TRILOGY-PROKOFIEV'S WAR SONATAS:
A STUDY ON PIANISM DIAGNOSIS AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

D.M.A. Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts
in the Graduate School of
The Ohio State University
By
Chiann-Yi Liao, B.M., M.M.

The Ohio State University
1999

Document Committee:
Professor Steven Glaser
(Document Advisor)
Professor Margarita Mazo
Professor Kenneth Williams

Approved by:

Document Advisor
School of Music
ABSTRACT

This document discusses how Prokofiev's own virtuoso abilities as a pianist became an important component in his unique compositional style. Apart from the usual approach to this kind of topic, I will identify the technical problems in Op. 82, 83, and 84, the so-called "War Sonatas", by categorizing them as follows: thirds, chords, octaves, leaps, broken chords (arpeggiated chords), rhythm, dynamics, running figures (group of notes, irregular scales), voicing and phrasing, sound quality (touch), pedaling, and other features, such as glissando, alternating motions between hands, repetitions, and tone clusters. My goal is to understand how Prokofiev employed the above technical demands while crafting thematic material with these difficult technical ingredients into the framework of a large scaled multi-movement sonata. Rather than analyzing these techniques measure by measure, specific examples from three sonatas, Op. 82, 83, and 84, will be used for illustration and reference. Pedagogical suggestions for selected passages will follow the above discussion.
Dedicated to
My Parents
And
All My Friends
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Steven Glaser for his guidance and help for this document. During my doctoral years, I would not be able to accomplish many requirements if without his support and dedication. In addition, I would like to thank the members of my Document and Recital committees for their support: Dr. Magarita Mazo, Dr. Kenneth Williams, Professor Michael Davis, and Dr. Donald Gren. A special word of thanks to Dr. Joel Bloch, who helped me with his expertise—English writing style and grammar.
VITA

September 30, 1968...................... Born-Kaohsiung, Taiwan

1991...................................... B.M., National Taiwan Normal
University, Taipei, Taiwan

1994...................................... M.M., The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

1994-1998................................. Teaching Associate,
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

FIELD OF STUDY

Major Field: Music
Studies in piano performance
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| ABSTRACT | .......................................................... | ii |
| DEDICATION | .......................................................... | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | .................................................. | iv |
| VITA | .......................................................... | v |
| LIST OF EXAMPLES | ............................................... | viii |
| LIST OF TABLES | ................................................ | xi |

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
| INTRODUCTION | .............................................. | 1 |

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE WAR SONATAS .................................. 3
   
   Brief Biography of Sergei Prokofiev ...................................... 4
   Historical Background of the War Sonatas ................................ 12

2. DIAGNOSIS OF REQUIRED TECHNIQUE OF EACH SONATA ......................... 26
   
   Thirds .................................................. 27
   Chords .................................................. 30
   Octaves .................................................. 38
   Leaps .................................................. 42
   Broken Chords ........................................ 48
   Rhythm .................................................. 53
   Dynamics ............................................... 59
   Running Figures (group of notes, irregular scales) ...................... 63
   Voicing and Phrasing .................................... 65
   Sound Quality (Touch) .................................... 68
   Pedaling ............................................... 71
   Miscellaneous ......................................... 72
   Glissando .............................................. 72
   Alternating motion between hands ......................................... 73
   Repetitions ............................................ 74
   Tone clusters .......................................... 75
3. PEDAGOGICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SELECTED PASSAGES

Sonata No. 6 ................................................................. 77
Bars 138-187 ............................................................ 77
(From the development section of the first movement)
Bars 36-42 ............................................................... 79
(One of the appoggiatura passages of the second movement)

Sonata No. 7 ................................................................. 80
Bars 182-252 ............................................................ 80
(From the development section of the first movement)
Bars 145-177 ............................................................ 84
(The coda of the third movement)

Sonata No. 8 ................................................................. 86
Bars 275-289 ............................................................ 86
(From the coda of the first movement)
Bars 458-489 ............................................................ 87
(From the coda of the third movement)

CONCLUSION ............................................................... 89

APPENDICES ............................................................. 94

A. Diagrams of each sonata ........................................ 94
B. Excerpts for Chapter II ............................................ 98
Excerpts from Sonata No. 6 ........................................ 99
Excerpts from Sonata No. 7 ....................................... 112
Excerpts from Sonata No. 8 ....................................... 118
Excerpt from Prokofiev Sonata No. 3 .......................... 129
Excerpt from Scriabin Piano Sonata No. 9 .................. 130
Excerpt from Prokofiev Toccata, Op. 11 ...................... 131
C. Examples for Chapter III ........................................ 132
Excerpts from Sonata No. 6 ........................................ 133
Excerpts from Sonata No. 7 ....................................... 136
Excerpts from Sonata No. 8 ....................................... 139

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................... 142
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-1: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 1-14</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-2: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 24-34</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-3: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 52-55</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-4: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 111-114</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-5: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 131-134</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-6: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 67-80</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 141-146</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 151-156</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 161-168</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 177-181</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 193-200</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 241-251</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-13: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 252-257</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14: Sonata No. 6, second movement, m. 30-42</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-15: Sonata No. 6, second movement, m. 129-131</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-16: Sonata No. 6, second movement, m. 140-142</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-17: Sonata No. 6, third movement, m. 1-11</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-18: Sonata No. 6, third movement, m. 75-78</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-19: Sonata No. 6, third movement, m. 42-61</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 13-17</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-21: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 26-34</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-22: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 40-50</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-23: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 277-280</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-24: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 97-106</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-25: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 125-136</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-26: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 204-214</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-27: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 243-254</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-28: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 341-357</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-29: Sonata No. 6, fourth movement, m. 410-417</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-1: Sonata No. 7, first movement, m. 11-25</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-2: Sonata No. 7, first movement, m. 262-286</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-3: Sonata No. 7, first movement, m. 42-46</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-4: Sonata No. 7, first movement, m. 249-251</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-5: Sonata No. 7, first movement, m. 153-162</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-6: Sonata No. 7, first movement, m. 176-180</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-7: Sonata No. 7, first movement, m. 187-201</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8: Sonata No. 7, second movement, m. 1-14</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7-9: Sonata No. 7, second movement, m. 43-47. 114
7-10: Sonata No. 7, second movement, m. 79-83. 114
7-11: Sonata No. 7, second movement, m. 53-63. 115
7-12: Sonata No. 7, second movement, m. 69-71. 115
7-13: Sonata No. 7, third movement, m. 1-8. 116
7-14: Sonata No. 7, third movement, m. 49-56. 116
7-15: Sonata No. 7, third movement, m. 119-126. 116
7-16: Sonata No. 7, third movement, m. 143-157. 117
8-1: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 44-45. 118
8-2: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 73-76. 118
8-3: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 183-186. 118
8-4: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 189. 118
8-5: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 196-200. 118
8-6: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 90-91. 119
8-7: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 137-151. 119
8-8: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 170-176. 119
8-9: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 277-286. 120
8-10: Sonata No. 8, first movement, m. 290-297. 120
8-11: Sonata No. 8, second movement, m. 1-4. 121
8-12: Sonata No. 8, second movement, m. 9-12. 121
8-13: Sonata No. 8, second movement, m. 24-29. 121
8-14: Sonata No. 8, second movement, m. 46-51. 121
8-15: Sonata No. 8, second movement, m. 58-60. 122
8-16: Sonata No. 8, second movement, m. 64-70. 122
8-17: Sonata No. 8, second movement, m. 77-79. 122
8-18: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 7-12. 123
8-19: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 26-31. 123
8-20: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 41-46. 123
8-21: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 71-76. 124
8-22: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 121-127. 124
8-23: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 184-189. 124
8-24: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 308-321. 124
8-25: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 220-240. 125
8-26: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 359-362. 125
8-27: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 245-255. 126
8-28: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 343-352. 126
8-29: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 422-429. 127
8-30: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 475-480. 127
8-31: Sonata No. 8, third movement, m. 458-469. 128
A: Prokofiev Piano Sonata No. 3, m. 190-208. 129
B: Scriabin Piano Sonata No. 9, m. 1-15. 130
C: Prokofiev Toccata for Piano, m. 1-26. 131
D: Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 118-189. 133
E: Sonata No. 6, second movement, m. 30-42. 135
F: Sonata No. 7, first movement, m. 183-254. 136
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sonata No. 6 diagram</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonata No. 7 diagram</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonata No. 8 diagram</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Prokofiev is one of the greatest pianists and composers of the twentieth century. On stage, he often appeared as a pianist/composer, a practice that ceased soon after he returned to his homeland permanently. His talent as a composer is evident in his ability to compose for different genres: instrumental music, piano works, symphonies, operas, ballet music, and film music. Among these compositions, the number of piano works is impressive. The question of whether Prokofiev's own virtuoso piano playing influenced his piano writing or vice versa is worthwhile discussion. From the existing recordings, we learn about the characteristics of Prokofiev's exceptional playing: the dexterity of his fingers, the great flexibility of his wrists, the steadiness and the intensity of his rhythm, and lastly, a polished, stylistic, and well-thought-out musicianship. With the knowledge of what Prokofiev possessed technically, it is easy to see why his piano compositions contain leaps, repetitions, rapid-moving chords, and etc.

Prokofiev wrote the War Sonatas during the period of time that Prokofiev was reluctant to premiere his new compositions in public and no longer willing to give piano solo recitals. Therefore, we do not have the composer's interpretation of these works. Did the fact that Prokofiev stopped playing his own music change the way he composed for piano? As a result of my curiosity to this question and my personal
fondness of these sonatas, the pianism of the War Sonatas is the topic of my document.

There are a number of studies that focus on theoretical analyses of his sonatas such as Vlahcevic's *Thematic-tonal organization in the late sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev*, 1975), while others concentrate on measure-by-measure/phrase-by-phrase performance practice discussions of one or more selected sonatas (such as Ungar's *Prokofiev's Piano Sonata no. 6, Op. 82 a motivic analysis and performance practice study*, 1996). Since the War Sonatas were sketched around the same time, there must be some similarities among them, as well as the individualities in each that Prokofiev desired. My ambition is to present an examination on the techniques of these works and also provide practice suggestions, based on my own experiences, for selected passages. This document may appear technically oriented toward pianistic problems, but I have included a full consideration of Prokofiev's musical style and musicality in order to help not only playing these works but also solving technical problems. It is eternally true that no matter what you work to achieve technically is to help obtain what you desire to create musically. I sincerely hope that those with interests in learning these sonatas in the future or those who will teach them will profit from this document.

This document consists of the above introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion: Chapter I, the historical background of the War Sonatas; Chapter II, the diagnosis of the pianism of the War Sonatas; Chapter III, the practice suggestions for selected passages.
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE WAR SONATAS


Brief Biography of Sergei Prokofiev

Sergei Prokofiev was born on April 23, 1891 in Sontsovka, Ukraine. As a child prodigy, he wrote his first piece at the age of five. Being the only child in his family, Prokofiev was very close to his mother, who was a good pianist and became the composer's first piano teacher. In 1902, a few years after he composed his first opera, The Giant, Prokofiev was introduced to Sergei Taneev in Moscow and began having serious lessons in composition with him. Later that summer he studied intensively with Reinhold Gliere at Sontsovka. Two years later, he moved with his mother to St. Petersburg to attend the Conservatory. Despite the disruption of the
revolution in 1905, Prokofiev's study in the Conservatory went fairly well considering he was unusually young at the age of fourteen. He studied instrumentation with Rimsky-Korsakov and also became acquainted with Nikolai Miaskovsky, who was to remain a close lifelong friend. Within five years, Prokofiev had completed his undergraduate study at the Conservatory and also had his public debut at “Evenings of Contemporary Music” with his virtuosic work for piano, Op.4. The amazing speed with which Prokofiev composed was evident early in his career. The First Piano Sonata, First Piano Concerto, Second Sonata, Toccata for piano and several other works for instruments were all completed in three or four years. Prokofiev graduated from the conservatory winning first prize in the school piano competition by performing his own First Concerto.

His first trip to Europe was in 1913. During this trip, he also attended Ballets Russes's performance in Paris and later went to London to meet Diaghilev. The first commissioned work from this great producer was the ballet Ala and Lolly (never produced, later revised as the better-known The Scythian Suite). Their fifteen-year collaboration (until Diaghilev's death in 1929) was significant for Prokofiev that has affected many years to come in his compositions. According to the letters from Diaghilev to Prokofiev and Stravinsky, it was evident that Diaghilev was very interested in Prokofiev's music and talents. In the letter to Stravinsky, Diaghilev wrote, “he is gifted, but you what can you expect if the most sophisticated person in his milieu is Tcherepnin, whose avant-garde swank greatly impresses him.” Diaghilev also thought that Prokofiev's talent is yet to be developed, “Prokofiev is easily influenced,.....either he must change totally, or we'll lose him forever.”

Owed
to Diaghilev, these ballet productions, never once being Prokofiev's major compositional interest before, helped Prokofiev greatly to establish his career in the West. They together produced *Bassoon*, *Steel Gallop*, and *Prodigal Son*, all in Paris. Because of this great producer and his influence, Prokofiev became interested and enthusiastic about this genre and he later spent almost forty years in composing more ballet music. Meanwhile, Prokofiev continued to travel back and forth between Europe and Russia and was still diligently writing new compositions. In addition, he became acquainted with Meyerhold, who became one of his good friends before he left for the United States in 1918.

In and outside of Russia, there were wars and unstable political events happening in those years, such as World War I and the October Revolution. Prokofiev stayed mostly in America during 1918 to 1922 except for several trips to Europe to participate in the revision of his Ballet *The Bassoon* and attended its premiere. He had his American recital debut in New York City. The success of this event resulted in more engagements in the United States and a recording contract from Steinway-Duo-Art player piano program as well as some commissioned piano works requested by a publishing house. Prokofiev started composing *Love for Three Oranges* (for the Chicago Opera) and the other piece that would make Prokofiev a celebrated concert pianist in the west—The Third Piano Concerto. The premieres of both works were very well received in Chicago in 1921, the year before he moved to Europe for the following fourteen years.

During this period Prokofiev composed for opera, orchestra and various instrumental ensembles. Aside from his professional life, he met Lina Codinas in Etta,
Southern Germany. Soon after they were married, they moved to Paris to begin their family life. While residing in Paris, Prokofiev frequently traveled between Europe and America since he had diverse engagements. Sometimes it would be for premieres of his works, occasionally for a performing engagement or acquiring collaborative opportunities. His career in Europe seemed so promising at that point that he did not consider the option of returning to the Soviet Union. Though abroad, Prokofiev still kept frequent correspondences with friends in the USSR, such as Miaskovsky and Meyerhold who had been his supporters in their homeland and always defended Prokofiev's stay in the west to the Soviet musical authority.

However, he decided to return to Russia in the early 1930's. According to Boris Schwarz,

“It was the desire to compose music in his homeland, for the Russian people, that explains in part his decision, in 1933, to settle in Moscow. It was a decision dictated by nostalgia rather than politics, for Prokofiev was essentially non-political. At the time he was in the midst of a creative crisis: his career in the West was stagnant, and his style was no longer considered trend-setting in modern music. He confided to a French critic, Serge Moreux, in 1933, 'The air of foreign lands does not inspire me because I am Russian and there is nothing more harmful to me than to live in exile...I must again immerse myself in the atmosphere of my homeland...I must hear Russian speech and talk with the people dear to me. This will give me what I lack here, for their songs are my songs....I'm afraid of falling into academicism. Yes, my friend, I am going home.'”

Prokofiev also addressed the intention of going back to Moscow in the letter to Miaskovsky in 1935, "My journey is coming to a close...I really feel like getting back to Moscow...." Finally, at the end of 1935, Prokofiev decided to return to Russia permanently, and the following year the rest of his family moved back to Moscow, too. After his return, he found it important to associate himself in Soviet musical
circles. The political change certainly had some impact on Prokofiev. Choosing the "proper" topic and approach to the music to meet the taste of the authorities became a serious concern to all composers. "His move there [to Moscow] coincided with a critical period for Soviet music. With the dissolution of the RAPM [Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians] in 1932 and the subsequent establishment of the Union of Soviet Composers, the administration of musical affairs throughout the country was, in effect, subject to government control." Prokofiev, non-political though bothered by these political intrusions, remained in Russia for the rest of his life. As always, during this last period of his life, he never once stopped composing, even when hospitalized. The range of his compositions spanned solo works for piano or violin to large orchestrated stage works.

His personal life was no less dramatic than his music at that time. Less than five years after his family moved back to Moscow with him, Prokofiev separated from his wife to live with Mira Mendelson, who admired him a great deal and also assisted him on his operatic works, such as War and Peace. The relationships Prokofiev had with these two women more or less described his needs at respective times in his career. According to Robinson, "In Paris, Lina had been a great help to Prokofiev, lending him the social grace and tact which he lacked and that was so important for success in that arena." "Throughout his life, he had always placed his music first, following where it led him. His music had brought him back to Russia; now it had led him to Mira [whom he must have felt close to heart, like his music]."

During the late 1930s, two tragedies that greatly affected Prokofiev resulted from Stalin's policies. Meyerhold was arrested and killed. Shostakovich, a rising star
at the time, experienced repression when the authorities canceled his *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. Despite these occurrences, Prokofiev was comparatively fortunate after his return in the 1930s. He met and collaborated with Sergei Eisenstein, a film director and perhaps Prokofiev’s most compatible collaborator of all time. Together they produced *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*. Both productions were favorably received by the public and further enhanced his reputation as one of the leading composers in the USSR. There were many projects awaiting his attention. Unfortunately, he suffered from a severe concussion in 1945. He was hospitalized for a period of time but never fully recovered from this injury.

Three years later, the government began a new series of ideological attacks on composers; Prokofiev was among the targets. Physical discomfort and the political climate began to take its toll. Prokofiev continued to compose; however, his health and stamina were declining. After finishing the revision of his Fifth piano sonata, he died on March 5, 1953, the same day as Stalin.

As a composer, Prokofiev had a unique way of writing music, his method having been established while he was young. He was constantly creating new themes, melodies and motives, and he either used them for current projects or kept them in a sketchbook for future use. Moreover, he liked to revise earlier compositions or rearrange them for different instrumentation or genres, because “for him, a musical idea did not necessarily have a specific context.” In the War Sonatas, there are a few evidences supporting this trend. Prokofiev employed the fate motif first found in the coda of the last movement of the Sixth Sonata in the first movement of the Seventh.
Sonata. Moreover, the melodic approaches to the opening of the Eighth Sonata and to *War and Peace* noticeably resemble each other.

The style of his music, especially his piano music, is remarkably distinctive. As a student in the conservatory, he was influenced by Scriabin, as were other young Russian composers. At the Conservatory, he was not doing very well in his composition courses due to his adventurous taste in music. “The press pronounced his music 'unintelligible' and 'ultra-modern'” after his debut in the Evenings of Contemporary Music. He maintained this outrageous face throughout the early period of his professional life. Yet, he also realized that it would be a plus for his career if he could appear on stage performing his own music, in the role as composer-pianist or composer-conductor. Therefore, he stayed in the conservatory and continued with his studies in piano and conducting. He composed a great deal of piano music in his early years in order to establish his fame as well as to promote his music to the public and most importantly, to critics and other artists.

While in Paris, however, his compositional style began to change greatly and so did his choice of genre. Operas and larger stage works became his favorite projects. Except for the Fifth piano sonata, he did not write any other major piano solo works at this time. Due to the musical trend and environment, he was drawn to neo-classicism.

In order to present himself as a multi-talented musician to the public, he preferred composing piano concerti so that he could demonstrate orchestration skill and keyboard virtuosity at the same time. The Third Concerto was written while in the United States, and the Fourth and the Fifth were completed in Paris. Performances
of those concerti require the collaboration among an orchestra, a pianist (most likely by Prokofiev himself), and a conductor. Prokofiev strove to establish his career in the West as quickly as possible but it was not an easy task due to the competition. In the music circles in Paris, Stravinsky was the most prominent composer of all. He was so successful in his career that Parisians recognized him more as a Parisian than a foreigner or a Russian. Although both Stravinsky and Prokofiev were Russian natives, the former had left Russia much earlier. Critics and Parisians were so fascinated with Stravinsky's Ballet stage works. It must have been difficult for Prokofiev to start his career there since he was also interested in composing stage works. Several stage works were finally completed, but Prokofiev was still unsatisfied with his career. As an alternative, he maintained his image as a pianist (or pianist/composer) as another way to retain his fame in the West.

Among his rivals were Artur Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz and Rachmaninov—the three most popular pianists at the time. The only composer among the three, Rachmaninov would often perform his own compositions on tour. Rachmaninov found it difficult to combine concertizing and composing and as his concert schedule increased, he lacked the time necessary for composition. Though Prokofiev was following the same route, he found it difficult to completely withdraw himself away from composition. His music would best gain attention and recognition through his own public performances. Performing was a vehicle for him, but he was first and foremost, a composer. During all his concert tours, he never ceased to write new themes, ideas, and eventually new works. Wherever he traveled, he always tried to find new outlets; obtaining more commissions, collaborations, and furthering his
status as a composer. Nevertheless, he still preferred to go back home after eighteen
years abroad. Shostakovich comments on his new competitor:

Prokofiev was an inveterate gambler and, in the long run, he had
always won. Prokofiev thought he had calculated perfectly and that
he would be a winner this time, too. For some fifteen years Prokofiev
sat between two stools—in the West he was considered a Soviet and
in Russia they welcomed him as a Western guest. But then the
situation changed and the bureaucrats in charge of cultural affairs
started squinting at Prokofiev, meaning, Who’s this Russian fellow?
And Prokofiev decided that it would be more profitable for him to
move to the U.S.S.R.. Such a step would only raise his stock in the
West, because things Soviet were becoming fashionable just then,
they would stop considering him a foreigner in the U.S.S.R., and
therefore he would win all around......

And this was where Prokofiev landed like a chicken in soup. He
came to Moscow to teach there, and they started teaching him.10

The political climate of Soviet Russia now forced Prokofiev to the realization that to
survive, he must learn to compromise. He was often accused of having too many
western faults in his compositions. His music was too abstract and too complex. He
needed to learn to apply social realism in concept or simplicity in character into his
works. Toward the end of his life, he accomplished that.

To conclude, we find great music from all three periods of his career.
Prokofiev was a composer who had his unique style, and maintained his own
individuality and personality, which reflected his unlimited imagination. “Prokofiev
had listed the principle elements of his art: 1) Classicism—an affinity for forms
indigenous to the Baroque and Classic Periods; 2) Innovation—a striving for a new
harmonic language and the means for expressing stronger emotions; 3) the Toccata or
Motor element—where rhythmic vitality plays an important role; 4) the Lyric element;
5) an element of either Grotesqueness, Jestng or Mockery.” 11 Prokofiev’s
contributions to piano literature are: nine Piano Sonatas; five Concerti; Four Etudes,

**Historical Background of the War Sonatas**

The name "War Sonatas" comes from the time period when these sonatas were written; 1939 to 1944 during World War II. Prokofiev returned to the U.S.S.R. permanently in 1936. In the first few years, the composer eagerly involved himself in the whole cultural, musical society of his homeland, the new Russia. While abroad, he still had frequent correspondences with his friends in Russia so it was not difficult for him to find collaborative opportunities to restart his career in the Soviet Union. He wrote a few stage works: Alexander Nevsky, Romeo and Juliet, The Queen of Spades, Hamlet and also the Zdravitsa, Op. 85, with an English subtitle "Hail to Stalin". At that time, there was pressure on Prokofiev to adapt to the new political arena. "Hail to Stalin" was one such compromise. He had been very cautious on choosing topics or programs for each new composition. Stage works, mostly programmatic music, especially had to be treated properly, which directly reflected the taste of the Communist Party. Shostakovich understood this though even he had his problems with the authorities. He was the rising star among Soviet composers then. His opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* had made Shostakovich an instant celebrity from its first performance. Unexpectedly, an unsigned article in *Pravda* changed the
fate of this opera. The power of Stalin and by extension his government extended to
the arts; *Lady Macbeth* was cancelled.

Prokofiev’s final arrival in the USSR was soon after this incident. He must
have realized immediately how vital it was to have a good rapport with the political
center. In fact, he had already said in 1932 “that no one wanted to make a mistake in
seeking the musical language appropriate for Soviet life.” Prokofiev gambled his
career and his life on a decision to return to his country. Since he still had friends and
immediate collaborative opportunities, he truly believed that this would be a positive
move. Soon after, Prokofiev was invited to write for the film *Alexander Nevsky* by the
director, Sergei Eisenstein. Atypical, this was to be a very successful collaboration.
Due to the composer’s extremely demanding personality, he had had all sorts of
problems and conflicts with former collaborators. Prokofiev could be
uncompromising artistically, as well as intolerant of what he considered
“unprofessional behavior”. His association with Eisenstein was amicable, productive
and artistically rewarding. Besides having similar personalities, they both had lived in
the United States for a short period of time. Like Prokofiev, Eisenstein’s career did
not fully blossom in other countries. He approached Prokofiev with an invitation to
join a project—a story of the thirteenth-century Prince of Novgorod, Alexander Nevsky.
The success of this work had an enormous impact on the careers of both director and
composer. *Alexander Nevsky* was one of the first sound films ever produced in the
Soviet Union and also the first sound film directed by Eisenstein. The composer spent
most of 1938 on this project. It turned out to be a huge success for both men.
Meanwhile, *Romeo and Juliet* and the *First Cello Concerto* had their world premieres at the end of 1938.

The following year 1939 was probably one of the most productive years in Prokofiev's career. He completed the revision of *Alexander Nevsky* and also started sketching out the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth piano sonatas. While vacationing in Kislovodsk during the summer of 1939, Prokofiev ambitiously began writing all ten movements (initially eleven; four for the Sixth, three for the Seventh, and four for the Eighth) of these three sonatas. Kislovodsk was one of Prokofiev's favorite places and stimulated his creative process. The Second and Fourth Sonatas had been conceived there. The summer of 1939 was perhaps even better as he was to meet Mira Mendelssohn there.

The piano had always been very close and intimate to Prokofiev. It brought him fame at the beginning of his career. Yet, he had abstained from writing a large-scale piece for piano, although he certainly had shown some ambition with this form. It had been sixteen years since he last wrote a piano sonata. As usual, he worked on a few pieces simultaneously so that he could switch from one to another whenever he felt stymied.

**The Sixth Sonata**

The Sixth Sonata was the first to be finished, in the early spring of 1940. This piece helped establish a long-term cooperative and professional relation between pianist Sviatoslav Richter and Prokofiev. According to Richter, "The remarkable clarity of style and structural perfection of the music amazed me. I hadn't heard..."
anything like it before. The composer, with barbaric audacity, breaks with the ideals of the romantics and includes the shattering pulse of the 20th century in his music. This is a magnificent sonata, classically well-balanced in spite of all the sharp corners. After hearing the first performance of this sonata played by Prokofiev in the composers' union, where the Soviet composers usually gathered, Richter became very fond of this piece and was determined to learn it. He received great success from his first non-student public performance in which he played the Sixth sonata.

This sonata contains four movements: Allegro moderato, Allegretto, Tempo di Valse lentissimo, Vivace. Nestyev had mentioned in the composer's biography that "Miaskovsky commented on the 'power and daring' of this music and also the novelty of its style, which he called 'a mixture of the old and the new Prokofiev.'" This sonata is an extremely complex piece of music. It commences with a warlike, march-like theme that appears later in the last movement to close this lengthy sonata.

Different from the preceding Fifth Sonata, the Sixth Sonata is coarse, harsh and aggressive, especially the first movement. Prokofiev's craftsmanship is undoubtedly shown in this piece. All the thematic materials in this sonata were thoroughly developed throughout each movement and the diverse ideas and approaches to the keyboard are amazingly placed and set up. There is not only character but also a cornucopia of abstract feelings and ideas behind every movement. According to Nestyev, "for all its complexity, one can sense a hidden program in the arrangement of its musical images, which range from the frighteningly harsh to the delicately lyrical."
The first movement is in sonata form. The first theme is extremely inhuman and brutal, inferring the cruelty caused by the war. To contrast, the diatonic second theme is melancholy and tender. These two themes joined and then shattered in the tremendously complex development section, which is usually the climax in Prokofiev's piano sonatas both technically and musically, particularly in the War Sonatas. Overall, this movement is very percussive and harsh in sound and furious in mood.

After the stormy first movement, Prokofiev inserted a charming dance-like second movement. In this playful movement, listeners will find inventive naughtiness and irony from an unexpected harmonic arrangement. Due to the lightness of the sound, there are some passages with hidden and implicit technical difficulty, which is not easy for listeners to perceive. This movement in a three-part form is a marvelous example of Prokofiev's variation writing.

A graceful but rather unusually slow waltz follows the second movement. The Third movement of the Sixth sonata is the longest slow movement of all nine piano sonatas of Prokofiev. The richness of harmony and the climactic approach of this movement are very appealing, imaginative, and theatrical. Harmonic surprises, diverse tone color and an abrupt change of atmosphere in the middle of this movement certainly help this lengthy and slow-paced music maintain tension and drama in procession throughout the entire movement. Furthermore, listeners will also hear one long-lined melody after another. This movement is mostly linear in writing, while remaining in ABA form.
The Sixth sonata concludes with a toccata-like final movement. According to Vishnevskaja, this is an “arch form with a slight modification” (ABACADACBA) The triumph comes at the end of this movement where the first theme of the first movement returns hauntingly and brings this work to completion. One observes a particular segment that Prokofiev used in the coda section; it seems to be one of small transitional materials also applied by the composer in the first movement of the following sonata, the motive, \[\text{\includegraphics[width=0.2\textwidth]{image.png}}\]. There are many moods occurring throughout the movement, especially towards the end of the piece. It spans the emotional gamut from a cheerful and sunny to brutal, with sudden changes of mood. Violent crashes place the previous joyful brightness with darkness and nervousness in character. According to different sources of historians’ remarks, this sonata is a peculiarly controversial piece of music. We may find a dissonant approach and percussive velocity similar to some of his earlier works, such as the Toccata op.11, Sarcasm op.17 or even his earlier sonatas. Yet, the unlimited spirit, musical maturity, and the organization and manipulation of thematic materials are without question different from, and at a higher level, than those found in earlier works.

**The Seventh Sonata**

The Seventh Sonata consists of three movements: *Allegro inquieto, Andante caloroso, Precipitato*. The sonata was to become one of the most played and popular sonatas in the piano literature. “Like the Sixth, the Seventh Sonata is dark and ominous in mood, even though it is written (like the Sixth) in a major key—B flat.” Interestingly, there is no key signature at the beginning of this B-flat major sonata,
which has puzzled performers and theocists. Although shorter in length, the Seventh is characteristically similar to the Sixth.

To Richter, who gave the world premiere of this sonata after learning it in only four days, this is another great work by Prokofiev.

Disorder and uncertainty reign. Man observes the raging of death-dealing forces, but what he lived for doesn’t cease to exist. He feels, he loves. The fullness of what he is feeling reaches out toward others. He is together with the rest of mankind, protesting and suffering deeply with them in their common grief. Full of a will for victory, he makes a headlong running attack, clearing away all obstacles. He will become strong through struggle, expanding into gigantic and life-affirming force."

Prokofiev’s biographer Nestyev stated that this sonata is “the most radically modern of Prokofiev’s piano sonatas, surpassing in this respect even the Sixth Sonata, with its fierce raging and moments of almost mystical aloofness.” Even though it was first sketched back in 1939, Prokofiev did not finish it until three years later.

The premiere of this sonata was, according to Robinson, “one of the most memorable musical events of the War years.” It was held in January of 1943 in the Hall of Columns. It was a tremendous success for both the performer and the composer. A few months later, Prokofiev was awarded the prestigious Stalin Prize.

Unfortunately, but also not surprisingly, the cultural bureaucrats only granted this piece a “second class” not a “first class” (the “first class” is equivalent to the top prize). Since Prokofiev had been abroad for so many years, they apparently were uncertain about his loyalty to the “Mother Russia” and to its cultural development. His good friend Miaskovsky commenting on this issue said that “the important thing was to break the ice, and, it seems, it has now been broken.” Miaskovsky was
absolutely right. Prokofiev indeed received several more honors and awards after this "Stalin Prize".

There are many things in this opening movement that are atypical, such as the opening theme. It begins with both hands playing in unison. Looking at the score without actually playing it, we might find this is a struggle between the black and white keys. No wonder Prokofiev did not write any key signature at the beginning of the piece since the tonal center is still rather obscure through the whole beginning section. Prokofiev used this energetic, driving nature in 6/8 mixed with canonic imitation along with ambiguous melodies to create a grotesque effect. "Melody clearly becomes secondary in importance to the blend of sparse texture, dissonant harmony, and sharply accentuated mechanical rhythm." 22

In contrast to the first theme, Prokofiev authored a sparsely textured melancholy second theme, in 9/8 rhythm. The exposition does not come to a formal ending with a cadence. Atypically, the development section begins by sneaking into the evolution of the second thematic material unexpectedly. The transitional material that begins the development is somewhat similar to Prokofiev's stage work, such as Romeo and Juliet. This development section is in fact the most violent, piercing and dissonant music of the movement. In some ways, this sonata is even more dramatic than the Sixth. The dynamic level continuously rises in the development section, heightening the tension; it never seems to stop until the second theme returns to end the fury, which is the juncture of the development and recapitulation sections. Due to the extensive dominance of the first theme in the development, it would not be a surprise if listeners do not discover the lack of the first theme in the recapitulation.
Actually, the first theme is utilized once more in the coda section. Alas, after an almost nine-minute struggle, we finally reach a B-flat major chord—the tonic—in the last two measures.

The *Andante caluroso* found on the top of the second movement precisely indicates the character and the pacing of this movement. The opening theme is filled with warmth and profoundness. One feels an emotional relief after hearing that intensive, restless first movement. Prokofiev chose a rather romantic expression marking for it—*caloroso*, meaning with passion. This neo-romantic approach is very unique in his War Sonatas, especially in the Seventh and the Eighth. Besides transitional tempo markings, Italian words with more descriptive and more emotionally compelling direction were added in the score. The dynamic range of this movement is drawn as an arch shape, and corresponds to its form, ABA.

The astounding third movement probably is "the" movement that makes this sonata such a tour de force for the concert hall. This driving 2-3-2 (meter 7/8) *ostinato* propels forward with unrelenting energy and virtuosity. *Precipitato*, meaning restless and rushed, is given at the top of the page; however, performers should definitely avoid playing it with "*Precipitato*" character because this element has already been written in its rhythmic pattern. Dynamics, texture and musical tension increase in their intensity as the movement progresses. The movement is basically built on a simple left-hand three-note bass pattern: B flat-C sharp-B flat with the rhythm of eighth-quarter-eighth. The final pages exhibit massive chordal dissonance, which challenges the dynamic and technical limits of the performer and the instrument.
The Eighth Sonata

The Eighth sonata offers an entirely different view of Prokofiev. Overall, it is the lengthiest of the nine piano sonatas of Prokofiev. (However, many people have remarked that the Eighth is slightly shorter than the Sixth. I have compared many recordings and found that the Eighth is actually longer than the Sixth.) In addition to its unusual length, its lyrical quality and tenderness are unquestionably appealing. Robinson said in his book, "'sweet' and 'dreamy' are words rarely associated with Prokofiev or his music, but they occur with surprising frequency in the Eighth Sonata." This unusually emotional sonata was dedicated to Mira Mendelson.

Richter turned down the opportunity to give the premiere performance of this sonata. Emil Gilels, another young gifted pianist, was invited by the composer to give the first public performance of it. According to Gilels, "the eighth sonata is a profound work demanding a great deal of emotional tension. It impresses one by the symphonic nature of its development, the tension, breadth and charm of the lyrical passages." Its charm and depth had certainly changed Richter's initial opinion of this piece. "It is the richest of all of Prokofiev's sonatas. It has a complex inner life with profound contrapositions. At times it seems freeze, as if listening to the inexorable march of the times. The sonata is somewhat heavy to grasp, but heavy with richness—like a tree heavy with fruit." From the remarks of these two pianists who had worked closely with Prokofiev, one learns that the nature of this composition is very different from that of the previous two sonatas, which were also sketched out in Kislovodsk in 1939. The Eighth sonata marks a departure for Prokofiev from the more aggressive, virtuosic style of the Sixth and the Seventh to the characteristics that
are indicative of his later compositions. In this regard, the Eighth is a transition stylistically to the Ninth sonata.

All the thematic materials used in the beginning of the first movement of the Eighth Sonata are long in length, sweet and tender in character and song-like. However, these melodies would be very challenging for singers because of the tessitura; for example, the very opening theme spans over three octaves. However, this register-displaced melodic material does not destroy the peaceful opening. Instead, it distributes gracefully, due to the linear writing. This kind of softness and richness of writing is very unique in Prokofiev's piano music. He often enhanced the richness by adding more notes or more chords, occasionally with percussive touch.

The first movement's lyrical, almost Schubert-like nature inhibits some driving, aggressive elements that are to come later in the movement. After a period of tranquility, the sixteenth-note figure appears in the transitional section, with a falling gesture that intensifies the restlessness. Those sixteenths are arpeggiated chords with a fairly odd rhythmic pattern—\[\text{\includegraphics[width=0.2\textwidth]{arpeggio.png}}\]. This transitional material increases the musical tension and in contrast to the opening before the sparse second theme arrives.

Here, we have a theme with a symphonic quality. The theme contains a dialogue between a bass instrument and a treble with the dissonance, which has not existed in the opening pages. The emotional intensity of the second theme is well written with the interval minor ninth and the register displacement. The sonority of the second theme is also new in Prokofiev's piano music; it suggests an homage to Scriabin.

The typical writing of Prokofiev reappears in the development section. With the final theme of the first theme package in the bass (the first theme contains several
melodic subjects, so called "theme package" here), the ascending chromatic figure on
the right hand effectively changes the mood; the lyrical quality diminishes in this
section. Atypically, the first-theme materials are not dominant in the development
section. Instead, Prokofiev manipulates the character of the second theme to replace
the tranquility with harshness and heaviness. In addition, the increasing dynamics
(from pp to fff) and the demand for percussive touches help to extend the intensity of
this movement to its extreme. The development section represents the emotional
climax in the opening movement. To conclude this movement, Prokofiev enhances
the merits of the development section in the recapitulation and coda. With his usual
approach to the coda section, the final pages have a breathtaking effect. It is like a
rocket launch with a long countdown climaxing in a burst of energy and fire.

The second movement, Andante sognando (dreamy Andante), exudes
tranquility. This is another example of the use of more expressive and romantic
terminology by Prokofiev. This movement portrays a recollection of Ravel's Bolero
but in miniature. It is in a ternary form, like most middle movements in Prokofiev's
piano sonatas. We also find this dance quality very similar to numerous pieces in his
ballet and operatic works. With this dance quality, the movement is basically a
showcase for Prokofiev's fantastic variation writing. As in the slow movements of the
Sixth and the Seventh, the meter is 3/4, three counts in each measure.

The final movement begins with a rapid tarantella, recalling Prokofiev's early
piano works, such as the transitional section of the Third Sonatina or the last movement
of the Second Sonata. In the beginning part of this movement, listeners can easily
pick up the humor and unlimited spirit of Prokofiev. Musically, if the opening section
is to be described as a "chase", then the next section-Allegro ben marcato-will be a frenzied waltz. Prokofiev once again demonstrated his fine craftsmanship in this section. The second theme of the first movement (the minor ninth) is blended with the bass figure from the waltz section, dancing slowly back to the recapitulation. The manipulation of the thematic materials is classic Prokofiev. He combines several different themes (from different movements) and develops them simultaneously, thickening the texture by adding chords and extending the key range in order to heighten the musical tension. This movement is a delightful piece of music; it brightens the whole scope of this rather emotionally restrained sonata.
Endnotes — Chapter I:


2 Ibid.


7 Ibid. p. 387.


9 Ibid.


15 Ibid.

16 Vlahovic, Sonia K. *Thematic-structural organization in the late sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev*. Thesis. Catholic University of America, 1975, p. 73.


18 Ibid. p. 410.


21 Ibid. p. 412.


25 Ibid. p. 194.
CHAPTER II

DIAGNOSIS OF REQUIRED TECHNIQUE OF EACH SONATA

In this chapter, we are going to discover how Prokofiev’s own virtuosic abilities as a pianist became an important component in his unique compositional style. Apart from the usual approach to this kind of topic, I plan to identify the technical problems in these three sonatas by categorizing them as follows: Thirds, Chords, Octaves, Leaps, Broken chords (Arpeggiated chords), Rhythm, Dynamics, Running figures (group of notes, irregular scales), Voicing and Phrasing, Sound quality (Touch), Pedaling, and lastly, Miscellaneous (Glissando, Alternating motions between hands, Repetitions, glissando, Tone clusters). The goal is to understand how Prokofiev employed the above technical demands (without the piece becoming an etude) while crafting thematic material with these difficult technical ingredients into the framework of a large scaled multi-movement sonata that expresses a myriad of expressions and moods. Rather than analyzing these techniques measure by measure, specific examples from these three sonatas will be used for illustration and reference. The other major objective in this chapter is to define the similarities and differences among these three sonatas in terms of technical approaches and musical expressions.

26
THIRDS

Sonata No. 6

Because there are so many passages filled with it in his piano music, Prokofiev must have been fond of the double-third technique and must have felt quite comfortable with it. For example, in his third piano concerto representing his foreign period, his third sonata from his early period, and here the Sixth Sonata from his Soviet period, the figure of thirds dominates entirely. Solid double thirds demand equality and togetherness of each line, but to master the broken thirds calls for the absolute smoothness and the profound legato playing.

Generally speaking, the placement of each required technique in Prokofiev's piano music is sectional in concept. The material used in the first (ex. 6-1) and the second theme (ex. 6-3) of the first movement of this sonata are both based on thirds; solid double thirds for the first theme and a broken version for the second. In the opening phrase of this piece, Prokofiev creates a bombastic sonority that comes from the uncertain tonality of the double thirds in the right hand and the angular bass octaves in the left hand, pronouncing A and D-sharp in ff. The first challenge is therefore for the right hand until later in the transitional passages when the left hand has the same motive (bars 12-18, ex. 6-1). This passage demands an equal amount of volume from both voices. One possible interpretation for this could be as if two instruments were echoing the double thirds. The equality of the top and the bottom of the double thirds actually provides an interesting effect—tonal uncertainty. The motif runs through the entire movement and returns in the last movement, binding this sonata more thoroughly. We find this sixteenth-sixteenth-eighth unit in the exposition,
the development and the recapitulation. Due to the thematic development in the middle section, this motif is spread out and blended with the other techniques. This practice of combining several different pianistic techniques in one passage seems to be one of Prokofiev's favorites.

There appear to be one or two particular techniques in each section. Whenever the current section ends, one can always expect another new technical challenge in the following passage (or section). A hint of broken thirds is found in the second theme. As the texture changes, the challenge becomes different.

In addition to the double-thirds figure, there are two examples of another kind of thirds. First, in the coda of the first movement, bar 248 (ex. 6-12), the left hand carries the chromatic descending thirds jumping back and forth between the two octaves. This is a combination of thirds and leaps. In general, good double-thirds playing requires good fingerings in addition to flexible wrists and fast fingers. In this case, the position shifting (the leaps) is the problem, not the thirds. A fast, rapid moving left arm would definitely be the key to reduce the difficulty of this passage. Lastly, an interesting use of thirds in this sonata can be found in the return of section A (bars 256-7, 273-4, 278-81; ex. 6-23 for bars 278-281) in the last movement. All the second thirds of these double thirds are diminished thirds and are played by both thumbs, as is found in the Scarbo of Ravel's Gaspard de la Nuit. For those measures of thirds, light wrists and arms, and rapid motions from both parts are demanded. This physical requirement seems to be technically one of the utmost importance in playing Prokofiev's piano music.
**Sonata No. 7**

The most significant use of thirds in this sonata can be first found in bars 23-27 (also any other recurrence) of the first movement. Unlike the Sixth Sonata, the figure of thirds in the Seventh Sonata definitely does not dominate in texture. However, how Prokofiev crafted a segment of thirds in this sonata is quite interesting. In bars 23-27 (ex. 7-1), these thirds are coupled into triads. They are in fact broken triads but in the texture of thirds. This functionally transitional segment takes place throughout most of the first movement of this sonata. The major challenge is the position shifting and leaps. For example, in bars 264-273 (one of the varied recurrences; ex. 7-2), the motion in the right hand is a five-finger-position shifting in between a half step back and forth.

**Sonata No. 8**

The use of thirds can be found in the second movement of Sonata No. 8, bar 25 (ex. 8-13). A series of parallel ascending thirds, played with the right hand, leads to the first return of the fine theme. This type of scale parallel passage in thirds has been seen in Prokofiev’s piano writing, especially in his early works, for example, the Third Sonata (bars 191 and 205-207, ex. A). Typically, it is another trait of Prokofiev’s virtuosity; however, the approach is different here. In this moderate-paced movement, the sound of the parallel thirds is more like two woodwind instruments’ playing. It is graceful and feather-like, without any harshness or aggression. It requires a light wrist and arm from the right hand, and letting the right hand bounce on the keyboard. This technique produces the proper sound quality.
CHORDS

A solid chord contains more than two notes. Two performances of the same chord could sound completely different on the same keyboard if we do not press down each key with equal weight. A brighter tone may require more sound from the top note of the chord, but if a warmer and deeper tone is desired, then the bass or the middle should be stressed more. Composers often use chords to enhance the texture, weight, and power of their music. They call for either the fullness or the richness of the keyboard sound. Compared to most other instruments, the keyboard is one of the most versatile instruments of all. The fact that the piano can produce multiple tones simultaneously is what makes it the “king” of instruments, in my opinion. The figure of chords certainly plays an essential part in the piano music. Prokofiev had applied chords into his piano writing in many ways; in fact, this feature is one of the most frequently used techniques in his works for piano.

Sonata No. 6

In the harsh, aggressive first movement of the Sixth, the chords are surprisingly not the main ingredient for its heavy nature. With the exception of bars 31-36 (ex. 6-2) and the coda section (bars 253-267, ex. 6-12), chords seem to function as an accompanimental figure in most of the passages. They provide color either to support the leading voice line (bars 24-32, ex. 6-2) or to build a bridge for the upcoming color change (bars 192-195, ex. 6-11). All the chords found in this movement are combined with other technical problems besides playing the chord itself. In bars 24-32 (ex. 6-2), the leading voice is the middle voice, played
alternatingly with both hands. To suppress the volume of the repeating chords above
the leading voice while producing a melodic sounding note from the thumb is a
technical challenge. This is a common voicing problem. However, what Prokofiev
does in these passages is write the music in a symphonic (or orchestral) style. As an
orchestrated version of this example, strings or three wind instruments could
have played the repeating chords while bassoon or other lower-registered instruments,
playing the middle melodic part. Different voicing of chords definitely creates
different sound effects, though sometimes chords can be interpreted without stressing
a particular voice. For example, in bars 192-195 (ex. 6-11), we capture a hint of the
opening of the Black Mass, Sonata No. 9 by Scriabin (ex. B). All four voices are
equally important in order to bring out the atmosphere from this transitional passage.
The more equal all four notes sound, the better the color. Lastly, the two exceptions
mentioned above especially in the coda section, the left-hand chords are constantly
moving between different registers, while the dynamics are changed frequently and
abruptly. The proper control of weight and pressure to the keys may accomplish the
dynamic changes, along with a relaxed left arm to help play these skipping chords
with ease.

Chords are a dominating figure of the second movement but used differently
than in the first movement. This movement could almost be described as an exercise
for chord playing. As discussed above, a traditional application of chords is to
increase the dynamics and the weight of the music (the texture); however, a delicacy is
also developed in this heavy sonata. With p marked at the beginning of the
movement, those mid-registered chords are assumed to be an imitation of the sound of
a woodwind choir or a string quartet playing *pizzicato*. The most impressive writing is in bars 36-42 (ex. 6-14), 50-56, and 131-140. A delightful dance-like music is assembled with solid chords being played lightly, shortly and delicately in the higher register against rapid moving and arpeggiated figures in the bass. These episodes consist of demandingly stretched and constantly shifting chords in the right hand, with difficult left-hand accompaniment. The necessary stretches to play these chords may cause injury. Even if one could reach intervals of a tenth or an eleventh comfortably, one ought to play with not only relaxed arms and wrists but also light touches on each chord in order to produce the proper tone—staccato quarter note in *pp*. To voice these episodes, the top of each chord should be brighter than the rest. Another physical problem may occur from this voicing choice. In this case, to obtain the brightness of these chords demands for bigger sound from the top of each chord, for which the fifth finger, the thinnest finger of all five, has to give extra weight to the applied keys. The stretch mentioned previously and this voicing increase the possibility of injury. Suggestions for practicing this passage properly will be addressed in the next chapter.

The warmth and the richness of chords are the sound quality of the third movement. In this movement of mostly linear writing, the voicing of chords is more important than other issues in performing. One must decide which line contains the melody to avoid an ambiguous direction of the music. Moreover, good legato playing is also essential in this movement because most of the themes are long and the pacing is slow. In addition, to produce the ideal quality of sound, we must not overlook the importance of the non-melodic notes in chords. Those non-melodic notes enrich the melody with harmonic support and create a diversity of color changes to retain the
drama of the music. Texturally, the bulkiness of this movement is built upon chords, too. First, Prokofiev gradually added notes to chords in the progression to the climax. Second, he extended the key range toward two extremes (going higher and higher on the right-hand side, as well as lower and lower on the left-hand side) in order to obtain a bigger sonority from the keyboard. The intensity and the dynamics are varied as the texture changes.

The figure of chords is not a prominent element in the last movement of the Sixth Sonata. With the thinnest texture of all four movements, chords are rarely found. We find repeating chords in the left-hand in section C, bars 127-153 (ex. 6-25) (also in the recapitulating C, bars 290-303). These chords support the material in the right hand harmonically but care should be taken not to overwhelm the melody dynamically. Bars 204-207 (ex. 6-26) in section D contains the similar Scriabin-like chordal writing. As mentioned in the first movement, these chords require equal volume and equivalent color from all voices in order to successfully perceive the character and the atmosphere of this episode.

Sonata No. 7

In the first movement of this sonata, chords are mostly applied to create dissonant sound. With a style of canonic imitation throughout the whole exposition, the texture of this movement is thinner than it sounds. Chords found in the exposition have more rhythmic effects than dynamic effects. With dissonance, they serve as rhythmic accents to the thematic material. For instance, we find, in the bass, the combination of F-G flat-E-F in bars 24-27 (ex. 7-1). In the lowest possible register of
this chord, short in length (eighth note) and loud in dynamics (ff), this chord sounds absolutely harsh and penetrating, almost like a tone cluster. However, the tone quality of chords becomes even more percussive and more violent in the development section; for example, bars 189-203 (ex. 7-7). The first episode of this passage starts with a series of chords in open position, over two octaves in range. Those dissonant chords are constructed with random intervals, such as the first chord of this episode. We find an interval, diminished tenth (G sharp-B flat), with a bass note B natural. Most of the following chords here, played with percussive touch, exhibit the similar sound effect as the first one. Two hands first move in contrary motion, in bar 191, then in parallel motion toward the bottom of the keyboard. This is a technically challenging passage for most pianists because of the constant change of open-and-close hand position. Some of the interval changes are quite awkward. The awkwardness and difficulty increase with the drastic position (or register) changes, too. In the next episode, chords function as an interruption. A fierce chord, in bar 195, consists of A sharp-E-G-B (left hand)-G-B-E-A flat (right hand). It contrasts in texture to the single-lined material and sounds even more shocking with the extreme register change. In order to maintain and perhaps increase the tension, Prokofiev placed two of these types of chords in bar 201. Prokofiev has extracted the “masculine” element from this chordal passage, which is acoustically effective and overwhelming.

We find an interesting use of chords in the second movement. Here is the first challenge for pianists. In section A, chords act as an accompaniment to the single melodic line, starting from the tenor and then to soprano later. To maintain a long
melodic line and to avoid the interruption from the chordal accompaniment are the main concerns in this case. A single line cannot compete with chords in texture so a deeper and warmer sound must be produced for the melodic material, with a lighter touch and a different color on those chords. In section B, Prokofiev used numerous chords to build the climax of this movement, for example, bars 52-64 (ex. 7-11). Massive chords are frequently repeated with supporting octave-bass. Most of the chords (or chords and octaves) span over several registers, creating enormous sound. Prokofiev is able to conceive singular and unusual sound effects such as in bars 79-85 (ex. 7-10) and 89-94. In addition to this traditional use of chords, we find a peculiar sound effect in bars 79-85 and 89-94. Sparsely textured, the combination of monotones, bitonality and suspension (from the syncopated middle line) creates an atmosphere; that is distant, cold, and lifeless. It starts with repeating C major chords in bar 79 contrasting the E major seventh in the bass. Two bars later it becomes even more vague harmonically because of the continual changes of chords (bars 81-85). The bass and the middle voices remain the same while the upper part shifts from one chord (or one key) to another. A new color appears when the chord is changed. To successfully accomplish this passage requires well-controlled balance between the thumb and the other four fingers of the right hand—the thumb plays the monotone and the other four play the chords.

The third movement is basically textured with numerous chords in the right-hand with an *ostinato* bass figure throughout the entire movement. Chords serve more as a rhythmic unit than a melodic segment. In the opening, chords move stepwise (for example, bars 2-5, ex. 7-13) within each phrase until the surprise arrives—a chord
skipping to a higher register (bar 8, ex. 7-13). It is a thematic (or material) displacement that has been used quite frequently by Prokofiev. In section B, the chords in the right hand function as an *ostinato* accompanimental figure for the left hand, which carries a short motive with *staccato* touch. Again, those chords have more rhythmic effect than the sound production to the music. As the music goes, more and more chords are added. In the progression of reaching the climax, starting from the returning A section to the end, the texture is thickened by the double quantity of the original chorale pattern shown in the very beginning A section. The constant position shifting is definitely a challenge for all pianists. All the position shifts here are random, irregular, and cover three or four octaves in distance. This whole ending section (ex. 7-16) requires fast-moving arms to cope with all the big leaps and flexible fingers to conquer those chords, which demand for quick hand position altering (sometimes hands kept wide open, sometimes close). In addition, physical endurance is vital in this passage. Since this movement should be interpreted with such a relentless spirit, there are no opportunities to rest the arms or fingers. Playing these types of chords consumes a great deal of energy; there are nine pages of chords without a break in this movement.

*Sonata No. 8*

Chords are obviously not the major element in the texture of the first movement of the Eighth Sonata. Except in bars 170-175 (ex. 8-8) and the “Fantasy” section before the recapitulation (bars 183-195, ex. 8-3), the texture seems mostly linear. In bars 170-175, these two bombastic dissonant chords in the lower register
provide bass support (for dynamic reason) and also create a different color for the recall of the second theme. These chords bring a harshness and dissonance to the second theme, which was first announced melancholically. In the second example (bars 183-195), Prokofiev used chords to assist in increasing the dynamics for the arrival of the climax. Those repeated chords help to build an emotionally intense moment in the movement. Structurally, in the bars 196-205 (ex. 8-5), chords, with longer-note value modulating in a ten-bar progression, function as transitional material from the development section to the recapitulation section. Musically, they also serve as a transition from the stormy end of the development to the tranquil opening theme.

As in the other two slow movements in the War Sonatas, the texture of the second movement of the Eighth Sonata (ex. 8-11) is dominated by chords. As discussed above, chords, with their thicker texture, possess "warmth" that is absent from single-lined material. The resonance of the former is much stronger because of the simultaneous sound production from multiple notes. To sustain a long melodic line demands a sound with warmth, richness, and fullness. For this type of writing, voicing deserves the utmost attention. The performer ought to carefully examine which is the melodic line that requires richer sound and which is the accompaniment that provides harmony and color.

Chords function in the third movement as a tutti section does in an orchestral piece. For example, in the "Waltz" section (bars 185-225, ex. 8-23), an implicit crescendo has already been written in by increasing voices (thickening the texture). In addition, displacing all the added chords in various registers is another characteristic of Prokofiev's chordal writing. Due to its fast-dance nature, there are not many
passages containing thicker texture in this movement except the example discussed above and the coda. Prokofiev combines solid chords and broken chords to create a virtuosic coda to close this sonata. With rapid shifting of arms and fingers, those chords sound absolutely brilliant. This passage illustrates a new technical challenge that had not appeared in Prokofiev's previous piano works.

OCTAVES

Traditionally, octaves are used by composers for a number of functions, such as building a climax. Nevertheless, there are no such octave passages in these three War Sonatas. Prokofiev did not use the merits of octaves as a foundation for climactic elements. Octaves are mostly applied to enhance the harmonic support or to increase the dynamic level.

Sonata No. 6

Octaves here are used as bass support or to enrich the sound. The weighty sound of this sonata is not solely derived from octaves, with the exception of a few passages. For example, in the opening measures, the bass octaves provide the harmonic foundation either to support or to confront the melodic element. In addition, Prokofiev composed some melodic material in octave form to obtain a bigger and fuller sound from the melodic line while maintaining its simple texture (bars 229-248, ex. 6-12, first movement).

As discovered in other technical natures, i.e., chords, leaps, etc., Prokofiev often combined several technical demands in one passage. For instance, in bars 165-
176 (ex. 6-9) of the first movement, a series of mixed intervals with leaps is found in the left-hand part. If we divide this episode into groups of two intervals, we will find a chromatic relation between the top note of the first interval and the bottom note of the second interval, which is an octave. Not only does it become more challenging, but also create an odd rhythmic effect here with the uneven textured right-hand part. A syncopation effect occurs when we hear a fuller sound—almost like played with accents—by combining a full chord in the right hand and an octave in the left hand on every second and fourth beats.

Lastly, a sound imitation of Double Bass is found in Section B of the third movement (bars 42-47, ex. 6-19; bars 117-119). This is a traditional approach to legato-octave work, similar to the writing in Chopin's Etude, Op. 25, No.10. Using a smooth wrist motion, moving up and down between the black and the white keys, one can acquire the right quality of legato octave playing.

**Sonata No. 7**

In the first movement, the octave passages engaging the first theme material are articulated with detached touch, short, sharp, and grotesque in mood. In bars 45-59 (ex. 7-3), the transitional material in the left hand is written in octaves, because octaves resonate better and stronger than a single-note figure. Technically it is not so easy to play due to the fast speed. A flexible left wrist and arm freely bouncing on the keyboard may help this problem. It is crucial that one keeps their hand in the middle of the keyboard, where the black key's edge is so that the distance from key to key (especially between the white key and the black key) will become shorter. Prokofiev's
typical displacement of octaves or octaves and chords is demonstrated thoroughly in
the development section of this movement.

In bars 45-47 (ex. 7-9) of the second movement, octaves with legato touch are
placed in the higher register, with the melodic material. Some single notes are found
here; the voicing problem is to occur. The different texture between single notes and
octaves creates unbalanced shaping. Single notes require greater volume than the
octave part in order to maintain a long, smooth melodic line.

Ostinato bass octaves (ex. 7-13) are basically the foundation of the third
movement. Not only are those octaves rhythmic figures, but also the leading role of a
long crescendo (providing dynamic effect), from the beginning to the end. The
difficulty here is not those ostinato octaves but the mixed texture of octaves, chords,
and leaps. Prokofiev added more chords and octaves in order to build a finale full of
excitement and power in the coda section. The displacement of these figures
challenges the performer to the extreme, physically and technically. To
simultaneously maintain accuracy and intensity becomes vital here. Flexibility of
fingers, hands, and arms is the key to succeed in this final passage of the Seventh
Sonata.

Sonata No. 8

Overall, octaves function as harmonic support in this sonata. In the beginning
of the first movement, for example, octaves provide a fuller sound for the long-line
melody and also monitor the harmonic change. We may relate this octave approach to
the second movement, too. The bass octaves in the opening page of the second
movement have a sound effect similar to Ravel's *Bolero*. The lower-registered instruments support the melody with a repeated bass figure throughout the entire *Bolero*, as found in the left-hand part of the beginning of this movement. Played with delicacy and warmth, this bass figure furnishes a charming sensation to this dance-like movement.

The diversity of octaves is illustrated in the third movement. First, the delicate bass octaves as seen in the previous movement appear in the opening pages. Second, in the middle of the frenzied waltz section, bars 225-278 (ex. 8-25), canonic imitation is applied between two lines, which consists of octaves. This is not a usual octave passage but a result of linear writing with imitation. To properly voice this semi-octave passage in order to display two voices distinctively is a challenge. In addition to accompanying and harmonically supporting the melodic material, octaves also possess the melody that dominates in the beginning parts waltz section. Third, a short episode of octaves in the coda section is technically challenging due to the required fast tempo and the leaps (bars 466-468, ex. 8-31).

Lastly, we also find the use of broken octaves in bars 63-66 and 424-430 (ex. 8-29). These broken octaves are atypical; they are spread out in three octaves rather than two. If we attempt to play them as printed, it becomes more difficult because of the rapid speed. We may rearrange the fingering—the left hand would play the last note of this triplet three-octave figure (including the left hand, four octaves)—in order to obtain the same effect effortlessly.
LEAPS

Leaps are the most technique in Prokofiev's piano compositions. It would be rare if you cannot find a leap on every page, or even in each phrase. Due to the quantity of leaps found in his music, I will select the passages of significance, which feature leaps in these sonatas. Furthermore, since all the slow movements contain displacement devices, we will not discuss those leaps here so as not to be redundant. We will examine them later, in the phrasing and voicing section.

Sonata No. 6

The development and the coda of the first movement, the leaping arpeggios in the second movement and the second half of the last movement will be the focus of the following discussion. First, the development of the first movement is a marvel of Prokofiev's manipulation of displacement, leaps, multi-thematic development and rhythmic effect. From bars 92 to 217 (ex. 6-5, 6-7, 6-8, 6-9, 6-10, and 6-11), we find all different types of leaps. After bar 118, the first theme joined the development section and hand-crossing motions take place. These leaps in this section are derived from multiple thematic development, which themes were initially written with displacement. In order to differentiate the sound of each melodic material, Prokofiev placed them in layers, as if an orchestral piece played only with two hands. For example, in bars 129-137 (ex. 6-5), the outer voices, in both hands, carry two versions of the second theme, one (the right hand) in rhythmic augmentation, the other by repetition of the melodic notes. The middle lines and part of the bass line reiterate the relentless motif from the first theme. Though it is a complicated evolution of the
thematic material, it does not sound so complicated, due to the arrangement of the
growth of each motivic element. There are some tremendously difficult jumps in this
section, such as in bar 145 (ex. 6-7), in the left hand. It is a skip over almost four
octaves within the length of an eighth note, in the tempo of Più mosso del Tempo I
(Tempo I is Allegro moderato). A few more shocking jumps in the development
section are found in bars 177-183 (ex. 6-10), especially those played with the
glissando (bars 180 and 182). This passage is mostly written in the higher registers of
the keyboard. The jumps take place from F-sharp (or G, or A-sharp) to the interval
major seventh (F-sharp and E-sharp). This register change and the unexpected interval
seventh create a great deal of dissonant effect. The first three times of this jump are
placed on the last beat of each measure. Articulated with accents, these jumps play a
part in the rhythmic interest—syncopation.

A small episode in the coda section is one of the most challenging passages in
this sonata, bars 249-251 (ex. 6-12). Leaps with the right hand are placed between the
single note and an octave, in the span of three octaves. The accompaniment, in the left
hand, features blocked fourths and fifths leaping an octave. These skips in the higher
registers are extremely difficult for accuracy. The key to performing this passage is to
watch the right thumb, which plays the single note and the bottom note of the octave.
The better the feel of the interval octave one has, using only the thumb, the easier this
episode. As required in most techniques, a flexible right arm is essential in this case
since the arm motion can help the shifting between two octaves.

There are several passages with the same material in the second movement
that has always troubled performers. Bars 36-42 (ex. 6-14), 50-56, 131-140. Due to
the similarity of these three episodes, I will only discuss the first. The left-hand figure is a descending C major arpeggio (the quintuplets) from the G above middle C to three octaves below middle C, yet with three notes missing in the middle octave-G, E, and C. These three missing notes in fact create the leap. The question here is not only how to negotiate those leaps but also how to play them in tempo, Allegretto yet in 2/2. This passage demands more technique than just playing the leaps well. There are three minimum technical requirements for this passage. First, use a light touch for the dynamic marking, pp. Second, extraordinarily fast finger work is needed for fast tempo. Third, a feel for the interval (leaps) for accuracy of repositioning (for both the descending arpeggios and going back to the top for the next arpeggio) is essential.

The last movement, Finale, challenges performers with the demands of velocity, in which we find numerous appearances of leaps. Hand crossing is first required in bars 13-17 (ex. 6-20), where the left hand crossed over the right hand, and later in bars 45-52 (ex. 6-22), in which the right hand crossed over the left hand. Moving to bar 100 (ex. 6-24). In this episode, there are gestures of leaps in both right-hand and left-hand parts. The melodic notes on the right hand are displaced in different registers, for example, the skip from D-flat in bar 102 to over an octave, F-natural, in bar 103. Meanwhile, the left hand is bouncing in between more than two octaves. The next evident example of skipping is found in bar 133 (ex. 6-25, and all reoccurrences). This skipping brings out not only the wide span of registers but also the syncopation effect from the accents. At last, in the coda of this movement, we find the striking sound effect from leaps, bars 409-410, 413-415 (ex. 6-29). The fate motif sounds extremely shocking by Prokofiev’s arrangement of it, as a result of combining
polyrhythm (three against four), constant tonal changes (B-flat to G to E-flat to B and E), and most important, the displacement of registers.

Sextet No. 7

Like the Sixth, the Seventh is built with numerous leaps throughout the piece. For example, the opening theme and its later development are built around a series of steps and leaps (bars 1-4 and 10-14). They are not technically hard but become so in the development section by Prokofiev’s manipulation of displacement of registers. Due to the frequent use of leaps, we will focus on the development section of the first movement and the coda of the last movement.

The leaps enhance the harshness and the dissonance in the development of the first movement. Starting from bar 168, solid chords are pronounced in the higher register over the span of four octaves. Those leaping chords contrast to the single-note motives in both texture and register. They are different from what we have seen in the Sixth. Besides the shifting, the texture is also changed from a single-line figure to a chordal type. There are a number of position changes, not moving stepwise but skipping, including the thinner-textured material (for example, bars 177-179, ex. 7-6, and 252-256). Technically, flexible wrists and fingers and excellent tactility to the keyboard will help accomplish this passage with accuracy. Musically, precise rhythm and a dynamic approach will help create intensity.

The coda of the last movement is a work of art. Prokofiev forces the limitation of various techniques to their extreme. Structurally, it is similar to what Ravel has done in his Bolero and La Valse, the evolution of the thematic material (or motif).
The coda here starts at bar 145. The bass ostinato relentlessly continues but the chords in the right-hand part are spread over different registers with many embellishments, such as grace notes (bars 152 and 154, ex. 7-16). Moreover, both hands are moving frequently, sometimes in contrary motion and sometimes in parallel. It is truly more symphonic writing than pianistic writing. There are many doublings in this coda; Prokofiev thickens the texture in order to increase the intensity and the dynamics. In addition to that, the effect from the displacement (leaps) certainly widens the extent of applied registers so that the biggest sonority may be obtained. Pianistically, the coda is difficult because it requires four or five notes played **fff**, sometimes spanning more than an octave in a fast tempo. Tension and fatigue are challenges because of the need to maintain the tempo to the final measure.

**Sonata No. 8**

The most violent and unstable part of this sonata is built on the random switches of registers and brittle touch to the keys in the development section of the first movement. As in the Sixth and the Seventh Sonatas, Prokofiev enlarged the texture in the Eighth Sonata by adding more voices and developing various motivic ideas simultaneously while layering them into different registers. What happens in this development section is very similar to the Sixth Sonata. Starting from bar 141(ex. 8-7), the theme extracted from the opening theme package becomes the dominant melody. After modulating it twice, Prokofiev inserted the same theme in the tenor line but in rhythmic augmentation (prolongation of each melodic note) to the upper line, which is also carrying the same material but in the original format. The theme used
here contains leaps again, from melodic displacement. In bar 170 (ex. 8-8), after this whole evolution is repeated, the second theme re-enters, but with greater dissonance from the bass chords (which now almost sound like tone clusters). This episode of the second theme requires rapid shifting for the position changes, too. Besides the development section, there are numerous leaps in the coda. Bars 278-279 (ex. 8-9) and bar 286 (ex. 8-9) certainly deserve full attention. In bars 278-279, the left hand crosses over the right hand back and forth a few times, all for the random changes of hand position. Bar 286 contains difficult leaps in the right hand, in which the third beat demands an incredibly fast hand position change from open position to close position, while shifting the position an octave lower.

The focus of discussion in the last movement will be the "waltz" section. As early as in bars 121-124 (ex. 8-22), we discover that leaps are going to become more and more dominating as the music goes. Bars 185-225 (ex. 8-23) is regarded as the height of this section, in which leaps help in building a climax. Furthermore, the ensuing episode cannot be overlooked. It is a reunion of thematic materials from the first and the third movement. The theme from the first movement is placed in the middle of the waltz theme (in the bass) and the new motif (on the top line). This theme, the augmented octave (originally it was minor 9th, later changed back to minor 9th), is played by both right and left hands, the first note by the left hand and the second note by the right hand. Interestingly, the first note is higher than the second one but the playing order is contrary. The gesture of leaps still dominates here and even takes place with the clef change, for example, bars 314-315 and 318-319 (ex. 8-24). Lastly, in the coda section, as in the other two last movements in the War
Sonatas, leaps become the most important element. Slightly different from the last movement of the Seventh, this coda requires fast movement between each chord, though there are broken chords, not solid chords, in the right-hand part. This type of writing, in bars 458-465 (ex. 8-31), is more difficult to play than the solid chords. One does not have much time to reposition one’s hand because there are always notes (single or chordal) ahead. Also different from playing solid chords, it allows an earlier release from the present position to prepare for the next one. Overall, Prokofiev seemed to invent creative ideas to manipulate this technique into challenges for performers.

**BROKEN CHORDS (ARPEGGIATED CHORDS)**

Prokofiev is indeed a composer with a unique style and approach in writing piano music. As stated above, he often either combines several technical demands in one passage or applies them in an unusual way.

*Sonata No. 6*

An awkward passage of four consecutive ascending arpeggiated chords is found in bars 7 (ex. 6-1), 19 and 224. There are gaps between each arpeggiated chord (interval fourth, fifth, fourth and second) but they are not the same chord. These gaps technically prevent this passage from obtaining the general effect of arpeggiated chords; continuous and flowing. In addition to a flexible right wrist, it is essential to have a fast moving arm so that repositioning will become easier. In the last movement of the Sixth, more awkwardness occurs, but this time is for the left hand. For
example, in bars 29-35 (ex. 6-21) (and 61-81), Prokofiev arranges accompanying broken chords into a different order, descending instead of the usual ascending way. This peculiar arrangement is a test for the flexibility of the left hand, especially the thumb. It is a reversion of typical broken-chord accompaniment, for which the fifth finger reaches out for the bass change since the other four fingers often stay or move with the fifth finger (such as Alberti-bass accompaniment). In this example, the left thumb has to move (or stretch out) constantly, sometimes over an octave, while the other four fingers remain in the same position.

The marvel of Prokofiev's creativity is shown in the second movement. It is not only a unique approach to broken chords but also regarded as one of the most difficult passages in the Sixth Sonata. Three episodes with the same texture are found in bars 36-42 (ex. 6-24), 50-56, and 131-140. Those arpeggios span over three octaves with an octave missing in the middle. The missing octave creates a huge gap that adds to the difficulty. Due to the fast tempo, it is almost impossible to complete the hand shifting over those gaps, mostly intervals of elevenths, with ease. In the next chapter, we will discuss this passage with specific suggestions about how to practice and how to master the difficulties with the least effort.

Besides this unusual approach to arpeggiated figures, one traditional use is found in the third movement. In the middle section, bars 76-83 (ex. 6-18), a repeating accompanying segment with broken 7th chords in the left hand, either augmented or diminished, represents an unstable feeling. Those busy moving arpeggiated notes increase the intensity of this section, as in other of the composer's piano works.
Sonata No. 7

Broken chords play an important role in this sonata; however, it does not appear to be as dominating as it truly is on the printed pages. Prokofiev breaks chords apart and reorganizes them in repetition, for example, bars 10-19 (ex. 7-1). The manipulation of canonic imitation, suspension (from the chord progression), and displacement makes this passage very interesting. It is in fact an interplay between two hands, based on a repetitive motif. It appeals to listeners with its unusual arrangement of the broken chords as well as the lack of direction while in repetition.

This figure occupies many passages in the first movement. Furthermore, there is another application of broken chords found in bars 93, 99, 101, 313 and 315. The broken chords are arranged with some stretches between notes in the left hand. As in other virtuosic passages in Prokofiev's composition, it requires a combination of fast moving arms and flexible fingers for its velocity.

Difficult example of broken chords is in bars 69-75 (ex. 7-12) of the second movement. In addition to rapid arpeggios that demand absolute rhythmic precision, B and A, the top note of each broken-chord group, respectively, is doubled an octave higher for sonority, and makes this passage much harder to play. The solution requires good finger crossing technique (crossing over thumb) and the flexibility of hands to open and close hands in a flash. Lastly, it is apparent that no significant writing of broken chords is in the third movement, in which solid chords dominate the texture.

50
Sonata No. 8

Broken chords in the first movement are shown in different appearances. We find the traditional face of it in bars 183-186 (ex. 8-3), 188 and 191-193. As in some of Liszt’s piano works, the arpeggios here create a turbulent sound effect, certainly virtuosic. It calls for rapid switching between hands and powerful fingers in order to capture the atmosphere and sound. Another similar textured passage found in bars 73 (ex. 8-2), 257 and 259 possesses a different sonority. The arpeggios in these bars are played as if imitating the sound of the harp; light, delicate and sweeping.

A different application of a broken-chord figure is first seen in bars 44-54. In this pattern, hand position is changing constantly; the sensation is almost like playing a series of solid chords rapidly. It is also necessary to have some rotation in wrists and arms. There are an abundance of similar passages in the development section. One ought to take care to maintain the smoothness in this type of passage. For the frequent changes of hand position, it is possible to obtain some unwanted accents from each change, causing a heavy clumsiness, completely opposite of what is desired.

A recall of the Third Piano Concerto is heard in the final pages of the first movement of the Eighth. In bars 275 and 281-285 (ex. 8-9), the left-hand part has a similar figure to what Prokofiev had written in his Third Concerto—a chromatically descending passage of broken chords (or split chords) in parallel fifths. So does the right-hand part though not in parallel fifth. Nimble fingers alone cannot solve the technical problem here; aid from relaxed and flexible arms may reduce the danger of injury. The challenge is from a combination of an extremely fast tempo, demanding
dynamics (p) and countless notes that are more than what the listener can process. It requires a great deal of power, energy, and endurance from the performer, who must be physically relaxed, particularly in both arms.

Compared to the first movement, broken chords are not as dominant and diverse in the second movement. They appear mostly in the accompanimental material. However, it differs in the third movement. Broken chords undoubtedly serve as a fundamental element in the last movement of the Eighth; opening and closing the movement. It is also the leading figure of this 12/8 piece. Taking advantage of this thin-textured pattern, Prokofiev was able to capture lightness, flow and velocity, all at the same time. The melodic element is based on those broken chords, too. They run through the entire movement relentlessly and inexhaustibly. This movement provides the performer a great opportunity to show virtuosity in the form of broken chords. As usual, the mixture of several different technical devices plays a major part of Prokofiev’s scheme. All it creates is more demands for constant repositioning and precision of rhythm and notation. Surprisingly, we find a recollection of Chopin’s approach to arpeggiated figure, in bars 71-78 (ex. 8-21) and 433-440. It has a same effect as heard in the Etude, Op. 25, No. 12 by Chopin.

Lastly, in the coda section, a blending texture of solid chords and broken chords pushes the performer’s technical limits. As in the other two War Sonatas, this last movement concludes with the most physically as well as technically challenging final episode (bars 458-489, ex. 8-31). In this case, the performer must deal with these two different figures (solid and broken chords) simultaneously, while coping with the leaps between each chord.
RHYTHM

This is one of the most charming characteristics in Prokofiev's writing. Rhythm is the engine, the heart and soul of his music. It drives the melodic material, intensifies the musical tension and dynamics, and most of all, controls the pacing. As rhythm is critical to the success of a performance of these sonatas, one must manage this issue well.

Sonata No. 6

The mechanical quality of the first movement originates from its rigid and strict rhythmic pattern, with emphasis (accents) on the first two beats of each measure in the meter of 4/4. However, this steady pattern is distorted in bars 4-6 (ex. 6-1). The accents have been moved from the downbeat to the offbeat, the eighth note before the bar line of bars 5 and 6. The syncopation must be played precisely in order to achieve this special effect. This movement primarily remains in 4/4 until the middle of the development, bar 111 (ex. 6-4), then becoming 2/2. It is interesting to see how Prokofiev arranged different meters to accommodate the character of each passage. For instance, the development section is the emotional climax of this movement. In order to increase the intensity, Prokofiev changed 4/4 to 2/2 (with a transition of 3/2) for a faster pacing and later, gradually changed it back to 4/4 to prepare for the recapitulation, as in the opening 4/4. During this 2/2 section, the rhythm pushes the music forward, blending with the canonic imitation as an introduction to the multi-thematic development. Prokofiev demonstrates his incredible craftsmanship as a composer not only by developing various materials simultaneously but also with full
consideration of rhythmic effect. All the meters are altered with subtlety, as well as
with transitions. The episode before the recapitulation is paced in different meters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These changes bewilder listeners as if there were no meters in this whole prelude to
the return. In addition to changing the pace, these meters help to anticipate the
vacillating melodic materials.

The second movement is basically in 2/2. With a transitional meter 3/2,
section B changes to 4/4, along with a different tempo indication, *Meno mosso*. A
mystery appears in the return of section A. Instead of the meter changing back to 2/2
(not until bar 141, ex. 6-15), it remains in 4/4 (bar 131, ex. 6-15). Did Prokofiev
intend to modify the pacing here in order to make the tempo change more smoothly,
though the previous two appearances of this episode are both in 2/2 (bars 36-43, ex. 6-
14, and 50-56)? To solve this puzzle, we ought to look into the difference between 2/2
and 4/4. In 2/2 meter, there are only two beats in each measure, in half note, with an
emphasis on the first beat, although in meter 4/4, there are four beats with a bigger
emphasis on the first beat and a smaller emphasis on the third. Rhythmically, 4/4
sounds less active and pushed than 2/2, so the returning A is paced in 4/4 to serve as a
bridge between the preceding section, which is slower, and the coda section, which is
in the original rhythm.
On the contrary, the third movement is not as rhythmically oriented. It is written in 9/8, a fairly slow waltz. Rhythmically, the most unstable passage is the section before the returning A (bars 71-96), due to its function as a transition. It is typical of how Prokofiev builds a climax. The frequent changes in the rhythmic pattern (or the meter) dramatize and intensify the music. This kind of passage often sounds somewhat chaotic or turbulent and often occurs before the return of the opening material.

The last movement of the Sixth is in 2/4. As in most of the last movements of his earlier sonatas, this movement is full of spirit, energy and velocity. Its spirit is related to its fast tempo, and consistent and steady rhythm. It is basically in the feel of one beat per measure with some unexpected accents occurring as surprises, such as found in bars 131 (ex. 6-25), 140, 147, 296, and 303. Because of the rapidity and the constant leaping between each beat, these measures are not as easy to play as they appear to be.

A recall of the first movement occurs in section D (bars 185-228, ex. 6-26). This section contains several rhythmic or meter changes, as in the previous movements. Indeed, it is similar to the passage found in the first movement discussed above (bars 192-217). Inheriting the same motivic ideas, this section helps to conclude this sonata in a cyclic style in addition to its emotional contribution to the whole content of this movement. It is followed by the return to A, which requires the most rhythmic control (steadiness) in this movement.

It is difficult to maintain an absolute steadiness in most fast passages, containing ceaseless and restless running figures. In this case, bars 243-289 (ex. 6-
27), it does not seem to have a break or a relaxing point to get the rhythm or the tempo back. In addition, the different figures, a minor 9th, major 7th, minor 9th seen in bars 252-253 (ex. 6-27) (and also 271-273), allure the performer to rush due to the rests, following those broken intervals. Generally speaking, it is harder to play rests than sounded notes. If one does not calculate or sense the length of those rests, they will be unable to maintain the same tempo. Moreover, in the Piu tranquillo section (bars 341-369, ex. 6-28), we find evidence of syncopation beneath the melody. Besides adding interesting harmonic color to the melody, that leaps and articulation in the left hand distort meter helps to rid of the music of the natural accents in 2/4 meter; therefore, preserving the tranquility. Prokofiev endeavored to portray a peaceful, calming passage before the stormy coda. Though in a rigid 2/4, the coda presents tumultuosness by repeating the fate motif \[
\begin{align*}
\text{\textbullet} & \quad \text{\textbullet} \\
\text{\textbullet} & \quad \text{\textbullet}
\end{align*}
\]. It comes in triplets to interrupt the 16th-note pattern. Polyrhythm is shown here, though it is not as dominant in this sonata as in Prokofiev's earlier sonatas.

Sonata No. 7

This sonata starts in 6/8, with two major rhythmic motives, \[
\begin{align*}
\text{\textbullet} & \quad \text{\textbullet} \\
\text{\textbullet} & \quad \text{\textbullet}
\end{align*}
\text{and}
\begin{align*}
\text{\textbullet} & \quad \text{\textbullet} \\
\text{\textbullet} & \quad \text{\textbullet}
\end{align*}
\], constantly occurring throughout the first movement. These two rhythmic motives are motoric. They build energy and contribute to the mechanized spirit of the movement. The first motif is the fate motif, seen in the Sixth Sonata. This may be considered as evidence of the close relationship between the Sixth and the Seventh that were sketched at the same time.
Perhaps because of the mechanic quality, there are not as many meter changes in the first movement of the Seventh as in the Sixth. Except for some unstable moments in the second theme section (before the development), it is either in 6/8 or in 9/8. In this aspect, it is overall much simpler than its preceding sonata. It is essential for the performer to maintain a firm control of tempo, careful not to lose the rhythmic vitality, since it is very rhythmically oriented.

The second movement primarily stays in 3/4 with a few passages of 2/4 or 4/4, with the rhythmic treatment similar to the preceding movement. However, in contrast to the first movement, rhythm is not a dominant element.

The third movement is built on a motivic *ostinato*, B-flat to C-sharp to B-flat in the pattern \[ \frac{\text{C}}{2} \frac{\text{D}}{3} \frac{\text{E}}{4} \] (2-3-2). The meter is 7/8, an irregular meter. It possesses the nature of the meter 7/8, which is somewhat unsteady and the performer often tends to rush to the next measure. In fact, this *ostinato*, like a pulse, helps to maintain the regularity and mechanic consistency. This arrangement of rhythm and meter is one of Prokofiev's best works.

**Sonata No. 8**

The rhythmic treatment to this sonata is similar those of the other two War Sonatas. The first movement begins with and mostly remains in 4/4 meter until the section before the recapitulation. There are two meter changes: one for convenience for notation (bars 187-188 and 189-190, ex. 8-4), the other serving as a transition from the rapid, stormy, arpeggiation figure to the return of the first theme, which is in a much slower tempo. For easier notation, Prokofiev changes the meter from 4/4 to
12/8 and back to 4/4, etc. in bars 187-190. Because the tempo here is not the tempo for the beginning, Prokofiev inserts a 6/4 with lengthy notes to bring it back to Tempo I. This transition formulated with Prokofiev's rhythmic arrangement (with a different meter and also in a different tempo), sets up the return nicely.

The second movement has no rhythmic surprise. The meter 3/4 dominates the entire movement except one measure, bar 60, in 4/4 (ex. 8-15). A new figure, running scale that imitates a harp sound, glissando, is added to interrupt the three-beat dance. However, the original feeling remains until the end of this movement followed by another dance-like movement, the last movement of the War Sonatas.

12/8, 4/4 and 3/4 are the three meters chosen for the third movement. Prokofiev carefully applies them to meet the needs of each passage. For example, the opening material is in 12/8 for the equality of the sound from each note. In bar 9, it is changed to 4/4 since there are only regular eighth notes, half notes and whole notes. The interesting switch is found in bars 42 (ex. 8-20). The texture basically appears the same as the opening 12/8 section, but why does Prokofiev change the meter here? Based on my observation, due to the need for emphasis on the first note of each triplet group (because the melody is built with the first note of each triplet group), to obtain the equality of all the notes is not the goal here. The switch of these two meters can be found at the beginning of this passage, where the second theme enters. Lastly, as in many movements of the War Sonatas, the frequent changes of meter occur right before the returning A section (particularly in bars 343-350, ex. 8-28). Prokofiev incites to create a chaotic atmosphere before the return of the opening material.
DYNAMICS

Dynamics are associated with intensity. However, it does not mean that the most intensive part must contain the loudest dynamic marking. Of all nine sonatas, the War Sonatas are considered to be the heaviest, the fullest in sound and musically, the most dramatic. As in the previous discussions on other required techniques, there are similarities in the way the three sonatas are treated, dynamically. Therefore, an overall examination of dynamics in these sonatas is appropriate.

Sonata No. 6

The focus is on the first movement. This sonata begins with $ff$ filled with tension from the dissonance, though the transition, from bar 12, in $f$. The first smaller dynamic marking, $p$, appears much later in bars 23-4 (ex. 6-2). It does not last long because it soon rises to $mp$, followed by a crescendo two measures later, finally reaching $ff$. A diminuendo appears immediately after this sectional climax and leads into the second theme, which is in $p$. The second theme remains in smaller dynamics until another $ff$ arrives at the end of bar 76 (ex. 6-6). Yet, within seven measures, the dynamic level decreases to $pp$, which is the first $pp$ in this movement and also the lowest dynamic point. This type of roller-coaster-like dynamic arrangement is strongly bound to the architecture of this exposition section.

The music becomes more dramatic in the development section. It starts in $pp$, and gradually increases one dynamic level every three or four measures. Apparently, Prokofiev is ambitious to push the dynamic limit. Based upon the detailed dynamic indications, it seems that he is very specific as to the dynamic treatment. We find
meticulous dynamic markings not only in different voices but also on particular notes, for example, in bars 196-205 (ex. 6-11). It is clear to the performer as to what dynamic level Prokofiev desires. Furthermore, the abrupt but effective dynamic arrangement for the coda of the first movement is certainly the key that makes this movement so successful. The extreme changes from ff to p or even to pp (bars 259-272, ex. 6-13) create an effect listeners tremendously as if the listener was on a rollercoaster ride.

Sonata No. 7

The second movement of the Seventh represents another type of dynamic writing. Prokofiev’s arrangement, dynamically, for this movement is designed not only for sound effect, but also to convey the drama and atmosphere. As discussed above, Prokofiev is very meticulous in his indications. For instance, there are two different dynamic markings for the alto line and the bass line in the beginning of this movement. Prokofiev must have considered the timbre of the different registers. The strings of the lower registers produce more resonant and perhaps louder sound than those of the higher registers even if they are played with equal amount of weight. Since the melodic line (the alto) requires a fuller sound, Prokofiev purposely marked mp for the alto, and p for the bass. The melodic line is generally indicated with a louder dynamic marking than the accompaniment. Though this rule (or conception) for the balance between the melody and the accompaniment applies to all compositions, few composers are as specific as Prokofiev. Moreover, the mix of dynamics, touches, and tempo (or pacing) is a trait of Prokofiev’s piano writing. In
bar 13 (ex. 7-8), we reach the climax of the opening page. What makes this climax sensible and convincing is the combination of increasing dynamics (crescendo to f) and the touch of ma dolce. The next climax arrives in the Più largamente section. Prokofiev specifically demands a slower tempo to increase the musical tension, with a thicker texture and a continuation of louder dynamics. Musically, this arrangement is more effective than if the climax is reached by an accelerating tempo or an extreme modification of dynamics, such as in the beginning part of the development section of the first movement of the Seventh or in the coda of the first movement of the Sixth. In fact, the most successful dynamic writing in this movement, in my opinion, is in bars 79-97 (ex. 7-10). Prokofiev devises the top and bass lines in pp, surrounding the middle line in mf. The genuine tone of the middle registers of the piano is sweet and warm, neither as bright as the higher registers, nor as muffled and heavy as the lower registers. The extreme dynamic contrast here creates a special sound effect (or atmosphere)—hollow. The outer voices produce a very “distant” and “unreal” sound quality, which abstracts the warmth from the syncopated middle voice.

Sonata No. 8

The first movement of the Eighth is the focus of this discussion. The profound mood here is related to its dynamic arrangement. For instance, the dynamic level is restrained to the range between pp and f in the entire exposition section. None of the dynamic changes here are abrupt; instead, all the minute dynamic variations help to build a natural flow of the melodic material. Nevertheless, in this linear-composed movement, Prokofiev does not give as specific dynamic demands for each voice as in
the previous two examples discussed in the paragraphs above. The dynamic markings
are for the ensemble of all the voices, especially in the beginning section.

Drama occurs in the development section, which begins with pp (bar 90, ex. 8-
6) and finally reach fff (bar 183, ex. 8-3). The melodic bass line is marked mf from bar
100, with the arpeggiated accompaniment, in the higher registers, marked p. The
following passages mostly remain in f until bar 133, then becoming ff. The
transitional motif to the second theme (bars 54-55, Andante I) arrives and leads to the
next episode, which is a variation on one of the opening motives (bars 10-11). The
dynamic level is increasing with every modulation of this motif. As in many passages
in the War Sonatas, the dynamics in this section seems either to remain at the same
level or increase to the next higher level. This type of dynamic arrangement helps to
preserve a great deal of intensity throughout lengthy thematic evolution. It is also a
challenge for the performer to present them with absolute clarity.

The climax of this development section, bar 183, marked Andante in fff, is led
by allargando and crescendo from bar 178. This episode from bar 183 to bar 205 (ex.
8-3, 8-4, 8-5) exhibits the biggest dynamic contrast (from fff down to pp) in this
sonata, which not only calls for emotional involvement from the performer but also
creates an overwhelming sound effect.

Another exhibition of extreme contrasting dynamics is the coda. Derived from
the beginning of the development section, the coda starts with the sixteenth-note
running figure in pp (bar 261). The dynamics are increasing rapidly; it reaches f in bar
275 and fff in bar 281 (ex. 8-9). The mix of velocity and dynamics is illustrated
thoroughly in this coda. On the contrary, Prokofiev ends this movement with a
dramatic change of pacing and dynamics (bars 293-297, ex. 8-10). Finally, the movement comes to rest in piano, as it started, only with longer-valued notes (the shortest being a quarter note).

RUNNING FIGURES (GROUP OF NOTES, IRREGULAR SCALES)

Sonata No. 6

The first appearance of an irregular running figure is seen in bars 153-154 (ex. 6-8). It is an octonic scale, ascending from E-flat (or E-natural) to D:

E-flat (or E-natural)-F-G-A-flat-B-flat-B-natural-C-sharp-D

Different from major and minor scales, which are fingered traditionally in the basic pattern of 123-1234, this octonic scale is fingered as 1234-1234, with 1 on F. This kind of fragmental running figure is very typical in the War Sonatas. Other examples, not based on an octonic scale, can be found in bars 162 and 248. These two examples require rapid shifting between each register since there are no other fingerings that can prevent the jumping.

Sonata No. 7

In this angular sounding sonata, there are few passages that make of running figures, especially the scale-like figures. They are not a prominent feature in this sonata, although one particular running passage is very difficult to accomplish perfectly, in bars 250-251 (ex. 7-4) of the first movement. These two measures are 63
constructed with F-sharp major ascending scale. Several interval skips are found in
the second measure, between B and D, D and E-sharp, and E-sharp and G-sharp.
Thus, the ascending F-sharp major scale is interrupted, creating a fingering problem.
It is crucial to find a workable fingering for this passage. However, no matter what
fingering the performer uses, rapid finger switching (especially switching underneath
the thumb) is the key to resolve the technical obstacle. The other examples found in
the second movement are all based on scales, bars 46 (D major) (ex. 7-9), and 54 and
61(E major) (ex. 7-11).

Sonata No. 8

Most of the running passages in this sonata (especially in the first movement)
have been discussed in the previous section on "Broken Chords". Nevertheless, a
different type of running figure is found in bars 290-291 of the first movement (ex. 8-
10), bar 60 of the second movement (ex. 8-15), and bars 27-31 (387-391), 223-224,
and 248-252 of the third movement (ex. 8-19). In the examples of this first movement
(ex. 8-10), there are two ascending scales in each hand, in 32nd notes. The problem
lies in the polyrhythmic writing in the latter half of the scale (three against four).

Another example of a *glissando* imitation is in the second movement. A silky
smoothness and a feather-like delicacy of touch are two desired goals. Furthermore,
all the running passages listed above in the third movement are technically
challenging. The first example challenges the performer with a fingering problem.
One must play the ascending scale evenly while delineating the change of key from B-
flat to B-natural. The right hand is required to hold the B-flat while playing the
running scale underneath it. For most people, it is impossible to play an octave with the second and the fifth fingers. Thus, the repetitive use of the right thumb (for A-flat and B-flat) is required for this awkward episode.

The next two examples are both in the waltz section of the third movement. The first one in bars 223-224 (ex. 8-25) is an octonic scale, alternating played with both hands. A seamless performance of this passage is desired. The second example in the waltz section is perhaps one of the most difficult passages in this sonata (bars 248-252, ex. 8-27). It begins with a sequence of tetrachords (or alternative tetrachords) later interrupted by a leap of an interval fourth, rapidly shifting from E-flat to A-flat and another interruption, by a fourth down, from D-flat to A-flat. There are two challenges in this example; first, to play the sequence of the tetrachords without getting scrambled, and second, to reposition the right hand rapidly and accurately. A strong sense of rhythm and efficient fingerling will help. Based on personal experience, I would finger bars 250-251 as follows:

**VOICING AND PHRASING**

The most common voicing and phrasing problems in these three sonatas are caused by linear writing or imitation writing. In addressing these problems, tone

65
quality and clarity are vital. I will focus my discussion on the slow movements of these three sonatas.

**Sonata No. 6**

The longest slow movement of all nine sonatas, the third movement of the Sixth calls for a lugubrious sensation. In the opening phrase (bars 1-4, ex. 6-17), the melody in the top voice of the right-hand chords is surrounded by a thick accompaniment. A long, unbroken melodic line is desired. To best achieve this requires not only voicing down the accompanimental chords but also having the melodic line move towards longer-value notes. For example, bars 4-12 (ex. 6-17) contain two melodic lines in the right hand. A convincing voicing requires not only great clarity and balance between these two elements, but also maintaining a long line throughout these eight measures. This is best achieved by "feeling" the eighth notes to the dotted phrased quarter notes, thus giving the phrase direction.

In the B section, we find imitations in the beginning measures between two octaves in the right hand and a few more passages with imitations appear later in the movement. A new theme starts from bar 45 (ex. 6-19). Similar to string quartet or chorale writing, this episode consists of four voices, moving individually though in ensemble. Legato playing is essential. Furthermore, in bars 57-60 (ex. 6-19), the register displacement charges the new melodic material. Preventing the displacement from interrupting the long phrase is the challenge.

Phrasing and voicing become more complicated in the returning A section. Prokofiev reorganizes the themes that have appeared earlier in the movement. In the
first phrase of the returning A, we find the opening theme on both the soprano and the added tenor lines, though somewhat in a thick texture. The next phrase challenges one's voicing skills as there are two lines containing the same material but one is written in single-line, the other in chords. According to Prokofiev's dynamic indication, the performer ought to bring out the chordal line more than the single-note line. To present the melodic material and the dynamics with clarity is critical.

Sonata No. 7

The second movement of the Seventh (ex. 7-8) is perhaps the most indicated voicing writing among all the movements in the War Sonatas. Beautiful legato playing is demanded from the beginning. Of utmost importance is to consistently sustain a long line without being overpowered by other voices. In addition to the balance between the melodic material and its accompaniment, a warm and rich sound quality, particularly for the melody, is also a necessity to successful voicing. The voicing challenges in the middle section require a fluent and precise execution of all the dynamic markings that will help to present each phrase clearly.

Sonata No. 8

The second movement of the Eighth contains five variations on the opening theme, with a few transitional elements. This type of variation writing provides the performer opportunities to be creative with voicing. In the first variation, bars 9-16 (ex. 8-12), Prokofiev not only changes the accompanimental element from quarter-note figure to an eighth rest and an eighth note, but also adds a new voice in the alto.

57
My suggestion is to bring out the syncopated bass line by altering pedaling to the off beats, allowing one to "hear the rests". Moving to the second variation, from bar 27 (ex. 8-13); the register displacement complicates the voicing. In the next variation (from bar 47, ex. 8-14), the theme is first placed in the baritone in bar 47, then in the soprano in bar 49, and finally in the tenor in bar 51, in which we find the theme in the soprano line come to the end. To prevent the broken-chord accompaniment in the right hand from overpowering this thematic chair of Prokofiev's is an important issue.

In bar 66 (ex. 8-16), the fourth variation begins the theme in the middle voice, while the descending broken octaves of A-flats appearing in the soprano and the bass lines. Lastly, the final variation in bars 78-81 (ex. 8-17), is the shortest of all. Like the previous four variations, this one requires a warmer and bigger sound for the melodic material while keeping the thicker-textured accompaniment in a lower dynamic level and with a less bright and projective sound in order to differentiate the melodic and the accompanimental figures. In addition, maintaining a long line is essential to a successful performance of this movement as well as most slow movements.

SOUND QUALITY (TOUCH)

Most people consider the appropriate touch (or sound quality) for Prokofiev's piano music to be "percussive" or "detached". However, it is unfair to stereotype Prokofiev's music in such a way that the performer may lose sight of the diverse possibilities of sound in the interpretation of his composition. One must study each phrase, each passage, and each section thoroughly in order to look for the proper sound quality, based upon the realization of articulation markings and other
indications. Moreover, it is important for the performer to react sensitively to any change in texture, harmony, and rhythm in order to obtain the sound, which may have been desired by Prokofiev.

"Percussive" tone is certainly one of the traits in Prokofiev's piano works. A more muscular, harsher, and bolder approach to the keyboard will produce a "percussive" sound. In writing, Prokofiev also uses harmonic devices (dissonance) and displacement (leaps) to create percussiveness. In the War Sonatas, we hear many passages with this type of sound. It can be an imitation of percussive instruments (such as drums) or an imitation of a harsh bowing on the strings or pizzicato. For example, the sound effect is overwhelmingly percussive in the development sections of the first movements of all three sonatas. In the Sixth Sonata, the aggression in the music is derived from the leaps, the tone clusters, the glissando, and the manipulations of the thematic material. Moreover, both the detached touch for the repeated bass sounding like drums and the accents add more boldness to this development section. The classic "percussive tone" is perceived in the first and the last movements of the Seventh Sonata. The texture of the last movement is displayed with numerous chords and huge leaps and an ostinato bass that has a driving, toccata character. Except for a few phrases scored with slurs, the writing suggests a detached touch. Musically and pianistically, even without the articulation indications, the performer will be able to perceive the sound quality for this type of writing.

A percussive touch can also enhance the contrasts between registers. For example, in the development section of the first movement of the Eighth, we find a
series of displaced thematic material in various registers. Each melodic note is played with an emphasis, and a percussive and direct touch.

However, several different sound qualities are demanded for these sonatas. The first example to be discussed is the second movement of the Sixth. Though in a thick texture, this delightful dance-like movement requires an extremely delicate touch. The chords should be interpreted with light and relaxing bouncing motions from fingers and forearms. The sound effect recalls some of the movements from Prokofiev's Ballet music, such as Romeo and Juliet.

A different sound approach is found in both second themes of the first movements of the Sixth and the Seventh Sonatas. Both second themes are sparsely textured. In the Sixth, the second theme of the first movement begins with unison spanning one or more octaves apart. This unison creates a unique and peculiar sound effect—hollow, empty, and cold—as if two different registered instruments were playing it, such as bassoon and flute. Prokofiev and Shostakovich often used in composing piano music with this type of unison writing; for example, in the piano part of the first movement of Shostakovich's Piano Trio in E Minor.

Nevertheless, Prokofiev employs the traditional sound approach to these slow movements in the War Sonatas. These slow movements are best served by a legato touch as well as a warm and rich sound quality. In addition, the first movement of the Eighth Sonata, excluding the development section and the coda, shares this type of warm and legato sound to capture the character and the atmosphere.

In my opinion, in order to interpret these three sonatas with the appropriate sound quality, one must study the score from the composer's point of view. Search for
the sound and the color from the texture, the melodic shape, and the harmony. Since these three sonatas were written in such a complicated structure, Prokofiev seems to suggest a multi-dimensional approach in terms of sound quality. Besides those have been mentioned above, such as the imitation of the harp sound found in the second movement of the Eighth, the Scriabin-like passages in the first movement of the Sixth, we also find "quasi impani" in bar 191 of the first movement of the Eighth. Secco, Non legato, and détache are seen frequently in these sonatas, too.

PEDALING

There are only a few passages with pedal markings in these sonatas: bar 61 and 71 of the fourth movement of the Sixth Sonata, and bar 301 of the first movement of the Seventh Sonata. The lack of pedal markings is typical of Prokofiev. In addition, we find bar 317 marked "senza Ped". However, one should use pedal properly according to the content even without indicated pedal markings by the composer. For example, in bars 40-42 (also 52-54) of the first movement of the Sixth, the bass B is supposed to sustain over three measures, while the second theme is played in the higher registers (over an octave higher than the bass B, bars 40-42). Since it is impossible to hold the bass B while playing the second theme, one may use the sustaining pedal (the middle pedal) for B or pedal continuously over three bars. In fact, Prokofiev leaves the performer absolute freedom to create their own pedaling. The performer must use their own judgment in deciding the proper pedaling. The proper use of pedals can help create a brighter sound quality, too; for example, in bars 36-42 (ex. 6-14) of the second movement of the Sixth Sonata, a touch of accented
pedaling (or rhythmic pedaling) makes chords in the right hand sound sharper and brighter. In addition, the performer can also use "crescendo pedaling" to enhance the dynamic "crescendo". For example, if we apply this pedaling that requires sensitivity (such as from 1/4 pedal to full pedal, according to the dynamic markings) appropriately throughout the third movement of the Seventh Sonata, a bigger dynamic contrast and greater intensity will be obtained. Lastly, we use pedal to increase dynamic level or to create a grand sonority, such as in the coda of the third movement of the Eighth Sonata (bars 458-465, ex. 8-31, and 474-475). A long pedal over at least two bars, with the overlapping sound effect on B-flat major chord and C-sharp minor chord, increases the volume immensely.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Glissando**

This technique is rarely used in Prokofiev's piano sonatas; in fact, there are only two passages in which we can find the use of glissando-bars 180 (ex. 6-10) and 182 of the first movement of the Sixth Sonata. The very first time Prokofiev introduced this technique in his piano music is in the *Diaboliqque Suggestions*, Op. 4 pieces. It also can be seen in the Toccata, op. 11 and his piano concerti. Belonging to the family of virtuosity, composers normally apply glissando in their compositions when there is a need of new color, new tone, or new sound from the keyboard. The sweeping motion from fingers and arms certainly produces a different tone quality from the sound produced by striking the keys (or the strings). In this example, bars 180 and 182 of the first movement of the Sixth Sonata, we find a pretty aggressive use
of glissando, typical of Prokofiev's glissandi. It is neither a graceful touch like impressionist composers would have in mind, nor is it in the Romantic trend; showy, brilliant and beautiful. In this case, it is more like a long fingernail scratching a blackboard, harsh, spooky and piercing. Those sharp, percussive staccato notes corner these two glissando passages in the higher registers of the keyboard. The sound effect here from the combination of staccato and glissando is quite exotic. These two passages are placed in the rhythmic pattern of triplets. Musically, it requires precise rhythmic execution of each note and each beat, unlike most of the glissandi found in other scores, in which some degrees of flexibility are allowed. It is somewhat bound with the conception of inhumanity, machine-like.

**Alternating motion between hands**

The first example of this device is found in bars 68-69 (ex. 6-6) and 73-74 of the first movement of the Sixth Sonata. It is reminiscent of some passages in the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto. A similar use can be traced in the third movement of the Eighth Sonata, bars 9-10 (also in bars 13-14, 32-33, 36-37, 80-84, 359, 361, 363-368, 371-372, 441-442, 445-446, and 486-487). Bars 359, 361 (ex. 8-26), 441-442, 445-446, and 486-487 are particularly reversions of the introductory motif in Prokofiev's *Toccata*. Besides, there are two passages with the same material that illustrates this technique in the last movement of the Seventh, bars 74-76 and 119-124 (ex. 7-15). It is technically much harder here because of the complex meter 7/8. For bars 119-124, the performer must cope with this technical device while sustaining the longer-value notes E-flat in the right hand and C-sharp in the left hand. To sustain
these two notes also restrains the quick bouncing of the fingers and wrists, which is
the key to mastering this technique. The performer must free and relax their wrists
before starting the alternating motion.

Repetitions

This technique is used greatly in Prokofiev’s piano music, especially in the
War Sonatas. The first example from the Sixth Sonata is the development section of
the first movement, which begins with canonic imitation on the second theme, in
repetition. We find repetitions not only in this section but also in the second
movement (such as bars 28-34, ex. 6-14) and the fourth movement. The driving
character is found in the use of repetitions in the fourth movement. The first
appearance of this motif is in bars 127-128 (ex. 6-25), in which G-sharp is repeated
numerous times. A relentless feeling is definitely created through this repetition of G-
sharp. Furthermore, the fate motif in the coda is a group of four repeated notes, which
appears in the first movement of the Seventh.

An example of the repetition in slow tempo served as an accompanimental
figure is seen in the left-hand part of bars 153-160 of the first movement of the
Seventh (ex. 7-5). It produces an effect similar to timpani being played with a soft-
head mallet. We find another example with the same sound approach in the second
movement of the Seventh, bars 60-61 (ex. 7-11). In the third movement, “repetition
on chords” is one of the most used technical devices, such as bars 50-57 (ex. 7-14), or
163-170. The difficulty of these repetitions on chords is not only the repetition itself,
but also the degree of tension in the hands caused by the constant open position of the
right hand. Relaxed and flexible wrists are essential for a less exhausting performance of these repetitions. Flexible wrists help the bouncing motion, though we still need powerful forearms to support the wrists' motion and to satisfy the dynamic arrangement.

There are not many passages found with the use of repetition. The most significant example is in the final page of the third movement of the Eighth Sonata, bar 476-485. This difficult passage with repetitions on the single note is invented for the right hand, which requires a rapid finger switch (switch fingers on the same note with proper fingering, such as 321). This type of writing has been applied with great success by other composers; namely Ravel in Alborado del gracioso, the last movement of the Gershwin Piano Concerto in F, the second movement of the Rachmaninov Third Piano Concerto. Though the passage demands a fast tempo and rapid switching between fingers, the performer must not force the sound or the motion; the lighter the touch, the easier to play.

Tone clusters

This common twentieth-century piano technique is surprisingly seen infrequently in Prokofiev's composition. In fact, in the Variations, there are only two appearances found in the development section of the first movement of the Sixth (bars 142 and 146, ex. 6-7). In some editions, we find col pugno printed on top of the tone clusters, meaning playing with fist. Its effect is to extract the maximum percussive potential from the instrument. Indeed, in this section, both tone clusters
create a new sound quality, which is harsh, dissonant, and most important, musically very effective.
CHAPTER III

PEDAGOGICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SELECTED PASSAGES

SONATA NO. 6

I. Bars 138-187 (From the development section of the first movement, ex. D)

This passage from the first movement is considered the heart of the development section. Continuing the repeated bass figure in the left hand, the juxtaposition from the multi-thematic evolution is to occur expectedly. Here, like many other Prokofiev themes or melodic material, both first and second themes of this movement are initially written with displacement that particularly creates the difficulty.

Rapid arpeggios are found in bar 138. They are 64th-notes and are divided alternately between two hands. What challenges most pianists are playing the leaps that appear between these arpeggios, such as going from E down almost two octaves to F (played with the right hand), and then to B, more than three octaves from this E. To play these random leaps, one must have or develop a keen sense for these applied intervals and their exact positions by practicing efficiently with the help from some anchor notes (notes functioning as a reference point to written noted on the score). The suggested anchor notes for the left hand in bar 138 are the D-sharp below the
high E and the B-flat below the low B-natural. If one allows the right hand to stay in the position of the arpeggio (the augmented F-7\textsuperscript{9}) and let the left hand shift between the E and the B, one may complete this episode more successfully.

Another arpeggio appears in bar 145 demanding great velocity from the right hand. The fast tempo, the gap—the interval fifth—between each triplet, the leap from the last triplet to the motif \[\text{\textcopyright},\] and the leap in the left hand that spans almost three octaves from the C to the interval of augmented fourth (F and B), create the challenge in this measure. Practice the arpeggio in block-chord pattern and use arm movement to help playing the leaps. Moreover, one must recognize that the arpeggiated figure here is only the embellishment for the thematic material, which is the C-sharp octave on the downbeat. Thus, one must not force the sound from the arpeggio. Technically, the lighter the touch, the easier. Understanding the structure often helps to overcome some technical obstacle.

The next passage to be examined is from bar 176 to bar 187. A martellato touch, harsh and direct, will produce the desired sound quality and tonal effect. Physically, stiff arms and firm fingertips can enhance the harshness of the tone. The precise execution of the rhythm, such as dotted eighth note and the sixteenth note as well as strict observance of the triplets can also create the mechanical and steel-like sound, as if imitating the motion of a robot. Furthermore, one should observe the indicated articulations—staecato, non-staccato, and the accents.

In bars 185-187, the written-out, trill-like episode calls for another type of virtuosity. These thirty-second notes require fast finger work. One ought to treat them as if playing trills, though they do not appear so on the page. Keeping the right
forearm free and relaxed and using rotation will help. The dynamic arrangement
(crescendo for bar 185 and 186, diminuendo for bar 187) may be thought of an aid, in
that one should not force the sound at the beginning of this episode. In many cases,
we tighten our muscles by forcing.

II. Bars 36-42 (one of the arpeggiated passages, the second movement, ex. E)

This passage is one of the greatest technical challenges in this sonata. We find
two different virtuosic demands for both hands. First, the descending arpeggiated
figures in the left hand consist of a gap between the third note and the fourth note,
mostly with an interval of an eleventh. Musically, it is essential to play these
quintuplets leggiero in order to achieve the appropriate sound quality. Technically,
one’s goal is playing these arpeggiated figures rapidly, accurately, and most important,
effortlessly. Practice them in block-chord; it will help to obtain the shift between two
broken triads. Also, emphasize, with weight, the third note (played with the third
finger) and the fourth note (played with thumb) in order to feel the distance of these
gaps. In addition, maintain both hands close to the keyboard so one can achieve this
challenging passage with more accuracy.

To obtain lightness, a light and flexible left arm (both upper arm and forearm)
is vital. Starting from the top of each quintuplet, the left elbow charges a sweeping
motion over two beats. This motion has two segments, one moving down for the
descending figure and another moving up to return to the original position.

The problems for the right hand are solid chords. These chords could be an
extreme discouragement for those whom only have small-sized hands because of the
demand for wide-span writing in the right hand. First, to play these chords one should keep their right hand close to the keyboard (as close as possible, feeling no distance between the fingers and the keyboard), by which one can avoid excessively bouncing up and down from the keyboard. Thus, it will also be easier to prepare their hand to play the following chord with less effort. Due to some physical limitation, it may be impossible to play all the notes in the chord. Rolling the chords quickly is the best alternative.

Lastly, there are a few leaps in the middle of bars 41 and 42. Use arm movement to help play these leaps. Once again, great tactile command of the keyboard with respect to the distance of the employed intervals is essential. Practicing these chords slowly while learning to feel the leap (or the interval) on the keyboard without looking down at the keyboard will advance this challenging passage more accurately and confidently.

SONATA NO. 7

I. Bars 182-252 (From the development section of the first movement, ex. F)

The first challenge in this section is to produce the required loudness and sonority with a thin-textured score. The dynamics mainly stay in ff. The harshness and the coarseness of the sound quality are undoubtedly an understatement. Traditionally, composers would have written this kind of passage in a more complex and thicker texture. In this particular passage, though the texture is thin, it is also sparse with a wide range. For example, in bars 182-195, both hands play on the two ends of the keyboard; the right hand in the fairly high registers and the left hand in the
lower bass. The more bass, the greater the sonority. This general treatment may be
applied throughout this section. The purpose is showing the different sound qualities
between the higher and the lower registers. Moreover, the dissonance effects the
dynamics, too. For instance, the episode in bars 189-195 consists of numerous
dissonant chords. One ought to enjoy and listen to the dissonant effect and blend these
chords with a harsh touch and an effective pedaling (accented pedal, pedal on the
beat). The phrase is in descending; therefore the dynamics emphasis on the left hand
will certainly help to build a grander sonority. In addition, an intense and perpetual
rhythmic feel is essential to the climatic atmosphere, which is not only associated with
loudness. Besides these musical perspectives, there are several physical preparations
necessary. Use a great deal of arm weight and even the power from one’s back to
produce ff. The grandiosity cannot be derived solely from powerful fingers. The
weight from both arms and back will help to produce much bigger sound and also
prevent one from injury that can be caused by forcing the sound with tense fingers.

Technically, this section is filled with all kinds of difficulties, including
random intervals and leaps (the difficult run in bars 250-251 has been discussed in the
last chapter). First, a series of random intervals appears in the right hand in bars 189-
195. What makes these six measures so difficult to play is that every element is
written randomly, including intervals, rhythm, direction of hand movement, and the
unpredictable dissonance. However this turbulent effect, it does produce the desired
sonority.

Physically, flexible hands with flexible fingers are vital. Everything above the
wrists must remain relaxed. Based on Prokofiev’s notation, one may learn the
grouping of these intervals and the rhythm. It is structurally composed one beat ahead of the bar line until bar 193, in which these intervals start with an upbeat. This rhythmic arrangement actually establishes regularity out of this chaotic episode and it will also keep one from losing control in playing. If one can employ and feel this rhythmic pattern physically, in every three eighth notes one may quickly release the tension from stretching or repositioning, especially for the right hand. Keep both hands close to the keyboard, not lifting up and down constantly. Practice these intervals slowly to assure that both hands, wrists, and forearms are relaxed. Use lower wrists for the bigger intervals and higher wrists for the smaller intervals. Wrists are the transition from forearms to palms to fingers, where one finds over-bearing tension caused by frequent stretching for large intervals. Once one feels physically comfortable to play these random intervals, one can gradually start increasing the tempo. The other suggestion is to assure that the right thumb stays relaxed. If the thumb is relaxed and the hand flexible, it will become easier to stretch for the bigger intervals and contract the hand for the smaller intervals.

Leaps are another challenge in this section. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is one of the most distinguishing characteristics in Prokofiev’s piano writing. Beginning with the pick-up to bar 244, bars 243-249 contain some of the most difficult passages with leaps. Leaps in the right hand challenge the performer for accuracy, particularly the four consecutive leaps in bars 245-247. They demand excellent tactility, of the interval of an octave, by using the second and the fifth fingers (the top notes of these intervals are played with the second and the fifth fingers). Practice descending broken octaves with these two fingers until one becomes familiar
with the distance. The bottom notes of these intervals (two in a group spanning an octave) are all played with the right thumb; therefore, technically, they are comparatively less awkward than the upper notes of these intervals. On the other hand, if one employs some anchor notes to help positioning more accurately, these passages with leaps will become less frustrating. In this example, from bar 245 to the first eighth note of bar 247, one may use C-sharp as an anchor note to C, F-sharp to F (bar 245-6), G-sharp to G, and C-sharp to C (bar 246-7). Let the second finger slide into C, F, G, and C by tactiley touching these anchor notes (use the left side of the second finger to contact these notes but take caution to not to produce the sound). Thus, the precision will be more achievable.

To conclude, both the leaps and the random figures in the development section of the first movement of the seventh, tests the performer’s accuracy. Some of the leaps or register jumps are not easy to play even after many hours of daily practicing. Examine the score from the composer’s perspective and strive to comprehend the reasoning behind the writing. Look into the patterns, the groupings, or the figures and understand how they are constructed (or what formula they are applied with) so one may deconstruct these patterns and find a means to approach the challenges. As difficult and complex as this development section is, it is still based on Prokofiev’s typical schemes of composition; linear yet vertical, tonal yet unexpectedly dissonant, and most distinctively, random and irregular yet with an established regulation. Technically, to perfect the passages with leaps, only execute the shift when one knows exactly where the next position is and the physical relation to the present position. A successful performance can best realized after technical preparation (movement of the
fingers, hands, and arms) is combined with a well-thought-out musical understanding and conception of the score.

II. Bars 145-177 (the coda of the third movement, ex. G)

This section is a compact version of this movement. Many techniques, such as leaps, chords, etc., that appeared earlier are splendidly developed in this coda. The return of the first theme begins in bar 145 with the chord fundamentally in the right hand on either the third or the fourth beat (7/8 time signature) in a displaced register. It is placed either an octave lower than the register of the proceeding chord (the first beat) (except in bars 152 and 154) or an octave higher than the following chord (the fifth or the sixth beat). Additionally, the *otisnato* figure in the left hand is also altered with a displacement of the C-sharp octave (some of the E-flat octave), in a register higher than it first appeared in the beginning of the movement.

Understanding the principle of thematic displacement in the coda helps one better cope with the leaps. It is particularly important for the performer to have a clear picture of the score; how Prokofiev assembled those motivic segments to construct the first half of the coda section. Of course, patiently and efficiently practicing in a slower tempo is what one should be doing in the beginning of the learning process. Solid memorization will also be helpful; therefore one ought to consider memorizing the score in the very earliest stage of learning.

The two bars, 152 and 154, are arranged with a different displacement scheme. There is a huge jump occurring on the third beat of these two measures, over three octaves if counting from the bottom notes of the starting intervals to the top note of the
chord on the third beat. The right hand and the left hands shift in parallel. To play these two leaps one must use arm movement to help. Move both arms before fingers or hands. I suggest even throwing the upper body to the right side before the jump, where the higher registers of the keyboard are, so that a bigger sound may be produced. Prepare hand position in advance by visually locating the position that comes after the jump. Since these are two leaps with accents on the third beats, one may let the audience “feel” the huge skipping by making momentary delay to the third beats, slightly deliberating the grace notes in the left hand. Lastly, in the last thirteen measures of this movement (bars 165-177), the first six measures require the left hand to shift rapidly between two octaves, and the right hand doing the same for the last seven measures. One should be alerted to the relation between the bottom note of the chord to the top note of the octave (before and after the shift). Realizing that the distance between these two notes is close is helpful. In bars 172, 175, and 176, the right hand moves ascendingly by registers. The B-flats played with the fifth finger are the pointer reference to play these measures. In addition, keep both hands as close to the keyboard as possible. The more tactile, the better.

Creating and sustaining a huge sonority while constantly intensifying and increasing the dynamics is another task. The coda is the last section of the movement, and at this point, the performer is perhaps physically exhausted in fingers and arms. One saves much energy and increase accuracy by moving both hands horizontally on the keyboard (maintaining hands close to the keyboard). Thus, reducing excessive movement for a bigger sound, relax the shoulders, and keep the forearms down while employing back muscles and arm weight as appropriate. Yet, one should not overplay.
or overpower in the beginning of this coda because the dynamic marking is only $f$. It is tempting to start the coda with a louder dynamics because of the thicker texture. In truth, this is unnecessary. A thicker-textured score will generally create a bigger sonority than a thinner-textured one does if played with same dynamic level. Gradually add more and more weight and intensity into the keys. Dynamics is a matter of contrast or comparison between the lowest and the loudest. Intensity, here, comes from the ostinato with its driving, mechanical, motoric element as well as a conception of a longer phrase. Always look to the architecture of the music, which helps one to mentally plan interpretive ideas as well as execute them musically, technically, and tonally.

**SONATA NO. 8**

I. Bar 275-289 (From the coda of the first movement, ex. H)

Block-chord practicing and an effective practice technique will be helpful to reach the required velocity in this passage. Occasionally, this kind of reverse-textured or reverse-articulated practicing helps one achieve the desired effect with greater ease and efficiency. In this example, broken chords apparently dominate the texture. Practicing, by blocking the broken chords, will improve the fatigue and help rid one of tension from playing ceaseless rapid figures and skips. Familiarize the actual movement of hands in order to prevent from any unnecessary movement. For example, in bars 275 and 281-285, the left hand contains the broken triads chromatically descending, while the right hand, ascending arpeggiated figures. The left thumb becomes tense after playing several broken triads; a common problem.
Since these broken triads are moving chromatically, it will be wise for one to maintain their hands close to the black keys. Find a path in between black keys and white keys, which will provide an opportunity to play these broken triads by sliding from white key to black key and vice versa. In particular, keep the left thumb relaxed, checking often, because there is a high percentage of injury from over practicing a passage like this. In addition, a constant down motion from the left wrist is essential, as if one is playing a series of chromatic descending triads. One may also use a long pedal to supply a grander and brighter sound effect, especially for meeting the required dynamics, \( p' \). It is important to maintain a relaxed right forearm in order to perform the virtuosity in this passage. Use rotation to guide the movement of the fingers and avoid the tension caused from playing consecutive broken chords.

II. Bar 458-489 (the coda of the third movement, ex. I)

This coda is similar to that of the first movement in terms of the required technique. From bar 458 to bar 469, the right hand plays broken chords while the left hand plays solid chords or octaves. As in the coda of the first movement, be vigilant to keep shoulders down as well as relax wrists and forearms. Block these broken chords in order to learn the position changes and enhance the tactile feel of the distance between two chords. Since continuously playing or practicing this kind of passage in loud dynamics tends to exhaust one quickly increasing the possibility of becoming physically tense or even causing injury, it may be more appropriate to begin practice with a smaller dynamic level. Increase the dynamic level progressively. It is wise to approach one technical demand at a time. In this case, it is difficult to achieve
the requirement for tempo, endurance, and virtuosity simultaneously. For example, in bars 476-481, it will be better to first learn the shifts in the left hand as well as the leaps and the repetitions in the right hand (by practicing with blocking the broken figures) and then pursue the dynamics and the tempo requirements. The demanding fast tempo (Vivace) is what makes this coda so challenging. Lastly, it is essential to always visually spot your new location in advance of the hand position shifting.
CONCLUSION

In most cases, composers often had ideas about sounds, colors, and moods for their compositions, sometimes even before they began writing. All three sonatas demand a great variety of touches. "Touch is a matter of elimination of non-essentials, so that the greatest artistic ends may be received with the simplest means. This is a general principle that runs through all the arts." One should apply this principle in playing accordingly. Always have an idea of sound before starting any technical practice. What one strives for technically is a fundamental preparation for their musical expressions or philosophical conceptions. Accuracy seems a genuine challenge in these three compositionally complex works. The key to solving most of these problems is mental certainty. If one truly understands why and how every passage, every section, every movement is constructed as well as confidently and honestly executes the score, accuracy should not be too difficult to achieve.

The following personal perceptions of each movement of the War Sonatas are programmatic in nature, described in a picturesque heading to be used as an aid in identifying mood.
The first movement of the Sixth Sonata:

The robot in a steel factory. The angular quality in this movement charges its spirit, which is mechanical, inhuman, and rigid. It is somewhat similar to the sound quality in the second and the fourth movement of the First Sonata for Violin and Piano by Prokofiev.

The second movement of the Sixth Sonata:

Naughty angels dancing in the sky. The lightness of this movement portrays a humorous and mischievous character.

The third movement of the Sixth Sonata:

A farewell waltz to the silent fall. Melancholy, warmth, and emotional depth are the main ingredients for this slow waltz. For the best results, I suggest a phrasing approach that emphasizes a long singing line.

The fourth movement of the Sixth Sonata:

A funny dog and its tail. It is a chase as a dog tries to catch or bite its own tail. Ironies, sarcasm, humor, and great deals of fun are the elements to create a convincing performance of this movement.
The first movement of the Seventh Sonata:

Soldiers marching. Unity and stability are vital. The second theme captures some emotional bearing of soldiers, sorrowfully and tearfully shrieking in the bottom of their hearts.

The second movement of the Seventh Sonata:

A post-war remembrance of the Café Terrace at Night. This movement has always reminded me of the painting by Vincent Van Gogh, Café Terrace at Night but with a completely different time frame, after the World War II. The harshness in the middle section recalls the German tanks attacking the beautiful scene. The funeral bells (the monotone-like passage) from the church imply the depression and the lifeless atmosphere after the war.

The third movement of the Seventh Sonata:

Multiple rebirths within an atom. The unstable quality from the meter 7/8 and the restless feeling from the unitary divisions of 7/8 (2+3+2) imitate the destruction and the splitting of a unit, which is paradoxically growing and expanding, while being violently torn apart.

The first movement of the Eighth Sonata:

A tale of the Fishing boats on the beach at saintes-maries. This is also a painting by Vincent Van Gogh. The tranquility of the exposition section has always reminded me of this painting because it portrays an atmosphere similar to that of this
painting. However, the tides on the beach imply an upcoming tragedy or unpredictable event. The nightmare finally disappears and everything returns peacefully to its place.

The second movement of the Eighth Sonata:

A recollection of Degas’s ballerinas. One cannot possibly neglect the dance quality in this movement. It is like many of Degas’s paintings of ballerinas, such as Rehearsal of a ballet on stage. Grace, elegance, and delicacy are the three important qualities in this choreographic work.

The third movement of the Eighth Sonata:

J. F. Herring’s Steeple Chase Cracks. Like the other two last movements in the War Sonatas, the unlimited energy, provided by the ceaseless running figures, runs through the entire movement, recalling horses racing, as seen in this Herring’s painting.
Endnote — Conclusion:

APPENDIX A:

Diagram of each sonata
Sonata No. 6 (1939-1940)
Op. 82
Key: A Major
Movements: 4. Allegro moderato; Allegretto; Tempo di valzer lentissimo; Vivace.

I. Allegro moderato: Sonata Form (4/4, A Major)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Exposition</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Recapitulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
<td>1-91</td>
<td>92-217</td>
<td>218-272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First theme: 1-23 Transition: 24-39 Second theme: 40-67 (in Exposition)

II. Allegretto: A B A' (Ternary Form) (2/2, E Major)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
<td>1-92</td>
<td>93-130</td>
<td>131-160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Tempo di valzer lentissimo: A B A' (Ternary Form) (9/8, C Major)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
<td>1-41</td>
<td>42-96</td>
<td>97-125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. Vivace: A B A' C A'' D A''' C B A''' Coda (Arch Form) (2/4, A Minor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A''</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A'''</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A''''</th>
<th>C'</th>
<th>B'</th>
<th>A'''</th>
<th>Coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

95
Sonata No. 7 (1939–1942)
Op. 83
Key: B-flat Major
Movements: 3. *Allegro inquieto; Andante caloroso; Precipitato.*

I. **Allegro inquieto: Sonata Form (6/8, B-flat Major)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Exposition</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Recapitulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
<td>1-152</td>
<td>153-237</td>
<td>328-412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First theme: 1-76. ...Transition: 77-123. . . .Second theme: 124-152 (in Exposition)

II. **Andante caloroso: A B A' (Ternary Form) (3/4, E Major)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
<td>1-31</td>
<td>32-97</td>
<td>98-160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. **Precipitato: A B C B A' (Arch Form) (7/8, B-flat Major)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
<td>1-49</td>
<td>50-78</td>
<td>79-104</td>
<td>105-126</td>
<td>127-177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sonata No. 8 (1939-1944)  
Op. 84  
Key: B-flat Major  
Movement: 3. *Andante dolce; Andante sognando; Vivace.*

I. *Andante dolce: Sonata Form (4/4, B-flat Major)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Exposition</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Recapitulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
<td>1-49</td>
<td>90-205</td>
<td>206-297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. *Andante sognando: Ternary Form (3/4, D-flat Major)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II (B+A*)</th>
<th>III (B'+A'*)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure Number</td>
<td>1-34</td>
<td>35-58 (35-66, 67-76)</td>
<td>59-81 (59-84, 85-94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. *Vivace: A B A' C A'' B' A''' Coda* (Rondo Form) (12/8, B-flat Major)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>A''</th>
<th>B'</th>
<th>A'''</th>
<th>Coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-41</td>
<td>42-84</td>
<td>85-106</td>
<td>107-379</td>
<td>380-403</td>
<td>404-448</td>
<td>449-457</td>
<td>458-489</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

97
APPENDIX B:
Examples for Chapter II
ex. 6-19 42  Poco più animato

107
Sonata No. 9 ("Black Mass"), Op. 68

ex. B

Moderato quasi andante

Legendre

1. [Sheet music]

2. [Sheet music]

3. [Sheet music]

4. [Sheet music]
Toccata, Op. II

Ex. C

Allegro marcato

pp

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(music notation)}
\end{align*}
\]
APPENDIX C:

Examples for Chapter III
Sonata No. 6, first movement, m. 138-189

ex. D

133
Sonata No. 7,
third movement,
m. 143-177
Sonata No. 8, third movement, mm. 458-486
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Scores:

