I, Di Zhu, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Musical Arts

in:

Piano Performance

It is entitled:

Prokofiev’s Piano Transcriptions:
A Comparative Study of His Transcribing Techniques

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Prokofiev’s Piano Transcriptions:
A Comparative Study of His Transcribing Techniques

A doctoral document
submitted to the
Division of Graduate Studies and Research
of the University of Cincinnati
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
in the Keyboard Studies Division
of the College-Conservatory of Music

by

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23 May 2006

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Abstract

Prokofiev’s output consists of a large quantity of transcriptions which are arranged from his own work. Particularly during his Soviet period (1936–1953), there are increasing numbers of transcriptions from his ballet, opera, and even film scores. Many have more than one transcription. Transcriptions make up one third of his piano works. Except for four sonatas, Prokofiev’s original piano compositions were replaced by piano transcriptions completely in the Soviet period. This document discusses Prokofiev’s motivations for creating piano transcriptions, categorizes these transcriptions, and analyzes his transcribing style and techniques. As a result of his compositional habit, many of Prokofiev’s works have several versions: original full score, piano reduction score, and orchestral and instrumental transcriptions. The composer’s transcribing techniques are analyzed and discussed in decoration, refinement, simplification, organization, and melodic treatment through the comparison of different versions of the work.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Besides being a well-known composer, Sergey Prokofiev was one of the most celebrated pianists of the twentieth century. He most often played his own piano works during his concert tours around the world, which not only helped him establish his international fame as a composer, but also was a vehicle for him to try out and promote his compositions. Playing a major role in his output, Prokofiev’s piano compositions are among the most popular works in pianists’ repertoire. Besides piano sonatas and character pieces, his piano work consists of large numbers of transcriptions, revealing his unique compositional techniques and styles. Among so many practitioners of transcription, Prokofiev stands out because he transcribed such a large quantity of his own work.

“Transcription,” in a more general sense, refers to a work that is adapted from one instrumental medium to another. It is often used interchangeably with “arrangement.” These two terms occasionally are distinguished by the degree of fidelity to the original work by some sources, but at times the distinctions seem contradictory. Some music dictionaries and articles claim that “transcription” is more liberal and “arrangement” is more literal (e.g. Baker’s Dictionary of Music, Evlyn Howard-Jones’ “Arrangements and Transcriptions”), while others disagree (e.g. Harvard Dictionary of Music). Prokofiev had a rather wide range of transcribing styles, from literal to freely reworking of the music. Further discussion of the definitions and

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The practice of transcribing pieces to different media can be found in almost all periods of music history. As the piano developed into a prominent instrument in both concert halls and homes for entertainment, piano transcriptions became a medium for music lovers to enjoy their favorite tunes from orchestral or theatrical works at home, and a vehicle for piano virtuosos to display their showmanship.² Particularly during the nineteenth century, piano transcriptions – by such composers as Franz Liszt, Sigismond Thalberg, and Carl Tausig, to name a few – were flourishing. These works were most often transcribed from the songs, symphonies, and operas of other composers. This tradition continued into the twentieth century.

Prokofiev is one of the most important figures practicing this tradition. What is so unusual about Prokofiev’s transcriptions, however, is that he almost always transcribed from his own works. Although transcribing one’s own work from one instrumental medium to another was not something new in music history, the quantity, variety, and the exclusiveness of Prokofiev’s are unprecedented and unparalleled. For instance, more than half of his orchestral works and one third of his piano works are transcriptions. Besides transcriptions for piano and orchestra, he also adapted his music to instrumental, chamber, vocal, and symphonic music.

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Especially during his Soviet period (1936–1953), there are large numbers of transcriptions from his ballet, opera, and even film scores. Many have more than one transcription, such as his ballet Cinderella. There are three sets of pieces transcribed from the ballet score for piano: Three Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 95), Ten Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 97), and Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102), as well as Adagio for cello and piano (Op. 97b), three suites for orchestra (Opp. 107, 108, and 109), and a part of Waltz Suite for orchestra (Op. 110).
Chapter 2. Motivation

Prokofiev’s learning and compositional habits made the large quantity of piano transcriptions possible. Piano was his primary learning and composing instrument. Prokofiev began to play piano and compose piano pieces before the age of six. He learned many symphonies by playing piano arrangements for four hands with his mother, teachers, and friends. Like J. S. Bach, Prokofiev also studied music through transcribing it. During his conservatory years (1904–1914), he admired Scriabin’s work so much that he arranged the first part of his Third Symphony for the piano.\(^3\) Having no knowledge of instrumentation and orchestration at that time, his early operas and symphonies were written in piano scores only. His *Giant*, the first opera composed when he was nine, was in piano score with the lyrics written between the treble and bass clefs. This became a habit: he almost always composed in front of the piano, wrote the piano score first for orchestral music, and orchestrated them later.\(^4\) This compositional routine provided a foundation for his later piano transcriptions.

Prokofiev constantly went back to a work to refine it, even after the music was performed or published. His reworking of old pieces sometimes grew into “new” ones. His

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several early piano pieces were revised and became movements in Op. 3 and Op. 4.\(^5\) Some of the materials of his early sonatas were turned into later ones: his early sonata No. 2 became No.1, and No. 5 was incorporated into No. 4.\(^6\) Even his Symphonies No. 3 and No. 4 are the result of this compositional routine. Commenting on his use of materials from the opera *The Flaming Angel* in his Third Symphony, Prokofiev wrote: “The leading themes of *The Flaming Angel* were composed as symphony music long before I began work on the opera and when I subsequently used them for the Third Symphony they merely returned to their native element without, as far as I am concerned, being the least tainted by their temporary operatic sojourn.”\(^7\)

During his Soviet period, Prokofiev met a writer, Maria-Cecilia Abramovna (aka Mira) Mendelson. Her literary knowledge inspired him, and soon they began to discuss possible sources for operas, ballets and songs.\(^8\) In 1941, Prokofiev left his wife and sons for Mendelson. She later became his second wife. Mendelson was a great comfort to Prokofiev, giving him love and support. She helped Prokofiev to choose, write, and revise many librettos of his theatrical works. Prokofiev’s increasing numbers of theatrical works in this period, on which the piano transcriptions were based, reflect her inspiration and assistance.

Another reason behind the large number of transcriptions seems to be Prokofiev’s way


\(^{6}\) Ibid., 27.

\(^{7}\) Ibid., 99.

to publicize his theatrical and orchestral works, especially when many productions of the works were postponed or even canceled (due to all kinds of reasons) during both his foreign and Soviet periods. Many transcriptions of his theatrical works were performed in public or even published several years before the premiere of the originals. When these works were finally staged, the audience had already known some of the music fairly well.

Additionally, Prokofiev was not totally satisfied with some of the theatrical productions, particularly *Romeo and Juliet*. Even though Prokofiev wrote ballet music for Diaghilev in his early years, apparently the traditional ballet music was different than what he thought it should be when he began to work on the score. He did not consider ballet music on the same level as other music forms at that point. It was not surprising that he had arguments with Kirov Theater. The choreographer, Leonid Lavrovsky, and dancers thought the music undanceable; it was too short for a full-length ballet, and the chamber-like orchestration sometimes was too soft to hear. As a result, the rehearsal could not continue. It was against Prokofiev’s principle to change anything once the music was finished. He conceived the music “as an artistic and dramatic whole. Each piece had its function and place; the ballet was not a collection of interchangeable numbers in the style of Minkus.” On the other hand, Lavrovsky was adding and reorchestrating the music arbitrarily without Prokofiev’s knowledge. Prokofiev finally made the compromise for additional dances, a fuller orchestration, and “as clear-cut as

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10 Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev*, 372
possible” rhythms. Even though the ballet was very well received, Prokofiev was not happy about it. The piano transcriptions and symphonic suites from these works with more “translucent” texture perhaps are more authentic versions of the music.\textsuperscript{11}

There might be some political and commercial reasons, but the main reasons are personal. The majority of Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions were transcribed in his Soviet period, and most of them were done during the Second World War, when Soviet artists were relocated frequently by the government to escape the invasion of Germany. It hardly makes sense that Prokofiev arranged piano works to make more money when the civil system was paralyzed and people’s lives were in great danger. In fact, Prokofiev’s composing became an escape from the misery of the war and his personal life, as well as a weapon to fight the war as an artist. That is probably why the years of the Second World War were one of his prolific periods.

Chapter 3. Categorization

Prokofiev’s piano works can be categorized into two groups: piano sonatas and character pieces, which includes piano transcriptions. Most of them are multi-movement or multi-piece works, containing two to as many as twenty pieces. All his piano sonatas are on a larger scale. Except No. 9, the last movement of each sonata always ends brilliant and forcefully. His piano transcriptions and character pieces, on the other hand, are shorter. The last piece of each set tends to end softly.

Prokofiev began to catalogue his compositions when he was eleven years old.\textsuperscript{12} He seemed to be rather careful about the opus numbers. Sometime Prokofiev reworked a piece to such a degree that he had to give it a different opus number to distinguish it from the earlier version, such as \textit{Sinfonietta} (Opp. 5 and 48) and piano sonata No. 5 (Opp. 38 and 135). Early transcriptions often share the same opus number with their originals, which are mostly literal rearrangements, such as \textit{Classical Symphony}, and \textit{Divertissement}. Later works, with different opus numbers, are more liberal, showing that Prokofiev took the transcriptions more seriously as an independent work.

Prokofiev’s output is conventionally divided into three periods: Russian (1891–1918), Foreign (1918–1936), and Soviet (1936–1953). Except for some youthful arrangements, Prokofiev’s piano works consist of only character pieces and piano sonatas in his Russian

In the second period, piano transcriptions began to appear. There were transcriptions from his own works such as the *Classical Symphony* (Op. 25), *March and Scherzo* (Op. 33ter) from his opera *The Love for Three Oranges*, and *Six Pieces* (Op. 52), in which the movements are transcribed from different sources. His only transcriptions from other composers also came from this time, including two waltzes by Schubert and a fugue by Buxtehude. After his permanent return to the USSR in 1936, Prokofiev’s original piano compositions (except for four sonatas) were replaced by piano transcriptions completely, and these transcriptions are solely adapted from his own work. Those pieces include: *Divertissement* (Op. 43bis), *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75), *Gavotte* (Op. 77bis), *Three Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 95), *Three Pieces* (Op. 96), *Ten Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 97), and *Six Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 102).

Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions can be categorized as follows:

1) Early youthful works
   1. Scriabin’s Third Symphony
   2. Fugue by Buxtehude

2) Mature works transcribed from his own works
   1. Classical Symphony Op. 25
   2. March and Scherzo from *The Love for Three Oranges* Op. 33ter
   3. Divertissement Op. 43bis
   4. Six Pieces Op. 52
   5. Ten Pieces from *Romeo and Juliet* Op. 75
   6. Gavotte Op. 77bis
   7. Three Pieces from *Cinderella* Op. 95

13 Prokofiev did transcribe some pieces by other composers, such as a fugue by Buxtehude and Scriabin’s Third Symphony, when he was a student at St. Petersburg Conservatory. But these works are not considered as his mature works. Although Prokofiev’s *Classical Symphony* was composed from 1916-17, according to Shlifstein, the piano version was published in 1931. See Shlifstein, *Autobiography*, 296.
8. Three Pieces Op. 96
9. Ten Pieces from Cinderella Op. 97
10. Six Pieces from Cinderella Op. 102

3) Works transcribed from other composers
   1. Schubert Waltzes
   2. Fugue by Buxtehude (different than the early one)

4) Piano reduction scores

In general, Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions serve different purposes: as piano reductions (note-for-note transcriptions) for rehearsals or hearings, transcriptions from other composers for his recitals, and transcriptions from his own work for solo performance. Although there are some published piano scores of Prokofiev’s theatrical works that were transcribed by the composer himself – such as those of Tale of the Buffoon, Le Pars d’acier (The Age of Steel), and The Prodigal Son – they are not intended for concert performance. Hence, these sources will be excluded or used for comparison purpose only. Early piano transcriptions are considered youthful works, which were the assignments of his study in St. Petersburg Conservatory. Hence, these works are not included in the document. Transcriptions from other composers will also be left out from the analysis because of their small number. Prokofiev did not even give them opus numbers. Besides, these works, according to Prokofiev himself, are for his own recitals to please his American audience. Therefore my document will focus on the transcriptions of his own works, which are intended for solo performance (see Table 1).

14 According to Prokofiev himself, American audiences were not used to a whole concert consisting of only his own work. To compromise, Prokofiev transcribed some pieces by other composers. See Prokofiev, Prokofiev by Prokofiev, 249.
Table 1. List of Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Opus</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Opus</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>Symphony No. 1</td>
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<td>33ter</td>
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<td>Divertissement</td>
<td>43bis</td>
<td>1938</td>
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<td>Six Pieces</td>
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<td>String Quartet No.1</td>
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<td>Three Pieces from Cinderella</td>
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<td>1942</td>
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<td>1941–42</td>
<td>Opera War and Peace</td>
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<td>Ballet Cinderella</td>
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<td>Six Pieces from Cinderella</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Ballet Cinderella</td>
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Chapter 4. Transcribing Techniques

As a result of his compositional style, many of Prokofiev’s works have several different versions: original full score, piano reduction score, and orchestral and instrumental transcriptions. Sometimes these scores are similar; other times they are quite different. By comparing these scores we can see some characteristic features of his transcribing techniques, including, decoration, refinement, simplification, and organizations of materials, as well as treatment of melodies.

Decoration

Compared to the original scores, Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions are more decorative. He often embellished both melody and accompaniment by using arpeggio marks, grace notes, short runs, or adding notes and altering the rhythm.

Arpeggio mark is the most frequently used decoration device in Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions. Examples can be found even in the piano version of his famous Classical Symphony (Op. 25), one of the most literary transcriptions among his works. Prokofiev’s use of arpeggios appears to be spontaneous and unpredictable, which is evident in the first movement of the Classical Symphony. The first appearance of the arpeggio mark is at measure 5 on the left hand D major chord with the opening theme on the right hand (Example 1a). However, the mark is missing in the restatement of the same theme in C major at measure 13 (Example 1b). After 53 bars of absence, it returns more frequently in measures 59–73, but there are no fixed patterns. Even though arpeggio marks can be found in both statements of the same passage in
measures 58–61 and 62–65, Prokofiev altered the pattern by adding an arpeggio in the left hand at measure 62, and eliminated the one at measure 63 of the left hand and measure 64 of the right hand (Example 2).

Example 1a

Example 1b

Classical Symphony for piano (Op. 25), 1st movement, m. 5

Classical Symphony for piano (Op. 25), 1st movement, m. 13

Example 2

Classical Symphony for piano (Op. 25), 1st movement, mm. 58–65

Arpeggio marks appear more frequently in slow movements of the piano transcriptions. The use of the mark not only enhances the lyrical quality and expressiveness of such music as “Romeo and Juliet before Parting” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 10), but also creates a special effect which imitates the complex orchestral sounding. Arpeggiations,
such as those in “Masks” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 5 [see Example 7e]), provide more variety in sound and texture of the music.

Prokofiev also would decorate his music with grace notes, giving the music a more graceful and lively touch. From one up to four notes, the grace note is treated in a similar way to the arpeggio mark – sometimes scattered and spontaneous, other times dense. In measures 55–63 of “Mercutio” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No 8), the block chords originally in the ballet become grace notes, creating a reversed arpeggio effect. Prokofiev kept the lowest note of each chord, but turned the top two notes into grace notes to embellish the chromatic line of the main notes (Examples 3a and 3b). Another quite extraordinary usage of the grace note can be found in the last movement, “Finale,” of the Classical Symphony, where Prokofiev added grace notes on every down beat of the melody for almost 30 bars (mm. 43–70), as well as the theme in the recapitulation (mm. 171–192 [Examples 4a and 4b]).

Example 3a

No. 15 “Mercutio” of ballet Romeo and Juliet (Op. 64), mm. 55–63
Piano reduction score by L. Atovmyan
Example 3b

“Mercutio” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 8), mm. 55–63

Example 4a

Classical Symphony for orchestra (Op. 25), 4th movement, mm. 43–53

Example 4b

Classical Symphony for piano (Op. 25), 4th movement, mm. 43–53
Other ornamental devices include decorative figurations, short runs, and altering notes or rhythms. Prokofiev sometimes would combine them, as well as arpeggios and grace notes all together, making the music highly decorative. This embellishment style somewhat resembles the ornamentation of Baroque practice. A combination of all ornamental devices can be found in the “Rondo” of *Six Pieces* (Op. 52, No. 2), which was transcribed from the third dance, “*L’Enjôleuse*,” of his ballet *The Prodigal Son* (Op. 46). Particularly from the *Mono Mosso* section (m. 87), the piano transcription becomes highly embellished compared to the piano score which was also transcribed by the composer (Examples 5a and 5b). Prokofiev not only rewrote the left hand with the arpeggiated figurations at measures 91 and 92 and the short runs at 96 and 97, but also gave more variety to the grace notes in the transcription. Added to both the melody and the accompaniment, these grace notes are multiple or single note, in parallel or contrary motion, and moving up or down (mm. 88–90 and 99–101). Prokofiev even modified the rhythm of the right hand melody to double dotted eighth notes at bars 96–97. Furthermore, in the following section, Tempo Primo (m. 112), Prokofiev extended the range of the original melodic line and embedded it into a fast-moving decorative figuration in the transcription (Examples 6a and 6b). The extension of the melody range is another characteristic feature of Prokofiev’s transcription, which will be further discussed later.
“L’Enjôleuse” of ballet *The Prodigal Son* (Op. 46), mm. 87–103. Piano reduction score by Prokofiev

“Rondo” of *Six Pieces* (Op. 52, No. 2), mm. 87–103

Example 6a

“L’Enjôleuse” of ballet *The Prodigal Son* (Op. 46), mm. 112–115

Piano reduction score by Prokofiev

Example 6b

“Rondo” of *Six Pieces* (Op. 52, No. 2), mm. 112–115

**Refinement**

Prokofiev picked the pieces to transcribe for their suitability for piano. Some works are arranged for piano without much alteration; they fit the piano style really well. When major changes are made in his piano transcriptions, they are often for artistic considerations rather
than technical ones. The piano transcriptions are refined with more variety, contrasts, and pianistic qualities than the original scores.

Prokofiev often avoided too many repetitions of the same accompanying patterns in his piano transcriptions. It is particularly true in some of the pieces arranged from dances. Instead of a relatively monotonous marching rhythm throughout the whole piece, the left hand accompaniment in the “Masks” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 5) shows more diversity than the original. The eighth-note marching rhythmic pattern played by strings and percussion (Examples 7a and 7b), which is kept throughout the ballet score, is altered later on with runs (Example 7c), grace notes (Example 7d), arpeggiated chords (Example 7e), and triplet arpeggios (Example 7f) in the transcription. Similarly, Prokofiev altered the original unchanging waltz pattern of No. 19 “Cinderella’s Departure for the Ball” of his ballet *Cinderella* (Example 8a) with a modified waltz pattern (Example 8b), a double bass-line pattern (Example 8e), and descending triplets (Example 8d) in the “Waltz” of *Six Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 102, No. 4).

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*Example 7a*  
No. 12 “Masks” of ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 64), mm. 4–5

*Example 7b*  
“Masks” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 5), mm. 4–5
Example 7c

“Masks” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 5), m. 9

Example 7d

“Masks” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 5), m. 12

Example 7e

“Masks” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 5), m. 14

Example 7f

“Masks” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 5), m. 26

Example 8a

“Waltz” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 4), mm. 37–38

Example 8b

“Waltz” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 4), mm. 102–103

Example 8c

“Waltz” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 4), mm. 5–6

Example 8d

“Waltz” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 4), mm. 21–22
Although some orchestral idioms, such as fast repeating notes and tremolos, are playable on the piano, Prokofiev rarely kept those effects in his piano transcriptions. He often reduced them to a simple chordal style instead. In “Summer Fairy” of *Ten Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 97, No. 2), the repeating notes in the strings at measures 1, 3, 5, and 7 (Example 9a), which are rearranged either literally or as tremolos in L. Atovmyan’s piano reduction score (Example 9b), are replaced by simple chords in Prokofiev’s piano transcription (Example 9c). Prokofiev also changed the tremolos in measure 10 to block chords. L. Atovmyan’s piano reduction score of *Cinderella*, published in 1954, was approved by Prokofiev. This arrangement is closer to the original score, but the busy left hand is rather distracting from the lyrical right-hand melody on the piano. By reducing the repeating notes and tremolos to the steady and slower paced chords, the melody stands out. It is also true in the first section of the “Romeo and Juliet before Parting” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 10), where the original tremolos played by strings are replaced by plain chords in the transcription.
Prokofiev almost never used tremolo marks in his piano transcriptions. He only used the mark once at measure 90 in the last movement, “Finale,” of his Classical Symphony. Even
though all the movements of the *Classical Symphony* were published together as a solo piano piece by some editions, except the second and the third movement which was published individually, the outer two movements are apparently piano reduction scores.\(^{15}\) There are instrument indications all over the place, as well as an extra staff for more voices which cannot be squeezed in the grand staff. Therefore these movements are not intended for concert performance. The close arrangement to the tremolo effect in his piano transcriptions is the one in the last two measures of the “Waltz” of *Six Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 102, No. 4). The tremolos played by cello, double bass, piano, and percussion in No. 19 “Cinderella’s Departure for the Ball” of the ballet score (Example 10a), were modified to a more pianistic and spicier figuration (mm. 122–132 [Example 10b]). Instead of the repetition of G’s, Prokofiev added B, F, and A-flat, making it a G major-minor 7\(^{\text{th}}\) chord with flat 9\(^{\text{th}}\). Thus, the ending, even though ends on the tonic G, sounds unresolved, which leads the music naturally to the next movement.

Prokofiev also replaced some other orchestral idioms which are playable on the piano but rather invariable and static on the instrument. In “Amoroso” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 6), Prokofiev completely rewrote the accompaniment from bar 34 to the end (m. 70). The repeating broken chords in the strings and piano parts are replaced by more complex, free-flowing, and wilder ranged figurations played by hands together, which give the music a more expensive and yet pianistic quality (Examples 11a and 11b).
Runs not only are used as embellishment in Prokofiev’s transcription, but also help the music to achieve a more effective climax or dramatic moment. In measure 11 of “Masks” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 5), Prokofiev dropped the marching rhythm on the fourth beat, expanded the run in the right hand, and let the left hand take over the melody, which not only makes the execution much easier compared to L. Atovmyan’s piano score, but makes a more effective crescendo to the climax in the next measure as well (Examples 12a, 12b, and 12c).
Example 12a

No. 12 “Masks” of ballet Romeo and Juliet (Op. 64), mm. 11–12

Example 12b

No. 12 “Masks” of ballet Romeo and Juliet (Op. 64), mm. 11–12
Piano reduction score by L. Atovmyan

Example 12c

“Masks” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75 No. 5), mm. 11–12
In the “Waltz” of *Six Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 102, No. 4), Prokofiev added runs and arpeggios in the last section (mm. 104, 108, 110, 114, and 118–21) to achieve a sweeping climax. Prokofiev simplified the right hand melody to its bare bones (mm. 110–113). On the other hand, the bass line of the left hand becomes more dominant by the added runs (mm. 110 and 114). The fast moving thirty-second note arpeggios of the right hand in the next four measures (mm. 118–121) broaden and thicken the texture, which help the music to reach the culmination of the whole movement (Examples 13a and 13b).

Example 13a  
Example 13b

No. 19 “Cinderella’s Departure for the Ball” of ballet *Cinderella* (Op. 87), mm. 102-121  
“Waltz” of *Six Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 102, No. 4), mm. 102-121  
Piano reduction score by L. Atovmyan

Prokofiev often paid special attention to the ending of each piece, which can be exemplified through his further refinement of the endings of the piano transcriptions.

Particularly in *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet*, he reworked the endings of six of the ten movements, making them even more dramatic and unique. The ending of the “Folk Dance” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 1 [mm. 258–266]) is adapted from No. 31.
“Further Public Festivities” (mm. 136–144) of the ballet. Prokofiev changed the dynamic marks from $f$ in the ballet score to $mp$ and $pp$ in the piano transcription. Thus, the two final chords marked with $ff$ sound even more dramatic and astonishing. In “Masks” (Op. 75, No. 5), Prokofiev eliminated the original closing section – Andante (mm. 41–54) of No. 12 “Masks” of the ballet. He used the marching rhythm one more measure in a lower register, which recalls the very opening, making the ending less abrupt and the whole movement concise and homogeneous. He also composed a new ending (the last 6 bars) for “Romeo and Juliet before Parting” (Op. 75, No. 10).

More interesting modification of the endings are those of “Dance of the Girls with Lilies” (Op. 75, No. 9), “The Montagues and Capulets” (Op. 75, No. 6), and “Mercutio” (Op. 75, No. 8) of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Julie. Prokofiev gave “Dance of the Girls with Lilies” a more delicate ending by lowering the right hand melody two octaves and adding grace notes and a dotted rhythm in the left hand (Examples 14a and 14b). In “The Montagues and Capulets,” Prokofiev extended the range of the melody (mm. 94–95) by raising the last two notes (A-sharps) one octave higher. A rather peculiar revision is the altering of the regular triplet in the last measure (m. 95), where the repeating chords in triplet is replaced by a rest on the third beat of the right hand and second beat of the left hand (Examples 15a and 15b). Similarly, the ordinary dotted rhythm in the last measure of “Mercutio” is turned into a syncopated sixteenth rhythm with a rest in the middle of the rhythmic pattern. Prokofiev further spiced up the A-flat major chord by adding a G in the right hand (Examples 16a and 16b).
Example 14a

No. 49 “Dance of the Girls with Lilies” of ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 64), mm. 55–56

Example 14b

“Dance of the Girls with Lilies” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 9), mm. 55–56

Example 15a

No. 13 “Dance of the Knights” of ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 64), mm. 138–139

Example 15b

“The Montagues and Capulets” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 6), mm. 94–95
The modification of the endings can also be seen in many other piano transcriptions, such as “Summer Fairy” of Ten Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 97, No. 2) and “Amoroso” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 6). A quite humorous ending of the first movement, “Divertissement,” of Divertissement (Op. 43b, No. 1) is worth mentioning. Prokofiev arranged his orchestral work Divertissement (Op. 43) to the piano twice. The first version, published with the orchestral score in 1930, is a literal arrangement of the full score. The second version, published as Op. 43bis in 1940, is more elaborate as a piano work, and each movement has its own title. The registers of the repeating Es in the last three measures (mm. 148–150) of the original work (Examples 17a and 17b) were changed in an interesting way. Prokofiev kept the

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16 Shlifstein, Autobiography, 298, 308.
same notes as the original but with the hands crossing back and forth (Example 17c).

Example 17a

![Example 17a diagram]

*Divertissement* for orchestra (Op. 43), 1st movement, mm. 147–150

Example 17b

![Example 17b diagram]

*Divertissement* for orchestra (Op. 43), 1st movement, mm. 147–150

Piano reduction score by Prokofiev
Example 17c

“Divertissement” of Divertissement for piano (Op. 43b, No 1), mm. 147–150

Unlike their counterparts, piano transcriptions often have less repetition of the same materials. Prokofiev would remove the repeat signs or eliminate some reappearances of a musical idea to make the music more concise. This is evident in many works, such as the removal of the repeat sign from bars 27 to 82 in the “Scene” of Ten pieces from Romeo and Juliet (OP. 75, No. 2), a literal transcription of No.3 “The Street Wakens” of the ballet score, or the elimination of eight measures at bar 24 from “Romeo and Juliet before Parting” of the same work (Op. 75, No. 10), which are similar to the theme at measure 28.

A more elaborate example is the “Minuet” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 3), transcribed from No. 11 “Arrival of the Guests” of the ballet. The original dance is in a rondo form with some themes appearing twice in the second half. Theme A is always in its complete form except the second appearance, where it is shortened from 12 bars to 4 bars. In the process of transcribing the dance number to the “Minuet,” Prokofiev eliminated the repetition of theme B and the first appearance of theme E, combined the two D sections together, and shortened all the reappearances of theme A to 4 bars, making the music a more concise and regular rondo form (see Table 2).
Table 2. Comparison of “Arrival of the Guests” and “Minuet”

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Link</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Minuet (Transcription)</th>
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<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length (bars)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When repetitions are kept in the transcriptions, they are often varied by changing the accompaniment pattern or embellishing the melody, such as *Gavotte* (Op. 77bis). It is arranged from “Pantomime”, the fourth movement of Prokofiev’s incidental music – Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. In the original score, Prokofiev indicated to play the first section (mm. 5–20) again with the second ending as the end of the movement. In the piano transcription, however, Prokofiev wrote out the repeat of the first section. He not only added notes and altered the original rhythms in measures 78–79, 86, and 90 in both the melody and the accompaniment, but also changed registers and extended the range of the melodic lines (Examples 18a and 18b).
Sometimes Prokofiev even would vary the reappearances of a theme. The “Waltz” of the *Three Pieces* (Op. 96, No.1) is transcribed from scene four “The Lounge Room by Helene Besouchov” of his opera *War and Peace* (Op. 91). The first three entries of the main theme are identical in both full score and the piano and voice reduction score which was also range by the composer (Example 19a). In the piano transcription, however, only the first appearance of the theme (mm. 18–30) is similar to the originals (Example 19b). Prokofiev embellished the melody with sixteenth notes in the second entry (mm. 34–42) and further altered the accompanying pattern with arpeggio in the third entry (mm. 70–78 [Examples 19c and 19d]).
Example 19a

“The Lounge Room by Helene Besouchov” of opera War and Peace (Op. 91), mm. 18–22
Piano reduction score by Prokofiev

Example 19b

“Waltz” of the Three Pieces (Op. 96, No. 1), mm. 18–22

Example 19c

“Waltz” of the Three Pieces (Op. 96 No. 1), mm. 34–38

Example 19d

“Waltz” of the Three Pieces (Op. 96 No. 1), mm. 70–74
Simplification

When transcribing a full score to piano, it is sometimes impossible to preserve all the voices from the original to the new medium. It is quite common to simplify thick textures or reduce voices to make the piano version playable. It is not surprising that Prokofiev combined or left out some supporting voices, and reworked some passages to make the music more suitable to play on the piano. However, by comparing some of the piano transcriptions with the piano reduction scores, as well as the original scores, we can clearly see some voices and notes which could be preserved were eliminated in the transcriptions, which is particularly true in his piano transcriptions from his ballet music. Unwillingly, Prokofiev made the music fuller and heavier to accommodate the needs of the dancers. Piano transcriptions provided Prokofiev a change to restore the spirit of his original thoughts. The reduction of voices and notes provides the music with a lighter and more transparent texture.

Prokofiev rarely compromised the melodic line of his music, but he would treat supporting voices more liberally. Some typical ways of combining and removing voices can all be seen in the “Folk Dance” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet. From bars 32 to 43 of the ballet score (Example 20a), the accompaniment voices in bassoon, harp, piano, and strings are reduced to one voice played by the left hand in the transcription (Example 20b). Prokofiev combined the triplets and the bass in a wider range to provide the spacious and liveliness to the character of the music. In bars 43–51 (Example 21a) of the ballet score, the bass line, which could be preserved as in L. Atovmyan’s piano score (Example 21b), is removed from the piano transcription (Example 21c). Although holding the D and playing the triplets by the left hand in
measures 45–46 and 50–51 of the piano score can be achieved by using the sustain pedal, it would consequently thicken the texture and give away the clarity. The removal of the bass did not weaken the music. The simplicity of texture, on the contrary, provides the music more sweetness and delicacy, giving it more contrasts in register and texture to the preceding and following themes.

Example 20a

![Example 20a](image)

No. 22 “Folk Dance” of ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 64), mm. 32–39

Example 20b

![Example 20b](image)

“Folk Dance” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 1), mm. 32–39
Example 21a

No. 22 “Folk Dance” of ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 64), mm. 43–51

Example 21b

No. 22 “Folk Dance” of ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 64), mm. 43–51
Piano reduction score by L. Atovmyan

Example 21c

“Folk Dance” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 1), mm. 43–51

The passage from bars 82 to 89 of the “Folk Dance” is also simplified, where the repeating quarter-eighth rhythmic pattern (Example 22a), kept intact in the left hand of the piano reduction score (Example 22b), was replaced by the drone in the bass in the transcription
(Example 22c). The melody at the top is slightly modified without the repeating notes on the second and fifth beat. Thus the melodic line, which could be overpowered by other voices, becomes more distinct.

Example 22a

No. 22 “Folk Dance” of ballet Romeo and Juliet (Op. 64), mm. 82–89
Another common way of simplification used by the composer is reducing voices in parallel octaves into single notes, which can be exemplified from the comparison of the three versions of *Divertissement*. The parallel melodic bass line played by cello and double bass one octave apart from measure 68 of the third movement of *Divertissement* for orchestra (Op. 43 [Example 23a]) is kept untouched in the piano reduction score (Example 23b), which was also arranged by Prokofiev. He marked *dolce* and *p subito* at the beginning of the section, but the heavy bass line and the thick texture in the piano score conflict with the context of the music. In the “Dance” of *Divertissement* for piano (Op. 43b, No. 3), Prokofiev removed the flute part at the top, reduced the parallel octave bass to a single line, and combined it with the middle voice (Example 23c). Thus, the lighter texture and the flowing left-hand accompaniment make the *subito piano* more surprising and effective.
Example 23a

Divertissement for orchestra (Op. 43), 3rd movement, mm. 68–75

Example 23b

Divertissement for orchestra (Op. 43), 3rd movement, mm. 68–75

Piano reduction score by Prokofiev
Instead of simply reducing octave doubling into single notes, Prokofiev sometimes would vary it with octave-single alternation. This can be seen from bars 13 to 28 of the “Folk Dance” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet*. The original accompaniment in octaves is replaced by the alternation of octave and single note (Examples 24a and 24b). Prokofiev never used any pattern rigidly and monotonously. He did not always use an octave on the downbeat (mm. 20 and 28), and he further altered the pattern with two octaves every four measures (mm. 15, 19, 23, and 27).

**Example 24a**

No. 22 “Folk Dance” of ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 64), mm. 13–28. Piano reduction score by L. Atovmyan

**Example 24b**

“Folk Dance” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 1), mm. 13–28
Organization

Orchestral works, ballet music, and operas are the main sources of Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions. These sectional and multi-movement works fit naturally into his piano style—short character pieces. Some of the movements are transcribed literally to the piano, and all the main elements are kept intact, such as the “Scene” (Op. 75, No. 2) and “Dance of the Girls with Lilies” (Op. 75, No. 9) of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet*. However, there are some pieces that went through some significant changes, particularly those arranged from ballets and operas. Due to the necessities of the plots, librettos, or requests by commissioners and choreographers, Prokofiev often had to distribute or cut one musical thought into different acts or scenes, or add some extra materials into the music. Without these restrictions, Prokofiev craftily unified the similar elements, eliminated unnecessary repetitions, links, or static moments, and provided the music higher artistic value.

In reorganizing the materials during the transcribing process, Prokofiev would simply remove some sections, which do not quite fit into the music without contexts of the scenarios, such as the removal of Andantino, a link to the next dance, in “Autumn Fairy” of *Ten Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 97, No. 3), and the Juliet theme in “The Montagues and Capulets” of *Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet* (Op. 75, No. 6), adapted from No. 13 “Dance of the Knights” of the ballet. Prokofiev would also combine some materials which were originally distributed into different scenes, such as the combining of No. 22 “Folk Dance” and No. 31 “Further Public Festivities” of the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* into the “Folk Dance” of the piano transcription.
Both dance numbers (No. 22 and 31) were based on the same thematic materials. Prokofiev used the first half of No. 22 and the second half of No. 31 with some alternation and modifications. Similarly, “The Young Juliet” of Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet (Op. 75, No. 4) is joined together with No. 10 “The Young Juliet” and the ending of No. 46 “Juliet’s Room” of the ballet score.

Some of these eliminations and combinations are in cut-and-paste style, but others are more elaborate and sophisticated with some transposing and reworking of the materials, or even additional new materials. In “Pas-du-chale” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 4), Prokofiev completely abandoned the formal structure of the original dance of the ballet. It now consists of a new introduction, part of No. 2 “Pas-du-chale” of the ballet (mm. 104–132), a newly composed section, part of No.46 “The Morning after the Ball” (mm. 16–63), and No. 35 “The Sisters’ Duet with the Oranges” in its entirety. Most of the materials are kept in their original forms, except the passage from the dance No. 46, where Prokofiev not only transposed the theme of measures 16–63 a few times, but also eliminated eight bars (mm. 36–43) from the original score. All the materials selected from the ballet, as well as the new sections, are based on the same theme. In the ballet, this theme is in a quite different style in each scene and always related to the stepsisters: the sisters dance with a scarf, reminisce about the ball, and dance with three oranges.17 The piano transcription combines these actions and newly composed materials altogether, forming a kind of variation form in three sections.

There are also some cases where totally different materials are drawn together to give the transcriptions more contrast. The “Winter Fairy” of *Ten Pieces from Cinderella* (Op. 97, No. 4) is mainly adapted from No. 16 “Winter Fairy” of the ballet. The originally short and straightforward piece is extended and alternated with the theme of Fairy Godmother, forming a Rondo form. After the full statement of Winter Fairy’s theme (mm. 1–16), Prokofiev ended the section with material originally used as the ending of this dance (mm. 16–18), followed by a newly written four-measure link (mm. 18–21). In the B section of the transcription (mm. 22–31), Prokofiev used the theme of the Fairy Godmother from dance No. 5 “The Beggar Woman Fairy.” The return of the A section (mm. 32–54) is prolonged with newly composed material based on the same theme. The Fairy Godmother theme in the reappearance of the B section (mm. 55–64) is drawn from No. 48 “The Prince Finds Cinderella” this time. The last appearance of the A section (mm. 65–69) is completely recomposed, and shortened to five measures. The music ends with the ending of No. 48 of the ballet (mm. 70–73).

A more complex usage of different materials can be found in “Quarrel” of *Six Pieces from Cinderella* (Op.102, No. 3). It consists of themes selected from No. 2 “Pas-du-chale,” No. 46 “The Morning after the Ball,” and No. 4 “The Father” of the ballet, as well as some passages from No. 7 “Dancing Lesson,” and No. 47 “Visit of the Prince.” Based on the same material, the music from No. 2 and No. 46 describes the sisters quarreling over a scarf. While No. 4, a different theme, describes the stepmother and sisters quarreling with the father. Prokofiev used this theme as the middle section to provide contrast to the outer sections adapted from No. 18

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An eight-measure passage from No. 47 (mm. 5–12) was also used several times in different keys to alternate and contrast with the themes in the A sections (see Table 3). All these themes in the piano transcription were carefully chosen. They convey similar moods and style, and are masterfully mingled together, providing more dramatic contrasts, and vibrantly portraying the stepmother and the sisters accusing the father and chaotically arguing among themselves.

Table 3. Formal structure of “Quarrel” of Six Pieces from Cinderella

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Intro Measure</th>
<th>A Measure</th>
<th>A Origin</th>
<th>B Measure</th>
<th>B Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1–8</td>
<td>9–48</td>
<td>49–56</td>
<td>56–67</td>
<td>68–75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>No. 7 Dancing Lesson, mm. 1–4</td>
<td>No. 2 Pas-du-chale, mm. 39–79</td>
<td>No. 47 Visit of the Prince, mm. 5–12, one octave lower</td>
<td>No 2, mm. 79–90, transposed a minor 3\textsuperscript{rd} higher</td>
<td>No. 47, mm. 5–12, transposed from E to C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td>No. 47, mm. 5–12, transposed to E-flat</td>
<td>No. 46 The Morning after the Ball, mm. 69–136, one octave higher</td>
<td>No. 47, mm. 5–12, transposed to A (minor)</td>
<td>No. 46, mm. 136–160, in which mm. 136–148 is transposed a minor 3\textsuperscript{rd} higher</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides those pieces from Cinderella and Romeo and Juliet, “Intermezzo” from Six Pieces (Op. 52, No. 1), transcribed from his ballet The Prodigal Son also exemplifies this feature. The reuse of materials in these pieces reaches such a degree that it goes beyond the concept of transcription. These works can be labeled as “new” works. This is Prokofiev’s quite common compositional practice.

Except Gavotte (Op. 77bis), each of Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions consists of several
pieces in contrasting moods and styles. The pieces in each work were arranged from a single work, or sometimes from several different works. The former type includes most of his transcriptions; the latter only includes two works: Six Pieces (Op. 52) and Three Pieces (Op. 96). Even though Prokofiev’s piano music resembles many classical styles and features, close key relationships between movements is no longer a device to unify the pieces in a set. Only the Classical Symphony follows the classical traditional (D major, A major, D major, and D major). There are no evident key schemes in the rest of the transcriptions. The March and Scherzo (Op. 33ter), for example, are two rather independent pieces. The “March,” without any flats and sharps in the key signature, begins in A-flat major after a two-measure introduction in repeating Ds. It ends on C major after an abrupt modulation. The “Scherzo,” on the other hand, suggests a key center in F-sharp, a remote key to both A-flat and C major. This remote key relationship can be found not only in the piano transcriptions but also in his other piano works, such as his early composition Four Etudes (Op. 4) where the key of each movement are D minor, E minor, C minor and C minor.

Prokofiev never tried to use thematic materials to draw connections between the pieces of a work. Except for the “Grasshoppers and Dragonflies” of the Ten Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 97, No. 5) which borrows the theme from the “Summer Fairy” (Op. 97, No. 2) in its middle section, each movement of the piano transcriptions is self-contained with its own themes.

Prokofiev also did not attempt to use the storyline to hold the pieces together in those transcribed from his ballet. Only Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet roughly follows the plot with alternation of the order of some movements, such as the placement of the “Folk Dance,”
arranged from dance No. 22 and 31, before the “Scene” from No. 3 of the ballet as the opening movement. In the three sets of Cinderella piano transcriptions, Prokofiev completely abandoned the consecutive storyline. The first two piano suites (Opp. 95 and 97) are full of diverse characters and scenes, which were chosen for their aptness as piano transcriptions;¹⁹ and each suite contains only one dance for Cinderella and the prince. The organization of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102) is different from the other two suites for piano for its focus on Cinderella and the prince, much greater length, and its dramatic settings, as well as the complexity. It consists of three dances for Cinderella and the Prince – “Grand Waltz”, “Waltz”, and “Amoroso”, one solo dance for Cinderella, and two sarcastic and comedic scenes – “Quarrel” and “Pas-du-chale” – of the sisters and the stepmother.

Even though they lack key schemes or other thematic or literary connections, all the pieces in each transcription are harmoniously grouped together. Prokofiev often weakened the tonal center of the endings by avoiding the third and fifth of the tonic chord, adding foreign notes to the chord, or abrupt modulations right before the cadence. These “less satisfying” endings help the pieces flow naturally from one into another. There are also many pieces that can be played equally well as single works. But which one is the more authentic way? Prokofiev seemed to have left that option to the performer. The composer himself often played only one or a handful of pieces from one set in his recitals, such as the “March” from Op. 33ter,

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¹⁹ Shlifstein, Autobiography, 88.
and the “Gavotte” from the *Classical Symphony*. In his autobiography, Prokofiev unveiled the performance issue on his symphonic suite from *Chout*: “There were twelve movements – too many and too varied to be performed in succession, but I did not intend all of them to go into one programme; five or eight numbers of the conductor’s choosing is quite enough.”

### Melodic Treatment

Thematic material is one of the most important elements in Prokofiev’s music, which distinguish him from his contemporaries. During the first trip to Western Europe in 1914, Prokofiev heard many new works by Ravel and Stravinsky. He realized that even though he was intrigued by their “vitality, ingenuity, and eccentricity,” he could not accept the differences which are so important in his own composition, that those works are “lacking in real thematic material.” When transcribing music to piano, Prokofiev would rewrite the accompaniment entirely but never abandoned the melody. He was always trying to preserve the melodic lines. In the “Scherzino” of *Six Pieces* (Op. 52, No. 4), for example, Prokofiev preserved both vocal and piano parts from the original song (Op. 35, No. 4). The piece begins with exactly the same arrangement as the original piano part. Prokofiev placed the vocal melody as the middle voice played by both hands (Examples 25a and 25b). At measures 8–11 and 17–21, the piano carries

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another melodic line besides the chordal accompaniment. Again, Prokofiev preserved the melodic lines of both piano and vocal parts as well as the accompaniment (Examples 26a and 26b).

*Example 25a*

Song from *Five Songs* for voice and piano (Op. 35 No. 4), mm. 1–4

*Example 25b*

“Scherzino” of *Six Pieces* (Op. 52, No. 4), mm. 1–4

*Example 26a*

Song from *Five Songs* for voice and piano (Op. 35, No. 4), mm. 8–11
Only one exception is the elimination of the vocal melody in the “Waltz” of Three Pieces (Op. 96, No.1) from his opera War and Peace. It does not mean that the piece is lacking in thematic material. In fact, the orchestral part carries the main theme, which was well established before the entrance of the vocal part. On the other hand, the vocal part is either a doubling of the orchestral themes or merely serves as a counter melody. Therefore the removal of the theme does not affect the integrity of the work.

Prokofiev rarely altered the pitches of the melody, but sometimes he would respell the notes. Even though Prokofiev’s music shows strong classical influences, his harmonic language and spelling are unconventional. He sometimes spelled harmonies differently among voices, such as those at measures 10–11 of the song from Five Songs for voice and piano (Op. 35, No. 4 [see Example 26a]). He used sharps for the vocal part but flats for the piano at measure 11. Thus the G-sharp and A-flat, B-sharp, C, and B-flat coexist in one harmony. When Prokofiev transcribed this piece to the “Scherzino” of Six Pieces, he changed the flats in the melody and the accompaniment of the piano to sharps to match the voice from the original vocal part (see Example 26b).
The only freedom in the melodic treatment is the register. Prokofiev often moved the melody to a different register, higher or lower. This feature can also be found in the “Scherzino” from Six Pieces. Compared to the original, the vocal theme in the second half of the “Scherzino” (mm.22–end) was lowered one octave and embedded into a new figuration played by the left hand (Examples 27a and 27b). Thus the melody was kept in a low register, and it is supported by a more flowing accompaniment. This new arrangement provides the music more gratifying contrasts to the slow-paced first section not only in textures but also in registers as well.

Example 27a

Song from Five Songs for voice and piano (Op. 35, No. 4), mm. 22–24

Example 27b

“Scherzino” of Six Pieces (Op. 52, No. 4), mm.22–24

Prokofiev’s change of register also can be partial, which consequently gives the melodic line a wide range with big leaps, a characteristic feature of his music. In the “Grand Waltz” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 1), for example, Prokofiev only partially changed the
register of some phrases. The original rather smooth and stepwise melodic line in measures 66–74 (Example 28a) was suddenly dropped down an octave at measures 68–69, creating more leaps (Example 28b). To compensate, Prokofiev added two grace notes to soften the abrupt change of the melodic contour.

Example 28a

No. 30 “Grand Waltz” of ballet Cinderella (Op. 87), mm. 58–66

Example 28b

“Grand Waltz” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 1), mm. 66–74

The piano transcriptions provided Prokofiev opportunities to freely express his musical thoughts without the restraint of the pitch ranges of some instruments. Prokofiev would expand the original melodic line into a much wider range in his piano transcriptions. For instance, the melody in measures 110–125 in the “Grand Waltz” of Six Pieces from Cinderella was originally carried by woodwinds within a two-octave range (Example 29a). It was now stretched out more
than three octaves in the transcription (Example 29b). This technique also prevails in other piano transcriptions, such as those in the previous examples: “Rondo” of Six Pieces (Op. 52, No. 2) and the Gavotte (Op. 77bis).

*Example 29a*

No. 30 “Grand Waltz” of the ballet Cinderella (Op. 87), mm. 210–219

*Example 29b*

“Grand Waltz” of Six Pieces from Cinderella (Op. 102, No. 1), mm. 110–125

Quite often, Prokofiev reworked the articulation and phrasing of the piano transcriptions. The articulation of the song (Op. 35, No. 4) and the “Scherzino” of Six Pieces (Op. 52, No.4), for instance, are totally different. The original vocal part is more lyrical which is marked with long slurs. The same voice in the “Scherzino,” however, is transformed into a more instrumental articulation with staccatos, short slurs, and *tenuto* marks (See Examples 25a and
Prokofiev rarely changed the tempo, key, and harmony in the piano transcriptions, which helped to preserve the character of the music from the original work. Prokofiev also kept the texture as close as possible to the original. Because Prokofiev wrote the piano score first, which provided the music some pianistic quality at the very beginning, it is not surprising that some pieces were arranged for piano transcriptions without much alternation such as the “Andante” of *Six Pieces* (Op. 52, No. 5) from the first movement of his string quartet No. 1 (Op. 50).
Prokofiev once analyzed his own musical style, and he mentioned five lines (styles) in his music: the classical line, which is related to classical forms or imitation of the 18th century music styles; the modern line, including new harmonic languages and “new departures in melody, orchestration, and drama”; the toccata line, an association with “repetitive intensity of the melodic figures;” the lyrical line, often long melodies conveying “a thoughtful and meditative mood;” and the “grotesque” line, “scherzo-ish” style with “whimsicality, laughter, and mockery” in quality. All of these five lines can be identified in Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions. His lyrical and grotesque lines, however, are more prominent – such as those in the three sets of transcriptions from Cinderella, which are full of the abundant, expansive, and lyrical themes of Cinderella, the prince, fairy godmother, and summer and winter fairies, as well as humorous and mocking themes of the stepmother and stepsisters.

During his later periods, Prokofiev was experiencing the changing of his music style, from a more complicated and dense massiveness to a simpler and more accessible one. This style was developed before his return to his homeland, which coincides with the Pre-Soviet Union norm, the so-call Socialist Realism. The tuneful and expressive melodic lines and simplicity of the texture in Prokofiev’s piano transcriptions reflect the new style, particularly when he further reworked the melodies and simplified the music in the transcriptions.

Transcriptions are often overlooked by performers and scholars, and they are not

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considered as serious as the original work. As a pianist-composer, Prokofiev always wrote his
orchestral and theatrical music as a piano score first, and mostly at the piano. Consequently this
compositional habit provided the piano versions some originality and pianistic qualities at the
very beginning. The piano transcriptions contain some of his most fascinating writings.
Prokofiev’s transcribing style and techniques are more artistic than simply modifying the music
to make it playable on the piano. Prokofiev transformed his piano transcriptions as more
independent works rather than subsidiary adaptations of the originals. Just as what he wrote
about his Six Pieces (Op. 52), “I took care to make them sound quite independent, and gave
each a title of its own without any reference to the original work from which they were
taken.”\textsuperscript{24} Compared to their original versions, the piano transcriptions seem to be more
satisfying as concert pieces. Without any limitations from the commissioners or instruments, the
piano transcriptions provided Prokofiev opportunities to freely express his musical thoughts and
restore them into their ultimate forms. With his skillful transcribing techniques, Prokofiev was
able to extract the essence of the compositions from other genres to piano which helped the
music to achieve a higher artistic value.

\textsuperscript{24} Shlifstein, \textit{Autobiography}, 81.
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