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**RACHMANINOFF'S SECOND PIANO SONATA OP. 36:
TOWARDS THE CREATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE
PERFORMANCE VERSION**

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by

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Summary

This study highlights aspects of performance for the consideration of the pianist wishing to perform Rachmaninoff's second piano sonata op. 36, using a combination of the two versions (1913 and 1931) published by Boosey & Hawkes. By providing a background to the composition, revision, and structure of this sonata, the study aims to inspect all aspects of the conception and revision of the work.

Through a close examination of two recordings of this sonata - by Vladimir Horowitz and Van Cliburn - the study analyses and compares the performers' choices regarding the selection and combination of material from the two versions for performance. Aspects such as technical difficulty, texture, structure and sonority are highlighted as points for the pianist to contemplate when attempting an alternative version of this work. These elements of successful performance are singled out by the detailed observation of the material selected by the performers, with conjectures as to the most probable reason for its selection. The various analyses and comparisons are illustrated by means of music examples.



Key terms

Chords

Composer

Material

Performer

Pianist

Recapitulation

Revision

Selection

Sequences

Sonority

Structure

Texture

Theme

Version

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Motivation behind the study

On first hearing a recording of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata op. 36 (revised 1931) by the renowned pianist Vladimir Horowitz, I was intrigued by the fact that the artist did not play the work exactly as I anticipated. This was a recording of a live performance given by Horowitz in 1980 in Symphony Hall, Boston, and supposedly of the revised version. Having played this version many times, I was astonished to hear some striking aural discrepancies from the way I knew the work. Aware that the piece exists in two published forms, the original version (1913) and the version revised by the composer himself (1931), I started researching this most unusual performance which seemed to correspond with neither of these versions. While in search of clarity on this issue, it was brought to my attention that another artist, Van Cliburn, had also recorded a unique version of the piece. His recording is coincidentally a live performance as well, given in 1960 in Moscow, and in it he makes use of some material from the revised version in what is essentially a performance of the original 1913 version. This inspired me to investigate the reasons for Rachmaninoff's revision of the work, and to compare these two recordings to Rachmaninoff's published versions (Boosey & Hawkes 1947), in order to establish their similarities and differences with a view to helping pianists select the material most suited to performance.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The study proposes to examine the reasons behind Rachmaninoff's revision of his Second Piano Sonata. It further proposes to analyze exactly what material Horowitz used (from the 1913 and the 1931 versions); what material Cliburn used; and a comparison of the two recordings. Through this process it should be possible to reach the conclusion that certain material in the work lends itself more to performance than other material. The history of the composition of the sonata will be set out, with the reasons for its subsequent revision by Rachmaninoff thereafter. A discussion of the connection between the composer and

Horowitz that led to Horowitz's unique recording of the work; and a short summary of the careers of the pianists are deemed necessary to this study.

1.3 Research methods

The study will be conducted by:

- studying the available literature on the composition of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata and its 1931 revision
- analyzing the recordings made by Vladimir Horowitz and Van Cliburn
- analyzing the scores of both printed versions to see what material was either utilized or discarded by both above-mentioned artists
- annotating findings by means of music examples and verbal descriptions where necessary
- comparing the two recorded versions.

1.4 Delimitation of the study

This study has a very specific scope as it focuses on two published versions of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata, and two specifically selected recorded versions of the work. It will only supply background information regarding the composer and performers where deemed absolutely necessary for the clarification of the subject under scrutiny.

1.5 Structure of the study

Chapter one is an introduction to the study. Chapter two provides a background to Rachmaninoff's musical style, and details the composition, revision, and basic structure of the second sonata. Chapters three and four contain an overview of each performer's style, as well as an analysis of the recordings of the sonata. Chapter five is a comparison of the two recorded versions, and Chapter six examines material most suited to performance as selected



by the two performers – focusing on technical difficulties, texture, structure and sonority.
Chapter seven presents the conclusions drawn from the study.

Chapter Two: The history of the composition and revision of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata

2.1 An overview of Rachmaninoff's compositional style

Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) is both fascinating enigma and unfathomable paradox. Living more than half his life in the 20th century, he was somehow just too old to embrace the new methods of “modern music” at the time of their birth. He was unwilling, perhaps even unable, to abandon the integrity of his beloved art for the “sideleaps and grotesque contortions” of modernism (Riesemann 1934:245). He even went on record saying that he had ‘no sympathy with any composer who produces works according to preconceived theories or [...] who writes in a certain style because it is the fashion to do so’ (Ewen 1941:804). Friends who knew Rachmaninoff well described him as giving the impression of one belonging to ‘some historical era of past glories that he alone could remember’ (Chasins 1957:41). Yet by all accounts he certainly enjoyed the technological advancements of this modern age; the ones that enabled him to drive a good motorcar at speed, and build a modern, spacious house for example.

Before he even left Russia he was chastised by critics for ‘not keeping pace with the modern development of musical ideas’ (Riesemann 1934:168). As this was said when Scriabin’s mysticism was an exciting new advance, one can only imagine their disparagement by the thirties and forties. From a performance perspective, however, his music has always been – and still remains – immortally popular with audiences and performers alike. In this study I hope to shed some light on certain characteristics of Rachmaninoff’s music that lend themselves to performance and help to preserve his justly deserved place at the forefront of romantic literature for the piano.

It seems then, that it was only musically that Rachmaninoff found himself an anachronism: unable to follow the trends that were changing the foundations music had rested on for centuries. Only one year older than Schoenberg (1874-1951) and one year younger than Scriabin (1872-1915), Rachmaninoff’s musical ideas took him down no fantastic paths of evolution and brought about no revolutionary harmonic language; his style remained essentially the same over 40 years

into the 20th century (Martyn 1990:13). Rachmaninoff seemed supremely content working within the inherited framework of a grand romantic tradition bequeathed to him by his mentor, Tchaikovsky (1840-1893); and his composition teachers, Arensky (1861-1906) and Taneyev (1850-1918). Stylistically, his music belongs firmly in the 19th century; and he can even be considered the last important composer of the Romantic Era (Martyn 1990:32).

Many musicologists writing about Rachmaninoff's work have remarked that at its heart, his music is fundamentally Russian. They do not make this observation because of any openly nationalistic tendencies his music shows, but because it seems as if Rachmaninoff was so steeped in the very essence of Russia that he had no need to add "ethnographical trimmings" (Medtner in Martyn 1990:27); the melodies he wrote were as good as Russian folksongs themselves. Rachmaninoff remarked in an interview that music should be 'the expression of a composer's complex personality, [...] the country of his birth, his love affairs, his religion, the books which have influenced him, the pictures he loves' (Ewen 1941:804). For Rachmaninoff, all of these were inextricably linked to his homeland.

Yet his melodies transcend all cultural barriers with their international appeal. They may be quintessentially Russian, but there is something in them which speaks directly to the heart. To examine Rachmaninoff's rich gift for melodic writing is to come close to the secret of what makes his compositions universally and enduringly appealing. The so called "big tune"- a glorious, extended melody brought to a passionate climax in an inimitable Rachmaninoff fingerprint - is what continues to enchant music lovers, the world over. This outstanding lyrical quality was certainly nurtured in the musical environment of the late 1800's Moscow; where Rachmaninoff's talent was nurtured and Tchaikovsky, that king of romantic lyricists, reigned as undisputed sovereign (Riesemann 1934:212).

There are some more obviously Russian characteristics to be found in Rachmaninoff's music. Two of these relate to the Russian Orthodox Church: firstly the use of bell-like effects and sonorities; and secondly a construction of melodies according to principles of the liturgical *canti firmi*.

The bell-effects are found throughout his music, and strikingly, the second piano sonata is an excellent example, where one finds the whole spectrum of bells from the deep clangour overlapping with higher peals preceding the recapitulation in the *Allegro agitato* (see Example 2.1 – all examples in this chapter are from the original version unless otherwise stated); through the sombre and introspective tones prefacing the coda of the slow movement (see Example 2.2); to the exultant and triumphant sonorities that close of the sonata (see Example 2.3). Martyn (1990:30) notes that these bell-effects are to be found in nearly all Rachmaninoff's music, irrespective of the place of composition; be it Russia (Preludes op.32, Second Sonata), Dresden (Second Symphony) or Italy (*The Bells*).

Example 2.1: Overlapping bell-effects, bars 112-116, *Allegro agitato*



The image displays a musical score for piano, specifically focusing on the overlapping bell-effects in bars 112-116 of the *Allegro agitato* movement. The score is written in two systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system covers bars 112 and 113, while the second system covers bars 114, 115, and 116. The music is characterized by dense, overlapping chords and melodic lines, creating a rich, bell-like texture. Annotations include 'low bells' and 'etc.' in the first system, and 'high bells' and 'etc.' in the second system. The dynamic marking *ff pesante* is present in bar 113. The score is set in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D minor) and a 4/4 time signature.

Example 2.2: Sombre and sonorous bells, bars 74-77, *Lento*



Musical score for Example 2.2, bars 74-77, *Lento*. The score is in 4/8 time and consists of two systems. The first system covers bars 74 and 75, marked *pp*. The second system covers bars 76 and 77, marked *p dolce*. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/8. The music features a somber and sonorous character with a slow tempo.

Example 2.3: Exultant bells close the sonata, bars 291-297, *Allegro molto*



Musical score for Example 2.3, bars 291-297, *Allegro molto*. The score is in 3/8 time and consists of two systems. The first system covers bars 291, 292, and 293, marked *ff*. The second system covers bars 294, 295, 296, and 297, marked *m.d.*. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 3/8. The music features exultant bells closing the sonata with a fast tempo.

The principles governing the structure of melodic lines in Orthodox Church music can be found underpinning many Rachmaninoff melodies. In this liturgical music an interval of a third is very rare and anything greater is non-existent (Riesemann 1934:221). This limits the framework for constructing a melody, tending to emphasize one particular note - from which the melody continuously departs and returns, and encourage largely stepwise movement. This is a true characteristic of Rachmaninoff's melodies and in the second sonata one finds two very fine examples; the second theme of the first movement (see Example 2.4), and the "Big Tune" of the second movement (see Example 2.5). Other striking examples can be found in the main themes of both the second and third piano concertos.

Example 2.4: Second theme, bars 37-40, *Allegro agitato*

Meno mosso. (♩ = ♩.)



37 *mf* *mf* *mf* *p* 38

39 *pp* 40 *p*

Example 2.5: Main theme, bars 7-11, *Lento*



It is no surprise that Rachmaninoff assimilated characteristics of Russian Orthodox Church Music into his personal style when one considers that he absorbed it virtually with his mother's milk. We have Granny Butakova to thank for encouraging the young Rachmaninoff in his love of this art form, taking him to services and rewarding him when he could recreate what he had heard that morning on the piano at home. According to Riesemann (1934:221), this early influence of the church gave his music 'much that is valuable and stimulating.'

A more unusual but distinctive trait running through Rachmaninoff's work is his use - in various guises - of the *Dies Irae*; the medieval plainchant from the Requiem Mass. The use of this particular motive is unusual in that it comes from the Catholic and not the Orthodox Church and was therefore not part of his musical heritage. Efstratiou (1995:230) is of the opinion that Rachmaninoff's melodies generally have the same melancholy cast as the *Dies Irae* and that because it was not a part of his musical language as a boy, his continuous use of it must be because its shape naturally fits his own musical contours. The motive has had some famous exposure in works like Liszt's *Dante Symphony* and Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*, to name



only two; so it is likely that Rachmaninoff heard it and absorbed it as a natural mannerism into his personal style. Admittedly, there are cases where he uses it rather deliberately, as in the *Paganini Rhapsody*, where his treatment of it is almost a thumbing of the nose to fate.

In general one observes a few typical features in his writing for the piano that announce Rachmaninoff to be the composer. There is the thick, note-dense texture; the profusion of chromatic harmonies and rapid harmonic rhythm; the repeated chords in which one note will continually change; the demanding accompaniment figures in which every note can be heard (making it impossible for a performer to “cheat” anywhere); and of course the chocolate-box melodies constructed as discussed above. In a rather disapproving appraisal Wolf (1957:225) remarks that much of Rachmaninoff’s piano writing is merely a piling-up of sonorities à la Liszt; it sounds magnificent but it is not always musically significant.

Rachmaninoff’s music, though dismissed during his lifetime as: ‘twaddle’; ‘having very little originality’; ‘genteel vulgarity’; ‘[expressing] the decadent ideas of a bourgeois’; and ‘[the work of] an insignificant imitator and reactionary’ (Rieseemann 1934:202,203 and Martyn 1990:15), has at last come into its own. As Walsh (1973:12) reflects ‘his music has *survived* where that of some of his more experimental contemporaries has had to be *revived*.’ Since his death in 1943, Rachmaninoff’s music has steadily risen in popularity to where it occupies a prominent position as standard repertoire for all pianists; from the moderately competent learner to the veteran of international piano competitions.

2.2 Rachmaninoff’s Piano Sonata no. 2 op. 36: Composition, Revision and Structure

2.2.1 Composition

The Second Piano Sonata op. 36 was completed in September 1913 and dedicated to Rachmaninoff’s boyhood friend and fellow Zverev pupil, Matvey Pressmann. Rachmaninoff was at the height of his creative powers. He was in the middle of a most productive period of composition and thriving on the stability and sense of purpose that being a husband (he married his cousin Natalya Satina in 1902) and father of two brought (Martyn 1990:24). This fruitful



time was one of the last Rachmaninoff would enjoy on his wife's family estate in Russia, Ivanovka. His flow of inspiration was always strong here, and he completed many works around the same time as the sonata, including the *Etudes-Tableaux* op. 33 (1911), the Choral Symphony *The Bells* op. 35 (1913) and his *All-Night Vigil* op. 37 (1915). This idyllic summer came after a period of gruelling work that forced Rachmaninoff to take his family to Europe for eight-weeks of rest and recuperation before returning to Ivanovka for the remainder of the season (Norris 2001:711).

In Rome, in a small flat - recommended to Rachmaninoff by Modest Tchaikovsky as a place where his brother Peter had frequently retreated for privacy – Rachmaninoff retired early each day to compose (Riesemann 1934:171). Here he sketched the sonata, as well as the *The Bells* and it is interesting to note that these works were conceived simultaneously; as the sonata could just as easily have borne the title *The Bells* for its pervasive use of bell-effects and sonorities. However, as the composer never linked it directly with the source of his inspiration for *The Bells* – an anonymous poem sent to him by a music student (Martyn 1990:242) - we must discard any idea of it being a literal tone-painting of a scene or the expression of a definite pictorial idea like the *Etudes-Tableaux*.

2.2.2 Revision

The work was well received at its premiere in Moscow (with the composer as performer) on 3 December 1915. On this occasion the critic Tyuneyev (Martyn 1990:249) remarked that it was a work of great talent and maturity; but that it showed reserve, severity and less lyricism than one was accustomed to from Rachmaninoff (Norris 1973:365). Rachmaninoff himself was not satisfied with the setting he gave the sonata and for years longed for the necessary time to revise it. He felt there was much in the piece that was superfluous, with too many voices moving simultaneously, and compared its length unfavourably to that of Chopin's second sonata 'which lasts nineteen minutes, and all has been said' (Swan A & K 1944:8).

It is interesting that he measured his sonata by this yardstick, considering Chopin's sonata is also his second for the piano; is in the same key (B flat minor), of a very similar opus number (op. 35) and was extremely well known by the composer as it was one of his staple pieces in his



concert repertoire. It is possible that he had this sonata in mind when he set about composing his, but it is more likely merely a striking coincidence that appeals to the imagination.

During the summer of 1931 Rachmaninoff began work on its revision, which entailed far more than shortening. He wished to tighten the structure and prune the sonata of some of its excess technical difficulties; though it is doubtful whether he succeeded in the latter respect as the revised version remains a taxing and technically complex work (Hinson 1987:579).

Efstratiou (1995:79) is of the opinion that Rachmaninoff's tightening of the form by removing many of the transitions between themes is at the peril of the sonata's structure. 'There is no room for conciseness in this style, which is variational. Rachmaninoff's transitions are necessary not only because they connect themes and modulate, the function of a bridge passage, but because they continue the train of thought and can sometimes be climactic.' Therefore, one can see how the overall development of ideas would be compromised through the removal of the material that links them together; out of which they even occasionally grow.

Martyn (1990: 322) is of a similar opinion. He maintains that the changes to the structure of the sonata are "lamentable" and the new material not always easier to play. Of particular interest to me - in the light of this study - however, is his opinion that Rachmaninoff used a performance-oriented rather than structure-oriented approach to his revision: 'it almost seems as though Rachmaninoff operated on the principle of retaining intact only those core parts of the work which had perhaps proved most effective in performance.' This is precisely the angle I wish to explore in examining the two recordings.

The revised version is certainly closer to the "ideal time" of Chopin's nineteen minutes. Where the 1913 version takes approximately 25 minutes to perform, the 1931 version takes only around 20.

It is my opinion that the cool - if not downright hostile at times - reception of many of Rachmaninoff's works in the New World (and even in Russia before he left) made him deeply insecure; and as a result of this he was continually re-assessing his works and attempting to improve them. One refers to reviews which greeted a performance of a new work with such

sweeping dismissals as: ‘half-an-hour of padding’; or ‘the sort of music that any pianist could extemporize by the yard’; and even ‘a lifelong failure to think of inspired and clinching ideas is unlikely to repair itself after the age of sixty’ (Martyn 1990:14-15). Observe that not a single one of the works that Rachmaninoff ever “revised” was increased in length; all were shortened, with material simply cut out and thrown away. Surely this leads us to surmise that psychologically, Rachmaninoff was not at all certain of the quality of these works, or at any rate sufficiently convinced of their value to justify leaving them as he had originally conceived them.

It is also possible that because the sonata was written between two works that Rachmaninoff considered his best compositions, *The Bells* and *All-Night Vigil*, the sonata appeared more flawed than it really is. Caught in the glare created by Rachmaninoff’s perceived perfection of these two flanking works – in which he felt the combination of creation and construction to be ideal – it is plausible that the sonata would have suffered in the harsh light of comparison and thus come under the composer’s scrutiny for more alterations than were strictly warranted.

2.2.3 Structure

It is not within the scope of this study to compare both the 1913 and the 1931 versions of the sonata, which has already been admirably done by Norris and Threlfall in their catalogue of Rachmaninoff’s music (1982). In this study I would only like to highlight certain basic aspects of the sonata’s form for ease of reference when I begin to compare the recordings to the versions as published by Boosey & Hawkes (1947).

The sonata is in three musically interrelated movements; *Allegro agitato*, *Lento* and *Allegro molto*. On its first hearing it gives the impression of being a single movement work because the three movements are not only thematically linked, but joined by bridges so there is scarcely a break between them (Hinson 1987:579). Two *Non allegro* sections (of seven bars each) form these bridges and are constructed of similar material, transposed and given a slightly different rhythmic aspect for the second appearance.

According to Wolf (1957:178) the overall structure is an example of sonata form in the strictest sense of the term. The first movement opens in B flat minor. The first theme (see Example 2.6) characterizes the movement and is found throughout all three movements in various guises.

This theme returns in the tonic key, with the second theme in G flat major, for the recapitulation after an improvisatory development. The melody of the second theme centres around F, and shows the gentle undulations typical of the liturgical melodies mentioned above, and only once moves more than a third (refer to Example 2.4). The link between the first two movements closes in E minor, the key of the slow second movement. The second movement has a main theme based on a simple motive of a falling third, which is repeated sequentially (Example 2.7 illustrates the falling thirds).

Example 2.6: First theme, bars 0-3, *Allegro agitato*



The musical score for Example 2.6 is written for piano in G-flat major (three flats) and 4/4 time. It begins with a piano introduction marked *Allegro agitato.* The right hand starts with a melody in the treble clef, and the left hand provides a bass line in the bass clef. The score includes various ornaments such as triplets and sextuplets, and a *rit.* marking. The dynamics range from *m.d. veloce* to *ff*. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system covering bars 0-3 and the second system covering bars 4-7.

Example 2.7: Main theme, bars 7-11, *Lento*



The image displays a musical score for the main theme of the *Lento* movement, bars 7-11. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems. The first system shows bars 7-11, with a 'falling third' annotation over the right hand. The second system shows bars 9-11, with 'etc' annotations and a '5' fingering. Dynamics include *p* and *m.g.*

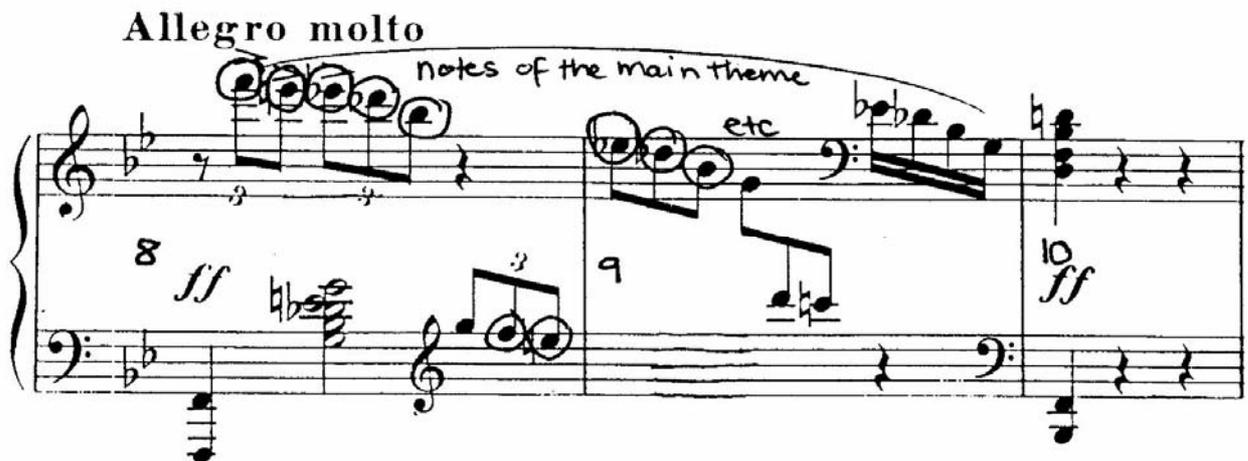
The beautiful and characteristic Rachmaninoff melody of the *Lento* is built to a fervent climax. Following this is a development section on themes from the first movement, which can be seen as a second development for the sonata, almost as if Rachmaninoff wished to try his hand at these themes again. This section is completely different in the 1913 and 1931 versions, as is the coda after this development. In the original composition Rachmaninoff returns to the main theme of the *Lento* with melodic sequences emphasizing the falling third of the main theme after an impassioned cadenza which grows out of the development. In the revised version, however, he changes this and follows the cadenza with a statement of the first movement's second theme first, on which he builds a coda (Efstratiou 1995:93).

This means that the form of the movement in either version is different. In the original version the form can be analysed as ABA; the return of the first theme after the cadenza being the second A section. In the revised version, however, the form would be something more like ABCoda. By adding completely unrelated material (to anything in this movement) – and not returning to the main theme of the movement, Rachmaninoff negatively affected the form in the revised version. However, because this approach serves to strengthen the overall cyclic nature

of the sonata as a whole we cannot just summarily dismiss the idea as a bad one. In the final chapter I will examine both performers' solution to this thorny problem.

After the second movement there is a further modulation back to B flat major for the final *Allegro molto*. In Dubal's opinion (1989:385) this movement, which is in rondo form, is one of Rachmaninoff's most electrifying works. The main theme of the final movement is closely related to the first theme of the opening movement, but strangely enough only in the revised version. The original version starts with a similar flourish, but one which is not thematically linked to the first movement (see Examples 2.8 and 2.9). The second theme in this movement (Example 2.10) is another "big tune" which forms an effective contrast with the rhythmic first theme.

Example 2.8: Revised version, bars 8-10, *Allegro molto*



Example 2.9: Original version, bars 8-10, *Allegro molto*



Example 2.10: Second, more lyrical theme, bars 91-100, *Allegro molto*

a tempo, poco meno mosso



mf 91 p 92 93 94

95 dim. 96 p 97

98 mf 99 p 100 dim. etc

There was one man who felt strongly enough about the revision of this work to approach the composer himself with a suggestion to restore it to some of its former glory, or in other words put back some of the material removed during the sonata's revision. That man, Vladimir Horowitz, was also a great pianist. I will examine his relationship with Rachmaninoff and how he came to be a champion of this specific work in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: An analysis of Vladimir Horowitz’s recorded version as compared to the two versions published by Boosey & Hawkes

3.1 An overview of Horowitz’s performing career

There is no doubt of Vladimir Horowitz’s (1903-1989) iconic position as the foremost pianist of the twentieth century. A quixotic blend of genius and childishness, those who came to know him best remarked on his disposition as that of a spoilt child – the brightest star in his own private universe. For Horowitz, it was as if he became the composer of every composition he studied. His performance of a work was an act of creation in itself, and he resented anyone who infringed on his territory by playing his repertoire (Dubal 1993:xix). Even after his death in 1989, Horowitz remains greatly revered and adulated as an artist, but most pianists realize that he cannot be imitated, only emulated; his art is unique, infused with individuality and his own unique personality.

Horowitz was born in 1903 in a small industrial settlement, near Kiev. He later gave Kiev as his place of birth, seeming to want to belong to this cultural capital of the Ukraine more than the dingy Berdichev. His father, Simeon Horowitz, was a well-educated man who constantly sought to improve his family’s status and so relocated the family to Kiev, most likely when Horowitz was a small child. Volodya – the diminutive of Vladimir – was always a cosseted and protected child. The youngest of four children, he was, in his own words ‘profusely spoilt [...] willful, selfish, and often lazy’ (Dubal 1991:4).

Horowitz was born into a musical family. His mother, Sophie, was a talented pianist and his father’s brother, Alexander, had studied piano and composition with Alexander Scriabin. In fact, it was due to this uncle’s connection with Scriabin that the boy Horowitz came to play for the master himself: an experience which remained a highlight of his life even in the glow of all the fame and glory that he later achieved (Dubal 1991:4). Years later Horowitz reflected on this meeting, saying that in a unique way Scriabin’s personality is mirrored in his music. ‘His music



is supersensuous, superromantic and supermysterious. Everything is *super*; it is all a little overboard' (Dubal 1991:5-6). Strikingly, this is the type of criticism that Horowitz was destined to receive throughout his career. Many found his performances (especially in the early days) too fast, too loud, and too flashy; with not enough thought taken for the poetic or spiritual content of the music (Plaskin 1983:103).

The young Horowitz soon outgrew his mother's initial home teaching and began his formal piano studies at the Kiev Conservatory under Vladimir Puchalsky (dates unknown), a rather natural musical progression for the boy as his mother had been a Puchalsky student in her days at the conservatory. However, Horowitz did not flourish under the rigid and rather military style of teaching that Puchalsky preferred. Luckily for him, Puchalsky soon retired and was replaced by Sergei Tarnowsky (dates unknown), and under his more humane tutelage the pupil began to thrive. Both Puchalsky and Tarnowsky had worked under the famous Leschetizky (1830-1915); whereas Felix Blumenfeld (1863-1931), Horowitz's subsequent and last teacher, was a pupil of Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) – therefore from a completely different school of playing (Schonberg 2001:739).

From early on Horowitz was an avid admirer of Rachmaninoff's music, spending his time playing Rachmaninoff instead of practicing Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, and incurring his mother's wrath in the process. He dreamed of being a composer-pianist like his idol, but never fulfilled the promise he demonstrated in his teens. In Dubal's opinion (1991:8), this image Horowitz held of himself – as both composer and performer - was with him throughout his life and was responsible for his sporadic outbursts of composition, which mostly took the form of piano transcriptions. Some of these were well received, like his further embellishments of Liszt's works. Perhaps this tolerance was due to Liszt's own reputation as a brilliant improvisator, with many arrangements to his credit. However, it was wholly different when Horowitz took to tinkering with works like Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*; he found himself severely frowned upon by the musical fraternity, and regarded as nothing short of a musical vandal. In his own defense Horowitz said 'when I change anything, it is only to make a better piano sound. And Mussorgsky did not know how' (Dubal 1991:11).



Horowitz lived through the Russian Revolution of 1917, narrowly escaping death by a falling bomb on the street near their apartment. His father's prosperous business was taken away because he was Jewish and the family lost everything they had within 24 hours. Uncle Alexander once again came to the rescue as Horowitz's first "manager", organizing him concerts in Karkov, Kiev, Odessa, Tiflis and Moscow to help bring in money to feed the family. At 20 he started to gain recognition for his formidable talent, playing 20 recitals with ten different programs in just one season (Schonberg 2001:739).

Horowitz was unhappy under the new regime in Russia and consequently began to give some thought as to how he could covertly escape. Germany was the current citadel of music and he longed to be able to broaden his horizons, as well as pit himself against the best talent Europe had to offer, confident his gifts would not go unappreciated. Early in 1925 a concert manager, Alexander Merovitch, came to his rescue. Merovitch was also determined to leave Russia and arranged with Simeon Horowitz to get his son out (with only a little passport "doctoring") for a city-by-city tour of Europe, accompanied by the violinist Milstein and cellist Piatigorsky. It was quite an emotional decision for the young Horowitz, especially leaving his mother and sister Regina - both of whom he adored - and one which would, in hindsight, prove even more traumatic than the initial leave-taking. Fate had something horrible in store; the only member of his family Horowitz ever saw again was his father and that only for one brief visit (Dubal 1991:18).

However, all unhappiness lay in the future and it was with great excitement and equal trepidation that Horowitz commenced his tour. They began in Germany. After moderate success in Berlin they moved on to Hamburg, and here he hit his lucky break. One evening, on a day following another modestly acclaimed performance, Horowitz and Merovitch found the local concert manager desperately looking for them at their hotel: the soloist for that evening's concert had fainted in the dress rehearsal and a substitute had to be found urgently as the first half of the concert had already begun! Horowitz, exhausted and cold after walking round the Hamburg Zoo, reluctantly agreed to play – provided the parts for the Tchaikovsky Concerto could be found. The score and parts were found in the orchestra's library and Horowitz made his way to the hall, knowing he had not touched the work since Berlin, some three weeks before.



In his book *Speaking of Pianists* Abram Chasins relates how the understandably nervous conductor was thoroughly bowled over by Horowitz's performance.

After the orchestral opening, Horowitz started. Upon hearing his first crashing chord, [the conductor] spun round in amazement. At the second, he jumped off the podium and sprinted to the piano, staring incredulously at Horowitz's hands. He stayed right there until the conclusion of the first cadenza, his face a study in disbelief while his arms beat time [...]. When it was all over, the piano lay on the platform like a slain dragon and the whole house rose as one, screaming hysterically (Chasins 1957:139).

Horowitz always referred to this concert as his breakthrough, without which he may not have been able to launch his career. He went on to flaming success in Paris, where he met the impresario Arthur Judson who offered him a 25-concert tour of America. On January 12, 1928, Horowitz made his American debut in Carnegie Hall. However, a few days before this Horowitz had an experience that he was to hold even dearer than his first performance in his adopted country: he met Rachmaninoff personally after years of worshipping his music and portraying it to concert audiences. Horowitz told a personal friend, John Pfeiffer, the impact this meeting had on him:

"I consider that [meeting] my real success even before my debut in Carnegie Hall. I shall never forget it – that he, the musical god of my youth, should work with me, a young unknown (at least in this country). I loved his music, loved its atmosphere, felt in it my roots of 19th-century Russia, understood that my own technique had a development that served his music [...] I knew and loved him through his music, and now he sat beside me." (Pfeiffer 1978:5)

The two exiled Russians became good friends and within a few years Horowitz was famous.

In 1933 Horowitz appeared as a soloist for the first time under the baton of the revered Arturo Toscanini, resulting in his acquaintance with the Maestro's daughter, Wanda, and the young couple's subsequent marriage in December of the same year. He also became an official American citizen in 1942, and did much to help in the war effort, bringing in \$11,000,000 with just in one War Bond concert.

From 1953 on, Horowitz' career was characterized, or even plagued, by a series of "retirements". Always rather neurotic, Horowitz became increasingly weighed down by feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy, and prone to bouts of depression. For a period of ten years he was treated by a psychiatrist and was heavily sedated which had a detrimental effect on his memory and thus his playing (Sachs 1982:167). He returned to the stage after the last of these sabbaticals in 1986.

At 86 his technique was still miraculous. He seemed to conquer his persistent doubts in the last years of his life as if he no longer felt he had to prove himself to the world; as though he had resolved his inner struggle to establish himself as a fine artist and not merely a gifted entertainer. His final public recital was given in Vienna and he died at home of a heart attack two years later (1989), just days after completing a recording.

Many of the pianists who wrote contributing articles for David Dubal's book *Remembering Horowitz* (1993) remark on Horowitz's unique and exceptional use of colour. They speak of unparalleled sonority; colour effects perfectly suited to the piano's mechanism; a singing line that left the listener limp; several levels of melodic intensity; a vertical combination of tones so diversely coloured that harmony and line complemented each other perfectly. Many note his sense of rhythmic projection – he could achieve striking rhythmic intensity without having to play like a metronome to create the tension (Dubal 1993:143,145,208,210).

Some also remarked on his inconsistencies where 'stylistic anachronisms and just plain bad taste [...] sat cheek by jowl with ineffable craftsmanship' (Dubal 1993:69). Leslie Howard is of the opinion that it is in Horowitz's textual tampering that his art is at its least defensible. He believes that Horowitz's unnecessary alterations of works by Liszt, Mussorgsky and Rachmaninoff are even destructive; and is of the opinion that Horowitz's version of Rachmaninoff's second sonata 'does not advance our comprehension of why Rachmaninoff should have emasculated a fine work in a period of depression' (Dubal 1993:70-71).

As is typical with any great personality - and especially when that personality is expressed in a public form of art - there seems to be of necessity an equal amount of compliment and criticism. Horowitz has left behind him a fine, widely-varied recorded legacy, but in some circles will

never be credited as anything more than a brilliant technician (Schonberg 1978:412). For myself, I only had to take an overview of his recorded output to achieve some clarity on this matter. Horowitz plays large (and small) works by Liszt, Prokofieff, Rachmaninoff and Scriabin with vigour, flair and incomparable passion; but is equally successful in works on a smaller scale: one thinks of his Chopin mazurkas, Scarlatti sonatas, and Schumann miniatures, where simplicity of expression and his famous cantabile are never surrendered to mere ostentatious virtuoso effects.

3.2 Horowitz's relationship with Rachmaninoff and the sonata

According to Horowitz (Dubal 1985:1997), Rachmaninoff had requested the firm of Steinway & Sons – on whose pianos both Rachmaninoff and Horowitz performed - to communicate to Horowitz as soon as he arrived in America that Rachmaninoff very much wished to meet him. Thus it happened that the day after Horowitz arrived in the New World he was introduced to his musical idol. This meeting left a great impression on him, as we have already mentioned above.

The two Russians struck up a rather unlikely friendship after this; given what one surmises must have been great differences in their personalities. In fact, this unique relationship could perhaps have been brought into flower much earlier. As a young boy, Horowitz was apparently taken to play for the composer, in much the same way as he was for Scriabin; but when he and his mother got to their four o'clock appointment Rachmaninoff had already fled the city.

When questioned about this somewhat cowardly action years later, Rachmaninoff told Horowitz that he hated hearing so-called "prodigies" because they were usually nothing extraordinary. In his forthright honesty he knew that he would have to break this unwanted news to the parents when asked his opinion; because he was incapable of lying, or even glossing over the truth, to present a more hopeful picture. Thus, to spare himself the embarrassment of what he imagined would prove another painful encounter, he simply left the hotel early and returned home.

Rachmaninoff had tried, without much success, to reintroduce the Second Sonata to recital repertoire after its revision in 1931. Due to the lack of audience response he abandoned it after a



few seasons (Martyn 1990:323). The Second Sonata had always been one of Horowitz's favourite works and he was not prepared to give it up when he had been performing it since his Russian days. In the early 1940s Horowitz visited Rachmaninoff several times to discuss the plan he had in mind for a restoration of the work. He felt that 'what might have been gained in conciseness of expression had been outweighed by losses in pianistic sonority and drama' (Martyn 1990:323). He suggested to Rachmaninoff that they discuss a fusion of the two versions which would hopefully find the middle of the road between them. According to Horowitz, Rachmaninoff agreed, giving him free rein to go ahead and compile a new version from the 1913 and 1931 scores for his own use.

1943 saw the first fruits of Horowitz's labours – his debut performance of his fusion of the two versions, in a concert only two months before Rachmaninoff's death. Horowitz continued to schedule the Second Sonata on concert programmes throughout his career and even made some further alterations to his original blend of material. The first recording he made of his version was in 1968, in Carnegie Hall (Walker 1980:126).

As early as 1934 Oskar von Riesemann (1934:199) predicted that the sonata would 'soon enjoy a very welcome "resurrection" in the programmes of all noted pianists.' History has proved him blessed with prophetic foresight, as the sonata is now a standard work for concert pianists and is more often than not included in repertoire lists for international competitions. But this restoration of the sonata to widespread popularity was largely due to Horowitz's efforts to include it in recitals and thus familiarize concert audiences with its sounds.

Rachmaninoff himself wrote that behind every composition is the composer's structural plan for that work. A pianist wishing to play a composer's work 'should endeavor, first of all, to discover this plan, and then he should build in the manner in which the composer would have him build' (Dubal 1989:211). Surely Rachmaninoff would have felt the same about a pianist wishing to re-build, or re-assemble, his work in order to make it most effective for performance.

I believe that through his close relationship with Rachmaninoff - and their subsequent discussions of a fusion of Rachmaninoff's two versions - Horowitz was capable of a unique understanding of the composer's "plan" for his Second Sonata. Horowitz's opportunities of

discussing his ideas for the reconstruction of the sonata with the composer surely qualify him to 'build as the composer would have him build' - qualify him to compile a new version; especially when considered in the light of his credentials as a superlative performer himself.

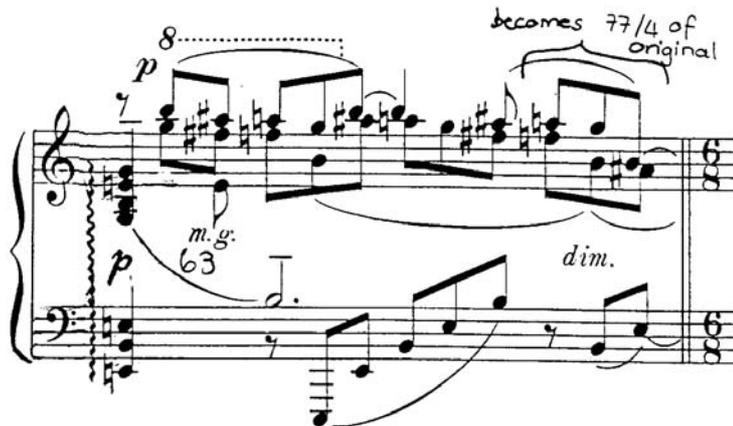
I hope to glean insight into why his version is successful in performance by closely examining his selection of material as most suitable to performance. By formulating reasons for his selection of certain material, I trust to be able to come to a deeper understanding of the appeal of this wonderful work.

3.3 An analysis of the first movement

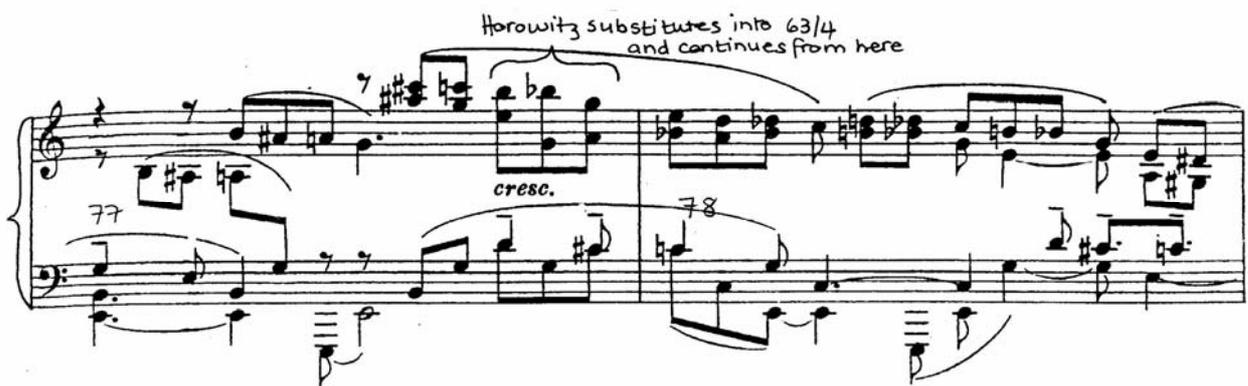
In this movement Horowitz leans more towards the original than the revised version. In total we find Horowitz utilizing just over 151 bars of the original score compared to the 25 bars of the revised score. Admittedly, some sections are exactly the same in both versions, but here I have remained with the score Horowitz was working in until he makes an obvious change.

He starts with the original opening, preferring the fuller chords here to the pruned ones of the revised version. He continues with this version from the first bar to bar 62, at which point he changes to the revised version. He then plays a section (bars 52-63/3) of the revised version, which comes just after the end of the second theme and is a preparation for the development. Just before the development section starts however, he makes a smooth transition back to the original version by substituting the fourth beat of bar 77 (i.e. 77/4) into bar 63/4 of the revised version (see Examples 3.1 and 3.2). After this it is easy to continue with the development in the original version.

Example 3.1: Revised version, bar 63



Example 3.2: Original version, bar 77-78



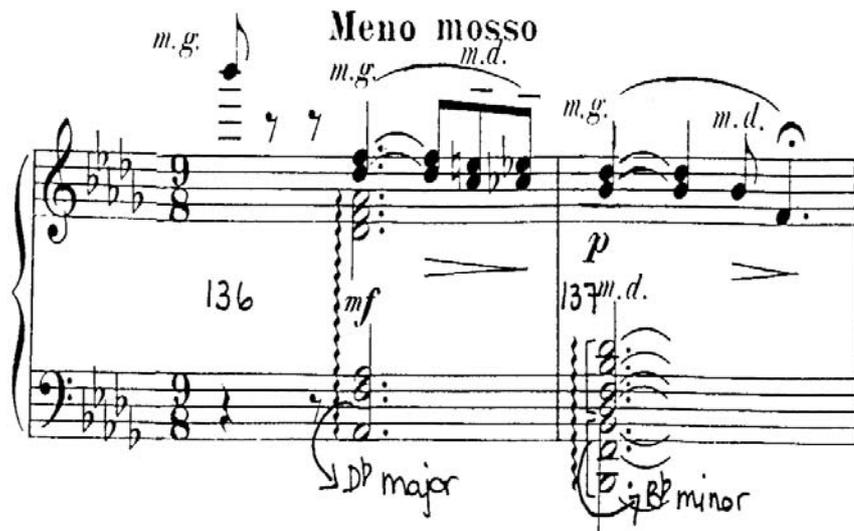
Horowitz plays the development section (bars 77/4-120) completely from the original and makes a neat switch to the revised version from the recapitulation. He remains in the revised version for bars 97-109, and then reverts to the original for bars 134-181 - which is almost the very end of the sonata. The last two bars (136-137) see him making a quick detour into the revised. The juxtaposition of the D-flat major and B-flat minor chords (see Examples 3.3 and 3.4) that occurs in the revised version, but not the original version, highlights the tension between these two harmonies that has been an undercurrent throughout the movement. This is why this alteration in the revised version is usually incorporated, even by performers wishing to play the original version in its entirety (Martyn 1990:322).

Example 3.3: Original version, bars 182-184



musical score for Example 3.3, bars 182-184. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked *meno mosso*. The dynamics are marked *m.g.* (mezzo-giochiato) and *p* (piano). The key signature is B-flat major, with a handwritten note indicating a shift to B-flat minor. The score shows three measures: bar 182, bar 183, and bar 184. The bass line in bar 182 is marked *p* and *Bb minor*. The bass line in bar 183 is marked *m.g.* and *Bb minor*. The bass line in bar 184 is marked *m.g.* and *Bb minor*.

Example 3.4: Revised version, bars 136-137



musical score for Example 3.4, bars 136-137. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked *Meno mosso*. The dynamics are marked *m.g.* (mezzo-giochiato), *m.d.* (mezzo-dolce), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The key signature is B-flat major, with a handwritten note indicating a shift to B-flat minor. The score shows two measures: bar 136 and bar 137. The bass line in bar 136 is marked *mf* and *Bb major*. The bass line in bar 137 is marked *p* and *Bb minor*.

3.4 An analysis of the second movement

For the second movement I have started with the bridge passage which links the *Lento* to the *Allegro agitato* as bar 1. Horowitz plays this link from the revised version, but changes bar 4 rhythmically in a way that corresponds with neither version. This particular bar is exactly the same in both versions (see Example 3.5) but Horowitz changes the right hand G quaver to a crotchet so the right hand A falls together with the right hand D and left hand F-natural on the fourth beat (I have transcribed this in Example 3.6). In changing this, the rhythm corresponds more closely with the following bridge - between the second and third movements - where the last beat is a triplet (see Example 3.7).

Example 3.5: Original/revised bar 4 from *Lento*



Example 3.6: Horowitz's version of this bar



Example 3.7: Original and revised bar 4, from the bridge to the final movement *Allegro molto*



Horowitz uses the original score for the first statement of the main theme of this movement, bars 7/4-11/3. For the second statement he uses the revised version, bars 11/4-19. He returns to the original version for the next fifteen bars, 20-35, which incorporates the final statement of this theme - before the development - and an impassioned climax. For the development section of this movement Horowitz plays from the revised version. This is a considerably shorter “development” than the original one in which the ‘prominence of the sonata’s motto prepares the ground for the frenetic vortices of the main dramatic climax, which uses the same dramatic figure and which [the revised version] reduces to an unrelated rhetorical gesture’ (Martyn 1990:322).

Horowitz nevertheless chooses to use this truncated section, bars 36-44. After bar 44 there is a build up to the main climax, and here Horowitz omits some bars; however, it is possible this could be a slip of memory as it is a live performance. Thus from bars 34-53, omitting bars 44-52 in a possible memory-lapse, he remains in the revised version but changes to the original for the explosive climax (bar 63 onwards), which is one bar longer here than in the revised version. Horowitz continues to play the original version to the end of this movement.

3.5 An analysis of the third movement

For the third and final movement, Horowitz also favours the original version. Once again I include the bridge as the start of the movement. He plays the original version from bars 1-44. He then makes a change to the revised version just before a series of chords, and remains with this version from bars 36-73.

Horowitz then does something rather unusual. He plays a section in the original version that was omitted in the revised version, but makes his own alterations to the material. Each time the bar repeats itself he omits the repetition and moves straight on to the next sequence. This is a very simple but effective way of shortening this small section and one wonders why Rachmaninoff never thought of it. In Example 3.8 I have indicated the bars that Horowitz plays.

Horowitz keeps to the original version for the first statement of the second, more lyrical theme of this movement, bars 91-96. Where bars 97-100 should be he inserts the corresponding ones, bars 82-85, from the revised version. Examples 3.9 and 3.10 show the original statement of this theme and the three bars from the revised version that Horowitz chose to use instead of the three original bars.

Horowitz continues to play from the original score from bars 101-165, which includes a third repeat of the second theme that Rachmaninoff edited from the revised version. He then leaves out an entire section, bars 165-186, continuing after this with bars 186-248. For the final statement of the second theme he again substitutes just one bar from the revised version, bar 192, in place of bar 249 in the original version (see Examples 3.11 and 3.12). From here on the scores are the same to the end in both versions and Horowitz makes no further structural changes.



Example 3.8: Original version, bars 83-90

Horowitz plays this bar

83 *f* 84

Horowitz plays this bar

85 86

Horowitz plays this bar

87 *dim.* 88

→ Horowitz plays from here onwards *rit.*

89 90

Example 3.9: Original version, statement of second theme, bars 91-100

a tempo, poco meno mosso



mf 91 92 93 94

From here Horowitz substitutes the revised version 82-85

95 dim. 96 p 97

98 mf 99 100 dim. etc

Example 3.10: Revised version, bars 82-85



p 82 mf 83 mf 84 85 dim.

Example 3.11: Original version, bars 244-250



Musical score for Example 3.11, showing bars 244 through 250. The score is written for piano and includes a handwritten annotation: "Horowitz substitutes this bar with the Revised version bar 192". The score is in G minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *p*.

Example 3.12: Revised version, bar 192



Musical score for Example 3.12, showing bar 192. The score is written for piano and includes a handwritten annotation: "192". The notation includes treble and bass staves with various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *p*.

3.6 Summary

In all three movements Horowitz uses more original material than revised. On the whole, however, it is a distinctive and out of the ordinary combination. Where one expects him to remain with one version - perhaps where he seems to favour one movement's development over the other - he suddenly changes to the other version or leaves out chunks of the score he is busy with. It is a unique blend of the two versions; and it works in performance.

Horowitz is definitely concerned with the overall stage-impression of the work. He never leaves out a virtuoso passage, and makes special effort to include passages in both the first and second movements that play with sonorities for their tone-colour. Horowitz leaving the development section in the revised version to pick up the beautiful sonorities found from bars 77 in the original version but most particularly in bars 82-83, is an example of this in the first movement. It is my belief that in the second movement he includes bars 20-21 and 74-77 of the original version for the same reason; bars 20-21 in the revised version have less tinkling bells and the bars corresponding with 74-77 are reduced by half and therefore not as effective. I have included music examples of these bars with a more in-depth discussion in chapters five and six.

In the final movement Horowitz favours the "bigger and bangier", more dense chordal writing of the original version, but then emphasizes the lyrical second theme by including its third repetition (only in the original version); almost as if to compensate for all the virtuoso thunder and lightning.

Chapter Four: An analysis of Van Cliburn's recorded version as compared to the two versions by Boosey & Hawkes

4.1 An overview of Cliburn's performing career

The story of Van Cliburn's meteoric rise to fame is one that every young and promising exponent of the keyboard aspires to. Cliburn (born Harvey Lavan Cliburn in 1934) has some intriguing details in his story that make it both unique and almost unreal. Unlikely though it may seem, by the age of 17 Cliburn had only had one piano teacher, and even more unlikely is the fact that she was his mother (Steinberg 2001:55).

Rildia Bee O'Bryan Cliburn, as she prefers to be named, was not your average suburban mother who could tickle the ivories a little herself and willingly passed on her scant knowledge to an interested son. On the contrary, she had had the kind of professional training that would have equipped her for her very own career as a concert performer had she chosen it; but with the constraints pressed on women by society at the time, she was gently chided by her conventional parents into a more sedate version: becoming one who would train others to perform...a teacher. She was sent to New York to study with Arthur Friedheim, the acclaimed performer and teacher (Steinberg 2001:55). Friedham had studied under the awe-inspiring Liszt, who we know was a pupil of Czerny. Czerny himself was a pupil of Beethoven...so we find that Cliburn's talent was hardly formed in a vacuum but rather that he had a most impressive piano "pedigree"; and could trace his lineage back to one of the original Classical Masters themselves.

From an early age Van became accustomed to watching his mother give lessons in the afternoon at their house. A bright little thing, he soon realized that her various pupils were getting the time and attention from her that he naturally craved, so after one little student had left he sat down at the piano and began to play the boy's last piece by ear, finding it note by note on the keyboard. It was at this point that Mrs Cliburn realized she had a budding pianist in the house (Chasins 1959:34). Aged three, he set himself the goal of becoming his mother's best pupil, to win all that pride and approval that good work brought from her. Cliburn once said that he prompted

his mother to begin teaching him, “I guess I thought if she could teach everybody else in the block she could certainly teach me” (Chasins 1959:35).

Another striking fact in the Cliburn story is that he remembers being sick and left with a baby-sitter while his mother went out to a concert, and being keenly disappointed at having to stay at home because the performer was the great Rachmaninoff, who was already his hero. The singularity of this is not in the recollection of this small childhood disappointment, but in the fact that Cliburn was only five years old at the time; was used to attending concerts regularly with his mother; and had already established Rachmaninoff as an idol - which seems to indicate a rather discerning taste for one so young!

From his debut aged four, Cliburn consistently scooped prestigious awards for himself, most notably the Texas State Prize, winning a performance with the Houston Symphony Orchestra: the National Festival Award, which entitled him to a recital in Carnegie Hall: and the Leventritt Award in 1954, which carried various performances as part of its prize. Naturally Cliburn received some notice - which resulted in performances - from all this winning of public contests, but it wasn't enough. By 1957 his bookings for concert dates started to wane, a result of the way in which the concert scene was run by big-money managers in America at the time. Abram Chasins elucidates:

Any artist who is allowed to build a public – no matter how modest – any public that could become *his* public, might impede the assembly-line operations [of corporate music managers]. Requests for his re-appearance may cause embarrassment when management prefers to use the date otherwise; building a following permits an artist to acquire bargaining power [...] and he may even ask for a well-merited fee-hike, which would make him harder and harder to sell and within the budget of fewer and fewer towns. [...] In the concert business of the United States there is room at the top, which the filler artist can rarely reach from his pigeon-hole, and at the bottom [...] In between is No Man's Land. And that is precisely the situation that the majority of our finest pianists have had to face (Chasins 1959:79).

This was certainly true in Van Cliburn's case, but not enough so to merit Shostakovich's astonishing statement after the Tchaikovsky victory that Cliburn had “earned his first wide and entirely deserved recognition among us here in Moscow” (Chasins 1959:63). In his book entitled *The Van Cliburn Legend* (1959), Abram Chasins explores some of the “myths”

surrounding Cliburn - one of which is that he was completely unheard-of and unknown in the United States before being shot to the top in Russia. Chasins cites the many awards and prizes as well as the various concert dates Cliburn procured as proof that he was indeed a recognized musical and artistic success long before Moscow, but acknowledges that there were some basic flaws in the management of artists then which perhaps prevented him from carving out a more conspicuous niche for himself before international fame (Chasins 1959:63).

Nevertheless, no one can deny that it was his popular and unanimously-voted win at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow 1958 that made him a household name. His prize-winning programme, consisting of the Tchaikovsky B-flat minor and Rachmaninoff D minor concertos, would later become his signature programme and his recordings of these works his most popular-selling discs (Steinberg 2001:55).

Cliburn returned home after his fabulous victory a “hero of the Cold War, an American who played the piano better than the Russians” (Dubal 1989:72). No wonder he made front page headlines! Cliburn was also given a ticker-tape parade through New York City; a justly deserved raise in fee; and masses of publicity. What he was not given, however, was a period of grace in which he could develop from a young - though supremely gifted - artist into a mature musician of caliber. The 24-year old ran from concert to concert, often presenting the same programme season to season simply because the public didn’t care to give him the time he desperately needed to learn new repertoire; to study more, think more.

By the early sixties it became obvious that Cliburn’s playing was deteriorating at the same pace as his frenetic concert schedule. Always commended for his beautiful golden tone and his grandeur and warmth in romantic repertoire; he became increasingly criticized for a harsh, unmelodious sound; unnecessary affectations; stodgy tempi; and a loss of freshness (Steinberg 2001:55).

In 1962 he established the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Fort Worth, Texas, whose first winner was a fellow American and Leventritt winner, Ralph Votapek (Schonberg 1978:427). The competition is still running today and is regarded as one of the most gruelling contests in the international arena. Cliburn, however, stopped playing. He took a prolonged

sabbatical, returning to the stage only in 1989 with a glittering comeback-tour of Russia; but has not been able to re-launch his career on its previous scale (Steinberg 2001:55). Though he continues to concertize every so often, he will never again experience the mass adulation and public clamour for his appearance that 1958 brought. He has made some worthwhile recordings, and his interpretation of Rachmaninoff's second piano sonata is regarded as one of the definitive recordings of this work (Dubal 1989:385). Martyn (1990:323) goes so far as to credit Van Cliburn with giving impetus to the revival of the second sonata by reintroducing the work to audiences in Moscow in the 1960's.

4.2 An analysis of the first movement

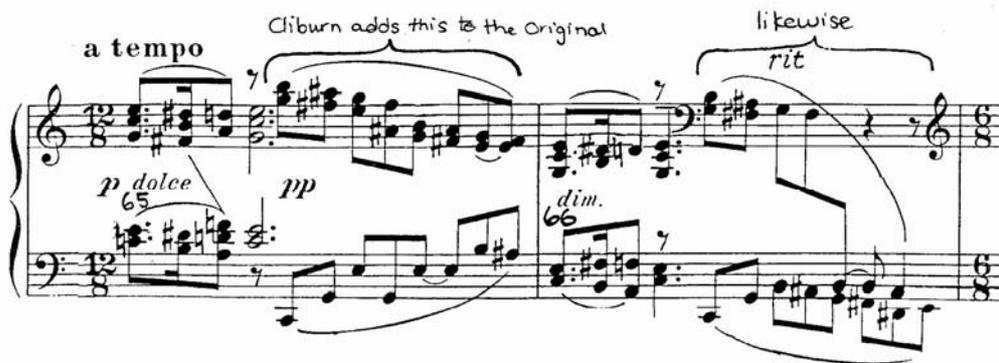
Cliburn bases his interpretation on the original score, making use of the revised version for a few brief passages. He starts with the original version and continues with it until bar 82/2. In this bar he substitutes the second to fourth beats with those from bar 65 in the revised version and does the same in the following bar, with the revised bar 66's second to fourth beats replacing part of bar 83. The following example (4.1) shows the original version bars 82-84. In Example 4.2 I have indicated the portion added from the revised version.

Example 4.1: Original version, bars 82-83



The image shows a musical score for two staves (piano and bass). The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'a tempo' and the dynamics are 'p dolce' and 'dim.'. There are annotations: 'Cliburn removes this section' with a bracket over the second and third beats of bar 83, and 'likewise' with a bracket over the second and third beats of bar 84. There are also 'Red.' and asterisk symbols at the bottom of the staves.

Example 4.2: Revised version, bars 65-66



Cliburn continues with the revised version for the development section, bars 67-94, but adds two bars of bell-chords that Rachmaninoff deleted in the revised version (Example 4.3 illustrates the two additional bars that are removed in the revised version). He reverts to the original score from the recapitulation up to bar 180, where he changes the last left hand quaver B-flat to the two-note chord found in the revised version, F and B-flat, and adds the two right hand semi-quaver figures of this bar that correspond with this chord but transposes them an octave up to join smoothly with the right hand figures in the original version which are higher here.

Example 4.3: Original version, bars 113-119



The musical score for Example 4.3 consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system covers bars 113 and 114, marked *ff pesante*. The second system covers bars 114, 115, and 116, with an annotation for "Additional bar 1" above bar 116. The third system covers bars 117, 118, and 119, with annotations for "Additional bar 2" above bar 117, *rit.* above bar 117, and *marc.* above bar 118. The right hand part features a sequence of chords with a melodic line, while the left hand provides a steady bass accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major, and the time signature is 4/4.

Now he faces the problem of how to end the sequence of these right hand figures. Cliburn solves this by ending the sequence on an F, instead of the B-flat Rachmaninoff indicates in both versions. Example 4.4 shows the original version of these bars, while Example 4.5 shows the revised version. For Example 4.6 I have transcribed Van Cliburn's combination of these two versions with his own ending from his recording. Cliburn completes the movement with the last two bars of the revised score.

Example 4.4: Original version, bars 179-181



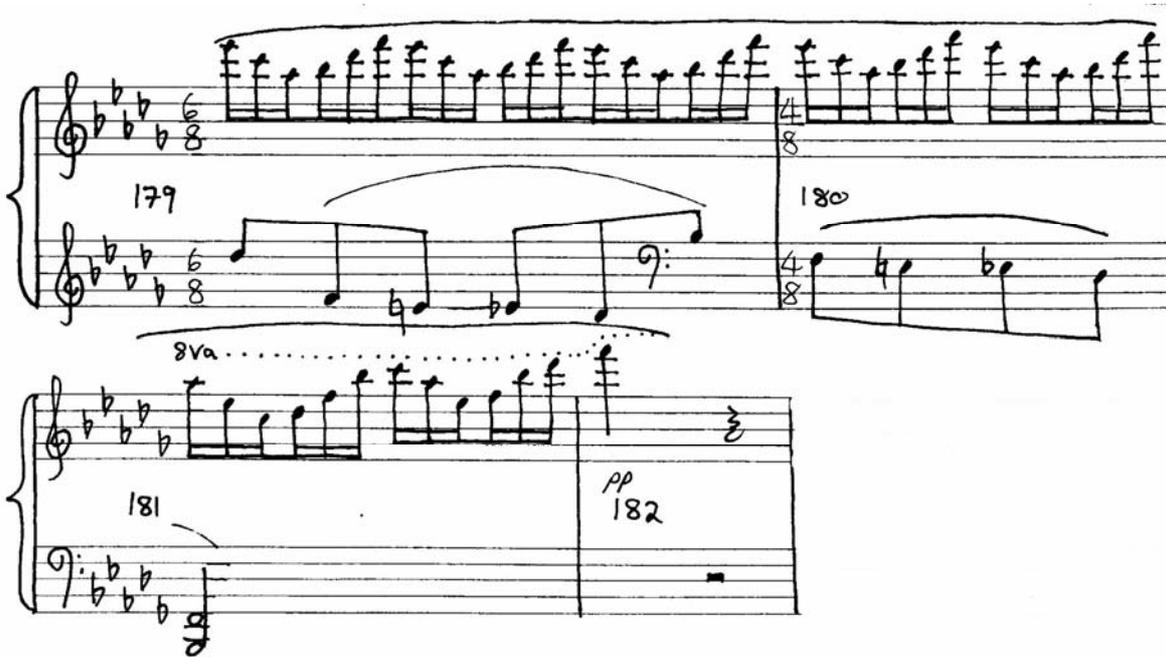
Musical score for Example 4.4, Original version, bars 179-181. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/8 time. It consists of three measures. The first measure (179) features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. The second measure (180) continues the arpeggiated pattern in the treble. The third measure (181) shows the treble clef with a final chord and a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo). A *m.g.* (mezzo-giochiato) marking is present above the treble staff in the third measure.

Example 4.5: Revised version, bars 134-136



Musical score for Example 4.5, Revised version, bars 134-136. The score is in G major and 4/8 time. It consists of three measures. The first measure (134) features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. The second measure (135) features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment, marked *perdendo*. The third measure (136) features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment, marked *m.g.* and *pp*.

Example 4.6: Cliburn's version of these bars



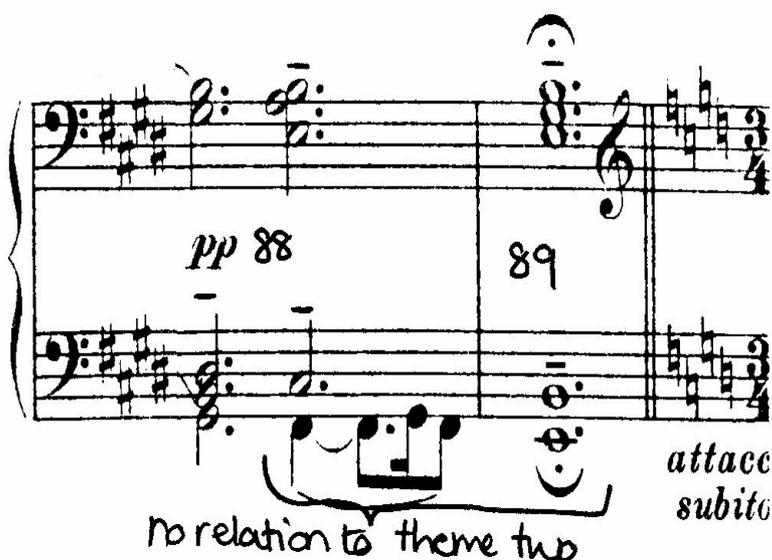
Musical score for Example 4.6, Cliburn's version of these bars. The score is in G major and 4/8 time. It consists of three measures. The first measure (179) features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. The second measure (180) features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. The third measure (181) features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment, marked *pp* and *182*. A *8va* marking is present above the treble staff in the third measure.

4.3 An analysis of the second movement

Once again Cliburn starts the movement from the original score. He remains with this version for all the transformations of the main theme and for the complete development - which contains more material from the first movement than the development in the revised version – up to bar 75. In bar 76 he changes to the revised score bar 64, altering the last two quavers B and C-sharp to E and F-sharp to form an unbroken melodic line leading to the melody of the next bar, which starts on G-sharp.

For the next bar (bar 65) he continues with the revised version, preferring to use this statement of the second theme of the *Allegro agitato* than the reference to the main lyrical theme of this movement. This only lasts for a bar and a half before Cliburn reverts to the original version, neatly sliding the last two beats of the original bar 79 into the revised bar 66. From 79-88/3 he continues with this version but in the dying moments returns to the revised version - which ends slightly differently with a pointed reference once again to the second theme of the first movement. Having already included one declaration of this theme, it would not make sense to leave out this final reminder, so the last two bars are played from the revised score (bars 75-76, see Examples 4.7 and 4.8).

Example 4.7: Original version, final two bars, 88-89

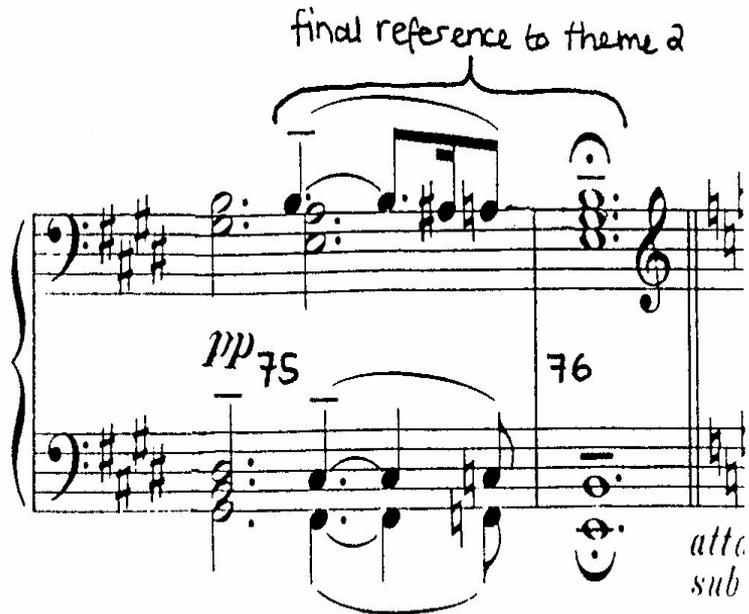


pp 88 89

no relation to theme two

attaca subito

Example 4.8: Revised version, final two bars, 75-76



final reference to theme 2

mp 75 76

atc
sub

4.4 An analysis of the third movement

Van Cliburn's performance of this movement is once again based on the original version. He only departs from this in one brief instance: for bars 226/3-232 of the original version he substitutes bars 171/3-177 of the revised version. Examples 4.9 and 4.10 illustrate the differences between the two versions of this passage.

Example 4.9: Original version, bars 225-232

Cliburn substitutes the revised version from here on



225 *ff* 226 *p*

227 228 229 *mf*

230 231 232

Example 4.10: Revised version, bars 170-177



For the rest of this movement Cliburn does not deviate from the original score at all.

4.4 Summary

Cliburn's performance is nailed firmly to the original score; he does not use it as merely a point of departure, but as a foundation. The anonymous author of the cover notes in his compact disc of this work states that Cliburn remains true to the original score except in a few instances where he has utilized materials composed for the revised version that are consistent with Rachmaninoff's harmonic style in 1913 (when the sonata was composed).

While this may be true of the last movement where he plays almost verbatim from the 1913 score, it is my opinion that Cliburn must have had some other criteria in his selection of materials for the first two movements - as well as bearing in mind that he wanted an overall sound consistent with Rachmaninoff's first thoughts for the piece. He goes out of his way to include as much development of the various themes as possible. In the *Allegro agitato* he



moves from the original to the revised version to pick up two bars of continued development of the second theme instead of continuing in the original version where the corresponding material is simply for sonorous effect and does not add to the structure or development of the movement (refer to Examples 4.1 and 4.2).

He certainly did not choose to include a reference to a theme from the first movement in the *Lento* merely because it seemed to fit Rachmaninoff's earlier musical language; for wouldn't Rachmaninoff's original thought here - to return to the movement's own main theme - be best? It is my opinion that these instances are part of a deliberate and carefully planned performance strategy to include thematic references in order to enhance the structure of the piece; and to ensure the cohesion of all three movements into a integrated whole.

Chapter Five: A comparison of the recordings by Horowitz and Cliburn

5.1 An analysis of the first movement

Both performers start with the original version as a point of departure, and end with the new ending Rachmaninoff wrote for the revised version, which emphasizes the harmonic tension underlying the movement. Though choosing to start and end in the same way, their selection of material for much of the movement is different.

After the second theme Horowitz changes to the revised version for a section building up to the development (bars 52-63), but reverts to the original version for the entire development section (from bar 77); while Cliburn remains in the original version (with the exception of one or two bars) until just before the development section where he then changes to the revised version (bar 66 onwards). Admittedly, this is not as vastly different as it sounds at first, as the development section in both versions is almost the same, except for the reduction of one small section and the removal of two bars in the revised version - which prolong the dramatic climax just before the recapitulation (refer to Example 4.3). Examples 5.1 and 5.2 will show the section that was condensed for the revised version, compared to the original version. Both performers choose to include the two bars of additional chords that were deleted from the revised version as redundant. Horowitz remains with the original version of which they are a part and Cliburn includes them in the revised version he is playing from at this point.

Cliburn remains with the original version through the recapitulation (starting in bar 121) and only changes to the revised version for those last few bars. Horowitz, however, selects the recapitulation from the revised version (starting in bar 97), remaining with this version until the restatement of the second theme, at which point he reverts to the original version once again for his interpretation (from bar 134), ending with the two final bars of the revised version.

Example 5.1: Original version, bars 91-98



Musical score for Example 5.1, bars 91-98. The score is written for piano and features a complex rhythmic and melodic structure. The notation includes various dynamics such as *f*, *mf*, *p*, *m.g.*, *m.d.*, and *dim.*. The score is divided into measures 91 through 98, with some measures containing multiple notes and rests. The key signature is one flat, and the time signature is 3/4.

Example 5.2: Revised version, bars 73-75



Musical score for Example 5.2, bars 73-75. The score is written for piano and features a complex rhythmic and melodic structure. The notation includes various dynamics such as *p* and *leggiero*. The score is divided into measures 73 through 75, with some measures containing multiple notes and rests. The key signature is one flat, and the time signature is 3/4. The text "condensed, revised version" is written above the score.

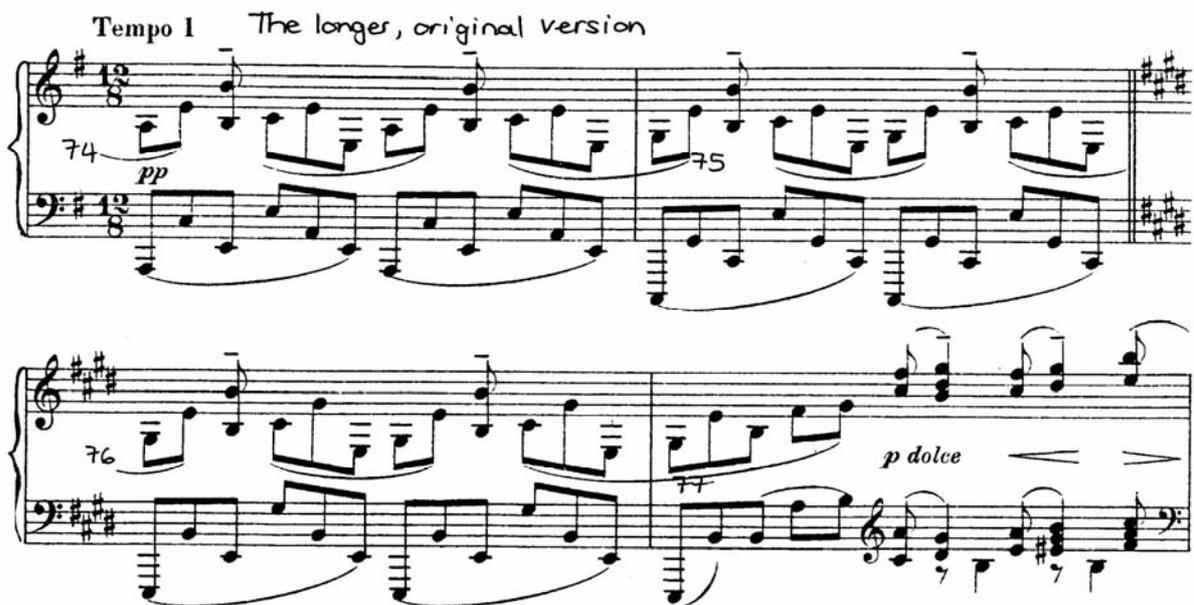
5.2 An analysis of the second movement

For the second movement, the pianists also choose different selections from the two versions. Horowitz starts with the revised link, while Cliburn prefers the original. Horowitz uses the revised version for the second statement of the main theme, bars 11/4-19, but apart from this he keeps to the original version until the development section, at which point he changes to the revised version (the revised development is from bars 36-62). Cliburn also makes use of the original version for the statement of the first theme and its transformations, but remains with it for the original development (bars 36-73) which is longer.

We therefore have two contrasting developments. However, both performers choose the original version for the few bars after the cadenza's climax. This section is extended in the original, and because of this the solemn bell-like sonorities form a smoother transition between the storm and the calm that follows. Examples 5.3 and 5.4 illustrate the difference in the length of this section between the two versions.

Example 5.3: Original version, bars 74-77

Tempo 1 The longer, original version



74 *pp* 75

76 *p dolce* 77

Example 5.4: Revised version, bars 63-64, briefer in this version



Horowitz continues with the original, preferring to play a return to the theme of this movement than include the second theme of the previous movement that occurs in the revised version. Cliburn does the opposite. He chooses to include the thematic reference to previous material, but then reverts to the original version for the rest of the movement in order not to lose the last appearance of the movement's main theme either - which would have been the case had he remained in the revised version. Example 5.5 illustrates the original ending of the sonata, with the return of the main theme highlighted, while Example 5.6 illustrates the revised version, highlighting the occurrences of the second theme of the first movement.

However, as he has already included one reference to the second theme of the previous movement, he slips slyly back into the final bars of the revised version for the close of the movement to catch the dying breath of this theme. In the original version the ending is similar but the final allusion to the second theme from the *Allegro agitato* is absent (refer to Example 5.5).



Example 5.5: Original version, bars 76-89

Return of main theme, Lento

76 *p dolce*

77

78 *mf*

79

80 *dolce*

81 *p*

82

83 *dim.*

84 *pp*

85

86

87

88 *pppp*

89

attacc subito

thematically unrelated



Example 5.6: Revised version, bars 63-76

Tempo I

63 *pp*

64

Second theme of first movement etc

65 *p dolce*

66 *p*

67 *mf*

68 *p*

69 *p*

70

71 *pp*

72 *p*

74

75 *pp*

76

attaca subito

5.3 An analysis of the third movement

The two performers' interpretations for this movement are distinctly different. While Horowitz selects a good sample of material from both versions, Cliburn remains with the original version for the entire movement with the exception of a few bars included from the revised version, as mentioned in 4.3. Horowitz does, however, utilize more material from the original version than from the revised version, and with good reason. It seems that in this movement Rachmaninoff was his most severe in editing. He cut the length of the movement by a third and deleted four whole pages from the development section (Martyn 1990:322).

One section he deleted, bars 166-200, is important for several reasons. It contains echoes of the first movement as well as a range of beautiful bell sounds. According to Martyn (1990:322), by his removal of this section, Rachmaninoff changes a fresh presentation of the main theme of the sonata into a mere fleeting suggestion before the re-appearance of the second theme, and in doing so impairs the balance of the movement and damages the cyclic form of the sonata as a whole. Example 5.7 shows the “fleeting suggestion” of the main theme of the sonata that has to stand in place of all the thematic reference and development that Rachmaninoff eliminated; and how woefully inadequate these two bars seem for the job!

Example 5.7: Revised version, bars 178-179





Both performers have obviously felt the chasm the removal of this section leaves in the sonata's structure and have included it, Cliburn in its entirety and Horowitz in part, only omitting some twenty bars (165-186).

It seems unusual that Cliburn does not play this movement's main theme from the revised version, as in this version the initial falling arpeggio-figure is altered to resemble the first theme of the sonata. In the light of his inclusion of material that further develops themes and that reinforces the overall cyclic nature of the work in the previous movements, it seems an oversight on his part to leave out this rather important allusion now (refer to Examples 2.8 and 2.9 for the different openings in the two versions).

5.4 Summary

On the whole, Cliburn's is a more conservative attempt to reconcile the two versions. He leans heavily on the original score, only making brief forays into the superficially-tamed jungle of the revised version for material. Horowitz, on the other hand, is much more innovative in his amalgamation of the two versions. At times he even opts to revise sections of material himself to shorten it (consult Example 3.8), instead of discarding it entirely as Rachmaninoff did.

I would loosely summarise Cliburn's approach to this work as structural. In various instances already brought to light, he has selected material that positively reinforces the cyclic nature of the sonata again and again, over material that merely adds to the dramatic effect. One must also bear in mind, having said that, that his is a mature and intelligent musical mind, one that has naturally considered various other criteria when bringing to life his conception of the sonata. His is not a one-sided, analytical, or clinical approach, but a carefully designed and executed plan to most effectively convey this work to an audience who might be prejudiced against it. This would, of necessity, include a consideration of the effects of sonority and pianistic "fireworks" that would ensure a favourable reception from most audiences.



This is what no doubt influenced Cliburn in his choice of certain material from the revised version that is simply more effective in its revised form (refer to Examples 4.9 and 4.10), when Rachmaninoff had tried his hand at writing it for a second time.

Horowitz's approach is more complicated to assess. While it certainly is the expression of a personality full of contradictions, and as complex as Rachmaninoff's textures are thick, it is also the conception of a musical and artistic genius: whimsical, demanding, unique, sometimes overbearing, but always convincing purely by the force of its delivery and the impact it makes on the listener. By this I mean that sometimes we forget we are supposed to be listening to Rachmaninoff's sonata in the overwhelming awareness of Horowitz, the performer. In the words of David Ewen (1946:72), 'his personal color is spread with generous brushstrokes across the canvas of [the] music'.

Generally, Horowitz has selected a variety of material; sometimes for its sound-effect, sometimes for its scintillating virtuosity, sometimes to tighten the structure of the work, and sometimes just because he can. Having the composer's express approval to back him up, he is free to be more imaginative in his selection and combination of material than Cliburn.

Whether approaching the work from a structural angle or with a view to the most communicative and impressive performance, some of Rachmaninoff's revisions have only served to detract from the overall appeal of the work instead of facilitating, or enhancing, the listening and performing experience. It is with this view that I will examine the performers' selection of material in the following chapter.

Chapter Six: Material most suited to performance as selected by Horowitz and Cliburn

Horowitz and Cliburn

6.1 Technical demands

As is to be expected from any true proficient, neither Horowitz nor Cliburn has considered technical matters as a criterion in the selection of material for their performances. I have not found one instance where either pianist leaves out a section because of its complexity, dense texture, or the demands it places on the performer's technique.

Naturally, the pianist considering this piece as an addition to their repertoire would have to have substantial technical equipment to even consider the work. It is one of considerable difficulty for player and listener; but also one repaying study (Friskin & Freundlich 1973:156). However, if some trifling technical difficulty still remains, but the performer would nevertheless like to attempt the piece, I would recommend the revised version. The somewhat thinner texture means that the repeated chordal passages are slightly simplified. Not strictly speaking any easier than the original version, the revised version becomes less demanding on the performer merely by having fewer notes to grasp for each chord, and fewer bars to play with its shorter length.

Examples 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 are some illustrations, from the first and last movements, of the more grateful writing - yet just as effective - in the revised version, compared to the original version.

Example 6.1: Original version, bars 0-2, *Allegro agitato*



The musical score for Example 6.1 shows the original version of bars 0-2. It is in 4/4 time and marked *Allegro agitato.* The score is written for piano and features a complex texture with multiple layers of chords and arpeggios. The dynamics range from *m.d. veloce* to *ff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingering numbers (1, 2, 3, 6, 7).

Example 6.2 Revised version, bars 0-2, *Allegro agitato*



Musical score for Example 6.2, Revised version, bars 0-2, *Allegro agitato*. The score is in 4/4 time and features a right hand with a thinner texture and a left hand with a more active line. The tempo is *Allegro agitato*. The score includes dynamic markings such as *m.d.*, *veloce*, *ff*, and *m.g.*. The right hand part is marked with *Right hand much thinner texture* and *Op. 36 (1931 Edition)*. The left hand part is marked with *m.g.* and *m.d.*. The score includes a fingering diagram for the left hand and a *cresc.* marking.

Example 6.3 Original version, bars 223-225, *Allegro molto*



Musical score for Example 6.3, Original version, bars 223-225, *Allegro molto*. The score is in 4/4 time and features a right hand with a thicker texture and a left hand with a more active line. The tempo is *Allegro molto*. The score includes dynamic markings such as *cresc.* and *ff*. The right hand part is marked with *cresc.* and the left hand part is marked with *ff*. The score includes a *cresc.* marking.

Example 6.4 Revised version, bars 168-170, *Allegro molto*



Musical score for Example 6.4, Revised version, bars 168-170, *Allegro molto*. The score is in 4/4 time and features a right hand with a thicker texture and a left hand with a more active line. The tempo is *Allegro molto*. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* and *p*. The right hand part is marked with *f* and the left hand part is marked with *p*. The score includes a *f* marking.

6.2 Texture

Both pianists start with the original version for the thicker-textured chords that result in a richer pianistic sound (refer to Examples 6.1 and 6.2). Cliburn and Horowitz's preference for the note-dense material of the original version for the body of the sonata confirms the fact that this is what is most effective in a performance of this work. In my opinion, this is because the thicker writing is more consistent with Rachmaninoff's style of composition when he wrote the sonata, and, by and large, both pianists have endeavored to maintain this texture throughout. Any pianist wishing to perform this work would have to consider this factor in their selection of material.

Cliburn even chooses to incorporate some of the revised version's material where it is more solidly constructed than the equivalent material of the original version. He substitutes bars 171-177 of the revised version into bars 226-232 of the original version. The double-note thirds in the right hand, combined with the almost continuous triplet figures in the left hand, provide a better foundation for this skipping passage in the higher range of the piano than the original version supplies. Examples 6.5 and 6.6 illustrate the difference between the two versions of this passage.



Example 6.5: Original version, bars 226-232, *Allegro molto*

Musical score for Example 6.5, bars 226-232, *Allegro molto*. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system contains bars 226, 227, 228, and 229. The second system contains bars 230, 231, and 232. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note triplets and slurs. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and triplets. Dynamics include *ff*, *p*, and *mf*. A first ending bracket is shown above bars 226-229.

Examples 6.6: Revised version, bars 171-177, *Allegro molto*

Musical score for Examples 6.6, bars 171-177, *Allegro molto*. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system contains bars 171, 172, and 173. The second system contains bars 174, 175, 176, and 177. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth-note triplets and slurs, with a handwritten annotation "Right hand double-thirds" above bar 172. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and triplets, with a handwritten annotation "left hand triplets" above bar 175. Dynamics include *f*, *p*, and *mf*. A first ending bracket is shown above bars 171-173.

6.3 Structure

As I have already noted, both pianists begin the sonata with the original version. They continue with this score to include a section, from bar 51 onwards, of roughly ten bars that Rachmaninoff removed in the revised version. This section contains a mini-climax that culminates in the ringing bell-chords of bar 62 in the original version. The falling sequences of interlocking chords in bars 60-61 foreshadow the chords of the main climax of the movement (just before the recapitulation) and also the final ending of the entire sonata. A corresponding passage later in this movement, bars 157-158, is also included by both performers (see Examples 6.7, 6.8, and 6.9). Both Horowitz and Cliburn have seen the significance of this passage: with its foreshadowing of material, thematic importance – the theme it precedes is a prominent one, and effective pianistic style, it is no wonder it has been incorporated by both pianists.

Example 6.7: Original version, bars 60-61, interlocking chords, *Allegro agitato*



Example 6.8: Original version, bars 112-116, chords preceding the recapitulation, *Allegro agitato*

Musical score for Example 6.8, bars 112-116. The score is in piano (piano) and consists of two systems. The first system covers bars 112, 113, and 114. The second system covers bars 114, 115, and 116. The tempo is *Allegro agitato*. The score features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. The dynamic marking *ff pesante* is present in bar 113. The key signature is B-flat major. The score ends with the word "etc" in bar 116.

Example 6.9: Original version, bars 291-297, final bars of the sonata, *Allegro molto*

Musical score for Example 6.9, bars 291-297. The score is in piano (piano) and consists of two systems. The first system covers bars 291, 292, and 293. The second system covers bars 294, 295, 296, and 297. The tempo is *Allegro molto*. The score features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and rests. The dynamic marking *ff* is present in bar 291. The key signature is B-flat major. The score ends with a double bar line in bar 297.

In the second movement Cliburn chooses the original development over the much shorter revised development. The development in the original version is largely built on themes of the first movement and there is no doubt that Cliburn chooses to keep to the original version with this in mind. Horowitz selects his material for this movement with a different view. He plays the shorter development, and, as we will see in the following paragraphs, selects the simpler of the two endings Rachmaninoff wrote for this movement. These choices, when viewed together as reflecting Horowitz's design for the movement as a whole, serve to tighten the structure of the movement by shortening the B section – not introducing too much new material - and returning to the A section after the cadenza.

The second movement's concluding section is surprisingly different in both versions, influencing the form of the movement (mentioned in 2.2.3). In the original version the coda brings the main theme of the movement back to the listener's remembrance with its gentle falling sequences. In the revised version, however, there is statement of the second theme of the first movement before the sequences appear. The melody of these sequences is now 'adjusted' so that it reflect the theme from the first movement that it follows, rather than the main theme of the second movement (refer to Examples 5.5 and 5.6).

This causes a predicament for the performer. Either one chooses the original version of the movement, ending with a return of the main theme to create a cosy ternary form but sacrificing the overall cyclic structure of the work (by the absence of the second theme from the first movement); or one chooses the revised version, which contains this second theme but doesn't convincingly return to its own main theme. This option reinforces the cyclic nature of the sonata as a whole but impairs the structure of the movement.

Horowitz votes for the original version and sacrifices the overall cyclic nature of the work, but Cliburn shows a stroke of brilliance in his solution to this thorny problem. He returns to the revised version to pick up the reference to the second theme, but then, with only a tiny amount of tampering eases back into the original version for the falling sequences that revisit the main theme of the movement. In conclusion, he returns to the revised version to pick up the very last reference to the second theme in the final two bars, which it would have been strange to omit having already made a detour to include this theme once. In this way Cliburn ensures the best of

both worlds. He reinforces the cyclic nature of the work as a whole, but also strengthens the structure of this movement by keeping its ternary form.

In the *Allegro molto* both performers select much of their material from the original version. Cliburn plays this movement almost in its entirety from the original score, while Horowitz does utilize some of the revised version's material but incorporates much of what Rachmaninoff deleted from the development section of the movement. I have already detailed the importance of this material, see 5.3, and will only add that the original version has a more intricate structure, one that is compromised when playing directly from the revised version. In this movement especially, a pianist should carefully consider each entry of the two main themes of the movement, as well as any material formed from themes from the first movement, to allow this final rondo to be as effective as possible, structurally, in performance.

6.4 Sonority

There are numerous instances where both performers show consideration for the aural impression a given bar will make, and take into account the sonority or tonal-effect of certain passages before either selecting or rejecting them. In what appears to be an uncharacteristic move that compromises sonority in the first movement, Horowitz changes to the revised version for a series of chords that are written much fuller in the original version - bar 52-53 in the revised version and bar 62-63 in the original (see Examples 6.10 and 6.11).

Example 6.10: Original version, bars 62-63, *Allegro agitato*



The image shows a musical score for piano, specifically the original version of bars 62-63 from the *Allegro agitato* movement. The score is written in G major and 2/4 time. It consists of two staves: a right-hand staff and a left-hand staff. The right-hand staff is marked with a dynamic of *molto marcato* and contains the text "fuller chords". The left-hand staff has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The score shows a series of chords in the right hand, with some accidentals (flats) in the original version. The left hand has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The score is marked with a dynamic of *molto marcato* and contains the text "fuller chords".

Example 6.11: Revised version, bars 52-53, *Allegro agitato*



However, when one considers that these chords are structurally important as an appearance of the main theme of the movement; that they recur four times throughout the movement; and that excepting this one isolated instance where they are set as semi-quaver figures, they occur only as crotchets or quavers; one can understand why Horowitz chooses to sacrifice the more superficially glamorous writing of the original version for the structurally safer and more deeply sonorous revised version.

The crotchet or quaver rhythm that Rachmaninoff favoured for all the other instances of this passage, in both versions, allows the chords to ring out with more resonance - something just not possible when playing a succession of semiquavers. By choosing to play these bars from the revised version, where they match more closely with the other occurrences of the passage throughout the movement, Horowitz ensures structural unity and more effective sonority. The following examples (6.12-6.15) show each occurrence of this theme throughout the first movement of the original version.

Example 6.12: Bars 23-26, *Allegro agitato*



Tempo I.

23 *ff m.d.*

24 *m.d.*

25 *m.d.*

26 *m.d.*

The score for Example 6.12 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system covers bars 23 and 24. Bar 23 is marked *ff m.d.* and features a dense texture of chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. Bar 24 is marked *m.d.* and continues the melodic line with some chromaticism. The second system covers bars 25 and 26. Bar 25 is marked *m.d.* and shows a continuation of the melodic and harmonic material. Bar 26 is also marked *m.d.* and concludes the passage with a final chord. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor) and the time signature is 4/4. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Dynamic markings include *ff* and *m.d.* (mezzo-dolce).

Example 6.13: Bars 62-63, *Allegro agitato*



62 *molto marcato*

63

The score for Example 6.13 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system covers bars 62 and 63. Bar 62 is marked *molto marcato* and features a dense texture of chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. Bar 63 is marked *molto marcato* and continues the melodic and harmonic material. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor) and the time signature is 4/4. Dynamic markings include *molto marcato*.

Example 6.14: Bars 121-124, *Allegro agitato*



Example 6.15: Bars 163-164, *Allegro agitato*



Horowitz also selects passages in the original version purely for their colour-washing effect. One such passage is a section from bars 82 to 84 of the original version. Most of each bar has no thematic relevance apart from the first two beats. In the revised version, the remaining beats are thematically significant, which is why Cliburn chooses to include them; from a structural point of view they add to the development of the sonata. But here Horowitz is unique in that he prefers to include these bars merely for the beauty of their sound. And what a beautiful sound it

is! The eerie right hand quavers with the mysterious overlapping left hand B-flat, tolling out in mournful insistence. These bars are certainly included by Horowitz for their tonal effect. Examples 6.16 and 6.17 will highlight the difference between the two versions in this section.

Example 6.16: Revised version, bars 65-66, *Allegro agitato*

Example 6.16: Revised version, bars 65-66, *Allegro agitato*. The score shows two staves. Annotations include: *a tempo*, *p dolce* (bar 65), *pp* (bar 66), *dim.* (bar 66), *thematic significance* (bracketed over bars 65-66), and *likewise rit* (bracketed over bars 65-66).

Example 6.17: Original version, bars 82-84, *Allegro agitato*

Example 6.17: Original version, bars 82-84, *Allegro agitato*. The score shows two staves. Annotations include: *a tempo*, *p dolce* (bar 82), *largo un poco* (bar 83), *dim.* (bar 83), *chosen for tonal effect* (bracketed over bars 82-83), *etc* (bar 83), *a tempo* (bar 84), *rit.* (bar 84), and *pp* (bar 84).

In the second movement the statement of the main theme is largely the same in either version, but Horowitz and Cliburn still favour the original. In the original version there are certain bars that give the impression of a myriad chiming bells, and when these are reduced in the revised version, they become less effective. Two such bars that both performers include, so as not to lose their striking bell-effects, are bars 20-21 (see Example 6.18 and 6.19).

As already mentioned in 5.3 (refer to Examples 5.3 and 5.4), both performers opt for the extended transition from the climax to the calm of the coda. The solemn tolling of the deep bass tones makes a resonant bridge between the passion of the cadenza and the subdued ending of the movement, and the two bars this section is reduced to in the revised version are ineffectual in achieving this.

Example 6.18: Original version, bars 20-22, *Lento*



The image displays a musical score for two systems of music. The first system, labeled '20', shows a piano part with a treble and bass clef. The treble clef part features a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the bass clef part has a rhythmic accompaniment. A bracket labeled 'Bell effects etc' spans across the first two measures. The second system, labeled '21' and '22', continues the piano part. The treble clef part has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and the bass clef part has a rhythmic accompaniment. A bracket labeled 'Bell effects etc' spans across the first two measures of this system. The second measure of the second system is marked with 'pp' (pianissimo).

Example 6.19: Revised version, bars 20-22, *Lento*



I would therefore advise the pianist considering this work not to lose sight of the overall aural impression the sonata gives. Its super-abundance of tolling, booming, pealing, ringing, chiming, and tinkling bells can never be underestimated, and as these bell-effects play such a central role in the fabric of the work it would be wise not to reject material that displays any aspect of their many-hued voices to advantage.

Chapter Seven: Summary and conclusions

Upon reaching the end of my assessments and comparisons of both scores and recordings alike, I have found myself able to draw some conclusions. Horowitz uses a thorough blend of material from both scores, while Cliburn utilizes more of the original material, but does include material from the revised version, and even, on occasion, alters both scores to form a smoother transition between versions.

The fact that the two performers show similarities in their selection of material for these recordings (they both take the bulk of their “supplies” from the original version - in all three movements) implies that the two pianists had similar goals in mind when making their selections, and not that Horowitz had all the advantage through his relationship with the composer. It also leads us to draw some conclusions about the revised version. It is evident that this version is simply not as successful as the original. In spite of the pruned texture and removal of redundant, doubled notes; these prominent artists both fundamentally prefer to use the more complex polyphony and thematically-intricate material of the original score. Add to this the authors and musicians I have already quoted stating their preference for the 1913 version, and we have a strong body of evidence suggesting the sonata would have been better off had Rachmaninoff remained with his first ideas for the work.

Cliburn, without having had the input of the composer’s views on, and plans for, the work, still managed to select an entirely logical and sensible blend of material that makes for compelling listening. At times his selection even mirrors Horowitz’s closely. What are the factors that have enabled him to select his material so judiciously?

The answer to this can be found in the criteria both artists considered when selecting material. I believe any true musician of caliber can compile an equally credible version, by considering certain characteristic features and basic structural elements of the work and striving to portray these in the best possible way. In chapter six I highlighted these elements of structure and performance that any sound musician would take into account when attempting an alternative version of this work. The cyclic structure of the work is of paramount importance, as is the inter-relation of themes across all three movements. The bell-effects and overall virtuoso



pianistic style have to be considered as well. If a pianist is willing to make an in-depth study of the work in both its original and revised versions with these factors in mind, I am positive he or she will be able to formulate their own ideas as to the most effective material for performance.

I have also reached the conclusion that there is a fine line between artistry and intellect, and that, as a performer, one should not only think with one's head, but sometimes with one's heart as well. As much as a pianist may wish to convey the skill of the composer in constructing this magnificent work by highlighting each revolution of every theme, it is equally important to consider certain material just for its poetic value. This material need not – not to say that it *does* not - serve any other function, its purpose is to awaken an emotional response within the listener. To my mind this is more important than intimidating the audience with feats of virtuosity; it is this response that the performer awakens within the listener that keeps the audiences coming back to the concert halls year after year.

It would not be possible to create an alternative performance version, as I had originally thought, simply because of the multiple possibilities that exist due to the wealth of material, and the character of each individual performer. In Chapter six I observed that both artists selected material in a way that was unique to their musical experience, and even their personality. This means that, depending on the angle from which each performer wished to consider the work - be it an analytical and structural angle, or with a view to giving a mind-blowing virtuoso performance - there would be new possible combinations of the fabric of composition from either version for each artist that considers the sonata. For as long as there are musical, sensibly intelligent performers wishing to try their hand at this work, there will be new, alternative versions with a view to effective performance.

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APPENDIX A

Rachmaninoff's Piano Sonata no. 2 op. 36:

The original version

(1913)



APPENDIX B

Rachmaninoff's Piano Sonata no. 2 op. 36:

The revised version

(1931)