

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document:                   SELECTED LATE-ROMANTIC RUSSIAN  
PIANO MUSIC

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Directed By:                         Professor Bradford Gowen  
School of Music

In music study, the term “Romantic” usually refers to the period of European music between approximately 1800 and 1910. However, the term “Romantic” can also refer to style rather than chronology. For instance, Rachmaninoff wrote Romantic music in the 1930’s, a period of time much later than what most people would consider to be the Romantic period. The compositional characteristics of the Romantic period included flexible forms that responded to emotional demands, an exploration and extension of harmonic language, and emphasis on the significance of melody. From the pianistic standpoint, the instrument’s singing qualities were revealed, reflecting the tendency of artistic expression to be very personal. In addition, composers often demonstrated great virtuosity and mastery over their instruments.

The nationalistic characteristics of Michael Glinka and the styles of Western pianist composers such as Frédéric Chopin, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and especially Franz Liszt influenced the late-Romantic Russian composers in an immense way. At the same time, the late-Romantic Russian composers left a rich legacy to later Russian composers in their nationalistic elements, love of color, and virtuosity (such as found in Igor Stravinsky's *Three Movements from "Petrushka"* and Serge Prokofieff's Sonatas). A new element from the later composers is found in their percussive approach to the piano.

Many late-Romantic Russian composers wrote piano music, including César Cui, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Modest Mussorgsky, Peter Ilich Tchaikowsky, Anton Rubinstein, Sergei Taneyev, and Felix Blumenfeld. For my recital programs, I selected works from this period by familiar composers such as Sergei Rachmaninoff and Alexander Scriabin, as well as by less familiar ones, including Alexander Borodin, Alexander Glazunov, Mily Balakirev, Anatoli Liadov, Anton Arensky, Sergei Liapunoff, and Nikolay Medtner.

I have divided these composers into three categories. The first category includes Borodin, Glazunov, Liadov, and Arensky. These composers usually excelled in composing smaller-scale character pieces of the salon style. The second category comprises Balakirev and Liapunoff, whose music is characterized by virtuosity. The third category includes Medtner, Rachmaninoff, and Scriabin, who were eclectic in their gifts, and wrote in large forms as well as miniatures.

SELECTED LATE-ROMANTIC RUSSIAN PIANO MUSIC

By

Hung Luo

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
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2007

Advisory Committee:  
Professor Bradford Gowen, Chair  
Professor Gerald Fischbach  
Professor Mikhail Volchok  
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Professor Bei-Lok Hu

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## Dedication

To my father, who is resting in the presence of the Lord.

## Acknowledgements

There are a number of people to whom I owe thanks for helping this project get off the ground. I would like to thank my advisor Professor Bradford Gowen for his advice, guidance, refinement, and support during the process. I am indebted to him for his abundant knowledge and precise teaching. His uncompromising musical integrity is respectable. Thanks are also due to my former teacher Professor Gregory Sioles, whose insightful inspiration influenced my performances; and whose keen musical understanding and contagious passion for music has been permanently imprinted in me. An acknowledgement is also due to my dissertation committee: Professor Gerald Fischbach, Professor Larissa Dedova, Professor Mikhail Volchok, and Professor Bei-Lok Hu for their valuable time in overseeing this project.

I want to thank the assistance in researching my performance repertoire of the International Piano Archives at Maryland. Thanks are due to Maxwell Brown, Carol Stone, and Jarl Hulbert, all of whom edited my dissertation. Jarl, thank you so much for your sacrificial giving of time. I am blessed to know you as a friend with tremendous grace and character. Maxwell Brown, who provided valuable insight on my performance is also deeply appreciated.

My gratitude goes to my two chamber partners: violinist Shih-Yun Hsieh and cellist Victor Coo. Shih-Yun, thank you for all your efforts on this project. Victor, you inspired me not only with your outstanding musicianship, but also with your communicative warmth, kindness, and generous friendship.

Special thanks are due to my spiritual mother Christine Chang. Without her unceasing, fervent prayers and enduring of all kinds of obstacles with me through this endeavor, this dissertation project just would not have been the same. I am truly indebted to all my friends such as Mark Stoner, Shau-Ling Barrett, and many others who continually prayed and showed their support. They are awesome gifts from God and their heartfelt friendships are very dear to me.

My deepest gratitude and honor goes to my mother, as well as to my father who went to be with the Lord about two years ago. Their love, patience, and support in the long process is amazing and beyond measure.

The One Whom I can never thank enough is the Lord Jesus Christ, who walks with me through all the seasons of my life. I want to thank God for His unconditional love and acceptance when I was still a big mess; the hope He offered me when I felt helpless; His availability and understanding when I needed someone to communicate with; and His amazing, unique way of cheering me up and making me feel special. I want to thank God for establishing His kingdom in me and turning the impossible to possible. He has done so much in me and for me in the whole process, which makes it all meaningful. I also want to thank Him for being the center and joy of my life. Dear Jesus, Your love makes my heart sing!

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Recital I .....	1
Recital Program .....	1
Notes on the Program .....	2
Alexander Borodin .....	2
Alexander Glazunov .....	3
Mily Balakirev .....	6
Anatoli Liadov .....	10
Sergei Rachmaninoff .....	11
Recital II .....	17
Recital Program .....	17
Notes on the Program .....	18
Sergei Rachmaninoff .....	18
Anton Arensky .....	23
Recital III .....	28
Recital Program .....	28
Notes on the Program .....	29
Nikolay Medtner .....	29
Anton Arensky .....	30
Alexander Scriabin .....	33
Sergei Liapunoff .....	35
Bibliography .....	37

**Recital I**

Recital program

“Au Couvent” from *Petite Suite* Alexander Borodin (1833–1887)

Theme and Variations, Op. 72 Alexander Glazunov (1865–1936)

Polka in F-Sharp Minor Mily Balakirev (1837–1910)

Scherzo No. 1 in B Minor

Intermission

Barcarolle, Op. 44 Anatoli Liadov (1855–1914)

*Biryulk* (Children’s Games), Op. 2

No. 1 Presto

No. 2 Allegro

No. 5 Vivace

No. 6 Allegro

No. 8 Allegro moderato

*Tabatière à musique* (A Musical Snuffbox), Op. 32

Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42 Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Hung Luo, Pianist  
Wednesday, February 8, 2006 at 8:00 pm  
Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall  
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center  
The University of Maryland at College Park  
School of Music

Notes on the Program

This recital program is the result of my exploration and study of the distinctive stylistic characteristics of piano works written by five Russian composers representing the late-Romantic period: Alexander Borodin (1833–1887), Alexander Glazunov (1865–1936), Mily Balakirev (1837–1910), Anatoli Liadov (1855–1914), and Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943).

**ALEXANDER BORODIN (1833–1887)**

“Au Couvent” from *Petite Suite* (1884–5)

Borodin was born illegitimately into a princely family. As an adult, he was torn between music and his activities as a distinguished professor of chemistry with a genuine love for his work. When Borodin was in his late twenties, he met Balakirev, who was the center of the composer group eventually known as “The Five,” and Borodin became a member of the group as well. In addition to Balakirev and Borodin, “The Five” also included composers Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908), Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881), and César Cui (1855–1918).

Borodin’s output of piano works was extremely limited. He began the *Petite Suite*, his major work, during the winter of 1884–5 and completed the piece in the early summer of the latter year. The suite was dedicated to the Countess Mercy-Argenteau, and is subtitled *Petit d’amour d’une jeune fille* (Little love of a young girl). The piece includes seven movements: Au Couvent (In the Monastery), Intermezzo, Mazurka I, Mazurka II, Rêverie, Sérénade, and Nocturne. The first and

most famous of these, “Au Couvent,” is presented in a symmetrical ABCBA (arch) form. Its distinctive atmosphere communicates a monastic serenity enhanced by tolling bells heard at the beginning in the A section. Borodin emphasizes contrasts between the upper and lower registers. The suggestion of bells through the use of overtones is an example of an effect which has been popular with many Russian composers. The middle section contains an imitation of chant-like choral singing, first by the trebles in the B section, then with octaves in the bass in the C section. The sonority of the middle section builds, rising to a fortissimo climax. In contrast with the intense middle section, the chant-like melody returns calmly in the second B section. Finally, in the second A section, the monastic bell tones recede into the misty atmosphere heard at the end of the piece. The bell and chant elements serve most effectively to unify the entire work.

### **ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV (1865–1936)**

Theme and Variations, Op. 72 (1900)

Glazunov studied with Rimsky-Korsakov and was later greatly influenced by Franz Liszt (1811–1886), Richard Wagner (1813–1883), and Johannes Brahms (1833–1897). The music of Glazunov thus exhibits both Russian nationalism and European influences. Glazunov was most successful composing with smaller forms and he tended to be structured and academic in his writing. His music, thus, may sometimes sound uninspired. Yet beautiful melodies and harmonic treatments abound in his works.

Glazunov's Theme and Variations, Op. 72, completed in August 1900, reflects the styles of a variety of composers. The F-sharp minor theme has a strong Russian flavor, and it is followed by fifteen variations. The theme opens in what sounds like A major, with a single melody line in chant-like fashion. In measures four to five, there is a plagal cadence, which adds to the already established religious atmosphere. Surprisingly, the theme ends in F-sharp minor. The chorale-like first variation retains the melody in the top part, as does the second variation, with its running sixteenth-note triplet accompaniment. The third variation is slower in tempo, with inner-voice writing and syncopation created through the use of notes tied over bar lines. A more elaborately pianistic fourth variation is the first of the variations in which Glazunov departs from the original melody. The downbeat is displaced in the right hand. He begins the melody and then breaks it off. The contour of the right hand moves downward, with an extended arpeggio in hemiola rhythm. An interesting aspect of the fifth variation is its orchestral texture, while the sixth variation, marked Largo, has a double-dotted left-hand rhythm set against a sixteenth-note figuration that leads to the contrapuntal Allegro of the seventh variation. An active and energetic left hand lends the seventh variation a quick march-like feeling while a lively compound-rhythm drives the etude-like eighth variation beginning in A major. The ninth variation, still in A major, is marked Adagio tranquillo. The additional instruction *quasi campanelli* (as if bells) encourages the performer to emphasize the bell-like sonority of the music. The central section of this ninth variation shifts into the key of F major and expresses an Eastern character similar to that found in "Pagodes," from *Estampes* (1903), composed by Claude Debussy (1862–1918). Descending and ascending scales

accompany the melody in the etude-like tenth variation (in the original key of F-sharp minor) followed by an eleventh variation consisting of a gentle F-sharp major Allegretto. Variation eleven has an underlying three-beat feel—a departure from the two or four-beat feel of previous variations. In the final four variations, Glazunov presents new ideas to bring the work to a close. The twelfth variation, for example, contains more freedom as Glazunov alternates between different tempi and incorporates more harmonic depth and more frequent changes of key. The arpeggiated chords of this variation center on the key of D major; the variation begins with two measures conveying a heavy, rich texture, followed by four measures in a lighter mood. In contrast, the thirteenth variation, in F-sharp minor, provides the listener with the stability of a perpetual motion with octaves in the right hand. The etude-like impression and demanding technique of this variation are reminiscent of works of Liszt. Contrasts continue with the cross-rhythmic G-flat major Andante tranquillo of the fourteenth variation. Its theme is stated in the inner part, and its key is the enharmonic equivalent of the tonic major. While the previous variation (thirteen) evokes the feeling of Liszt, the two-against-three cross-rhythm in variation fourteen is more similar to the style of Brahms—rich in texture, with chords in the right hand and moving triplets in the left. The final variation, fifteen, portrays a considerable variety of moods, opening with heavy chords alternating with a playfully fast scherzando section and continuing with the general idea of contrast. The scherzando conveys a woodwind-like texture, and some of the figurations in the left hand of this variation are unpianistic and awkward, such as the extended intervals that

are too wide to be easily reached. Momentum is gained towards the end of the work, with strong chords and octaves.

### **MILY BALAKIREV (1837–1910)**

Polka in F-Sharp Minor (1859)

Scherzo No. 1 in B Minor (1856)

Balakirev was a musical figure of substantial influence in Russia and had a great deal of impact on the development of Russian music. Though well known for his roles as pianist, conductor, leader, educator and advocate of Russian music, however, Balakirev has become almost totally forgotten as a composer. His original piano works, which constitute a large and important part of his creative output, are not well known today. Most western pianists are unaware of these excellent pieces, and, with the exception of just a few of them, Balakirev's piano compositions are currently out of print. The most recent Soviet collection of his piano works, compiled by K.S. Sorokin and printed in 1961, is available in the United States only in a few university libraries.<sup>1</sup>

Musical essayist V.V. Stasov asserts that Russian music might have a different direction altogether had it not been for Balakirev's influences.<sup>2</sup> V. Karenin goes even further, claiming that without Balakirev's guidance and leadership, many composers, such as Mussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Cui, would have

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<sup>1</sup> Vera Breheda, "The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev" (DMA diss., University of Washington, 1983), 3.

<sup>2</sup> V.V. Stasov, *Selected Essays on Music* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1968), 96, Quoted in Vera Breheda, "The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev" (DMA diss., University of Washington, 1983), 3.

been very different and possibly lesser musicians and might even have failed to become composers at all.<sup>3</sup> Further, it is difficult to imagine what would have subsequently happened to Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915), Rachmaninoff, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893), and Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), who were all influenced by the composers mentioned above.<sup>4</sup>

It is another great Russian composer, Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857), who is credited with inspiring Balakirev to spread the doctrine of musical nationalism, which resulted in Balakirev becoming the leader of the Russian National School. This movement gained momentum in the 1860s, when Balakirev brought together a group of musicians (which, as mentioned earlier, also included Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, and Cui) first known as “Balakirev’s Circle” and later as the “The Mighty Handful,” “The Mighty Five,” or simply “The Five.” The primary purpose of the group of composers was to collect and edit the native folk-tunes of their Russian homeland.

While Balakirev was quite interested in composing orchestral music, he was also an excellent pianist. He wrote more than one hundred piano compositions: thirty-eight solo pieces; more than a dozen piano transcriptions; forty piano duets, the majority of which are based on Russian folk songs; four piano chamber works; and two piano concertos, the first concerto being only one movement in length. Balakirev’s original solo piano works include mazurkas, nocturnes, scherzos, waltzes, character pieces with various titles, and a large-scale sonata. Given the genres

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<sup>3</sup> V. Karenin, “Obituary of Balakirev”, in *Russkaya Mysl* (1910): 191, quoted in Vera Breheda, “The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev” (DMA diss., University of Washington, 1983), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Vera Breheda, “The Original Solo Piano Works of Mily Balakirev” (DMA diss., University of Washington, 1983), 3.

mentioned above, the influence of Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), is evident. In addition, Balakirev's difficult piece *Islamey* (1865), a fantasy incorporating distinctive Eastern characteristics, reveals the clear influence of Liszt.

Balakirev's compositional style for the piano combines traditional Western music, Russian folk music, and Eastern elements. The impact of Chopin and Liszt is reflected in Balakirev's elegant melody lines replete with romantic lyricism, graceful ornaments, and highly figured, flowery passages which often demand a strongly developed technical facility. Balakirev's harmonic language seems derived in part from Chopin's harmonic coloration and in part, also, from the tonal freedom of Glinka. From Glinka, Balakirev's music seems to have inherited its transparency and clarity. Balakirev's indirect hints at folk melodies also suggest Glinka's influence. Even when there are no actual folk tunes found in the music, however, Russian and Eastern folk elements still affect Balakirev's compositional style, especially the through melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and timbral aspects. Although Balakirev's approach reflects incorporation of a wide variety of influences, his personal synthesis created a new and distinctive piano style with its own unique and recognizable character.

Periods of intense creative activity for Balakirev were often interspersed with lengthy intervals of compositional stagnation. His thirty-eight original piano works can be divided into three periods: early (1854–1861); middle (1869–1886); and late (1898–1910). Nine of the thirty-eight works were written in the first two periods, and the remaining twenty-nine were written in the last twelve years of Balakirev's life.

Balakirev produced only five works during the first period: Scherzo No. 1 in B Minor, Nocturne No.1 in B-Flat Minor, Polka in F-Sharp Minor, Mazurka No. 1 in A-Flat Major, and Mazurka No. 2 in C-Sharp Minor. These five early pieces are mostly characterized by a salon style which can also be heard in others of his piano compositions such as some of his later mazurkas and waltzes.

The Polka in F-Sharp Minor, written in 1859, was the earliest Balakirev piano composition to appear in print. It was first published by Denotkin, and later by Gutheil. The polka is a type of Bohemian dance in a quick duple meter with characteristic rhythms. Although based entirely on one simple, Russian-sounding melody, Balakirev's Polka establishes variety, partly through its alternating sections of major and minor tonalities. The piece is preceded by an introduction, proceeds as a rondo in ABACA'B' form, and ends with a coda.

Scherzo No. 1 in B Minor was written in 1856, published by Stellovsky in 1860, and later reissued by Gutheil. It exhibits an obvious similarity to Chopin's own Scherzo in B Minor (1831–2). Both are presented in the same key, and both are in ABA form (with introduction). In addition, the sustained chord at the end of Balakirev's introduction employs exactly the same harmony as the opening chord (ii<sup>ø7</sup>) of Chopin's Scherzo.

## ANATOL LIADOV (1855–1914)

Barcarolle, Op. 44 (1898)

*Biryulk* (Children's Games), Op. 2 (1876)

No. 1 Presto

No. 2 Allegro

No. 5 Vivace

No. 6 Allegro

No. 8 Allegro moderato

*Tabatière à musique* (A Musical Snuffbox), Op. 32 (1893)

The works of Liadov range from single pedagogic pieces to extended compositions. They are typically written in a delicate and graceful style, exhibiting the influence of Chopin while maintaining a clear Russian character. Liadov's Barcarolle, Op. 44, exemplifies these traits. This piece was written in 1898, fifty-two years after Chopin's Barcarolle in F-Sharp Major, Op.60 (1845–1846). Not only is Liadov's work written in the same key as Chopin's Barcarolle, but the pedal point, compound meter, left-hand figuration, florid notes in one hand set against accompaniment in the other hand, fragments of melody in the left hand accompaniment, parallel thirds, sixth and octaves all reflect Chopin's style.

Liadov is at his best in his charming short works or "miniatures." His *Biryulk* (Children's Games), Op. 2 (1876), a collection of such miniatures, is suffused with great charm, Russian nationalism, humor, gentle irony, and child-like innocence. In the first miniature, No. 1 Presto, in ABA form, Liadov obscures the meter, only to make it clear again later. He uses the same device as well in miniatures No. 5 Vivace. In the *meno mosso* section of No. 1, the style of composition is reminiscent of *Papillons*, Op.2, No.1 and "Valse noble" from *Carnaval*, Op. 9 (1834–35) by Robert

Schumann (1810–1856). While miniature No. 2 Allegro is through-composed, the scherzo-like No. 5, like No. 1, is presented in ABA form. Miniature No. 5 is a fun, joking piece, which relates the work to its title. The middle section of No. 5 contains an alternating dialogue between the hands. As in miniatures No. 1 and No. 5, miniatures No. 6 Allegro and No. 8 Allegro moderato are written in ABA form. The grace notes in No. 8 clearly depict children playing. In the middle section, the grace notes are reversed from the top to the bottom evoking a teasing sense of fun.

Liadov's most famous piece is *Tabatière à musique* (A Musical Snuff Box), written in 1893. This popular piece cleverly imitates the song of a mechanical music box.

### **SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)**

#### Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42 (1931)

A pupil of Anton Arensky (1861–1906) and Sergei Taneyev (1856–1915), Rachmaninoff was further influenced by Chopin, Liszt, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, and Brahms. In addition, Rachmaninoff's musical style was imbued with Russian nationalism. The lyrical, intense, and often passionate melodies of Rachmaninoff are usually supported by sonorous, rich harmonies suffused with a keen dramatic mood.

Rachmaninoff wrote two sets of variations: Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Op. 22 and Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42. Twenty-eight years separate the composition of the works; the first set was written in 1903 and the second set in 1931. The Chopin variations comprise Rachmaninoff's first solo attempt at a large-scale form for the piano, while the Corelli variations stand both as Rachmaninoff's last

work for piano and, also, the only piano-solo opus composed during the composer's twenty-six years of exile in the United States. Opus 22 is a longer work, yet the Corelli variations display a more mature orchestral style, with a clearer texture and greater rhythmic and harmonic freedom.

The Corelli variations comprise a collection of twenty variations with an intermezzo situated before the fourteenth variation and a coda placed at the end of the opus. The first thirteen variations are all presented in the key of D minor. The Intermezzo then precedes two variations in D-flat major. For the last five variations and the Coda, Rachmaninoff returns to the original D minor key. Rachmaninoff indicates that variations eleven, twelve, and nineteen may be omitted if desired. This work seems preparatory for his Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, which he composed three years later, in 1934. Many of the Corelli variations (such as number ten) foreshadow the later Rhapsody.

Rachmaninoff wrote to Nikolay Medtner (1880–1951) about the Corelli variations on December 21, 1931, from New York:

I am sending you my new variations. I've played them here about fifteen times, but of these fifteen performances, only one was good. The others were sloppy. I can't play my own compositions! And it's so boring! Not once have I played these all in continuity. I was guided by the coughing of the audience. Whenever the coughing increased I would skip the next variation. Whenever there was no coughing I would play the proper order. In one concert, I don't remember where—some small town, the coughing was so violent that I only played ten variations (out of twenty). My best record was in New York, where I played eighteen variations.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Maurice Hinson's program note from "*Klavier Variations on La Folia*", James Bonn, Klavier Records: Released 1982, KS-571. LP.

The thematic basis of the work is a Portuguese dance melody *La Folia* which had been used by several previous composers including C.P.E. Bach (1714–1788), Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842), and Liszt. Rachmaninoff mistakenly attributed this melody to Corelli, because of its use in Corelli's twelfth violin sonata. Rachmaninoff, however, changed the Adagio tempo found in the violin sonata to Andante in his set of variations. After the initial treble statement of the theme of the work, the first variation presents the thematic melody in a lower register while maintaining most of the original harmonies of the theme. Some altered rhythms create a syncopated feeling, and the polarity between the treble and the bass registers produces different levels of sound. Rachmaninoff favored use of the bass to enrich the sonority of his music. Perpetual motion is employed as a device throughout the second variation, and the treble clef is favored. In contrast, the third variation moves to the bass register. The left hand contains many octaves, and has a more expanded role than in the second variation. In the fourth variation, there is a return to the treble as at the beginning. Rachmaninoff tends to provide variety in a number of ways, such as through changes in register, dynamics, rhythm, and texture. He creates contrasts not only between the variations but also within the same variation. In fact, contrasts pervade the entire piece. In the fourth variation, the composer uses chromatic grace notes in the accompaniment to contrast with the theme. As the variation continues, the range of the register expands. Supplying contrast yet again, the punched-out sound in the marcato fifth variation gives a more powerful and energetic effect in comparison with the solemnity of the fourth. The fifth is the first variation in which Rachmaninoff creates variety through meter changes and the first time he uses triplets

in this piece.  $3/4$  meter is followed by  $2/4$  meter, which gives the effect of a  $5/4$  time signature. In the sixth variation, there is a return to the high register, while the triplets continue. The meter becomes consistent, yet the mood and dynamic of this variation changes abruptly from the forte marcato of the fifth variation to a *piano leggiere e staccato* style. Next, perpetual motion is employed throughout most of the seventh variation. The last four measures include a downward flourish. As in the seventh variation, the left hand of the tipsy eighth variation begins with the D octave and returns to D at the end. Rachmaninoff often uses D octaves, also, as a pedal point in the ninth variation. Although Rachmaninoff was a twentieth-century composer, his emphasis on tonality makes his music quite accessible to the audience. The improvisatory tenth variation is written in the high registers and contains meter changes again, but it does not provide as much contrast as does the beginning of the fifth variation. In the middle section, there is a cadenza-like gesture in the downward motion of the chromatic scale. Near the end, there are changes from duple meter to triple meter, which creates more measured contrast. The eleventh variation is the first and only variation not to start with D. Instead, it starts with F. The right hand contains some upward arpeggios. Following the left-hand octaves and the overall chordal structure of the twelfth variation,  $9/8$  meter appears for the first time in the thirteenth variation; the rhythmic patterns are grouped in threes but the variation still has a  $3/4$  feeling. The rhythmic pattern of an eighth note followed by a sixteenth rest, a sixteenth note, and an eighth note permeates this variation creating a dotted-rhythmic effect. The same rhythm can be found later in variations eighteen, nineteen, and twenty.

An improvisatory, cadenza-like Intermezzo serves as a dividing point after the thirteenth variation and sets the stage for the modulation from D minor to the D-flat major in the fourteenth and fifteenth variations. The fourteenth variation is quite reminiscent of the theme of the work. The compositional technique Rachmaninoff uses here is similar to the idea of the recapitulation in sonata form—the return of the theme. Different from the previous variations, the *dolcissimo* fifteenth variation carries a distinctive, tender mood, which provides a special moment in the piece. Many previous compositional techniques can be found in the sixteenth variation including contrast of treble and bass registers, upward and downward motions, and interjections of chromatic-triplet sixteenths. Such interjections are also found in the second, tenth, and eleventh variations. The compositional techniques of the sixteenth variation are expanded later to include cross-hand technique. In the seventeenth variation, the melody, an augmentation of the theme, is accompanied by a left hand figure that contains a new rhythmic figure, an eighth note and triplet sixteenths followed by three more eighth notes. The meter changes from 4/4, to 2/4, and then to 6/4, but the accompaniment remains the same until the last four measures. Although the eighteenth variation presents the same rhythm as the thirteenth variation and corresponds harmonically with it as well, the stronger dynamic intensity and the larger leaps of the chordal figures and the thicker texture all increasingly build the momentum toward the end. The chordal figures become wider in range and more difficult in the nineteenth variation because of the rapid hand shifts. The texture changes at approximately the half-way point, and ends with descending chromatic chords. The final variation continues to exploit the rhythmic figures found in the

thirteenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth variations. It is considered the most technically demanding variation of the piece because of the extreme leaps and extended hands. The range opens wider due to the large leaping octaves and chords. This variation not only begins with octaves in D, but also ends with three measures of D octaves preceding the Coda, a reflection of how much Rachmaninoff favors tonality. Many repeated compositional techniques reappear in the slow and melodic coda, such as triplets, changing meters, emphasis on the note D, and a clear reference to the theme in the last measures, concluding quietly this brilliant, well-rounded work.

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## Recital II

### Recital program

Sonata in G Minor, Op. 19 for Cello and Piano      Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)  
Lento  
Allegro scherzando  
Andante  
Allegro mosso

### Intermission

Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 32      Anton Arensky (1861–1906)  
Allegro moderato  
Scherzo  
Elegia: Adagio  
Finale: Allegro non troppo

Hung Luo, Piano  
Shih-Yun Hsieh, Violin  
Victor Coo, Cello  
Thursday, May 11, 2006 at 5:30 pm  
Homer Ulrich Recital Hall  
Tawes Fine Arts Building  
The University of Maryland at College Park  
School of Music

Notes on the Program

This recital program is the result of my exploration and study of the distinctive stylistic characteristics of piano works written by two Russian composers representing the late-Romantic period: Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) and Anton Arensky (1861–1906).

**SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)**

Sonata in G Minor, Op.19 for Cello and Piano (1901)

Lento

Allegro scherzando

Andante

Allegro mosso

A pupil of Anton Arensky (1861–1906) and Sergei Taneyev (1856–1915), Rachmaninoff was further influenced by Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), Franz Liszt (1811–1886), Robert Schumann (1810–1856), Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893), and Johannes Brahms (1833–1897), and was flavored with Russian nationalism. The lyrical, intense, and often passionate melodies of Rachmaninoff are usually supported by sonorous, rich harmonies combined with a keen dramatic sense.

In Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op.19, the piano dominates, and yet interweaves with the cello part. Although Rachmaninoff did not write much chamber music, this four-movement Cello Sonata is well known. The Cello Sonata, composed in 1901 around the same time as the Second Piano Concerto in C Minor, Op.18 (1900–1901) was dedicated to Rachmaninoff's friend and cellist Anatoli Brandukov (1856–1930); he and the composer premiered the work in Loskow on

December 2, 1901. The Cello Sonata Op.19 bears some resemblance to Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, probably because of their closeness in time of composition. Both works are grand in scale with long, lyrical melodic architecture and bravura passage-work for the piano. The use of tonal centers is also similar.

The piano part is more than mere accompaniment—the technical demand for the pianist is extreme. In addition, difficulties in maintaining proper balance between cello and piano pose a significant problem. The rich, sonorous piano texture can easily overpower the cello's single melodic line. In speaking of this balance problem, Geoffery Norris writes:

Rachmaninoff did not really overcome the problems of instrumental balance in his finest...chamber work...However, he shows a closer, if not intimate, knowledge of the expressive possibilities of the cello....The piano part is certainly the more skillfully constructed of the two, yet the intensity and drama of the music can...amply overcome any deficiencies of instrumental balance.<sup>6</sup>

The Sonata begins with a recitative-like introduction much in the same manner as the Second Piano Concerto begins with an introduction. The first movement of the Cello Sonata, in sonata-allegro form, consists of the introduction, three extensive sections, and a coda. The introduction, marked *Lento*, does little to establish the tonic key area of G minor, but does provide important motives, such as the two-note phrase based on the interval of a minor second—the most important interval in this movement. The thematic structure is traditional in the use of a pair of main themes; however, Rachmaninoff distinguishes the themes by the use of two tempo indications. The *bel canto*-like first theme is given the tempo marking of *Allegro moderato*, but changes to *con moto* as it modulates away from G minor in the

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<sup>6</sup> Clyde E.Beavers, "A Survey of The Works For Violoncello And Piano By Sergei Rachmaninoff" (DMA diss., University of Kentucky, 1997), 97.

exposition. Rachmaninoff likes to change the time signature in order to allow for expansion in certain places. For instance, he changed the time signature at measure 32 from 4/4 to 6/4. The second theme, basically in D major, is marked *Moderato*. When Rachmaninoff changes from theme to theme, he sometimes changes the accompaniment patterns of the piano part as well. An example of this can be found in measures 18 and 53, the sixteenth-note broken chords in the first theme change to solid chords at the second theme. The closing theme, which is an extension of the lyrical second theme, is marked *Un poco più mosso*. Rachmaninoff often uses different rhythmic values to help create various moods. The development, for instance, begins with a thirteen-measure section marked *Tempo I (Allegro moderato)*. An *accelerando* increases the tempo to *Con moto*. Rachmaninoff develops his use of sixteenth-note groups and triplets from the exposition extensively into chromatic, virtuosic keyboard writing. Groups of triplet figurations foreshadow the rhythmic pattern which occurs at the beginning of the second movement. The effect of three eighth notes plus an eighth note rest at measure 165 is the same as two eighth notes plus a quarter note in the beginning of the *Allegro moderato*. The beginning of the *Allegro molto*, being unstable both tonally and rhythmically, serves as a preparation for the recapitulation. A truncated first theme is presented with a more chromatic and tension-producing piano accompaniment. There is no marking such as *Tempo I* to indicate this theme, and the earlier *Con moto* material is absent. The G major second theme, on the other hand, returns entirely. The coda begins with an exact repetition of the beginning of the development, harmonically altered in measure 264 to return to a g minor tonality. Rachmaninoff also often combines either different rhythmic patterns

in instruments, or changes the rhythmic patterns from one section to another section to provide great diversity. The conclusion of the rhythmically diverse coda uses elements of the development and a short closing theme, providing for a large-scale virtuosic and intense ending to the movement.

The overall form of the second movement, *Allegro scherzando*, appears to be a rondo (ABACABA) since the motivic theme returns so many times. However, one could also argue for a ternary structure (ABA C ABA), partly built with motivic elements that provide for contrasts in mood from section to section, both in mode and musical material. The first occurrence of the A section (ms. 1-80) contains two distinct thematic areas; the B section (ms. 81-142) provides a contrast in mood, often which the A section (ms. 143-219) returns, with the addition of a closing coda (ms. 220-233). The movement is in C minor, the subdominant of the sonata's G minor tonality. The movement's harmonic progressions are not, however, based on classic tonic-dominant relationships. The harmonic framework of this movement comes from mediant relationships, so prevalent in late nineteenth-century repertoire. All of the key areas represented in the scherzo are related to the tonic through a cycle of thirds. For example, the B section, in A-flat, is a major third below C, key of this movement. The scherzo, structured in large part by rhythmic pattern, makes particular use of two motives:  and  which, combined with constant running triplets in the accompaniment, provide exceptional forward propulsion of the musical ideas. Rachmaninoff does not use as many rhythmic contrasts as in the first movement, and, even more than in the other movements, balance between the two instruments is a main challenge. The cello part is in the low register, together with the

piano, most of time. The long melodic line appears at the *un poco meno mosso* (ms. 33-48) again. As in the first movement (m. 32), at measure 69, Rachmaninoff uses expansion again by changing the time signature from 12/8 to an unusual 18/8. Of course, the unusual time signature may be related to the type of movement—a “Scherzo”, which means “joke.” Rachmaninoff also uses different note groupings, such as two, three, six, seven or eight eighth notes to help to create his joke.

The slow third movement is the shortest one among the four, with only sixty-eight measures. It is in ternary (ABA) form. The long, lyrical, and melancholy introduction is introduced by the piano, and the movement centers around E-flat. The F-sharp in the opening measure, resolving to G, suggests the continuing importance of the interval of a major second. The theme that weaves the two instruments together is like a dialogue. In the same manner as the A section, the theme of the B section is introduced by the piano, but with a harmonically altered answer in the cello. The B section is in G minor (a third-relation, as found in the second movement). The A section returns, but altered.

The fourth movement is characterized by its rhythmic vitality and its lyrical second theme. Rachmaninoff focuses on rhythmic interests again. The duple and triple rhythmic patterns from the previous movements are reintroduced. The texture is thick in this movement, and there are moments of intense, brilliant, and bravura passages for both instruments. The form, a standard one for the early nineteenth century, is sonata-allegro plus coda. The harmonic framework, as well, is entirely within early nineteenth-century usage, having been based by Rachmaninoff on a G major tonality. G major is not commonly found in Rachmaninoff’s works. It creates a

positive, brilliant feeling, which makes this movement rather special. The movement, marked *Allegro mosso*, begins with a four-measure piano introduction that sets the mood and the pace of the first theme. The first theme begins at measure 5 in the cello part. It is full of rhythmic vitality, structured on the triplets. The second theme begins at the lyrical *Moderato*, changes to *Più vivo*, then leads to the development section at the *Tempo I*. The theme comes back again at measure 183 and the coda begins at the *Meno mosso*. Rachmaninoff broadens it by using half notes instead of the quicker value of eighth or sixteenth notes. It starts to build up from *Vivace* to its climax, and ends with a triumphant *marcato*.

#### **ANTON ARENSKY (1861–1906)**

Piano Trio No.1 in D Minor, Op.32 (1894)

*Allegro moderato*

Scherzo

Elegia: *Adagio*

Finale: *Allegro non troppo*

Arensky studied with Rimsky-Korsakov, but his style also reveals the influences of Chopin, Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), and Tchaikowsky. His most important student was Rachmaninoff. Arensky worked in both the traditional Western European forms and those of his own nationality. He excelled in composing miniatures. Arensky's music, especially his melodies, sounds distinctly Russian.

Of Arensky's chamber repertoire, the Trio No.1 in D Minor, Op. 32 is his best known extended work. Composed in 1894 in memory of the Russian cellist Charles

Davidov, Arensky's Piano Trio displays a melodic facility and fluent compositional technique.

The first movement of this Piano Trio is in sonata-allegro form. Like his student Rachmaninoff, Arensky uses triple and duple rhythmic combinations in the first movement, but the melodic line is not as long as Rachmaninoff's. The texture is simpler and more transparent, and the accompaniment part does not have so many variants as Rachmaninoff's. The first movement is built around three themes: the first dramatic, the second lyrical, and the third more passionate. The accent on the fourth and final beat of the first theme creates a sigh over the rising melody, a sigh begins which in the violin part. From measure 14 to measure 17, there are fugue-like figurations exchanged between the cello and violin. In the *Più mosso* section, Arensky develops his sigh-motives into "sighing phrases" and contrast them with flourish figurations in measures 37 and 38 (which provide a sense of virtuosity) before eventually leading to the expansive, lyrical second theme. The register of the cello part is higher than the piano part in the second theme, resolving the balance issue that can be encountered when the two instruments are combined. Beginning in measure 62, the passion of the third theme is made evident by a *fortissimo* marking and accents. In the second *Più mosso* section, there are "struggles" between the piano and the stringed instruments. In the development section, Arensky uses the first thematic material, triplet and sixteenth-note figurations, and fugue-like sequential patterns again as in the exposition. The piano part still functions primarily as an accompaniment, while parallel motion between the string instruments appears from measure 127 with tremolos. A pedal point on A finally resolves to D, at the

recapitulation. The thematic material and the triplet figurations come back again in the coda.

The playful Scherzo is in Ternary (ABA) form, like the Scherzo of Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata. Arensky brings about a masterful union of melodic and rhythmic refinement to capture the elegant atmosphere of a salon. In the beginning, he uses violin harmonics and the pizzicato in the cello part. Those two techniques produce a special effect. From measure 4 to the measure 6, Arensky also uses decreasing groupings (from twelve, to eleven, to ten) to create a joke-like effect to enhance the characteristic of the Scherzo. Arensky seems to favor the higher register for the piano part in the Allegro molto section, which creates a twinkling sound. The Meno mosso section is waltz-like, and contrasts with the light, playful Allegro molto section. Arensky puts accents on weak beats to further support his joke-like effects. The "G.P." (grand pause) markings in measures 200 and several other places reminds one of Haydn, who liked to use unexpected pauses. The short motivic material of the Allegro molto appears again in the transition section to prepare to go back to the A section. Again, Arensky ends this Scherzo joking with the use of a "G.P.".

The Elegia is in Ternary (ABA) form. The opening dotted rhythm provides some of the funeral march-like character. Unlike the previous movements, this third movement begins with the cello (with the piano serving as an accompaniment). Arensky continues with the imitative / contrapuntal writing from the first movement in the A section. In the B section, the roles of the stringed instruments and the piano are reversed. The piano plays the theme and the stringed instruments provide the accompaniment. There are conversations between the cello (and piano) and the violin

at the second part of the B section. At the beginning of the second part of the B section, the pizzicato marking appears again in the cello, and the violin harmonics are brought back at measure 55, in a similar technique to the second movement. The altered A section comes back again at Tempo I. It also starts with B-flat, but unlike the beginning of the movement, occurs in the violin instead of the cello.

The brilliant Finale has an orchestral effect. The piano part has full chords, and the two stringed instruments answer with virtuosic passages. The emotional range in the last movement is wide—from the finest pianissimo to an overwhelming fortissimo. Arensky shifts the tempo often in this movement to intensify different emotional levels. The Allegro non troppo changes to a Più vivo, an Andante recalling the beginning of the first movement ends in an Adagio, and then an Allegro molto intensifying from pianissimo to fortissimo sweeps away the melancholy memories.

Thematic material is constantly developed, with opening material placed in contrast against later material. Arensky combines many thematic ideas from previous movements in this movement as a flashy summary. At its opening, the double dotted rhythm recalls the beginning of the Elegia. In fact, the 3/4 time signature is the same as that of the second movement. At measures 56 and 67, the accents are on the first and the third beats, which remind one of the Meno mosso section in the second movement. Tremolo in the string instruments, such as at measure 19, is also similar in technique to what Arensky did in the first movement (ms. 129-136). There are also some rhythmic alterations in the last movement, such as the triplets in measure 24 (compare to the third movement). From measure 24 to measure 34, the fugue-like writing from the first movement is used again between the violin and the cello while

the piano material in the Più vivo section occurs from the very beginning of the fourth movement. The altered rhythmic material at the beginning of the Adagio and Allegro molto recalls the opening of the Elegia, but the time signature of the Allegro molto is 3/4 instead of 4/4.

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### Recital III

#### Recital program

*Fairy Tale*, Op. 51, No. 3 in A Major Nikolay Medtner (1880–1951)

“Bird’s Tale” from *Romantic Sketches for the Young*, Op. 54, Book 1

From *24 Characteristic Pieces*, Op. 36 Anton Arensky (1861–1914)  
No. 16 “Elégie”

No. 5, in E-Flat Minor from *Près de la mer, Six Esquisses*, Op. 52

Sonata No. 3 in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 23 Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915)  
Dramatico  
Allegretto  
Andante  
Presto con fuoco

#### Intermission

No. 3 “Étude” from *Four Pieces*, Op. 25 Anton Arensky (1861–1914)

*Essais sur des rythms oubliés*, Op. 28  
No. 1 Logaédes  
No. 2 Péons  
No. 4 Sări

From *24 Characteristic Pieces*, Op. 36  
No. 13 “Étude”

*Rêverie du soir*, Op. 3 Sergei Liapunoff (1850–1924)

No. 8 “Epic Song” from *12 Études d’exécution transcendante*, Op. 11

Hung Luo, Pianist  
Monday, February 19, 2007 at 8:00 pm  
Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall  
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center  
The University of Maryland at College Park  
School of Music

### Notes on the Program

This recital program is the result of my exploration and study of the distinctive stylistic characteristics of piano works written by four Russian composers from the late-Romantic period: Nikolay Medtner (1880–1951), Anton Arensky (1861–1914), Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915), and Sergei Liapunoff (1850–1924).

#### **NIKOLAY MEDTNER (1880–1951)**

*Fairy Tale in A Major, Op. 51, No. 3 (?1928)*

“Bird’s Tale” from *Romantic Sketches for the Young, Op. 54, Book I (?1932)*

Medtner studied with Anton Arensky (1861–1906) and Sergri Taneyev (1856–1915), and was influenced by Johannes Brahms (1833–1897). Medtner was a prolific composer who focused mainly on piano music. His style reflects a sonorous and colorful Romantic style, but also shows ties to classicism as reflected in his use of sonata forms. Many of his works are difficult. His music is generally emotionally reserved and permeated with intellectual rigor. Medtner’s output includes fourteen Sonatas, thirty-three Fairy Tales, and many other miniatures. His *Fairy Tale, Op. 51, No. 3, in A Major* reflects the casual, relaxed French salon style. An innocent and charming piece that gives lots of space for the imagination, it is written in ABA form with a coda.

The “Bird’s Tale” from *Romantic Sketches for the Young, Op. 54, Book I*, is a good example of descriptive music. Medtner’s vivid imagination shows through the whole piece. This piece is written in ABA form (with introduction and coda).

**ANTON ARENSKY (1861–1914)**

From *24 Characteristic Pieces*, Op. 36

No. 13 “Étude”

No. 16 “Elégie”

No. 5, in E flat minor from *Près de la mer, Six Esquisses*, Op. 52

No.3 “Étude” from *Four Pieces*, Op. 25

*Essais sur des rythmes oubliés*, Op. 28

No. 1 “Logaédes”

No. 2 “Péons”

No. 4 “Säri”

Arensky excelled in composing miniatures. He studied with Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908), but his style also reveals the influences of Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849), Robert Schumann (1810–1856), Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), and Peter Ilich Tchaikowsky (1840–1893). I have included two pieces from Arensky’s *Twenty Four Characteristic Pieces*, Op. 36, in my recital program: No. 13 “Étude” and No. 16 “Elégie.” No. 13 is written in ABA form. The piece is full of fast scale writing, which reminds us of Chopin’s works, but Chopin usually adds more chromaticism, and this No. 13 is mostly diatonic. No. 16 is one of Arensky’s finest pieces. It flows with a lyrical and melancholic melody, characteristic of his musical style. There are some syncopated rhythmic instances in this piece and it is in ABAB form with a coda.

One Arensky’s short solo piano piece I will perform is No. 5 in E-Flat Minor from *Près de la mer, Six Esquisses* (Near the Sea, Six Sketches), Op. 52. It is a scherzo-like miniature written in ABA form.

In his No. 3 “Étude” from the *Quatre Morceaux* (Four Pieces), Op. 25, he adopted a well-known Chinese tune as a theme and presented it in different keys. This etude, with its song-like folk tune, has great charm, such as is displayed constantly in his works. The beginning section of this piece includes mainly sixteenth note triplets, while the B section is based on the Oriental pentatonic (five-note) scale. The key signature (G-flat major) of the A section is also more complicated than the B section (B-flat major), as is the figuration, which makes for nice contrasts between two sections. Arensky deviates in this piece from a standard ABA form by bringing back short B and A sections at the end of the second A section, creating an unusual ABAB’A’. The extended B’ and A’ sections do not change the key as previously.

Arensky’s unusual *Essais sur des rythmes oubliés* (Essays on Forgotten Rhythms), Op. 28, are based on the unorthodox meters of ancient poetry, mostly of the Greeks and Romans. They are attractive musically and fascinating rhythmically. The first piece “Logaédes,” is in 6/8, and features a rhythmic pattern of four (in the right hand) against three (in the left hand) in the first half of the measure, followed by a feel of three eighth notes in the second half of the measure (See musical example. As can be seen, the second half of the measure is equal to three eighth notes).

“Logaédes” by A. Arensky, Op. 28, M. 1

The musical score for "Logaédes" by A. Arensky, Op. 28, M. 1, is presented in a grand staff format. The tempo is marked "Moderato" and the dynamics are "Piano" (p). The time signature is 6/8. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody with a rhythmic pattern of four notes in the first half and three eighth notes in the second half of the measure. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line with a similar rhythmic pattern. The piece is marked "Piano" (p).

Arensky grouped the right hand thirty-second notes in an unorthodox manner. In the first half of the measure, Arensky beamed six thirty-second notes together, followed by two groups of three thirty-second notes, which gives an effect of four groups of three thirty-second notes. It sounds like 12/32 time. The second half sounds like 3/8 time. This piece is in an ABA-like form with a coda, since the B section does not have an independent theme (B is an inversion of A). Its theme is very similar to the A section. No. 2, "Péons," is in quintuple rhythm. This kind of asymmetric meter is not common in music of this time. The chordal writing and off-beat accents sound like Schumann, as in his Impromptus, Op. 5, No. 6 in C Major and his Intermezzi, Op. 4, No. 2 in E Minor. This piece is in ABA form. The A section is a thick chordal texture, while the B section combines a single melody against broken chords. Arensky used a wild range of dynamics in this piece. He also grouped this piece as three plus two by beaming three eighth notes together, as in measure 7, and he tied chords together in the right hand at measure 12. In the beginning, he does not make it clear. No. 4, "Säri," is comprised of musical sentences of two measures of 3/4, followed by a measure of 6/8. He sometimes varies his alternation between 3/4 and 6/8. This piece is made up of written out hemiola. It has changing meters, but since the meter changes between the 3/4 and the 6/8, the groupings change from twos to threes. The sound to the audience is that of a hemiola. This piece is written in ABA form.

## ALEXANDER SCRIBIN (1872–1915)

Sonata No. 3 in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 23 (1897)

Dramatico

Allegretto

Andante

Presto con fuoco

Like Medtner and Rachmaninoff, Scriabin was a pupil of Arensky and Taneyev. His early piano works reflect the influence of Chopin and Franz Liszt (1811–1886). The genres he used during this period also are reminiscent of Chopin; they include waltzes, nocturnes, mazurkas, impromptus, etudes, preludes, and a polonaise. After 1900, Scriabin's style began to move in a new direction. A chromatic harmonic vocabulary later evolved into a distinctive personal style. The music is full of uncertainty and never quite seems to rest. It is permeated with mysticism and eroticism—floating between tonality and atonality.

Scriabin's Sonata No. 3 in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 23, is a large-scale, four movement work written in 1897. This sonata was composed almost immediately after the completion of the second one, and it was published by M. P. Belaieff in 1898. The thematic structure of this piece is closely bound together, and its thematic "cyclic" treatment is reminiscent of Liszt and César Frank.

The first movement (Dramatico) appears in regular sonata-allegro form. The first theme opens with short broken phrases gradually rising in power. The Development, begins in measure 55 and extends for forty measures. It contains an expansion from the second thematic material. At the Recapitulation, the first theme is abbreviated, and the second theme is in the tonic major key, as in most sonatas of the Classical period. The thicker texture of the first movement is complicated, since it

contains contrapuntal lines. Scriabin sometimes combines both themes simultaneously (such as ms.128-132 and ms.136-138).

The second movement (*Allegretto*) in E-flat major is in ABA form. The octave-doubling at the beginning contrasts with the thinner texture in the middle section (*con grazia*). At the end of the returning A section, it becomes more and more animated, and concludes with a intense and triumphant rush on a tonic chord of E-flat.

The third movement (*Andante*) in B major is written in ABA form. The first theme lasts for sixteen bars and reappears at measure 32. This movement gradually dies away from measure 49, and is joined to the next movement by a bridge (built on the main theme from the opening of the sonata) straight into the finale.

The Finale (*Presto con fuoco*) is laid out in modified sonata-allegro form. This movement begins with chromaticism in the right hand and a widespread arpeggio in the left hand. At measure 17 a contrapuntal melody is added over the chromatic theme. The second theme enters in the relative major at measure 37, which leads to a return of the first theme. The Development begins at measure 71 and is made up of a series of long phrases. The Recapitulation begins at measure 125, and the second theme starts at the *Meno mosso* section. A second development follows, and afterward Scriabin uses the dominant C-sharp pedal repetitively before the *Maestoso* coda enters at measure 202. The last twelve measures, with their fading references to the first theme, are colored by the minor key.

A subtle yet close relationship may be traced between the themes throughout the whole piece. For instance, the second theme of the first movement is rhythmically

similar to the opening melody of the fourth movement (right hand). The second theme of the first movement is expanded in the first development of the fourth movement. The triplet at measure 1 of the third movement reminds us of the triplet at measure 2 of the first movement. Thus, recurring motives provide an unexpected unity to bring the four movements of this sonata together into a single unit.

### **SERGEI LIAPUNOFF (1850–1914)**

*Rêverie du soir*, Op. 3 (1880–1903)

“Epic Song” from *12 Études d’exécution transcendante*, Op. 11 (1897–1905)

Liapunoff’s style combines Russian folk music elements with the influence of European training. Liapunoff was essentially a miniaturist. He studied with Tchaikowsky and Taneyev and was also influenced by Mily Balakirev (1837–1910). Some of his smaller piano works are reminiscent of Schumann, Chopin, and Mendelssohn. “*Rêverie du soir*” (Evening Reverie), Op. 3 is an example of a piece that is similar to some of Chopin’s nocturnes such as Op. 9, No. 1. This piece is written in ABA’ form with a coda (the bass note B stays until the end). Like Arensky, Liapunoff uses many triplets. Different from Arensky’s favoring of three against two, Liapunoff uses single notes against each triplet. Although I did not find much information about the composer’s intentions, I assume that, based on the title and the way the piece was written, he meant it to be program music about an evening’s atmosphere.

Liapunoff’s extensive piano works include a set of twelve *Études d’exécution transcendante*, Op. 11. The title, dedication, and format of Op. 11 all reflect the

paramount influence of Liszt. The final etude, No. 12, is entitled *Elégie en mémoire de Franz Liszt*. These twelve pieces complete the key sequence begun by Liszt in his own Transcendental Studies (Liszt wrote his Transcendental Etudes in twelve of the twenty-four major and minor keys). No. 8 (Epic Song) of Op. 11 is included in my recital program. In this piece, Liapunoff uses Russian Orthodox church music and Russian folk songs from his own folk song collection. The piece also includes aspects of thematic transformation developed by Liszt. This piece is written in free variation form.

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