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PROKOFIEV PIANO SONATAS NO.2, NO.5, AND NO.8: COMPARISON AND PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

D.M.A Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the

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By

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*****

The Ohio State University
2002

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this document is to help the reader understand the stylistic variety of Prokofiev’s piano sonatas that resulted from the change of his individual musical style and the historical time period in which he lived. This paper also identifies technical problems in three distinctive sonatas, No. 2, No. 5, and No. 8, and suggests appropriate solutions for performers. A comprehensive understanding of these pieces can achieve better performance with adequate solutions to diverse challenges. Through the study of Prokofiev’s piano sonatas we can learn about Prokofiev’s perception of the piano sonata, as well as the adaptation of ‘sonata form’ in the twentieth century.

Part I is an introduction that briefly discusses the life of the composer Prokofiev and his different compositional periods, and provides an overview of his piano sonatas.

Based on the analysis of Piano Sonatas No. 2, No. 5, and No. 8, Part II deals with the comparison of the stylistic characteristics by separately presenting common characteristics and distinctive features among these sonatas. This part also identifies the conservative aspects that were influenced by the classical
sonata style in the eighteenth century, and the innovative features that had an effect on other composers.

In Part III the challenges of performance are discussed in various areas including technical problems, fingering, pedaling, tempo, interpretation and memorization, and pedagogical solutions are suggested with effective ways to practice. The conclusion in Part IV provides a brief summary of this paper.
Dedicated to my husband
I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Professor Steven M. Glaser of the Ohio State University, for his guidance during my years of doctoral studies and for his support throughout the entire process of writing this paper. Without his valuable suggestions and advice, this paper would not have been possible.

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Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) is an important twentieth-century composer for both the quantity and quality of his work in the genres of ballet, symphony, concerto, opera, and piano sonata. Prokofiev demonstrated natural pianism and keyboard virtuosity through his piano sonatas and approximately 100 smaller piano pieces, and produced a significant piano solo repertoire. He carried the Romantic tradition of pianism into the twentieth century and exploited it beyond its limits, and thereby built up his own distinctive idiom at the keyboard.¹

Among Prokofiev's piano works, his nine piano sonatas represent his stylistic variety and show the unique characteristics that are important sources for understanding his piano writing. Three Prokofiev Piano Sonatas, No.2, No.5, and No. 8 show the distinguishing features of his sonata writing. Sonata No.2 is his energetic, vigorous early piece and is considered one of the landmark works of neo-Classicism, Sonata No.5, composed in his foreign period, has different traits that moves away from the vitality of his earlier sonatas, and Sonata No.8
is a mature, magnificent work that successfully demonstrates his lyrical aspect with vibrant, dynamic elements established in his early period. These various characteristics in the three sonatas will be scrupulously discussed and compared with each other in terms of form and structure, melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture.

This document also provides pedagogical suggestions on the challenges of performance. This type of approach - thoroughly understanding each piece and searching for effective ways to perform - can help a pianist achieve a more confident performance which leads to greater appreciation of Prokofiev's music by the audience.

1.1 Prokofiev's Life and Compositional Periods

Sergei Prokofiev was born on April 23, 1891 (the year of the centenary of Mozart’s death) in Sontsovka, a small remote Ukrainian village in Imperial Russia, an only child in an affluent and cultured household. With the help of his mother, an amateur pianist and the composer's first piano teacher, he wrote his first piano work, eight bars long, at the age of five. Receiving his first training from his mother, Prokofiev learned the basics of how to read music fluently, to write down his own musical ideas, and to be critical of what he heard and read in music. Although Prokofiev's piano study with his mother did not develop a solid technique for him, her principal aim of cultivating a true love for music in him was very successful. Rather than destroying his early enthusiasm for the
piano with the constant practicing of exercises, she devoted much time to introducing him to musical literature.

In 1902 at the age of eleven, Prokofiev studied harmony, form, and orchestration with Reinhold Gliere, a professional composer who had recently graduated from the Moscow Conservatory. Two years later, he moved with his mother to St. Petersburg to attend the Conservatory. Along with his general studies, Prokofiev studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakov, Joseph Wihtol, and Anatol Liadov, conducting with Nikolai Tcherepnin, and piano with Alexander Winkler and Anna Esipova. In 1908, Prokofiev attended a series of concerts known as the ‘Evenings of Modern Music’, where he was invited to have his public debut as pianist-composer. The aim of the organization was to establish and maintain contact with the West by cultural exchange programs. The activity of this group, in addition to a visit to London (1914), was to implant a notion of the possibility of success abroad in the mind of the young Prokofiev. In the aftermath of the 1917 Russian revolution, he immigrated to the United States in 1918.

Historians usually divided Prokofiev’s life and works into three periods: the Russian period (1891-1917), the foreign period (1918-1935), and the Soviet period (1936-1953), so that his leaving Russia became an important event dividing the time periods of his life.

In the Russian period, during the pre-revolutionary years, Prokofiev wrote over thirty compositions in various genres, the most important being the
Scythian Suite (1914), the First Violin Concerto (1917), an opera, The Gambler (1917), and Symphony No. 1 known as the Classical Symphony (1916-7), as well as his first three piano concertos. His first four piano sonatas are also composed in this period. In addition to his piano sonatas, he wrote numerous short sets of pieces for the keyboard including Toccata, Op. 11 (1912), Sarcasms, Op. 17 (1912-14), and Visions fugitives, Op. 22 (1915-17). Prokofiev was not a late developer; he himself reckoned that his distinctive musical language was fully formed by his earlier time. Prokofiev obviously displayed his vitality and conciseness with the cynical and spicy flavor of these early pieces.

In the years 1918-1935, referred to as the ‘foreign period’, Prokofiev lived mostly in the United States and France. During that time, his playing and works met with mixed reactions from critics and the public. With varying degrees of success and failure, Prokofiev toured as a concert artist. The works of this period reflect the influence of the composers whom Prokofiev met in Paris, including Ravel, Stravinsky and the group of French composers, Les Six. The piano works of Prokofiev’s foreign period include Four Pieces, Op. 32 (1918), Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 38 (1923), and Two Sonatinas, Op. 54 (1931-32). The Fifth Sonata was revised during the last year of his life and it was given a later opus number, Op. 135. In addition, he composed over twenty orchestral works, among them the Second (1924), Third (1928), and Fourth (1930) Symphonies, the Fourth (1931) and Fifth (1932) Piano Concertos, as well as two operas, The Love for Three Oranges (1919) and The Fiery Angel (1919-27).
Prokofiev returned to the land of his birth in 1936 and remained there for the rest of his life. During the Soviet period, he received many state honors for his work, and composed several of his greatest and most successful piano works such as the late Piano Sonatas, No.6 (1939-40), No.7 (1939-42), No.8 (1939-44), and No.9 (1947). He also wrote music for the broad masses which was characterized as “light-serious”: Lieutenant Kije (1934), a symphonic suite from the film music, and Hail to Stalin (1939), a collection of pieces based on folk material of the Republics. In addition, the outstanding stage works are the two ballets, Romeo and Juliet (1935-36) and Cinderella (1940-44), the children’s theatre piece, Peter and the Wolf (1936), the cantata, Alexander Nevsky (1938-39), the operas, War and Peace (1941-52) and A Real Man (1947-48), as well as the Fifth (1944), Sixth (1945-47), and Seventh (1951-52) Symphonies. He continued to compose, as much as his health allowed, during the last period of his life. Prokofiev died on March 5, 1953, the same day as Stalin.

Prokofiev’s styles vary by time period and include diverse genres such as piano solo, concerto, ballet, symphony, opera, and film music. Although the piano sonatas are the main topic of this paper, I briefly summarize his works in other genres to locate the piano sonatas among his entire achievements.

He composed his first three piano concertos in his Russian period (although the completion of the Second and Third Concertos is 1920’). The First (1911) and Second (1913-23) Concertos, which were composed in his student years at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, show Prokofiev’s own
remarkable piano technique including driving rhythms, biting dissonances, and a grotesque, often dark, mood based on the percussive nature of the keyboard. The aggressive, rhythmic music seems to have been in reaction to the sensuous beauty of Romanticism. The Rubinstein prize was awarded him for his *First Piano Concerto*. The critic Karatygin wrote that the premiere of the *Second Concerto* "left listeners frozen with fright, hair standing on end." Also, he predicted that ten years hence the same audience would be "unanimously applauding a new composer with a European reputation." Like his prediction, the piece was accepted as a characteristic piece showing Prokofiev’s vigorous spirit.

The *Third Piano Concerto* was composed during the years 1917-1921. The piece is the roundest, most classically balanced of Prokofiev’s piano concertos, and has long been the most popular. In the piece, Prokofiev shows few of the experimental elements typical of his other foreign-period pieces; instead, he displays great vitality with combined lyrical elements (later to becomes characteristics of his Soviet style). The orchestra is a more active partner than in the *Second Concerto*, and a lively balance of interest is maintained throughout.

The Austrian Pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who had lost his right arm in the First World War, originally commissioned the *Fourth Concerto* in 1931. However, he refused to play it, claiming that he did not understand it. Prokofiev revised the concerto for both hands, but the concerto remained
unperformed until 1956, three years after the composer’s death and twenty-five years after it was composed. Its deeply personal emotion, its beautifully airy scoring, and pleasing formal waywardness create an identity that is strong and rewarding.\textsuperscript{10}

Composed in 1932, one year after completing the Fourth Concerto, Prokofiev’s Fifth Piano Concerto seems complex and unusual. The piece has five movements; all are divertissements, balletic in character, with the exception of the broader and deeper fourth movement. According to Prokofiev’s memoirs, he was dissatisfied with the piece because he longed to return to Russia.\textsuperscript{11} He feared that the piece’s complexity might mask a thinness of emotional commitment. Generally, the piece displays Prokofiev’s innovative and modernist piano writing.

In the genre of ballet, Prokofiev composed his first primitivist ballet \textit{Ala and Lolly} (1914) in his Russian period, urged on by Diaghilev, who wished to repeat the success of Stravinsky’s \textit{The Rite of Spring} (1913). Diaghilev, however, shelved the piece \textit{Ala and Lolly}, which despite the music’s powerful savagery remained unstaged until 1921. In the meantime, Prokofiev abridged it to create the four-movement \textit{Scythian Suite} (1914), which deals with two mythological heroes—Ala and Lolly—from the Scythian people living by the Black Sea. The orchestration of the piece is heavy, brassy and full of brilliant pictorial effects like the spinning of the roulette wheel created by the woodwinds and xylophone.\textsuperscript{12} This savage, daring music first evoked a storm of
mingled enthusiasm and indignation, but gradually received the more favorable responses from French composers with the recognition of Prokofiev's undoubted genius for astonishing sonority.

In the Soviet period, Prokofiev's ballet music reached new heights with the full-length Romeo and Juliet (1935-36) and Cinderella (1940-44), now two of the best-known ballet scores in the world. However, at that time he finished Romeo and Juliet, Prokofiev found it impossible to present it because of a hostile political climate, and his detractors were quick to point out that it had already been rejected by the Bolshoi Ballet as being "unsuitable for dancing". Eventually, the world premiere of Romeo and Juliet took place in 1938 at the Brno Opera in Czechoslovakia, just months before the remains of this liberal country were finally swept away by the rising tide of Nazi totalitarianism. The Soviet stage premiere was not to be until 1940, when the heroine, Galina Ulanova, moved the audience to tears by her portrayal of Juliet at the Kirov Theatre. Romeo and Juliet emerged as one of Prokofiev's supreme achievements, and his communication of Shakespeare's passion and pathos ensure the work's permanent place in the repertoire. It shows why Prokofiev is considered one of the most important ballet composers of the 20th century.

Prokofiev also wrote seven symphonies in the course of his career. The first of these, the Classical Symphony, dates from 1917, and the last, from 1952. The first symphony is by no means the work of a beginner, for the 26-year-old Russian composer had already written two unpublished symphonies as well as
three magnificent concertos and the striking *Scythian Suite* for orchestra. He had been thinking of writing an entire symphonic piece without using the piano as he worked, hoping that in this way he could obtain greater clarity of orchestral color, and avoid the "temptation of improvisational, 'finger' composition." 16 Prokofiev wrote a Haydnesque, straight-forward and tuneful symphony with the size and scoring of the traditional orchestra of Haydn and Mozart.

The *Second Symphony* (1924) has two-movements structure bearing an external similarity to Beethoven's *Piano Sonata* Op.111 with the second movement of 'Theme and Variations'. Prokofiev composed the *Third* (1928) and *Fourth* (1930) *Symphonies* based on pre-existing materials from his opera *The Fiery Angel* (1927) and ballet *the Prodigal Son* (1928). In 1944 during the war, Prokofiev completed the *Fifth Symphony*, in which he wanted to make a clear commitment to "Socialist Realism" in an easy and popular fashion.17 Fortunately, he won a Stalin Prize, First Class, for the *Fifth Symphony* (and another at the same time for the *Piano Sonata No.8*). Unlike the two previous symphonies, the *Fifth* had no program, but Prokofiev announced that it was music "glorifying the human spirit...praising the free and happy man." 18 Michael Steinberg states in his book, "many composers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were baffled by the problem of how to confront the sonata style defined by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, how to get at its substance and not just its shell. However, in his *Fifth Symphony*, the fifty-three-year-old Prokofiev takes on the challenge with the confidence, the skill, and the fresh
approach of a master." The piece is one of the most balanced works of his later years, and its popularity is understandable.

The *Sixth Symphony* was written between 1945 and 1947, at which time Prokofiev also finished the orchestral suites arranged from ballets such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*. In reality the slow acceptance of this symphony was influenced greatly by the frictions between Prokofiev and the Soviet authorities, who were discontented with its "artificial complexities", and attacked it as too obscure for the ordinary Soviet citizen to understand. To compose such a work in such a place and at such a time took courage. In the long run, the symphony has been accepted as an intense and radiant work with conflicting and unresolved emotions. By contrast, the *Seventh Symphony*, Prokofiev's last major work composed in 1951-52, was hailed as a triumph at its Moscow premiere. The piece, however, had a very cool reception in the West for the reason that the apparent simplicity of the music represents stylistic regression.

Prokofiev's first mature opera is *The Gambler* (1917), composed in his Russian period, which did not earn the honor of stage production until thirteen years after its completion. However, it first fully revealed his lyricism and his fascination with abnormal or extreme states of mind. After the Russian Revolution, Prokofiev chose to live abroad, dividing much of the next fifteen years between France and the U.S.A. For America he produced his opera *The Love of Three Oranges* (1919), an example of his lively youthful style,
highlighted by a march, which years later became the theme music for The FBI in Peace and War. It likely proved successful because of its high proportion of illustrative orchestral music; it is the single Prokofiev opera that could be called a success in his lifetime. Written for the Chicago Opera, where the work was not enthusiastically received, it had enormously successful first performances in the Soviet Union in 1926 and 1927. These triumphs played a significant role in persuading Prokofiev to return to his homeland in the 1930s.

After Prokofiev permanently returned to the U.S.S.R. in 1936, there was pressure on him to adapt to the new political situation. He was very careful in choosing topics or programs for each new composition. In particular, stage works, generally programmatic music, needed more caution because they contained concrete, direct messages, which were considered to be more influential on the audience at that time. Composers were expected to adjust themselves to the taste of the Community Party. Moreover, Stalin denounced the “fidgety, screaming, neurotic music” of Shostakovich’s opera Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk (1936), which made Prokofiev realize the importance of adapting to the Communistic ideal. Similarly, the Soviet cultural bureaucrats were forced to recognize Prokofiev’s enormous talent and the cultural significance of his international reputation and the popularity of his music abroad. Actually, the Soviet system was never comfortable with geniuses like Prokofiev, who surpassed the norm with exceptional passion, and was rewarded for his labor with numerous official honors, among them the coveted Stalin
Prize. Hymn to Stalin (1939) with popular texts for mixed choir and orchestra may be representative of the composer’s negotiation with political reality.

However, his last years were clouded by virulent political attacks on his music with the accusation of “bourgeois formalism” and “pessimism”, and his compositions were frequently rejected by the Soviet authorities. He had to struggle harder for his music to be accepted and performed. The opera A Real Man was a representative example showing Prokofiev’s extreme caution in opera writing. The piece is the most musically simple and unchallenging of his operas with heavy use of folk-style and mass songs, and a series of “numbers” strung together without internal logic. Gone are the endless flow and drive of the vocal line found in The Gambler and The Love for Three Oranges. Prokofiev’s evolution as an operatic composer was buried under Soviet ideology. This would seem to show how completely Soviet culture had weakened the revolutionary principles of its artists, and how much Prokofiev pursued the approval of those in authority.

On the other hand, Prokofiev is remembered as one of the most successful film composers. In his foreign period, a small Russian comic film brought forth one of his most beloved scores, Lieutenant Kije (1934), whose tale is charmingly dry and absurd, and which was perfectly suited to Prokofiev’s own satirical sense of humor. In the five movements, Prokofiev smoothly presented sparkling, rich nostalgia in the style of burlesque parody. In 1938, Sergei Eisenstein’s cinematic genius prompted Prokofiev to what is perhaps the
greatest film music ever written, *Alexander Nevsky*, which deals with the thirteenth-century Prince of Novgorod, Alexander Nevsky, and is epic in manner yet swift in pace, monumental in emotion yet warmly human. It was one of the first sound films produced in the Soviet Union, and it turned out to be a huge success for him.

Generally, Prokofiev was regarded as a European in Russia, but a Russian in Europe. Soviet bureaucracy criticized his music as too “difficult” for “proletarian” taste, while the Western avant-garde found it too old-fashioned. Although we cannot really find a clear-cut division between early and late, or Western and Soviet in Prokofiev, his music unquestionably shows considerable changes. In his earlier years he often wrote a sharp-edged and fairly dissonant sort of music. During his later years in the Soviet Union, he turned to a more smooth style, painted with a broader brush, and was less inclined toward humor. There is little of the lushness of *Romeo and Juliet* and *War and Peace* in his early music, and not much of the sharpness of *Chout (The Buffoon)* (1915-20), *Visions fugitives* (1915-17), or *Suggestion Diabolique* (in *Four Piano Pieces*) (1910-12) in his work after 1936. Nonetheless, there are elements that steadily flow through all Prokofiev’s music. He himself recognized four “basic lines” in his lifework, which he called classical, modern, motoric, and lyrical. These do not correspond to particular periods in his life; though the balance among the components varies from work to work, all are present all the time.
1.2 Overview of the Piano Sonatas

The nine piano sonatas are a testament to Prokofiev's self-proclaimed compositional ideals; although each is a distinctive work in itself, the "Prokofievian thread" runs through all.\textsuperscript{36} The sonatas display a wide range of emotional expression, and exemplify Prokofiev's growth as a composer. His composing style did not remain static since his aesthetic principles continued to evolve and mature. He continued to experiment with various techniques in terms of harmony, melody, texture, and pianistic skill in the sonatas, which cover a span of over forty years from his student days to his late days. Following the tradition handed down from the Classical period, Prokofiev strove to extend the sonata genre at the same time as he chronicled his stylistic development.

The First, Third, and Fourth Piano Sonatas are taken in greater or lesser part from three of the six student sonatas written at the Conservatory. The First and Third Sonatas are one-movement compositions, displaying the Romantic modification of traditional three or four-movement sonatas. The Second Sonata follows the traditional sonata form, but it displays Prokofiev's unique, creative compositional techniques. In Sonatas No. 1 through No. 4, Prokofiev established many original techniques, to which he adhered fairly consistently throughout his life.\textsuperscript{37} His distinctive compositional devices of toccata-like, motoric rhythm, tweaked harmony including harmonic dislocation and side-slipping, and

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unusual, satirical melody with unexpected twists as well as octave displacement are already found in his earlier sonatas, and continue through his later one’s. In addition, his first four sonatas are all in minor keys, while his last five sonatas are all in major keys. In this respect, the minor mode seems to provide more opportunities for the chromatic alterations so important in his early music.

There is a six-year gap between the last Sonata Mo. 4 (1917) in the Russian period and the only Sonata Mo. 5 (1923) in the foreign period. In his second period, he came under the influence of Stravinsky and Les Six, producing works dissimilar to earlier pieces in which he followed his very personal, creative nature. In this respect, the Fifth Sonata seems quite different from the previous sonatas. Although it is still tonal and diatonic and follows a traditional formal structure, it shows Prokofiev’s attempt at diverse keyboard sonorities in an exotic mood.

During the Soviet period, after a long break from composing piano sonatas, Prokofiev wrote his most significant and profound piano sonatas, the so-called War Sonatas, No. 6, No. 7 and No. 8. The three War Sonatas were sketched out simultaneously in 1939 and completed consecutively in 1940, 1942 and 1944. The turbulent times of the war had an effect on the character and style of these three sonatas. The War Sonatas, however, are much more closely interrelated than would be suggested merely by the fact that they were composed during the war. In his biographical writings, there is evidence that all ten movements of the three sonatas were started at the same time, and were
given consecutive opus numbers (Op.82, 83, and 84) notwithstanding many other compositions finished among them. Furthermore, the War Sonatas reveal cross-references involving motivic, intervallic, and key relationship across the three sonatas as well as cyclic treatments within each sonata. These interrelationships form a crucial basis for the acceptance of the three sonatas as a "trilogy". After finishing the War Sonatas, Prokofiev composed the last sonata No.9 in 1947, which is absent from complexity showing simple peacefulness.

Stylistically, Prokofiev mostly returned to aesthetics and techniques established in his early Russian period, while displaying his distinctive elements. He seems to have achieved the facility that allowed him to consistently employ his compositional materials in an effective manner and the artistic maturity to create truly great musical artworks in his piano sonatas.

Martin states in her dissertation that there are parallels among Prokofiev's sonatas. According to her statement, the First and Ninth Sonatas share a lack of complexity and a partial reliance on outside influence, and complement each other as one possesses a passion and eagerness, and the other a well-won serenity. Also, the first four and last four sonatas were composed while he lived in Russia; only the Fifth was a product of his "foreign" period, whose style is considered a major departure from the previous four sonatas. As a conclusion, the First, Fifth, and Ninth Sonatas show not only the mark of exterior circumstance, but symbolize an interrelation of beginning, change, and end.
CHAPTER 2

COMPARISON OF THE PROKOFIEV SONATAS

NO.2, NO.5, AND NO.8

2.1 Common Characteristics of the Three Sonatas

Prokofiev's three sonatas No.2, No.5, and No.8 share several features. In these three sonatas, Prokofiev utilized the traditional sonata form used in Classical piano sonatas: the fast sonata-allegro first movement, the lyrical slow middle movement, and the energetic last movement (although the Second Sonata has four movements with the addition of a second movement, scherzo). Moreover, unlike other twentieth-century composers such as Bartok, Stravinsky, and Hindemith, Prokofiev wanted to adhere to a conventional sonata perception while emphasizing thematic development as in Beethoven's sonatas rather than considering a piano sonata as a vehicle for other elements. For example, Bartok wrote one Piano Sonata in 1926 in which the external formal structure seems conventional, but which is in reality more sectional, lacking thematic development with the emphasis on the percussion element of the keyboard. Stravinsky also composed one significant Piano Sonata (1924), which is a small
"objective" work with lean, gaunt texture, and Hindemith wrote three piano sonatas in 1936, in which the typical formal scheme of sonata is considerably modified from the original with the focus on contrapuntal treatments such as in the fuga last movement of the Third Sonata.

In his book, David Ewen presents an interview with Prokofiev held in 1930; according to the interview, among several forms he used, Prokofiev thought the sonata form contained everything necessary to suit his structural purpose. Additionally, he was a good pianist and he knew the keyboard very well. Thus, Prokofiev could create distinguished piano sonatas and is considered one of the most significant and innovative composers of piano sonata genre since Beethoven.

In addition to the traditional sonata form, clarity in structure is another characteristic display in Prokofiev’s three sonatas. In the expositions, the first and second themes are clearly suggested and differentiated with a fascinating transition section utilizing different materials and moods from the two themes. In the developments, the previous subjects are revised with thematic changes, and the recapitulations are quite obviously presented with brilliant codas. Prokofiev’s finales are often ostinato-based movements, ending a sonata with an obvious close and also reflecting a structural aspect of the Classical sonata.

Ostinato, the repetition of a short musical pattern, emerged as a central element in the twentieth-century, the period when melodic-rhythmic ostinatos appear most often, while melodic-harmonic ostinatos were most prevalent in the
Baroque period. In the transition section between the two theme groups of the first movement of the Second Sonata, ostinato figurations appear as a prevailing element; in measure 32-45, three consecutive intervals of an octave followed by two half steps, D'-D-C#-D, come out along with the left hand's ostinato accompaniment (Fig.2.1.a), and reappear with a rhythmic change from eighth to sixteenth notes in the closing section of the exposition (Fig.2.2.b). Fiess asserts that Prokofiev helped to establish the importance of the ostinato as a textural device in twentieth-century music.

Figure 2.1. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 1st mov.

a. mm.32-38

b. mm.84-89
Also, Prokofiev’s phrasing is symmetric in all three sonatas; for example, in the first theme of the first movement in the *Fifth Sonata*, a four-measure antecedent phrase and another four-measure consequent phrase form one period as is common in Classical sonatas (Fig.2.2).

![Figure 2.2 Prokofiev Sonata No.5, 1st mov. mm.1-8](image-url)
In terms of texture, Prokofiev’s writing is basically homophonic based on a firm foundation of tertian harmony that depends generally upon triads including major, minor, diminished, augmented, and seventh chords. However, counterpoint occupies a position as important as that occupied by homophony, since many of his chords are either created by contrapuntal lines or have strong linear connections. Thus, functional harmony provides a stabilizing vertical outline that interacts with the strong horizontal forces of voice-leading and dissonance resolution. In all three sonatas, one can find this kind of chord progression determined by voice-leading (the conduct of the several voices or parts in a polyphonic or contrapuntal texture). Among the several examples, the Second Sonata clearly exhibits chord progressions in measures 35-42 of the fourth movement, which sounds like a brass ensemble led by trumpet and including horn and bassoon (Fig.2.3).

Figure 2.3. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov. mm.34-37
In the second subject of the third movement in the *Second Sonata*, all the voices are rhythmically independent, but rarely equal; while the soprano has the melody, and the bass line fulfills the harmonic function, the middle voice provides a counter-melody that completes the harmony, supplies forward movement rhythmically, and generates contrapuntal interest (Fig. 2.4). This kind of device is used for adding fullness to a simple progression or enriching an accompanied melody.

![Figure 2.4. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 3rd mov. mm.22-23](image)

In general, these three sonatas follow the classical model as in Classical sonatas, by utilizing traditional sonata form with clarity of structure and phrasing, and simplicity of texture based on homophonic writing.
In melody, by way of contrast, one can find some aspects in which Prokofiev followed his own individual path, following neither previous composers nor other contemporaries. Prokofiev’s melodies often exhibit distinct characteristics that depart considerably from the melodies of previous composers or at least those with “classical” inclinations. Most of all, Prokofiev frequently employed many abrupt, unexpected leaps in melody including a seventh or a diminished and augmented interval with an addition of sharps or flats. Additionally, Prokofiev used hand-crossing techniques with random switches of register, which produces a “wrong note” result and a humorous or comic effect. The Second Sonata displays this kind of amusing melody in the first theme of the fourth movement, which is unquestionably original (Fig.2.5). Sometimes, the rapid leaps and hand-crossing recall Domenico Scarlatti, but Prokofiev created his unique melodic language with ironic humor, displaying far more than mere technical skill.

Figure 2.5. Prokofiev Sonata No.2 4th mov. mm.17-22

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Similarly, Prokofiev often drew the audience's attention to 'octave displacement' by shifting a main melody one octave up and down. The *Eighth Sonata* has a representative example of octave displacement in the second movement, which covers over eight measures (mm.27-34), and gives the impression of a conversation between different instruments such as the flute and the bassoon (Fig.2.6). This kind of melodic arrangement clearly reveals Prokofiev's unique concern for registration.

![Figure 2.6. Prokofiev Sonata No.8 2nd mov. mm.27-34](image-url)
In terms of harmony, the sonatas also clearly show Prokofiev’s harmonic characteristics. Prokofiev’s harmony is basically tonal, rooted in the system of functional harmony. In general, his abundant chromatic alterations affirm rather than disturb tonality. His chromaticism is antithetical to the chromaticism of the Wagner-Mahler-Schoenberg tradition.\textsuperscript{48} It derives from the concept of expanded tonality rather than from the concept of tonal dissolution. In his book, Fiess states that often what appear to be distantly related harmonies may be analyzed within the context of functional harmonic progressions once enharmonic note-spellings and substitutions have been taken into consideration.\textsuperscript{49}

Prokofiev’s cadence points are fairly obvious, sometimes with a small pause, as in the first movement of the \textit{Second Sonata} (m.31), which gives the audience a chance to breathe (Fig.2.7).

\textbf{Figure 2.7. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 1\textsuperscript{st} mov. mm.26-31}
Often, his cadences finish on unexpected chords or in unexpected keys as the result of abrupt modulations, as in measure 8 of the first movement in the Second Sonata, where the first theme seven measures long finishes on an unexpected chord of the ninth on B, instead of a normal D minor chord (Fig.2.8).

Moreover, cadences can be entirely omitted or merely alluded to as in measure 19 of the first movement in the Second Sonata, where the dominant chord is omitted with one dominant note of A to imply the cadence (Fig.2.9). However, as a whole, Prokofiev’s cadence points are quite recognizable within the clear structures of these sonatas.
One can find another important harmonic feature in these sonatas. Prokofiev used substitute chords in place of traditional harmonies, while retaining their harmonic functions. Fiess discusses an analogy between the harmonic substitution and Fauvist techniques in painting, in which familiar subjects are frequently painted with unorthodox colors that substitute for familiar ones. The *Second Sonata* has an example exhibiting harmonic substitution in measure 70 of the fourth movement, in which an Eb major chord suddenly appears as harmonic replacement of G major (Fig. 2.10). The technique results in ironic or comic effects with a small surprise, similar to that in ‘wrong note’ melodic writing.
The first movement of the *Eighth Sonata* also has a significant passage in terms of harmony; the rising melody of the first theme in Bb major suddenly changes to B major in its climactic point of measure 3, and this kind of harmonic side-slipping with the use of neighbor chords gives a fresh impact and adds tension to the moment, stamping Prokofiev's individuality on the piece (Fig.2.11).
In addition, Prokofiev often used bitonality and polytonality produced by the combination of two or more lines in different keys. The bitonality permits the presentation of tonal materials in complex sonorities. The history of bitonality as a programmatic device, with the intent of pursuing new sonority, or humorous, satirical effect, includes Mozart’s *A Musical Joke* K.522 (1787), Darius Milhaud’s *Saudades do Brasil* (1921) and Charles Ives’s *Variations on America for Organ* (1891), in which the keys of F major and Ab major are juxtaposed but distinguished by the dynamic markings *ppp* and *ff*.  

The *Second Sonata* has a striking passage of bitonality with D major in the R.H. and C major in the L.H. in the fourth movement, which creates a chaotic, confusing image (Fig.2.12).

![Figure 2.12. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov. mm. 98-102](Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.)
The influence of *Les Six* and Stravinsky may be seen in the increased use of polychordality and bitonality as in measures 78-79 of the first movement and measures 9-12 of the third movement in the *Fifth Sonata*. The first example shows the bitonality of E major and Bb major (Fig. 2.13), while the latter has B major and F major (Fig. 2.14). It is remarkable that the key relationships of both examples are at the interval of the tritone.

![Figure 2.13. Prokofiev Sonata No.5, 1st mov. mm. 78-80](image)

![Figure 2.14. Prokofiev Sonata No.5, 3rd mov. mm. 9-10](image)
In the *Eighth Sonata*, bitonality is also heard in the coda of the third movement, where the keys of B♭ major and E major in the R.H. are also related by the interval of the tritone (with added C♯ minor of the L.H.) (Fig. 2.15). However, the first and third beats are B♭ major, and the second and fourth beats are E major, unlike the examples of the *Fifth Sonata* where the key division was between R.H and L.H. not between beats.

![Figure 2.15. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm. 474-476](image)

There is another distinctive harmonic feature in these sonatas. Prokofiev employed seconds in tertian chords giving an added dissonant bite and spice, or wit and irony, to the character of the chords. The *Fifth Sonata* effectively shows such examples both in the second and third movements; measures 17-19 of the second movement seem to show the jazz influence in the 1920’s with teasing and chirping bird sounds (Fig. 2.16), while measures 104-106 of the third.
movement with the added tritone have an ugly, stubborn and muddy sound with thick texture (Fig. 2.17).

Figure 2.16. Prokofiev Sonata No. 5, 2nd mov. mm. 16-20

Figure 2.17. Prokofiev Sonata No. 5, 3rd mov. mm. 104-106

Prokofiev also commonly used obvious parallel intervals and chords in the sonatas. Classical tonal theory prohibits motion in parallel fourths, fifths and octaves, since the repeated or extended use of parallel chords of any type can serve to disrupt the structural hierarchy that is the basis of classical tonality.
replacing it with a succession of equally weighted harmonies, none of which may be perceived as the tonic. Thus, parallel intervals and chords are not common in the music of the 18th – 19th centuries. However, after frequent use of parallel motion in Debussy’s music, some of the 20th-century composers exploited parallel chords for their own purpose. Prokofiev utilized parallelism in his sonatas, which creates a deliberately rustic, exotic, or even humorous effect as well as orchestral color with different registers.

There are several passages that display various kinds of parallel motion in the sonatas. In the first movement of the Second Sonata, he doubles a cadential phrase in parallel fourths, without obscuring the underlying triadic harmony (Fig.2.18).

![Figure 2.18. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 1st mov. mm.95-100](image)

This kind of parallel technique can be more frequently found in all three movements of the Fifth Sonata in his foreign period. In particular, parallel
octaves are prominent in measure 7 and in measures 14-15 within the first theme of the first movement (Fig.2.19.a.b) and in measures 96-97 of the third movement (Fig.2.20), where the lines of soprano and bass are doubled two octaves apart. In addition, in measures 104-107 of the third movement, we find a passage of parallel chords with added tritone, which produces a percussive effect with the use of tone clusters similar to Bartok’s *Sonata Op.26* (Fig.2.17).

Figure 2.19. Prokofiev Sonata No.5, 1st mov.

a. mm.4-7

b. mm.12-15
The *Eighth Sonata* also has many parallel chords. Most distinctive and remarkable is a two-measure section of parallel triad chords of the second inversion in accompaniment figures of the R.H. in the second movement, chromatically moving upwards, which is almost identical to the feature in Toccata, Op.11 composed in his Russian period. (Fig.2.21).

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2.2 Distinctive Features of Each Sonata

2.2.1 The Second Sonata

Prokofiev’s Second Sonata, a significant composition written in 1912, shows great progress from his First Sonata, which is stylistically immature and is often considered to be a late Romantic sonata in the manner of Rachmaninoff’s sonatas. The Second Sonata, within a conventional sonata framework, includes a second scherzo movement demonstrating Prokofiev’s respect for the classical sonata form at this early point in his career. David Kinsey observes that this work paved the way for such later neo-Classical works as Stravinsky’s Piano Sonata (1924). A percussive style appears in this piece, along with a toccata-like driving rhythm, frequent dissonance, and widespread ostinato figuration, resulting in bold and exciting effects.

The opening Allegro, ma non troppo exhibits two contrasting themes, the energetic first theme (mm.1-31) and the lyrical second theme (mm.64-85). The first theme has a rising sequential pattern with asymmetric phrases (Fig.2.22), while the second theme shows stepwise motion with a symmetric period structure (Fig.2.23).
Actually, the second theme is notable in that a triple meter (3/4) is used, different from the duple meter (2/4) of the first theme, a change which is not
common in classic sonata-allegro movements. Also, the second theme is accompanied by arpeggio figures similar to those in Chopin's Nocturnes, but rarely found in Prokofiev's other pieces. These characteristics demonstrate the fact that Prokofiev wanted to clearly differentiate the two themes as in the classic sonata-allegro movement; however, the second theme sounds like a Romantic second theme, lacking Prokofiev's more distinctive features.

In the middle section of the first theme (mm. 8-20) there is nothing but a ninth chord on B based on the syncopated ostinato figures of seconds in the R.H.; there is no fifth (F#) at first (mm. 8-9), then a diminished fifth (mm. 10-11), and finally a perfect one (mm. 12-13), thus giving the impression of harmonic stagnancy, a slowness or repetitiveness of harmonic motion (Fig. 2.24). Also, as mentioned before, the pedal point on B remains unresolved in measure 19, where the dominant chord is elided with only the dominant note (A) leading directly into a tonic triad of D minor (Fig. 2.9).

Figure 2.24. Prokofiev Sonata No. 2, 1st mov. mm. 8-12

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In the development section of the first movement in the Second Sonata, Prokofiev skillfully combines material from three different themes: the second theme, rhythmically changed from triple meter to duple meter, and two different ostinato figures taken from the bridge and transition sections between the first and second theme group (Fig. 2.25).

![Figure 2.25. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 1st mov. mm. 157-164](image)

The device of thematic combination presents Prokofiev's interest in contrapuntal technique. The similar passage is found in the development of Bartok Piano Sonata (1926), where several fragments from the previous thematic groups such as a long pedal tone, an ostinato accompanimental

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figuration, accented sixteenth notes, and the first theme are combined together (Fig. 2.26).

![Figure 2.26. Bartok Sonata 1st mov. mm. 147-150](image)

The vigorous mood shown in Prokofiev's first movement continues in the second scherzo movement in duple meter with a dance-like quality. The scherzo movement strongly shows Beethoven's influence with its perpetual motion; especially, the duple meter scherzo with the arrangement of the second movement in a sonata follows Beethoven's formal scheme as shown in his piano sonatas, Op. 31, No. 3 in Ab major, Op. 101 in F major, and Op. 110 in F minor. The first theme from the scherzo has wide leaps based on the underlying chordal structures (Fig. 2.27), while the trio comprehensively employs the octave (Fig. 2.28).
Compared to the conventional tonic-dominant relationship between the outer movements of the first and fourth (D minor) and the second (A minor), G# minor in the third movement is remarkable with the tritone relation to the first movement. This exhibits Prokofiev's harmonic imagination.

The highly chromatic third movement (Andante) shows a murky and dark mood. The texture of the third movement is much thicker than the simple texture of the previous movements; mostly, three or four voices move with
considerable independence. The first subject group begins with a four-measure introduction, and the bass part has double pedal points with a sequential progression of inner voices from measure 2 to measure 14, and step-wise downward motion in the lower bass part (G#-G-F-E) (Fig. 2.29). This distinctive and exceptional feature of the movement is seldom found in the slow movements of Prokofiev's other sonatas.

Figure 2.29. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 3rd mov. mm.1-15
The second subject group of the third movement (mm.22-30) is in an unusual meter (7/8), and has an inner voice, which usually moves chromatically and obliquely against the outer voices (Fig.2.4).

There is one more aspect of the third movement worth mentioning. In the closing section of the first subject group (mm.19-22), there is a cadential passage that, with consecutive pianissimo tritone chords under a tonic pedal (Fig.2.30), has the serenity of the finale of the German Requiem. As a whole, the third movement of the Second Sonata is like Brahms’ music with its dark, sober, and serious mood.

Figure 2.30. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 3rd mov. mm.19-21

After the ppp ending of the third movement, Prokofiev resumed his amusing and bravura style with motoric, driving ostinato figuration in the fourth movement. The Second Sonata was received with particular disfavor wherever
it was first played, but the last movement was apparently disliked even more than the others. An example of the severe criticism of that time regarding the performance of Prokofiev's *Second Sonata* is:

"The finale of the *Second Sonata* reminds one of a herd of mammoths charging across an Asiatic plateau...when the dinosaur's daughter graduated from the Conservatory of that epoch, her repertory must have included Prokofiev." The criticism obviously displays the hostile reception of that time toward the piece, despising it as a primitive, aggressive, and clumsy music.

In the beginning of the development in the fourth movement, the lyrical second theme from the first movement reappears for twelve measures (Fig. 2.31). Prokofiev's little touch of cyclic treatment in the *Second Sonata* was not very significant in the piece, but twenty-five years later it became a more essential element in sonatas No. 6 through No. 9.

![Figure 2.31. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov. mm.134-137](Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.)
Also, the fourth movement displays a polyrhythmic combination of two themes in measures 98-113: the transition material in 6/8 and the ostinato accompaniment of the second theme in 2/4 are simultaneously used in one measure, which displays the conflict between two different meters, resulting in a "messy" and busy effect (Fig. 2.32).

Figure 2.32. Prokofiev Sonata No.2 4th mov. mm.98-102

2.2.2 The Fifth Sonata

The *Fifth Sonata* was originally composed in 1923 when piano works, as a whole, were becoming rarer in Prokofiev's output. There is a six-year gap between the completion of the preceding *Sonata No. 4* and this one. During those six years, Prokofiev spent much time on the composition of operas such as *The Love for Three Oranges*, and on performance tours in the United States and Europe. The *Fifth Sonata*, however, had an unsuccessful Paris premiere in 1924. Thirty years later in 1953, Prokofiev revised the sonata at the end of his life.
Thus, the *Fifth Sonata* has two opus numbers: Op.38 (1923) and Op.135 (1953). Prokofiev had tried off and on to improve Op.38 since its initial failure and it is the Op.135 version that is commonly known today. In general, the revisions (Op.135) simplified some of the highly complex passages in the original version (Op.38). For example, Op.135 has fewer tempo changes with simpler harmony than Op.38 as in a passage of the development in the first movement (Fig 2.33. a, b). Myra Mendelson-Prokofiev, Prokofiev's second wife, has said that Prokofiev told her many times he was quite pleased that he had rewritten the sonata.58
Fiess states that more frequent meter changes in Op.38 may have been influenced by Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* (1913),59 which shows continuous meter changes as in the beginning section of *Mystic Circles of the Young Girls* (Fig.2.34).
The rhythmic vivacity is not as dominant in the *Fifth Sonata* as in the *Second*. Instead, Prokofiev concentrated his interest more in the areas of melody and harmony with an increased use of chromatic writing. Also, melodic lines become less inclined to skip broadly and switch registers suddenly. Nestyev states that the *Fifth Sonata* "shows the composer moving away from the vitality of his early piano compositions toward a cold, formal speculation." \(^6^0\)
The *Fifth Sonata* has three movements: the first movement in sonata form (C major), the *Andantino* second movement in ternary form (Gb major), and the third movement in rondo form (C major). Unlike the minor keys used in the *Second Sonata*, each movement is major and there is a tritone-relationship (C major/Gb major) between the outer movements and the middle movement, much like the relation (d minor / g# minor) of the first and third movements in the *Second Sonata*.

In the *Fifth Sonata*, Prokofiev wrote the first and second theme of the first movement using unusual modes and scales. The first theme (mm.1-8) consists of the first phrase (mm.1-4) with a Mixolydian flavor and the second phrase (mm.4-8) with the suggestion of a rising whole-tone scale (Bb-C-D-E-F#) (Fig.2.2). On the other hand, the second theme (mm.26-34) has a Phrygian suggestion in the first phrase (mm.26-29) and the sound of a downward whole-tone scale (B-A-G-F-D#-C#-B) in the second (mm.30-34) (Fig.2.35).
With these modal and whole-tone suggestions, Prokofiev tried to keep pace with many of his European contemporaries by exploiting unusual sonorities and exotic flavors.\(^{61}\)

In the ending part of the first theme section, there are some striking quartal chords in measures 16-20; e-a-d in the R.H. and d-g-c in the L.H. (m.16), and b-e-a in the R.H. (m.20) (Fig.2.36).
These quartal chords rarely appear in Prokofiev’s other sonatas while they are much more common in Bartok’s piano works such as the *Bagatelles*, Op.6 and his *Piano Sonata*, Op.26. In the *Fifth Sonata*, the quartal chords do not create their own special effects, since they mostly appear within a tertian context, ending by resolving into tertian chords. They present a slightly different mood in this section, but they tend to take on a tertian coloring in that they appear obviously in the midst of tertian harmony with clear cadence gestures.

After the closing section with its frequent meter changes between duple and triple, the development does not exhibit significant contrapuntal combinations of themes as in the *Second Sonata*; instead, sequential repetitions are dominant within the sections of each theme, and bitonality, especially between E and Bb majors, is much more pronounced in measures 78-89 (Fig. 2.13).
The elegant first movement is followed by a charming second movement. Repeated staccato chordal accompaniments support the outer A section in the ABA structure of the second movement (Fig.2.37). The subtle sound of this movement reminds us of Erik Satie’s music or suggests the mood of jazz, especially in Paris in 1920’s.

![Figure 2.37. Prokofiev Sonata No.5, 2nd mov. mm.1-6](image)

Beginning with an Alberti-bass and its suggestion of Classicism, the third movement is in the rondo form A-B-A-C-A-B-Coda. The movement may also be heard as a sonata form, section C (mm.52-79) can be referred to as the development. However, the piece does not have enough of the typical elements to be considered sonata form because the second theme (B section) is in the same key (C major) as the first theme (A section), and section C of development is not much developed thematically. This third movement has a similar mood to the first movement in this sonata with the same meter (4/4), and similar tempo.
(Allegro and Allegretto), not Vivace as in finale movements of other sonatas. However, the texture of the third movement is much thicker than the first, and the coda section of the third movement has a percussive sound with parallel chords and added tritone (Fig. 2.17).

2.2.3 The Eighth Sonata

The Eighth Sonata presents a quite different view of Prokofiev. It is one of the longest of the nine piano sonatas, and its lyrical quality and tenderness are undeniably appealing. Robinson says, in his biography, that “sweet” and “dreamy” are qualities rarely associated with Prokofiev or his music, but they occur with surprising frequency in the Eighth Sonata. In particular, the first thirty-four measures of the first movement, based on a variation of motives, are a powerful demonstration of Prokofiev’s ability to sustain a period of melodic growth successfully.

Malcolm Brown suggests that the exceptional character of the Eighth Sonata is in some part attributable to the atypical presence of ‘theatrical’ elements. In earlier years before his return to the Soviet Union, Prokofiev had composed two symphonies (No. 3 and No. 4) which derived much of their musical substance from stage works written shortly before; but later on the styles of his ‘absolute’ and ‘theatre’ music diverged considerably. However, the Eighth Sonata, composed in 1944, is unusual among his mature ‘abstract’ works in its stylistic kinship with his theatre music of the period. Brown mentions in
particular that the quietly lyrical idea of this first subject of the first movement resembles Natasha’s theme from *War and Peace* in that the passage has the expansive range, the same general contour, and a similar *espressivo* phrase-structure.⁶⁴ (Fig. 2.38, 2.39).

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Figure 2.38. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 1st mov. mm. 1-5

Figure 2.39. Prokofiev *War and Peace* Natasha’s theme

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Conventionally, a sonata begins with a decisive motion, whether or not a slow introduction announces the opening. However, Prokofiev ignores this custom here: the first movement starts quietly and in a firmly deliberate tempo, picking up only at the Allegro moderato in measure 90. To underline his choice of pace and dynamics, he insists on it throughout all three ideas that comprise the first group. Each is notable for a slow progression, broad range, and dynamic restraint. This kind of long, smoothly unfolded exposition is not usual in Beethoven's sonatas—where, if there is a lyrical section at the beginning of the movement, it is generally an introduction to an Allegro passage and not an exposition, as is in Beethoven Sonata Op.81a in Eb major. Instead, the initial passage is partially like that of the Schubert Sonata D.960 in Bb major, or resembles the beginning of Brahms Intermezzo Op.118 No.2.

Prokofiev's concern for registration clearly emerges with the wide range of all three subjects in the first group; for instance, the climax in the first period (m.3) occurs in a vertical expanse of over four octaves (Fig.2.38). Each phrase is conceived for instrumental performance since no single human voice could easily encompass the required span; nonetheless, vocal elements abound in the melodic lines of each phrase. Prokofiev obviously exploited the wide keyboard range with the disposition of all the parts in each idea.

The climax of the first period also displays Prokofiev's highly personal harmonic coloring, in which the climax is heightened by a tonal shift up a half step. Harmonic dislocation or side-slipping by half step, either up or down,
one of Prokofiev’s personal characteristics. He tweaks the melodic line and its accompanying parts to enhance the impact of high points, to re-animate the line as it approaches a cadential juncture, or simply to color an otherwise ‘squarely’ conventional progression.

The emotional intensity of the second theme is well expressed with descending minor ninths in the tenor, immediately answered by a delicate flute-like duet two octaves away in the soprano (Fig. 2.40).

Israel Nestyev says in Prokofiev’s biography, “the second group of the first movement reminds one of the troubled recitatives in Prokofiev’s operas.” The melody has unexpected leaps with a large distance. Their interchange with two distinctive figures represents a dialogue. Again Prokofiev has ignored conventions of sonata form: lyrical, self-contained melodies unfold in his
sonata's first group, while the fragmented, motivic material is reserved for the second theme.

The lyrical, almost Brahms-like, quality of the exposition suddenly changes to an energetic and aggressive character in the beginning of the development (m.90), which is a characteristic feature in Prokofiev's sonatas (Fig.2.41).

![Figure 2.41. Prokofiev Sonata No.8. 1st mov. mm. 90-91](image)

With this background animation, Prokofiev projects the themes of the exposition without their accompanying harmony and a counterpoint results from the combination of different themes, similar to the Second Sonata. This practice of stripping previous lyrical themes to their elemental shape frequently occurs in Prokofiev. The technique helps him to avoid the difficulties of 'developing' self-contained, lyrical themes. However, the effect is grand when the second subject in the first theme group appears raw against a G# pedal tone four
octaves below at measure 141 (Fig.2.42.a), or when the first subject appears
devoid of its rich accompaniment at measure 155 over a single sinuous line of
counterpoint (Fig.2.42.b). The appearance of the somber, sinister second theme
is reserved for the culmination of the development in measures 170-176, where
the maximum force of the piano is required (Fig. 2.42.c). Although the original
quality is transformed into a threatening roar in the section, the basic elements
of this group remain unchanged from their first emergence in the exposition; it
is not fragmented or expanded, only restated fortissimo.
While the first movements of the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Sonatas differ in conception, their middle movements contain much in common, both in mood and idiom. All are lyrical compositions in dance style.

The second movement of the Eighth displays tranquility and serenity with the markings, *dolce* and *tranquillo* (Fig. 2.43).
This is another example showing Prokofiev's tender expression, and the movement is also a showcase for Prokofiev's fantastic variation writing; the main eight-measure melody reappears four times with slightly different melodic figures and accompaniments throughout the movement. Its basic theme is distinguished by almost classical clarity, balance of form, and melodic elegance. As the first period closes, simple chromatic changes throw the tonality from Db major to D major without any other devices, which presents an enjoyable surprise (mm.8-9). In general, mildness is the characteristic of harmony in this movement. Delayed resolutions, added tones, and momentary shifts contribute a slight spiciness to both melody and harmony, though bold digressions are carefully avoided.
In contrast with the second movement, the final movement begins with a rapid tarantella (Fig. 2.4), recalling Prokofiev's earlier pieces such as the last movement of the *Second Sonata*. From the opening measures, the audience can easily discern Prokofiev’s humor and energetic spirit.

![Figure 2.44. Prokofiev Sonata No.8,3rd. mm.1-3](image)

In the long dance-like middle section, Prokofiev creates the basic motivic material using the notes of Ab-G-Ab, and applies this motive to the three distinctive parts in the middle section (Fig.2.45.a.b.c). The short ostinato motif gradually expands until octave displacement reveals its true identity with the ominous minor ninths of the second theme in the first movement (Fig.2.45.c). This is a clear display of cyclic treatment within the *Eighth Sonata* as in the *Second Sonata*. 

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Figure 2.45. Prokofiev Sonata No. 8, 3rd mov.

a. mm. 107-114

b. mm. 225-232

c. mm. 279-290
Basically, the *Eighth Sonata* relies on techniques developed during his first period. In particular, Prokofiev's rhythmic features in the *Eighth Sonata* effectively illustrate a trend toward the technique he established during his Russian period as in the *Second Sonata*. In the first movement, driving sixteenth notes suddenly initiate the development section after little pause, and gradually build up the tension to the explosive climax of this movement. Also, the third movement shows an energetic triplet of eighth notes moving up and down, which constitutes the beginning and the ending section of the movement. Using vigorous rhythms, he fully demonstrates his characteristic vitality and spirit in the sonata.

As in the *Second Sonata*, the ostinato pattern is prominent in the *Eighth Sonata*. The beginning of the second movement displays the ostinato accompaniment with three octave notes of Db-Ab-Ab, sixteen measures long. The dance-like middle section in the third movement (mm.107-342), which assumes the character of a "frenzied waltz" in *Allegro*, has the distinguished four-bar ostinato of the L.H. with three notes of G,Ab and Bbb spanning about 58 measures (mm.225-282) (Fig. 2.45.b). The ostinato by using a simple motive unifies the long middle section.

In terms of texture, the *Eighth Sonata* displays variety from simplicity to complexity, often changing from simple arpeggio doubling of two hands to three linear passages exchanging the melody, or from homophonic chordal writing with voice-leading to a linear progression with four voices.

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Unusual meter and polymetric combination within one measure, as used in the Second Sonata, are not found in the Eighth Sonata. However, there is one interesting spot in the climax of the first movement with both 4/4 (the first and second beats) and 12/8 (the third and fourth beats) in one measure, but this passage sounds like a triplet-subdivision of the prior quarter note of the first beat and does not make a big difference in the passage (Fig.2.46).

Figure 2.46. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 1st mov. m.187

Frequent meter change within one movement (as in the Fifth Sonata) is still used in the Eighth Sonata. In the first movement, the serious second theme alternates between 4/4 and 2/4 three times in the exposition (Fig.2.40). In spite of the meter change, the meters of 4/4 and 2/4 share duple meter with each other so those sections do not make sudden changes, while the Fifth Sonata is likely to wander in some passages because of the meter change between duple and triple within one movement.
In terms of structure, the *Eighth Sonata* presents quite distinctive aspects. Most of all, the formal dimensions of the outer movements are considerably expanded notably in the development of the first movement (105 out of the entire 297 measures) showing contrapuntal combination of different themes, and in the middle section (C) of the third movement (242 out of 489 measures) containing roughly half the length of the entire movement.

In addition to the formal dimensions, the first theme group of the first movement, which consists of four periods, and each period has two four-measure phrases of antecedent and consequent, shows the extension of traditional theme group with symmetric structure by using variation technique. Also, an extension of the traditional period structure is found within the first theme group. The first period has a one-measure addition in measure 5, linking the first phrase (mm.1-4) and the second phrase (mm.6-9) (Fig.2.38), while the second and third periods show well-balanced eight-measure phrases. The startling commencement of the development with new materials is another distinctive feature of the *Eighth Sonata*. In these respects, Prokofiev’s unique experimentation with the conventional sonata form in the *Eighth Sonata* shares similar innovative characteristics with Beethoven’s late sonatas.
3.1 Technical Problems

3.1.1 Rapid notes

In this section, rapid notes are defined as single running notes in major, minor, chromatic scales, or any irregular group of notes in a comparatively fast tempo. Prokofiev frequently used irregular note groups and unusual scales, derivation of which are difficult to determine because of many sharps and flats, and abrupt intervals. He also utilized even normal scales in a slightly different way. All of these aspects create technical difficulties for the performer. The first appearance of rapid notes in the *Second Sonata* is in measures 52-53 of the first movement (Fig.3.1).
This figuration ascends two octaves imparting the feeling of acceleration with the beginning triplet followed by sixteenth notes. The difficulty is that the two down-beat notes (E and D#) have octaves, in which a rapid shift of hand position between chord and scale is needed. In spite of the difficulty, an even and seamless sound is desirable like playing a simple two-octave scale with a little crescendo. In practicing, at first, one can play the scale slowly and exactly without the octave chords, by using the fifth finger of the R.H. for the second down-beat note, D#; thus, the entire fingering is (1-2-3)-(1-2-3-4)-(5 1-2-3)-(1-2-3-4)-5 (until the first note of measure 54). Then, one adds the octave chords in the scale. The focal point of the practice is the connecting parts of an octave chord and a single note. When changing hand position between a chord and a single note, one should shift the hand lightly and rapidly to the exact spot of the next chords or notes. To show a little crescendo for the whole line of two
measures, the intensity of finger pressing the keyboard can be differentiated gradually with a relaxed wrist.

In order to play one passage or even one measure freely and perfectly, a more individualized way to practice should be examined by the performer since each performer’s hand is different in size and flexibility. Mechanical practice should be avoided; instead, the performer should listen carefully to the sound he produces during practice, and observe the hands, arms, and shoulders not to get tense.

In the *Eighth Sonata*, a similar passage is found in the right-hand scale in measures 27-30 of the third movement (Fig.3.2)

![Figure 3.2. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm.27-29](image)

The difference between the representative passages in the *Eighth* and *Second Sonatas* is that the first chord is not an octave but a ninth chord, which is more difficult because both the first lower octave note (Ab) and the next note
(Bb) should be played by the thumb of the R.H. Although the thumb note Ab of the R.H. may be shared by the thumb of the L.H. in measure 27, sharing with two hands is not feasible in the following passage of measures 29-30 due to the spacing of the hands. Ideally, the first thumb note of Ab should be light, moving quickly to the next thumb note Bb in measure 29. Simultaneously, the sound of the longer Bb notes in the treble voice should be clearly brought out, and sufficiently sustained despite the fact that the ninth of the first chord is hard to play, especially for someone with small hands. The fingering of the alto line in the first scale of measures 27-28 may be (1-1-2)-(1-2-1)-(2-3-4)-(5-2-1)-(3-2-1).

There is another example showing ascending running-notes of both hands in measures 248-253 of the third movement in the Eighth Sonata (Fig. 3.3).
The example is well known for its difficulty. The difficulty arises from playing sixteenth ascending, sequential patterns followed by the left hand in the same pattern at the interval of the fourth in a fast tempo. One should try not to break the sound between the last and the next first notes in four-note groups of measures 248-250, in which slight rolling motions of the hands are needed with relaxed wrists. The following descending scales are in normal Db major (mm.251-252), but the connecting part of the ascending and descending scales (Eb-Ab notes in the R.H., and Bb-Db notes in the L.H.) is quite problematic as one must change directions in both hands with rapid leaps of fourths. In this case, one can practice the leaping motion, separating five notes with the last four notes of the ascending scale (m.250) and the first note of the descending scale (m.251) with the accents on the descending first notes of both hands (Ab, Db). The dynamic marking of crescendo from mp to ff with ‘precipitato’ (rushed) adds to the difficulty of the passage. However, a clear and exact sound is more important than musical expression due to the fast tempo; the pressure on the keyboard for crescendo may obstruct the speed by causing fatigue. Instead, to show the dynamic, one can use a bit of pedal.

Another distinctive passage that demonstrates fast running notes with hand crossing is in measures 223-225 of the third movement in the Eighth Sonata (Fig.3.4).
In this section, the scales require the alternation of both hands, and one must be more careful to produce the sound of one smooth line and avoid the bumpy sound normally caused by hand crossing. To avoid such a sound, the last note of the grouped four notes should be touched without unnecessary accents. In particular, the thumb notes of the left hand need more attention since the thumb is likely to cause a bump or unevenness with the different direction and length of the other four fingers. During the exercise, one can play the scale by one hand, listening for a desirable, seamless sound, and then try to imitate the same sound with both hands.

A similar passage is found in measure 60 of the second movement in the *Eighth Sonata*, in which the scale accelerates with the change of note values from thirty-second to sixty-fourth notes (Fig. 3.5).
Different from the previous example of the third movement, the sound of the whole scale might be like a tender, shining *glissando*. Also, redistributing the scale between two hands can make this section much easier to play, therefore redistributions are marked above with the desirable fingering.

The first movement of the *Eighth Sonata* also has one remarkable passage in measures 290-291 (Fig. 3.6).
In this passage, Prokofiev utilized normal scales in a slightly different way. The beginning notes are the same in both hands with an octave apart, but the endings are different with Gb in the R.H. and E in the L.H. The second half of the scale has rhythmic divergence of thirty-second and triplet of sixteenth notes, suggesting some psychological feeling of disappointment or disagreement, or a “modern” sense of unresolved complexity. In this section, the scales of both hands must present a clearly articulated sound, and the final notes of the scales (Gb,E) should be more emphasized in both hands. Firm fingers are needed, and the use of deep, long pedal is not suitable in the section. The rhythmic discrepancy also should be brought out within the scales. In practicing polyrhythmic passages, one must confirm the simultaneous start and end of both hands with small accents, not trying to practice the exact ratio of each note between the hands.

There is one more difficult passage in the L.H. with rapid notes in measures 40-41 of the third movement in the Eighth Sonata (Fig. 3.7).

![Figure 3.7. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm.39-41](image)

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The L.H. shows a descending line with a small turning in the middle of the scale. Playing the left-hand scale alone is not very difficult, but it becomes more difficult if the syncopated, repeated chords of the R.H. are added to the L.H. To avoid a scrambled sound, one can give little accents on the first beats of each measure in both hands, assuring the rhythmic accuracy of the hands. At the same time, the sound of the R.H. should not be predominant over that of the descending scale in the L.H. Additionally, when the last note of the scale in the L.H (C#) comes to the octave chord of B in the next measure 42, a rapid change of the hand position from a scale to a chord is needed with increased dynamic, accentuating the first chord of three B notes measure 42 in both hands.

3.1.2. Chordal Patterns

Keyboard instruments provide many opportunities for composers to use various sounds and expressions through different chordal patterns achieving a variety of textures. Keyboard instruments can produce as much sound as our hands can reach and touch on the keys at the same time, from simple chords with two notes to thick and massive chords as in orchestral tutti parts. Many composers display their unique characteristics through their chordal writing. Since new possibilities of making a percussive sound with the piano were introduced in the early twentieth century, chordal writing has become even more diverse and innovative.
In his piano sonatas, Prokofiev also shows a variety of chordal patterns, from plain octave ostinato figures to consecutive thicker chordal patterns of four or five voices. At times, his chordal writing is technically hard to play, but in most cases it is more feasible than the piano writing of other twentieth-century composers such as Bartok and Stravinsky, who emphasized the percussive aspect of the piano. In this respect, Prokofiev's chordal writing is not really innovative or progressive, but quite conservative.

In the Second Sonata, the beginning part of the second movement exhibits various staccato chordal styles, in which the chords of the R.H. get thicker while accompanying the melody of the L.H. with hand-crossing. Single and two-note staccato chords of measure 1 become successive two-note staccato chords of measures 3-4, chromatically moving with the use of alternative fingerings between 2, 4 and 1,5 (Fig. 3.8.a). These two-note chords then change to the three-note chords in oblique shape in measures 9-10 (Fig.3.8.b), and lastly, the three-note chords lead to four-note chords in measure 16 (Fig.3.8.c).
In measure 3, a small change in hand position is needed in the R.H. to accommodate the intervallic differences of 3rd – 6th (the first two eighth chords of measure 3), 3rd – 5th (the third and fourth chords), and 3rd – 4th (the seventh and eighth chords) (Figure 3.8.a). When practicing this chordal pattern, one can separately play two layers of the upper chromatic line with the use of 4-5 fingers and the lower leaping line with 1-2 fingers. Then, one plays the two lines together without staccato concentrating on the intervallic changes. After
getting acquainted with the hand position and the fingering, the performer may practice staccato. Light staccato is similar to tapping fingers on a table or on a computer keyboard, while big and strong staccato is akin to bouncing a ball. Thus, light staccato needs small, but firm finger motion with accuracy in a shaped hand position and relaxed wrists. Strong staccato requires big fore-arm motion, with relaxed but stable wrists, to convey the strength from the upper-arm to the fingers. As more notes are added to the chordal pattern, the intervals get wider, or a crescendo is needed as in measures 8-9 and 16, one should gradually change the small staccato chord motion to a big staccato motion.

In playing continuous chordal passages as in the beginning part of the scherzo movement in the Second Sonata (mm.1-26), strenuous practice with accumulated fatigue may cause injury to the hands or arms. If feeling exhausted or sore, one should stop practicing immediately. After a period of rest, one may try it again in a much slower tempo, while watching hands, arms and shoulders carefully.

In the fourth movement of the Second Sonata, a continuous chordal passage is found in the transitional section of measures 35-50 (Fig.3.9).
In this section, triadic chordal patterns including the second and third inversion are interrupted by one note of the L.H. Keeping the triplet rhythm even - without unnecessary accents on one note of the L.H. - is important. Also, the upper note of each chord with the fifth finger of the R.H. should be brought out as a melodic line, typical of 'voice-leading' chordal passages, emphasizing the notes of strong beats within one measure.

This section reappears with subtle differences four times in the movement; in measures 98-113 with added accompaniments of the L.H. (Fig. 3.10.a); in measures 206-209 with different accompaniment pattern of the L.H. only four measures long, adding four-note chords in the right hand, (Fig. 3.10.b); in measures 259-274 with the same figures as in the first transition, transposed one note higher (Fig. 3.10.c); and the last in the coda of measures 322-334 with many four-note chords and large leaps of the R.H. (Fig. 3.10.d).
Figure 3.10. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov.

a. mm. 97-101
b. mm. 205-209
c. mm. 258-262
d. mm. 321-326
A constant tempo is vital while playing these similar sections. Consecutive four-note chords with large leaps (Fig.3.10.d) are very difficult to play in a fast tempo. However, demands on technique cannot be an excuse to lag behind the original *vivace* tempo, because inexhaustible driving rhythm is the most important element in this movement.

In the second movement of the *Fifth Sonata*, one can find constant three-meter chordal accompaniments with *staccato* in the L.H., which give a dance-like quality to this movement (Fig. 3.11).

![Figure 3.11. Prokofiev Sonata No.5, 2nd mov. mm.1-18](image-url)
The chords show all kinds of triads: major, minor, diminished, and augmented triads in first and second inversion. Diminished triads, however, are not shown until the ending part of the movement before the coda (mm.108-110). Diminished chords seem to be reserved for the climactic passage in the movement. Technically, all chords should be played lightly and evenly with slightly emphasized sound of the ornamented note of A and the bottom note of the first chord, Bb (m.1). At this time, the wrist must be relaxed when the hand is in chord position. In measures 13-18, there are some playful staccato chords of the seconds in the R.H. These teasing chords should be more sparkling and lucid. For this sound, one should tap shortly and lightly by using the tips of fingers in the upright position.

The third movement of the *Fifth Sonata* shows an unusual sound similar to the tone clusters in Bartok’s *Sonata* Op.26. In measures 105-106, repeated five-note chords are found with the change of range, and these two measures of regular eighth chords are followed by a rhythmically altered passage with the same chords in measures 108-110 (Fig.3.12).
A hand stretch using all five fingers is not easy for someone with small hands. In this case, one may play the first two notes from the bottom of each chord with the thumb of the R.H. if the bottom two notes do not have sharps and flats. The dynamic marking maintains $f f o r$ this section, so sustaining one's strength is crucial in this passage. For effective performance with less fatigue, one should decide which chords need more sound in terms of structure, harmony, or melody among all the chords and save power in order to play the more important chords well with energy. One's endurance can result in a musically convincing performance.

In the *Eighth Sonata*, chordal passages are as not as common. In the first movement, linear progression is predominant except in two chordal sections of the L.H.: measures 130-131 with the ascending chordal pattern of
the L.H. alternating dotted eighth three-note chords and sixteenth one note (Fig. 3.13.a), and measures 281-286 with the sequential split chordal pattern of the L.H. moving downward for five measures (Fig. 3.13.b).

Figure 3.13. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 1st mov.

a. mm.130-131
b. mm.281-282

The former (Fig. 3.13.a) has a step-wise progression, but there is a wide leap in the middle of measure 131, where the sixth chord (E, C#) of the second beat is preceded by three short running notes. It is very hard to play well
because a sudden shift of the L.H is required in the fast tempo. In this case, a pianist with big hands can play the chord with the first and second fingers so the fingering including the running notes would be 5-4-3-2/1 (E/ C#). For a pianist with small hands, I would suggest a fingering 5-4-3-5/1 for this part, requiring a quick change of the third and fifth fingers of the L.H. In spite of the difficulties of this chordal section, the progression of the L.H. should be clearly played, emphasizing the contrary motion between the hands.

The latter (Fig.3.13.b) has a chromatically descending passage of split chords in parallel fifths. To play this passage with clear articulation, it is recommended to practice dividing the left hand part into two different lines of the upper with the fingering of 1-3 and the lower with 5-3 in order to assure the finger movement of the L.H. on the keyboard. Many flats and sharps are included in the section, but excessive positional change of the hand (in and out of black keys) adds to the difficulty of the passage, and hinders the tempo. An economical lateral hand motion would be a better solution for this section, with slightly turning motion of the wrist if needed. The arm and wrist should be relaxed while firm fingers should articulate as precisely as possible.

In the third movement of the *Eighth Sonata*, linear progression is as dominant as in the first movement. There are a few significant chordal sections; in measures 225-282 of the middle section (Fig.3.14), and in measures 458-485 of the coda (Fig.3.15.a.b.c).
In the former passage, the L.H. shows an octave ostinato figure of four measures. The upper and lower lines of the octave have different accents with slightly different note values, appearing like a canon between two lines, making this accompaniment somewhat difficult to play. In practicing this part, one may play with both hands, feeling the different accents in the two lines.

The coda of the third movement in the Eighth Sonata shows three kinds of chord patterns with wide leaps in the L.H: consecutive jumping triad chords of the root and its inversion positions (Fig.3.15.a), octave chords without any regular directions (Fig.3.15.b), and split chords (Fig.3.15.c).
Due to a fast tempo with driving rhythm, all sections are very difficult to play. As suggested before, playing with inexhaustible energy is significant in the execution of such a demanding passage. After deciding upon more important spots, one’s strength should be distributed efficiently throughout the sections, reserving some energy for climactic moments as well as trying to find momentary points for musical rest or relaxation without thwarting the driving rhythm.
3.1.3 Broken Chords

Prokofiev’s energetic and driving motion is often presented through broken chords with eighth triplet rhythm, sometimes forming ostinato figures. These broken chords with motoric rhythm are not easy to play in a fast tempo. There are several examples in his sonatas with the third movement of the *Eighth Sonata* being a representative model. In the third movement, except for the dance-like middle section, broken chords in 12/8 meter inexhaustibly run through the entire movement with thin, simple texture and play a significant role in this vigorous movement.

In measures 1-3 of the third movement in the *Eighth Sonata*, the melody of broken chords goes up two octaves and down one octave from the top Bb with small ripple figures whose sound is light and playful (Fig.3.16).

![Figure 3.16. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm.1-3](image-url)
In measure 1, small rolling motions in the R.H. are needed to play four broken chords. In the remaining broken chords ascending and descending (mm.2-3), the R.H. and fingers should follow smoothly in the direction of the forearm; much emphasis on independent finger motion, without regard to the whole moving direction, may hinder the lightness of the sound and the fluent flow of the melody. The use of the second finger of the R.H. for the first note of measure 2 (Bb) is also helpful for a smooth melodic line. The dotted half notes of Bb (mm.2-3) should be given small accents. Another difficult aspect of this section is a leap between the last eighth note of the second beat (Ab) and the next dotted half note of the third beat (Bb) in measure 3 with the ninth interval. One should practice the exact distance between two notes with the relaxed wrist, and the last eighth note (Ab) of the second finger should sound soft and lighter without being short in a hurry.

The third movement shows familiar arpeggio figures in measures 71-78 (Fig.3.17).

![Figure 3.17. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm.71-73](image-url)

Figure 3.17. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm.71-73
Although both hands do not have the same shapes, the passages certainly resemble the arpeggio patterns of Chopin Etude Op.25 No.12. Clearly articulated sound of each note is desirable with less pedal, but, among them, the first eighth note of the first beat (the bottom note of the figure) and the first of the third beat (the peak note) within each measure should be emphasized.

In the Second Sonata, similar driving broken chords are found in the accompaniments of the L.H. in the first and fourth movement. In the first movement, triplet eighth notes of slightly altered broken chords in the meter of 2/4 accompany the first theme (Fig.3.18).

Figure 3.18. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 1st mov. mm.1-8
The left hand’s accompaniment figures of the first movement in the
Second Sonata show the downward progression of D-C-B-Bb-A-G-F-E-D on
the first notes of each measure. As the intervals within the broken chords get
wider in measures 1-8, the thumb notes of the L.H. in each measure become
harder to play well in tempo, particularly for a player with small hands. The
player should have small rolling motion in the L.H., and avoid unnecessary
accents on the thumb notes.

Similar ostinato broken chords in the meter of 6/8 are shown in both
hands in the beginning part of the fourth movement (Fig.3.19).

![Figure 3.19. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov. mm.1-5](image)

The broken-chord figure of the fourth movement is mostly shown as an
ostinato pattern without much change. Technically, the figure seems harder than
that of the first movement, because it includes the fourth finger of the L.H.
which is less independent than other fingers, and the tempo is vivace with the
Various methods to practice by using different articulation, rhythm, and dynamic can be helpful. Also, slight accents on the first eighth note in each measure easily generate the feeling of steady rhythm.

Although the broken chords of the first and fourth movements are not the same in meter and shape, both are fundamental elements that support the energetic and vigorous motion, and also show a cyclic feature in the *Second Sonata*.

Another example may be found in measures 9-12 of the fourth movement in the *Second Sonata* (Fig. 3.20).

![Figure 3.20. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov. mm. 8-13](image)

Broken-chord figures in both hands end the introduction section by descending five octaves, which is a surprising drop. Every third note of the descending figure in measures 9-12 shows step-wise motion of (E-F)-(G-A)-(Bb-C#), and they are finally led to the D of measure 14, constituting a...
harmonic minor scale on D. After an initial impulse on the top Bb note in both hands, one’s forearm should move downward to the A note with trill. What is desired in the phrase is an even and seamless line without unnecessary accents in the middle.

Additionally, there is a passage displaying an ascending motion with melodic broken chords in measures 146-160 of the fourth movement in the *Second Sonata* (Fig. 3.21).

Figure 3.21. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov. mm.146-161
The first broken chord of the sixteenth triplet and a eighth note (m.146) is repeated with a plucked (fast arpeggiated) figure twice in the next measure 147. The pattern of these two measures reappears six times in the whole section (mm.146-160), showing a chromatically ascending line of E-F-F#-G-Ab-A-Bb. When playing this passage, the sound of the triplet and plucked broken chords may be sparkling and light with the accents on the notes of the fifth finger. Also, the passage may have a flexible, indecisive tempo, hesitant in the beginning, and gradually speeding up with crescendo according to the expression marking of poco a poco accelerando al vivace.

3.1.4 Repeated notes

Many twentieth-century composers often emphasized the percussive aspect of the piano by employing repeated notes. Prokofiev also utilized repeated notes based on inexhaustible, motoric rhythm. In these sonatas, the Second and Fifth Sonatas rarely have repeated notes as in the Toccata, Op.11, but the Eighth Sonata has a few passages with repeated notes. In the third movement, measures 9-10 show repeated notes, alternated by both hands under a sustained chord of E minor in the R.H. (Fig.3.22).
This passage, contrasting with the previous sections of triplet eighth-note broken chords, is a staccato section of eighth notes in the meter of 4/4 that appears several times in the third movement. In playing this passage, the repeated staccato notes should sound even, not very playful but rather cold and dry in a steady, unhurried tempo. The hands should be close to the keyboard, playing with light staccato touch without unnecessary accents, particularly on the thumb notes of the R.H.

There is another repeated notes in the third movement of the *Eighth Sonata*. In measures 476-477 of the coda, a very demanding section of repeated single notes is found in the R.H. (Fig.3.23).
Based on the bitonality of Bb and E major in the L.H., the R.H. moves up and down in the shape of a stairway with three repeated notes. The sound of the section should be clearly articulated with vigor. Frequent changes of fingering on the repeated notes may deter the fast tempo, so the desirable fingering of measure 476 in the R.H. is (1-2-2)-(1-2-2)-(2-4-4)-(4-2-2). Once past an initial impulse on the first note of each measure, one may let the remaining notes within the measure go forward, quivering the hand against the keyboard slightly and rapidly.

3.1.5 Large leaps

Prokofiev frequently employs many abrupt, unexpected leaps in melody, and hand-crossing techniques with random switches of registers, which generate many challenges of performance. In the Second Sonata, the fourth
movement has an example showing octave displacements in the melody with large leaps in measures 17-26 (Fig.3.24).

![Figure 3.24. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov. mm. 17-22](image)

This first theme of the fourth movement spans more than two octaves, and also requires hand crossing of the R.H. with the ostinato accompaniment of the L.H. in the range of alto. This kind of melodic displacement demonstrates Prokofiev's originality, and inspires the mood of *scherzando* in the movement. No matter where the melody locates among different ranges, the melodic line should be played distinctly with clear sound. The hand prepares the next position in advance, and memorization of the passage enables the preparation much easier.

In the middle of development section in the fourth movement of the *Second Sonata*, a repeated single C# with *sf* is found in the R.H. thirteen times, which displays large and rapid leaps (Fig.3.25).
The repeated C# sounds like a car horn, showing a kind of obstinate expression. The notes should show aggressive and ruthless accents. To play the passage well, one’s arms should move quickly with relaxed shoulders, and one’s eyes should glance at the exact spot of the keyboard for the next note, right before the jumping hand lands on the key. This preparation should be carried out from the beginning stage of one’s practice.

As discussed before, the scherzo movement of the Second Sonata shows hand-crossing devices throughout the entire scherzo section (Fig.3.8.a). In the passage, the R.H. plays staccato accompaniments in the alto range, so the two high-pitch melodic notes in the middle of each measure should be played by the L.H. crossed over the R.H. This kind of consistent hand-crossing figure may keep one’s hands and arms busy and cause them to become easily tired. One
should get acquainted with the distances through repeated practice with accuracy.

The *Eighth Sonata* has some passages with large leaps in measures 149, 278, and 286 of the first movement (Fig.3.26.a.b.c).

![Figure 3.26. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 1st mov.](image)

- a. mm.148-150
- b. mm.277-278
- c. m. 286

Figure 3.26. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 1st mov.

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The first example (Fig.3.26.a) shows large leaps of both hands in the same direction. One's hands should quickly leap from the short ornamented notes toward the next longer notes with accurate distance, but the first ornamented notes also take some care; in particular, the D octave notes of the L.H. should be brought out as a strong pedal point, and sustained sufficiently by using the pedal, although the section is not easy to play.

The left-hand part of the next example (Fig.3.26.b) seems like random leaps without a main direction, which makes this measure harder to play. The sound of the leaping L.H. can imitate the various timbres created by different instruments in an orchestra such as trumpet (D# of the first and fourth beat), tuba (octave B of the second), trombone (octave G on the third), and flute (E of the next first). The fingers should be firm, and move precisely and lightly.

The last example with the leap of the R.H. (Fig.3.26.c) is one of the most demanding passages in the first movement because, in the third beat of the measure, the performer should change very quickly from chord position of octave B notes to scale position of A, shifting downward over the range of one octave. In spite of the busy motion, the scale should be one seamless line, which is the performer's main task. When practicing the passage, the performer should consider the four sixteenth notes of the third beat as a group with one downward motion, and repeat the four notes with a minimum of jumping.
Lastly, the coda section of the third movement in the *Eighth Sonata* is well known as the most challenging passage for every performer. In particular, measures 458-465 are a very challenging passage with continuous large leaps (Fig. 3.27).

Figure 3.27. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm.458-461

The passage requires constant up-and-down leaping motions in fast tempo in both hands: the R.H. of broken chords and the L.H. of solid chords. The broken-chord figures are harder than the solid chords in that we do not have time to prepare for the next notes due to the continuously connected notes. In playing the right-hand part of the passage, we should get acquainted with the different hand position and location of each chord through repeated practice with small rotation, and the last note of each triplet should be played lightly, the player being careful not to lose sound or shorten the length of the notes.
3.2 Tempo

In terms of tempo, the three sonatas No. 2, No. 5, and No. 8 have a traditional relationship among the movements; the first movement in Allegro, the slow movement in Andante or Andantino, and the last movement in Vivace or Allegro. However, some differences do arise with these three sonatas regarding tempo.

Compared to the first movements of the Second and Fifth Sonatas, the first movement of the Eighth Sonata is different from the others in terms of tempo; it begins the exposition Andante, changes the tempo to Allegro in the development, and then returns to Andante in the recapitulation with the coda in Allegro. In contrast, the first movements of the Second and Fifth sonatas have a generally constant tempo of Allegro. In the first movement of the Eighth Sonata- in spite of the Andante sections of exposition and recapitulation- the overall tempo of the movement is not considered Andante because of the long Allegro sections in the development and coda. Sometimes, some listeners consider the first Andante section to be a long introduction, regardless of the thematic material in it. In playing the first movement of the Eighth Sonata, it is important to clearly present the contrast between the different tempos of Andante and Allegro.

Sometimes, a transition section connecting the first and second themes changes the tempo and mood with some musical expressions such as Piu mosso or Piu animato, which refreshes the ear before the appearance of the second
theme. The Second Sonata shows *Piu mosso* (more agitated) in its transition section with *ritard* at the ending part (mm.60-63), and the transition of the Eighth Sonata (mm.35-54) also has *Poco piu animato* (a little more animated) with *allargando* (becoming slower) before the beginning of the second theme (mm.53-54). In playing these transition passages, one may show a lively and unique mood, different from the outer thematic sections. On the other hand, the Fifth Sonata does not change tempo in its transition.

The slow movements of *Andante* (No. 2 and No. 8) or *Andantino* (No. 5) maintain constant tempos through the pieces, with the exception of one passage showing a tempo change in the ending part of the Second Sonata (Fig.3.28).

![Figure 3.28. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 3rd mov. mm.58-60](image)

In the passage the beginning tempo of *Andante* changes to *Adagio* in the last two measures (mm.59-60) through a *ritardando* section (mm.57-58). This tempo change in the ending part puts an emphasis on a submerging mood with
ppp before beginning the energetic fourth movement. The last six notes of L.H. should display more dragging tempo with an exhausted, enervated sound. The fingers must be close to the keyboard and slowly press the keys to the bottom.

The tempo of Vivace, in the last movements of the Second and Eighth Sonatas, enhances the driving and inexhaustible motoric effect. In spite of the technical difficulty due to the fast tempo, the tempo should be strictly kept because motoric rhythm based on a constant tempo is an essential, unyielding element in the finale of Prokofiev's sonatas.

By contrast, the middle sections of the last movements in the Second and Eighth Sonatas are worthy of attention in terms of tempo. In the finale of the Second Sonata, the second-theme material from the first movement suddenly reappears Moderato in the middle section (mm.134-145), different from the Allegro of the first movement (Fig.3.29).

Figure 3.29. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 4th mov. mm.134-137
The comfortable, unruffled *Moderato* of the middle section between the outer *Vivace* results in a large contrast of mood: what was agitated is now relaxed. In playing this passage, one should show a tender, expressive sound in a slightly flexible tempo within *Moderato*. The consecutive chords of the accompaniment in the L.H. should unfold smoothly showing the subtle changes of the harmonies.

Similarly, the long middle section of third movement in the *Eighth Sonata* is differentiated with *Allegro ben marcato* from the outer *Vivace* sections (Fig. 3.30).

![Figure 3.30. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm.107-115](image)

Continuity of tempo is essential here until the section with the musical expression *Pochissimo meno mosso* (extremely little not too fast) in measure 289. If one take a comparatively fast tempo for the *Allegro ben marcato* passage, it is hard to maintain the tempo in some passages that need many leaps.
in both hands as in measures 225 (Fig.3.4), and 250-251 (Fig.3.3). Therefore, choosing an appropriate tempo from the beginning of the middle section is important. Keeping a chosen tempo steady is also important in the outer scherzo sections of *Allegro marcato* (mm.1-26) in the second movement of the *Second Sonata* (Fig.3.8.a), while the middle trio section (mm.26-57) has a variety of tempo with *rit.* and *a tempo.*

Compared to the last movements of the *Second* and *Eighth Sonatas*, the third movement of the *Fifth Sonata* has a moderate tempo, *Un poco Allegretto,* but a consistent tempo should also be sustained until the beginning of the coda. Prokofiev indicated *Poco meno mosso,* and *Piu mosso* for the coda (mm.104-140), which seems like a compensating device for a less-vigorous last movement. (Fig.3.12).

3.3 Pedaling

Pedal markings are rare in Prokofiev’s piano sonatas, which means that the performer can use pedal at one’s own discretion taking into account the context of the music, the volume of the instrument, and the acoustics and size of the hall.

Basically, pedal can be used to create a variety of sound such as a bright and accentuated sound, an overlapping and muddy sound, a misty and obscure sound as in impressionistic music, or a sound with special effects. Although there are not many indications of pedal in the three sonatas, one can find some
passages where utilizing the pedal can help the performer create a variety of moods.

There are some passages where pedal can help more punch and brightness to the accents. In this case the performer should change the sustaining pedal quickly and frequently without overuse. For example, in the transition section in the fourth movement of the Second Sonata, short and shallow pedaling on the accent notes can emphasize the accentuated, aggressive sound with impelled rhythm (Fig.3.9). The coda section in the first movement of the Eighth Sonata is another similar example (Fig.3.13.b). By using frequent change of the pedal, the passage has more angular, and clashing sound.

There are also some examples that benefit from a thick, turbid sound with the aid of the pedal. In the last part of the development in the first movement of the Eighth Sonata, one can sustain the pedal for all of measure 183 in order to enhance the dramatic effect (Fig.3.31). However, changing the pedal on the third beat of D# octave notes is recommended in that the third beat is an important climactic note, and it should be highlighted and clearly rung. In addition, one should be careful to catch the first ornamented notes of both hands in the pedaling.
The coda of the third movement in the *Eighth Sonata* is a representative passage that can benefit greatly from deep pedaling. One may show either the mixed sound of the bitonality (Bb major and E major) by using the pedal in the whole measure, or the thick, but recognizable sound of different tonalities by changing the pedal every beat (Fig.3.27).

One can use the half sustaining pedal to increase the misty, vague mood of the passage, as in the second-subject section in the third movement of the *Second Sonata* (Fig.3.32).
In this passage, one can create the mood of walking alone in a hazy and damp forest, unaware of a destination, with the use of the half sustaining pedal. For a more imaginative sound, the performer may use the *Una corda* pedal, which may be considered a device to transform the color of the sound, not as an aid for soft sound. Thus, along with the appropriate touch, the *Una corda* pedal can help generate some of the most fascinating tones along with the sustaining pedal. Prokofiev wrote a musical marking of "leggiero" (light or nimble) with *pp* in the section; the performer can make the top voice of the R.H. sound more distinct in spite of the obscure mood of the passage as a whole.

The ending part of the development in the third movement of the *Eighth Sonata* is one of the passages where Prokofiev occasionally marked pedaling in the score (Fig.3.33).

![Figure 3.33. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 3rd mov. mm.343-345](image)
The half sustaining pedal can provide a vague and obscure mood for this passage with the musical expression of ‘irresoluto’ (irresolute, indecisive). As in the previous example, the top line of the R.H. should show a clear musical direction despite the generally ambiguous mood.

It is difficult to suggest a certain way of pedaling because it is subjective and personal. It must be understood that pedaling is to a great degree an extension of one’s own ideas regarding the purpose of the musical passage in question. Thus, it requires an understanding of the composer’s intent and style as well as the discretion of the performer. Listening to the sound carefully, the performer himself should decide how deep, how long to use the pedal, or how often to change the pedal for high-quality resonance. After all, the performer’s ears might be the best teacher, and perceptive listening sense of the performer is fundamentally required for an effective use of the pedal. Finally it is important to practice with the sound of a big hall in mind not limiting the sound to the acoustics of a small practice room.

3.4 Interpretation

3.4.1 Phrasing

Phrasing is one of the most important elements for interpreting a piece, and it can be quite individual because breathing and feeling are different for each performer. However, phrasing should be natural, as with singing based on
one’s actual breathing. That is why a teacher often encourages their students to sing the melody for themselves if there is awkwardness in their phrasing. Phrasing needs direction and a destination, and, if possible, should cover the progression to the destination with longer musical lines, as opposed to small sections. Split phrases cause tedious music-making with many starts and stops.

The second theme of the first movement in the Second Sonata suggests an idea related to desirable phrasing in measures 64-71 (Fig.3.34).

Figure 3.34. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 1st mov. mm.59-71

The right hand’s melody seems to sink into repose at measure 67, but the melody flows to the next phrase. The performer would better consider the whole eight measures - a traditional period with a four-measure antecedent and a consequent of the same length - as one phrase; otherwise, the melody may lose
its musical intensity with the natural flow. Even though there are some short phrase lines and dynamic markings, these should be expressed within one phrase.

Another example presenting musical challenges is at the beginning of the third movement in the *Second Sonata* (Fig. 3.35).

![Figure 3.35. Prokofiev Sonata No.2, 3rd mov. mm.1-24](image)

The first melody emerges after four introductory measures including two measures in bass and tenor parts, and another two measures with added alto

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part. The melody extends up to a B in measure 9 with ritard, but continues with two sequential passages (mm.10-14) to the climax located on the downbeat of measure 19. Here there is a forte restatement of the melodic figure (mm.18-19), which fades away into pp, ending the section (mm.20-22).

If we consider the first 10 measures as the first phrase, the implied cadence feels incomplete as a result of a rising alto part followed by a continuation of the melodic line. Moreover, measure 14 seems to be the only logical place for repose, though the phrase continues to measure 22 to conclude this extremely long statement. Playing 22 measures in one phrase is certainly a challenge requiring exceptional concentration of one’s breathing and tone projection. Pianists would be wise not to allow the tone to diminish in this small reposing spot, or the phrase will wither, destroying the continuity and natural flow of the phrase. The choice of tempo is crucial; it must be slow enough to capture the desired mood (a dirge) yet allow the performer to successfully sustain the tension in the melodic line.

3.4.2 Timing

As mentioned in the previous phrasing section, finding musical direction and the destination of the passages is significant for interpretation. In playing a phrase, one should not linger or hesitate in the course of the phrase; one should take forward motion to reach the destination in the passage. Forward motion does not mean speeding up or rushing, but rather it involves musical elasticity,
flexibility that embraces stretching and prompting motions, which is also related to timing.

In Chopin’s compositions, one can see the musical marking of *tempo rubato*, which is the practice of making the established pulse with written note-values flexible by accelerating and slowing down the tempo. This has long been an expressive device. The timing mentioned here in Prokofiev is related to the concept of *tempo rubato*, but it is slightly different. In the passages where there is no tempo marking such as *tempo rubato, ritardando* or *accelerando*, the performer may effect a slightly urging or stretching motion to display the musical direction effectively. This kind of flexibility is usually hard to explain in detail to others because it is generated from one’s musical sense and is highly connected to individual feeling and taste. Small differences with flexibility, however, can make the music more exciting and convincing.

The second movement of the *Eighth Sonata* has a good passage to discuss the issue of timing. The slow cantabile melody of the R.H. shows different note values such as half, dotted eighth, eighth notes, and sixteenth in the first four measures (Fig.3.36).
This movement has a fluent dance quality like most of the slow movements in Prokofiev's piano sonatas. Dance is not mechanical, therefore the music must have much flexibility. Generally speaking, one tends to move to the longer-value notes. In this passage, the eighth notes give a direction and it should move forward to the longer downbeat notes. For example, the three eighth notes in the moving upbeat of measure 2 (Ab-Gb-F) might move to the next longer dotted note of Eb, and same in the next three eighth notes of measure 3 (Eb-F-Gb). The shorter sixteenth notes in measure 1 (Bb-Ab-G-Ab) also should move ahead to the next longer note in measure 2 (Db), but they can slightly stretch to avoid interrupting the leisurely mood prevalent here. The performer can use this kind of approach in similar passage in order to achieve a more musical interpretation.
3.4.3 Voicing and Balance

When practicing a piece, the player should decide which voice to accentuate. If we play all of the voices equally without any differences among them, the sound becomes pale, rather having color and line. Convincing music with brilliant tone requires intelligent voicing and control of balance. Sometimes, one needs differences of strength and touch, or special fingering and pedaling to attain a desirable voicing. Among many movements, the slow movement of each sonata needs much attention in terms of voicing and balance.

Most of the third movement in the Second Sonata has the dynamic of \( p \), \( pp \) or even \( ppp \) except for a few measures with \( f \), which is a big challenge for the performer in controlling the sound (Fig.3.35). \( P \) sound is considered much harder to play than \( f \) in that appropriate control between relaxation and tension of the fingers is essential, and, sometimes, too much caution can cause a void sound. In the movement, the treble voice should be dominant over the lower three voices, and, in spite of \( p \) sound, the melody should be eloquent, not mumbling. For the most part, the fourth and fifth fingers are used to play the top voice, with the fingers in an upright position for a clear sound. Also, the performer should save his softer \( p \) sound for the most special moment, as in measure 52 of \( ppp \) in this piece.

In the second movement of the Eighth Sonata, the treble voice of the R.H. should also be brought out, as based on the suave chordal sound of the L.H. (Fig.3.36). As in the third movement of the Second Sonata, the fourth and
fifth fingers of the R.H. are used for the singing melody, and the fingers should be close to the keyboard for absolute legato tone with a relaxed wrist and arm. In playing repeated melodic notes such as the Db in measures 5-6, the performer should be careful not to make sudden changes in sound or omit one of them.

In the middle section of the second movement (mm.35-65), the sound of the consecutive falling chords in the R.H. reminds one of a beautiful bell tone. In this section, the treble voice should display more ringing tone, but avoid being too bright or sharp. All of the upper three voices may show a dreamy and ethereal sound based on the octave pedal tones in the bass. The falling figures of the three measures should be connected within one phrase in a stable and regular tempo without any vacillations; the arm and fingers should be very relaxed and flexible (Fig.3.37).

Figure 3.37. Prokofiev Sonata No.8, 2nd mov. mm.35-37
3.4 Memorization

Most performers have experienced the fear of memory slips and have made strenuous efforts to avoid them. On stage, no one can be guaranteed to play as well as they did during practice. Surprises occur which we may not have encountered in our practice such as messing up fast passages, rushing lack of control, or memory slips. These abnormal errors, however, can be prevented by means of thorough and efficient practice. Even memory slips, which have been considered harder than other technical problems in that they are influenced by individual psychological conditions, can also be warded off through various ways of practice.

Here are some suggestions for effective memorization. Muscular or kinetic memory is a basic method acquired by “repeated practice” in various rhythms, tempos, articulations, and dynamics. Repetitive practice can make us memorize our physical motions allowing us to play a piece gradually and unconsciously. Moreover, if one practices technically difficult passages several times, one find that the passages are easier to memorize. However, this kind of kinetic memorization does not ensure that our fingers will work well under the tense circumstances of the stage.

To enhance the certainty of one’s memory in this phase, one can try starting at various points in the piece. For example, in the first movement of the Second Sonata, one may start at the bridge sections between the first and second themes (m.32), the closing section before development (m.85), or the transition...
in the recapitulation (m.223). Without successive progressions, sudden starts in insignificant spots may cause one to feel strange, even uncomfortable. This kind of self-test has considerable benefits.

Another suggestion is memorization by means of analysis, formally and harmonically. If one looks into the structural frame of the piece, and identify the harmonic progression of passages, one becomes more confident about memorization. For instance, in the first movement of the *Eighth Sonata*, the first theme group of the exposition consists of similar four periods with each period divided into four-measure antecedent and consequent phrases. If the performer recognizes this kind of overall structure and the differences in detail among them, in terms of melodic figures and the accompaniment patterns, one can proceed without any hesitation in playing. Based on this understanding, one may practice the passage, “comparing” similar passages side by side.

Similarly, if one can “categorize” and be well acquainted with the harmonic progression of different triad chords such as major, minor, diminished, or augmented in the second movement of the *Fifth Sonata*, it is like knowing one’s present location and the right direction for the destination by having an exact map of our journey. When practicing based on this technique, bass notes as a foundation of harmonies should be thought of as such successions, and not as a ‘snatching’ into unfamiliar space.

The last suggestion to memorize a piece completely is visual memory with imaginary sound; that is, without any sound and motions, one close one’s
eyes, and "visualize" the score, measure to measure or page to page like on a movie screen, singing inwardly the melodic and harmonic progressions. This memorization is most difficult in that one easily gets lost unless one concentrates on the music with one's whole heart and soul. However, if one can do this, one becomes much more self confident easing one's anxiety and negativity on the stage.

In summary, effective and valuable are several practice techniques for memorization by means of repetition, random start, structural recognition, comparison of passages, harmonic understanding, and visualization.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Sergei Prokofiev gave more importance to the piano sonata than any other major twentieth-century composer. Commenting on his role in the history of the piano sonata, Irwin Freundlich writes: "Prokofiev is one of the most prolific and successful composers of piano music in the twentieth-century. Neither Bartok, Hindemith, Stravinsky nor Schoenberg have bequeathed as many works to the modern piano repertoire. For this creative act, which finds its fullest expression in the sonatas, contemporary pianism is in his debt." 69

Prokofiev's nine sonatas share many similarities, however each reveals his creativity and originality, as distinguishing features constantly emerge. Prokofiev launched his First Sonata with a Romantic musical language similar to that of Rachmaninoff's. The sensuous traits in the First Sonata change to the aggressive, rhythmic quality in his Second Sonata. With the addition of the second scherzo movement, the Second Sonata is considered one of the milestone works of neo-classicism. The energetic, motoric rhythms continuously emerge in his Third Sonata, emphasizing the economical use of
short motives typical of Beethoven’s sonatas. With a six year gap following the reflective Fourth Sonata, Prokofiev’s Fifth Sonata shows different features from his earlier sonatas. Contact with European composers like Stravinsky, Ravel, and Les Six greatly influenced his compositional style from the early 1920s through the middle of the 1930s. The Fifth Sonata tends to be less distinctive than the others in which he followed his personal creative instincts, and shows Prokofiev’s attempt at diverse keyboard sonorities in an exotic mood.

Prokofiev’s significant three War Sonatas, composed after a long break from the Fifth Sonata, display a variety of expression from inexhaustible vitality as in the third movement of the Seventh Sonata to dreamy serenity as in the second movement of the Eighth. Specifically, the first movement of the Eighth Sonata successfully demonstrates the exceptional lyrical and expressive qualities similar to those found in Prokofiev’s appealing ballet music.

Moreover, the *Eighth Sonata* shows Prokofiev's experimental aspect by ignoring the traditional practice of sonata: the long smoothly unfolded exposition and the unconventional commencement of the development in the first movement, and the unusually extensive middle section with motivic development in place of the sequential repetition in the finale. In terms of pianistic technique in the *Eighth Sonata*, Prokofiev sometimes combines several technical demands in one passage based on the toccata-like driving motion dominated by detached touch as in his earlier sonatas. Also, he applies them in slightly different and unusual ways that challenge the performer.

However, unlike Beethoven, Prokofiev is not considered an inventive, pioneering composer leading to a new movement in 20th century music, while Beethoven played a significant role in opening the new Romantic era as a pioneer. Prokofiev distinguished himself by establishing his own unique, original musical idiom in the 20th century instead.

In their biography of Prokofiev, Laurence and Elizabeth Hanson state that “Prokofiev succeeded sufficiently well to ensure that piano writing will never be the same.”70 This supports Prokofiev's contribution to music history. Following in the tradition of Beethoven, Prokofiev advanced the sonata as a genre, exploiting it beyond its known limits, and creating his own musical world in his piano sonatas.

In conclusion, Prokofiev's piano sonatas reveal the successful synthesis of diverse techniques and appealing, musical ideals including classical, lyrical,
motoric, modern, and satirical elements. Prokofiev’s musical originality, individuality, and craftsmanship greatly influenced twentieth-century music and explain why his piano sonatas have become standard repertoire in recital programs and have attained lasting popularity.
ENDNOTES

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1 Stephen C. E. Fiess, Piano Works of Serge Prokofiev, p.2.
4 Victor, p.23.
5 Robinson, p.277.
6 Victor, p.37.
8 Nestyev, p.55.
10 Robinson, p.259.
11 Samuel, p.111.
12 Robinson, p.119.
13 Robinson, p.303.
14 Samuel, p.134.
15 Robinson, p.296.
17 Robinson, p.431.
18 Samuel, p.147.
19 Steinberg, p.436.
20 Robinson, p.284.
21 Samuel, p.147.
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45 Randel, p.601.
46 Fiess, p.49.
47 Fiess, p.45.
48 Brown, p.11.
49 Fiess, p.13.
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Randel, p.719.

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