

RACHMANINOFF'S *RHAPSODY ON A THEME BY PAGANINI*, OP. 43:

ANALYSIS AND DISCOURSE

Heejung Kang, B.A., M.M.

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APPROVED:

Pamela Mia Paul, Major Professor and
Program Coordinator

Stephen Slottow, Minor Professor

Josef Banowetz, Committee Member

Steven Harlos, Interim Chair of Piano

Jessie Eschbach, Chair of Keyboard
Studies

James Scott, Dean of the College of Music

Sandra L. Terrill, Interim Dean of the

Robert B. Toulouse School
of Graduate Studies

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This dissertation on Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, Op.43 is divided into four parts: 1) historical background and the state of the sources, 2) analysis, 3) semantic issues related to analysis (discourse), and 4) performance and analysis. The analytical study, which constitutes the main body of this research, demonstrates how Rachmaninoff organically produces the variations in relation to the theme, designs the large-scale tonal and formal organization, and unifies the theme and variations as a whole. The selected analytical approach is linear in orientation - that is, Schenkerian. In the course of the analysis, close attention is paid to motivic detail; the analytical chapter carefully examines how the tonal structure and motivic elements in the theme are transformed, repeated, concealed, and expanded throughout the variations. As documented by a study of the manuscripts, the analysis also facilitates insight into the genesis and structure of the *Rhapsody*. How Rachmaninoff develops his ideas through several notebooks - including sketches and drafts - is described.

Later parts of the dissertation deal with programmatic aspects of the *Rhapsody*. Related to the composer's significant use of the *Dies Irae* melody, semantic issues concerning "love and death" are taken into account and closely related to the specific

structure of the piece. Rachmaninoff's symphonic poem, *The Isle of the Dead*, is a work which bears some intriguing resemblances to the *Rhapsody* in its larger structure as well as its ideology. Therefore, an interpretation of this work is provided to show the special relationship between the two pieces.

The last chapter presents a discussion of two recordings of the *Rhapsody* by Rachmaninoff and Moiseiwitsch made in 1934 and 1938 respectively. Comparing and contrasting the different interpretations of each variation in these two historical recordings, this concluding part of the study explores ways in which analysis can be realized through performance.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	vi
LIST OF PLATES	ix
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
1. Purpose of Study	1
2. State of Selective Research	4
3. Background and Early Reception	8
4. Theme by Paganini	15
5. Overview of the Large-Scale Tonal Structure of the <i>Rhapsody</i>	19
6. The Sources for the <i>Rhapsody</i>	21
II. ANALYSIS	26
1. Introduction and Variation 1: The Drive Towards the Theme	26
2. The Theme	27
3. Variations 2 and 3	32
4. Variations 4, 5, and, 6	34
5. Variation 7	36
6. Variation 8	38
7. Variation 9	40
8. Variation 10	42
9. Variation 11	43
10. Variation 12	45
11. Variation 13	47

12. Variation 14	48
13. Variation 15	50
14. Variation 16	52
15. Variation 17	52
16. Variation 18	55
17. Variation 19	59
18. Variations 20 and 21	60
19. Variations 22 and 23	62
20. Variation 24	66
21. The Tonal Structure of the <i>Rhapsody</i>	69
III. DISCOURSE.....	73
1. <i>Dies Irae</i> : Rachmaninoff's <i>Memento Mori</i>	73
2. Semantics of the Dance of Death	79
The Dance of Death in <i>the Seventh Seal</i>	79
Semantic Parallel between the <i>Rhapsody</i> and <i>the Seventh Seal</i> : "death"	81
Salvation through Love	85
Rachmaninoff's "humor" in the <i>Rhapsody</i>	90
3. Love and Death	95
IV. PERFORMANCE AND INTERPRETATION: PERFORMANCE OF THE RHAPSODY IN THE 1930s	101
1. Rachmaninoff as a Pianist	101
2. Rachmaninoff vs. Moiseiwitsch	105
V. CONCLUSION	110
APPENDIX	112
BIBLIOGRAPHY	165

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1. Library of Congress MSS 14d	21
2. <i>The Seventh Seal</i> , a game of chess between the Knight and Death.....	161
3. <i>The Seventh Seal</i> , the Knight's confession to Death	162
4. <i>The Seventh Seal</i> , " <i>The strict lord Death bids them dance</i> "	163
5. Böcklin' s <i>The Isle of the Dead</i>	164

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Examples	Page
1. Analysis of Introduction and Variation 1	113
2. Elias's clean graph of the Theme, theme from Brahms's Paganini Variation, Op.35	114
3. Analysis of the Theme	119
4. Analysis of Variation 2	120
5. Analysis of Variation 3	121
6. Analysis of Variation 4	122
7. Analysis of Variation 5	123
8. Analysis of Variation 6	124
9. <i>Dies Irae</i> and its implicit pattern.....	125
10. Analysis of Variation 7	126
11. Analysis of Variation 8	127
12. Analysis of Variation 9	128
13. Analysis of Variation 10	129
14. Analysis of Variation 11-foreground level	130
15. Analysis of Variation 11-background level	131
16. Presentation of motive 'x' in Variation 12.....	132
17. Analysis of Variation 12	133

18. Analysis of Variation 13	134
19. Triplets transformation from the original sixteenth-note motive ('x')	135
20. Analysis of Variation 14	136
21. Transformation of the triplet in Variation 14	137
22. Analysis of Variation 15	138
23. Analysis of Variation 16	139
24. Analysis of Variation 17-foreground level	140
25. Analysis of Variation 17- background	141
26. Rachmaninoff's manipulations of the Paganini theme	142
27. Analysis of Variation 18	143
28. Analysis of Variation 18 [mm. 660-670]	144
29. Analysis of Variation 19	145
30. Analysis of Variation 20- background	146
31. Analysis of Variation 20- foreground	147
32. Analysis of Variation 21	148
33. Analysis of Variation 22	149
34. Analysis of Variation 23	150
35. Analysis of Variation 24	152
36. Tonal structure of the <i>Rhapsody</i>	155

37. Thematic motive, its inversion, and expansion	156
38. Motive 'x' (mm. 1-2), <i>the Isle of the Dead</i>	157
39. Analysis of <i>the Isle of the Dead</i> , Op.29	158
40. <i>The Isle of the Dead</i> , analysis – background level	160

LIST OF PLATES

Plates	Page
1. Schenker's annotation on Elias's graph on Brahms's Paganini Variation, Theme, detail of unpublished graph in Ernst Oster Memorial Collection, file 34, page 329.....	115
2. Schenker's annotation on Elias's graph on Brahms's Paganini Variation, Theme, detail of unpublished graph in Ernst Oster Memorial Collection, file 34, page 330	116
3. Schenker's annotation on Elias's graph on Brahms's Paganini Variation, Theme, detail of unpublished graph in Ernst Oster Memorial Collection, file 34, page 330	117
4. Schenker's annotation on Elias's graph on Brahms's Paganini Variation, Theme, detail of unpublished graph in Ernst Oster Memorial Collection, file 34	118

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of Study

During the first half of the twentieth century, there was a strong tendency to criticize Rachmaninoff's music. Some music intellectuals denigrated it as showy and shallow, lacking a conspicuously characteristic style, although Rachmaninoff's music usually guaranteed premium box office sales. Victor Belaiev said:

The world of Rakhmaninov's creative ideas is self-restricted, but on the other hand it is exceedingly compact and self contained. In his work it is vain to seek for mystical depths, for the artistic solution of world and cosmic problems, for any concern with the ultimate limits of the mystery of the universe...¹

In the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary*, one can read Eric Blom's excoriating criticism of Rachmaninoff:

...as a composer he can hardly be said to have belonged to his time at all... He had neither the national characteristics of the Balakirev school nor the individuality of Taneyev or Medtner. Technically he was highly gifted, but also severely limited. His music is well constructed and effective, but monotonous in texture, which consists in essence mainly of artificial and gushing tunes accompanied by a variety of figures derived from arpeggios. The enormous popular success some few of Rakhmaninov's works had in his lifetime is not likely to last, and musicians never regarded it with much favour...²

Despite what Blom thought fifty years ago, Rachmaninoff is still very much adored by audiences and worshiped by pianists to this day. Despite the criticism and intellectual

¹ Victor Belaiev, "Sergei Rakhmaninov," *The Musical Quarterly* (1928): 362.

² Eric Blom(ed.), *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed. Vol.7 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1954), 27.

denigration of Rachmaninoff's music, there have been an enormous number of recordings and also a consistent stream of publications concerning it.

Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, Op.43 was highly praised by composer-pianist Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji as "a profoundly original and independent mind at work, a mind that stands as aloof in its way as does that of Medtner... from the fashionable monkey-tricks of Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and Moscow."³ The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how Rachmaninoff organically produces the variations in relation to the theme, designs the large-scale tonal and formal organization, and unifies the theme and variations as a whole in his own musical discourse and narrative.

The main body of this study will be an analysis of the *Rhapsody*. The selected analytical approach is linear in orientation -- that is, Schenkerian -- with very close attention to motivic detail, and an examination of how the tonal structure and motivic elements in the theme are transformed, repeated, concealed, and expanded throughout the variations. Part of the analytical study will offer insight into the genesis and structure of the *Rhapsody* as documented by a study of the manuscripts. Sketch materials for the *Rhapsody* are found in the Glinka Museum and the Library of Congress: Φ18.1423 and Φ18.1424 in the Glinka Museum contain some sketches for the Theme and the eighteenth variation, and LC 14a, b, c, d, include the full score and draft materials.

³ Quoted in Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 2002), 142. Originally written by Kaikhosru Sorabji in *New English Weekly*, 4 April (1935), 520.

Related to the analysis, how Rachmaninoff develops his ideas through several note books will be described.

Later parts of this study will deal with some programmatic aspects of the *Rhapsody*. Is it truly “vain” to seek in Rachmaninoff’s music mystical depths or concerns with the ultimate limits of the mystery of the universe (as Belaiev claims)? Related to the composer’s significant use of the *Dies Irae* melody in the *Rhapsody*, some semantic and semiotic issues will be taken into account, and an existential narrative running throughout the work will be demonstrated. Corresponding to the structural narrative of the *Rhapsody*, an interpretation of Rachmaninoff’s symphonic poem, *Isle of the Dead*, will be provided, a work which bears some intriguing resemblances to the *Rhapsody* in its larger structure as well as its use of the *Dies Irae* motto.

The last chapter will discuss two performances of the *Rhapsody* by Rachmaninoff and Moiseiwitsch made in 1934 and 1938 respectively. Comparing and contrasting the different interpretations of each variation in these two historical recordings, will show how the analysis and metaphysical meaning of the piece can be realized in actual performance.

2. State of Research (selective)

As mentioned above, musicological and analytical research on Rachmaninoff's music has been slowly continuing.⁴ Some salient biographical and musicological literature for this study follows. One of the first biographies, *Rachmaninoff's Recollections told to Oskar von Rieseemann* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934) was written by Rieseemann during the composer's lifetime. In fact, the proofs of the book were delivered at *Senar*, Rachmaninoff's villa in Switzerland, just before he began to compose the *Rhapsody*. The biography appears as if Rachmaninoff dictated it, but he was not fully satisfied with it, although the book contains a front page reproducing a polite letter from the composer with his signature.⁵ However, this book still reflects a certain contemporary perspective on Rachmaninoff's music, and provides the author's assessment of Rachmaninoff's significance as a composer in the last chapter.

Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda's *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1956, reissued in 2001), written with the

⁴ The state of Soviet or Post-Soviet Rachmaninoff research is briefly mentioned in David Cannata, *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony*. (Innsbruck-Wien: Studien Verlag, 1999), 15, and, in Cannata. Review of Maria Biesold's *Sergej Rachmaninoff, 1873-1943, zwischen Moskau und New York: Ein Künstlerbiographie* in *NOTES* 50/2 (1993), 591.

⁵ In Rachmaninoff's letter to his friend, Vladimir Vilshau, he says about Rieseemann's book:

...You have probably heard about Rieseemann's book, which is called 'Rachmaninoff's Recollections Dictated to Rieseemann'. It was published in America and in England. Of course, it is in English. If you wish, I will send it to you. The book is very boring. By the way, there is a lot in it that is not true, which proves that I did not dictate the book...

Published in Victor Seroff, *Rachmaninoff* (London: Cassell & Company LTD, 1951), 192. According to Seroff, "When I spoke to Rachmaninoff about Rieseemann's book, he told me that he did not like the book, but he explained to me that while he was only giving him material, never suspecting that he would be quoted verbatim." Seroff, 194.

assistance of Sophia Satina, Rachmaninoff's sister-in-law, and Victor Seroff's *Rachmaninoff* (London: Cassell & Company, 1951) have provided important starting points for Rachmaninoff scholarship in English. Both books contain abundant primary sources such as the composer's letters to friends, musicians, and family, compositional notes or brief sketches for some of his works, and contemporary criticism of his music. Also they include related letters and the composer's notes for his own narrative on the *Rhapsody*.

Robert Threlfall and Geoffrey Norris's *Catalogue of the Compositions of S. Rachmaninoff* (London: Scholar Press, 1982) contains brief but useful information on manuscripts, publication, and significant performances, plus an outline analysis of each of Rachmaninoff's works. Barrie Martyn's *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1990) is definitive in delving into these three aspects of Rachmaninoff as a musician; the section on "the composer" is especially useful. All of Rachmaninoff's works are discussed in moderate detail with musical examples. The appendix contains his entire discography as well as all works conducted and concerts given by Rachmaninoff.

Another important source for this study is David Cannata's dissertation, *Rachmaninoff's Changing View of Symphonic Structure* (Ph.D. Diss., New York University, 1992, reissued as *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony*. Innsbruck-Wien: Studien Verlag, 1999). Counted among the first serious musicological researches on

Rachmaninoff in English, his dissertation and its reissued edition constitute a well-organized guide to the study of Rachmaninoff's manuscripts. They discuss Rachmaninoff's practice in his sketches, drafts, and full-score manuscripts; and the appendices provide information about the location of the manuscripts for most of his works, including an itemized list of music manuscripts in the Rachmaninoff Archive of the Library of Congress. These two studies focus on Rachmaninoff as a composer and trace the creation of several large-scale symphonic works through a large number of primary sources, including letters and manuscripts in Russia, Europe, and the United States. In particular, Canata's investigation of Rachmaninoff's various compositional documents for the *Rhapsody* offers some valuable and important clues that provide an impetus to this study. Indeed, it should be regarded as a pioneering work that attracted scholarly attention to Rachmaninoff's music. However, in its exploration of syntactic and semantic structures in Rachmaninoff's music, Cannata's book does not probe far beneath the surface.

With regard to further analytical research on Rachmaninoff's music, Richard Coolidge, in his article "Architectonic Technique and Innovation in the Rachmaninov Piano Concerto," *The Music Review* 40 (1979): 176-216, examines critical commentary on Rachmaninoff's music in general and his piano concertos in particular, including the *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, and provides some harmonic and formal analysis of the four piano concertos and the *Rhapsody*. But, once again, the analytical discussion is

limited in scope; the article being merely a general introduction to Rachmaninoff's music for orchestra and piano.

Robert Cunningham's dissertation, *Harmonic Prolongation in Selected Works of Rachmaninoff, 1910- 1931* (Ph.D. Diss., Florida State University, 1999), may be considered among the first serious analytical investigations on Rachmaninoff's piano music. His study concentrates on the *Preludes* Op. 32, nos. 8, 10, and 13; *Etudes-tableaux*, Op. 39, nos. 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8; Op. 33, no. 3; and *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, Op. 42. In a Schenkerian context, Cunningham's research focuses on Rachmaninoff's adventurous chromatic idiom and his strong adherence to keeping tonality with clear tonal direction through complicated linear embellishment. The analysis of the selected piano works is detailed, concentrated on voice leading, harmonic function and progressions, special chromatic harmonies, etc. However, Cunningham's Schenkerian graphs fail to show voice leading clearly: his graphs present a confusing profusion of undifferentiated slurs and too many indicated lines.⁶

⁶ For example, see pp. 226-227.

3. Background and Early Reception

It seems likely that Rachmaninoff began thinking about his compositional ideas for the *Rhapsody* around 1923, about thirteen years before its publication. Cannata reports that the earliest sketch materials are found in Glinka Museum Manuscripts Φ 18.1424, which are Rachmaninoff's initial manipulations of the Paganini theme.⁷ Considering that the notebook was a Christmas gift in 1922 to Rachmaninoff from his friends, the Somoffs, and that many sketches for the *Fourth Piano Concerto*, Op.40 (composed in 1917-27) and the *Three Russian Songs*, Op.41 (composed in 1928) appear in the same notebook, Cannata suggests that Rachmaninoff must have used this book between 1923 and 1926.⁸

Rachmaninoff finished the *Rhapsody* in August of 1934. After completing his concert season in Paris and Liège in April of 1934, Rachmaninoff arrived at his villa *Senar* near Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, which had been recently constructed under his supervision. At this time, the composer began to feel an anxious need to compose, since he had not published any compositions after completing the *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, Op.42, in 1931, and revising the *Second Piano Sonata*, Op. 36, in the same year.⁹ In addition, the delivery of a new concert grand piano from the Steinway Company

⁷ Cannata 1999, 55.

⁸ Cannata 1999, 55. Cannata quotes the inscription by Eugene Somoff inside this notebook, "We hope that this modest gift is of assistance, handy in the minute of your inspiration."

⁹ Rachmaninoff was occupied most of the summer of 1932 with the construction of his villa, *Senar*. Although he did not produce any new opuses for two years before the composition of the *Rhapsody*, he worked on new piano transcriptions such as the *Scherzo* from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,

in New York as a present for the new house greatly pleased Rachmaninoff and increased his urge to resume creative work. After undergoing a small operation on May 23 in Paris and returning to Senar on July 1 from a recovery vacation at Lake Como, Rachmaninoff immediately embarked on the *Rhapsody*. It seems likely that he worked with intense concentration for seven weeks. Rachmaninoff's dear friend and one of the greatest pianists, Vladimir Horowitz, reminisces that Rachmaninoff telephoned him nearly every day while he was composing his new ambitious work. The composer told Horowitz, "I have a new variation to play for you."¹⁰

Rachmaninoff completed his new work on August 18 and on the next day wrote to his sister-in-law, Sophia Satina, about his excitement over his first "Senar" piece:

...it's been long since I wrote to you – but ever since the very day of my return from Como and Monte Carlo on July 1, I've kept myself at work, working literally from morn to night, as they say. This work is rather a large one, and only yesterday, late at night, I finished it. Since morning my chief aim has been to write you. This piece is written for piano and orchestra, about 20-25 minutes in length. But it is not "concerto"! It is called Symphonic Variations on a theme by Paganini. I'll tell Foley [Rachmaninoff's publisher] to arrange for me to play it this coming season, in Philadelphia or Chicago. If he does not arrange it, and there is a little doubt of this, then you too will hear it. I am happy that I managed to write this piece during my first year in the new Senar. It's some compensation for the many stupidities I allowed myself in building Senar. Truth! I believe it! ...You may speak of the "Variations" only to Somoff, but to no one else...¹¹

and, the *Prelude*, *Gavotte*, and *Gigue* from Bach's Partita in E major for unaccompanied violin.

¹⁰ Glenn Plaskin, *Horowitz: A Biography of Vladimir Horowitz* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1983), 186.

¹¹ Quoted in Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda. *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (New York: New

Rachmaninoff soon modified the title. Three weeks later, he wrote to his old friend

Vladimir Wilshaw with news of his new composition:

...Two weeks ago I finished a new piece: it's called a Fantasia for piano and orchestra in the form of variations on a theme by Paganini. The piece is rather long, 20-25 minutes, about the length of a piano concerto. I'll give it to the printer next spring – after I try to play it in New York and London, which will give me time to make necessary corrections. The thing's rather difficult; I must begin learning it, but I get lazier every year with work on my fingers. I try to get by with some old piece that already sits in the fingers...¹²

Once again, Rachmaninoff changed his mind about the title, calling the work simply "*Rhapsody*" in his letter on October 25, 1934, to his friends, the Swans:

Dear Ekaterina Vladimirovna and Alfred Alfredovich, I know that you wanted to get to the rehearsal of my *Rhapsody* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, but unfortunately I was unable to arrange it for you. The first public performance of the *Rhapsody* will take place in Baltimore on the night of the 7th of November. You have an automobile, and I will have seats for you, if you come. Let me know if this suits for you, as I must know about the tickets. With sincere greetings. S. Rachmaninoff.¹³

The premiere of the *Rhapsody* was performed by Rachmaninoff with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski on November 7 in Baltimore. In general the new work was a remarkable success with both public and critics.¹⁴ About six weeks

York University Press, 1956), 304.

¹² Bertensson and Leyda 1956, 305.

¹³ Alfred Julious Swan, and Katherine Swan. "Rachmaninoff- Personal Reminiscences, Part II" *The Musical Quarterly* XXX/2 (1944):187.

¹⁴ Since the reception after the premiere was very successful with the public, musicians, and critics in general, Rachmaninoff was annoyed by the short and lukewarm correspondence by the *Musical Courier*. "Not an important opus, in all probability, but one eminently worth hearing."

later RCA decided to record the *Rhapsody* with the same performers on Christmas Eve. Three days after its recording in Philadelphia, the *Rhapsody* was performed at Carnegie Hall in New York, with Bruno Walter conducting the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and created a critical and popular sensation. *The New Yorker* Robert A. Simon wrote:

...After the business of composing variations on a theme had been pretty well upset by an untimely revival of Reger's variations on a theme by Hiller, Mr. Rachmaninoff restored the industry with a *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*. The Rachmaninoff variations, written with all of the composer's skill, turned out to be the most successful novelty that the Philharmonic Symphony has had since Mr. Toscanini overwhelmed the subscribers with Ravel's *Bolero*. Of course, the *Rhapsody* had the advantage of Mr. Rachmaninoff's pianism and Mr. Walter's adroit direction of ensemble music, but the succession of brilliances for the piano, dramatic references to the *Dies Irae*, wide-open Schmalz for divided strings, and old-fashioned bravura was enough to insure success...¹⁵

After its European premiere in Manchester, England on March 7, 1935, with the Hallé Orchestra under Nikolai Malko, the performance two weeks later in London with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham also received an enthusiastic reception. In the following month, Rachmaninoff introduced the *Rhapsody* in Paris with Alfred Cortôt conducting. In Minneapolis, Rachmaninoff collaborated with Eugene Ormandy. John K. Sherman from the *Minneapolis Star* wrote:

...For Rachmaninoff, greeted by an audience that overflowed into the pit at Northrop Auditorium, has the aura and aspect of greatness, and it is sensed the moment he steps on to the platform... And as usual, the experience of hearing Rachmaninoff goes down as one of the deep and authentic

¹⁵ Quoted in Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda. 1956, 309.

experiences of the season. What may have surprised many last night was that from the man who looks like an oracle of remote and superior wisdom should have come the brilliance, the Lisztian pyrotechnics, the sheer mischief of the composition he chose to play with the orchestra – the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, composed only last year.¹⁶

However, the *Rhapsody* was not always praised by contemporary music intellectuals. H. G. Sear, in his article “The Influence of Paganini,” reflects the attitude that classified Rachmaninoff as a “second-rate composer,” just as Belaiev and Blom did in their merciless criticism of Rachmaninoff’s music:¹⁷

...When I first heard the Rachmaninoff *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* for piano and orchestra, I made the following note: “But for the highly polished finish, these variations bear the mark of having been dashed off at the piano in a fury of improvisation; it is a dazzlingly brilliant work but it hasn’t the cerebration of the Brahms,¹⁸ only the great virtuoso-pianist could have fashioned it..., ... I should class the *Rhapsody* as an impressionistic work, and a number of mental images did actually assert themselves, but a proclivity for fancy needs to be braked. The technical difficulty transcends; there are few pianists, who, playing it, will have leisure to indulge in fancy...”¹⁹

Despite Sear’s prediction, the *Rhapsody* has remained a highly popular work for many concert pianists to this day. On December 13, 1936, the composer’s good friends, Benno Moiseiwitsch and Sir Henry Wood, presented an impressive concert that included the *Rhapsody* and the *Second Piano Concerto*, in London. Moiseiwitsch was the first

¹⁶ Quoted in Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda. 1956, 315-316.

¹⁷ See page 1.

¹⁸ Sear compared Rachmaninoff’s *Rhapsody* with Brahms’s *Paganini Variations*, Op.35, which was set on the same theme.

¹⁹ H.G.Sear. “The Influence of Paganini,” *The Music Review* 4 (1943): 109-110.

pianist other than Rachmaninoff to record the *Rhapsody*, this time with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, under Basil Cameron.²⁰

In 1937, three years after the *Rhapsody* was composed, the Russian choreographer Michel Fokine visited Rachmaninoff at *Senar* to discuss a ballet production based on the famous musical legends about Paganini, using the *Rhapsody* as its stage music. It is interesting to note that a programmatic idea for the *Rhapsody* came to Rachmaninoff's mind after he composed the piece, not before. Rachmaninoff sent a letter to Fokine that describes his choreographic plot:

...About my *Rhapsody* I want to say that I shall be very happy if you will do something with it. Last night I was thinking about a possible subject, and here is what came into my head. I will give you only the main structure now; the details are still in a haze. Why not resurrect the legend about Paganini, who, for perfection in his art and for a woman, sold his soul to an evil spirit? All the variations which have the theme of Dies Irae represent the evil spirit. The variations from No.11 to No.18 are love episodes ...²¹

Fokine accepted Rachmaninoff's basic idea for the ballet and choreographed "Paganini: Fantastic Ballet in Three Scenes by S. Rachmaninoff and M. Fokine." The ballet was performed at Covent Garden in London on June 30, 1939 and enjoyed great success.

²⁰ This recording by Moiseiwitsch is the first one dating from 1938. Later Moiseiwitsch recorded the *Rhapsody* for the second time with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, under Basil Cameron.

²¹ Quoted in Seroff, 188. Rachmaninoff continues to explain his programmatic plan for some of the variations. For this arrangement, the length of the piece was adjusted: the first nine measures of Variation 11 were repeated and the last five measures of Variation 18 were echoed by the strings.

Rachmaninoff constantly performed the *Rhapsody* until his death on March 28, 1943. His last performance season was 1942-43 and in New York in December of 1942 he played the *Rhapsody* with the New York Philharmonic under Dmitri Mitropoulos, even though he was already suffering from lumbago and a constant cough. The piece that he persistently played even one month before his death was the *Rhapsody*.²²

²² He played the *Rhapsody* twice in Chicago in February of 1943, which became his last concert. He planned to have another concert in Louisville, Kentucky, and in Knoxville, Tennessee, afterwards, but following the doctor's advice due to Rachmaninoff's serious illness the remaining concerts were all cancelled.

4. Theme by Paganini

Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini for Piano and Orchestra*, Op.43 (1934) takes its theme from the famous last piece in A minor of Paganini's 24 *Caprices*, which is also set as a theme and eleven variations by Paganini himself.²³ This charming theme was already explored by Liszt and Brahms as fundamental source material in their variations: Liszt arranged Paganini's original piece with this theme in his two sets of *Grandes Études de Paganini* (first published in 1840 and revised in 1851) as the last piece (No.6): and Brahms employed the theme twice in his two sets of *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, Op.35 (1886). Not only as a composer, but also as one of the greatest pianists of all time, Rachmaninoff performed the variations on the same theme by Liszt and Brahms before he composed his *Rhapsody*.²⁴ It is especially noteworthy that after Rachmaninoff set down the earliest sketch materials, which are his initial manipulations of the Paganini theme, circa 1923 to 1926, he included Liszt's Paganini

²³ To consider Rachmaninoff's interest in this theme, one might not want to overlook the influence of Fritz Kreisler, who was Rachmaninoff's dear friend and edited Paganini's original *Caprices*. The immediately preceding work in terms of chronology - the *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, Op.42 – also takes its theme from a violin piece in which Corelli used an ancient Portuguese dance melody named *La Folia* as the theme in his violin sonata.

²⁴ See Rachmaninoff's piano repertoire in Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1990). The list of Rachmaninoff's repertoire includes every work he played in public from his debut in 1892 to his death in 1943. According to this, he played not only the A minor *Paganini Variations* by Liszt and Brahms, but also most of *Grand Paganini Etudes* by Liszt and *Studies after Caprices by Paganini* by Schumann, which are based on other caprices from Paganini's set. Moreover, this list shows that he was very interested in exploring piano variations by various major composers: 32 *Variations* by Beethoven, *Air and Variations in B flat* by Handel, *Variations in F major* by Haydn, *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen-Variations* after Bach by Liszt, *Variations sérieuses Op.54* by Mendelssohn, *Gavotte and Variations in A minor* by Rameau, *Symphonic Studies*, Op.13 by Schumann, and *Theme and Variations*, Op.19, No.6 by Tchaikovsky.

Variations No. 6, *Theme and Variations* in his performance repertoire for the season 1927-28.²⁵

Liszt's work on this theme is not his own set of variations but rather a transcription which attempts to realize Paganini's violin virtuosity on the keyboard.²⁶ Therefore, it closely follows the original work's entire tonal and formal scheme while introducing challenging pianistic techniques.

Unlike Liszt, Brahms transcribed only the theme of Paganini's *Caprice* No.24 and composed 28 motivically independent variations on it, 14 for each book. Also entitled "*Studien* (Études)", his two sets of *Paganini Variations*, Op.35 were written during the winter of 1862-1863. The variations were the product of a period in which Brahms encountered the pianist Carl Tausig during his first stay in Vienna. Clearly, Brahms was influenced by Tausig's virtuoso piano technique.

Compared to Liszt's variations on the same theme, Brahms's work is more adventurous in its use of pianistic devices such as wide leaps, octaves, double chords in thirds and sixths, combinations of polyrhythms, top trills for the weak fingers of the right hand, and so forth. Brahms exploits such diverse transformations of rhythms and melodies, concentrating on a specific technical difficulty in each and every variation. In

²⁵ See Martyn, 427. Rachmaninoff started to play Liszt's *Grandes Études de Paganini* in public in 1919 and performed these pieces (No.2, 3, 5, and 6) until 1936.

²⁶ At Paganini's Paris debut concert in 1831, Liszt heard this magical and even demonic violinist's playing and was greatly inspired. After he met Paganini, he not only composed the "*Grand Études de Paganini*," but also revised his twelve études, which he composed before hearing Paganini, and published them in 1851 with the title "*Études d'une execution transcendante*."

the structural aspect, his variations remained quite strict, hardly straying from the explicit harmonic structure of the theme, except for the greatly expanded 14th variation with the coda in the first set.²⁷ Brahms also usually preserves the duration or the number of measures of each variation from the theme.

Brahms never intended that pianists should perform the entire two sets at one sitting. Indeed, at that time the variations were rarely played straight through. Heinrich Barth, who first performed them in England in 1880, made a selection that received the tacit approval of the composer. The order in which he played them was: Book I: 1, 3, 5, and 9; Book II: 6, 8 and 12; Book I: 10,11,4,13 and 14²⁸. This interesting record - at least for pianists of the modern day - reveals that Brahms acknowledges each variation as a somewhat independent entity. Therefore, Brahms's *Paganini Variations* may be considered a collection of individual technical studies.

Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody* projects a very different character from the works of Liszt and Brahms; unlike a simple transcription of Paganini's original violin work for the keyboard or as a collection of études, his *Rhapsody* is organic in nature, and expands its musical means to the piano and the orchestra with a variety of tone colors. By

²⁷ For more detailed harmonic analysis, refer to Schenker's sketch with Elias's arranged graphic analysis in the Oster Collection. Examining Elias's clean copy of the analysis for each variation, one can observe a strictly sustained basic harmonic structure, while deeper explorations of various harmonies proceed at the middleground level. The items for Brahms's *Paganini Variations*, Op.35 are 34/314-332. The numbers for, firstly, the file and, secondly, the individual item, are arranged by Robert Kosovsky in his *The Oster Collection: Paper of Heinrich Schenker. A Finding List* (New York: New York Public Library, 1990).

²⁸ Quoted in H.G. Sear, 108. Sear talks about another set of variations on this same theme in A minor by Mark Hambourg, published in 1902 and dedicated to his teacher Leschetizky.

undertaking a further set of 24 variations on a theme which had been previously explored by others, what more does Rachmaninoff want to say? How does he achieve an original and independent compositional narrative? To begin to answer this question, tonal grouping in the *Rhapsody* will be examined.

5. Overview of the Large-Scale Tonal Structure of the *Rhapsody*

The *Rhapsody* may be divided according to its large-scale tonal structure into three sections:

1. Introduction, Variation 1, Theme, and Variations 2 -10 in A minor
Variation 11- transition to Variation 12, preparing the dominant of D minor
2. Variations 12-18 in D minor, F major, B \flat minor, D \flat major
3. Variations 19-24 in A minor, but revalued as the upper fifth of D

This tonal division may correspond to the form of a sonata with a three movement-scheme; the first is moderately fast, the second slow, and the third fast throughout. The first tonal group in A minor is initiated with nine bars of Introduction. Characteristically the Introduction is connected to Variation 1, which does not include the piano and presents a harmonic scheme of the Theme in advance. The first tonal group encompasses the appearance of the *Dies Irae* at Variation 7 in a more relaxed tempo corresponding to the second theme in sonata form – albeit still in the tonic. The *Dies Irae* tune reappears in Variation 10. Variation 11 accomplishes the tonal transition from A minor to D minor, presenting a cadenza-like piano solo and eventually establishing the dominant of D minor.

The middle tonal group begins with Variation 12 presenting a somewhat slow and melancholic dance (*Minuetto*). The variations in this group are mostly in triple meters, except for Variations 16 and 17, and explore various keys (D minor, F major, B \flat minor, D \flat

major). This tonal group includes the famous eighteenth variation in D \flat major as the last one, which projects the climax to which the previous variations build— from the Introduction to Variation 17.

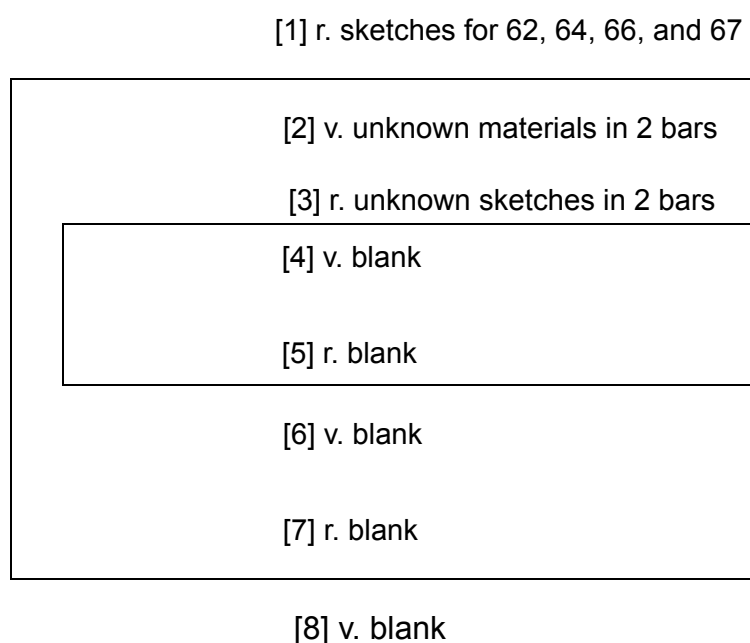
After Variation 18, the last tonal group in A minor drives forcefully towards the end. From Variation 19 to 22, the tempo gradually accelerates - *L'istesso tempo*, *Un poco piu vivo*, *Un poco più vivo (alla breve)*. After a cadenza-like piano solo passage at the last part of Variation 22, Variation 23 returns to *L'istesso tempo* with the strong reappearance of the Theme, now played by piano and orchestra in alternation. Eventually the last part of the last variation pushes the tempo to *Più vivo*, in which the final statement of the *Dies Irae* in *tutti* is proclaimed.

Differing from this order and grouping of variations, Rachmaninoff's manuscripts of the *Rhapsody* present a different juxtaposition of variations. In the next section, the state of the sources of the *Rhapsody* will be discussed.

6. The Sources for the *Rhapsody*

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, brief sketch materials are found in the Glinka Museum MSS Φ 18.1423 and Φ 18.1424, and in the Library of Congress 14d. Cannata dates these sources to between 1923 and 1926.²⁹ The earliest of these documents, Φ 18.1424, includes Rachmaninoff's initial manipulations of the Paganini theme, which become the famous eighteenth variation. The Library of Congress (LC) MSS 14d, which consist of two interleaved bifolios, presents some sketch materials of Variation 22. In f.1r, the first two staves show the text found at figure 62-2, 64, 64+2, and a melodic fragment, which will be transposed to E \flat later in the cello at figure 66+1. The rest of f.1r is filled with a sketch mainly for figure 66 in short score; the first pair of staves shows a cadenza-like piano passage at figure 66, and the second pair the orchestral materials at figures 66, 67, and 68-3.

Figure 1 Library of Congress MSS 14d



²⁹ Refer to Cannata (1999), 55-56.

Two spiral notebooks, LC 14b and 14c, include the draft for the *Rhapsody*. All draft materials of LC 14b and 14c were written in short score, which show two upper staves for the piano and from two to four staves for the orchestra. Rachmaninoff began to formulate his ideas in LC 14c, drafting Variation 13 first. It is noteworthy that he does not begin sketching with a variation in the tonic A minor but rather with Variation 13 in the subdominant key of D minor. Including materials in D minor between pages 14 and 16 - which seem to have been devised for the D minor group of variations but were discarded later - the first sixteen pages in LC 14c show a random order of the variations: 13, 5, 18, 4, 9, and 19. Between pages 18 and 23, Variations 14 and 15 are paired, completing the F-major group. After unidentified materials in A minor on pages 24-27, pages 28-31 complete Variations 16 and 17 in B \flat minor. In other words, after sketching some variations in an apparently random order, Rachmaninoff arranged the F major and B \flat minor group in their final order. Then, Variation 21 appears on pages 32-33, followed by drafts for Variation 3 (pp. 34-37).

Rachmaninoff now grouped the Introduction, the Theme, and Variation 2 together (pp. 38-40) without Variation 1, which appears between the Introduction and the Theme later in the full score (LC 14a) and the published version. Since the first variation was not yet conceived, Rachmaninoff numbered all variations one less through all the draft materials in LC 14c.

Through pages 41- 55, Rachmaninoff laid out Variations 6-12 in their final order.

Then Variation 20 appears, followed by Variation 22, which was not numbered by the composer (pp. 56-66). It is noteworthy that Rachmaninoff kept sketching figure 66, which is a long E \flat prolongation in Variation 22, in the concluding part of this book. The sketch for Variation 22 is incomplete, ending just before the piano begins a cadenza-like passage in m. 818.

Rachmaninoff continued his drafts for the last part of the *Rhapsody* in LC 14b, whose first 22 pages also contain the draft materials of his piano transcription of Mendelssohn's *Scherzo* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The drafts for the *Rhapsody* from page 23 to 42 are for Variations 22, 23, and 24, which Rachmaninoff did not number. The order of these variations in this notebook appears as 24, 22, 24, 22, and 23. The first sketch for Variation 24 contains the last part of the variation at figure 77-4 (m. 898) and the piano figuration at figure 78+8 (m. 918). The second sketch for Variation 24 appears on page 28 after the sketch of figure 66 in Variation 22, which the composer repeatedly sketched in the previous notebook. Here, in his second sketch of Variation 24, Rachmaninoff drafted from the beginning of the variation to m. 897 – just before the *Più vivo* section (m. 898) appears. Then he continued to sketch consecutively figures 77, 78, and 79. Compared to his first sketch of these figures, the second sketch is almost identical to the published version. In his previous sketch book (LC 14c), Rachmaninoff had laid out Variation 22, but without its concluding cadenza-like passage. After completing the sketch for Variation 24, i.e., the end of the *Rhapsody*, Rachmaninoff

sketched a cadenza-like passage of the piano solo at the end of Variation 22 (m. 818).

LC 14b is completed by a sketch of Variation 23.

The full score LC 14a is almost completely identical to the published version, except for several small deviations. For example, in the Theme, Rachmaninoff wanted to use the A minor chord in the piano part instead of only the single note A; he tried it in the first measure, but immediately corrected it to the figure which appears in the published version. In the same measure (the first measure of the Theme), he initially intended to add some woodwind instruments to the piano and strings, as can be seen behind his crossing-out. Here, the numbers assigned to the variations correspond exactly to the published version because Rachmaninoff inserted Variation 1 between the Introduction and the Theme as "Precedente." Considering that Rachmaninoff corrected the original numbering using a pen-knife and wrote out the new numbers, increasing them by one, it seems that his idea for Variation 1 was formulated at the very last moment.

From what can be seen and observed in his manuscripts and sketchbooks for the *Rhapsody* - unlike Beethoven who made many significant changes in the process of creating - Rachmaninoff did not struggle or labor much over his composition. For the genesis of the *Rhapsody*, Rachmaninoff carefully set up his ideas at the outset and hardly made any major structural changes throughout his several sketches and drafts. However, while there are successive sketches for the last part of the piece (especially for figure 66 of Variation 22) and the last-moment insertion of Variation 1, nevertheless it is

clear that the structurally important content was already determined in the composer's mind. Even though the sketches do not show significant structural deviations from the published version, it is still intriguing to examine how Rachmaninoff expands skeletal ideas to detailed drafts through the repeated sketches for the last part of the *Rhapsody*. Furthermore, it may be noted that the process of filling out the skeletal ideas with details corresponds to the Schenkerian concept of elaborating a basic structure with later levels of diminution. In the following chapter, each variation will be analyzed in detail, while providing Schenkerian graphs and occasional discussions of Rachmaninoff's sketches.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS

1. Introduction and Variation 1: The Drive Towards the Theme

The *Rhapsody* opens with a nine-bar Introduction which startles the listener with unresolved seventh chords. Introducing the characteristic sixteenth-note melodic material A-C-B-A-E, this gesture signifies the rising fifth A-E arpeggiated as A-C-E, henceforth designated motive 'x.' These initial nine bars are remarkable for their parallel seventh chords and fifths. In addition, this condensed phrase contains an ascending fourth motive (E-F#-G#-A, designated 'yi'³⁰), both in the foreground voice leading for the first four measures (Example 1, bracketed) and in its expanded version throughout the first nine measures and the first measure of Variation 1. As marked in Example 1, this enlarged ascending fourth motive stretched out across the Introduction (mm. 1-9) provides the context within which the surprising unresolved parallel seventh chords may be understood. While the piano persistently sustains the tonic in octaves (mm. 3-7), this intense passage leads softly into the dominant seventh chord of A minor (m. 9) just after the *sforzando* ninth chord in measure 8.

After the introduction, it would be expected that Rachmaninoff would announce the Theme; but – playfully, or, perhaps diabolically – he does not do so. Instead, Variation

³⁰ Since a descending-fourth motive occurs in the Theme and is presented through variations, this descending-fourth will be named 'y.' Thus, the inverted form of 'y' in the Introduction is designated as 'yi.'

1, marked *Precedente* by the composer and played only by the orchestra, provides the harmonic scheme of the Theme in advance of its presentation. As discussed in the sources for the *Rhapsody*, this variation is not found in any of the sketches before the composer's clean copy of the full score manuscript (the Library of Congress MSS 14a) of the *Rhapsody*. Thus, Rachmaninoff must have inserted it between the Introduction and the Theme at the last moment to create a more suggestive introductory mood before initiating the Theme. The listener can appreciate the effect of a bass line of a long *passacaglia* through this procedure.³¹

2. The Theme

Paganini's original theme is played by the orchestra while the piano presents a similar pattern as in Variation 1. It consists of an eight-measure antecedent phrase (mm. 34-41), which contains a repeated four-measure phrase, and an extended consequent phrase of sixteen measures (mm. 42-57) within which an eight-measure phrase is also repeated. As shown in Example 3, the antecedent phrase features an alternation of I and V, the consequent a sequence leading from I through IV to II and a return to I via the augmented sixth chord and the V. Four-measure groupings can be easily identified in the antecedent. In the consequent's first four measures (mm. 42-45) the sequential pattern

³¹ This sort of presentation is used in Beethoven's *15 Variations on a Theme from "Prometheus"*, Op.35 ("Eroica" Variations) and the Finale of his "*Eroica*" *Symphony*, Op.55 in Eb major. In Op.35 an "*introduzione col basso del tema*" starts with the presentation of the bass of the theme in the order of the great, small, one and two-line octaves. In the Finale of Op.55, after the introductory 11 measures, the first theme is presented as the bass of the second.

emphasizes two-measure groupings. From the beginning of the fifth measure of the consequent (m. 46), the measure groupings begin to shorten to two one-measure groupings (mm.46-47), and finally the penultimate measure (m. 48) contains two harmonic progressions in quarter values.

Since Rachmaninoff's harmonization of the Theme is almost identical to Brahms's (except that Rachmaninoff uses the German instead of the French augmented sixth chord in m. 48), the present exploration of the Theme will begin with an examination of Schenker's analysis of Brahms's Paganini Variations in item 34/329 (Plate 1) and 34/330 (Plates 2 and 3) in the Ernst Oster Collection.³² To facilitate the following discussion of the Theme *per se*, reference will be made to measures in the Theme beginning with m. 1.

Examples 2a-d are transcribed from Elias's clean graph of Schenker's rough sketches; these sketches exhibit different levels of detail. Example 2a shows the background structure of the Theme. The fundamental line, the *Urlinie*, begins from the primary tone, C ($\hat{3}$), embellished by its upper-neighbor tone D, supported by IV, and proceeds to B ($\hat{2}$), supported by II and V, and to A ($\hat{1}$) at the end. Example 2d provides a foreground graph.

Turning now to Plates 1-3, Schenker's rough sketch employs more slurs than the one by Elias. Schenker clearly indicates a descending fourth motive from A (m. 9) to E

³² Schenker's analytical sketches and his pupil Angelika Elias's clean copies of his analysis can be found in the Oster Collection. The numbers for, first, the file, and second, the individual item, are arranged by Robert Kosovsky in his book *The Oster Collection: Paper of Heinrich Schenker. A Finding List* (New York: New York Public Library, 1990).

(mm. 14-15) with slurs and a bracket in all three sketches. Another significant difference between Schenker's sketches and Elias's copy is that she marks a structural IV whereas he focuses on the I-II-V-I progression, as shown in Plate 1. Although Schenker takes the *Kopftón* at the beginning, marked $\hat{3}$ above the staff (Plate 2), it seems that the more valued upper-voice motion in the first half is $a^1-e^2-a^2$ as notated in Plate 1 and 3, and more clearly in Plate 2.

In Schenker's reading of the upper voice, the prolonged A initiates the descending-fourth motive A-G-F-E. Schenker seems to have changed his mind concerning the *Kopftón* in the midst of his analysis of the first volume of Brahms' variations. Let us try to reconstruct his thought process. In Elias's clean graph (Example 2d), which closely follows Schenker's sketch of the Theme, Schenker takes C ($\hat{3}$) as the *Kopftón*. He places D and C ($\hat{4}$ and $\hat{3}$) in parentheses above the sequential progression in the consequent phrase, indicating that D and C should be understood as a neighboring figure interpolated between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{2}$. Notice that, although Schenker marks $\hat{3}$ (the *Kopftón* C) at the beginning, he never pulls out C as a white note (Example 2d); rather he indicates the arpeggiated ascending-fifth motion A-C-E with a slur (Plate 2). Later, Schenker must have realized that pulling C ($\hat{3}$) out of the arpeggiation of the A minor chord, violates motive 'x.' Therefore, in Variation 6 in Elias's graph, changing his mind, Schenker marks $\hat{5}$ for the first time above E, which is supported by V of the antecedent phrase, and deletes the parentheses marked around $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$, making them a part of the *Urlinie*. Plate 4 shows Elias's

graph of the Theme with Schenker's annotations. Probably, this summary graph was made after Elias had finished her clean graphs of all fourteen variations in Volume 1. Here, Schenker clearly initiates his reading from $\hat{5}$ (mm. 2 and 4). Notice the brackets that Schenker draws over the fifths a^1-e^2 and a^2-d^2 ; he emphatically shows the ascending arpeggiation of the A minor chord (A-C-E), motive 'x,' and its continuation in inverted form (A-F-D), now considering C at the beginning to be a part of motive 'x;' in this way, Schenker could avoid breaking up the initial motive. Then, in Volume 2, Schenker reads the whole from $\hat{5}$.

Example 3 presents my reading in contrast to Schenker's from $\hat{5}$. Since the initial motion in the upper part draws attention to A prolonged by an octave transfer from a^1 (m. 1) to a^2 (m. 9) - as Schenker marked and emphasized already - the e^2 (mm. 2 and 4), which Schenker takes as the *Kopftön* $\hat{5}$, can be considered rather to be an inner voice caught within the prolongation of A. Simultaneously, the V chords in mm. 2 and 4 support an implied B, which is to be understood as a rising passing tone leading from A (mm. 1 and 3) ultimately to the primary tone C ($\hat{3}$) in mm. 14 and 15. Thus, *pace* Schenker, the arrival point of the *Kopftön* C may be regarded completely differently, not immediately in m. 1, but with a long, drawn-out *Anstieg* to m. 14.

In this reading, the sustained A (mm. 1-9) leads to B (m. 13), supported by the II chord, to C in the next two measures (mm. 14-15), which now is taken as the *Kopftön*, creating an *Anstieg* (initial ascent) through a third progression (A-B-C, henceforth

designated motive 'z'). Rachmaninoff uses the augmented sixth chord in m. 15 (m. 48) with only two notes of the augmented sixth (F and D \sharp), whereas Brahms employs the French sixth. If the chord is read as a German sixth (F-A-C-D \sharp), then the *Kopfton* C is sustained through the augmented-sixth chord in m. 15 (m. 48) and proceeds to B ($\hat{2}$) in the dominant chord in the same measure. This reading is confirmed in m. 23 (m. 56), where Rachmaninoff fills in the harmony, placing C in the piano part to complete the German augmented sixth chord.

This interpretation bears upon the working out of the rest of the variations in two ways. First, the delayed arrival of the *Kopfton* can be considered to be related to the large-scale tonal and formal structure of the *Rhapsody*: it corresponds to the idea that the true *Kopfton* (C \sharp , $\hat{3}$) of the piece as a whole is ultimately achieved only in the eighteenth Variation after a long "journey" to get there, forming a colossal *Anstieg* from a¹ to c \sharp ². Second, in the present reading, the A prolongation throughout the antecedent in the upper part, which is supported by the octave transfer through the arpeggiation, is strongly present and a² initiates the descending-fourth motive 'y' (A-G-F-E). Now, notice that the descending-fourth motive from A to E was already present in the Introduction in its inverted form (E-F \sharp -G \sharp -A) both in the foreground and expanded in the middleground (Example 1). Observe, then, how Rachmaninoff creates a deeper sense of "connection" between the Introduction and the Theme by juxtaposing the rising fourth in the Introduction with the descending fourth in the Theme, thereby producing a well-balanced

symmetry.

In addition to the motion of the ascending third to the *Kopfton* (the *Anstieg*, 'z') and the descending fourth ('y'), a double neighbor figure (E-F-D-E, which will be labeled the "*Todmotiv*" henceforth) is implicit in the Theme. This motion is $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}$ in the key of A. The double neighbor's prominent figure is sometimes associated with death or sorrow. As Carl Schachter observes, "the musical basis of this association is surely the descending half-step ($\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ in minor mode) with its goal-directed and downward motion, its semitonal intensity, and the "sighing" quality it can so easily assume."³³ According to Timothy L. Jackson, the four-tone "cross" motive may have come to signify death through its association with the Crucifixion: the cross is formed both by the contour of the tones and by the "crossing" of one conceptual voice over another.³⁴

Notice also the emphasized tritone in the bass between II and V (B-F). It will be shown that this tritone assumes great motivic significance later in the piece transposed to A-D \sharp /E \flat and E-B \flat . Throughout the variations, all of these motivic elements are preserved and varied either implicitly or explicitly.

3. Variations 2 and 3

Rachmaninoff preserves the Theme's number of measures in Variation 2. The

³³ Carl Schachter, "Motive and Text in Four Schubert Songs," in *Aspects of Schenkerian Analysis*, ed. David Beach (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 70.

³⁴ Timothy L. Jackson, "Schubert's Revisions of *Der Jüngling und der Tod*, D. 545a-b and *Meeresstille*, D. 216a-b," *The Musical Quarterly* 75 (1991), 336-361.

graph in Example 4 illustrates how the composer through-composes Variation 2 even though the second part of the consequent (mm. 74-81) seems to be a repetition of the same structure as the first part (mm. 66-73). The upper part is initiated with the beginning of the *Anstieg* (A-B) - just as in the Theme - but does not attain the *Kopfton* at the end of the first consequent phrase. Rather, the ascent from A reaches *through* the C in m. 73 and C \sharp supported by A chord in m. 75 - which is a tonic quickly transformed into the dominant of IV – and proceeds to D in m. 75. D supported by the IV chord in m. 75 functions as an incomplete upper neighbor tone. Therefore, as marked in the graph, the *Anstieg* to C ($\hat{3}$, m. 80, motive ‘z’) is now drawn out *across the consequent’s recomposed repetition* (from A at the beginning through the chromatic passing tone B \flat ($\flat\hat{2}$, m. 78) supported by the Neapolitan \flat II). Thus, the *Kopfton* is achieved only at the very end of the variation (in m. 80) and followed by a rapid structural descent at the conclusion. The descending-fourth motive ‘y’ (A-G-F-E) is strongly present throughout the upper part as shown in Example 4.

Rachmaninoff begins to extend the basic length of the Theme in Variation 3 (Example 5). In this variation, the eight-bar antecedent is expanded to twelve bars (mm. 82-93) and the sixteen-bar consequent to nineteen bars (mm. 94-112). As shown in Example 5, the variation is initiated with a I_6 chord and proceeds to IV_6 and II_6 chords, creating the effect of a greatly-extended auxiliary cadence to the structural V chord in measure 101. As in Variation 2, the arrival of the *Kopfton* is delayed until end of the

recomposed consequent (m.101). Again, in the first presentation of the consequent, C \sharp (m. 94) displaces C as a leading tone to D; thus, in the second statement, the *Anstieg* is filled in chromatically as A-B \flat (supported by the \flat II 6 chord (m. 107) leads to B \flat -C (m.100, supported by II 6): again, motive 'z,' now filled in completely chromatically, is extended across the entire variation.

Example 5 calls attention to both the descending-fourth motive ('y') and the double-neighbor tone figure (the '*Todmotiv*'). Here, the composer varies the register of these motives: while the Theme makes the descending-fourth motive 'y' (a 2 -g 2 -f 2 -e 2) more explicit registrally, this variation conceals the same motive an octave lower (a 1 -g 1 -f 1 -e 1), across the voice exchanges in mm. 94-97 and mm. 98-101. Since the descending-fourth motive now occurs in the lower register, the double-neighbor tone figure [E-F-E-D-E], now in a higher register, is more prominently heard.

4. Variations 4, 5, and 6

Variations 4 and 5, do not complete a structural descent, but achieve the *Urlinie* in Variation 6. More precisely, in Variation 4, Rachmaninoff expands the antecedent's ascent A-B ($\hat{1}$ - $\hat{2}$) across the entire variation; Variation 5 *twice* – i.e., emphatically – completes the *Anstieg* to C ($\hat{3}$, mm. 174 and 188; i.e., achieves motive 'z'), while Variation 6 provides the structural descent. In other words, the upper voice structure of the Theme by itself is now projected across no less than three variations! Variation 4

(Example 6) initiates the descending-fourth motive 'y' as a foreground, voice-leading motive (A-G#-F#-E and A-G-F-E). Repetition of 'y' in the antecedent (mm. 113-128) is concealed in the consequent (mm. 129-152): from mm. 129-140, 'y' is stated as a¹-g¹-f¹-e¹, then from m. 141 to the end of the variation as a²-g²-f²-e². The basic length of the antecedent (two four-measure groups) is doubled in this variation. In the first half of the consequent, the prolonged A starts to move to B \flat (m. 137) and B \natural (m. 140), preparing a third-ascent to an implied C in m. 140; the ascent then continues through C# (m. 141) to D (m. 149), which becomes the seventh of V₇. In the second half, the *Anstieg* never reaches C ($\hat{3}$) since the variation halts on the dominant chord.

In Variation 5, the antecedent phrase resumes its original eight-measure length (as in the Theme). Rachmaninoff places a neighbor note motive A-G#-A at the beginning (bracketed in Example 7) both as a foreground motive (inner voice of the piano, m. 153) and as a foreground voice-leading motive (orchestra part, mm. 153 to 155). This motive is inverted and transformed into G-A \flat (enharmonically equivalent to G#)-G as a foreground voice-leading motive in mm. 165-168 and mm. 179-182. The rising third A-C – motive 'z' – filled in chromatically, is stated twice; notice that the C in m. 174 anticipates the definitive arrival of the *Kopfton* C in m. 188. The restatement of 'z' in the second half of the consequent is indicated by the lower beam.

In this union of three variations, Variation 6 realizes the structural descent, completing *Urlinie*. In this variation, the structural harmonies are juxtaposed differently

than before. After an extended fourteen-measure antecedent (mm. 189-202), I does not proceed to IV (as in the theme); instead, it moves to V, which is prolonged from mm. 211-230. As shown in Example 8, the section consisting of mm. 184-230 creates the impression of an extended antecedent (I-V); in other words, the compositional idea is to take the I-V/ $\hat{1}$ - $\hat{2}$ structure of the antecedent and extend it through the consequent! The *Kopfton* C is achieved in m. 231, just after the conclusion of the V prolongation, and is sustained through the $\frac{4}{4}$ chord on E \flat in m. 237. Since the composer changes the Theme's harmonic framework in this variation, the IV and II chords (so prominent in the Theme) are not found. The ascending-third progression, motive 'z' – i.e., the *Anstieg* from A through B to the primary tone C – is obvious, each tone supported by the structural I-V-I. However, in this variation the descending-fourth motive, 'y,' and the double-neighbor motive are absent; this is because the sequential section through IV-II, which is associated with the descending-fourth motive and $\hat{6}$ (F) in the upper part, is not reproduced.

5. Variation 7

Rachmaninoff introduces the first seven notes of the ecclesiastical plainsong, the sequence *Dies Irae*, as a recurring motto or motive.³⁵ This melody employs a restricted

³⁵ As one of four sequences retained by the Council of Trent in the Catholic Church, the melody of *Dies Irae* was often used in the Requiem Mass as an integral part of the setting. For secular and non-liturgical use, composers borrow the tune to evoke the appropriate atmosphere of an element of the supernatural, wicked powers, madness, and death.

range: all of the notes move within the interval of a perfect fourth, recalling the descending-fourth motive from the Theme, motive 'y.' The motto retains a "collapsing" figure [C-B, C-A, B-G, A], intensifying the dark atmosphere. Through its "falling down" motion, the explicit motive of the motto encompasses the double-neighbor figure [B-C-A-B] (marked with asterisks in Example 9), traditionally associated with death.³⁶ This double-neighbor pattern within the tune corresponds to the same figure implied in the Theme as a part of $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}$ motion [E-F-(E)-D#-E].

Rachmaninoff states the *Dies Irae* motto in the piano part first, making it a counterpoint to the Paganini theme in the orchestra. The *Dies Irae* flows slowly in half notes while the orchestra augments the sixteenth-note motive from the Theme to the eighth-notes underneath the tune; this rhythmic juxtaposition creates the interesting illusion that the *Dies Irae* is a slowly-moving *cantus firmus* and the orchestral counterpart an added melody, which reverses the way the piece has proceeded thus far.

As seen in Example 10, Rachmaninoff adjusts the harmonic structure of the Theme's antecedent to accommodate the newly introduced motto. Now, the alternation of I and VI in the Theme's antecedent substitutes for I and VI (m. 250). Notice the voice-exchange of C and A (mm. 243-258), which occurs in conjunction with parallel-tenth motion in the outer voices leading from I to VI. Unlike in the previous variations, the *Kopfton*, C, takes its place at the very beginning, emphasizing the first use of the *Dies*

³⁶ Refer to Jackson, "Schubert's Revisions of *Der Jüngling und der Tod*, D. 545a-b and *Meeresstille*, D. 216a-b."

Irae motto. Since the *Kopfton* ($\hat{3}$) is sustained throughout the whole variation, there is no completion of the *Urlinie*.

While Rachmaninoff preserves the essential harmonic structure of the consequent [I- IV- \flat II- V(III⁶)] (mm. 259-284), the “collapsing” motive of the *Dies Irae* is transformed at various pitch levels as a sequential pattern.³⁷ The descending-fourth motive (‘y’) from A to E, which was present in the Theme and used in the previous variations, is now transposed to G-F-E-D in conjunction with the C prolongation (mm. 269-279) caught within the framing motion of IV to \flat II⁶ (mm. 266-278). Throughout the consequent, the upper part traverses a descending third from E to C, as a continuation of the descending third (C-B-A), which was employed in the antecedent.

This variation is significant for several reasons: firstly, the composer first introduces the *Dies Irae* theme and its motivic figure of the descending third; secondly the *Kopfton* arrives at the very beginning of the variation (in contrast to the Theme and previous variations); and, finally, the original motive (‘x’) is varied at a different pitch levels according to the sequential pattern of the *Dies Irae*. Therefore, the original motivic ideas are implicitly preserved within new explicit motives.

6. Variation 8

Continuing the rhythmic augmentation of the sixteenth-note figure in the orchestral

³⁷ E-D-E-C \sharp -D (mm. 259-262), D-C-D-B-C (mm. 262-268), G-F-G-E-F (mm. 269-272), F-E-F-D-E (mm. 272-276).

part of the previous variation, Variation 8 now places it in the piano part and doubles the length of the antecedent from the original eight measures to sixteen measures, mm. 285-300. While the antecedent preserves the harmonic structure I-V in duple augmentation, the expanded consequent incorporates some harmonic changes. Instead of continuing the descending-fifth sequence in the bass (A-D, G-C, F-B) in the first part of the consequent, Rachmaninoff changes paired descending fifths to rising thirds (B \flat -D in mm. 301-303, A \flat -C in mm. 305-307, see Example 11), dynamically emphasizing the B \flat and A \flat chords. Each of these emphasized chords lasts one measure more than the original, resulting in a durational expansion of the first half of the consequent (eight measures in the Theme becomes fourteen measures (mm. 301-.314). The second half of the consequent in the Theme is eight measures long; in this variation, these eight measures are expanded to fourteen through a series of six inserted “extra” measures (mm. 316, 318, 320, 322, 324, and 326). Notice that two of these “extra” measures (mm. 324 and 326) contain voice exchanges, as shown in the example.

The recomposed repetition of the consequent (mm. 315-328) differs slightly from the initial statement (mm. 301-314), while preserving its harmonic structure. As shown in the graph in Example 11, the initial ascent of a third, motive ‘z,’ is stretched out chromatically across the first part of the consequent phrase as A-B \flat -B \sharp -C ($\hat{1}$ $\flat\hat{2}$ $\sharp\hat{2}$ $\hat{3}$), achieving the *Kopfton* C at m. 313. Unlike Variations 2, 3, 4, and 5, which recompose the initial ascent (*Anstieg*) across the consequent’s second phrase, this variation does not

restate the *Anstieg* in the second phrase. This modification is related to the placement of the descending-fourth motive 'y,' A-G-F-E, relative to the arrival of the *Kopftón* C. In the initial statement (mm. 303-313), the *Kopftón* arrives *before* motive 'y' is completed in m. 313, while in the recomposed repetition (mm. 315-326), it arrives (m. 327) after motive 'y' concludes on E (m. 326).

In Example 11, C, maintained as the *Kopftón*, at m. 314 can be linked to the C at m. 327, not through the *Anstieg* but through the neighbor note, D, in mm. 323-324. The D creates a voice exchange with F here, not with B as in the first phrase (m. 312). The C ($\hat{3}$), which arrives via passing-tone C \sharp from D, occurs above the diminished-seventh chord built on the D \sharp (m. 327). Now the *Kopftón* is placed to call attention to the tritone A – D \sharp , which is related to the tritone B-F in the bass of the Theme (see Example 3).

7. Variation 9

In Variation 9, Rachmaninoff places the tritone motive A-D \sharp in the foreground (mm. 329-330). As shown in Example 3, in the Theme the tritone motive was introduced in the bass (B-F, mm. 46 and 48) and in the upper voice (A-D \sharp , mm. 47-48). Now, in Variation 9, the upper voice cunningly inserts the tritone A-D \sharp into the interval of the fifth [A-(C)-(D \sharp)-E] (see Example 12). However, this idea is not derived simply from the Theme. As early as Variation 3, the music gravitates to D \sharp . In the upper part, the first note of the piano part is D \sharp and the figure D \sharp -E recurs throughout this variation. The *Kopftón* C is anticipated

above the bass D \sharp (m. 110, see Example 5), thereby calling attention to D \sharp as a chromatic passing tone between D and E. In Variation 6, the *Kopfton* C is sustained through the A \flat $\hat{6}$ chord with E \flat in the bass at m. 238; soon E \flat is respelled and reinterpreted as D \sharp at m. 239, this enharmonic transformation of E \flat into D \sharp further emphasizing the D \sharp . As mentioned in the analysis of Variation 8 (see Example 11), the *Kopfton* $\hat{3}$ (C) arrives above the diminished seventh chord over the bass D \sharp (m. 237). Therefore, while the tritone A-D \sharp was hidden underneath other motives and motions prior to Variation 9, we may observe the preparation of this tritone in the preceding variations; in Variation 9, its significance increases. This building technique highlights an ongoing developmental process to create an organically evolving musical structure, and thereby achieves motivic continuity and integration.

Turning now to a more detailed consideration of Variation 9, the tritone motive (A-C-D \sharp -E) in the piano is consistently prominent in the fast runs throughout the variation, creating a contrasting rhythmic pattern between piano and orchestra (off-beat eighth-notes against each triplet). Here, notice how amazingly Rachmaninoff brings out and expands this foreground tritone motive in the bass as [A(I)-C(I $\hat{6}$)- D \sharp (VII $\hat{0}$ /V)-E(V)] (Example 12). Each note of this enlarged motive, identified with asterisks in Example 12, is marked by providing support to each note of the initial ascent (*Anstieg*) to $\hat{3}$ (C): A and C support A ($\hat{1}$), and D \sharp supports B ($\hat{2}$) and the *Kopfton* C ($\hat{3}$) at m. 355.

Although the tritone motive dominates the whole variation, Rachmaninoff does not

neglect other motivic features: the double-neighbor figure, $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}-\hat{\#4}-\hat{5}$ (the “Todmotiv”), encompasses the whole variation [E (m. 330) - F \sharp (m. 353) - E (m. 356) - D \sharp (m. 367) - E (m. 368)]; furthermore, the descending-fourth motive ‘y’ [A (mm. 345 and 357) – G (mm. 352 and 364) - F \sharp (mm. 353 and 367) – E (mm. 356 and 368)] occurs both in the first and second phrases of the consequent.

As shown, it can be observed how Rachmaninoff extracts a less obvious feature of the Theme (the tritone B-F and A-D \sharp), employs it as part of the background structure in the previous variations (Variations 3, 6, and 8), and then, in Variation 9, both focuses on it in the foreground and projects its enlargement in the background.

8. Variation 10

In conjunction with the recurrence of the *Dies Irae* motto, Variation 10 (Example 13) presents its *Kopfton* ($\hat{3}$) clearly at the very outset (m. 369), just as in the first *Dies Irae* variation (Variation 7). While the piano solo presents the motto in a heavy gait in a low register with half-note and whole-note values, the bass line in the orchestra articulates the first four notes of the *Dies Irae* tune. In the upper voice, the *Dies Irae* traces a descending-third motion from C to A over tonic prolongation (mm. 369–373). Observe that an ascending third motion from A (m. 373) to C (m. 384) is created by unfolding through an arpeggiation [A (m. 373) – C (m. 375) - E (m. 376) / F (m. 377) – D (m. 382) – B (m. 383)]; this ascending third A-C achieves a well-balanced symmetry with the

previous descending-third line C-A. Therefore, even though the *Kopfton* is stated at the beginning of this variation, it is clear how the composer preserves and varies the idea of the initial third ascent (A-B-C, i.e., motive 'z'). C ($\hat{3}$), sustained through the unfolding, proceeds to an implied B ($\hat{2}$) at m. 383 and arrives at A ($\hat{1}$) in the next measure. However, Rachmaninoff skillfully avoids a strong closure of the *Urlinie* by replacing the expected tonic chord with VI_6 (beneath $\hat{1}$, m. 384) so that the consequent connects to its recomposed repetition creating a strong sense of continuity! At this point (m.384), $\hat{3}$ is picked up by the flute and sustained until the fundamental line is finally completed (mm.396-399).

Despite an adjustment to the harmonic structure, it is of considerable interest that the composer still weaves the idea of $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}$ (the "*Todmotiv*") into the voice leading; this motive is stretched out as E (m. 369) – F (m. 377) – E (m. 380) – D (m. 382) – $E_b=D\#$ (m. 387) – E_b (m. 383), and E (m. 383) – F (m. 384) – $D\#$ (m. 390) – E_b (m. 392). In addition, the descending-fourth motive ('y') continues, first above $VI_6 - bii_7 - V$ in mm. 377-383 and then through the restatement of the *Dies Irae* in mm. 392-397.

9. Variation 11

This variation prepares Variation 12, which is in the key of D minor. While the harmonic structure is adjusted towards the new key, the foreground maintains the Paganini thematic melodic material (A-C-B-A-E) and its sequential pattern throughout the

whole variation. Compared to previous variations, this variation is in a cadenza-like style: the orchestra plays the role of accompanist to the piano solo, mainly offering a harmonic basis. In contrast the piano part is virtuosic. Examples 14 and 15, respectively, show the foreground and background levels.

Example 15 illustrates the main idea of this variation. Connected with A ($\hat{1}$) from the end of previous variation, A initiates the descending fourth motive 'y,' which is stretched out across the variation! At the beginning (m. 402), A is a part of an A minor seventh chord supported by C. At this point, listeners can hear G very clearly, since the orchestra plays a long A/G trill and arpeggiates the A minor seventh chord. At a deeper structural level, the G, the seventh of the A chord, is properly resolved to F, which is supported by $D\flat$ in the bass (mm. 409 - 411). This progression also contains the 6-5 motion: A to G, supported by C. The $D\flat$, in the bass (m. 409), proceeds through $D\sharp$ (m. 412) to E (m. 414) in an inner voice of the V of D minor. Coming from C, $D\flat$ can be associated with $C\sharp$ as its enharmonic equivalent. Considering this variation in conjunction with the next, the upper part traverses a descending-fifth motion from A to D (at the beginning of Variation 12). Therefore, this variation in its entirety can be heard as representing just the consequent phrase of the Theme, considering the enlargement of the descending-fourth motive in the upper part, even though the structural harmonies are slightly adjusted.

Example 14 shows how the initial foreground neighbor-note motive A-G-A in the

string trills (bracketed and marked by asterisks in the graph) is recomposed in enlargement across mm. 412-414. It is also noteworthy that the A-G-A motive is stated vertically in the sustained seventh chords in the orchestra (see the A-G in the chords in mm. 402, 405, and 408). The Paganini motive (A-C-B-A-E) is transferred into different registers. Especially at the end of the extended final measure (m. 414), Rachmaninoff highlights this melodic motive with chromatically altered C[#] and B^b (A-C[#]-B^b-A-E), preparing D minor for the next variation: this short, echo-like passage calls attention to the arpeggiation of V of D minor (C[#]-E-A) in its foreground voice leading. The last measure also features a double-neighbor figure (A-B^b-G[#]-A, representing $\hat{5}-\hat{6}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}$ in D minor, i.e., the “Todmotiv”) in a fast run over the V of D minor (bracketed in Example 14). Rachmaninoff prepares not only the harmonies in the next variation in D minor but also one of its significant motivic elements.

10. Variation 12: *Minuetto*

Shifting the tonal gravity from A minor to D minor, Rachmaninoff also changes the metric and rhythmic character from that of the previous variations. The meter changes from duple (2/4) to triple (3/4); furthermore, the thematic sixteenth-note Paganini motive (‘x’) is represented in the orchestral accompaniment by a free augmentation in D minor (i.e., D-F-A) at the slower tempo of half-note and quarter-note rhythms throughout this variation (see Example 16). While the orchestral accompaniment retains the implicit

motivic idea of arpeggiation from the original sixteenth-note figure ('x'), the piano draws out the initial neighbor-note figure in the *Dies Irae* motto (F-E-F-E-F in mm. 419-423) and then elegantly weaves the motto's continuation into the dotted rhythm of the *Minuetto* (marked with asterisks in Example 17). As in previous variations containing the *Dies Irae* (Variations 7 and 10), Rachmaninoff finds yet another way to vary both the original sixteenth-note motive ('x') and the *Dies Irae* motto, and to juxtapose them in a different musical dimension.

The first note of the spun-out *Dies Irae* motto is the *Kopftón* F ($\hat{3}$). In the consequent, the descending third F-E-D (mm. 419 to 432) is superimposed upon the ascending third D-E-F (mm. 415-438). The *Kopftón* F is sustained through the consequent's recomposed repetition (mm. 438-446). It is especially noteworthy that in Variation 12, as in Variations, 4-5, and 7, there is no structural descent of the *Urlinie*. Notice that in the consequent's recomposed repetition beneath the sustained *Kopftón*, the third-ascent from D to F recurs (as in the first statement of the consequent).

The descending-fourth motive ('y') is composed out at a different pitch level in this variation (since the key is changed). It occurs twice, in the first and the second part of the consequent, as G-F-E-D, and creates parallel-tenth motion with the upper voice (another descending fourth motion, B \flat -A-G-F) as illustrated in Example 16. The $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{6}$ - $\hat{4}$ - $\hat{5}$ motion (the "Todmotiv") is implied through the whole and each scale degree is supported by a structural harmony: I (A, m. 415) – IV (B \flat , m. 432) – (G, m. 437) – V/I (A, m. 438).

11. Variation 13

The orchestra plays the original Paganini motive ('x'), now augmented from sixteenth to eighth notes, and articulated *marcato*, against the heavy bell-like "tolling" chords in the piano. This variation restores the original length of the Theme (twenty-four measures), but employs different structural harmonies. In the antecedent (mm. 447-454), the bass line progresses from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$ (D-A): but the expected dominant chord (mm. 450 and 454) is replaced by the $F\#_6$ chord while retaining its bass note, $\hat{5}$ (A). Through the use of the $F\#_6$ chord, the *Kopfton* F ($\hat{3}$) - retained from the previous variation (which, as described above, plays out an *Anstieg* to $F(\hat{3})$) - is displaced to $F\#$ ($\#3$, see Example 18). This $F\#$ returns to F ($\hat{3}$) over the $B\flat_6$ chord with D in the bass; now, the F (mm. 459 and 468) functions as a chromatic passing tone between $F\#$ ($\#3$, mm. 455 and 463) and $E\flat$ ($\flat 2$, mm. 461 and 469). In this variation the consequent phrase does not follow the sequential descending-fifth pattern (D-G /C-F /B \flat -E \flat in D minor) parallel to the Theme. Rather, throughout the main body of the variation the piano sustains the pedal D in octaves; the harmonic bass progression D-E \flat -A-D (I-II-V-I) is released only in the last two measures (mm. 461-462 and, in the repetition, mm. 469-470).

After concluding the repeated consequent at m. 470, the variation proceeds to the startling $C\#$ minor chord stated in *fortissimo* in the same measure. This surprising, emphatic $C\#$ minor chord leads the tonal center to F major in the next variation, functioning as an enharmonic equivalent to $D\flat$ minor, i.e., $\flat VI_3$ in F major. Here, the shift

from D minor to F major is accomplished quickly, unlike the previous key change from A minor to D minor (Variation 12), which required the entirety of Variation 11.

This variation contains a complete *Urlinie* from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$ with $\#\hat{3}$ functioning as a neighbor-note as explained above. The ascending-third motive transposed from A to D minor, i.e., D-E-F ('z,' mm. 470-471) is initiated in the top voice to link Variations 13 and 14 (bracketed in Example 18, mm.470-471). In addition, the descending-fourth motive 'y' (D-C-B \flat -A) is composed out along with the sequential pattern in the consequent, as marked by asterisks in Example 18.

12. Variation 14

In this march-like variation, the orchestra assumes the primary responsibility for the melodic lines, while the piano is assigned chordal passages. Throughout the whole, the original sixteenth-note figure is transformed into triplets (see Example 19). The first triplet figure (mm. 472-473) is in essence an inversion of the original motive, and the second figure (mm. 473-474) imitates the uninverted form.

The E in the C \sharp minor chord at the end of the previous variation strongly leads to F ($\hat{1}$) at the very beginning, which is sustained from mm. 471-482 as shown in Example 20. F 2 is shifted down to f 1 at m. 473 through the triplet figure; through another octave transfer, this f 1 moves back to f 2 at m. 476. The treble staff of Example 20 illustrates that f 2 (m. 476) proceeds to e 2 (m. 478), which is then sustained above the bass progression (F-F \sharp -

A \flat -G, mm. 478-483). At m. 483, e² descends to g¹ ($\hat{2}$). Thus, the upper line, by incorporating the unfoldings [f¹-f², e²-g¹], leads F ($\hat{1}$) through G ($\hat{2}$) to A ($\hat{3}$, 'x' transposed to F major). Notice that the definitive arrival on A supported by I in m. 488 is anticipated by the A in m. 486 above D (VI).

After the initial ascent to A ($\hat{3}$) is achieved in m. 488, A is sustained through the rest of the variation embellished by its chromatic lower neighbor tone, G \sharp , supported by C \sharp minor chord (m. 503). There is no completion of the *Urlinie*.

As indicated in the graph (see asterisks), C \sharp repeatedly appears in the bass as a part of the progression of D-C \sharp -F. Notice that Rachmaninoff prepared this C \sharp by employing it to link Variations 13 and 14 (refer to Example 18, mm. 470-471). An enharmonic equivalent of D \flat $\hat{6}$ in the key of F major, this C \sharp eventually is transformed into D \flat in the last measure of the variation (m. 507, piano's left hand chord); this D \flat resolves to C, $\hat{5}$ in F major, at the beginning of Variation 15. Thus, Rachmaninoff connects Variations 14 and 15 in the same way as Variations 13 and 14, varying his original idea of $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{6}$ - $\hat{5}$ and alternating C \sharp and D \flat .

After several repetitions of the C \sharp -F progression in the bass (mm. 497-506), the piano initiates a different figuration in preparation for the next variation: the triplet figure, which dominated the whole variation, especially the piano part, now is transformed into a new sixteenth-note figure in the last two measures of this variation. Example 21 illustrates how the triplet, varied from the original sixteenth-note motive in the Theme, in its turn

metamorphoses into another sixteenth-note figure at the very end of this variation (m. 507, third beat). Therefore, it may be observed how Rachmaninoff develops and varies his original idea: a newly transformed idea does not always derive directly from the original idea but evolves from the previously developed idea. Hence, the new ideas grow organically one from the other – demonstrating remarkable motivic continuity - and are juxtaposed in an “ongoing” process in the course of the whole piece.

13. Variation 15: *Scherzo*

In Variation 15 the piano solo consists of a virtuosic and dazzling elaboration of the sixteenth-note figuration throughout. Now, the D_b , which was prepared by its enharmonic equivalent $C\sharp$ from Variation 13, is established in the repeated $\hat{5}-\hat{b}6-\hat{5}$ motion. In the middle of the variation, this D_b is replaced by $D\sharp$ ($\hat{4} \hat{6}$) (mm. 533 and 547). The $\hat{5}-\hat{b}6-\hat{5}$ motion [$C-D_b-C$] occurs at the beginning and $\hat{5}-\hat{b}6-\hat{5}$ motion is implied through mm. 523 to 535 and mm. 535 to 550, as exhibited in Example 22.

The bass progression [(C)- D_b -C-F], featured several times implicitly and explicitly in the course of the variation, creates an interesting comparison with the similar bass motion in Variation 14. By continuing to focus on the bass progression (D-C \sharp -F) - which linked Variation 14 to Variation 13 - there was no structural V(C) in the *Ursatz* of Variation 14 and, with this lack of a structural V, the *Ursatz* failed to achieve closure. Now, in Variation 15, the bass progression [D-C \sharp -(D_b)-F] is corrected to [$D(b)$ -C-F, introducing the

structural dominant between (\flat)VI and I (marked with asterisks in Example 22). Indeed, with the release of the structural V, this variation is able to complete the *Umlinie* from A ($\hat{3}$) to F ($\hat{1}$).

The A($\hat{3}$) at m. 551 is approached via an *Anstieg* [motive 'z,' F-G-(G \sharp)-A] with each note supported by I-V-I. A¹ (m. 523) anticipates a² (m. 544). The a² reached at m. 544 (through octave transfer) is sustained through m. 551 embellished by a lower neighbor tone, g \sharp^2 , at m. 550. When this variation returns to its *Kopftön* a² at m. 551, the orchestra plays the triplet idea, recalling the previous variation: the triplet figure [C \sharp -E-C \flat -F] of Variation 14 is now notated as [D \flat -E-C-F] (mm. 552-553).

As illustrated in Example 22, the *Umlinie* is completed through mm. 544-555; therefore, mm. 555-564 may be regarded as a coda extending the tonic. After this final tonic arrival, Rachmaninoff again strongly emphasizes C \sharp and D \flat by placing both on the second beat of mm. 558-560, and marking *sforzando*. Furthermore, the strong tension of the diminished 7th chord with C \sharp /D \flat is further intensified by a rhythmic hemiola: the triple meter is displaced by duple meter from mm. 557-562. Especially, to be noted are the repeated eighth-note pairs in the orchestra which anticipate the orchestral accompaniment at the beginning of the next variation! Rachmaninoff creates this idea not only by replacing triple rhythm with duple - which will be employed in the next variation - but also by including B \flat and C \sharp /D \flat in the diminished 7th chord, which anticipates the tonic of B \flat minor of Variation 16.

14. Variation 16

Variation 16 returns to 2/4 and presents the new key of B \flat minor. Rhythmically anticipated by the strongly emphasized passage in Variation 15 (mm. 557-562), the orchestral accompaniment begins quietly with the paired eighth-note figure. This first five-measure accompaniment articulates an inner-voice descending-third motion f¹-e¹-e \flat ¹-d¹-d \flat ¹ through mm. 565-569. By means of this third descent, the *Kopfton* D \flat ($\hat{3}$) is achieved at m. 569. At m. 571, the orchestra restates the original sixteenth-note motive, emphasizing b \flat ¹ ($\hat{1}$).

The *Kopfton*, D \flat , at m. 569, initiates the descending-fourth motion D \flat (mm. 569 and 595) -C \flat (mm. 583 and 598) -B \flat (mm. 587 and 601) -A \flat (mm. 594 and 604, motive 'y'), supported by B \flat -C \flat -E \flat -F \flat in the bass (marked with asterisks in Example 23). Along with this descending-fourth motive, the double-neighbor note figure (i.e., the "Todmotiv") encompassing $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{6}$ - $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{5}$ motion occurs in the inner voice. The *Urlinie* ($\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$) is completed at m. 605; thereafter, the coda places D \flat back on top and repeats the opening passage.

15. Variation 17

Rachmaninoff presents the double-neighbor motive (the *Todmotiv*) at the foreground voice-leading level: F($\hat{5}$)-G \flat ($\hat{6}$)-(F)-E($\hat{4}$)-F($\hat{5}$). In this variation, the "death" connotation of the "crossing" four-tone double-neighbor figure (the *Todmotiv*) is intensified by the "dark" atmosphere created by "grumbling" figuration in the piano's lower register

combined with relatively soft dynamics.

As illustrated in Example 24, at the beginning the *Todmotiv* occurs in the top voice of each group of three eighth notes: F-G \flat -F-E-F. Each F is especially highlighted durationally by the quarter note, prepared with a small crescendo. In the piano part's upper voice, an octave transfer shifts f¹ at m. 613 up to f² at m. 617; sustained through m. 621, f² proceeds to g \flat ² and g \flat ¹ (mm. 624-625), which then descends to e \sharp ² at m. 627, and returns to f² in mm. 628 and 630. This is a masterful enlargement of the *Todmotiv* !

The *Kopfton*, D \flat , is anticipated at m. 617 in the orchestra through the ascending-third motion (B \flat -C-D \flat , i.e. motive 'z'). The strong arrival on D \flat (m. 621), prepared by C \sharp ($\hat{2}$), occurs above the I₆ chord. While the bass proceeds from D \flat to E \flat through paired descending-fifth motions (A \flat -D \flat , B \flat -E \flat), the *Kopfton*, D \flat , initiates a descending-third progression to B \flat (m. 625) through C \flat (m. 623), producing a symmetrical balance with the above-noted third-ascent anticipating the arrival of the *Kopfton*. The B \flat (m. 625) eventually returns to D \flat (m. 632) passing C \sharp (m. 627) through the voice-exchange between F and D \flat , while the bass progresses through yet another descending-fifth motion (C \sharp -F). Once the tonic, B \flat , arrives at m. 634, the bass descends by half-step to reach A \flat , which functions as dominant of D \flat in the next variation.

Variation 17 preserves the same length of the antecedent and the consequent phrases of the Theme. Before the bass proceeds to D \flat in m. 621, there are eight measures of antecedent; then, through mm. 621-636, the consequent phrase takes its

place in sixteen measures, whose last measure proceeds to the extra measure (m. 637) which links Variations 17 and 18 providing the dominant of the next key D \flat major. In spite of preserving the same length of measures of the Theme, Variation 17 contains a different feature in construction of the antecedent and the consequent phrases. Instead of a repeated alternation of tonic and dominant in the Theme's antecedent, Variation 17's antecedent sustains the tonic (B \flat minor), and then presents the A flat major chord as a V of D \flat at its last measure. Unlike two repeated phrases of the consequent in other variations, this variation features a more likely through-composed style; D \flat (tonic 6 chord) is prolonged through mm. 621-630, passing the third motion between F and D \flat , and proceeds to the structural dominant F through E \flat . Thus, this variation has a somewhat distinguished phrasing feature from the others.

Example 25 presents a more condensed version of the analysis of Variation 17. As shown in this graph, the bass ascends from the tonic through an extended D \flat (mm. 621-630), E \flat (m. 633), and F (m. 633): this ascending motion can be easily distinguished by means of the penetrating timbre of the entire woodwind section. In contrast to the next famous eighteenth variation, this variation creates intense and dark emotions through the stirring low-register chromatic $\hat{5}\text{-}\flat\hat{6}\text{-}\hat{5}$ figure in the piano solo, moving slowly but continuously ascending through fifth relationships [F-B \flat , A \flat -D \flat , B \flat -E \flat , C \flat -F, in Example 24] in the sonorous playing of the woodwind section, and in murmuring and trembling string tremolos. These features provide an amazing contrast with the following variation. In this

context, the structurally ascending bass line leads the dark emotions up until the “gloomy” B \flat minor chord descends chromatically to the “hopeful” A \flat major chord, the dominant of D \flat , just before the “Love” variation begins (Example 24).

16. Variation 18

This famous variation was denoted as a “love” episode by the composer himself in the letter to Mikhail Fokine about his own choreographic plot.³⁸ The melodic inversion (motive ‘xi’) from the Theme is composed out in a major key, D \flat , and is developed into a beautiful *cantabile* in 3/4. The initial manipulations of the Paganini theme are found in the earliest sketch, Glinka Museum MSS Φ 18.1423 (1922+). As shown right below the melody from the Theme in Example 26³⁹, Rachmaninoff first thought of the inversion of the melody in A major. Then, he set up D \flat major in the third line of Example 26, and changed the time from 2/4 to 3/4 in the next line. The last line shows the triplet figure that appears throughout, particularly the descending triplet figure – not transposed to the pitch of the published version yet - played by the piano when the orchestra is assigned the main melody (mm. 650 ff).

The fact that Rachmaninoff set down his manipulation of the Theme in this variation at such an early stage in the compositional process is significant in light of my contention that the tonic of this variation, D \flat , is destined to serve as the true *Kopfton*

³⁸ Refer to Rachmaninoff’s letter about his choreographic plot in page 14.

³⁹ Transcribed and quoted from Cannata (1999), 57.

supported by III[#]₃. As an enharmonic equivalent to C[#], which functions as $\hat{3}$ in the context of the piece in its entirety, D^b is finally achieved after a long and difficult path from Variations 1 through 17, traversing a large *Anstieg* (A-B-C-C[#], 'z'). As the quintessential variation to which the *Rhapsody* builds and from which it departs, the structure of this variation itself contains a similar feature to the whole piece, as well as to the Theme: the arrival of the *Kopftön* is much delayed.

The variation can be divided into three sections, and this division exactly corresponds to Rachmaninoff's distinctive usage of the piano and orchestra. As shown in Example 27, the first section includes mm. 638-651 (first beat) in the prolongation of D^b and is played by piano solo without orchestral accompaniment. In conjunction with the repetition of the inverted motive 'x' ('xi,' A^b-F-G^b-A^b-D^b) and the whole-step descending motion B^b-C-D^b-A^b (mm. 639-643), the inner voices present the descending-fourth motive, 'y,' as A^b-G^b-F-F^b-E^b (mm. 639-644). Within the prolongation of the dominant (A^b) in mm. 643-649, the outer voices move in a sequence of 10-5 motions (marked in the graph). Through melodic and harmonic sequential patterns, the upper voice articulates the "ascending-fourth" motive, 'yi,' as a^{1b}-b^{1b}-c²-d^{2b} in mm. 643-648. After the sequence arriving at d^{2b} (m. 648), the melody ascends to a^{2b}, creating the prolongation of A^b through the octave transfer. The prolonged A^b (mm. 643-648) then proceeds to B³ (m. 649) in the German augmented-sixth chord over D^b, which leads to C (m. 649, functioning as $\hat{3}$ in A^b

major), presenting motive 'z.' Notice that, in the bass, $D\flat$ in the German sixth chord moves *up* to $E\flat$ (the dominant of $A\flat$), instead of resolving down to C – thereby creating an unusual resolution of the augmented sixth. This irregular resolution of the augmented-sixth chord – it functions as a common-tone chord to the cadential six-four - contributes to the dramatic intensity of this first climax. The chromatic deformation of motive 'z' - with the augmented second ($A\flat-B\flat-C$) -, superimposed upon the “ascending-fourth” motive, 'y_i,' is soon followed by a third-descent, C ($\hat{3}$ in $A\flat$ major)- $B\flat$ ($\hat{2}$)- $A\flat$ ($\hat{1}$) in mm. 649-650 imitating *Urlinie*-closure in the key of the dominant. $A\flat$ (m. 650) heralds the return of the primary melodic figure ($A\flat-F-G\flat-A\flat-D\flat$), drawing motive, 'x_i,' back to the tonic, $D\flat$. While all three motives, 'x_i,' 'y_i,' 'z,' are presented through the top voice-leading, the inner voice-leading traces the descending-fourth motive, 'y,' as $A\flat-G\flat-F-E\flat-E\flat$, creating a beautiful counterpoint with its top voices! Especially remarkable is the “mirroring” of 'y' and 'y_i,' both generated from $A\flat$. In the next chapter, more will be said about the semantics of this superpositioning of prime and inverted forms of 'y' in the next chapter. Recall that motive 'y' was already stated in the beginning (also in the inner voices) as $A\flat-G\flat-F-F\flat-E\flat$ (mm. 639-644); now $F\flat$ is associated with its enharmonic equivalent $E\flat$ in the second statement. The semi-tonal “descent” $E\flat-E\flat$ in the restated motive 'y' is inversionally imitated by the top voice-leading $B\flat-C$ (m. 649), a semi-tonal “ascent.” As marked by braces in Example 27, this semi-tone relation is further echoed by $C-D\flat$ (mm. 649-650). Considering the structure of the first section as a whole (mm. 638-651), C, which was achieved by the

third ascent from $A\flat$ in conjunction with the $A\flat$ prolongation, functions as the lower neighbor of $D\flat$.

The second section begins in m. 650 with the orchestra playing the main melody while, through mm. 650-661, the piano accompanies the orchestra with triplet chordal passages. In its upper voice, this section features the same motivic presentation as the first section but in the tonic $D\flat$ major. $D^2\flat$ initiates the ascending-fourth motive, 'yi' ($D\flat$ - $E\flat$ - F - $G\flat$, mm. 654-659), through the ascending melodic-sequential patterns. $D^2\flat$ is prolonged through an octave transfer to $d^3\flat$, which soon moves to the *Kopfton* F , transposing the chromatic deformation of the ascending-third motive, 'z,' to $D\flat$ - $E\flat$ - F . Here, the rising semitone $E\flat$ - F is supported by its inversion $A\sharp$ - $A\flat$, clearly transformations of the other semi-tonal motions (including $B\sharp$ - C and C - $D\flat$) in the first section. As in the previous section, beneath 'yi' in the top voice, the inner voice draws its motivic counterpart with the descending-fourth motive 'y,' $D\flat$ - C - $B\flat$ - $A\flat$ - $A\sharp$ - $A\flat$ (mm. 654-660). Beneath the superpositioned upper-voice motives, the bass miraculously restates the first main melodic idea – even with $B\flat$ as a decorating upper-neighbor to $A\flat$ (!) - in an expanded form ($B\flat$ - $A\flat$ - F - $F\sharp$ = $G\flat$ - $A\flat$ - $D\flat$, marked by asterisks in Example 27), i.e., motive 'xi.'

Rachmaninoff cleverly organizes the sectional framework of this variation to reinforce and highlight its structural segmentation and the arrival of the *Kopfton*. To this end, he uses different instrumentation in each section. He presents the "prelude" section before the *Kopfton* arrival as a piano solo, and adds the full orchestration to the piano for

a dramatic “climax” with the completion of the fundamental descent [F(3̂)-E♭(2̂)-D♭(1̂)] in the second section. After the full orchestra-plus-piano creates an expressive and passionate climax with the resolution of *Uralnie*, the variation concludes with an extended coda (mm. 661-679). The coda places a lyrical and slowly-descending countermelody in the orchestra (the last section), which is embraced by the piano playing the main melodic figure. As shown in Example 28, this last section includes a long prolongation of treble D♭, which descends to a lower register, calming the music from its emotional peak in the previous section over a long pedal point on the tonic. Beneath the prolonged D♭, the inner voice-leading draws the motive ‘zi’ (a third descent), through a series of melodic sequences.

17. Variation 19

After the love idyll fades away, the orchestra accelerates its rhythmic pulse (a *tempo vivace*) in 2/4 through six interlude-like measures before the beginning of Variation 19 (mm. 680-685). The triplets in this small interlude foreshadow the musical materials of the upcoming variation. The “warm” D♭ now transforms enharmonically to the “animated” C♯ in the *sforzando* chord in m. 680. The C♯ descends by a half step to C♮ in the A minor six-three chord (m. 682) to prepare the A minor of the nineteenth variation.

Rachmaninoff writes the piano part of Variation 19 in linear arpeggios throughout, simulating violin pizzicatos, while the orchestra accompanies the piano solo with short

staccato chords. The antecedent of this variation moves A-D (I-IV) instead of A-E (I-V) as in the thematic model; therefore, because A is consonant with IV (and would be dissonant against V), the upper voice does not ascend A ($\hat{1}$)-B ($\hat{2}$), but simply prolongs A, which is picked up in the first phrase of the consequent (m. 693). As in the previous variation, the descending-fourth motive ‘y’ and its inverted form ‘yi’ are superimposed upon each other in the consequent phrase and its recomposed repetition (Example 29). The ‘y’ is laid out as A (m. 693) – G (m. 694) – F (m. 695) – F \sharp (mm. 697-698) – E (m. 698) in the first section of the consequent; then, as A (m. 699) – G (m. 700) – F \sharp – E (mm. 701-704) in the recomposed repetition of the consequent. The ‘yi’ inversionally imitates and crosses over the ‘y,’ as E (mm. 693 and 699) – F (m. 695) – F \sharp (mm. 697-698 and 701-704) – G \sharp (mm. 698 and 704) – A (mm. 698 and 704). As illustrated in Example 29, the $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{6}$ - $\hat{5}$ - $\hat{4}$ - $\hat{5}$ motion [E-F-(E)-D \sharp -E] (*Todmotiv*) in the orchestral chords is implicit and greatly expanded throughout the whole.

18. Variations 20 and 21

Variations 20 and 21 together create an attenuated acceleration by moving from *Un poco più vivo* at Variation 20 to the same tempo designation at Variation 21. To create a sense of excitement, Variation 20 features accented sixteenth-note runs in the orchestra and constant leaps in dotted rhythm in the piano solo, and Variation 21 intensifies the kinetic drive through motoric *staccato* triplets.

In the last group of seven variations, Variations 18 through 24 – i.e., from the point when the “real” *Kopftou* arrives to the end - Rachmaninoff devises ever more bold ways to vary the more background-level structure of the Theme. In Variation 20, the composer replaces the structural V with \flat II ($B\flat$) in the nine-measure consequent phrase (mm. 715-723) and its nine-measure recomposed repetition (mm. 724-732). As Example 30 demonstrates, the first section of the consequent phrase encompasses a neighbor-note contrapuntal motion from I (m. 705) to \flat II (m. 717) and back to I (m. 723). The prolonged \flat II ($B\flat$) is extended by a chromatic voice-exchange (mm. 717-721) involving $B\flat$, $B\sharp$, and D. Furthermore, the consequent’s recomposed repetition presents an even more radical transformation of the I- \flat II-I progression. The bass A at m. 723 proceeds to the $B\sharp$ (m. 727) through $B\sharp$ (m. 726), which functions as a passing tone (because of this $B\sharp$, the D chord in m. 726 can be interpreted in two ways, either as a IV chord with an added sixth or as a II_7). The $B\sharp$ and $D\sharp$ (m. 727) then participate in a chromatic voice-exchange with $B\flat$ and D to prolong the structural \flat II (mm. 727-731) as illustrated in Example 30.

In the upper voices, both the *Anstieg* and the *Umlinie* contain $\flat\hat{2}$. As the foreground level of analysis shows (Example 31), the fourth-motive ‘y’ is employed in an significant way in this variation. The inversion of ‘y’ is stated at the beginning (E-F \sharp -G \sharp -A through mm. 705-710). An expansion of the descending-fourth from A to E is then composed across the antecedent and the first section of the consequent as A (m.707) – $A\flat$ (m.717) – G (m.718) - F \sharp (m.720) - $F\sharp$ (m.721) – E (m.723).

In Variation 21, two *Anstiegs* are required to reach the *Kopftton* C# (# $\hat{3}$) at m. 747 (Example 32). This C# becomes its enharmonic equivalent, D \flat , in the bass (m. 745), and the D \flat proceeds to D# (m. 751) through the voice-exchange as illustrated in Example 32. Over the D# in the bass, within the B⁶ chord, B occurs in m. 751 as a passing tone to C ($\hat{3}$) in m. 752. In this variation, Rachmaninoff confirms the “true” *Kopftton*, C# (# $\hat{3}$), which was achieved in Variation 18 for the first time.

The antecedent of this variation realizes the *Anstieg* A ($\hat{1}$, m. 733) – B ($\hat{2}$, m. 737) – C ($\hat{3}$, m. 740, i.e., ‘z’) and the structural descent from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{2}$ over the D-D# and E chords; this is quite different from the other variations, in which A-B ($\hat{1}$ - $\hat{2}$) is repeated through the antecedent. Also the antecedent spells out the descending-fourth motive ‘y’ as A-G-F#-F \flat -E and E-D-C#-C \flat -B at the foreground level (marked with brackets in Example 32). Motive ‘y’ (A-G-F#-E) and its inverted form ‘yi’ (E-F-F#-G#-A) are superimposed in the consequent and its recomposed repetition, as in Variations 18 and 19.

19. Variations 22 and 23

The combination of motives ‘y’ and ‘yi’ continues in Variation 22. Flowing from Variation 21 without a pause, Variation 22 preserves the tempo, *Un poco più vivo*, but now, through the *alla breve*, bestows upon it the character of a March. The piano repeatedly plays the descending tetrachords in chords; motive ‘y’ dominates the foreground throughout. As shown in Example 33, the descending-fourth continues to

move higher until the bass arrives at the surprising *fortissimo* E \flat major chord (m. 785). This chord is startling because the listener hears the prolonged A (mm. 753-784) as a dominant of D minor due to constantly emerging B \flat and E \flat (as a $\flat\hat{2}$ in D minor); but instead of cadencing on the expected tonic, it resolves to the Neapolitan, a semitone higher than the anticipated chord of resolution. This evaded cadence has great significance for the last part of the piece, for the D that is by-passed (m. 785) is realized in Variation 24 (m. 876), as will be explained below. Notice that the motion from A to E \flat /D \sharp spells out the tritone in the Theme across Variation 22.

Unlike Variations 18, 19, and 21, which present ‘y’ and ‘yi’ superimposed; notice that ‘yi’ is laid out at the middleground level, “overwhelming” the foreground use of the ‘y!’ This “battle-like” feature whereby the rising-fourth ‘yi’ triumphs over the falling-fourth ‘y’ in the deeper structure, is reinforced by the composer’s indication of the mood as “*Marziale* (March-like).”

After the arrival on E \flat , the bass is sustained in an extended prolongation of E \flat , including fast chromatic-scale passages (mm.785-797), brilliantly embellished harp-like figures (mm. 798-810, figure 66), and a virtuosic cadenza-like section (mm. 811-818) in the piano solo. In this longest and most elaborate variation, Rachmaninoff erects only two big harmonic “columns” [A-E \flat], without any structural closure in the key (Example 33).

Turning to the sources for this variation, the harp-like figuration (corresponding to m. 798, figure 66) seemed to be sketched fairly early; this earliest sketch is found on the

first page of LC 14d (1923-6), which was used after the sketch of Variation 18. The first two staves of LC 14d, p. 1, present a harmonic reduction from m. 765ff. (figure 62-2) to m. 785ff. (figure 66). In a four-measure sketch, the first measure clearly contains mm. 765-766 (figure 62-2). Then, the second measure leaps forward in the final version to an harmonic reduction of five measures (mm. 780-784), including the alternation of $A\flat$ and A , which are replaced as $G\sharp$ and A in the later drafts of LC 14c. Then, the third measure initiates the $E\flat$ prolongation. Here, it is remarkable that the figure in this measure occurs in two places in the later draft and the published version; the first $E\flat$ chord with $B\flat$ on the top voice features the first downbeat-chord in m. 785 (figure 64+2), but in the sketch, underneath the chord, there is an embellishing harp-like arpeggio of $E\flat$, which appears in m. 798 (figure 66). This is followed, in the sketch, by the fourth measure including m. 799 (figure 66+1). Thus, Rachmaninoff inserted mm. 785-797 between figures 64+2 and 66, creating an even longer $E\flat$ prolongation. In other words, these four measures summarize the harmony through figures 62-2, 64, 64+2, and 66; i.e., the compositional ideas from figure 62-2 to 66, reduced and condensed into four measures, are filled out in their details later.

In the same page, below these four measures, Rachmaninoff produced a more detailed sketch for figure 66 spanning nine measures, which embrace the materials through mm. 798-809 (between figure 66 and 68-3). In this sketch, the orchestral part does not exactly correspond to the later draft or published version; most of melodies are

subsequently transposed. The sketch for figures 64-66 in Variation 22 continues in the later notebooks, LC 14c and b; particularly, 14c includes five pages for this passage in the last part of the book. Through this continuing process, the sketches for this part become more sophisticated and clearly profiled as in the published version.

Calling attention to its tritonal relationship with the key of A minor, the prolongation of E \flat (D \sharp) continues into the next variation, 23, structurally integrating the last part of the *Rhapsody*. The beginning of Variation 23 is marked by strong E \flat octaves, which move to E \natural , loudly played by the orchestra *tutti*. After the tension produced by this striking progression is attenuated by the general pause (mm. 820 and 822), the primary theme is playfully delivered by the piano in the key of A \flat minor (\flat , m. 823). This playful eight-measure false tonic is immediately followed by a startling E major chord (V of A minor, m. 830), which leads to the same tune in the key of A minor. Thus, two antecedents, the first in A \flat minor, the second in A minor, are connected to the consequent by the C \sharp minor chord in m. 838.

Now will be traced the structural connections between these chords – E \flat , E \natural , A \flat , A \natural , and C \sharp –before the consequent begins in Variation 23. As shown in Example 34, throughout Variations 22-23, above the A, E \flat , and E \natural prolongations, the upper voice traverses A-B \flat -B \natural ($\hat{1}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{2}$). B \natural is sustained as its enharmonic equivalent C \flat over the eight-measure long A \flat minor (mm. 823-830). In the next eight-measure A minor phrase, C \flat is transformed back into B \natural as A-B \natural ($\hat{1}$ - $\hat{2}$) supported by the tonic-dominant alternation. Then,

before proceeding to the consequent, over the C# minor chord, the *Kopftón* C# is picked up, as the culmination of the chromatic *Anstieg* A-B \flat -B \natural =C \flat -C# (motive 'z'). Now, D \flat (=III#₃) is respelled as C# in the bass.

The A in the bass (m. 839) initiates the descending-fourth motion A-G-F-E, motive 'y,' through mm. 831-846 within a prolongation of A (mm. 831-847). Notice that the inner voice articulates the chromatically filled-in ascending-fourth, A-B \flat -B \natural -C-D \flat (motive 'yí') counterpointing motive 'y.' Observe that the inner voice also creates the third-descent D \flat (C#)-B-A (# $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$) over VI-V-I in A. The prolonged A (mm. 839-847) moves to F (m. 853) in conjunction with parallel-tenth motion with the upper voice. Within the descending-third motion ('zí') of A-F, note the sequentially descending arpeggiated fifth (motive 'xí'). Traversing a consecutive-third progression from F (m. 853) through D (m. 867) to B (m. 871), the variation ends with the cadenza-like passage on the F \sharp chord (m.871). Thus, F is sustained through the end of the variation. The structural frame in Variation 23 seems to be constructed of more diverse "non-structural" harmonies in the context of A minor (such as A \flat and F) than in other variations. The harmony shifts from A \flat to A, C# in the antecedent and from A to F in the consequent.

20. Variation 24

Since Variations 23 and 24 are structurally intertwined, they must be considered together. As shown in Example 35, A minor at the beginning of Variation 24 (m. 872) is

not interpreted as a structural tonic; rather, transformed into A major in m. 875, it functions as dominant of D. Then, the prolongation of D, beginning with D minor in m. 876 and concluding with the emphatic D major chord in m. 918, accomplishes a modal shift from minor to major. The D prolongation is laid out through mm. 876-918, embracing the final statement of the *Dies Irae* at the last part (mm. 910-916). If we consider the passage in D, the bass progression D (I, mm. 876-884) – E (V/V, mm.892-897) – A (V, mm. 898-910, with A not as a tonic return but as the minor dominant of D) – D (I, m. 918), supports completion of a pseudo-*Urlinie* in the key of D minor: F (mm. 876-884) - E (mm. 892-910) - D (m. 918) [=3-2-1]. The ascending-fourth motive ('yi') A-B-C-D (marked with asterisks in the example) is superimposed upon this 3-line! Beneath motive 'yi,' it is remarkable that the bass presents the ascending fifth motive 'x' (D-A, mm. 876 and 894) and its inverted 'xi' (A-F-D, mm. 898-918) creating a "mirroring" image.

At the intermediate structural level in the bass, D (m. 876ff.) comes from F (m. 853ff.) in the previous variation, resulting in a descending-third progression. Thus, A-F in Variation 23 is connected with F-D in Variation 24, creating an enlargement of the descending arpeggiated-fifth motive ('xi'). The fifth-progression from A to D through F, which occurs across Variations 23 and 24, is recomposed within the D prolongation in mm. 910-918: remarkably, Rachmaninoff achieves this recomposition of 'xi' through the citation of the *Dies Irae*, which begins from A, then proceeds through F to D!

In the bass, the D (m. 918) quickly proceeds chromatically to E \flat (m. 938) and E \natural (m.

939) leading to the definitive tonic arrival in the very last measure, which supports completion of the *Urlinie*, as shown in Example 35. The descent $\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ is to be understood as coming from the *Kopfton* C# through an incomplete neighbor-note D (supported by the D prolongation). Here, the upper part combines two prominent voice-leading strands. One completes the *Urlinie* (embellished by D as an upper neighboring-tone), while the other ascends E-F-F#-G-G#-A ('yi'). This remarkable chromatic enlargement of 'yi,' spanning Variations 23-24, is worked out as follows: E over the bass E and A (mm. 821-847 in Variation 23), F over the bass F (mm. 853-871) and D (mm. 876-916 in Variation 24), F# over the D major chord (m. 918), G over the bass E, G# over the structural dominant E (m. 939), then A over the tonic (m. 940). Since motive 'yi,' E-F#-G#-A was presented in the Introduction (see Example 1), the motive which begins the piece, now ends it.

After the *Kopfton* is achieved in Variation 18 as the goal of a long and difficult "journey," creating a real point of departure, the piece begins to integrate its background and intermediate structural levels more intensively from Variation 19 to the end. Thus, the last part of the structural frame shall be examined more carefully; in the concluding pages of this chapter, consideration will be given as to how Rachmaninoff integrates and unites the last group of seven variations within a single unified structural frame. Then the focus will be widened to make clear how this interpretation of the structure is related to the motivic aspect.

21. The Tonal Structure of the *Rhapsody*

Example 36 summarizes the structure of the last part of the *Rhapsody*, Variations 18 to 24. After the long, drawn-out *Anstieg* to the *Kopfton*, $D\flat$ ($C\sharp$) achieved in Variation 18, another attenuated process leads the bass $D\flat$ ($III\sharp_3$) in Variation 18 to $E\flat$ (IV) in the last variation (which then rises through $E\flat/D\sharp$ to $E\flat$ (V) in the final cadence). Within this large-scaled structural framework (Example 36), the A minor that emerges just after Variation 18 is not to be interpreted as a definitive tonic return; rather, this A prolongation (between Variation 19 and the beginning of Variation 22), is interpolated between $D\flat$ (Variation 18) and $E\flat$ (Variation 22), which functions as a passing tone leading to $E\flat$ (Variation 23). The extended prolongation of $E\flat$ (enharmonically equivalent to $D\sharp$, mm. 785-819) also calls attention to $A-D\sharp E$, which first appeared in the upper voice of the Theme (mm. 47-48), and then as a foreground motive $A-C-D\sharp E$ (mm. 329-330) prominently throughout Variation 9.

Example 36 shows how the jarring tonal shift at the beginning of Variation 23, featuring $E\flat$, $E\flat$, and $A\flat$, plays an essential role in completing an enlarged arpeggiation of $D\flat$ (from Variation 18) - $E\flat$ ($F\flat$) - $A\flat$, i.e., motive 'x,' in the bass. This greatly expanded arpeggiation through six variations quickly gives way to its inverted form, 'xí,' as $A\flat$ (m. 823, now enharmonically equivalent to $G\sharp$) - $E\flat$ (m. 830) - $C\sharp$ (m. 838), which is composed out across the antecedent of Variation 23. Therefore, $D\flat$ from Variation 18 as a structural $\sharp III\sharp_3$ is prolonged from Variation 18 to Variation 23 through the expansion of motive 'x,' $D\flat$ -

E[♯] (F[♭])-A[♭], and its inversion G[♯]-E[♯]-C[♯]. In conjunction with this “mirroring” presentation of motive ‘x’ and ‘xi’ in the bass, observe that (in the upper voice) the ascending-fourth motive ‘yi’ is expanded between the initial arrival on the *Kopfton* in the eighteenth variation and its recurrence over the C[♯] minor chord (m. 838): G[♯] (=A[♭] in the D[♭] chord in Variation 18) – A (between Variations 19 and 22) – B[♭] (over the E[♭] prolongation in mm. 785-819) – B[♯] (m. 821) – C[♭] (=B[♯], mm. 823-829) – B[♯] (m. 830) – C[♯] (m. 838). Through the consequent of Variation 23 and the D prolongation in Variation 24, the bass recomposes motive ‘xi’ as A (m. 839) – F (m. 871) – D (m. 876, i.e., the A[♭]-F-G[♭]-A[♭]-D[♭] motive of the “love” variation transposed up a semitone), to articulate a “mirroring” symmetry with D[♭]-E[♯] (F[♭])-A[♭]. Example 37 demonstrates how the thematic motive (Example 37a) is inverted (37b) in Variation 18, then expanded and repeated on a large scale (37c).

Through Variations 19-23, the music experiences a series of harmonic deceptions whereby the normative interpretation of the harmony (in the overall key of A minor) is undercut by reinterpretation in the context of prolonged D[♭]/C[♯] major-minor chords. The reappearance of A minor in Variation 19 mystifies the listener, sounding like a tonic return. However, arriving at Variation 22, the listener begins to hear the A minor as a dominant of D minor because of the constant appearance of B[♭] and E[♭] (as $\hat{6}$ and $\flat\hat{2}$ in D minor).⁴⁰ Despite the expectation of the D minor chord as tonic, A (V/D) moves – surprisingly – to

⁴⁰ According to Carl Schachter, “we can quickly infer a tonic as center from signals given by other pitches; neither the tonic chord nor even the tonic note need be present,” “Analysis by Key: Another Look at Modulation,” *Unfoldings*, ed. Joseph N. Straus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 140.

the Neapolitan E_b (bII), bypassing the expected I. This extended E_b proceeds to E_b , never confirming the tonic chord in D minor. Furthermore, though E_b might be heard as V of the home key of A minor, it in turn resolves to the “wrong” tonic: A_b minor, i.e. bII A_b moves to E, which functions as V of the “correct” tonic A minor in Variation 23; however, this A turns out to be VI of C^\sharp , which is an enharmonic respelling of the D_b of Variation 18. Therefore, with regard to this long passage encompassing Variations 18-23, it may be said that by constantly evading expected cadences there is created an extended tonality, perhaps even “pantonality.” Carl Schachter points out that “the term ‘tonality’ is applied to the enriched tonal contents of the foreground, unified, like the simple elements of diatony, through their relation to the tonic; these contents may include both local chromaticism and modulation to illusory keys [of the foreground]” (described by Schenker as *Scheintonarten des Vordergrundes*).⁴¹ The present analysis shows how “the illusory keys of the foreground,” like A minor and D minor (Variations 19-22), E_b major (Var. 22), and A_b minor (Var. 23), functioning within the structural frame of the D_b/C^\sharp prolongation, relate to motivic expansion, and variously enrich the tonality of the piece.

Further consideration will more be given to the structure of the piece as a whole (Example 36). The upper part, which is supported by tonal groups of variations (D minor-Variations 12 and 13, F major-Variations 14 and 15, and B_b minor-Variations 16 and 17), presents an enlargement of motive ‘x,’ F-A- $D_b=C^\sharp$, until the *Kopftou* D_b ($C^\sharp, \hat{3}$) is achieved.

⁴¹ Schachter (1999), 149-150.

Notice that the upper part contains bi-directional voice-leading: the descending fundamental line (*Urlinie*) and the ascending-fourth, chromatically filled as E-F-F#-G-G#-A, which traverses the whole piece. Previously described in the analysis of Variation 24, this chromatic ascent across Variations 23-24 is connected with the beginning of the *Rhapsody*: as 'yi,' it is present in the Introduction. Recall that Rachmaninoff had further expanded the foreground fourth-ascent in the bass (E-F#-G-A at the beginning of the Introduction) through the whole nine-bar Introduction at the middleground level (see Example 1).

Rachmaninoff's motivic enlargement also occurs in the structural bass: the succession of the first three primary harmonies (I – #III₃ – V) calls attention to the ascending arpeggiated motive 'x,' which is found in the original Paganini motive A-C-B-A-E of the Theme! It has also been noted that there is a large-scale rising-third motion from A to the *Kopftön* D_b, which draws out motive 'z.' Thus, three fundamental motives derived from the Theme, 'x,' 'y,' 'z,' are embedded in the deepest middleground of the *Rhapsody*.

CHAPTER III

DISCOURSE

1. *Dies Irae*: Rachmaninoff's *Memento Mori*

What did we see? A wonderful omen, a dead body.
For the soul is separated from the body and departs.
You, my soul must proceed to the judgment of God,
And you, my body, into the damp ground...⁴²

In the *Rhapsody*, Rachmaninoff invokes a melody borrowed from the ecclesiastical plainsong to the sequence *Dies Irae*. As one of the oldest and most famous chant melodies, the *Dies Irae* officially belongs to the office of the Requiem Mass in the Roman Catholic liturgy: "... A Day of Wrath comes when the world shall dissolve in ashes, and the trumpet, scattering a wondrous sound through the tombs of all lands, shall drive all unto the Throne..." The text of the chant includes the biblical notion of the last judgment day, hence naturally evokes the subject of "death" for its listeners.

Within the Romantic Movement, composers commonly borrowed the *Dies Irae* tune for non-liturgical use in their works to create images associated with a vision of death, a supernatural and vicious power, the Inferno⁴³, the Triumph of Death⁴⁴, the

⁴² Quoted in Malcolm Boyd, " 'Dies Irae': Some Recent Manifestations," *Music and Letters* 49 (1968) :350. The text is from the chorus of Miaskovsky's sixth symphony, also based upon the *Dies Irae* tune.

⁴³ Liszt portrays the Inferno in the first movement of his '*Dante*' *Symphony*, using the *Dies Irae*. He also writes a motto to depict the hell that has "strange tongues, horrible cries, words of pain, tones of anger, voices high and hoarse."

⁴⁴ The *Dies Irae* is also stated emphatically as a theme in Liszt's '*Totentanz* (1849)' for piano and orchestra. The work was inspired by the fresco "Triumph of Death" in the Campo Santo at Pisa. The "triumph of death" formed a part of the carnival celebration in Florence: after dark, a huge wagon, draped in black and drawn by oxen, drove through the streets of the city. At the end of the shaft was seen the Angel of Death blowing the trumpet.

Witches' Sabbath,⁴⁵ the macabre, and the Dance of Death.⁴⁶ With its strong effect of creating a dark and sorrowful atmosphere, the *Dies Irae* remained Rachmaninoff's *idée fixe* throughout his career as a composer. The first appearance of *Dies Irae* in his works occurs in the first Symphony in D minor (composed in 1896, premiered in 1897) along with other traditional chants of the Russian Orthodox Service. The various implicit and explicit uses of the *Dies Irae* in the first movement correspond to Rachmaninoff's own inscription on the score, "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense," which is the biblical notion of "A Day of Wrath."

Rachmaninoff's *First Piano Sonata* in D minor, Op.28 (1907) features the *Dies Irae* in the second theme of the third movement. The composer connects the program for this work with Goethe's *Faust*, denoting in the first movement the hero, the second Gretchen, and the third the Witches' Sabbath on the Brocken.⁴⁷ In this context, the *Dies Irae* helps to create a mood for the Evil power.

It is of interest to note that in the years of 1907 through 1909, Rachmaninoff produced consecutive pieces with the *Dies Irae* connotation.⁴⁸ After his *First Piano*

⁴⁵ Berlioz quotes the *Dies Irae* in his "*Symphonie fantastique* (1830)," where the finale movement is associated with the Dream of the Witches' Sabbath. After funeral bells are rung out, the *Dies Irae* theme is played first in slow tempo, repeated in faster time, and then jiggled by woodwind and strings. The work contains more reference to the *Dies Irae* than the first two lines, which are the usual length of quotation by other composers.

⁴⁶ For more detailed demonstration of the use of the *Dies Irae* by various composers, see Malcolm Boyd, 347-356 or Robin Gregory, "Dies Irae," *Music and Letters* 34 (1953):133-139. Especially, Boyd arranges the list of the composers and their works which contain the *Dies Irae* quotation.

⁴⁷ For a further programmatic background of the piece, refer to Martyn, 187-188.

⁴⁸ Barrie Martyn says that Rachmaninoff's *Symphony No.2* in E minor, Op.27, composed between 1902 and 1907, also consists of the *Dies Irae*. However, since the use of *Dies Irae* is not clearly explicit, it will not be mentioned in this study. David Rubin has analyzed the use of *Dies Irae* in Rachmaninoff's *Second*

Sonata, he composed an impressive symphonic poem, *The Isle of the Dead*, Op.29 (1909), the work inspired by one of five paintings with the same title by Arnold Böcklin. The first four notes of the *Dies Irae* are introduced by string tremolos at a later part of the piece (mm. 387-400); then, at the very last moment before the tranquil ending, the full statement of the *Dies Irae* is presented by clarinet, bassoon, and cello, with timpani and low strings in the background (mm. 462-68). Related to the subject (or impression) of the piece, the *Dies Irae* is quintessential to the work.

Rachmaninoff's choral symphony, *The Bells*, Op.35 (1913), based on Edgar Allan Poe's poem of the same title, presents an interesting quotation of the *Dies Irae*. The first movement, imitating the sound of silver sleigh-bells as a symbol of birth and youth, contains the first four-note figure from the *Dies Irae* in its concluding measures. Although Rachmaninoff made the atmosphere of the first movement joyful and light, it seems likely that the composer wants to intimate that even our celebration of the beginning of life and agony-free youth are already integrated with death. The second movement imitated golden wedding bells; the third, bronze alarum bells; and the final, iron funeral bells. Throughout, the *Dies Irae* connotation keeps returning, sometimes with a sorrowful descending chromatic passage.

It seems that Rachmaninoff's obsessive use of the *Dies Irae* in his works is not merely due to his obscure or mystical pessimism but also due to his own terrible fear and

Symphony in his article in *The Music Review*, Vol. 23, 1962.

anxiety about death. Marietta Shaginyan,⁴⁹ who enjoyed a close friendship with Rachmaninoff between 1912 and 1917, mainly through their letters, says that Rachmaninoff wrote to her on 5 November, 1915, asking if he could meet her to talk about death:

...He asked me in a very anxious and hesitant tone, 'What is your attitude towards death, dear Re? Are you afraid of death?' ... The occurrence of two deaths one after the other - of Scriabin and Taneyev - had affected him deeply, and he had come across a fashionable novel about death and had immediately become ill from terror of it. Before this he had been just a little afraid of robbers, thieves, epidemics, but these, for the most part, he could cope with. It was precisely the uncertainty of death which affected him. It was terrible if there was something after death. Better to rot, disappear, cease to exist: but if there was something else after the grave, that was terrible. What scared him was the uncertainty, the impossibility of knowing ... 'I have never wanted immortality personally. A man wears out, grows old; under old age he grows fed up with himself. I have grown fed up with myself even before old age. But if there is something beyond, then that is terrifying,' He immediately became rather pale and his face began to tremble ...⁵⁰

At this time, Rachmaninoff embarked on the second set of *Études-tableaux*, Op.39, in which eight of the nine pieces are in minor keys, and six include the *Dies Irae* tune explicitly and implicitly, No.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8.

⁴⁹ At the age of twenty four (1912), she started to write to Rachmaninoff as one of his "fans" under the name of 'Re' (the note D). Obviously, her letters caught the composer's attention and their correspondence continued until Rachmaninoff left Russia in 1917. Throughout this period, outside Rachmaninoff's musical friends, she was the only influential person concerning the composer's choice of poems for his songs, and her advice was respectfully accepted by Rachmaninoff. Some of the letters that Rachmaninoff sent to her were published by her in *Novy Mir*, No.4 (1943), Moscow. After the Revolution, she became a Soviet authoress and honored poetess. In his *Rachmaninoff* (1951), Seroff devotes one entire chapter (chapter 11) to Marietta Shaginyan.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Martyn (1990), 271. Originally in Marietta Shaginyan, *VR/A* 2, 139-141.

In the summer of 1916, Rachmaninoff had a concert at Rostov in Russia. Afterwards he visited Shaginyan, who was living in Nakhichevan near Rostov. Shaginyan again reminisces:

...The last time Rachmaninoff came to us in Nakhichevan was in 1916. Then he was suffering from a fear of death. I remember that he asked my mother to tell his fortune with cards – was he to live much longer? A story by Artzibashev, about death, had made a terrible impression on him – “It’s impossible to live while one knows one must die after all. How can you bear the thought of dying?” While saying this, he had unconsciously begun to eat from a plate of roasted salted pistachio nuts that we always had ready for him. He shifted a little nearer the plate, then looked at it, realized the incongruity – “The pistachio nuts have made my fear go away. Do you know where?” My mother gave him a whole sack of them to take along to Moscow to cure his fear of death ...⁵¹

In spite of the whole sack of pistachio nuts as consolation for his fear of death, Rachmaninoff did not escape from his obsession with death. He used his *idée fixe Dies Irae* theme in successive late works - the *Rhapsody*, Op. 43 (1934), *Symphony No.3*, Op. 44 in A minor (1936), and *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45 (1942). Before Rachmaninoff began to use the *Dies Irae* in his late works, but just after the first public performance of his *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, Op. 42 (which is the preceding work before the *Rhapsody*), Rachmaninoff invited music critic Joseph Yasser to talk about his review of the new work. It is interesting to observe that this meeting included a discussion about the *Dies Irae*. Yasser recalls:

⁵¹ Quoted in Bertensson and Leyda, 198-199.

...He [Rachmaninoff] began to tell me that he was very much interested in the familiar medieval chant, *Dies Irae*, usually known to musicians (including himself) only by its first lines, used so often in various musical works as a “Death theme.” However, he wished to obtain the whole music of this funeral chant ...; [he said] he would be extremely grateful for my help in this matter, for he had not time for the necessary research. He also asked about the significance of the original Latin text of this chant and asked some questions as to its history... without offering a word of explanation for his keen interest in this...⁵²

According to this recollection by Yasser in 1931, Rachmaninoff knew only the first lines of the *Dies Irae* at this time, but he wanted to know further not only its entire music and the Latin text but also its history. Therefore, Rachmaninoff’s *Dies Irae* citation in his later works (1934-1942) must have been considered even more deeply, even though still not more than the first line of the chant is actually quoted. As a non-verbal medium, music presents various “signs” to express ideas and emotions. Hence, certain signs are associated with specific images and ideologies to be articulated in music. Composers learn first those musical signs that are traditionally conveyed through the vast music literature, and then manipulate them within their own narratives and structures. For Rachmaninoff, as we know, the *Dies Irae* is one of the most important signs, deeply rooted in his obsession with the subject of death. Then, how is the *Dies Irae* as a sign of “death” symbolized and articulated by Rachmaninoff in the structural context of the *Rhapsody*? In the next section of this chapter, a semantic perspective will be given on Rachmaninoff’s use of the *Dies Irae*.

⁵² Quoted in Bertensson and Leyda, 278.

2. Semantics of the Dance of Death

With his “keen interest” in the *Dies Irae* - its text, origin, and history -, Rachmaninoff might have known about the Dance of Death. Its iconography may be traced back to the middle of the fourteenth century, the period of epidemics such as the Black Death. Pageants of the Dance had been popularly performed in churches to instruct people on the subject of death and its universal sway. The object of the drama was to teach people that everyone must die and that therefore they should prepare themselves for death. In these plays, Death appears more frequently as God’s messenger than as destroyer. At first Death and his victims started their dancing movement with a slow and dignified gait. Particularly, Death, acting as a messenger, assumed the guise of fiddlers and other musicians accompanying the Dance. The Dance was described in poetry and painted on the walls of cemeteries, on charnel-houses, in mortuary chapels, and even in churches by the early nineteenth century.⁵³

The Dance of Death in *the Seventh Seal*

Ingmar Bergman’s movie *The Seventh Seal* (*Det Sjunde Inseglet*, Sweden 1957) is an existential allegory about life and death, and is connected in a sophisticated way with the Dance of Death. The film will be examined in some detail because there are

⁵³ The Dance of Death also was used and quoted in nineteenth-century music by some composers: *Songs and Dances of Death* (1875) by Mussorgsky and *Danse macabre* (Dance of Death), Op.40 (1874) by Saint Saëns.

important parallels between Bergman's film and Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody*. Although Bergman's film postdates the *Rhapsody*, both works draw upon the same iconography, which, as has been intimated, reaches back to the fourteenth century, and so is deeply rooted in the Western psyche and artistic tradition.

The film is set in Sweden in the Middle Ages, the time of the Black Death and universal suffering. The Knight, Antonius Block, and his Squire return home after a decade of battling in the Crusades. When they arrive on the coast of Sweden at dawn, Death in a black cape comes for the Knight. The Knight deals with Death by proposing a game of chess on condition that if he wins, Death will release him, but if he loses, Death can take him to the grave. Death accepts the offer, reminding the Knight that he never loses (Figure 2). Henceforth Death follows the knight through the journey.

Continuing their journey, the Knight and his Squire visit a monastery. While the Squire talks to a Painter, who is decorating the walls of the porch of the church with the Dance of Death, the Knight enters the chapel. He pours out his heart and soul to a Monk whose face is hidden; he confesses his religious doubts, seeks knowledge to grasp God with the senses, and says that he will perform a significant and meaningful deed before he dies (Figure 3). He also tells the Monk about his strategy in his game with Death. Then the Monk turns and reveals himself as Death, tricking and mocking the Knight!

It seems that there is only misery around the Knight. As the people desperately seek scapegoats for the plague, they resort to witch-hunting. Flagellants carrying heavy

crosses beat themselves; in this scene the *Dies Irae* rings out. The Knight soon meets the traveling juggler Jof, his wife Mia, and their baby Mikael. The family kindly welcome him and share their bowl of wild strawberries and milk. This scene is a very peaceful and loving respite in the movie; the Knight reminisces about his happiest time with his newly married wife. Deeply moved by their kindness and the peacefulness of the moment, the Knight decides that his last meaningful deed before dying will be to save this family from the grasp of Death. Joined by the family and several more characters, the journey to Knight's castle continues. As the group passes through a forest before arriving at the castle, the Knight continues his game with Death, kicking over the board before his opponent can take his queen. While Death hurries to find the scattered chess pieces, Jof's family is able to escape.

Finally, the Knight and others arrive at the castle where the Knight's wife waits for him, but Death follows them. The next morning, Jof and Mia emerge from the wagon at the edge of a shore. Against the dawn sky, they see the vision of the Knight and others dancing hand-in-hand in a line led by Death (Figure 4).

Semantic Parallel between the *Rhapsody* and *the Seventh Seal*: "death"

I propose that Bergman's movie provides an important key to the semiotic code of the *Rhapsody*. In the movie, the Knight's confession in the monastery reflects his fear of

death. More precisely, he is afraid of what comes after death - afraid of the life beyond, not dying itself. The uncertainty or impossibility of knowing what follows death also frightened Rachmaninoff, as is confirmed by Marietta Shaginyan's report⁵⁴, "...Better to rot, disappear, cease to exist: but if there was something else after the grave, that was terrible [for Rachmaninoff]..." At the church, having lost his faith in God and man after the Crusades, Bergman's Knight persistently seeks for an answer or knowledge to solve his religious doubts and the question of the meaning of existence:

KNIGHT: I call out to Him in the dark but no one seems to be there.

DEATH: Perhaps no one is there.

KNIGHT: Then life is an outrageous horror. No one can live in the face of death, knowing that all is nothingness.

Just like this intense scene in the movie, full of questions posed in the dark, the *Rhapsody* begins with rising parallel-seventh chords (mm. 2, 6-8) in the nine-bar Introduction. Although the seventh in a seventh chord is supposed to move down by step, Rachmaninoff does not properly resolve the sevenths in these chords. For example, in m. 2, the E in the F \sharp -A-C-E chord should descend to D but instead ascends to F, the seventh of the G-A-C \sharp -F sonority. Analogous ascending sevenths occur in mm. 6-8. Notice also the forbidden parallel fifths in mm. 4 and 6. The strangely paradoxical *rising* sevenths might be understood to allude interrogatively to the inscrutable paradox of death. Furthermore, there is something questioning about the rising, chromatically ascending

⁵⁴ See page 77 .

bass line throughout the Introduction. As illustrated in Example 1, a middleground enlargement of the ascending-fourth motion [E-F#-G#-A] is expanded from the foreground fourth-ascent in the bass [E (implied above A)-F#-G-A] at the beginning. This rising fourth is like a musical question mark - corresponding to the questions posed by the Knight in the chapel - that then initiates the long journey in the piece as a whole.

In the *Rhapsody*, the *Dies Irae* motto - a symbolic representation of “Death” - insinuates itself into the piece beginning in Variation 7 just as Death unpredictably enters life. The *Dies Irae* intimates the presence of Death in the 7th, 10th, 12th, and 24th Variations not only at the foreground level (by announcing the tune) but also at deeper levels by concealed motivic repetitions. It is noteworthy that the *Dies Irae* motto also embodies a “cross” pattern (traditionally associated with Christ’s death on the Cross), which is formed both by the contour of tones and by the “crossing” of one conceptual voice over another. Consider, for example, the double-neighbor figure [B-C-A-B] (marked by asterisks in Example 9 in chapter 2), which is encompassed in the *Dies Irae*. Observe this double-neighbor figure stated as E-F-(E)-D#-E in the inner voice of Example 3.⁵⁵ Significantly, the cross-motive occurs in other variations implicitly and explicitly even before the *Dies Irae*

⁵⁵ Not every instance of this double-neighbor motive initiates the “Cross = Death.” However, it is important to call attention to those examples where this motive does have this specific connotation. In *Tchaikovsky*, Jackson mentions citation of the “Cross-motive” in the literature; the cross-motive is used not only in much late Baroque music by Pergolesi, Vivaldi, Lotti, Bach, and Handel but also in nineteenth-century music, for example, in the “cathedral” movement of Schumann’s Third Symphony. According to Jackson, Tchaikovsky’s use of cruciform symbolism in both *Romeo and Juliet* and the Sixth Symphony creates the image of “doomed” lovers. Later Russian composers like Shostakovich and Schnittke take up this symbolism. Timothy Jackson, *Tchaikovsky: Symphony No.6 (Pathétique)*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50-56. Describing himself as “not a student but a disciple” of Tchaikovsky, and knowing him as a mentor and patron, Rachmaninoff must have been aware of this.

first appears in Variation 7 or when the *Dies Irae* is not explicitly stated, as if Death lurks behind every corner of life:

... KNIGHT: Who are you?

DEATH: I am Death.

KNIGHT: Have you come for me?

DEATH: I have been walking by your side for a long time...

Variation 11 presents the double-neighbor “cross motive” A-B \flat -A-G \sharp -A ($\hat{5}$ - $\hat{6}$ - $\hat{5}$)- $\hat{4}$ - $\hat{5}$) in D minor at the foreground level – the oboe plays this melody at figure 31. In Variation 17, this “cross motive” is articulated close to the foreground through the voice-leading (labeled the *Todmotiv* in Example 24).

Throughout the *Rhapsody*, “death” is symbolized not only by the *Dies Irae* and the cross-motive but also by a tritone-motive. Known as “*musica diabolica*,” the tritone often is associated with death. It begins to be present at the harmonic structural level between B \flat (II) and E (V) in Variation 5 (see mm. 173-74 in Example 7). In Variation 6, the tritonal relation between A (I) and E \flat [D \sharp] (IV \sharp) is articulated within the motion from A to E (V) at the background level (mm. 231-37 in Example 8); E \flat [D \sharp], in particular, receives great emphasis through its support of the *Kopftön* C (measure 237). In Variation 8, this E \flat , now spelled as D \sharp (m. 327), creating the tritone motive [A-D \sharp], is profiled in the bass at a structural level, A-D-D \sharp -E-A (I-IV- \sharp V-V-I, Example 11). Persistently, in Variation 9, the tritone motive, A-D \sharp , is inserted into the interval of fifth [A-E], and emerges as a constantly prominent foreground motive [A-C-D \sharp -E] (Example 12). Not only as a foreground motive,

but as motivically enlarged throughout the variation at the background structural level [A (I, m. 329)-C (I₆, m. 348)- D[#] (VII⁹V, m. 355)-E (V, m. 356)], the tritone motive is fully explored and integrated at every level of this variation. The formation of the tritone idea is an ongoing process; Rachmaninoff begins to bring the D[#] to the fore as early as at Variation 3 by placing the *Kopfton* C above it (Example 5); he then intensifies the tritone motive, A and E_b [D[#]], at the background level through variations 6 to 8, and further expands and develops it in Variation 9. The tritone idea is sustained through the whole piece and specifically used in the background in Variations 13, 16, 22, and 24. Especially, Variation 22 contains a very long prolongation of E_b (D[#]) in the key of A minor for thirty-five measures, which strikingly draws attention to the tritone relation. Variation 24 suggests A-E_b once again just before the structural dominant at the end of the piece. Here, it is of considerable interest that Rachmaninoff presents, develops, and variously transforms the tritone throughout the piece; the underlying idea - as with the *Dies Irae* - is the omnipresence of “death” always integrated into the course of life.

Salvation through Love

Then, is there salvation? Does Bergman’s Knight receive any eschatological enlightenment through his journey? Although he is ruthlessly tricked by Death at his confession in the chapel, he does not seem to despair. He wants to use his reprieve, which he obtains through the game of chess with Death, for “one meaningful deed” not to

make life “an outrageous horror” and “a complete nothingness.” The Knight still continues to search for his answer in flagellants carrying heavy crosses to please God, and in the eyes of a young girl, who is stigmatized as a witch and being crucified. When the Knight meets the juggler Jof and his wife Mia, he encounters human love, kindness, peace, and faith for the first time: “I shall remember this moment. The silence, the twilight, the bowls of strawberries and milk, your faces in the evening light... I'll carry this memory between my hands as carefully as if it were a bowl filled to the brim with fresh milk.”

Bergman does not provide proof for God's existence or intimate what lies beyond death; however, he does propose that some kind of solution for these metaphysical problems may be found in love. Love cannot prevent death; but, in love, the Knight discovers a purpose for extending his life through his temporary reprieve. Here, Bergman's concept of “salvation-through-love” lies in the notion that, through love, one can make life meaningful even if there is nothing beyond death. Indeed, love can prevent life from degenerating into “futile pursuit” and “nothingness.” Furthermore, through love, human life may be replenished across the generations, thereby achieving a larger eternal existence.

Bergman's “love-metaphor” corresponds to Rachmaninoff's narrative in the *Rhapsody*. Here, love is woven into the piece rather late. Only at the eighteenth variation, after traversing a long, difficult path, does the upper voice achieve the long-delayed *Kopfton* C# [D_b] as ♯3. Just as Bergman's Knight took a long time to figure out what “his

last meaningful deed” should be and achieved love by saving the family so too, in Rachmaninoff’s tonal discourse, the upper voice must travel a long and difficult path to realize its goal. Even within Variation 18, the arrival of the *Kopfton* and fulfillment of the *Urlinie* occur after a long delay. As discussed in the analysis of Variation 18, the fact that Rachmaninoff’s first manipulation of the theme is destined for the “love” variation helps to support the idea that love is primary in the semantics of the piece. The graphic analysis of the *Rhapsody* as a whole, displayed in Example 36, proposes that the entire piece builds to the eighteenth variation, creating the climax. Also the piece departs from this variation in a structural sense, considering that the actual *Urlinie* descent extends from the eighteenth to the last variation.

First of all, let us consider the eighteenth variation with a discussion of how its musical signs denote it as the “love” variation - the quintessential variation of the *Rhapsody*. The eighteenth variation features an intriguing correlation of structure and motivic presentation related to its semantics (Example 27 and 28). Introducing an expressive melody, the first section, presented by the solo piano, achieves the first climax with the $\hat{3}$ in $A\flat$, the key of the dominant of $D\flat$. The second section builds up to a passionate climax with full orchestra and piano on F, which functions locally as $\hat{3}$ of $D\flat$ major, finally reaching the true *Kopfton* of the *Rhapsody* as a whole, $D\flat$ ($C\sharp$, $\sharp 3$ in the overall key of A minor). Then, in the *coda*, the emotional peak of the moment is calmed and gradually fades into the slow, lyrical descending melody prolonging $D\flat$. It is especially

remarkable that each climax in the first two sections is intensified by the motivic presentation of the vertically “mirroring” ‘y’ and ‘yi,’ generated from the same note (A \flat in the first section and D \flat in the second). This “mirror” image of the motive embodies the quintessence of love, in which the subject [I] and the object [you] are so deeply intertwined and connected that sometimes one can see oneself more clearly through the other. For example, in the movie, through the love that was given by the juggler’s family, the Knight perceives himself better. Reminded of his happy memories, his soul awakens to the feelings of human love, kindness, and peacefulness - feelings which had been exiled to a remote corner of his heart due to war, skepticism, and existential doubts – and, as a consequence of this self-perception he then finds his way to completing his meaningful deed before dying. To summarize, the musical signs for the love-semantic in the eighteenth variation, the “prelude-climax-calming” structural feature and the “mirroring” motivic presentation clearly intimate both physical and psychological essence of love.

Henceforth, the mirroring motivic presentation occurs in a deeper structural level, however, not superpositioned but horizontally laid out. As illustrated in Example 36, the initial arpeggiated foreground motive of the “love variation,” designated xi, A \flat -F-D \flat [A \flat -F-G \flat -A \flat -D \flat , m. 639-40], is enormously expanded in inversion in the bass as D \flat (m. 638) - F \flat (E, m. 821) - A \flat (m. 823, i.e. x) in Variations 18 through 23. This ascending arpeggio motive (x) parallels the foreground motive of the Theme [A-C-E], considering that the

primary motive of Variation 18 is manipulated as a melodic inversion (xi). In Variations 23-24, this bass enlargement [D \flat -F \flat (E)-A \flat] is quickly “answered” by another arpeggiated motivic expansion A \flat (m. 823, now as an enharmonic equivalent to G \sharp) - E \natural (m. 830) - C \sharp (m. 838), to prolong D \flat but changing D \flat to its enharmonic equivalent C \sharp . Then, another motivic expansion of ‘xi’ follows; A (m. 831) – F (m. 871) – D (m. 876), which is the A \flat -F-G \flat -A \flat -D \flat motive of the “love” variation transposed up a semitone. As shown in Example 36, which provides an overview of the voice leading in the concluding Variations 23-24, notice further that “mirroring” unfoldings connect the D \flat of m. 638 and the C \sharp of m. 838 with the D of m. 876; in other words, the rising arpeggiation of x, D \flat (m. 638) – F \flat (E, m. 821) - A \flat (m. 823) is “reflected in” the downward bass arpeggiation from A (m. 831) - F (m. 871) - D (m. 876) - drawing out the “love”-motive (A \flat -F-D \flat , xi) of Variation 18 across the conclusion. Once D is attained in m. 876, the music initiates a long tonal process to convert D minor to D major (m. 918). Here, notice that death – as represented by the *Dies Irae* - strongly asserts itself for the last time in the *tutti*, just prior to the bass reaching the D major chord at the end of the D prolongation (m. 918). Therefore, we can say that death – as represented by the *Dies Irae* motive - is “embraced” by love – corresponding to enlargements of x and xi, which “encompass” the skeletal structure, particularly in the bass, until the conclusion; thus, the structure suggests that love “embraces” even “death” as an integral part of life.

“Salvation-through-love” is expressed not only through “mirroring” motivic presentation but also through increasing prominence of the rising-fourth motive ‘yi’ and its expansion traversing the entire piece. Before the eighteenth variation, the descending-fourth motive ‘y’ is emphasized throughout the variations (except for the Introduction); however, after the eighteenth variation, which superimposes ‘y’ and ‘yi,’ each of the last variations delineates the rising-fourth ‘yi’ in its deeper structure. The graphic analysis of the entire piece (Example 36) shows that ‘yi’ is dramatically present whenever the structural goal is achieved in the upper part (from the eighteenth variation to the end): ‘yi’ leads to D \flat /C \sharp (Variations 18-23), and D (above the D major prolongation coinciding with the final statement of the *Dies Irae* motto). Indeed, the falling ‘y’ is triumphantly inverted and transformed into the rising ‘yi.’ Thus, the ascending ‘yi’ functions not only as an important motivic element integrating the structure of the last part of the piece but also as an essential musical sign implying that only love may triumph over death.

Rachmaninoff’s “humor” in the *Rhapsody*

In the narrative of the *Rhapsody*, Rachmaninoff’s meditation on “death” focuses not only on the redemptive power of “love,” but also on “humor.” A clear example of humor can be found at the very end. When listening to the final measures, listeners may laugh, because Rachmaninoff treats the closure humorously: after the colossal build-up by the full orchestra and virtuosic piano figuration, the piano solo lightly plays the opening

sixteenth-note motive. Of course, not every contrast makes us laugh. Here, an important aspect of the comic is the extreme contrast between “loftiness” and “lowliness.” In “Comedy and Structure in Haydn’s Symphonies,” Poundie Burstein explains what he calls “the humor equation” as follows: “...The joys of striving toward ideals are often accompanied by a sense of shame and frustration as we fall short of our goals. By deriding our attempts to achieve a higher, more serious, better, and ‘lofty’ place in life, humor helps relieve the tension between such attempts and our failure to achieve them. The higher the goal, the greater the relief comedy can provide...”⁵⁶ Returning to the ending of the *Rhapsody*, this passage sounds funny because it strikingly contrasts a mood of grandeur, intensity, tension, and a climax toward an expected strong closure, with sudden release, lightness, even flippancy.

This discussion of surprising contrasts, i.e. pulling “low” ideas out of the context of “higher,” leads us to think further about the role of incongruity in humor. Let us consider again Marietta Shaginyan’s reminiscence of the story about Rachmaninoff and his pistachio nuts, quoted in the previous section of this chapter. This anecdote presents us with a burlesque caricature of Rachmaninoff - tall, aristocratic, dour, rarely smiling, and very successful composer-pianist, obsessed by the fear of death - who visits his friend and her mother. He only talks about death and what comes after dying, even asking to

⁵⁶ Poundie Burstein, “Comedy and Structure in Haydn’s Symphonies,” *Schenker Studies* 2. ed. by Carl Schachter and Hedi Siegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 67-68.

have his fortune told to find out how long he is going to live. Then comes a plate of salted pistachio nuts, making Rachmaninoff forget about his fear of death! A sudden shift occurs from the deeply serious and metaphysical to trivial physicality. This incongruity is humorous, but unconventionally funny because we all know that the fear of death will not completely disappear because of the nuts.

At the end of Bergman's movie, Death leads the Knight, his Squire, and others in a dance. Why do they dance knowing that they are dying? A possible answer can be found in the natural tendency of human beings to resist the great fear of death; hence, the activity of dancing comes from an attempt to "overcome" or "transcend" the fear. The humorous passage at the end of the *Rhapsody* connotes the similar meaning of the Dance of Death: "transcendental laughter" over life. To help explain laughter and comedy, philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Hobbes developed the so-called "superiority theory," which explains laughter as an expression of the ego's desire for supremacy over threatening agencies.⁵⁷ After contemplating death throughout the work, Rachmaninoff laughs at the fatal human condition – i.e., mortality – in order to overcome and transcend it.

Throughout the *Rhapsody*, humor arises not only at the end, but in the beginning and the middle. The beginning of the *Rhapsody* is humorous like the ending because of

⁵⁷ See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 436-39; Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe (London: Dent, 1982), 19; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. John Plamenatz (London: Fount, 1974).

the incongruity between strongly built-up tense, even chaotic unresolved seventh chords, chromatic bass ascent and full instrumentation in *forte*, which is suddenly dissipated by extremely simple and light staccato notes playing only skeletal tones from the harmonic structure of the Theme in Variation 1.

However, in the middle of the *Rhapsody*, Rachmaninoff creates humor by reversal of expectation not only in mood but also in harmonic connections. Recall how the composer extended the passage between Variations 18 and 23 to convert the *Kopfton* D \flat to its enharmonic equivalent C \sharp (Example 36). Before the eighteenth variation, A plays the role of tonic. However, appearing after D \flat (#III \sharp 3), the A in the bass in Variation 19 does not function as it seems; in other words, the expectation of tonic return through Variations 19-21 is reversed in Variation 22 due to B \flat and E \flat (as $\hat{6}$ and $\flat\hat{2}$ in D minor); thus, a harmonic “riddle” begins. A (V/D) unexpectedly proceeds to the Neapolitan E \flat (\flat II). Not revealing the tonic in D minor, Rachmaninoff continues to frustrate the listener’s expectation by moving E \flat up a semitone to E \natural . Familiar as V of the home key of A minor, the E resolves to the “wrong” tonic, A \flat minor (\flat I), in which the thematic tune (‘x’) is playfully presented. A \flat is corrected as A \natural through E (V/A), but the subsequent C \sharp still undermines a definite tonic return (as A is further revalued as VI of C \sharp). Hitherto, none of these putatively structural harmonies functions according to conventional harmonic expectation, tricking the listener. This passage might be understood to parallel the scene in Bergman’s movie where the Knight tricks Death to save Jof’s family by kicking over the chess board:

...KNIGHT; I've forgotten how the pieces stood.

DEATH; (laughs contentedly) But I have not forgotten. You can't get away that easily.

Through this trick, the Knight was able to realize his love for the family by saving it from Death. If perception and realization of love are represented in the *Rhapsody* by D \flat (Variation 18) and its enharmonic respelling C \sharp (Variation 23), the extended passage between D \flat / C \sharp might be understood as a kind of humorous harmonic "riddling" rather than comical laughter.

While contemplating on the existential questions concerning life and death, Rachmaninoff includes humor throughout the *Rhapsody* as a crucial element which human beings should not lose in order to become transcendental spectators of their own human condition. The *Rhapsody* is a magnificent allegory embracing "love," "death," and "humor."

3. Love and Death

As discussed previously, in his *Rhapsody*, Rachmaninoff expounds an existential narrative of “love” and “death,” which informs the structure of the piece. Since “pure” structure never exists separately from its relevant ideology, the semantics and ideology of “love” and “death” must be decoded in order to determine the true structural features of this piece.

Among Rachmaninoff’s creative works which present the *Dies Irae*, his earlier work, *The Isle of the Dead*, Op.29 (1909), can be instantly cited as the one which implies the linked ideological and semantic issues that are so fundamental to the *Rhapsody*. Based on Böcklin’s painting of the same title, which depicts Death carrying a coffin by boat to an eerie island, Rachmaninoff’s tone poem *The Isle of the Dead* clearly assimilates a coded message of the “death plot” into its structure. As an earlier work which also presents the *Dies Irae* as a semantic sign, this piece poses an intriguing question: throughout his creative works which hold in common a semantic narrative, did Rachmaninoff employ analogous structures? In other words, it is interesting to explore whether or not there is any common structure due to the use of the common signs in his compositional works. In this section, there will be explored the structural resemblance between *The Isle of the Dead* and the *Rhapsody*, so as to thereby illuminate Rachmaninoff’s structural paradigm, which expresses his ideology related to the subject of “death.”

While seeking inspiration for a symphonic tone poem, Rachmaninoff saw a black-and-white reproduction of one of the five paintings of this subject by the Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin, *The Isle of the Dead*, in Paris in 1907 (see Figure 5). The composer was deeply impressed by this painting and composed the tone poem between January and March of 1909.⁵⁸ Later in an interview with Basanta Koomar Roy in the *Musical Observer*, he said: ‘The massive architecture and the mystic message of the painting made a marked impression on me, and the tone poem was the outcome...’⁵⁹ Here, it is intriguing to consider that Rachmaninoff mentioned the “structural” aspect and the “semantic” aspect of the art work together. These two primary aspects must have been inextricably connected in the compositional narrative of *the Isle of the Dead*.

The piece begins just like the painting (figure 4); the boat approaching the island with its towering cypresses⁶⁰ and rocks is rowed silently by the oarsman; in the boat, a white figure - Death - quietly stands near the white-draped coffin. The gently lapping 5/8 rhythmic figure (Example 38) throughout seems to portray the waves and the rocking

⁵⁸ It was after he composed his tone poem that he saw one of the original paintings in Berlin. It seems that Rachmaninoff much preferred the strong contrast of the monochrome reproduction to the original. He recalled, in an interview with *Musical Observer* in 1927, that if he had seen the original first, he might not have composed the work.

⁵⁹ Rachmaninoff’s interview by Basanta Koomar Roy, *Musical Observer*, vol. 26 (1927), 16.

⁶⁰ A cypress tree is often cited in the literature as a sign of “sad death.” For example, William Shakespeare’s Sonnet “Dirge of Love” includes the citation of cypress as a tree in a funeral place; “Come away, come away, Death,
And in sad *cypress* let me be laid ;
Fly away, fly away, breath ;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it !
My part of death no one so true
Did share it....”

boat by pulling and returning the oar. As shown in Example 38, notice that the figure contains an ascending arpeggio motive in the A minor chord, designated x, analogous to the x motive [A-C-E] in the *Rhapsody*.

Example 39 presents a middleground analysis of *The Isle of the Dead*. As the tranquil opening grows, through the long *crescendo*, and reaches the C minor region at m. 201, the structural bass parallels the *Anstieg*, proceeding from A (m. 1) to B \flat (m. 131), then to C (m. 201). Passing through a transition from C minor to E flat major (m. 260) - when the music changes to a contrasting mood with a change of meter to 3/4 - Rachmaninoff lets the music depart from the mere depiction of Böcklin's painting. In a letter that he sent to Leopold Stokowski after a performance of *The Isle of the Dead* in 1925, Rachmaninoff writes about this part of the work: "It should be a great contrast to all the rest of the work - faster, more nervous and more emotional - as that passage does not belong to the 'picture;' it is in reality a 'supplement' to the picture - which fact, of course, makes the contrast all the more necessary...In the former is *death* - in the latter *life*."⁶¹ The "life" section with its sweet melodic outpourings corresponds to the eighteenth variation in the *Rhapsody*, reminding us of love and happiness in past life. However, there is no eternity in life. Just as all human happiness is no more than a passing experience, E \flat (mm. 260-298) is led up to F \sharp (m. 331) through D (mm. 299 - 330), creating a more anxious and tense mood. The structural bass proceeding toward F \sharp

⁶¹ From the letter from Rachmaninoff to Stokowski, April 25, 1925. Quoted in Martyn, 205.

strikingly draws attention to the “tritone” relation between C and F \sharp by unfolding (C-E \flat / D-F \sharp). F \sharp is prolonged and emphasized by the ardently agitated entire orchestra (mm. 331 – 383), ending with an inexorably pounding group of chords. Here, notice that E \flat , representing past earthly life, is “trapped” within the tritone, C-F \sharp , a symbolic representation of death. Rachmaninoff asserts, pessimistically, that human life lasts only briefly in the context of eternity.

Returning to C (III \flat) in m. 386 from the climactic prolongation of F \sharp , the strings quietly begin to intone in tremolo the first four notes of the *Dies Irae* [C-B-C-A]; this immediately draws the listeners’ attention to the “death” motto. The ominously tolling *Dies Irae* in C minor is led into C \sharp in the bass in m. 418, supporting the arrival of the *Kopfton* C \sharp (\sharp 3). C \sharp proceeds to D (IV \sharp 3, m. 454). Here, notice that the return to A minor in m. 428 does not function as a tonic arrival but as a minor dominant of D (as in the later part of the *Rhapsody*). This D (m. 454) continues to D \sharp (m. 467), which arrives after low strings and clarinets toll the “death” motto, i.e., the *Dies Irae*. D \sharp ascends to E (V) and E proceeds to the tonic at m. 468 in a waving-figure rhythm. Then, the music fades away.

The long-delayed *Kopfton* C \sharp (m. 418) is achieved through a greatly drawn-out *Anstieg* from A. Example 40 shows how the upper part works in relation to the large-scael harmonic structure: A (m. 1) - B \flat (m. 131) - B \natural (m. 200) - C (m. 201) - B \flat (lower neighboring tone of C, m. 260) - C (m. 299) = B \sharp (m. 337) – C \sharp (*Kopfton* \sharp 3, m. 418) – (B $\hat{2}$,

m. 468) – C (î, m. 468). As marked by asterisks in Example 40, the upper voice remarkably encompasses the first four notes of the *Dies Irae*!

Now we may call attention to the structural parallelism between the *Rhapsody* and *The Isle of the Dead*. Both pieces achieve their *Kopftou C# (#3)* late in the piece after a greatly prolonged *Anstieg* from A. The *Ursatz* (the fundamental structure) in both pieces exhibits strongly similar features:

The *Rhapsody* A(I) - - - - - D \flat (C# III#3) - - D \sharp (IV) - - [E \flat] - - - E (V) - - A(I)

The *Isle* A(I) - C(III \flat 3) - [E \flat - F \sharp] - C- C# - - - - - D \sharp (IV#3) -D \sharp (E \flat) - E (V) - - A(I)

In both pieces, the ascending arpeggio motive [A-C(#)-E] from the Theme (The *Rhapsody*) and the beginning (*The Isle of the Dead*) is enormously expanded and articulated throughout the fundamental harmonic structure. It is also interesting to consider that both “love”=“life” and “death” (semantically marked by significant use of the *Dies Irae*) coexist within the structure. While Rachmaninoff employs the D \flat (C#) region for the “love” metaphor in the *Rhapsody*, he creates a long E \flat prolongation for the “life” narrative in *The Isle of the Dead*. However, in *The Isle of the Dead* he “traps” the “life (E \flat)” region within “death,” strikingly represented by the tritone C-F \sharp ; in the *Rhapsody*, by contrast, he initiates the “love (D \flat =C#)” region as suggestive of salvation from death at a deeper structural level. In other words, the “love (D \flat =C#)” region is “liberated” to enjoy background status as a *Stufe* within the bass’s major articulation of the motive A-C#E. In

that sense, the *Rhapsody* “overcomes” the more pessimistic semantics of *The Isle of the Dead*.

CHAPTER IV

PERFORMANCE AND INTERPRETATION: PERFORMANCE OF THE RHAPSODY IN

THE 1930s

1. Rachmaninoff as a Pianist

It is well known that Rachmaninoff was one of the greatest pianists of all time. He possessed a charisma that immediately impressed his listeners; Sorabji said that “Rachmaninoff’s strongly magnetic and compelling personality, and its most attractive combination of restraint and dignity” enthralled audiences and placed him in the highest rank among the greatest pianists.⁶² There are numerous enthusiastic reports of Rachmaninoff as a pianist. Medtner wrote that “This [Rachmaninoff] sound, in score or keyboard, is never neutral, impersonal, empty. It is as distinct from other sounds as a bell is different from street noises; it is the result of incomparable intensity, flame, and the saturation of beauty.”⁶³ Earl Wild recalls Rachmaninoff’s live sound as “beautiful, something never captured on his recordings and the most intoxicating I have ever heard.”⁶⁴ Harold Schonberg said, “There never was any *Kitsch* to Rachmaninoff’s playing, even when the music was *Kitsch*. So big were his musical thoughts, so aristocratic his

⁶² Kaikhosru Sorabji, Rachmaninoff, Albert Hall, Nov. 24, 1929. *New Age*, 5 December, 56. In his book *Rachmaninoff*, Barrie Martyn quotes one anecdote from the famous concert manager Wilfrid van Wyck reminiscing (1981) about Rachmaninoff’s charisma in front of audiences: “Once, at a Queen’s Hall recital, there was an epidemic of sneezing and throat clearing. Rachmaninoff glanced around the hall, ‘like a weary bloodhound’ and the noise stopped dead.” Martyn, 397.

⁶³ John Holmes, *Composers on Composers* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1990), 115.

⁶⁴ Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and The Eight* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press), 143.

instincts, that he ennobled whatever he played.”⁶⁵ For Horowitz, Rachmaninoff was simply “his musical god.” For Schnabel, Rachmaninoff’s “sovereign style, a combination of grandeur and daring, the naturalness and the giving of his whole self” were absolutely unforgettable.⁶⁶ Even those who disliked Rachmaninoff’s compositions – like Stravinsky and Prokofiev- , admitted his genius at the keyboard.

Unlike many other great pianists, Rachmaninoff was not a child prodigy. It is interesting to note how he started his career as a concert pianist. After graduating from the Moscow Conservatory with the Gold Medal in 1892, Rachmaninoff wanted to concentrate on a full-time career as a composer. His appearance as a pianist was limited to playing his own compositions or sometimes participating in mixed recitals with other performers. However, due to his financial problems, in part caused by the disastrous premiere of his *First Symphony*, Rachmaninoff slowly began his career as a concert pianist. In Kiev in November of 1911, he played a composition by another composer in a public concert for the first time: it was Tchaikovsky’s B \flat minor *Concerto*. After that, Rachmaninoff never stopped playing as a virtuoso pianist in public. His performance repertoire covered a vast amount of piano literature.⁶⁷

As a great composer-pianist, Rachmaninoff’s performances always reflected a

⁶⁵ Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 391.

⁶⁶ Artur Schnabel, a posthumous tribute to Rachmaninoff in *The New York World Telegram*, 3 April, 1943. Quoted in Martyn, 396.

⁶⁷ For Rachmaninoff’s concert statistics as a pianist and as a conductor, refer to Martyn, 387-395. Martyn also includes a detailed information about Rachmaninoff’s discography in one entire chapter, 451-505.

profound understanding of musical structure and were never merely instinctive interpretation. He studied the pieces thoroughly not only as a pianist, but from the perspective of a composer. With his composer's mind, Rachmaninoff considered the particular and essential structural features of the pieces in his repertoire, and how to realize these at the keyboard. In an interview with Basil Maine from *Musical Opinion*, Rachmaninoff talks about the advantage of being both a performer *and* a composer:

If you are a composer you have an affinity with other composers. You can make contact with their imaginations, knowing something of their problems and ideals. You can give their works *colour*. That is the most important thing for me in my pianoforte interpretations, *colour*. So you can make the music live. Without colour it is dead...The great interpreters in the past were composers in most instances. Paganini, so we understand, was a king of virtuosity... but he was a composer too. Liszt and Rubinstein; and in our time Paderewski and Kreisler. Ah! I know what you are thinking. But it doesn't matter. It makes no difference whether there are first- or fourth-rate composers. What matters is, they had the creative mind and so were able to communicate with other minds of the same order. ⁶⁸

Rachmaninoff recorded the *Rhapsody* with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski on Christmas Eve, 1934: RCA wanted to record the work immediately after the dazzling success of the first performance in the fall of 1934. The recording was made in one of the RCA studios where the acoustics were dull and dead so that they produced a harsh orchestral sound. At this session, Rachmaninoff and Stokowski recorded two performances of the *Rhapsody* and chose the first one for the record release. Rachmaninoff's recording was issued on HMV's prestigious Red Label.

⁶⁸ Basil Maine, "Conversation with Rachmaninoff," *Musical Opinion*, vol.60 (1936), 14-15.

In the 1930's, the same decade that the composer recorded the work, another historically significant recording of the *Rhapsody* was made by Benno Moiseiwitsch. Having studied with Leschetizky in Vienna, Moiseiwitsch enjoyed his fame as one of the greatest pianists during the twentieth century. Both exiled Russians, Moiseiwitsch and Rachmaninoff shared a lifelong friendship until the composer's death in 1943. Rachmaninoff regarded Moiseiwitsch highly as a pianist and even said that Moiseiwitsch's playing of some of his compositions, like the *Second Piano Concerto*, was superior to his own. Moiseiwitsch was the first pianist to play the *Rhapsody* in public since the composer himself when he performed it in 1936 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Henry Wood conducting.⁶⁹ Moiseiwitsch's recording of the *Rhapsody* was made by HMV in Studio 1 in England on December 5, 1938, with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Basil Cameron. Although Moiseiwitsch's recording was released on HMV's less expensive Plum Label, his stunning performance is no less

⁶⁹ Moiseiwitsch enjoyed telling this humorous anecdote about the *Rhapsody* and Rachmaninoff: "...In 1934 Rachmaninoff played the world premiere of his new celebrated *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with the Philadelphia Orchestra. A few days before the performance, at a New York dinner party, he confessed to me that he was nervous about the opening event. 'I wrote the Variations down, he said 'and it looked good. Then I went to the piano and tried it, and it sounded good, but now when I am practicing it for the concert, it goes all wrong.' The composer was especially concerned about a series of excruciating chord jumps in the twenty-fourth of the Variations. Just then a butler entered the room with a tray full of liqueurs. Rachmaninoff, a teetotaler, refused. 'Why, Sergei Vassilievich,' I urged, 'you must have a glass of Crème de Menthe. It is the best thing in the world for jumps.' 'Do you mean it?' he asked seriously. 'Definitely!' I assured. Whereupon he called the butler back and helped himself to a generous quaff of the emerald cordial. Eye-witnesses testify that before the performance in Philadelphia, Rachmaninoff downed another large Crème de Menthe and that, following the spectacular success of the *Rhapsody* on that occasion, he never failed to have a Crème de Menthe in the greenroom before playing the work publicly. On a score of the Paganini Rhapsody inscribed to me, the twenty-fourth Variation is plainly marked in the composer's hand: 'The Crème de Menthe Variation.' " Benno Moiseiwitsch, "Reminiscence of Rachmaninoff by Benno Moiseiwitsch," *Music Journal* 21:1 (1963): 20.

valuable to us than Rachmaninoff's playing.⁷⁰

In the next section of this chapter, these two historical recordings by Rachmaninoff and Moiseiwitsch will be discussed. From his special vantage point as the composer, how does Rachmaninoff's performance realize his particular view of the work? Having been praised by Rachmaninoff as the "better performer" of some of his works, how does Moiseiwitsch realize his interpretation? Through a discussion of these distinguished interpretations, ways will be suggested in which - intuitively - performers may highlight specific structural features identified in the foregoing analysis of the piece.

2. Rachmaninoff vs. Moiseiwitsch

From the beginning of the *Rhapsody* up until Variation 3, both Rachmaninoff and Moiseiwitsch play in a similar way and in the same tempo. Both pianists begin the piece with great intensity in the Introduction, and then play with a light and playful tone from Variation 1 to 3. It is from Variation 4 that sensitive listeners begin to notice a slight difference between the two performances. While Moiseiwitsch takes a slightly faster tempo and generally pushes each phrase throughout, Rachmaninoff makes the phrasing clearer in a more stable tempo. Particularly, Rachmaninoff projects the descending-fourth progression A-G#-F#-E ('y') deliberately (e.g. Variation 4, mm. 113-116ff.). Variation 5 also

⁷⁰ Moiseiwitsch recorded the *Rhapsody* again later with the same conductor. In this study, the first recording will be used for a discussion of performance. Both recordings were reissued each by Naxos Label and Appian Publications & Recordings, England. Both were transferred from the late 1930's RCA Victor pressings.

creates the same impression; Rachmaninoff focuses on clear articulation, while Moiseiwitsch produces a rather playful, bright mood with a light tone color. In Variation 6, Moiseiwitsch projects exaggerated dynamics. Compared to Rachmaninoff's playing, he takes more time to play the *ritardando* in m.193 and mm. 200-201. Hence, he creates a more improvisatory-like mood throughout, while Rachmaninoff does not lose the underlying pulse and articulates the phrases more clearly.

An obvious difference between the two interpretations emerges in Variation 7, the first variation to announce the *Dies Irae*. Rachmaninoff articulates the first line of the *Dies Irae* (which constitutes the first phrase of the variation) with general *decrescendo*. In each phrase, listeners can sense that Rachmaninoff deliberately creates the *decrescendo* so that one can imagine the decay of the sound of a ringing church bell. In contrast, Moiseiwitsch persistently plays *pesante*, emphasizing each note and chord in the phrase. He makes a *decrescendo* only when the composer indicates *diminuendo*, but does not emphasize it. Particularly, in the first phrase (without the indication of *diminuendo*), Moiseiwitsch plays each note with a strong *tenuto*, emphasizing the whole line as a chant melody. Specially, when the second phrase presents the same melody, he brings out an inner voice - the lowest voice of the right hand part - so that the chant melody majestically "sounds forth" in a lower range.

In Variations 8 and 9, Rachmaninoff plays chordal passages with a full sound, while Moiseiwitsch concentrates more on building up the phrases with intentional control

of dynamics. Especially, Rachmaninoff emphasizes each note of the foreground motive of Variation 9 [A-C-D#-E, m. 329-30ff.], delivering the tritone motive A- D# more clearly.

It is interesting that Rachmaninoff and Moiseiwitsch present contrasting interpretations of the second *Dies Irae* variation, Variation 10 - just as was the case with the first *Dies Irae* presentation in Variation 7. Rachmaninoff emphasizes each half-note of the line with a strong *marcato*, even sounding like a *staccato*, again producing the effect of church bell tolling. From figure 29 (m. 384), Rachmaninoff greatly reduces the sound of the piano part so that, arriving at figure 30 (m. 392), the *Dies Irae* statement by the orchestra can be heard more clearly. On the contrary, Moiseiwitsch sustains each half-note of the *Dies Irae* melody, and even connects these half-notes with full *legato* over the half-rests between them; thereby, he evokes an imaginary, dignified singing of the plainchant. At figure 29, while Rachmaninoff plays his part at a very low volume, giving priority to the orchestra, Moiseiwitsch emphasizes his role in a much more active way: he brings out the chordal sequential pattern of the *Dies Irae* in his left hand. When arriving at figure 30, his dynamic level is higher than Rachmaninoff's.

In Variation 11 both pianists begin with an expressive and capriccioso style as indicated. The difference between the two pianists emerges from figure 31 (m.409) where the piano articulates a chromatically fast-moving cadenza-like passage. Rachmaninoff carefully reduces his dynamics so as to bring out the double-neighbor "cross motive" A-Bb-A-G#-A ($\hat{5}-\flat 6-\hat{5})-\#4-\hat{5}$) in D minor played by the woodwind instruments above his

sophisticatedly controlled *leggiero* playing; Moiseiwitsch focuses more on pianistic bravura. In this, it appears that Rachmaninoff's view as a creator helps him to realize a more structurally thought-out performance.

In Variation 14, attention can be called to the different ways that both pianists deal with the tempo. Compared to Rachmaninoff's duration of 45 seconds, Moiseiwitsch's faster tempo (his performance lasts 42 seconds) produces a pushed, forward-moving drive throughout. While Rachmaninoff stays in a stable tempo until the very end of the variation, Moiseiwitsch pushes the tempo faster after m. 498 so that he can more naturally connect this variation with the next in a much faster tempo (*Più vivo*).

Arriving at the love variation, two great pianists present to us their slightly different view of "love." Moiseiwitsch's playing brings out more of the obligato line. In other words, he realizes the continuity of the inner voice so that listeners can appreciate more of the contrapuntal texture of the variation. Moiseiwitsch intentionally plays both hands slightly at a different time to distinguish each voice and thus creates a beautiful correspondence between voices, as if, for Moiseiwitsch, love is understood as a "mutual" and "equal" relationship between subject and object. Rachmaninoff also brings out the inner voice but it happens rather sporadically. In the structural aspect of the performance, Moiseiwitsch's playing sounds more sectionalized; he takes a bit more time to finish up the first section (mm. 638-51) with a long D_b prolongation in the upper part; also he slows down more to play the end of the second section (mm. 651-61) with the arrival of the

Kopfton and the achievement of the fundamental descent. In contrast, Rachmaninoff's performance preserves a continuity of the structure. He does not use a lot of *rubato* to sectionalize the variation as much as Moiseiwitsch does, and this clarifies the structure more to the listener.

After the love variation, from Variations 19 to 24, both pianists greatly build up the intense mood leading to the climactic ending. Indeed, the two pianists exhibit a brilliant bravura in the last variation. However, at the very end, when the first rhythmic motive from the Theme occurs like a "joke," the two players take different attitudes towards it. Rachmaninoff ends with a more assertive tone and weight; while Moiseiwitsch treats the final joke more lightly. As a whole, Rachmaninoff's performance is realized by a profound understanding of the structural features of the piece, while Moiseiwitsch intuitively understands the work, but never fails to maintain a dazzling charm throughout, bringing a lighter aspect of the piece to the surface.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Great music always expresses itself with coherence and logic, and the realization of the masterwork through performance must reflect the spatial depth, logic, and meaning of the work. In *Free Composition*, Schenker notes;

The performance of a musical work of art can be based only upon a *perception of that work's organic coherence* [my emphasis]... one can achieve true musical punctuation only by comprehending the background, middleground, and foreground. As punctuation in speech transcends syllables and words, so true punctuation in music strives toward more distant goals. This, of course, does not mean that the tones of the fundamental line need be overemphasized, as are the entrances in a poor performance of a fugue. The player who is aware of the coherence of a work will find interpretative means which allow the coherence to be heard. He who performs in this way will take care not to destroy the linear progression... Consequently, the concept of background, middleground, and foreground is of decisive and practical importance for performance.⁷¹

As discussed in the previous chapter, great performers can hear and realize continuity of various events at different structural levels, whether by means of a thoroughly thought-out perception or a profound musical intuition. In this sense, the performance is a “live analysis.” Concomitantly, the analysis which successfully captures the essential meaning of a musical work and its organic coherence can be a crucial guide to achieving a good performance. It is this inextricable relation between performance and

⁷¹ Heinrich Schenker. *Free Composition. Volume III of New Musical Theories and Fantasies*. Trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York and London: Longman, 1979), p. 8.

analysis that has stimulated and motivated the present study.

Additionally, a deep curiosity as to the relationship of structure and ideology has encouraged the present research. In particular, this study has exposed how Rachmaninoff articulates specific musical signs and structural features to express an ideology of “love and death” through the structure of his *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*. It is intriguing to observe the composer employing almost identical structural features in another piece, *The Isle of the Dead*, to achieve a semantic related to that of the *Rhapsody*. We may conclude with a question: is there a common structural pattern linked to a specific ideology that Rachmaninoff employs throughout his compositions? Thus, the present study suggests a *topos* for future research.

APPENDIX

1 2 3 4 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 18 19 20 21 23 24 25

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a melodic line with several slurs and a 'y' marking above it. The bass staff begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains a bass line with several slurs and a 'V' marking below it. The score is divided into two sections: 'Introduction' (measures 1-10) and 'Variation 1' (measures 11-25). The 'Introduction' section ends at measure 10, and 'Variation 1' begins at measure 11. The 'Variation 1' section ends at measure 25. Below the bass staff, there are four vertical lines indicating chord changes, labeled 'I', 'I', 'V', and 'I' from left to right.

Introduction

Variation 1

Example 1 Analysis of the Introduction and Variation 1

a. $\hat{3}$ ($\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$) $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$

b.

c.

d.

I I IV II V I

Example 2a-d. Elias's clean graph of the Theme, theme from Brahms's Paganini Variation, Op.35



Plate 1: Schenker's analysis of Brahms's Paganini Variations, Theme, detail of unpublished graph in the Ernst Oster Memorial Collection, file 34, page 329. Reproduced with permission from the New York Public Library.



Plate 2: Schenker's analysis of Brahms's Paganini Variations, Theme, detail of unpublished graph in the Ernst Oster Memorial Collection, file 34, page 330. Reproduced with permission from the New York Public Library.



Plate 3: Schenker's analysis of Brahms's Paganini Variations, Theme, detail of unpublished graph in the Ernst Oster Memorial Collection, file 34, page 330. Reproduced with permission from the New York Public Library.

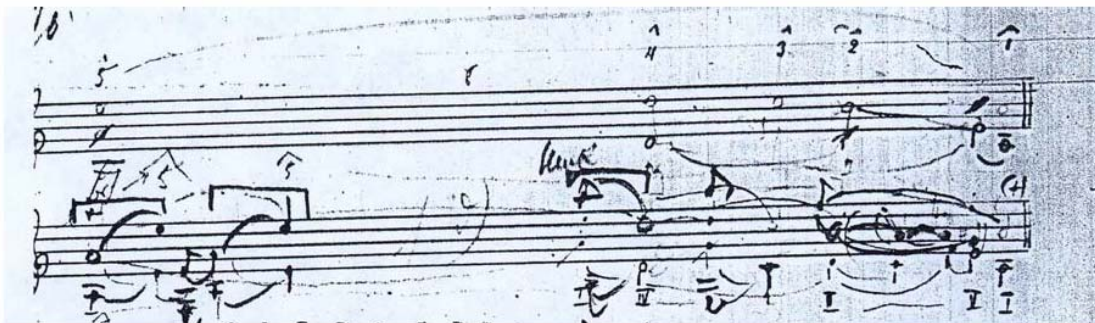


Plate 4: Schenker's annotation on Elias's graph of Brahms's Paganini Variations, Theme, detail of unpublished graph in the Ernst Oster Memorial Collection, file 34. Reproduced with permission from the New York Public Library.

1 2 3 4 5-8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17-24

1 2 3 4 5-8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17-24

1 2 3 2 1

1 * * * 2 3 * 2 1

5- 6 5 5

IV II V I

Example 3 Analysis of the Theme

58 61 62-65 66 70 72 73 74 75 78 80 81

1 y y y 3 2 1

I I bII V I

Example 4 Analysis of Variation 2

113 116 121 124 129 132 136 137 140 141 143 145 147 149 152

Example 6 Analysis of Variation 4

157 165 168 173 174 178 182 187 188

The musical score is presented in two staves: a treble clef staff (right hand) and a bass clef staff (left hand). The right hand features a melodic line with numerous ties and ornaments, including a large slur covering measures 174-182. The left hand provides a bass line with some slurs and fingerings. Analysis markings are placed above the staff: '1' above measure 157, '2' above measure 173, '3 1' above measure 174, 'Nn' above measure 178, and '4' above measure 187. Roman numerals 'I' and 'V I' are placed below the staff at the beginning and end of the passage, respectively. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1 through 6. A large bracket spans the entire passage from measure 157 to 188.

Example 7 Analysis of Variation 5

184 193 203 207 210 211 214 219 - 230 231 234 235 237 238 239

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The score is annotated with various elements:

- Fingering:** Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are placed above or below notes to indicate fingerings. For example, '1' is above the first note of the first measure, '2' is above the first note of the second measure, '3' is above the first note of the third measure, and '4' is below the first note of the fourth measure.
- Harmonic Analysis:** Roman numerals I, V, and I are placed below the bass staff to indicate the underlying chords. A 'V' is placed below the bass staff at the end of the fourth measure.
- Structural Markings:** Vertical lines and brackets connect the fingering numbers to specific notes. A dashed line connects the '3' above measure 231 to the '3' above measure 237. Another dashed line connects the '2' above measure 238 to the '2' above measure 239.

Example 8 Analysis of Variation 6



Example 9 Dies Irae and its implicit pattern

243 247 249 251 257 259 262 266 273 277 278 280 281 284

Dies Irae

10- 10- 10

5- -6

IV bII⁶ V ⁷/₄ -3
 (III ³/₄)

Example 10 Analysis of Variation 7

285 301 303 305 307 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 319 321 323 324 325 326 327 328

1 2 3 2 1 3 2 1

Z

p.t.

I IV bII V I bII V I

Example 11 Analysis of Variation 8

332 337 341 344 345 348 349 352 353 354 355 356

356 357 360 361 364 365 366 367 368
 = 345 - 348 - 349

Example 12 Analysis of Variation 9

Var. 10 402 405 408 409 410 411 412 413 414

1

Am; I v of D minor

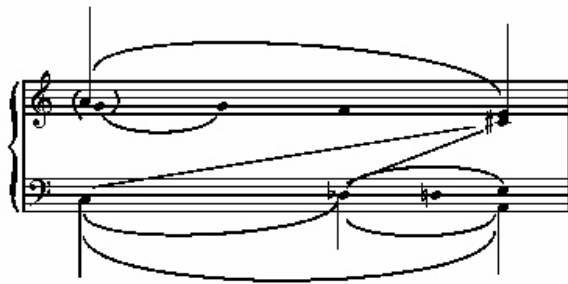
Example 14 Analysis of Variation 11 - foreground level

402

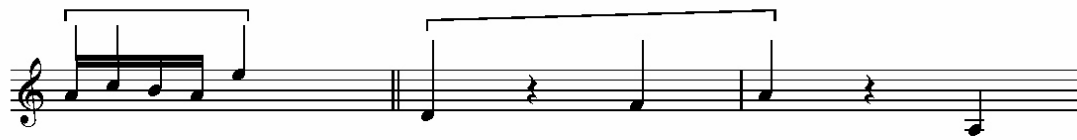
409

412

414



Example 15 Analysis of Variation 11 - background level



Example 16 Presentation of motive 'x' in Variation 12

415 419 423-426 427-430 432 433 435 436 437 438 440 441 442 443 444 445 446

1 3 Dies Irae 2 3 13 3

I IV V I

Example 17 Analysis of Variation 12

447 450 455 457 459 461 462 463-469 470 471

The musical score consists of two staves, treble and bass. The treble staff contains a melodic line with several slurs and ornaments. Above the treble staff, there are annotations: a '3' above the first measure, a 'y' above a slur from measure 455 to 461, and a 'z' above a slur from measure 470 to 471. Asterisks are placed below the treble staff in measures 455, 457, 459, and 461. The bass staff contains a bass line with slurs. Below the staves, the chord progression is indicated as I (D minor), V, I, and I (F major). The text 'F major Var. 14' is written below the final chord.

Example 18 Analysis of Variation 13



Example 19 Triplets transformation from the original sixteenth-note motive ('x')

471 472 473 474 476 478 481 483484 486 487 488 490 494 495496 498 500 501 503 504507

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clefs). The score is annotated with various markings for analysis. Above the treble staff, there are three large boxes labeled 1, 2, and 3, which appear to be phrasing or structural divisions. A slur labeled 'y' spans across measures 478 and 481. Below the bass staff, there are four asterisks (*) marking specific measures. At the beginning and end of the score, there are Roman numerals 'I'. In the right-hand section of the score, there are chord symbols: '#C' and 'D' with a flat sign. The notation includes various note values, slurs, and articulation marks.

Example 20 Analysis of Variation 14



Example 21 Transformation of the triplet in Variation 14

509 510 518 519 522 523 529 533 534 535 544 545 546 547 550 551 552 553 554 555 558 564

1 2 3 3 3 2 1

I V I

Example 22 Analysis of Variation 15

613

614 615 616

617

618

620

621

624 625

626 627 628 630

632

633

634

637

1
Todmotiv
3 6 H4 5
I I₆ III₆ V I
b

Example 24 Analysis of Variation 17 - foreground level

621 625 627 630 632 633 634

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music is in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The treble staff contains a melodic line with several slurs and a triplet of eighth notes at measure 625. Above the treble staff, there are three fingerings: '3' above measure 625, '4' above measure 632, and '1' above measure 634. A bracket connects measure 625 to measure 632. The bass staff contains a bass line with slurs and a long phrase spanning from measure 621 to 634. Below the bass staff, there are three chord symbols: 'I' under measure 621, 'V' under measure 632, and 'I' under measure 634. A large bracket spans from measure 621 to 634, encompassing the entire passage.

Example 25 Analysis of Variation 17 - background

The image displays a musical score for Example 26, consisting of five staves. The first staff is in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The second staff is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The third staff is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats (E-flat major). The fourth staff is in 3/4 time with a key signature of four flats (F major). The fifth staff is in 3/4 time with a key signature of five flats (C major). The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and various articulations such as slurs and accents.

Example 26 Rachmaninoff's manipulations of the Paganini theme, Glinka MSS 18.1423, f.32r.

Transcribed and quoted from David Cannata , *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony* (Innsbruck- Wien: Studien Verlag, 1999), 57

section 1 section 2

638 640 643 644 647 648 649 650 651 652 655 656 657 658 660 661

'xi' * * * * *
 'y'
 10- 10- 'y' 10
 'z'
 'y'
 'y'
 'z'
 'xi' * * * * *
 3̂ 2̂ 1̂
 I D♭ major : I V I

Example 27 Analysis of Variation 18

687 689 690 692 693 695 697 698 699 701 702 703 704

1 1 2 3 3 2 1

yi

I V I

Example 29 Analysis of Vairation 19

706 717 718 721 723 727 730 731 732

1 b2 3 b2 1

I bII bII I

Example 30 Analysis of Variation 20 - background

733 734 735 736 737 738 739 740

741 742 744 745 747 748 749 750 751 752

I

I

Example 32 Analysis of Variation 21

Var. 18

Var. 22

Var. 23

819 821 823

825=829 830

832

834

835

The image shows a musical score for Variation 23, consisting of a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The score is annotated with various symbols and lines to indicate harmonic structure. At the top, a solid line represents the upper voice, with a dotted line below it. Vertical lines connect these lines to specific notes in the score. Annotations include:
- $\sharp 3$ at the beginning and end of the piece.
- $\hat{1}$ and $\flat 2$ above the first two notes.
- \flat and \sharp symbols above notes in the middle section.
- $\flat xi'$ below a note in the lower register.
- $\sharp III$ at the bottom left and right corners.
- A large curved line spanning the bottom of the score, with a vertical line at the end.

Example 34 Analysis of Variation 23

Var. 24

839 841 843 844 845 846 847 849 851 853 855 863 867 871 872 873 876

from D^b/C#

The musical score consists of two staves, Treble and Bass clef. The Treble staff features a complex, arpeggiated melodic line with many slurs and ties. Above the Treble staff, there are several fingering instructions: a hat symbol (^) above measure 839, a sequence of numbers in parentheses (b2, b2, 3, #3, 2) above measures 843-847, and a hat symbol (^) above measure 849. A bracket labeled 'xi'' spans from measure 853 to the end of the piece. The Bass staff features a more rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and ties. Below the Bass staff, there are several fingering instructions: 'yi' above measure 843, 'y' above measure 845, and 'xi'' above measures 847, 849, 851, and 853. There are also asterisks (*) below measures 839, 841, and 843. A dashed line is drawn below the first three measures of the Bass staff. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Var. 23

Var. 24

838

839 853

872

873

874 875

876

877 879 880

881

882

884

from E in m. 830

The image shows a musical score for Variation 24, spanning measures 838 to 884. The score is written for piano, with a treble and bass clef. Above the staff, there are two horizontal lines representing structural levels. The first line has a bracket from measure 838 to 872 labeled with the Roman numeral #III, and another bracket from measure 876 to 884 labeled with Nn. The second line has a bracket from measure 838 to 872 labeled with 'xi', and another bracket from measure 876 to 884 labeled with IV. The musical notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. There are also some specific annotations: a sharp sign (#) above the first measure, a 'x' above a group of notes in measure 853, and several flat signs (b) above notes in measures 877-880. The score is annotated with various symbols and brackets to indicate structural analysis.

Example 35 Analysis of Variation 24

884 885 886 887 888 889 891 892 894 895 898 902 904 910 916 918

from F
from D \flat /C \sharp

Nn

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is a vocal line with a treble clef, featuring a complex melodic line with many slurs and ties. The lower staff is a piano accompaniment with a bass clef, featuring a more rhythmic and harmonic line with many slurs. The title "Dies Irae" is written in the center of the piano staff. Above the vocal staff, there are several vertical lines and a dotted line, with the label "'yi'" positioned above the line at measure 895. Below the piano staff, there are vertical lines and a dotted line, with the labels "V/D" and "'xi'" positioned below the line at measures 904 and 910 respectively.

IV

876=
884

892

895

898

910

918

926

937

938

939

940

from F

from D^b/C#

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The score is divided into measures corresponding to the measure numbers listed above. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various articulations and fingerings. A slur labeled 'yi'' covers measures 884-895. Another slur labeled 'xi'' covers measures 910-918. A large slur labeled 'x'' covers measures 926-937. A slur labeled '2' covers measures 938-939, and a slur labeled '1' covers measure 940. The bass staff contains a supporting line with fingerings '5 -' and '6' above the notes in measures 926-927, and '6' and '4' below the notes in measures 928-929. A long slur spans from measure 918 to measure 939. Roman numerals 'V' and 'I' are placed below the bass staff at the end of measures 939 and 940 respectively. The score is enclosed in a box with a dotted line at the bottom.

var. 1	var. 12	var. 14	var. 16	var. 18		var. 19	var. 22	var. 23		var. 24		661	823	830	838	839	871	876	918	938	939	940
-----------	------------	------------	------------	------------	--	------------	------------	------------	--	------------	--	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

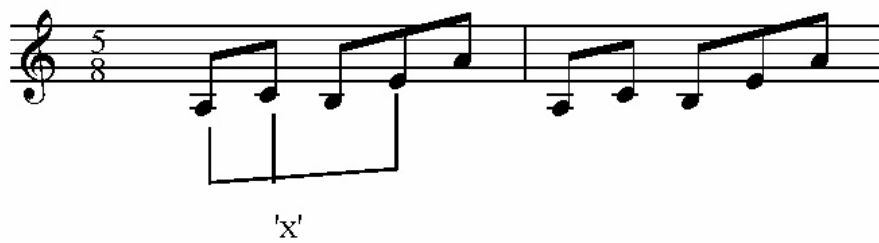
E F F# G A

I #III#3 V I

Example 36 Tonal Structure of the Rhapsody

The image displays three musical examples labeled a, b, and c, illustrating thematic development. Example a shows a four-note ascending eighth-note motif in a treble clef. Example b shows the same motif inverted, with a descending eighth-note pattern in a treble clef. Example c shows the motif expanded into a six-note descending eighth-note pattern in a bass clef, with a large slur encompassing the entire phrase.

Example 37 Thematic motive , its inversion, and expansion



Example 38 motive 'x', mm. 1-2, the Isle of the Dead

260 299 307 319 321 331 377 386 418 428 454 458 462 467 468

\flat^2 \sharp^3 $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with complex notation. The score includes various musical elements such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. The notation is dense and spans across several measures, with some notes connected by long horizontal lines. The score is framed by a large horizontal line at the top and bottom, with a vertical line on the left side. The notation is in black ink on a white background.

III \flat^3 IV \sharp^3 \flat^3 V I

* * * *
 3 #3 1
 I III V I

Example 40 The Isle of the Dead, analysis - background level



Figure 2 *The Seventh Seal*, a game of chess between the Knight and Death
<http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Forum/6370/7thseal.html>
(retrieved September 25, 2003) Reproduced with permission from
Criterion Company (Janus Film), New York.



Figure 3 *The Seventh Seal*, the knight's confession to Death

<http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Forum/6370/7thseal.html>

(retrieved September 25, 2003) Reproduced with permission from Criterion Company (Janus Film), New York.



Figure 4 *The Seventh Seal*, “The strict lord Death bids them dance”

<http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Forum/6370/7thseal.html>

(retrieved September 25, 2003) Reproduced with permission from Criterion Company (Janus Film), New York.



Figure 5 Böcklin' s *The Isle of the Dead*

<http://www.stmoroky.com/reviews/gallery/bocklin/iotd.htm> (retrieved September 25, 2003) Reproduced with permission from Tim Eagen.

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14a Full score, *Stichvorlage*.

14b/27b Draft. (with Mendelssohn transcription draft)

14c Draft.

14d Sketches.

Third Symphony, Op.44

15a Full score.

15b Copyist's full score with Rachmaninoff's annotations.

15c Conductor's score (TAIR 1937) with Rachmaninoff's annotations.

15d Draft. ("first three gatherings").

10/15e Sketch. (Breitkopf, B&H #4E").

15f Draft. (fourth gathering").

15g Sketch. ("another gathering").

7b/15h Sketch.

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