



DOCTORAL DISSERTATION / DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTISTIC WORK

in the field of arts

in the discipline of musical arts

**REALIZATION OF THE IDEA OF INTERPRETATION'S CO-CREATION IN
PIANO DUETS BASED ON *FANTASIE-TABLEAUX* OP. 5
AND *SUITE* OP. 17 BY S. RACHMANINOV.**

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Szczecin 2024

PART ONE

ARTISTIC WORK

ARTISTIC WORK - CD RECORDING:

SERGEI RACHMANINOV - SUITES FOR TWO PIANOS

Performers:

Dominik Wizjan

piano

Marianna Shirinyan

piano

Sound engineering:

Federico Mattioli / Marco Pomelli

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of the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen

on Steinway & Sons pianos (model D).



SUITES FOR TWO PIANOS

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Suite No.1 for two pianos "Fantaisie-Tableaux", Op.5

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 1 | I Barcarolle. Allegretto | 8.30 |
| 2 | II La nuit... l'amour. Adagio sostenuto | 6.34 |
| 3 | III Les larmes. Largo di molto | 6.25 |
| 4 | IV Pâques. Allegro maestoso | 2.55 |

Suite No.2 for two pianos, Op.17

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------|
| 5 | I Introduction. Alla marcia | 4.07 |
| 6 | II Valse. Presto | 5.59 |
| 7 | III Romance. Andantino | 7.35 |
| 8 | IV Tarantelle. Presto | 6.00 |

Total time 48.09

Marianna Shirinyan, *piano*

Dominik Wizjan, *piano*



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PROGRAMME

S. Rachmaninov - Suite for two pianos *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5

<i>Barcarolle. Allegretto</i>	08:30
<i>La nuit... l'amour. Adagio sostenuto</i>	06:34
<i>Les larmes. Largo di molto</i>	06:25
<i>Pâques. Allegro maestoso</i>	02:55

S. Rachmaninov - Suite for two pianos Op. 17

<i>Introduction. Alla marcia</i>	04:07
<i>Valse. Presto</i>	05:59
<i>Romance. Andantino</i>	07:35
<i>Tarantelle. Presto</i>	06:00

Marianna Shirinyan - Piano I

Dominik Wizjan - Piano II

PART TWO

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Introduction

Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one.

(Franz Joseph von Munch-Bellinghausen)

The piano duet, one of the most challenging and demanding genres of chamber music, offers exceptional artistic possibilities, both technically and interpretatively. The collaboration between two pianists requires not only precise synchronization but, above all, a deep understanding of the musical dialogue that becomes the heart and essence of the performance interpretation. The correlation between the two pianists presents a fascinating field for exploring the idea of co-creating a musical interpretation.

In the history of music, works for two pianos¹ constitute a negligible number of the entire piano repertoire. Even composers considered to be the greatest geniuses have only a few works specifically written for this instrumental combination². Counting all the compositions intended for this particular type of chamber music in the works of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert, or Chopin, one can find only eight pieces in total³. The oldest surviving work for two keyboard instruments is considered to be the *Alman for two virginals* composed by Giles Farnaby⁴.

In the Baroque era, among the composers who wrote works for two keyboard instruments, in this case, harpsichords, are François 'Le Grand' Couperin (composed *Allemande à deux Clavecins* in 1713) and Armand-Louise Couperin (four compositions for two harpsichords - *Symphonie De Clavecins* and three *Deuxième Quatuor A Deux Clavecins*, of which only the second survived); Georg Friedrich Händel (*Suite à deux Clavecins* HWV 446); from the Bach family—Johann Sebastian (*Concerto* in C major BWV 1062 and *Contrapunctus XIII* from *Die Kunst der Fuge* BWV 1080 - a version for two keyboard instruments), Wilhelm Friedemann (*Sonata* in F major for two harpsichords F.10 and *Concerto* in E-flat major for two harpsichords F.46), Carl Philipp Emanuel (two *Sonatinas* - No. 1 in

¹ Previously harpsichords or clavichords.

² This refers to compositions originally intended for two keyboard instruments, not transcriptions or other types of arrangements.

³ J. S. Bach – two works, J. Haydn – one, W. A. Mozart – three, L. van Beethoven – zero, J. Brahms – one, F. Schubert – zero, F. Chopin – one.

⁴ Giles Farnaby (c. 1563-1640) – English composer.

D major H.453 and No. 2 in B-flat major H.459, as well as two double *Concertos* - F major H.410 and E-flat major H.479), and Johann Christian (*Sonata* in G major Op. 15 No. 5)⁵.

Despite the significant development of music written for four hands during the Classical period, mainly due to the advancement of keyboard instruments themselves and the expansion of their range, as well as the increased importance of music publishing, the number of works written for two keyboard instruments remained small. In 1777, Dr. Charles Burney, in the preface to *Four Sonatas or Duets for two Performers on one Piano Forte or Harpsichord*⁶, mentions the superiority of the duet for four hands over the duet for two instruments, mainly because: *it was incredibly rare for someone to have two instruments in one room and the issue of modern instruments going out of tune quickly*⁷. Among the works written for two keyboard instruments during this period, we can mention Joseph Haydn's *Concerto* in G major for two harpsichords Hob. XVIII: G2, Muzio Clementi's *Sonata* in B-flat major Op. 1bis and *Sonata* in B-flat major Op. 12, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Sonata* in D major for two pianos K. 448, *Fugue* in C minor K. 426, and *Concerto* for Two Pianos in E-flat major K. 365.

In the Romantic era, the use of two pianos gained new significance, including the reduction of orchestral works, such as symphonies, or transcriptions of orchestral parts in piano concertos. Unfortunately, the proportion of works for two pianos in comparison to solo piano compositions still did not change. Franz Schubert, who alongside Mozart is considered one of the greatest creators of works for four hands, did not compose any piece for two pianos. Among the composers whose work includes pieces for two pianos are Felix Mendelssohn with his two *Concertos* for two pianos—No. 1 in E major and No. 2 in A-flat major, Robert Schumann (*Andante and Variations* for Two Pianos in B-flat major Op. 46), Frédéric Chopin (*Rondo* in C major for Two Pianos Op. 73), Franz Liszt (*Concerto Pathétique* S. 258), Johannes Brahms (*Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn* Op. 56b), and in later years, Anton Arensky (five *Suites* for Two Pianos - No. 1 Op. 15, No. 2 Op. 23, No. 3 Op. 33, No. 4 Op. 62, No. 5 Op. 65), and Sergei Rachmaninov (*Russian Rhapsody*, two *Suites* for Two Pianos Op. 5 and Op. 17).

This dissertation is an analysis of the process of co-creating an interpretation in a piano duet based on two works by Sergei Rachmaninov: *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5 and *Suite* Op. 17. These compositions are

⁵ Ferguson, H., *Keyboard Duets: From the 16th to the 20th Century for One and Two Pianos : an Introduction*, ed. Oxford University Press, New York 1995, pp. 2-5.

⁶ These works are considered the first-ever published pieces for four hands.

⁷ Burney Ch., *4 Sonatas or Duets For 2 Performers on 1 Piano Forte or Harpsichord*, ed. R. Bremner, London 1777.

characterized not only by technical virtuosity but also by deep emotional content and rich harmonies, making them ideal material for studying the process of co-creation in interpretation.

To date, numerous studies on the life and work of Sergei Rachmaninov have been published, but very few delve into a deep formal and stylistic analysis of the *Suites* for two pianos. The most important publications include:

- *Rachmaninow - symfonik nieznany: związki intertekstualne w twórczości symfonicznej Sergiusza Rachmaninowa*, by Iwona Świdnicka;
- *Sergei Rachmaninov - A lifetime in music*, by Sergei Bertennson;
- *Rachmaninow*, by Mikołaj Bażanow;
- *Rachmaninoff: composer, pianist, conductor*, by Barrie Martyn;
- *Sergei Rachmaninoff*, by Rebecca Mitchell;
- *Rachmaninoff and His World*, by Philip Ross Bullock;
- *Sergiusz Rachmaninow w Literaturze*, by Jacek Gębski⁸.

There are numerous recordings of Sergei Rachmaninov's compositions, among which particular attention is drawn to the recordings⁹ made by the composer himself, who recorded all four piano concertos and the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with *The Philadelphia Orchestra* between 1929 and 1949¹⁰.

The main part of my doctoral dissertation is the artistic work - the CD recording "*Sergei Rachmaninov - Suites for Two Pianos*." During the recording, which was released on CD in 2022, I was joined by pianist Marianna Shirinyan, performing the part of the first piano.

The CD includes the following works:

S. Rachmaninov – *Suite for two pianos Fantaisie-Tableaux Op. 5*

Barcarolle. Allegretto

La nuit... l'amour. Adagio sostenuto

Les larmes. Largo di molto

Pâques. Allegro maestoso

⁸ Publishing details are provided in the *Bibliography*.

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7yAbSgOlml> [access: 10.08.2024].

¹⁰ Conductor – Eugene Ormandy (*Piano Concertos No. 1, 3, 4*); Conductor – Leopold Stokowski (*Piano Concerto No. 2 and Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*).

S. Rachmaninov – *Suite for two pianos Op. 17*

Introduction. Alla marcia

Valse. Presto

Romance. Andantino

Tarantelle. Presto

While working on the preparation of both suites, I was intrigued by the idea of co-creation in a piano duet, arising from the construction of these compositions. The analysis of their formal structure and performance technique was aimed at answering the following research questions:

- What is the formal structure of the described works?
- What are the similarities and differences between the described works?
- How is the relationship between the sound of the first and second piano parts distributed?
- Do the parts of both pianos create a single musical image?

The goal of this doctoral dissertation is to find answers to these questions, to investigate the phenomenon of co-creation of a musical work by two pianist-artists, and how their mutual interaction affects the final musical image of the compositions. I will also discuss how, through joint decisions regarding tempo, dynamics, phrasing, and articulation, it is possible to realize the idea of co-creation in interpretation and present practical performance aspects that may serve as a valuable guide for other performers.

In my work, I used a historical-analytical method, drawing on available sources in Polish, English, and Russian. All the musical examples of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* for two pianos Op. 5 and *Suite for Two Pianos* Op. 17 used in this work, as well as during the preparation of the recording, come from:

- Rachmaninov S., *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, ed. A. Gutheil, Moscow 1894.
- Rachmaninov S., *Suite* Op. 17, ed. Muzgiz, Moscow 1948.



Illustration 1, Portrait of Sergei Rachmaninov by Donald Sheridan.

1. Fantaisie-Tableaux Op. 5

Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninov was born on March 20/April 1¹¹, 1873, in Semyonovo in the Novgorod Governorate in a musical family. His grandfather, Arkady Alexandrovich Rachmaninov, was a student of John Field¹², and both of his parents were pianists. It was his mother, a graduate of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, who gave him his first piano lessons. He continued his studies under the guidance of Anna Ornatskaya, a teacher brought in by his grandfather, and at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. In 1885, at the urging of his cousin Alexander Siloti¹³, Rachmaninov began studying at the Moscow Conservatory in the piano class of Nikolai Zverev¹⁴, and later also under Alexander Siloti. He studied counterpoint with Sergei Taneyev¹⁵ and composition with Anton Arensky¹⁶.

In the composer's correspondence from January 10th, 1891, one can find the first mention of a composition for two pianos. In a letter to Natalia Skalon, he writes: *I have started working on a piece for two pianos, which I intend to perform on Monday or Tuesday together with Sasha*^{17 18}. He is referring to the *Russian Rhapsody*, which ultimately premiered during a student concert in the fall of that year, performed by the composer and Joseph Lhevinne¹⁹. Alexander Goldenweiser recalled:

Someone told him that nothing could be written on a certain Russian theme. He wrote a composition in E minor (in the form of variations). It was quite good music. I remember that during one of the charity concerts for our colleagues - we often organized such concerts - Rachmaninov and Lhevinne performed this piece for two pianos; the piece ended with a variation of octaves, alternately by one pianist and then the other, who increased the tempo with each change, and everyone watched

¹¹ The double dating is due to Russia's transition from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1918. March 20 is the date according to the Julian calendar, while April 1 is the Gregorian date. The Julian calendar is still used in the Orthodox Church.

¹² John Field - Irish pianist, composer, pedagogue; creator of the nocturne genre.

¹³ Aleksandr Iljich Siloti - Russian pianist, composer, conductor; a student of, among others, Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Franz Liszt.

¹⁴ Nikolay Sergeyevich Zverev - teacher of, among others, Mily Balakirev, Alexander Goldenweiser, Alexander Siloti, and Alexander Scriabin.

¹⁵ Sergey Taneyev - a student of Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Nikolay Rubinstein; director of the Moscow Conservatory from 1885.

¹⁶ Anton Arensky - Russian pianist, composer, conductor, pedagogue.

¹⁷ Alexander Siloti.

¹⁸ Bertensson S., J. Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff. A lifetime in music*, ed. New York University Press, New York 1956, p. 57.

¹⁹ Martyn B., *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, ed. Routledge, London 1990, p. 46.

*who would outdo whom. Both had phenomenal wrists, but it was Rachmaninov who won*²⁰.

Among the works written during his student years, it is worth mentioning the *Piano Concerto No. 1* in F-sharp minor Op. 1 (1891), as well as the opera *Aleko* (1892), for which Rachmaninov received the highest honor in the form of a gold medal at the end of his composition studies²¹. As a student of Zverev, he met Pyotr Tchaikovsky, who became his greatest authority²². Rachmaninov himself said:

*Tchaikovsky was already famous at the time, recognized worldwide and respected by everyone, but fame did not spoil him. Of all the people and artists I have had the opportunity to meet, Tchaikovsky was the most charming. His spiritual subtlety is exceptional. He was modest, like all truly great people, and simple, like few (...) He listened to my first opera Aleko, and thanks to him, it was staged at the Imperial Theater. Just having my opera staged at the Imperial Theater was enough to start my career; but Tchaikovsky did even more. He shyly and modestly, as if afraid of my refusal, asked if I would agree to have my work staged on the same evening as one of his operas. To see my name on the same poster as Tchaikovsky's was a huge honor for a composer; I would never have dared to dream of such a thing*²³.

It was Tchaikovsky that the next composition for two pianos, the *Suite No. 1 Fantaisie-Tableaux* for Two Pianos Op. 5, was dedicated to. Spending the summer of 1893 in Lebedyan, in a letter to Natalia Skalon dated June 5, Rachmaninov writes: *I am working on a fantasy for two pianos, which consists of a series of musical images*²⁴. This suite is the first use of programmatic content in Rachmaninov's work, and the musical images he refers to are four fragments of poetry by Mikhail Lermontov (*Venice*), Lord Byron (*Parisine*), Fyodor Tyutchev (*Human Tears, o human tears*), and Alexei Khomyakov (*Easter*), which precede each movement of the *Suite*. Poetry has always been an extremely important source of inspiration for the composer:

²⁰ Bertensson S., Leyda J., *Sergei Rachmaninoff. A lifetime in music*, ed. New York University Press, New York 1956, p. 41.

²¹ He completed his studies as a pianist a year earlier, in 1891.

²² Świdnicka I., *Rachmaninow - symfonik nieznaný*, ed. Uniwersytet Muzyczny Fryderyka Chopina, Warszawa 2016, p. 119.

²³ <https://www.senar.ru/articles/difficulties/> [access: 23.06.2024].

²⁴ Bertensson S., Leyda J., *Sergei Rachmaninoff. A lifetime in music*, ed. New York University Press, New York 1956, p. 57.

*Poetry greatly inspires me. Of all the arts, after music, I love it the most. I think our Pushkin is admirable. I constantly read Shakespeare and Byron in Russian. I always carry books of poetry with me. Poetry inspires music because there is so much music in poetry. They are like twin sisters*²⁵.

The premiere of the piece took place in Moscow on November 30, 1893, performed by Rachmaninov and Paul Pabst. Tchaikovsky, who had promised to attend that day, did not show up, as he had passed away a few weeks earlier, on October 25²⁶.

²⁵ Gębski J., *Sergiusz Rachmaninow w literaturze*, ed. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006, pp. 223-224.

²⁶ Martyn B., *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, ed. Routledge, London 1990, p. 76.

1.1 *Fantaisie-Tableaux Op. 5, mov. 1 Barcarolle*

At dusk the chill wave laps gently
Beneath the gondola's slow oar
That song again and again, the twang of the guitar,
In the distance the old barcarolle was heard,
now melancholy, now happy...
The gondola glides through the water, and time glides over the surge of love;
The water will grow smooth again and passion will rise no more.
(M. Lermontov)

The poem Venice by Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov serves as the inspiration for the first movement of Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux Op. 5*. In the poem, the author presents the image of a Venetian gondola gliding at dusk as a symbol of fleeting love. Interestingly, neither the poet nor the composer had visited Venice before creating their works.

The barcarolle was originally a song in 6/8 time sung by Venetian gondoliers. It is characterized by a moderate tempo, and the accompaniment rhythmically imitates the rocking of the boat, the movement of the waves, or the oars. The main elements shaping the musical image of the piece are variations and ornamental means²⁷.

The first movement of the *Suite Op. 5 - Barcarolle* is composed in G minor. Rachmaninov faithfully follows the characteristics of this musical genre. The moderate *Allegretto* tempo, the singing, melancholic cantilenas reminiscent of the gondoliers' songs, and the use of *ostinato* technique in the accompaniment part give this movement a soothing character. The piece is in a song form with the following formal structure: **A** (bars 1-86) - **B** (bars 87-160) - **A1** (bars 160-213) with an extended **coda** (bars 214-250).

Rachmaninov begins this movement with a characteristic *ostinato* accompaniment in the first piano part. It seems natural to sustain the right pedal for two bars here. After applying variations in the later sections, the accompaniment significantly influences the phrasing in the melodic part. Already at

²⁷ Wójcik, D., *ABC Form Muzycznych*, ed. Musica Iagellonica, Kraków 2006, p. 60.

this point (bars 3-4, 7-8), it is worth mentioning the collaboration between the pianists in creating a joint interpretation - highlighting and mutually passing on musical thoughts. If the accompaniment in the first piano part is performed in even tempo without *rubato*, it would be appropriate to introduce the theme while maintaining the pulse of the accompaniment without additional agogic delays. However, if the performer considers it appropriate to use *rubato* to diversify the identical two-bar motif in bar three, the pianist leading the melody should continue the *rubato* in bar four and return to tempo from bar five onward.

The image displays a musical score for two pianos, Piano I and Piano II, from S. Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, movement 1, bars 1-10. The tempo is marked *Allegretto*. Piano I begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic, while Piano II begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic. Red boxes highlight specific musical passages in both parts, likely indicating areas of interest for performance analysis or interpretation.

Example 1, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 1, bars 1-10²⁸.

Analogous places where the shaping of the accompaniment part affects the subsequent presentations of the first theme are bars: 7-8, 20-21, 35-36, 39-40, 52-53 and 59-60. It is crucial to avoid routinely (literally) repeating identical solutions, as this could create the impression of not dialoguing or creatively continuing and developing the motifs but rather too literal, even mechanical, imitation of motifs or phrases. In the context of an analogous passage in the transition (bars 27-28),

²⁸ Rachmaninov S., *Fantaisie-Tableaux* for two pianos Op. 5, ed. A. Gutheil, Moscow 1894.

considering the application of new harmonic solutions, one might suggest a slight agogic extension of the melody's entry, which would further emphasize the unexpected harmonic shift (B-flat major to C minor). In later sections (bars 59-60 and 183-184), to avoid repeating the same ideas and considering the rhythmic density in the accompanying part, it would be advisable to refrain from this technique.

The four-bar first theme seems somehow monotonous due to the numerous melodic and rhythmic repetitions. Out of the eleven notes in the first presentation, nearly half (5) are the note B-flat²⁹. Rachmaninov significantly limits the use of variations in subsequent presentations of the theme (Examples 1 and 2)³⁰. However, the same cannot be said about the accompaniment part. The first presentation of the ostinato accompaniment evolves with each subsequent theme entry (Example 2) to reach its most refined form in bar 161 (Example 3). This is an example of the distinctly Russian element of art music that appears in folk performance practice - the principle of elaborating the theme. It is worth noting the subtle dynamic suggestions in the successive presentations of the theme, despite the increasing texture density. Rachmaninov proposes a lower dynamic than at the beginning of this section. This is an important observation to consider when interpreting the initial theme presentations.

²⁹ This immediately brings to mind the similarity to the third movement of the *Cello Sonata* in G minor Op. 19 by S. Rachmaninov, where the theme is based on two notes - B-flat and E-flat.

³⁰ The left-hand part is transferred to the right hand and shifted an octave higher, with the addition of intervals and chords that do not affect harmonic changes and minimal melodic alterations.

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The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system contains a piano (p) and a vocal (v) part. The piano part is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs. The vocal part is written in a single staff and includes a melodic line with a fermata and a lower line with sustained chords. Dynamics include *ppp* and *pp*.

Example 2, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 1, bars 36-41.



Example 3, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 1, bars 161-164.

In the above example (Example 3) in the first piano part, one can observe the extension of the phrase to four bars and the intensification of dynamics. The change in the structure of the accompanying part thus influences the shaping of the melodic part. Four-bar, lively passages are not conducive to using rubato, whose free use was possible in earlier fragments of the piece. The point to which the phrase should be led also changes - naturally, it seems to follow the accompanying part and reach the culmination of the *mf* dynamics on the first beat of the third bar of the theme, also in the melodic part.

Despite such a developed accompanying part, it is essential to maintain the appropriate sound proportions between the performers. The transfer of the harmonic foundation to the melodic part (Examples 2 and 3) allows for the abandonment of the right pedal in the first piano part, which, despite the dense texture, will contribute to achieving a lightness effect.

In the entire **A** section (excluding the transition leading to section **B**), there is a clear division between the leading part (second piano) and the accompanying part (first piano). Despite the obvious distinction between "melody" and "accompaniment," the composer frequently "reminds" of this

structural separation through suggestive dynamic indications. The first attempt to unify the sound of the pianos occurs in the transition to the **B** section. From bar 67, both piano parts are treated as a unity - both in rhythmic elements, melodic lines, and the building of dynamic tensions. From this perspective, the marking of *sf* in bar 71 in the first piano part and *mf* in the second at the climax chord of this transition seems rather incomprehensible. I consider this to be an editorial error, and the correct approach is to use the *sf* marking in both piano parts (Example 4). Marianna Shirinyan, with whom I recorded the piece, shares my view that this is an editorial mistake.

The image shows a musical score for S. Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, movement 1, bars 67-75. The score is in B-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a complex piano part with many triplets and a vocal line. The vocal line has lyrics in Russian: "poco a poco ere - - - scen", "do - - - mi", "nu - - - en - - - do", and "nu - - - en - - - do". The piano part has dynamic markings "sf" and "mf" circled in red in the first system, and "pp" in the second system. The score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal line and two piano staves.

Example 4, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 1, bars 67-75.

This transition requires extraordinary precision in synchronization between the pianists and the most accurate, unified articulation. Selective execution of all sixteenth-note runs may prove helpful, and unlike in section **A**, it is advisable to establish the approach to shaping the musical image beforehand. We decided to implement *crescendo* at this point (as suggested by the composer), however, to mitigate the tension after the climax chord, we applied *subito piano* on the next chord (bar 73) while maintaining "pearly" sixteenth notes.

The transition (bars 67-86) leads to the **B** section, where the second theme of the *Barcarolle* is presented, this time in the major mode (G major) in the middle register, with the roles of the parts being reversed. Similar to the previous theme presentations (except for its first presentation), the part presenting the theme also serves as the harmonic foundation. In section **B**, the performer of the first part has complete freedom in shaping the phrase. The task of the accompanying part is to fill in the background with a "bell-like" accompaniment and to align with the melody. Despite the pianistic difficulties³¹, this part should be played *leggiero* (Example 5).

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a vocal line and two piano staves. The vocal line has the lyrics "la melodia marcato" and "eu - do". The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a "bell-like" accompaniment in the left hand, marked with *p* and *pp leggiero*. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with intricate sixteenth-note passages in both hands.

³¹ Frequent use of the 4th and 5th fingers in sixteenth-note passages and the high register contribute to an uncomfortable hand position for the pianist.



Example 5, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 1, bars 90-98.

The second theme (bars 90-98) intertwines with the previously used motif from the transition (from bar 74), where an attempt was made to unify the sound of the pianos. In the following fragment, interesting harmonic changes occur as follows: B minor - G minor - D major - B-flat major - G major. The last two harmonies are particularly surprising and should be emphasized by giving them different colors - after a bright, cheerful D major chord, B-flat major can introduce a certain sense of exaltation, and G major will mark a return to tranquility. The introduction of the final key should be prepared using *rubato*, and both parts should apply dynamics of *p/pp*.



Example 6, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 1, bars 146-149.

In the **A1** section (bars 160-213), the first theme returns - once again in the same configuration of the piano parts (theme in the second piano part, accompaniment in the first). However, in this section, the composer highlights all the earlier ideas/elements - both the first theme, the transition, and the second theme. In the **A** section, only the first theme + transition to the **B** section appeared; in the **A1**

section, we see both the first and second themes, as well as the transition. For this reason, the formal structure of this section does not appear fully perfect or symmetrical.

In bar 175, another editorial inaccuracy in the dynamic markings can be noticed. In the example below, there is no indication of differentiating the sound of the dotted half notes in the left hand of the second piano part. The correct approach here is to replace the *f* mark with *sf*.

The image displays a musical score for S. Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, movement 1, specifically bars 173-176. The score is written for piano and grand staves. The first system covers bars 173-175, and the second system covers bars 175-176. In bar 175, the left hand of the piano part has a dotted half note with a circled 'f' dynamic marking. In bar 176, the left hand of the piano part has a dotted half note with a circled 'f' dynamic marking. The right hand of the piano part has a dotted half note with a circled 'f' dynamic marking. The grand staff in the second system has a 'ritard.' marking in bar 176.

Example 7, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 1, bars 173-176.

Rachmaninov, known for his brilliant climaxes³², limited himself to only one in the entire *Barcarolle*, which is prepared in just half a bar (bar 214) and simultaneously overlaps with the beginning of the *coda*. To give it a bit more significance, we decided to maintain the dynamics of *pp* and *ppp* as long as possible in the second theme preceding the climax (from bar 195), savoring all harmonic changes in the minor key presentation of this theme.

³² The most well-known and striking example of this in his piano works is the second *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18.

Another surprising compositional technique³³ is the placement of the *f* marking in bar 214 in the second piano part during the sustained sound. This automatically brings to mind string or wind instruments, which, unlike the piano, have the ability to increase volume and shape the tone of the sound during its duration. In achieving this sound, the first piano part plays a crucial role by creating an intense *crescendo* over less than a bar - from *ppp* to *f* (Example 8). After careful consideration, I believe this is most likely another editorial error - in both the first piano part (*crescendo* from the first beat of bar 214 and *forte* on the first beat in bar 215 and) and the second piano part (*forte* on the second beat in bar 214).

Example 8, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 1, bars 213-217.

To intensify the emotions and dynamics, I agreed with Marianna Shirinyan to emphasize the parts played by the left hands, which evoke a "meaty" sound, and to delay the *diminuendo* until around bar 229³⁴.

³³ In his piano works.

³⁴ Rachmaninov suggests a *diminuendo* as early as measure 219. The descending harmonic progression creates an impression of emotional quieting, and considering the length of the *coda* itself, a *diminuendo* after three measures of culmination would seem unconvincing.

Despite its substantial size, the first movement of the *Suite* Op. 5 maintains a soothing character and relatively low dynamics. The constant, almost "academic" reminders by the composer of *pp* and *ppp* are more suggestions that do not have to deter the pianists from freely shaping the musical image. As for the use of two pianos in this movement, it is relatively "fair" (balanced). The first theme is introduced in the second piano part, the second theme in the first piano part, and the transition aims to unify the sound. However, there is a noticeable lack of instrumental dialogue. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of mutual shaping of the musical image. Subtle dynamic and agogic nuances in the accompaniment part inspire the performer of the melodic part to explore different ways of shaping the melody. This, however, requires great trust in the partner and an exceptionally sensitive listening to one's own playing to create a shared, logical, and convincing vision of the piece.

1.2 *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 2 *La nuit... L'amour... (The Night... the Love...)*

*This is the hour when the nightingale's enchanting song
flows with a thousand invocations of love
that seem to melt in silent words.
The brook flows louder, the wind rustles more sweetly,
and their sounds caress the lonely ear...*
(G. Byron)

The next movement of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5 continues the theme of love that runs through this work. The poem *Parisina* by George Byron served as the inspiration for the second part, titled *The Night... the Love*. The above text tells a story of a nocturnal meeting of lovers, with the action taking place in Venice.

The second movement of the *Suite* is the only one in a different key from the main one, namely the dominant key of D major instead of the principal key of G minor, and it serves as a particularly evocative point for the performers' imagination. In this movement, characteristic programmatic elements appear, such as the imitation of the nightingale's trills (e.g., bars 18-29 in the second piano part), the representation of the sounds of the wind (e.g., bars 16-29 in the first piano part), and motifs associated with the theme of love (e.g., bars 30-59 in both parts). This creates an atmosphere that unmistakably points to the nature of this scene.

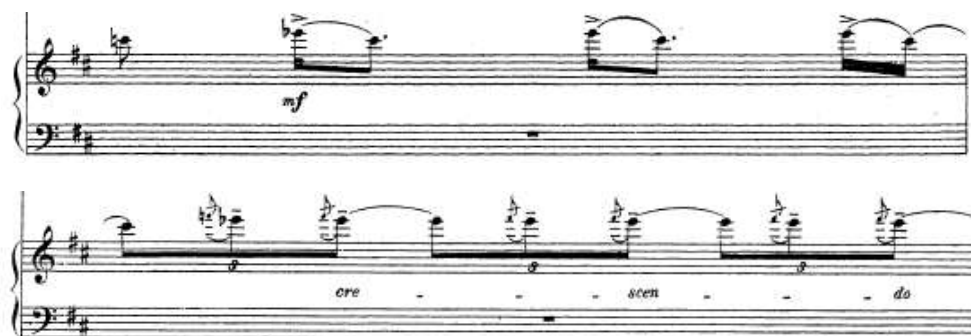
This movement opens with the second piano part repeating three-note motifs - *F#1-D1-F#1* (rhythm: dotted eighth note - sixteenth note - long note sustained for 2 and 2/3 bars), accompanied by chordal passages played *arpeggio* in the first piano part (Example 9). The *Adagio sostenuto* tempo and each subsequent appearance of the chords with the suggestion of maintaining one level of loudness (*pp*) should not, however, deter the performer from using dynamics and *rubato* consistent with the harmonic progression. The persistent repetition of *F#1* in the second piano part, despite the composer's lack of dynamic and/or articulation differentiation, should depend on the way the chords are shaped in the first piano part, both in terms of possible *rubato* and dynamic evolution. The appropriate moment of executing the next *F#1* note can also inspire the performer of the first piano part to varied phrasing. Together with my partner, Marianna Shirinyan (1st piano), we decided to follow the composer's indication of *crescendo* while moving the culmination of the introduction one

bar earlier and applying a slight slowdown and softening in the last, summarizing arpeggio based on the tonic chord (bar 14), which allowed us to highlight the treatment of the chords as a melodic line.

The image shows a musical score for two pianos, Piano I and Piano II, from S. Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, movement 2, bars 1-15. The tempo is marked "Adagio sostenuto." Piano I's part consists of a series of chords in the right hand, starting with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. Piano II's part consists of a melodic line in the right hand, starting with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The first system shows bars 1-8, and the second system shows bars 9-15. In the second system, Piano I has a crescendo leading to a forte (*f*) dynamic, and Piano II has a melodic line with a crescendo leading to a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

Example 9, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 2, bars 1-15.

In the following bars (bars 16-30), the composer intended to create the "background of the narrative," as the second piano part's task is to imitate the nightingale's song in the high register of the right hand (Example 10), while the first piano, through rolled chords in the *ppp* dynamic, simulates the sound of the wind, evoking a sense of mystery and uncertainty (Example 11).



Example 10, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 2, bars 22-23 (pft. 2).



Example 11, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 2, bar 16 (pft. 1).

Rachmaninov employed minimal dynamic changes in the first piano part (*ppp*, *p*, without *crescendo* or *diminuendo*). To avoid stagnation, it seems natural to suggestively phrase and create an interesting, "lively" background for the performer imitating the bird songs (the nightingale's trills).

In the next section (beginning from bar 30), the first piano part takes over the role of imitating bird calls, this time with accompanying triplet eighth notes in the left-hand part. The melodiousness and the emphasis on creating an *amoroso* theme (a soft, "alluring" type of sound, flexible execution combining slight agogic and dynamic intra-phrase changes, use of the right pedal), introduced in bar 30 in the second piano part, suggest an association with declarations of love (Example 12). In bar 36, another exchange of motifs between the pianists takes place. The second piano part assumes an accompanying role, presenting rolled chords that allude to the wind's rustle from the introduction. Despite the transfer of the thematic material to the high register in the first piano part and the melodic-harmonic changes, the composer's reuse of the *f* dynamic, the *amoroso* marking, and the similar size of the episodes imply a continuation of the theme - this time in a slightly different color shade. The ascending octave passages help build the climax (Example 12).



Example 12, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 2, bars 30-35.

In bar 43, the *agitato* section begins, leading to the largest climax in the entire second movement. The modified love theme descends chromatically, and at the climax (Example 13, bars 59-70), numerous previously used elements can be observed, such as:

- the rhythm that opens the analyzed movement (previously based on the F#1-D1 third, this time solely on F#1),
- arpeggiated chords from the initial section of the movement (bars 1-13),
- triplet accompaniments in the accompanying part.

Rachmaninov indicates the climax on the F# major chord in bar 59, marking it with *fff* dynamics, which, after two bars, reduces to *ff*. In my opinion, the subsequent bars should continue in *fff* while maintaining the flexibility of phrasing. Despite the high volume level, it is advisable to use *crescendo* and *diminuendo* in the scale passage played in the right hand of the accompanying part (bars 60-62, 63-65). This will help emphasize the passion of romantic love depicted in this scene.

The image displays a musical score for piano, specifically Example 13 from S. Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, movement 2, bars 57-62. The score is written for piano and features complex textures including triplets, arpeggiated chords, and dynamic markings like 'ff'.

The score is divided into two systems. The first system (bars 57-62) shows a complex texture with multiple staves. The top staff has a melodic line with triplets. The middle staff has a triplet accompaniment. The bottom staff has a triplet accompaniment. The second system (bars 63-68) shows a more complex texture with multiple staves. The top staff has a melodic line with triplets. The middle staff has a triplet accompaniment. The bottom staff has a triplet accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings like 'ff' and 'f'.

Example 13, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 2, bars 57-62.

After the intense climax lasting 11 bars, there is a momentary emotional de-escalation, during which the composer recalls previously used motifs. The triplet accompaniment is replaced by arpeggiated chords (again triplets) - reminiscent of the sound of a harp. Despite the lack of specific dynamic indications, the harmonic progression suggests increasing the means to intensify the sound (greater

emphasis on the keyboard, playing *tenuto*, *crescendo*, more pronounced use of the right pedal) and achieving another climax. This may reflect another surge of emotions/passion of the lovers. After this intense fragment, with the unexpected appearance of the G minor chord in bar 83, we applied a color and dynamic change (*subito piano*) to reduce the tension.

In the next section of the piece (bars 90-123), the motifs previously presented appear alternately in both parts. Elements previously shown can be noticed, such as the sound of the wind, the nightingale's song, and the love theme. Given the massive scale of the climax (both in terms of dynamics and emotion) of the analyzed movement, it may be desirable to tone down the intensity and gradually emotionally calm this scene. The chromatic love theme is transferred and modified in the lower register, alternately in both parts. It leads to the *coda*, in which elements from the introduction are used. For the third time, an arpeggiated chord passage appears, referring to the opening bars and enclosing the second movement of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5 in a frame. The last two bars refer to the three-note motif *F#1-D1-F#1* that opens the entire movement, this time in longer rhythmic values: half note - quarter note - dotted half note with a fermata (Example 14).



Example 14, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 2, bars 125-130.

Unlike the first movement of the *Suite*, where each pianist was responsible for presenting one of the two themes and instrumental dialogue was absent, in the second movement, the two parts frequently exchange motifs. This technique not only brings greater joy and satisfaction from jointly shaping the vision of the piece and conveying a convincing, logical interpretation in both parts to the listener but also gives this movement coherence and integrity.

In this movement of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, Rachmaninov introduces distinct illustrative elements, reminiscent of scenes from a novel or a stage work. Drawing inspiration from Byron's poem, he builds an image of a mysterious and romantic night. The rustling wind and somewhat chaotic nightingale trills in the high registers form the background of this story, while the exchange of the *amoroso* theme between the pianists illustrates a dialogue between lovers and the escalating passion, leading almost to ecstasy during the climax. Such perfect use of imitative techniques allows for deeper immersion in the emotions depicted in this story and their understanding.

1.3 *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 3 *The Tears*

*Tears, human tears
You flow both early and late -
You flow unknown, you flow unseen
Inexhaustible, innumerable -
You flow like torrents of rain
In the depths of an autumn night.
(F. Tyutchev)*

The poem *Tears* by Fyodor Tyutchev serves as the introduction to the third movement of Rachmaninov's first *Suite*, bearing the same title. In *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, apart from the previously mentioned elements of programmatic content, the composer uses the motif of bells. Bell motifs were used by most Russian composers of this period, and in Rachmaninov's works, they became one of the main elements of inspiration. The composer himself recalled in 1913:

The sound of church bells dominated all the towns of Russia I knew—Novgorod, Kiev, Moscow. They accompanied every Russian from childhood to the grave, and no composer could escape their influence... Throughout my life, I enjoyed the different moods and music of joyful ringing and mourning tolls. This love for bells is innate for every Russian.

*One of the fondest childhood memories is associated with the four notes of the great bells in the St. Sophia Cathedral in Novgorod, which I often heard when my grandmother took me to the city on holidays. The bell-ringers were artists. Four notes were a motif that returned again and again, four silvery, weeping notes, always clothed in an ever-changing accompaniment woven around them. I always associated them with the thought of tears. Many years later, I composed the *Suite for Two Pianos*, consisting of four parts, each developing a poetic motto. For the third part, introduced by Tyutchev's poem *Tears*, I immediately knew what theme was perfect—and the bells of the Novgorod Cathedral sang again...³⁵*

³⁵ Bertensson S., Leyda J., *Sergei Rachmaninoff. A lifetime in music*, ed. New York University Press, New York 1956, p. 184.

The *Largo di molto* tempo, minor key, reference to tears and bells give this movement of the *Suite* Op. 5 a mournful character. The form of this movement can be represented as follows: **Introduction** (bars 1-6) - **A** (bars 7-16) - **B** (bars 17-28) - **A1** (bars 29-46) - **Coda** (bars 47-57).

The first piano part opens this movement with "four silvery, weeping notes"³⁶, which are the primary and essential elements forming the shortest of all the movements in both suites³⁷. Each of these short thoughts (motifs) that evoke the composer's fondest memories and associations begins with the note B1. In subsequent sections, slight changes in motifs and phrases occur, leading to the emergence of new melodic variants.

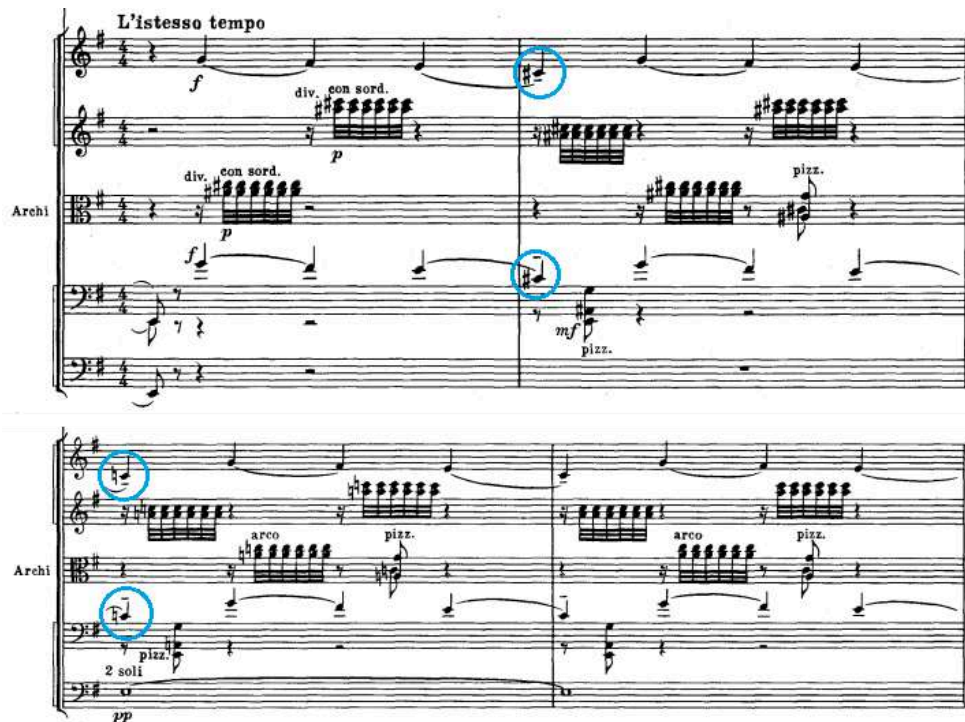
The image shows the first seven bars of the third movement of S. Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5. The score is for two pianos. Piano I (top) begins with a melodic line in the right hand, marked 'p' (piano), with a blue circle highlighting the first note (B1). Piano II (bottom) begins with a sustained chord in the left hand, marked 'pp' (pianissimo), with a blue circle highlighting the first note (B1). The tempo is 'Largo di molto.'

Example 15, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 3, bars 1-7.

Rachmaninov uses a nearly identical motif in his opera *The Miserly Knight* Op. 24 from 1906 (Example 16), even employing similar melodic changes, such as lowering the last note from Eb1 to D1 in the third part of the *Suite*, analogous to C#1 to C1 in the opera.

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ The entire section consists of 57 measures.



Example 16, Bell-tears motif, S. Rachmaninov - *The Miserly Knight* Op. 24, bars 31-34³⁸.

The inspiration for using this motif came from the sounds of bells, but it is essential to avoid a literal imitation of these instruments' sound. It is necessary to maintain appropriate and flexible phrasing that aligns with the shape of the melody, intervallic tensions, and is related to the harmonic progression and dynamic shading, which highlight the contours of the melodic lines. This approach prevents any potential "verticalization" of the sound. It is worth noting that in *The Miserly Knight*, this motif is placed in the string section, where the use of strict legato creates the impression of "flowing" sounds, confirming the thesis presented.

In bars 7-10, this motif descends in seconds with an accompanying harmonizing left-hand part (arpeggiated passages spanning over two octaves). The absence of the second piano part allows the performer to freely explore various colors and emphasize interesting hidden melodic lines in the left-hand part (for example, the C# note resolving to the D note in bars 9 and 10). In bar 10, the second piano joins in with the consistently present four-eighth-note, sequentially descending motifs initiated in bar 7. However, the first of them has a different direction (ascending), which will be repeated several times. When the first piano part initiates the section in *forte*, continuing it with a *diminuendo* along with the descending motifs until *pp* in bar 15, the role of the second piano part in shaping phrases changes. In this section, this part should follow the dynamic shaping related to the

³⁸ Rachmaninov S., *The Miserly Knight* Op. 24, ed. Muzyka, Moscow 1972.

melodic contour - *crescendo* when the melody ascends and *diminuendo* when it descends, while maintaining the overall intention of gradual softening in the subsequent bars. The composer's dynamic proposal also suggests this (Example 17, bars 10-11). Rachmaninov's use of *diminuendo* in bar 12 should not limit the plastic execution of the melodic shape by the second piano performer.

In the third movement of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, Rachmaninov for the first time in his work showcases an innovative approach to the role of collaboration in creating a narrative, cooperation, and correspondence between two pianos. Previous compositions, such as the youthful *Russian Rhapsody* for two pianos (1891) or the earlier movements of the suite, were characterized by a clear division between the leading part and the accompanying part (with minor exceptions, such as doubling the melodic part in the second piano in the *Russian Rhapsody*, or the less distinctive melodic content in the transition sections of the first movement).





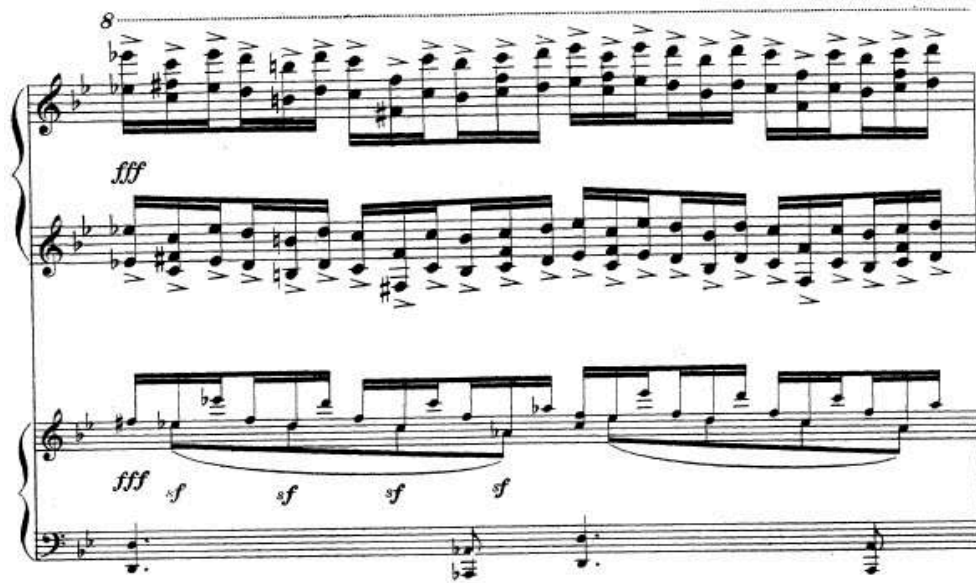
Example 17, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 3, bars 10-15³⁹.

In the **B** section (bars 17-29), the bell-tears motif continues in the second piano part, this time delayed by a sixteenth note relative to the motif from the beginning of the movement. This evokes the image of sobbing⁴⁰. This section consists of 12 bars, continuing the melody in an ascending direction, performed with a *crescendo*. The dynamic intensification lasts for 7 bars. Despite the growing emotions, it is essential to maintain a stable tempo. In bar 24, a climax occurs, and both pianists should fully utilize the dynamic possibilities of their instruments, still phrasing in accordance with the shape of the melody (Example 18). An interesting technique is the composer's decision to discontinue the *legato* articulation in the sixteenth-note triplets in the accompanying part, emphasizing each sixteenth note individually with an accent, suggesting *molto marcato* playing. After

³⁹ In the presented musical example, the phrase dynamics shaping suggestions were highlighted in blue.

⁴⁰ In Russian musical literature, such beginning of motives (on weak and even weakest parts of a rhythmic group) is referred to as "breath," "gasp," or "sigh."

the climax, four bars of emotional relaxation follow, leading to the **A1** section. Here, the piano parts are reversed compared to the **A** section, with slight harmonic and melodic variations.



Example 18, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 3, bar 24.

The *coda* has the character of a funeral march (Example 19). The division of parts into leading and accompanying returns. The first piano part should play with unwavering precision, with extraordinary rhythmic accuracy, and in *ppp* dynamics, yielding precedence to the second piano part, which resonates with arpeggiated diminished chords intended to intensify emotional tension, and tonic chords to diminish it. Despite the composer's threefold use of *mf* dynamics, it is worth differentiating the chords, for example, in terms of color, dynamics, and agogics (stretched or tight *arpeggios*). The purpose of these techniques is clear - the performer should treat them as a melodic line and thus shape the phrase smoothly and convincingly. The use of *ritenuto* in the last two bars presents a certain challenge for the duet (the issue of synchronized playing - simultaneity of touché). Maintaining eye contact might prove helpful, but it mainly depends on the mutual understanding, experience, and "chemistry" of the duet.

L'istesso tempo.

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a grand staff (treble and bass clef) and a piano part (treble and bass clef). The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more complex bass line in the left hand. The melody is introduced in the right hand in bar 46. Dynamics include *ppp*, *mf*, *p*, *sf*, and *ppp*. The tempo is marked *L'istesso tempo.* and the piece concludes with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking.

Example 19, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 3, bars 46-57.

1.4 *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 4 *Easter*

Across the earth a mighty bell is ringing
Until all the booming air rocks like the sea
As silver thunderings sing forth the tidings
Exulting in that holy victory...
(A. Khomyakov)

The above quote is an excerpt from a poem by Alexei Khomyakov⁴¹ and precedes the final part of Sergei Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5. This section intertwines two motives - once again, as in the previous movement, Rachmaninov uses the **motif of bells**. This time, it evokes the joyous sound of morning matins⁴², reminiscent of the composer's experience of Easter celebrations in a Russian Orthodox church. The multi-layered chords are accompanied by the **motif of the hymn Christ is Risen**⁴³. Unlike the previous section, where the bell sound was merely an inspiration for creating the main four-note theme, serving as the foundation for the composer's idea and the entire narrative of the section (not necessarily utilized for shaping the sound), the interpretive goal in the *Easter* movement was to faithfully replicate the sound of Orthodox church bells.

To deepen the understanding and appreciation of the Orthodox bell motif, which is crucial in interpreting the final part of the *Suite* Op. 5, familiarity with elements of Russian culture and the works of other Russian composers, who frequently employed this motif, can be helpful. One such work is the concert overture *Russian Easter* Op. 36, composed by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov in 1888. The finale of this piece is particularly noteworthy, where, in addition to the bell motif, the melody of the hymn *Christ is Risen* is also used. Other significant works worth considering in this context are two compositions by Modest Mussorgsky: the opera *Boris Godunov* from 1872, particularly the Coronation Scene from the prologue, and one of the miniatures from *Pictures at an Exhibition* - *The Great Gate of Kiev*, along with its orchestral version⁴⁴, which can inspire interpreters of the final movement of the *Suite* Op. 5, to treat the piano sound in a symphonic manner. Both Mussorgsky and

⁴¹ Alexei Stepanovich Khomyakov (1804-1860) - *Кремлевская заутреня на Пасху* (*Kremlin Vigil on Easter*), 1850. He was one of the most important creators and advocates of Slavophilism, with Russia's hegemony at the forefront

⁴² Rus. утреня.

⁴³ Rus. Христос воскрес (из мертвых).

⁴⁴ The orchestral version was arranged by Maurice Ravel.

Rachmaninov employ similar compositional techniques⁴⁵ to imitate the sound of the mentioned bells (Examples 20 and 21).



Example 20, M. Mussorgsky - *Pictures at an Exhibition* - *The Great Gate of Kiev*, bars 77-93⁴⁶.



Example 21, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 4, bars 6-10.

The bell motif that appears repeatedly in the last part of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5 can be divided according to the register and rhythm used by Rachmaninov, resulting in four variations. Additionally, there are variants of these motifs, arising from rhythmic, articulative changes, or the number of notes in the chords:

⁴⁵ The thickening of sound and rhythm through the addition of new layers to the bell motif, the use of seventh chords, and different registers. The rhythmic motifs of both composers are also very similar.

⁴⁶ Mussorgsky M., *Pictures at an Exhibition*, ed. V. Bessel & Co., Sankt Petersburg 1886.

1. The motif in the high register with a characteristic sixteenth-note-eighth-note rhythm, which maintains the motion of the entire section:



Rachmaninov enriches this idea by alternating the articulation. The eighth-note chords are played *tenuto* (longer articulation and simultaneously longer rhythmic values), while *staccato*, contrasting in length and articulation, is used in the sixteenth-note octaves (Example 22)⁴⁷. To maintain uniform sound, I would suggest keeping, where possible, the same fingering pattern (in the right-hand part, octaves with the 1st and 5th fingers), though this may depend on the size and agility of the pianist's hand⁴⁸.

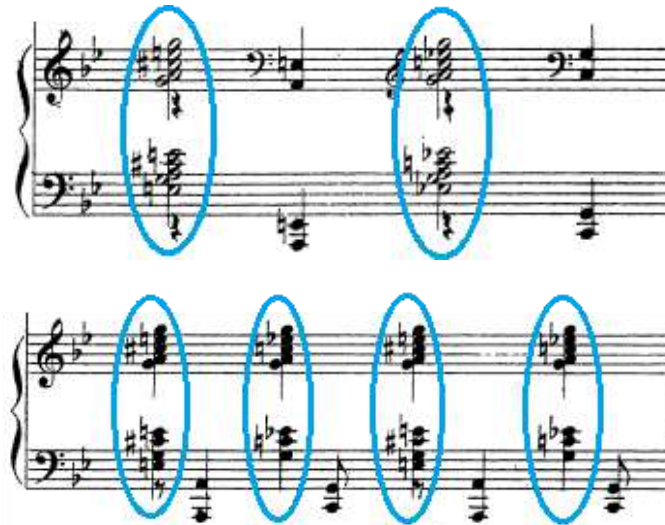


Example 22, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 4, bars 9-10 (pfte. 1).

⁴⁷ In the introduction of this part of the work, the entire rhythmic sequence is suggested with *staccato* articulation. In bars 9-10, the composer adds *tenuto* on the first beat, and in bars 11-12 additionally on the second and fourth beats.

⁴⁸ There is a possibility of using the 4th finger on the upper note of the octaves in the right hand in certain places. This could activate different muscles, preventing the constant use of a mechanical octave-playing technique, which involves playing from the wrist and/or elbow. This method is suitable for hands with a wide span. Its advantage is the possibility of more expressive and plastic shaping of the motives.

2. The motif in the middle register, consisting of two half notes or four quarter notes, providing rhythmic stability:



Example 23, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 4, bars 13, 15 (pfte. 2).

3. The motif in the middle register with a syncopated quarter-note or eighth-note rhythm (right-hand part), whose main task is to thicken the texture and emphasize its persistence:



Example 24, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 4, bars 17, 19 (pfte. 2).

4. The motif in the low register on the weaker beats of the measure:



Example 25, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 4, bars 13, 15 (pfte. 2).

The last part of the *Suite*, again in G minor, has a two-part form: **A** (bars 9-30) - **A1** (bars 31-44) with an **introduction** (bars 1-8) and a **coda** (bars 45-58). The tempo *Allegro maestoso*, suggested by the composer, reinforces the majestic, exalted, optimistic (despite the minor key) character of this music, which is meant to evoke the solemn, festive moods associated with the celebration of Easter.

In the introduction, the composer introduces the listener to the "bell" motif in the first piano part in the high register. In bars 3-5, the second piano joins in, presenting an imitation of bell sounds with longer rhythmic values, realized in descending minor thirds and perfect fifths. The motif initiated by the first piano part, later subjected to harmonic expansions (Example 22), continues to be present almost until the last measures, unlike those in the second piano part, which, after being introduced, do not return in the same configuration. The introduction ends with three identical measures featuring a powerful C minor chord with an added major sixth (in the solo of the second piano), reaching the note C of the contra octave in *fff* dynamics. Besides the final fragment of this movement of *Suite* Op. 5, this is the only section where Rachmaninov omits the bell motif in the high registers. To ensure the perfect resonance of the lower registers of the piano, it seems obvious to add a fermata on the mentioned chords. To further emphasize the dark sound color, I would suggest highlighting the note C in the contra octave. Even in this short, eight-measure introduction, the composer shows the range of registers he will be operating in this section⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ From the contra octave to the three-line octave inclusive - a total of 6 octaves.

In the analyzed final part of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, the piano parts are musically equivalent. The pianists take over the motifs from each other. Part **A** can be divided into two sections. In the first (**a**, bars 9-24), the first piano part continues the bell motif in the higher registers. Simultaneously, in the second piano part, all previously mentioned combinations of the bell motif occurring in the middle and low registers are utilized. In measures 21-24, one can observe a differentiation between the two piano parts, resulting from a denser texture, leading to the second section (**b**, bars 25-30). In this section, the second piano part takes the lead in presenting the bell motif in the high register. In the parallel narrative, the first piano part introduces the theme - a quote of the hymn *Christ is Risen*, characterized by a distinctive ascending line of minor seconds (Example 26). Despite the use of chordal texture, the part leading this theme should be characterized by differentiated sound, considering that the motif used in this passage draws inspiration from vocal church music, which requires a longer, more horizontal phrasing. In section **A1** (bars 31-44), the roles of the two instruments are reversed.

Example 26 - Motif *Christ is Risen*, S. Rachmaninov - *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, mov. 4, bars 23-30
(pfte. 1).

Rachmaninov reminisces about presenting the piece to the musical elite in Russia during one of the weekly concerts at the Belyayev house:

Once, Belyayev invited me to play for them. I had just written the Fantasy for two pianos. Felix (Blumenfeld) was put on the second piano because he was the only one who could sight-read so well. I played from memory on the first piano. Everyone was there - Liadov, Rimsky-Korsakov - they listened very attentively, and it seemed that they liked it. Rimsky was smiling the whole time. Then they praised me, and Rimsky said:

'Everything is fine, except that at the end, when the hymn "Christ is Risen" is heard, it would be better to state it first alone and only the second time with the bells.'

I was foolish and full of myself at the time - I was only twenty years old - so I shrugged and said:

'Why? It always goes together in reality'

and I never changed a note. Only later did I realize how correct Rimsky-Korsakov's criticism was. Rimsky-Korsakov's true greatness dawned on me gradually, and I greatly regretted never becoming his student^{50 51}.

The only suggestion from the composer for a possible tempo change is an *accelerando* that appears in the last six measures of the *coda*. In my opinion, this should not be a spectacular acceleration. It is, in fact, the culmination of the section, where the pianists reach *ffff* dynamics. A more pronounced *accelerando* might result in a loss of the sound, its intensity, and the emotional tension that had been built up for so long. One could speculate, even venture the theory, that Rachmaninov, by inserting this term, had in mind only a slight or even minimal quickening of the tempo. This would align well with the final part's overall expression, not only of the final part of *Suite Op. 5* but of the suite itself, avoiding both pomposity and what is known as empty virtuosity. Both factors would diminish the authenticity of experiencing this music, highlighting the performers' pianistic technique and virtuosity, leading to *emotional overload*⁵². At this point, dynamic elements should be prioritized over agogic ones.

⁵⁰ Bertensson S., Leyda J., *Sergei Rachmaninoff. A lifetime in music*, ed. New York University Press, New York 1956, p. 61.

⁵¹ This quote shows how much importance Rachmaninov attached to the opinions and advice of other composers or pianists, even though he did not immediately assimilate or accept them.

⁵² A term used by Samuil Feinberg.

In the sections where the theme *Christ is Risen* does not appear, I would allow the performers to make controlled, minimal "imperfections"⁵³ when changing the right pedal, in order to thicken the sound. This, of course, depends on the acoustic of the hall where the piece is being performed, as well as the size and quality of the instruments, and the volume of their sound.

The final part of Rachmaninov's *Suite Op. 5* presents new challenges for the artists. Despite its modest size, in addition to typical technical difficulties, it is extremely demanding in terms of stamina. The composer's suggestions regarding dynamics do not make it easier. Rachmaninov suggests dynamics no less than *ff*, reaching, as mentioned earlier, even up to *ffff* (in the *coda*). Below is a diagram showing the dynamic development of the entire section:

Introduction (bars 1-8)	a (bars 9-24)	b (bars 25-30)	a1 (bars 31-38)	b1 (bars 39-44)	CODA (bars 45-58)
<i>ff</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>fff</i>	<i>fff</i>	<i>fff</i>	<i>ffff</i>

Attention should be paid to the fact that in this section, the composer does not indicate any *crescendo* or *diminuendo*. To gradually increase the volume, Rachmaninov uses *sf* markings and accents, expands the registers used, and doubles or adds additional layers of sound. This is a deliberate technique aimed at faithfully replicating the sound of bells. I am convinced that performers should absolutely trust the composer's intentions and strictly adhere to his dynamic suggestions. Any attempts to reduce the mentioned dynamics, especially to "rest" or better prepare for the upcoming climax, may prove detrimental from a musical expression standpoint. However, the piano should not be treated as a percussion instrument.

The most physically demanding element for the performers in this section is the bell motif, played in the higher registers. The exchange of this motif between the pianists creates an opportunity for a brief rest, but at the same time, it generates one of the greatest technical and musical challenges for the piano duo, namely the often uneven sound between the two instruments (especially in the higher registers). Only in a recording setting could this problem be partially mitigated through appropriate adjustments to the microphone placement and mixing console.

⁵³ Partial release of the pedal lever so that the changes do not occur suddenly but overlap with each other.

Following the above stylistic and formal analysis, it is worthwhile to summarize the most characteristic elements of Sergei Rachmaninov's *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5 in a concise, tabular format.

Movement	Characteristic
I. <i>Barcarolle</i>	• Loving character. • Long melodic and accompaniment lines alternated between the parts of the first and second pianos. • Predominantly soft dynamics - <i>pp</i> and <i>ppp</i>. • Very short melodic-harmonic section leading to the only climax. • The first theme introduced by the second piano, the second theme by the first piano. • Unification of sound in the transition. • Programmatic elements: - Depiction of lovers through the first and second themes. - Accompaniment structure evokes the movement of waves and the swaying of a gondola.
II. <i>La nuit... L'amour... (The Night... the Love...)</i>	• Loving character. • Dialogue between the parts of the first and second pianos - exchange of motifs. • An 11-bar climax in dynamics <i>ff/fff</i>. • Programmatic elements: - Numerous illustrative elements. - Melodic-rhythmic structures reminiscent of the chirping and trilling of a nightingale. - Representation of wind noise through arpeggiated chords in <i>ppp</i> dynamics. - The melodic nature and suggestions for creating the <i>amoroso</i> theme evoke associations with love confessions.
III. <i>The Tears</i>	• Mournful character, • Programmatic elements: - Presence of the main motif - bell-tears motif. - Imitation of sobbing through rhythmic modifications of the main motif. - Mournful character achieved through the use of <i>Largo di molto</i> tempo, dotted rhythms, and repeated identical melodic-rhythmic motifs.

	• The opening motif in the first piano part is also the main motif of the entire section, continuously repeated. • An innovative approach in Rachmaninov's work to the role of two pianos - based on identical rhythms, two separate melodic lines are presented, with their climaxes not aligning simultaneously (shifted by several beats).
IV. <i>Easter</i>	• Ceremonial character. • Programmatic elements: - Continuously repeated melodic-rhythmic motif - the bell motif. - Motif of the hymn <i>Christ is Risen</i>. • Multilayered texture achieved through variations of the bell motif (different registers, rhythms, articulations, texture - number of components in chords). • Large dynamic volume - <i>ff-ffff</i>. • Absence of <i>crescendo</i> and <i>diminuendo</i> markings.

2. Suite Op. 17

If there were a conservatory in Hell, and if one of its talented students were to compose a programme symphony based on the story of the Ten Plagues of Egypt, and if he were to compose a symphony like Mr. Rachmaninov's, then he would have fulfilled his task brilliantly and would delight the inhabitants of Hell⁵⁴.

This is how César Cui⁵⁵ reviewed the premiere of Rachmaninov's *Symphony No. 1 in D minor Op. 13*, on March 28, 1897. The performance was significantly impacted by the shortcomings and lack of preparation⁵⁶ by the conductor, Alexander Glazunov. The disastrous premiere plunged Rachmaninov into a three-year depression, during which his compositional activity nearly ceased. During this period, to cope with financial difficulties, he gave piano lessons, performed a few concerts, including in London, and for two seasons (1897-1898), he was employed as the assistant conductor at the Private Opera in Moscow.

At the beginning of 1900, Rachmaninov underwent three months of hypnotherapy under the guidance of psychologist and amateur musician Nikolai Dahl, which helped him return to composing⁵⁷. He dedicated his *Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor Op. 18*⁵⁸ to Dahl, and the piece became a tremendous success, receiving highly favorable reviews from critics.

Alongside the *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Rachmaninov was also working on his second *Suite* for two pianos Op. 17⁵⁹. One evening in April, at the apartment of Alexander Goldenweiser, with whom Rachmaninov often played music, the pianists performed the complete suite together for the first time. The official premiere of the work took place on November 24, 1901, shortly after the premiere of the concerto. Since the piece had been sent to Karl Gutheil for publication as early as October 1901, it received the opus number 17 and became the first work published after Rachmaninov's five-year gap⁶⁰.

⁵⁴ Bażanow M., *Rachmaninow*, ed. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1972, p. 152.

⁵⁵ César Cui - Russian composer and music critic.

⁵⁶ Martyn B., *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*, ed. Routledge, London 1990, pp. 96-97.

⁵⁷ Bertensson S., Leyda J., *Sergei Rachmaninoff. A lifetime in music*, ed. New York University Press, Nowy Jork 1956, p. 90.

⁵⁸ The premiere of the *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18, took place on October 27, 1901.

⁵⁹ Both the second *Piano Concerto* in C minor, Op. 18, and the second *Suite* for two pianos Op. 17, were completed in April 1901.

⁶⁰ The last published composition before the *Suite* Op. 17, was *6 Moments Musicaux* Op. 16, in 1896.

2.1 Suite Op. 17, mov. 1 Introduction

The *Introduction* is the opening section of Rachmaninov's second *Suite* for two pianos, Op. 17. It contains uncomplicated melody, numerous chords, consistently repeated rhythmic formulas, *alla breve* time signature, optimistic and triumphant character. All this plus the composer's performance suggestion *Alla marcia* point to a march-like interpretation for this section. The formal structure of the piece can be outlined as following: **Introduction** (bars 1-4) - **A** (bars 5-41) - **B** (bars 42-92) - **A1** (bars 92-124) - **Coda** (bars 124-156).

In contrast to the first *Suite*, the second one features greater integration between the two pianos, which implies a reduced prominence (though still present) of the division into a leading part and an accompanying part. This cohesion becomes an important structural element, as it highlights the unity and compatibility of the two performers, which is a significant aspect of the work and affects its interpretation.

In measure 5, the first theme begins with a suggestion to use *marcato*. To emphasize the march-like and triumphant character of the piece, in accordance with the composer's original intention, it is worth considering applying this style of play right from the four-bar introduction. The correlation between the parts evokes a comparison with the *Russian Rhapsody* mentioned in section 1.3, where both parts were meant to perform the opening theme identically (Example 27).



Example 27, S. Rachmaninov - *Russian Rhapsody*, bars 1-4⁶¹.

⁶¹ Rachmaninov S., *Russian Rhapsody*, ed. Muzgiz, Moskwa n.d.

However, In the first section of the *Suite*, despite the use of identical chords and accompanying octaves, there is an expansion of the sound through the use of varied registers in each part. Specifically, both the right and left hands in the first piano are transposed down an octave in the second piano (Example 28). To achieve the proper balance of the chordal sound, it is important to ensure the clarity of the highest chordal component in the part of the first piano.



Example 28, S. Rachmaninov - *Suite* Op. 17, mov. 1, bars 5-8⁶².

In addition to performing the theme *marcato*, Rachmaninov also suggests accentuating selected longer rhythmic values to emphasize important points within the metrical and rhythmic structure. Such accentuation can contribute to a more varied and rich shaping of the phrases (including agogic nuances). The composer indicates that this section should be played at *ff* dynamics. Given the complex chordal texture, which vertically includes up to 14 notes, it may be worth considering a lower dynamic level that would allow for more nuanced phrasing.

⁶² Rachmaninov S., *Suite* for two pianos Op. 17, ed. Muzgiz, Moscow 1948.



Example 29, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 1, bars 17-20.

The climax in measures 19-20 leads directly into the first transition (bars 21-30). Rachmaninov suggests a dynamic of *pp* (in this case *subito pp*) following the accented chords, which requires a short "breath" to separate the sounds of the two sections (bar 20). The length of this pause depends on the acoustic properties of the concert hall and the characteristics of the instruments (speed and simultaneity of the pedal action). Similar moments occur in measures 41 and 101.

This musical score excerpt shows four staves of music. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The music is characterized by dense, complex chords and rapid changes in dynamics. Markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte), *p* (piano), *cresc.* (crescendo), and *pp* (pianissimo). The tempo is marked with a 'V' symbol, indicating a vivace tempo.

Example 30, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 1, bars 21-28.

Rachmaninov applied an interesting and previously unused technique by precisely conveying his vision for shaping the phrase in this passage through dynamic markings placed above the right-hand part of the second piano. This could be helpful for less experienced performers. For more experienced artists, these markings may seem obvious. In the accompanying left-hand part, which is responsible for maintaining motoric consistency, a balanced, "discreet" *pp* dynamic should be maintained (except for the *crescendo* in bars 24-25) along with *staccato* articulation. A certain inconsistency is evident in the lack of such markings in the first piano, where a similar division is noticeable: *staccato*-accompanied eighth notes and a melodic line with longer rhythmic values in the right hand.

In the initial segment of section **B** (bars 42-57), a division between the leading and accompanying parts can be observed. The second piano presents a contrasting eight-bar phrase both in articulation (*legato*) and dynamics (*mf*), while the first piano maintains the march-like motoric and rhythmic quality with markings for *staccato e leggiero*. An interesting technique, considering this division of roles, is the composer's dynamic indication of *mf*, which is mandatory for both performers in measure 42 (Example 31).



Example 31, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 1, bars 42-45.

Despite the indication for both pianists to use the same dynamic level, it is crucial to differentiate the volume of sound. The performer responsible for creating the movement and harmonic filling should prioritize the pianist playing the theme. A significant dynamic retreat in the accompanying part (pft. 1), which seems more attractive due to its developed melodic line, will allow for greater freedom in shaping the melody without the concern of overshadowing the less elaborate and less prominent role of the second piano. At the repetition of this phrase in bar 50, the octaves accompaniment is transferred from the left hand of the first piano to the left hand of the second piano, this time with the indication of *pp staccato e leggiero* (Example 32).



Example 32, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 1, bars 50-53.

Considering the inability to use the right pedal so as not to prolong the *staccato e leggero* sounds, the performer should use fingered octaves where possible and maintain strict legato in the upper component of octaves for larger intervals (thirds and fourths). Characteristic "fanfare" motifs (Examples 31 and 32, highlighted in red), despite the lack of explicit suggestions from the composer, require expressive, dynamic, and particularly articulatory differentiation. Accentuation may also be used to distinguish these motifs from other rhythmic figures.

In bars 58-73, Rachmaninov employs what is known as contrastive and/or sub-voicing polyphony. In addition to simultaneously leading two melodic lines, he introduces supporting or counterpointing threads, creating an impression of great creative and melodic invention, highlighted by the distinct and individual shaping of themes and counterpoints. This represents a kind of development and refinement of the concept from the third part of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, where Rachmaninov treated both piano parts equally in leading the "tears-bells" motif. In *Suite* Op. 17, however, the composer took it a step further, differentiating the two parts in terms of both material and melodic shape, as well as the placement of phrase climaxes (Example 33).



Example 33, S. Rachmaninov - *Suite* Op. 17, bars 58-65.

This fragment provides performers with exceptional freedom and joy, representing a quintessence of piano duet work. Rachmaninov often employed similar solutions in both his chamber music and solo piano compositions. Notably, two subsequent works exhibit analogous elements: *Piano Concerto* No. 2 in C minor Op. 18 and the *Cello Sonata* in G minor, Op. 19. These elements include:

- Simultaneous leading of two melodic lines (Examples 34 and 35).
- Uncomplicated rhythmic patterns in the themes, primarily consisting of quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes (Examples 34 and 35).
- Occasional "meeting" of themes at the climax of one part (Example 34).
- Equal dynamic markings for both parts (Examples 34 and 35).



Example 34, S. Rachmaninov - *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18, mov. 1, bars 121-132⁶³.



Example 35, S. Rachmaninov - *Cello Sonata* in G minor Op. 19, mov. 2, bars 105-109⁶⁴.

The characteristic "fanfare" rhythmic motif (two eighth notes followed by a quarter note), which plays a significant role in shaping the accompaniment in the left hand of the second piano part in the first section of *Suite* Op. 17 (Example 33), can also be found in the aforementioned works (Examples 36 and 37).

⁶³ Rachmaninov S., *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18 (two pianos version), ed. A. Gutheil, Moscow 1901.

⁶⁴ Rachmaninov S., *Cello Sonata* in G minor Op. 19, ed. A. Gutheil, Moscow 1902.



Example 36, S. Rachmaninov - *Cello Sonata* in G minor Op. 19, mov. 1, bars 183-187.



Example 37, S. Rachmaninov - *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18, mov. 3, bars 37-42.

Section **A1** is almost an identical repetition of section **A**, with the only difference being the development and attainment of the greatest climax of the entire section in measure 124, which simultaneously initiates the *coda*⁶⁵. In the *coda*, Rachmaninov's suggestions regarding the use of the right pedal, which are not found in the first *Suite*, become evident (Example 38). Due to the bass register and the dynamic marking of *p*, careful and possibly partial pressing of the right pedal is necessary. Despite maintaining the march-like character, the *coda* aims to achieve a dynamic calming effect⁶⁶, and the final chord, suggested to be played at *mf*, should not be attacked but rather subtly brought out.

⁶⁵ An analogous work where the greatest climax is also the beginning of the *coda* is the first movement of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5.

⁶⁶ The dynamic range in the *coda* is *pp-mf*.

The image shows a musical score for Example 38, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 1, bars 122-125. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system (bars 122-124) is marked 'ritardando' and 'a tempo' with a box containing the number 14. The second system (bars 125-126) is also marked 'ritardando' and 'a tempo' with a box containing the number 14. The score features complex chordal textures and melodic lines in both hands, with dynamic markings including *ff*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*.

Example 38, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 1, bars 122-125.

2.2 Suite Op. 17, mov. 2 Valse

Compared to *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, *Suite* Op. 17 stands out as a composition with greater thematic richness. A prime example of this is its second movement, *Valse*, with a formal structure of **A-B-A1-C-A-B1-Coda**. In this section, the composer presents three distinct themes. Each theme is preceded by an eight-measure introduction, which features an eighth-note passage imitating a controlled trill in one part and outlines the phrase contour, as well as a melody-and-chord segment based on hemiolas in the other part (Example 39). The use of the suggested dynamic range (*pp-f*) in such a brief introduction contributes to a more engaging, richer, and expressive opening. The hemiolas employed are present throughout the entire work.

The image displays the first eight measures of the Valse movement from Suite Op. 17, No. 2 by Sergei Rachmaninov. The score is written for piano and right hand, in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time, marked Presto. The first system shows the piano part with a forte (f) dynamic and a decrescendo (dim.) leading to piano (p). The second system shows the piano part with a forte (f) dynamic and a decrescendo (dim.) leading to pianissimo (pp). The third and fourth systems show the right-hand part with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic.

Example 39, S. Rachmaninov - *Suite* Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 1-8.

The first theme (section **A**) is presented in the key of G major and, similar to the outer sections of the previous movement, lacks a clear division between the leading and accompanying parts. For this reason, performers should strive for full sonic integration of both parts. Achieving this effect requires

a unified approach to shaping phrases, as well as maintaining dynamic and articulation consistency. Rachmaninov clearly divides this theme into two eight-measure phrases:

- 1) The preceding phrase (bars 9-16) aims to build dynamic intensity (*pp-mf*).
- 2) The following phrase (bars 17-24) is designed to reduce emotional tension (*mf-pp*).

Re 1) In the preceding phrase, the energetic eighth notes in the right-hand parts of the performers are accompanied by a distinctive waltz accompaniment, which is divided between the two pianists (Example 40).

The image displays a musical score for two pianists, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'non legato'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system (bars 9-16) shows the right-hand parts playing eighth notes, while the left-hand parts play a waltz accompaniment. The dynamics are marked 'mf' and 'pp'. The second system (bars 17-24) shows the right-hand parts playing eighth notes, while the left-hand parts play a waltz accompaniment. The dynamics are marked 'cresc.' and 'f'. A yellow box highlights the first measure of the first system, and a yellow box highlights the first measure of the second system.

Example 40, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 9-16.

The preceding phrase is particularly demanding in terms of synchronization between both parts - tempo *Presto*, with a dynamic level of *pp* and simultaneous, uncomfortable for the performers eighth-note passages. The use of the right pedal should be minimal to fully realize the composer's intention of *non legato* execution. Despite the suggested articulation, working together on this passage at slower tempos with *legato* articulation can be extremely helpful to fully understand and hear the melodic contours of both parts.

The octaves (bars 9-16), written on the first measure (pft. 2), are combined with harmonic fillings in the first part. Emphasizing these will facilitate synchronization between the performers. This approach is not innovative, as Rachmaninov likely drew inspiration from Anton Arensky's *Suite No. 1 Op. 15, mov. 2 - Waltz* (Example 41), which served as a kind of prototype for this type of two-piano composition.

The image shows a musical score for two pianos, labeled 'PIANO I.' and 'PIANO II.'. Both parts are marked 'Allegro.' and 'p molto espressivo'. Piano I has a 'pp' dynamic marking. Piano II has a 'pp' dynamic marking and the instruction 'sempre legato.'.

Example 41, A. Arensky - *Suite no. 1, Op. 15, mov. 2*, bars 1-6⁶⁷.

Re 2) The succeeding phrase is characterized by a different articulation compared to the preceding one. In addition to the eighth-note passages (now in *legato* articulation) in both parts and the waltz-like accompaniment, Rachmaninov introduces an additional melodic motif - a descending line based on hemiolas, also carried out in both parts. Despite being notated in quarter notes, I would recommend shaping this line with the use of the right pedal (Example 42, highlighted in green) and/or, depending on acoustic conditions and the ability to shape the sound, utilizing *legato*. This approach will add a multilayered quality to the entire succeeding phrase (a singing phrase against a backdrop of fine eighth notes, where melodic notes - quarter notes "meet" primarily at intervals of

⁶⁷ Arensky A., *Suite for two pianos No, 1, Op. 15*, ed. A. Gutheil, Moscow n.d.

thirds, as well as sixths and fourths). Additionally, in the left-hand part of the first piano, there is another thematic material (Example 42, highlighted in blue) that should be emphasized to achieve a richer expression. In the context of varied articulation, careful use of the right pedal should be considered.

The image shows a musical score for Example 42, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 16-25. The score is in 3/4 time, key of E major. It features four systems of piano and left-hand parts. The piano parts are in the upper staves, and the left-hand parts are in the lower staves. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'cresc.', 'sf', 'mf', 'dim.', and 'pp'. Performance suggestions are marked in green (phrasing) and blue (highlighted additional material).

Example 42, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 16-25⁶⁸.

The first theme should not be subordinated to technical elements in any way. It should convey a sense of lightness, pleasure, and vitality rather than mechanical precision. It is important that each initiated motif (melodic layer) is performed with attention to detail and full understanding and conviction, resulting in a clear message for the listener. The phrase, which reappears in bars 61-68, modulates to the parallel key (E minor), where the second theme (section B) is introduced with a more tranquil and lyrical character (Example 43). Rachmaninov precisely describes his interpretive vision in this section by using numerous articulative symbols, dynamic markings, and previously rare agogic indications (*un poco meno mosso*, *accelerando*, *Tempo I*, *senza ritenuto*, *ritenuto*).

⁶⁸ In the above example, performance suggestions are marked in green (phrasing) and blue (highlighted additional material).

6 Un poco meno mosso

6 Un poco meno mosso

9

9

9

Example 43, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 66-81.

In the second theme, there is a return to the division between the leading and accompanying parts. The performer on the first piano should aim to introduce movement into the somewhat static melodic line. The element shaping the rhythm (in the right hand of the first piano) is the material from the introduction, which should be articulated very clearly to vary the long rhythmic values of the theme. Despite the different roles, the parts exchange musical material - the first piano "completes" the last four measures of the theme led by the second piano using hemiolas (bars 81-84 and 97-100).

In measure 110, a climax occurs (*ff* and *con passione* in the first piano part), and after eight measures, the roles reverse - the same marking is used in the second piano. In bar 118, similarly to bar 110, I would suggest a dynamic decrease (*mf* after *ff*, Example 44, marked in red), which will allow for a more flexible execution of the eight-note passages. While in the first part the emotional tension is reduced through *diminuendo* (bar 114), simultaneously giving the second performer space to build another climax with *crescendo* (bar 115). This makes the roles of both performers appear equivalent in terms of musical significance (Example 44).

The image shows a musical score for Example 44, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 107-121. The score is in E-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a piano part with various dynamics and markings. Bar 13 is marked with a blue oval containing 'ff con passione'. Bar 14 is marked with a red circle containing 'mf'. Bar 15 is marked with a blue oval containing 'dim.'. Bar 16 is marked with a blue oval containing 'cresc.'. Bar 17 is marked with a blue oval containing 'cresc.'. Bar 18 is marked with a red circle containing 'mf'. Bar 19 is marked with a blue oval containing 'ff con passione'.

Example 44, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 107-121.

After the second section, there is a brief return to the first theme (section A1), followed by a recurrence of the introduction leading into the most elaborated section C (bars 158-307, key of E-flat major). Rachmaninov suggests a tempo of *meno mosso*, with *meno* appearing to be a key term. A greater slowdown could cause issues with shaping the sixteen-measure theme. This is an important consideration when choosing the initial tempo of the piece. By using hemiolas and Rachmaninov's suggestions regarding the use of the right pedal, the phrase should be shaped in two-measure segments, which will help maintain the "waltz-like" character of this section. The way the melodic line of the second piano part is shaped is particularly important in this context. Despite the composer's

notation (one-measure phrasing), it would be more justified to extend the phrasing over two measures. This would help to avoid fragmentation of the thematic material and thus unify the narrative presented in "longer breaths" (Example 45, marked in green).

The foundation of the third theme is formed by the first four notes of the *Dies Irae* motif (Example 45, bars 158-160), which, alongside the bell motif, was one of the most significant sources of inspiration in Rachmaninov's work. Interestingly, this motif, inherently associated with death, is presented in a major key. There is a very clear distinction between the leading and accompanying parts, where the second piano provides rhythmic and harmonic filling and fully supports the performer of the thematic part (pfte. 1), allowing them the freedom to shape their artistic vision.



Example 45, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 157-173.

Despite the appearance of the third theme and a change in key (E-flat major), Rachmaninov maintains thematic coherence by using elements from previous sections, such as rhythmic material from the introduction, hemiolas, lyricism, and the driving eighth-note passages. After the initial two statements of this theme, the second piano takes on the role of leading the narrative (bar 206), this time using chords, which implies an intensification of the sound. Each subsequent repetition of the theme or its modified/fragmented version (from bar 230) aims to prepare for the climax in bar 265. However, this should not restrict performers in their free interpretation of the melodic shape and phrasing, as well as dynamic withdrawals and agogic fluctuations that allow for surprising the listener during interesting harmonic changes. Together with my partner, we decided, for example, to include a slight delay and *subito piano* in measure 236 (a D-flat major chord preceded by a G major chord). It is also worth considering and applying the continuation of the two-bar pedaling to maintain the harmonic qualities of this fragment. After such a long-built climax, the following 30 measures aim to reduce emotional tension. Despite the composer's recommendation to decrease the dynamics from *fff* to *ff* in bar 266, it may be worth leading a few more measures with the climax dynamics. The suggestion of *accelerando* and the return of the characteristic phrase from the introduction in bar 296 would suggest the appearance of a new theme. However, this phrase is modified and leads to the

most challenging fragment to synchronize in both suites (bars 312-328). Three of the four repetitions of the four-bar phrases based on the first theme (shared eighth-note passages in the right hands) end with a suggestion of *ritenuto*, to return to the main tempo after a short pause. The same agogic solutions will give a sense of monotony. It is worth considering a coloristic variation of the statements (dynamic and agogic withdrawal in the third due to the harmonic change from E-flat major to E minor), as well as minimal variations in the length of pauses between each statement, and the extent and/or intensity of the *ritenuto* itself. This requires not only excellent understanding and mutual sensing of intentions and emotions within the duo but also a precise outline of the shaping of each phrase.

Example 46, S. Rachmaninov - *Suite* Op. 17, mov. 2, bars 312-321.

The final repetition of the above phrase aims to return, using *accelerando*, to sections **A** and **B1** (the second theme with reversed piano parts, in the key of G minor). Bar 444 marks the beginning of the *coda*, in which elements from all previous sections are utilized. The parts once again exchange musical material. The piece concludes with eighth notes in a high register, imitating the sound of bells. The suggestion of *perdendo* in the last measures pertains to a gradual decrease in dynamic, not agogic. The main reason for this is to achieve the effect of distant bells. Reducing the volume while

maintaining the tempo allows for a natural fading effect. Slowing down could disrupt the fluidity, making the effect less vivid and authentic.

Despite the often unclear notation (the absence of the characteristic waltz accompaniment in the second and third theme, or the constant use of hemiolas), proper shaping and understanding (e.g. presenting the third theme in two-bar phrases) of each of the three distinct themes affects the perception of this section as a waltz. This should be one of the goals for performers interpreting this movement of *Suite* Op. 17⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ Numerous elements, such as multi-thematic structure, virtuosity, the use of duple rhythm in triple meter, as well as the "trill" introduction, evoke associations with the *Waltz* in A-flat major Op. 42, by Frederic Chopin, whose performance by Rachmaninov was published by RCA.

2.3 Suite Op. 17, mov. 3 Romance

The only slow movement of *Suite Op. 17* is another excellent example of Rachmaninov's compositional mastery, demonstrating his extraordinary skill in creating contrapuntal melodic lines, exchanges, and elaborations, resulting in dense and elaborate musical textures. Often, despite the absence of explicit markings in the score, the counterpoint plays an equal role to the themes.

The brief two-bar introduction of the third movement (second piano part) evokes the opening of the first movement of *Fantaisie-Tableaux Op. 5*. After the twice-repeated, identical sixteenth-note figure of the A-flat major chord, a lyrical theme emerges, starting on the weak beat of the third bar (Example 47). When performing this melodic theme, *rubato* should be used in accordance with the intervallic distances (e.g., a slight delay between the notes C1 and F in measure 4, similar to the change in the direction of a cello bow).

There is a clear division between the leading and accompanying parts, further emphasized by the composer's dynamic suggestion - *mf* for the performer presenting the theme and *p* for the one creating the background. In my view, this division could be approached differently. Introducing the first two measures with a softer dynamic (*pp*) would allow the theme to emerge "from nowhere" in a dynamic of *p*. This would enable the performer to shape the phrase more freely, both dynamically and in terms of *rubato*. Despite the modest dynamic, the octaves in the accompaniment part's left hand in the opening measures should produce a deep, resonant tone, significantly supporting the stability of the melodic line.



Example 47, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 1-6.

Section **A** (bars 1-42) can be divided into two segments: **a** (bars 1-18) and **b** (bars 19-42). In the first segment, the second piano part conforms to the interpretative concept and phrasing of the performer on the first piano. In measure 6, the duo exchanges accompaniment material (sixteenths in *p* dynamic and eighths played *staccato* in *pp* dynamic). Rachmaninov's precise dynamic markings suggest that the sixteenth-note material should be carried over as a continuation of the line from measure 5 in the second piano. The absence of this suggestion might lead some performers to seek other dynamic and agogic solutions, such as an echo effect or excessive use of *rubato*, which does not seem advantageous in this context. Interestingly, Rachmaninov omitted this type of material exchange between performers in measure 10 (Example 48).



Example 48, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 10-12.

In bars 5-6 and 9-10, the slanted line between the staves is intended to draw attention to the transfer of the melodic line's ending to the left hand of the performer. However, in bar 11, it suggests a continuation of the second four-measure phrase and its connection to the eight-measure thematic material. Due to the varied material in both the leading and accompanying parts, the composer's indications of *ritenuto* and *a tempo* suggest that the notes *db1* and *f1* should be separated by a slight pause, which helps maintain the eight-measure proportion between the first two presentations of the theme and their responses. This section alludes to the practice of "intonation" or "singing out" the leading line or theme, typical of folk vocal practices, especially characteristic of polyphonic choral music. This practice was adopted into art music by the end of the 18th century, not only in the development of the famous Russian romance with instrumental accompaniment (such as *gusli*, guitar, harpsichord/clavecin/piano) but also, in a somewhat later period (early 19th century), in piano music.

In the second segment of part A (bars 19-42), the roles between the pianists are reversed. The thematic part (pfte. 2) presents the doubled theme in both hands, while the accompanying part (pfte. 1) not only provides accompaniment but also introduces additional melodic material marked *tenuto*. Despite the *p* dynamic, this additional material should be more prominently highlighted, as it holds equal importance to the theme. The multi-layered narrative development throughout the piece is a crucial factor for a fuller interpretation and appreciation of this section.

Although understanding the composers' intentions and adhering to their indications can be crucial for interpreting a work, sometimes deviations from these instructions can bring a fresh perspective and deeper insight into the piece. In bars 24-25, to avoid repeating the same solutions from the analogous section (bars 8-9) during the first presentation of the theme, my partner and I decided to apply a subtle *diminuendo* (instead of the suggested *crescendo*) and to bring out the top note of the

A-flat major chord in the second piano part with a "bright" sound. This decision allowed us to achieve a more expressive opening of the following section (Example 49).

Example 49, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 22-27⁷⁰.

In this movement of *Suite* Op. 17, Rachmaninov clearly and meticulously outlines his concept for phrasing, articulation, dynamics, and balance between the performers. However, one might find it surprising due to the significant dynamic contrast between the first piano part (*mf*) and the second piano part (*p*) in measures 26-27 (Example 49). In previous sections of this work, as well as in *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, such differences indicated a clear division between the leading and accompanying parts. In the performance of *Suite* Op. 17, this may result from the introduction of new material in the first piano part that needs more emphasis, while the counterpoint in the second part is based on the melodic shape of the first theme.

Despite these differences, each pianist should have the freedom to shape their musical material as an independent melodic line. However, this freedom must not lead to disharmony or "incompatibility" in

⁷⁰ Dynamic suggestions are marked in green.

the interpretation of the pianistic elements to ensure that both parts are cohesive and fitting, rather than arbitrary. In this context, a symphonic approach may be useful, where each melody plays the role of one section of the orchestra. Despite differences in timbre, way of producing sound, or individual artistic freedom, performers must maintain close collaboration to ensure harmonious integrity and unity in performance. A shared understanding of phrase structure, consistency in articulation, and proportional distribution of dynamics and tension are crucial for creating an interpretation that is both individually rich and mutually coordinated.

In measure 43, section **B** begins in E major, which can be divided into four segments: bars 43-52 and 53-64, along with an analogous fragment with reversed roles in bars 65-74 and 75-86. Rachmaninov's notation once again suggests a division based on musical significance. It seems natural to highlight the sounds of the phrase in the second piano part and to jointly shape the narrative (Example 50, marked in blue). The two-bar phrase is repeated three times, with each repetition becoming more elaborate. In the second occurrence, there are added intervals introducing harmonic elements and octaves in the left hand of the accompanying part, which add color. Despite the *staccato* notation, these notes should resonate well, with a suggestion to use the right pedal. In the third occurrence, the second piano introduces additional melodic material. Although there are two independent motifs, their dynamic shaping and drive towards the climax are similar, creating a cohesive and intense musical structure.



Example 50, S. Rachmaninov - *Suite* Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 43-45

In the second segment (bars 53-64), a new motif appears in the second piano part. The accompaniment in the first piano part (Example 51) evokes a similarity to the fast section from the second movement - *Adagio Sostenuto* of the second *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18 (Example 52). A symphonic approach of creating the musical image may inspire performers to choose appropriate

articulation and timbre. For instance, the *staccato* notation applied to small rhythmic values in the left hand of the first piano part can be associated with the *pizzicato* articulation typical for string instruments. Meanwhile, the main motif of this section resembles the sound of a woodwind instrument, which, together with the continuation of the narrative, is enhanced by additional instruments with different timbres. The next layer of sound consists of *staccato* octaves in *pp* dynamics (bars 56, 60).

The image displays a musical score for S. Rachmaninov's Suite Op. 17, movement 3, bars 53-56. The score is written for piano (p) and features complex rhythmic patterns, including staccato octaves and woodwind-like motifs. The notation includes various dynamics such as *pp* (pianissimo) and *mf* (mezzo-forte), and includes fingerings and articulations like *staccato* and *pizzicato*. The score is presented in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

Example 51, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 53-56.

The image shows two systems of a musical score for Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto in C minor, Op. 18, movement 2, bars 111-115. The first system (bars 111-115) includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Clar.), Bassoon (Fag.), Cor Anglais (Cor. 1. 2.), Piano (Pfte.), Violin I (Viol. I.), Violoncello (Vcl.), and Bass (Basso.). The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (bars 116-119) continues the woodwinds and strings, with the piano part becoming more active. Dynamics include *mf*, *pp*, and *cresc.* markings.

Example 52, S. Rachmaninov - *Piano Concerto in C minor Op. 18, mov. 2, bars 111-115*⁷¹.

The return to the main key in bar 87 introduces the next, most emotionally intense section of the third movement of *Suite Op. 17 - Un poco più mosso*. The division into leading and accompanying parts remains evident until the end of this section. Measures 87-94 lead up to the greatest climax (Example 53, bars 95-99). In this climax, the first piano part fulfills the melodic and harmonic role, while the second pianist supports the build-up of emotional tension by adding density and layers to the sound. During the culmination itself, there is a significant increase in activity, with chords played

⁷¹ Rachmaninov S., *Piano Concerto in C minor Op. 18*, edd. Boosey & Hawkes, New York 1947.

in sixteenth-note triplets in the first piano part. A similar technique can be observed in the codas of both the first and third movements of Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18 (Examples 54 and 55).

The image displays a musical score for Example 53, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, movement 3, bars 95-98. The score is written for piano and features a complex texture with multiple staves. The top system consists of two staves, both marked with a forte (ff) dynamic. The bottom system also consists of two staves. The music is characterized by dense chordal textures and rapid sixteenth-note triplets in the upper voices. The key signature is C minor, indicated by three flats. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. The first system is labeled with a box containing the number 12, and the second system is labeled with a box containing the number 13.

Example 53, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 95-98.



Example 54, S. Rachmaninov - *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18, mov. 1, bars 367-374.



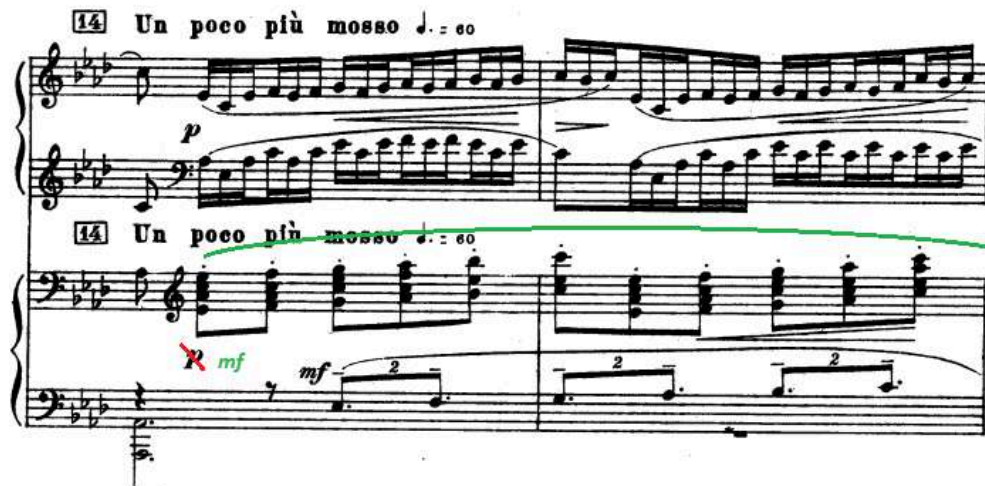
Example 55, S. Rachmaninov - *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18, mov. 3, bars 430-436.

In bars 99-102, an intriguing dialogue between the pianists occurs, reminiscent of the exchange of the sixteenth-note accompaniment lines from measures 5-7. Despite the meticulous repetition of the same dynamics (*p/pp*) in both parts, it might be worth considering the use of *rubato* to avoid monotony in this section (Example 56).



Example 56, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 99-103.

In the next section, *Un poco più mosso* (bars 107-122), the significant variation in articulation (*staccato* and *tenuto legato*) and dynamics (*p* and *mf*) in the second piano part is striking (Example 57). While performing the second piano part, I chose to treat both hands as having equal musical significance. The very wide arpeggiated chords in the left hand in the subsequent measures influenced the shaping of the seemingly "independent" melody in the soprano voice, which, for the sake of coherence and integrity of the performance, I decided to present as lyrically as the melody in the baritone voice (*legato*, *mf*). Analyzing previous solutions, it is apparent that Rachmaninov, when handling two melodic lines, preferred to divide them between the two performers, suggesting his "orchestral" thinking. This approach provides greater interpretative flexibility and allows for a more individual approach to each phrase. From this perspective, an alternative concept would be to apply the same solution in this fragment, which could enhance the interpretative richness and clarity of the performance by differentiating the role of each pianist.



Example 57, S. Rachmaninov - *Suite* Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 107-108⁷².

In measure 123, the *coda* begins, marked as *Meno mosso* (*Tempo I*). The accompaniment in the second piano part features a dynamic of *ppp* and *sempre leggiero*, with numerous chromatic chords requiring extreme delicacy in dynamics, articulation, and pedaling from the performer. There is an option for partial pressing of the right pedal, but caution is necessary to avoid losing the harmonic foundation in the lower register, which should resonate for just under two measures. This part essentially yields to the performer of the first piano, who can fully highlight all harmonic changes and take pleasure in shaping them.

The final reminiscence of the first theme's melody (Example 58) serves as the closing of the work. Rachmaninov uses the return to the initial motif of this section of the *Suite* as a formal tool to end the piece in a complete and coherent manner. This retrospection emphasizes the unity and continuation of the musical idea, while also providing a sense of closing the circle.

⁷² Performance suggestions (dynamic and articulation) are marked in green.

The musical score is written for piano and right-hand parts. It is in B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. The score is divided into two systems, each containing two staves.

System 1 (Bars 139-141):

- Staff 1 (Piano):** Bars 139-141. The piano part is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) in bar 139. It features a series of chords and a melodic line in the right hand.
- Staff 2 (Right Hand):** Bars 139-141. The right-hand part is marked *p* (piano) in bar 139. It features a complex melodic line with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Fingering numbers (1-5) are indicated above the notes.

System 2 (Bars 142-143):

- Staff 1 (Piano):** Bars 142-143. The piano part is marked *f* (forte) in bar 142. It features a series of chords and a melodic line in the right hand. The tempo is marked *rit.* (ritardando) in bar 143. The piano part is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) in bar 143.
- Staff 2 (Right Hand):** Bars 142-143. The right-hand part is marked *p* (piano) in bar 143. It features a complex melodic line with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Fingering numbers (1-5) are indicated above the notes. The tempo is marked *rit.* (ritardando) in bar 143.

The score concludes with a double bar line at the end of bar 143.

Example 58, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 3, bars 139-143.

2.4 Suite Op. 17, mov. 4 *Tarantella*

The fourth movement of Rachmaninov's *Suite Op. 17*, titled *Tarantella*, serves as a dynamic and extraordinarily virtuosic conclusion to the work. Drawing inspiration from the Italian tarantella, Rachmaninov faithfully captures the energy, temperament, and distinctive features of this lively dance - very fast tempo *Presto*, triple meter of 6/8, with motoric and rhythmic basis rooted in eighth-note movement, emphasizing the whirling character of the tarantella. The final movement of *Suite Op. 17*, despite its dance-like form, incorporates elements of both joy and drama, which is typical for Rachmaninov's music, known for its rich emotional and harmonic palette.

In the introduction (bars 1-21), the composer reveals the emotions that will characterize this movement. The two-bar opening in *ff* dynamic in the second piano part is immediately interrupted by *subito pp* in both parts. This dynamic collapse is then gradually developed through *crescendos* in bars 5 and 6, and again in bar 14, leading to powerful, fifteen-notes dominant chords in bars 18-19 marked *sff*, which should be firmly anchored⁷³. The process of building the volume of this introduction is worth delaying, especially considering the use of extensive chromaticism and *fugato* technique, which makes it unsettling, exciting, and intriguing for the listener. Despite the *legato* notation, all eighth notes need to be played with exceptional energy and selectivity to maintain clarity and precision of sound, which is crucial in building the drama.

A certain inconsistency can be noticed in the phrasing in bars 4-7 of the second piano part. I would personally lean towards using the phrasing from the anacrusis and first measure as well as measures 8-11, which seems to be a more interesting approach, especially in the context of the longer phrasing in the first part (Example 59, marked in green). On the other hand, the dynamic marking *pp* (bar 3, ptfe. 2), which occurs during the accented pedal octave, may be a printing error. The instrument's mechanism does not allow for such a sudden change in dynamics on a single note⁷⁴. Instead, I suggest moving the *pp* to the nearest moment where such a dynamic shift is feasible (the fourth eighth note of the fourth bar). The ending of the introduction with two bars of rest (bars 20-21) heightens the sense of unease and curiosity, while also allowing the preceding chords to resonate fully.

⁷³ Rachmaninov suggests *staccato* articulation. For better resonance, it is worth considering performing it with *tenuto*.

⁷⁴ The pedal can be changed at this point, which will significantly dampen and weaken the sound, depriving it of overtones.

The image shows a musical score for Example 59, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 4, bars 1-10. The score is in 3/4 time, marked Presto (♩ = 96). It features a piano (pp) and fortissimo (ff) dynamic range. Performance suggestions (green) include phrasing slurs and dynamic markings (pp, cresc.).

Example 59, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 4, bars 1-10⁷⁵.

The form of the final movement of Suite Op. 17 can be described as a sonata allegro form with a shortened recapitulation (absence of the first theme). The music flows continuously, maintaining a steady pulse and the energy of the dance-like tarantella. In this movement, the following sections can be identified:

- Introduction (bars 1-21)
- Exposition (bars 22-230)
- Development (bars 230-390)
 - Phase I (bars 230-310)
 - Phase II (bars 310-390)
- Recapitulation (bars 390-506)
- Coda (bars 506-584)

As noted in the footnote of the printed edition, the main theme of this composition (Example 60) is derived from a collection of Italian folk songs, though its exact origin has never been definitively

⁷⁵ Performance suggestions (dynamic and phrasing) are marked in green.

identified⁷⁶. The structure of the theme can be described as follows: a predecessor (question) consisting of two repetitions of a four-bar phrase, and a successor (answer) which undergoes modifications with each appearance. The four-bar head of the theme introduced in the first piano part is marked *staccato*⁷⁷. Despite this, in my opinion, each chord should be firmly articulated (with a suggestion of *marcato*)⁷⁸ while maintaining the melodic shape of the phrase. Subsequent appearances (bars 26-30 - ppte. 1; 38-42, 42-46 - ppte. 2) are based on longer rhythmic values, which naturally affects the richness/density of the chordal texture.

Example 60, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 4, bars 22-31.

In this movement, Rachmaninov introduces numerous abrupt and sudden dynamic changes, including *subito pianissimo* and *subito fortissimo*. These contrasts continuously surprise the listener, fostering greater emotional engagement with the piece as the music oscillates between extremes. As a result,

⁷⁶ Rachmaninov likely encountered this motif during his trip to Italy. The first sketches of both the second *Suite* for two pianos Op. 17, and the second *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18, were made during Rachmaninov's stay in Varazze, Italy (Liguria) in 1900, at the invitation from baritone Feodor Chaliapin.

⁷⁷ This is the only section in the entire piece with such articulation.

⁷⁸ In a manner similar to the climactic chords in the introduction.

the audience becomes more aware of the diverse emotions contained in the work through the evocative interpretation.

However, it is equally important for performers to find the right balance between technical virtuosity and elegance and finesse. Excessive use of *fortissimo* can lead to the impression of a hollow technical display rather than a profound musical experience. In extreme cases, such an approach can discourage or even fatigue the listener, rather than delighting them. Therefore, as in the final section of the *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, it is essential to avoid excessive dynamic overload, which could undermine the intended effect and weaken the artistic impact of the interpretation. Any use of *subito p* or *pp* demands exceptional precision in pedal technique⁷⁹.

The last two statements of the head of the theme (bars 78-86) introduce the use of *diminuendo* and mark the conclusion of the first theme. In the transition, there is a richness of accents in both the leading and accompanying parts. Performers may experiment with a more aggressive sound in this section, but it is important not to neglect phrasing. Rachmaninov changes the time signature in the first part from 6/8 to 3/4 and modulates from the main key of C minor to E-flat minor (bar 102).

In bar 138, there is a noticeable shift in dynamics and articulation, signaling the introduction of the second theme of the final movement of *Suite* Op. 17. Although this section experiences a reduction in emotional tension, it is crucial to maintain the same tempo to ensure consistency throughout the movement. This theme (Example 61) features a gypsy-like character, which contrasts with the more triumphant and grounded first theme. Rachmaninov simplified the accompaniment (pfte. 1) by reducing it to a single staff.

⁷⁹ Especially in cases where *subito p* or *pp* is not preceded by a short breath in both parts, for example, in bar 45.



Example 61, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 4, bars 150-157.

The melody line played by the right hand of the second piano should be characterized by strict *legato*, which poses a challenge due to the accompanying harmonic fillings played *staccato*. A solution I discovered while working on the piece was to press the right pedal immediately after the *staccato* quarter notes in the right hand had sounded (during the rest on the sixth beat) and release it along with the next notes of the theme. The performer of this section must carefully balance the thematic layer (*mf, legato*) with the accompaniment (*pp, staccato*) to maintain clarity and distinctness of both elements.

It is impossible not to notice the similarity of this fragment to the fast section of the second movement of the third *Piano Concerto* in D minor Op. 30 (Example 62). In both cases, we have a lyrical theme conducted over a bass line on the first beat of the measure, along with harmonic fillings played *staccato*. Additionally, there are numerous repetitions and figurations with a small ambitus, marked *leggiero*.



Example 62, S. Rachmaninov - *Piano Concerto* in D minor Op. 30, mov. 2, bars 135-147⁸⁰.

In the first phase of the development (bars 230-310), there is a disappearance of the clear division between the leading and accompanying parts (Example 63), which requires perfect dynamic synchronization from both performers as they jointly carry the narrative forward.



⁸⁰ Rachmaninov S., *Piano Concerto* in D minor Op. 30 (two pianos version), ed. A. Gutheil, Moscow 1910.



Example 63, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 4, bars 230-238.

This section can be divided into ten eight-bar phrases, each aiming to prepare for the climactic chord in bar 310. Rachmaninov precisely outlines the climax points of each phrase⁸¹ and the level of volume, and consequently, the building up and diminishing of emotional intensity⁸². A full understanding of the dynamic architecture of this section is crucial for the long, "climbing" yet simultaneously wavy buildup towards the climax, without giving the impression of falling into a formulaic pattern or repetition.

Rachmaninov's dynamic suggestions:

- bars 230-238 Phrase 1 : *p* - *cresc.* - *sf*
- bars 238-246 Phrase 2: *mf* - *cresc.* - *f*
- bars 246-254 Phrase 3: *f* - *cresc.* - *sff*
- bars 254-262 Phrase 4: (none) - *dim.* - *pp*
- bars 262-270 Phrase 5: *pp* - *cresc.* - *mf* - *dim.*
- bars 270-278 Phrase 6: *pp* - *cresc.* - *mf* - *dim.*
- bars 278-286 Phrase 7: *mf* - *cresc.* - *dim.*
- bars 286-293 Phrase 8: (none) - *cresc.* - *f* - *dim.*
- bars 294-302 Phrase 9: *p* - *cresc.*
- bars 302-310 Phrase 10: *ff* - *sff*

My dynamic proposal:

- Phrase 1: ***pp*** - *cresc.* - *sf* (***mp***)
- Phrase 2: ***p*** - *cresc.* - ***mf***
- Phrase 3: ***mf*** - *cresc.* - ***sf*** (***f***)
- Phrase 4: ***f*** - ***cresc.*** - *dim.*
- Phrase 5: *pp* - *cresc.* - *dim.*
- Phrase 6: ***mp*** - *cresc.* - *dim.*
- Phrase 7: *mf* - *cresc.* - *dim.*
- Phrase 8: ***f*** - *cresc.* - *dim.*
- Phrase 9: *p* - *cresc.*
- Phrase 10: *ff* - ***cresc.*** - *sff*

⁸¹ According to the melodic shape: ascending - *crescendo*, descending - *diminuendo*.

⁸² The emotional intensity in this case refers to dynamics used without combining them with agogic changes.

After such a long buildup, the second phase of the development brings a moment of emotional quietude. The eighth-note motif from the introduction reappears. Confirming my doubts about the phrasing of the second piano part in bars 4-7, in this section, Rachmaninov once again uses shorter phrasing. The performers engage in a continuous dialogue, exchanging varied material, and Rachmaninov contrasts the motifs in terms of articulation, reminding the performers of the *pp* dynamic eight times over twenty bars (bars 310-330). A very important element that binds the frequent material exchanges is the continuous repetition of the pedal octave (G-G) in bars 310-368. These should not stand out in any way, but the performers must ensure they are audible throughout this entire period. This section aims to build the next climax leading to the repetition of the second theme section with the roles of the parts reversed. Despite numerous chords and the *ff* dynamic, it is important to remember the climax point of the entire section, which is the C minor chord in bar 390.

The shortened recapitulation, which begins from the transition (bar 390), leads directly to the *Coda - Più mosso*. The *Tarantella* is the only among all the movements of both suites for two pianos where such a spectacular and virtuosic finale can be observed, reminiscent of the first and third movements of the *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18, or the final movement of the *Piano Concerto* in D minor Op. 30. In this conclusion, one can notice elements from the previous sections, such as:

- the eighth-note accompanying motif from the introduction,
- phrases imitating the second theme (a *legato* melody line conducted over accompanying harmonic fillings performed *staccato*, with the accompaniment of eighth-note figurations with a small ambitus),
- sudden and brief dynamic changes,
- The use of *fugato* technique and interwoven eighth-note figurations between the two pianos, creating a continuous dialogue effect, where it is difficult to distinguish which part is leading the narrative,
- A variation of the first theme (bars 562-570), which was used to cohesively conclude the piece. This is also the only fragment where Rachmaninov suggests a dynamic of *fff*. It is important to keep this in mind when applying *ff* dynamics in the preceding sections. The composer recalls the first theme of this movement for the last time, enhancing the depth and sound by conducting it simultaneously in both parts (Example 64). Despite such an extreme volume of sound⁸³, the performers should shape the phrase according to the melodic line (analogous to the shape of the first theme). Together with my partner, we decided on

⁸³ Rachmaninov reminds of the *fff* dynamic twice more in measures 577 and 582.

a minimal slowdown in the last two bars of the movement to prepare the concluding notes of this section. Despite the composer's lack of suggestion regarding a *ritardando*, a slight stretching of the tempo allowed for a well-grounded articulation of the final accented C notes in both parts (dotted half notes, fermatas, accents).

The image shows a musical score for Example 64, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 4, bars 558-568. The score is in B-flat major and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of piano and violin parts. The piano part features a melodic line with a crescendo and a final accented C note. The violin part features a melodic line with a crescendo and a final accented C note. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *cresc.*, and *ff*, and a fermata over the final accented C notes.

Example 64, S. Rachmaninov - Suite Op. 17, mov. 4, bars 558-568.

After conducting a stylistic and formal analysis, I present below the most characteristic elements of the *Suite Op. 17* by Sergei Rachmaninov.

Movement	Characteristic
I. <i>Introduction</i>	• Triumphant and march-like character. • Predominantly rich chordal texture in both piano parts creating multi-note harmonies. • Equal importance in both piano parts. • Showcasing two distinct melodic lines where the climax does not coincide (shifted by a few beats).
II. <i>Valse</i>	• Varied character (depending on the theme). • Three distinct themes in terms of character, key, and articulation. • Distribution of the waltz accompaniment in the first theme between the first and second piano parts (inspired by the works of A. Arensky). • Long melodic lines and accompaniment, alternating between the first and second piano parts (excluding the first theme). • Absence of characteristic waltz accompaniment in the second and third themes. • Frequent use of hemiolas (skillfully shaped in two-bar segments to maintain the waltz character).
III. <i>Romance</i>	• Romantic character. • The only slow movement – marked <i>Andantino</i>. • Equal importance in both piano parts. • Dense and intricate soundscapes due to the use of contrapuntal melodic lines (multilayered texture). • The counterpoint often plays an equal role with the themes. • Symphonic approach in creating the musical image.
IV. <i>Tarantella</i>	• Energetic character. • <i>Presto</i> tempo. • Virtuosity displayed in both piano parts. • Rhythm based on eighth-note motion, emphasizing the swirling and spirited nature of the <i>tarantella</i>. • Numerous culminations.

	• Frequent, sudden dynamic changes. • <i>Coda</i> maintained in a virtuosic character (the only one among all movements of both suites).
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Conclusion

At the end of the 19th century, Anton Arensky (1861-1906), one of the leading figures in Russian musical life during this period, played a crucial role in the development of the repertoire for two pianos, setting standards for future composers. His work in this area, particularly the five suites for piano duo, laid the foundation for a new musical movement. The success of Arensky's second suite in 1892 had a significant impact on the young Rachmaninov, prompting him to experiment with form and musical expression within this genre, leading to the creation of *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5 and *Suite* Op. 17. Although these two works were composed within a relatively short time frame, they express the maturity and evolution of the composer's style, reflecting his emotional and artistic transformations.

Each of these compositions, while maintaining the structure of a four-movement suite, has a distinct character and style, forming a cohesive artistic whole. *Fantaisie-Tableaux* Op. 5, characterized by a freer structure, stands out for its greater lyricism and subtlety, with a strong emphasis on poetic images and moods. The music here is more reflective, rich in emotional nuances and subtle dynamic shifts, while *Suite* Op. 17, composed after Rachmaninov had overcome his depression, is a more energetic and rhythmic work. Its clear structure and dance-like character bring it closer to classical models, showcasing the composer's growing experience.

Despite the differences in character and style, both suites exhibit strong emotional expression typical of Rachmaninov's style. The melodies are rich and lyrical, imparting a deep, romantic character to the pieces. In both works, the composer employs his characteristic dense and rich harmonizations, which give the music an emotional and full sound. Both suites are a testament to the virtuosity of both the composer and the performers. Each piece includes passages that allow the pianists to demonstrate both technical prowess and musicality, always requiring precise synchronization between the artists. The piano technique in *Fantaisie-Tableaux* is more subtle, demanding great sensitivity to detail from the performers and the ability to create sonic images, while *Suite* Op. 17 is more "spectacular," placing greater emphasis on the technical skills of the pianists. It requires precision and strength, particularly in the dynamic and rhythmic sections.

The eight-year period between the creation of the two suites was a time of intense emotional experiences for Rachmaninov, which is reflected in his music. The influence of these experiences

resulted in some of the most important works of his career, including second *Suite* Op. 17, second *Piano Concerto* in C minor Op. 18, and *Cello Sonata* in G minor Op. 19. These pieces not only solidified Rachmaninov's position as a distinguished composer but also became milestones in the musical literature for these specific instrumental ensembles.

When comparing the two suites in terms of the relationship between the two pianists, it is worth noting that *Suite* Op. 17, with its multilayered and complex texture, offers performers greater interpretative freedom. The use of polyphonic technique, the contrasting treatment of multiple melodic lines, and the ability to highlight them differently allow pianists to approach interpretation in various ways, making this work more demanding, satisfying, and open to diverse artistic exploration. In this context, *Suite* Op. 17 appears to be a more accomplished work, considering the correlation between the two pianists in a piano duo.

In conclusion, it is worth emphasizing that co-creating an interpretation in a piano duo is not only a challenge but also an extraordinary artistic adventure. This process, while demanding, provides pianists with a unique opportunity to explore the depth of musical expression and discover new, previously unknown aspects of the work. I hope that the analyses and conclusions presented in this dissertation will contribute to a better understanding of the process of co-creating an interpretation in a piano duo and will become a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration for future performers. Collaboration in a piano duo is not just about technical precision but, above all, about a deep emotional bond, allowing for the creation of exceptional, expressive interpretations of musical works that have the potential to remain long in the memory of listeners.

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