ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: RUSSIAN JAZZ WITH BOLSHEVIK TRIMMINGS: MODERNIST COMPOSER-PIANISTS IN REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

Mijail V. Tumanov, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2021

Dissertation directed by: Professor Larissa Dedova
School of Music

The purpose of this project is to highlight the piano compositions of the extraordinarily diverse period in Russian music between the emergence of pre-Revolutionary modernism in the early twentieth century and the publication of the "Muddle Instead of Music" article in 1936, the lack of State intervention in artistic matters up until the early 1930s proved to be a boon for Soviet composers. The title of this project is taken from Karleton Hackett's review of the 1921 premiere of Prokofiev's opera *The Love for Three Oranges* in the *Chicago Evening Post.* Hackett's misguided characterization is very telling – *The Love for Three Oranges* contains neither jazz nor Bolshevik influences. The figure of the composer-pianist played an important role in the development of Russian piano music in the early twentieth century; every one of the composers featured in this project was an accomplished pianist. This project presents but a small fraction of the solo piano repertoire created by the remarkable innovative

composers of early twentieth-century Russia. A number of these composers failed to remain relevant in the post-1936 political climate and have thus vanished from history books. Yet their works offer a wealth of exciting new repertoire for pianists. In addition to discussions of each work and composer featured, special attention is given to Samuil Feinberg, whose life and works remain in obscurity. An extensive analysis of Feinberg's Second Piano Sonata, Op. 2, and *Berceuse,* Op. 19a, is included since available information on Feinberg's musical language is very scarce. References to thorough analyses and discussion of works covered is provided in the bibliography.

RUSSIAN JAZZ WITH BOLSHEVIK TRIMMINGS:
MODERNIST COMPOSER-PIANISTS IN REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

by

Mijail V. Tumanov Pavlov

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Advisory Committee:
Professor Larissa Dedova, Chair
Professor Olga Haldey
Professor Donald Manildi
Professor Elizabeth A. Papazian
Professor Mikhail Volchok

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The purpose of this project is to highlight the piano compositions of the extraordinarily diverse period in Russian music between the emergence of pre-Revolutionary modernism in the early twentieth century and the publication of the "Muddle Instead of Music" editorial in 1936.[1] In addition to discussions of each work and composer featured, special attention is given to Samuil Feinberg, whose life and works remain in obscurity. An extensive analysis of Feinberg's Second Piano Sonata, Op. 2, and *Berceuse,* Op. 19a, is included since available information on Feinberg's musical language is very scarce. References to thorough analyses and discussion of works covered is provided in the bibliography.

The title of this project is taken from Karleton Hackett's review of the 1921 premiere of Prokofiev's opera *The Love for Three Oranges*, published in the *Chicago Evening Post.* While some critics praised the opera, most had a hard time making sense of the work. Hackett's misguided characterization is very telling – *The Love for Three Oranges* contains neither jazz nor Bolshevik influences. In the *Chicago Tribune* review of the opera, Edward Moore stated that "Mr. Prokofiev might well have loaded up a shotgun with several thousand notes of varying lengths and discharged them against the side of a blank wall."[2] Unlike the mixed reviews *The Love for Three Oranges* received in Chicago, New York critics panned it unanimously when the Chicago Opera took it on tour in 1922. Michael Pisani argues that the perplexed reception of *The Love for Three Oranges* with the American audiences was in large part due to the sharp divide between "high culture" and "low culture" prevalent 1920s America. The "low-brow" farce of *The*

[1] Anonymous, "*Sumbur vmesto muzyki,*" Pravda, January 28, 1936, https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/21722335.
[2] Michael V. Pisani, "A kapustnik in the American opera house: Modernism and Prokofiev's Love for Three Oranges," *The Musical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 487.

Love for Three Oranges felt out of place in opera, a bastion of "high culture."[3] The contrast in the reception of *The Love for Three Oranges* in America in 1921-22 and Russia in 1926 evidences the divergent attitudes towards modernism in the two countries.

The turn of the twentieth century was a turbulent time in the Russian Empire. Emperor Alexander II the Liberator was assassinated in 1881 after five attempts on his life – two in the 1860s and three more after 1879. His successor, Alexander III, sought to strengthen the autocracy, fanning the flames of revolution. After Alexander III's death in 1894, his son, Nicholas II, proved ineffective in instituting successful reform. The period leading up to the 1905 Russian Revolution and the formation of the beleaguered State Duma (Parliament) was rife with tragedy – pogroms against the Jewish population, famine, the failed Russo-Japanese war, Russia's role in the First World War, and civil unrest ending in bloodshed, including the Khodynka Tragedy and Bloody Sunday.

By the time of the February and October Revolutions of 1917, Samuil Feinberg, Vladimir Deshevov, and Sergei Prokofiev were all trained musicians, having completed their conservatory education. Both Deshevov and Feinberg were conscripted after the outbreak of the First World War, but Feinberg fell ill with typhoid fever and was demobilized in 1915. Deshevov remained in the army until 1917. The youngest of the composers in this project, Dmitri Shostakovich, would not begin his conservatory studies until 1919, at the age of thirteen. All four composers were conservatory-trained pianists, and as such constitute a link to the composer-pianist tradition of the nineteenth century.

[3] Ibid., 492.

In the years following the Bolshevik Revolution and until the late 1920s, the Soviet state had relatively little interest in imposing aesthetic views on artists, and travel between the USSR and the West was easy enough that ideas could be freely shared. It is worth noting that throughout the 1920s, pre-Revolutionary establishment musicians enjoyed the support, however feeble, of the Soviet authority governing arts and education, the Narkompros (People's Commissariat for Enlightenment), and especially its leader Anatoly Lunacharsky, a member of the intelligentsia himself. Lunacharsky, who held his post at the Narkompros until 1929, had remarkably liberal views on the arts and the preservation of cultural heritage. Instead of decrying the arts of the Czarist regime as "morally corrupt" and banning works that contradicted Marxist ideology, Lunacharsky argued that "bourgeois" art would bring the greatest benefit to Soviet society if it were brought to the masses with the appropriate ideological commentary, until such a time when the new Soviet art would leave the "bourgeois" art obsolete. At a performance of Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* for a proletariat audience, conductor Nikolai Malko remembers:

> Before the opera started, Lunacharsky . . . made a speech. . . . He finished thus: 'Pushkin and Glinka were noblemen and estate-owners. Let them have their nobility and their belongings. We are concerned only about their talent and their creations. The opera *Ruslan and Ludmila* is a beautiful diamond in the crown of Russian art. Up to now you were not given the opportunity to be in contact with Russian art. Now you are here. The worker of Petrograd is offered a valuable cup of a marvelous, sparkling wine. Drink and enjoy it!'[4]

[4] Nikolai Malko, *A Certain Art* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1966), 137-8, quoted in Haas, 4.

Lunacharsky frequently came under attack for his support of the progressive ACM and LACM ideals until his resignation in 1929.[5]

The search for a Soviet aesthetic was developed as an open-ended debate in which all artists could participate and air their views. The April Resolution of 1932, abolishing creative organization in favor of official unions, the official adoption of Socialist Realism, and the "Muddle Instead of Music" editorial in 1936 cemented Socialist Realism as the official aesthetic direction of the Soviet State.

Lest it seem like the 1920s were a carefree time for Soviet composers, the quarrel over the irreconcilable differences between the leading music organizations' views was constant. Until the dissolution of all independent artistic associations in 1932, the Russian Association of Proletarian Music (RAPM) was persistently at odds with the formally trained musicians that comprised the ACM (Association of Contemporary Music) and its branch, the LACM (Leningrad Association of Contemporary Music). RAPM, ACM, and LACM are merely the most influential of the independent organizations of the 1920s; other collectives include Proletkult (Proletarian Culture), PROKOLL (Production Collective), and OBERIU (Union of Real Art). All independent creative organizations were disbanded by the Soviet State in 1932, in favor of the creation of centralized Unions, including the Union of Composers.

The climate of the musical life of those years is neatly outlined in a letter, dated December 28, 1924, written by composer Nikolai Roslavets, imploring for the acceptance of his resignation from his post at the State Music Publishing House.[6] Roslavets bemoans

[5] Haas, 28.
[6] Marina Lobanova, *Nikolai Andreevich Roslavets i kul'tura ego vremeni* (Moscow: Petroglif, 2011), 80.

the pushback he receives from "proletarian musicians," the wariness of the musical intelligentsia towards the state apparatus, the political persecution of Alexander Gedike in connection with the arrest of Pavel Lamm, and the indifference of the state authorities. The case of Pavel Lamm deserves special mention; Lamm was a prominent member of the ACM and head of the State Music Publishing House, whose Moscow apartment served as a weekly salon for progressive-minded musicians in the 1910s and 1920s, including Feinberg, Gedike, Nikolai Myaskovsky, Alexandr Goldenweiser, Konstantin Igumnov, and Anatoly Alexandrov, as well as musicologists Victor Belyaev, Gregory Catoire, and Boris Asafiev (a founding member of the LACM), among many others.[7] In 1923 Lamm was arrested and imprisoned for several months on phony charges of "nationalism" brought forth by RAPM supporters. After Prokofiev's return to Russia, Lamm also acted as the composer's assistant, preparing fair copies and scores of orchestrations.[8]

Both ACM and LACM were loose-knit organizations without a political agenda. The earlier of the two, Moscow-based ACM was founded in 1923 by Vladimir Derzhanovsky and Leonid Sabaneev.[9] The International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), selected several ACM composers to represent their country abroad at ISCM festivals – Feinberg in 1925, Myaskovsky in 1926, Alexander Mosolov in 1927 and 1930, and Lev Knipper in 1931. In turn, the ACM arranged for the performance and distribution

[7] Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and power in early Soviet Russia* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 51.
[8] Lyudmila Korable'nikova, "Lamm, Pavel Aleksandrovich," *Grove Music Online* (2001): https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.15905
[9] Nelson, 49.

on Western works in the Soviet Union.[10] Founded in 1926, the LACM was to promote "the broadest possible familiarization with the works of composers, representing all paths, both in the USSR and abroad."[11] Like its Moscow counterpart, the LACM was able to program, in addition to new Soviet music, such works as Strauss's *Salome,* Berg's *Wozzeck,* Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges* (commissioned and written abroad), Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf,* as well as works by Stravinsky, Honegger, Mahler, Schoenberg, Bartok, Milhaud, and Hindemith.[12] Shostakovich and Deshevov, who were associated with the LACM, also benefited from the exposure the organization provided.

Deshevov, Feinberg, and Shostakovich were associated with either the ACM or the LACM and pushed the boundaries of musical aesthetics of their time. While the lack of concrete ideology proved to be a weakness in terms of shielding its members from attacks by RAPM and other "proletarian" organizations, the ACM and LACM played an instrumental role in creating a forum for new ideas, facilitating the performance of contemporary music, and maintaining communication with the West.

Samuil Feinberg (1890—1962)

Born in Odessa, Feinberg moved with his family to Moscow in 1894. He studied piano at the Moscow Conservatory with Alexander Goldenweiser and composition with Nikolai Zhilyayev, Scriabin's editor and friend. While Feinberg is best known today for

[10] Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia: Enlarged Edition, 1917 – 1981* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 49-51.
[11] David Haas, *Leningrad's Modernists: Studies in Composition and Musical Thought, 1917 – 1932* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 16.
[12] Haas, 18.

his transcriptions of J.S. Bach, his influence as a pianist and pedagogue should not be overlooked. As a pianist, Feinberg had a unique breadth of interests. He was the first Russian pianist to perform Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* in its entirety and had all of Beethoven's and Scriabin's sonatas in his repertoire. A passionate champion of modern music, Feinberg performed Prokofiev, Stanchinsky, and Myaskovsky both in Russia and abroad. His treatise, *Pianism as Art,*[13] deals with questions of interpretation, technique, style, and aesthetics, not only in regard to established repertoire, but also modern trends that emerged during Feinberg's lifetime. As a prominent member of Moscow's new music scene, Feinberg offers unique insight into the aesthetic views of his circle. *Pianist as Art* is slated to be released in its first complete English translation in March 2021.[14] Excerpts of the book, translated by Lenya Ryzhik and Stephen Emerson, are available online.[15]

Feinberg's output until the 1930s is deeply influenced by Scriabin's style. Along with Nikolay Roslavets, Anatoly Aleksandrov, and Boris Lyatoshinsky, he belongs to the so-called "post-Scriabin" line of Russian music.[16] Connected to Scriabin through his own composition teacher Zhilyayev, Feinberg became a celebrated interpreter of his music, even earning praise from the composer himself.[17] Feinberg's first two Piano Sonatas, his first works for solo piano, were written in 1915, the year of Scriabin's death.[18] His last Piano Sonata, No. 12 Op. 48, was written in 1962, shortly before Feinberg died. Feinberg's lack of recognition as a composer may easily be attributed to the complexity

[13] Samuil Feinberg, *Pianizm kak iskusstvo,* 2nd edition (Moscow: Muzyka, 1969).
[14] https://www.robertrimm.org/books
[15] http://math.stanford.edu/~ryzhik/music.html
[16] Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Era: 1917 – 1991,* 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2017), 28.
[17] Solomon Eichner, "The Life and Legacy of Samuil Feinberg" (DMA diss., University of South Carolina, 2017), 18, retrieved from https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/4104.
[18] Feinberg, 589.

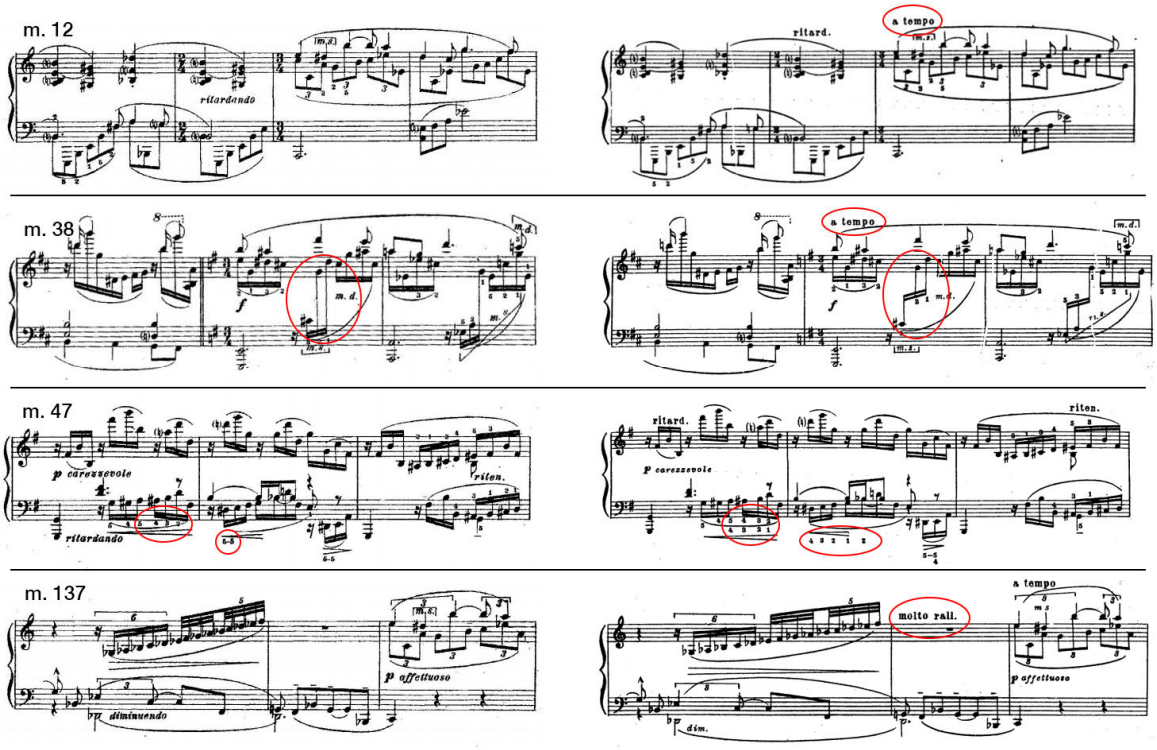
of his works, his reclusive nature, and an almost pathological aversion to self-promotion.[19] Given the lack of scholarly analysis and the complexity of Feinberg's musical language, the Second Sonata and *Berceuse* are discussed below in significant detail.

The Second Sonata, first published in 1923, was corrected and republished in 1957. While the corrected edition was prepared from new plates, as evidenced by occasional visual differences in beaming, the two are remarkably similar, down to the number of measures per line and pagination. The only major revision is the addition of the repeat of the exposition, absent in the first edition. Several missing *a tempo* markings are added in as well, along with the occasional revised fingering, and notably, the *molto rall.* in measure 138. Some differences between the editions are illustrated in Example 1.

The Second Sonata is an example of a particularly Romantic strain of Scriabin's style. The lyrical melodies are embedded within dense chromatic harmonies and complex counterpoint. At first glance, the structure of the single-movement Second Sonata might appear to follow a fairly straightforward sonata form. The primary theme that permeates most of the exposition is interrupted by a clear second theme in measure 29, delineated by new melodic material, rhythmic drive, and a contrasting key. The repeat of the exposition in the 1957 edition is a throwback to the classical sonata form. The development introduces new melodic material but works its way back to the home key in just thirty-three measures. The recapitulation generally follows the structure of the exposition, albeit with some recomposition.

[19] Jonathan Powell, "Feinberg, Samuil," *Grove Music Online* (2001): https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.41242

Ex. 1: Comparison between the first edition (left) and the revised edition (right)



The problem with this interpretation becomes apparent after what is presumed to be the recapitulation, which ends in F♯ major, a double-chromatic mediant away from the home key of A minor. Feinberg manages to quickly return to the home key via parallel keys (F♯ major > F♯ minor > A major > A minor), only to move away to F minor six measures later. After closer inspection it becomes evident that Feinberg's use of the sonata form is merely a decoy; formal unity and dramatic tension are achieved in almost subliminal ways. Feinberg blurs the lines between the traditional sonata sections through thematic transformation; the development serves as an extension of the exposition, whereas the recapitulation includes significant recomposition and a development-like episode before the final re-statement of the closing theme. The formal structure is presented below:

Table 1: Formal plan of Feinberg's Second Piano Sonata, Op. 2.

Section	Exposition		Dev.	Recapitulation				
Themes	PT	ST, PT/CT	Dev.	PT	ST, PT	Dev.	PT/CT	Coda
Measures	1 – 28	29 – 54	55 – 77	78 – 95	96 – 121	122 – 139	140 – 151	152 – 159
Key	Am	Bm – Em	—	Am	C♯m – F♯m	Fm	Am	Am

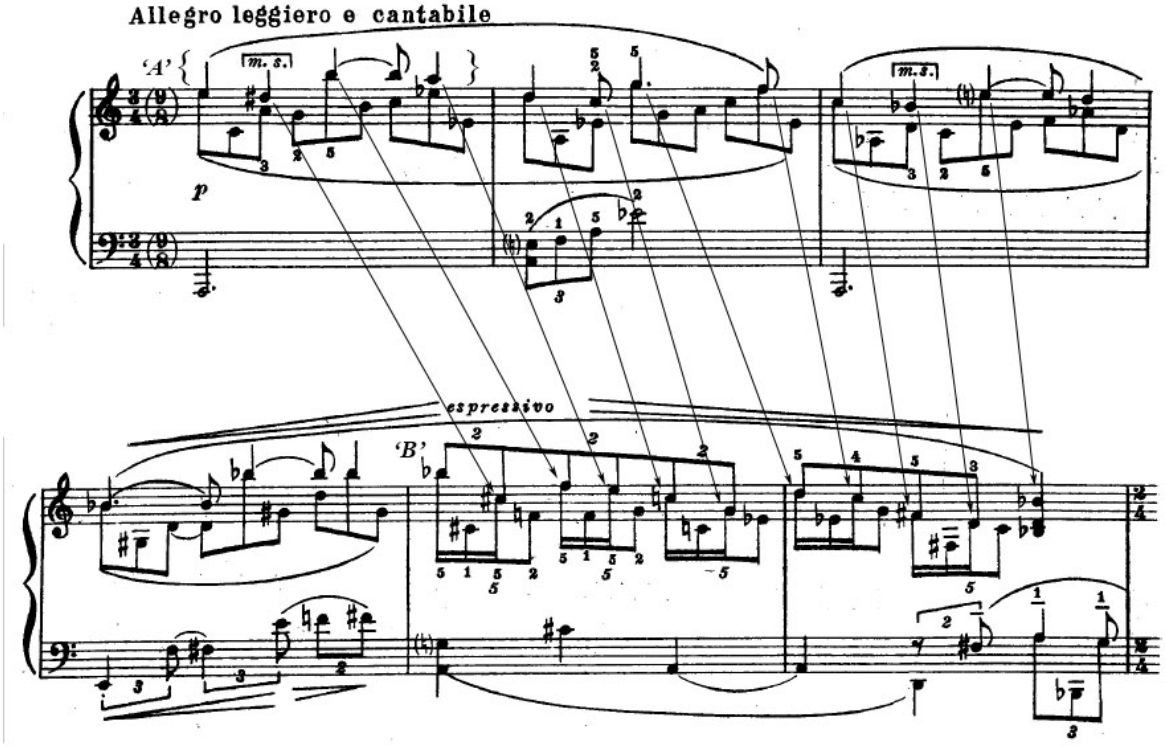
Feinberg seems to draw inspiration from Liszt's Piano Sonata in his use of thematic transformation as a means to unify the work. The material is introduced gradually, with a new idea often derived from a pre-existing motive or kernel, which then evolves throughout the piece. Development is achieved by accumulation and recombination of thematic material.

The primary motive comprises four pitches alternating between narrow and wide intervals (motive "A"). (Ex. 2) The first wide interval – minor sixth – is of particular importance. The minor sixth is the widest interval in the primary theme and only occurs once per presentation – it is always the first wide interval. The second segment of the primary theme (mm. 5 – 14) is derived from its first three measures. Their melodic contours are nearly identical, but the close relationship is obscured by an altered rhythmic design. (Ex. 3) Grosvenor Cooper's system of rhythmic analysis is useful in differentiating the rhythmic flow of these two motives.[20] Measures 1 – 4 are comprised of two repetitions of a dactyl-iamb-amphibrach pattern (strong-weak-weak, weak-strong, weak-strong-weak), whereas measures 8 – 10, which may be called motive "B," fall into

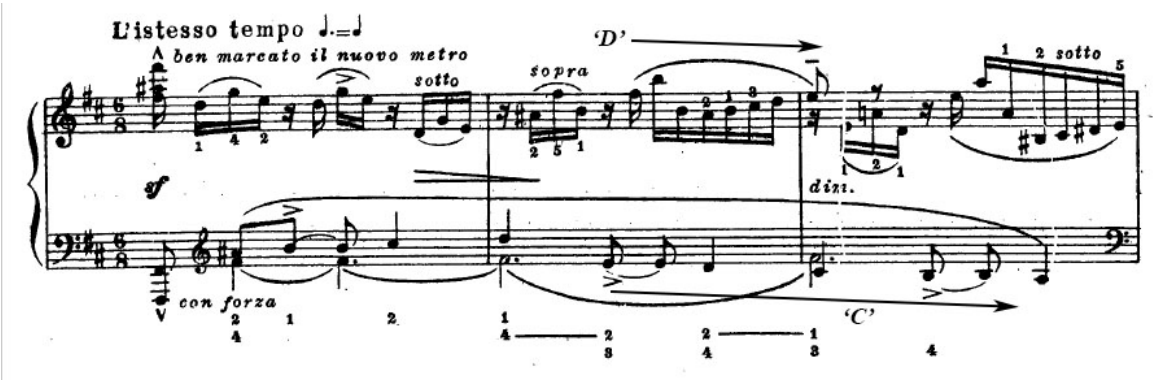
[20] Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

a consistent series of trochees (strong-weak). The rest of the primary theme group is saturated with various permutations and rhythmic variations of motives “A” and “B.” The secondary theme group introduces two important new motives – the stepwise descending motion in the bass (motive “C”) and the sixteenth-note motive in the right hand (motive “D”). (Ex. 4)

Ex. 2, mm. 1 – 3 and Ex. 3, mm. 7 – 9. Motives “A” and “B.”



Ex. 4: mm 29 – 31. Motives “C” and “D.”

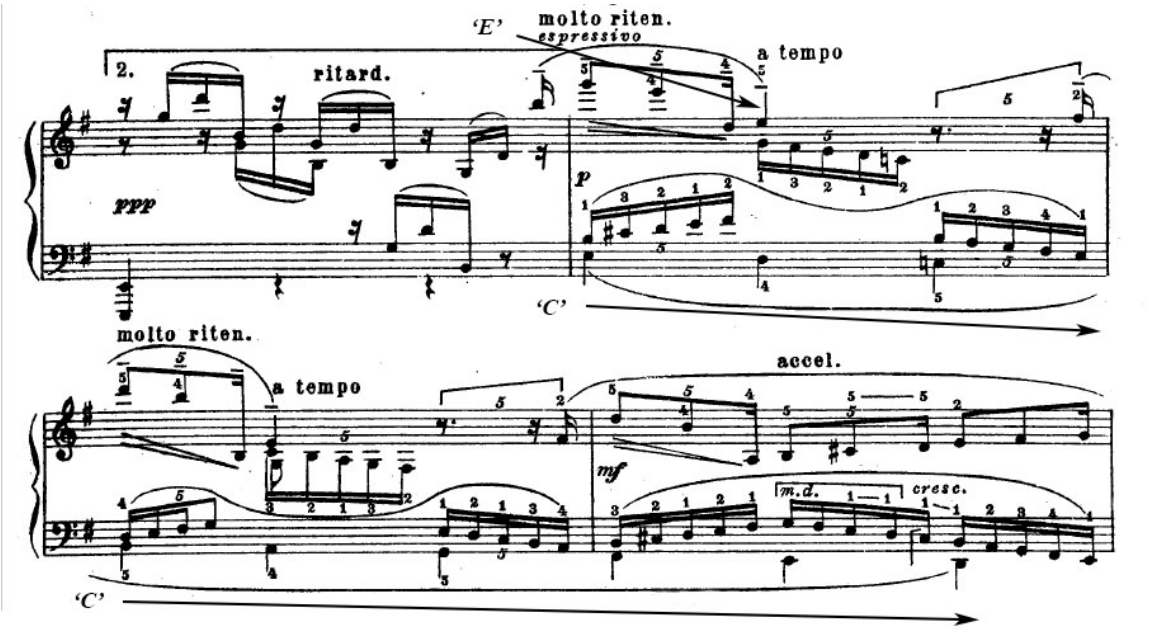


The development section starts out with a new motive (“E”) against a steady backdrop of quintuplet scalar passages. (Ex. 4) Motive “E” is not directly derived from motive “A,” but there are two significant similarities – the opening minor sixth and unstable rhythmic structures. Motive “C” serves as the bass starting at measure 55, while the melody has ascending stepwise motion in the conclusion of the phrase.

The contrary motion created between the “C” motive, the melody, and the quintuplets (m. 57) eventually coalesces into a new motive “F,” which first appears in measure 72. (Ex. 5)

Considering the piece as a whole and the interrelationship between its main motives clarifies the puzzling structures of the recapitulation, as seen in Table 2. Feinberg combines the four main motives (ABCD) in measures 78 – 95, then omits motive “D” from measures 106 – 113, where the closing theme belongs. Motive “D” is replaced by motive “F” in the following section of the recapitulation, analogous to the transitional material at the end of the development (mm. 73 – 77). Motive “F” leads into a reprise of motive “E,” first introduced in the development. The closing theme (mm. 140 – 151) is truncated, but parallels measures 39 – 54 of the exposition.

Ex. 5: mm 54B – 57. Motives “C” and “E.”



Ex. 6: mm 71 – 73. Motive “F.”

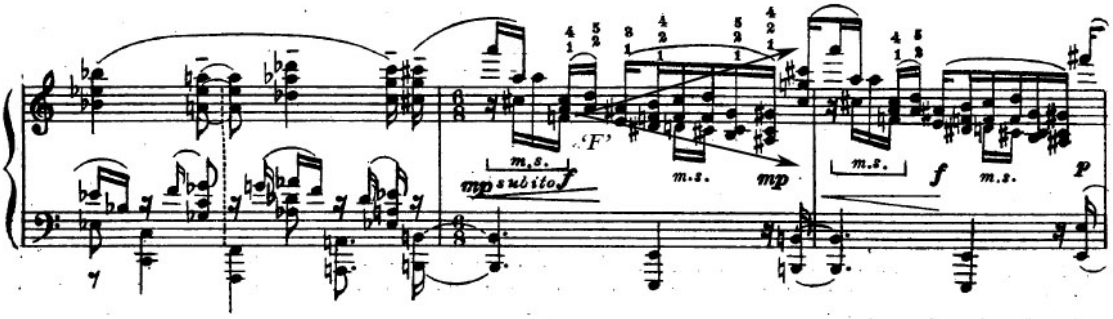


Table 2: Motivic combinations.

Section	Exposition			Development		
Theme	PT	ST	PT/CT	—	—	—
Motive	A B	C D	A D	C E	A D	A F
Measures	1 – 28	29 – 38	39 – 54	55 – 67	68 – 72	73 – 77

Section	Recapitulation				Dev.	Recap.	Coda
Theme	PT	ST	PT	—	—		—
Motive	A B C D	C D	A	A F	A E F	A D	A
Measures	78 – 95	96 – 105	106 – 113	114 – 121	122 – 139	140 – 151	152 – 159

By relying on motivic development, Feinberg eschews traditional sonata form functionality. The extended recapitulation both reaffirms the importance of motive "A" through constant repetition while continuing to develop other motives at the same time. The development section itself carries little weight, except as a means to introduce new material – an expository rather than a developmental function. Renewal of memorable motives allows Feinberg to nimbly manipulate traditional structures, creating sonic interest through formal ambiguity.

Even in his earliest published compositions Feinberg does not shy away from intense chromaticism, complex harmonies, thick textures, sophisticated formal structures, and challenging virtuoso writing. The composer retained these late-Romantic qualities as his style matured in the following two decades, even as the classicist ideas of clarity and

precision became prevalent among his younger contemporaries. In *Berceuse,* Op. 19a, Feinberg experiments with near-total chromaticism and harmonic stasis, the direct opposite of neoclassicism.

Berceuse, published in 1932, begins with a haunting melody that weaves through static, shimmering clouds of sound. The overall impression is something akin to listening to Scriabin's *Le Poème de l'extase* in a state of *poluson* [21] or hypnagogia, the threshold between wakefulness and sleep. *Berceuse* is in ternary form, and much like the Feinberg's Second Sonata, relies on motivic manipulation for both development and cohesion. Eschewing conventional harmonic rhythm and progressions, Feinberg constructs the "A" section from four distinct "arrays" of pitches, each containing almost the entire chromatic scale. These arrays are easiest to describe in terms of the pitches they do not contain; the first array (mm. 1 – 6 and 11 – 18), built on the pitch "E♭," omits the G major triad, the "B♭" array (mm. 7 – 8 and 21 – 22) omits the D minor triad, while the "A♭" array (mm. 9 – 10, and 23 – 26) omits the C major triad. Departing from the established pattern, the "C" array (mm. 19 – 20) only leaves out a single pitch, B. The structural organization of the "A" section (see Table 3) includes two subsections: the first neatly returns to "E♭" array, while the second ends unresolved on A♭, the opening array of the "B" section. The movement of the bass line in the "A" section (I – V – IV – I) contributes to the entrancing sonority and musical unity; the plagal quality is echoed in the "absent" triads of the first three arrays (G – Dm – C). The bass line parallels the recurring opening motive of each phrase of the "A" section: an ascending fifth or sixth

[21] Russian – *полусон*

followed by a descending second. Another important element is the persistent ostinato pattern, the core of each tonal array. The top line of the ostinato comprises three pitches alternating major and minor seconds, and the first pitch of the ostinato is always a tritone above the bass. (Ex. 7) The ostinato slows down as it carries over into the "B" section, while activity in melody intensifies, and an additional accompaniment figure intertwines with the ostinato, although the bass remains mostly on A♭. The melodic material is developed from the recurring melodic motive of the "A" section, as well as the ostinato. The latter is ultimately transformed into an energetic upwards gust in measures 38 and 40, juxtaposed with the original ostinato in measure 39, albeit in a new key area, and the return of the "A" section in measure 41. The closing "A" section starts out with a reprise of measures 15 – 26, except the bass line changes from E♭ – C—B♭ – A♭ to E♭ – C – B♭ – E♭. The final progression from B♭ to E♭, in measures 49 – 50, is the sole instance of a dominant-tonic relationship in *Berceuse*. The "B" section material reappears in measure 54, now centered on E♭, including one final burst of energy in measure 58, followed by a fragmented coda.

Ex. 7: mm. 1 – 5.

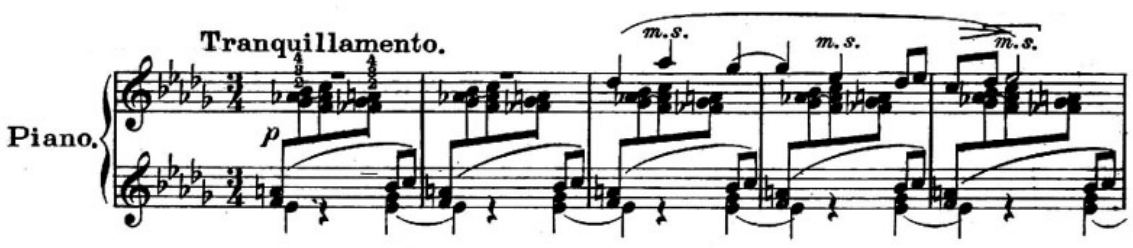


Table 3: Formal plan of *Berceuse,* Op. 19a, "A" section.

Subsection	*a*				*b*			
Array	E♭	B♭	A♭	E♭	E♭	C	B♭	A♭
Measures	1 – 6	7 – 8	9 – 10	11 – 14	15 – 18	19 – 20	21 – 22	23 – 26

While the *Berceuse* is certainly not atonal, conventional harmonic function is lost in the sustained clouds of sound and the pulsating ostinato figure. Feinberg's remarkable ability to write lyrically within a densely chromatic and dissonant texture is one of his defining stylistic characteristics. Starting in the mid-1930s, the composer gradually begins to incorporate more diatonic elements and more transparent textures in his music, culminating in the practically neoclassical Twelfth Sonata, Op. 48, written in 1962.

Vladimir Deshevov (1889—1955)

Born in St. Petersburg in 1889 to a musical family, Deshevov was admitted into the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1908, where he studied piano with Alexander Winkler, who also taught Prokofiev and Leonid Nikolayev. Deshevov's composition professor was Maximilian Steinberg, a student of Rimsky-Korsakov, a classmate of Stravinsky, and the future teacher of Shostakovich.[22] One of Deshevov's most notable compositions is the opera *Ice and Steel*, written in 1929, and most recently staged by the *Saarlaendisches*

[22] Iosif Genrikhovich Rayskin, "Deshevov, Vladimir Mikhaylovich," *Grove Music Online* (2001): https://doi.org /10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.07624

Staatstheater in 2007. Mobilized during World War I, Deshevov did not return to St. Petersburg until 1923, after occupying a variety of official posts in the music education apparatus in Yelizavetgrad and Sevastopol. Much of Deshevov's output during the 1920s consists of piano music, such as *Meditations,* Op. 3, inspired by Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives.*[23]

Rails, Op. 16, started out as incidental music for Boris Paparigopulo's theatrical adaptation of Pierre Hamp's novel *Le Rail*, about a railroad workers' strike and the daily operations of a train station.[24] The incidental music for the play, staged in Leningrad in 1926, was a great success for Deshevov, earning him high praise; one reviewer commented that it surpassed the "obsolete" works of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky,[25] and Milhaud called him a "real genius"[26] upon returning from his 1926 visit to the Soviet Union. *Rails* was originally scored for two violins, double-bass, flute, clarinet, trombone, and piano (with the unusual addition of paper "mutes" across the strings, an early instance of the prepared piano technique), but unlike so much of Deshevov's music for stage, film, and ballet, was never adapted into a concert suite by the composer.[27] The homonymous character piece for piano is the only remaining fragment of Deshevov's incidental music. It follows the trend of modernist urbanist music, in the vein of Alexander Mosolov and George Antheil. The evocation of the rhythmic sound of a steam locomotive in the opening section brings to mind Honegger's *Pacific 231* and Charles-Valentin Alkan's *Le chemin de fer.* The mechanistic drive takes on a background role in

[23] Hakobian, 42
[24] L. Nikitina, "Vladimir Deshevov: 20-e gody," *Sovetskaya Muzyka* 494, 1980: 89.
[25] Hakobian, 53.
[26] Hakobian, 7.
[27] Nikitina, 89.

the middle section, as the right hand presents a folk-like melody. This charming juxtaposition of nature and machine is reminiscent of Frederic Rzewski's *Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues,* composed some 50 years later.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891—1953)

It is hard to overstate the importance of Sergei Prokofiev to the landscape of Russian piano music in the first decades of the 20th century. While Prokofiev's output during the early part of his career can hardly be called "Soviet" music, since he emigrated shortly after the Revolution, his presence in the music scene in the 1910s caused a revolution in its own right. The shockwaves created by Prokofiev's revolutionary style influenced composers long after his departure to the West. Feinberg, a champion of Prokofiev's music, devotes an entire chapter to his style in *Pianism as Art*, alongside Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, and Scriabin. According to Feinberg, Prokofiev's primal and elemental style was a complete negation of all prevailing pianistic trends: the finesse and sophistication of late Scriabin, the colorfulness of French Impressionists, and the full-blooded temperament of Rachmaninov.[28] Prokofiev's brief career in pre-revolutionary Russia served as a bridge between the composer-pianists of the so-called "Silver Age" of Russian culture and the modernists of the 1920s. The works included in this project, along with the First, Second, and Fourth Piano Sonatas, were to become mainstays in Prokofiev's solo recitals in the second half of the 1910s and throughout the 1920s.[29]

[28] Feinberg, 132-133.
[29] Gary O'Shea, "Prokofiev's Early Solo Piano Music: Context, Influences, Forms, Performance" (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2013): 145-154, White Rose eTheses Online.

Prokofiev began his studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1904, at the age of 13. He completed his studies in composition in 1909, then went on to study piano performance, first with Alexandr Winkler, and later with Anna Yesipova, as well as conducting with Nikolai Tcherepnin, graduating in 1914.[30]

The *Sarcasms,* Op. 17, were written between 1912 and 1914, the final two years of Prokofiev's studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. These eclectic miniatures pack dry humor, lyricism, harmonic innovation, mechanistic effects, and a nearly deranged "laughing fit" (in No. 5), into neat traditional forms. Feinberg remarks on Prokofiev's ability to apply expanded harmonies to classical architecture in *Sarcasms*, rather than phantom-like figurations.[31] The *Sarcasms* beautifully illustrate their composer's inner dichotomy of the traditionalist versus the innovator. That is to say, Prokofiev sought to find his voice within the framework of classical ideals—"precision in thematic material, clarity of expression and integration of form"[32]—rather than superficial sound effects.

The *Visions Fugitives,* composed between 1915 and 1917, have an almost impressionistic character. Indeed, much like the French Impressionist composers, who found inspiration in the Symbolist poetry of Verlaine and Mallarmé, these pieces were influenced by a Russian Symbolist poet, Konstantin Balmont (1867 - 1942). Balmont's poetry was a frequent source for the composer; Prokofiev wrote thirteen art songs on his poems between 1909 and 1921 (Opp. 7, 9, 23, and 36), in addition to the cantata *They Are Seven,* Op. 30. The actual inspiration for the title of *Visions Fugitives* is the poem "I do

[30] Dorothea Redepenning, "Prokofiev, Sergey," *Grove Music Online* (2001): https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22402
[31] Feinberg, 551.
[32] Sergei Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907-1914: Prodigious Youth,* trans. Anthony Phillips (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), 258.

not know wisdom."[33] The relevant lines of the poem – "In each fugitive vision I see worlds / Full of the changing play of rainbows" – perfectly capture the spirit of Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives.* In his discussion of the cycle, Feinberg finds echoes of the composer's unique brand of neoclassicism, including an imitation of Viennese classical style in Nos. 8 and 16, and that of J.S. Bach in No. 9.[34] Despite being written over a span of three years, the final order of the *Visions* evidences Prokofiev's intention of their performance as a set, rather than a loose collection of pieces.

Prokofiev's Third Piano Sonata, along with the Fourth, was composed in 1917. Both sonatas, subtitled *From Old Notebooks,* can be traced to the early sonatas he composed in 1907 and 1908,[35] during his time at the conservatory.[36] Prokofiev's predilection for classical forms is readily apparent in both sonatas, even if the tonal language and texture is not so obviously "neoclassical" as in the "Classical" Symphony No. 1, Op. 25, composed the same year. The single-movement Third Sonata alternates an energetic *perpetuum mobile* first subject with a lyrical second subject. The two are reconciled in the recapitulation, where the second subject transforms into a triumphant quasi-fanfare. The Third and Fourth Piano Sonatas, and *Visions Fugitives,* were premiered by Prokofiev in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) in April of 1918. A few weeks later, with the blessing of Anatoly Lunacharsky, Prokofiev took the Trans-Siberian train to Vladivostok and left Russia.[37] He would return permanently in 1936, just as the suppression of "formalist" music by the Soviet authorities began.

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[33] *Я не знаю мудрости,* 1902.
[34] Feinberg, 549.
[35] O'Shea, 72.
[36] Redepenning.
[37] Daniel Jaffé, *Sergey Prokofiev* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), 63-64.

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906—1975)

A titanic figure in the music scene throughout most of the Soviet era, Shostakovich had an amazing ability to reinvent himself when so many of his contemporaries fell out of relevance with the changing winds of Party aesthetics. He was considered "ideologically the most Soviet composer"[38] by some of his contemporaries in the 1920s, in large part due to the fact that he was the first major composer fully trained after the revolution. Shostakovich was publicly condemned in "Muddle Instead of Music" in 1936, and the widespread denunciations of "formalism" that followed. The birth of the Party-approved Socialist Realism in 1932, however vaguely defined in relation to music, marked the beginning of the end of a time of intense musical innovation and freedom.

Written in 1922, in the middle of his studies at the Petrograd (St. Peterburg) Conservatory, the *Three Fantastic Dances* became Shostakovich's first published work in 1926. While the *Dances* are written in a conventional musical language, some tendencies of Shostakovich's mature style are already in evidence; in particular, the choice of the dance genre itself, the dry humor, and rhythmic vitality. The third dance of the set, a polka, has a peculiar similarity of spirit to Stravinsky's *Danse Russe* from *Petrouchka,* although obviously the two are different in scope and complexity.

The rarely performed *Aphorisms* belong to Shostakovich's brief foray into *avant-garde* in the late 1920s. *Aphorisms* was composed shortly after Shostakovich's return from the First Chopin Competition in Warsaw in 1927.[39] Other works from this creative

[38] Nikolay Malkov, "Ob avtore 'Nosa,'" *Rabochiy i teatr 3* (1930): 11, quoted in Hakobian*,* 60.
[39] Laurel Fay and David Fanning, "Shostakovich, Dmitry," *Grove Music Online* (2001): https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.52560

phase include the First Piano Sonata (1926), and the opera *The Nose,* written in 1927-28 and premiered in 1930. Much like in *The Nose,* here Shostakovich revels in the humor of the absurd; some movements bear titles wildly incongruous with their musical content (the "Nocturne," for example, has a violently dissonant character), others are a grotesque mockery of their prototypes. In particular, the "Etude" (No. 6) is a parody of ubiquitous technical exercises, and the "Dance of Death" (No. 7) ridicules the overuse of the quotation of the *Dies Irae* plainchant. The pointillistic "Canon" (No. 8) appears to be a prototype for the octet of porters reading newspaper advertisements at the end of Act II, Scene V of *The Nose.* Curiously, out of the six movements of Shostakovich's last String Quartet, No. 15, four *(Elegy, Serenade, Nocturne,* and *Funeral March)* share their titles with the movements from *Aphorisms*. String Quartet No. 11 also contains a *Recitative,* an *Etude,* and an *Elegy.*

Shostakovich wrote the *24 Preludes,* Op. 34 in just over two months (December 30, 1932 – March 2, 1933) and premiered them on May 24 at the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory.[40] The *24 Preludes* were written as the composer was considering resuming his activities as a concert pianist; Shostakovich had not performed in public in almost three years.[41] The set was his first work for solo piano since *Aphorisms* and would become his last work for solo piano for the next ten years. Modeled after Chopin's *24 Preludes,* Op. 28 in their tonal plan (circle of fifths, alternating major and relative minor), Shostakovich's *Preludes* offer a kaleidoscopic variety of characters and styles, from the austere to the fantastical, and from the grotesque to the profound. Many of the stylistic

[40] Sofia Moshevich, *Shostakovich's music for piano solo: interpretation and performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 43.
[41] Ibid.

elements of *Aphorisms* are reimagined in the *Preludes* in a more mature and musically accessible language. Compare, for instance, the counterpoint of *Aphorism* No. 8 and *Prelude* No. 4, or the parodistic *Etude* of *Aphorism* No. 6 and *Prelude* No. 5.[42] While the *Preludes,* Op. 34 are eclipsed by their younger sibling, the monumental *Preludes and Fugues,* Op. 87, the *Preludes* are musical gems in their own right, and a testament to Shostakovich's extraordinary craftsmanship and creative force.

Conclusion

In addition to the obvious fact that the lack of state intervention in artistic matters up until the early 1930s was a boon for Soviet composers, the figure of the composer-pianist played an important role in the development of Russian piano music in the early twentieth century. Every one of the composers featured in this project was an accomplished pianist; however, their legacy was uneven. Shostakovich's and Prokofiev's pianistic careers were certainly eclipsed by their reputation as composers, while Feinberg's influence as a pianist and pedagogue took precedence over his compositions. Meanwhile, Deshevov, among many other 1920s modernists, faded into obscurity largely due to his inability to adapt to the changing aesthetic mandate of High Stalinism.

This project presents but a small fraction of the solo piano repertoire created by the remarkable innovative composers of early twentieth-century Russia. A number of these composers failed to remain relevant in the post-1936 political climate and have thus vanished from history books. Yet their works offer a wealth of exciting new repertoire for

[42] See also the mockery of technical exercises in the third movement of Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto, starting at measure 109.

pianists. While interest in these compositions has risen significantly in the past decades, there is still much work to be done in terms of preparation of reliable editions, performance practice, and availability of modern recordings.

Appendix A
Program Notes

CD I:

Samuil Feinberg (1890 - 1962)

Born in Odessa, Feinberg moved with his family to Moscow in 1894. He studied piano at the Moscow Conservatory with Alexander Goldenweiser and composition with Nikolai Zhilyayev, Scriabin's editor and friend. While Feinberg is best known today for his transcriptions of J.S. Bach, his influence as a pianist and pedagogue should not be overlooked. Feinberg's lack of recognition as a composer may easily be attributed to the complexity of his works, his reclusive nature, and an almost pathological aversion to self-promotion. As a pianist, Feinberg had a unique breadth of interests. He was the first Russian pianist to perform Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* in its entirety and had all of Beethoven's and Scriabin's sonatas in his repertoire. Feinberg was a passionate champion of modern music, performing Scriabin, Prokofiev, Stanchinsky, and Myaskovsky both in Russia and abroad. His treatise on interpretation and style, *Pianism as Art,* will be available in its first complete English translation in March 2021. Excerpts of the book, translated by Lenya Ryzhik and Stephen Emerson, are available online.

Sonata No. 2, Op. 2 (1915)

Feinberg's output until the 1930s is deeply influenced by Scriabin's style. Along with Roslavetz, Aleksandrov, and Lyatoshinsky, he belongs to the so-called "post-Scriabin" line of Russian music. Connected to Scriabin connection through his own composition teacher Zhilyayev, Feinberg became a celebrated interpreter of his music, even earning praise from the composer himself. There is something symbolic in the fact that Feinberg's first two Piano Sonatas, Opp. 1 and 2, were written in 1915, the year of Scriabin's death.

The Second Sonata is an example of a particularly Romantic strain of Scriabin's style. The lyrical melodies are embedded within dense chromatic harmonies and complex counterpoint. At first glance, the single-movement sonata appears to follow a traditional sonata-form structure. However, Feinberg extensively employs thematic transformation and recombines motives in such a way as to subvert convention.

Berceuse, Op. 19a (1927)

Almost impressionistic in character, the *Berceuse* begins with a haunting melody that weaves through static, shimmering clouds of sound, based on an *ostinato* pattern of three notes. The middle section slows down and breaks up the

underlying *ostinato* and introduces the ascending melody that reappears just before the end. The overall impression is something akin to listening to Scriabin's *Le Poème de l'extase* in a state of *poluson,* or hypnagogia, the threshold between wakefulness and sleep. True to its name, the *Berceuse* ends with two disjointed utterances of the *ostinato* before sinking into oblivion.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891 - 1953)

It is hard to overstate the importance of Sergei Prokofiev to the landscape of Russian piano music in the first decades of the 20th century. While Prokofiev's output during the early part of his career can hardly be called "Soviet" music, since he emigrated shortly after the Revolution, his presence in the music scene in the 1910s caused a revolution in its own right. Feinberg, a champion of Prokofiev's music, devotes an entire chapter to his style in *Pianism as Art*, alongside Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, and Scriabin. According to Feinberg, Prokofiev's primal and elemental style was a complete negation of all prevailing pianistic trends: the finesse and sophistication of late Scriabin, the colorfulness of French Impressionists, and the full-blooded temperament of Rachmaninov. The works featured in this project, along with the First, Second, and Fourth Piano Sonatas, were to become mainstays in Prokofiev's solo recitals in the second half of the 1910s and throughout the 1920s. Prokofiev's brief career in pre-revolutionary Russia served as a bridge between the composer-pianists of the so-called "Silver Age" of Russian music, and the modernists of the 1920s.

Sarcasms, Op. 17 (1912-14)

I. Tempestoso
II. Allegro rubato
III. Allegro precipitato
IV. Smanioso
V. Precipitosissimo

The *Sarcasms* were written during the final two years of Prokofiev's studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. These eclectic miniatures pack dry humor, lyricism, harmonic innovation, mechanistic effects, and a nearly deranged "laughing fit" (in No. 5), into neat, traditional forms. Feinberg remarks on Prokofiev's ability to apply expanded harmonies to classical architecture in the *Sarcasms*, rather than phantom-like figurations. The *Sarcasms* beautifully illustrate their composer's inner dichotomy of the traditionalist vs. the innovator. That is to say, Prokofiev sought to find his voice within the framework of classical ideals—"precision in thematic material, clarity of expression and integration of form"—rather than superficial sound effects.

Visions Fugitives, Op. 22 (1915-17)

I. Lentamente

II. Andante
III. Allegretto
IV. Animato
V. Molto giocoso
VI. Con eleganza
VII. (arpa) Pittoresco
VIII. Comodo
IX. Allegretto tranquillo
X. Ridicolosamente
XI. Con vivacità
XII. Assai moderato
XIII. Allegretto
XIV. Feroce
XV. Inquieto
XVI. Dolente
XVII. Poetico
XVIII. Con una dolce lentezza
XIX. Presto agitatissimo e molto accentuato
XX. Lento

The *Visions Fugitives* have an almost impressionistic character. Indeed, much like the French Impressionist composers, who found inspiration in the Symbolist poetry of Verlaine and Mallarmé, these pieces were influenced by a Russian Symbolist poet, Konstantin Balmont. The actual inspiration for the title is the poem "I do not know wisdom." The relevant lines of the poem – "In each fugitive vision I see worlds / Full of the changing play of rainbows" – perfectly capture the spirit of Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives.* In his discussion of the cycle, Feinberg finds echoes of the composer's unique brand of neoclassicism, including an imitation of a Viennese classical style in Nos. 8 and 16, and that of J.S. Bach in No. 9. While the *Visions* were written in a span of three years, their final order presumes their performance as a set, rather than chronological or merely a collection of short pieces.

Sonata No. 3, Op. 28 (1917)

Prokofiev's Third Piano Sonata, along with its littermate (the composer affectionately referred to his compositions "puppies" in letters to Nikolai Myaskovsky), the Fourth, was composed in 1917. Both sonatas, subtitled *From Old Notebooks,* can be traced to the early sonatas he composed in 1907 and 1908, during his time at the conservatory. Prokofiev's predilection for classical forms is readily apparent in both sonatas, even if the tonal language and texture is not so obviously "neoclassical" as in the "Classical" Symphony No. 1, Op. 25, composed the same year. The single-movement Third Sonata alternates an energetic *perpetuum mobile* first subject with a lyrical second subject. The two

are reconciled in the recapitulation, when the second subject transforms into a triumphant quasi-fanfare. The Third and Fourth Sonatas, and *Visions Fugitives,* were premiered by Prokofiev in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) in April of 1918. A few weeks later, with the blessing of Anatoly Lunacharsky, the People's Commisar for Enlightenment, Prokofiev took the Trans-Siberian train to Vladivostok and left Russia. He would return permanently in 1936, just as the suppression of "formalist" music by the Soviet authorities began.

Vladimir Deshevov (1889 - 1955)

Born in 1889 in St. Petersburg to a musical family, Deshevov was admitted to the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1908, where he studied piano with Alexander Winkler, who also taught Prokofiev, and Leonid Nikolayev. Deshevov's composition professor was Maximilian Steinberg, a students of Rimsky-Korsakov, a classmate of Stravinsky, and the future teacher of Shostakovich. One of Deshevov's most notable compositions is the opera *Ice and Steel*, written in 1929 and most recently staged by the *Saarlaendisches Staatstheater* in 2007. Mobilized during World War I, Deshevov did not return to St. Petersburg until 1923, after occupying a variety of official posts in the music education apparatus. Much of Deshevov's output during the 1920s consists of piano music, such as *Meditations,* Op. 3, inspired by Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives.*

Rails, Op. 16 (1926)

Rails started out as incidental music for a stage adaptation of Pierre Hamp's novel *Le Rail*, about a railroad workers' strike and the daily operations of a train station. The incidental music was a great success for Deshevov, earning him high praise; one reviewer commented that it surpassed the "obsolete" works of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, and Milhaud called him a "real genius" upon returning from his 1926 visit to the Soviet Union. The piano piece *Rails* follows the trend of modernist urbanist music, in the vein of Alexander Mosolov and George Antheil. The evocation of the rhythmic sound of a steam locomotive in the opening section brings to mind Honegger's Pacific 231 and Charles-Valentin Alkan's Le chemin de fer. The mechanistic drive takes on a background role in the middle section, as the right hand presents a folk-like melody. This charming juxtaposition of nature and machine is reminiscent of Frederic Rzewski's Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues, composed some 50 years later.

CD II:

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)

Shostakovich, of course, hardly requires an introduction. A titanic figure in the music scene throughout most of the Soviet era, Shostakovich had an amazing ability to reinvent

himself when so many of his contemporaries fell out of relevance with the changing winds of Party aesthetics. Considered "ideologically the most Soviet composer" by some of his contemporaries in the 1920s, Shostakovich was publicly condemned in the widespread denunciations of "formalism" that followed the "Muddle Instead of Music" editorial in 1936. The birth of the Party-approved Socialist Realism, however vaguely defined in relation to music, marked the beginning of the end of a time of intense musical innovation and freedom.

Three Fantastic Dances, Op. 5 (1922)

I. Allegretto
II. Andantino
III. Allegretto

Written between the ages of 14 and 16, the *Three Fantastic Dances* became Shostakovich's first published work in 1926. While the *Dances* are written in a conventional musical language, some tendencies of Shostakovich's mature style are already in evidence; in particular, the choice of the dance genre itself, the dry humor, and rhythmic vitality. The third dance of the set, a polka, has a peculiar similarity of spirit to Stravinsky's *Danse Russe* from *Petrouchka,* though obviously the two are different in scope and complexity.

Aphorisms, Op. 13 (1927)

I. Recitative
II. Serenade
III. Nocturne
IV. Elegy
V. Marche funebre
VI. Etude
VII. Dance of Death
VIII. Canon
IX. Legend
X. Lullaby

The rarely performed *Aphorisms* belong to Shostakovich's brief foray into *avant-garde* in the late 1920s. Other works from this creative phase include the First Piano Sonata (1926), and the opera *The Nose,* written in 1927-28 and premiered in 1930. Much like in *The Nose,* here Shostakovich revels in the humor of the absurd; some movements bear titles wildly incongruous with their musical content (the "Nocturne," for example, has a violently dissonant character), others are a grotesque mockery of their prototypes. In particular, the "Etude" (No. 6) is a parody of ubiquitous technical exercises, and the "Dance of Death" (No. 7) ridicules the overuse of the quotation of the *Dies Irae* plainchant. The pointillistic "Canon," (No. 8), appears to be the prototype for the octet of porters reading newspaper advertisements at the end of Act II, Scene V of *The Nose*. Curiously, out of the six movements of Shostakovich's last String Quartet, No. 15, four

(*Elegy*, *Serenade*, *Nocturne*, and *Funeral March*) share their name titles with the movements from *Aphorisms*. String Quartet No. 11 also contains a *Recitative*, an *Etude*, and an *Elegy*.

24 Preludes, Op. 34 (1933)

I. Moderato
II. Allegretto
III. Andante
IV. Moderato
V. Allegro vivace
VI. Allegretto
VII. Andante
VIII. Allegretto
IX. Presto
X. Moderato non troppo
XI. Allegretto
XII. Allegro non troppo
XIII. Moderato
XIV. Adagio
XV. Allegretto
XVI. Andantino
XVII. Largo
XVIII. Allegretto
XIX. Andantino
XX. Allegretto furioso
XXI. Allegretto poco moderato
XXII. Adagio
XXIII. Moderato
XXIV. Allegretto

Shostakovich wrote the *24 Preludes,* Op. 34 in just over two months (December 30, 1932 – March 2, 1933) and premiered them on May 24 at the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. This would become his last solo piano work for the next ten years. Modeled after Chopin's *24 Preludes,* Op. 28 in their tonal plan (circle of fifths, alternating major and relative minor), Shostakovich's *Preludes* offer a kaleidoscopic variety of characters and styles, from the austere to the fantastical, and from the grotesque to the profound. Many of the stylistic elements of *Aphorisms* are reimagined in the *Preludes* in a more mature and musically accessible language. Compare, for instance, the counterpoint of *Aphorism* No. 8 and *Prelude* No. 4, or the parodistic *Etude* of *Aphorism* No. 6 and *Prelude* No. 5. While the *Preludes,* Op. 34 are eclipsed by their younger sibling, the monumental *Preludes and Fugues,* Op. 87, the *Preludes* are musical gems in their own right, and a testament to Shostakovich's extraordinary craftsmanship and creative force.

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