A PERFORMER’S GUIDE TO THE
SIX PRELUDES, OP. 6, AND TOCCATA, OP. 15,
OF ROBERT MUCZYNSKI, WITH A SHORT SYNOPSIS OF
RUSSIAN INFLUENCE AND STYLE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this document is to examine selected piano compositions by Robert Muczynski and to trace the important impact of the tradition of Russian composer-pianists from the middle nineteenth century through the early twentieth century with a discussion of stylistic features. The document is intended to offer pianists and piano teachers an introduction to the *Six Preludes*, Op. 6 and the *Toccata*, Op. 15.

Robert Muczynski (b.1929) is an American composer-pianist trained under the Russian composer-pianist Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977). Muczynski was strongly influenced by his teacher’s Russian heritage and career as a composer-pianist. Tcherepnin passed on to Muczynski not only compositional techniques but a model for a career that combines composition and performance following a tradition that dates back to Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894), a founder of the Russian piano school. These Russian influences on Muczynski have greatly contributed to his style and to his career as a composer-pianist so that his career has come to resemble that of a Russian pianist.

Muczynski’s *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, and *Toccata*, Op. 15, include many stylistic features that represent the composer’s profound knowledge of the instrument and of performance. They offer excellent material for teaching late intermediate and early
advanced piano students because the musical ideas in each piece are clear and each piece isolates a specific technical challenge.

Chapter 1 presents a biographical sketch of the composer and a survey of his works for solo piano. Chapter 2 traces the performance traditions and the stylistic origins of the Russian piano school. Chapter 3 examines stylistic features of Muczynski’s music through comparison with features found in the works of Tcherepnin and Prokofiev. The performer’s guide to *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, and to *Toccata*, Op. 15, in Chapter 4 is intended as a point of departure for the student at the intermediate or advanced level.

The conclusion summarizes the current study and concludes that Muczynski crystallized the essence of Russian tradition in his works which benefit from the composer’s extensive understanding of pianism at the top level as a composer-pianist.
Dedicated to

the Master of inspiration and discipline
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the Russian influences on Robert Muczynski’s music and career and to provide a performer’s guide to Six Preludes, Op. 6, and Toccata, Op. 15, with a discussion of stylistic features and influences.

Robert Muczynski (b.1929) is a composer-pianist and was a dedicated college teacher. He is regarded as an important figure in American piano music in the second half of the twentieth century. Born in the United States, Muczynski trained under the Russian composer-pianist Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977) and was strongly influenced by Tcherepnin’s Russian background and career as a composer-pianist. Consequently, Russian influences on Muczynski have greatly contributed to his style, which is similar to that of Prokofiev, and to his unique career as a composer-pianist, resembling that of Russian pianists. Through his teacher Alexander Tcherepnin, Muczynski is linked to the Russian tradition of composer-pianists who played their own music. Tcherepnin was perhaps the last of the great line (Ramey, 1980).

The Russian piano school and its pedagogues are regarded as unparalleled, with a long line of students stemming from great teachers. With the great contribution of its teachers, the Russian piano school has been a significant part of the history of piano performance throughout the West since it began in the mid nineteenth century. Early
twentieth-century Russian Modernist composers such as Skriabin and Prokofiev have been influential all over the world with respect to both performance and piano composition. This study will focus on style, with particular reference to Prokofiev and Tcherepnin, and performance tradition, for the composer-pianists nurtured in such early Russian conservatories as those in St. Petersburg and Moscow, derived a significant part of their compositional technique from their brilliant virtuosity as performers.

Russian Modernist composers and even today’s Russian pianists are closely associated with the fundamental training system of the Russian piano school, emphasizing composition, analysis, performance, and pedagogy. The breadth of this training program, based on intimate teacher-student relationships, encouraged the cultivation of pianists as multi-functional artists, and allowed the Russian piano school to grow into a powerful movement that has achieved a worldwide reputation.

The influence of the first generation of Russian Modernists and their pupils (either Russian or American-born), bolstered by the huge wave of early twentieth-century immigration from Russia to the United States, has played a significant role in the development of American piano music, both in performance and in compositional style. Moreover, this influence has continued in succeeding generations.

Muczynski is one of the composers strongly influenced by the traditions of the Russian piano school. Therefore, tracing Russian influences on Muczynski is essential for understanding characteristics of Muczynski’s piano music as well as the close association between composition and performance in his career. Two predominating influences can be traced: the performance tradition of the Russian piano school and the Neo-Classical style of Russian Modernist composers such as Prokofiev and Tcherepnin. The Russian
piano school and the Neo-Classic style in Russian Modernism are treated together in chronological order because the two topics are not separable, although the focus of each topic is different: ‘Russian piano school’ for tracing the prodigious performance tradition and ‘Russian Modernism ’ for dealing with the stylistic focus of Muczynski’s compositions.

Muczynski’s character pieces are regarded as good teaching material because each piece is designed on the basis of one clear idea and usually isolates a specific technical challenge. His character pieces demand mastery of many piano techniques of the twentieth century, such as percussive effect, note clusters, and use of the sustaining pedal. The character pieces of Muczynski also illustrate many common aspects of the composer’s style, such as driving rhythms, chromaticism, bitonal or polytonal harmonies, varied moods, and lyricism in a Neo-Classical texture. Muczynski’s mild treatment of dissonances and humorous rhythms are ideal for students who are new to the twentieth-century piano repertoire. Moreover, easily read at first glance, compared to other twentieth-century repertoire, these pieces also encourage performers and students to explore the new sounds and performance experiences offered by Muczynski’s work.

Among the character pieces of Muczynski, the *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, and *Toccata*, Op. 15, have been selected for a performance guide in this study because they provide an opportunity for students to study the features discussed above, as well as for comparing Op.6 and Op.15 to other preludes and toccatas composed by various composers throughout music history. It should be noted that composers since the Romantic period have rejuvenated by combining the tradition of these genres and new elements under the name ‘character piece’, as Op.6 and Op.15 show. This study asks how Op. 6 and Op. 15
can be interpreted and performed stylistically and technically, and what solutions can be suggested to solve technical concerns. It will discuss important stylistic features, including melody, harmony, rhythm, form, timbre, and technical concerns, including technical problems and practice techniques.

Chapter 1 presents a biographical sketch of the composer and a survey of his works for solo piano. Chapter 2 traces the performance traditions and the stylistic origins of the Russian piano school. Chapter 3 examines stylistic features of Muczynski’s music through comparison with features found in the works of Tcherepnin and Prokofiev. The performer’s guide to Six Preludes, Op. 6, and to Toccata, Op. 15, in Chapter 4 is intended as a point of departure for the student at the intermediate or advanced level.

By considering Muczynski’s career and compositional style, and concentrating on selected character pieces, this study will provide insight into a particular cross-cultural tradition and offer a guide to performing these pieces representative of that tradition.
1.1 Biography

Robert Muczynski was born in Chicago on March 19, 1929, the son of Polish immigrant, Stanley Muczynski. Despite no musical background in his family, Robert showed talent and enthusiasm for music from a fairly young age. In 1947, Muczynski entered De Paul University in Chicago, where he was trained as a composer-pianist. As a piano major, he first studied with Walter Knupfer, a former pupil of Liszt, who was a superb musician and an encouraging teacher. Muczynski was trained as a virtuoso pianist under Knupfer’s instruction and had opportunity to learn Liszt’s piano music seriously. His encounter with Liszt’s music would later help him to employ virtuosic elements in his own compositions.

Alexander Tcherepnin, an international figure at that time, came from Paris to Chicago in 1949. When Muczynski became a pupil of Tcherepnin in composition at De Paul University, he struggled between two identities: that of pianist fully devoted to piano performance and that of a beginning ‘composer-pianist’. Finally, Muczynski solved the problem by studying both piano and composition with Tcherepnin. Like other devoted
Russian teachers, Tcherepnin had a lot of enthusiasm for teaching his students and encouraging talented young composers. His teaching was focused on the awareness of the student’s potential and the development of the student’s musical intuition and individuality. In Muczynski’s development as a composer-pianist, he inherited his teacher’s Russian tradition and background, including a Russian stylistic focus in his composition and a dual career as performer and performer. Muczynski graduated from De Paul University with both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in piano performance, despite his growing interest in composition. Later, he attended the Académie de Musique in France on a French government scholarship. Muczynski was offered commissions from various organizations. His compositions by commission include the First Symphony (Music Foundation), the First Piano Concerto (Louisville Orchestra), Dance Movements (Chicago Little Symphony), Symphonic Dialogues (National Symphony of Washington D.C), Trio for Violin, Viola, and Cello (Linton String Trio), and Cavalcade (Tucson Symphony Orchestra) (Hawkins, 1980, p. 1).

As a composer-pianist, Muczynski presented his compositions on various concert stages. In 1954, he performed his First Piano Concerto, a composition commissioned by the Louisville Orchestra. On February 4, 1958, Muczynski made his New York debut at Carnegie Recital Hall with a program of his own piano works. The program included the Sonatina, Op.1; Five Piano Sketches, Op.3; Variations on a Theme of Tcherepnin, Op.8; Six Preludes, Op.6; and the First Piano Sonata. The following review, which appeared in the Musical Courier, assured that Muczynski had successfully launched his career as a composer-pianist:

An exceptionally gifted young pianist appeared on this occasion in a
program of his own compositions, displaying in a somewhat personalized medium of expression, technical skill, and a profusion of musical ideas that have not quite ‘jelled’ into an individual style. Mr. Muczynski is alert to interesting patterns and his tonal contrasts are descriptively acute. The chief fault to be found with his composition lies in the multiplicity of his resources. (Trompeter, 1958, p. 20)

The review also points out the potential and capability displayed in his works:

“Meanwhile all that he writes is pleasant and accented by a true sense of the dramatic. Muczynski knows how to make the piano sing and backs his instrumental facility with cool intelligence.”

Muczynski was granted several awards for his compositions. Included were the Ford Foundation’s ‘Young composers Projects Fellowship Grant’ in 1959, a top prize at the 1961 Concours International Composition Competition for his *Sonata for flute and Piano*, ‘Best of the Year 1966’ by *Piano Quarterly* for *A Summer Journal*, Op. 19.

His *Third Piano Sonata* was chosen as the required contemporary solo piano work for the 1977 Seventh Annual International Piano Festival/Competition at the University of Maryland, and *Masks*, Op.40, was composed under the commission on 1980 Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition.

Throughout his career, teaching has been a significant part of his musical activity. His teaching specialty was not limited to either piano performance or composition, as his talents freely embraced both areas. From 1955 to 1956, Muczynski taught composition, piano, and theory at De Paul University. He then went to Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, where he held the position of Chairman of the Piano Department from 1956 to 1959. After spending a year as a visiting lecturer at Roosevelt University, he served as a professor and Head of Composition at the University of Arizona in Tucson until his
retirement in 1988, when he was named Professor Emeritus. (Muczynski, 1990, Introduction)

1.2 Solo Piano Works of Muczynski

Muczynski is a composer devoted to piano music. He is a virtuoso himself, and his profound knowledge of the instrument and performance is well represented in his piano compositions. His piano compositions include sonatas, character pieces, and concertos. The following list provides names, opus number, and composition year of solo piano works by Muczynski.

Character pieces:

Five Sketches, Op.3 1952

Six Preludes, Op.6 1954

Variations on a Theme of Tcherepnin, Op. 8 1955

Suite, Op.13 1960

Toccata, Op.15 1962


Fables, Op.21

Diversions Op.23

Seven, Op.30 1971

Maverick Pieces Op.37 1976

Masks, Op. 40 1980

Dream Cycle, Op. 44 1983

Sonatina & Sonatas:
Sonatina, Op.1 1950

First Piano Sonata, Op.9 1957

Second Sonata, Op.22 1966

Third Piano Sonata, Op.35 1974

Many of Muczynski’s compositional hallmarks are in his piano compositions, such as finely crafted harmonies that function somewhere between tonal and atonal harmonies. The first and second sonatas require virtuosity and athletic strength, whereas the third sonata is more spacious and relaxed (Ramey, 1980). Unlike Muczynski’s character pieces, which are based on one unifying idea, the first and the second sonata include various styles such as brilliant passages, imitative characteristics, and a percussive quality, as well as great virtuosity within a large-scale structure. The third sonata has a slightly different character from the first and the second sonata. It shows more spacious and relaxed character and an emotional intensity. A unique feature of the third sonata is a harmonic language closer to atonal than polytonal.

Muczynski’s character pieces are considered good teaching material because every piece is designed on the basis of one clear idea that usually isolates a specific technical challenge. The polytonal-harmonic character of his music encourages students to explore a new world of sound. The character pieces of Muczynski also feature many common aspects of the composer such as driving rhythms, chromaticism, bitonality or polytonality, varied moods, and lyricism.

Six Preludes, Op. 6, was composed right after graduation from De Paul University. This small character piece, a set of six preludes, takes an important place among Muczynski’s works of his goal to create compositions with ‘an economy of
means’ that would make the most of each musical idea. The stylistic features in Six Preludes are discussed in Chapter 5, The Performer’s Guide to the Six Preludes.

Among the character pieces, the Suite, Op. 13, is a very unusual case from the point of view of Muczynski’s lyricism. He defined this piece as a “departure in his writing” and stated that he was more concerned with “technical” issues rather than “emotional” ones. As a result of this, performers will face the various technical challenges, such as slow and sustained chords in Phantom and Whirlwind or sixteenth notes in Labyrinth. On the other hand, Diversions, Op.23, is more lyrical and less virtuosotic.

Toccata, Op. 15, is a unique character piece in one movement. From its beginning, a perpetuo moto drives without any pause until the end. The interval of the fourth plays an important role both linearly and vertically.

Summer journal, Op.19, and Maverick Pieces, Op. 37, contain the influence of jazz and blues. Jazz influence is also found in the fifth prelude of Six Preludes.

According to Muczynski, Fables, Op.21, was composed for intermediate students (Magrath, 1995, p.442). This set, like the Six Preludes, contains many important pedagogic elements, such as patterns that liberate one hand by assigning it a repeating rhythmic and melodic figure, intriguing syncopations, hand crossings, melody voicing, and strong rhythm requiring coordination between the hands.

Diversions, Op. 23, also serve as good teaching pieces for the intermediate student. Like other pieces composed with a pedagogic intention, this set of nine small pieces shares many common features. Compared to Fables, Op. 21, it is unique in that
more complex harmonies, including chromaticism and polytonal character, are carefully introduced to the student.


*Maverick Pieces*, Op. 37 is regarded as ‘essentially preludes’ by Muczynski himself (Ramey, 1980). Muczynski also states that each prelude might be played separately or together, like the Chopin preludes, since the preludes have varying difficulty. These pieces also have potential as teaching repertoire as well as concert repertoire. *Maverick Pieces* is regarded as one of the most difficult of Muczynski’s piano works.

*Masks*, Op. 40, has all the elements of brilliance of Muczynski’s style and technical virtuosity. This piece was composed for the final stage of the Gina Bachauer international competition and is regarded as one of the summits of Muczynski’s pianistic output.
CHAPTER 2

RUSSIAN INFLUENCES

2.1 Performance traditions of Early Russian Conservatories

2.1.1 The Origin of Russian Piano School

The origin of the Russian piano school traces back to the beginning of the early nineteenth century, the beginning of the era of brilliant Romantic virtuosos. Samuel S. Holland (1996, p. 143) claims that, “Though a large simplification, there is some truth in the view of the seventeenth century as an era dominated by the virtuoso singer, the eighteenth century by the virtuoso violinist, and the nineteenth century by the virtuoso pianist.”

Indeed, the Romantic pianism of the nineteenth century opened the era of the piano virtuoso that reaches up to the present day. The Russian piano school was formed against the background of Romantic pianism, as were other European piano schools.

Beginning in the second half of eighteenth century, great European masters visited or lived in Russia by invitation of Russian aristocrats (Kofman, 2001, p. 10). The varied nationalities of these masters, mostly keyboard masters, included Italian composers, such as Galuppi, Cimarosa, Paisiello, and Manfredini, and German pianists, such as Henselt, Steibelt, and Gessler, as well as representative virtuosos of Romantic pianism such as Clara Schumann, Hummel, Thalberg, and Liszt. Clementi was a foremost
influence of the time in Russia for his contribution as a prodigious composer, keyboard
player, and teacher, as well as piano manufacturer. Clementi’s etudes are still part of the
technical curriculum in some music schools. Chief among names, John Field and Adolph
von Henselt are regarded as influential figures in the earliest period in regard to the
settlement of Russian playing style and pedagogical influence (Kofman, 2001, p. 10).

By the late eighteenth century, music education had already become a popular
fashion for many aristocrats, and many noble people became amateur performers with
profound performance skills. Thus, amateur performers formed their own music circles,
and music teachers, mostly piano instructors, stayed in noblemen’s homes for private
instruction. The great popularity of music instruction, mostly piano lessons, spread to the
middle class in Russia. Democratization in Russia greatly contributed toward broad
opportunities in music education for the middle class (Kofman, 2001, p. 13).

As the emphasis on public music education increased, the St. Petersburg
Conservatory, the first conservatory in Russia, was opened in 1862 by Anton Rubinstein,
its founder and the first director. Nikolas Rubinstein, the brother of Anton Rubinstein,
soon opened the Moscow Conservatory in 1864 and became its first director. Around that
decade, several important works of Russian piano literature were created as well: Islamy
by Balakirev in 1860, one of the most difficult in the piano repertoire, Pictures at an
Exhibition by Mussorgsky in 1874, and the first piano concerto of Tchaikovsky in B-flat
minor (Kofman, 2001, p.13).

Almost century before, the first conservatory in Europe, the Conservatoire de
Musique, was founded in Paris in 1795. Soon after, other conservatories sprang up in
principal musical centers throughout Europe such as Milan, Naples, Prague, Brussels,
Florence, Vienna, London and Hague. Among them, the Leipzig conservatory was founded by Mendelssohn in 1843, the St. Petersburg conservatory by Anton Rubinstein in 1862, and the Moscow conservatory in 1864. This beginning of “formally organized institutions or music schools located in music centers throughout Europe” had a great historical significance in Western music history (Gerig, 1974, p. 287).

2.1.2 Anton Rubinstein: The Formation of Basic Aspects of Piano Training and Social Contribution

In the early stage of formation of the Russian piano school, Anton Rubinstein not only founded the first institution, the St. Petersburg Conservatory, but also established important aspects of the training of pianists. Rubinstein’s playing and his technical strategy inspired contemporary teachers and theorists such as Leschetizky, Deppe, Breithaup, and Matthay. In spite of his sometimes unpolished manner, Rubinstein’s technique had certain ideal qualities that impressed Russians audiences. Rubinstein’s own training and background influenced his performance style. Rubinstein learned a fine finger technique and tonal sensitivity from Villoing, his mentor who had studied with Clementi, and the free use of arm movement from Liszt. Josef Lhevinne describes Rubinstein’s arm movement as “employment of the weight of his body and shoulders” (Gerig, 1974, p. 292). He also states that, “Rubinstein could be heard over the entire orchestra playing fortissimo. The piano seemed to pedal out gloriously as the king of the entire orchestra; but there was never any suggestion of noise, no disagreeable pounding” (Gerig, 1974, p. 292). Lhevinne’s remark implies that Rubinstein overcame the harshness of tone that had plagued him when he once eagerly imitated Liszt.
Through his study with Alexander Villoing, the best piano teacher in Moscow at the time, and the encounter with Liszt, Rubinstein developed a firm technique and virtuosic element of performance. Rubinstein began his first study with Villoing at the age of eight and continued to study with him for five years. Villoing took him to Paris for future training and the establishment of Rubinstein’s career. Soon, Liszt’s grandiose style inspired young Rubinstein to imitate Liszt’s performances (Gerig, 1974, p. 290). Rubinstein himself remembers, “At that time, I was a devoted imitator of Liszt, of his manners and movements, his trick of tossing back his hair, his way of holding his hands, of all peculiar movements of his playing.” (Rubinstein, 1969, p. 19) Again, Villoing took Rubinstein to Germany hoping that Rubinstein would refine his impetuous virtuosity with more sincere study, specifically in counterpoint. Throughout the fruitful learning years, Anton Rubinstein created a successful career as a performer as well as a prolific composer.

The significance of Chopin’s compositions to the Russian piano school originated from Rubinstein’s encounter with Chopin and his music. He regarded Chopin’s compositions as the highest quality from the point of view of its lyricism and pedagogical value.

An extraordinary interest of Rubinstein’s is that he struggled to imitate at the piano the singing tone of Rubini, a magnificent Italian tenor renowned for his beautiful ringing tone in Bellini’s and Donizetti’s operas. Wallace points out that, “His great original achievement during that period was to develop a true ‘singing tone at the piano. As a child the singing of the Italian tenor Rubini had impressed him as the most beautiful sound in the world, (Wallace, 1976, p. 12)” Even to the present day, singing quality is an
essential part of Russian piano playing. Arcadi Volodos, a Russian pianist of today’s youngest generation, also studied singing before he started his career as a pianist. Paul Myers’s statement shows Volodos’s singing experience strongly influenced the accomplished lyrical element of his performance:

He has also demonstrated that he is the undisputed master of showpiece works of Rachmaninov and Horowitz. It is perhaps because he studied voice before concentrating on the piano that Volodos also displays a lyrical quality that is rare even among the great virtuosi. Throughout these performances, one hears the piano ‘singing’ as the composer intended. (Myers, 2000)

Rubinstein’s training principle was systematic and intensive from the early age of the students (Wallace, 1976, p. 14). According to his training system, students begin training at the age of nine or ten and acquire mechanical principles of technique, which are basic and essential for pianists, for five years. The training covers hand and wrist positions, scales, arpeggios, double thirds and sixths, pedaling, and tone production, and includes annual auditions to prove the mastering of techniques. After being admitted to the upper school, new curriculum is added to their study that includes the study of standard literature with a major professor, a singing class for reinforcing phrasing ability, and a pedagogy division which later became a foundation of numerous devoted teachers (Wallace, 1976, p. 14).

In 1887, Rubinstein added an additional requirement, a double exam, in a degree program that is given to the students to master repertoires from varied genres and varied periods by themselves in a short period of time. This new requirement was a very effective way to encourage students to accomplish sincere discipline and true musicianship through the long period of training (Chang, 1994, p. 4).
Rubinstein also greatly contributed to improving the social status of musicians and the national system of music education in Russia. When Rubinstein returned to St. Petersburg from Europe in 1849, he found that musicians were facing poor living circumstances in Russia at that time (Chang, 1994, p. 3). Musicians needed other professions to make a living. Upon this realization, Rubinstein and his Imperial patronage established the Russian Musical Society in 1859, which was an association devoted to improving musical education in Russia by founding conservatories in major cities. Three years later, Rubinstein founded the St. Petersburg conservatory, the first music conservatory in Russia, and the conservatory’s first class graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Music in 1865. With this degree, the graduates earned the title “Free Artist”, which granted them legal standing in society. The system of Free Artists provided the first legal certification that appears on legal documentation, including passports. The first graduates include prestigious names such as Tchaikovsky, Laroche, Lavrovskaya, and Esipova, who later taught Prokofiev. Rubinstein also arranged governmental administration and support, more systematic and stable than private support, for the conservatory, and encouraged the inclusion of music classes in every school’s curriculum (Chang, 1994, p. 3).

Rubinstein’s enormous contribution is not limited to his superb musicianship or creation of a teaching method, but extends to the improvement of the general musical environment in Russia that built a solid foundation for the improvement of Russian musicians’ circumstances from his time to our own. In 1888, Rubinstein was awarded the title “His Imperial Majesty” by the Russian Emperor as a national acknowledgement of his significant and invaluable efforts (Chang, 1994, p. 4).
2.1.3 Theodore Leschetizky: The Leschetizky Method

Along with Anton Rubinstein, Theodore Leschetizky is a significant figure in the early period of the Russian Music Society and the St. Petersburg conservatory. Compared to Rubinstein’s social and administrative contributions, Leschetizky’s role was more focused on the pedagogical side, establishing a basic technical method, called the Leschetizky method. Leschetizky’s three contributions that significantly influenced the development of the early piano school were the establishment of the Leschetizky method, hiring the system of *Vorbereiters*, and Leschetizky’s pupils (Chang, 1994, p. 5).

Leschetizky himself was a pupil of Carl Czerny, a forerunner of the virtuosi, and respected Czerny’s studies as valuable technical guides. Based on his own experiences with former studies and performance experiences, Leschetizky created the Leschetizky method. Seymour Bernstein recalls, “According to anecdotes told to me by two of my own teachers – Clara Husserl and Alexander Brailowsky, both disciples of Leschetizky—the master’s chief asset lay not in methodology but in his uncanny ability to adapt his teaching to the needs of each pupil.” (1997, Introduction)

Leschetizky claimed himself as “no friend of theoretical piano method” since, as Malwine Bree points out, Leschetizky’s genius is no fixed method at all (Bernstein, 1997, Introduction). Today, Leschetizky method has become a prime reference for piano methods developed in the Western world as well as in Russia.

Unlike other inventors, Leschetizky left virtually no written method. However, numerous witnesses commonly point to the fact that Leschtizky had a phenomenal instinct for diagnosis and that his procedure varied considerably for each student, depending on what weaknesses he perceived. Of course, this flexibility illustrates the fact
that Leschetizky truly applied his motto ‘No Method’ (Uszler, Gordon, Mach, 1991, p. 322). *The Groundwork of Leschetizky*, edited by Malwine Bree, prefaced with a strong endorsement from Leschetizky, illustrates clear and simple instructions. In the book, curved fingers, arched hand position, finger action, and wrist flexibility are emphasized and coordinating exercises are provided. The purpose of the instructions and exercises are aimed at the establishment of correct finger action for perfect legato and staccato in various finger passages.

A controversy surrounds the Leschetizky method in that Leschetizky never considered arm movements in his method, and seems only to have emphasized finger strength, which might result in the danger of break the strength from arm and fingers (Levinskaya, 1930, p. 38). Advice such as ‘play from finger alone’, ‘do not use pressure of the arm’ or ‘the strength is to be derived solely from the finger’ support such an argument. However, these instructions should be carefully interpreted regarding their purpose in solid finger training. Levinskaya’s observation of the “correct balance between two opposing trends, finger action from old method and weight touch and relaxation method of modern,” indicates the true value and benefit in Leschetizky method.

What Leschetizky really meant was, that the contraction of the *unrequired* muscles of the arm must be rigorously eliminated, so that only those required for finger articulation should be exercised. He was right in so far that when the finger-operating muscles only are used, though they are situated in the forearm, we have a clear conscious sensation of the action and movement coming from the fingers alone. (Levinskaya, 1930, p. 39)

*Vorbereiters* is a system of assigning preparatory teachers of mechanical principles to new students. After finishing the preliminary study with these teachers,
students learned musical interpretation through a more progressed and serious stage of performance study with Leschetizky. The system of *Vorbereiters* led the students to an effective and systematic accomplishment of musicianship based on solid training of basic techniques. This system later provided an important role-model for later conservatories, such as Juilliard and others, all over the world (Chang, 1994, p. 5).

Leschetizky’s students included renowned pianists such as Safonov, Essipova, Edwin Hughes, Melville-Liszniwska, Paderewski, Schnabel, Moiseivitch, and Gabrilovitch. They also became great teachers who continued the traditions of the Russian pioneers inherited by later generations. Some U.S composers as well as great performers were pupils of Leschetizky’s students. Vengerova, who studied with Essipova and Leschetizky, later taught Lukas Foss, Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, and Gary Graffman (Chang, 1994, p. 6).

### 2.1.4 Basic Aspects and Characteristics of Russian Playing

As their performance demonstrates, the motto in Russian pianists’ minds is communication and expression of human emotions in music through the instrument. Russian pianists know that they need a solid technical training to acquire an ultimate freedom of expression. In other words, the Russian idea about technique is “a unity of physical movement and human emotions” (Chang, 1994, p. 2). Therefore, without solid technical training, it is difficult to express emotions through music. According to Rachmaninov, “It goes without saying that technical proficiency should be one of the first acquisitions of the student who would become a fine pianist. It is impossible to conceive of a fine playing that is not marked by clean, fluent, distinct, elastic technique.” (Rachmaninov, 1913, pp. 209-10). Rosina Lhevinne, a teacher of Van Cliburn, traces the
origin of the Greek word *techne*, which means first craft, and then art. Therefore, pianists should “learn the craft to save the art.” (Chang, 1994, p. 2) Annette Hullah, a student of Leschetizky, summarized Leschetizky’s impression about national traits and differences:

> From the English he expects good musicians, good workers, and bad executants: doing by work what the Slav does by instinct; their heads serving them better than their hearts. The Americans he finds more spontaneous. Accustomed to keep all their faculties in readiness for the unexpected. Their perceptions are quick, and they possess considerable technical facility. They study perhaps more for the sake of being update than for the love of music.

> The Russians stand first in Leschetizky’s opinion. United to a prodigious technique, they have passion, dramatic power elemental force, and extraordinary vitality. Turbulent natures, difficult to keep within bounds, but making wonderful players when they have the patience to endure to the end. The Pole, less strong and rugged than the Russian, leans more to the poetical side of music. Originality is to be found in all he does; refinement, an exquisite tenderness, and instinctive rhythm. The French he compares to birds of passage, flying lightly up in the clouds, unconscious of what lies below. They are dainty, crisp, clear-cut in their playing, and they phrase well. The Germans he respects for their earnestness, their patient devotion to detail, their orderliness, and intense and humble love of their art. But their outlook is a little gray. The gentle Swedes, in whom he finds much talent, are more sympathetic to him; and the Italian he loves, because he is Italian—though he cannot, as a rule, play the piano in the very least. (Gerig, 1974, p. 287)

These days, the difference is less clear between a Russian conservatory graduate and an American or German one than in former periods, due to the internationalization of performance styles. But up to the 1950s, Russian pianism was more clearly distinct among pianists and reflected a tradition derived from Anton Rubinstein’s foundation even though individual artists displayed their own idiosyncrasies. However, certain common characteristics were found in Russian piano performance, such as solid technique, rich sound, Romantic spirit in interpretation, and tremendous power without harshness. Contrasted with the German school or French school, as described by Leschetizky, the dramatic and emotional elements of Russian pianists make them ideal interpreters of romantic music (Schonberg, 1995, p. 293).
The first appearance of ideal qualities of Russian playing can be traced back to the first half of the nineteenth century when European pianistic influence in Russia started with John Field (1782-1837), a pupil of Clementi, who settled in St. Petersburg in 1803 (Gerig, 1974, p. 288). The Russian audience’s enthusiastic response to Field’s performance reflects one of the later important features of Russian style: Field’s touch and sound that reflected the sensitivity of his playing. Kofman points out:

The Russian audience particularly admired his special touch; it was precise and delicate. Russian composer Michael Glinka, who kept precious memory of three private lessons with Field, called it “pearly.” An amazing virtuoso, with extraordinary technique, Field was famous for the sensitivity of his playing, smooth phrases and perfect grace. His sound was beautiful, rich, and deep, without any harshness, with so many nuances that his contemporaries compared him with the best singers of that time. Cantabile has its cultural roots in the tradition of the Russian sacred music that was performed a capella, but became especially appreciated in Russia with Field’s influential playing of cantabile. (Kofman, 2001, p. 11)

The Russian predilection towards ‘singing’ quality is well represented in Russian critics’ response to two virtuosos’ performances in Russia. For Hummel’s performance, Universal Music Newspaper in 1823 recalls, “Piano for him is orchestra and organ, but not the singing instrument that we are used to hearing,” (Kofman, 2001, p.11)

Liszt was not satisfying to Russian tastes. Dubuk, Field’s student, states, “Field had an opportunity to hear young Liszt, whose technique was such a contrast to his. Looking at Liszt’s large hand gestures and harsh striking of the keys, and listening to the thunderous sound, Field asked his fellow, ‘And he could bite too, could he not?’” (Kofman, 2001, p. 11)

Another influential figure in the early period is Adolph von Henselt (1814-1889), a German who studied with Hummel. He arrived in Russia in 1838. His official
contribution can be compared to Anton Rubinstein with respect to the foundation of a pedagogic system in the early period. During his forty-year career as a devoted teacher, he served as an imperial court pianist and teacher of the royal children, music inspector of an imperially supported elite girls’ boarding schools, supervisor of training music teachers, as well as personally administered the examinations. Along with John Field, Henselt’s style was highly regarded as an influential style as well in the first half of the nineteenth century. Dannreuther called Henselt “the link between the styles of Hummel and Liszt” (Gerig, 1974, p. 289). Bettina Walker, his wife and student, describes Henselt’s touch as,

“a shelling-- a peeling off of every particle of fibrous or barky rind; the unveiling of a fine, inner, crystalline, and yet most sensitive and most vitally elastic pith. With this, it suggested a dipping deep, deep down into a sea of tone, and bringing up thence a pearl of flawless beauty and purity; something too, there was of the exhalation of an essence-- so concentrated, so intense, that the whole being of the man seemed to have passed for the moment into his finger-tips, from which the sound seemed to well out, just as some sweet yet pungent odor from the chalice of some rare flower.” (Gerig, 1974, p. 289)

She also recounts an episode illustrating the great flexibility in his playing. She asked Henselt about what he meant when he told his pupil “to imagine that he was sinking his fingers into warm wax”:

The pupil said he had not spoken of warm wax. ‘But I believe I have,’ he said, ‘told pupils to think that they are going to sink their fingers in dough.’ This is but one instance of Henselt’s abhorrence of anything inelastic. ‘An ass’, he said once, “can give the notes a knock like that!” And another time, when a pupil had come down with too hard an emphasis, he exclaimed in anger, “you just come in there with the tramp of a trooper!” (Gerig, 1974, p. 290)

Henselt describes his only method as “a simple and thorough carrying out of those fundamental and absolutely incontrovertible principles of true art which all musicians and
all teachers are bound to know and follow, and which are contained in every sound pianoforte school.” (Gerig, 1974, p. 290)

With the singing style characteristic of Field and Henselt, Anton Rubinstein completed the traditional Russian style that is the synthesis of tremendous strength, orchestral pianism, and lyrical intimacy. In other words, two contrasting styles, represented by Field and Liszt, are combined in Rubinstein’s playing and became a standard of Russian style. About the settlement of stylization by Rubinstein, Schonberg claims,

Russian pianism reflected a tradition stemming largely from Anton Rubinstein even though individual artists had their own style. However, certainly there are common characteristics that Russian pianists have: a warm sound, an extroverted quality, a good deal of controlled freedom, a generosity in interpretation, an ability to vary rhythms without ever losing the basic meter. Contrasted to the German school, characterized as more severe and intellectualized, or the French school, characterized as clear, logical, fast in tempos, on top of the keys with less color and sonority of the Germans and Russian. (Schonberg, 1995, p. 293)

As Wallace points out, the Russian piano school is “a program of strict and steady discipline” from an early age with Anton Rubinstein’s approach to musical training and Theodore Leschetizky’s mechanical principles. (Wallace, 1976, p. 14) The significance of musical approach and interpretation in the Russian school has been emphasized from the first stage of the conservatory by Anton Rubinstein. Russian pianists are true Romanticists in spirit since they follow the principle of communication of human emotions through the piano.

2.1.5 Composer-Pianist

In the Romantic era, both composition and performance were necessary activities for piano virtuosos as they always needed new compositions to show off their virtuosic
ability. As performance practice and the development of the instrument were continued up to the late nineteenth century, composition became an important part of Romantic pianism. Liszt was a representative composer-virtuoso who had performed his own compositions, mostly composed for his own performance, including original pieces and arrangements. The rare performances of Chopin were intended to present his compositions to the public. The balance between composer-pianist and interpreter-pianist changed during the late nineteenth century. The new tendency was seen in the recital programs of virtuosos such as Paderewski and Hoffmann. Other composers’ pieces took big part of their performance repertoire in their program while they continued to compose for their own performances (Hamilton, 1997, p. 66).

The equal significance of composition and interpretation created a new task for pianists. They struggled to find an appropriate solution. Under these circumstances, Anton Rubinstein’s solution offered to his piano students was to learn a piece of music perfectly according to the composer’s intention, and then to make some changes for “possible improvements”. As a result, both successful and bizarre arrangement were created from compositions from former periods. Arrangements and transcriptions formed a large portion of the prolific output by piano virtuosos from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Two examples of Busoni’s Arrangements demonstrate contrasting cases.

Busoni’s transcriptions of J.S. Bach’s organ chorales were beautifully arranged for the Romantic piano with the sonority of the original instrument in mind. The effect of the organ pedal is beautifully created through using bass octaves. On the other hand, the arrangement of Bach’s Goldberg Variations by Busoni shows how he tried to fit the
original piece to the new nine-foot, concert grand piano. The original delicacy was replaced by the extensive use of octaves and chords. Rubinstein’s suggestion and composers’ works of the period demonstrate how most pianists of that time struggled to find an appropriate balance between activity as a performer and a composer.

Rubinstein’s significance in the establishment of the composer-pianist tradition in the Russian piano school is tremendous. The gift of composition in his artistic nature endowed him with an imaginative feeling for melody, and a “wealth of invention.” Regarding the quantity as well as the quality, Rubinstein’s composition catalogue includes five symphonies, five concertos for the piano, several overtures, trios and quartets, thirteen operas, two oratorios, and many songs (Rubinstein, 1969, p. 142). It is remarkable that the genres of his compositions cover many vocal genres such as operas, oratorios, and songs as well as orchestral music. In regard to compositional style and forms, Rubinstein showed an eclecticism that combines European traditions up to the Romantic era with native Russian folk influence. Rubinstein’s melodies, for example, are derived from his own creations, characteristic of Russian music, as in the *Maccabees*, the *Demon* and the *Tower of Babel* (Rubinstein, 1969, p. 143). As discussed earlier, Rubinstein once strove to imitate Rubini’s singing tone at the piano, which explains his interests in composing vocal music and applying its characteristics across genres.

Trained under the tradition and influence stemming from Rubinstein, many Russian pianists have claimed to be not only pianists but also composers. Stressing the necessity of playing Bach, Nikolaev also calls himself a composer-pianist. He said, “I’m not only a pianist, but also a composer, and a pupil of Taneev. I’m very thankful to Taneev for the fact that he taught me to love Bach. Bach is the greatest composer of
polyphony.” (Kofman, 2001, p. 7) Igumnov also stresses the importance of intelligent playing as well as the relationship between composition and performance. “Music is a language. Performance is a vivid story in which all parts are connected. All contrasts are logical” (Kofman, 2001, p. 7)

The recording series *The Russian piano school* is a response to the growing curiosity for audible resources from Russian piano school. This series presents representative pianists throughout the history of the Russian piano school, and most of the recordings are new to the Western world. Much of the repertoire includes the compositions of composer-pianists, including their own compositions. For instance, Goldenweiser played his works as well as those of his contemporary Russian composer-pianists. Pletnev’s repertoire included the arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s *Nutcracker*.

In the development of young pianists, Russian conservatories offer a critical background of cultivating multifunctional musicians. Writing of A.A. Nikolaev, a former professor at the Moscow Conservatory presents important factors about the training background at the conservatory:

> We do not have a special technical program of examinations since any pianist or student of piano entering the conservatory is extremely well prepared in piano technique which he receives in any middle-educational institution prior to entering the conservatory. In our program of examinations, we include compositions bringing out a vast technical ability of a young musician. Frequently students perform etudes by Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninov, Skriabin, Debussy and other contemporary composers. (Gerig, 1974, p. 310-311)

Not only the artists’ training program, but also classes for coach-accompanists and children’s music teachers demand a high level of development in their studies. An official “Syllabus of Special Classes in Piano for Music School” published by the Soviet
ministry of Culture in Moscow in 1960 illustrates the purpose and ideal of Russian music education:

The teachers of these classes (the instruction is actually given in private lessons) are first exhorted to tend to the intellectual and social development of their students so that they may become ‘true patriotic sons of the fatherland’ Musical emphasis includes development of an appreciation for folk music and the classics from Russia and other nations, of sight reading and analytical abilities, and of interpretive and practice skills. Great stress is placed upon learning to work independently on pieces: “The ability to form and to project an independent interpretation of a composition on the basis of careful and thoughtful study of the text must be developed.” Once or twice a year this work is evaluated by the teachers in the presence of his fellow students. Every student must also appear in public performances or exams at least three times a year.” (Gerig, 1974, p. 311)

The Russian piano school shows one of the most successful examples of the results of a well-established education program for students and the efforts of devoted teachers.

2.2 Influences from Russian Modernism

2.2.1 Appearance of Russian Modernism

Along with the continuous development of early conservatories, the Moscow conservatory nurtured a group of pianists who are today better known as modernist composers than as pianists. Under great pedagogues like Taneev, Safonov, Pabst, and Zverev, composers such as Rachmaninov, Medtner, and Skriabin, who eventually initiated Modernism, set out careers that had a huge impact on later piano literature. Russian Modernist composers exemplified the maximum potential of pianists with a background of both intellectual development and virtuosic performance ability. Kofman describes the atmosphere of this period in Russia:

Asafyev, a remarkable Russian critic called that period “a time of high emotional temperature”. Many outstanding composers, such as Skriabin, Rachmaninov,
Medtner, Stravinsky, and Prokofiev also appeared in ‘the golden age of Russian piano’, from the end of the Russian Revolution in 1917. This era gave such a powerful cultural push to the future development of the Russian piano school… Everything that the Russian piano school is famous for was initiated and developed at that time (Kofman, 2001, pp. 23-24)

“Russian Modernism” refers to a group of composers who experimented with new techniques and new idioms in the early twentieth century. Because of their experimental techniques, those composers were called Modernists. These composer’s approaches and styles were varied, however, from conservative to progressive. Therefore, a more flexible definitional approach is necessary because Modernism broadly includes the musical phenomenon of the era rather than any fixed set of styles. In explaining with Modernism, Russian folk music, is essential to define its identity with its new elements, such as harmonic coloring and audible features (Roberts, 1993, xi). Aleksander Skriabin (1872-1915) and Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) were among the important figures because of their foremost achievements and influence on contemporary Modernist composers.

The period around 1910 is also significant in Russian art history because of the activity of progressive artists. The Russian painter Vasil Kandinsky produced the first abstract painting, called First abstract water colour. Kandinsky had a great interest in contemporary music and its characteristics. He thought “poise and systematic arrangement of parts” is more important than “melodic and decorative elements” (Roberts, 1993, p. 2). He was also acquainted with Schonberg, a leading figure in the Second Viennese school, and often mentioned the works of Debussy and Schonberg as references in his book. Kasimir Malevich, who painted in an ‘elegant and simple’ style, became an important figure in Russian painting. In Russian literature, more varied movements were led by writers and poets. The Symbolist movement, led by Aleksander
Blok, had already reached its maturity in 1910 and Acmeists, including Anna Akhmatova and Osip Emilevich Mandelshtam, and the Futurist movement, including Mayakovsky and Velimir Khlebniky, arose as reactions to Symbolism. Acmeists were focused on “perfection of form and precision in the use of words” while the main interest of the Futurists lay on the “impact of modern technology”. (Roberts, 1993, p. 2-3)

As in art history, 1910 is regarded as a significant year in Russian music history. Continuing rivalry between Nationalists and Eclectics was to end before 1910. Among the ‘Five’, Rimsky-Korsakov died in 1908 and so did Balakirev in 1910. Even though Cui lived until 1918, he stopped composing activity after the last work, The Captain’s Daughter, in 1911. In 1910, Skriabin, a founding figure of Modernism, began to demonstrate new styles in his series of piano works beginning with his Op.58 (Roberts, 1993, p. 3).

Around 1910, a new generation of composers gradually started to launch into new music with more experimental and progressive characteristics. Arthur Lourie (1892-1966) wrote a string quartet based on microtonal intervals, an idea that was borrowed by other Russian composers by 1910, and Prokofiev already showed some signs of his future style in work such as his Four Etudes for Piano. In 1911, Skriabin returned to Russia and Nikolai Miaskovsky (1881-1950) graduated from the St. Petersburg Conservatory (Roberts, 1993, p. 3).

Modernist composers, both Russian and Western, were very interested in each other’s latest music and new styles. A concert series held in St. Petersburg from 1901 onwards called Evenings of Contemporary Music presented leading figures of the time, including Western composers such as Debussy, Mahler, Ravel, Florent Schmitt,
Schonberg, and Strauss, and Russian composers, such as Miakovsky, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky. Also, the Koussevitsky concert series, which was continued until 1920, presented the latest Modernist works by Western composers and inspired young Russian composers. In Paris, Diaghilev produced the modern Russian ballets of Stravinsky such as the *Firebird* in 1910, *Petrushka* in 1911, and the *Rite of Spring*, which provoked a riot among the audience in 1913.

The revolution in 1917 brought significant change to Russian conservatories and Modernist composers. The importance of the native Russian idiom was stressed even more than in the past so that conservatories, formerly representing a Western European or eclectic style, now became a center for Russian Nationalism. With this change, confrontation between proletarian groups and Modernist groups became complicated since their main concerns differed. The main argument of the proletarian group was that music should be easily acceptable to working class people, while Modernist composers’ interests were more focused on exploring new techniques and idioms.

Conservatories were reformed in 1922 and their leading figures were replaced by more progressive composers such as Anatoly Asafyev (1888-1982), Lev Knipper (1898-1974), Vladimir Kriukov (1902-1960), Miaskovsky, Prokofiev, Roslavets, and Sergei Vasilenko (1872-1956). Among them were included European composers such as Bartok, Honegger, and Schreker (Roberts, 1993, p. 4).

History demonstrates how two critical characteristics of Russian Modernism were formed: progressiveness along with native Russian music which included folk music and Russian church music.
2.2.2 Skriabin and Prokofiev

Skriabin’s compositional techniques, incorporating influences from Eastern European folk music and Russian folk music along with his own devices, became a point of departure for other Modernist composers to create their own styles. He was a successful pianist even though his hand was somewhat small. Skriabin’s earlier style was influenced by Chopin in regard to harmonic progressions, melodic gestures, and textures, and emotional intensity. Skriabin’s new style presented complex rhythms, fragmented melodic and rhythmic ideas, ambiguous harmony (Gordon, 1996, p. 430).

The influence of folk music is found in almost every composer’s style, even though its usage often stays under the surface of the music. Modernist composers preferred to focus on the common elements between the Western tonal tradition and folk music rather than folk idiom itself. Roberts claims that,

Its effect is particularly noticeable in their pitch schemes and scale patterns, their use of dominant-type chords in nonfunctional and even final positions, and the occasional cadence which, to Western ears, seems to hover between dominant and tonic but is really a modal phenomenon. In nineteenth-century Russian music theory there was a peculiar conflict of opinion over dominant and tonic functions and over dominant and augmented 6th functions, which reflected the subtle aural differences between the Russian modal and Western tonal traditions. Also important is the use of the variable 3rd and 7th of the scale and the plagal element in cadences and tonal schemes. (Robert, 1993, p. 9)

Even though Prokofiev was inspired by Skriabin in his early years, his style contrasts clearly with Skriabin’s style. In general, Prokofiev’s music is linear, polyphonic, and the harmonies are naturally produced from the linear progression of each voice, in contrast to Skriabin’s style, which is more focused on complex harmonic texture. In Skriabin’s music, a bass note in the harmony serves as a root which vertically
accords with upper notes of the harmony. On the other hand, bass notes in Prokofiev’s harmony have less vertical meaning but tend toward the cadence (Roberts, 1993, p. 8).

The horizontal element is as important to Prokofiev’s music as Skriabin’s complex harmony is to his music. Prokofiev particularly favored employing two techniques of neighboring progression and ostinato, which related to a linear style from Russian folk music.

Driving sarcastic rhythm, another representative style of Prokofiev’s, derives from vigorous repetitive folk instrumental music. Such motoric rhythm was also used by other Modernist composers. Prokofiev’s achievement is that he incorporated all of the elements in such a Neo-Classical structure.

Prokofiev’s nature as a Neo-Classicist, with its anti-Romantic approach to both piano music and piano techniques appeared from his early development. Particularly, he explored the sharp, percussive capabilities of the instrument. Essipova remarks that Prokofiev, “has assimilated little of my method. Very talented but rather unpolished” (Gerig, 1974, p. 307). Prokofiev’s distinctive style seemed to struggle against the ideal Russian style. This struggle was noted also by Reinhold Gliere, the earliest teacher of Prokofiev:

He played the piano with great ease and confidence, although his technique left much to be desired. He played carelessly and he did not hold his hands properly on the keyboard. His long fingers seemed very clumsy. Sometimes he managed rather difficult passages with comparative facility but at other times he could not play a simple scale or an ordinary arpeggio (Gerig, 1974, 307)

Despite the struggles with traditional performance styles and teachers, Prokofiev’s distinctive style of performance was sensational and successful and presented a new style to Russian audience. Israel Nestyev, Prokofiev’s Russian biographer, points out
Prokofiev’s brilliantly individual style of playing, with its clean-cut finger
technique, steel-like touch, and exceptional freedom of wrist movement bore the
stamp of the Esipova-Leschetizky school. Prokofiev became one of the greatest
Russian virtuosos, and in his best works he enriched piano literature by altogether
new means of expression (Gerig, 1974, p. 308)

The following statement of Kabalevsky shows how Prokofiev’s physical technique
strongly impressed him when Prokofiev performed his third sonata:

It was hard to describe the impression Prokofiev made on us that evening. I think
I shall not be mistaken if I say that that first performance of his gave many of us
an “entirely new understanding of his music”, very different from that gained
from the performance of their musicians, who tended to emphasize the elemental
quality of the music, the dynamic contrasts and the mechanical elements. The
music sounded far richer, far more subtle when Prokofiev played it. Everything he
played sounded full-blooded and healthy, both spiritually and physically,
everything was colorful, dynamic but without the slightest exaggeration, the
slightest crudity let alone coarseness. In short, nothing “Seythian.” And what was
most important, everything was illumined by the light of sincerity, poetry and
human warmth. Moreover, the whole performance was distinguished by a quiet
reserve, a total absence of any external pianistic effects that conveyed an
impression of a great spiritual calm. With his extraordinary pianistic talents,
Prokofiev revealed that rich lyrical feeling in his music which we had failed to
notice until then. This was a joyous and unexpected discovery for us. (Gerig,
1974, p. 309)

On December 20, 1908, the newspaper Slovo reviewed the Prokofiev’s performance. In
the review, the author, one of the promoters of Evening of Contemporary Music, stated
that Prokofiev successfully presented his compositions through his own performance:

S. Prokofiev’s short piano pieces, performed by the composer himself from
manuscript scores, were most original. This young composer, who has not yet
completed his musical education, belongs to the extremist school of Modernist,
and in his daring and originality goes far beyond the contemporary French
composers. (Prokofiev, 1979, p. 282)

2.2.3 Prokofiev, Nikolay Tcherepnin, and Alexander Tcherepnin

Alexander Tcherepnin was a son of Nikolay Tcherepnin, a modernist faculty
member at the St. Petersburg Conservatory who admired the work of Skriabin. As a

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‘Modernist’ on the faculty, Nikolay Tcherepinin was a gifted teacher who inspired his students to find their own creativity and encouraged young progressive composers, including Prokofiev. Alexander Tcherepinin recalls,

At the same time Tcherepinin’s reputation as a teacher was growing in Russia. In 1908 he was named to the faculty of the Petersburg Conservatory, to be in charge of the orchestral conducting class. Among his students was Prokofiev, whom he would always refer to as “my student, the composer Prokofiev.” Tcherepinin quickly became known as the most inspiring teacher and the one with the most fervid interest in new styles and techniques. Without doubt, he greatly influenced Prokofiev’s development as a composer. (Arias, 1989, p. 179)

Nikolay Tcherepinin encouraged Prokofiev “I have great faith in your talent as a composer” (Nestyev, 1946, p. 18)

Nikolay Tcherepinin played an important role in demonstrating Classical beauty and simplicity as well as modernist spirit to Prokofiev. Tcherepinin favored Mozart and Haydn and urged his students to analyze their orchestral scores to thoroughly learn from them. This influenced Prokofiev to be aware of Classical beauty. Prokofiev states that Tcherepinin also was the modernist for Prokofiev:

Of all my teachers, Tcherepinin was the liveliest and most interesting musician, although he was entirely made up of contrasts, His talks about conducting were always lively and meaningful, but when he went up to the podium, the orchestra fell to pieces under his baton. His talk about the future of music was no less interesting. For example, he would strike an E major chord, and then some short chords in B major. “In the end, they will write all white notes and black notes.” (At this, he would spread his left hand over the white keys as far as he could, and his right hand over the black keys.) “Then they will see there is no place to go.” (Arias, 1989, p. 180)

From a young age, Alexander Tcherepinin had been impressed by the driving rhythms and harsh dissonance in Prokofiev’s music and later adopted these characteristics into his own style. In his youth, Tcherepinin had numerous opportunities to listen to newly composed works by Prokofiev at his home. Prokofiev’s writing style and
his works for piano impressed Tcherepnin so much he was inspired to compose his own piano works (Cisler, 1993, p. 72). Tcherepnin’s career as a composer-pianist and as a teacher began to flourish in Paris when he met Isidor Philip, an influential figure of contemporary pedagogy. Philip encouraged Tcherepnin as a pianist and helped Tcherepnin to get his own compositions published (Wrenn, 1998, p. 5).

As the only composition teacher of Muczynski, Tcherepnin was a major source for introducing Prokofiev’s music to Muczynski. So vivid was this impression that consequently Muczynski’s style is more similar to Prokofiev’s is than to that of his teacher, Alexander Tcherepnin.
3.1 Influence of Alexander Tcherepnin and Prokofiev

From an early age, Muczynski admired various composers and absorbed musical influences from them. Strong impressions in his youth from the music of Beethoven and Liszt affected him throughout his compositional life. Later, he absorbed influences from Neo-Classical composers such as Bartok, Copland, and Prokofiev, whose stylistic impact was profound on Muczynski. After establishing his own style as a composer, Muczynski continued to learn from composers such as Barber, Vivaldi, Haydn, Chopin, Brahms, Franck, Debussy, Shostakovitch, and Hindemith, whom he called a “superb craftman” (Cisler, 1993, p. 59). Muczynski strongly believes that the performer should focus on the composer’s intention represented in the music itself.

Prokofiev and Tcherepnin are two major figures whose influence regarding style and musical language can be traced in his music. Like other devoted Russian teachers, Tcherepnin had boundless enthusiasm for teaching to develop his students’ musical insight. Gloria Coates, a former student of Tcherepnin, calls Tcherepnin “her mentor and major source of encouragement for nearly twenty five years (Arias, 1989, pp. 241-242). Muczynski recalls,
He was instrumental in helping me find my own voice. But his impact on me personally was absolutely incalculable. He was the first to recognize whatever degree of musical talent I possessed. In addition, he was completely supportive, optimistic, and inspiring as a teacher and friend. Without his guiding vision I doubt that I’d be a composer. He had the remarkable ability to make one believe in oneself and to be dedicated to noble purposes. As a composer I owe him everything. (Cisler, 1993, p. 62),

As a Russian composer nurtured in the Russian conservatory tradition,

Tcherepnin fully understood the merit of the “composer-pianist” who plays his own works on the stage in his own performance style. Moreover, the works of Russian Modernist composers reflect the close relationship between composition and performance. For instance, the piano compositions of Prokofiev and Muczynski contain performance-related features issues such as colouristic harmony, note clusters, glissandi, ragtime and jazz influences, percussive treatment of the piano, and the emancipation of the sustaining pedal. Tcherepnin’s own training experiences made him strongly recommend that Muczynski become “a composer-pianist rather than a composer and a pianist” (Ramey, 1980). A concept of composer-pianist was new in the U.S when Muczynski first began his career.

Muczynski performed *Divertimento for Piano and Orchestra* at the graduation concert in 1952 that the event became a stepping stone for the career of a composer-pianist. When Muczynski received a commission from the Louisville Orchestra, Tcherepnin said, “Bob, since you are a good pianist, why not a piano concerto? Then you would not only have the piece in your pocket but you could go on stage as a performer.” Muczynski composed his piano concerto and recorded it with the Louisville Orchestra as well as performing it with other orchestras, including the Chicago symphony (Ramey, 1980).
The significant influence of Tcherepnin on Muczynski may be the composer’s spirit rather than any particular style or musical idiom:

Although Muczynski finds little similarity between his style and that of his teacher, Tcherepnin, saying, “In reality there is little connection, since the Russian French tone of Tcherepnin’s music is different from mine”, a few parallels in form, rhythm, texture and pianism may be drawn. (Cisler, 1993, p. 68)

Evidence is clearly found in the compositions of Tcherepnin, Prokofiev, and Muczynski that suggest the similarity between Muczynski and Prokofiev is much more robust than that between Muczynski and Tcherepnin.

3.2 Lyricism

Tcherepnin’s emphasis on the importance of the composer’s own spirit and ideas, including own musical language, was passed on to Muczynski as well. Tcherepnin claims, “my first compositions were accomplished through freedom and intuition” (Arias, 1989, p. 209).

John Downey, who studied with Tcherepnin as well as other prominent figures of the twentieth century including Honegger, Rieti, Boulanger, Milhaud, Messian, Sessions, Babbitt, and Krenek, states:

The most striking difference to me was Tcherepnin’s approach to the ‘hierarchy of composition.’ The emphasis shifted from the exterior- the works or writings or techniques which one is attempting to incorporate into a particular composition- to what is motivating one to speak this or that musical language, and to what is motivating one to speak this or that musical language, and to what extent are the actual ingredients of one’s vocabulary successful in expressing this, that or whatever one is trying to say with music as a whole. It was an unexpected shift, but still a most welcome one, and a change that for the first time really forced me to think not only about a musical language in general, but to search within me for whatever I might discover that was individual to me as a composer. (Arias, 1989, p. 232)
Tcherepnin’s own advice to Gloria Coates also revealed his philosophy about the priority of the aspects of composition:

You have already had two years of theory. Is that correct? Next, you must study counterpoint. The Renaissance style is the best, for it will teach you how to control lines. Study the old forms and write in them. This will help you create your own forms. Analyze all the Beethoven sonatas, for they will teach you all you need to know about composition. As far as instrumentation, that is simple. You must learn the nature and technique of each instrument. You should then carefully study the scores of composers you admire. All this training you can get anywhere, either at a conservatory or a university. The important thing is to keep your composing separate. You should develop as a composer as you study your other courses, but you must also develop your intuition independently. This development will be accelerated if you always listen and select pitches and combinations that you truly like. (Arias, 1989, p. 232)

Moreover, when Muczynski was a college student at De Paul University, Tcherepnin emphasized the significance of one unifying idea, an “economy of means” to express the composer’s intuition. Muczynski’s compositions contained enough ideas on one page for eight pieces despite the expressiveness and musical quality in his compositions. To incorporate his teacher’s advice, Muczynski composed the *Six Preludes*, Op.6, in 1952. Each prelude in Op. 6, is based on one unifying idea that provides a specific technical challenges. The *Six Preludes* was a landmark of Muczynski’s later character pieces and contained stylistic variety and experimentation.

As Muczynski began his professional career as a composer, he realized that the compositional tendency of the middle twentieth century in America tended to acknowledge a current trend favored by music scholars, such as serialism, electronic music, or the avant-garde. Those styles seemed to break traditional connection to them. He felt that “To him the message is clear. If you are not part of some progressive trend, you were not as good or valuable as those who were.” (Cisler, 1993, p. 36)
America’s effort to make a break from its European heritage first began in the 1920s by American composers, such as Copland. These composers were trained in France and began to develop their independence. The International Composers’ Guild founded in 1921 and the League of Composers, with its journal Modern Music, became major organizations that supported the modernist movement and presented modern composers’ works from both Europe and America in the 1920s. A growing conflict between modernists and conservatives was brewing:

The 1920s, with their open power-struggles between modernists and conservatives and even among the modernists themselves, were an active and quarrelsome time. The decade ended with a clear victory for modernism and with the consolidation of a modernist establishment powerful not only in its own concert-giving societies, where it operated to make or break career, but in the universities as well. Also in the orchestras, where Stokowski, Koussevitsky, and Frederick Stock (following the examples of Karl Muck, Walter Damrosch, Pierre Monteux) backed the leaders of the modernist establishment. (Cisler, 1993, p. 37)

Despite a temporary decline in experimental music during the depression, the modernist trend continued until the 1970s, during which time Muczynski established his style as a composer. It is obvious Muczynski experienced less enthusiasm and support from those critics despite his successful career during the 1950s through the 1970s. However, Muczynski continued to establish his own style and present his own works, by his own performances, to the world. Muczynski refused to accept the current trend, which was purely cerebral brain and only understandable to the theorists and the critics. He believed that the priority in composition must be on the composer’s lyricism from his own heart and a communication with the audience.

Muczynski’s philosophy is directly reflected in his character pieces with their particular emotions, intuitive insight, and sense of humor. Most of his character pieces have
programmatic titles and each movement has descriptions of the mood. Muczynski respects the performer’s own spirit as much as he does his own, and even though Muczynski is always very specific about all markings, including tempo, he states,

> Yet I hope performers won’t take the metronome markings too literally. If I could revise the pieces today, I would probably leave the markings out. At best they are merely guidelines, for one often plays a piece one tempo one day and a slightly different one the next. (Muczynski, 1990, Introduction)

Another incident reveals his capacity for emotional reflection in a piece. Muczynski’s *Toccata*, Op.15, which he calls a “rage piece”, was composed after a serious accident in Gallup, New Mexico. He recalls, “Beethoven had his ‘Rage Over A Lost Penny’. This is my ‘rage over a lost car’” (Muczynski, 1990, Introduction). Muczynski tried to avoid the ‘usual repeated-note idea’ found in most toccatas but he carefully engineered this abstract work around the interval of a fourth (Muczynski, 1990, Introduction).

Embracing Neo-Classical features, Prokofiev remained a lyrical composer-pianist, devoted to post-Romantic lyricism, as did Tcherepnin and Muczynski. Prokofiev claims, “I have no theories. I am essentially a pupil of my own musical ideas” (Fiess, 1994, p. 6). Also, Sviatoslav, Prokofiev’s oldest son states, “My father writes music like other people’s and then Prokofievizes it” (Fiess, 1994, p. 6). Despite the strong anti-Romantic currents, Prokofiev continued to develop his lyricism. Prokofiev’s Romanticism is often reflected by his marks of expression such as *caloroso, tenebroso, inquieto, tranquillo,* and *con agitazione e dolore* (Fiess, 1994, p. 2). Evidence of Prokofiev’s lyricism is found in his use of melody, especially, in slow movements, as is also found in the works of Muczynski and Tcherepnin:
I have never questioned the importance of melody. I love melody, and I regard it as the most important element in music. I have worked on the improvement of its quality in my composition for many years. To find a melody instantly understandable to the uninitiated listener, and at the same time an original one, is the most difficult task for a composer. (Cisler, 1993, p. 97)

3.3 Neo-Classical Features

The term “neoclassicism” was first employed by Boris de Schlozer in a review of a concert organized by Jean Wiener in February 1923, in connection with Stravinsky (Messing, 1988, p. 129). In the review, Schlozer’s definition of Neo-Classicism has its original meaning, “a rigor, simplicity, and purity”. In the 1920s, Neo-Classicism was more clearly defined when a nationalistic trait, a primitive folk element, was employed as a musical idiom. Despite its “twisted implication” to Romanticism, Neo-Classicism never refers solely to either the revival of the techniques and forms of Classical composers or to the elimination of all expression. The entailment of parodic or sarcastic meaning and restrained lyricism are balanced with “forms and perceptible thematic process of earlier styles” (Whittall, 2001, p. 754).

Stravinsky’s influence was as powerful on Prokofiev as on young French composers. Stravinsky’s influence on Neo-Classic composers can be seen in that elements derived from him have been found in the work of most Neo-Classic style composers.

The sarcastically humorous character first experimented by Stravinsky was derived from imitating the sound of puppet-movement. This character became an important character of Neo-Classical style as a new spice as well as other innovations of Stravinsky such as the revolutionary aspects of rhythm and the percussive treatment of
the orchestra (Chung, 2002, p. 7). From his first encounter with Diaghilev, who was attempting to promote Russian art in Paris, Stravinsky impressed Diaghilev deeply and was commissioned by him to compose a ballet based on the Russian folk tale *Petrushka*.

In *Petrushka*, Stravinsky experimented and reached the most important turning point regarding stylistic changes and experiments of his own. First, Stravinsky replaced the Romantic sound influenced by his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov with mechanical sounds for describing grotesque characters and story (Chung, 2002, p. 8). The Russian Dance scene in particular illustrates Stravinsky’s transformation of native Russian folk music with its imitation of the automatic movements of the puppets. Another revolutionary aspect which influenced the Neo-Classical style is new rhythmic techniques. In the *Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky used radical rhythmic elements such as mechanical repetitions, percussive rhythms, and ostinato. With the use of dissonance and chromaticism, brutal characteristics of the music were drawn out with the extreme effect of percussive treatment of orchestra (Chung, 2002, p.8).

Prokofiev stood out among those composers who revived Neo-Classical aesthetics by synthesizing Classical clarity with experimental techniques of his own, as well as influences from others, including Stravinsky. Prokofiev’s great admiration for the Romantic spirit, such as that embodied by Beethoven and Schumann, confined his Neo-Classicism within the boundary of compositional idiom. Stravinsky’s stylistic influences were reflected more gently in Prokofiev’s music. Compared to Stravinsky’s grotesque and tragic sound and radical treatment of rhythm, Prokofiev’s sound and rhythm are rather mild and humorous. Prokofiev’s second piano sonata, Op.4, is regarded as a landmark of Neo-Classicism. This sonata features Neo-Classical characteristics, such as
simplicity and clarity of structure, harmony, melody, and rhythm, and percussive effect of the piano.

Muczynski inherited the dualism, a synthesis of lyricism and Neo Classic idioms, and developed them into his style. While few stylistic similarities are drawn between Tcherepnin and Muczynski, common stylistic features between Prokofiev and Muczynski include “irregular meters and strongly accented patterns to create an irresistible rhythmic drive”, “restrained and framed within spare, neo-classical texture”, and “extended tonality playing around tonal area with mild treatment of dissonance” (Muczynski, 1990, Introduction). Like Prokofiev’s, Muczynski’s Neo-Classical characteristics are both mild and conservative.

After the composition of Six Preludes, a Neo-Classical philosophy, ‘an economy of means’, incorporating Neo-Classical idioms, became a motto in Muczynski’s mind through his long compositional life. Muczynski can be identified as an eclectic composer with regard to his lyricism and Neo-Classicism since the commanding presence of his own spirit and ideas are always behind his compositions.

3.4 Stylistic Features

3.4.1 Form

Like Prokofiev and Tcherepnin, Muczynski uses traditional forms. His preferences for traditional forms include short forms such as binary and ternary forms for his character pieces and sonata form, including sonata-allegro and rondo movements, for larger structures. For character pieces, Muczynski hires “a set of movements” like the character pieces of Schumann and Prokofiev. Muczynski has strong a tendency to
achieve unity in sonata movements by restating the opening motive or theme in the later part of the movement, not in the recapitulation, of the movement, or in a coda. Along with this traditional feature, Muczynski’s sonatas comprise of small fragments and episodes (Hawkins, 1980, p. 46).

The return of the theme takes a different form in each composer’s sonatas. In Prokofiev’s Sonatas No. 3 and No. 7, the first part of the opening theme is omitted in the recapitulation, while Tcherepnin brings only one theme back in his sonatas (Cisler, 1993, p. 73). Muczynski differs slightly from those composers by returning to the opening motive in the middle of the development or the coda, or returning to fragment of the theme. Example 3.1 shows that the opening motive is fragmented in the coda.

Example 3.1. Muczynski Second Piano Sonata, 1st movement. mm. 1-2 and mm. 187-188
In the character pieces of Muczynski, the return of the theme frequently occurs. The opening motive returns in its original form or is changed in varied manners (see Example 3.2).

Example 3.2  Diversions, Op.23, No. 1. mm. 1-4 and mm. 18-21

Another noticeable feature of form is the cyclicism found in all three composers’ works. As a significant device of the period, cyclic technique was widely favored by Romantic composers both in sonata and in character pieces. Cyclic character in sonata first appeared in Beethoven’s sonatas in the late period. Beethoven sonatas composed from 1814 to 1820 such as the E minor Op. 90, A Major Op. 101, and A-flat Major Op. 110 sonatas contain cyclic characteristics unifying the movements, and were a point of departure for Romantic piano sonatas. Following the Romantic sonata tradition, in the sonatas of Prokofiev and Tcherepnin, thematic material is employed in varied mood and style over the movements as in those of Muczynski. All three sonatas of Muczynski have
a cyclic character as shown in the examples, of the opening theme of the first movement and the fourth movement of *Second Sonata* (compare Example 3.1 and 3.3).

Example 3.3. Muczynski *Second Piano Sonata*, 4th movement. mm. 145-147

In the character pieces of Muczynski and Prokofiev, cyclicism is clearly employed as well. With Schumann and his character pieces in his mind, Prokofiev’s form of a set of movements became an important formal device to convey his spirit and musical ideas. Both Muczynski and Prokofiev transformed the theme into various styles and moods. Cyclic themes sometimes return to make a strong statement at the climax (Example 3.4), or only to recall a fragment of the theme.

Example 3.4. Prokofiev *Ten Pieces*, No. 2 *Gavotte* mm.1-2 and No. 9 *Humorous Scherzo* mm. 31-34
Example 3.5. *Diversions*, No.1 mm.1-3 and No. 6 mm. 1-3

### 3.4.2 Harmony

Muczynski’s harmony is based on bitonality or polytonality, chromaticism, note clusters, and, sometimes, modal effect. Muczynski claims the purpose of his harmonic use is not restricted to a set theory, despite the strong tendency toward increasingly advanced and distorted harmonies among contemporary composers, but serves as an idiom for his musical insight. His traditional harmonic sources were always abundantly able to express his creativity. On the basis of a clear tonal center, the neighboring movement of harmony and melody creates two kinds of dissonances: the mild dissonances with a touch of humor (Example 3.6) and the strong conflict between two tonal centers to generates sharply dissonant effect (Example 3.7). These examples show two contrasting cases of one technique.


Regarding chordal texture, it is clear that Muczynski's harmonic practice is based on that from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. As with Prokofiev, Muczynski’s harmonies employ ‘non-functional chords’ which play a more independent role as individual sonorities, rather than as part of a traditional harmonic progression toward a cadence. With the use of seventh and ninth chords, Muczynski extended harmonies to eleventh and thirteenth chords to create new sonorities. As Example 4.8 shows, Prokofiev experimented with the thirteenth chord as well. Muczynski’s harmonic expansion exploits the effect of the overtone series which results in mild dissonances and coloring.

Rapid alteration of polytonal chords or octaves is favored by all three composers. Entailing virtuosic power and speed, this harmonic progression generates the sonorous percussionistic effect of marimba or xylophone (Example 3.9, 3.10, 3.11).

Example 3.9. Tcherepnin *Twelve Preludes*, Op. 85, No. 2 mm. 9-10
A clear tonal center often appears either by making a strong statement or by employing a pedal tone in varied registers in all three composers’ works. Prokofiev and Tcherepnin also frequently used the pedal point to indicate a primary tonal center as well as to create mild dissonances. Sometimes, Muczynski extended the use of the pedal point to create a bell-like effect. In this case, a bell-like sound reveals the intuitive quality of his lyricism.

The pedal point takes an especially important role when two or more keys are juxtaposed.
Example. 3.12. Prokofiev *Visions Fugitives*, Op. 22, No. 2 mm. 13-17

Example. 3.13. Tcherepnin *Toccata*, Op. 1, mm. 1-7

While usually a bitonal juxtaposition is treated mildly, sometimes two tonal centers sharply conflicts. One tonal center will triumph at the end.

Example. 3.15. Prokofiev *Visions Fugitives*, Op. 22, No. 5 mm. 13-16

Example. 3.16. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No.6 mm. 3-4

Prokofiev and Muczynski also make frequent use of ostinati in varied tempi and moods. In fast movements, ostinati function both as a harmonic center and as a driving force to generate an aggressive character (Example 3.16). In the slow movement, the note group in the bass creates a chaconne effect.
Sometimes, the interval of a 4th is uniquely treated to create the relentless character of the piece. The *Toccata*, Op. 15, demonstrates that the fourth intervals of an empty sonority and the rhythm equally serve to create a driving passage.

### 3.4.3 Melody

In general, the melody or theme is easily recognizable and singable and at times mildly dissonant, at times lyrically consonant showing typical influences on him such as modality, chromaticism, and blues lament and jazzy character (Hawkins, 1980, p. 44).

An angular shaped melody is often used in various moods and tempi on a triadic basis and in sparser textures. Angular themes are a unique product of Neo-Classic composers since Stravinsky first experimented. In general, its effect creates either a percussive and simple sound in a humorous or sarcastic mood, or a mysterious or intuitive sound in slow movements.

Melody is transformed into various shapes and forms and appears beyond the boundaries of movements. Cyclic melody often returns in various textures and registers. In binary and ternary form in character pieces, the cyclic melody returns in the original form as they appeared in the opening to make a balance in the structure.

Rhythmic motive or small fragment of a theme is as variously used as thematic material. Within a piece or a movement, each motive is combined each other in various ways.

**3.4.4 Rhythm and Meter**

Rhythmic flair in Muczynski’s works is very important because rhythm and meter comprise a significant part of his music as well as detailing his fine craftsmanship. The similarity with Prokofiev can clearly be seen in numerous examples. Techniques such as syncopation, accents, and hemiola are frequently used to manifest scenes of driving quality, influenced by Russian folk instrumental music, and sarcastic or humorous moods. Here are some examples of Muczynski that represent those characteristics and similarities between him and Prokofiev.
Example 3.19. Prokofiev Sonata, No.2 1st movement and Muczynski *Six Preludes* No.1

Example 3.20. Prokofiev Sonata No.5, 1st movement and Muczynski *Six Preludes* No.3
Example 3.21. Prokofiev Sonata No. 6, and Muczynski *Six Preludes*, No. 6

Example 3.22. Prokofiev Sonata No. 2, and Muczynski *Six Preludes*, No. 4
Like Prokofiev, Muczynski combines small fragments of motives in various ways. For example, the four types of rhythmic patterns in Example 4.11 show how Muczynski arranges rhythmic motives to achieve rhythmic unity. This rhythmic arrangement provides both rhythmic unity and variety.

A continuous perpetuo moto made up of a one-note value or the repeated pattern provides rhythmic unity and an effective driving force. Irregular accents on beats help to maintain rhythmic interest within such a plain rhythmic structure.

3.4.5 Texture

Textural complexity and variety in a composer’s works are the most distinctive standard for revealing the composer’s performance level as a pianist. Since the relationship of composition and performance is an important issue in this study, examining Muczynski’s textural features will provide the significant evidences to support the argument in this study that the work of composer-pianists reflects the close relationship between the performance and composition in their career.

Muczynski often used a single texture to sustain the unity of the mood within a movement or a piece. This relates to his idea of ‘an economy of means’, to glean the most from each musical idea. ‘A great sense of fluidity can be achieved while isolating and addressing a specific type of technique. The use of single texture is well represented in relentless and perpetual toccata-like pieces as well as the small preludes of Muczynski.

Muczynski has two goals for textural unity: description of movement and addressing an abstract mood. The Toccata, Op. 15, and the last movement of the Six Preludes, Op. 6, both show a great deal of driving force with a feeling of rage or aggressiveness. As mentioned earlier, the Toccata, Op. 15, was composed when his emotions were high due
to a serious car accident. *Flight* and *Labyrinth* in the *Suite*, Op. 13 are designed to describe perpetual movement of a specific object.


Oftentimes, opening themes return in transformed textures in a later part of the piece. In *Phantom* in *Suite*, Op. 13, the opening begins in the thin texture, then soon changes into thick octave-chords. Varied textures are closely related to registral interests. In the fifth prelude in *Six Preludes*, Op. 6 and *Vision* in *Suite*, Op. 13 Muczynski used three staves to notate wide ranging.

While textural variety in Muczynski’s character pieces is usually achieved through displaying a single texture in each movement in a set of music, his sonata
movements show much variety of texture within a movement. Besides, within a long structure, “textural diversity” takes an important role in “determining form” (Cisler, 1993, pp. 180-181). For example, the first movement of the First Piano Sonata displays varied textural progression in diverse registers. The first thematic material begins chordally, then a multi-layered texture continues through a doubled melodic line in the middle to upper registers while inner voices and the bass are doubled at the octave in the low register. Fragmental motives appear in each voice, creating a polyphonic quality.

**3.4.6 Pianistic Technique**

Like other composer-pianists, Muczynski’s writing style in the piano repertoire fits well into piano performance and lays well under the hand. The composer’s asset as a performer is displayed in pianistic writing that embraces piano techniques of the twentieth century such as percussive effect, note clusters, and the sustaining pedal. Here is general description of twentieth-century techniques:

Music of the twentieth century require mobility (frequent change of texture and range), an appreciation of freedom (of meter, pitch and rhythm choices, improvisatory moments), the development of new hand shapes (seconds, fourth, sevenths, clusters), and treatment of the keyboard as percussion instrument. (Uszler, Gordon, Mach, 1991, p. 216).

These techniques share common characteristics that create remarkable audible effects as well as strong performance effects. Moreover, one unifying idea isolates a specific technical challenge and makes Muczynski’s piano works excellent teaching repertoire.

Percussive treatment of the instrument, an innovation of composers like Bartok and Prokofiev, clearly reflected the anti-Romantic nature of Neo-Classicism. Their adaptation of folk music material is an application of old material. With accented notes,
percussive writing is presented in varied styles including rapid alternation of chords or note clusters, ostinato bass, and strummed repetition of dissonant chord, which recalls a guitar-like sound. Again, the similarity between Prokofiev and Muczynski is clearly noticeable in many examples.

‘Note clusters’, first devised by the American composer Henry Cowell (1897-1965), are one of the techniques reflected natural piano performance (Cook, 1998, p. 199). Soon, the device was widely used by modern composers who searched for innovative new devices. Particularly in passages with a driving mood, rapid note clusters can create great excitement in harmony and mood.

The sustaining pedal contributes varied moods as well as colouristic uses. Within passages with a percussive quality, the sonorous use of pedal is an important innovation in twentieth century piano technique.

Rapid alteration of chords is often found not only in Neo-Classical works but in works of composers like Rachmaninov, whose style belongs to the post-Romantic tradition. Since Liszt, the virtuosotic character of rapidly altered chords had become popular with composer-pianists.

Muczynski’s angular melodies resulting from broken chords cause wide leaps of fingers and entail extension of hands and fingers. This requires accuracy and complete relaxation in playing.
CHAPTER 4

PERFORMER’S GUIDE TO
SIX PRELUDES, Op. 6 AND TOCCATA, Op. 15

4.1 General Comments

A great asset of using Muczynski’s *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, and *Toccata*, Op.15, in a teaching and performance repertoire is their presentation of Muczynski’s stylistic variety and technical brilliance. Muczynski conveyed his musical ideas and inspiration using the format of a set of character pieces in *Six Preludes*. *Six Preludes* is the first set of his music which provides a successful example of this form for later compositions. After the composition of *Six Preludes*, Muczynski composed more than ten character pieces in this format.

While *Six Preludes* represents a style typical of Muczynski, the *Toccata*, Op. 15 illustrates features unique among Muczynski’s character pieces. The most noticeable difference between the *Toccata* and the other character pieces is that this piece is composed in one a movement form while the other character pieces were written in the form of a set of multi movements. Harmonic language is unified within the piece by employing the interval of the fourth applied in various ways, and chromaticism, while the *Six Preludes* shows a strong tendency of towards polytonality and bitonality.
The rhythmic character of both pieces contrast as well. *Six Preludes* contains much more rhythmic variety, including frequent meter change, while the predominant rhythm of the *Toccata* is composed of only plain eighth note throughout the entire piece. Strong accents and percussive qualities also predominate.

However, many innovations within the preludes and toccatas, pieces composed in these “old” forms follow much in the tradition of the genres. In both pieces, Muczynski bases each movement on one predominant unifying idea, which is an essential characteristic of both genres that is found in J. S. Bach as well as in the preludes of Chopin, who took this example from Bach, Debussy and Rachmaninov as well. In following Tcherepnin’s advice, Muczynski focused on creating the most out of the musical ideas.

Clear and simple ideas make the pieces easily accessible to the student, who may be new to twentieth century repertoire, and help them to clearly understand the composer’s intention. There are many advantages in playing both pieces paired in a recital program, since the pieces are twentieth century repertoire composed in Baroque form. This also provides the opportunity for the student to compare these works with other preludes and toccatas composed in earlier periods.

Despite the similar technical difficulty in both pieces, the *Toccata* might be regarded as a more demanding piece because it requires more basic strength to play through the entire piece without rest and concentration to maintain fluency and accuracy. Since the works contain demanding technique, including leaps between intervals, octave passages, fast scales, and chord playing, preparatory exercise and perfect relaxation are recommended.
In the Performer’s Guide, important stylistic features such as melody, harmony, rhythm, form, timbre, and technical concerns will be discussed.

4.2 Performer’s Guide to Six Preludes, Op. 6

4.2.1 Prelude No.1

General mood

In general, the mood is light, humorous, and joyful because of the light staccati chords and primarily major triads. The prelude is fun to play because of its rhythmic vitality, percussive articulation, contrasting dynamics, and hopping between registers. The form of the prelude is ternary (ABA with coda), but still the single identifying motive returns throughout the piece.

A section: mm. 1-18           B section: mm. 19-48
A section: mm. 49-57          Coda: mm. 58-end

Melody

The first theme of angular and triadic melody is introduced with chordal accompaniment in m.1-m.9. The melody is within a range of one octave and often shows intervals of 3 rd or 4 th between each note.

Example 4.1. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 1-9
In m. 10, new material appears through the use of simpler harmonies and eighth note rhythmic motive.

Example 4.2. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 10-13

From m. 19, the first theme is developed in lower register.

Example 4.3. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 19-23

In m. 49, the first theme returns. This time, the first theme is extended and interrupted by a small rhythmic material and followed by Coda through mm. 58-68.
Example 4.4. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 49-51

Harmony

Overall, my harmonic impression of this prelude is that it has a clear tonal center of D, which freely plays around with neighboring sharp and flat key areas.

In ABA form with coda, the A section shows a tonal center of D major, even with coloristic treatment and mild dissonances. The composer creates sonority of mild dissonances by shifting (or floating) around the tonal center, D major, by neighboring movement.

Example 4.5. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 1-4
In the second part of the A section, new material serves as a transition between B and A sections, in addition to the return of A section and the following coda. During this time, a pedal tone of A-flat is sustained in the right hand.

Example 4.6. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 10-13

B section still has a strong tonal center in D major and is built on material of a section.

Example 4.7. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 19-23

In the middle of B section, a pedal tone of B in the right hand is sustained in the right hand while small fragments of motives imply flat keys such as Eb and Db.
Example 4.8. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 31-40

Then, same material with the first material in B section reappears in Eb which is neapolitan to D major and leads to A section.

Example 4.9. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 41-52

After returning A section, A note can be regarded as a pedal tone and dominant along with chromatic ascending passage in the left hand before the prelude ends in D.
Rhythm (Half note=94)

Rhythmic patterns in this prelude are generally straightforward. Overall, there are four types of rhythmic patterns in the A section:

Example 4.10. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 58-68

Example 4.11. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 Rhythmic patterns
These four types of rhythm are used in all three sections of the ternary form, proper. The rhythms are modified slightly through syncopation, but basically retain the same rhythmic idea. For example, rhythmic motive No. 1 used in section A (mm. 1-2) is slightly altered when it returns in section B (mm. 19-20).

Example 4.12. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 19-20

The second rhythmic group is found in each transitional section. The rhythm consists of simple eighth notes with long pedal tone.

**Timbre**

In general, this prelude requires two contrasting sounds; first, very instrumental and percussive quality of the sound because of its frequent use of staccato and strong accents such as sforzando. Second, smooth legato sound is used less frequently than the first one.


Example 4.15. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 10-13

Using different registers of the keyboard is one of the unique features that create interesting pianistic effects. Registers are found in high, middle, and low areas of the keyboard.
Example 4.16. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 1 mm. 3-4, mm. 19-20, and last two measures

In the coda, the first note in left hand starts from the low register and the passage climbs up to the high register. Moreover, the last two measures in the low register are clearly contrasted to the beginning passage in the contrasting high register. Along with the contrast in articulation and register, dynamic contrast between “f” (forte) and “p” (piano) are necessary, as well as the ability to play “fp” (fortepiano).

**Suggestions**

My suggestion to the student would be first to isolate right and left hands, while looking at the keyboard whenever certain chords are played. For instance, the first section uses many D major chords, and a combination of seeing them visually on the keyboard, and making note of them on the score, can keep the student from having to reread each chord every time it appears. I would probably skip the B section, and have
the student read just the outer A sections, first, since they are very similar. Then, I would mark on the score where the B section begins and ends, and explain to them that this is roughly in the key of A Major. Finally, I would point out that the pedal points are a half-step above each of the corresponding sections, and also write that in the score. In addition, I would point out to them on the piano how the second lower scale degree is a neighboring note, and that it “slides” very effectively into the “tonic” of the section.

Additional technical difficulties that need to be isolated in this prelude are the playing of staccato, and holding legato notes while playing staccato. As in any passage of staccato, I would first have the student staccato legato, in order that the muscles of the hand can “condition” what they are supposed to be playing, in addition to understanding the general direction of the line or harmony. Then, the staccato, a light bouncing with loose wrists devoid of tension, would be “imposed” on the motives while trying to retain the general direction of the line. For the combination of holding legato notes while playing staccato, I would have the student play hands alone, very slowly, in order for the hand to become comfortable holding a note while the other notes bounced lightly. Finally, I would have the student play both sustained notes in both hands, without the staccati, and then the staccati in both hands without the sustained notes. Then, I believe that the student would be able comfortably to play the passage as required.

Moving between registers comfortably presents another technical challenge in this piece. I would have the student be seated comfortably at the piano centered in the middle, and without playing, move the torso as necessary to place the arms and hands in each register. This would give the body a general idea of how, when, and where to move while I sang the melody of each different register. The student could also sing out the
rhythmic patterns of each passage while moving the body into the proper position of each register.

**4.2.2 Prelude No.2**

**General mood**

This prelude is the only slow one in Op. 6 (Lento quarter note = 58). In the context of all the preludes it provides a wonderful contrast and interlude of poise and mystery. It sets out with a very solemn, “bell-like” quality in the four measure ostinato bass. The hands require independence of each other in register, rhythmic motion, and dynamic contrast, but are within the grasp of the intermediate student because of its repetition, tempo, and sound pianistic writing.

**Form**

The form of this prelude is a double period form carrying element of chaconne. The measure unit in the left hand is repeated throughout the prelude and serves as a chaconne bass. From m.4, bass octave in left hand is syncopated.

![Example 4.17. Muczynski Six Preludes, Op. 6, No. 2 mm. 1-5](image)

Example 4.17. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2 mm. 1-5
The melody which first appears in m.5 in the right hand is varied to accommodate a triplet rhythm figure from m.14 while keeping ‘Tempo I’ against the chaconne left hand pattern.

Example 4.18. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2 mm. 14-15

If I call this prelude a double period form, the structure can be divided into two sections.

First section (mm. 1-13)

First period (mm. 1-8)

Second period (mm. 9-13)

Second section (mm. 14-end)

**Melody**

The melody is essentially in the left hand, though the right hand, accompanimental, in nature is also a melody in its own right. The melody of the right hand consists of chromatic half steps changing octave register which results in large leaps for the right hand. This right hand melody is transformed twice into inverse motion and further varied through rhythmic subdivision into triplets.
Example 4.19. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2  mm. 5-6

Melody shape in the first theme is inversed.

Example 4.20. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2  mm. 10-11

First theme returns with rhythmic change into triplets:

In Coda, fragments of the accompanimental figure appear.

Example 4.22. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2 last three measures

Harmony

This prelude begins and ends roughly in e minor which suggests a strong tonal of E. The chaconne pattern of the left hand utilizes the dyads and again closing the ostinato in E, with a suggestion of a movement to the ‘subdominant’ in between.

Example 4.23. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2 mm. 1-4

The right hand melody plays also around the notes of E minor with neighboring half steps. I think this feature is similar to the first prelude. This time, neighboring notes are places on strong beats so that it creates more mysterious sound.
In addition, the octave E in the left hand contributes to the stability of the tonal center while supporting the bell-like quality mentioned afore hand.

From m.9, bass octave in B and G, D notes in upper parts implies G major chord which has two common tone with e minor.

After returning to the first harmonic material with the making ‘Tempo I’, the prelude ends with ambiguous e minor chord mixed with f# note.
Example 4.26. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2 last three measures

**Rhythm**

Against the quarter note figures of the left hand chaconne pattern, Muczynski begins the right hand accompanimental melody with eighth notes. The rhythmic variety of this piece is achieved by the return of the same figure only this time in triplets (see measure 14).

Example 4.27. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2  m. 5

In m.14, eighth note rhythm turns into sixteenth note triplets.
Timbre

The prelude is very interesting in terms of the three layers of sound; first, the chordal pattern in the middle register, second, the low E octaves, and final, the right hand figure which is relatively high.

Suggestions

The overall difficulty of this prelude for the student resides in the fact that three basic sounds must be achieved in each layer of the piece. The success in keeping the texture variegated contributes to the musical continuity of each motive, placed in different registers which allow for optimal contrast. Generally, the sound should be one
of softer nature, allowing the character and mood of “misterioso”, but a deeper, projective tone is necessary in both the chaconne and low octaves with a lighter touch in the right hand accompanimental figure.

I would have the student isolate all the different layers of the texture. For reference and stability, I would have the student play the chaconne pattern all the way through the piece, first, possibly even highlighting the score with a certain color to help isolate the pattern. The sound I would have the student attempt would be an “intense” and “projective” tone, with a slight voicing in the upper voice. Next, I would have the student play the low E octaves and have them try to contrast by explaining that the sound should be more “open” and bell-like, with voicing in the lower note of the octave. Finally, the right hand would be played through several times with steady pulse, possibly my tapping on the piano, helping the student to achieve rhythmic stability and understanding of the different metric subdivision of the beat. This final sound would be the most “mysterious” and require a very light touch. In order to help attain that fluid and soft sound, I would assist the student in understand the half-steps between the notes, first having them group neighboring notes while playing forte (so that the muscles could “condition” the material), and then switching to a softer attack and lower dynamic level.

The effective use of pedal is particularly important in helping achieve the composer’s intention in this piece. While it is necessary to use the damper pedal to help achieve an open and smooth sound, it is even more important that the student not overuse the pedal due to the neighboring half-steps found in the right hand passage. Clarity is necessary, especially for this reason, and also because the changing registers of the right hand,
though relatively in a high register, should be audible without “ringing” from the previous octave. Examples of pedal suggestions are offered below.

Example 4.30. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2  mm. 1-5

For the last three measures, selective and short use of pedal is suggested.

Example 4.31. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 2 last three measures
4.2.3 Prelude No. 3

General mood

This prelude possesses a humorous and rather comical mood throughout the piece and has a great driving force achieved by steady use of sixteenth note triplets. This jovial attitude has much to do with bouncing octaves in the left hand which “hop” around a chromatic right hand motive. The right hand motive further adds to the mischievous nature of this piece by being placed in a lower register and changing direction frequently.

Form

Roughly, this prelude shows elements of ABA form.

A section: mm.1-21

B section: mm. 22-37

A section: mm. 38-end

Two reasons I classify it as ABA form are as follows. First, at the beginning of B section, B-flat note first appears in the right hand which is a sign of development.

B-flat note constantly appears in the B section.

Example 4.32. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 3 mm. 22-25
Second, the first theme returns in m. 38. This time, the first theme comes back with the most intense harmonic moment.

Example 4.33. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 3 mm. 38-41

**Melody and Harmony**

The melody is comprised of sixteenth note running chromatic passages that span a wide range and changes direction frequently. The left hand accompanies with bouncing octaves in eighth notes with a strong tonal center in the key of Db. An interesting feature with regard to the harmony is that Db major in the left hand juxtaposes with Dorian mode in the right hand. As a result of this, the composer successfully creates dissonances by left steps.

Example 4.34. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 3 mm. 1-4
Another feature is that the changes in the left hand suggest a “circle of fifth” pattern.

Example 4.35. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 3 m. 1, m. 7, m. 13, and m. 17

At the end, there is a white key scale to the top and final chord, and which also happens to be the highest register in the piece, and ends strongly in the key of C major.

Example 4.36. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 3 mm. 46-49
Rhythm

The tempo marking of this prelude is ‘Allegro giocoso’ with a metronome indication of quarter note =100. Considering that the quarter note is divided into sixteenth note triplets, meaning 6 notes played per beat, this is a very fast and driving tempo. All rhythmic elements such as accents, syncopations and meter changes contribute to the rhythmic vitality which is an important part of a humorous, energetic, and playful aspect of the piece. In particularly the B section, there are a lot of rhythmic surprises in the middle B section which are achieved by meter change.

Example 4.37. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 3  mm. 26-33

Timbre

I would say that this piece possesses a relatively deeper coloring due to the fact that both hands play primarily in a lower register. I would also associate larger brass instruments of the orchestra (in particular, tuba) with the bouncing staccati in the left hand. The slightly darker quality is achieved also by the right hand which is chromatic in a low register for most of the piece.
Suggestions

This is an effective, virtuoso piece which is completely attainable if the student is prepared for the hands playing in the same register. I would first begin by showing the student how to play more towards the edge of the keys with the right hand, while staying close to the keys. If then, the left hand octaves were positioned appropriately more towards fall board (higher), it would have more room to move and bounce, and not “bump” into the right hand while playing. Slow practice, hands alone are essential in helping the student achieve dynamic crescendo and decrescendo, since dynamic swelling is particularly important to the effect of this piece. The accents and staccati further should be isolated in practice since they offer much articulation and textural variety.

My suggestion with use of pedal is to use it sparingly, and only when necessary. This has to do with the staccati, as well as the chromaticisms. I would only use pedals in measure 39, and in the last two measures:

Example 4.38. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 3  m. 39 and last two measures
In the change of register, as the patterns ascend towards the higher end of the keyboard, overuse of pedal could be anticlimactic since there would be much “left over” sound from the lower register from the larger strings in the bass, which could result in creating a muddled effect.

4.2.4 Prelude No.4

General mood

This prelude has a short four-measure introduction which begins sadly in the tempo marking ‘Allegro meno mosso’ with no metronome marking. This gives way to an angry, frustrated ‘Allegro con motto’ (quarter note=144) from measure 5 all the way through measure 51.

The middle section with its large sonorities and widely spaced hands at the forte dynamic level, create an interlude similar in character to the coda of Mussorgsky’s “Gnomus” of his Pictures at an Exhibition. The chromaticism and hand crossing give way to the “crying out” of section B, much like the gnome who has suddenly become aware of himself and all of his abnormality. The creature suggested in the B section in Muczynski piece, however, is much busier in his self-absorption and fussier, too, moving at a faster tempo, with left hand leaps and accents, and more busily than his earlier counterpart.
In the middle section through mm.26-35, the new mood appears temporarily with tempo marking 112 ‘Maestoso’, and returns again to the opening sixteenth note motive.

At the end, through mm.52-end, the ‘angry mood’ drastically changes into sad and depressed or deflated mood.
Example 4.41. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 4 mm. 47-58

Form

The form of the prelude is A B A’ B’ with small codetta.

A: mm. 1-4, Allegretto meno mosso

Melodic idea is introduced

B: mm. 5-21, Allegro con moto, (Quarter note=144)

Melodic material is metric and characteristic motive cell.

Transition: mm. 22-25, Con brio

A’: mm. 26-35, Maestoso (Quarter note=112)

Melody in A section is augmented in terms of texture and dynamic and the length of the section is doubled.

(A section: 4 measures, A’ section: 10 measures)
B’: mm. 36-51, A tempo agitato

Codetta: mm. 52 – end.

Melody

Melodic material is taken from the first prelude reflecting a cyclic nature to the entire set of preludes.

Example 4.42. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 4 and No. 1

As shown above, the melodic pattern of Prelude No. 1 is slightly transformed into a different melodic shape, with changes also in rhythm, dynamics and tempo.

The short motivic melody in the left hand throughout the piece (with exceptions of mm. 1-2, the ‘Maestoso’ section, and very end) is another unique feature of this prelude.
Example 4.43. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 4  mm. 9-10

5 note clusters in the right hand are made with the scale material at the very beginning through m.1-4.

Example 4.44. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 4  m. 1 and m. 5

Harmony

As shown in the first three preludes in Op. 6, the composer’s harmonic approach is focused on juxtaposition of two or more than two different areas to create ‘sonorous sound’ rather than following conventional harmonic structure.

Main harmonic material used in this prelude is shown in the beginning of the prelude.
Above examples can be analyzed by major and minor 2\textsuperscript{nd} intervals between notes rather than traditional harmonic structure as follows.

In A section (mm. 1-4), polytonal harmony based on juxtaposition of \# and b keys is shown in above examples. The tonal center of B section is E.
Besides, harmonic structure is based on sharp and white key areas.

In codetta, chromatic chord progression accumulates layers of mysterious sound and ends with e.

![Example 4.48. Muczynski Six Preludes, Op. 6, No. 4 mm. 52-56](image)

**Example 4.48. Muczynski Six Preludes, Op. 6, No. 4 mm. 52-56**

**Rhythm**

The tempo marking of this piece is quarter note = 144. This is a fast tempo given that the subdivision of the quarter note is sixteenth notes, which serve as a main rhythmic motive.

Rhythmic pattern in the right hand in the A section is shown below.

![Ex. 1. first 2 measures->diagram in p11](image)

**Example 4.49. Muczynski Six Preludes, Op. 6, No. 4 mm. 1-2 and its rhythmic structure**
The counter rhythmic motive consists of a strong syncopation

Example 4.50. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 4  mm. 9-10

In the meter marking of 2/4, this represents a syncopation against the running sixteenth notes.

Overall, rhythmic patterns and counting are very stable and create a ‘perpetuo moto’ flair in the outer sections with no meter change.

**Timbre**

The note clusters of the right hand create an interesting timbral effect in the middle register of the keyboard. The strumming effect recalls repetitive Russian instrumental character which was often favored by Prokofiev. Further textural variety is added by the contrasting rhythmic motive where the left hand jumps across 5 note clusters. Again, as in Prelude No. 3, the hands are very close to each other and span a range of an octave most of the time.

Example 4.51. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 4  mm. 5-7
The left hand crossing over the right hand is brought out through accenting the syncopation.

**Suggestions**

I would strive to have the student achieve a most comfortable position with regard to the hand crossing over steady 16\textsuperscript{th} notes. Again, practicing hands separately would help the student achieve fluidity of the right hand and keeping the hand from becoming tense is of primary importance. Then, I would have the student add the left hand and make sure that it was also very free pointing out that the hands should once again stay in different places on the keys in order to prevent bumping into each other.

The introduction and middle section require again analyzing the specific triads or intervals which comprise the sonorities. As with in Prelude No. 1, the chord qualities and notes could be written into the score to keep the student from having to reread the sonorities. The middle section requires emphasis on the left hand octaves, with a lighter touch on the accompanimental syncopated chords. I would start by having the student play ‘forte’ on the octaves, and ‘piano’ on the chords in the left hand. I would also isolate the octave melody in the right hand, keeping loose arm motion and emphasizing the importance of the top note of the octave melody. Finally, I would have the student practice finger 1 of the octave right hand passage separately, and then finger 5 in the same manner.

Visual depiction and imagery is important particularly in the prelude in order to help the student achieve the depth of sonority required in portraying the drama in this piece.
4.2.5 Prelude No.5

General mood

Overall, this prelude is a playful piece that includes a registeral interest and a variety of articulation. Jazz influence is one of the unique features found in this prelude.

Form

The form of the prelude is A B A’.

A (mm. 1-11),  B (mm. 12-26),  A’ (mm. 27- end)

Melody

Jazz influenced melody in the prelude is short and motivic.

Same melodic material appears in different registers through the prelude.

Example 4.52. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 5  mm. 1-5 and mm. 12-14
Harmony

There is two different harmonic material used in the A and B section. In the A section, A is strong tonal center and in the B section, Bb is strong tonal center.

Example 4.53. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 5  mm. 1-2 and mm. 12-13

Two seventh chords in the A section provide important clues to the jazzy character of the prelude.

Example 4.54. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 5  m. 5 and m. 6

The last chord of the prelude also implies A as a tonic.
Rhythm

In a moderately fast tempo, simple and playful rhythm provides important clues to the character of the prelude. The tempo marking is quarter note = 104.

Syncopations and accents are used to create more rhythmic interest.
Timbre

Three different registers on three staves create dimensions of sound.

Suggestions

The grace note at the top is reminiscent of a charming bell sound. Contrasting articulations should be clearly distinguished.
Example 4.59. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 5  m. 27

The A section with many two note slurs, staccatos, and accents is more playful and faster than the B section which is slower and has a smoother legato.

Besides, pedal is less used in the A section which is more sharply articulated.

Example 4.60. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 5  A section

Example 4.61. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 5  B section
4.2.6 Prelude No.6

General mood

In the interview with Ramey, transcribed on Muczynski’s LP recording jacket (1980, Laurel Record), Muczynski recalled the episode when he composed this last prelude:
“I recall writing No.6 on New Year’s eve. I had been invited to two parties that evening and had refused the second, having already accepted the first. At the last moment the first party fell through and I was left with nowhere to go, so I sat at the piano and wrote the last of the preludes. You know that Beethoven Rondo, Rage Over a Lost Penny? This relentless little toccata is a rage over a lost party, and probably more fun.”

This prelude is interesting in that it show his self-expressiveness in the music. Another piece similar to this is the Toccata op.15. This toccata was composed after he was involved in a serious car accident and is filled with unpredicted leaps and a brilliant closing. Later, Muczynski called this toccata ‘a rage piece over the lost car’.

Form

Form of the prelude is A B A’ B’.

A (mm. 1-17) C# in ostinato bass is emphasized by placing on the strong beat.

B (mm. 18-35) Ostinato pattern is moved to the right hand from the left hand. Ostinato pattern is based on bb.

A’ (mm. 36-45) Same character as A section.

B’ (mm. 46-end) Same character as B section

Melody

The melody is comprised of chromatic scales and intervals accompanied by a simple ostinato pattern.
The melody of the first theme in the right hand is developed in the B section in the right hand through mm. 18-35. Melody is in the left hand.

Harmony

Overall, the prelude shows polytonal character, juxtaposition of b-flat minor and c# minor.
Conflicts between sharp dissonances, especially between Bb and C# in A section, are emphasized. Bb is reference to the center of harmony because most Bb’s in the prelude are strongly emphasized. In addition, the prelude ends with a strong octave of Bb in sforzando.

Example 4.64. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 6  mm. 5-6 and last two measures

Another example of harmonic conflicts is shown in B section between Bb and A.

Example 4.65. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 6  mm. 22-24

**Rhythm**

The rhythm of this prelude is clear and earnest in a fast and driving tempo, with an indication of Allegro marcato quarter note =168. The main rhythmic pattern is made up of eighth notes.
Unity of rhythm found through the piece contributes to represent the composer’s emotion ‘anger’. Mostly, accents are placed on strong beats and it helps to make strong statement of the emotion as shown in the examples.

Example 4.66. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 6 mm. 1-4 and mm. 38-41

**Timbre**

Like other preludes in the opus, registeral interest occurs in the difference between the A and B sections. In the first A section, the prelude starts in the low register, moves to the to a higher register in section B. and then returns to the low register in section A.
Example 4.67. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 6  mm. 1-2, mm. 16-22, and mm. 36-41

**Suggestions**

Overall, a strong percussive quality of staccato in the left hand, and dry and crisp marcato is essential to the appropriate sound, with little or no use of pedal.

One of the big challenges is to combine speed (quarter note=168) and strength.

To solve this problem, fast release of forearms and hands after attacking octaves with staccato, accent, and sfforzando, is required. Also, I can suggest to the performer to bounce on the staccato accents and sfforzando.

Example 4.68. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 6  mm. 1-2
Complete relaxation of the wrist should always be checked on each articulation of staccato. Otherwise, the wrist will be tense and cause loss of control of articulation. Effective voicing can be achieved by keeping different dynamic levels between both hands playing staccato through the piece. For example, if voicing is in the right hand, sforzando in the left hand should not overcome the right hand. To achieve different levels of dynamic between both hands, feeling heavier weight from natural gravity on the right arm and shoulder will be helpful. Fast octave playing with strength requires maximum use of the forearm which can provide faster and better control. While forearms function as a main mechanism, the wrist should be completely ready, and relaxed, to carry the strength from the forearm to the hand and fingers.

Further Technical Considerations

In addition to the suggestions provided under the heading of each prelude, there are also three different types of practice techniques that could greatly help the student achieve optimal technical control of the pieces.

1) Rhythmic distortions (dotted rhythms, displaced accents)

For mastering passages like the following example from the Prelude.3, the performer needs practicing with rhythmic distortions. For example, the performer may practice with different rhythmic groups of two, three, four notes or even more.
2) Blocked chords

Blocked chord playing always causes technical problem because of thick texture of chords or note clusters. The performer needs little firmness in hands for even control of five fingers with relaxed arms. Five note clusters found in Prelude.4 requires effective adjustment of hand and wrist on the keys according to the size of the hand and the length of the fingers. Practicing for rotating wrist without keyboard is very useful to practice natural playing movement.

Example 4.70. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 4

For playing triad or 7th chords, the performer has choice of fingering. For example, 7th chords can be played with fingering 5-3-2-1 or 5-4-2-1. The student may practice the top
note of the chord separately and strongly, to distinguish the sound for voicing, then, as a next step, play the top and bottom notes together and inner notes separately.

Example 4.71. Muczynski *Six Preludes*, Op. 6, No. 4

3) Metronome practice

Since each prelude has specific metronome tempo marking by the composer, careful practice with metronome is necessary. The performer may practice each section with different tempos separately. For instance, Prelude.4 has two metronome tempos (quarter note =144 and 112), so that it requires separate practice for each metronome tempo before playing whole piece through. Until reaching up to the level of playing the indicated tempo, ‘graded metronome practice’ with accuracy from slow tempo is very helpful. The performer may try even faster tempos than the indicated one and return to the indicated tempo for more control and confidence.

Understanding the changes in mood and using visual imagery can be especially helpful to the performer. For instance, in Prelude No. 2, it is helpful to imagine large bells in the left hand low E bass octaves. In Prelude No. 4, it is helpful to imagine a gnome, or dwarf, or even a bear bouncing around.
Striving for textural coloring and a variety of sounds is particularly useful in bringing this set of preludes to performance expectation. Finally, to program them in pairs before performing them as a complete set would enable the performer to isolate the specific moods of only a certain number of pieces before finally preparing to play all of them with great contrast and variety of mood.

4.3 Performer’s Guide to Toccata, Op. 15

General Mood

Muczynski calls his Toccata, Op.15, a ‘rage’ piece because it was composed after a serious accident in Gallup, New Mexico. He recalls, “Beethoven had his ‘Rage Over A Lost Penny’. This is my ‘rage over a lost car’.” (Muczynski, 1990, Introduction) Muczynski tried to avoid the “usual repeated-note idea” found in most toccatas but he carefully “engineered is abstract work around the interval of a fourth” (Muczynski, 1990, Introduction). This toccata communicates how Muczynski felt when he had the accident. All the elements, including driving gestures in thin textures, the chromatic idiom, unpredictable leaps, and the dramatic climax, are assembled to describe his emotional response. Most of all, its percussive quality significantly contributes to maintain tension in the mood. Prokofiev’s Toccata, Op. 11, features similar characteristics such as motoric and perpetual motion, chromaticism, leaps, and percussive treatment of the piano. Whereas Muczynski’s Toccata is evolves with a continuously thinning texture, in Prokofiev’s Toccata evolves with thicker textures, such as chords and octave chords. Its repetitive and strumming quality is descriptive and derives from Russian folk instrumental music.
It is interesting that, sometimes the lyrical aspects in Muczynski are intensely expressed when he felt “rage”. Along with the *Toccata*, the last prelude in *Six Preludes* was composed in a similar mood.

**Form**

The form of this piece is ABA with a coda.

A (mm. 1-57)

The A section is divided into two sections.

The first (mm. 1-27, including small transition) is comprised of leaps of a fourth, which is a driving force in the piece. In the second part (mm. 28-57), the interval of a fourth appears in the form of a harmonic interval accompanied by ostinati in the left hand with no use of pedal. From m. 49, a broken fourth interval suddenly appears again and leads into the B section.

B (mm. 58-129)

The B section presents a more chromatic character accompanied by chords in the left hand that contrast with elements to the A section.

From m. 114, chromatic melodies are paralleled in both hands a broken fourth interval suddenly appears in m. 122 to announce that the A section will soon return.

A’ (mm. 130-196)

The opening theme returns in its original form, but thematic fragments are variously combined with it.
Coda (mm. 197- end)

Through measures 197- 212, thematic materials are combined variously, then the thickest texture arises: octave chords in the right hand along with chords in the left hand is presented. Again, the interval of a fourth appears in both chords and broken chords, and the coda ends with strong octave chords in both hands.

Melody

Two types of melody run through the Toccata; one of an angular melody by a broken fourth interval and an another involving chromatic scale. In the beginning, the melody by broken fourth interval is introduced as the main material. The melody in the first three measures is accented on the first beat.

Example 4.72. Muczynski Toccata, Op. 15, mm. 1-3

The interval of the fourth is transformed into a harmonic vertical form accompanied by an ostinato pattern.
Example 4.73. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, mm. 24-32

New material is presented in the B section. The melody has a more narrative character and sometimes, more sonority, accompanied by a pedal tone.

Example 4.74. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, mm. 58-65

**Harmony**

Overall, the *Toccata* displays a chromatic harmony which makes this piece unique among his output. Its polytonal character is achieved through the use of interval of fourth, but stays under the surface. In other words, the composer’s harmonic idiom is focused on the interval of a fourth. The interval of 4th appears in two forms, melodic and harmonic intervals.
Example 4.75. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, melodic interval and harmonic interval of 4th

The ostinato pattern is comprised of a chromatic scale. Its chromatic character especially plays an important role in the B section. A modified version of the angular melody, less sharp than the one in the A section, is presented and creates a mild dissonant effect with the pedal tone. Like in his other repertoire, Muczynski devised a tonal center in the *Toccata*. One way to indicate a tonal center is by placing accents on it. In the last prelude of *Six Preludes*, sharp dissonances are achieved through conflicts between two tonal centers, Bb and C#.

Example 4.76. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, mm. 179-182
Muczynski appears to employ a strong conflict between Bb and C# in order to express “rage” or “conflicting”. Although not as strong as in Six Preludes, the Toccata also includes an example of tonal centers. In Toccata, Bb is a strong tonal center.

Example 4.77. Muczynski Toccata, Op. 15, mm. 55-57 and mm. 27-31

Note clusters shortly appear in A. These note clusters are in the range of the fourth interval as well as the harmonic fourth intervals and melodic fourth intervals.

Example 4.78 Muczynski Toccata, Op. 15, mm. 138-141
Whereas the interval of a fourth is emphasized as a harmonic device, the seventh is regarded as important harmonic material in B section. The seventh interval is stressed by accents. Like the fourth interval, the seventh is in the form of melodic and harmonic interval as shown in following examples.

Example 4.79. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, mm. 70-79

Rhythm

The rhythmic features in Toccata are simple and honest. A continuous perpetuo moto provides a rhythmic unity made up of eighth notes. A rhythmic similarity is found in the last prelude of *Six Preludes* in that the composer’s emotion is expressed through unity in rhythm. No tempo marking is found in the *Toccata* which is rare in Muczynski’s works.
Accents on strong beats help to make strong rhythmic statement, as shown in the example.

Example 4.80. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, mm. 8-11

In the B section, repeated ostinati become hemiola as a result of a meter change. The hemiola and meter change are the only rhythmic devices that grant the piece rhythmic vitality.

Example 4.81. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, mm. 35-36

**Timbre**

Along with an overall percussive quality, registral variety occurs throughout the entire piece. In the first A section, the *Toccata* starts in the low register, and rapidly moves to a
high register. Registeral movement is faster in the A section and more stable in B section.

In the low register, dark and deep sound is created.

Example 4.82. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, 8-11

Example 4.83. Muczynski *Toccata*, Op. 15, mm. 20-23

Rapid alternation of both hands creates vitality and excitement in performance.

A pianistic effect is pronounced in the B section by combining melodic material with a sonorous pedal. This creates an effect of layered sound.
Suggestions

This virtuoso piece entails that the performer memorizes each phrase or small section because of its great speed. To reach up the performance tempo, steady practice with the metronome is required. I would let the student isolate the first part in the A section and other similar sections and practice them together. For broken intervals, I would first have the student play them harmonically in order to learn their harmonic meaning and to know the location of the hand rather than individual fingers.

As mentioned earlier, rapid movement between registers offer another challenge for the performer. I would have the student sit seated with relaxation in the torso, and have him or her move their torso while placing their arms and hands in each register. The teacher might play a recording to support this practice while the student is moving. This practicing method also applies to Muczynski’s works that have registeral variety in great speed.

Another difficulty lies in the fact that three sounds in each layer sound with a different color and volume level. First I would have the student practice each voice separately and then combine two instances of each voice. After thoroughly mastering, the student would...
play them together. Even though the dynamic marking indicates *piano* or *pianissimo*, the volume level of the top sound should be at least *mezzo piano* in order to project the proper tone. Throughout the whole process of practice, careful listening is necessary for the student.

The ostinato figure requires perfect relaxation of the wrist. The pre-exercise and the relevant technical practice should be assigned by the teacher. I would have the student slowly roll each wrist separately and together. On the keyboard, I would have the student imitate an exaggerated rotating motion without playing, and then play the passages.

For memorization, I would have the student begin from the last section and memorize the piece backward. This way is much securer than memorization from the beginning, because the student automatically memorizes the first section. However, memorization of later parts is not accomplished as readily and often a student needs to spend twice as much time on later parts than earlier ones.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study grew out of my own personal curiosity when I found out two facts about Muczynski. He was a composer-pianist, and he was given the background of a Russian composer-pianist by his teacher although he was a native-born American. From that moment on, I wondered what factors helped him to achieve success as a composer-pianist and how his Russian-style educational background had influenced him across cultures and nationalities. In his career, Muczynski has proved himself as a performer on various stages, including appearances as a soloist with many orchestras. His compositions have been considered superb additions to the piano repertoire and are beloved by numerous performers and teachers.

Muczynski and Russian composer-pianists share common characteristics. First, like Russian pianists nurtured in early Russian conservatories, Muczynski freely embraced composition, performance, and teaching areas. Second, like Russian composer-pianists, Muczynski’s profound knowledge of the instrument and its performance practices is clearly reflected in his piano compositions. Third, the pedagogic interest shown in his compositions and teaching career is similar to that of many devoted Russian teachers. Finally, the most important aspect of Muczynski’s style, a synthesis of lyricism
and Neo-Classic idioms, is similar to that of Prokofiev, a major influential figure of the Russian piano school.

The best starting point for this pursuit was Tcherepnin, Muczynski’s only composition teacher and a native Russian. Tcherepnin was nurtured in the tradition of the Russian piano school and passed on the particular strengths of his background to Muczynski. Despite few similarities between Muczynski and Tcherepnin in their compositional styles, Tcherepnin’s contribution was critical in Muczynski’s development as a musician. Tracing Tcherepnin’s Russian background, I found another influential figure, an even greater one, Anton Rubinstein, who cast an immense shadow over an entire phenomenon. Rubinstein’s brilliance as a musician and pioneering enthusiasm as an educator have tremendously influenced Russian music history as well as that of the entire Western world.

Tcherepnin and Rubinstein share a common characteristic in that they showered knowledge what they had acquired upon their students unsparingly. This devotion is shown in Rubinstein’s words, which deeply impressed and challenged my own thinking.

I firmly believe that in view of the deep interest felt by the highest authorities in this noble problem of civilization, - the liberation of the masses from the slough of vice, and the opening out to them of a means of moral development through the medium of the arts, - many of my projects will be adopted, and ways will be provided to carry them into execution for the benefit of our beloved country and the welfare of many millions of the Russian people. May God grant this! As for myself, the ideas which I have striven to express are confirmed by many years of experience and a thorough acquaintance with the subject in question; and I can truly affirm that my sole motive has been to serve my dear native land according to the best of my knowledge and ability. (Rubinstein, 1969, p. 138-139)
Despite the appearance in numerous renowned names and their contributions, I focused on Anton Rubinstein because he founded all the basic aspects of the musicians’ training in the Russian piano school.

The historical origin of Modernism, nurtured in the early twentieth-century Russian conservatories, has provided general historical context, although each Modernist composers could be studied individually because of their stylistic variety. In discussing influences and styles associated with Muczynski, I focused directly on content relevant to Muczynski. This is why I rarely mentioned Tcherepnin’s specific style, because his stylistic influence on Muczynski is not as strong as Prokofiev’s.

Today the brilliant tradition of composer-pianist, which flourished from the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, has declined even among Russian pianists though young Russian pianists still perform their own compositions and transcriptions on stage and at major international competitions. It is therefore astonishing that Muczynski promoted the tradition of composer-pianist in America in the second half of the twentieth century. What made Muczynski adhere to his belief in composition by a performer seems to be associated with pedagogic devotion. His piano music was not composed for an elite minority of music but for a broad range of performers and students.

His major piano works composed from the 1950s are greatly accessible to pianists. Their playable character suits their clarity and lyricism. His compositional attitude went against the contemporary experimental tendency.

Pedagogic genres such as prelude and etude are a challenge to the composer because those genres require including two contrasting characteristics, technical study as well as artistic beauty. Only composer-pianists can achieve these two characteristics.
because only they truly understand the training of piano technique. *Preludes*, Op. 6, and *Toccata*, Op. 15, represent these two characteristics, successfully achieved because of Muczynski’s dual background as a composer-pianist. Moreover, the recording series performed by Muczynski himself is a valuable source of audible reference for the performer. This is also a big part of the composer-pianists’ advantage.

Most pianists, including myself, consider themselves as performers who interpret previously composed works, who revive works on the stage without trying to find their own potential as composers. Composition is an activity separate from most pianists’ work and seems to be someone else’s job. I strongly recommend that we question this division and ask, “Why not compose?” This activity can only serve to achieve a higher stage of musical development. Composition will also greatly promote performer’s ability of interpretations of repertoire.
REFERENCES


Myers, P. (2000). Note in CD Arcadi Volodos


DISCOGRAPHY
