

PROKOFIEV'S ECLECTIC APPROACH IN HIS  
VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 2 IN G MINOR

Jishuang Yan, BA, MM

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APPROVED:

Felix Olschofka, Major Professor and  
Interim Director of Graduate  
Studies in the College of Music  
Clay Couturiaux, Committee Member  
Peter Mondelli, Committee Member  
John Holt, Chair of the Division of  
Instrumental Studies  
John W. Richmond, Dean of the  
College of Music  
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse  
Graduate School

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Prokofiev had a specific approach to the modernist aesthetic that is worthy of a special study from a new perspective: eclecticism. There are two distinguishable views on his achievement in modern music. One is the Western version, which sees his eclectic approach as not innovative enough in comparison with modern composers such as Stravinsky. The other view is from the traditional Soviet approach, which holds Prokofiev in the highest esteem. These sources largely ignore Prokofiev's Paris and American periods. Such an oversimplification is likely to have reflected political circumstance. Neither the Western view nor the Soviet view provides a satisfying interpretation of Prokofiev's musical style. Therefore, understanding his eclectic approach is important to challenge and redefine our notion of Prokofiev's musical aesthetic.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Question the “New Simplicity”

Compared with that of his contemporaries, Prokofiev’s musical lexicon does not align with either conservatism or the avant-garde, but rather, his compositional approach is eclectic. Drawing upon some of the composer’s own writings, musicologist Deborah Rifkin describes Prokofiev’s eclectic style in his Violin Concerto No. 2 as exemplary of a “New Simplicity.”<sup>1</sup> I submit that this term, which first appeared in a Soviet-sponsored publication, might be useful for explaining Prokofiev’s later repertoire composed under Soviet totalitarianism, but it should not include the Violin Concerto No. 2, which was composed in Paris, Voronezh, and Baku, and premiered in Madrid. In any case, “New Simplicity” is not a fully accurate term to explain Prokofiev’s musical style, because it only represents Prokofiev’s return to the classical idiom, excluding the more modern innovation of the composer’s eclectic style, reflecting his desire to conform to Stalin’s Soviet Realism rather than the composer’s more complex outlook.

Fortunately, the composer himself proposed another framework through which to view his works. In 1941, Prokofiev described his compositional style as consisting of “five lines”: classical, modern, toccata, lyrical, and grotesque.<sup>2</sup> Unlike his more avant-garde contemporaries, he created a hybrid style of classical and modern elements. It is evident that the composer employed multiple ideas from his five lines simultaneously in his Violin Concerto No. 2. The goal of this dissertation is to elaborate upon Prokofiev’s hybrid musical

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<sup>1</sup> Deborah Rifkin, “The Quiet Revolution of a B Natural: Prokofiev’s ‘New Simplicity’ in the Second Violin Concerto,” *Twentieth-Century Music*, no. 6 (2011): 183-208, <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2147/10.1017/S1478572210000162>. The primary source for the “New Simplicity” can be found in Harlow Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: a Biography* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 294.

<sup>2</sup> Sergei Prokofiev, *Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, ed. Semyon Shlifstein, trans. Rose Prokofiev (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1959), 36-37.



style from a new point of view, the eclectic approach, in order to help readers, enrich their understanding of his aesthetics.

### Contrasting the Western and the Soviet View

There are two distinguishable views on Prokofiev's contributions to modern music: the "Western" view considers his return to the Soviet Union the biggest mistake of his life, whereas the Soviet view insists that leaving Russia in 1918 was his biggest mistake.<sup>3</sup> Both versions are unsatisfying insofar as they do not always reflect the best scholarly practices. This dissertation offers an alternative, challenging our tendency to discuss modern music in binary terms.

The Western view states that Prokofiev's art was not revolutionary in a progressive sense but much like Rachmaninoff's, was generally traditional. Richard Taruskin notes that from a stylistic standpoint, Prokofiev's music always has traditional roots that "lay a simple harmonic design and a stereotyped formal pattern straight out of the textbook."<sup>4</sup> In addition, Taruskin did not believe there was any avant-garde (modern) music in Russia until the generation after Prokofiev, led by Shostakovich. Nor was Prokofiev opposed to a more functional musical harmony. Yet Stephen Press writes that Prokofiev's first version of *Chout* "But not only was the music stylistically unadventurous next to *Le sacre (The Rite of Spring)*, it was wedded to an old-fashioned ballet *d'action* replete with hero, villain, damsel in distress and benevolent protector."<sup>5</sup> Prokofiev also does not, as Neil Minturn concludes, fit into the system of "isms" that dominate Western views of twentieth-century music history, such as Schoenberg's expressionism and serialism, Debussy and Ravel's impressionism, and

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<sup>3</sup> Harlow Robison laid out the two points of view in his Prokofiev biography, *Sergei Prokofiev*, X.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 86.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Press, "Diaghilev and the Two Versions of Prokofiev's 'Chout,'" *Music & Letters* 82, no. 1 (2001): 51-77.

Stravinsky's primitivism and neoclassicism.<sup>6</sup> Since there is no clear term to describe Prokofiev's musical style, French musicologist Paul Collaer put Prokofiev in the Soviet composer category.<sup>7</sup> However, Minturn believes it is problematic to place Prokofiev in a nationalist category, because "a large portion of his compositional career was spent outside his homeland, and that portion spent inside the Soviet Union was not unequivocally successful."<sup>8</sup> Influenced by the Western view, many histories of modern music do not include Prokofiev as a significant composer, and there are few studies that interpret his musical style.<sup>9</sup>

The other view comes from Soviet scholarship, which holds Prokofiev in the highest esteem. Soviet musicologist Israel Nestyev and many leading Soviet musicians hold this view. These sources largely ignore Prokofiev's Paris and American periods. Nestyev justifies this exclusion by drawing a subjective contrast in his Prokofiev biography: "happiness and productivity in Russia, distress and sterility in Paris and America."<sup>10</sup> Such an oversimplification is likely to have been a reflection of political circumstance. It forces us to distrust the motives of Soviet authors charged with considering works such as Violin Concerto No. 2 that were composed, in whole or in part, outside of Russia.

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<sup>6</sup> Neil Minturn, *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 207.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Collaer, *A History of Modern Music* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1961), 292.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, Prokofiev's return to his homeland did not harm his creativity. During his Soviet period, he composed significant works such as Symphony No. 5, *Peter and the Wolf*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. See Minturn, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 207.

<sup>9</sup> See Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople, ed., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Otto Deri, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968); and Paul Collaer, *A History of Modern Music* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1961). Whittall mentions Prokofiev only twice in his chapters on Opera and Symphonic Music II. In comparison, he puts composers such as Berg, Webern, Bartók, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg in independent chapters, including analysis of their musical styles. The *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* has six hundred pages, of which fewer than two briefly mention Prokofiev's achievements. Deri's book mentions Prokofiev's significant oeuvre, but there is little explanation of his composition style. Collier's book includes a chapter on eclecticism, but it does not include Prokofiev; Prokofiev is placed in Soviet composers with Shostakovich instead.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, V.

In sum, neither the Western view nor the Soviet view provides a satisfying interpretation of Prokofiev's musical style. Although this dissertation focuses only on Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2, describing the "eclectic approach" of this concerto should allow other scholars to draw inferences about Prokofiev's mature compositional strategies in general. This eclectic approach not only enriches our understanding of Prokofiev's modern aesthetics but also challenges and redefines our notion of the twentieth-century modern aesthetic, which relies too often on such polarizing dualities and oversimplifications.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Prokofiev's Autobiography, "Five Lines"

As the author described in the previous section, two contrasting views (Western and Soviet) on Prokofiev's contributions to modern music are equally lacking in objectivity because of their basis in political rhetoric. Therefore, in order to have a more precise interpretation of Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2, some historically informed analysis would be used to evaluate his essential self-characterization shift in his compositional style, the so-called "five lines":

The first is classical line, which could be traced back to my early childhood and the Beethoven sonatas I heard my mom play. This line takes sometimes a neo-classical form (sonatas, concertos), sometimes imitates the 18<sup>th</sup> century classics (the *Classical Symphony*, the *Sinfonietta*). The second line, the modern trend, begins with that meeting with Taneyev when he reproached me for the "crudeness" of my harmonies (*Scythian Suite*, *The Gambler*, *Seven*, *They Were Seven*).... Although this line covers harmonic language mainly, it also includes new departures in melody, orchestration and drama. The third line is the toccata, or the "motor," line traceable perhaps to Schumann's Toccata, which made such a powerful impression on me when I first heard it (*Scherzo* of the Second Concerto and *Toccata* in the Fifth Concerto). This line is perhaps the least important. The fourth line is lyrical: it appears first as a thoughtful and meditative mood, not always associated with the melody, or, at any rate, with the long melody (beginning of the First Violin Concerto). For a long time, I was given no credit for any lyrical whatever... But as time went on I gave more and more attention to this aspect of my work... I should like to limit myself to these four lines, and so regard the fifth, "grotesque" line which some wish to ascribe to me, as simply a deviation from the other lines. I would prefer my music to be described as "Scherzo-ish" in quality, or else by three words describing the various degrees of the Scherzo-whimsicality, laughter, and mockery.<sup>11</sup>

Minturn claims, "The five lines are best understood as characteristics whose presence in most of Prokofiev's music is a matter of degree rather than presence or absence."<sup>12</sup> The author will later show how Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 also employs multiple aspects from the five lines simultaneously. This is a unique compositional technique that could be interpreted

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<sup>11</sup> Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36-37.

<sup>12</sup> Minturn, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 344

as an eclectic approach. Research to define each of the “five lines” is crucial to understand Prokofiev’s rationale behind his eclecticism in his compositions.

### Historical Research of Prokofiev’s Musical Style

This dissertation is the first to use the eclectic approach to describe Prokofiev’s musical style. Numerous books, articles, and dissertations have discussed his musical style, contemplating his treatment of form, melody, rhythm, harmony, and orchestration.<sup>13</sup> For instance, Sooyoung Kim’s dissertation describes his music as a form of “stylistic symbiosis, precisely the blending of traditional and modernist techniques.”<sup>14</sup> These studies generally consider Prokofiev’s musical idiom as a hybrid style, containing both classical and modern elements.

Although such a hybrid may seem consistent with the eclectic approach proposed here, these authors tend to want to classify the composer differently. French musicologist Paul Collaer, for example, discusses eclecticism in his *History of Modern Music*, but ultimately categorizes Prokofiev alongside Shostakovich in a chapter on music in Soviet Russia.<sup>15</sup> This common classification of Prokofiev’s music is incomplete. Unlike Shostakovich’s, many of Prokofiev’s compositions were written outside Russia: the Symphonies Nos. 2-4, the Piano Concertos Nos. 3-5, *The Love for Three Oranges*, and the Violin Concerto No. 2 (which was his last commission from the West). Admittedly, Prokofiev’s music does sometimes display nationalistic features, but such Russian folkloric elements are but one of many features that constitute Prokofiev’s style.

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<sup>13</sup> Israel Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, trans. Florence Jonas (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), 454 -88; Christina Guillaumier, “Ambiguous Modernism: The Early Orchestral Works of Sergei Prokofiev,” *Tempo* 65, no. 256 (2011): 25-37; Esther Stephens Kerr, “A Stylistic Analysis of Serge Prokofiev’s Second Concerto” (Master’s thesis, North Texas State Teacher’s College, 1943), 97-98; Sooyoung Kim, “Perspectives on the Symbiosis of Traditional and Modernist Techniques in Four Violin Compositions by Sergei Prokofiev” (DMA document, University of Cincinnati, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Kim, “Perspectives,” ii.

<sup>15</sup> Collaer, *History of Modern Music*, 368.

Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 is one of his many works that takes such an eclectic approach. Interpretations of it in the secondary literature are limited compared with those of his piano compositions. Michael Roeder suggests this lyrical concerto represents "Soviet Realism," which displays a Classical spirit in its formal structure and counterpoint. The second movement of Prokofiev's concerto has reminded listeners of the slow movement from Mozart's Piano Concerto in C major, K. 467.<sup>16</sup> Robin Stowell points out that the composition was originally designed as a "sonata" for violin and orchestra. This could explain the distinctive beginning with the soloist immediately playing the first theme without orchestra accompaniment.<sup>17</sup> Stowell believes the finale to have a grotesque Russian character, whereas Roeder's opinion was that there were no grotesque characteristics in this concerto.

Few dissertations and articles focus on Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2. Esther Kerr draws the conclusion that the concerto is "formally classical, melodically lyrical and diatonic, rhythmically uncomplicated, harmonically thoroughly modern, but not very radical."<sup>18</sup> As already mentioned, Deborah Rifkin describes Prokofiev's eclectic style as the "New Simplicity."<sup>19</sup> Rifkin considered this concerto as representative of Prokofiev's mature style, which exemplifies simple melodies and classical formal structures. The term "New Simplicity" is taken from Prokofiev's article in the Soviet newspaper *Izvestiia* that discussed the problem of accessibility in modern music. "It [a new composition] should first all be melodic, but the melody, though simple and accessible, should not become a refrain or a trivial turn of phrase.... The same holds true for compositional technique and how it is set forth; it must be clear and simple, but not hackneyed. Its simplicity must not be an old-

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Thomas Roeder, *A History of the Concerto* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1994), 320.

<sup>17</sup> Robin Stowell, "The Concerto," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, ed. Stowell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 162.

<sup>18</sup> Kerr, "Stylistic Analysis," 97-98.

<sup>19</sup> Rifkin, "Quiet Revolution," 183-208.

fashioned one; it must be new simplicity.”<sup>20</sup> This accessibility in his music was Prokofiev’s political endorsement to pursue his career as a Soviet composer. In other words, Prokofiev may have used the term just to keep himself out of the very real danger other Soviet artists were experiencing. In any case, I suggest that “New Simplicity” is not an appropriate term to describe Prokofiev’s concerto.

### The Eclectic Style

In comparison, Prokofiev’s “five lines” is a more precise source to interpret his music style. Prokofiev’s use of Classical formal structure, modern harmony, lyrical melody, toccata passages, and grotesque character in his Violin Concerto No. 2 could be interpreted from a new point of view: the eclectic approach. However, the term “eclectic” has largely escaped the attention of classical music scholars, being more frequently used about in the popular or film music genres. Jason Middleton and Roger Beebe explore popular music in the late 1990s in the United States.<sup>21</sup> In this period, the producer’s most common strategy was to apply a hybrid style of rock and hip-hop music, which could be called eclecticism (the musical material includes rock, pop, rap, punk, swing, mambo, etc.) Alison Arnold points out that popular film songs in India employ eclectic music. For example, Hindi film music, which occupies one-fifth of India’s film market, uses the eclectic approach. “[The song] is a mixture of Indian and Western musical styles and accompanying instruments.”<sup>22</sup> Both eclectic film music and eclectic popular music represent a hybrid musical style that makes use of multiple musical elements. This is a similar approach to Prokofiev’s concerto, which employs five “lines” at the same time.

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 294.

<sup>21</sup> Jason Middleton and Roger Beebe, “The Racial Politics of Hybridity and ‘Neo-Eclecticism’ in Contemporary Popular Music,” *Popular Music* 21, no. 02 (2002): 159; <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2165/docview/195172128?pq-origsite=summon>.

<sup>22</sup> Alison Arnold, “Popular Film Song in India: A Case of Mass-Market Musical Eclecticism,” *Popular Music* 7, no. 2 (1988): 177; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/853535>.

## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON THE “FIVE LINES”

#### Prokofiev’s Early “Modern” Attempt, the *Scythian Suite*

To understand Prokofiev’s eclectic approach, we will now conduct a historically informed style analysis on the concerto through the lens of the “five lines” concept. The first two lines, classical and modern, are perhaps Prokofiev’s most significant aspects of his eclectic style. As he discussed in his autobiography, the priority of the “modern line” is harmonic innovation as well as new departures in melody, orchestration, and drama.<sup>23</sup> Also, Prokofiev suggests the *Scythian Suite* (originally in the ballet *Ala and Lolli*) as one of his early modern attempts.<sup>24</sup>

According to many sources, Sergei Diaghilev and Igor Stravinsky were two of the most important people who influenced Prokofiev’s early modern innovation. Diaghilev, the impresario and founder of the Ballets Russes Company in Paris, commissioned Prokofiev to write a new ballet, *Ala and Lolli*, in 1914. But before Prokofiev could participate in the Ballets Russes, Stravinsky had become an avant-garde idol in Paris. His early ballets, *The Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911), and *The Rite of the Spring* (1913), written for Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, become the trend of the modern music in twentieth-century Paris. The influence of Diaghilev and Stravinsky may be found in Prokofiev’s diary, which shows how Prokofiev changed his artistic judgment on Stravinsky’s *Petrushka*. When Prokofiev first saw *Petrushka* in 1913, he considered it “music not needed for the sake of music but purely for the stage.”<sup>25</sup> One year later, he wrote: “I could state without any qualification that I like it

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<sup>23</sup> Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36-37.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Sergey Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries, 1907-1914: Prodigious Youth*, trans. Anthony Phillips (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 429.



[*Petrushka*]. Unfortunately, *The Rite of Spring* was not in the repertoire for this season.”<sup>26</sup>

Prokofiev appreciated Stravinsky’s style and composed *Ala and Lolli* under the strong influence of *The Rite of the Spring*.

*Ala and Lolli* demonstrates Prokofiev's modernist compositional techniques. Here we find a reconfiguration of sound through disruptive gestures, juxtaposed layers of sound, pulsating rhythms, the creation of specific aural imagery, ostinatos, the obliteration of tonality, harmony in a dialectic engagement with absent sounds, economical use of language, and “effect” tactics.<sup>27</sup>

However, Prokofiev claimed that he did not fully understand the compositional technique in *Rite of the Spring*, believing it was “quite possible that I was also searching for the images [of *The Rite of the Spring*] in my own way.”<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, Diaghilev was also pushing Prokofiev to imitate Stravinsky’s style.

Evidence can be found in a letter that Diaghilev wrote to Stravinsky in 1914:

Dear Igor:

I have lots of news, but first of all a few words about Prokofiev.... [*Chout*] might be suitable for the Mariinsky Theater ten years ago but is unacceptable for us. He is not looking for Russian effects in his music. For him, it’s just music in the widest sense. It is just music, and very bad.... I am counting on your help. Prokofiev is easily influenced.... I urge you to come, since it is important for the future.<sup>29</sup>

Diaghilev had not approved Prokofiev’s imitation of Stravinsky’s compositional technique.

Stephen Press explained Prokofiev’s problem: his music was composed “wholly characteristically, on his terms. He did not quote borrowed material as Stravinsky had done in his early ballets.”<sup>30</sup> Diaghilev wanted Prokofiev to compose a showcase of Russian folk tunes for his new ballet, similar to Stravinsky’s approach. As a result, Prokofiev looked to Stravinsky as an influence.

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<sup>26</sup> *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries*, 707.

<sup>27</sup> Guillaumier, “Ambiguous Modernism,” 31.

<sup>28</sup> “Autobiography” in *Sergei Prokofiev: Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Oleg Prokofiev (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1991), 250.

<sup>29</sup> *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Press, “Diaghilev and the Two Versions,” 54.

**Table 1: Comparison of Prokofiev’s early and mature style with Stravinsky’s Russian period.<sup>31</sup>**

Prokofiev Scythian Suite	Stravinsky (Russian period)	Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 2 (eclectic style)
International music, no Russian influence	Use of the past	Hybrid of modern and classical elements
Homophonic and atonal	Essentially homophonic	Manipulates basic tonal harmony, presenting it in unusual combinations
Ostinatos	Much use of repetition (ostinato)	Less repetition and ostinato
Some rubato	Metronomic strictness, no rubato	Lots of rubato
Diatonicism adding color notes	Chromaticism and diatonicism	Diatonicism
Staccato and legato	Staccato	Staccato and legato
No writing about musical theory	No writing about musical theory	No writing about musical theory
Two-part counterpoint	Prefers spare, two-part counterpoint	“Strict” counterpoint

Prokofiev later acknowledged this collaboration with Stravinsky: “Leafing through Russian songs opened to me lots of interesting possibilities.”<sup>32</sup> Influenced by his early collaboration with Stravinsky and Diaghilev, the thematic materials in Prokofiev’s composition are mostly in Russian character. Prokofiev’s compositional style is also same as Stravinsky’s that do not follow a specific artistic dogma. Prokofiev once answers when he was asked about the basis of his musical innovations, “I have no theories, from the moment an artist formulates his own ‘logic,’ he begins to limit himself.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, a comparison of Prokofiev’s early and mature style with Stravinsky’s Russian period could help to understand Prokofiev’s musical idiom. Table 1 illustrates the similarities between Prokofiev’s *Scythian Suite* and Stravinsky’s Russian period style. In Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 2, however, he tends to compose in a stricter counterpoint and diatonic harmony. Prokofiev believed that diatonic music had more possibilities than atonal music, once stating, “The construction of a

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<sup>31</sup> Stravinsky compared his composition style with Schoenberg in an interview; see Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues and A Diary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 56-58.

<sup>32</sup> Press, “Diaghilev and the Two Versions,” 53.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 455.

composition on a tonal basis may be compared to building on rock, whereas construction without a tonal basis is like building on sand.”<sup>34</sup>

### Prokofiev’s “Classical” Line, the *Classical Symphony*

As Prokofiev discussed in his autobiography, the “Classical” line takes a neo-classical form (sonatas, concertos) and imitates the eighteenth-century classics (the *Classical Symphony*).<sup>35</sup> This section will mainly look at the *Classical Symphony*, to understand Prokofiev’s classical quality in his eclectic style.

At the age of thirteen Prokofiev went to the St. Petersburg Conservatory and spent seven years there. While in school Prokofiev studied composition with Anatol Lyadov (1855-1914) and Jazepes Vitols (1863-1948), piano with Anna Nikolayerna Esipova (1851-1914), and conducting with Nicolas Tcherepnin (1873-1945). The largely conservative style of his teachers in St. Petersburg Conservatory influenced Prokofiev’s early compositions. Inspired by his study with Tcherepnin, he wrote his first symphony in the manner of Haydn, now considered as one of the earliest neo-classical works. Prokofiev wrote about this symphony:

I spent the summer of 1917 near Petrograd. I had been thinking of writing an entire symphony without the help of the piano. I believed that the orchestra would sound more natural... [And there] arose the notion of a symphony in Haydn’s style, since Haydn’s technique had somehow become especially clear after my work in Tcherepnin’s class.... If Haydn had lived into our age, he would have preserved his own style of composing and, at the same time, have absorbed something from the new music. That was the kind of symphony I wanted to write: a symphony in classical style. And when I saw that my idea was beginning to work I called it the “Classical” Symphony: in the first place because that was simpler, and secondly for the fun of it....<sup>36</sup>

Dorothea Redepenning wrote that this often-quoted comment, “Reads like an early confession of neo-classicism. Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella*, the key neo-classical work, was not

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<sup>34</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 479.

<sup>35</sup> Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36-37.

<sup>36</sup> Sergei Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev, A Composer’s Memoir*, trans. Guy Daniels (London & Sydney: Macdonald & Jane’s, 1979), 192.

begun until two years later. Prokofiev was certainly referring back to classical models here, for instance in the proportions of the symphony, the well-balanced sonata movements in the opening allegro and the finale, the triad-based melodies and the occasional Alberti bass figures.”<sup>37</sup> Redepenning’s summary of Prokofiev’s style in the *Classical Symphony* has two aspects. First, Prokofiev’s employment of traditional formal structure: both the first movement and finale are in sonata form. The second movement is in ABA form. The third movement uses a Baroque dance form, Gavotte in 4/4, instead of the Minuet in 3/4 that was more common in the Classical period. Second, Prokofiev’s musical language in the *Classical Symphony* imitates Haydn’s style. Although Prokofiev’s work does not have a direct quote from Haydn, there are similar textures to Haydn’s *Surprise Symphony*. In Examples 1a-b, the Alberti bass figures (arpeggiated accompaniment) in both symphonies are found in the bassoon part. In addition, both Haydn and Prokofiev employ triad-based melodies in these two examples.

**Example 1: Comparison of Prokofiev’s “Classical” line with Haydn’s style.**

**(a) Haydn, Symphony No. 94 in G major (Surprise Symphony), mm. 220-26**

The image displays a musical score for Haydn's Symphony No. 94, measures 220-26. The score is written for a full orchestra, including Flutes (Fl. I & II), Oboes (Ob. I & II), Bassoons (Bsn. I & II), Violins (Vln. I & II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The key signature is G major (one sharp). The time signature is 4/4. Measures 220-221 are marked with a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). Measures 222-226 are marked with a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). The bassoon part (Bsn. I & II) features a triad-based melody in measures 220-221, marked with a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). The bassoon part also features an Alberti bass figure (arpeggiated accompaniment) in measures 222-226, marked with a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.). The other instruments (Fl. I & II, Ob. I & II, Vln. I & II, Vla., Vc., Cb.) are shown in the score.

<sup>37</sup> Grove Music Online, s.v. “Prokofiev, Sergey,” by Dorothea Redepenning; accessed 13 January 2019; <http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2173/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000022402>.

(b). Prokofiev, *Symphony No. 1 in D Major (Classical Symphony)*, mm. 45-50

However, Prokofiev later abandoned this imitative style, which is why the *Classical Symphony* was his only neo-classical style work. A letter he wrote to Boris Asafiv, the dedicatee of the *Classical Symphony*, in 1925 explained his rationale:

Stravinsky's concerto<sup>38</sup> is a continuation of the line he adopted in the finale of his Octet—that is, a stylization in imitation of Bach—which I do not approve of, because even though I love Bach and think it is not a bad idea to compose according to his principles, it is not a good idea to produce a stylized version of his style.... I do not think very highly of things like *Pulcinella* or even my own “Classical” Symphony, which are written “under the influence” of something else.<sup>39</sup>

He now considered all imitation from other composers a failure. He criticized Stravinsky's neo-classical style and was even willing to question his own successful *Classical Symphony*.<sup>40</sup>

In sum, Prokofiev's “Classical” line ceased to use imitation style in his mature compositions, but continued to employ traditional forms, especially sonata form. Nestyev wrote, “The classical quality of Prokofiev's music is clearly evident in his choice of form.... In an interview in 1918, he called sonata form ‘the most flexible musical form.’”<sup>41</sup> The first

<sup>38</sup> Stravinsky, *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments* (1923-24).

<sup>39</sup> *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 95.

<sup>40</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 467.

<sup>41</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 484.

movements of both the *Classical Symphony* and Violin Concerto No. 2 are in sonata form. The classical formal structure is an important element in his eclectic approach.

### The Toccata, Lyrical, and Grotesque Characters

According to Prokofiev's autobiography, the "toccata, lyrical and grotesque" lines are of relatively low importance, but those elements are still an indispensable part of his eclectic approach.<sup>42</sup> About the toccata line, as he described, Schumann's Toccata in C major, Op. 7, impressed him a lot as a young student. The toccata line also can be interpreted as a motor line, dominated by driving rhythms.<sup>43</sup> Prokofiev suggests the *Scherzo* from his Piano Concerto No. 2 as one example of the "toccata" line. Examples 3a-b shows Prokofiev's *Scherzo* and Schumann's *Toccata*, both excerpts being in a fast tempo and expressing the virtuosic ability of the soloist. The term "toccata," first used in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, is derived from the Italian verb meaning "to touch". It is often used for keyboard instruments, featuring fast rhythms. For instance, J. S. Bach wrote his famous Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565, for the organ. Thus, the toccata line is also Prokofiev's adoption from the past and could therefore be analyzed as a part of the "classical" line.

As Prokofiev explained about his "modern" line, although this line covers harmonic language mainly, it also includes new departures in melody. The lyrical melodies in most of his works could also be considered innovative. Nestyev wrote of Prokofiev's unexpected melodic turns: "In the realm of melody, just as in rhythm and harmony, Prokofiev often juxtaposes the simplest and most traditional patterns with the sharpest, most angular ones."<sup>44</sup> Also as the author wrote about the "modern" line, Stravinsky also influenced Prokofiev to write melodies in the Russian tradition. Alexander Werth describes Prokofiev's lyrical gift as

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<sup>42</sup> Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36-37.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 475

“a melodic gift, which is in the best Russian traditions of Mussorgsky and Liadov.”<sup>45</sup>

Prokofiev’s lyrical line has both modern innovation and Russian tradition character, which could be generalized as elements in the classical and modern lines.

As he described in his autobiography, the last “grotesque” line is a deviation from the other lines. Prokofiev preferred his music to be described as “Scherzo-whimsicality, laughter, and mockery.”<sup>46</sup> This line can be found in most of Prokofiev’s finest compositions, such as *The Love for Three Oranges*, *Peter and the Wolf*, and the *Violin Concerto in G minor*. The finale from the Violin Concert No. 2 is where the listener can begin to synthesize the many elements and find a Scherzo-like atmosphere.

In conclusion, Prokofiev’s eclectic approach in the five lines could be interpreted as a reduction binary of modern versus classical. The modern line represents his innovation in harmony, orchestration, and lyrical melody. The classical line is his adoption from the past, mainly his employment of traditional form, such as sonata form and toccata. The remaining three lines—lyrical, toccata, and grotesque—could be analyzed as characters in the classical line and modern lines.

**Example 2: Comparison of Prokofiev’s “Toccata” line with Schumann’s style.**

**(a) Schumann, Toccata in C major, Op. 7, mm. 1-10**



<sup>45</sup> Alexander Werth, *Musical Uproar in Moscow* (Westport, CT: Green wood Press, 1973), 78.

<sup>46</sup> Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36-37.

(b) Prokofiev, Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, mm. 1-12

32

**II**  
**SCHERZO**

**Vivace**

Fl. *a2* *ff*

Ob. *1* *mp* *dim.*

Cl. in Sib *ff* *mp* *dim.*

Fag. *mp* *dim.*

Solo Pfte. *ff* *dim.*

**Vivace**

VI. I *pizz.* *f* *mp* *dim.*

VI. II *senza cord.* *ff* *mp* *dim.*

Vle. *senza cord.* *ff* *mp* *dim.*

Vc. *pizz.* *f* *mp* *dim.*

Cb. *pizz.* *f* *mp* *dim.*

**25**

Ob. *1* *mp* *dim.*

Cl. in Sib *1* *mp* *dim.*

Fag. *1* *mp* *dim.*

Solo Pfte. *mf*

**25**

VI. I *p*

VI. II *p*

Vle. *p*

Vc. *p*

B. & H. 17779



## CHAPTER 4

### THE ECLECTIC SECOND VIOLIN CONCERTO

#### Historical Background

Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 is one of his works that embody his eclectic approach. Comparing the works of Prokofiev's earlier period with his more mature compositions, there is a stylistic gap. Of the works composed in 1916-17, *Ala and Lolli* is radical with strong influence from Stravinsky, the *Classical Symphony* is in the neo-classical style inspired by his conservatory study with Nikolai Tcherepnin, and the Violin Concerto No. 1 is his original attempt at a modernistic style. The compositional styles of these three pieces, although quite diverse, still do not represent his complete artistic identity. Meanwhile, the Violin Concerto No. 2 (1935) and its contemporary works such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Peter and the Wolf*, representing his later period, are more consistent in an eclectic style.

Composed before Prokofiev returned to Soviet Russia permanently in 1936, the Violin Concerto No. 2 is his last commission from the West. It was written for the French violinist Robert Soetens, who had played the Western premiere of Prokofiev's Sonata for Two Violins in C major in 1932. The man who gave the premiere was the Polish violinist Samuel Dushkin, for whom Stravinsky had written his neo-classical Violin Concerto in D major one year earlier. Prokofiev talks about Stravinsky's concerto in a letter to Miaskovsky: "Stravinsky is scribbling a Violin Concerto; those who have seen it say that this new opus is akin to Capriccio but simpler, more sonata-like and ... drier."<sup>47</sup> Perhaps Stravinsky inspired Prokofiev, as he did the same thing to Soetens. The premiere of the Violin Concerto No. 2 was given in Madrid on December 1, 1935. The work became an immediate success. Prokofiev was delighted by the outcome, writing to Miaskovsky: "It gave me great pleasure

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<sup>47</sup> *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 294.

since it all sounded even better than I thought when I was orchestrating it... The public reception was also excellent—the music somehow immediately reached the audience.”<sup>48</sup>

Prokofiev wanted the concerto to be utterly different from his first in both music and style. “As with my previous concerns,” Prokofiev said, “at first I looked at another title, something like ‘a concert sonata for violin and orchestra,’ but in the end, I called it simply Violin Concerto No. 2.”<sup>49</sup> Compared with the first concerto, the second has more obvious employment of traditional form structure and lyrical thematic material.

### The “Modern” Line in Prokofiev’s Eclectic Concerto

As Prokofiev discussed in his autobiography, the priority of the “modern” line is harmonic innovation.<sup>50</sup> Some scholars, such as Richard Taruskin, consider Prokofiev’s music not to be revolutionary, because it relies on a simple harmonic design. However, Prokofiev’s specific understanding of the modern aesthetic at that time was different from his contemporary avant-garde colleagues. His innovative ideas can be viewed through his manipulation of tonal harmony using a modern aesthetic, as Neil Minturn has described: “He did not hesitate to use the most ordinary and commonplace harmonies, but always treated themes in a new way, presenting them in unusual combinations.”<sup>51</sup> The harmonic innovation in his Violin Concerto No. 2 is also based on this tonal structure.

Prokofiev’s harmonic innovation often uses the most traditional tonal harmonies and places them in special combinations. Nestyev describes Prokofiev’s use of chord combination in this way: “These clear and simple basic tonalities are always combined with strikingly unusual incidental and transitional chord combinations, and given rich modulatory

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<sup>48</sup> *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 318.

<sup>49</sup> Victor Seroff, *Sergei Prokofiev, A Soviet Tragedy*, (New York: Taplinger, 1979), 174.

<sup>50</sup> Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36-37.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.

development.”<sup>52</sup> In Ex. 3, the chord progression from rehearsal 18 could be analyzed in the offbeat accompaniment: C minor, B minor, A-flat major, F-sharp minor, E-flat major, F minor second inversion, C-flat major, E-flat major first inversion. Each beat of these chords has a simple and clear tonality; however, putting them in combination creates the illusion of “atonal” music. Because the chord progression is combined with unusual incidental and modulations, the listener cannot find a tonal center.

**Example 3: Prokofiev’s modern harmonic language. Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 2, I, mm. 156-62**

As Prokofiev described in his “five lines,” his modern line covered not only harmonic language, but also new departures in melody and orchestration.<sup>53</sup> “Prokofiev’s [melody] often juxtaposes the simplest and most traditional classical patterns with the sharpest, most angular ones.”<sup>54</sup> In Ex. 4, the second theme is freer than the first theme (see Ex. 7a) and hyperbolic

<sup>52</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 479.

<sup>53</sup> Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36-37.

<sup>54</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 475.

with its sudden leaps. The two wide intervals across measures 64 and 65 are major ninth and minor ninth. Also, Ex. 4 is the second time the solo violin states the second theme, and there is an interested difference compared with the first time (Ex. 8a). At the downbeat of m. 66, the violin does not play the high E-flat the second time; instead it is orchestrated in the oboe part, so that the violin is able to hold the D-natural an eighth note longer. The dissonant minor ninth is more emphasized when played by solo violin and oboe.

**Example 4: Prokofiev's innovation in melody. Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 2, I, mm. 60-67**

The influence from Stravinsky could find in the orchestration. Prokofiev stated in his letter to his friend Miaskovsky that he has studied Stravinsky's Violin Concerto before he composed the Violin Concerto No. 2.<sup>55</sup> David Nice suggests the two concertos have similar orchestration. (See Ex. 5a and 5b). "There are occasional reminders of Stravinsky concerto and its unorthodox ensembles.... Flutes and bassoons weave stark unisons reminiscent of a passage in the opening of Stravinsky's third movement."<sup>56</sup> The woodwind instruments in this

<sup>55</sup> *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 294.

<sup>56</sup> David Nice, *Prokofiev: from Russia to the West, 1891-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 334.

part all play in unison or octaves. The difference is that Stravinsky's solo material is also unison to the flute player, whereas Prokofiev's solo material is broken chords over the accompaniment's harmonic progression.

### Example 5: Comparison of Prokofiev's orchestration with Stravinsky's style.

**(a) Prokofiev, Violin Concerto no. 2, I, mm. 113-17**

**Pochissimo più mosso**

113 **13**

Fl. *mf*

Bn. *mf*

Vln. Solo

Vc. *pizz.* *mf* *pizz.*

Cb. *mf*

**(b) Stravinsky, Violin Concerto in D major, III, mm. 1-2**

Aria II

77 Tempo  $\text{♩} = 48$

Flauto gr. 1

Clarinetto piccolo

Tromba - Do 1

Tromboni (basso) 3

Violino Solo

Violino 1

Violino 2

Viole

Violoncelli

Contrabbassi



Example 6: Comparison of Prokofiev's solo material with Stravinsky's style.

(a) Prokofiev, Violin Concerto no. 2, I, mm. 166-79

11

19 senza sord.

mf

Ob.

V-le

Cor.

pizz.

f

V-le, Cl.

p

mf

V.c., Fag.

20

cresc.

V-le

p

cresc.

C-b. e Fag.

V.II

V.I

ff

V.c., C-b. pizz.  
f Fag. e Cor.

T-ro mil.

(b) Stravinsky, Violin Concerto in D Major, II, mm. 69-83

Furthermore, the influence from Stravinsky could also be found in the solo material. This can be seen in Ex. 6a and 6b, holding very similar texture and rhythm. The polyrhythmic structure is also exactly the same in both scores. In Prokofiev's score, the first four bars from rehearsal 19 have a contrasting rhythm between the articulated eighth notes played by the soloist and the legato quarter notes that played by the orchestra. Interestingly, Stravinsky's approach from rehearsal 65-66 is exactly the same. The only difference is that Prokofiev applies variation techniques in the orchestra's accompaniment part. The quarter notes accompaniment later becomes syncopated eighth notes and sixteenth notes. While

Stravinsky's accompaniment is a consistent complex polyrhythm and dominated by the quarter notes melody.

#### The "Classical" Line in Prokofiev's Eclectic Concerto

The "classical" line is represented by the formal structure. The Violin Concerto No. 2 is traditional in structure: the first movement in sonata form, the second in ternary song form, and the last in rondo form. This was a typical concerto structure of works from the Classical period. This section of the dissertation focuses on the first movement, to help readers understand the Classical quality of the eclectic concerto. Table 2 shows Prokofiev's use of sonata form in this movement. The order of the thematic material and its tonality represents Prokofiev's adoption of Classical rules.

**Table 2: Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 2, I, Sonata Form**

Number of measures				
(91)		(91)	(75 + 16 = 91)	
Exposition		Development	Recapitulation	Coda
1-9	52-60 91	92-181	183-257	258-273
G minor	B-flat major	various keys	G minor	G major
First theme	Second theme		First theme	Second theme

As Table 2 shows, Prokofiev use of sonata form divides the first movement into three equal 91-measure sections. In the exposition, the first theme is in the tonic, G minor, and the second theme is in the relative major, B-flat. In the development section, the first and second themes are stated in B-flat major and G major. In the recapitulation, the first and second themes are stated in G major and G minor. Prokofiev is conservative in following the rules of sonata form in these thematic key areas. In addition, as Nestyev described, this concerto has "an organic formal unity based on the principle of development rather than the mechanical combination of contrasting fragments." Prokofiev includes two main themes in the first

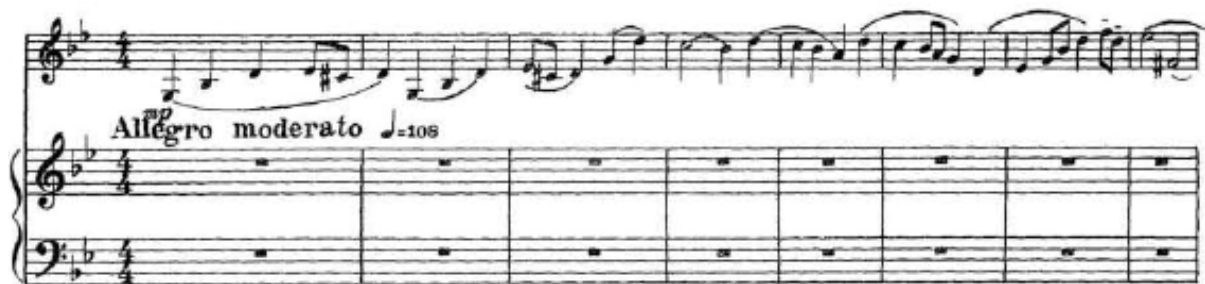


movement, developing them within the sonata form structure. Examples 7a-d and 8a-b shows Prokofiev's development of the first and second themes.

In Ex. 7a, the solo violin opens this first movement immediately with the first theme stated in the tonic, G minor. The unique feature of this first theme is that the basic idea has five beats, but the time signature is 4/4. Therefore, the phrases cross the bar line. The first phrase lasts for the first ten beats, the second phrase the next thirteen beats, and the third phrase (which serves as the consequent of the first theme) the last nine beats. Then in Ex. 7b, the orchestra takes over and restates the first theme in B minor. Meanwhile, the violin plays a development of the first theme. In Ex. 7c, the violin restates the first theme in C-sharp minor. In Ex. 7d, the first theme material is in the *accent* eighth-note that played by the solo violin. In Ex. 8a, the violin introduces the second theme in B-flat major. In Ex. 8b, when the orchestra takes over the second theme in C major, the solo violin plays a variation of the second theme in the same key. The tenuto notes in the violin emphasize the thematic line.

**Example 7: Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 2, I. Development of first theme.**

**(a) First movement., mm. 1-8**



**(b) mm. 9-13**

(c) mm. 24-27

musical score for measures 24-27. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a violin part (V.I.) with a trill in measure 24, a clarinet (Cl.) part, and a piano accompaniment (piano) with a bassoon (Fag.) part. Dynamics include *mf*, *p*, *dim.*, and *mp*. The piano part has a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking in measure 27.

(d) mm. 113-22

musical score for measures 113-22. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a violin part (V.I.) with a trill in measure 113, a clarinet (Cl.) part, and a piano accompaniment (piano) with a bassoon (Fag.) part. Dynamics include *mf*, *p*, *dim.*, and *mp*. The piano part has a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking in measure 113.

Example 8: Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 2, I. Development of second theme.

(a) First movement. mm. 52-59

musical score for measures 52-59. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a violin part (V.I.) with a trill in measure 52, a clarinet (Cl.) part, and a piano accompaniment (piano) with a bassoon (Fag.) part. Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, and *f*. The piano part has a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking in measure 52.

(b) mm. 134-48

Ob., Cl. (2 Fl. 8va)

*poco rit.*

*Ob.*

*V.I.*

*p*

*mf*

*mp*

*Vc., V.II, V.Ie*

16

17

2. Прокофьев

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After examining Prokofiev's sonata form in the first movement, we should compare the movement with those of other important violin concertos, to show the Prokofiev concerto's Classical quality. As Table 3 shows, of Prokofiev's contemporaries, neither Stravinsky nor Berg continued employing a standard fast-slow-fast three-movement concerto structure. J. S. Bach influenced Stravinsky's neo-classical violin concerto. The instrumental concerto emerged around 1685, the year Bach was born. In Italy, Torelli was the inventor of the "modern" concerto; his compositions used four-part orchestra with a dominant first-violin part, rather than the more contrapuntal style of violin part in trio sonatas (such as Corelli's).



**Table 3: Comparison of Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 2 with other important violin concertos**

	Mozart Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Major	Beethoven Violin Concerto in D Major	Sibelius Violin Concerto in D Minor	Stravinsky Violin Concerto in D Major	Berg Violin Concerto	Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 2 In G Minor
Composition Time	1775	1806	1904	1931	1935	1935
First Movement Structure From	Ritornello Sonata Form	Sonata Form	Sonata Form	Sectionalized Toccata	Two Sections, First: ABA; Second: A B C B A, and coda.	Sonata Form
Cadenza	Cadenza Composed by Others	Cadenza Composed by Others	Cadenza serve as Development Section	No Cadenza	No Cadenza	No Cadenza
Role of Orchestra	Ritornello form allows dialogue between the soloist and orchestra	Ritornello texture, soloist plays or develops what orchestra just played	Symphonic nature, orchestra part is very independent of the soloist material	Sinfonietta orchestra, dialogue between solo and orchestra, chamber music like	Symphonic nature, orchestra part reveals a transparent texture.	Sinfonietta orchestra, dialogue between solo and orchestra, chamber music like
Special Orchestration	Scored for two Oboes, two Horns and Strings.	Add Timpani, Clarinets, Bassoons, and Trumpets	Add Trombones	Add English horn, Bass Drum, and Tuba	Add Saxophone, Harp, and a Percussion section	Standard as Beethoven, add a small Percussion section
Main feature	Early standard use of ritornello sonata form; Thematic materials imitate the mood of operatic Aria	The opening timpani play a rhythmic cell that is developed throughout the whole movement.	Nationalistic themes; Highly Symphonic nature; No real dialogue between Soloist and Orchestra	Four movements structure; An imitation of J. S. Bach, Neoclassical work	Two movements structure, each in two sections; Programmatic intention; Serialism music	Eclectic music: classical formal structure, modern harmony, toccata, lyrical, and grotesque character simultaneously

Vivaldi popularized the fast-slow-fast three-movement concerto structure, with the first movement being in ritornello form. Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor and Violin Concerto in E major followed Vivaldi's model. Stravinsky's concerto did not imitate Bach's formal structure but was in four movements: the first movement a sectionalized Toccata, the finale entitled Capriccio, while two Aria movements were inserted in the middle. Berg was even more radical: his violin concerto was based on the twelve-tone method of the Second Viennese School. It has two movements, each in two sections. In comparison, it is clear that Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 has a Classical quality in formal structure. The first movement is in sonata form and the finale is in rondo form, which had been standard since Mozart.

Admittedly, Prokofiev as an eclectic composer, made some innovations in the recapitulation of the first movement. Nestyev suggested that Prokofiev "may [have] conceive [d] the recapitulation as a continuation of the development section." The composer not only develops new musical ideas in the exposition, but also includes new development materials in the recapitulation. Ex. 9 shows an arpeggiated passage in the recapitulation that did not appear in the exposition. We might compare this to Sibelius's innovation in his Violin Concerto, in which the cadenza in the first movement serves as the development section in the sonata form. But overall, both Sibelius and Prokofiev basically follow the rules of sonata form.

In addition, the Classical quality of Prokofiev's concerto can be seen in his orchestration. With the development of orchestra instruments from the eighteenth century, more and more instruments became available to composers. As shown in Table 3, Mozart's orchestration included only two oboes, two horns, and strings. In contrast, in the twentieth century, Sibelius was able to add more colorful orchestration in the form of timpani, clarinets, bassoons, trumpets, and trombones.

**Example 9: New development in recapitulation. Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 2, I, mm. 214-19**

The musical score for Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2, I, mm. 214-19, is presented in a multi-staff format. The top staff features a violin melody with a forte (f) dynamic. The second staff shows a piano accompaniment with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The third staff continues the piano accompaniment, marked mezzo-piano (mp). The bottom staff includes a cello part, also marked mezzo-piano (mp). The score is in D major and 2/4 time, with a tempo of Allegretto. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The score is numbered 24 at the beginning of the first staff.

Even Stravinsky's so-called neo-classical concerto, which is said to have light orchestration, still calls for a twentieth-century orchestra, including piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets in A/B, three bassoons (third doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, and strings. In contrast, Prokofiev is more conservative, scoring for a moderate-sized orchestra similar to Beethoven's, except that he adds a one-person percussion section: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, snare drum, bass drum, castanets, cymbals, triangle, and strings.

Not only is the formal structure and orchestration in Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 highly traditional, the texture of the lyrical melodies has a Classical quality. For example, Roeder suggests that the second movement is reminiscent of the slow movement from Mozart's Piano Concerto in C major, K. 467.<sup>57</sup> (See Ex. 10a-b.)

<sup>57</sup> Roeder, *History of the Concerto*, 320.

**(a) Prokofiev, Violin Concerto No. 2, II, mm. 1-9**

31 Andante assai ♩=108

Cl.

Bn.

Vln. Solo

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc.

pizz.

p

mp

pp

p

**(b) Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, K. 467, II, mm 1-14**

Andante.  
TUTTI

Flauto.

Oboi.

Fagotti.

Corni in F.

Pianoforte.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violoncello e Basso.

7

Handwritten musical score for "The Rose Tree". The score is written on ten staves. The first four staves are for the vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass), and the last six staves are for the piano accompaniment (Right Hand and Left Hand). The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *sp* (soprano), *f* (forte), and *p* (piano). The lyrics "The Rose Tree" are written below the piano part.

“Pizzicato strings and staccato clarinet, in its slower register, establish a simple triplet accompaniment before the solo violin enters with a long-breathed melody featuring duplets



against the accompaniment's triplets."<sup>58</sup> Roeder's description of the opening of Prokofiev's second movement could also have been referring to Mozart's piano concerto. In Ex. 10a-b, the accompaniments of both concertos are in triplets. Prokofiev uses 12/8 meter eighth notes accompanying the solo violin, whereas Mozart uses 4/4-meter eighth-note triplets that accompany the first violin section. The only difference is the Prokofiev adds two clarinets playing staccato while the violins, violas, and cellos play *pizzicato*. Mozart employs only second violin, viola, and cello playing the accompaniment *arco*. Both themes are lyrical and stepwise. Prokofiev only occasionally introduces octave leaps. Also, the two composers are making use of a rather high register to give a transparent sonority to the solo instrument.

#### The "Toccata, Lyrical, and Grotesque" Lines in Prokofiev's Eclectic Concerto

According to Prokofiev's autobiography, the "toccata, lyrical and grotesque" lines are of relatively low importance, but those elements are still an indispensable part of his eclectic approach.<sup>59</sup> Example 11 shows similar compositional elements to Ex. 3. For instance, in Ex. 11, Prokofiev employs a rhythmically aggressive toccata passage that shows off the virtuosity of the soloist. The toccata line is an adaption of Prokofiev's from the past and could therefore be analyzed as a part of the "classical" line. It also shows his modern harmonic innovation. This can be seen in the chord progression of the offbeat accompaniment. In the first two measures of rehearsal 1,1 the triads are F minor, E minor, D-flat major, B minor, A-flat major, G major, E major, and A minor. Ex. 3c shows that Prokofiev made use of mostly ordinary harmonies, but manipulated them with modulations and used them in unusual chordal combinations, achieving his modern harmonic language. Therefore, the "toccata" line could also depend on the "modern" line. A similar double classification can be found in his lyrical and grotesque lines. Besides the modern innovation, this passage in Ex. 11 is fast and

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<sup>58</sup> Roeder, *History of the Concerto*, 320.

<sup>59</sup> Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36-37.

light, creating a playful mood and “scherzo” in quality. This is perhaps what Prokofiev meant in his “grotesque” line: his music always expresses a joyful and optimism character.

The singing quality of the first and second theme is where Prokofiev “lyrical” line can be best heard. (Ex. 7a and 8a) He uses sharp intervals to emphasize a powerful emotion, also highly lyrical in character. “The Russian character of Prokofiev's music is revealed in his melodic and harmonic idiom, which [is linked] by many threads to folk and classical traditions, as well as in his distinctive musical images, which range from the epic to the lyric to the derisive.”<sup>60</sup> Both his first and second themes, in the first movement, are of Russian character, which could be traced back to his early association with Stravinsky.

**Example 11: Prokofiev’s “toccata and grotesque” lines. Prokofiev, Violin Concerto in G minor, I, mm. 101-6**

The musical score for Example 11 is a two-staff system. The top staff is for the violin, and the bottom staff is for the piano. The key signature is G minor (three flats: B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score begins at measure 11, indicated by a box containing the number 11. The violin part starts with a melodic line marked 'p' and 'V-ni, V-la arco'. The piano accompaniment starts with a bass line marked 'pp' and 'pizz. e Fag.'. The score continues to measure 12, indicated by a box containing the number 12. The violin part is marked 'p' and the piano accompaniment is marked 'pp'.

<sup>60</sup> Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, 459.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 embodies his eclectic approach: a hybrid style of modern and Classical elements. This style embraces the composer's essential self-characterization shift in his compositional style, the so-called "five lines": classical, modern, toccata, lyrical, and grotesque. "The five lines are best understood as characteristics whose presence in most of Prokofiev's music is a matter of degree rather than presence or absence."<sup>61</sup> The majority of his mature works include elements from all five lines.

To understand Prokofiev's eclectic approach, a historically informed style analysis has been conducted through the lens of the "five lines" concept. The toccata, lyrical and grotesque lines can be understood as subsets of Prokofiev classical and modern lines. The first two lines, classical and modern, are the most significant aspects of his eclectic style. The "classical line" makes use of early formal structure, such as sonata form, rondo form, and toccata. This aspect was heavily influenced by the conservative style of his teachers at the St. Petersburg conservatory. For instance, in the Violin Concerto No. 2, the order of thematic material and its tonality in the first movement reflects his adoption of sonata form rules. The classical quality in the concerto can also be found in his orchestration and lyrical melodies. Prokofiev's modern line is mainly based on his harmonic and melodic innovations. Diaghilev and Stravinsky's influence played an essential role in Prokofiev's modern innovation. His harmonic language often uses the most traditional tonal harmonies and places them in a special combination. In addition, a passage from the concerto is similar to Stravinsky in orchestration.

Most of Prokofiev's mature work is like the Violin Concerto No. 2 in employing different degree of classical and modern elements simultaneously. Although this dissertation

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<sup>61</sup> Minturn, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 344.

focuses only on this concerto, the research on the “eclectic approach” of this concerto should allow other scholars to draw inferences about Prokofiev’s mature compositional strategies in general. This eclectic approach not only enriches our understanding of Prokofiev’s modern aesthetics but also challenges and redefines our notion of the twentieth-century modern aesthetic, which relies too often on such polarizing dualities and oversimplifications.

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