

**A pedagogical approach to the formulation of fingering
options for selected piano works of Debussy, Scriabin,
Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Bartók, and Prokofiev:
A practice-led study**

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation of piano fingering that can be applied to the practical study of problematic technical material and musical content in selected piano works of Debussy, Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Bartók, and Prokofiev. The appropriate and practical application of piano fingering forms the basis of a sustainable virtuoso piano technique. Most available literature relating to the domain of piano fingering only addresses the basic application thereof. This study aims to present and discuss effective approaches to the formulation of fingering options necessary to surmount musical and pianistic obstacles.

Primary data was collected through the researcher's practical study of the selected piano works, as suggested by the practice-led research design. The main objective was to devise fingering options that complement the composer's indicated musical and pianistic intentions. Additionally, the influence of hand sizes on the appropriate choice of fingering was also investigated. When necessary, secondary movements produced by the wrist and forearms, which complement the suggested fingering options, were discussed.

Taxing pianistic figurations and musical content can successfully be mastered by the employment of proper fingering. Various fingering possibilities should be investigated before deciding on the desired combinations. A thorough study of fingering at the onset of learning new repertoire is essential to achieve freedom in artistic interpretation and technical finesse.

Keywords

Fingering	Pianist	Twentieth Century
Music	Piano	Virtuoso
Pedagogical	Piano Technique	
Performance Practice	Repertoire	

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and rationale

The approach to developing my topic was motivated by a question that fascinates many pianists (professional and amateur), piano teachers, and academics alike — namely, what the necessary fundamental skills may be that an individual must possess to demonstrate virtuosity on the keyboard of the piano. I contend that virtuosity does not merely refer to a display of *bravura* technical abilities. In my view, virtuosity necessarily entails complete control over musical features, a wide range of dynamics and timbres, faultless phrasing, and pellucid articulation combined with effortless finger agility.

The question mentioned above has many meretricious answers. Prominent pianist-composers including C.P.E. Bach (1714–1788), L. van Beethoven (1770–1827), F. F. Chopin (1810–1849), I. J. Paderewski (1860–1941), L. Godowsky (1870–1938), and others, however, have emphasised the importance of using proper fingering (Wirth, 2007:2). I also consider the appropriate use of fingering a crucial aspect in the development of a proficient piano technique. Chopin believed that fingering forms the basis of good playing (Bar-Niv, 2015:7), a straightforward but compelling statement which, in my observation, is neglected by many piano educators and students.

As an experienced piano teacher, I continuously strive to reinforce the importance to my students of using appropriate fingering. I contend that the study of fingering is not a subject reserved for the advanced pupil and that even beginners stand to gain from awareness of the advantages in the application thereof. While I do not enforce stringent rules for establishing appropriate fingering, I argue that the basic rules applicable to scales, arpeggios, broken chords, block chords, octaves, ornaments, phrasing, and articulation should always be a point of departure. I believe that the process should be creative and imaginative and have observed from my students that success is occasionally contingent on trial and error.

In my approach to learning new repertoire, I incorporate a detailed study of fingering in the early stages of the process. I have a keen interest in finding practical and appropriate fingering methods to deconstruct, comprehend, and master technical difficulties. I often learn multiple

sets of fingering combinations for technically demanding pianistic material. As an anxious performer, I have found that the thorough study of fingering will assist in technical control during a performance and in sustained and confident memorisation¹.

Given the utility of applying appropriate and effective fingering in practice, it is apparent that there is a significant gap in the academic literature dedicated to the subject of fingering². Literature that demonstrates the practical use of fingering in the existing piano repertoire is relatively uncommon (Bar-Niv, 2015:6). Very few pieces of literature specifically offer analysis beyond the basic application of fingering, indicating a need for further studies exploring the topic in more in-depth detail. I have opted to contribute to this line of research in light of this gap.

In my MMus mini-dissertation (2016), “*Die gebruik van vingersetting in geselekteerde cadenzas van Grieg, Tsjaikofski, Rachmaninof en Prokofjef*”, I discussed general approaches to the application of fingering for selected piano concerti *cadenzas* of Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Prokofiev. I opted to provide fingering solutions exclusively for virtuosic pianistic material. In contrast to the latter, this thesis demonstrates a broader approach to fingering for an array of specific pianistic material with additional references to musical content, hand sizes, and secondary wrist and forearm movements.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate fingering options for selected piano works of Debussy, Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Bartók, and Prokofiev. It employed a pedagogical approach that aimed to explore multifarious approaches to the formulation of fingering options necessary for mastering musical and technical difficulties.

The selected composers presented in this study represent various distinctive musical languages associated with Twentieth-Century Western Art Music. The transition into the twentieth century saw a dramatic development of the tonal system. The practice of tonal harmony waned after its predominant reign over three centuries (Lan, 2000:2). Composers experimented with

¹ The establishment and employment of effective fingering options are greatly beneficial to unswerving memorisation. The latter includes the employment of symmetrical fingering, fingering equilibrium between hands, alternating fingering patterns, and similar fingering options for sequences. These fingering methods are discussed throughout this thesis.

² This statement is motivated with greater detail in the literature overview.

new harmonic principles and systems, which often resulted in the expansion of pianistic content. This phenomenon can be observed in the demanding constructions of technical material in piano works composed during this period. The composers represented in this study were also virtuoso pianists, and their pianistic output often served as mediums for demonstrating their technical expertise during a performance.

The selected piano works, listed in the following table, represent various different genres comprised of original solo piano works (sonatas, character pieces, etudes, and sets of variations) and concertos. I argue that a thorough study of fingering for these piano works is essential to lay the technical foundations for overcoming and mastering complex musical and technical difficulties. The scope of this study enabled me to select piano works from a substantial pool of available repertoire. I aimed to compile a list of works that have gained considerable prominence among professional performers, teachers, and students. I have studied, performed, taught, and attended international masterclasses on these piano works.

I thought it wise not to limit the selection of composers and piano works to further restrictions as that would have diminished the resources needed for covering fingering suggestions for a wide variety of musical and technical content. However, there are several works from the standard piano literature which are not discussed in this thesis. I have only included works that I have adequately studied in the past. It would not have been feasible to include repertoire that I am not artistically and technically acquainted with.

Table 1: Selected piano works

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)	
<i>Images</i> Book I, L.110 I: <i>Reflets dans l'eau</i>	1901–1905
Preludes Book II, L.123 Nos. 1, 4, 6, 7, 11, & 12	1912–1913
Twelve Etudes, L.136 Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, & 11	1915

Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915)	
Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 19	1892–1897
Twelve Etudes, Op. 8 Nos. 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, & 12	1894
Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 64	1911
Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)	
<i>Moments musicaux</i> , Op. 16 Nos. 1 & 2	1896
Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Op. 22	1902–1903
Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30	1909
<i>Études-Tableaux</i> , Op. 33 Nos. 5, 7, & 8	1911
<i>Études-Tableaux</i> , Op. 39 Nos. 3, 4, 5, 8, & 9	1916–1917
Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1 (revised version)	1917
Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)	
<i>Jeux d'eau</i> , M.30	1901
<i>Miroirs</i> , M.43 I: <i>Noctuelles</i> IV: <i>Alborada del gracioso</i>	1904–1905
<i>Gaspard de la nuit</i> , M.55 I: <i>Ondine</i> III: <i>Scarbo</i>	1908
Piano Concerto, M.83	1929–1931

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)	
Etude Op. 18, No. 2	1918
Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz.95	1930–1931
Piano Concerto No. 3, Sz.119	1945
Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)	
Four Etudes, Op. 2 Nos. 1, 2, & 3	1909
Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 28	1917
Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26	1917–1921
Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16	1923
Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 82	1939–1940
Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83	1939–1942

1.3 Research questions

Main research question:

- What are the most appropriate and effective fingering options — from a pedagogical perspective aimed at problem-solving — that can be applied to the practical study of problematic technical material and musical content presented in selected piano works?

Secondary research questions:

- How do the physical attributes of a pianist's hands impact the appropriate choice of fingering?
- Which secondary movements produced by the wrist and forearm are necessary for the successful implementation of the suggested fingering options?

CHAPTER 2

Literature overview

2.1 Introduction

Descriptive, analytical, and other types of literature relevant to this study include contributions concerned with piano fingering, piano technique, performance practice, and Twentieth-Century piano music. The structure of the literature overview has three main topics of concern. The first aims to reflect on problematic musical and technical content in the selected piano works. The second topic includes my view on the value and resourcefulness of Bar-Niv's (1945–) publication *The Art of Piano Fingering*. Followed are summaries of valuable guidelines from professional pianists relevant to the application of fingering and its advantages in technical proficiency. I have also contributed to the discussion by briefly demonstrating the usefulness of the suggested approaches.

2.2 Problematic musical and technical content

The evolution of the piano's technical and sonorous features contributed to the vast developments of musical composition in the twentieth century (Cooke, 1998:192). Piano music already established a notable influence on the growth of musical language since the mid-eighteenth century. The ascendancy of nineteenth-century piano music greatly influenced composers of the following century. The piano never lost its importance as a medium for twentieth-century composition, and composers demanded even greater creative outputs from the instrument. (Lan, 2000:1)³

2.2.1 Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Debussy established himself as an innovative composer who invented a distinctive harmonic language unaffected by the orthodox traditions of tonal harmony (Burge, 1990:5). Elements of Debussy's non-functional harmonic language — labelled as Impressionism — include his fondness of parallel voice leading, the whole-tone scale, and modes. Debussy often utilised dominant-seventh, leading-tone-seventh, dominant-ninth, and French-augmented-sixth sonorities without conforming to their expected resolutions and functionalities. (Lan, 2000:2)

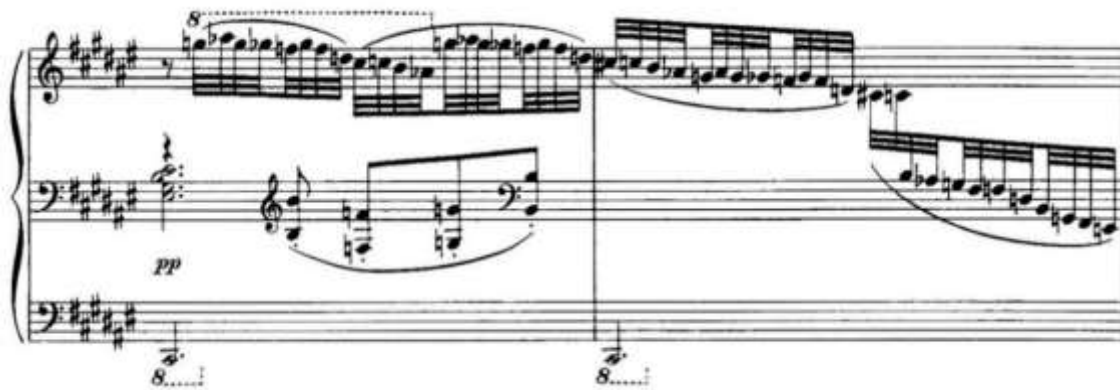
³ A citation placed after the full stop of a sentence refers to the complete paragraph or section preceding it.

Debussy's unique approach to the application of his harmonic language in his piano works often resulted in demanding musical and technical hurdles. His late piano works display an emphasis on the physical acts of pianism. The *Twelve Etudes*, L.136 necessitate masterful finger dexterity and flexibility merged with a delicate touch. Pianists should also display skilful control and regulation of melodic material among secondary technical material. (Burge, 1990:19)

Problematic content in the selected piano works of Debussy include:

- Passagework⁴ requiring execution in various timbres, dynamic ranges, and articulations.

Example 1: C. Debussy, *Prelude No. 7, Book II*, L.123, bars 5–6



- Majestic arpeggiated material and scale passages rapidly moving over a wide register of the keyboard.

Example 2: C. Debussy, *Images*, L.110, *Reflets dans l'eau*, bars 58–59



⁴ Passagework is often thought of as non-thematic material (usually scales and runs) intended for virtuosic display. However, for practical reasons, passagework will refer to any material, thematic included, distinctively perpetual.

- Consecutive *legato* double note passages requiring superb dynamic control to shape melodic contours.

Example 3: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 2*, bars 59–62

Animando

mf *p* *mf* *f*

dim.

Example 4: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 4*, bars 30–34

Rubato

p *p* *f*

Molto rit. *dim.* *p* *più p* **Mouvt** *pp*

- Rapid chromatic passagework requiring execution in various timbres, dynamic ranges, and articulations.

Example 5: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 7*, bars 15–20



2.2.2 Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915)

Scriabin's career demonstrated his dual expertise as a composer and virtuoso pianist (Burge, 1990:53). The musical language of Scriabin's early period challenged the periphery of tonality. He applied the use of chromaticism to its utmost intensity, created tonal obscurity, and explored unique constructions of chords and harmonic movement. (Whitehead, 2014:129). A transfixing figure as a composer, Scriabin's harmonic language saw an incredible metamorphosis throughout his life. His early music was influenced by nineteenth-century Romanticism and ultimately descended into obscurity — as seen in his *Piano Sonata No. 9* — of non-tonal harmony. (Burge, 1990:56–57)

Scriabin's compositional techniques — the mystic chord⁵, bichords⁶, non-tonal harmony, and symmetry — contributed to his innovative pianistic techniques. These techniques include large hand stretches and repositioning, uncomfortable hand spans, massive leaps over a wide range of the keyboard's registers, and virtuosic left-hand figurations. (Lee, 2013:32–34)

⁵ A six-note artificial chord consisting of an augmented fourth, diminished fourth, augmented fourth, and two perfect fourths.

⁶ The amalgamation of any two chords.

Problematic content in the selected piano works of Scriabin include:

- Perpetually moving passagework often requiring uncomfortable hand position shifts and stretches.

Example 6: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 19*, 2nd movement, bars 1–4

Presto $\text{♩} = 96 - 100$

p sotto voce

The musical score for Example 6 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows the first two bars, and the second system shows the next two bars. The right hand features a complex, rapidly moving melodic line with many double notes and trills. The left hand provides a dense, textured accompaniment with many double notes and trills. The tempo is marked 'Presto' with a quarter note equal to 96-100 beats. The dynamics are 'p sotto voce'.

- Consecutive *legato* double notes and dense juxtaposed textural and melodic material.

Example 7: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 64*, bars 207–210¹

ondoyant

pp allé

marquée

The musical score for Example 7 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows bars 207-208, and the second system shows bars 209-210. The right hand features a complex, rapidly moving melodic line with many double notes and trills. The left hand provides a dense, textured accompaniment with many double notes and trills. The tempo is marked 'Presto' with a quarter note equal to 96-100 beats. The dynamics are 'pp allé' and 'marquée'.

- Quasi broken chord left-hand accompaniment rapidly moving over a wide range of the keyboard and often resulting in large hand stretches.

Example 8: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 19*, 2nd movement, bars 99–102



- Elaborately decorative material necessitating precise dynamic control.

Example 9: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 64*, bars 261–263



2.2.3 Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Rachmaninoff had abundant success in his career as a composer, virtuoso pianist, and conductor. His recordings provide enough evidence to confidently assert his reputation as one of the most profoundly gifted pianists of all time. Rachmaninoff demonstrated unsurpassed

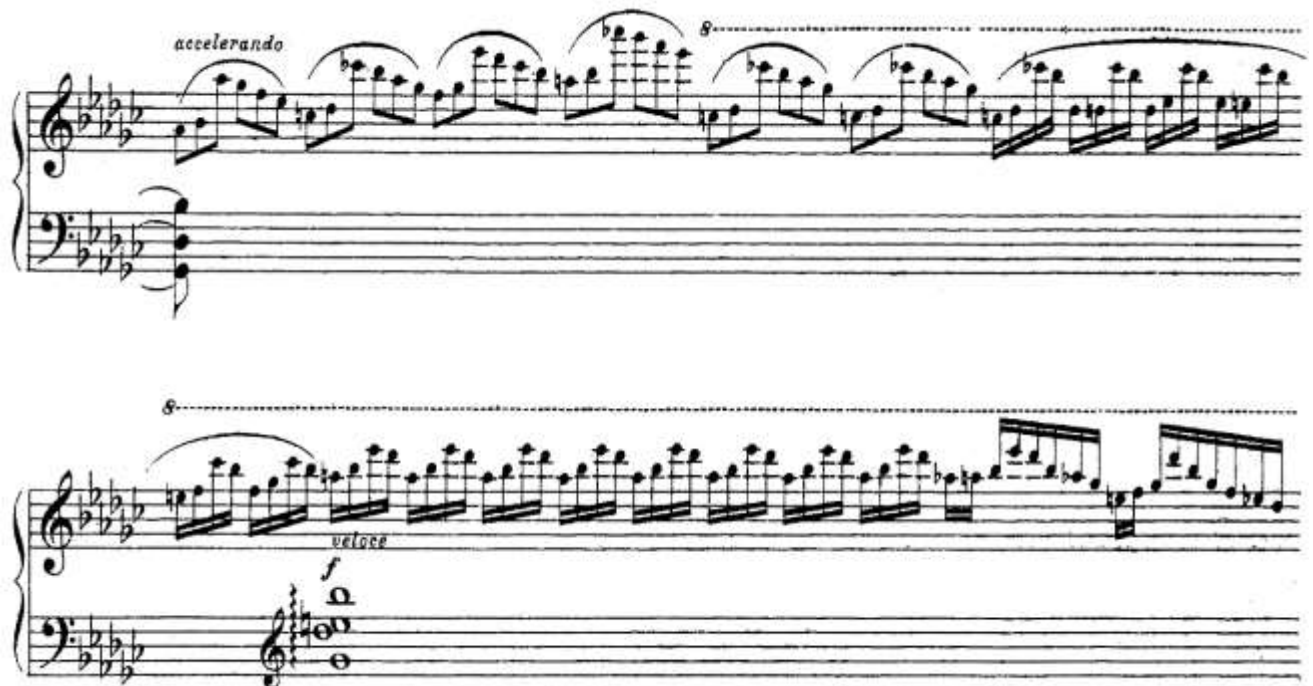
pianism from a musical and technical perspective. Unlike his contemporaries, he remained unaffected by the musical idioms of the twentieth century and showed no attraction to the novel musical styles of his time. (Burge, 1990:57–58). Rachmaninoff’s musical language combines tonal traditions derived from nineteenth-century Romanticism with Russian modal structures. He expanded the horizons of composers of the previous century with the use of modality, non-functional tones, and chromaticism. Rachmaninoff’s music is firmly grounded in tonal structures and abides by the predominant rules of traditional tonality. (Chen, 2015:111)

Rachmaninoff’s exceptional understanding of the technical possibilities of the piano can be seen in his astonishingly demanding constructions of technical material. The conquering of these works requires unflinching pianistic control and pliability. The technical challenges evident in Rachmaninoff’s music remain unparalleled. (Burge, 1990:59–60)

Problematic content in the selected piano works of Rachmaninoff include:

- Swift quasi *cadenza*-like passages necessitating absolute clarity and technical control.

Example 10: S. Rachmaninoff, *Moment musicaux Op. 16, No. 1, bar 55*



The image displays two systems of a musical score for S. Rachmaninoff's *Moment musicaux Op. 16, No. 1*, specifically bar 55. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat (F major), and the time signature is 3/4. The first system is marked *accelerando* and features a complex, rapid melodic line in the right hand with many accidentals and a steady accompaniment in the left hand. The second system is marked *veloce* and continues the melodic line in the right hand, ending with a final chord. The score is presented in a clear, black-and-white format.

- Perpetually moving passages — requiring control in various dynamic ranges — constructed using chromatic movement, scales, and double notes.

Example 11: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 1st movement, bars 141–147

The musical score for Example 11 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows the right hand playing a melodic line with chromatic movement and double notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'Allegro.' and the dynamics range from 'pp' to 'f'. The second system continues the melodic material in the right hand, with the left hand accompaniment becoming more complex, including some triplets and sixteenth notes.

- Elaborately decorated melodic material that often demands execution in rapid tempi.

Example 12: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 3rd movement, bars 226–229

The musical score for Example 12 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows the right hand playing a highly decorated melodic line with many ornaments and grace notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'Allegro.' and the dynamics range from 'mf' to 'f'. The second system continues the melodic material in the right hand, with the left hand accompaniment becoming more complex, including some triplets and sixteenth notes.

- *Legato cantabile* melodic material constructed by consecutive double notes of different intervals.

Example 13: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 8*, bars 4–11



The musical score for Example 13 shows two systems of music. The first system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a piano accompaniment. The melodic line is marked 'a tempo' and 'cresc.' (crescendo). The piano accompaniment is marked 'a tempo'. The second system also consists of two staves. The treble clef staff continues the melodic line, marked 'poco rit.' (poco ritardando). The piano accompaniment is marked 'mf' (mezzo-forte), 'dim.' (diminuendo), and 'p' (piano).

2.2.4 Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Prevalent traits of Ravel's musical language are characterised by progressive harmonic applications occasionally combined with components of jazz, polytonality, and an innovative approach to the use of tone colours and sonorities (Ivanchenko, 2015:22). *Jeux d'eau* is regarded as Ravel's first masterpiece for piano, reflecting his elegant approach to colourful Impressionistic sonorities (Ivanchenko, 2015:19). *Jeux d'eau* is also appraised for establishing the dawn of a new period in the evolution of pianism (Myers, 1960:24).

Ravel's piano suite *Gaspard de la Nuit* is widely considered to be his most virtuosic composition for piano — the movement *Scarbo* perhaps the pinnacle of virtuosity in his piano literature (Ivanchenko, 2015:56). Ravel's inventive pianistic ideas — for example, the infamous passage in *Scarbo* constructed by successive major seconds — was never before seen or used in piano literature. Ravel's pianistic genius can also be observed in the way he redistributes melodic and accompaniment material between hands. (Burge, 1990:49–51)

Problematic content in the selected piano works of Ravel include:

- Swift scale passages and repeated notes often being executed in close proximity of secondary accompaniment material.

Example 14: M. Ravel, *Miroirs*, M.43, *Alborada del gracioso*, bars 44–48



- Decorative passages requiring a delicate *cantabile* touch.

Example 15: M. Ravel, *Piano Concerto*, M.83, 1st movement, bars 237–240



- *Legato* double note passages constructed by consecutive intervals smaller than minor thirds.

Example 16: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, *Scarbo*, bars 454–459

- Unconventional constructions of arpeggiated material intertwined with melodic content.

Example 17: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, *Ondine*, bars 66–67

- *Legato* double notes constructed from a combination of different intervals descending in zig-zag patterns.

Example 18: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, *Ondine*, bars 57–58



2.2.5 Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

Bartók's idiosyncratic output for the piano expanded the purview of the technical components of the instrument. His musical language reflects rudiments of formal classical approaches encompassing tonal and atonal features. Bartók's fascination with native folk music is a predominant facet of his musical output. He was also an eminent virtuoso pianist and piano pedagogue. His *Three Studies* for piano are considered to be his most challenging set of solo pieces for the instrument. He aimed to exploit technical problems from different perspectives to that of nineteenth-century etudes. (Burge, 1990:73–77)

Bartók expanded the percussive qualities of the piano — although many unfortunate performances of his works are due to these percussive qualities being hackneyed. It is evident in Bartók's recordings that he never exaggerated the percussive elements of the instrument and

paid close attention to detail pertaining to timbre, rhythm, articulation, and melody. The musical elements in Bartók's music — the use of modes, five-note scale constructions, non-functional harmonic sonorities, and his fixation with the construction of chords built from intervals of seconds, fourths, and sevenths — directly resulted in his pianistic inventions. (Cooke, 1998:197–198)

Problematic content in the selected piano works of Bartók include:

- Octaves with an added note written for both hands that require an expressive *legato* approach and great control over melodic contours.

Example 19: B. Bartók, *Etude Op. 18, No. 2*, bar 28



The musical score for Example 19 shows two staves. The top staff is marked "quasi cadenza, senza misura, poco rubato" and the bottom staff is marked "sempre molto espr.". The music consists of complex, multi-note chords and intervals, characteristic of Bartók's style.

- Consecutive double notes constructed by a mixture of major and minor thirds played simultaneously by both hands.

Example 20: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz.95*, 1st movement, bars 227–232



The musical score for Example 20 shows two staves. The top staff is marked "cresc.". The music consists of complex, multi-note chords and intervals, characteristic of Bartók's style.

- Rapid perpetual passagework requiring control in various timbres, dynamic ranges, articulations, and extreme registers of the piano.

Example 21: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz.95*, 2nd movement, bars 80–84

The musical score for Example 21 shows two systems of music. The first system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a continuous stream of eighth notes. The dynamic marking 'sempre pp' is present. The second system continues the same pattern, with the right hand playing chords and the left hand playing eighth notes.

Example 22: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz.95*, 1st movement, bars 262–265

The musical score for Example 22 shows two systems of music. The first system consists of a grand staff with a bass clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a continuous stream of eighth notes. The dynamic marking 'p' is present. The second system continues the same pattern, with the right hand playing chords and the left hand playing eighth notes.

2.2.6 Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Prokofiev's musical language displays a combination of traditional and novel tonal methods. He did not discard earlier tonal traditions and instead invented new possibilities in the application thereof. (Rego, 2012:318). Prokofiev's education as a composer is firmly grounded

in traditional systems of the Classical period. On the contrary end of the spectrum, his harmonic language is coloured by extreme dissonances and unexpected harmonies. (Burge, 1990:104)

Prokofiev demonstrated a remarkably prodigious technical facility on the keyboard. His technically demanding piano works directly reflect his skill as a pianist. Prokofiev's piano concerti are prime examples of his increased demands on pianistic frontiers. (Rego, 2012:314). Two distinctive textural features of Prokofiev's piano writing are fast, virtuosic passagework — rhythmically energetic, occasionally consisting of translucent perpetual scale passages — and slower lyrical material (Berman, 2008:22).

Problematic content in the selected piano works of Prokofiev include:

- Perpetual passagework often demanding maximum velocity and dexterity.

Example 23: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 1st movement, bars 173–181

Allegro. non legato



The musical score consists of three systems of piano music. The first system is in bass clef, marked *pp*, and features a perpetual scale passage. The second system is also in bass clef, marked *pp*, and continues the scale passage. The third system is in treble clef, marked *mp*, and features a perpetual scale passage. The tempo is marked *Allegro. non legato*.

- Virtuoso passagework constructed from a combination of scales, broken chords, arpeggios, and repeated notes. Passages often demand frequent and clear accents in all dynamic ranges.

Example 24: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 2nd movement, bars 43–49

The musical score for Example 24 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system covers bars 43-46, and the second system covers bars 47-49. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is characterized by rapid, flowing passages in both the right and left hands. Dynamics include *dim.* (diminuendo), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). There are several accents and slurs throughout the passage.

- Passagework written for both hands that do not confine to unison movement and symmetrical constructions. Accents are often dramatic and placed on weak beats at the end of passages.

Example 25: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 28*, bars 91–95

The musical score for Example 25 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system covers bars 91-93, and the second system covers bars 94-95. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked *Allegro tempestoso*. Dynamics include *rit. assai* (ritardando), *pp* (pianissimo), *ff ferocce* (fortissimo), and *sf* (sforzando). The music features dramatic accents and a powerful, stormy character.

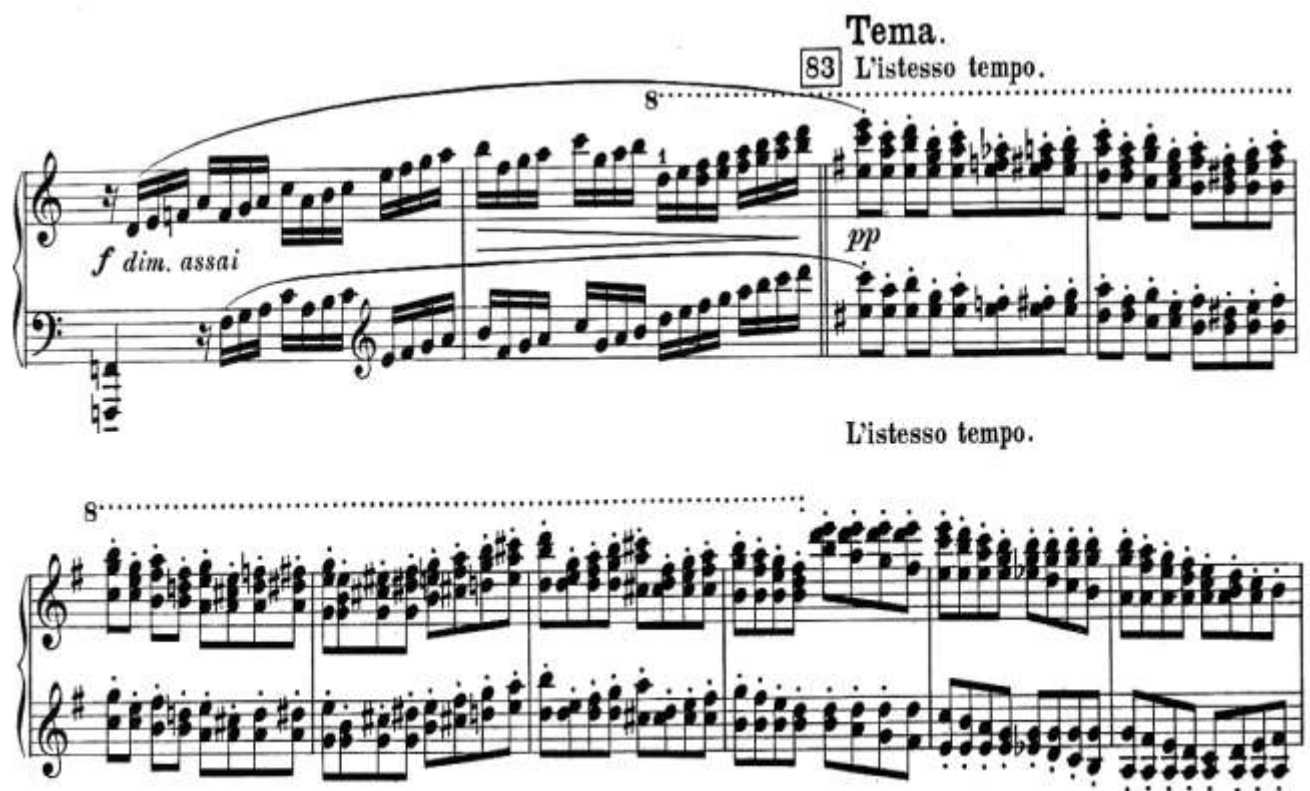
- Unconventional chordal movement.

Example 26: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 1st movement, bars 219–220



- Consecutive double notes and chords constructed from various intervals requiring frequent hand position changes.

Example 27: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 2nd movement, bars 176–185



2.3 Rami Bar-Niv (1945–): *The Art of Piano Fingering*

Bar-Niv's publication, *The Art of Piano Fingering*,⁷ is an invaluable source and inspiration to this study. Doctor Walden Hughes⁸ (1955–2019) praised this publication for making an immense contribution to research in the domain of piano fingering. He further stated that this unprecedented contribution is the first of its kind in the three-century existence of the piano. Bar-Niv recognises that even though it is accepted that virtuoso pianists can provide effective fingering for the repertoire they perform, no author has before published a practical and systematic pedagogical approach to the application of fingering. C. P. E. Bach's treatise, *Versuch über die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen*⁹, is the only source with an approach comparable to Bar-Niv's publication but was put in writing in the eighteenth century for harpsichordists. (Bar-Niv, 2015:212)

Bar-Niv contends that a common problem among piano educators is finding practical approaches for teaching students methods on the application of proper fingering — concluding that fingering influences all facets of performance. These features include technical proficiency, musical expression, sound quality, memorisation, and the prevention of hand injuries. There is a lack of available material, however, that provide comprehensive pedagogical methods for establishing appropriate fingering options. Basic knowledge and rules are mostly passed on generationally from teachers to students. Not many master pianists and teachers have contributed to this topic — existing information is usually not longer than a chapter and sometimes dispersed among other subjects and concerns. (Bar-Niv, 2015:7)

The opening chapters in Bar-Niv's publication relate to basic knowledge of traditional fingering philosophies relevant to the five-finger position¹⁰, scales, arpeggios, and chords. The following chapters provide further information on traditional fingering methods combined with advanced and innovative fingering tools. He presents the reader with a wealth of fingering methods and suggestions that can be applied in repertoire from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Twentieth-Century periods. His objective was to organise information according to specific aspects including patterns and sequences, finger gliding, finger substitution, finger crossings, finger pedalling, repeated notes, passagework (scales, arpeggios,

⁷ First published in 2012.

⁸ Hughes was an accomplished pianist and dedicated professor at Northwest Nazarene University.

⁹ English translation: *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*.

¹⁰ The chapter relevant to the five-finger position includes information relating to pentascales, intervals, triads, and which finger to use when starting a passage or phrase.

broken chords etc.), double notes, octaves, ornaments, chords, and the redistribution of material between hands. I intended to incorporate a similar approach to the organisation of information in this study.

Bar-Niv (2015:201–202), in the concluding chapter of his publication, supplies the reader with a summary listing useful approaches for formulating fingering options:

- Comfortable fingering is good, while efficient fingering is better. A prime concern when deciding on fingering should be efficiency that allows the successful interpretation of musical content without the risk of a hand injury. Comfortable fingering — whether it serves a pianist mentally or physically — should come second to the latter.
- The foundation for all fingering designs is the five-finger hand position and its extensions. Strive to limit changing hand positions by determining the maximum number of notes that can be played under one hand position.
- Be mindful of the correlations between the design of the keyboard and the physical attributes of the hands with three long fingers and two shorter ones.
- Identify where finger crossings and thumb placements are needed. Analysing certain passages backwards can result in a better understanding of its construction.
- Tempo, dynamics, accents, expression, phrasing, and styles invariably impact the choice of fingering. Exhort implementing creative and innovative ideas.

2.4 Approaches to the application of piano fingering

I concur with Bar-Niv that most available literature by master pianists and teachers only includes brief accounts on the subject of fingering. These writings, however, contain useful information on the approaches to the application of fingering. Followed are summaries of contributions that have proven to be useful to my practical study of fingering. I contribute by demonstrating how these ideas can be effectively applied in practice. Included are observations associated with nineteenth-century pianism by Frédéric Chopin and Theodor Leschetizky. It is essential to recognise that pianistic elements of Twentieth-Century music were greatly influenced by nineteenth-century pianism. The contributions of these pianists and educators are still applicable to the formulation of fingering suggestions for Twentieth-Century music.

2.4.1 Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)¹¹

The proper rendering of a piece is dependent on appropriate fingering. The thumb should be used freely without restricting or limiting its use for melodic content and on black keys. A chromatic scale can be played using the right-hand 3rd, 4th, and 5th fingers crossing over one another. The latter can also be applied to *legato cantabile* phrases. The 5th finger can pass over the thumb. Consecutive notes in a melody can be played by using only one finger. Alternating fingers on repeated notes are not always necessary and can be successfully executed — if the tempo allows it — by using the same finger. (Casaroti, 2006:12–13)

Comment:

I agree that it is unnecessary to avoid the use of the thumb on black keys and for melodic content. The thumb is an incredibly versatile finger that can be used without restrictions; however, caution should be given to avoid unintentional accents produced by a heavy thumb. It is by no means wrong to avoid using the thumb on black keys but doing so might result in larger expansions between other fingers.

A chromatic scale demanding execution with the 3rd, 4th, and 5th fingers can be observed in Chopin's *Etude, Op. 10 No. 2*. The same principle is usually applied to consecutive chromatic minor thirds. I often employ this technique to achieve *molto legato* for shorter *cantabile* phrases.

It is possible to perform certain scale passages (or sections thereof) by passing the 5th finger over the thumb (descending) and the thumb under the 5th finger (ascending). This technique will decrease the amount of finger passing movements.

¹¹ The ideas attributed to Chopin herein are based on assessments of his piano works by later observers and not necessarily articulated by him in written form.

Example 28: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 2nd movement, bars 39–40

Var. II. Allegro.

The first variation of the musical score for Example 28 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of repeated notes with fingerings: 5 4, 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2, 1 4 3 2, 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1, and 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a series of repeated notes with fingerings: 1 2 3 5, 1 2 4, 1 2, 3 5 3 2 1, 3 2 1, and 3 2. The tempo marking is *ff* *tempestoso*. A dotted line above the first staff indicates an octave shift.

OR

Var. II. Allegro.

The second variation of the musical score for Example 28 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of repeated notes with fingerings: 5 1 4, 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2, 1 4 3 2, 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1, and 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a series of repeated notes with fingerings: 1 3 5, 1 3 5, 1 2, 3, 1 5 3, 1 3 2 1, and 3 2. The tempo marking is *ff* *tempestoso*. A dotted line above the first staff indicates an octave shift.

Repeated notes can be played by using only one finger (or a combination of two fingers used simultaneously). Alternating fingers in soft passages can result in unintentional accents. The repeated notes in the following example can be performed by using the 2nd and 3rd fingers simultaneously. I would perform the repeated notes — even though written on the bottom stave — using my right hand. My left hand, being my non-dominant hand, does not possess the stamina needed to produce a controlled and equal sound. The stretch required to play the chord in bar 2 and 9 with the left hand might be uncomfortable or even impossible for a pianist with small hands. Notes can be redistributed between hands and will also result in a comfortable pivot for the right-hand thumb.

Example 29: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 1–13

Modéré

Left hand: 1 E
2 B
3 G#
5 E

Right hand: 1(Cx)

pp

sourdine

très fondu, en trémolo

très long

Left hand: 1 B
2 G#
4 E
5 Cx

Right hand: 1(E) 2+3(D//)

Alternating fingers is advisable when playing quick repeated notes that necessitate a pellucid sound. Various combinations of two, three, and four fingers can be used.

Example 30: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 9*, bars 1–6

(4 3 2)
3 2 1 (4 3 2) (4 3 2)
3 2 1 3 2 1

Scherzando

pp

p

pp

pp

(4 3 2) (4 3 2) (4 3 2)
3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1

2.4.2 Theodor Leschetizky (1830–1915)

A steadfast performance requires confidence and ease, which can be attained by deciding on proper fingering options beforehand. Simple fingering may be employed if it allows a pianist to adhere to the composers' musical intentions. Notes marked with loud dynamics should preferably be played with strong fingers. The thumb can occasionally be passed under the fifth finger if the pianist can adhere to the prescribed tempo of the passage. The thumb can be passed under to a black key provided that the subsequent notes are in proximity and require some accent. This execution must be done by swinging the wrist to raise the hand and allow free movement of the thumb. It is acceptable for a pianist to experiment and use creative and unorthodox fingering choices — if it does not hinder the performance. (Brée, 1997:119–120)

Comment:

I occasionally use a combination of strong fingers to play notes marked with loud dynamics. The result could lead to some challenges, especially when large leaps are involved. The melodic material in the left-hand part of the passage below is an example of comfort coming second to the composers intended musical content.

Example 31¹²: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16, 1st movement, bars 154–157*



The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is marked 'colossale' and features a complex melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. Fingering suggestions are provided for the left hand: '3+2' for the first measure, '2+1' for the second, and '2+1' for the third. The second system continues the piece with similar fingering suggestions: '3+2' for the first measure, '2+1' for the second, and '2+1' for the third. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

¹² The fingering used in this example is borrowed from my MMus mini-dissertation (2016) and can be found on page 92.

Certain passages only allow one possible set of fingering. The passage below demands the right-hand thumb to be passed under the 5th finger — applying alternative fingering will not be effective. The passages end by passing the 3rd finger over the 5th to a C-sharp and E, respectively.

Example 32¹³: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 1st movement, bar 176

I continually challenge myself to use creative and unorthodox fingering methods to simplify technically demanding passages. The fingering I supplied for the following passage may seem unusual at first glance, but implementing this method will reduce redundant obstacles and prevent clashing hands.

Example 33: M. Ravel, *Jeux d'eau*, M.30, bar 82

¹³ The fingering used in this example is borrowed from my MMus mini-dissertation (2016) and can be found on page 98.

2.4.3 Ernest Schelling (1876–1939)

It is immensely valuable for a pianist to study and provide fingering for a piece when commencing the learning process. The task of finding suitable fingering should be a thorough study. It must be emphasised that the selected fingering should suit the physical dimensions of a pianist's hands. The use of fingering suggestions provided by composers or editors are not by any means obligatory. The successful pianist experiments with fingering options before settling on the proper, appropriate, and preferred combinations. It is not encouraged to change fingering once it has been practised and learnt. A difficult fingering combination for passages is often advantageous and results in a better rendering according to the conformant of the musical content intended by the composer. (Cooke, 1999:269–270)

Comment:

It is wise to question fingering suggestions by pianists, composers, and editors. Their suggestions may be useful, but it can be argued that some approaches are not appropriate for the proper rendering of the applicable musical and technical content. The first edition¹⁴ of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30* includes a few fingering suggestions. It can be assumed that these are Rachmaninoff's ideas since no editor is mentioned, and the same fingering suggestions also appear in other editions. The following example displays in red Rachmaninoff's fingering suggestions for a broken chord passage. I find Rachmaninoff's approach uncomfortable — especially the contraction between the 2nd and 5th fingers of the right hand — and have suggested an alternative method incorporating stronger fingers with comfortable contractions between the thumbs and 5th fingers¹⁵.

¹⁴ Rachmaninoff, S. V. 1910. *3me-Concerto pour le Piano, Op. 30*. Arranged for two pianos by the composer. Moscow: Gutheil.

¹⁵ I am by no means devaluing Rachmaninoff's fingering suggestions. I have learnt the passage using multiple approaches, including that of Rachmaninoff. My execution of the passage was not satisfactory due to the uncomfortable contractions.

Example 34: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30, 2nd movement, bars 83–85*


The image shows a musical score for Example 34, which is a passage from S. Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30, 2nd movement, bars 83–85. The score is written for piano and features two different fingering approaches for the right and left hands. The right-hand part starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a crescendo (*cresc.*), and then a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The tempo marking is *accel.* followed by *a tempo, più mosso*. The left-hand part also starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. Two different fingering patterns are shown for the right hand, with the first pattern using the thumb, 2nd, and 3rd fingers, and the second pattern incorporating the 4th finger. The left-hand part also shows two different fingering patterns, with the first pattern using the thumb, 2nd, and 3rd fingers, and the second pattern using the thumb, 2nd, and 3rd fingers in a different sequence.

The following passage displays two different approaches to fingering. Both are appropriate and can be used for successful execution. The first option reflects a simple approach employing only the right-hand thumb, 2nd, and 3rd fingers, while the left-hand fingering throughout remains unchanged. The second option reflects a more challenging alternative approach. This method might pose a challenge at the first few attempts, but it could lead to a better rendering of the passage. The fingering pattern for the right-hand part is extended by incorporating the use of the 4th finger. This particular fingering can increase velocity and provide better control over *leggiero*-playing.


The fingering pattern for the left-hand part will provide additional security to the memorisation of this passage. I have found that the repeated use of a specific fingering pattern (as seen in the left-hand part of option 1) could lead to technical insecurities. Alternating fingering patterns (as seen in the left-hand part of option 2) will reduce the probability of a faltering memory.

Example 35: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 3rd movement, bars 236–238¹

Option 1:



Option 2:



2.4.4 Josef Hofmann (1876–1957)

The fingering used for executing C major scale is not fitting for scales starting on black keys and will result in redundant obstacles. A chromatic scale that demands velocity and accuracy must be played with the right-hand thumb on B and E and left on F and C; groups of three or four consecutive fingers can be used in-between as often as required. The notes leading up to a mordent will determine which fingering to use. Executing a mordent using three fingers is not necessarily an advantage over using just two. It could lead to imprecision and unbalanced sound. Each finger has its characteristics for producing unique tone colours. (Hofmann, 1920:106–107)

Comment:

It can be beneficial to practice all major scales (hands separately and together) using the standard fingering of C major scale. It could provide a renewed perspective on the physical construction of the keyboard and how the hands and fingers can manoeuvre between and over the keys. Applying this technique to performance should be done with caution. The safest approach, in my opinion, is to adhere to standard scale fingering wherever possible. Unusual fingering options can be applied to the beginning or end of scale passages to limit finger passing movements resulting in new hand positions.

A chromatic scale passage that necessitates a brilliant and brightly articulated sound should preferably be played using only the thumb, 2nd, and 3rd fingers. The 4th finger can be incorporated when the chromatic scale requires lightness at rapid tempi. A pianist with well-developed finger independence and dexterity can combine both approaches to achieve the desired effect and speed of a chromatic scale.

Mordents can be played by using several different finger combinations. It is advisable to use strong fingers (a combination of two or three fingers depending on the preference of the pianist) to perform loud and rapid mordents or mordent-like passages. I often incorporate the use of the 4th and 5th fingers for mordents appearing in slower *cantabile* melodic material. Max Pirani (Ahrens & Atkinson, 1955:38–39) suggests the following finger combinations for executing mordents:

RH: 132, 143, 243, 354

LH: 312, 413, 423, 534

2.4.5 Heinrich Neuhaus (1888–1964)

Artistically correct fingering refers to the employment of fingering that will allow a pianist to accurately execute a passage while simultaneously conforming to the musical intentions of the relevant composer. A pianist's principal concern should always be to honour the composers' musical intentions — physical comfort and convenience is only a secondary concern. The choice of fingering should complement the style and character of the respective composer. The physical size of a pianist's hands will inevitably influence the choice of fingering. Certain fingering combinations must be avoided if it exploits individual weaknesses which will result in bovine playing. Although it is natural for skilled pianists to adjust fingering when necessary,

it is sensible to decide on the best appropriate options and adhere to its use. It is also advisable to practice several distinct standard approaches to fingering — examples include the employment of the 4th finger to chromatic scale passages and incorporating gliding movements from black to white keys. There is value in exploring fingering suggestions supplied by pianists, composers, and editors, although one should carefully evaluate their judgement. (Neuhaus, 1973:141–156)

Comment:

I also assert that the study and application of various fingering methods are necessary to develop a thorough grasp of the immense possibilities that this subject presents. I am particularly fond of employing finger gliding techniques. The example below demonstrates how this technique can be used to avoid an uncomfortable stretch between the right-hand 3rd and 4th fingers (A to D-sharp, bar 25).

Example 36: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 1st movement, bars 23–25*

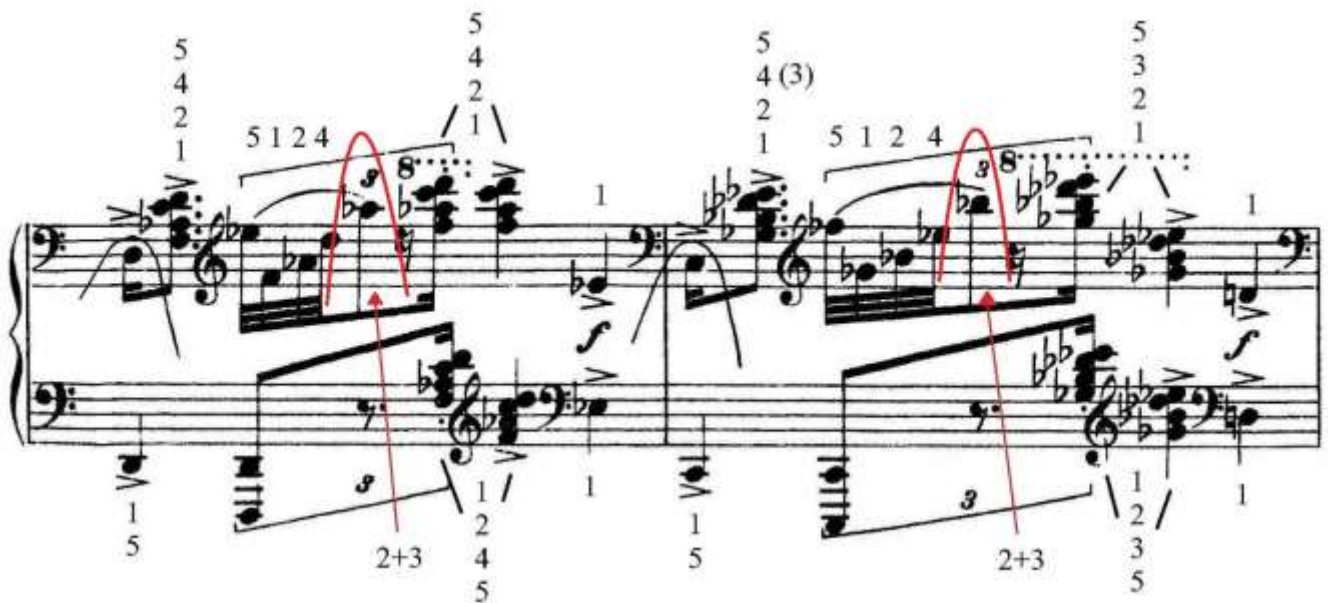
2.4.6 Menahem Pressler (1923–)

Fingering should be decided upon according to the intended musical content and tone colour of a passage — comfort and convenience must come second to the latter. Students must be provided with a wealth of knowledge on the improvement of passages with better fingering and redistribution of the hands. Pianists are encouraged to identify difficult passages and practice them first. Practice sessions must often begin by searching for ways to conquer technical difficulties. (Brown, 2009:88–89 & 93)

Comment:

I have found that the redistribution of material between hands to be one of the most helpful and creative methods of fingering¹⁶. This technique can have a dramatic effect on the musical quality and technical execution of certain passages. A pianist that attempts to play the following passage exactly as written might find it challenging to interpret the musical content according to the composer's musical intentions. The chance of inaccuracies is also high due to the rapid and uncomfortable right-hand leaps. This obstacle can be eliminated by redistributing material to the left hand. The result will reduce the risk of inaccuracies and allow a pianist to play all the chords with proper accents.

Example 37¹⁷: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 1st movement, bars 139–140



The image shows a musical score for two staves, likely piano and left hand. The right-hand staff contains complex chords and melodic lines with various fingering numbers (1-5) and slurs. The left-hand staff contains bass notes and chords, also with fingering numbers. Red arrows and brackets indicate the redistribution of material between the hands, showing how notes from the right hand are moved to the left hand to facilitate smoother transitions and reduce leaps.

2.4.7 Murray McLachlan (1965–)

The practical and dependable use of fingering is possibly the principal requirement for unfaltering technical control in performance. A significant amount of time must be spent on fingering at the onset of learning a new piece. The latter applies to all pianists — beginner to advanced levels. Principles of scale fingering must be used as a reference. Fingering for passagework is often determined by the placements of the thumb, making it invariably essential to know where it must be used. Similar fingering should preferably be used for sequences and

¹⁶ I also incorporated this technique in examples 28, 29, 33, and 36.

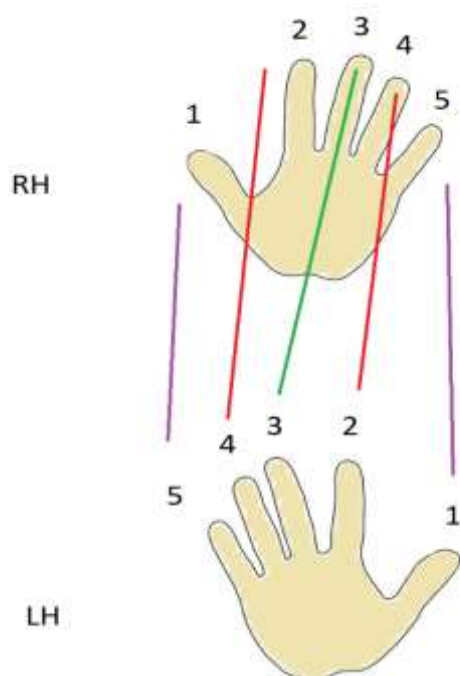
¹⁷ The fingering used in this example is borrowed from my MMus mini-dissertation (2016) and can be found on page 88.

patterns. Avoid using too many position changes caused by the thumb. Symmetrical fingering between hands is encouraged when playing intricate passagework. The latter can be achieved by using the thumbs at the same time. The arrangement and omission of notes are justifiable if the listener remains oblivious to the changes. Finger substitutions — a fundamental principle of organ playing — can be employed to achieve the richest quality of *legato* on the piano. Fingering can also improve tonal and chordal balancing. (McLachlan, 2015:151–158)

Comment:

I have found that finger symmetry can be beneficial for securing memorisation. Applying symmetrical fingering to passagework played simultaneously by both hands moving in contrary motion is possible. Achieving symmetry in passagework played simultaneously by both hands moving in unison is a more complicated process. Perhaps a better way of labelling this technique is achieving equilibrium between hands. This technique can be achieved by deciding on fingering according to the concept shown in the image below.

Figure 1: Achieving fingering equilibrium between hands



The three fingering combinations supplied for the right-hand passage in the following example can be accepted as appropriate for a successful performance. I would, however, prefer to use the fingering supplied inside the blue figure. This specific fingering produces an almost perfect equilibrium with the fingering used for the left-hand passage.

Example 38: M. Ravel, *Piano Concerto, M.83*, 1st movement, bar 171

(4 3 2 1 2 3 1 2)
1 2 3 1 4 3 1 2 1 2 1 3 5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 5
1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 3 4 1 2 5 4 3 2 1 2 4 5 1 2 3 5
simile

5 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 3 2 1 4 1 2 3 4 5 4 2 1 5 3 2 1 simile

A pianist should only resort to the arrangement and omission of notes if the execution of the technical material is physically impossible. Bar-Niv (2015:75) illustrates an excellent alternative to the passage in the following example. Many pianists find this passage technically impossible, and the proper rendering thereof requires an enormous hand span and formidable finger independence. I believe that Bar-Niv’s rearrangement is acceptable as it provides a pianist with the technical resources needed to comfortably execute a variation on this passage at the appropriate tempo and dynamic range.

Example 39: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 3rd movement, bars 312–313

Original passage:
1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1
6 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 6

Alternative approach:
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1
1 2 3 4 4 1 1 4 4

2.4.8 Neil Stannard¹⁸

Fingering for a given passage should suit all hand sizes, provided that the pianist wholly fathoms the technical aspects of the passage. All hands are constructed in the same manner and can similarly move laterally up and down the keyboard. There are a few exceptions when the physical size of a pianist's hands must be accommodated with applicable fingering. Large hands are prone to twist when trying to avoid black keys. Adjustments must be made for thicker fingers moving between black keys. Pianists with smaller hands might find wide expansions between certain fingers uncomfortable. A pianist that can easily play large intervals with the 3rd and 4th fingers can lessen the number of thumb crossings. (Stannard, 2014:48)

Comment:

I argue that Stannard's statement — which asserts that fingering for a given passage should suit all hand sizes — is an accurate and valid argument. All hand sizes should be able to adapt to most fingering suggestions, with the exceptions being small hands not able to accommodate large stretches and large hands with thick fingers not able to navigate comfortably between black keys. The following examples demonstrate how these matters can be addressed.

Example 40: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 3rd movement, bars 159–160²

The image displays two musical staves for a piano passage from Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30, 3rd movement, bars 159–160. The top staff is labeled "Thin fingers:" and shows a complex fingering scheme: 5 3 5 3 2 2(1) 4 1 1 2(1) 3 4 3 1 2 1 2 3 4 3. The bottom staff is labeled "Thick fingers:" and shows a simpler fingering scheme: 5 3 5 3 2 3 4 4 5 5 4 3 1 2 1 2 3 4 3. Both staves include a "simile" marking and various dynamic markings like *p*. The "Thick fingers" version has several fingerings enclosed in red boxes, indicating adjustments for larger hands.

¹⁸ Stannard's date of birth is unknown. To my knowledge, he currently resides in California, USA.

Example 41¹⁹: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 1st movement, bars 387–388

Small hands:

veloce

1 1 2 4 5 1 2 1 4 5 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 5 1 3 5 1 2 1 4

3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2

5 1 2 1 4 5 1 2 1 4 5 1 2 1 4 5 1 2 1 4 5 1 2 1 4 5 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 4

3 2 3 2 1 2

5 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 1 2

5 3 2 1 2 1 4 3 2 1 2 1 4 3 1 1 2 4 3 1

1 4 3 2 1 1 4 3 2 1 2 4 3 2 1
(2 3 1 2 1) 1 2 4 3 1 2

1 2 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 (2 1) 1 2 4 3 1 1 2 4 3 1 2 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1

3 2 1 1 4 3 2 1 3
(2) 2 2 2 2

2.5 Conclusion

It is argued here that the thorough study of fingering is essential to the development of a proficient piano technique. Per Bar-Niv's assessment, it is apparent that most available sources only provide brief accounts on the subject of fingering. Although these contributions are useful,

¹⁹ The fingering used in this example is borrowed from my MMus mini-dissertation (2016) and can be found on page 76.

as demonstrated in the preceding examples, I find that the information mostly addresses general approaches. Bar-Niv's publication is the only source that provides an in-depth investigation exclusively dedicated to the subject of fingering. I value his pedagogical approach in that it practically aims to establish multiple effective fingering solutions for problematic musical and technical content.

Bar-Niv's publication is broad in the sense that he includes repertoire from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Twentieth-Century periods. However, his reference to early Twentieth-Century piano repertoire is brief, which is why I chose to focus on piano works composed during this period. My study — similar to Bar-Niv's publication — will focus primarily on the subject of fingering. I will only make secondary references to movements produced by the wrist and forearm if the successful execution of the given fingering is dependent on a particular movement. No literature will be used to address secondary concerns — observations and conclusions will solely be established through my practical study of the piano works.

CHAPTER 3

Research methodology

3.1 Research approach

This study aims to establish logical fingering methods and appropriate fingering suggestions for problematic musical and technical pianistic content. The methods of research that were employed are motivated by the worldview of pragmatism. According to Creswell (2014:10–11), a pragmatic approach does not limit the researcher to the parameters of a single specific research method. Pragmatism is a philosophy that describes the application of the best possible method or combination of methods to find answers to the research questions. A pragmatic approach, therefore, was argued as conducive to selecting the appropriate logical and creative processes that were used to conduct this study.

It is commonplace for the artistic research domain — especially branches that involve the process of artistic practice to collect and interpret data — to employ the use of multiple methodologies in the research process. Characteristics of artistic research stem from artists employing the process of their creative practice as research tools. This process and inquiry — involving all stages of the research course — subsequently leads to the expansion of knowledge related to the field of study (Crispin, 2015:60).

This study incorporates a qualitative approach with features of a performative paradigm. According to Maree (2007:50), qualitative research refers to the process of collecting ample descriptive data of an observed fact or event intended to develop a comprehension of what is being studied or beheld. Qualitative research methods, in essence, aim to answer questions relating to the *how*, *why*, and *what* of an event (Patton & Cochran, 2002:4). A study that demands a thorough comprehension of a problem entailing changeable features not easily measurable is suitable to a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2013:48).

Elements of a performative paradigm are evident as my practical study of the selected piano works formed an integral part in the completion of the research process. Haseman (2006:102) defines a performative paradigm as a third type of research separate from qualitative and quantitative research. Performative research, however, shares similar values to that of qualitative research. Forms of non-numerical data are commonly associated with performative

research, which is conveyed symbolically through music, images, and action. Haseman (2006:102) further asserts that a performative paradigm is the most suitable approach for research involving all types of artistic practices.

3.2 Research design

Practice-led research is the most suitable design for this study. My practical study of the selected piano works was a crucial component in the completion of the research process. Practice-led research, according to Candy (2006:3), bears operational significance for practice in that it is “concerned with the nature of practice” itself and leads to the generation of original knowledge. Practice-led research is distinctive from Practice-based research, which is concerned with creative work appearing as a form of research.

According to Board (Sullivan, 2009:47), an idiosyncratic characteristic of research in the creative and performing arts is Practice-led research. Similar to other domains of research carried out in the humanities, Practice-led research also identifies with the establishment of research questions and problems. The conditions and productions of Practice-led research comprise a substantial emphasis on creative practice. Sullivan (2009:47) states that Practice-led research, in its broadest sense, “is circumscribed by an equally important emphasis placed on the artist-practitioner, the creative product, and the critical process”.

3.3 Data collection and research process

The scores of the selected piano works are the primary source for this study. Primary data were derived exclusively from my practical study of the piano works. Secondary sources include the publications mentioned in Chapters 2.3 and 2.4 of the literature overview. The valuable ideas presented in these publications contributed to my problem identification and problem-solving procedures. The process of research was divided into three pivotal phases, as presented in the following three subchapters.

3.3.1 Phase one: Preparation for the practice

The first phase involved the preparation for my practical study of the selected piano works. I familiarised myself with the musical and technical content while I simultaneously identified material that required an in-depth investigation of fingering. The material has been organised according to the following pianistic features:

1. Octaves
2. Octaves with an added note
3. Chordal structures
4. Double notes
5. Repeated notes
6. Ornamentation
7. Arpeggiated material
8. Broken chord figurations
9. Passagework
10. Miscellaneous material

3.3.2 Phase two: The practice

The second phase entailed the actual process of practice which necessitated the deconstruction, comprehension, and mastering of the identified pianistic material. I provided suitable and appropriate fingering options for the selected passages and sections while I documented the pedagogical methods that I incorporated to formulate my ideas. I also carefully observed the physical movements of my wrists and forearms to determine if the successful execution of the supplied fingering was dependent on secondary movements.

As previously discussed in the literature overview, it is essential to recognise that various factors can influence a pianist's choice of fingering. One such factor which had to be deemed vitally essential is the physical attributes of a pianist's hands. When necessary, I provided multiple fingering options to accommodate all hand sizes. I further assert that the most crucial element that impacted my fingering choices — supported by the views of the prominent pianists and pedagogues presented in the literature overview — is the composers' intended musical content. The latter refers to tempo, articulation, accentuation, dynamics, timbre, and other expressive musical qualities. Additionally, I made use of multiple fingering methods that include:

- Redistribution of material between hands
- Using the thumbs and 5th fingers on black keys
- Passing the thumbs under any other finger
- Passing the 5th fingers over the thumbs
- Alternating fingers using various combinations
- Finger gliding
- Alternative fingering for scales
- Using multiple fingers on one key
- Finger substitution
- Symmetry between hands
- Finger pedalling

I believe that several of my fingering suggestions may be observed as quite unorthodox due to my implementation of the latter guidelines. The final product of fingering suggestions is my own creative ideas which originated from the process of my practice as an experienced pianist and teacher.

3.3.3 Phase three: Documenting the outcome

The third and final phase entailed documenting the outcome of my data collection. The latter has been done by organising the information according to the guidelines presented below.

- The technical material of the particular passage has been discussed briefly.
- The reasons for my choice of fingering have been explicated with reference made to the method/s used.
- When necessary, I justified why certain fingering options should be avoided.
- When required, secondary movements of the wrist and forearm have been discussed in relation to the supplied fingering.

3.4 Delimitations of the study

- The primary concern of this study is piano fingering. Additional references have been made to wrist and forearm movements only if the successful execution of the supplied fingering was dependent on that particular movement/s.
- Additionally, this study does not make any references to the use of pedalling techniques unless it had a direct influence on the choice of fingering.
- This study does not include an introductory chapter dedicated to the basic use of piano fingering. A reader who shows interest in a topic at this advanced level of pianism is anticipated to have a firm grasp of the basics and not require explanation at a basic level.
- This study does not include passages from first movement *cadenzas* of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30* and Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*. I devised and discussed fingering options for these *cadenzas* in my MMus mini-dissertation (2016), "*Die gebruik van vingersetting in geselekteerde cadenzas van Grieg, Tsjajkofski, Rachmaninof en Prokofjiëf*".
- The piano works used in this study are associated with traditional written-out musical notation and do not require extended piano techniques for performance.

- Fingering provided by editors has not been discussed as this study is not comparative in nature. However, fingering provided by the relevant composers has on occasion been assessed.

3.5 Value of the study

This study intends to be useful to any pianist, piano teacher, advanced piano student, or music cognoscenti interested in exploring the subject of piano fingering, or further developing this line of research to advance its practical application. It aims to contribute to the expansion of knowledge in the domain of piano pedagogy by providing creative approaches to the application of fingering essential for conquering musical and technical difficulties in a selection of magnificent Twentieth-Century piano works.

Neil Stannard's publication, *The Pianist's Guide to Practical Technique*, is a collection of passages (known to be infamously tricky) borrowed from well-known standard piano literature of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods. This publication has been immensely valuable to the maintenance and improvement of my piano technique. Stannard (2014:7–9) suggests that pianists should concentrate their energy on practising sections in music they intend to play and not only devote attention to studies of Czerny, Clementi, and others. It is not in the least my intention to devalue the latter studies, but rather to support the idea that good technique is not solely dependent on endless hours of devotion to non-music studies and exercises. Instead, already-existing passages from masterworks of musical and technical value can be used to ultimately substitute studies that are not particularly useful. I believe that this study can be used in a similarly to that of Stannard's publication. The passages from the selected Twentieth-Century piano works accompanied with my fingering suggestions could be a valuable contribution to a pianist's maintenance of keyboard technique.

3.6 Ethical considerations

This study has no ethical issues and did not involve contributions from research participants.

CHAPTER 4

Octaves

4.1 Introduction

The importance of studying and finding creative and effective fingering options for octaves should never be underestimated. Before embarking on this process, it is rather apparent to determine the maximum extent of the pianist's hand span. The thumbs are always used when playing octaves. The use of the 2nd fingers is impractical even for the largest of hands. The use of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th fingers can vary between pianists depending on their specific hand sizes. The table below displays a summary of fingering options that I deem possible when playing octaves in any given musical context.

Table 2: Hand sizes

Extra-Small Hand Sizes	
Black key octaves	White key octaves
The maximum hand span only allows the use of the thumbs and 5 th fingers.	The maximum hand span only allows the use of the thumbs and 5 th fingers.
Small Hand Sizes	
Black key octaves	White key octaves
The maximum hand span allows the use of either the thumbs and 5 th fingers or the thumbs and 4 th fingers.	The maximum hand span only allows the use of the thumbs and 5 th fingers.
Medium Hand Sizes	
Black key octaves	White key octaves
The maximum hand span allows the use of either the thumbs and 5 th fingers or the thumbs and 4 th fingers.	The maximum hand span allows the use of either the thumbs and 5 th fingers or the thumbs and 4 th fingers.

Large Hand Sizes	
Black key octaves	White key octaves
The maximum hand span allows the use of the thumbs in combination with either the 3 rd , 4 th , or 5 th fingers.	The maximum hand span allows the use of either the thumbs and 5 th fingers or the thumbs and 4 th fingers.
Extra-Large Hand Sizes	
Black key octaves	White key octaves
The maximum hand span allows the use of the thumbs in combination with either the 3 rd , 4 th , or 5 th fingers.	The maximum hand span allows the use of the thumbs in combination with either the 3 rd , 4 th , or 5 th fingers.

This chapter's fingering suggestions can be adjusted according to the hand sizes mentioned in the previous table. I believe that larger hands have many pianistic advantages — particularly relating to *legato* playing — when performing octaves. A pianist with small hands, who can only play octaves with the thumb and 5th finger, might have to compensate by incorporating additional techniques to achieve the composer's intended musical effect during the performance. These techniques — which relate to physical movements, strength, and the use of the damper pedal — will be discussed in greater detail in the following subchapters.

4.2 Bravura octaves

Bravura octaves often demand velocity and power to the maximum. I believe that the successful execution of both the latter features is partly influenced (for better or for worse) by a pianist's choice of fingering. Octave fingering should be decided upon according to the construction of a particular passage and its musical features. The choice of fingering should ideally complement secondary movements produced by the wrists and arms required for proper execution. It is almost always necessary to draw additional power from the arms, shoulders, and back when playing octaves that demand dynamic ranges greater than *forte*.

The octave passage in the following example is taxing to perform. Not only is a pianist required to effortlessly play consecutive octaves — containing several large leaps — at a brisk tempo, but to also perform them with an adequate amount of power to achieve *fortissimo* dynamic

levels combined with occasional accents. I have found that drawing power from the wrists alone is not sufficient to execute this passage effectively. It is necessary to use the energy produced by the forearm's vertical movements combined with support from the back. There are several reasons why I would employ a simple approach to fingering for this passage (and any octave passage with similar pianistic and musical traits). Firstly, the occasional rapid and large octave leaps would require excellent aiming from a pianist; thus, it would be beneficial to keep the hand's stretch at a constant span. Secondly, this passage requires unwavering physical stamina from a pianist — any tension produced by an overly large hand span would be detrimental to the latter.

Furthermore, it would be unwise to devise complex fingering for a quick perpetual octave passage that requires constant vertical movement of the forearms during a performance. A pianist's focus should be on producing an accurate execution combined with the required dynamic levels (in constant competition with an orchestra), which could be hindered by unnecessarily complicated fingering. In conclusion, I would suggest all hand sizes to use only the thumbs and 5th fingers to perform this passage. An alternative would be to use the thumbs and 4th fingers on black key octaves.

Example 42: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 2nd movement, bars 158–165

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano octaves. The first system shows two staves (treble and bass clef) with rhythmic patterns of eighth notes. To the right of the first system, two fingering diagrams are provided: 'White key octaves: 5 1 / 1 5' and 'Black key octaves: 4 1 / 1 4'. The second system continues the musical notation, including a dynamic marking of *ff* and various accidentals (sharps and flats) across the staves.

A bolder approach to fingering could be applied to shorter *bravura* octave passages containing no large leaps. The triplet octave passage in the following example consists mostly of stepwise movements with occasional leaps no larger than a major third. Strong accents are placed on unexpected beats in the context of a *fortissimo* dynamic level. I have suggested three approaches to fingering for this example. This first approach is the simplest, employing the use of the thumbs and 5th fingers only. The latter approach is suitable for all hand sizes. An alternative would be to use the thumbs combined with the 4th and 5th fingers united on white key octaves, and the thumbs and 4th fingers on black key octaves.

Lastly, and possibly the most unorthodox suggestion, is to eliminate the use of the 5th fingers. The thumbs and 4th fingers are suggested for white key octaves, and the thumbs and 3rd fingers for black key octaves. I would personally prefer to use the second or third suggested fingering options. In terms of strength, the 5th fingers are the weakest. Reinforcing their use with the 4th fingers — or completely eliminating them — could be beneficial to this passage's required powerful sound production.

In contrary to the previous example, I would suggest using less forearm movement when executing this passage. Excessive forearm movement would be impractical for extreme tempi. Instead, energy can be drawn from the upper arms, shoulders, and back. The fingers and hands should preferably remain in close contact with the keys.

Example 43: B, Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Sz.95, 3rd movement, bars 45–47

Option 3:

4	simile	3	3
1		1	1

Option 2:

4+5	simile	4	4
1		1	1

Option 1:

5	simile		
1			

Tempo I (♩. 150)

Option 1:

1	simile		
5			

Option 2:

1	simile	1	1
5+4		4	4

Option 3:

1	simile	1	1
4		3	3

Octave passages constructed by black keys only should ideally not be played with the same fingers throughout unless the octaves ascend or descend as a pentatonic scale. The chosen fingering should ideally complement the pattern/s in which the octaves appear. My fingering suggestions for the next passage complements its quasi-zigzag pattern. The fingering is slightly altered in the middle section to accommodate the accents. The pattern eventually deviates from its original form, and the fingering also accommodates the changes. I often use finger combinations 1 & 3, 1 & 4, and 1 & 5 for consecutive black key octaves, as seen in bar 79.

The successful implementation of the suggested fingering would depend on flexible wrists moving the hands laterally and vertically to the next position. The forearms must accommodate the latter mentioned movements by remaining relaxed at the elbow joints.

Example 44: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 5*, bars 76–79²

Strepitoso

4 5 simile
1 1

ff

1 1 simile
5 4

4+5
(3+4)
1
3+4+5
1

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
4 5 4 5 4 5 5 4

1 1 1 1 1
(3) (3)(4)(5)

It can be beneficial to adjust an initial fingering pattern for consecutive octaves requiring a dramatic increase in volume or power. The *crescendo* in the following passage can be controlled effectively by adjusting the fingering towards the moment of climax. This passage's onset can be played with the thumbs and 5th fingers on white key octaves and the thumbs and 4th fingers on black key octaves. The use of the 4th fingers on black key octaves will allow the hands to remain in close contact the keyboard while ensuring minimal movement from one octave to the next. The latter will ensure sufficient control over the first part of the *crescendo*.

The use of the 4th fingers is eliminated in the second half of the passage when the *crescendo* volume increases dramatically. Power must now be drawn from the forearms, upper arms, and shoulders. The exaggerated movement of the forearms will cause the hands to move vertically further away from the keys. The use of only the thumbs and 5th fingers will ensure that the hand's span remains consistent, giving a pianist more freedom to draw sufficient power from the upper body.

The final octave can be played using a combination of fingers simultaneously (on the lower and upper C's), consequently strengthening the *crescendo*'s conclusion.

Example 45: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 3rd movement, bars 366–368

The image shows a musical score for Example 45, S. Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 3rd movement, bars 366–368. The score is written for piano and right hand. The piano part features a series of chords with the following fingering: 4 1, 5 1, 4 1, 5 1, 4 1, 5 1. The right hand part features a series of chords with the following fingering: 4 5 4 5, 4 5, 1 simile, (4+3) 5+4, 1. The dynamics are marked *ff* and *brioso*. The tempo is indicated as *Vivace*.

I assert that using the 4th fingers on black key octaves is not necessarily an advantage; neither should it be accepted as a given rule. The passage below demonstrates this statement. The use of the 4th fingers on black key octaves could be detrimental to the swift tempo demanded for performance. Black key octaves played with the thumbs and 4th fingers cause a more extensive expansion of the hands than when using the thumbs and 5th fingers. The hands might not be able to contract fast enough to play the occasional chords with adequate emphasis securely. The hand might also not expand fast enough to play the black key octaves following the chords with the thumb and 4th fingers.

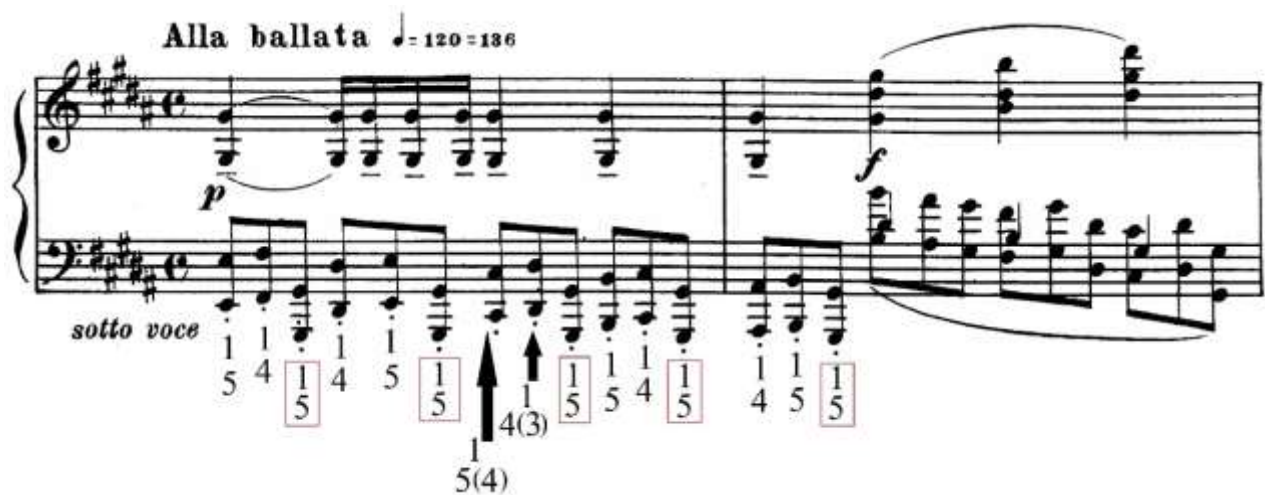
The blue figure indicates a section of the octave passage where no chord appears. Here, a pianist can incorporate the 4th fingers to perform the octaves without any detriment to the indicated musical features.

Example 46: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1*, 1st movement, bars 1–5

The image shows a musical score for Example 46, S. Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 1st movement, bars 1–5. The score is written for piano and right hand. The piano part features a series of chords with the following fingering: 5 1 on all octaves, 1 5 on all octaves. The right hand part features a series of chords with the following fingering: 4 5 4, 1 1 1, 1 1 4, 4 5. The dynamics are marked *ff*. The tempo is indicated as *Vivace*.

The fingering for the left-hand octave passage in the following example was determined by the leaps to and from the recurring lowest G-sharp octave. Swift octave passages that contain large leaps can be approached creatively by deciding on fingering that creates the shortest distance between the consecutive octave leaps.

Example 47: A. Scriabin, *Etude Op. 8, No. 9*, bars 1–2



4.3 Legato octaves

Students should be advised to not fully be dependent on the damper pedal to achieve *molto legato* when performing *legato* octaves. During my time as an undergraduate university student, I have often made the mistake of being too reliant on the damper pedal to achieve *molto legato*. My outlook on this matter was greatly influenced after attending a masterclass²⁰ on Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op.23* with Italian pianist Roberto Plano²¹. Plano insisted that *molto legato* can only be achieved by applying the appropriate touch and fingering to a passage and advised only to use the damper pedal to enhance the effect.

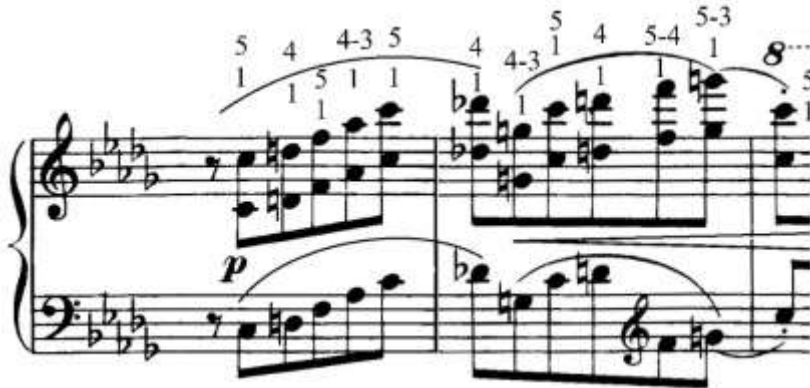
Plano was referring to the following octave passage from the opening movement of Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto No. 1*. I was entirely dependent on the damper pedal to sustain the *legato* phrasing. An adjustment of fingering ensures that the octaves' top notes remain *legato* without the damper pedal's assistance. This fingering, which requires rapid finger

²⁰ This masterclass was presented at the Stellenbosch International Piano Symposium (2014).

²¹ Roberto Plano (1 August 1978) is an Italian virtuoso pianist. His achievements include the first prize winner of the Cleveland International Piano Competition (2001), finalist at the Twelfth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition (2005), and Laureate of the Honens International Piano Competition (2003) and the Axa Dublin International Piano Competition (2006) (*Roberto Plano Biography*, 2020).

substitutions, ensures that the hand remains in close contact with the keys resulting in an enhanced control on phrasing. The latter, combined with an ample amount of weight from the arm, will produce a rewarding *molto legato*.

Example 48: P. Tchaikovsky, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 23*, 1st movement, bars 94–96^{1a}



The photograph below illustrates how the fingering at the beginning of the previous passage (octave C to octave D) must be physically approached. The 4th fingers can easily pass over the 5th fingers due to their longer lengths.

Figure 2: Passing the 4th finger over the 5th finger



Finger substitutions for *legato* octaves work effectively in slower tempi. Naturally, a pianist's hand size will determine whether this technique is employable. The following right-hand octave passage demonstrates how this technique can be used. A flexible wrist is necessary when attempting this suggestion. The 4th and 5th fingers remain in constant contact with the keyboard. The hand's vertical momentum will be controlled by the wrist, which is essential for producing a full-bodied sound and controlling the phrasing.

Example 49: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83*, 2nd movement, bars 46–47

Più largamente

5 4-5 4-5 4-5 4-5 4-5 4-5 4-5 1 4-5 4-5
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It features a right-hand part with a series of octaves. Above the notes, fingerings are indicated: 5, 4-5, 4-5, 4-5, 4-5, 4-5, 4-5, 4-5, 1, 4-5, 4-5. Below the notes, there are additional markings: (h), (h), 2, 1. The score includes a dynamic marking 'espress.' and a tempo marking 'Più largamente'. The bass line is also visible, with some notes and a '7' marking.

Finger substitutions can occur on the top or bottom note of an octave. The location of the consecutive octave will determine the outcome. Substitutions can be done with any combination of two fingers. This fingering technique is also beneficial for securing memorisation, especially related to muscle memory.

Example 50: S. Rachmaninoff, *Variations on a Theme of Chopin*, Op. 22, bars 5–9

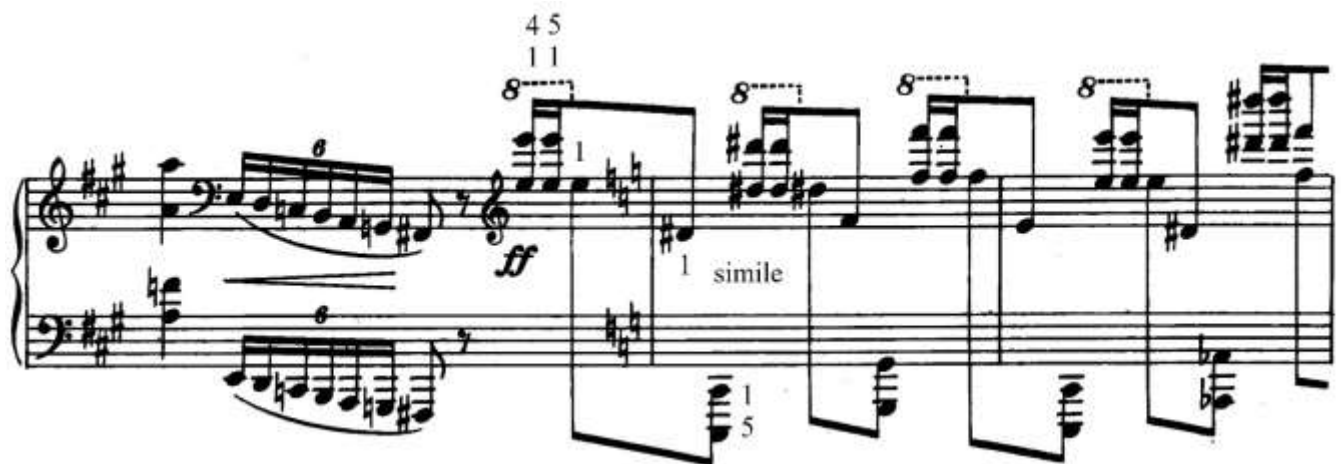
The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It features a right-hand part with a series of octaves. Below the notes, fingerings are indicated: 1-4, 4, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 5-4, 1, 1, 1, 5-2, 1, 1, 4-3, 1, 5-2, 1-2, 1, 5-2, 1, 5. The score includes a dynamic marking 'p' and a tempo marking 'rit.'. The bass line is also visible, with some notes and a 'V' marking.

4.4 Repeated octaves

The choice to alternate fingers for repeated octaves will depend on the musical context in which the octaves appear. Fast repeated octaves mostly require alternating fingers to sound well-articulated. Alternating fingers for repeated octaves will cause the hand to expand and should only be done when necessary. I generally tend to avoid using the 3rd fingers for alternating octaves, as this will result in a large expansion of the hand that could cause unwanted strain and even injury.

Alternating fingers for repeated octaves can have many physical advantages. Utilising this technique will drastically reduce the movement required from the wrist to produce a clearly articulated sound. A commonly accepted notion is to alternate fingers in a descending fashion, for example, 5, 4, 3, etcetera. The opposite approach is also possible and can be seen in the example below. I would suggest alternating the fingers towards the 5th finger (the pinkie or little finger) as this would leave the hand in its most relaxed and least expanded state.

Example 51: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 4th movement, bars 33–35



The image shows a musical score for Example 51, S. Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16, 4th movement, bars 33–35. The score is written for piano and right hand. The piano part features repeated octaves marked with '8' and '1 1' fingerings. The right hand part features repeated octaves marked with '8' and '1 5' fingerings. The score is marked with 'ff' (fortissimo) and '1 simile'. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4.

As mentioned previously, alternating fingers for octaves are not always necessary and can even be detrimental to a passage's intended musical qualities. The repeated octaves in the next example are marked *tenuto*²². A pianist should stay in close contact with the keys to produce this desired musical effect. Each octave should be played with an adequate amount of weight and pressure, while the keys need to be released just enough for the repeated note mechanism

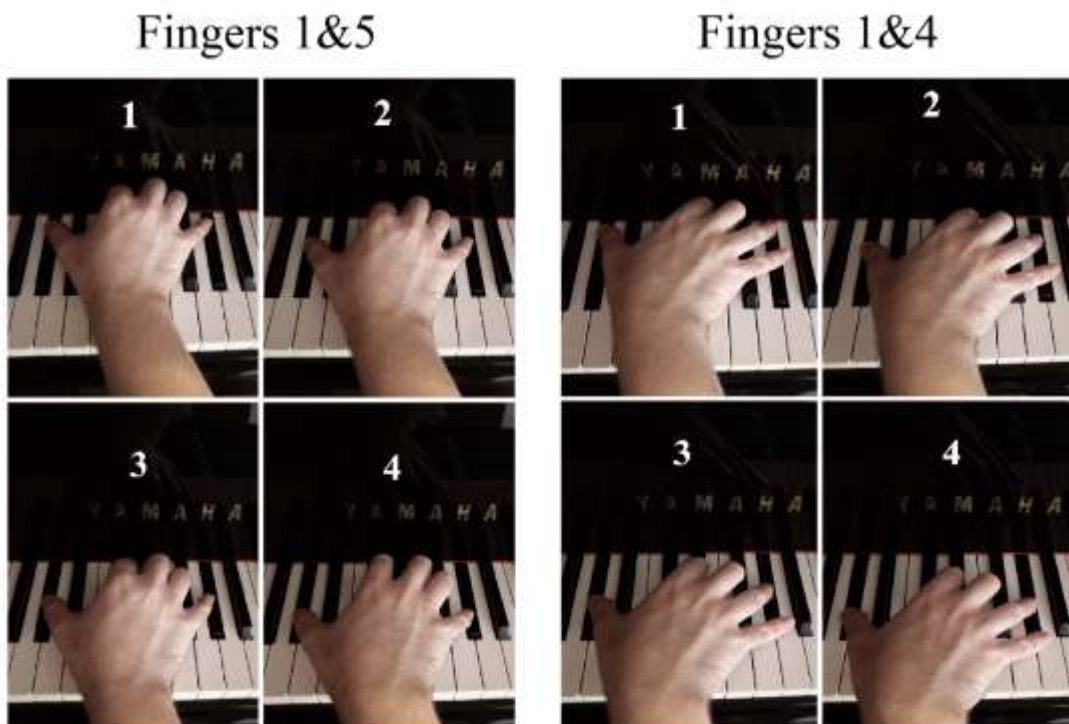
²² *Tenuto* can refer to a note being sustained for its full length or to a slightly accented note. Judging by the context in which the *tenuto* is used in Example 52, I believe Scriabin would like the repeated octaves to be slightly accented and sustained, in contrast to the left-hand octaves marked *staccato*.

of the piano to bounce back into place for the next strike. Constant contact with the keys is essential for the *tenuto* effect to be convincingly interpreted. Thus, alternating fingers will not be recommended. Instead, I will suggest sliding the hand a little closer to the keys' edge (away from the piano) with each passing octave. This movement —which allows the fingers to strike the key on different parts of its surface — will make the *tenuto* effect easier to control and interpret successfully. Figure 3 illustrates the latter mentioned movement.

Example 52: A. Scriabin, *Etude Op. 8, No. 9*, bars 1–2



Figure 3: Sliding on the surface of the keys



4.5 Redistribution of material between hands

Redistributing material between hands is an effective fingering technique that can reduce various technical hurdles. In the example below, bars 78–81 demonstrate how a simple redistribution of material can eliminate all right-hand octave leaps. This technique can be borrowed for an octave passage written similarly. The material in bar 82 is redistributed to allow a pianist to execute the right-hand mordent with stronger fingers. The damper pedal will be responsible for slurring the octaves (B-flat to A).

Example 53: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Sz.95, 3rd movement, bars 78–82

Più allegro

The musical score shows two staves. The right staff (treble clef) contains the upper notes of an octave passage, and the left staff (bass clef) contains the lower notes. The material is redistributed so that the right hand plays the upper notes and the left hand plays the lower notes, eliminating large leaps. The score includes fingering numbers (1-5) and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *simile*. A damper pedal is indicated at the bottom right, used to slur the octaves from B-flat to A.

Octave passage material can also be redistributed to provide the right hand with the capacity to articulate the top notes clearly. An unoccupied left hand can be used to take over the bottom notes of an octave passage written for the right hand (and vice versa). Doing so could eliminate large leaps and minimise arm movement.

Example 54: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Sz.119*, 1st movement, bars 62–64

The image shows a musical score for Example 54, consisting of two systems of piano and right hand parts. The piano part is in the lower register, and the right hand part is in the upper register. The score includes various fingering numbers (1-5) and phrasing markings such as slurs and accents. The first system covers bars 62-64, and the second system continues the piece. The piano part features a steady accompaniment with some arpeggiated figures, while the right hand part has more complex melodic lines with slurs and accents.

The next example illustrates how a pianist with small hands can redistribute material to accentuate an octave melody's top notes while adhering to the composers indicated phrasing. Small hands that cannot play white key octaves with the thumb and 4th finger (shown inside the blue figures) can consider arpeggiating them.

Example 55: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz.95*, 2nd movement, bars 23–26

Più adagio ♩ = 80-72

The image shows a musical score for Example 55, consisting of two systems of piano and right hand parts. The piano part is in the lower register, and the right hand part is in the upper register. The score includes various fingering numbers (1-5) and phrasing markings such as slurs and accents. The first system covers bars 23-26, and the second system continues the piece. The piano part features a steady accompaniment with some arpeggiated figures, while the right hand part has more complex melodic lines with slurs and accents. The tempo is marked 'Più adagio' with a metronome marking of 80-72.

Più adagio ♩ = 80-72

Small hands: 5 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 5 1 4 5 4 3 simile simile

p dolce

2 1 5 1 1 5 1 1 2 3 2 1 5 1 1 5 simile simile 1 4

Detailed description: This musical score is for a piano piece titled 'Più adagio' with a tempo of 80-72 beats per minute. It is written for 'Small hands' and consists of two staves: piano (top) and bass (bottom). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes various fingerings (numbers 1-5) and dynamics such as 'p dolce' and 'simile'. There are also some markings like 'p.' and 's.'. The piece is in a 4/4 time signature.

The redistribution of material in the example below may seem oddly unorthodox at first glance. Utilising this fingering is entirely optional and should be done with caution. The suggested fingering will make this passage much harder to learn. Additionally, the pianist might take longer to reach the desired tempo at which this passage is expected to be performed. The reward, however, could be worth the effort. The redistribution eliminates many octave leaps and could produce a well-articulated sound, provided that the pianist has well-developed finger independence — mainly referring to the left hand.

Example 56: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 1st movement, bars 189–192

1 3 2 4 1 2 5 1 5 3 1 1 2 1 2 5 3 2 1 2 5 3 1 2 1 5 3

4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 5 4 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 3 5 *crese.* 1 3 5 4 1 2 3 4 1 3 5

2 1 2 5 3 1 1 2 5 3

4 5 4 3 2 1 2 5 4 5 4 3 2 1 2 4

Detailed description: This musical score is for a piano piece titled 'Example 56' by S. Prokofiev, from his Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 1st movement, bars 189-192. It is written for piano and consists of two staves: piano (top) and bass (bottom). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes various fingerings (numbers 1-5) and dynamics such as 's' and 'crese.'. The piece is in a 4/4 time signature.

CHAPTER 5

Octaves with an added note

5.1 Introduction

Much like octaves, fingering for octaves with an added note will be determined by the maximum extent of a pianist's hand span. Additionally, the span between the 2nd & 4th and 3rd & 4th fingers should also be taken into consideration. The following finger combinations can be used for octaves with an added note:

Table 3: Finger combinations for octaves with an added note

Combinations with the thumbs and 5 th fingers	
5 5 5	1 1 1
4 3 2	4 3 2
1 1 1	5 5 5
Combinations with the thumbs and 4 th fingers	
4 4	1 1
3 2	3 2
1 1	4 4
Combinations with the thumbs and 3 rd fingers (for extra-large hands only)	
3	1
2	2
1	3

The finger combinations above can be utilised in various groupings. I would suggest using combinations that produce the simplest transitions to the consecutive keys. The fingering should also complement the composer's phrasing and articulation.

5.2 *Bravura* octaves with an added note

The suggested fingering for all hand sizes in the next example will probably be accepted as the obvious and most approachable choice. This fingering causes the hand to remain in its most relaxed state during this specific passage's execution. I would, however, prefer to use the fingering suggestions shown inside the blue figure. This fingering does require more flexibility from the hand, but the physical positioning of the thumb, 2nd, and 5th fingers on the white keys make the transition to the black keys effortless. Figure 4 demonstrates this transitioning. The latter is essential, considering the rapid tempo at which this passage is expected to be

performed. The successful implementation of all the suggested fingering options for this passage will demand a flexible wrist.

Example 57: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 1st movement, bar 235

Allegro molto.
Alla breve.

All hand sizes: 5 5 5
4 3 4
1 1 1

Large hands: 5 4 5
3 2 3 or 4 5 4
1 1 1 3 2 3
1 1 1 1 1 1


Figure 4: An effortless transition



The following two examples demonstrate how hand sizes can influence fingering for *bravura* octaves with an added note. Repeated patterns should preferably be fingered similarly. Always try to find the smoothest transition to the consecutive keys within the context of the established fingering groups and patterns. A larger hand may accommodate more fingering groups in one hand position. A small hand might have to use a repeated fingering to connect to a previously established fingering pattern. The latter two statements can be observed in Example 58.

Example 58: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30, 2nd movement, bar 213*


	4 5		4 5		4 5 5 2 4 3 1 1 1
Large hands:	3 3	simile	2 3	simile	3 4 5 4 5 2 3 4 2 3 1 1 1 1 1
<hr/>					
All hand sizes:	5 4 1	simile	5 5 3 4 1 1	simile	5 5 5 5 5 3 3 4 3 4 1 1 1 1 1



The musical score for Example 58 shows a piano and grand staff. The piano part features a series of chords and arpeggios, with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The grand staff shows the piano accompaniment, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. Fingerings and hand sizes are indicated above the notes, and a 'simile' marking is present in both parts.

Example 59: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit, M.55, Scarbo, bars 361–365*

	4 5		5		
Large hands:	2 3		4	simile	
<hr/>					
All hand sizes:	5 3(2) 1(1)	5 4(3) 1(1)	5 3 1	simile	



The musical score for Example 59 shows a piano and grand staff. The piano part features a series of chords and arpeggios, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The grand staff shows the piano accompaniment, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. Fingerings and hand sizes are indicated above the notes, and a 'simile' marking is present in both parts.

	1 1		2		
All hand sizes:	4 2		5	simile	
<hr/>					
Large hands:	1 1		1	simile	
	3 2		2	simile	
	5 4		5		

5.3 Distinct articulations

The process of performing octaves with an added note *legato* — without the damper pedal's assistance — is much more intricate than that of plain octaves. It might not always be possible to perform the outer notes of the octaves *legato*. If so, the fingering should ensure that the inner notes remain connected. A larger hand can consider using the 3rd and 4th fingers on black keys, provided that the 2nd finger can comfortably reach the inner note. *Legato* octaves with an added note will require the hands to remain in close contact with the keyboard while avoiding excessive wrist movements. Finger substitutions can also be used if the indicated tempo allows this. The chosen fingering should complement the phrasing of a passage.

Example 60: S. Rachmaninoff, *Variations on a Theme of Chopin*, Op. 22, bars 279–280



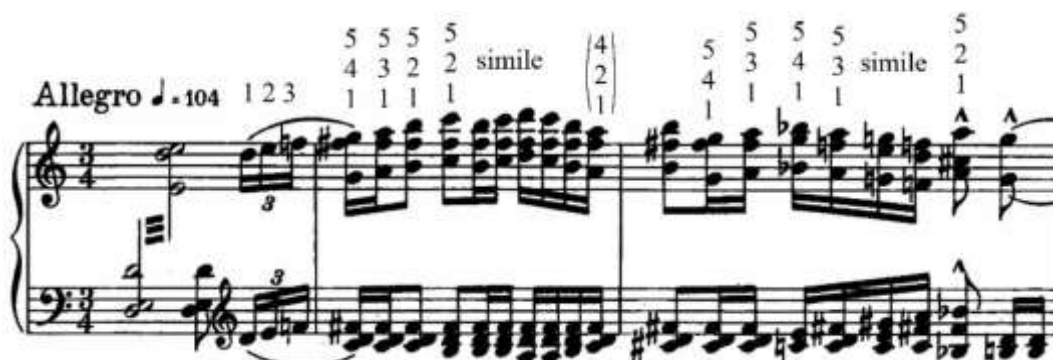
5 4 5 4 3
 3 2 3 2 2
 1 1 1 1 1

5 5 4(5) 5 5 5 5 5 5 4(5) 5
 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 3 4(5) 3 2 4 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 4
 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

Var. XVIII.
 Più mosso.
 p legato
 mf

Portato, *non-legato*, and *staccato* octaves with an added note can be played with more elastic wrists. The latter articulations do not have to be connected by fingering. The same finger should preferably play a repeated inner note within moving outer octaves, especially when quick tempi are required.

Example 61: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Sz.95, 1st movement, bars 3–5



Allegro $\text{♩} = 104$ 1 2 3

5 5 5 5 simile (4) 5 5 5 5 simile 5
 4 3 2 2 2 4 3 4 3 simile 2
 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

Example 62: A. Scriabin, *Etude Op. 8, No. 9*, bars 9–10

(4 5)
4 5 3 4
Large hands: 2 2 2 2
1 1 1 1

5 5 5 5
5 2 3 2 2 4
All hand sizes: 3 1 1 1 1 1
1 1

All hand sizes: 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
2 2 2 2 2 2 3 3 2
5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
2 2 2 2 2 2 1 1 1
Large hands: 5 4 5 4 5 5 2 2 2
3 4 5
(4 5 5)

Example 63: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 33, No. 8*, bar 26

5 5 5 4 4(5)5 5 5 5 4 4(5)5 5 5 5 5 4 5
Large hands: 2 2 2 2 2 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 5
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
All hand sizes: 2 2 2 3 3 3 5 5 2 3 5 2 2 2 2 3 3
1 1 1 1 1 1 2 2 1 1 3 1 1 1 1 1 1

It is not always wise to provide fingering for octaves with an added note according to the indicated articulation. The slurs in the following example will have to be sustained by the damper pedal. It is technically much harder to accurately play each bar's first semiquaver notes to the accented dotted quavers. The hand has more time to transition to the slurred semiquavers' position at the end of each bar. The fingering should thus be chosen to surmount this obstacle.

Example 64: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 559–562

Avoid:	5 4 5	
	2 2 3	
	1 1 1	

	5	5
	5 3	4(3)
	2 1	1
En	2	
	1	

retenant un peu

simile

The hands should always remain as relaxed as possible in the context of the technical movements required to perform the music. In the example below, the right-hand semiquavers can be played with the fingering pattern 125, followed by 135. However, the interval between the D-sharp and top A makes the 3rd finger impractical due to the unnecessary stretch between the 3rd and 5th fingers.

Example 65: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 3*, bars 53–54

5 5	5 5
3 2	3 2
1 1 simile	1 1 simile
8	

Avoid:	5 5
	2 3
	1 1

The following example demonstrates how both hands can use mirrored fingering while playing octaves with an added note simultaneously. This fingering will also ensure that the *tenuti* can be sustained as much as possible.

Example 66: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Sz.119, 1st movement, bars 32–33^{1a}

5 4 5 5 5 4 5 4
3 2 3 4 3 2 3 2 3(4)
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2
1
1

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3
5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5

It is advisable to use the same fingering combination to play successive *non-legato* white key octaves with an added note — especially if the passage will be performed at a swift tempo — as illustrated in the example below. The red figures indicate areas where the fingering secures a smooth transition between white and black keys.

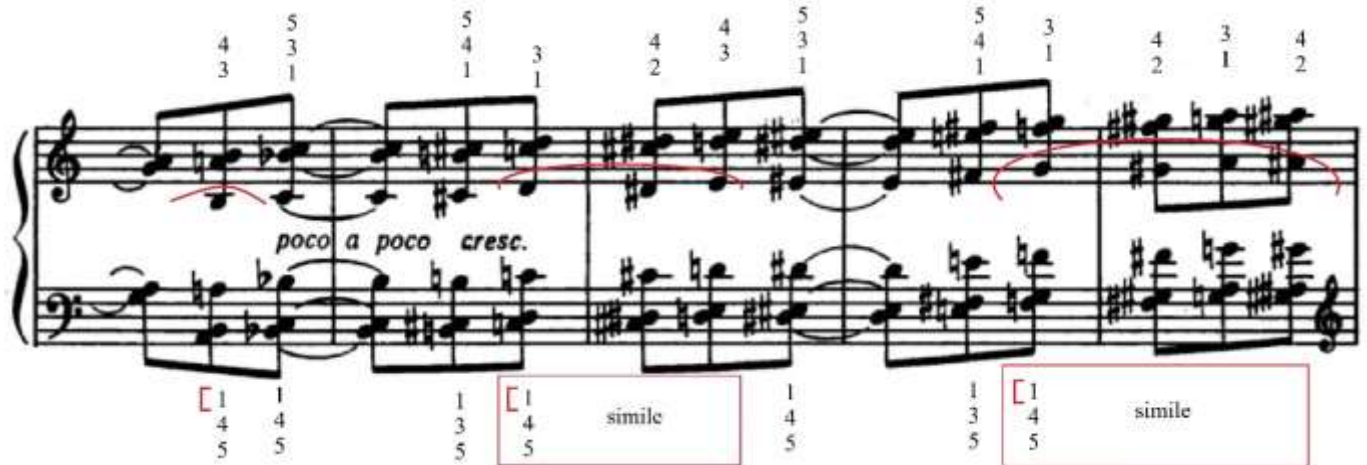
Example 67: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Sz.95, 1st movement, bars 236–237

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5
4 4 3-4 5 3-4 4 simile 3-4
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
1
8
più f

5.4 Redistribution of material between hands

The passage below can be played throughout using only the thumb's, 4th, and 5th fingers. This approach might seem practical but could lead to insecure memorisation. The redistribution of material would create the possibility of finding alternative fingering patterns that can improve and secure memorisation.

Example 68: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Sz.119, 3rd movement, bars 45–49



poco a poco cresc.

1
4
5 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
1 simile 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
1 simile

The redistribution of material can eliminate overlapping hands (usually occurring between the thumbs), and the result could improve control over musical features. I have suggested two fingering possibilities for the passage below that will eliminate overlapping hands. This fingering could also lead to enhanced control over phrasing and *legato* playing. The blue figures in the second option indicate the alternative fingering options.

Example 69: B. Bartók, *Etude Op. 18, No. 2*, bar 28

Option 1:

5 5(4) 5 4 5 5(4) 5 4 5 5(4) 5 5 5 4 4 5 5 5
 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 3
 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

quasi cadenza, senza misura, poco rubato



sempre molto espr.

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
 2 3 2 2 2 3 2 2 2 3 2 2 2 3 3 3 2
 5 5 5 4 5 5 5 4 5 5 5 5 5 4 5 5 5

Option 2:

5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5 5 5 4 4 5 4 5
 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3 3 2 3 2 3 2 3
 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

quasi cadenza, senza misura, poco rubato

sempre molto espr.

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
 2 3 2 2 2 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 3 2
 5 5 5 4 5 5 4 5 5 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 5

The suggested redistribution of material in the following example will reduce technical obstacles for the right hand. Consecutive octave movement will be eliminated, thus ensuring a better articulated and accented rendition. The redistribution will further allow a pianist to produce a more effective *crescendo*. Although no *legato* is indicated for the right-hand passage, the left-hand chromatic scale must be smoothly connected. When playing the passage exactly as written, the right hand has no alternative but to lift and move to the new position, subsequently breaking the *legato*. The redistribution will allow both hands to remain *legato*, which I consider a better musical representation of this passage.

Example 70: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 5*, bars 31–32

4 5 4 4 5
 1 2 3 2 2 3
 simile

p *piu f*

2 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 3
 5 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 simile

The material of the right-hand passage in the following example overlaps with the placement of the left-hand triads. The left hand may eliminate the use of the thumb when playing the triads. Doing so will allow the hand to comfortably play the triads on the edge of the white keys, providing sufficient space for the right hand to move freely. Figure 5 illustrates the latter scenario. The elimination of the thumbs will also ensure that accidental accents are less likely to occur while playing the passage *pianissimo*. The indicated articulation will enable a pianist to lift each triad, making this suggested fingering a practical choice.

Example 72: C. Debussy, *Prelude No. 1, Book II, L.123, bar 1*

Modéré
extrêmement égal et léger

pp

5

5

5

5

2
4
5

simile

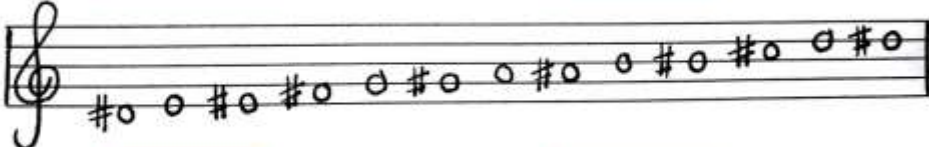
Figure 5: Eliminating the thumb



The triads in Example 73 ascend chromatically. As mentioned previously in Chapter 2.4.1, a chromatic scale can be played with the 3rd, 4th, and 5th fingers. The suggested fingering for the right-hand triadic passage was selected according to a variant on this chromatic fingering. The latter is depicted in the figure below.

Figure 6: Chromatic scale fingering variant

Standard: 3 4 5 3 4 3 4 3 4 5 3 4 3



Variant: 3 4 5 4 5 4 5 3 4 5 4 5 4

The thumbs and 2nd fingers play the bottom two notes of each right-hand triad, as seen in the example below. The left-hand triads do not comfortably conform to this approach. Instead, the fingering was devised according to patterns of three ascending triads.

Example 73: M. Ravel, *Piano Concerto*, M.83, 3rd movement, bars 224–229



3 2 1 4 2 1 5 4 3 4 2 1 5 3 4 2 1

5421 1 3 5 1 2 4 1 2 5 1 2 3 1 2 4 1 2 5

5 2 1 4 2 1 3 2 1 4 2 1 5 3 4 2 1 5 3 4 2 1

5421 1 3 5 1 2 4 1 2 5 1 2 3 1 2 4 1 2 5 1 2 3 1 2 4 1 2 5

It is not always possible to use the same fingering patterns for passages that require the hands to play similarly constructed chords simultaneously. The latter is due to the hands' natural placement on the keyboard, which creates a mirrored image. The right-hand chords in the passage below can be played throughout using the thumbs, 2nd, and 5th fingers. It would be unwise to incorporate the 4th finger for every other chord, except when the top note is played on a black key. The large interval between the top two notes of most right-hand chords would cause an uncomfortable (and sometimes impossible) stretch between the 2nd and 4th fingers.

Example 74: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16, 3rd movement, bars 142–143*

The image shows a musical score for Example 74, S. Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16, 3rd movement, bars 142–143. The score is in G minor and marked *ff con brio*. It consists of two staves: a piano part on the left and a right-hand part on the right. The piano part features a series of chords with a fingering box below it containing the numbers 1, 3, 5 in the first column and 1, 2, 4 in the second column, with the word "simile" to the right. The right-hand part features a series of chords with a fingering box above it containing the numbers 5, 2, 1 in the first column and 4, 2, 1 in the second column, with the word "simile" to the right. There are also circled numbers (4) above some notes in the right-hand part. The score is marked with accents and slurs.

The following example demonstrates how fingering for a triad is often determined by its preceding and succeeding technical material. Each right-hand G-minor triad in bar 9 utilises a different fingering. The preceding scale passage determines the fingering for the first G-minor chord. The fingering for the second and third G-minor triads forms the shortest distance between them, making the leaps more comfortable. The right-hand material can also be redistributed to the left hand, as seen in the second option.

The fingering for the second inversion right-hand triads in bars 10 and 12 are grouped in patterns of two. The first option avoids the use of the thumb on the lowest B-flat of the fourth triad.

Example 75: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 3rd movement, bars 8–13¹*

Option 1:

Allegro, ma non troppo. 123

Option 1 shows two systems of piano and bass staves. The first system covers bars 8-10, and the second system covers bars 11-13. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above notes. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, *mp*, and *f*. A damper pedal is used throughout.

Option 2:

Allegro, ma non troppo. 123

Option 2 shows two systems of piano and bass staves. The first system covers bars 8-10, and the second system covers bars 11-13. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above notes. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, *mp*, and *f*. A damper pedal is used throughout.

The left hand can play the bottom notes of the right-hand second inversion triads, as seen in the next example. This redistribution will allow the right hand to have better control over the tonal balancing of melodic notes. The bottom notes of the last three semiquaver triads in bar 22 must be played with the left-hand thumb. No fingering alternative is possible due to the 5th and 2nd fingers sustaining the crotchet C and A-flat. The damper pedal alone cannot sustain these notes as it must lift on each triad to avoid smudging harmonies.

Example 76: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 33, No. 7*, bars 22–23

The musical score for Example 76 shows two staves. The right hand (treble clef) has a melody with various fingering numbers: 4, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 3, 2, 5, 4. The left hand (bass clef) has a bass line with fingering numbers: 5, 1, 5, 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5, 1, 5, 3, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5, 2, 3, 2, 4. A red box highlights a diagram of a hand position with fingers 1-5 in a specific arrangement. The score includes dynamics like *pp* and *m. s.*, and a tempo marking *poco rit.*

The following three examples demonstrate practical approaches to *legato* fingering for triads. When physically possible, finger pedalling should be employed to its fullest use to achieve the smoothest transition between triads. The hands must remain in close contact with the keys. The blue figures indicate the fingering groups which form a hand position.

Example 77: C. Debussy, *Images, L.110, Reflets dans l'eau*, bars 1–4

The musical score for Example 77 shows two staves. The right hand (treble clef) has a melody with blue boxes highlighting fingering groups: $\begin{matrix} 3 & 5 & 3 \\ 2 & 4 & 2 \\ 1 & 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 3 & 5 & 3 \\ 2 & 4 & 2 \\ 1 & 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 3 & 5 & 3 \\ 2 & 4 & 2 \\ 1 & 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 \\ 4 & 2 \\ 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 \\ 4 & 2 \\ 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 \\ 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 \\ 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$. The left hand (bass clef) has a bass line with blue boxes highlighting fingering groups: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 \\ 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 \\ 3 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$, $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \\ 2 & 2 \\ 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$. The score includes dynamics like *pp* and a tempo marking *Andantino molto (Tempo rubato)*.

Example 78: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 8*, bars 35–36

The image shows two alternative fingering options for bars 35-36 of Debussy's *Etude L.136, No. 8*. Each option consists of a piano and bass staff. The piano staff has dynamic markings *mf* and *p ma sonore*. Above the piano staff, there are fingering diagrams for the right hand, including triplets and groups of notes. The first option includes a *simile* marking. The second option is marked *OR* and also includes a *simile* marking.

Example 79: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Sz.119*, 3rd movement, bars 507–514

The image shows two systems of fingering diagrams for bars 507-514 of Bartók's *Piano Concerto No. 3, Sz.119*, 3rd movement. The first system is for the bass staff, marked *p (molto legato)*. It includes a tempo marking *[Presto] (♩=96-98)*. The second system is for the treble staff. Both systems feature complex fingering diagrams for groups of notes, including triplets and other rhythmic patterns.

Repeated fingering patterns could be beneficial for memorising a passage securely. The coloured figures in the example below indicate when and where specific fingering patterns repeat. This passage is played *staccato* throughout and would require elastic wrists to create a bouncing effect of the hands on the keyboard.

Example 80: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 2nd movement, bars 178–185

Tema.
L'istesso tempo.

5 4 5 4 5 3 4 5 3 5 3 5 3 4 5
 (4)3 2 3 2 3 2 2 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 3
 1 1 1 1 1 | 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

5 3 5 3 5 3 4 5 5 4 5 4 5 3 4 5 5 3 4 5 5 3 4 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 4 3 5 5 5 5 5 5 4 5 4
 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 3 4 2 2 2 3 2 2 3 4 2 2 3 4 2 2 3 4 4 4 4 4 3 2 2 4 4 4 4 5 4 3 2 3 2 3
 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 4 1 1 1 1 1 2

The fingering provided for the first option in the following example will most likely be most pianists' preferable choice. The right hand must be kept above the left hand to avoid any clashes. The second option illustrates an unorthodox fingering approach. The redistribution of material will keep hands from overlapping.

A third alternative would be to combine the two methods of fingering. The initial pattern of this passage repeats twice, an octave higher each time. The initial pattern and its first repeat may employ the use of the first fingering option. The second repeat may alternate to the fingering used in the second option.

Example 81: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 1st movement, bars 219–220

Option 1:

Option 1: Musical score for bars 219–220 of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 1st movement. The score shows two staves (treble and bass clef) with complex chordal textures. Fingerings are indicated in boxes above and below the notes. Dynamics include *f*, *cresc.*, and *simile*. The piece concludes with a fermata and the marking *rit. s.*

Option 2:

Option 2: Alternative musical score for bars 219–220 of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 1st movement. This version uses different fingerings for the same passages as Option 1. It includes the same dynamics (*f*, *cresc.*, *simile*) and concludes with a fermata and *rit. s.*

6.3 Varied chordal structures

The suggested fingering options for the following four examples ensure the smoothest transition from one chord to the next. My aim was also to avoid unnecessary hand position changes. When possible, the same fingering is used for repeated notes between successive chords. Alternative options are provided for large hands when necessary.

Passages constructed by large chords are often taxing to perform — especially when fast tempi and extreme dynamics are involved — as seen in Example 85. Tension in the hands, arms, and shoulders are almost unavoidable. It is vitally essential for a pianist to release this tension as soon as the keys have been depressed. The latter can be done by keeping the joints elastic, allowing secondary movements of the wrists and forearms to absorb and release unwanted tension.

Example 82: S. Rachmaninoff, *Variations on a Theme of Chopin*, Op. 22, bars 287–288

	5	4 5 4 5 4	5	4 5 5
	3	3 3 3 3 3	3	3 3 3
	2	2 2 2 2 2	2	2 2 2
Large hands:	1 simile	1 1 1 1 1	1 simile	1 1 1

	5	5 5 5 5 5 5	
	3	5 3 3 4 4 4 3	
	2	2 2 2 2 2 2 2	
All hand sizes:	1 simile	[1 1 1 1 1 1 1]	simile

The musical score for Example 82 consists of two staves: piano (top) and bass (bottom). The piano part features a complex texture with many beamed notes and triplets. The bass part has a more rhythmic accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *simile*. An upward-pointing arrow is located above the piano staff in the second measure of the second system.

Example 83: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Op. 30, 2nd movement, bars 99–101

The musical score for Example 83 consists of two staves: piano (top) and bass (bottom). The piano part features a complex texture with many beamed notes and triplets. The bass part has a more rhythmic accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Dynamics include *p* (piano).

	2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1	1 1 2 1 1 1 1	2 1
	3 3 2 4 4 4 3 3	3 3 4 2 2 2 2	3 3
	5 5 3 5 5 5 5 5	5 5 5 4 4 5 5	5 5
	5		
	1 1		
	2 2		
	3 4		
		2 1	1 1
		3 3	1 1
		5 5	2 2
			4 3
			5
			1 3 1 2
			4 5 2 3
			4

Example 84: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 2nd movement, bars 56–57*

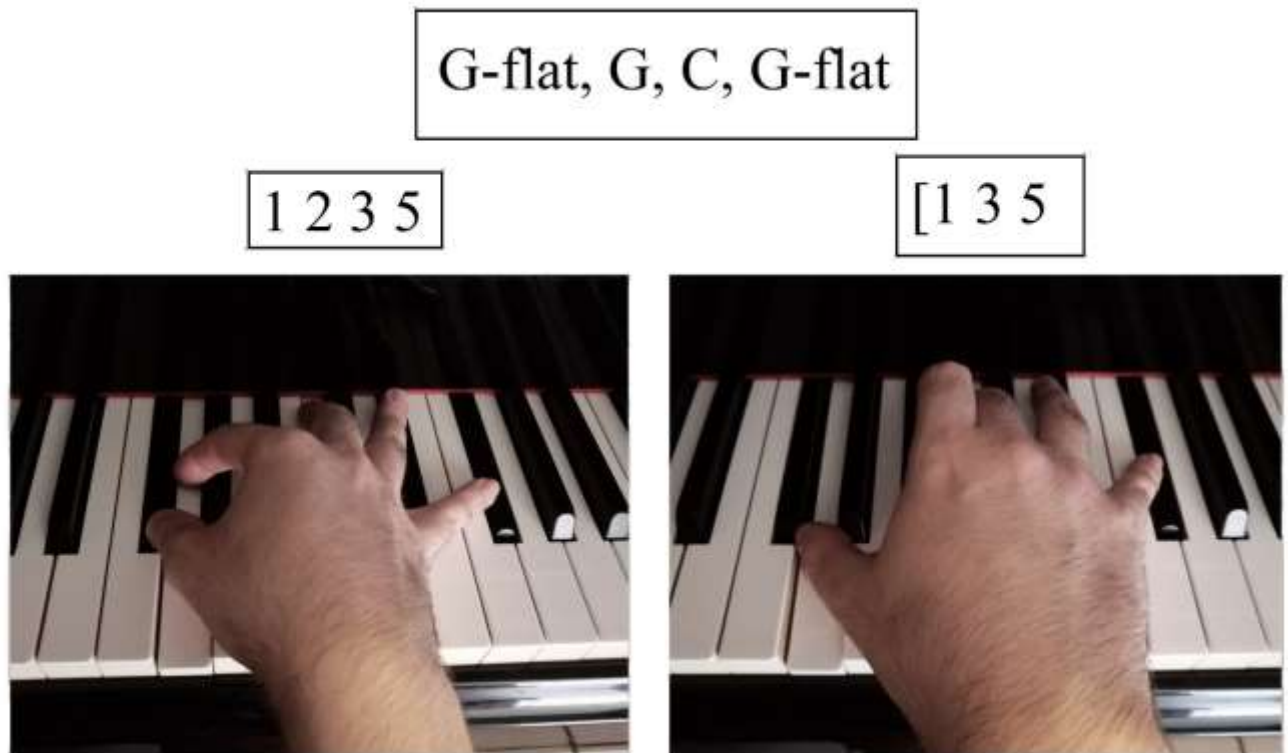
Example 84 shows the piano and bass staves for bars 56–57 of the second movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1. The piano part features a series of chords with fingerings: 4 5 5, 2 2 3, 1 1 2, 5 3 5, 4 3 4, 5 3 4 5, 3 4, 5 4 5 3 3 3, 3 3 3 5 3 4, 3 3 3 2 2 2, 2 2 2 3 2 2. The bass part has fingerings: 1 1 1, 1 1 1, 2 1 1 1, 1 1, 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 1 1. Dynamics include *pp* and a circled *#* in the piano part. A note on the right indicates 'Leads to: D 2 B 1' with 'A 5' above it.

Example 85: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30, 1st movement, bars 219–226*

Example 85 shows the piano and bass staves for bars 219–226 of the first movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3. The piano part has fingerings: 5 5(4), 5 3 3, 3 2 2, 1 1 1, 5(4), 5 5 5, 3 4 4 3, 2 2 2 2, 1 1 1 1, 5, 3, 2, 1. Dynamics include *ff* and 'simile'. The bass part has fingerings: 2 1 1, 3 2 2, 5 3 3, 5 4, 1 1 1 1, 2 2 2, 3 4 4 3, 5 5 5, 1 1 1 1, 4 4, 4(5), 5 4 4, 2 2 2, 1 1 1 5, 4 3 4, 5 4, 2 2 2, 3 2 3 2, 1 1 1 1, 1 1. The tempo is marked 'Allegro.' and the dynamics include *ff molto marcato*. The bass part also has fingerings: 1 2 1 2 1, 1 simile, 2 1 1, 2 3 4 3 2, 4 4 5 4 4, 5 5 5 5, 3 2 2, 4 3 3, 5 5 5 4, 3 2 2, 5 3, 5 4(5), 2 2, 5 4(5).

The figure below illustrates how the fingering for the first right-hand chord in Example 85 will avoid an uncomfortable and strenuous stretch between the 2nd & 3rd and 2nd & 5th fingers.

Figure 7: Avoiding a strenuous expansion of the hand



Certain chordal constructions — similar to the one mentioned above — can cause the hands to endure severe strain due to abnormally large expansions between certain fingers. The right-hand chord built on the eighth quaver in bar 52 of the following example will be impossible for a small hand to play. My right hand — that can comfortably play consecutive tenths — is expanded to its maximum when playing this chord. The strain experienced from overly large expansions, especially between the 2nd and 4th fingers, can easily cause injury during execution.

The redistribution of material to the left hand can solve the problem mentioned above. As seen in the following example, this redistribution will also allow a pianist to play the right-hand chords with greater emphasis and power. A pianist with small hands that cannot accommodate the redistribution can consider eliminating the D from the chord, as indicated with the green figure in the following example.

Example 86: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 5*, bars 50–52

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the initial part of the piece with dynamic markings *sf*, *p*, and *cresc.* and the instruction *accelerando*. The second system includes the instruction *ritenuito*. The third system, labeled "or:", provides an alternative fingering for the right hand, with a green box highlighting the sequence 5, 4, 1.

System 1 (Bars 50-52):

- Right Hand Fingering: 5, 4, 5, 5; 3, 2, 3, 4; 2, 1, 2, 2; 1, 1, 1, 1
- Left Hand Fingering: 1, 1, 1, 1; 2, 2, 2, 2; 3, 4, 5, 3

System 2 (Bars 53-56):

- Right Hand Fingering: 5, 5, 5, 5; 4, 4, 3, 4; 2, 2, 2, 2; 1, 1, 1, 1
- Left Hand Fingering: 1, 1, 1, 1; 2, 2, 2, 2; 3, 4, 5, 3

System 3 (Bars 57-60):

- Right Hand Fingering: 5, 4, 2, 4, 4, 3, 3; 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1; 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1
- Left Hand Fingering: 1, 1, 1, 1; 2, 2, 2, 2; 3, 4, 5, 3

System 4 (Bars 61-64):

- Right Hand Fingering: 5, 4, 2, 1; 5, 4, 1 (highlighted in green); 5, 4, 2, 1
- Left Hand Fingering: 1, 1, 1, 1; 2, 2, 2, 2; 3, 4, 5, 3

CHAPTER 7

Double notes

7.1 Double note seconds

The following finger combinations can be used to play consecutive double note major and minor seconds:

Table 4: Finger combinations for consecutive double note major and minor seconds

Right hand	[1 ²³	2 1	3 1	4 1	5 1	3 2	4 2	4 3	5 3
Left hand	[1	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	2 3	2 4	3 4	3 5

The advantage of using the thumbs to play seconds constructed by two consecutive white keys cannot be applied to any other interval. The fingering suggestions for double note seconds in this subchapter should be accessible for all hand sizes. However, pianists with larger hands might prefer to avoid the fingering contraction of the thumbs and 5th fingers.

Ravel suggests²⁴ using the right-hand thumb, 2nd, and 3rd fingers to execute the passage below constructed from major seconds. His fingering is simple and effective. I have suggested an alternative option incorporating the 4th finger in certain finger combinations. This suggestion would lessen the amount of movement required by the hand to move the fingers. Additionally, this alternative suggestion could make the pattern of the passage easier to memorise.

²³ The square bracket indicates that the thumb is used to play two consecutive keys.

²⁴ Ravel's fingering can be found in the G. Henle Verlag (Urtext) edition of *Gaspard de la nuit*.

Example 87: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 448–449

Alternative: [1 3 2] [1 4 3] [1 3 2] [1 3 2] [1 4 3] [1 3 2]

Ravel: [1 3 2] [1 3 2] [1 3 2] simile

The image shows a musical score for piano. The top part displays two rows of fingering suggestions. The first row, labeled 'Alternative', shows a sequence of fingerings: [1 3 2], [1 4 3], [1 3 2], [1 3 2], [1 4 3], and [1 3 2]. The second row, labeled 'Ravel', shows a sequence: [1 3 2], [1 3 2], [1 3 2], followed by the word 'simile'. Below the text is a musical score for two staves (treble and bass clef). The score includes a *ppp* dynamic marking and a *2^a ad.* marking. A large slur covers the entire passage, and a 'simile' marking is placed above the right-hand staff.

The example below displays further fingering options supplied by Ravel. I have suggested an alternative approach that could provide a pianist with enhanced control over the indicated *legato* phrasing.

Example 88: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 454–456

Alternative: 4 3 4 5 3 4 5 4 5 4 3 5(1) 4
1 2 1 1 2 1 3 1 3 1 2 1 1

Ravel: 4 3 4 [1 3 2] [1 3 4] 3 3 4
1 2 2 [1 2 1] 2 1 - lé - 2 3 1

The image shows a musical score for piano. The top part displays two rows of fingering suggestions. The first row, labeled 'Alternative', shows a sequence of fingerings: 4 3 4 5 3 4 5 4 5 4 3 5(1) 4, with a '1' below the final '5'. The second row, labeled 'Ravel', shows a sequence: 4 3 4 [1 3 2] [1 3 4] 3 3 4, with '1 2 2' below the first three notes, '[1 2 1]' below the next three, '2 1' below the next two, and '- lé - 2 3 1' below the final three. Below the text is a musical score for two staves (treble and bass clef). The score includes a *5* marking above the right-hand staff.

The fingering suggestions for the next example is based on the approaches mentioned in the previous two examples. The extremely fast tempo of this passage might influence a pianist’s final choice of fingering. The first option may be the most accessible approach, which suggests using only independent and strong fingers. The second option could be beneficial for memorising the pattern of the passage.

Example 89: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz. 95*, 2nd movement, bars 80–84

Option 2: [1 $\frac{4}{2}$ simile

Option 1: [1 $\frac{3}{2}$ simile

sempre pp

Option 1: [1 $\frac{2}{3}$ simile

Option 2: [1 $\frac{3}{4}$ simile

[1 $\frac{4}{2}$ [1 $\frac{3}{2}$ [1 $\frac{4}{3}$ [1 $\frac{3}{2}$ [1 $\frac{4}{2}$ simile

[1 $\frac{3}{2}$ simile

[1 $\frac{2}{3}$ simile

[1 $\frac{3}{4}$ [1 $\frac{2}{3}$ [1 $\frac{2}{4}$ [1 $\frac{2}{3}$ [1 $\frac{3}{4}$ simile

7.2 Double note thirds

The following finger combinations can be used to play consecutive double note major and minor thirds:

Table 5: Finger combinations for consecutive double note major and minor thirds

Right hand	2 1	3 1	4 1	5 1	3 2	4 2	5 2	5 3	5 4
Left hand	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	2 3	2 4	2 5	3 5	4 5

The fingering suggestions for double note thirds in this subchapter should be accessible for all hand sizes.

From a physical and musical perspective, I often find it useful to substitute the 3rd finger with the thumb in the fingering combination 35/53. Doing so in the example below (as shown inside the red figure) will allow a pianist to produce a proper accent while effortlessly transitioning to the subsequent thirds. The forearm and wrist can help the hand produce a proper accent by plunging it down onto the keyboard.

Example 90: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 82*, 1st movement, bars 1–3

The simple redistribution of material to the right hand in the passage below can assist the left hand in executing well-articulated thirds.

Example 91: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 82*, 4th movement, bars 426–430

The fingering for the chromatically descending major thirds in the following example would have been the standard approach accepted by most pianists. This fingering would have been ideal for this passage if the right-hand part were written an octave higher or the left-hand part an octave lower. However, the overlapping material renders this approach unfeasible. Instead,

I have suggested an alternative in which the material is redistributed between hands, as illustrated in Figure 8. The latter will eliminate the uncomfortable clashes and produce a more articulated rendition of this passage.

Example 92: C. Debussy, *Prelude No. 11, Book II, L.123, bars 149–153*

The image shows a musical score for two staves, likely piano and bass clef. The score includes fingerings (numbers 1-5) above and below notes, and a dynamic marking 'molto dim.' (molto diminuendo). The score is enclosed in a large bracket with the number '8' at the top left.

Figure 8: Redistributed major thirds

The image shows a musical score for two staves, illustrating redistributed major thirds. The score includes fingerings (numbers 1-4) above and below notes, and a 'simile' marking. The score is enclosed in a large bracket.

The first fingering option for the two-note slurs in the next example is the most simple and accessible approach. The second fingering option — which creates fewer hand position shifts — can also be considered. A down-up movement of the wrist must accompany both the latter suggestions.

Example 93: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 9*, bar 24

Option 1: $\begin{matrix} 3 & 4 \\ 1 & 2 \end{matrix}$ simile

Option 2: $\begin{matrix} 3 & 4 & 4 & 5 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 4 & 5 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 4 \\ 1 & 2 & 1 & 3 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 3 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 2 \end{matrix}$

The musical score for Example 93 shows a double-note passage in the right hand. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment. The right hand part is marked 'dim.' and consists of a series of double notes. Two fingering options are provided above the staff. Option 1 is a simple 3-4 / 1-2 fingering. Option 2 is a more complex fingering designed to minimize hand position shifts.

Regular hand position shifts must be avoided when performing quick double note third passages. Frequent hand position changes can be detrimental to achieving the desired tempo. The fingering should be determined by the maximum number of thirds that can be played in one hand position.

Example 94: S. Prokofiev, *Etude Op. 2, No. 1*, bars 21–22

$\begin{matrix} 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 5 \\ 1 & 1 & 2 & 1(3) & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1(3) & 1 & 2 & 1 & 3 \end{matrix}$

The musical score for Example 94 shows a double-note passage in the right hand. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment. The right hand part is marked 'ff' and 'p'. A fingering diagram is provided above the staff, showing a sequence of fingerings designed to minimize hand position shifts.

Example 95: S. Prokofiev, *Etude Op. 2, No. 1*, bars 25–26

$\begin{matrix} 2 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 2 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 5 \\ 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1(3) & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 3 \end{matrix}$

The musical score for Example 95 shows a double-note passage in the right hand. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment. The right hand part is marked 'ff'. A fingering diagram is provided above the staff, showing a sequence of fingerings designed to minimize hand position shifts.

Repeated fingering groups can be applied to successive double note thirds, provided that the passage may be played *non-legato* or *staccato*.

Example 96: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Sz.95, 3rd movement, bars 95–96

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The upper staff is the right hand, and the lower staff is the piano part. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The right-hand part consists of two measures of music, each containing a triplet of eighth notes. The piano part also consists of two measures, each containing a triplet of eighth notes. Fingering numbers are written above and below the notes. In the right hand, the first measure has fingering (5, 3, 1) for the first triplet and (4, 3, 2, 1) for the second triplet. The second measure has fingering (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) for the first triplet and (4, 3, 2, 1) for the second triplet. In the piano part, the first measure has fingering (1, 2) for the first triplet and (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) for the second triplet. The second measure has fingering (1, 2) for the first triplet and (1, 3, 1, 2, 1, 4(3)) for the second triplet.

Successive major and minor thirds appear in the opening section of the following *cadenza*. The contour of the right-hand passage mostly consists of stepwise movement with occasional leaps. I have therefore opted to incorporate *legato* fingering as far as possible. I aimed to include the maximum number of fingering groups per hand position. The opening of this *cadenza* is technically taxing to perform. Thus, the hands need to remain free from unnecessary tension. When possible, I suggested using the thumbs and 5th fingers simultaneously. This specific fingering combination allows the hand to return to its most natural and relaxed state.

Example 97: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Sz.95, 1st movement, bars 224–234^{3a}

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The upper staff is the right hand, and the lower staff is the piano part. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The right-hand part consists of four measures of music, each containing a triplet of eighth notes. The piano part also consists of four measures, each containing a triplet of eighth notes. Fingering numbers are written above and below the notes. In the right hand, the first measure has fingering (5, 4, 1, 2) for the first triplet and (3, 5, 2, 1, 3, 1) for the second triplet. The second measure has fingering (4, 2, 3, 4, 5, 2, 3) for the first triplet and (2, 1, 1, 2, 3, 1, 1) for the second triplet. The third measure has fingering (4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 5, 4, 3) for the first triplet and (2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 2, 1) for the second triplet. The fourth measure has fingering (2, 3, 4, 5, 2, 1) for the first triplet and (2, 3, 4, 5, 1, 1, 2, 3) for the second triplet. In the piano part, the first measure has fingering (3, 2, 5) for the first triplet and (4, 1, 3, 1, 2, 4(3)) for the second triplet. The second measure has fingering (1, 3, 5, 2, 4, 5) for the first triplet and (1, 2, 3) for the second triplet. The third measure has fingering (1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 2, 4) for the first triplet and (2, 1, 3, 5, 2, 4) for the second triplet. The fourth measure has fingering (1, 2, 1, 3) for the first triplet and (2, 1, 3) for the second triplet.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano, each consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The notation is heavily annotated with fingering numbers (1-5) and includes specific performance instructions.

- System 1:** Features a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The top staff has a complex sequence of notes with numerous fingering numbers above and below. The bottom staff also has extensive fingering numbers.
- System 2:** Includes the word *simile* in both staves. The top staff continues with similar phrasing and fingering. The bottom staff has a different set of fingering numbers.
- System 3:** Shows a continuation of the piece with various fingering groups and a final cadence-like structure.

Fingering for successive *legato* double thirds must complement the indicated phrasing. It is often much simpler to provide fingering for shorter *legato* phrases. Longer *legato* phrases often demand a complex combination of several fingering groups to sustain the *legato*. The beginning of a phrase does not necessarily always start with a completed fingering group. An example of the latter can be seen in the left-hand part of bar 59 in Example 98.

The following two examples demonstrate how the phrasing of a passage can influence the choice of fingering. The hands must remain in constant contact with the keys for the full duration of a phrase unless it becomes physically impossible.

Example 98: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 2*, bars 59–62

5
3 2 3 4 5 4 4
1 1 1 2 3 2 3 2
Animando 1 1 simile simile simile

Avoid: 3 4 5
2 1 3

3 2 3 4 5 2 3 4
1 1 1 2 1 1 1 2 simile

4 3 4 5 3 2 3 4
2 1 2 3 1 1 1 2 simile

mf p mf f

1 1 1 2 3 2 1 1 4 2 1 2
3 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 5 4 1 2 1 2

1 1 2 3
2 3 4 5 simile

1 2 3 1 2 3 simile
3 4 5 2 3 4 5

4 3 4 5 simile
2 1 2 1

4 3 4 5 3 2 3 4 simile
2 1 2 3 1 1 1 2

dim.

Example 99: A. Scriabin, *Etude Op. 8, No. 10*, bars 9–16

4 3
2 1

5 4 4 5
3 1 2 3 2

2 3 5 2 5 4 5 3 2 5
1 1 4 1 4 1 2 1 1 3 2

5 4 3 5 4 5
1 2 1 3 1 2

3 4 5 4 5 4 3 2 5 2 5 3 2 5 2
1 2 3 1 1 2 1 1 4 1 4 1 1 3 1 5 2

5 2
4 1

dim.

The first fingering option in the example below might at first glance seem like the most appropriate choice for this passage. However, the transition of the fingering group 12 to 35 (after each group of four quavers) should preferably be avoided. The first fingering option would have been the more preferred choice in a faster tempo. The second fingering option will allow a pianist to play each consecutive third perfectly *legato* in the context of an indicated *pianissimo*.

Example 100: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 2nd movement, bars 119–122*

Option 2: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 5 & 4 \\ 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 \end{matrix}$ simile $\begin{matrix} 3 & 4 & 5 & 4 \\ 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 \end{matrix}$ simile

Option 1: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 \\ 3 & 2 & 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$ simile

The musical score for Example 100 shows two fingering options for a piano passage. The score includes dynamic markings like 'ten.', 'pp', 'mp', and 'freddo', and performance instructions like 'poco cresc.'. Two arrows point to the transition between the two fingering groups in Option 2.

The first fingering option in the next example is based on the chromatic scale fingering variant, which employs the 3rd, 4th, and 5th fingers. The second fingering option, which avoids using the thumb on black keys, can also be considered.

Example 101: S. Prokofiev, *Etude Op. 2, No. 3, bars 19–21*

Option 1: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 & 3 & 4 & 4 & 5 & 4 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 3 & 4 & 4 & 5 \\ 2 & 1 & 2 & 4 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 5 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 4 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 4 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 5 \end{matrix}$

Option 2: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 3 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 3 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 4 & 5 \\ 2 & 1 & 2 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 5 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 4 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 5 \end{matrix}$

The musical score for Example 101 shows two fingering options for a piano passage. The score includes a 'poco cresc.' marking. The fingering options are presented above the staff.

7.3 Double note fourths

Passages constructed from successive double note fourths are relatively uncommon. The following finger combinations can be used to play double note fourths:

Table 6: Finger combinations for consecutive double note fourths

Right hand	2 1	3 1	4 1	5 1	4 2	5 2	5 3
Left hand	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	2 4	2 5	3 5

The fingering suggestions for double note fourths in this subchapter should be accessible for all hand sizes.

As mentioned previously, the specified tempo of a passage has a crucial impact on the appropriate choice of fingering. The latter is demonstrated in the following example. This passage must be performed at a rapid tempo while the pianist's touch must remain light in the context of the given dynamic level. I have suggested three possible fingering options for this passage — the first and second options are undoubtedly the most accessible and practical choices. The fingering options in red should be avoided. This fingering could have been used for a much slower tempo.


Example 102: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 3*, bar 54

Avoid: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 \\ 3 & 2 & 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$ simile

Option 1: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 5 & 4 & 5 & 4 \\ 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$ simile

Option 2: $\begin{matrix} 4 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 3 \\ 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$ simile

Option 3: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 5 \\ 3 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 \end{matrix}$



7.4 Double note fifths

Like double note fourths, passages constructed from successive double note fifths are relatively uncommon. The following finger combinations can be used to play double note fifths:

Table 7: Finger combinations for consecutive double note fifths


Right hand	2 1	3 1	4 1	5 1	5 2	5 3
Left hand	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	2 5	3 5

The fingering provided in the Masters Music edition for the passage below is appropriate, practical, and comfortable. Hand positions are established by fingering groups of two fifths each. I provided this passage with an alternative fingering option that will reduce the number of hand position shifts. A pianist with small hands might find this approach uncomfortable or even impractical.

Example 103: B. Bartók, *Etude Op. 18, No. 2*, bars 29–30

Alternative option for large hands: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 2 & 5 & 4 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$ simile

Fingering provided in Masters Music edition: $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 \\ 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$ simile



Fingering provided in Masters Music edition: $\begin{matrix} 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 \\ 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 \end{matrix}$ simile

Alternative option for large hands: $\begin{matrix} 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 2 \\ 5 & 5 & 5 & 4 & 2 & 4 & 5 & 2 & 4 & 5 \end{matrix}$ simile

7.5 Double note sixths

The following finger combinations can be used to play double note major and minor sixths:

Table 8: Finger combinations for consecutive double note sixths

Right hand	2 1	3 1	4 1	5 1	5 2
Left hand	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	2 5

Consecutive double note sixths are taxing to perform due to the hand's expanded state caused by certain fingering combinations. The larger distance of the interval results in a limited amount of possible finger combinations. A pianist with small hands might not accommodate the stretch between the thumbs and 2nd fingers.

The fingering provided for the following example will enable a pianist to smoothly connect at least one note of each consecutive sixth to the next. The wrists need to remain elastic when implementing this suggested fingering approach. The hand's lateral movement from the wrist will allow the fingers to move to the desired position while keeping in contact with the keys to sustain the *legato*.

Example 104: A. Scriabin, *Etude Op. 8, No. 6*, bars 1–5¹

Con grazia
♩ = 44

3 4
1 1

5 4 3 4 5 3 5 4 5 3 5 4 5 4
2 1 2 1 1 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1

5 4
2 1

3 4
1 1

5 4 3 4
2 1 2 1 1 1

5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 3
2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 1 2

5 4
2 1

Overlapping material between hands may be redistributed to avoid clashes, as seen in the example below. The redistribution will reduce the distance of certain intervals, thus making the fingering combination of the thumbs and 2nd fingers more accessible for small hands.

Example 105: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 4*, bars 30–32

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system covers bars 30-32 and includes a 'Rubato' marking. The second system covers bars 33-34 and includes a 'dim.' marking. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *f* (forte), and *dim.* (diminuendo). Red lines connect notes between hands to show overlapping material. Blue boxes highlight specific fingering patterns in the right hand of both systems.

7.6 Mixed intervals

Ravel suggests playing the next passage throughout with only the thumbs, 2nd, and 3rd fingers. Although feasible, I find Ravel’s unorthodox fingering approach impractical. It might be advantageous to use only strong fingers to perform this passage, but I believe this fingering to be detrimental to the memorisation process of this passage. The repeated use of this fingering combination could also lead to unwanted inaccuracies.

I have suggested an alternative fingering option which includes the use of the 4th and 5th fingers. This approach will reduce the number of hand position shifts and enhance memorisation by producing a fingering pattern. Lastly, this approach could also enhance the shaping of the indicated *diminuendo* and *crescendo*.

Example 106: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 468–476

Alternative: $\begin{matrix} 3 & 5 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 3 & 5 \\ 2 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 3 & 1 \end{matrix}$ simile $\begin{matrix} 3 & 3 & 4 \\ 2 & [1 & 2 & [1 & 3 & [1 \end{matrix}$

Ravel: $\begin{matrix} 3 & 3 & 3 & 3 \\ 2 & 2 & 2 & 2 \end{matrix}$ simile $\begin{matrix} 3 & 3 & 3 \\ 2 & [1 & 2 & [1 & 2 & [1 \end{matrix}$

$\begin{matrix} 3 & 3 & 4 \\ 2 & [1 & 2 & [1 & 3 & [1 \end{matrix}$ simile

$\begin{matrix} 3 \\ 2 & [1 \end{matrix}$ simile

Fingering options do not always conform to the rhythmic grouping of notes into beats and sub-beats. The fingering groups in the example below do not correspond to the groups of four demisemi-quavers. The blue figures indicate the distribution of the fingering groups.

Example 107: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Ondine, bar 57

Avoid: $\begin{matrix} 3 & 3 \\ 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$

$\begin{matrix} 4 & 5 & 4 & 5 & 4 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & (4) & (4) \\ 1 & 3 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 2 \\ & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$

$\begin{matrix} 4 & 5 & 4 & 5 & 4 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 4 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & (4) & (4) \\ 1 & 3 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 5 & 3 & 5 & 3 & 2 \\ & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 1 \end{matrix}$

The following example illustrates fingering that does correspond with the rhythmical grouping of notes.

Example 108: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, *Ondine*, bar 61

The bottom notes of the following right-hand double notes can be redistributed to the left hand, as seen in the example below. Doing so could produce a more secured, articulated, and virtuosic rendition of this passage.

Example 109: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 5*, bars 68–69

The fingering provided for ascending double notes in bars 6–7 of the following example will allow a pianist to highlight the top melodic notes.

Example 110: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 8*, bars 4–11

The image displays a musical score for Example 110, S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 8*, bars 4–11. The score is presented in two systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system includes a 'poco rit.' marking and a 'cresc.' marking. The second system includes a 'mf' marking, a 'dim.' marking, and a 'p' marking. Above the first system, there are two boxes labeled 'Avoid:' containing fingering patterns: $\begin{matrix} 4 & 5 & 4 \\ 1 & 2 & 1 \end{matrix}$ and $\begin{matrix} 5 & 4 & 5 & 4 \\ 2 & 2 & 1 & 2 \end{matrix}$. Below these boxes, a sequence of circled numbers (2, 4, 5, 3, 4, 5, 2, 3, 5, 3, 4) is shown with '1' underneath each. The second system has a sequence of numbers (5, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) above the first measure, 'a tempo' below it, and another sequence (3, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5) above the second measure, with '1' below it. A red figure highlights a transition in the second system. Below the second system, a sequence of numbers (5, 2, 1, 3, 5, 2, 1) is shown.

The fingering provided in the Muzgiz edition for the following descending double notes is practical, except for the uncomfortable transition between the fingering groups indicated inside the red figure. The alternative fingering option eliminates this obstacle. Furthermore, the integrating use of stronger fingers could enhance the indicated *fortissimo*. A pianist with thick fingers might prefer using the alternative fingering option, as this approach mostly avoids the placement of fingers between black keys.

Example 111: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 8*, bars 55–57

Thumb gliding

Alternative option: 4 5 4 5 4 3 5 4 5 4 5 3 4 | simile
2 1 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2

Fingering provided in the Muzgiz edition: 5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 5 4 | simile
2 1 2 1 2 1 1 2 1 2 1 2

The redistribution of material in the next example is vitally essential to sustain specific notes over bar lines. The damper pedal cannot be used to sustain these notes, as the pedal is required to change regularly to avoid smudging sonorities. The sustained notes are marked in colour, as seen in the following example.

Example 112: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 64*, bars 207–210

5 3 5 3 5 3
2 1 2 1 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 1

ondoyant 1 la mélodie bien

Hold the G with the thumb

marquée

The image shows a musical score for piano with two systems. The first system consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a tempo marking *marquée* and contains a melodic line with various fingerings (e.g., 5 2, 3 1, 5 2, 1 4, 1 3, 2) and slurs. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment with fingerings (e.g., 5, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 1 1 2, 1 1, 2 3, 5, 2 3, 1, 5) and slurs. A technical instruction "Hold the E with the thumb" with an arrow points to a specific note in the treble staff. The second system shows a continuation of the melodic line in the treble staff with fingerings 1, 2, 4 and a bass staff with fingerings 1 1 5, 1 1, 2 3, 5.

CHAPTER 8

Repeated notes

8.1 Introduction

The quality of a piano's repetition mechanism often determines the outcome of a pianist's control over the execution of repeated notes. A premium quality piano in good condition should allow a pianist the freedom to execute repeated notes using multiple approaches to fingering. However, in most cases, a pianist cannot select an instrument of their preference to perform on. Thus, it is sensible to study and learn repeated note passages using multiple sets of fingering combinations to adapt to the instrument available for performance.

Appropriate fingering for a repeated note passage will be determined by its musical and rhythmical features. It should never be assumed that alternating fingers should be used for all repeated note passages; in fact, alternating fingers could be detrimental to the successful interpretation of specific musical sonorities. The possibility of redistributing material to an unoccupied hand should always be investigated. I have, on numerous occasions, used this technique to execute technically demanding repeated notes with ease.

The fingering suggestions in this chapter should be accessible for all hand sizes.

8.2 Alternating fingers

Alternating fingers should preferably be used to play quick repeated notes necessitating a pellucid sound. Executing the latter using only one finger will require swift vertical quivering movements (flexions and extensions) of the hand from the wrist, which might not be physically possible in extreme tempi. Alternating fingers will eliminate this obstacle.

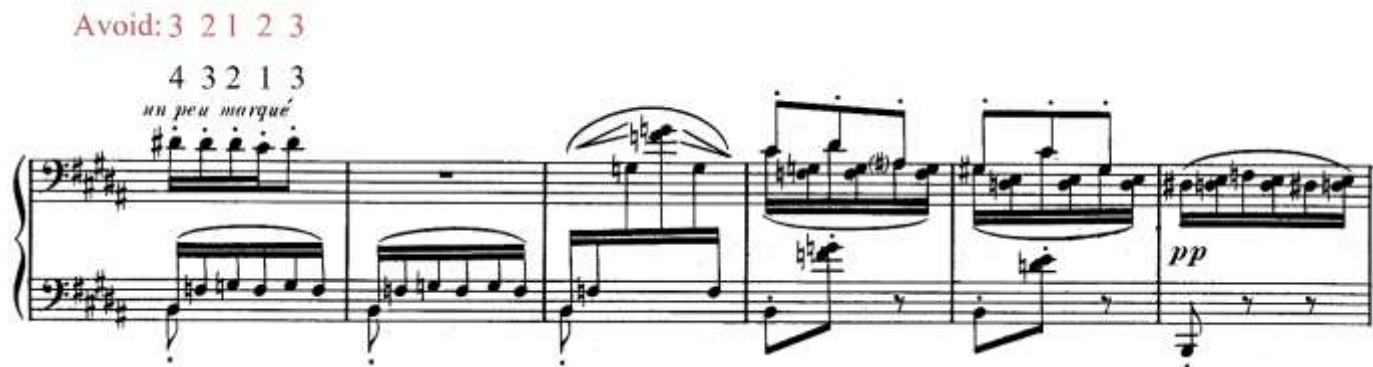
Various alternating finger combinations can be used to perform repeated notes. A pianist's ultimate choice will depend on the physical and musical demands of a passage. The following example demonstrates the latter assertion. The suggested fingering combination, which includes the 4th finger, is more practical due to the effortless movement of the 2nd finger on D-sharp to the thumb on C-sharp. The fingering option that does not include the 4th finger causes an unnecessary passing of the 2nd finger over the thumb (from D-sharp to C-sharp).

Example 113: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, *Scarbo*, bars 52–57

Avoid: 3 2 1 2 3

4 3 2 1 3

un peu marqué



The image shows a musical score for Example 113. It consists of two staves: a piano (right) and a bass (left). The piano part features a triplet of semiquavers in the first measure, followed by a double note (E-sharp and B) in the second measure, and then a series of chords and semiquaver patterns. The bass part provides a steady accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated above the notes, and the dynamic marking *pp* is present at the end of the passage.

The triplet semiquavers in the example below can be performed by alternating the thumb, 2nd, and 3rd fingers in a descending manner (321, 321). The second triplet semiquaver pattern should preferably be played with the 4th, 3rd, and 2nd fingers to keep the thumb and 5th finger ready to play the following double note (E-sharp and B). The abandonment of the triplet semiquaver pattern at the end of this passage is accommodated with proper fingering, ensuring that the leap between G-sharp and D-sharp is securely within reach.

Example 114: M. Ravel, *Miroirs*, M.43, *Alborada del gracioso*, bars 52–53


The image shows a musical score for Example 114. It consists of two staves: a piano (right) and a bass (left). The piano part features a series of sextuplets of semiquavers. Fingerings are indicated above the notes, with some options highlighted in boxes. The dynamic marking *p* is present at the beginning of the passage.

The first fingering option for the sextuplets in the next passage will probably be most pianists' preferred choice. This alternating fingering combination complements the rhythmic qualities of the semiquaver sextuplets. I have suggested an alternative method that eliminates the use of the 2nd finger. The sextuplets — employed as an accompaniment to the primary melodic content in the left-hand part — must be performed in a dynamic range not exceeding *piano*. The elimination of the 2nd finger will allow a pianist additional control over the repeated key's recoil, thus providing enhanced control over dynamics.

Example 115: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 9*, bars 55–57

Option 1: 313131 simile

Option 2: 321321 simile

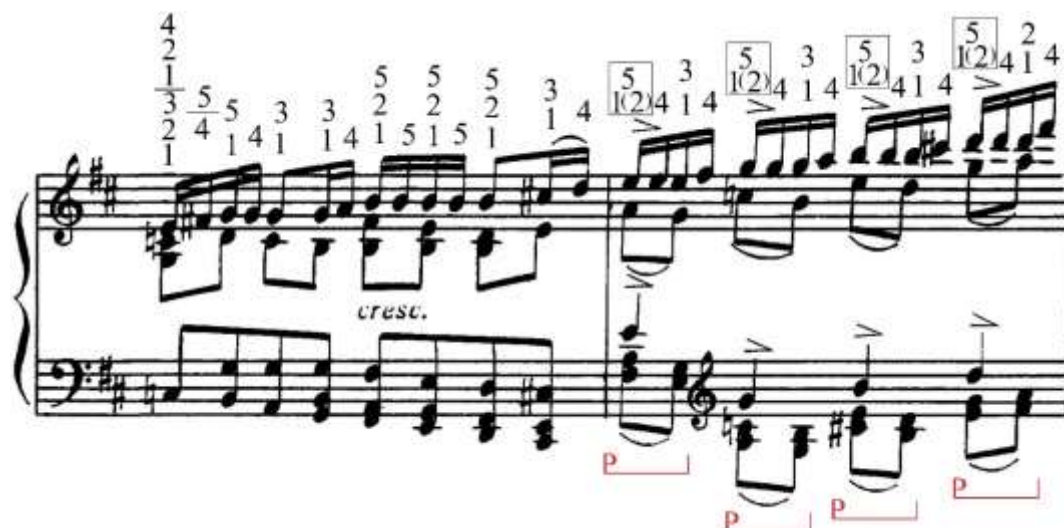


It is by no means obligatory to use only one alternating fingering combination for a repeated note passage. Combining two or more distinct fingering patterns could be beneficial for securing the memorisation of a passage. The latter can be observed in the following example that employs the use of three distinct fingering patterns. The combination 432 is used for three consecutive repeated black keys, while 321 is used for three consecutive repeated white keys. Lastly, the rhythmical grouping of the right-hand semiquavers in bars 10–11 is complemented by the repeated use of the fingering combination 31. The descending repeated semiquavers in these bars have been provided with alternative fingering options.

Example 116: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 9*, bars 7–11


The musical score for Example 116 shows two staves. The top staff is in bass clef and the bottom staff is in treble clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music is marked with *p* and *pp*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers in boxes above the notes. The top staff has fingerings: 4 3 2, 3 2 1, 3 2 1, 4 3 2. The bottom staff has fingerings: 3 2 1 3 1 3, 3 2 1 3, 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1, 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 1.

The right-hand repeated notes in the example below do not always accommodate alternating fingers due to the additional secondary melodic material. Fingers can alternate if the hand's span accommodates the necessary stretch required to play the double notes and chords. The right-hand quavers in bar 55 can be slurred, without employing the damper pedal, when using the alternative fingering options (the 2nd and 5th fingers on the first quaver and semiquaver of each beat). However, a pianist with small hands might find the latter suggestion impossible and must employ the damper pedal to interpret this passage successfully. Additionally, the right-hand accents can be strengthened by using a downward flicking movement of the hand from the wrist.

Example 117: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 4*, bars 54–55


The musical score for Example 117 shows two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The music is marked with *cresc.* and *p*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers above the notes. The top staff has fingerings: 4 2 1, 3 5 5 3 3 2 2 2 3 4, 5 3 5 3 5 3 5 2 4 1 4, 5 3 5 3 5 2 4 1 4.

8.3 Non-alternating fingers

Alternating fingers on repeated notes that necessitate a powerful accented sound may not be effective. Accented repeated notes should preferably be executed using only one finger or a combination of two fingers simultaneously, as indicated in the following two examples. The latter will allow a pianist to produce a powerful sound by employing strength produced by mobile wrists and forearms. Alternating fingers drastically reduces a pianist's ability to draw energy from the arm's joints or arm itself.

Example 118: M. Ravel, *Miroirs*, M.43, *Alborada del gracioso*, bars 208–212

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Example 118. The first system shows the piano part (left hand) and the right hand part. The piano part begins with a *pp subito* dynamic marking. The right hand part features a sequence of notes with fingerings 5, 3, and 1, followed by a bracketed section labeled '1+3 simile' and another bracketed section labeled '2'. The second system continues the piano part with a *mp* dynamic marking and the right hand part with a *ff* dynamic marking. The right hand part includes fingerings 5, 2, and [1], with bracketed sections labeled '2+3 simile' and '1+3 simile'. Both systems conclude with a double bar line and a final chord.

Example 119: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 82*, 4th movement, bars 404–411

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with various notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Above the first staff, there are fingering numbers: 12345, 1234, 1, 1, 1, 1. A dashed line with an '8' above it spans across the first staff. The second system also consists of two staves with similar notation. Above the first staff, there are fingering numbers: 1 1 1 1 1, 2+3 simile, 1 1 1 1 1, 1. A dashed line with an '8' above it spans across the second staff. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'.

8.4 Redistribution of material between hands

The possibility of redistributing material to an unused hand should always be investigated. This fingering method can eliminate many technical hurdles and improve the overall clarity and brilliance of a repeated note passage. The next three examples demonstrate the employment of this method.

Example 120: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 2nd movement, bars 135–139

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Above the first staff, there are markings: 'dim.', 'p', '32', '32', 'leggiere', '32', '32', 'simile'. Below the first staff, there are fingering numbers: 3, 3, 3, 1, 5, 1, 5, 2. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings like 'dim.', 'p', and 'leggiere'.

Example 121: M. Ravel, *Miroirs*, M.43, *Alborada del gracioso*, bars 46–51

The image displays a musical score for Example 121, consisting of three systems of piano music. The first system shows bars 46-48 with a complex melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Above the right hand, fingering patterns are indicated: $\frac{321}{432}$, 321 simile, $\frac{321}{432}$, and 321 simile. Below the left hand, fingerings are 5, 2, 4, 2, 5, 2, 5, 2, 4, 2, 5, 2. The second system, labeled 'OR', shows an alternative fingering for bars 46-48. Above the right hand, patterns include $\frac{321}{3}$, 32 , 32 , 32 , $\frac{321}{3}$, 32 , 32 , 32 . Below the left hand, fingerings are 5, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 5, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2. The third system shows bars 49-51 with a similar melodic line. Above the right hand, patterns include 321 , 321 , 32 , 32 , 321 , 321 , 32 , 32 , 32 , 32 . Below the left hand, fingerings are 5, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1.

Example 122: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136*, No. 9, bars 40–42

The image displays a musical score for Example 122, showing piano music for bars 40-42. The score is in a key with one flat and a 3/4 time signature. The right hand features a rapid semiquaver pattern of G-sharps. Above the right hand, fingering patterns 321 and 321 are indicated. The left hand provides a bass line. Dynamics include *sff strident*, *sff*, *p*, and *sff*. Fingerings for the left hand are 2, 2, 2, 2. A measure rest of 8 measures is indicated above the right hand in the final bar.

The repeated semiquaver G-sharps leading to the final octave D in bars 186–187 of the following example poses a myriad of technical problems. This passage's rapid tempo makes it essential to employ alternating fingers to execute the repeated G-sharp semiquavers. Fingers usually alternate in a descending fashion (4321) towards the thumb. The implementation of the

latter alternation — which ends on the thumb — complements the right-hand leap towards the final D. The left hand, however, should preferably avoid this fingering. Ending on the final G-sharp with the thumb will leave the hand with no other possibility than to pass over the 2nd or 3rd finger to the final D, which I would not recommend. A simple redistribution of material, as seen in the example below, will eliminate this impracticality. Additionally, this redistribution will allow a pianist to play the concluding octave D with the right hand only, thus providing the opportunity to draw sufficient power from the forearm to attain the maximum volume and power during a performance.

Example 123: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 2nd movement, bars 183–187

The image shows a musical score for Example 123, consisting of a piano part (left hand) and a right-hand part. The piano part is in the bass clef and features a series of eighth-note chords. The right-hand part is in the treble clef and features a series of eighth-note chords. The score includes several fingerings: 132 5132, 5132, 51 32, 5134, 5 1 432, 5 1, 5 23 15 23, 1523, 1 52 3, 1321, and 321. A 'brioso' marking is present above the right-hand part. The score is annotated with red brackets and boxes highlighting specific fingerings and markings.

The repeated notes in the next example can be played by using both thumbs. Ravel’s indicated pedalling will ensure that the right-hand chords remain sustained, making this approach acceptable. I have found this method helpful in maintaining a sustained *pianissimo* and balanced sound throughout this passage. An alternative fingering method for this passage has already been discussed in Chapter 2.4.1 (Example 29).

Example 124: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 1–7

The image displays a musical score for Example 124, consisting of two systems of piano and right-hand parts. The tempo is marked 'Modéré'. The piano part begins with a 'sourdine' (mute) and a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic. The right-hand part features a rapid, repetitive melodic figure. Red annotations highlight specific fingering and articulation: '1 1 1 1' is written above the first four notes of the right-hand figure, and '1 1 1 1' is written below the first four notes of the piano accompaniment. Above the first four notes of the right-hand part, the numbers 5, 3, 2, and [1] are written vertically. The word 'simile' is written above the right-hand part in both systems. The second system includes the instruction 'très fondu, en trémolo' (very soft, in tremolo) and 'très long' (very long) with a fermata over the final note. A bracket under the first two notes of the piano accompaniment in the second system is labeled '1 1'.

The left-hand accompaniment in the following passage is in close proximity to the right-hand melodic material. The swift and perpetual right-hand passage is taxing to perform with absolute clarity and control. The suggested redistribution of material will reduce the strain on the right hand, allowing a pianist to execute this passage with greater ease and increased virtuosity.

Example 125: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 93–102

The image displays a musical score for Example 125, consisting of three systems of piano notation. The first system shows bars 93-102 with a large slur over the right hand and a *pp* dynamic marking. The second system continues the notation with various fingering numbers (1-5) and articulation marks (red arcs) above the notes. A large red arrow points from the middle of the second system down to a boxed-in section. This boxed section, labeled 'or', shows an alternative fingering and articulation for the final two bars of the passage. The third system shows the final few notes of the piece with a *mf* dynamic marking and further fingering suggestions.

CHAPTER 9

Ornamentation

9.1 Introduction

A pianist should always aim to execute ornamented material — in any given musical or textural context — with finesse, clarity, and unflinching precision. I often experiment with unconventional fingering concepts to achieve the highest quality of the composer’s intended musical effect. Less often, I rearrange or rewrite ornamented material when I deem it necessary to enhance the musical or pianistic attributes of a specific passage.

The fingering suggestions in this chapter should be accessible for all hand sizes.

9.2 Lingering trills

Various fingering combinations can be used to execute lingering trills. I have suggested five fingering options for the right-hand trill in the example below. The first two options employ the use of only two fingers for the complete duration of the trill. The third fingering option is an alternating combination of the first two options (31 and 32). The fourth and fifth options combine two different fingering combinations. Here, the initial fingering must be altered halfway through the trill. The latter approach could enhance the stamina needed to execute the trill rapidly for an extended period.

Any fingering combination for trills that includes the thumb will require small rotational movements (supination and pronation) of the hand from the forearm.

Example 126: B. Bartók, *Etude Op. 18, No. 2*, bar 20

Option 1: 1 5 3131 simile
 Option 2: 1 5 3232 simile
 Option 3: 1 5 3132 simile
 Option 4: 1 5 3131 simile → change to 3232 simile
 Option 5: 1 4 52424 simile → change to 1414 simile (3)(3)



The left-hand trill in the example below should imitate a murmuring effect. The latter is not easily achieved by executing the trill with a non-dominant hand. Hence, I have suggested using the right hand to perform the trill. Doing so will increase the alteration speed of the trill and enhance control over dynamics.

The double notes in the right-hand part can easily be played by the left hand. This rearrangement is beneficial for accentuating the top melodic notes played with the strong fingers of the left hand. This method is by no means obligatory and is only a suggestion that can be employed when the left hand cannot sustain the trill's desired musical effect.

Example 127: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 3*, bars 13–17

(Andantino con moto)
in Tempo I^o

1 4 1 4 1 4 simile
(2)

p

p

p

>pp *murmurando*

1 2
3 5

1 1 1 2
2 4 5 4

2 3 2 3 simile

1 3 2 3 2 simile

Rit. - - - //

più p

pp

più pp

1 1 1 2 1
2 3 4 5 4


2 1
5

1
4

The fingering suggestions for the right-hand trills in the following example will ensure the smoothest transition between each consecutive trill shift. The added notes inside the red figures in bars 239–240 connect the leaps between the trills chromatically. I borrowed this idea from

the late distinguished virtuoso pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli²⁵. I believe his rendition of Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G, M.83*²⁶ to be one of the finest in existence.

Example 128: M. Ravel, *Piano Concerto, M.83*, 1st movement, bars 237–240



The image displays a musical score for Example 128, consisting of two systems of piano and glissandi. The first system shows a piano part with a glissandi marked 'gliss.' and a fingering diagram: $\begin{matrix} D C\# C B A\# \\ 3 2 1 3 2 \end{matrix}$. The second system shows a piano part with a glissandi marked 'gliss.' and a fingering diagram: $\begin{matrix} B C C\# D D\# E F F\# \\ 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 \end{matrix}$. Red arrows point to specific notes in the piano parts, and blue boxes highlight fingering patterns like '1 2323' and '1313'.

9.3 Redistribution of material between hands

When possible and practical, I prefer executing glissandi on black keys with individual fingers rather than gliding over the keyboard using only one finger. The one-finger gliding technique can be unreliable — especially in dynamic ranges softer than *piano* — causing certain keys not to sound. The glissandi on black keys in the next example can be executed by both hands using individual fingers. Doing so could enhance control over phrasing, dynamics, and timbre.

²⁵ Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (1920–1995) was an Italian virtuoso pianist widely considered one of the twentieth century's greatest pianists.

²⁶ Michelangeli's rendition can be viewed on YouTube by using the following URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YGxbA0WJ0k>

Example 129: C. Debussy, *Prelude No. 12, Book II, L.123, bars 63–64*

The image shows a musical score for Example 129, consisting of piano and bass staves. The piano staff (top) has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. It features a glissando marked 'gliss.' and 'm.d.' (mezza dolce) with a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic. The bass staff (bottom) has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. It includes a 'pp' dynamic and a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The score is divided into two measures. The first measure has a fingering '1 2 3 4 5' above the piano staff and '5 4 3 2 1 2' below the bass staff. The second measure has a 'simile' marking above the piano staff and 'pp' below the bass staff. There are also '8...' markings at the beginning of each staff.

The tremolo in the example below is problematic due to the large leap between the first left-hand octave and the preceding scale passage in bar 0 (the anacrusis). This uncomfortable leap can be avoided by redistributing material to the right hand. The top D and E — resembling a trill — must be played with the right hand. The repeated bottom D must be executed with the left hand. The redistribution will also ensure a smooth transition to the position of the following tremolo.

Example 130: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz.95, 1st movement, bars 0–2*

The image shows a musical score for Example 130, consisting of piano and bass staves. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 104 (♩ = 104). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The piano staff (top) has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It features a '7' fingering and a 'f' (forte) dynamic. The bass staff (bottom) has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. It also features a '7' fingering and a 'f' dynamic. The score is divided into three measures. The first measure has a fingering '1 2 3 1 2 3 4' above the piano staff and '5 4 3 2 1 3 2' below the bass staff. The second measure has a '1 3 1 3 simile' marking above the piano staff and '1 3 3 3 simile' below the bass staff. There are also 'f' dynamics in the second and third measures.

The method of redistributing material between hands must not be reserved only for technically demanding passages. Redistributing the material of an undemanding passage, as seen in the following example, can have a significantly positive influence on its clarity, phrasing, and tone colour during a performance.

Example 131: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 2nd movement, bars 189–191

The musical score for Example 131 shows two staves. The right-hand staff contains a melodic line with trills and triplets. Above the staff, fingerings are indicated: '2 3 2 3 simile' and '2 4 2 4 simile'. The first trill is marked 'tr' and 'dim.'. The second trill is marked 'tr' and 'p'. The third trill is marked 'tr' and 'dim.'. Below the staff, fingerings are indicated: '3 1 3' and '4 3 2 1'. The left-hand staff contains a bass line with triplets and a final trill marked 'tr' and 'pp'. Below the staff, a fingering '2' is indicated.

The redistribution of material in the example below can be considered to minimise the risk of right-hand inaccuracies. The second trill in bars 261 and 262 respectively, can be played with the left hand. This redistribution will eliminate problematic leaps to and from the latter mentioned trills.

Example 132: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 64*, bars 261–263

The musical score for Example 132 shows two staves. The right-hand staff contains a melodic line with trills and mordents. Above the staff, fingerings are indicated: '2323 1', '1 2 3 5', '1 2 3 5', '1 3 2 3 2', '1 2 3 4', '1 3 2 3 2', and '1 3 2 3 2 1 2 3 4'. The first trill is marked 'tr'. The second trill is marked 'tr'. The third trill is marked 'tr'. The fourth trill is marked 'tr'. The fifth trill is marked 'tr'. The sixth trill is marked 'tr'. The seventh trill is marked 'tr'. The eighth trill is marked 'tr'. The left-hand staff contains a bass line with a crescendo and a final trill marked 'tr'. Below the staff, fingerings are indicated: '1 5', '3 1 3 1', 'mp 5', '1 3 1 3 1', '3', '1', '1 2 3 4', and '5'.

It will be nearly impossible, especially for pianists with small hands, to execute the mordents placed on the right-hand octaves in the following example. The suggested redistribution of material to the left hand allows the right hand to employ stronger fingers to execute the mordents, eliminating uncomfortable or impossible hand expansions. Consequently, the left hand will be required to accommodate swift octave leaps. However, I deem the latter to be a better pianistic alternative to the octave mordents.

Example 133: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Sz.119, 3rd movement, bars 177–185

The image displays a musical score for Example 133, consisting of two systems of piano and right-hand parts. The piano part is marked with a *cresc.* (crescendo) and includes various fingering and articulation markings. The right-hand part features complex fingering patterns and articulation markings, including slurs and accents. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature.

System 1 (Bars 177-185):

- Bar 177: Piano part (5, 1), RH part (132, 1)
- Bar 178: Piano part (5, 1), RH part (132, 1)
- Bar 179: Piano part (1, 5), RH part (143, 1)
- Bar 180: Piano part (1, 5), RH part (1, 243/132)
- Bar 181: Piano part (2, 1), RH part (1, 143/132)
- Bar 182: Piano part (1, 5), RH part (1, 343/232)
- Bar 183: Piano part (5(4), 5), RH part (1, 343/232)
- Bar 184: Piano part (1, 2), RH part (1, 232)
- Bar 185: Piano part (1, 5), RH part (1, 343/232)

System 2 (Bars 186-187):

- Bar 186: Piano part (1, 5(4)), RH part (1, 3/2)
- Bar 187: Piano part (1, 5), RH part (1, 2/1)

9.4 Alternative arrangements

Taking the liberty of rewriting or rearranging material should be done with caution. A pianist cannot attempt the latter without the risk of being heavily criticised. I only consider rewriting a passage when the physical or musical demands are beyond my pianistic capabilities or when the rearrangement allows a significant improvement on a passage's musical or technical attributes. The following two examples illustrate the latter statement. Example 134 proposes a rearrangement, while Example 135 proposes the reworking of material. I deem both suggestions more pianistic and musically practical than the original material.

Example 134: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 438–439

The image displays a musical score for Example 134, consisting of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower in bass clef, both in a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score shows a complex, flowing melodic line with many accidentals. A red arrow points to a specific chord in the lower staff, which is a triad of notes: G#4, B4, and D5. Hand positions are indicated with numbers 1-5. The right hand position is 5-4-2-1, and the left hand position is 2(1)-3(2)-4(3).

Example 135: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Op. 26, 1st movement, bars 19–21

The image displays a musical score for Example 135, consisting of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower in bass clef, both in a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The score shows a rhythmic, repetitive pattern of eighth notes. A red arrow points to a specific chord in the upper staff, which is a triad of notes: G#4, B4, and D5. Hand positions are indicated with numbers 1-5. The right hand position is 5-4-2-1, and the left hand position is 3+2. The right hand also has a 1-3-5 position indicated.

CHAPTER 10

Arpeggiated material

10.1 Introduction

The physical construction of arpeggios typically requires pianists to navigate their fingers swiftly and effortlessly over a large area of the keyboard. Composers often construct passages intending to exhibit virtuosic skill by employing various constructions of arpeggiated material in the form of accompaniment to primary melodic material. In such instances, it is not unusual for hands to overlap and navigate — very often within proximity — over and under each other. The latter presents the possibility of redistributing material to ease the technical demands of a passage. I have employed this method in almost every passage presented in this chapter.

Hand sizes must be taken into consideration when devising fingering options for arpeggiated material. The maximum extension of a pianist's hands is less important than the individual extensions between each finger. Overly large expansions between fingers could be detrimental to an arpeggio's speed, tonal balance, and accuracy. The latter could result in physical injury too. The practical application of fingering will allow all hand sizes to accommodate and master even the most taxing arpeggiated passage.

10.2 Arpeggiated material for both hands simultaneously

The ascending arpeggiated passage in the following example is constructed by two distinct arpeggios. Standard fingering (for F-sharp minor) should be used to execute the right-hand arpeggio. Ravel suggested an unorthodox fingering for the left-hand arpeggio that requires a pianist to pass the 5th finger over the thumb. This approach is practical; however, I find the resulting hand position strenuous and uncomfortable, as illustrated in Figure 9 on the following page. I have suggested an alternative approach that complements the fingering suggested for the right-hand arpeggio. This suggestion eliminates the use of the 5th finger, which will enhance a pianist's control over dynamic contours and tempo. I would recommend a pianist with small hands to employ the alternative fingering option.

Example 136: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 227–234

The musical score shows two systems. The first system includes a piano part with a *ppp* dynamic and a treble part with a *simile* dynamic. Fingerings are indicated as 5 3 1 and 4 2 1 for the treble part, and 1 2 4 5 for the piano part. The second system shows a *f* dynamic in the piano part and a *simile* dynamic in the treble part. Fingerings 1 2 4 and 5 2 are shown. Below the score, two boxes provide alternative fingerings: 'Ravel: 5 3 2 1 simile' and 'Alternative: 3 1 4 3 2 1 simile'.

Figure 9: A strenuous hand position



I have suggested three fingering options for the arpeggiated passage in the example below. The first two options will most likely be the preferred choices of most pianists. The third option — which is my personal preference — is an unorthodox suggestion that requires the left hand to pass over the right hand at the end of the passage, using the 2nd and 3rd fingers simultaneously to strike the top A. This approach could produce a powerful and clear accent on the final octave.

Example 137: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 3rd movement, bars 1–3*

Option 1 (small hands):

Allegro vivace.

Option 2 (large hands):

Allegro vivace.

Option 3:

Allegro vivace.

The third fingering method employed in the example above — which requires the left hand to pass over the right hand — can be applied to the ascending arpeggiated passage in the next example. Additionally, I would suggest omitting the final D of the ascending left-hand B-minor

Example 140: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Sz.119*, 3rd movement, bars 416–419

Musical score for Example 140, showing piano and right-hand parts. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano part (left hand) consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment with fingerings 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2. The right-hand part features a melodic line with slurs and fingerings: 1 2 1, 1 2 1 2, 1 3 1 3, and 1 2 1 2 1. A circled '5' is present in the piano part at the end of the first measure.

Example 141: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 4th movement, bars 217–220

Tempo precedente
(Moderato)

Musical score for Example 141, showing piano and right-hand parts. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of two sharps (D major). The piano part (left hand) consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment with complex fingerings: 1 4(5), 5 2 1 1 2 5, 1 4(5), 4 2 1 1 2 4, 1 5, 5 3 2 1, 1 5, 1 5, 3 2 1 2 3 4. The right-hand part features a melodic line with slurs and complex fingerings: 1 2 4, 1 2 4, 1 4 2 1 4 2, (4) 1 2 3, 1 3 2 1 3 2, 1 2 3 1 2 3, 1 2 4, 1 2 4, 1 3 1 3 2, 1 2 1 2 4 5 1, 1 3 5, 2 1, 1 2, 4 2 5 1 3 2. The score includes a forte (ff) dynamic marking and a circled '1' in the piano part at the end of the second measure.

The unconventional construction of arpeggiated material in the following example makes devising suitable fingering options a complicated process. Ravel has suggested only hints to the fingering of his preference. The first fingering option was completed using Ravel's suggested approach. This approach will require a pianist to use the left-hand thumb in succession to execute two consecutive white keys without altering the rapid tempo of this passage. However, caution should be taken to avoid unintentional accents when using the thumb in succession. I deem this fingering option to be suitable for pianists with large hands. The second fingering option was devised to eliminate the consecutive use of the left-hand thumb. Furthermore, this approach is more suitable for pianists with smaller hands.

Example 142: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, *Ondine*, bars 66–67

Red: Ravel's fingering

The image displays two musical systems for the left hand of Example 142. The first system is labeled 'Option 1:' and includes the tempo marking 'Un peu plus lent' and the dynamic 'ff'. It shows two staves with various fingering numbers (1-5) and Ravel's original fingering highlighted in red. The second system is labeled 'simile' and also shows two staves with fingering numbers and Ravel's original fingering highlighted in red. The score includes treble and bass staves with various fingering numbers and Ravel's original fingering highlighted in red.

Example 144: M. Ravel, *Piano Concerto, M.83*, 1st movement, bars 197–200

The image shows a musical score for Example 144, M. Ravel's Piano Concerto, M.83, 1st movement, bars 197–200. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a piano part with a damper pedal and a right hand part. The piano part has a sequence of chords marked with a damper pedal symbol and 'ff'. The right hand part has a sequence of notes with fingerings: 1 2 4, 1 2 1 3 2, 1 2 3 1 2 3, 5 3 2 1 3 2. A red circle highlights a redistribution point where the right hand moves from the piano part to the right hand part. The piano part has fingerings 5 2 1 and 5. The right hand part has fingerings 2 1 8 and 5. A dashed line connects the 8 in the right hand part to the 5 in the piano part, indicating a redistribution of material.

An arpeggiated passage that employs the use of the damper pedal will present increased possibilities for redistributing material. The hand does not need to hold down keys which are sustained by the damper pedal. The latter will allow a pianist to creatively explore the possibility of redistributing material to an available hand, provided that the redistribution will not negatively impact the interpretation of the intended musical content. When necessary, pedalling must be adjusted to complement the redistribution. The following three examples demonstrate the employment of this method. I consider these fingering suggestions immensely valuable in ensuring a secured, controlled, and confident rendition of these passages.

Example 145: C. Debussy, *Prelude No. 12, Book II, L.123*, bars 35–36

The image shows a musical score for Example 145, C. Debussy's Prelude No. 12, Book II, L.123, bars 35–36. The score is in B-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a piano part with a damper pedal and a right hand part. The piano part has a sequence of notes with fingerings: 1 4 3 2 1, 1 2 3 4, 4 3 2 1, 1 2 3 4 1. The right hand part has a sequence of notes with fingerings: 5 3 2 1, 2 3 4 3 2, 2 3 4 3 2. A red arrow points to a redistribution point where the right hand moves from the piano part to the right hand part. The piano part has fingerings 5 3 2 1 and 5. The right hand part has fingerings 2+3 and 2 3 4 3 2. A dashed line connects the 2+3 in the right hand part to the 5 in the piano part, indicating a redistribution of material.

5(4) 5
5 3 2 1
f
2+3
2 3 4 3 2
2 3 4 3 2
1 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 1
5(4)

Example 146: C. Debussy, *Images*, L.110, *Reflets dans l'eau*, bars 55–56

5 3 2 1 5 5 5 5 1 1 1 2 3 5 3 2 1 5
(4)
mf cresc. molto
mf cresc. molto
1 2 3 5
1 2 3 5 1 2 3 5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 5
5 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 5

Example 147: C. Debussy, *Etude* L.136, No. 11, bars 58–61

Tempo I°
piu pp
piu pp
Tempo I°
4
1 2 3 4 5 1 4 3 2 1 5 4 3 2 1 3 2
4 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1 1 5
3 1 2

The top notes of the left-hand arpeggios in bars 59–60 of the example below overlap with the right-hand chords. These notes should preferably be incorporated into the chords, although this is not essential for a technically secure rendition. The second fingering option aims to demonstrate an alternative approach to the standard arpeggio fingering provided for the first option. I deem the first fingering option more appropriate for pianists with smaller hands.

Example 148: C. Debussy, *Images*, L.110, *Reflets dans l'eau*, bars 58–60

Option 1: 5 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 2 1 2 4 1 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ 5 1 5 3 2 1 5 3 2 1 RH 2 3 5 1 2 3

Option 2: 5 1 5 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 5 1 5 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 RH 1 2 3 1 2 3

Option 1: 5 1 5 3 2 1 RH 1 2 1 2 5

Option 2: 5 1 5 4 2 1 RH 1 2 4 1 2

A segment of the first right-hand G major arpeggio in the example below can be redistributed to the left hand. I would advise to not apply the same method to the second right-hand G major arpeggio. The top note of the final left-hand chord (DGB) would require the thumb to rapidly execute a repeated B, making the redistribution physically and musically impractical.

Furthermore, I have suggested employing a thumb gliding technique to execute the arpeggiated right-hand chords shown inside the green figure. The construction of this specific chord renders the use of standard fingering (5321) only suitable for extra-large hands.

Example 149: M. Ravel, *Jeux d'eau*, M.30, bar 37

The image shows a musical score for Example 149, M. Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*, M.30, bar 37. It features two staves: a right-hand treble clef staff and a left-hand bass clef staff. The right-hand staff contains two G major arpeggios. The first arpeggio is labeled 'G major arpeggio (1)' and has a fingering of 5 3 2 1 5 2 1 1. The second arpeggio is labeled 'G major arpeggio (2)' and has a fingering of 5 3 2 1 5 2 1 1. A green box highlights the first four notes of the first arpeggio. A yellow arrow points to the first four notes of the second arpeggio, with the text 'No redistribution of material to the left hand.' below it. The left-hand staff shows chords and arpeggios with fingerings 1 2 4, 5, 1 2 4, and 5. The tempo marking 'rapid' is present at the end of the passage.

10.4 Unconventional redistributions of material between hands

The tremendously fast tempo at which the arpeggio in the next example is expected to be performed makes the suggested redistributions a practical option. The suggested fingering ensures the least amount of hand position changes per hand. The latter will ensure that this arpeggiated passage can be executed at maximum tempo and dynamic control.

Example 150: B. Bartók, *Etude Op. 18, No. 2*, bars 26–27

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Example 150. The first system is marked *allargando* and *meno mosso*. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over it, and the left hand has a supporting accompaniment. Fingering numbers (1-5) are written above and below the notes. Red arcs connect notes across the systems, indicating phrasing. The second system is marked *espr.* and continues the melodic line with similar fingering and phrasing. The word "or" is written between the two systems, indicating an alternative fingering.

The fingering provided in bars 170–172 of the example below was devised according to Prokofiev's suggested divisions of material between hands. I deem this division pianistically practical for performance. In contrast to the latter, I consider the division of material between hands in bars 173–175 less practical and have suggested an alternative redistribution.

Example 151: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 2nd movement, bars 170–175

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Example 151. The first system is marked *ff* and features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over it, and the left hand has a supporting accompaniment. Fingering numbers (1-5) are written above and below the notes. Red arcs connect notes across the systems, indicating phrasing. The second system continues the melodic line with similar fingering and phrasing. The word "or" is written between the two systems, indicating an alternative fingering.

The intricate construction of arpeggiated material in the following example often intersects with primary melodic content. The material can be redistributed at the moment of intersection. Two fingering approaches have been suggested for this taxing passage. The first option is more suitable for pianists with smaller hands.

Example 152: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, Scarbo, bars 323–330

Option 1:

The first system of music for Option 1 shows the right hand with a melodic line and the left hand with arpeggiated accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated above and below notes. A 'simile' marking is present above the right hand in the third measure. The second system continues the piece, featuring a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking in the left hand and various fingering suggestions for both hands. Red circles and arrows highlight specific fingering points and transitions between the two options.

Option 2:

The second system of music for Option 2 provides an alternative fingering approach for the same passage. It follows the same musical notation as Option 1 but with different fingerings, particularly in the right hand's arpeggiated passages and the left hand's accompaniment. Red circles and arrows highlight the differences between the two options.

The redistributions provided for the left-hand arpeggios in the following two examples can be considered to minimise position shifts. Additionally, the redistributions will ease technical difficulties allowing a pianist increased control over timbre, dynamics, and phrasing.

Furthermore, the fingering options provided for the left-hand arpeggios in bar 14 of Example 153 illustrate two distinct methods of establishing fingering according to hand positions. The fingering provided for the first option is more suitable for pianists with large hands.

Example 153: B. Bartók, *Etude Op. 18, No. 2*, bars 13–14

The image displays musical notation for Example 153, consisting of three systems. The first system shows two staves (treble and bass clef) with a melodic line in the treble and an arpeggiated line in the bass. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above notes. A red bracket groups notes in the bass, and a green box highlights a specific note with a vertical line pointing to it. Annotations include 'mf', '5 3 1', '2', and '1 Eb'. The second system is labeled 'OR' and shows an alternative fingering for the same passage. The third system is marked 'sempre più agitato' and shows a more complex arpeggiated passage. Below the notation, two options for fingering are provided:

Option 1: 5 1 | 5 4 3 2 1 | 2 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 5 1 | 5 4 3 2 1 | 2 | 1 2 3 | 1 2 3 5 | (1 2 3 2 | 1 2 4)

Option 2: 5 1 | 5 3 1 | 3 2 1 2 3 | 1 3 5 | 1 5 1 | 5 3 1 | 3 2 1 2 4 5 3 | 1 2 4

Example 154: M. Ravel, *Gaspard de la nuit*, M.55, *Ondine*, bars 26–27

Option 1:

5
2
[1]

1 2 3 3
5 4 2 1

5 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 1 2 3
4

Option 2:

5
2
[1]

4
2 1 2


5 3 2 1 3 2 1 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3
5 4 3 2 1 3 2

Günter Philipp²⁷ recommends (as presented in the Peters Edition) the following fingering method for the arpeggiated chord in the following example. I deem this approach valid; however, I find the suggested hand positions — that require a pianist to use the fingering combination 54321 (left hand) and 12345 (right hand) — impractical for a rapid tempo and thunderous dynamics. I have suggested two alternative fingering approaches, as illustrated in Figure 10, that could enhance the dynamics, power, clarity, and virtuosity of this passage.

²⁷ Günter Philipp (born 1927) is a German pianist, musicologist, and composer.

Example 155: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 64*, bars 330–331

As written:



Fingering provided in Edition Peters:


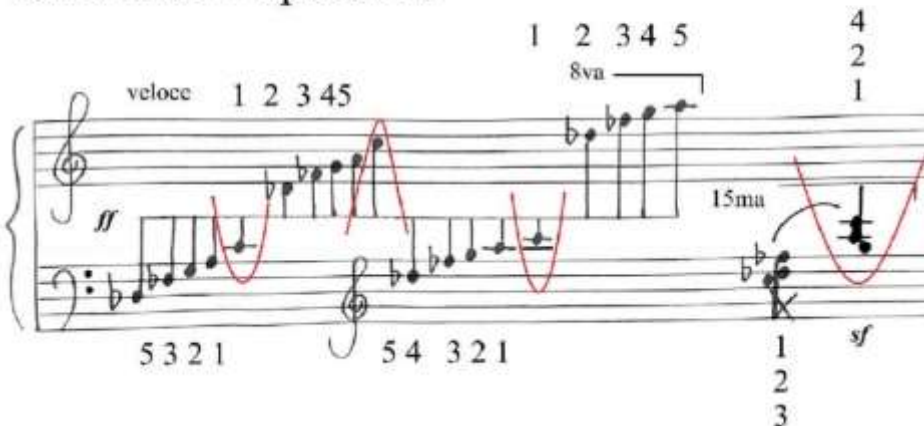


Figure 10: Alternative redistributions

Alternative option 1:



Alternative option 2:



CHAPTER 11

Quasi broken chord figurations

11.1 Introduction

Fingering for broken chord figurations is typically determined by the construction of the chord positions (root position, first inversion, second inversion, etcetera) that form the contour of a specific broken chord passage. The contraction and expansion of the hands — especially between the thumbs and other fingers — is a crucial physical technique that will navigate the hands to the desired positions. The parts in a passage where contractions occur must be identified, and fingering should be provided accordingly.

A pianist with large hands may accommodate more notes into one hand position; however, this could result in frequent and uncomfortable expansions of the hand that should preferably be avoided, especially in rapid tempi. Overlapping and intersecting material can be redistributed between hands.

11.2 Varied broken chord structures

Two practical fingering options can be used to execute the descending right-hand E-flat minor broken chord in the example below. The first option (in red) will allow six demisemiquavers in one hand position, while the second option will accommodate nine demisemiquavers. The first option should preferably be avoided as the broken chord passage pattern repeats after every nine demisemiquavers. This pattern (of nine demisemiquavers) also complements the fingering provided for the left-hand part.

Example 156: M. Ravel, *Miroirs*, M.43, *Noctuelles*, bars 35–36

Avoid: 532 321 542 421
521 421 321 simile
521 321 421

1 2 3 4 1 3 simile
1 2 3 4 3 5

The articulation of the right-hand passage in the example below will allow a pianist to use the same finger — in this case, the thumb and 5th finger — on consecutive keys without any detrimental consequences. This fingering method will reduce redundant hand position shifts, as demonstrated with the fingering provided in the first red figure (bar 100). The blue and green figures indicate the hand positions according to which the fingering options were formulated.

Example 157: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16, 3rd movement, bars 99–104*

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the right and left hands. The right-hand part is annotated with several elements:

- System 1 (bars 99-100):**
 - Bar 99: Fingering 5, 2, 4, 1, 3, 1. A blue box highlights the first three notes (5, 2, 4). A green box highlights the last three notes (1, 3, 1). The instruction *f secco* is present.
 - Bar 100: Fingering 5, 2, 4, 1, 3, 1, 1, 2, 1, 3, 2, 5. A red box labeled "Avoid: 5 2 1" with an arrow points to the first note (5). A green box highlights the first five notes (5, 2, 4, 1, 3).
 - Bar 101: Fingering 5, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 2, 5. A green box highlights the first five notes (5, 2, 4, 1, 2).
 - Bar 102: Fingering 5, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 2, 5. A green box highlights the first five notes (5, 2, 4, 1, 2).
 - Bar 103: Fingering 5, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 2, 5. A green box highlights the first five notes (5, 2, 4, 1, 2).
 - Bar 104: Fingering 5, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 2, 5. A green box highlights the first five notes (5, 2, 4, 1, 2).
- System 2 (bars 105-110):**
 - Bar 105: Fingering 1, 3, 2, 5, 1, 4, 5. A blue box highlights the first three notes (1, 3, 2). A green box highlights the last three notes (1, 4, 5).
 - Bar 106: Fingering 1, 5, 2, 3, 1, 5, 2, 4, 1, 1, 3, 5. A blue box highlights the first three notes (1, 5, 2). A green box highlights the last three notes (1, 3, 5).
 - Bar 107: Fingering 1, 5, 2, 4, 1, 1, 3, 5, 1, 2, 5, 5, 3. A red box labeled "Avoid: 1 2 5 2 1" with an arrow points to the first note (1). A green box highlights the first five notes (1, 5, 2, 4, 1).
 - Bar 108: Fingering 1, 2, 5, 5, 3, 1, 2. A green box highlights the first five notes (1, 2, 5, 5, 3).
 - Bar 109: Fingering 1, 2, 4, 1, 3, 5. A green box highlights the first five notes (1, 2, 4, 1, 3).
 - Bar 110: Fingering 1, 3, 5, 1, 2, 5, 5. A blue box highlights the first three notes (1, 3, 5). A green box highlights the last three notes (1, 2, 5). A red box labeled "Avoid: 2 5 (4) 5" with an arrow points to the first note (2).

The right-hand part in the following example demonstrates how a pianist with larger hands can accommodate more notes into one hand position. The slow tempo of this passage makes the latter a practical option. The left-hand part has also been supplied with appropriate fingering.

Example 158: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 1st movement, bars 161–162*

Large hands: $\frac{5}{3}$ 2 3 1 2 1 5 2 3 1 2 1 2 4 2 1 2 $\frac{5}{3}$ 2 3 1 2 1 5 2 3 1 2 1

All hand sizes: 5 (Andante)

The musical score for Example 158 consists of two staves. The top staff is for the piano part, and the bottom staff is for the large hands. The piano part includes dynamic markings of *pp* and *p*. The large hands part includes dynamic markings of *pp* and *p*. The score shows various fingering numbers for both hands. A red arrow points to a specific fingering in the piano part.

The next example demonstrates two distinct fingering methods for a broken chord passage played by two hands simultaneously. The two fingering options were devised by identifying the maximum number of notes that a hand position can accommodate, as illustrated by the red and blue figures. Both hands should preferably function in equilibrium. The latter can be achieved by employing an identical hand position pattern for each hand. The first fingering option is more suitable for pianists with small hands, as the hand position expansions never exceed the compass of an octave.

Example 159: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 3rd movement, bars 172–175*

Option 1:

The musical score for Example 159 consists of two staves. The top staff is for the piano part, and the bottom staff is for the large hands. The piano part includes dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*. The large hands part includes dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*. The score shows two distinct fingering options for the broken chord passage, highlighted by red and blue boxes. The tempo is marked *a tempo* and the articulation is *staccatissimo*.

Option 2:

The image shows a musical score for a piece in G major, marked *staccatissimo*. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The tempo is marked *a tempo*. The score is divided into several measures, each with specific fingering suggestions in colored boxes (red, blue, and green). The suggestions include sequences like '5 2 3', '(3)', '5', '(3)', '(3)', and '(1)5'. The dynamics range from *mf* to *f*. The piece is in 3/4 time.

Swift broken chord passages that demand a light and *legato* touch should be provided with fingering that eschews overly large hand expansions. Furthermore, the fingering should preferably not allow any finger to pass over the thumb or the thumb under any other finger. This could be detrimental to the lightness and speed of the passage. The latter suggestions can be observed in the example below.

Example 160: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 1*, bars 34–37

The image shows a musical score for Example 160, which is bars 34–37 of C. Debussy's *Etude L.136, No. 1*. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The tempo is marked *Molto rubato* and *Mouv^t*. The dynamics are *p*, *p leggiero legato*, and *più p*. The score includes several measures with specific fingering suggestions in red text: '2 1 4 5 1 4 5 3 4 1 2 4', '5 4 1 3 1 5 3 2 1 3 1 2', and '5 4 1 3 1 2'. A red note above the score says 'Avoid: 5 4 2 3 1 2 1'. The piece concludes with the marking *simile*.

The thumbs and 5th fingers should be used freely on black keys in any given musical or technical context, as demonstrated in the following example. The latter's avoidance could create uncomfortable and impractical hand positions and unnecessarily large expansions between fingers.

Example 161: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz.95, 1st movement, bars 154–162*

The image displays a musical score for Example 161, consisting of three systems of music. The first system shows the piano part in the left hand (bass clef) and the violin part in the right hand (treble clef). The piano part includes fingering numbers (e.g., 4 3 1, 2 1 4 2, 5 1 4 2, 5-4, 2 3 4) and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The violin part includes fingering numbers (e.g., 1 2 3, 4 5 2 4, 1 5 2 4, (4) 1 3 1 2). The second system continues the piano part with a red slur over the first measure and includes a '5-substitute-4' marking. The violin part continues with fingering numbers (e.g., 1 2 3, 4 5 1 5, 2 3 1 5, 2 4 1 2, 1, 1 2 3 4 5 2 4). The third system shows the piano part with complex fingering (e.g., 2 1, 4 2, 5 1 4 2 5 1-2, 1 4 2 5 1 3 2 5 1-2, 1 4 2 5, (4), 1 4 1 3 2, (3 5)) and the violin part with fingering numbers (e.g., 1 5 2 3, 5-3, 5, 2 3, 1 5, 2 3, 1, 5-3, 5, (3) 2 4, 1 5 2, 3 1 5 2 3 1). The score is written in a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature.

11.3 Redistribution of material between hands

The redistribution of material to the right hand in the next example can be considered to eliminate the perpetual ascending motion of the left-hand part. Moreover, the redistribution will allow a fingering alternative that incorporates stronger fingers, which could benefit the overall clarity and brilliance of this passage during a performance.

Example 162: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 1st movement, bars 49–51

Option 1:

Option 2:

As mentioned previously in Chapter 10.3, an arpeggiated passage that employs the damper pedal will present increased possibilities for redistributing material. The latter can be observed in the example below. Here, the right hand can be used freely to execute material intended for the left hand. This fingering method will dramatically decrease the taxing nature of this passage.

Example 163: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 19*, 2nd movement, bars 99–102

Prokofiev has provided the passage below with an alternative (*ossia*) redistribution of material between hands. I deem this redistribution to be pianistically significantly more practical than the strenuous original passage, as it eliminates large leaps and uncomfortable expansions between fingers. Furthermore, the redistribution will allow a pianist to produce an effective and strong accent on the first beat of every bar.

Example 164: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 2nd movement, bars 25–28

The image shows a musical score for the second movement of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16, bars 25-28. It features an *ossia* (alternative) passage. The score is written for piano and includes fingerings and dynamics.

Ossia: The ossia passage is shown in a separate staff at the top. It consists of three measures. The first measure has fingerings 3 5 3 1 2 5 3 above the notes and 2 1 2 5 4 1 2 5 below. The second measure has fingerings 5 1 3 2 1 2 5 3 above and 1 2 4 5 1 2 1 5 below. The third measure has fingerings 5 1 3 2 1 2 5 3 above and 1 2 5 4 5 below. The dynamics are *f* (forte) for the first two measures and *mp* (mezzo-piano) for the third. The tempo marking is *simile*.

Main Passage: The main passage is shown in two staves (treble and bass clef). The first measure has fingerings 3 5 3 1 2 5 3 1 above and 2 1 2 5 4 1 2 5 below. The dynamics are *f* for the first measure and *mp* for the second. The tempo marking is *simile*.

Avoid: The following fingerings are marked as to be avoided:

Avoid: 2 1 2 4 5 1 2 5
1 2 3 5 4 1 2 5

CHAPTER 12

Passagework

12.1 Introduction

Passagework is often thought of as non-thematic material (usually scales and runs) intended for virtuosic display. However, for practical reasons, passagework will refer to any material, thematic included, distinctively perpetual. Passagework can be constructed from various pianistic figurations — often applied in combination — including scale formations, arpeggios, broken chords, repeated notes, and double notes.

Devising fingering for passagework is often a tortuous process due to the elaborate and intricate constructions of such passages. Passagework often presents numerous possibilities for various fingering options. However, many fingering possibilities for passagework — which at first glance seem appropriate — often become impractical and uncomfortable when increasing the tempo to the required level. Thus, a pianist needs to experiment with various fingering possibilities before settling for the most appropriate option/s.

Fingering for passagework should always complement its timbre, dynamics, articulation, and tempo. Standard scale fingerings can be employed or substituted with alternative options. The thumbs and 5th fingers can be used freely on black keys. The latter could eliminate unnecessary hand position changes and benefit a pianist's control over phrasing and timbre.

The fingering options in this chapter should be accessible for all hand sizes.

12.2 Chromatic passagework

A chromatic scale passage that demands brilliance, pellucid articulation, and dynamics louder than *forte* should preferably be executed using only the thumbs, 2nd, and 3rd fingers (standard fingering for a chromatic scale). The latter is demonstrated in the following example.

Example 165: M. Ravel, *Piano Concerto, M.83, 3rd movement, bars 115–119*

Musical score for Example 165, showing piano and right hand parts. The piano part features a chromatic scale with fingerings 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 3 and dynamics *ff* and *simile*. The right hand part features a chromatic scale with fingerings 2 1 3 1 3 2 1 3 and dynamics *simile*. A bracket labeled '8' spans the first two measures of the right hand.

Contrary to the latter suggestion, a chromatic scale passage that demands lightness, soft dynamics, and velocity should preferably be executed using the thumbs, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th fingers. Additionally, the 5th fingers can be employed at the beginning (for the left hand) or ending (for the right hand) of a chromatic scale passage or section thereof. The latter is demonstrated in the example below.

Example 166: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 7, bars 15–20*

Musical score for Example 166, showing piano and right hand parts. The piano part features a chromatic scale with fingerings 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 and dynamics *pp*. The right hand part features a chromatic scale with fingerings (1) 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 1 3 2 1 and dynamics *pp*. The score includes various fingering suggestions and dynamic markings.

12.3 Various constructions

The fingering provided for the passage in the example below was devised by the employment of standard scale fingerings. Not all scales appear in their complete form. When necessary, fingering related to only a fragment of a specific scale can be employed.

Example 167: S. Prokofiev, *Etude Op. 2, No. 2*, bars 45–48

The musical score for Example 167 consists of two systems of music. The first system (bars 45-48) is in G major and 4/8 time. The right-hand part features a melodic line with several scale fragments: a 'Fragment of G major' (G-A-B-A-G-F#-E-D), an 'E natural minor' fragment (E-D-C-B-A-G), and a 'simile' section. The left-hand part provides a simple accompaniment. Performance markings include [a tempo], *dolce*, *pp*, and *simile*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above notes.

The second system (bars 49-52) continues the melodic line with more scale fragments: a 'D-flat major' fragment (D-C-B-A-G-F#-E-D) and a 'G major without a F# (G mixolydian)' fragment (G-A-B-A-G-F#-E-D). The left-hand part continues with a similar accompaniment. Performance markings include *pp* and *simile*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above notes.

Passagework often presents multiple possibilities for fingering. My approach to learning repertoire often involves experimenting with several fingering options before settling on the desired approach. In some cases, I learn at least two fingering variants to obtain a thorough understanding of the construction of a particular passage. The latter additionally reinforces memorisation capabilities. The action of a piano often dictates the effectiveness of a particular set of fingering. A pianist that can adjust fingering shortly before or during a performance will have increased control over the instrument available for performance. The following five examples each present two appropriate fingering options.

Example 168: C. Debussy, *Prelude No. 7, Book II, L.123*, bars 5–6

Option 1: 2 3 1 3 2 3 2 1 3 simile

Option 2: 1 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 3 1 2 simile

14 3 2 1 3 2 1

The image shows a musical score for Example 168. It consists of a piano part (left hand) and a right-hand part. The piano part starts with a *pp* dynamic and features a sequence of chords and single notes. The right-hand part is a complex, flowing line with many sixteenth notes. Above the right-hand part, two fingering options are provided: Option 1 (2 3 1 3 2 3 2 1 3) and Option 2 (1 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 3 1 2). A red arrow points to a specific note in the right-hand part, with the fingering '14 3 2 1 3 2 1' written above it. There are also some markings like '8' and '8.....' in the piano part.

Example 169: S. Rachmaninoff, *Moment musicaux Op. 16, No. 1*, bars 60–61

Option 1: 5 4 1 2 1 2 3 4 5 4 2 1 2 3 5 4 3 1 2 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 1 4 5 4 2 1 3 2

Option 2: 5 3 1 4 2 4 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 5 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 1 2 3 5 3 1 2 3 4 5 4 2 1 2 3 4 5 3 2 1 3 2
1 2 3 4 3 1 2 3 1 2 4 3 2 1 3 1 2 4

The image shows a musical score for Example 169. It consists of a piano part (left hand) and a right-hand part. The piano part is mostly sustained chords. The right-hand part is a melodic line with many sixteenth notes. Above the right-hand part, two fingering options are provided: Option 1 and Option 2. The piano part starts with a *pp* dynamic.

Example 170: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 3rd movement*, bars 21–23

Option 1: 4 5 4 2 1 3 1 4 5 1 2 3 1 3 5 1 2 3 5 1 2 1 3 1 4 5 1 2 3 1 3 5 5

Option 2: 4 5 4 1 2 3 1 4 5 1 2 1 2 4 5 1 2 3 5 2 1 2 3 1 4 5 1 2 1 2 4 5 4

The image shows a musical score for Example 170. It consists of a piano part (left hand) and a right-hand part. The piano part has some triplets and is marked with *p* and *cresc.*. The right-hand part is a melodic line with many sixteenth notes. Above the right-hand part, two fingering options are provided: Option 1 and Option 2. The piano part starts with a *p* dynamic and ends with a *cresc.* marking.

Example 171: M. Ravel, *Miroirs, M.43, Noctuelles*, bars 33–35

4 1 2 (3) 4 1 2 4 1 2
poco rubato
p

Option 1: 5 3 1 2 5 4 1 2 5 3 1 2 3 2 1 4 3 1 5 3 1 2 5 4
 Option 2: 5 4 2 1 5 4 1 2 5 4 2 1 5 3 1 3 2 1 5 4 2 1 5 4
 (1 3) (2)

(3)
 4 1 2 4 1 2

1 2 5 3 1 2 3 2 1 4 3 1
 1 2 5 4 2 1 5 3 1 3 2 1

Example 172: S. Rachmaninoff, *Moment musicaux Op. 16, No. 2*, bars 51–54

p *ff* *p*

Option 1: $\frac{1}{5}$ 3 2 1 simile 2 1 1 2 1 2 3 simile $\frac{1}{5}$ 2 1 3 2 1 simile

Option 2: $\frac{1}{5}$ 5 4 3 2 1 5 3 2 1 2 1 1 2 1 2 3 5 1 2 3 4 5 $\frac{1}{5}$ 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2

mf

5 2 1 3 2 1 simile
 5 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2

The thumb is a strong and versatile finger. Used correctly, it can benefit various musical aspects of a particular passage. The example below demonstrates, perhaps in an unorthodox fashion, how the thumb can be employed to execute the accented right-hand notes.

Example 173: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 3rd movement, bars 283–300*

Allegro.



The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers 1-5 above the notes. Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, *f*, and *mf*.

System 1: Treble clef: ① 4 2 1 4 1 5 1 2 5 3 2 ① 2 3 ① 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 4 3 2. Bass clef: *p*

System 2: Treble clef: ① 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 ① 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 3 ① 2 3 4 2 1 3 5 3 2 1. Bass clef: *mp*, *f*, *mf*

System 3: Treble clef: 2 3 4 1 2 3 5 3 2 1 4 2 ① 2 3 5 ① 2 3 5 ① 2 3 5 ① 4 3 2 ① 2 3 5 1 4 3 2. Bass clef: *f*, *mf*

The method of redistributing material is as useful for passagework as for any other pianistic material. This method of fingering could enhance various aspects of musical interpretation and tempo. The redistribution of material observed in the following example could produce a swifter and dynamically more controlled execution of the ascending scale passage. The latter is by no means obligatory, and a standard fingering approach, as seen in the first option, may be employed.

Example 174: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 2nd movement, bars 18–20

Option 1:
2424
Var. I. 2 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3
L'istesso tempo.

Option 2:
Var. I. L'istesso tempo. 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 5
4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1

The simple redistribution of material suggested in the following example lessens the taxing nature of the right-hand passage by allowing a pianist to eliminate an awkward hand position shift.

Example 175: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 3*, bars 146–150

(12) 13 25 24 1 5 24 1 45 8- 1 4 2 5 1 4
13 5 2 1 2 4 5 13 2 4 1 2 1 3 1 5

1 3 5 1 2 5 4 2 5 1 3 2 5 1 4 3 1 2 5 1 5 3

Passagework constructed by scale formations and arpeggios does not always conform to standard fingering approaches. The following example demonstrates the latter statement. The alternative fingering options will demand unusual pianistic techniques, including passing the thumb under the 5th finger, passing the 5th finger over the thumb, and using the 5th finger

consecutively on different keys. These techniques might appear impractical at first glance; however, the employment thereof complements the rhythmical qualities of the right-hand passage and will allow a pianist utmost control in rapid tempi.

Example 176: M. Ravel, *Piano Concerto*, M.83, 3rd movement, bars 140–153

The image displays a musical score for Example 176, consisting of three systems of piano and right-hand parts. The piano part is in the lower register, and the right-hand part is in the upper register. The score includes various fingering annotations and 'Avoid' labels.

System 1:

- Piano part: 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3, 5 4 3 2, 1 4 3 2
- Right-hand part: 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 5
- Annotations: *p*, 8

System 2:

- Piano part: 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 3, 5 4 3 2, 1 4 3 2, 1 2 4 5
- Right-hand part: 1 2 4 5, 5 4 2 1 5 4 2 1, 2 1 2 3 4 3 1 2
- Annotations: 8

System 3:

- Piano part: 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2, 1 2 3 4 1 3 4 5, 1 2 3 4 3 1 3 4, 5 4 2 1
- Right-hand part: 5 4 2 1
- Annotations: 8, *f*, 1 2 4 5, 1 2 4 5

The right-hand passage in the following example demands dazzling and light finger dexterity in a rapid tempo for a successful interpretation, which will require the hand to remain in its least expanded state whenever possible. The latter can be achieved by passing the thumb under the 5th finger and the 5th finger over the thumb instead of the thumb under the 4th finger and the 4th finger over the thumb. It is by no means erroneous for a pianist with extra-large hands to employ the fingering options I suggest avoiding.

Example 177: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 3*, bars 70–76

Avoid: 1 2 3 4

(1) 1 5 2 4 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 4 5 1 2 4 5 1 1 5 1 4 3 2 1 2 3

p

5 2 1 3 1 4 2 1 5 1 2 1

Avoid: 1 2 3 4

(3) 1 2 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 1 2 3 1 5 2 1 5 4 2 1 2 1 2 3 5 2 1 5 4 2 1 2 4 1 2 5 3 2 1 3 2 1

leggiero

2 1 5 2 1 1 3 2 5 1 3 2 5 4 2 1 2 1 3 5 2 1 3 5

Passages requiring execution in rapid tempi should be provided with fingering that results in the least amount of hand position changes. The latter is demonstrated in the following example. A pianist should avoid passing the thumb under other fingers, which creates unnecessary hand position changes. However, this will require a pianist to occasionally accommodate large expansions of the hand that will require effortless radial and ulnar deviation of the wrist.

Example 178: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 19, 2nd movement, bars 1–6*

The image displays a musical score for the first six bars of the second movement of Scriabin's Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 19. The score is written for piano and voice. The tempo is marked 'Presto'. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/2. The piano part features a complex, chromatic melody with various fingerings indicated above the notes. The vocal part consists of a single line of notes, marked 'p sotto voce'. Three red boxes with the text 'Avoid: 1' and a red arrow pointing to a specific note are placed above the piano staff in bars 2, 4, and 6. The annotations above the piano staff include fingerings such as 3 1, 2 3 5 4 1 2 3 5 1, (4) 1 2 5, 1 2 1 2 4 5 4 1 5 4 1 4 3 1 3 2 1 2, 5 4 3 2 3, 5 4 3, (5), 4 2 1, 2 4 5, 4 1 2 3 5 1, 2 3 5 1 3 5, 1 4 1 2, 4 1 4 3 1 3, 2 1 4, 2 1 2, 5 2, 4 1 2 1 5, 4 1 3, 2 5 1, (2 3) 3 4 5, 1 3 5, 4 1 2 3 4 5, 4 1 2 3 5 1, 2 3 5 1 2 5, and 4 2 1 2 4 5. The piano part also includes dynamic markings like 'p' and 'cresc.'.

A pianist will often be required to pass the 4th finger over the 5th finger, as indicated with the red figures in bar 90 of the following example. In certain instances, the latter becomes unavoidable; however, the length of the 4th finger makes this fingering technique pianistically practical and appropriate. The fingering for the preceding bars will allow a pianist maximum control over dynamics, tempo, and touch (in this respect, *leggiero*).

Example 179: S. Rachmaninoff, *Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Op. 22*, bars 86–90

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Example 179. Each system consists of a treble and bass clef staff. The first system is labeled 'Var. VIII. (♩ = 120)' and 'pp leggiero'. It features a series of sixteenth-note runs with fingerings such as 121, 31, 5, 532, 132, 132, 531, 521, 532, 321, 312, 5, 5, 312, 12, 1, 23, 123, 212, 512, 1, 2, 123. The second system includes a 'cresc.' marking and fingerings like 121, 523, 132, 124, 321, 523, 1, 21, 234, 312, 123, 132, 312, 341, 2, 31, 2, 12, 341. The third system has a 'f pp' marking and fingerings such as 5, 2, 5, 2, 4, 1, 3, 4, 1, 4, 3, 2, 3, 4, 5, 3, 1, 3, 4, 1, 4, 3, 2, 3, 4. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

12.4 Hands together in similar motion

Standard fingering should preferably be used for scale passages presented in their original form, as illustrated in the following example. I have suggested only one deviation from the latter for the left hand, as shown inside the blue figure. Here, I suggested redistributing the top C to the right hand, making the swift physical transition from the scale to the chord a less arduous process. On account of the latter, the left hand must pass the 3rd finger over to G-flat and end with the thumb on B-flat.

Example 180: C. Debussy, *Etude L.136, No. 1*, bars 111–116

The image shows a musical score for Example 180, C. Debussy's *Etude L.136, No. 1*, bars 111–116. The score is written for piano and features two staves. The tempo is marked *Strepitoso*. The dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *ff* (fortissimo). The score includes various fingering options for both hands, such as 2312 3412, 4 123, 1234 1 2 3 1, 234, 3, 321, 3 2 1, 4 3 2, 132, 1 4 3 2, 1 3 2 1, 4 3 2 1, 3 2 1, 3 2 1, 2, and 5. A red bracket highlights a specific fingering option in the right hand, and a blue box highlights a specific fingering option in the left hand.

Alternative fingering options can be employed for scale passages, provided that the fingering will allow a pianist to interpret the musical and technical content of that passage successfully. The first option in the example below utilises a standard fingering approach (alternating fingering groups of three and four fingers). The second option illustrates an alternative approach that is based on fingering groups of four fingers each. The indicated redistributions make the latter suggestion feasible.

Example 181: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 4th movement, bars 312–314¹

The image shows a musical score for Example 181, S. Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 4th movement, bars 312–314. The score is written for piano and features two staves. The tempo is marked *ff precipitato e brioso*. The score includes two options for fingering the scale passage. Option 1 uses a standard fingering approach (alternating fingering groups of three and four fingers). Option 2 illustrates an alternative approach that is based on fingering groups of four fingers each. The indicated redistributions make the latter suggestion feasible.

Scale passages executed in swift tempi should preferably contain the least amount of passing movements (over and under fingers) possible, as illustrated in the example below. The suggested redistributions can be considered to enhance accents and eliminate unnecessary leaps.

Example 182: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26, 3rd movement, bars 42–49*

The image displays a musical score for Example 182, consisting of three systems of piano and right-hand parts. The piano part is marked *mf* *energico* and the right-hand part is marked *mf*. The score includes various fingerings and dynamics. Red lines in the piano part indicate fingerings for the left hand, and blue lines in the right-hand part indicate fingerings for the right hand. The score is as follows:

System 1:
 Piano: *mf* *energico*. Fingerings: 3, 5, 1, 4-5, 43214321.
 Right-hand: Fingerings: 2, 1, 23412345.

System 2:
 Piano: Fingerings: 3, 2123123 4, 4, 1, 5, 4 3214321, 5, 14321321, 3, 1, 5.
 Right-hand: Fingerings: 1, 2321432 1, 1, 12312345, 2312345, 2.

System 3:
 Piano: Fingerings: 4-5, 43214321, 3, 2123123 4, 5 4321432 1, 8.....
 Right-hand: Fingerings: 1, 23412345, 1, 2321432 1, 1234 1234 5.

The fingering for the exceptionally rapid passagework in the following example should not contain any passing movements (over and under) of the thumbs or any other fingers. Instead, the hand should move the fingers to the required positions. The latter will occasionally require the consecutive use of the thumbs and 5th fingers on different keys.

Example 183: B. Bartók, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz. 95, 2nd movement, bars 170–175*

The musical score for Example 183 consists of two systems. The first system shows the piano part (left hand) and the right hand. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *p* and a fingering of 5 for the first five notes. The right hand has a dynamic marking of *simile* and a fingering of 1 2 3 4 5. Above the right hand, a red box contains the text "Do not employ: 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 2". The second system continues the piece, with the piano part marked *sempre sim.* and the right hand marked *simile*. The piano part has a fingering of 5 4 3 2 [1]. The right hand has a fingering of 1 2 3 4 5. Above the right hand, a red box contains the text "Do not employ: 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 4".

Appropriate fingering should be provided for a scale passage that changes direction. A finger that produces the least amount of movement should facilitate the turn, as demonstrated in the following example.

Example 184: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 3rd movement, bars 191–194*

The musical score for Example 184 shows the piano part (left hand) and the right hand. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *ff* and a tempo marking of *Allegro vivace.* The right hand has a dynamic marking of *ff* and a tempo marking of *Allegro vivace.* The piano part has a fingering of 1 2 3 1 2 4 and 1 2 3 1 4 1. The right hand has a fingering of 1 3 2 1 4 2 1 3 2 1 and 2 3 1 2 4 2 1 3 2 1. Above the right hand, a red box contains the text "Avoid: 1 3 1". Below the piano part, a red box contains the text "Avoid: 1 2 1".

The following four examples illustrate further fingering suggestions for perpetually moving passagework. Various fingering techniques have been employed, including the redistribution of material between hands, the use of the thumbs on black keys, passing the thumb under the 5th finger, and using the same fingering for sequences.

Example 185: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26*, 1st movement, bars 173–188

Allegro. non legato 123 4123 4123 1342 1531 2123 4123 1531

4123 1531 2543 1531 2123 1531 2321 4321 3123 4123 4123 1342

pp

432 1 4 2 3 1 13/24

1531 2123 4123 1531 4123 1531 2543 1531 2123 1531 2321 4321 3123 4123 4123 1342

mp

2/3 13232 131 2 13 2 43 2 132 345124 3 543124 3 231234 5 32 1432 1432 1 13/24

1531 2123 4123 1531 4123 1531 2543 1531 2123 1531 2321 5432 1432 1 32 1432 1235 2131

2/3 143432 1314 3124 1432 1 132 34 5124 3432 1 132123 1234 5 23 1234 5321 3524

4131 4321 4321 2131 4131 4341 4212 3432 5231 2321 4123 4342

1524 1234 1235 2415 2415 2324 1342 1234 1432 1234 1432 1213

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 2 1 3 2 1

p

5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 5

2 3 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 1 3 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1

p

3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2 3 4 1 5 1 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 3 4 1 2 3

Example 187: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 16*, 2nd movement, bars 44–53

1543 1321 4212 1212 123 11 432 5 5 1 432 1 321

p *mf*

5123 1231 2413 4343 421 123 123 125

5353 521

2323 212 5 5 1 1 432 5 1 432 1321 1 4 5432

mf *mf*

4343 421 123 123 1245 1 4 1 2 1234

5 1 321 5 1 321 5 1 1 5 1 321 1 413 31

cresc. *f* *dim.*

123 124 1 5 4 1 5 124 143 1 5 1 31

Example 188: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 33, No. 8*, bars 11–15

Option 1: All hand sizes

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (bars 11-12) features a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system (bars 13-14) includes complex fingering patterns such as 5 4 3 1 3 2, 1 2 1 4 3 1 4 3 2 1 3 2, 1 4 3 2 1 2 5 1 4 3 1 4 3 2 1 3 2, and 1 4 3 2. The third system (bar 15) shows a descending scale with a fingering of 1 2 5 4 3 2 1 2 5 4 3 2 1 3 1 2 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 1. The fourth system continues the descending scale with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a fingering of 4. The score includes various slurs and dynamic markings to guide the performer.

Option 2: Large hands

The musical score consists of four systems of piano and bass staves. The first system shows a piano introduction with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The second system features a complex ascending passage in the right hand with multiple fingerings (e.g., 1 2 1 4 3 1 4 3 2 1 3 2) and a corresponding bass line. The third system continues the ascending right-hand passage with further fingerings (e.g., 1 2 1 4 3 2, 2 1 4 3 2) and a more active bass line. The fourth system shows a final piano passage with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a bass line featuring sixteenth-note patterns.

The ascending right-hand passage in the following example demands velocity, clarity, and brilliance. The fingering for the onset of this passage is somewhat obvious. However, caution should be given towards its ending to avoid the unnecessary employment of the thumb resulting in redundant hand position shifts. The latter could be detrimental to the maximum velocity required during execution. The left-hand passage is provided with two fingering possibilities. The second option is more suitable for pianists with larger hands.

Example 189: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83*, 1st movement, bars 250–252^{1b}

The musical score for Example 189 shows two staves: piano (left) and right hand (right). The piano part is marked *con brío*. The right hand part features a complex passage with various fingering options. A red box highlights the instruction "Avoid: 1" with a red arrow pointing to a specific fingering choice. Below the score, two options for fingering are provided:

Option 1:	2	5	3	1	5	2	1	5	3	1	2
Option 2:	5	3	2	1	5	3	2	1	4	2	3

12.5 Hands together in contrary motion

Passagework written for both hands moving in contrary motion should preferably be provided with fingering that complements symmetrical movement between hands. The latter can be achieved by using the thumbs simultaneously, although not all contrary motion passages conform to this fingering method. Devising effective fingering options for intricate passagework constructions can be a daunting task. I have often gained a better understanding of a specific passage's construction by playing it in reverse and subsequently similarly providing it with fingering options. The thumbs can freely be used on black keys, and when necessary, fingers can glide from one key to the next to avoid uncomfortable hand expansions. The following three examples demonstrate effective fingering for contrary motion passagework.

Example 190: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 28*, bars 94–95

The musical score for Example 190 shows two staves: piano (left) and right hand (right). The piano part is marked *ff feroce* and the right hand part is marked *sff*. The tempo is *Allegro tempestoso*. The score is heavily annotated with circled numbers indicating specific fingering choices for both hands. A red box highlights a fingering choice in the right hand at the end of the passage.

Example 191: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 28*, bars 37–39

Example 192: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30*, 1st movement, bars 243–250

12.6 Hands together in various motions

Fingering for rapid passagework moving over a large span of the keyboard should preferably contain as few hand position changes as possible. Repeated patterns must be identified, and fingering should be provided appropriately, as demonstrated in the following example.

Example 193: S. Rachmaninoff, *Moment musicaux Op. 16, No. 1*, bars 78–83

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (bars 78-81) begins with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The second system (bars 82-83) starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The third system (bars 84-85) concludes with a pianissimo (*ppp*) dynamic. The score includes various fingering suggestions, such as triplets and specific fingerings like "5 3 1 2 3 2 1 simile" and "5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2 4 3 2 1 3 4". A red box highlights the fingering "5 2 1 (3) 5 2 1 simile" in the final system.

A simple redistribution of material could reduce many superfluous obstacles in a taxing passage, as demonstrated in the following three examples. Alternative fingering options has been provided when necessary.

Example 194: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 3rd movement, bars 5–7*

Example 194 shows the first system of bars 5-7 from the 3rd movement of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1. The score is in 3/8 time and D major. The piano part features a complex melodic line with many slurs and ties. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5, with some circled or in parentheses. Dynamics include *f* and *dim.*. The bass part provides harmonic support with simpler fingerings. A red bracket highlights a specific fingering sequence in the piano part.

Example 195: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 33, No. 5, bars 10–11*

Example 195 shows bars 10-11 from Rachmaninoff's Étude-Tableau Op. 33, No. 5. The score is in 3/8 time and B-flat major. The piano part has a melodic line with many slurs and ties. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5, with some circled or in parentheses. Dynamics include *cresc.*, *f*, and *dim.*. The bass part provides harmonic support with simpler fingerings. A red arrow points to a specific fingering sequence in the piano part. A red box at the bottom contains the text "Avoid: 4/5".

Example 196: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, 1st movement, bars 387–397*

Option 1:

Option 1: Musical score for bars 387–397 of S. Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, 1st movement*. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Dynamics include *mf*, *cresc.*, and *ff*. A red circle highlights a specific passage in the upper right.

Option 2:

Option 2: Musical score for bars 387–397 of S. Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 83, 1st movement*. This option shows a different fingering approach for the same passage as Option 1. It includes dynamics *mf* and *ff*, and a red circle highlights the same passage as in Option 1.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat. The treble staff contains a melodic line with various fingering numbers (4, 1, 3, 1, 3, 2, 4, 3, 1, 2, 4, 3, 5, 1, 4, 1, 2, 1, 3, 2, (4), 5, 1, 3, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) and dynamic markings including *cresc.*. The bass staff contains a supporting line with fingering numbers (5, 4, 3, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 5, 3, 2, 1, 3, 1, 5, 2, 1, 5). The second system continues the piece, featuring a *ff* dynamic marking and further fingering suggestions (1, 3, 2, 5, (4), 1, 2, 3, 5, 3, 1, 3, 4, > 5, 1, 3, 3, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 1, 3, 4, 1, 5, (4), (2)).

The fingering method of redistributing material can be applied to specific passages in a manner more intricate and unorthodox than demonstrated in the preceding three examples. The following two examples illustrate a more elaborate approach to redistributing material. I aimed to produce a pianistically effective result that complements the musical and technical attributes of the passages. Alternative fingering has been provided when necessary.

Example 197: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 1st movement, bars 32–34*

The image displays two alternative fingering options for a passage from S. Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 1st movement, bars 32–34. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The tempo is marked *Vivace. leggiero*. The passage begins with a *p* dynamic and a *m.g.* (mezzo-forte) dynamic. Option 1 features a fingering sequence of 1, 2, 5, 3, 2, 1 in the treble staff, with a 3+2 fingering in the bass staff. Option 2 features a fingering sequence of 1, 2, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1 in the treble staff, with a 1, 2, 4, 2, 1 fingering in the bass staff. Both options include dynamic markings of *p* and *m.g.* and are annotated with red and blue arrows and boxes to highlight specific fingering changes and accents.

Example 198: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30, 1st movement, bars 137–147^{1a}*

The image displays a musical score for Example 198, consisting of three systems of piano and right-hand parts. The first system includes markings for *accel.*, *legato*, and *p*. The second system includes *pp* and *Allegro*. The score is heavily annotated with fingering numbers (1-5) and articulation marks. A red arrow points to a specific measure in the piano part of the second system, and a box labeled "or:" provides an alternative fingering for that measure.

As with the rearrangement of material, a pianist must proceed with caution before adding additional notes to a passage. The latter necessitates a tenable argument before it can be considered valid. Additionally, any added notes should not obtrude the musical content or harmonic language of the composer’s original passage. The next example demonstrates the latter. I would suggest adding an additional C to the first right-hand semiquaver in bar 57. The added note will have no altering impact on the composer’s original work. The added C will reinforce the implied accent while providing a comfortable pivot for the hand before the passage descends into the opposite direction.

Example 199: S. Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 82*, 4th movement, bars 55–61

The image shows a musical score for Example 199, S. Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 6, Op. 82*, 4th movement, bars 55–61. The score is presented in two systems. The first system covers bars 55–60, and the second system covers bars 61–61. The score includes piano and bass staves with various dynamics (cresc., mf, mp) and fingering suggestions. A red circle highlights a specific fingering choice in the upper staff. Below the score are several lines of fingering diagrams for the right hand, showing different options for the same passages.

1 4 2 5 1 2 3 4

cresc.

5 2 1

1 2 3 4 5 3 4 5 1 4 3 2 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 5 3 2 1 3-1

mf

5 2 1 5 2 1 3+2 2 5 5 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2 (3) 1 1245 1213 2123

3 4 5 3 1

mp

1 2 3 5 1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4

2 1 2 4 1 2 3 4 5

12.7 Quasi *cadenza* passages

Quasi *cadenza* passages usually present numerous possibilities for fingering options. It is essential for the suggested fingering to complement the technical brilliance intended for virtuosic display. Quasi *cadenza* passages are usually executed in extreme tempi and demand utmost finger dexterity and dynamic control from a pianist. The creative redistribution of material can significantly benefit the latter, as illustrated in the following four examples. Alternative fingering has been provided when necessary.

Example 200: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30, 2nd movement, bars 53–54*

24
13 $\frac{3234}{2123\ 53}$

tr

veloce

21 5321 5321 5321 5321 323 1

23 23 23 23 *cresc.*

324 1

marcato

f

Example 201: S. Rachmaninoff, *Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Op. 22, bars 378*

Option 1: 241324543213214321 53212354321 Avoid: $\frac{532123543}{543212431}$ 4531 531 4521 $\frac{123412}{212312}$

p veloce

4321 4321 21 321 21

1 2

Option 2: 35132454321 4321 421 54321 421 321 3421 531 4521 12312

p veloce

234 4321 432 4321 321 21 321 21

2 4 $\frac{321}{432}$

Example 202: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 3rd movement, bars 77–79^{1a}*

Example 202 shows the piano and violin parts for bars 77–79^{1a} of S. Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 1, 3rd movement*. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with numerous slurs and fingering numbers (1-5) above and below the notes. A *dim.* (diminuendo) marking is present in the first system. The violin part is written in a single staff with a similar rhythmic pattern and includes several red arrows pointing to specific notes. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4.

Example 203: S. Rachmaninoff, *Moment musicaux Op. 16, No. 1, bar 55*

Example 203 shows the piano and violin parts for bar 55 of S. Rachmaninoff's *Moment musicaux Op. 16, No. 1*. The piano part is characterized by a rapid, repetitive rhythmic pattern with many slurs and fingering numbers (1-5) above and below the notes. An *accelerando* marking is present in the first system. The violin part is written in a single staff with a similar rhythmic pattern and includes several red arrows pointing to specific notes. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4.

2543212 354321 2542132 2543212 2432 1321 2432 1321

31 21 31 31 21 31

1421 2432 1321 2432 2432 12432 simile 1234 12 1 5

31 21 31 31 rit. 32 mf 1 2 5

Detailed description: This is a musical score for piano, consisting of two systems of music. The first system features a treble clef staff with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains six measures of eighth-note patterns. Above the staff, fingerings are indicated: 2543212, 354321, 2542132, 2543212, 2432/1321, and 2432/1321. Below the staff, fingering numbers 31, 21, 31, 31, 21, and 31 are written. The second system continues with similar eighth-note patterns. Fingerings 1421, 2432/1321, 2432, 2432, 12432, 1234, and 12 are shown above the staff. Below the staff, fingering numbers 31, 21, 31, 31, and 32 are present. The piece concludes with a fermata over a whole note chord, with dynamics *mf* and fingering 1 5. The bass clef staff has fingering numbers 1, 2, and 5 written below it.

CHAPTER 13

Miscellaneous material

13.1 The versatility of the thumbs

As mentioned previously, the thumbs are exceptionally versatile fingers that can be employed in creative ways to enhance various musical and technical attributes of a specific passage. The following four examples further demonstrate the latter statement. Here, the thumbs are used explicitly on notes that require accentuation in various levels of intensity. Depending on the power required to execute the accented note, the thumb might require additional energy drawn from rotating the hand from the forearm.

Example 204: A. Scriabin, *Etude Op. 8, No. 8*, bars 16–19

Example 205: S. Rachmaninoff, *Étude-Tableau Op. 39, No. 4*, bars 28–30

The suggested redistributions for the left-hand passage in the following example will eliminate uncomfortable and taxing hand positions. Additionally, the redistributed material doubles the first melody note of each phrase, subsequently complementing the melodic phrasing of this passage.

Example 209: S. Rachmaninoff, *Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Op. 22*, bars 18–19

The overlapping material in the example below can be redistributed between hands to eliminate swift right-hand octave leaps and strenuous left-hand stretches. The latter will additionally improve overall technical security and precision during a performance.

Example 210: A. Scriabin, *Etude Op. 8, No. 12*, bars 0–5

I do deem the visual aesthetics of a pianist's body and hands significant during a performance. The latter will typically influence the listener's judgement of the musical product. An aesthetically pleasing performance could drastically contribute to overall satisfaction among audience members. The example below demonstrates how a visually enticing performance can enhance a moment of musical climax. The right hand can cross over the left hand to strike the lowest A on the piano. After that, the left hand can cross over the right hand to strike the top G of the right-hand chord.

Example 211: A. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 7, Op. 64*, bars 326–327

The image displays a musical score for Example 211, showing a redistribution of material between hands. The top part of the score shows the original notation for bars 326-327, marked *sf* and *en délire*. A red arrow points to a diagram below showing the redistributed fingering for the left hand (2+3, 5, 4, 2) and right hand (b, 2) with *sf* dynamics.

The method of redistributing material between hands should not only be reserved for demanding pianistic figurations. This fingering method can be employed freely and creatively, as demonstrated in the following example. Here, the redistributions will assist in producing a well-articulated execution of the *acciaccature* marked *staccato*. Additionally, the redistributions will eliminate consecutive triadic leaps and enhance control over accents and dynamics.

Example 212: C. Debussy, *Prelude No. 6, Book II, L.123*, bars 0–10

The musical score consists of two systems of music. The first system is in 2/4 time and begins with the instruction "Dans le style et le mouvement d'un cakewalk". The right-hand part starts with a "strident" *f* dynamic, featuring a melody with chords and a left-hand accompaniment of triplet demisemiquavers. The second system continues the piece, marked with "dim." and "stf p". It features a right-hand melody with a "dim." dynamic and a left-hand accompaniment of triplet demisemiquavers. The score is annotated with red circles and lines, and various fingering numbers (1-5) are written above and below the notes. The first system shows a right-hand melody with chords and a left-hand accompaniment of triplet demisemiquavers. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment with dynamic changes and further fingering suggestions.

The following passage is provided with two fingering possibilities. The redistribution of material suggested for the first option can be considered to increase the accuracy of the right-hand leap towards the octave melodic material written on the upper staff. The second option illustrates an unorthodox method of redistributing material. Here, the triplet demisemiquavers are played throughout with the right hand. The octave melodic material on the upper staff must be executed with the left hand crossing over the right hand. This fingering method must only be employed if the pianist can control the indicated dynamic level without accidental accents produced by the thumb.

Example 213: C. Debussy, *Prelude No. 12, Book II, L.123*, bars 1–4

Modérément animé

léger, égal et lointain

Option 1:

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Option 1. The first system consists of a grand staff with two systems of staves. The top system has a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of triplets. The bottom system has a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 3, and 5. Dynamics include *pp* and *simile*. The tempo/mood is *Modérément animé* and *léger, égal et lointain*. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Modérément animé

léger, égal et lointain

Option 2:

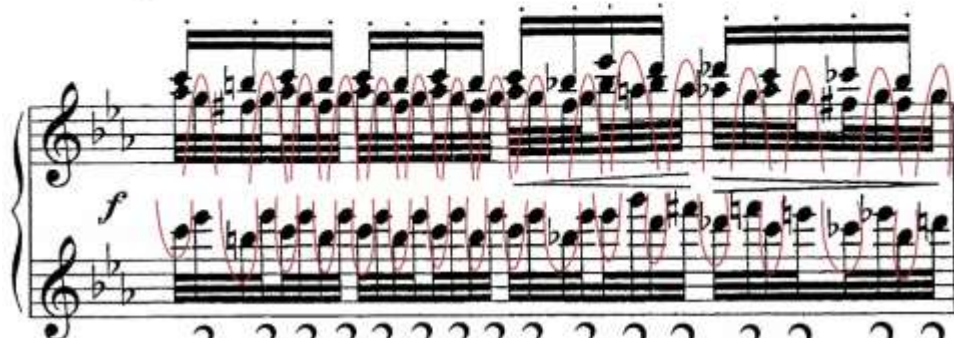
Right hand: 123 432 123 432 *simile*

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Option 2. The first system consists of a grand staff with two systems of staves. The top system has a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of triplets. The bottom system has a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 3, and 5. Dynamics include *pp* and *simile*. The tempo/mood is *Modérément animé* and *léger, égal et lointain*. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Red boxes highlight the left hand fingering in the second system of both systems.

The redistributions suggested for the following example will greatly benefit control over clarity, dexterity, dynamics, and tempo. Furthermore, the redistribution will eliminate any problematic synchronisations of the hands. The fingering provided for this passage will be more suitable for pianists with large hands and thin fingers. The execution thereof demands the left-hand fingers to navigate between black keys near right-hand material.


Example 214: S. Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30, 3rd movement, bars 227–229*

5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4
3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	2
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1


simile

3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	4	4	4	4	5

8va


simile

CHAPTER 14

Conclusion

I have found on many occasions that fellow pianists, piano teachers, and piano students underestimate the importance of effective piano fingering in practice. I consider the effective and appropriate use of fingering imperative for developing and maintaining a virtuoso piano technique. Additionally, effective fingering options can reduce redundant technical obstacles giving way to greater freedom in musical interpretation.

I deem this study a valuable contribution to the domain of piano pedagogy — specifically relating to the formulation of piano fingering. The available literature relating to this study is scarce and underdeveloped. Even though this study makes specific references to selected Twentieth-Century piano works, the fingering concepts discussed can be universally applied to all repertoire that confines to traditional written-out musical notation.

First and foremost, it must be mentioned that the fingering options supplied for the musical fragments in this study are not the only practical possibilities available. Certain passages present a vast number of fingering possibilities, while others are more limited and predictable. My main objective was to practically experiment with as many fingering options possible to find the options most suited — from a musical and pianistic perspective — for the selected passages. In addition to the latter, I also considered the impact of hand sizes on the appropriate choice of fingering.

During the practical process of devising fingering options for the selected passages, I have attempted to incorporate various fingering methods (as listed in Chapter 3.3.2). However, there are two methods that I regard immensely valuable. The first is the redistribution of material between hands. The latter fingering method has constantly reminded me that a composer's arrangement of notes on the grand staff does not necessarily complement a practical division of notes between the left and right hand. The redistributions provided for the selected passages in this study have many musical and pianistic advantages. The latter includes enhanced control over dynamics, timbre, phrasing, and taxing pianistic figurations.

The second fingering method I find valuable is freely employing the thumb on black keys without any restrictions. The latter will result in increased fingering possibilities, leading to a more comfortable and effective execution of a specific passage. The avoidance of the thumb on black keys could produce hand positions requiring large and taxing stretches between consecutive fingers.

The size of a pianist's hands must always be taken into consideration when devising fingering options. However, I passionately believe that pianists with small hands have no valid reason to think that certain repertoire is exclusively intended for pianists with large hands. I further assert that most fingering options should be accessible for all pianists regardless of individual hand sizes. Undeniably, there will be certain physical demands that pianists with small hands may not be able to accommodate. There are various ways to adapt when faced with the latter predicament. Large chords may be arpeggiated when it becomes impossible to play all the keys simultaneously. As a last resort, notes may be omitted or rearranged when no other alternative is possible. Proper fingering can additionally eliminate strenuous expansions of the hands.

Pianists with large hands and thick fingers might find it challenging to navigate between black keys. The latter can at times be avoided by employing appropriate fingering; however, it will inevitably be required — irrespective of the fingering used — for fingers to navigate comfortably between black keys. As with small hands needing to adapt to large expansions, large hands must adapt to compact contractions.

I contend that the successful implementation of the fingering options suggested for the selected passages in this study is not directly dependent on specific secondary movements produced by the wrists and forearms. However, the discussed secondary movements do complement the suggested fingering options to facilitate the indicated technical and musical demands of a specific passage.

The process of devising fingering options should be creative, practical, and goal orientated. Fundamentally, there are no right or wrong fingering options. I would instead imply that some fingering options are better than others. To conclude, I have suggested the following guidelines to keep in mind when embarking on the process of formulating fingering options for new repertoire:

- The arrangement of notes on the grand staff do not always reflect the most practical redistribution of material between hands.
- A simple and obvious fingering suggestion is not essentially the most practical choice. Complex and challenging fingering options often produce favourable musical and technical results.
- The most suitable fingering for perpetual passagework often becomes apparent when analysing the passage backwards.
- Initial fingering options for a specific passage might need later adjustment when the tempo is increased. A specific set of fingering that was practical in a slow tempo might not be practical when used in a faster tempo.
- Avoid unnecessary hand position changes, especially at the end of scale passages and arpeggios.
- Fingering should always complement the indicated articulation of passage. The damper pedal should never be used as a substitute to achieve *molto legato* unless a pianist's hand size cannot accommodate *legato* fingering.

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