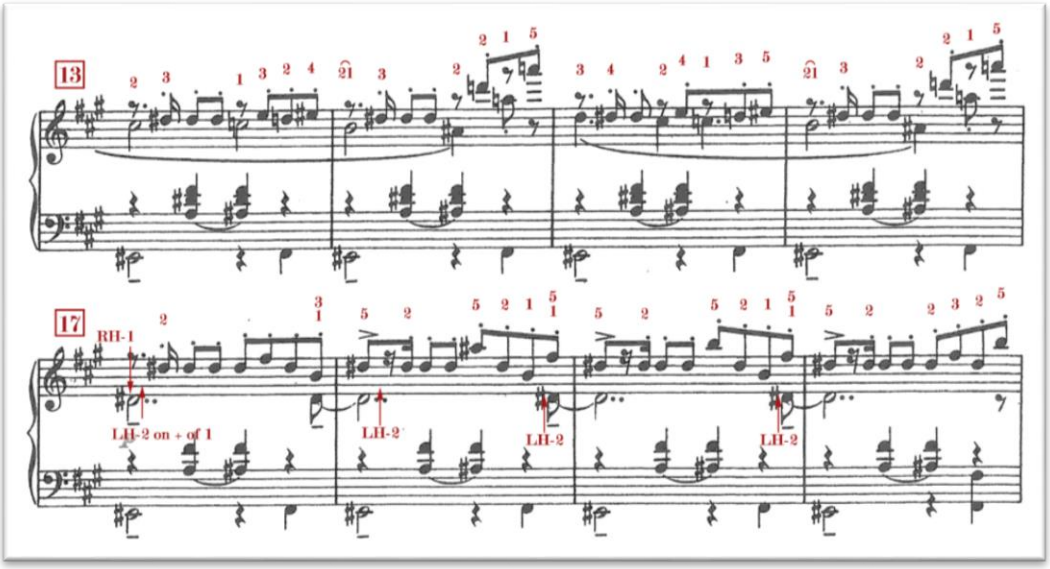
Example 4.22. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 9-10, redistribution.



The tenth in the left hand in measure 10 might require a redistribution to execute the correct texture by playing the A in the right hand instead of the left.

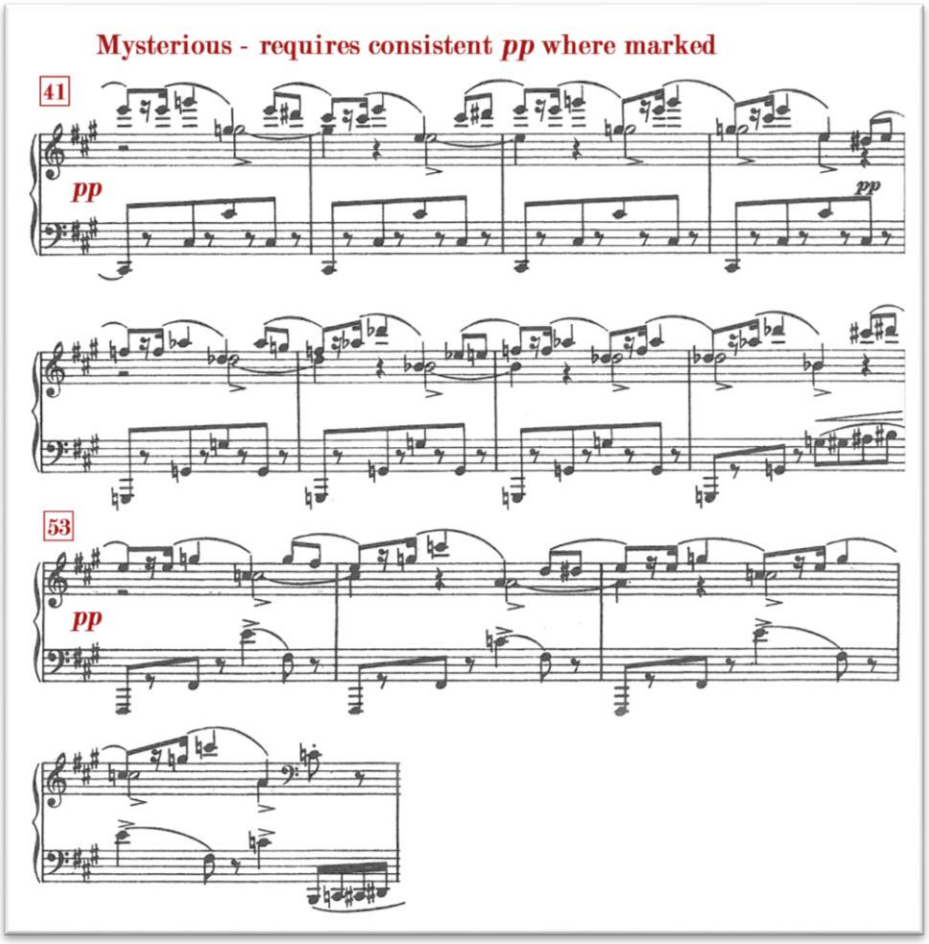
The articulations in measures 13 to 20 in the B section require attention to fingering in the right hand as suggested in example 4.23. It is important to play this right hand with the varied articulations. Neither voice is interesting alone, and therefore, a mixture of the descending chromatic line in the alto voice must be properly balanced against the *staccato* notes in the soprano. If done properly, the articulations are rather effective in contributing to the witty character.

Example 4.23. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 13-20, suggested fingering.



The light wit of the A and B sections turns more mysterious in the C section (mm. 41-56) which requires a consistent *pianissimo* in the first and third phrases in measures 41 to 48 and 53 to 56 shown in example 4.24.

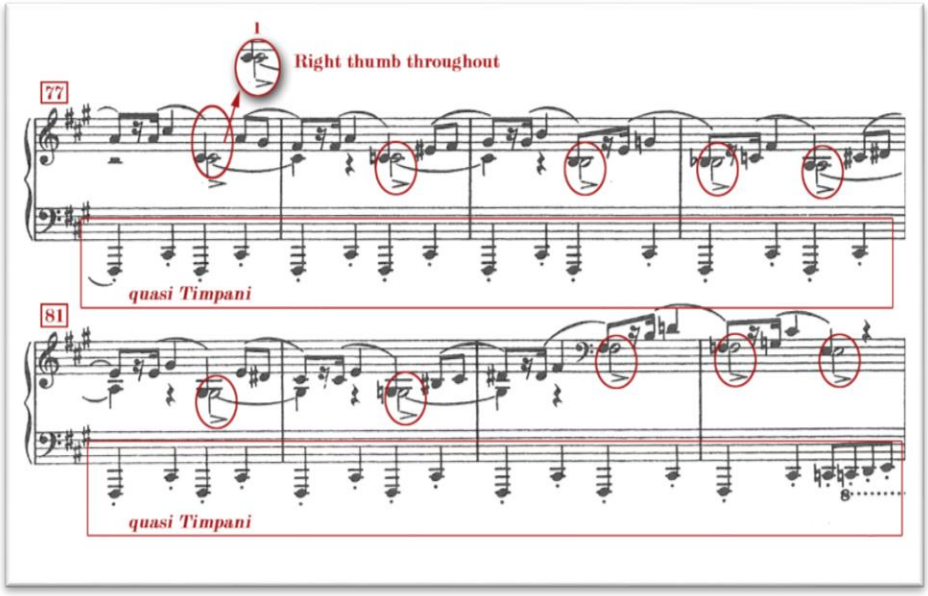
Example 4.24. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 41-48 and 53-56, *pianissimo*.



The middle phrase escalates to a *mezzo forte* dynamic in measure 49. This combined with the faster moving left hand creates a character that is more brooding than mysterious. Prokofiev's lighter side of humor returns in the restated A section (mm. 57-64) and B section (mm. 65-76) that follow. Material from the C section is used in the coda, beginning in measure 77 (see example 4.25), which is militaristic in nature indicated by the march-like left hand marked *quasi Timpani*.[16]

[16] No edition currently in print includes the marking *quasi Timpani*, nor does the first edition published by Koussevitzky in 1921. Two editions available on IMSLP include the marking. The first was published in 1955 in Moscow by Muzgiz, and the second published by Muzyka in 1983. The 1983 version lists the editor Pavel

Example 4.25. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Dance*, mm. 77-84, militaristic left hand, *quasi Timpani*.



The alto voice descends chromatically and is marked with accents which are easily executed when played with the right thumb.

Overall, the *Dance* can be a useful teaching piece for the late-intermediate pianist before progressing to more difficult works of Prokofiev. It includes modern aspects of chromaticism, a mixture of major and minor modes, and occasional parallel motion. These modern harmonic elements represent Ashley's categories 7, 8 and, 4respectively. Hints of his grotesque line are found in the humor or "scherzo-ish" quality of the dotted rhythms and *staccato* notes. In addition to becoming familiar with these style characteristics of Prokofiev, pianists will advance their technique through careful pedaling to enhance the variety of articulations and textures, overlapping hands,

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Lukyanchenko, however, the 1955 version lists no editor. The marking does not appear to be Prokofiev's as it does not appear in the first edition. The author has included the marking in Ex. 4.25 as an interpretative option for performers and teachers.

and a variety of leaps. On the surface, *Dance* appears to be a rather simple piece, but attention to the details will bring the character of the piece to life, making it quite rewarding to play.

Four Pieces, Op. 32, No. 2 *Minuet*

Pianists also will enjoy learning the *Minuet* which provides musical contrast. The jovial character in the A sections, highlighted by light *staccato* articulations, is pitted against the more brooding nature of the B section which is written in the lower register of the piano and features chromatic writing in G minor. Swaying melodic lines in the A sections exemplify Prokofiev's lyrical line. The modern line found in the harmonic language includes chromatic motion against sustained notes, parallelism, modal scales, and chords with seconds and tritones. Pianists will be challenged to further develop their technique by learning to play simultaneous articulations in one hand, and by addressing large hand spans, position shifts, and octaves.

Form and Analysis

The formal structure of *Minuet* can be divided into the following sections:

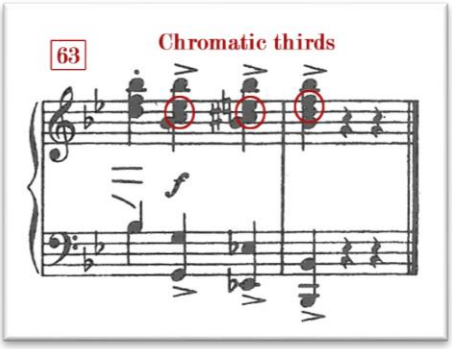
Section	Measure
A	1-24[17]
B	25-41
A	42-64

[17] The A section of *Minuet* begins with a two-note slur which emphasizes the pick-up on beat 3 at the outset and leads into beat 1 of measure 1.

The harmonic language of the *Minuet* is rather simple, yet Prokofiev still infuses some of his characteristic innovations. Elements that deviate from traditional tonal harmony include four of the categories outlined by Ashley. Prokofiev creates new chords by chromatic motion against sustained notes (category 2), uses parallel chords (category 4), writes modal scales (category 5), and adds notes to chords including tritones and seconds (category 9).

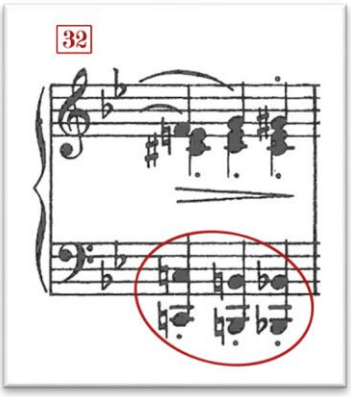
The final three chords of the piece in measures 63 and 64, shown in example 4.26, are a short example of chromatic motion against sustained or repeated notes (category 2) that are used to create new harmonies.

Example 4.26. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 63-64, chromatic thirds.



The B-flat octaves in the right hand are common to all three chords, but the inner voices move chromatically in thirds: C—E-flat, C-sharp—E, and D—F. A case for a second example of this chromatic motion could be made in measure 32, shown in example 4.27.

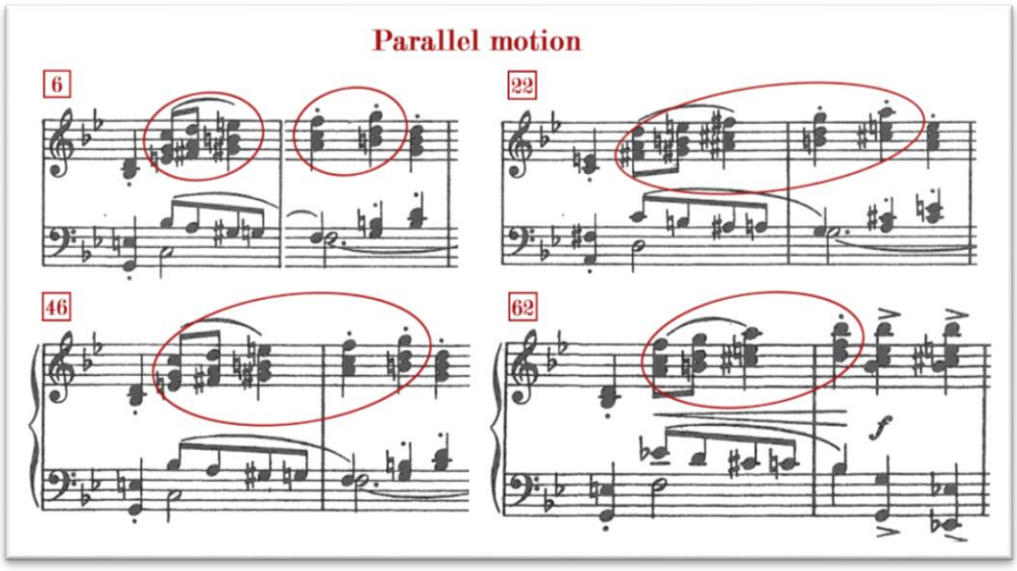
Example 4.27. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, m. 32, chromatic motion.



Here the repeated notes, C-sharp—E, are in the right hand and the chromatic motion is in the left hand octaves. While this is not an example of chromatic motion happening in the same hand, the principle identified by Ashley still applies when considering the composite harmony between the two hands.

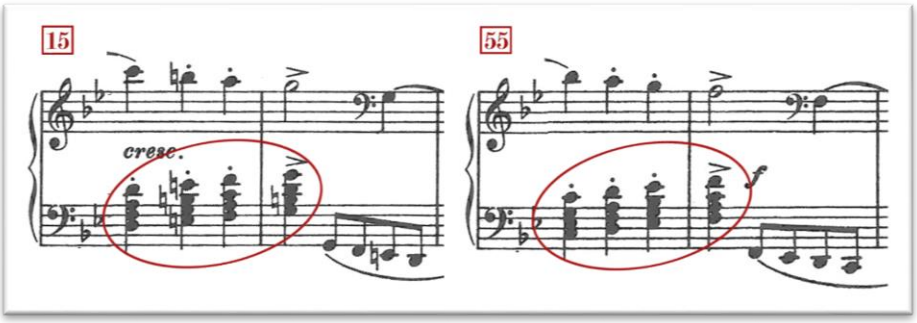
Several instances of parallel motion (category 4) can be found in the *Minuet.* Four of these occur in the right hand as first inversion triads found in measures 6 to 7, 22 to 23, 46 to 47, and 62 to 63, as indicated in example 4.28.

Example 4.28. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 6-7, 22-23, 46-47, and 62-63, parallel chords.



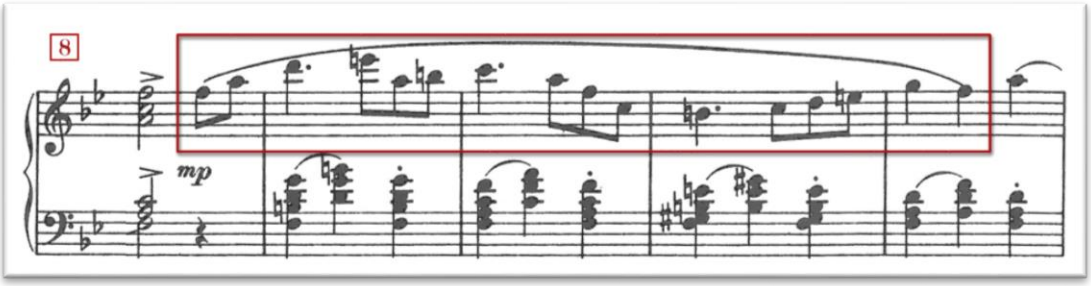
The examples of parallel chords seen in measures 6 to 7 and 46 to 47 are direct repetitions. Each instance includes five chords that ascend by step and use the pitch class of an E major five-finger pattern. An F-sharp major five-finger pattern is used in measures 22 and 23. These three examples of parallel chords could also be minute examples of Prokofiev's use of whole-tone movement indicated by the whole-step pattern of the first three chords in each example. The last instance, in measures 63 to 64, includes four instead of five chords and uses a different pattern of notes from the other examples as there is neither whole-tone motion or an identifiable five-finger pattern. Two other instances of parallel motion occur as four note chords in the left hand in measures 15 to 16 and 55 to 56, shown in example 4.29.

Example 4.29. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 15-16, and 55-56, parallel chords.



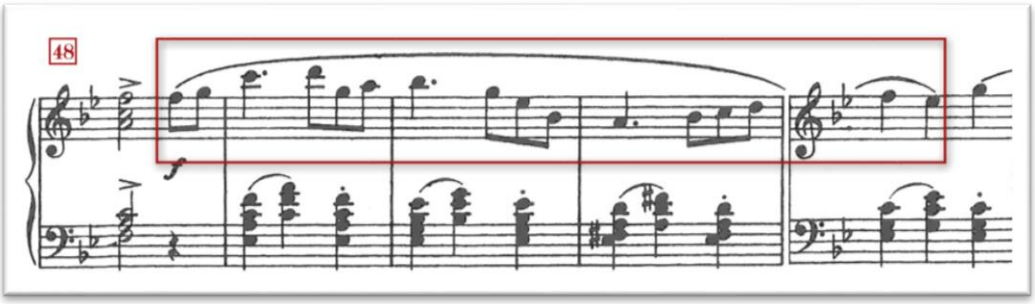
Like the harmony used in *Dance*, the *Minuet* features tertian chords that are non-functional. The *Minuet* is written in several key areas: B-flat major (mm. 1-15 and 40-64), C major (mm. 16-24), and G minor (mm. 25-39). Within the B-flat major sections Prokofiev's lyrical line is present in the right hand and uses modal scales (category 5). The first instance, found in measures 8 to 12 (see example 4.30), centers around F but has a raised scale degree four from B-flat to B-natural and is therefore written in F Lydian.

Example 4.30. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 8-12, F Lydian mode.



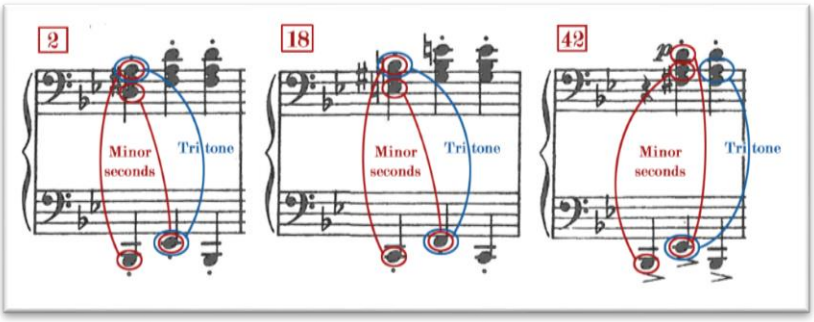
The same melody in measures 48-52 (see example 4.31) centers around E-flat and is in E-flat Lydian due to the raised scale degree four from A-flat to A-natural.

Example 4.31. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 48-52, E-flat Lydian mode.



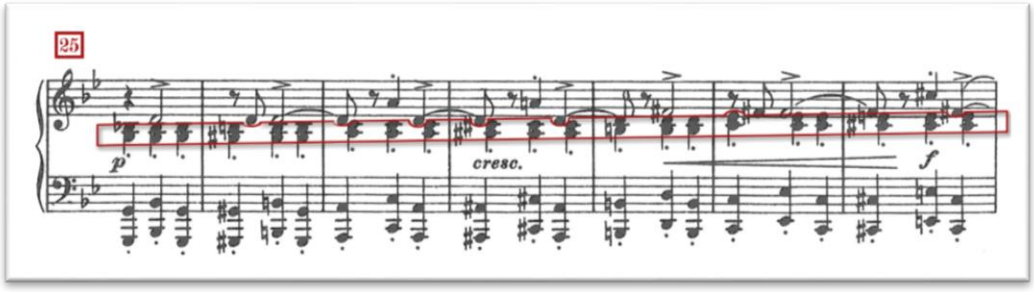
Prokofiev adds harmonic interest to several chords by adding notes that create dissonant seconds and tritones (category 9). Often the addition of a second creates a tritone within the chord. Two instances of an added second occur in the same motivic material of the A sections in measures 2, 18, and 42, as shown in example 4.32.

Example 4.32. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 2, 18 and 42, dissonant minor seconds and tritones.



In measures 2 and 42, the right hand has a D-major chord, but if one considers the B-flat and E-flat in the bass these notes create two minor seconds (D—E-flat and A—B-flat). Additionally, the interval from E-flat—A creates a tritone. The same pattern is used in measure 18 where the added notes in the bass, C and F, create minor seconds (E—F and B—C), and a tritone between two notes within the chord, F—B. General chromaticism is also used beginning in measure 25, shown in example 4.33, where Prokofiev writes a long line based on ascending chromatic thirds in the alto voice.

Example 4.33. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 25-31, ascending chromatic thirds, right hand.



Despite the simplistic harmonic framework, Prokofiev still manages to maintain his characteristic flair by using modal scales, chromatic motion, and added tones to create new chords with minor seconds and tritones.

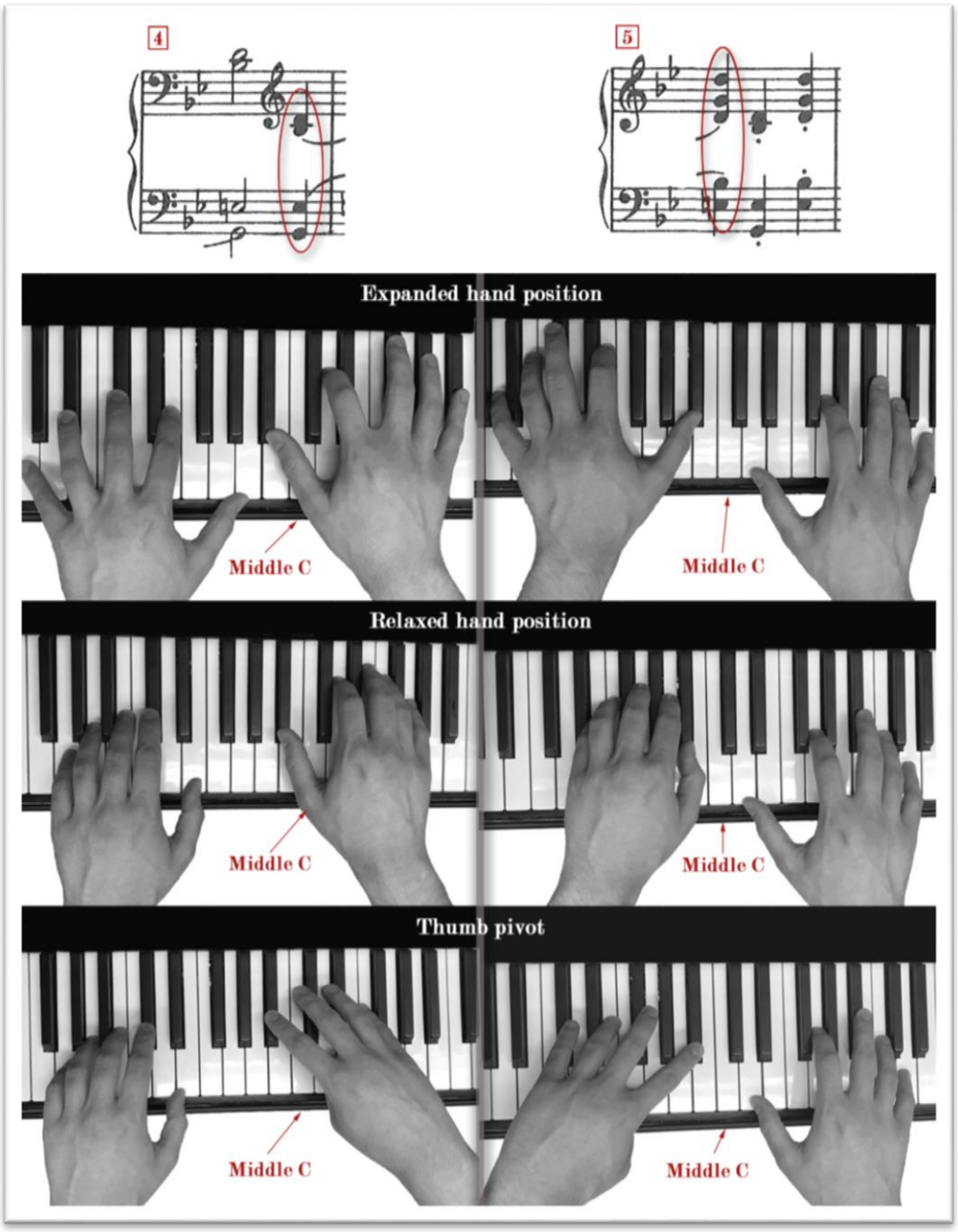
Technical Problems and Solutions

In some respects, the *Minuet* is technically easier than the *Dance*. However, pianists will encounter difficulties that include large spans for the hand, fast position shifts, *legato* parallel chords, two articulations to be played simultaneously in one hand, and octaves that sometimes include leaps. While the author has a hand span that can comfortably reach some chords and larger intervals, suggestions are also made for those with smaller hands. At times, passages are executed more easily with attention to good fingering selections. The *Minuet* is appropriate for a late-intermediate pianist.

The figurations written in measures 4 to 5, 20 to 21, 44 to 45, and 60 to 61 are slightly awkward due to the combined leaps in both the right and left hand. The images in example 4.34, offer three possible solutions for measures 4 to 5, which can be applied in measures 20 to 21, 44 to 45, and 60 to 61. It feels like the hands need to be stretched

out in order to execute this passage, especially if attempting to play the two-note slur accurately.

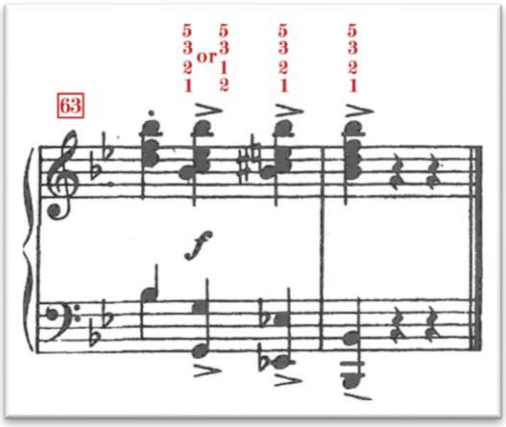
Example 4.34. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 4-5, hand expansions and position shifts.



If the pianist has large hands it might be best to pivot the hands laterally while lifting the fingers out of the key and keeping the hand slightly expanded so the fingers cover more surface area between the broken tenths in both hands. The tenth occurs in the right hand between the B-flat on beat 3 of measure 4 and the high D on beat 1 of measure 5. In the left hand, the tenth occurs between the G on beat 3 in measure 4 and the B-flat on beat 1 in measure 5. The lateral shift will help alleviate unnecessary tension. The pedal should be added to help execute the effect of a two-note slur. If the pianist has small hands the slight expansion will likely cause too much strain on the hand. Therefore, it is best to pick up the hand entirely and use fingerings that let the hand remain in a more natural position. An additional suggestion might be to use a finger crossing technique where the thumb in the right hand remains on the D. The second finger crosses over the thumb for the low B-flat on beat 3 in measure 4, and then crosses back over to reach the G and D on beat 1 of measure 5. The same technique can be used in the left hand where the thumb will remain on the E and the second finger will cross over to the B-flat on beat 1 in measure 5.

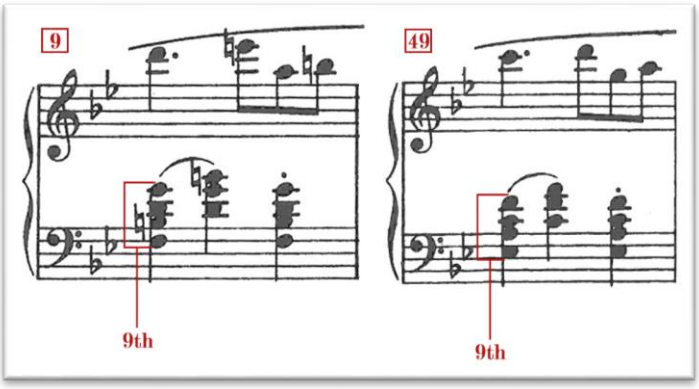
The final chords in the right hand in measure 63 to 64 are somewhat awkward with the inner notes between the octave. See example 4.35. The chord on beat 2 is particularly problematic as the bottom three notes (B-flat—C—E-flat) need to be played with the first three fingers, and therefore, the left side of the hand is contracted while the outer side of the hand needs to expand to reach the octave.

Example 4.35. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 63-64 hand expansions and fingering.



The best fingering is 1-2-3-5 for all three chords if the hand size allows. For pianists with larger hands, an optional fingering of the chord on beat two could be 2-1-3-5. This fingering gives the hand more space for fingers 1-2-3, making it easier to execute the chromatic movement of the inner notes from C and E-flat to C-sharp and E-natural on beats 2 and 3 of measure 63, respectively. If neither of those options work, the pianist might choose to roll the chord on beat 2 very quickly, almost with a flick of the wrist to create the effect of all notes being depressed at the same time. If none of these solutions produce the desired sound, the pianist might consider leaving out the low B-flat as it is important to bring out the chromatic motion of the C—C-sharp—D. The left hand has a few large spans to tackle in measures 9 and 49 (shown in example 4.36) where Prokofiev writes chords that span the interval of a ninth.

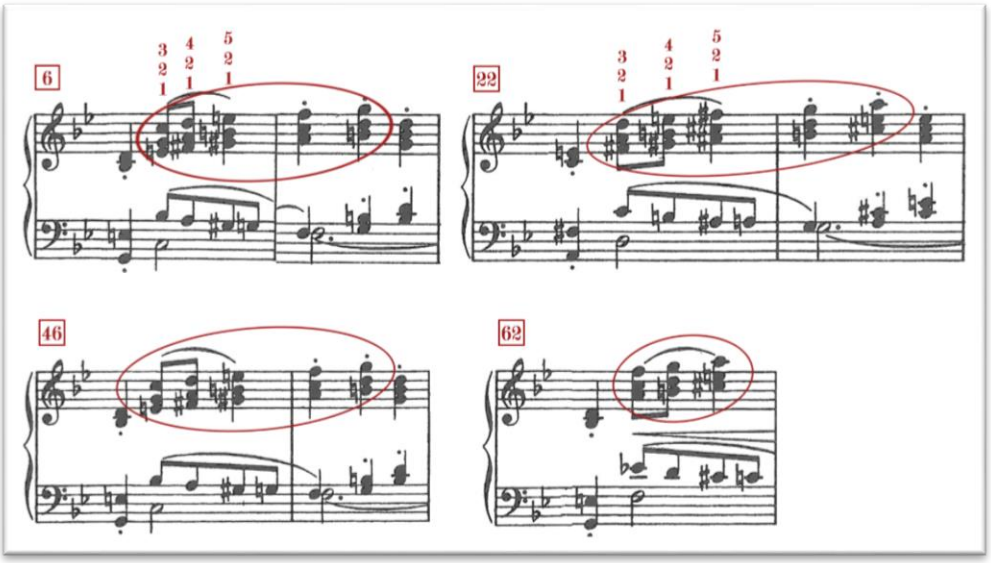
Example 4.36. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 9 and 49, large chord spans.



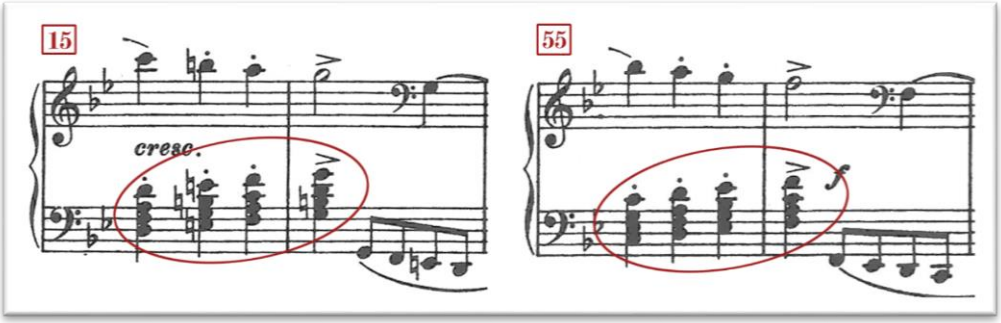
The same wrist technique can be used to roll the chord quickly if the pianist is not able to reach the interval comfortably.

Numerous instances of parallel chords can be difficult to play, particularly if they are to be played *legato*. Examples of parallel chords occur in the right hand in measures 6 to 7, 22 to 23, 46 to 47, and 62 (see example 4.37), and in the left hand of measures 15 to 16, and 55 to 56 (see example 4.38).

Example 4.37. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 6-7, 22-23, 46-47, and 62, parallel chords.



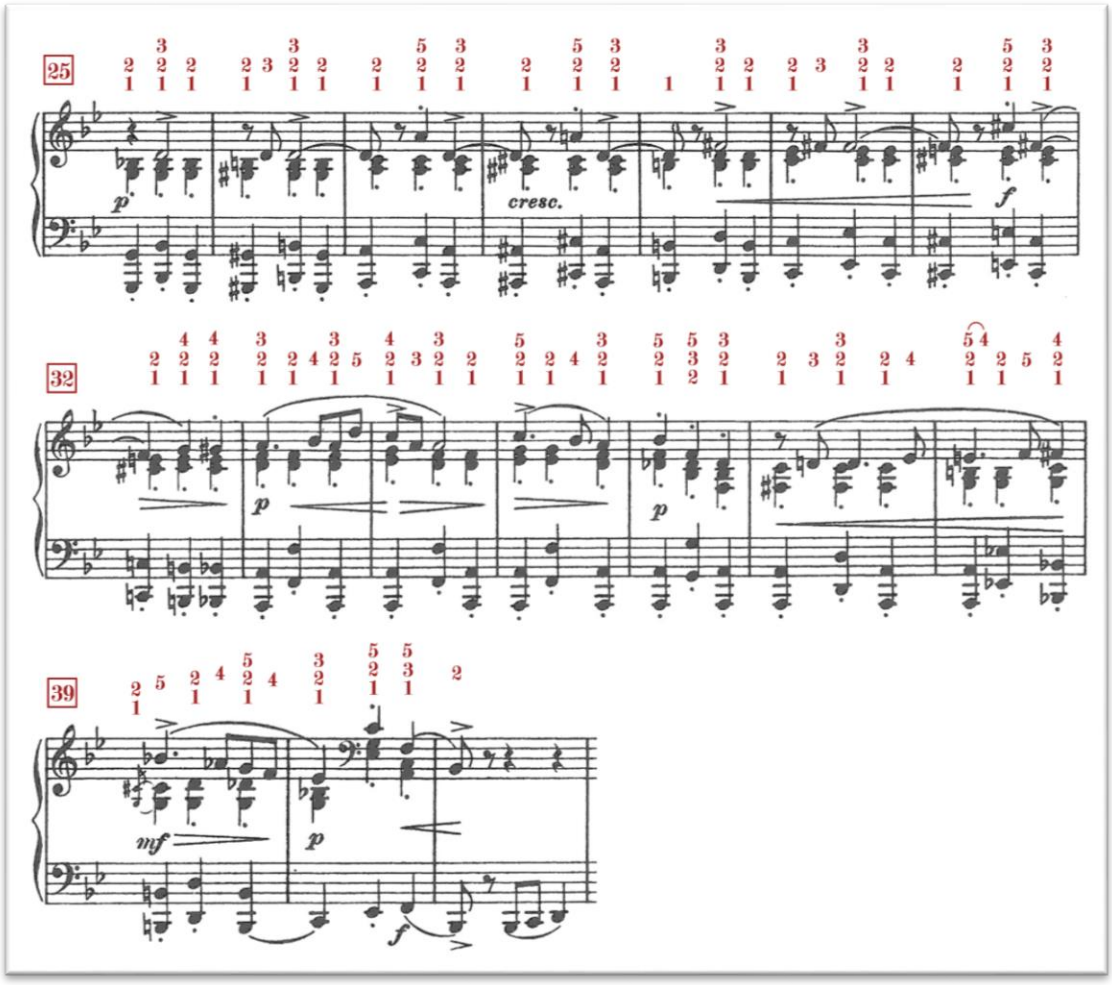
Example 4.38. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 15-16, and 55-56, parallel chords.



For those chords in the right hand with a *staccato* articulation it is easy to keep the hand in the same position and lift the hand for each chord. If a slur indicates a *legato* articulation (mm. 6, 22, 46, and 62), the pianist can either choose to pedal each chord or experiment with different fingerings. One solution would be to use fingers 3-4-5 on the top note of each chord to create the effect of a smooth *legato* while using fingers 1-2 for the lower notes. In order for this fingering to work effectively without tension in the hand, the pianist needs to lift or "bounce" their wrist for each chord. The lift will help the pianist to navigate the fingers over the black keys in addition to freeing up excess tension.

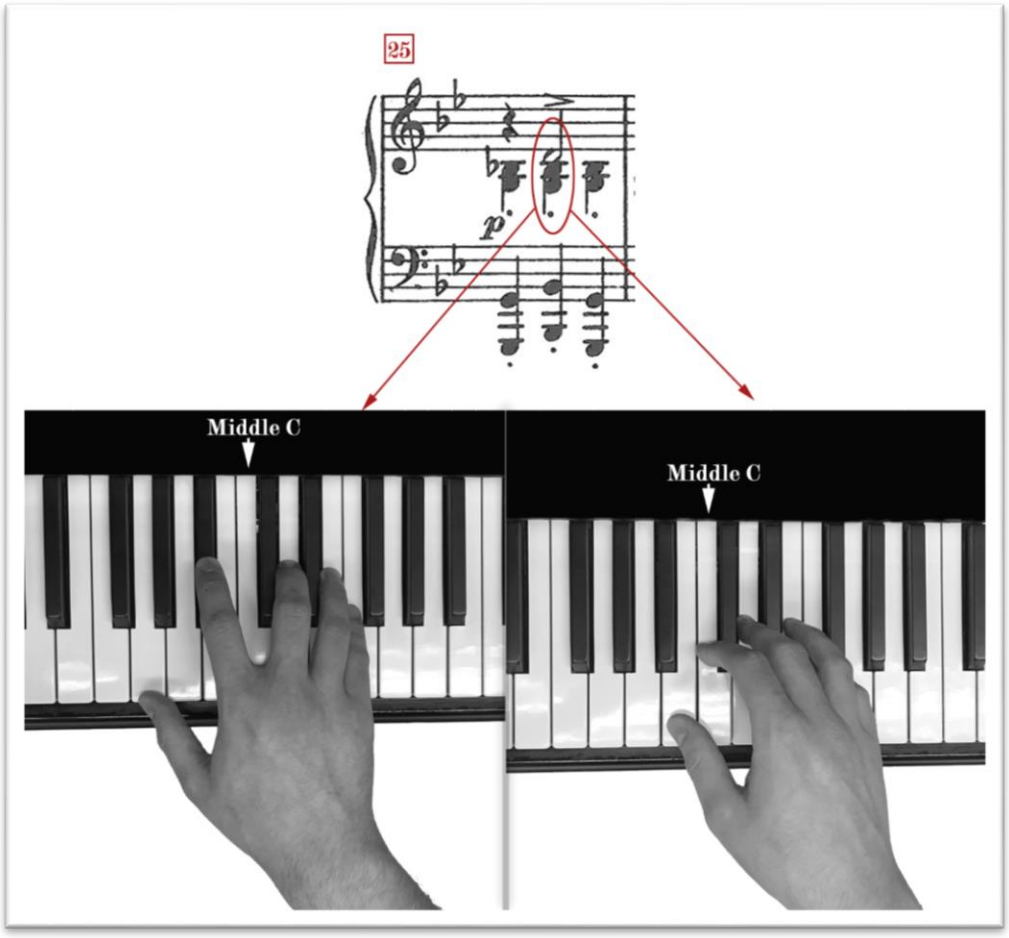
The primary technical challenge presented in the B section (mm. 25-41) occurs in the right hand which is required to perform two different articulations at the same time. Starting in measure 25 the bottom notes in the right hand are to be played *staccato* while the top notes are sustained. These instances of two different articulations in the right hand (mm. 25-32 and 33-39), with suggested fingering, are shown in example 4.39.

Example 4.39. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 25-41, suggested fingering.



In addition to careful fingering as suggested in example 4.39, it is important to practice this section slowly. On beat 2 of measure 25, play the chord while holding the D and then releasing the bottom third for the *staccato* articulation. This is easily executed using supination of the forearm, or rotating the arm outward toward the fifth finger, shown in example 4.40.

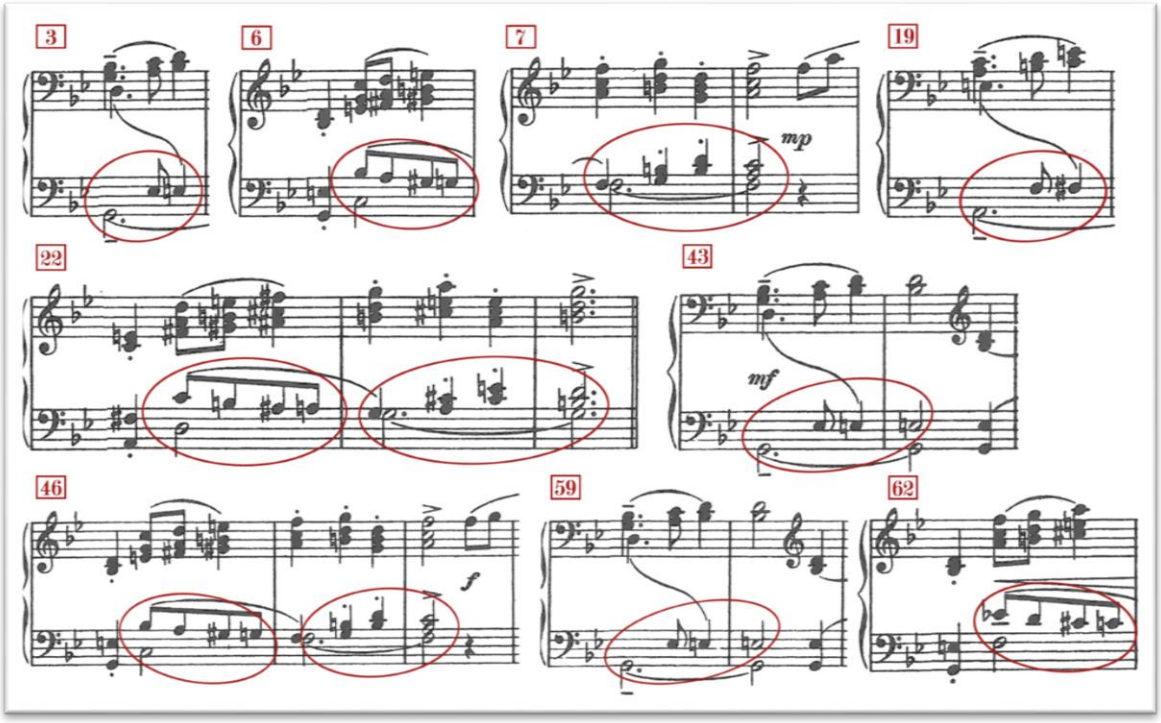
Example 4.40. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, m. 25, right hand supination.



The second passage shown in example 4.39, measures 33-39, is even more difficult, but the same technique can be applied. In this instance, the suggested fingering shown in example 4.39 is particularly imperative. Many of the chords in measures 25 to 39 use the fingering 1-2-3, leaving fingers 4 and 5 to expand to octave chords or to sustain a *legato* line in the soprano voice. If this fingering is uncomfortable, the pianist may need to use fingers 1-2-4 where needed.

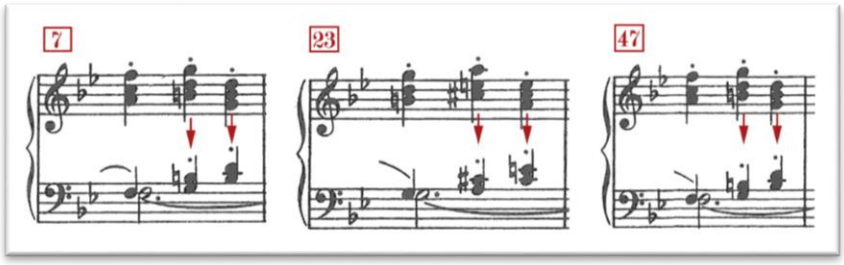
The left hand is also required to execute two articulations simultaneously. Examples for the left hand are found in measures 3, 6, 7 to 8, 19, 22 to 24, 43 to 44, 46 to 48, 59 to 60, and 62. See example 4.41.

Example 4.41. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 3, 6, 7-8, 19, 22-24, 43-44, 46-48, 59-60, and 62, left hand simultaneous articulations.



Cases where one voice is to be held against moving *legato* lines are easily executed with carefully chosen fingering. Similar to the right hand in passages that require held notes against *staccato* articulations, wrist motion will help the pianist to play these left hand passages with ease. *Staccato* articulations occur in measures 7, 23, and 47, highlighted in example 4.42.

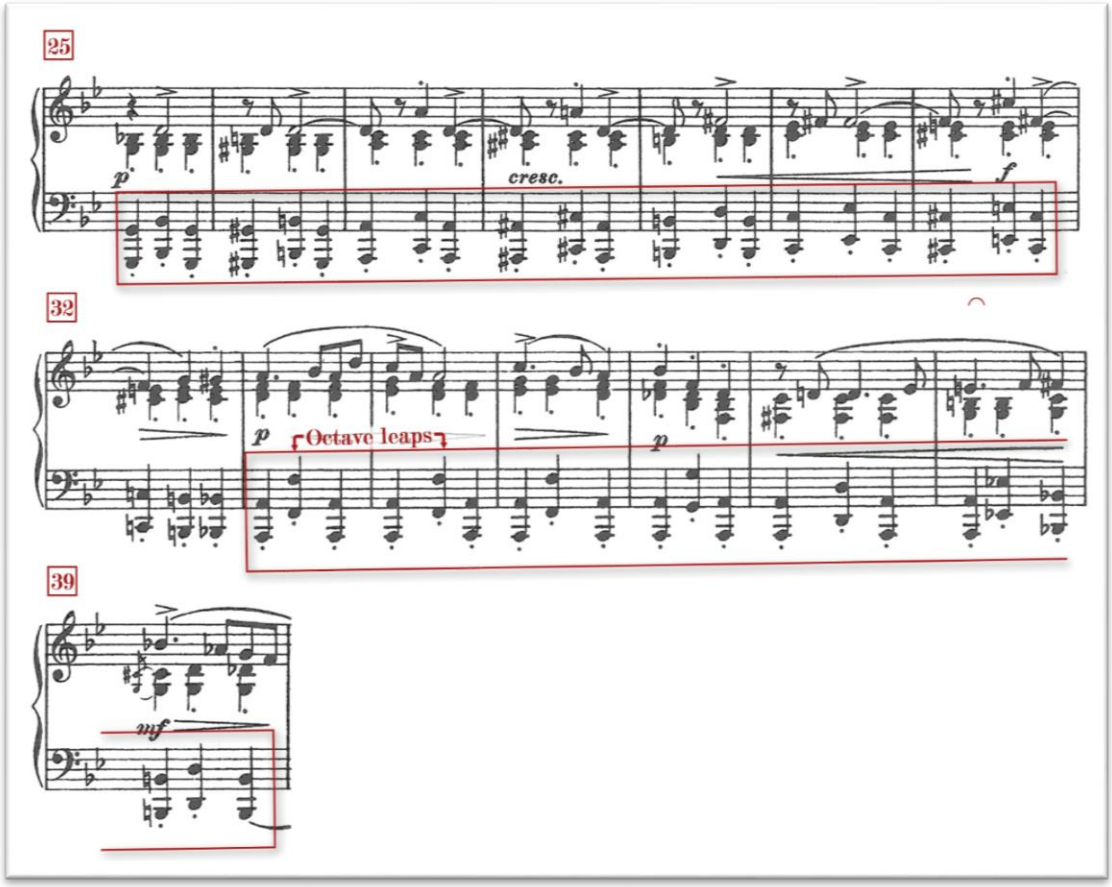
Example 4.42. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 7, 23, and 47, *staccato* articulations.



In these measures, it is particularly important for the fifth finger to land on the held note so that the rest of the fingers are free to play the *staccato* thirds. Supination is helpful again by rotating the arm toward the fifth finger, allowing the arm to play the *staccato* rather than the fingers alone.

Lastly, the left hand octaves in measures 25 to 31 and the left hand octave leaps in measures 33 to 39 can be problematic. These measures are shown in example 4.43.

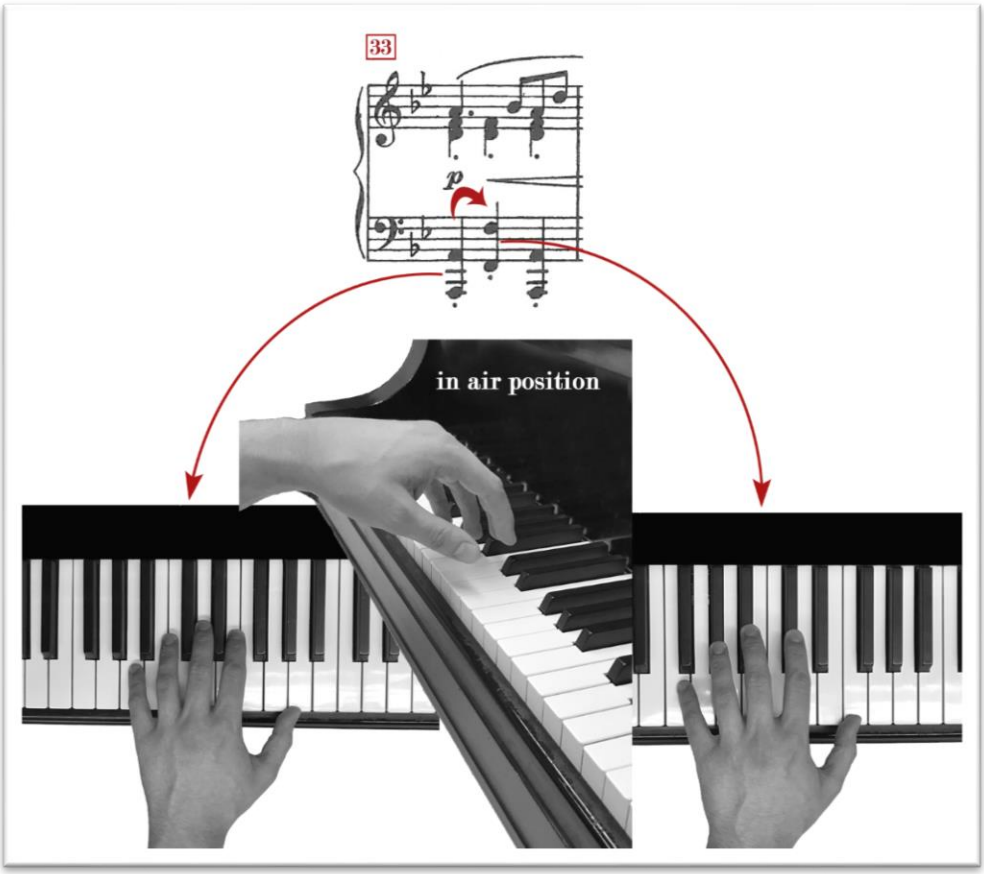
Example 4.43. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 25-39, left hand octaves.



The leaps are contained to the interval of a third in measures 25 to 31 and are easier to execute than those in the next passage in measures 33 to 39, however, it is important for the pianist to remain light in the wrist, perhaps using a slight upward motion in

combination with forward forearm motion. The whole arm must be used if the pianist hopes to play these octaves with freedom. The octave leaps in measures 33 to 39 are particularly difficult, especially when played against the melody in the right hand which has a combination of *legato* and *staccato* articulations to be played simultaneously. For the leaps in these measures, it is helpful to relax instantly in the air after springing out of the keys after the first octave on beat 1 in measure 33, shown in example 4.44. This will allow the hand to retract into a relaxed position before landing in the next octave. The pianist should aim to play this passage without any tension in the wrist, forearm, or elbow.

Example 4.44. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 33, left hand octave leaps.



Although the *Minuet* poses several technical challenges for the pianist, those studying this piece will benefit by gaining new techniques or refining those learned in previous pieces. These techniques include large spans for the hand, fast position shifts, *legato* parallel chords, two articulations to be played simultaneously in one hand, and octaves that sometimes include leaps.

In order to play these passages comfortably, pianists will need to pay attention to any excess tension in the body. It is easy to overlook this aspect of playing, particularly in a short piece such as the *Minuet* where one might rationalize physical tension that does not last for long periods of time. Any physical tension that is excessive can be damaging to a pianist's technique regardless of the length of the piece or passage, and this is particularly true with the *Minuet.*

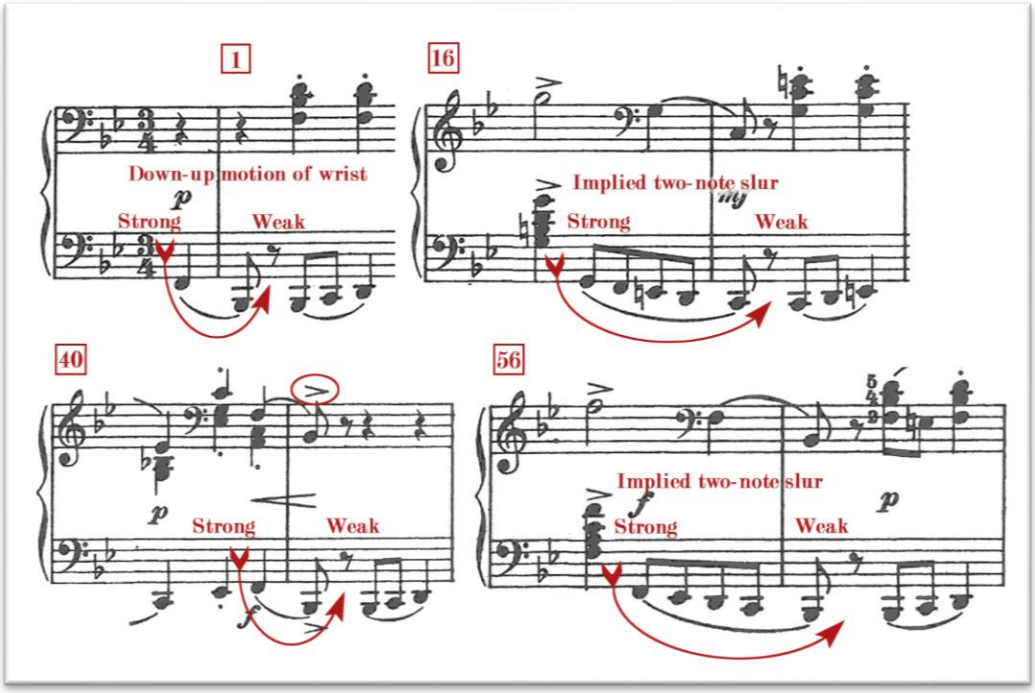
Performance Suggestions

The *staccato* articulations found throughout *Minuet* might fool many pianists into thinking that this piece lacks in phrasing, however, the occasional *legato* passages help highlight the importance of phrasing. Prokofiev's lyrical line of composition is certainly at play in this piece. In addition to phrasing, pianists will learn to control dynamics over long passages and to shape musical lines by developing a palette of sounds at a variety of dynamic levels. The contrast between *staccato* and *legato* lines contributes to the light and jovial qualities found in the A sections centering in B-flat major, and enhances the more stirring nature of the B section in G minor.

The first two notes of the piece lead us into the dance with a two-note slur which emphasizes the pick-up on beat 3 at the outset and propels us into beat 1 of measure 1.

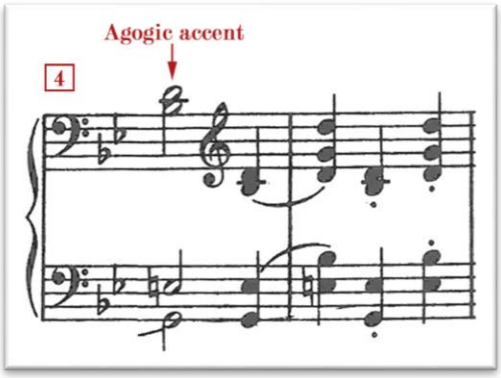
It is important to bring out this two-note slur at the beginning of the piece as well as its other appearances found in measures 16 to 17, 40 to 41, and 56 to 57, seen in example 4.45. The two-note slur in measures 40 to 41 is different than those found at the beginning of the piece and in measures 16 to 17, and 56 to 57, as there is an accent on beat 1 of measure 41. Perhaps Prokofiev wanted to mark the return of the A section with emphasis as indicated by the accent articulation, despite being on the weak part of a two-note slur.

Example 4.45. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 1, 16-17, 40-41, and 56-57, two-note slurs.



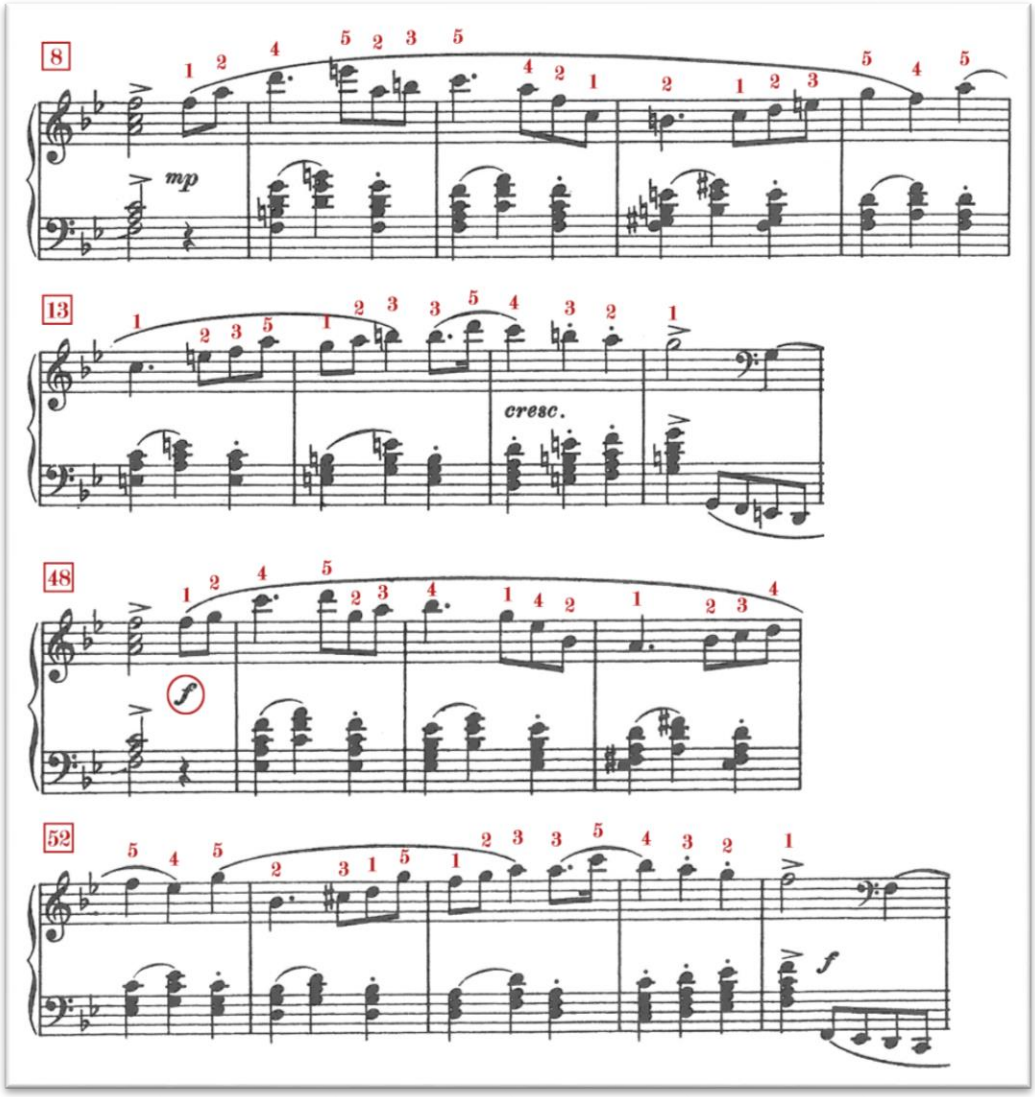
Staccato chords contribute to the lightness of the opening phrase. An *agogic* accent might be appropriate on the downbeat of measure 4 which brings attention to the preceding *legato* passage before returning to the light *staccato* chord in measure 5, shown in example 4.46.

Example 4.46. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 4-5, *agogic* accent.



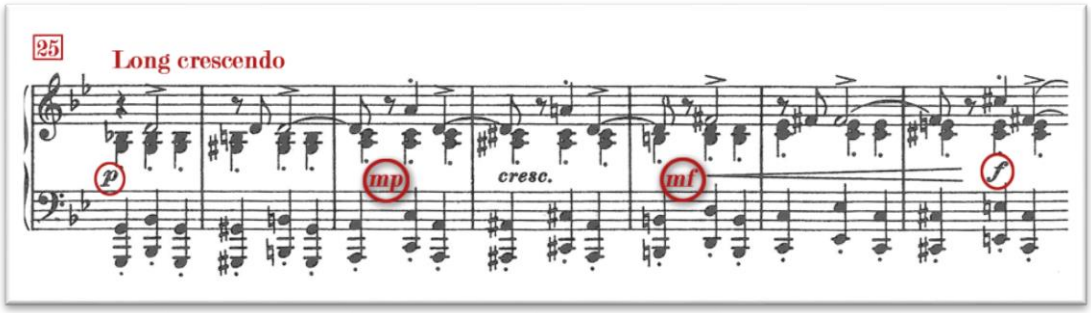
Prokofiev's gift for composing lyrical melodies is exposed on beat 3 of measure 8 through beat 1 of measure 16 (example 4.47) which requires a very smooth *legato* in the right hand and will be easily performed when using good fingering. The same melody occurs in measures 48 to 56 (example 4.47) with a few altered tones against different harmonies in the left hand.

Example 4.47. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 8-16 and 48-56, suggested fingering.



The theme in the B section in measure 25 begins *piano* and *crescendos* to *forte* over the course of seven measures. See example 4.48. It might be helpful to consider playing *mezzo piano* and *mezzo forte* dynamics at measures 27 and 29, respectively, as depicted in example 4.48, to help pace the long *crescendo*.

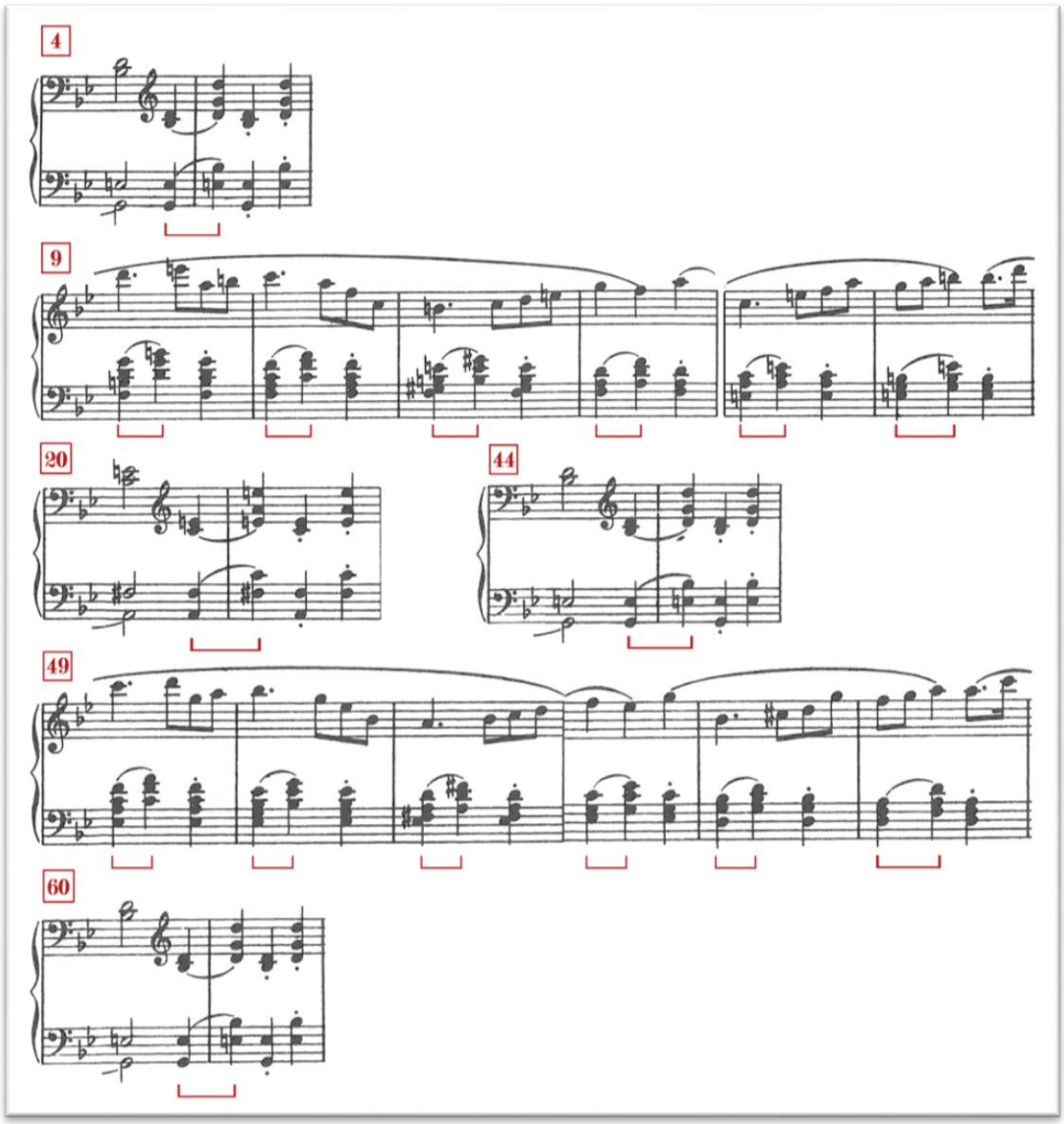
Example 4.48. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 25-31, dynamics.



The pianist should pay careful attention to the dynamic markings throughout, particularly the opening *piano* dynamic of the A sections as the soft dynamic will help create a certain lightness. The melody that returns in measure 48 (see example 4.47) is marked *forte* to bring attention to this singing line.

In addition to articulation and dynamics, appropriate pedaling will help bring out the character of this piece. Depending on the technical choices of the pianist for the slurred passages that contain chords and large intervals, the pedal can assist in executing such articulations. Several passages might require pedal in this way (mm. 4-5, 9-14, 20-21, 44-45, 49-54, and 60-61), and suggested pedal markings for these passages are provided in example 4.49.

Example 4.49. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Minuet*, mm. 4-5, 9-14, 20-21, 44-45, 49-54, and 60-61, suggested pedaling.



The *Minuet* is well-suited for the late-intermediate pianist seeking a piece with a contrast between spirited and slightly menacing characters. Pianists will understand Prokofiev's harmonic innovations by observing chromatic motion against sustained notes (Ashley category 2), parallel chords (Ashley category 4), modal scales (Ashley category 5), and chords with added tritones and seconds (Ashley category 9). In addition to the modern compositional line found in the harmonic language, the *Minuet*

highlights Prokofiev's lyrical line found in the flowing right hand melody in measures 8 to 16 and 48 to 56.

A pianist's technical ability will develop further by studying the *Minuet,* in part because it requires the pianist to execute large hand spans, fast position shifts, leaps, and to develop creative fingering to effectively play *legato* parallel chords as well as two different articulations that are to be played at the same time in one hand. Attention to musical aspects such as phrasing, articulations, dynamics, and pedaling gives the piece character, and if brought out these musical aspects will add to the enjoyment of both the pianist and audience.

Four Pieces, Op. 32, No. 3 *Gavotte*

Pianists seeking to learn the entire set of *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 might begin their study with the most accessible piece, *Gavotte*. Although the piece should not be performed too fast, the driving *ostinato* pattern of the left hand in the A sections is reminiscent of Prokofiev's toccata line. The lyrical line is present in the unison passage of the C section, and the grotesque or "scherzo-ish" line is present in the humorous character found throughout the work. Innovative harmonic techniques representative of the modern line include harmonic side-slipping, bitonality, and the use of modal scales. While the piece is the most approachable for intermediate pianists, technical challenges are still present including hand position shifts, double thirds, unison passages, and a variety of articulations.

Form and Analysis

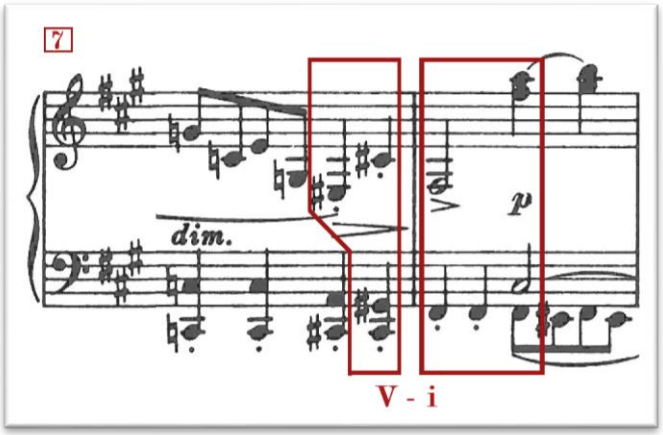
The formal structure of *Gavotte* can be divided into the following sections:

Section	Measure
A	1-8
B	8-24
A	24-32
C	32-48
A	48-58

The short *Gavotte* centers around F-sharp minor in the A and B sections, and is modal with a center of D in the C section. Like the *Dance* and the *Minuet*, the *Gavotte* follows a clear harmonic plan with several of Prokofiev's innovative techniques. In the A section, Prokofiev uses harmonic side-slipping (category 1) by altering subdominant and dominant chords. The altered subdominant and dominant chords mix F-sharp minor and F major, an example of bitonality (category 8). Modal scales are used in the C section (category 5). Parallelism is used in the standard way in the C section which includes a linear melody in parallel octaves (category 4).

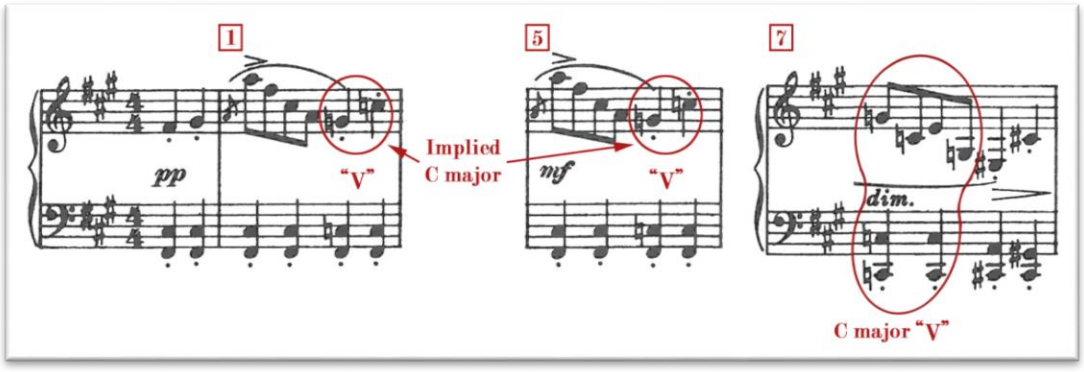
The A section is written in F-sharp minor as indicated by the opening chord in measure 1. F-sharp minor is confirmed as the key due to the V-i cadence in measures 7 to 8 (see example 4.50). However, Prokofiev obscures the dominant and subdominant chords earlier in the A section through harmonic side-slipping.

Example 4.50. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 7-8, V-i cadence in F-sharp minor.



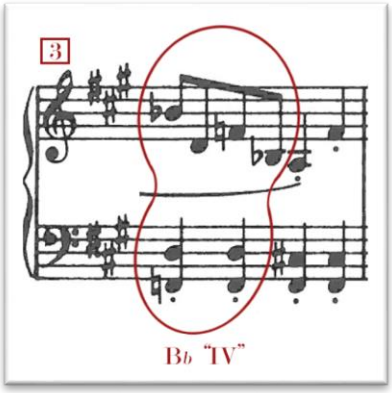
In measures 1 and 5, C natural and G natural are written on beats 3 and 4, respectively, implying a C major chord, shown in example 4.51. The C major chord also appears on beats 1 and 2 in measure 7 (see example 4.51).

Example 4.51. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 1, 5, and 7, side-slipping of the dominant chord.



This C major chord replaces the C-sharp major dominant chord in the key of F-sharp minor. In addition to altering the dominant chord, Prokofiev uses harmonic side-slipping to alter the subdominant chord. In measure 3, shown in example 4.52, a B-flat major chord is written on beats 1 and 2.

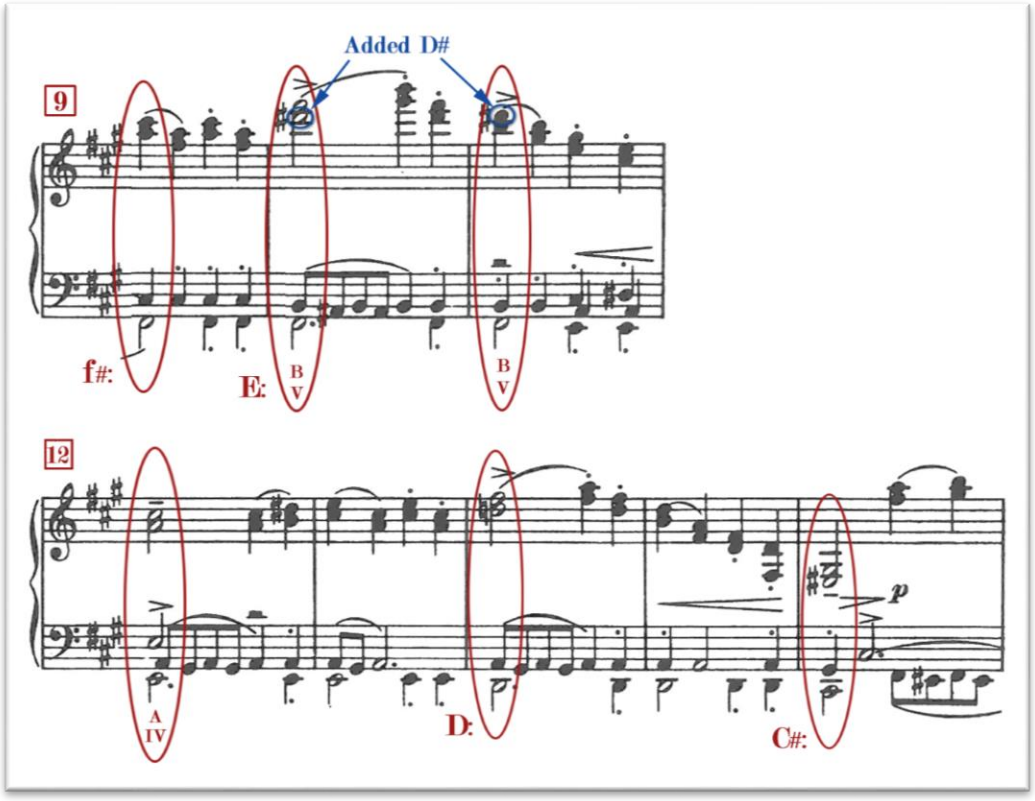
Example 4.52. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 3, side-slipping of the sub-dominant chord.



Here Prokofiev has lowered the B to B-flat and the F-sharp to F-natural. Both the C dominant chord and the B-flat subdominant chord are in the key of F major. Therefore, Prokofiev is using chromatically altered tones to create a mix of F-sharp minor and F major tonalities. This mixture of F-sharp minor and F major is an example of bitonality.

The B section features similar alterations of harmony, but rather than replacing the chords found in the original key, Prokofiev writes brief tonicizations of various keys using the diatonic collection of F-sharp minor as tonic. This is the case in measures 9 through 16 (see example 4.53) where there is a descent from F-sharp minor to the dominant C-sharp major via tonicization of E major and D major.

Example 4.53. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 9-16, descent from F-sharp minor to C-sharp major.

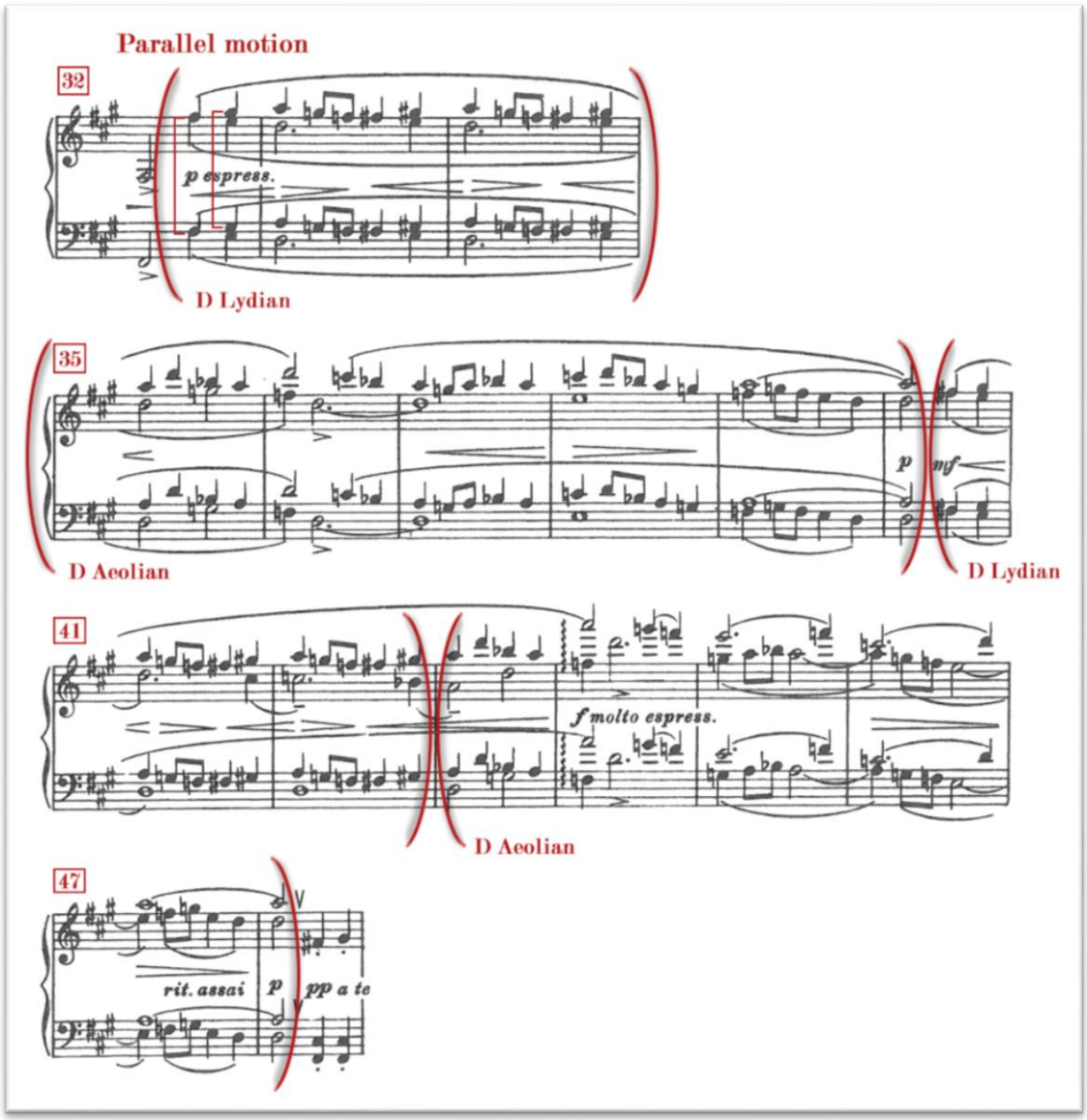


The added D-sharp in measure 10 creates a B major chord on beat 1, followed by an A major chord on beat 1 of measure 12. While a V-I cadence never confirms E major, the raised D-sharp and the implied dominant of B major and subdominant of A major indicate E major as the key. If E is considered tonic, E is a whole step below the original tonic of F-sharp minor and is considered the first downward step towards the dominant of C-sharp major. Prokofiev continues the downward descent into D major in measures 14 and 15, and arrives on the dominant in measure 16 which provides the V-i cadence confirming the key of F-sharp minor.

A linear melody is featured in the C section of the *Gavotte* and is representative of Prokofiev's lyrical line. The melody is written in parallel motion at the octave

between the right and left hand. Centered around D, Prokofiev uses two different modes to compose the melody in measures 32 to 48 shown in example 4.54.

Example 4.54. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 32-48, parallel motion, D Lydian and D Aeolian modes.



The first mode used is D Lydian (A scale on D) indicated by the raised scale degree 4 (G-natural to G-sharp) in measures 32 to 34 and 40 to 42, and the second is D Aeolian (F scale on D) with the lowered scale degrees 3 (F-sharp to F-natural) and 7 (C-sharp to

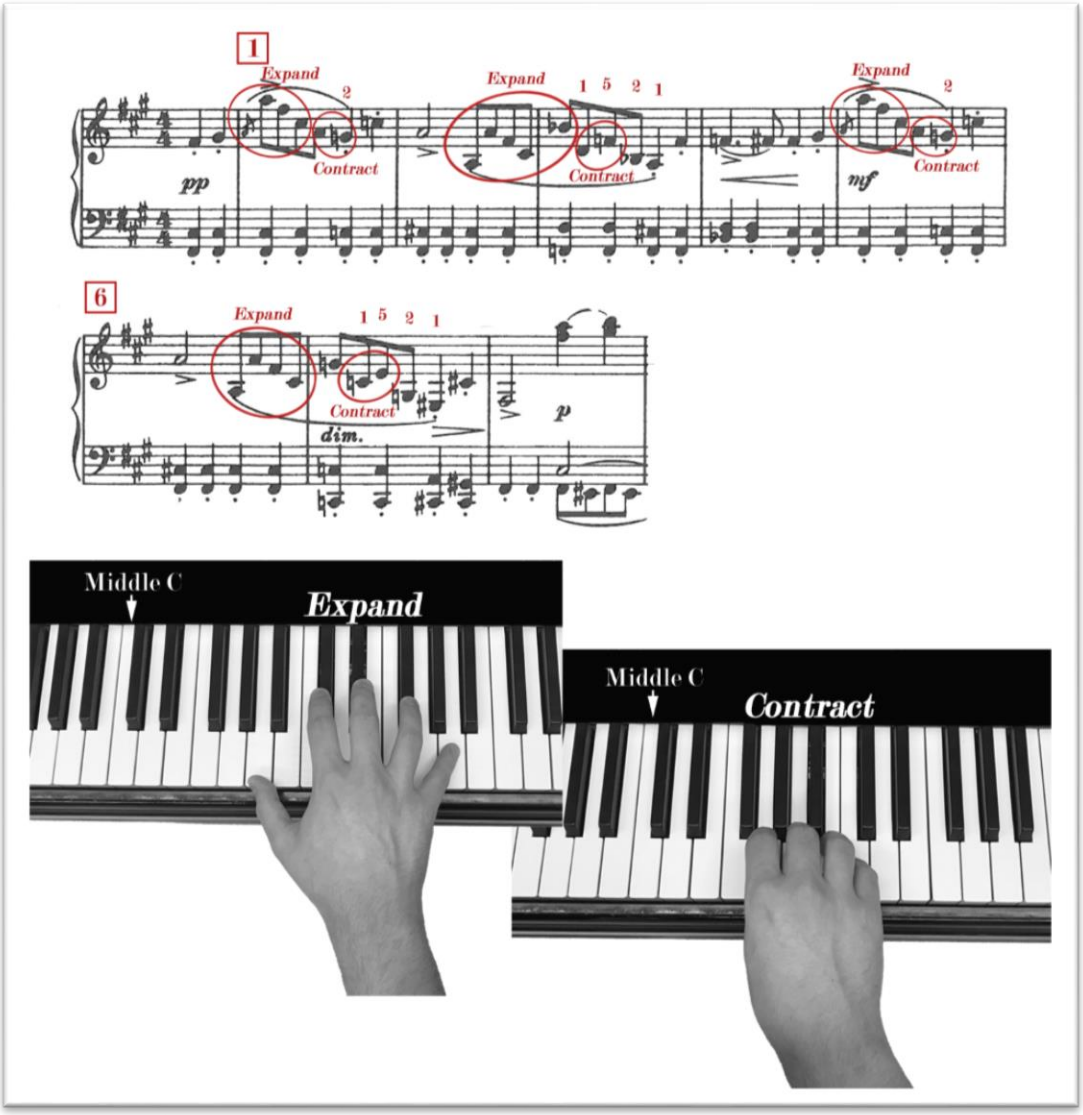
C-natural) and the lowered scale degree 6 (B-natural to B-flat) in measures 35 to 39 and 43 to 48. In addition to Prokofiev's use of modal scales, his use of parallelism, harmonic alterations of the dominant and subdominant chords in the A section, and his tonicizations of E and D major (also in the A section), exemplify several facets of harmonic deviation from traditional tonal schemes in the *Gavotte*.

Technical Problems and Solutions

The *Gavotte* poses fewer technical challenges than the other pieces in the set. This is, in part, due to the left hand which has a simple *ostinato* accompaniment for most of the piece. The right hand is also rather uncomplicated. However, for the late-intermediate student, the *Gavotte* will provide challenges in hand position shifts, a variety of articulations, double thirds, and passages in unison.

The opening motive in the A sections (mm. 1-8, 24-32, and 48-58) combine arpeggios and broken intervals which require careful fingering choices to ease the hand position shifts. Finger crossings along with hand expansions and contractions add to the comfort of playing this passage as shown for measures 1 to 8 in example 4.55.

Example 4.55. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 1-8, suggested fingering, hand expansions and contractions.



Crossing the second finger over the thumb to the G on beat 3 of measure 1 (indicated in example 4.55) puts the hand in a correct position for the following three notes. The finger crossing also allows the pianist to play all five notes of the arpeggio *legato*. Without the finger crossing, the *legato* line would become detached between the last two notes. The descending figure in measure 1 is most comfortably played with the suggested fingering shown in example 4.55. If the pianist contracts the hand between

beats 1 and 2, the hand will remain relaxed and free of tension. This fingering also encourages wrist rotation. A similar fingering and technique can be used in measures 2 to 3, and 5 to 7, shown in example 4.55. When the A section returns in measures 24 and 48 the same techniques can be applied.

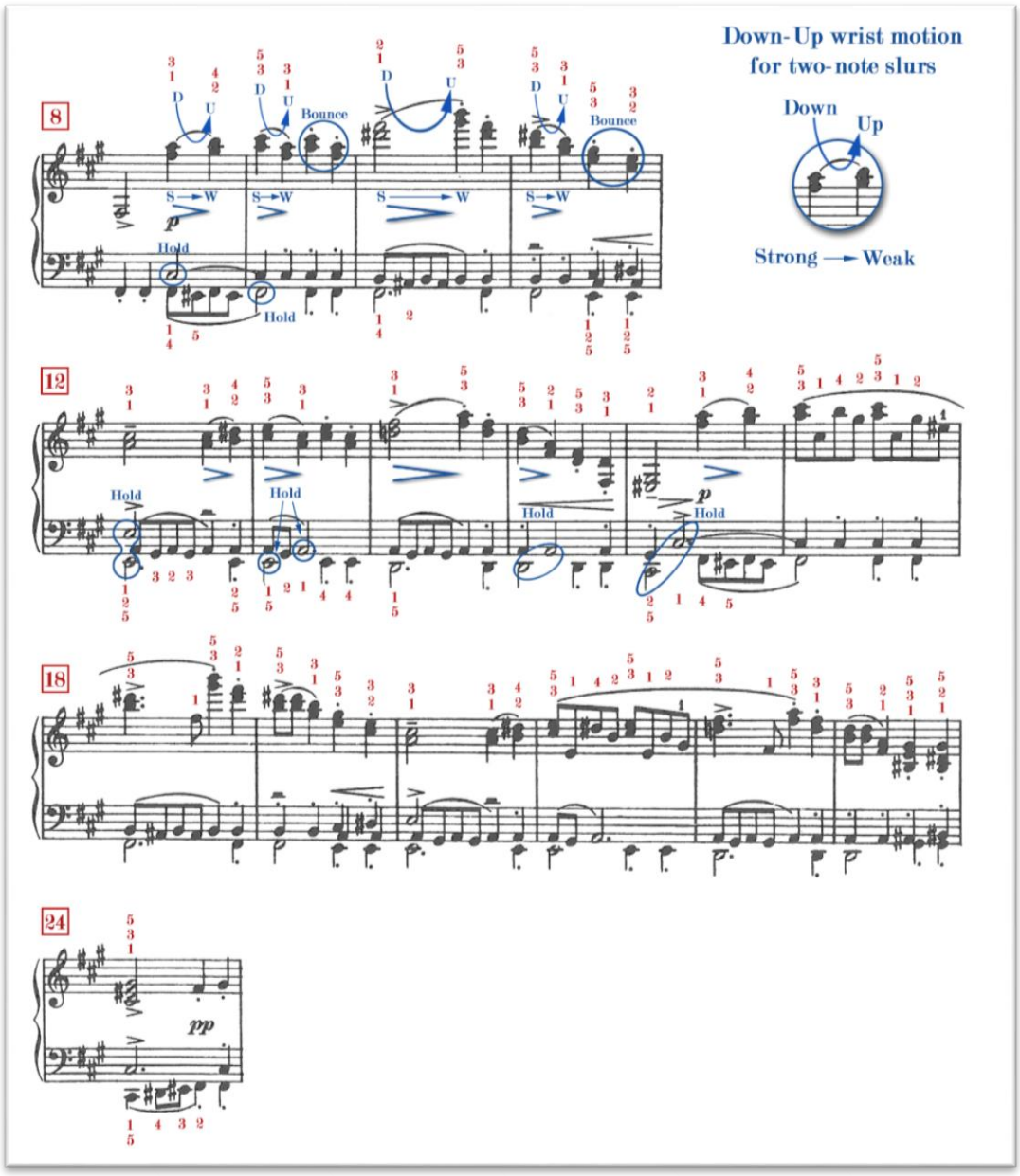
The left hand in the A sections must deal with an *ostinato* accompaniment of various *staccato* harmonic intervals. It can be difficult to control the balance of the left hand, and the *staccato* articulation can be easily executed at a *pianissimo* dynamic if the hand motions are small. It is best to keep the fingers close to the keys and use small wrist bounces to lightly detach the notes. One might practice by sustaining both pitches of the harmonic interval, listening for balance between the two notes, and then gradually decreasing the length of time the notes are held until playing *staccato*. This will ensure that both notes are balanced evenly in the hand. A further practice technique might be to first "ghost-play" the notes without depressing the keys or making a sound, then play the passage a second time depressing the keys halfway, and on the third time through play the keys all the way down aiming for a soft and light sound.

The B section in measures 8 to 24 is essentially a study of articulation. The right hand is written in double thirds and requires proper execution of two-note slurs as well as *staccato* and accented notes. A suggested fingering is provided in example 4.56. The two-note slurs in the right hand are easily played with a down-up motion in the wrist and a light bounce in the wrist for the *staccato* notes.[18] The articulations in the left hand

[18] Example 4.56 shows the down-up wrist motions of the two-note slurs and the wrist bounce for the *staccato* notes. These motions can be applied throughout the entire passage in measures 8-24.

contrast those in the right hand. The left hand must play two articulations indicated by held notes in one voice against *legato* and *staccato* notes in the other voices.

Example 4.56. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 8-24, right hand and left hand articulations and suggested fingering.



In measure 8, for example, the thumb in the left hand has to hold on to the C-sharp while the fourth and fifth fingers play *legato* eighth notes in the left hand. Then, in

measure 9, the fourth finger has to hold on to the F-sharp in the bass while the thumb has to play the *staccato* C-sharp in the tenor voice. In measure 12, the first and fifth fingers have to hold an octave on E while the second and third fingers play the *legato* passage in eighth notes. Such articulations require finger independence. It is important to make sure that there is no excess tension in the wrist during these passages. *Staccato* notes often follow the held notes and provide an opportunity to release any tension that may have accumulated. The combined articulations between the right and left hand in the B section are difficult to coordinate as each hand is required to play a different articulation. The author suggests that the pianist practice hands separately long enough that the execution of the articulations is clear and can be done with ease. At that point, the pianist can begin practicing hands together.

The final technical challenge is found in the C section in measures 32 to 47 which is a passage in unison between the hands. Unison passages are generally difficult due to different fingerings in each hand. It is common for a pianist to desire to play the same fingers on the same notes, but this is not possible in unison passages. The unison passage in the *Gavotte* is further complicated with the addition of held notes. Fingerings are provided in the performance suggestions, in example 4.60, which help to ensure a long *legato* line.

Organ fingerings are required at times which aid in the smooth transition between changing held notes. While the pedal can assist to smooth out the passage, it is recommended that the pianist first practice without pedal and try to play the entire passage *legato* with the fingers alone. This type of practice will make it apparent where

pedal is absolutely necessary, and will therefore avoid unnecessary use of the pedal which might hinder the pianists' ability to control the *piano* dynamic and clarity of line.

Pianists will gain the ability to control combined *legato* and *staccato* articulations in one hand as well as between both the right and left hand. Learning the *Gavotte* provides the opportunity to develop unique fingering options for the sake of articulation, and the ability to smoothly transition between hand position shifts. Pianists might choose to learn the *Gavotte* before tackling the other pieces in the set. The variety of articulations and required control of dynamics in the *Gavotte* are present in the other pieces in more challenging ways, and the *Gavotte* provides an introduction to these characteristic features of Prokofiev's writing.

Performance Suggestions

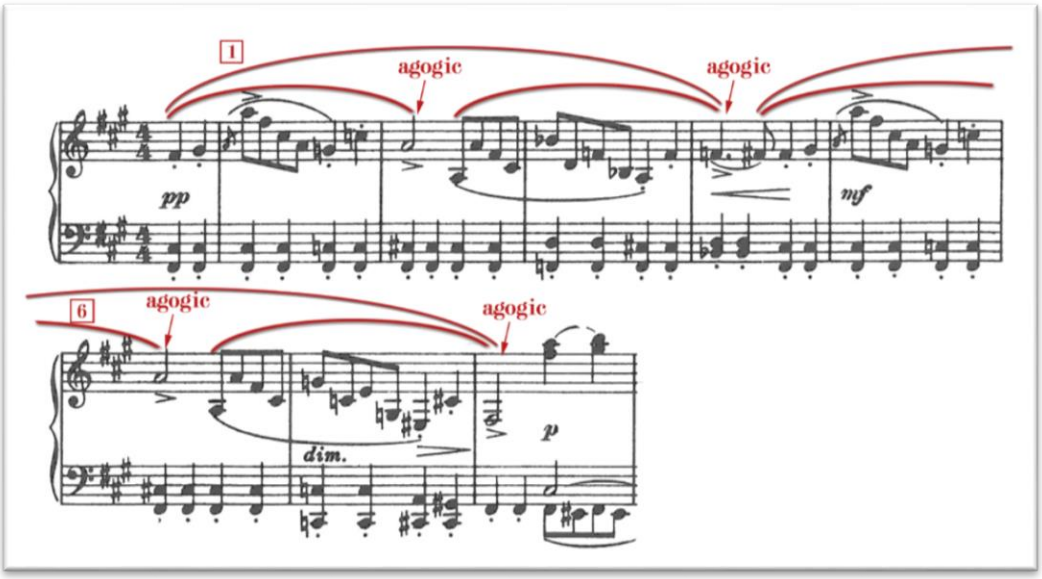
The *Gavotte* is the only selection of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 that Prokofiev recorded himself. It was recorded on March 4, 1935 in the Salle Rameau in Paris and is available on *Prokofiev Plays Prokofiev.*[19] The composer's performance offers some insights into a proper interpretation of the work, particularly with regard to phrasing and *rubato*. In addition to Prokofiev's recording, markings for articulations, dynamics, and expression provide interpretative insight for the performer.

The A section in measures 1 to 8 is written in two four-bar phrases. Each of the four-bar phrases are broken up into two, two-bar subphrases as shown in example 4.57. The accent markings on the long notes in measures 2, 4, 6, and 8 indicate an *agogic*

[19] Prokofiev, *Prokofiev Plays Prokofiev.*

accent might be appropriate. This could explain why Prokofiev plays through the eighth notes in measures 1, 3, 5, and 7 quickly, thereby providing time for the *agogic* accents and slowing of the tempo. The accents on the downbeat, along with the grace notes, in measures 1 and 5 serve a different purpose, helping to propel the initial tempo at the beginning of the phrase. Furthermore, the accent on beat 1 in measure 5 makes it easier to crescendo to the *mezzo forte* dynamic indicated. Suggested phrasing is provided in example 4.57.

Example 4.57. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Gavotte,* mm. 1-8, phrasing.

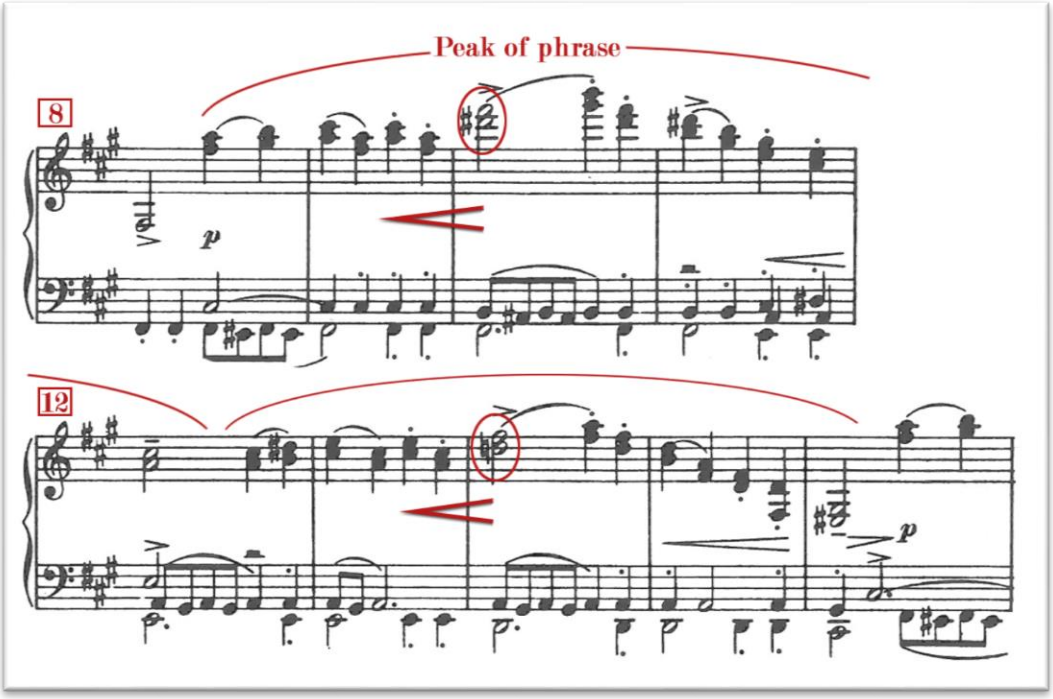


The right hand is primarily responsible for the phrasing in the A sections. The *ostinato* accompaniment in the left hand should be played with rhythmic precision. Although the piece is not virtuosic, the repetitive rhythmic pattern of the *ostinato* is somewhat reminiscent of other patterns used in Prokofiev's pieces that represent the toccata line. In addition to the toccata line, the grotesque line is represented by the humorous character of the *Gavotte* found in the articulation markings, the dissonant passages, and

the contrast between the biting *staccato* passages in the A section and the more lyrical lines in the C section.

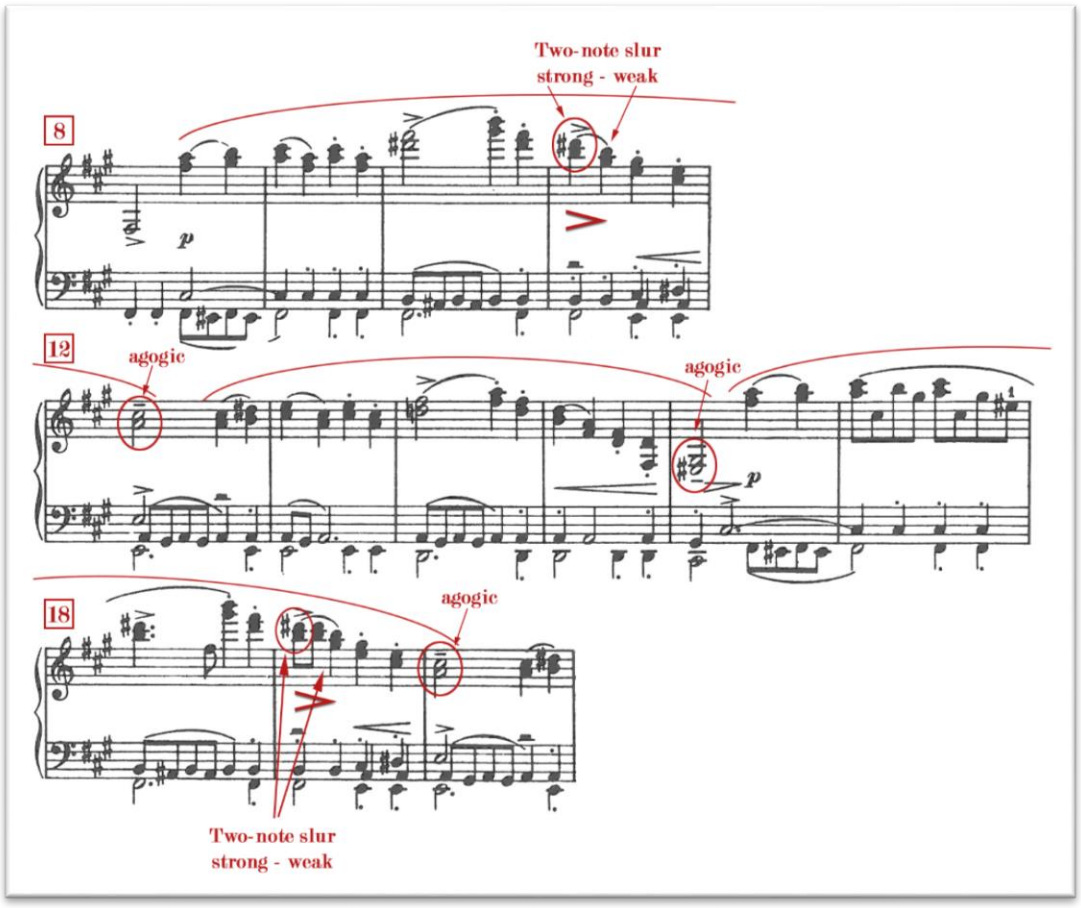
The tempo is more consistent in the B section on Prokofiev's recording when compared to the A sections. The right hand remains stable, however, Prokofiev pushes through the eighth notes in the left hand. It is hard to argue with the composer's performance, however, the eighth-note passages in the B section feel a bit rushed. The faster eighth notes do not seem to be necessary for the purposes of phrasing in the B section and the articulation markings shed light on an alternate phrasing scheme. The accents on beat 1 in measures 10 and 14, as seen in example 4.58, emphasize the peak of the phrase as they are both accented and the highest notes at that point in the melodic line.

Example 4.58. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 8-16, phrasing, articulation, and dynamic markings.



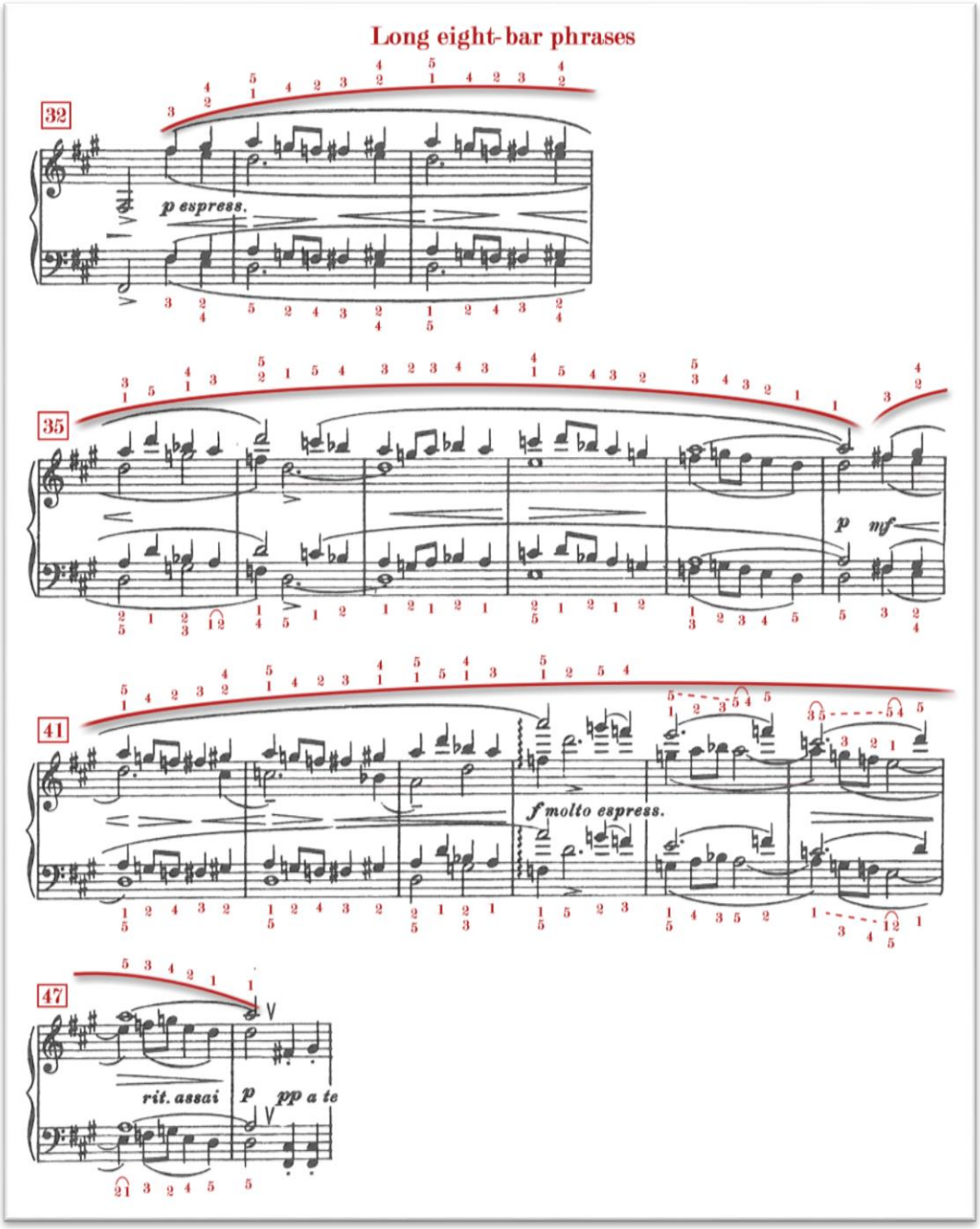
Additionally, the accent helps the notes to resonate long enough against the eighth note rhythm in the left hand. The accent on beat 1 in measure 11 brings attention to the two-note slur. The *tenuto* markings at the ends of phrases in the B section (mm. 12, 16, and 20, as shown in example 4.59) serve the same purpose as the *agogic* accents in the A section (indicated by the accents in measures 2, 4, 6, and 8, example 4.57). The phrasing becomes clear when the pianist accents the high notes at the top of the phrase in measures 10 and 14 while simultaneously growing louder, and then *decrescendos* into measures 12 and 16 with an *agogic* accent as the phrase tapers toward the end. See example 4.59.

Example 4.59. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 8-20, phrasing, articulation, and dynamic markings.



Unlike the phrasing of the A section which is written in four-bar phrases that can be broken into two-bar subphrases, the C section, beginning on beat 3 in measure 32, features longer four-bar phrases that elide together creating long eight-bar phrases (see example 4.60). The phrasing is more difficult to execute here and is aided by proper shaping of the long lyrical melody. Hairpin dynamics and *legato* lines are more easily played when adhering to carefully chosen fingering that allows for a smooth phrase as suggested in example 4.60. The lyrical C section provides contrast to the A and B sections which use *staccato* and accented articulations. The C section is most convincing when played with sensitivity to dynamic shaping and phrasing.

Example 4.60. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Gavotte*, mm. 32-48, phrasing and suggested fingering.



In addition to developing a variety of physical techniques, pianists will advance their musical abilities by learning the *Gavotte*. Attention to articulation, dynamics, and expression will highlight the contrasting lyrical and dance-like sections. The *Gavotte* is

the easiest piece in the set at an intermediate level and, if learned first, will provide the pianist with a solid foundation for tackling the remaining three pieces.

Four Pieces, Op. 32, No. 4 *Waltz*

The final piece of the set, *Waltz*, presents several elements of Prokofiev's compositional style. Parallel motion, octatonic scales, sudden modulations, and chromatic sonorities are some of the harmonic techniques used by Prokofiev in this piece, and represent his modern line in combination with the neo-Classic line found in the traditional ternary form. The lyrical line can be highlighted with careful voicing of the melody throughout. Students are presented with many techniques to master as this is the most difficult work in the set at an early advanced level. These techniques include hand position shifts, leaps, and hand crossings, as well as hand expansions, redistribution of notes, and rolled chords. Furthermore, the score is challenging to read with several clef changes, accidentals, and the use of three staves in the B section. The languid nature of the piece provides students the opportunity to work on phrasing, *rubato*, and voicing.

Form and Analysis

The formal structure of *Waltz* can be divided into the following sections:

Section	Measure
A	1-40
B	41-56
A	57-78

The texture of the *Waltz* is more dense than any of the other pieces in the set. The dense texture combined with Prokofiev's departures from strict tonal harmony

complicate the analysis. It is easier to understand the theoretical components of the *Waltz* by considering the larger structural points of organization. Brian Marks analyzed the *Waltz* in his study on Prokofiev's early piano sets.[20] The author of the present study has arrived at conclusions similar to Marks's regarding the structural aspects of the *Waltz* including the composer's use of the tonic, subdominant, and dominant as structural key areas of the A section, and octatonic usage in the B section. Departures from Marks's conclusions are clearly stated in this analysis. Furthermore, the analysis of Prokofiev's departures from tonal harmony according to the categories identified by Ashley are original to the author of the present study. Within these structural elements, several of Ashley's categories of harmonic innovation are highlighted. These include parallel motion (category 4), use of octatonic scales (category 5), abrupt modulations (category 6), and chromatic sonorities based on either tritones or flatted scale degrees or both (category 7).

The overall structure of the Waltz is in ABA form. The A sections center around E-flat major with clear structural points using the subdominant (A-flat major) and dominant (B-flat major) chords of E-flat major as key areas. The B section uses an octatonic collection in the melody which is organized by two dominant seventh chords (E-flat dominant seventh and B-flat dominant seventh) over two pedal tones a tritone apart. Marks identifies the E-flat dominant seventh chord as the only harmony in the

[20] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 229-36.

entire section,[21] but a B-flat dominant seventh chord is also present in measures 43, 44, 47, 51, 52, and 55.

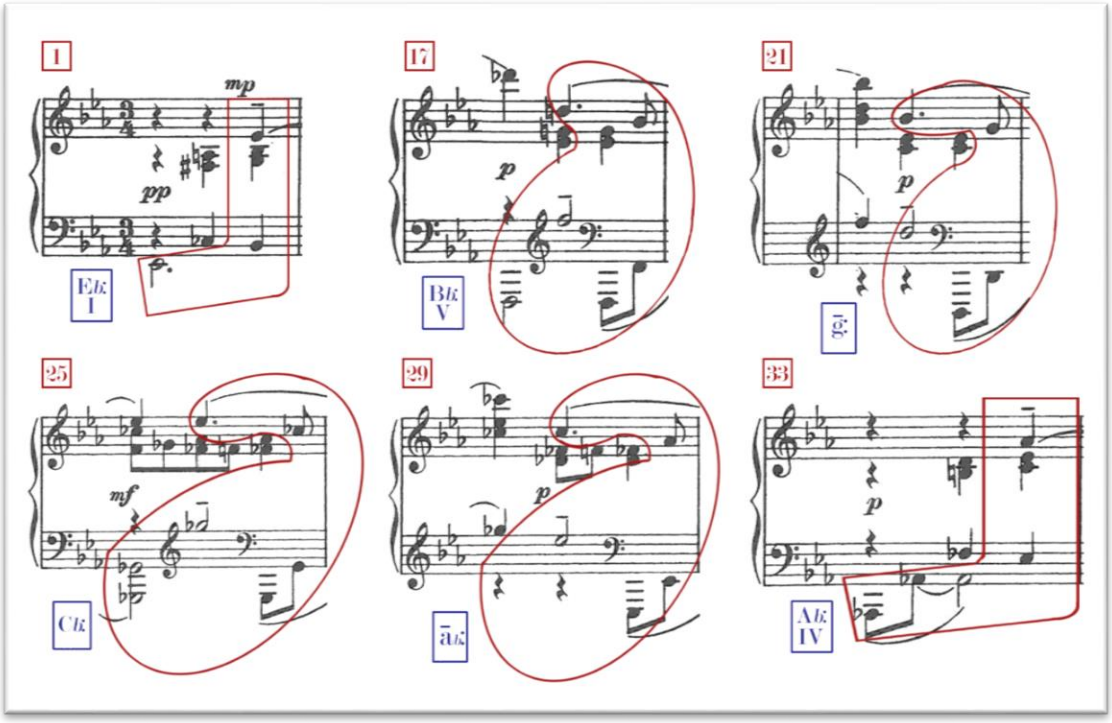
The opening chord of the first theme of the A section is an E-flat major triad, and the first phrase ends on a B-flat dominant seventh chord in measure 8, confirming the key area of E-flat major. B-flat major, the dominant of E-flat major, is used as the next key area in measures 9 to 16. Here Prokofiev transposes the same thematic material of the first phrase in measures 1 to 8 from E-flat major to B-flat major in measures 9 to 16. The second theme begins in measure 17, and is restated four times in the keys of B-flat major (mm. 17-20), G minor (mm. 21-24), C-flat major (mm. 25-28), and A-flat minor (mm. 29-32). The keys of the first and fourth phrases, B-flat major and A-flat minor, respectively, are best understood when referred to the primary key of the A section in E-flat major. B-flat major is the dominant of E-flat, and A-flat minor is the borrowed subdominant of E-flat. The keys of the second and third phrases, G minor and C-flat major, can be understood as tonicized re-statements of the phrase relative to the keys of the first and fourth phrases. G minor is vi of B-flat major, or its relative minor, and C-flat major is the III of A-flat minor, or its relative major key. Marks identifies the phrases as grouped into pairs, and the second statement of each phrase is the relative minor of the first (G minor is the relative minor of B-flat major, and A-flat minor is the relative minor of C-flat major),[22] however he does not relate B-flat major and A-flat minor to the overall key of E-flat major in the A section. The main theme is transposed

[21] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 233.

[22] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 232.

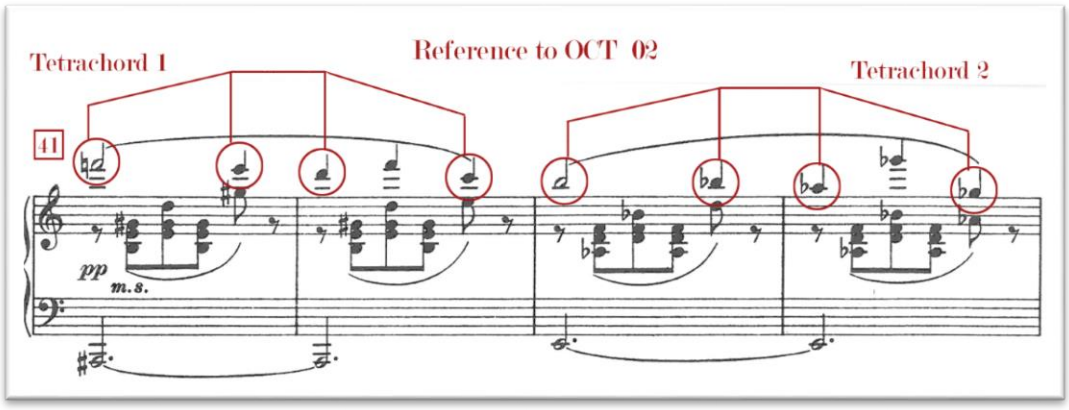
to A-flat major in measure 33, which is the subdominant of E-flat, and is another important structural area. The structural key areas of the A section are depicted in example 4.61. The abrupt shifts align with Ashley's sixth category of Prokofiev's harmonic innovation which includes arriving in new keys by direct modulation.

Example 4.61. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 1, 17, 21, 25, 29, and 33, important structural key areas in the A section.



The B section is less organized in terms of harmonic structure. The right hand melody in measures 41 to 44, shown in example 4.62, is based on two different tetrachords: the first, F-E-D-C, and the second, B-Bb-Ab-Gb. Marks uses the pitch collection of both tetrachords and determines that the collection is referential to an octatonic scale.

Example 4.62. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 41-44, octatonic melody in the right hand.

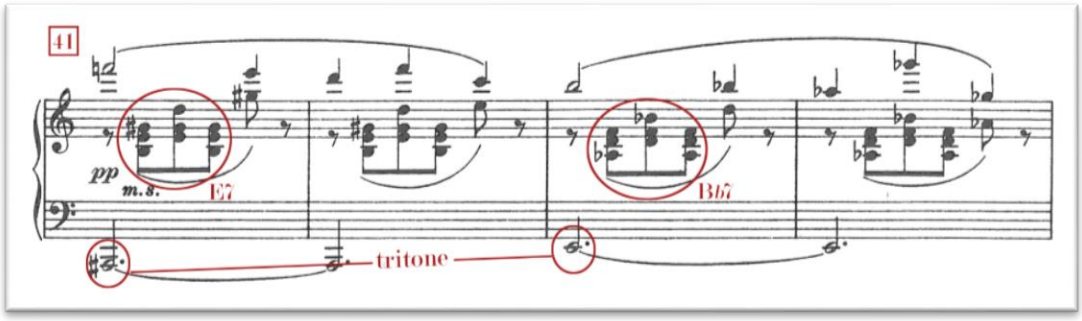


Marks identifies this as the first octatonic collection, which in integer notation is OCT 01 {0 1 3 4 6 7 9 t}. The integer notation translates to the notes C-C#-D#-E-F#-G-A-A#. This might be a typographical error as Marks likely meant to say that the pitch collection closely resembles the second octatonic collection. The integer notation for this collection is OCT 02 {0 2 4 5 6 8 t e}, which translates to the notes C-D-E-F-Gb-Ab-Bb-B. The only notes of this collection that are not present in the two tetrachords that comprise the melody are C and G-flat. By clarifying the correct octatonic collection, the remainder of Marks's analysis is plausible, explaining the two notes outside the octatonic collection, C and G-flat, as passing tones that lead into the next phrase.[23] The use of octatonic scales is one of Prokofiev's innovations identified by Ashely (category 5). One further addition to Marks's analysis includes the identification of a second harmony that unifies the structure of the B section.

[23] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 233.

Marks identifies that an E dominant seventh chord with a flatted fifth is the only harmonic content of the B section.[24] This harmony is found in measures 41 to 42, 45 to 46, 49 to 50, and 53 to 54. However, a second harmony, a B-flat dominant seventh with a flatted fifth, is found in the B section in measures 43, 44, 47, 51, 52, and 55. These two melodies first appear in measures 41 to 44, shown in example 4.63, and are re-stated in two-bar pairs for the remainder of the B section.

Example 4.63. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 41-44, left hand E dominant seventh and B-flat dominant seventh chords, and tritone relationship in the bass.



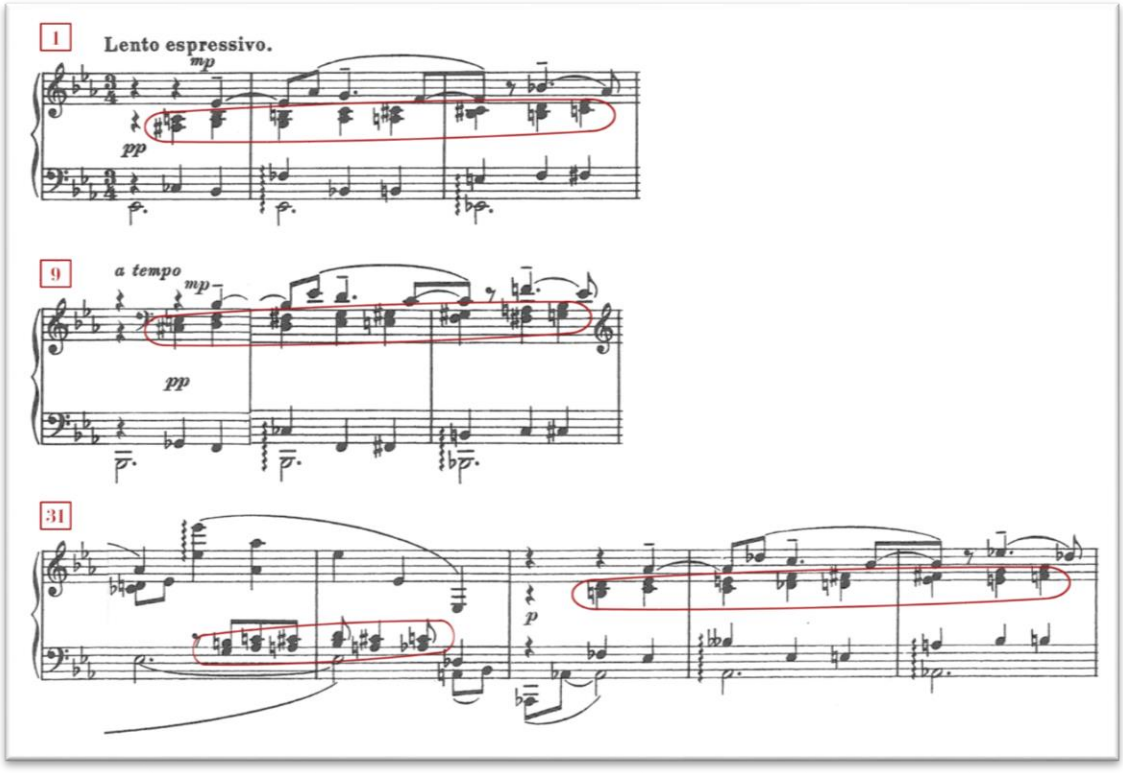
Marks's analysis of the A-sharp in the bass register as the flatted fifth of the chord does account for all the notes in the harmony, however, due to the shift in register of the left hand, one might also analyze the held bass notes as pedal tones that do not actively participate in the overall harmony. These two bass notes, A-sharp and E, are spaced a tritone apart. Tritone relationships used to create chromatic harmonies as well as flatted scale degrees fall into Ashley's seventh category of Prokofiev's departure from tonal harmony.

[24] Marks, "Stylistic Diversity," 233.

The return of the A section in measure 57 is an elaborate version of the first theme presented in the A section at the beginning of the piece. The same melody and harmonic progression are present, however the accompaniment is now in eighth notes with a few added chromatic passing tones. In addition to Ashley's categories previously identified (category 5—octatonic scales; category 6—abrupt modulations; and category 7—chromatic sonorities based on either tritones or flatted scale degrees or both), parallel motion is also used in the *Waltz*.

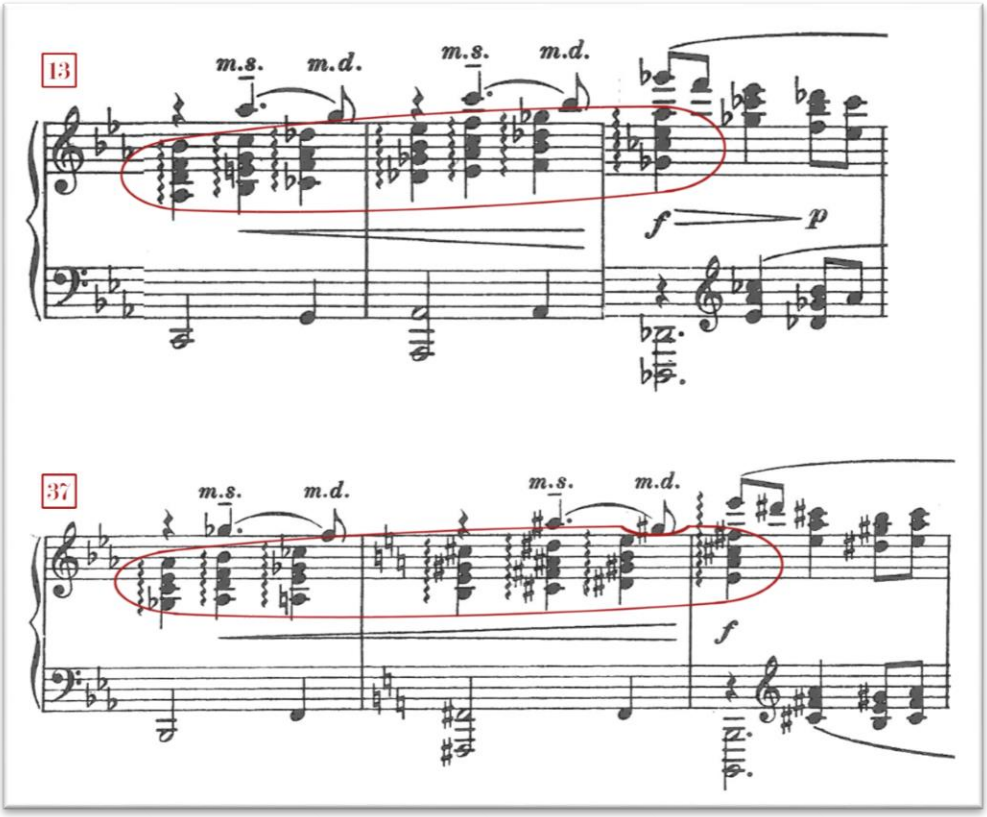
Parallel motion (category 4) is found in the chromatic thirds present throughout the A section in measures 1 to 3, 9 to 11, and 31 to 35, as seen in example 4.64.

Example 4.64. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 1-3, 9-11, and 31-35, parallel chromatic thirds.

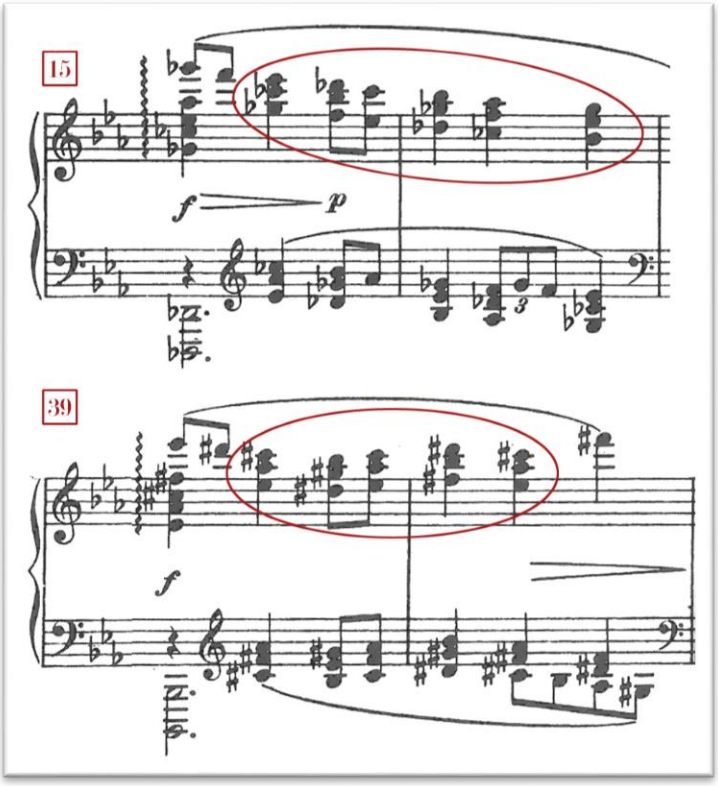


The ascending chromatic thirds create harmonies against the other notes, and in some ways could fall into Ashley's second category where one line moves chromatically against sustained notes thereby creating new chords, however, the chromatic line in this example is not moving against other notes that are static. Additional parallel motion occurs as rolled chords in measures 13 to 15, and 37 to 39, shown in examplex 4.65, as well as second inversion chords in measures 15 to 16 and 39 to 40 shown in example 4.66.

Example 4.65. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 13-15, and 37-39, parallel rolled chords.



Example 4.66. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 15-16, and 39-40, second inversion chords.



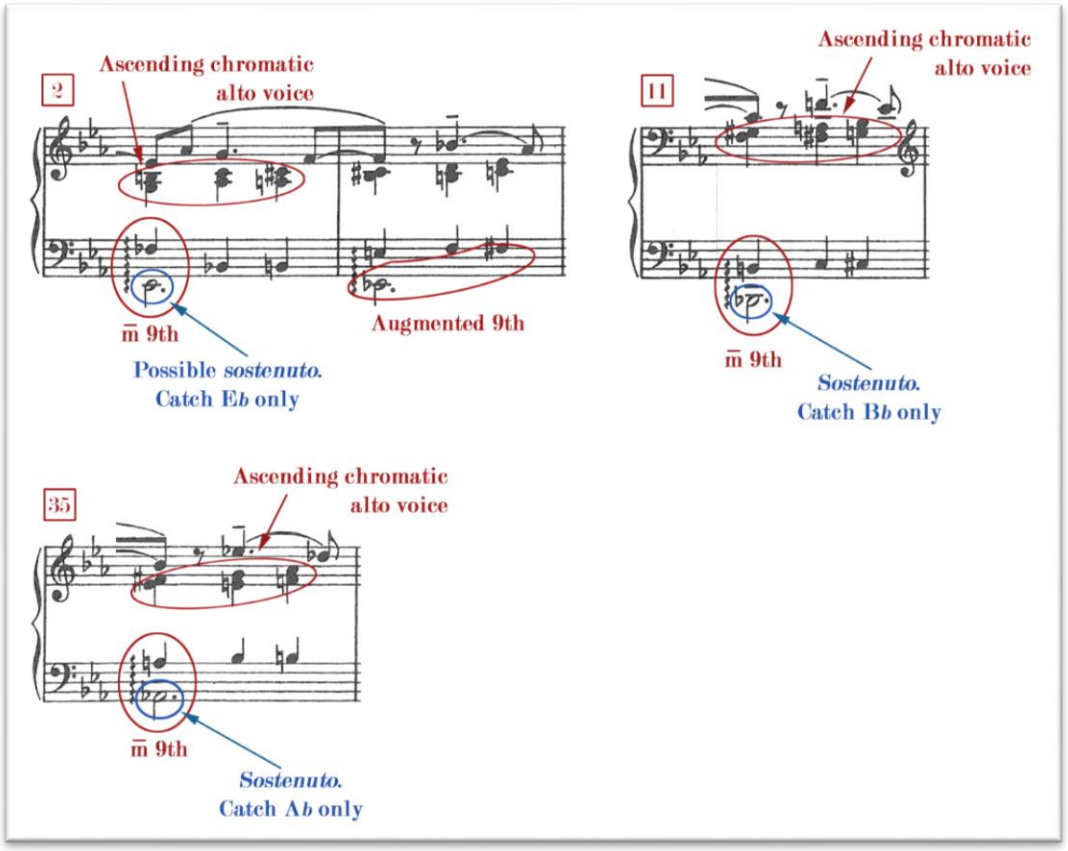
The theoretical components of the *Waltz* are more difficult to decipher than those of the first three pieces of the set. However, it is imperative to conduct a theoretical analysis to better understand the construction of the piece. Without an understanding of the key areas used for structural points in the A section, or the use of octatonic scales, flatted scale degrees, and tritone relationships in the B section, the *Waltz* would appear to be a sea of notes without any meaning. The analysis informs the pianist's interpretation and approach to voicing and phrasing, which are otherwise hard to understand. A firm grasp on the harmonic and structural aspects of the *Waltz* lays the foundation for tackling the technical issues.

Technical Problems and Solutions

One should not be fooled into thinking that the *Waltz* will be simple to play by observing the tempo marked *lento espressivo* and the basic rhythms of quarter and eighth notes on the first page. In fact, the *Waltz* is the most difficult piece in the set. Nearly every measure will pose a technical challenge for the pianist. In addition to the difficulty faced in the mechanics of playing the *Waltz*, pianists will exercise their reading abilities as accidentals are frequently used along with changes in clef. The most difficult reading challenge takes place in the B section when the right hand is split between two staves. The top staff is to be played an octave higher than written, and the middle staff is played as written. The broken intervals are confusing to read at first until one deciphers in which octave the notes are to be played. Once pianists overcome the initial challenge of reading through the *Waltz*, they can begin to tackle the technical challenges which can be grouped into the following categories: hand expansions, leaps, rolled chords, hand crossings, hand position shifts, and redistribution of notes between the hands.

Most hand expansions occur in the left hand. The first appearance is in measure 2, highlighted in example 4.67, where the left hand expands to a minor ninth if the fifth finger continues to hold on to the low E-flat as indicated. In measure 3, the interval increases to an augmented ninth which feels like a tenth in the hand.

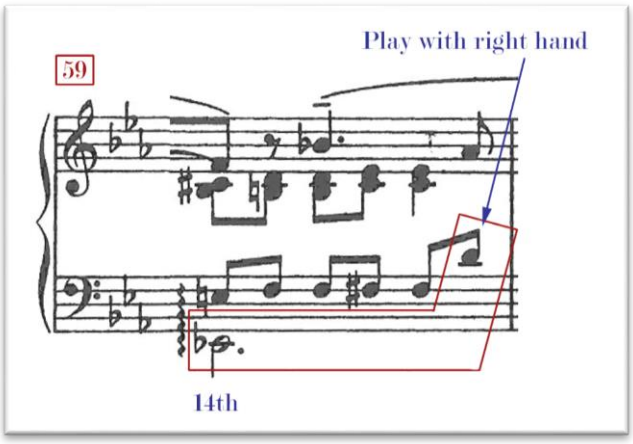
Example 4.67. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 2-3, 11, and 35, left hand expansions.



For pianists who cannot reach a ninth, the low E-flat will likely have to be lost in the harmony. If held with the pedal for the duration of the measure, the harmonies are blurred significantly. One might try experimenting with the *sostenuto* pedal, but because the chord is rolled on beat 1 and the alto voice is ascending chromatically, one would only want to catch the low E-flat. Such a technique with the *sostenuto* pedal is difficult and unreliable to execute. The passage in measure 2 is found transposed in measures 11 and 35. When the A section returns in measure 57 and the accompanimental tenor voice is written in eighth notes, the largest interval written is a fourteenth which is not possible to execute with the left hand alone, even for those with large hands. The best solution is to redistribute the D on the "and" of beat 3 in measure

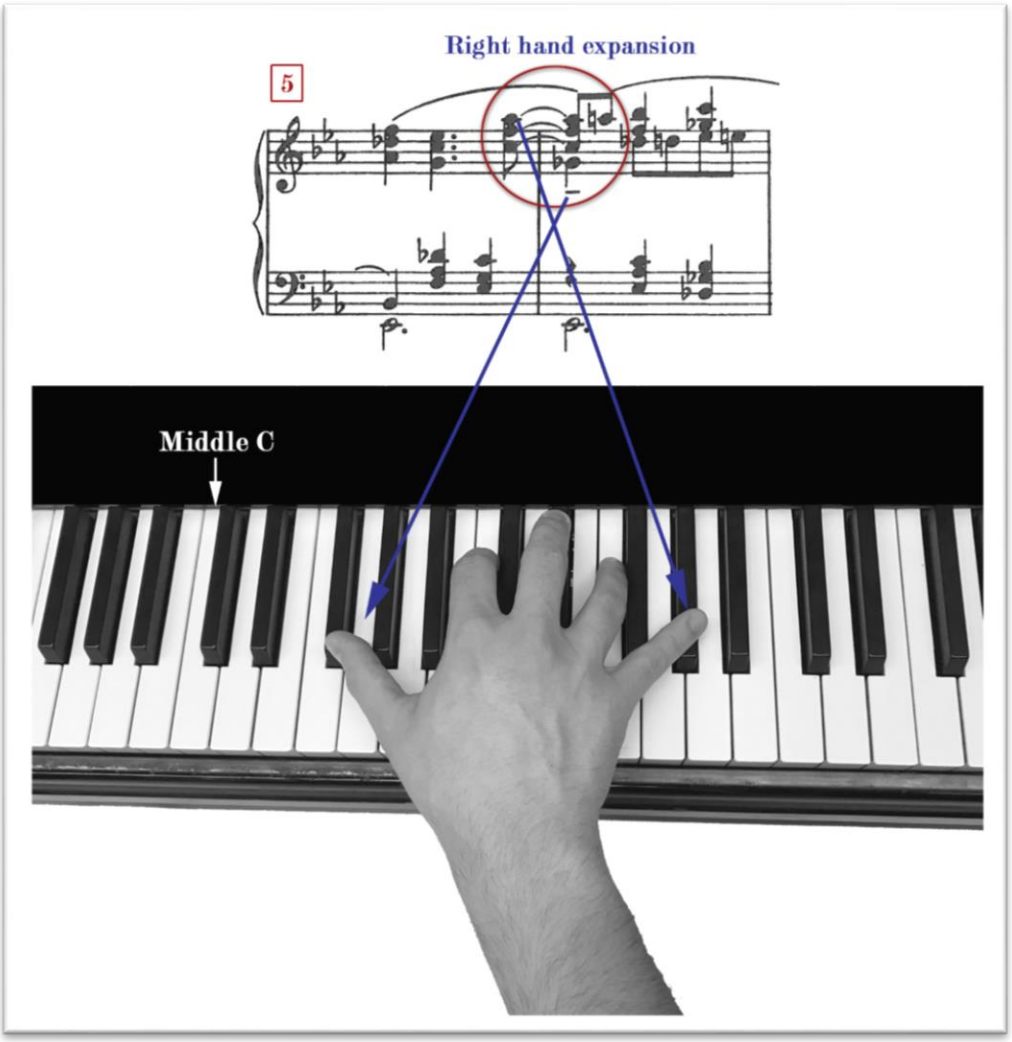
59 to the right hand as shown in example 4.68. Expansions also appear in the right hand.

Example 4.68. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, m. 59, redistribution of left hand D to the right hand.



The first complicated expansion in the right hand requires the pianist to hold a second inversion F minor chord and then reach down to grab a G-flat a ninth below in measures 5 to 6 (example 4.69). While holding the G-flat with the thumb, the soprano voice moves up a half step to A-natural increasing the stretch further. Many pianists will be unable to execute this passage in measures 5 and 6 with the fingers alone.

Example 4.69. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 5-6, right hand expansion.

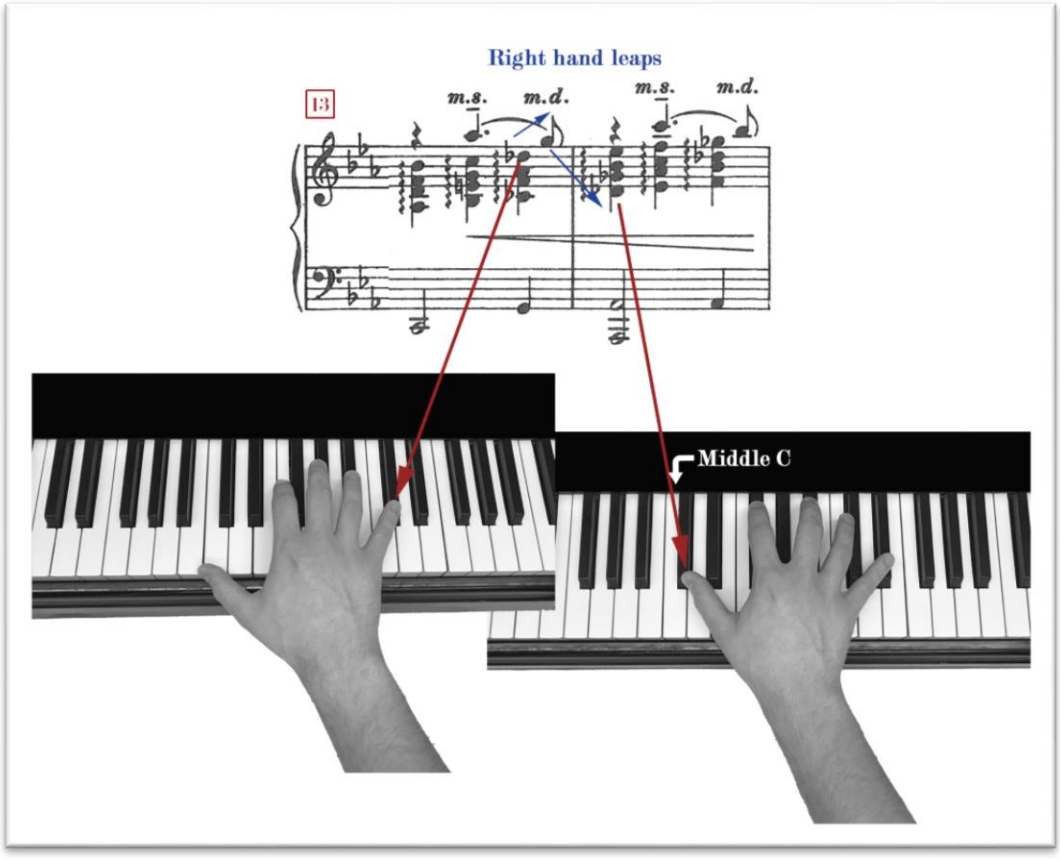


Additional large intervals in the right hand are written as rolled chords. For the left hand many of the hand expansions are due to pedal tones that need to be held throughout the entire measure. Such hand expansions cause excess tension for those pianists who are not able to play ninths and tenths comfortably. The pedal tones are important to the harmony however, and therefore, full pedal changes would alter the intended harmonic color. Pedaling choices are going to be the best options for achieving the desired sound. Because most pedal tones are in the lower range of the piano, it is possible to strike the note with enough sound to last through the measure with half

pedal changes where the dampers lightly touch the strings enough to clear some, but not all, of the sound. This type of pedaling requires a lot of control and is best suited for an advanced pianist.

Numerous leaps occur throughout the *Waltz*, however, the slow tempo eases the strain of executing these jumps. In many cases the pianist will need to make fast hand adjustments to land on the right notes in time. A prime example occurs in the right hand in measures 13 and 14 shown in example 4.70.

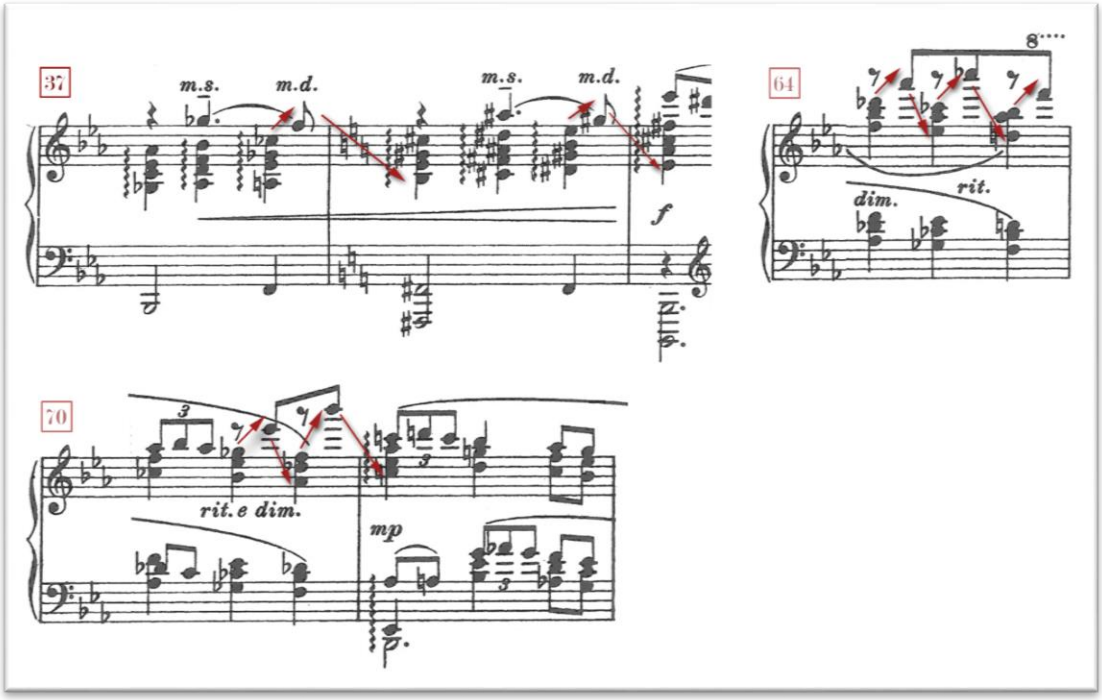
Example 4.70. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 13-14, right hand leaps, and set position for rolled chords.



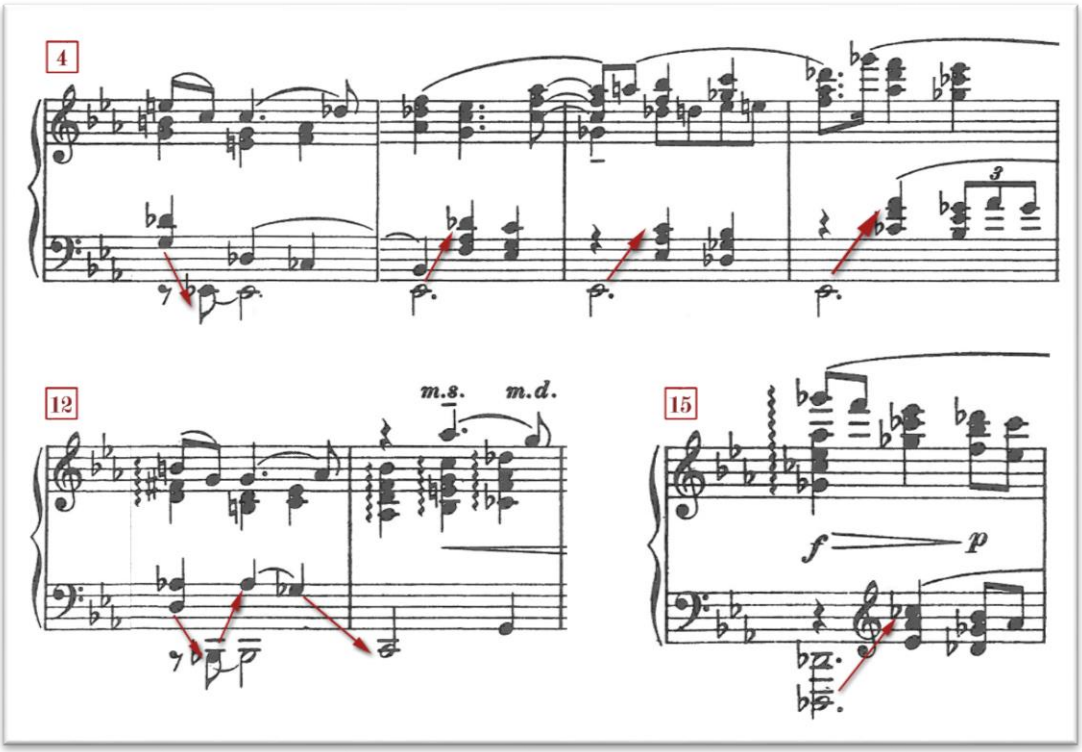
First, the pianist must play a rolled four-note chord on beat 3 of measure 13, then shift up to a G on the "and" of beat 3 before leaping back down to an additional four-note

rolled chord on beat 1 of measure 14. In order to execute this passage without playing the rolled chords too fast, it is best to set the hand in position for the rolled chord as much as possible, quickly leap to the G, and then swiftly return to get the hand over the notes for the next rolled chord. Example 4.71 shows other instances where this same technique will be necessary, including measures 37 and 38, and similarly in measures 64, 70, and 71. Leaps occur in the left hand in measures 4 through 7, 12 to 13, and 15 (shown in example 4.72), however, the most difficult occur in the return of the A section.

Example 4.71. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 37-38, 64, and 70-71, additional right hand leaps.

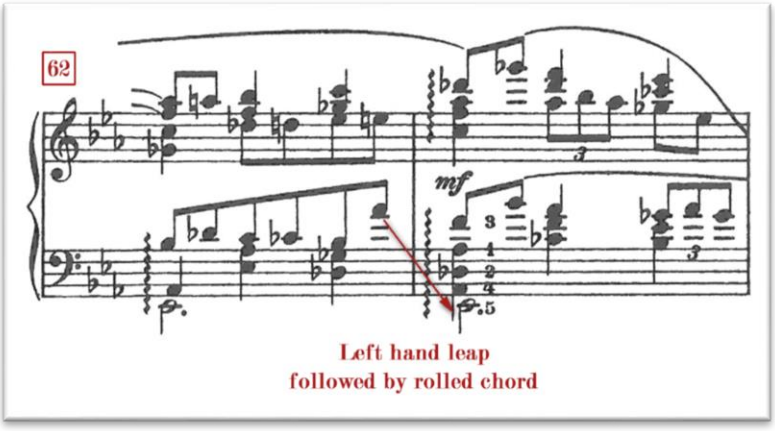


Example 4.72. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 4-7, 12-13, and 15, left hand leaps.



The left hand leaps beginning in measure 61 are particularly difficult because they are often preceded or followed by a large rolled chord. One instance of such a leap in measures 62 to 63, as shown in example 4.73, includes rolled chords on beat 1 of both measures. The transition begins on beat 3 of measure 62, where the left thumb leaps up an octave to the A-flat, and then must descend over two octaves to a low E-flat in order to begin a five-note rolled chord that covers the range of just over two octaves.

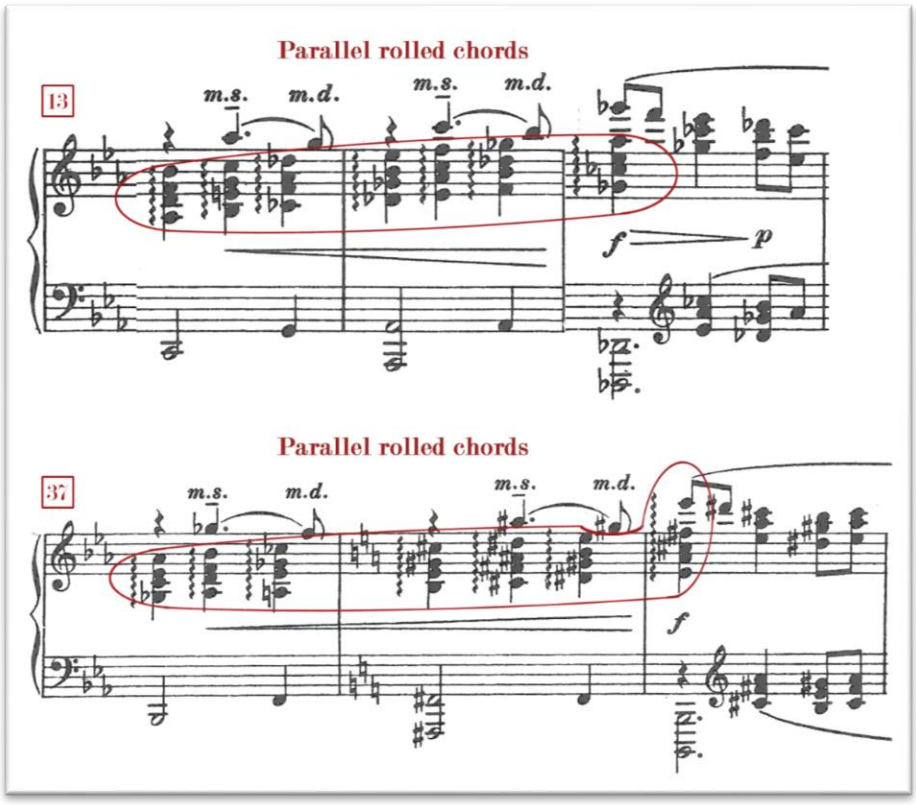
Example 4.73. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 62-63, left hand leap followed by transition to a rolled chord.



The difficulty is further compounded by the additional rolled chord in the right hand. The best solution is to use *rubato* in order to execute the passage accurately and without feeling hurried. This is also a climactic point in the phrase which allows for one to stretch time for the purpose of executing the large rolled chord in both hands. Perhaps, Prokofiev wrote the chord in this way to force the pianist to take time and acknowledge the peak in the phrase. Rolled chords are often associated with leaps in the *Waltz*, but a few singular examples can be found.

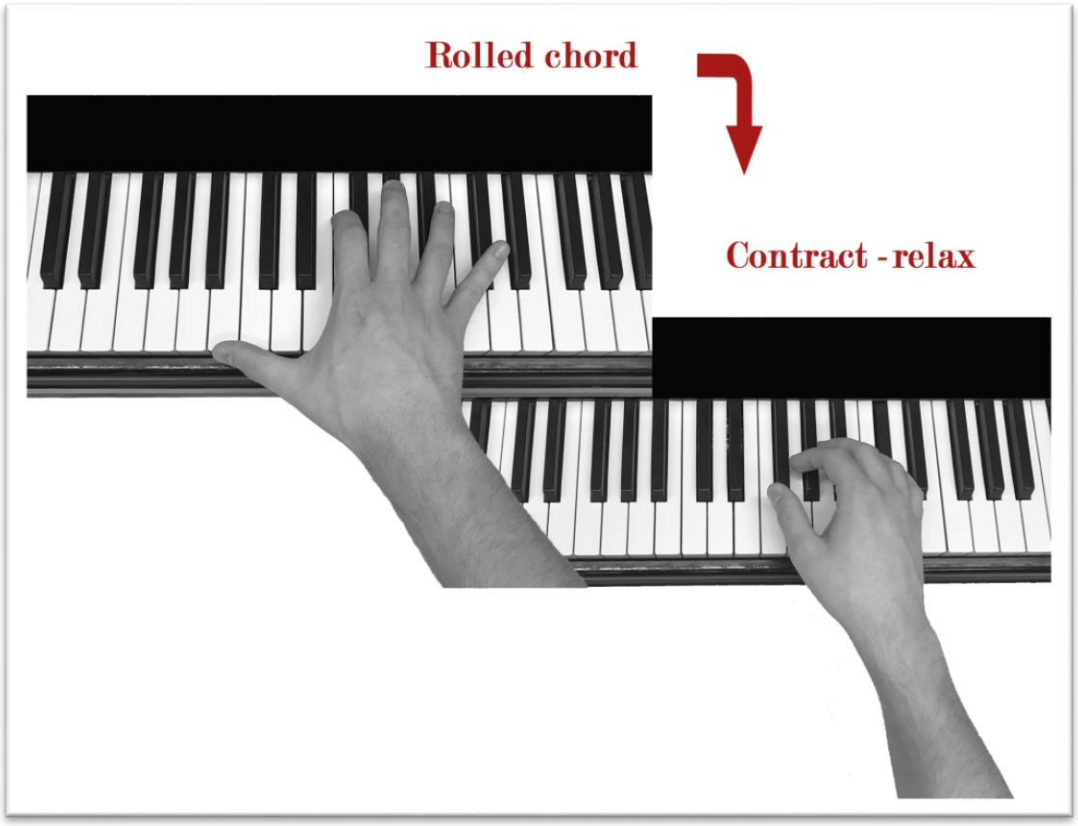
Parallel rolled chords in measures 13 to 15, and 37 to 39, shown in example 4.74, can cause excess tension in the hand, even for pianists with a large hand size. It is important not to attempt to roll the chords with the fingers alone. Doing so will result in an overly expanded hand and will likely cause a louder than intended dynamic level.

Example 4.74. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 13-15, and 37-39, right hand rolled chords.



The pianist should use their whole arm moving outward toward the top note of the rolled chord. When the hand reaches the highest note, the hand can contract into a relaxed position. See example 4.75 showing a relaxed position after executing a rolled chord.

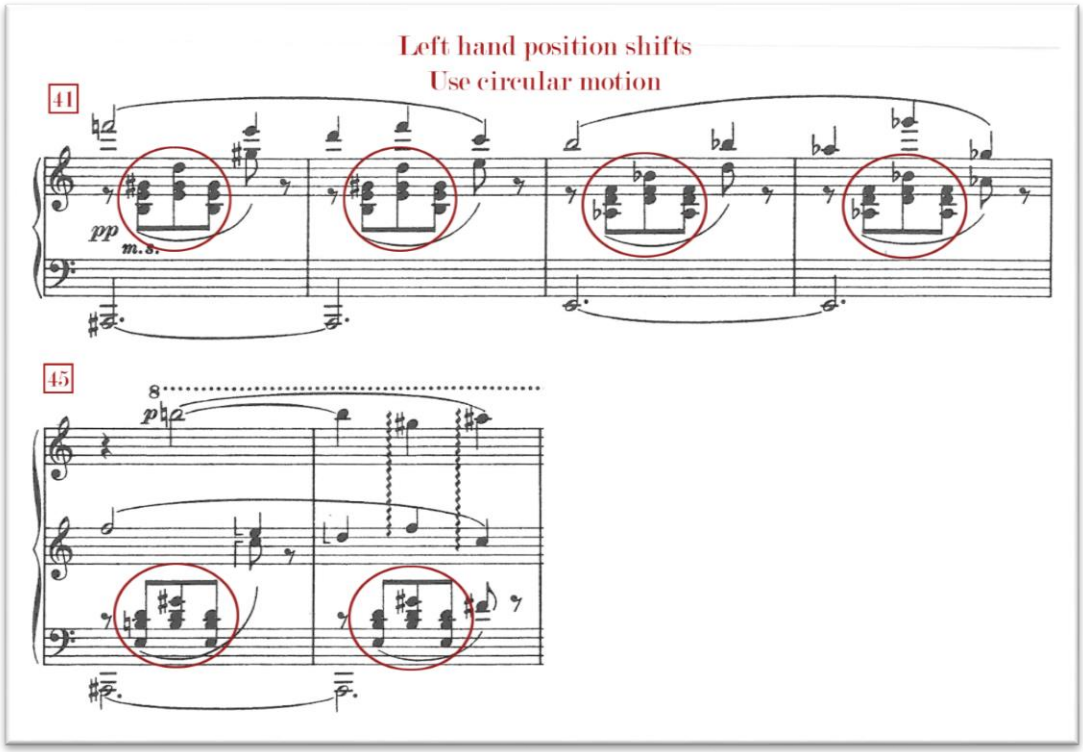
Example 4.75. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, right hand rolled chord to relaxed position.



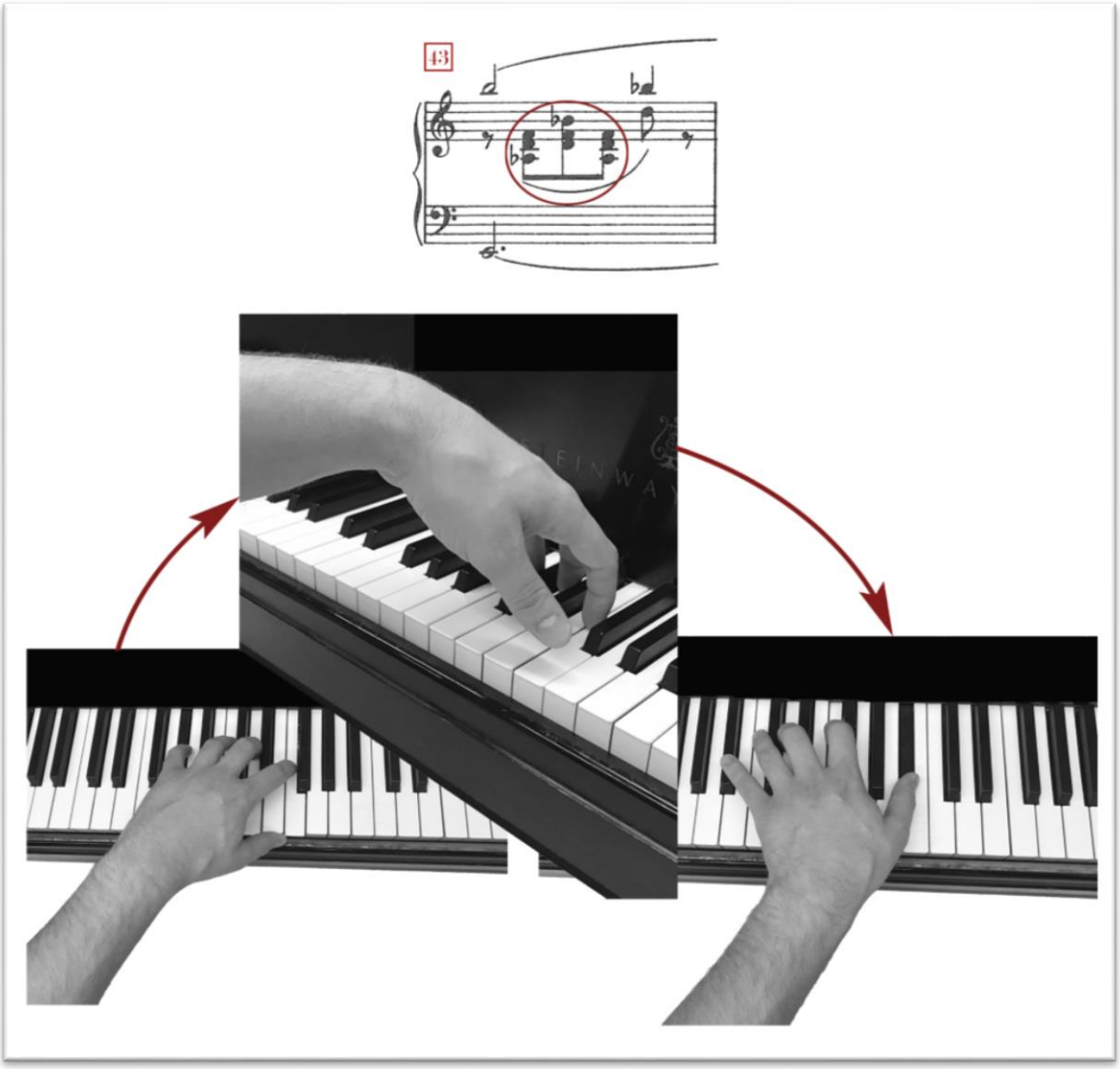
This type of relaxed position encourages a circular motion in the wrist when the hand and thumb have to return for the low note of the next rolled chord. Not only will this motion free up tension in the wrist, but it will also create a proper balance by bringing out the top note of each chord.

The techniques discussed thus far pertain primarily to the A sections. The B section is comprised of hand position shifts, leaps, and redistribution of notes. These technical challenges can be faced once the pianist has deciphered the score written in three staves. The left hand position shifts occur throughout the accompanimental figures which alternate between inversions of dominant seventh chords, such as in measures 41 to 46 shown in example 4.76.

Example 4.76. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 41-46, left hand position shifts.



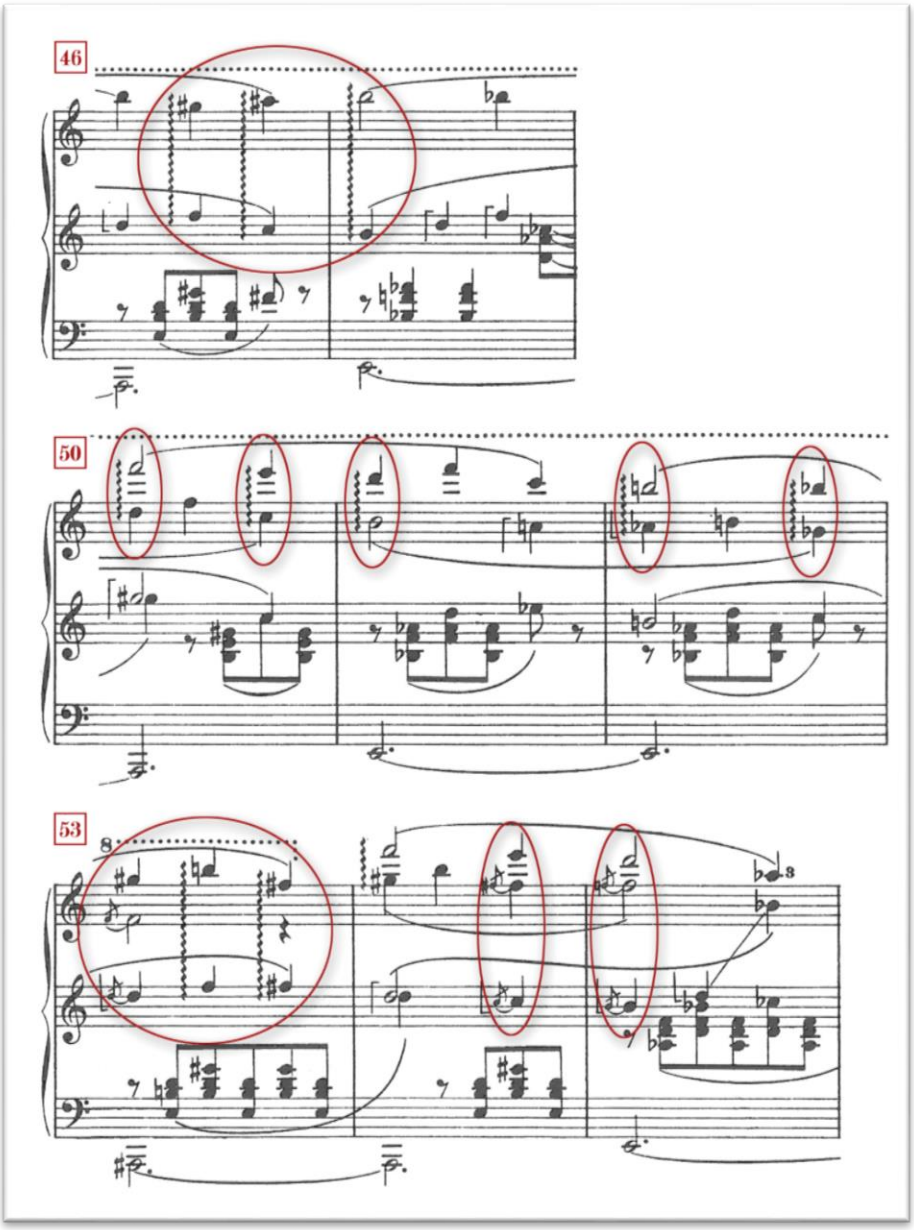
Example 4.77. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 43, left hand circular motion.



Again, it is best not to keep the hand expanded, and these left hand position shifts are more easily executed using small circular motions in the wrist. The placement of the hand for these shifts is shown in example 4.77, depicting the downward and upward swing of the circular wrist motion. Measure 43 is presented as an example, but this motion may be used in measures 41 to 46 and 49 to 55. Right hand leaps are also prominent in the B section.

The most difficult leaps for the right hand occur in measures 46 to 47, and 50 to 55, shown in example 4.78. The leaps on beats 2 and 3 of measure 46 and beat 1 of measure 47 require a fast arm shift, which at times must travel distances of more than two octaves.

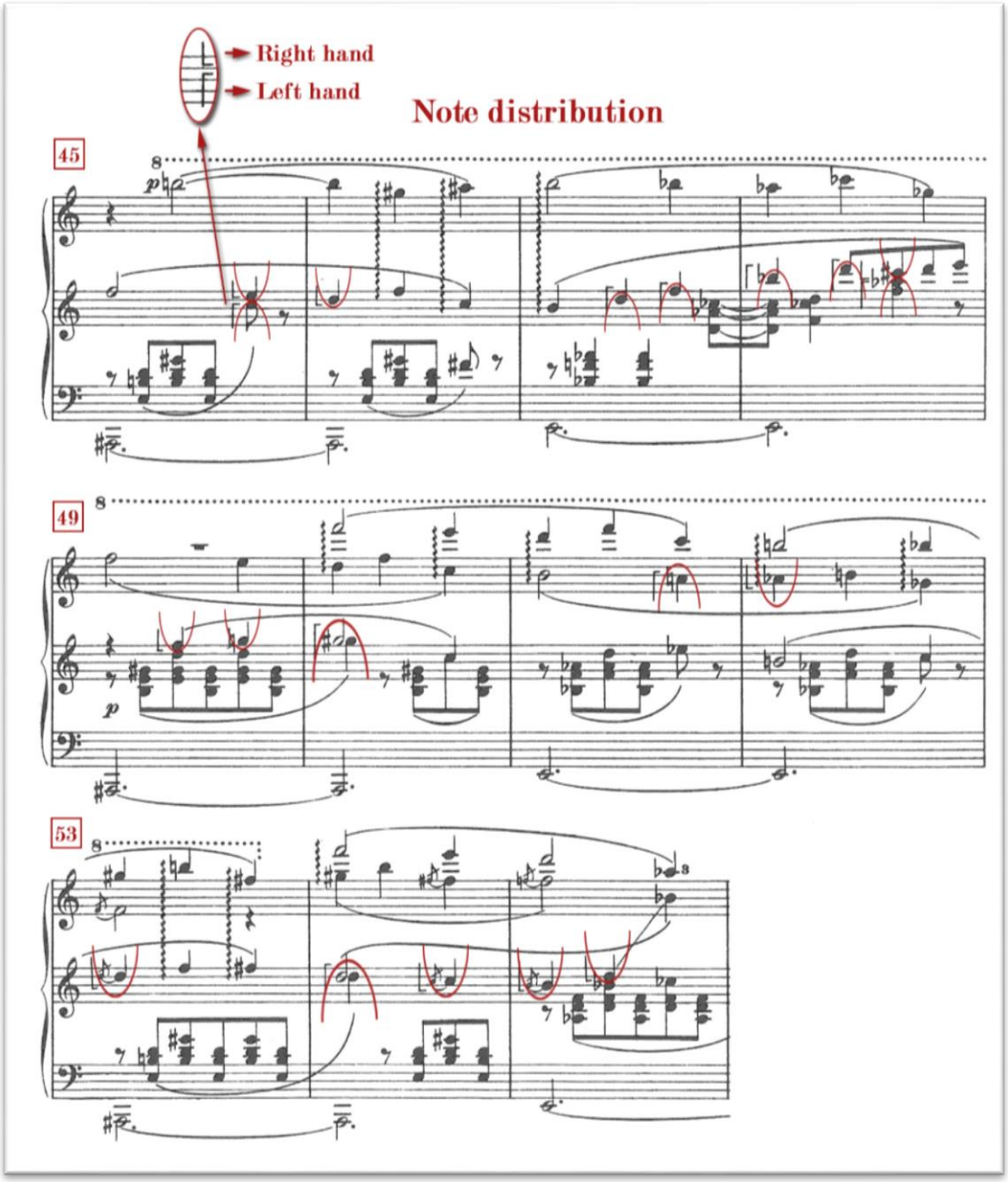
Example 4.78. *Four Pieces,* Op. 32, *Waltz,* mm. 46-47, and 50-55, right hand leaps.



One might think of this technique like a spring-loaded mechanism: if the two ends of a spring are pushed together, the spring will expand quickly once released. It is this type of speed that is required to execute the large leaps in this passage. For younger advanced students one might explain this technique like a cat pouncing. It is a fast, yet calculated move. In addition to hand position shifts and leaps, the inner voice is exchanged or redistributed between the right and left hand.

Brackets in the score indicate which hand is to play the notes of the inner staff in measures 45 through 55. These can be hard to read and the author recommends that the pianist clearly mark which hand is to play these notes as suggested in example 4.79. Practicing hands separately will help to clarify the appropriate hand to play this inner line and ease any confusion when playing this section hands together.

Example 4.79. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 45-55, right and left hand note distribution.



The *Waltz* is riddled with challenging technical elements and requires a variety of practice techniques in order to execute such elements with ease. Primary concerns include hand expansions, leaps, rolled chords, hand crossings, hand position shifts, and redistribution of notes between the hands, however, each pianist will likely discover

their own challenges. It is important to devise a systematic approach to solving each technical solution. Whether a pianist has large hands or small hands it is important to do what is most comfortable. If excess tension or pain arise it is best to go back and address the problem from a new perspective and search for a new solution rather than continuing to practice in the wrong way. The *Waltz* is a graceful and lyrical piece, and any indications of physical strain will only impede pianists' ability to communicate their interpretation to the audience.

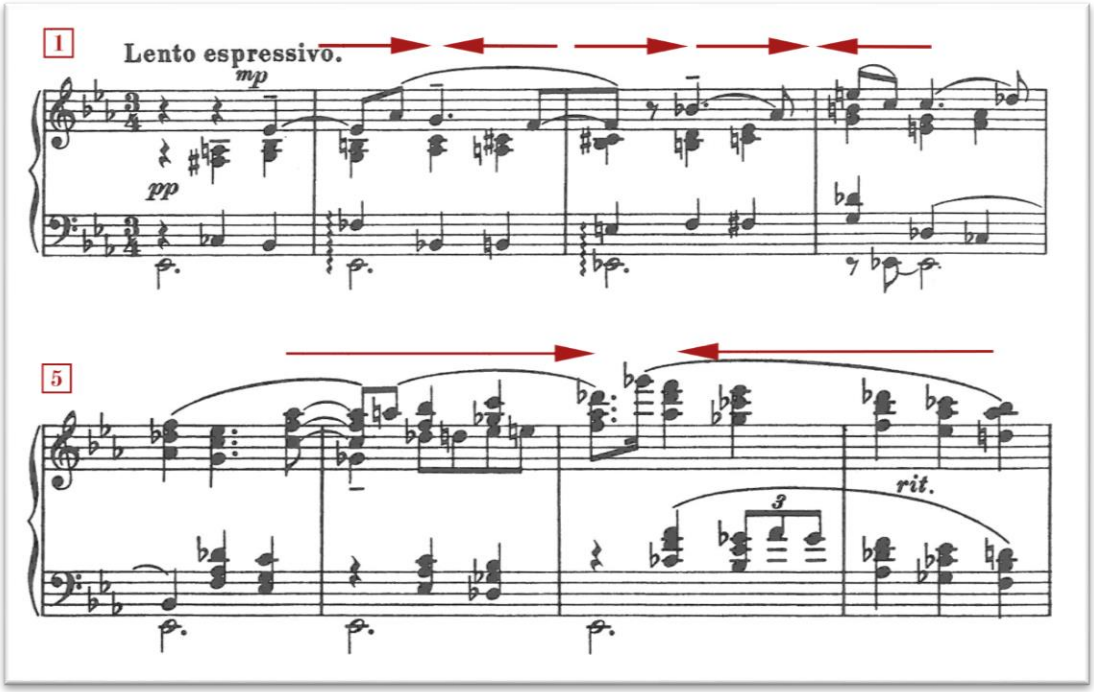
Performance Suggestions

The *Waltz* provides a perfect opportunity for pianists to refine voicing and *rubato*, both of which contribute to the musicality and phrasing of the piece. Without proper voicing the chromatic harmonies will obscure the melody. *Rubato*, from a musical standpoint, contributes to the ebb and flow of each phrase, and allows for easier execution of difficult technical aspects such as rolled chords and hand crossings. Several of Prokofiev's lines of composition are present including the lyrical line highlighted by the melody, the modern line in the inventive use of harmony, and the neo-Classic line in the ternary form.

Two long, eight-bar phrases make up the first theme in the A section. The top voice must be clearly voiced against the rising chromatic thirds in the alto voice. If the melody is not projected, the thirds will distort the lyrical quality of the melody. The chromatic thirds are intended to add color and interest to the melody. Eighth notes propel the melody forward and create the long phrase in measures 1 to 8. This phrase is most effective if the eighth notes are used to push the melody forward and the long

notes can be given a bit more time. Suggested *rubato* is indicated in measures 1 to 8 by forward and backwards arrows in example 4.80.

Example 4.80. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 1-8, arrows indicate *rubato*.

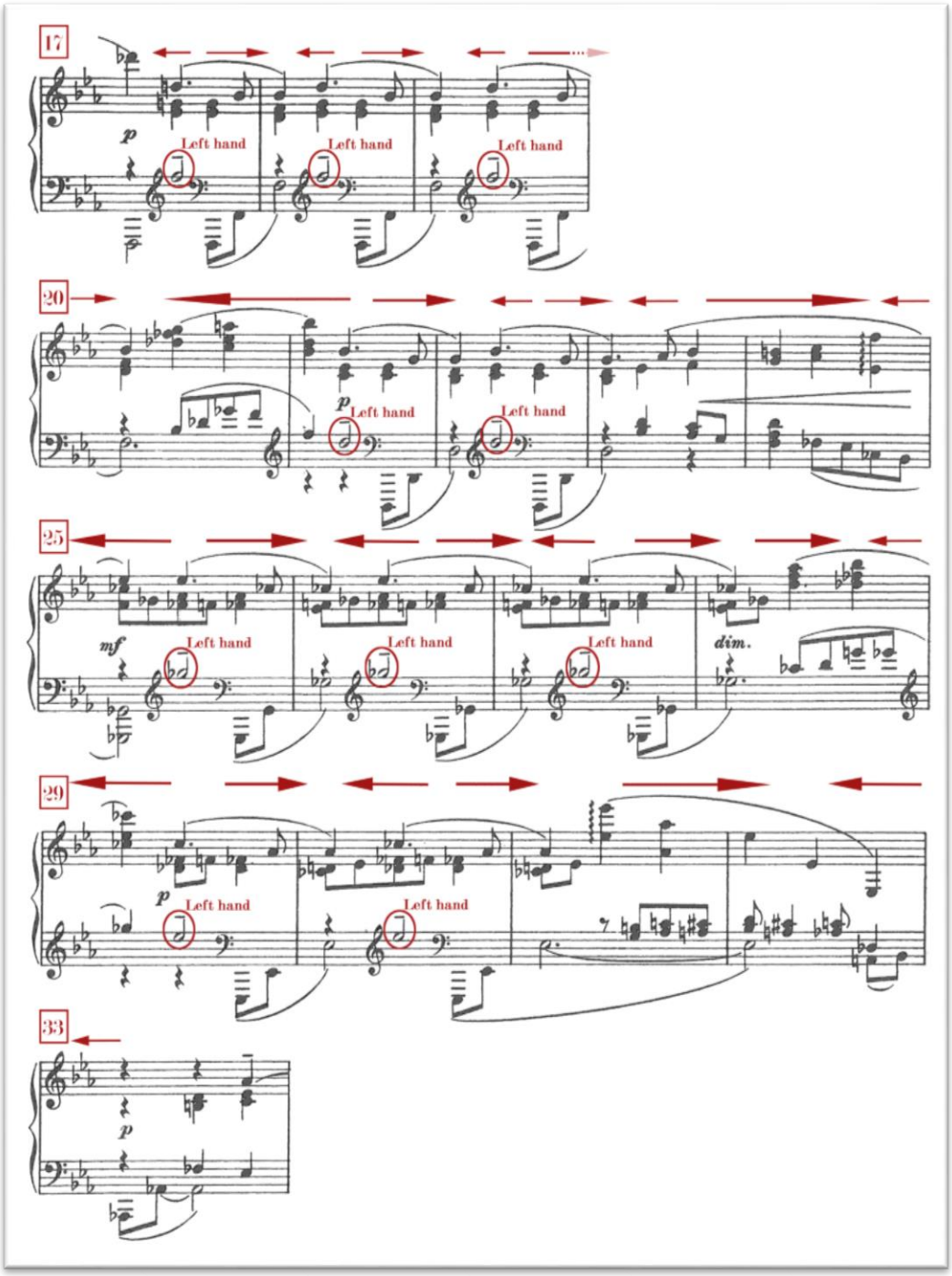


A similar plan for phrasing can be used in measures 9 through 18. It is important to push the tempo forward a bit in measures 13 and 14 in order to allow time for the rolled chord and leap at the peak of the phrase on beat 1 in measure 15. The *tenuto* markings must be given consideration in order to understand the phrasing in the second theme.

Beginning in measure 17, the left hand crosses over the right in each statement of the phrase throughout measures 17 to 32, and each note that the left hand plays in the treble clef is marked with a *tenuto* articulation. The pianist can slow down slightly on beat 2 of each measure, allowing time to execute the hand crossing and return back to the bass register. The following eighth notes on beat 3, which lead into beat 1 of the

next measure, can be used to restore time by pressing forward a bit. This type of phrasing, as depicted for measures 17 to 33 in example 4.81, gives each measure an additive effect where the third beat is used to propel us into beat 1 and the hand crossing gives a lightness to beat 2 which is necessary for the characteristic lilt of the waltz rhythm. Similar phrasing ideas can be applied to the return of the A section beginning in measure 57.

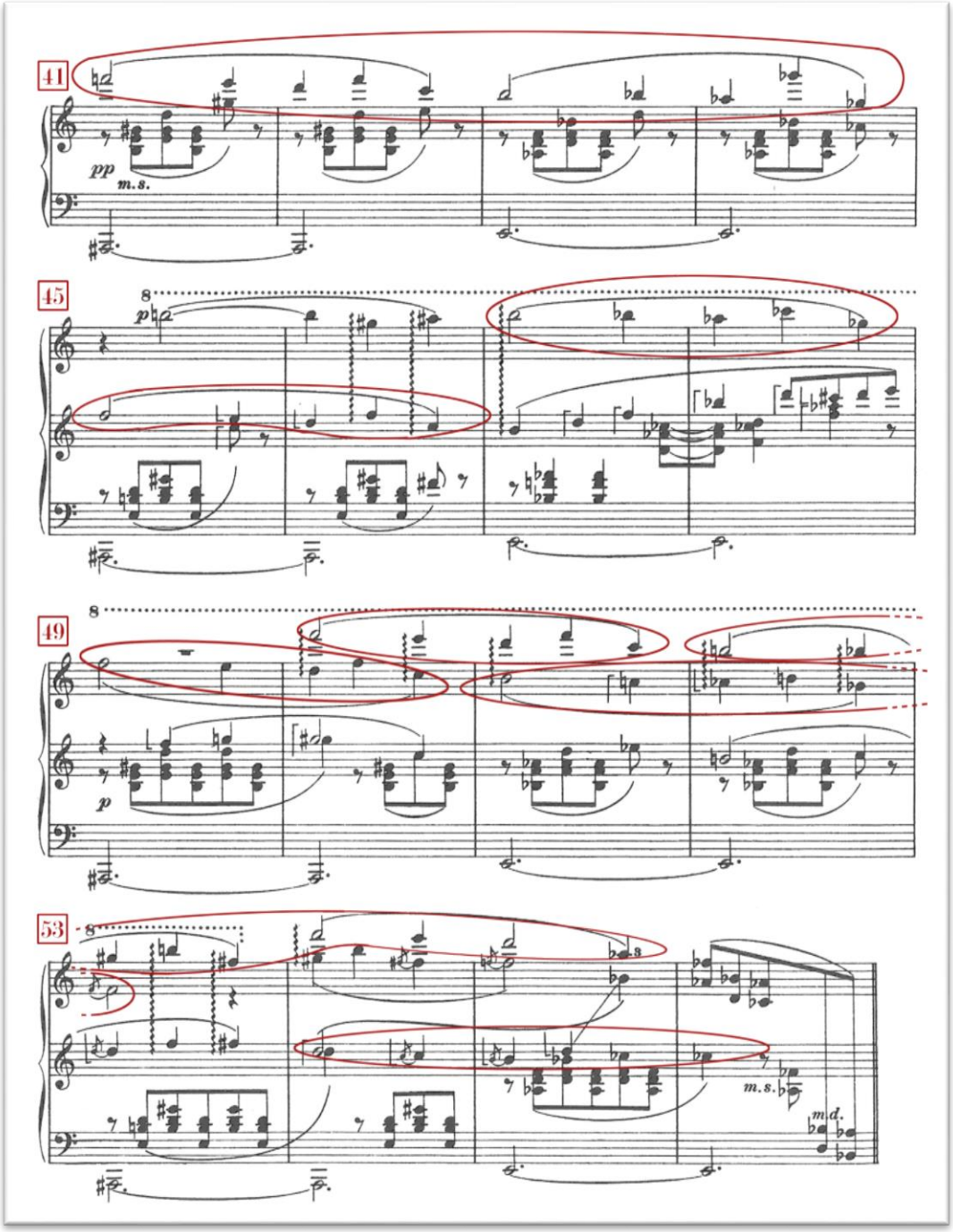
Example 4.81. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 17-33, arrows indicate *rubato*.



The melodic material is found in various voices throughout the B section which requires the pianist to give great attention to voicing. The melody first appears in the soprano voice in measures 41 to 44, followed by the middle voice in measures 45 to 46

and then returns to the top voice in measures 47 to 48. Beginning in a middle voice in measure 49, the melody is turned into a canon, which starts again in the top voice in measure 50. The melody to be voiced is highlighted in measures 41 to 56 as shown in example 4.82. When the canonical material begins in measure 45, these melodic lines begin to overlap.

Example 4.82. *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, *Waltz*, mm. 41-56, melodic voicing.



Other performance considerations beyond voicing and phrasing include pedaling. The pianist is encouraged to experiment with pedal in each phrase using a variety of pedal depths to achieve the proper balance between held pedal tones, the

blending of harmonies, as well as the clarity of melody. Pedaling in the *Waltz* is rather intricate and requires a keen ear and ample experimentation in order to achieve the desired sound.

There is much to be gained by the pianist who endeavors to learn and perform the *Waltz*. From navigating its dense texture to understanding the lack of strict tonal harmony, the *Waltz* introduces the pianist to many of Prokofiev's more complex theoretical components. Reading the score is the initial challenge, and younger advanced students will learn to navigate clef changes, accidentals, and the composer's use of three staves in the B section. Technical challenges include hand expansions, leaps, rolled chords, hand crossings, hand position shifts, and redistribution of notes between the hands. Many of the technical problems can be solved by refining musical ideas through careful use of *rubato*, phrasing, voicing, and pedaling. Pianists will also become acquainted with Prokofiev's lyrical, modern, and neo-Classic compositional lines in learning the *Waltz*. This wide range of technical and interpretive challenges makes the *Waltz* an early advanced piece, but one that will prepare a student for Prokofiev's more advanced works.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Prokofiev's *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 provides late-intermediate and early-advanced pianists with an opportunity to study the composer's unique musical style before attempting his most popular works for solo piano. Those works, including his nine *Piano Sonatas,* the *Toccata in D minor*, Op. 11, the *Sarcasms,* Op. 17 and the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, are suitable only for advanced pianists with a virtuoso technique. In fact, the great majority of Prokofiev's output for solo piano is advanced, resulting in a decided gap between these virtuosic pieces and the composer's pedagogical work, *Music for Children,* Op. 65. This document presented a pedagogical and performance guide to the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32 in part to help bridge this gap and to encourage a gradual transition for performers wishing to learn Prokofiev's advanced solo piano repertoire.

The author reviewed relevant research and literature, and considered the historical and musical context of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, aided significantly by the composer's own writings. Consideration of the musical context included a review of Prokofiev's musical language commonly identified through his five elements or lines of composition that permeate his output—classical, modern, toccata (or motor), lyrical, and grotesque. In addition, this study provided musical context by identifying the composer's harmonic language as described in a widely-referenced theoretical study by

Patricia Ruth Ashley.[1] An assessment of the solo piano works of Prokofiev from a musical, theoretical, and pedagogical perspective was provided in chapter 3 of this study which assisted in identifying those works which have pedagogical uses similar to the *Four Pieces*. And finally, for each of the *Four Pieces* (*Dance, Minuet, Gavotte* and *Waltz*) the author presented a formal analysis, technical suggestions for particular challenges in the pieces, and performance suggestions to aid in the practice and presentation of the work. The theoretical analyses of the *Four Pieces* were aided by previous scholarly work including that of Patricia Ruth Ashley, Stephen C.E. Fiess, and Brian Robert Marks.[2]

Historical and Musical Context of the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32

Prokofiev left his home in Russia in 1918 following the Bolshevik Revolution at a time when most well-known Russian artists had already left or were planning to leave as well. The political climate in Russia did not favor arts and culture, so Prokofiev along with others like Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff, Nabakov, Bunin, Chagall and Kadinsky had all left by the early 1920s. In September of 1918 Prokofiev began a new career in New York as both a performer and composer where his performances were well-received. It should be noted that while Prokofiev was still a young man—twenty-seven when he arrived in New York—he was already an accomplished composer whose career had seen success in Russia quickly after graduating from the St. Petersburg

[1] Ashley, "Prokofiev's Piano Music."

[2] Ashley, "Prokofiev's Piano Music"; Fiess, *Piano Works*; and Marks, "Stylistic Diversity."

Conservatory in 1914. Between his conservatory years, and the time he left for America in May of 1918, Prokofiev had written important works such as an early ballet, *The Tale of the Buffoon*, Op. 21 (1915), the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 (1915-17) for piano, an opera, *The Gambler*, Op. 24 (1915-16), the *Symphony No. 1 in D* "Classical," Op. 25 (1916-17), and continued work on *Piano Sonata No. 3 in A minor*, Op. 28 (1907-17), and *Piano Sonata No. 4 in C minor,* Op. 29 (1908-17). These works had greatly contributed to the development of his compositional style and he was ready to do much more. His compositions while in America would later include the popular opera *The Love for Three Oranges*, Op. 33, the *Overture on Hebrew Themes*, Op. 34, and an additional opera *The Fiery Angel*, Op. 37.

At the outset of his time in New York, Prokofiev performed to enthusiastic audiences, but these performances were not enough to support him. In his diary, Prokofiev noted in September of 1918 that he would "need some little pieces for a publisher, something not too demanding, a sonatina or some 'Fairy Tales.' My inclination is for some 'Tales of an Old Grandmother', whose senile rambling through the mists of her decrepitude yields glimpses of far-off memories."[3] It was at this same time, while he conceived and wrote the *Tales of an Old Grandmother*, Op. 31, that Prokofiev also composed the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32. But the inspiration he seemed to feel for his *Tales* did not follow along for the *Four Pieces*. In fact, the composer's diary reflects some disdain and frustration. On October 10, he wrote the *Minuet* but privately recorded that he "would much prefer to be working on an opera or finishing [his] dear

[3] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923,* 336.

'white' quartet."[4] While writing the *Waltz* on October 11, Prokofiev noted: "In the end the music will be quite good, but the Waltz is sugary-sweet and boring. If I did not need the money I would not be writing any of this rubbish."[5] As his composing continued the next day on the *Waltz*, Prokofiev expressed further frustration, writing, "There's nothing good in any of these dances. But I want to get this opus finished whatever happens."[6]

Having this window into Prokofiev's thoughts and feelings as he wrote the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 may create an unfair impression of the pieces themselves. As musical works, there is much to recommend them to students and teachers, particularly their exploitation of the composer's harmonic language and the theoretical underpinnings of his more virtuosic works for solo piano. They remain popular recital and competition pieces for pianists today, so it is important to see the larger picture of the composer's circumstances and perhaps his professional frustrations in the fall of 1918. He had just arrived in the United States after leaving a tumultuous situation in his homeland, and he was quickly finding an enthusiastic audience for his unique musical style. But he had to support himself financially and music publishers wanted something a bit simpler that was accessible to and might be purchased by teachers and pianists here. Despite his conflicted feelings, the composer shared many aspects of his compositional and harmonic style in the *Four Pieces* that are a benefit to late-intermediate and early-advanced pianists who are not ready for his more advanced and virtuosic repertoire.

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[4] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 343.

[5] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 343.

[6] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 345.

Prokofiev's Compositional Style

Prokofiev's compositional style is intriguing to performers because it reflects a Classical influence and borrows from the Romantic despite his pronounced use of chromaticism and a newer harmonic language that emerged in the Twentieth Century. The composer did not like Impressionism and displayed a preference for organization. He has been labeled both as neo-Classical and neo-Romantic. Prokofiev used Classical forms such as ternary, sonata-allegro, scherzo and trio, and rondo, as well as many dance forms from the Baroque including the gavotte, rigaudon, allemande, and minuet.[7] Of course, two of these forms, minuet and gavotte, appear in the *Four Pieces,* Op. 32. In addition to form, Neil Minturn has identified traditional tendencies in the tonal aspects of the composer's harmonic language including triads, diatonic scale fragments, and stepwise motion.[8] And the Romantic influence is seen in Prokofiev's lyrical melodies which Fiess has described as "sentimental, sometimes deeply Romantic in feeling."[9] Prokofiev's lyrical writing has also been categorized in two types of melodies by Berman: the first type using widely spaced intervals; and the second type using significant length and often accompanied by secondary contrapuntal voices with a reflective quality. This second use of melody identified by Berman is naïve and timid in nature, and consists of simple themes.[10]

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[7] Fiess, *Piano Works,* 2.

[8] Minturn, *Music of Prokofiev,* 11.

[9] Fiess, *Piano Works,* 2.

[10] Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas,* 11.

Other influences identified in Prokofiev's compositional style include expressionism and primitivism which were aesthetic trends that developed during the Twentieth Century. But Prokofiev disliked impressionism and he avoided connections with surrealism, mysticism, and folklorism. Stephen Fiess suggests that Prokofiev "preferred a musical aesthetic that was down-to-earth and robust rather than musical or ethereal,"[11] and this conclusion seems appropriate. One can see most of these influences in the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32.

Pedagogical Significance and Prokofiev's Other Teaching Pieces

Prokofiev's works for solo piano are extensive but for the most part they are available only to advanced pianists with virtuoso technique. Prokofiev seemed to have little patience for promoting his distinct musical style through composing works that teachers could share with developing pianists. In fact, as noted in the composer's diary, the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 only seem to have been written at the request of a music publisher and because, despite his popularity as a pianist, Prokofiev was in dire need of money after coming to the United States.[12]

Nevertheless, teachers and performers should be pleased that Prokofiev found it necessary to compose this music. The *Four Pieces* are valuable teaching pieces and

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[11] Fiess, *Piano Works*, 3.

[12] Phillips, *Diaries 1915-1923*, 343. On October 9, 1918, Prokofiev commented that publisher, Carl Fischer, "had indicated to ensure wider distribution of my music (and more profits for his firm) they would like to publish a few more pieces in addition to the *Tales*, perhaps more accessible, like for example the 'Gavotte', today I jotted down some ideas for a set of dances to keep the rogues quiet."

accessible works for students. Each of the pieces exhibit qualities of the composer's unique style that will prepare late-intermediate and early-advanced students for Prokofiev's more challenging works. The pedagogical value of the *Four Pieces* is also seen in their frequent use. They are regularly heard in recital and competition due to their variety of character, their musical quality, and their interesting technical demands.

Although not a composer with an extensive teaching repertoire, Prokofiev did compose other works, or individual pieces within sets, which have pedagogical value. This study reviewed the composer's solo piano literature in chapter 3 and, in addition to providing musical and theoretical commentary on the works, pieces of interest to teachers were identified and are provided in the form of a list below. The most common collection known to teachers may be the *Music for Children*, Op. 65 which is accessible to early-intermediate students. Besides the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32 and a few other works, pieces by Prokofiev which are accessible to students may be overlooked because they are part of a more difficult set. A good example of this is the *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22, which is considered an advanced work. While this is true of the set as a whole, pianists that are not yet at an advanced level may find a few of the *Visions* to be interesting recital pieces that will expand their repertoire. The author hopes that this study will draw attention to these pieces in addition to the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, and that teachers and pianists will consider them as valuable additions to the solo piano repertoire prior to taking on any of the larger body of Prokofiev's advanced repertoire. These sets and pieces are as follows:

Music for Children, Op. 65

Four Pieces, Op. 4, No. 2 (*Elan*) and No. 3 (*Despair*)

Ten Pieces, Op. 12, No. 6 (*Legend*) and No. 7 (*Prelude*)

Visions fugitives, Op. 22, No. 1 ("Lentamente"), No. 8 ("Commodo"), No. 13 ("Allegretto"), No. 16 ("Dolente"), No. 17 ("Poetico"), and No.18 ("Con una dolce lentezza")

Tales of an Old Grandmother, Op. 31

Three Pieces, Op. 59

Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet, Op. 75, No. 1 (*Folk Dance*), No. 7 (*Friar Laurence*), and No. 9 (*Dance of the Girls with Lilies*)

Pieces for Piano from Cinderella, Op. 95, No. 2 (*Gavotte*) and No. 3 (*Slow Waltz*), Op. 97, No. 8 (*Capriccio*) and No. 9 (*Bourrée*), and Op. 102, No. 1 (*Waltz*), No. 2 (*Cinderella's Variation*), and No. 6 (*Amoroso*)

From the *Music for Children*, Op. 65, No. 4 (*Tarantella*), No. 5 (*Regrets*), No. 7 (*March of the Grasshoppers),* and No. 10 (*March*), are the most popular selections from the set. *Tarantella* and *March* are particularly effective in recital. The *Tarantella* introduces students to Prokofiev's toccata line with its' driving rhythms, and *March* features Prokofiev's characteristic "wrong-note" writing. Other notable works from this opus include *Morning*, and *Evening*, examples of Prokofiev's lyrical writing; *Waltz* which features Prokofiev's typical leaps and hand position shifts; and Prokofiev's modern harmonic tendencies appear in *The Rain and the Rainbow* with several cluster chords.

Final Thoughts on the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32

Dance

Prokofiev's modern line is present in a variety of harmonic techniques used which include bitonality, borrowed chords, and parallelism. The bitonality is a result of Prokofiev's use of chromaticism. Intermediate pianists will be challenged by hand crossings, overlapping hands, position shifts, large hand spans, and executing two articulations in one hand. Pianists should be careful to choose appropriate fingering, and attention to the use of pedal is imperative. *Staccato* articulations, rests, and grace notes bring out the humorous quality of the work.

Teachers will want to consider two main challenges when introducing this piece to their students. First, decisions must be made regarding the configuration of the hands when they overlap (see examples 4.11 and 4.12). Whether the right hand is on top of the left hand, or vice versa, it is important to consider the passage that is to be executed before and after each instance of hand overlapping. Secondly, proper voicing of held notes is required in *Dance*. Held notes occur primarily in the alto and bass voices (see example 4.19 and 4.20), many of which can be held by the fingers alone, but some can only be held with the pedal. Pianists can experiment with both the damper and *sostenuto* pedals to find appropriate solutions.

Minuet

Pianists will enjoy many contrasts in the *Minuet* from the cheerful character in the A sections indicated by the *staccato* articulations, to the ominous feeling in the B section written in the low register of the piano. In addition to *staccato* notes, melodic

lines in the A sections offer additional contrast and highlight Prokofiev's lyrical line. Technical challenges include large hand spans, octaves, position shifts, and playing multiple articulations in one hand at the same time. *Minuet* features several harmonic innovations such as parallelism, modal scales, chords with seconds and tritones, and chromatic motion against sustained notes.

Managing the variety of articulations throughout the *Minuet* is the primary challenge in this piece. Tied notes are held against *staccato* thirds in the right hand (see example 4.39), and both *legato* and *staccato* articulations are written against held notes in the left hand (see example 4.41). Careful fingering is required for these passages. Additionally, pianists might separate the articulations, practicing each voice independently to make it clear in their mind which part of the hand is to hold notes or to play *legato* or *staccato*. The dance character of the *Minuet* will be enhanced by careful attention to the two-note slurs (see example 4.45). In addition to the opening two-note slurs which add to the character of the piece, left hand chords written as two-note slurs are properly executed with the addition of pedal as suggested in example 4.49. The *Minuet* highlights Prokofiev's lyrical, modern, and neo-Classic lines, which together provide students with an introduction to key aspects of the composer's style.

Gavotte

The *Gavotte* is the only piece in the set that contains aspects of Prokofiev's toccata line found in the *ostinato* accompaniment of the left hand. Other compositional lines include the lyrical unison melody in the C section, and the grotesque or "scherzo-ish" line found in the light humor of the *staccato* articulations and grace notes in the

A sections. Suitable for intermediate pianists, technical challenges include double thirds, unison passages, hand position shifts, and a variety of articulations. Students will experience Prokofiev's harmonic deviations such as harmonic side-slipping, bitonality, and his use of modal scales.

Although the *Gavotte* is the most accessible piece regarding technique, teachers will want to encourage their students to give careful attention to several details in order to highlight the character of this piece. The accent articulations serve two main purposes. The first accent in measure 1 (see example 4.57) propels the initial tempo at the beginning of the phrase. The second accent in measure 2 (see example 4.57) acts as an *agogic* accent, encouraging the performer to take time. Both of these accents must be taken into account in order to achieve proper phrasing. The light *staccato* notes throughout give the piece a certain lightness that contributes to the humorous nature of the piece. Contrasting the *staccato* and accented notes, the long *legato* passages in the C section require careful fingering to ensure a smooth line under the long-slurred phrases (see example 4.60). Lastly, it is important to carefully balance the left hand *ostinato* accompaniment in the A sections. Both notes of the harmonic intervals must be heard, primarily at a *pianissimo* dynamic, without overpowering the right hand melody.

Waltz

Several elements of Prokofiev's unique harmonic language are presented in the *Waltz*. These include parallel motion, octatonic scales, chromatic sonorities, and sudden modulations. Ternary form is used, an example of Prokofiev's neo-Classic line, in addition to the lyrical line emphasized by a carefully crafted melody. Technical

challenges abound in this work including hand position shifts, hand crossings, hand expansions, leaps, rolled chords, and redistribution of notes. Clef changes, accidentals, and the use of three staves make for difficult reading of the score. Students have ample opportunity to expand their sensitivity to voicing, phrasing, and *rubato*.

The author recommends that teachers and pianists carefully study the score prior to learning the notes at the keyboard. It will be easier to execute the technical challenges after decoding the score. Managing the numerous accidentals will become easier after identifying several key areas of the piece. The A section alone shifts through E-flat major, B-flat major, G minor, C-flat major, A-flat minor, and A-flat major (see example 4.61). Chromatic inner voices (example 4.64), and parallel chords (example 4.65 and 4.66) also account for many accidentals. An additional hurdle in reading the score occurs in the B section, where Prokofiev writes in three staves. In measures 45-55, the pianist must decipher the redistribution of notes between the hands for ease of playing (see example 4.79). After breaking down the reading challenges in the score, pianists can begin to practice the *Waltz*.

Several large hand expansions are presented in the *Waltz*, which require different solutions such as possible use of the *sostenuto* pedal (example 4.67), redistribution of left hand notes to the right hand (example 4.68), and rolled chords which require wrist rotation to avoid excess tension (see examples 4.70 and 4.75). Numerous leaps in both the right and left hands should be judiciously practiced (see examples 4.71, 4.72, 4.73, and 4.78). Lastly, hand position shifts in the left hand are easily executed with the addition of circular wrist motions (examples 4.76 and 4.77).

Order of Study

For pianists who plan to play the entire set of opus 32, the author recommends studying the pieces in the following order: *Gavotte, Minuet, Dance,* and *Waltz*. Pianists might begin their study of opus 32 with the *Gavotte*. The score is easy to read with a fairly compact range on the piano, thinner textures, and fewer accidentals. When accidentals do occur, they are often repeated in later passages or occur in unison passages which are easier to read between the hands. The techniques involved are the most accessible including some double notes, several articulations, and a few hand position shifts. The phrasing and dynamic plan is also quite clear.

The *Minuet* and *Dance* are similar in difficulty, but each require different techniques. The *Minuet* requires the pianist to play octaves and some large chords in the left hand, has a variety of articulations, and contrasts between *staccato* and *legato* passages. However, pianists will tackle leaps, hand position shifts, and hand overlapping in the *Dance* which might be slightly more difficult to execute in comparison to the technical challenges of the *Minuet*. From a performance point of view, the *Minuet* has fewer ideas to manage than the *Dance* as the three sections of ternary form are quite clear, and the return of the A section is almost a direct repeat of the first statement which minimizes the amount of material to be learned. The score is also easier to read as the range of the piano is more compact. In comparison, *Dance* presents a plethora of musical ideas, and uses a slightly expanded range of the keyboard. Additional difficulties include sustaining multiple voices, faster dynamic shifts, and more complicated rhythms. These elements might make the *Dance* somewhat more difficult than the *Minuet.*

Students will be primed to learn the *Waltz* after achieving success from learning the first three pieces of the set. Reading challenges posed by accidentals, expanded range of the keyboard, numerous articulations, clef changes, and hand crossings, were presented in the first three pieces and experienced by the pianists before learning the *Waltz*. New reading challenges in the final piece of the set include redistribution of notes and reading three staves. Hand expansions, rolled chords, and leaps pose additional technical challenges for the pianist. While learning to manage the technical aspects of the *Waltz*, pianists will also develop a finer sense of *rubato*, phrasing, and dynamic contrast. After completing their study of the *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, students will be prepared to move on to Prokofiev's more advanced works.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study has provided a pedagogical and performance guide only to Sergei Prokofiev's *Four Pieces*, Op. 32, a work appropriate for late-intermediate and early-advanced piano students. Despite the limitations of this study, the author hopes that teachers and students may see the benefits of an early introduction to Prokofiev's unique compositional style including the theoretical underpinnings of his solo piano works, his characteristic lines of composition, his harmonic language and some of the technical and performance challenges found also in his more advanced works. The popularity of Prokofiev's solo piano works in the Twentieth Century repertoire, together with the paucity of available study repertoire for solo piano from the composer, suggest related topics for study. These included at least the following:

1. Performance and pedagogical analyses of individual late-intermediate and early-advanced pieces from larger sets such as the *Four Pieces*, Op. 4, No. 2 (*Elan*) and No. 3 (*Despair*); *Ten Pieces*, Op. 12, No. 6 (*Legend*), and No. 7 (*Prelude*); *Visions fugitives*, Op. 22 No. 1 ("Lentamente"), No. 8 ("Commodo"), No. 13 ("Allegretto"), No. 16 ("Dolente"), No. 17 ("Poetico"), and No.18 ("Con una dolce lentezza"); and the *Three Pieces*, Op. 59.
2. Performance and pedagogical analyses with special attention to the transcriptions *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet*, Op. 75, No. 1 (*Folk Dance*), No. 7 (*Friar Laurence*), and No. 9 (*Dance of the Girls with Lilies*); and *Pieces for Piano from Cinderella*, Op. 95, No. 2 (*Gavotte*) and No. 3 (*Slow Waltz*), Op. 97, No. 8 (*Capriccio*) and No. 9 (*Bourrée*), and Op. 102, No. 1 (*Waltz*), No. 2 (*Cinderella's Variation*), and No. 6 (*Amoroso*).
3. Studies of the technical solutions available for performance challenges found in Prokofiev's solo piano repertoire including large hand spans, hand crossings, overlapping hands, octaves, position shifts, and playing multiple articulations in one hand at the same time.
4. Studies of the ways in which Prokofiev's limited solo piano works which are accessible to intermediate, late-intermediate, and early-advanced pianists may assist and enhance teachers and performers who seek to transition to the composer's more advanced and virtuosic piano repertoire.

5. An in-depth study of musical and technical elements required to perform the most advanced works of Prokofiev; and within the advanced repertoire, studies of further ways to separate the literature into gradual levels of progression.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

Permission Letter from Boosey & Hawkes

Ivan Hurd
University of Oklahoma
14811 Huebner Road Apt. 9323
San Antonio, TX 78231
USA

RE: Four Pieces, Op. 32 by Sergei Prokofiev

Dear Ivan:

We hereby grant you gratis permission to include excerpts from the above referenced works in your dissertation for the University of Oklahoma.

We do require that you include the following copyright notice immediately following the excerpts for which it pertains:

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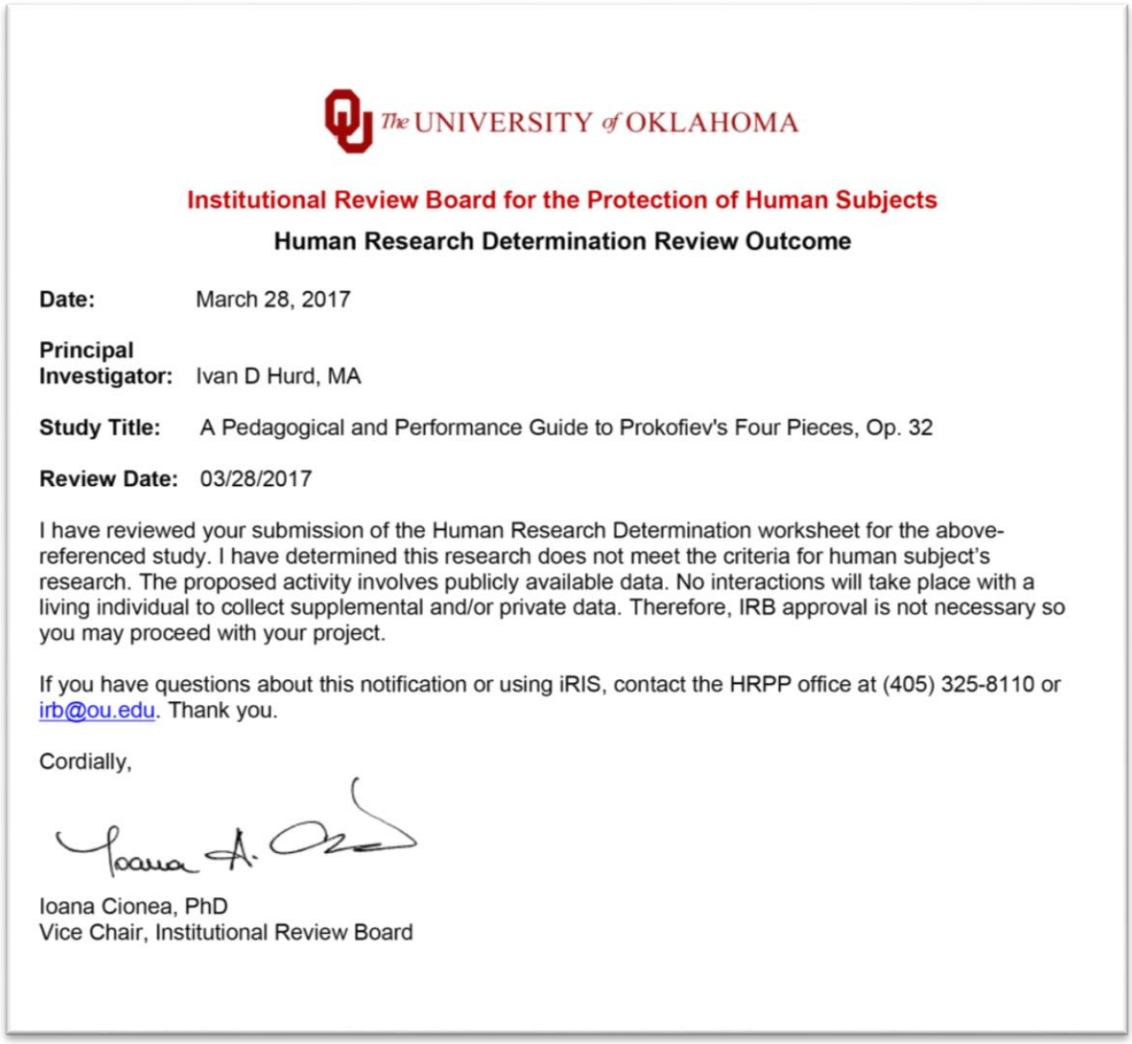
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Tyler Rubin
Assistant, Copyright Administration

APPENDIX B

Exemption Letter from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Human Research Determination Review Outcome

Date: March 28, 2017

Principal Investigator: Ivan D Hurd, MA

Study Title: A Pedagogical and Performance Guide to Prokofiev's Four Pieces, Op. 32

Review Date: 03/28/2017

I have reviewed your submission of the Human Research Determination worksheet for the above-referenced study. I have determined this research does not meet the criteria for human subject's research. The proposed activity involves publicly available data. No interactions will take place with a living individual to collect supplemental and/or private data. Therefore, IRB approval is not necessary so you may proceed with your project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the HRPP office at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu. Thank you.

Cordially,

Ioana Cionea, PhD
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board