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ABSTRACT

Over seventy years since the composer’s death, the music of Sergei Rachmaninoff continues to elicit polarized responses from listeners; even expressions of academic indifference may betray a degree of contempt by what they do not say. Much of this reaction, positive or negative, owes to a rather superficial appraisal of his style and the influences thereupon. Comprehension of the multilayered syntax of the composer’s late Russian and post-exilic works in particular—including the Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39, Nos. 1-3, the subject of this document—requires study from multiple perspectives.

Accordingly, the author subjects these Etudes to Schenkerian and Schoenbergian (i.e., Grundgestalt) analysis, critiquing Robert Cunningham’s Schenkerian analysis of No. 1 in the process. He also observes influences, not of the oft-cited Tchaikovsky, but of the more progressive Rimsky-Korsakoff and other members and successors of the Mighty Handful (Kuchka)—including Rachmaninoff’s contemporaries Scriabin and Stravinsky. Especially noteworthy is his juxtaposition of symmetrical pitch structures and modality onto the common-practice model, creating a phenomenon for which Rachmaninoff scholar Blair Johnston has coined the term “hyperdissonance.”
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First I wish to thank Dr. Severine Neff for freely sharing her scholarship on and enthusiasm for “Arnold” and his thoughts on the Musical Idea, the Grundgestalt, etc., and more generally for helping me to appreciate the relationship between theory and performance. Teaching undergraduate music theory as one of her graduate assistants remains one of the pedagogical highlights of my life.

I am also grateful to Dr. Frank Samarotto for his excellent teaching of Schenkerian theory—which has had a profound and lasting impact on how I listen to music of the common-practice era—and for several stimulating office-hour discussions as I worked out in my own mind the interrelationship of these two theories and the shape that this document was going to take.

Just when I thought the document was near completion, I heard Dr. Blair Johnston deliver a paper on progressive Russian elements in Rachmaninoff. The paper addressed a nagging question that I had been avoiding: if this repertory responded so well to a Schenkerian/Schoenbergian approach, why did it sound so different from that of Central European contemporaries like Strauss or Mahler? Subsequent one-on-one discussions of the implications of his theory of hyperdissonance for the Op. 39 and consultation of his dissertation greatly enriched the present document.

Many thanks to my committee for their patience as more than once I changed direction on this document to take into account new perspectives, requiring additional time to assimilate them and reflect them in the document. Finally, I thank my wife, Professor Linda Pisano, and our sons, Massimo and Liam, for the sacrifices of potential family time that made this possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Context, Perspectives, Objectives 1

- Historical Context of the *Etudes Tableaux*, Op. 39 4
- Two Austro-German Perspectives on Late Romantic and Post-Romantic Music 6
- Schenker and the *Ursatz* 8
- Schoenberg, Tonal Problem, the Musical Idea and the *Grundgestalt* 14
- Progressive Russian Influences on Rachmaninoff’s Mature Style 19
- Objectives and Organization 22

Chapter II. *Etude-Tableau in C Minor*, Op. 39, No. 1 24

- Introduction: Programme and Form 24
- PART I: Toward a Schenkerian Interpretation 28
  - Exposition 28
  - Development 34
  - Recapitulation and Coda 41
  - Conclusion: Contrasting *Ursatz* readings of 39/1 44
- PART II: A *Grundgestalt* Perspective 48
  - *Grundgestalt* and the Exposition 49
  - Development 59
  - Recapitulation and Coda 62

Chapter III. *Etude-Tableau in A Minor*, Op. 39, No. 2 63

- Formal/Tonal Plan 64
- Section A 65
- Section B 68
- Section A’ 71
- Coda 72

Chapter IV. *Etude-Tableau in F# Minor*, Op. 39, No. 3 74

- Section A: *Grundgestalt* Manifestations in Multiple Parameters 74
- Section B: *Grundgestalt* Manifestations over Dominant Prolongation 80
- Section A’: Variants of the Tonal Problem and *Bassbrechung* 81

Chapter V. Conclusion 75

Selected Bibliography 89
# LIST OF FIGURES

1.1: The Fundamental Structure (*Ursatz*)  
1.2: Interrupted *Ursatz*  

2.1a-e: 39/1, Multi-Level Harmonic/Contrapuntal Reduction  
2.2a-b: 39/1, Contrasting Views of Mm. 1-6  
2.3a-b: 39/1, Neighbor Subdominant vs. Consonant PT  
2.4: 39/1, Voice-Leading Reduction of Mm. 1-5  
2.5a-b: LIPs in Handel 435 and Rachmaninoff 39/1  
2.6a-c: 39/1, Development (Mm. 19-45)  
2.7: 39/1, Recapitulation and Coda (Mm. 46-78)  
2.8a-b: Mozart K. 332, FG/MG (Schenker); 39/1, MG/BG (Pisano)  
2.9a-d: 39/1, Deep-MG and *Ursatz* Readings  
2.10: 39/1, “Pseudo-*Ursatz*” in Fm (Mm. 1-58)  
2.11a-b: 39/1, Pisano-Schenkerian and *Grundgestalt* Reductions of Mm. 1-5  
2.12: 39/1, Exposition (Mm. 1-19)  
2.13: 39/1, Development (Mm. 19-46)  
2.14: 39/1, Mm. 51-59 (Bass Clef Reduction)  
2.15: 39/1, Mm. 46-78 (Hybrid Schenkerian/*Grundgestalt* Analysis)  

3.1: 39/2, FG/MG/BG  

4.1: 39/3, Tonal Problem (Bass Clef Reduction)  
4.2: 39/3, *Grundgestalt* As Expressed in Compound Motive  
4.3: 39/3, Projection of Reordered GG Motive into MG Bass (Mm. 1-42)  
4.4: 39/3, MG Projection of Compound GG Motive (Mm. 1-42)  
4.5: 39/3, First Branch of Interruption Structure, PSA (Mm. 1-59)  
4.6: 39/3, Dominant Pedal Point (Mm. 59-70)  
4.7: 39/3, Variant of Tonal Problem (Mm. 89-106)  
4.8: 39/3, Mm. 107-132  
4.9: 39/3, Schenkerian/Grundgestalt Analysis of Complete *Bassbrechung*  
4.10: 39/3, Schenkerian/Grundgestalt Analysis of Mm. 127-132
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

^1, ^2, etc.: Scale degree 1, 2, etc.

39/1, 39/2 etc.: Op. 39, No. 1, etc.

AC: Ascending Chromatic motive

ANT: Anticipation

BC: Bass Chromatic motive

BG, MG, FG: Background, middleground, foreground

BR-V: Back-relating dominant

CM, Gm, DM7, A7, Fm7: C maj., G min., D maj.-maj.7, A maj.-min.7, F min.-min.7

DC: Descending Chromatic motive

DI: Dies Irae

GG: Grundgestalt

LH, RH: Left hand, right hand

LT, LLT, ULT: Leading tone, lower leading tone, upper leading tone

M2, m6, P5, +4, °5: Major 2nd, minor 6th, perfect 5th, augmented 4th, diminished 5th

MIIV: Motion into an inner voice

NHT: Non-harmonic tone

NT, 2xNT, UN, LN, IN: Neighbor tone, double NT, upper/lower/incomplete neighbor

PAC, IAC, HC: Perfect authentic cadence, imperfect authentic cadence, half cadence

PT, CPT, 2xPT: Passing tone, chromatic passing tone, double passing tone

SC: Subversive Chromatic motive

TP: Tonal problem
CHAPTER I: Context, Perspectives, Objectives

Despite misgivings that he had spent his life “hunt[ing] three hares” while catching none,¹ Sergei Rachmaninoff was renowned in his homeland as a composer, conductor and pianist. After emigrating to the U.S. he focused on the piano out of fiscal necessity, refining his technique and expanding his repertoire of other composers’ works.² With little time or disposition to compose new works in exile, he performed much of his previous output throughout the U.S. and Western Europe. Although (or perhaps because) it was very well received by the public and other performers, reactions among many critics, academics and fellow composers ranged from disdain to dismissal.³

Such views obtained not only due to suspicion of Rachmaninoff’s popularity—and, more justifiably, that of film music composed in superficial imitation of his style⁴—but because his was a time of such sweeping artistic upheaval that those whose voices came to dominate therein, much like those who rose to power after the French Revolution, increasingly viewed anyone with any connection to the past as anathema.⁵ More recently these attitudes have relaxed and the tide has slowly turned in Rachmaninoff’s favor, yet some cannot or will not discard the biases that colored previous assessments. As one writer has

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⁴“It seems to be the fate of this composer to have to atone for the popularity of his imitators.” Gerhard Schlüsslmayr, “Die Klavierwerke Rachmaninows,” Musikdidaktik 31 (June 1978), 254 [emphasis mine]; trans. and quoted in Robert E. Cunningham, Jr., “Harmonic Prolongation in Selected Works of Rachmaninoff, 1910-1931” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1999), 3.
⁵“I was struck by the common thread between...the French Revolution and musical modernism....There is one right way...and whatever you decide is unacceptable, you expunge, whether they’re aristocrats [or] triads.” John Corigliano, http://www.johncorigliano.com/index.php?p=item2&item=116, program notes to The Ghosts of Versailles, accessed 6/3/2011.
analogized, the slower of two parallel trains moving in the same direction will appear to move backwards to passengers on the faster train.\textsuperscript{6}

Broadly speaking, on one side of the dispute are those who are content with certain outward traits of his oeuvre (technical bravura, lyricism, sensuous chromaticism) and feel little need to engage with it intellectually; on the other are those who consider these traits proof of its unworthiness of scholarly attention and likewise excuse themselves from intellectual engagement. One pianist has expressed the former view thus:

Logic can only go a certain distance in music. I find that the most inspired performances are those which are inexplicable from a logical point of view. If I try too hard to understand any piece of music intellectually, I find that it thwarts my musicality…. With Rachmaninoff you must really let yourself go, and feel what he is expressing. It’s a mistake to analyze Rachmaninoff too carefully, there’s so much emotion connected with him.\textsuperscript{7}

In contrast, the following represents the historical consensus of academia:

[Rachmaninoff] was primarily influenced by Liszt and Chopin, but his piano writing was more opulent than that of his idols, so that, confronted with almost uninterrupted fullness of sound and left-hand figurations, the ear ultimately tires. This compositional superabundance, however, fits perfectly with the luxurious melancholy that expresses so many of his melodic ideas and his romantic, but essentially diatonic harmony.\textsuperscript{8}

Both views suggest that, for better or worse, emotion, “musicality,” romantic opulence, and lyricism were more important to Rachmaninoff than compositional logic; both offer assessments of his true musical values that would apply less accurately to him than to someone like Josef Hoffmann, his friend and colleague. While Hoffman was known as a spontaneous, even “anarchic” performer, in Rachmaninoff’s interpretations “everything was perfectly planned, perfectly proportioned…as though they had been worked out in collaboration with God…to be played eternally this way and no other.”\textsuperscript{9} His occasional failure to convey the logic of a work to his own satisfaction elicited severe self-criticism.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10}Bertensson and Leyda, 195.
To a performer with theoretical interests such as myself, the aforementioned “romantic” perceptions (positive or negative) of Rachmaninoff amount to a false dichotomy. Both views, each for different reasons, suggest a failure to explore the undergirding unity and coherence that can be obscured by his music’s external features. Abraham’s glib reference to Liszt and Chopin, born sixty years earlier into a very different milieu, implies inadequate acquaintance with his work for authentic insight into his idiom; imperception of important distinctions between Rachmaninoff and his “idols”; and/or ignorance of kuchkist and post-kuchkist influences. His syntax, though rooted in common practice, is hardly derivative; mature Rachmaninoff cannot be mistaken for Liszt, Chopin, or even Tchaikovsky (also cited by Abraham) any more than mature Beethoven can be mistaken for Haydn. Stylistically speaking he was not so much post-Lisztian/Wagnerian as he was post-Tchaikovskian, “post-Mussorgskian, post-Rimsky-Korsakovian, post-Borodinian.... By 1909 (to say nothing of 1917, when [he] composed his last Russian-period works...), the influence of Tchaikovsky on Rachmaninoff was significantly diminished.”

Oblivious to Rachmaninoff’s enriched tonal palette, Abraham heard only a “pale shadow” of his predecessors. In contrast, Richard Coolidge deemed it “unrivalled even by Wagner’s and Mahler’s in chromatic complexity.... Its depths, never having been fully plumbed, have never been finely appreciated.” Joseph Yasser, a microtonal composer himself, hailed explorations of “*intra-tonal* chromaticism” (as opposed to “the *inter-tonal* chromaticism of Wagner” and his successors) expanding “the common harmonic language...within the restrictive frame of an integrally preserved principle of Tonality.”

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11 In fact Rachmaninoff conducted *Boris Gudonov* and several Rimsky-Korsakov operas early in his career. Bertessson and Leyda 79-82; Norris, 25.
Though Rachmaninoff was far from avant-garde, Yasser was correct to call his music progressive.\textsuperscript{14} Max Harrison gives a similarly insightful assessment of his legacy:

He did not make technical innovations of the sort that would lead another generation on to further developments. Yet he did not stand still; even less did he go backwards….He proved it was not necessary to be an innovator to write fresh and vital music, and in the end he proved that modernism did not render other styles and traditions obsolete.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Historical Context of the Etudes-Tableaux, Op. 39}

These appraisals are highly relevant to the Op. 39 \textit{Etudes-Tableaux}. At the funeral of Scriabin in 1915, Rachmaninoff resolved to memorialize his former classmate and raise funds for the surviving family by devoting several recitals and concerts to his music (to which he ultimately added Op. 39).\textsuperscript{16} His father and Taneyev, his counterpoint teacher and mentor at the Moscow Conservatory, both died while the work was in progress.\textsuperscript{17}

As Rachmaninoff’s last composition in Russia, Op. 39 marks the transition between his late-Russian and exile periods (1909-17 and 1926-43 respectively).\textsuperscript{18} Its remarkable fixation (even for him) on the \textit{Dies Irae}, the minor mode of eight of the nine Etudes, and the multiple tragedies surrounding its creation suggest that it was inspired by “more than [his] usual mystical fascination” with mortality. This is supported by a conversation with Marietta Shaginyan, an admirer with whom he had previously maintained an epistolary relationship à la Mme. von Meck and Tchaikovsky before stumbling upon her identity.

\textsuperscript{14}Yasser, 25 [emphasis his]. Even jazz and neo-classical influences have been cited in his late works. William Flanagan, “Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Twentieth-Century Composer,” \textit{Tempo} 22 (Winter 1951-1952), 4-8.
\textsuperscript{15}Max Harrison, \textit{Rachmaninoff} (London: Continuum, 2005), 352.
\textsuperscript{16}Martyn, \textit{Rachmaninoff}, 261, 435-436.
\textsuperscript{17}Only months earlier, Rachmaninoff had sought Taneyev’s approval of his new \textit{Night Vigil}, op. 37. “He must have been particularly eager for Taneyev’s praise of it. The praise came, warmer than ever—and…within three months Taneyev was dead.” Bertensson and Leyda, 192.
\textsuperscript{18}The years 1918-25 constituted a compositional hiatus for Rachmaninoff, an effect of chronic homesickness and the pressures of concertizing. However, some of his greatest works, including the \textit{Corelli Variations}, the \textit{Paganini Rhapsody}, and the \textit{Symphonic Dances}, come from his post-1925 “exile period.”
He asked me in a very anxious and hesitant tone, ‘What is your attitude towards death, dear Re? Are you afraid of death?...A man wears out, grows old; under old age he grows fed up with himself. I have grown fed up with myself even before old age. But if there is something beyond, then that is terrifying.’

Beyond this overarching theme, each Etude was evidently generated by its own programme. After submitting several from Opp. 33 and 39 to be orchestrated by Respighi and premiered by the Boston Symphony, Rachmaninoff, usually reticent on the subject of extramusical inspiration, divulged their programmes to Respighi for practical purposes:

- The first Etude in A minor [39/2] represents the Sea and Seagulls.
- The second Etude in A minor [39/6] was inspired by the tale of Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf.
- The third Etude in E-flat major [33/4] is a scene at a Fair.
- The fifth Etude in C minor [39/7] is a funeral march...The other theme represents the singing of a choir. Commencing with the movement in 16ths...a fine rain is suggested, incessant and hopeless. This movement develops, culminating in the chimes of a church.

Op. 39 represents a turning point that did not go unnoticed by the contemporary Russian musical press. “This great talent is now in a period of search. Evidently the individuality originally formed...has for some reason ceased to satisfy the composer,” opined one critic; another perceived “a more severe, concentrated, and deepened mode of expression.” Prokofiev’s observation that “this is not the old Rachmaninoff of the Second and Third Concertos,” though made years later about the Corelli Variations, is equally correct regarding Op. 39. The former long-breathed lyricism is largely replaced by more objec-

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19 Martyn, 271. “Re” was a pseudonym by which he continued to address her even after meeting her in person.
20 Bertensson and Leyda, 218.
21 Rachmaninoff, letter to Ottorino Respighi in care of Sergei Paichadze, managing director of La Societé Anonyme des Grandes Editions Musicales, January 2, 1930; quoted in Bertensson and Leyda, 262-263. Riesemann added, “Many of these take their inspiration from Böcklin’s paintings: No. 8, Op. 39...can be traced back to Morning. No. 1, Op. 39...to The Waves [i.e., Im Spiel der Wellen].” While he later proved unreliable on various points, this claim is supported by the existence of at least two other Böcklin inspirations: the tone poem The Isle of the Dead, after the eponymous painting, and the Prelude Op. 32, No. 10, after The Return. Oskar von Riesemann, Rachmaninoff’s Reflections Told to Oskar von Riesemann, trans. Dolly Rutherford (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 237; Bertensson and Leyda, 270, 299-300; Norris, 101-102; Benno Moiseiwitsch, “Sergei Rachmaninoff, 1873-1943,” The Gramophone, May 1943, 169-170.
23 S. S. Prokofiev, Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya, Moscow, 1961, 287; quoted in Martyn, 318.
tive, intensive motivic development, making this work especially fertile ground for a particular aspect of the analysis to be applied hereinafter.

Two Austro-German Perspectives on Late Romantic and Post-Romantic Music

This document began as a study of Op. 39, No. 1 for a seminar on Arnold Schoenberg’s (1874-1951) Grundgestalt theory and chromatic tonal music; subsequently I added Nos. 2 and 3 to expand the presentation into a D.M.A. document. In the process I encountered the dissertation of Robert Cunningham, which required a shift of focus. Taking cues from Deborah Stein and Daniel Harrison, Cunningham attempts to incorporate certain traits of late Romantic harmony—extended tertian sonorities, greater subdominant emphasis, robust chromaticism—into the analytic methods of Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935), which he then applies to a large swath of Rachmaninoff’s works for piano. My initial response to his study of 39/1 took the form of a rebuttal from a Grundgestalt perspective, the essence of which has been retained herein.

Further study of Schenkerian theory and a growing number of studies aimed at reconciling Schenker and Schoenberg convinced me that a synthesis of the two offered a more effective analytical tool than either alone. Their simultaneous application to Op. 39 reveals essential elements of each at work, addressing issues of coherence from different but equally valid viewpoints. As Cunningham examines only the first of these etudes, this document cannot focus solely on disputing his conclusions. Nevertheless, it seems like a good place to begin, since many of the Schoenbergian arguments against his views are buttressed, ironically, by Schenker’s own writings.

One might ask if these Teutonic paradigms share sufficient common ground with an early twentieth-century Russian aesthetic to justify their application to the oeuvre of Rachmaninoff. For evidence in the affirmative one need look no further than Tchaikovsky, one of only two influences that he acknowledged by name. Though sympathetic to kuchkist ideals of nationalism and inspired amateurism, Tchaikovsky was also a product of the Moscow Conservatory; hence influences of the central European canon appear throughout his works. His symphonies, while Slavic in spirit, “respond to Western expectations of integrated structure and coherence”[central concerns of both Schenker and Schoenberg]. … Tchaikovsky displays the rapprochement of Russian individuality with this proudest of Western genres.”

Though the influence of Tchaikovsky yielded over time to that of more progressive compatriots,[27] Rachmaninoff “nevertheless depended throughout his career on functional tonal patterns and goal-oriented, arc-shaped phrase designs derived from common-practice models….Indeed, arc-shaped melodic structures and the clear departure-return strategies they suggest…may be [his] principal inheritance from Tchaikovsky.” Whereas contemporaries like Scriabin and Stravinsky were more willing to forsake this inheritance, it may be precisely these “expressive trajectories,”[28] more than any other trait, that make Rachmaninoff’s music responsive to “Western expectations of integrated structure and coherence” and suggest its perviousness to a hybrid Schenkerian-Schoenbergian analysis.

[27]The other influence Rachmaninoff named was Rimsky-Korsakov, the youngest of the “Mighty Handful.” Sergei Rachmaninoff, “Music Should Speak from the Heart,” interview by David Ewen, The Etude, Vol. 12, no. 59 (Dec. 1941); quoted in Bertensson and Leyda, 368-369.
[28]Blair Allen Johnston, “Harmony and Climax in the Late Works of Sergei Rachmaninoff” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 8. Perhaps this particular common-practice characteristic also obscures the originality of his “intra-tonal” vocabulary from some who find him conservative or derivative.
Given the abundance of exclusively performer-oriented DMA documents on Rachmaninoff, I have chosen a more theoretical approach to this repertoire in order to include theorists and like-minded performers\(^{29}\) in the discussion. This may lead some readers to desire more background on the theories in question. Most graduate music curricula in the U.S. include courses on Schenkerian theory; some of his devotees have distilled his core concepts, as expressed in his capstone treatise, *Der freie Satz* (*Free Composition*), into introductory textbooks, some accessible even to advanced undergraduates. This is not true of *Der musikalische Gedanke* (*The Musical Idea*), Schoenberg’s analogous achievement; comparable courses on his thought tend to be available on an elective basis only, if at all. However, excellent introductions to his *Grundgestalt* theory are available in print.

Consequently this study will not duplicate a task already admirably performed by others. The following introduction serves only to compare and contrast these two theories; to suggest a rationale for their joint application to the *Etudes-Tableaux*, Op. 39, Nos. 1-3; and to clarify the ensuing analyses. For further background the reader is referred to available materials, including the writings of Schoenberg and Schenker themselves.\(^{30}\)

*Schenker and the Ursatz*

1. Structure is clarified through perspective. The small and the large…are seen separately. 2. Structure determines long-range formal projection. Embellishment does not; its purview is…that of detail and prolongation. 3. More far-reaching features of structure are abstracted from surface presence.… The bass [Bassbrechung] and upper melodic line [Ur­linie] form a coordinated fundamental structure [Ursatz], the temporal projection of the tonic triad. 4. Harmony…is shown as resulting from line and counterpoint. 5. Harmonic

\(^{29}\)See pp. 2-3 herein.

movement in the large, and the key centers other than the tonic that it engenders, are seen in relation to the primacy of the tonic, the only true tonality of a work. (6) The concept of compositional unfolding \([\text{Auskomponierung}]\) is introduced...voice-leading serves “as the means by which the chord, as a harmonic concept, is made to unfold and extend in time.”

Schenker viewed tonal music as an extended elaboration on the major triad found in nature (\textit{Klang in der Natur}): the first four or five harmonics above a fundamental tone in the harmonic series. The resulting vertical musical space is manipulated by prolongation through time,\(^{32}\) effected by a process of composing-out (\textit{Auskomponierung}), i.e., embellishment of the harmonics. Melodic activity results from motion among the upper two or three harmonics (the fifth and/or third and the root); motion between the two lowest (tonic and dominant) produces the basic harmonic structure.\(^{33}\) Schenker called the melodic motion the fundamental line (\textit{Urlinie}) and the harmonic motion the bass arpeggiation (\textit{Bassbrechung}). Together they comprise the fundamental structure (\textit{Ursatz}),\(^{34}\) two of whose most common manifestations are shown in Fig. 1.1.

\[\text{Fig. 1.1: The Fundamental Structure (\textit{Ursatz})}^{35}\]

\(^{31}\)Epstein, 6-7.

\(^{32}\)“Counterpoint, the linear dimension of music, provides the kinetic impulses by which harmony, the vertical dimension of music, is expressed in time.” Cadwallader and Gagné, 28.

\(^{33}\)For acoustical reasons this motion tends to be more disjunct than that of the \textit{Urlinie}; pianists may confirm this simply by considering the differing types of passagework normally required of the right and left hands.

\(^{34}\)Schenkerian analysis emphasizes outer voices because they are the most independent; inner voices are implied by the fact that the combined \textit{Urlinie} and \textit{Bassbrechung} manifest all members of the tonic triad. Frequent reference is made to the “imaginary continuo” of a tonal work (Cadwallader and Gagné, 67), an idea supported by the fact that the voice leading that results from the “rule of the octave” principle in Baroque continuo playing can be traced long after the practice itself was obsolete—even in these \textit{Etudes-Tableaux}.

\(^{35}\)The eighth-note stems in Figs. 1.1b and 1.2b remind one that the subdominant, unlike the dominant, is not generated by the harmonic series, but is rather an incomplete-NT embellishment of the motion from I to V.
These variant formations of the Ursatz could represent in the large any common-practice work that begins and ends in the same key and whose melodic motion can reasonably be shown to center on $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{5}$. At this utterly reduced level the dominant, supporting $\hat{2}$, represents not a second key area but the last significant perfect authentic cadence of a work and the “falling” melodic motion that characterizes it. Frequently, however, the Ursatz is expanded from $\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$ over I-V-I to $\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$ over I-V, I-V-I (or from $\hat{5}$-$\hat{4}$-$\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$-$\hat{4}$-$\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$, $\hat{5}$-$\hat{4}$-$\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$ over a similarly interrupted embellishment of I-V-I, the tonic/dominant axis).\footnote{Cadwallader and Gagné, 118-119.} In such cases the $\hat{2}$/V before the interruption may represent a secondary key area, a half cadence in the fundamental structure, or both. It is followed not by a cadence to $\hat{1}$/I, but by a return to or reiteration of $\hat{3}$/I (Fig. 1.2a) or $\hat{5}$/I (Fig. 1.2b).

![Interrupted Ursatz](image)

**Fig. 1.2: Interrupted Ursatz**

If, for instance, Fig. 1.2a represents a typical sonata-allegro form, the first $\hat{2}$/V usually represents preparation for the recapitulation. While it may appear that the recapitulation resolves tension built up by the preceding dominant pedal, that would imply that the upper-leading-tone $\hat{2}$ resolves to $\hat{1}$ and would require that one interpret the returning primary theme as a composing-out of $\hat{1}$, despite its initial exposition as an elaboration of $\hat{3}$. Schenker avoided this discrepancy by noting that, despite the return to tonic, the recapitulation actually interrupts the expected $\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$/V-I motion, retreats to the original $\hat{3}$/I, and re-
peats the entire large-scale cadence from beginning to end.

One could liken such an interrupted *Ursatz* to a large-scale parallel period: whereas the antecedent “phrase” (“branch” in Schenkerian terminology) begins on the tonic and *arrives* at a half cadence on the dominant, the consequent phrase starts over and passes *through* the dominant on its way to the authentic cadence. The first dominant raises an expectation of resolution that, at least as far as the *Urlinie* is concerned, is delayed by the repetition of the first branch of the structure:

Because V contains the leading tone, which embodies a strong tendency to *ascend* to 1, while 2 in the upper voice tends to *descend* to 1, it is easy to understand why so much tension is accumulated when the bass and melodic motions are interrupted at this point. The second branch of the interruption consequently begins again, retraces the path of the first motion, and...finally achieves closure and dissipates the tension of the incomplete first branch with the arrival of 1 over I.37

While sonata-allegro and other forms often modulate to other keys, in Schenkerian thought this does not occur independently of the primary tonic. All is an organic, monotonous whole, of which secondary key areas are simply chromatic elaborations. Thus in the larger context, 2/V, though consonant within itself, is dissonant in relation to the tonic; specifically, 2 is horizontally dissonant between 3 and 1 and vertically dissonant above the bass tonic. Though 2 is rendered *temporarily* consonant by the apparent abandonment by the bass of 1 (the first member of the harmonic series) in favor of 5 (the second member), the latter is an overtone generated by the fundamental and depends upon it for its existence. Hence at the deepest level both the bass 1 and its fundamental are still conceptually present (if temporarily inaudible) and the treble 2 is vertically dissonant against them.38

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37Ibid., 167.
38Cohen, 6; William Drabkin, “Schenker, the Consonant Passing Note, and the First-Movement Theme of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 26,” *Music Analysis*, Vol. 15, No. 2/3 (Jul.-Oct., 1996), 152. For a more local example, consider a 1-3-5-3-5-Alberti bass under a 3-5-1-2-2 melodic figure of the same note values. None of the
The more detailed the elaboration of the *Ursatz*, the less audible are these underlying processes. To detect them (or convey them in performance) requires one’s faculties of long-range hearing—not merely observing each event as it passes, but simultaneously looking ahead to the horizon and backward in the rearview mirror, so to speak. It also requires a sense of formal and tonal hierarchy; mere Roman-numeral chord labeling does not clarify, for instance, which dominant chords in a work are merely local events and which is the *structural* dominant of the monotonal cadence beneath the whole.

A typical Schenkerian analysis essentially reverses the aforementioned Schenkerian concept of composition: by identifying which aspects of a composition are most decorative (foreground), which are most essential (background), and which are in between (middleground), it retraces the *Auskomponierung* of the work from the finished product back to the tonic triad from which it emanates. Usually such analyses present their findings on multiple grand staves, vertically aligned in descending order of complexity to illustrate the interweaving of global events through detailed local phenomena.\(^39\) But not any path back to the *Ursatz* will do: for a successful analysis, all of one’s understanding of the interrelationships among melody, counterpoint, and harmony must be brought to bear.\(^40\)

Adequate description of the multiple means by which the *Ursatz* may be elaborated at various levels is beyond the scope of this study; only two of the most crucial can be addressed here. One of Schenker’s greatest contributions to tonal music theory was his observation of the interdependence of rhythm, counterpoint and harmony. The latter is not

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\(^39\) The first analyses presented in this format by Schenker himself are the *Five Graphic Analyses* (New York: Dover, 1969). Local events are described as “lower,” global as “higher”—or, paradoxically, “deeper.” Perhaps more clearly understood are “foreground/background/middleground,” abbreviated FG/BG/MG herein.  

\(^40\) Cadwallader and Gagné, 15.
solely a vertical phenomenon involving only simultaneous tones; given the appropriate
rhythmic and metric character, even a single, unharmonized melody can project clear har-
monic progressions. This can be accomplished not only by arpeggiation (as in the Prelude
of the Bach GM cello suite) but even with very conjunct motion, provided that most essen-
tial harmonic tones are strategically placed on strong parts of beats, strong beats within
measures, and strong measures within hypermetric structures.41

Such harmonically and rhythmically guided conjunct motions in either outer voice
prolong vertical harmonies and their component intervals horizontally and are referred to
as linear progressions, named individually for the harmonic intervals they outline and for
the direction in which they proceed (ascending third progression, descending fifth, etc.).
The URLINIE of nearly all tonal compositions is in fact a large-scale descending third or
fifth progression that prolongs the tonic; at more local levels other harmonies may be pro-
longed by the same technique. The intervals of the fourth and sixth (as inversions of the
fifth and third respectively in a major triad) and even the seventh of a seventh chord are
equally viable candidates for prolongation by linear progression.

Two or even three linear progressions may occur simultaneously, resulting either
in consecutive parallel intervals (most commonly tenths, sixths, and thirds) or in repeating
patterns of intervals (e.g., a descending sequence of alternating sevenths and sixths). Such
combined motions, often derived from species counterpoint, are called linear intervallic
patterns (LIPs). The first and last tones of both linear progressions and LIPs may reflect
either the projection of single harmonies (at varying structural levels) or progression from
one such harmony to another.42

41 An excellent example is the opening of the Prelude and Fugue in CM for Organ, BWV 547. Ibid., 75-78.
42 Ibid., 75-98; examples will also appear in the Rachmaninoff analyses herein.
Schoenberg, Tonal Problem, the Musical Idea and the Grundgestalt

One might infer that Schenker and the father of the twelve-tone method were polar opposites in musical thought. On the contrary, they agreed on many points where tonal music was concerned. Schoenberg’s view that “the harmonic course of a piece can be regarded as an ‘extended cadence’”⁴³ implies hierarchical harmonic prolongation and resonates with the Schenkerian concept of Auskomponierung. Schoenberg also concurred that even the most remote modulations of a tonal work are governed by a single tonic:

Every digression from the tonic is considered to be still within the tonality, whether directly or indirectly, closely or remotely related....There is only one tonality in a piece, and every segment formerly considered as another tonality is only a region, a harmonic contrast within that tonality.

Monotonality includes modulation—movement towards another mode and even establishment of that mode. But it considers these deviations as regions of the tonality, subordinate to the central power of a tonic.⁴⁴

They do seem to diverge in their views of the underlying process of composition: whereas Schenker describes it as a sort of interplay between nature and art,⁴⁵ Schoenberg places it squarely in the realm of human endeavor:

Composing is: thinking in tones and rhythms....Musical thinking is subject to the laws and conditions of all our other thinking, and beyond that must take into consideration the conditions resulting from the material. All thinking consists essentially in bringing things (concepts, etc.) into relationship with each other. An idea is the production of a relationship between things otherwise having no relationship to one another.⁴⁶

For Schoenberg, this process applies to both tonal and atonal composition: in the former case, all tones are related both to each other and, closely or remotely, to the tonic tone (not simply the triad): “Thus there is a [tonal] problem in every harmonic phrase no matter how short that phrase: straying from and then recovering the path to the principal

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⁴³ Schoenberg, Musical Idea, 311 [emphasis Schoenberg’s].
⁴⁵ “Consonance is the sole law of all that is harmonic and vertical, and belongs to Nature. Dissonance belongs to voice leading, to the horizontal, and consequently is art.” Heinrich Schenker, Der Tonwille, Vol. II (1922), p. 3; trans. David E. Cohen, “‘Passing’: Consonance, Dissonance, and Schenker’s Concept of Musical Unity” (unpublished draft of a lecture given at Indiana University, Feb. 2005), 7.
⁴⁶ Schoenberg, Musical Idea, 370 [emphasis Schoenberg’s].
tone. Were the principal tone to stand by itself...then the tonality, although quite primitive, would still at least be unambiguously expressed.\(^{47}\)

*Every tone which is added to a beginning tone makes the meaning of that tone doubtful.*

If, for instance, G follows after C, the ear may not be sure whether this expresses C major or G major...the addition of other tones may or may not clarify this problem. In this manner there is produced a state of unrest or *imbalance* which grows throughout most of the piece...The method by which *balance is restored*...[is] the real *idea* of the composition.\(^{48}\)

Though both Schoenberg and Schenker describe tonal music as a progression from consonance to dissonance and back to consonance, their views of the relationship between the two differ sharply. To Schenker, dissonance is entirely subordinate and transitory, definable only as the absence of, or by comparison to, consonance:

Consonance itself is sufficient evidence for itself; it rests in its [own intrinsic] euphony, signifying itself Beginning and End. Not so, however, Dissonance...for, far from resting in itself, it urgently points beyond itself. It can only be grasped in relationship to—that is, out of and through—a consonant unity, and it is for just this reason that only the consonant unity signifies Beginning and End for the dissonance.

In this sense, consonance manifests an absolute character: dissonance, on the contrary, merely a relative and derivative [character]. In the Beginning is Consonance! – It is what is primary, dissonance what is secondary.\(^{49}\)

For Schoenberg, by contrast, the conflict seems much more dramatic; the tonic does prevail, but only after significant struggle against a worthy adversary:

Every chord, then, that is set beside the principal tone has at least as much tendency to lead away from it as to return to it. And if life, if a work of art is to emerge, then we must engage in this movement-generating conflict. The tonality must be placed in danger of losing its sovereignty; the appetites for independence and the tendencies toward mutiny must be given opportunity to activate themselves; one must grant them their victories, not begrudging them an occasional expansion of territory. For a ruler can only take pleasure in ruling live subjects; and live subjects will attack and plunder.\(^{50}\)


\(^{48}\)Schoenberg, “New Music, Outmoded Music, Style, and Idea” (1946) in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1975), 123 [emphasis mine, except for the word “idea”]. Quoted in Patricia Carpenter, “*Grundgestalt* as Tonal Function,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 5 (Spring 1983), 16; immediately thereafter Carpenter, a former student of Schoenberg, adds, “And the same means...are those by which imbalance is produced. The function of the *Grundgestalt* in effecting a coherent tonality in a work is to make manifest that process by which instability is brought about in a work and stability finally restored.”


\(^{50}\)Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, 151. This is certainly true of Postromantic music: “In Postromantic repertory, there is often a sense that conventional tonal organization is somehow endangered, and that the danger is part of an aesthetic stance.” Johnston, 30.
If Schenker tolerates dissonance as a necessary evil, Schoenberg embraces it as a “life-giving force” without which music might not be justifiable as an art form. Perhaps these attitudes shape their respective views of the difference between “essential” and “incidental” dissonance. What first appears to be a mere difference of emphasis begins to reveal itself as a genuine disagreement over the role or status of dissonance in tonal music:

According to traditional theory, chordal dissonances, which influence the progression of the fundamental, are considered ‘essential’ dissonances, whereas non-chordal notes are ‘incidental’ dissonances. A non-harmonic dissonance is melodically motivated and has a momentary sonorous effect, without being of harmonic consequence.

Traditional theory was rejected by both Schenker and Schoenberg, but on opposite grounds: Schenker denied the concept of the ‘essential’ dissonance and Schoenberg that of the ‘incidental’… In Schenker’s theory… ‘it is as if a vacuum existed between the dissonant passing note and the stationary cantus firmus note’. The acoustical fact of dissonance has no musical relevance. [To Schoenberg,] calling a dissonance a suspension or a passing note is simply an attempt at justification; the dissonance itself, however, represents the real end at which the composer was aiming… Contrapuntal considerations can be dispensed with as soon as one is able to grasp the dissonance as itself, as an ‘emancipated dissonance’.

Schoenberg’s views hint at his rationale for twelve-tone composition; nevertheless, in tonal music he noted the subordination of all dissonances to the tonal center by means of neutralization (cancelation of chromatic tones) and resolution (elimination of vertical dissonances). Of course, not all non-harmonic tones are chromatic and vice versa, but the two may coincide. For example, D♭ in the context of an A♭M triad is a NHT, but depending on the tonal context in which the A♭M triad functions, D♭ may be either diatonic or chromatic. If A♭M is the III of Fm, D♭ is diatonic, and resolution of the dissonance suffices to restore consonance. If the same triad is the VI of Cm, D♭ is vertically dissonant with the triad and, as b², horizontally dissonant with the original tonic; it disturbs[s] the diatonic surface of Cm by suggesting, however obliquely, an alternate tonality.

Persistence of a specific chromatic element creates a “tonal problem” that must not only

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52 Ibid., 214.
be resolved but neutralized—in this case, by the reappearance of D♮, which negates the tonality-obscuring effects of Db—for the tonic to maintain supremacy.53

Naturally, every chromatic tone is not a tonal problem; just as there is one tonal center, there is usually one primary “pretender to the throne,” though it may enlist the aid of other tones. This pretender may be a diatonic tone aided by a chromatic tone (e.g., ♭5 and its LT #4) or vice versa (e.g., ♭♭5 and its mediant 4). In either case, these secondary relationships temporarily allow the pretender to redefine its relationship to the true tonic. The scope of the problem at any point (i.e., its potential to “depose” the ruling tonic) depends on the combined effect of the problematic tones’ repetition, duration, and dynamics; their metric, hypermetric, and structural position; and whether the resulting dissonance is essential or inessential. The greater the scope of the problem, the more emphatically it must be overcome.54 In the above example, D♯, once having neutralized Db, would ultimately have to “prove” its total allegiance to Cm by resolving itself into the tonic triad.

The creation and neutralization of a tonal problem is usually prefigured within the first few measures of a piece. The problem tone may or may not appear in the primary motive; it may manifest itself first as a melodic dissonance only, then as a member of a chord with no diatonic relation to the tonic; later it may generate an entire key area that aspires to tonal supremacy, enlisting tones unique to its own tonal collection—even its complete dominant and subdominant triads—to strengthen the sense of alienation from the tonic.

In addition to the tonal problem, other parameters of the work may manifest their own conflicts or “problems,” injecting additional tension into the work that likewise re-

53 Patricia Carpenter and Severine Neff, commentary on Schoenberg, Musical Idea, 62-63.
54 “The more frequently the principal tone is challenged and the stronger the elements that challenge it, the stronger are the means needed to restore the key.” Schoenberg, Theory of Harmony, 130-131.
quires release or resolution. The term *Grundgestalt* (“basic shape”) as employed herein refers to the first motive, phrase, or phrase period of a work that introduces all of these conflicts and suggests how they will be resolved; the ultimate realization of this process constitutes the overarching *musical idea* of the work.

The aim of both theories in question is to go beyond mere description or classification of component parts of a work—theme groups, formal divisions, harmonic progressions, etc.—to address the issue of coherence: that which makes a work of Western art music come across to the informed listener not as a series of disconnected “tunes” in various keys, but as a single, integrated, indivisible musical event. In their attempts to confront this question one again finds similarity of intent but difference of emphasis:

Schenker, when speaking of coherence, meant primarily tonal coherence, whereas Schoenberg thought of motivic coherence, and the conflict of opinion…appears less implacable when one takes into account the fact that in the instrumental forms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries…the accent gradually shifted from tonal to motivic structure.

The present study proposes, as suggested above, that these two approaches to tonal music are not irreconcilable. Their relationship may be considered analogous to that of the various transparencies found in a children’s anatomy book, in which the skeletal structure, major organs, circulatory and nervous systems, musculature, etc. are overlaid one onto the next. Each page is complete within its own parameters, but all pages combined, though impossible to contemplate simultaneously, give a fuller picture of the human organism. Similarly, I propose that a hybrid *Ursatz-Grundgestalt* analysis offers a more integrated understanding of highly chromatic, motivically unified tonal works such as Op. 39.

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55. “The *Grundgestalt* articulates the work’s basic material—its character, phrasing, surface rhythm, tempo, register. The point of unrest within it is the problem.” Severine Neff, electronic correspondence with the author, January 6, 2005. Schoenberg’s terminology evolved as he strove to articulate his theories, making some of his definitions appear fluid or imprecise. For present purposes, *Grundgestalt* and other terms will be defined as in *The Musical Idea*, supplemented as needed by clarification from Schoenberg scholars.

56. Dahlhaus, 214.
Progressive Russian Influences on Rachmaninoff’s Mature Style

The foregoing begs the question of how such undeniably “Russian individuality” can pervade an oeuvre that lends so well to analysis from a Western perspective.57 One looks to native sources shared by Rachmaninoff and his compatriots, such as folksong and Russian Orthodox chant. While he claimed never to have quoted either,58 perhaps he absorbed their collective melos unconsciously yet so thoroughly that they permeated his idiom even without direct quotation.59 Another answer may lie in techniques or vocabulary common to a large circle of Russian composers. Blair Johnston’s previously cited dissertation explores the question of kuchkist and post-kuchkist influence on Rachmaninoff. Drawing on research of Taruskin, Leikin, and his own penetrating analyses of works by Rachmaninoff and others, Johnston sheds light on aspects of their shared syntax that in Rachmaninoff’s case have received scant attention.60

To begin with, he maintains that progressive nineteenth-century Russians “absorbed equal-interval devices into the national idiom”61 and made the symmetry of the octatonic, hexatonic and whole-tone scales “explicit in a literal way that composers to the west normally did not exploit.”62 This tradition continued at least as far as Stravinsky, as evidenced by The Faun and the Shepherdess, Op. 2, which he composed as a student of Rimsky-Korsakov. Based on a series of tableaux by a seventeen-year-old Pushkin, the songs depict the eponymous characters “according to a well-worn post-kuchkist formu-
la…. [The] whole-tone faun music, so far from being ‘Debussy-ist,’ traces its lineage directly to Glinka’s portrayal of the evil sorcerer Chernomor, Ruslan’s antagonist.  

This concern with symmetry eventually generated the “Petrushka chord,” the result of two superimposed major triads a tritone apart.  

Precedent can be seen in Scriabin’s early preoccupation with Neapolitan-dominant relationships; from this he developed the concept of the “tritone nucleus,” which forms the double-tritone subset (0268) common to his “mystic chord” and Stravinsky’s “Petrushka chord.”  

Given that Rachmaninoff composed the Op. 39 as a “deploration sur la mort de Scriabin” in the same decade and milieu as Petrushka and Scriabin’s late works, it should come as no surprise that similar sonorities or pitch-class structures appear therein.  

Johnston draws parallels between Rachmaninoff and early Stravinsky in their use of symmetry that reach beyond abstract pitch content to similarity of syntactic intent:  

The appearance of equal-interval pitch devices in a functional tonal environment represents in Rachmaninoff’s music a kind of stress upon the functional system… Intensification, tonal instability, and climax coincide with a trend towards symmetry… In this one regard, at least, Rachmaninoff is perhaps not so different from early Stravinsky after all.  

Johnston then offers Taruskin’s view of the animus behind the Petrushka chord:  

The Petrushka chord is conceived, nay motivated, by a sense of struggle and antagonism, of order and chaos…we are meant to hear C and F-sharp in terms of an active, not a static, polarity—as competing centers, not merely as docile constituents of a single, static, octatonically referable ‘hyperharmony’  

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Taruskin, 241 [emphasis mine].  

Though the combinatorial hexachord thus generated, (013679), is not itself symmetrical, it is both a subset of the symmetrical octatonic scale and a superset of symmetrical tetrachords (0167), the diminished seventh chord (0369), and (0268)—all three of which contain two tritones.  


In one way or another, all of these examples associate symmetrical pitch structures with the supernatural, a stock-in-trade rhetorical/semiotic device among Russian composers. Johnston, Chapter 4 passim.  

Indeed, the funeral march mentioned as the programme for 39/7 (see p. 5 herein) alludes specifically to the death of Scriabin. Bertensson and Leyda, 262-263; Harrison, 209, 375.  

Johnston, 103.  

Taruskin, 756-57; quoted in Johnston, 103.
Rather than blend together and lose their respective identities, the two triads that comprise the Petrushka chord compete against each other, creating the “sense of struggle and antagonism” identified by Taruskin and described by Johnston as a “stress upon the functional system.” Such conditions are created not by the mere presence of symmetrical structures, but by their integration into tonal operations. Several clear examples of this process will be identified in the repertoire under consideration.

In addition to these “fantastic” structures, Johnston identifies four types of modal structures or procedures in Rachmaninoff’s mature works: 1) the church modes; 2) oscillation between or “stacking” of two diatonically related triads, an extension of a technique called ladoyava peremennost (“modal mutability”) or simply peremennost; 3) a melodic-harmonic idiom termed nega by Taruskin; and 4) Phrygian mode, which Johnston treats separately from the other church modes because of its unique structural implications.\(^70\)

Finally, through analysis of numerous excerpts, short works, and Opp. 43-45, Johnston illustrates how Rachmaninoff integrated these Russian elements into the European idiom that he inherited from Tchaikovsky and others of the Moscow school, creating a highly personal “compound syntax.” These elements contributed to a structure built around a “culminating point,” a term not always synonymous with climax as generally understood. Referring to this concept, which he also applied to his performance of other composers’ works, Rachmaninoff remarked:

> Each piece…is shaped around its culminating point: the whole mass of sounds must be so measured, the depth and power of each sound must be given with such purity and gradation that this peak point is achieved with an appearance of the greatest naturalness, though actually its accomplishment is the highest art. This moment…must seem a liberation from the last material obstacle, the last barrier between truth and its expression. The composition itself determines this culmination; the point may come at its end or in the middle, it may be loud or soft, yet the musician must always be able to approach it with sure calcula-

\(^{70}\)Ibid., 160, 165; for full discussion see his complete Chapter 5, “Modal Structures,” 160-233.
tion, absolute exactitude, for if it slips by the whole structure crumbles, the work goes soft and fuzzy, and cannot convey to the listener what must be conveyed.\textsuperscript{71}

In his own music, Rachmaninoff employed symmetry and modality respectively to lead to and away from the culminating point and lesser high points of musical structures. Whereas “functional chromaticism”—i.e., chromatic operations that refer to a potential rival tonic, such as $\#4$ functioning as a leading tone of $V$ or $bII$ as the subdominant of $VI$—already “intensif[ies] the directed motion of diatonic procedures,”\textsuperscript{72} symmetry in Rachmaninoff superimposes onto functional chromaticism an additional layer of tension that Johnston calls “hyperdissonance.” This procedure creates even greater forward momentum, yet at the same time exponentially delays arrival at a tonal destination. Modal structures, on the other hand, tend to appear during low points in the dramatic contour when a sense of relative stasis is desired.

**Objectives and Organization**

One aim of this study is to disabuse the reader of popular notions of Rachmaninoff as a Romantic tunesmith fighting the modernist current (and academic characterizations as a “pale shadow” of Tchaikovsky who wrote “too many notes”) and offer a more accurate assessment of his style vis-à-vis late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century trends in Western music generally and Russian music in particular. To this end the following analyses of the *Etudes-Tableaux*, Op. 39, Nos. 1-3 will: 1) acknowledge his common-practice heritage of tonal and contrapuntal coherence; 2) explore examples of multilevel motivic coherence and its chromatic repercussions; and 3) identify nationalist traits that Rachmaninoff shared with progressive Russian composers from the kuchkists to his own day.

\textsuperscript{71} Marietta Shaginyan, quoting a letter to her from Rachmaninoff; quoted in Bertensson and Leyda, 195.

\textsuperscript{72} Cadwallader and Gagné, 381.
Accordingly, Chapter 2 considers 39/1 from these multiple perspectives. As this is the only Etude of the three in question for which we have a clearly narrative programme, the chapter begins with preliminary discussion of the interplay among form, extramusical imagery, and “fantastic” and modal structures at selected points in the work. Subsequent Schenkerian analysis interprets its undergirding diatonic functions quite differently from Cunningham’s reading, which, though likewise intended to present a Schenkerian perspective, seems to me more eisegetic than exegetic. Finally, a Grundgestalt reading of the same work addresses, more thoroughly than is typical of Schenkerian analysis, the interrelationship between motivic unity and chromatic tonality.

Chapters 3 and 4 apply to 39/2 and 39/3 respectively the same hybrid Schenkerian-Schoenbergian-Johnstonian methodology, but with no adjunctive discussion of programme or debate with Cunningham like those that were required in Chapter 2. Nor do Chapters 3 and 4 offer separate Ursatz and GG analyses of their respective Etudes; rather they refer to both perspectives simultaneously or in alternation. Chapter 5 concludes the document by discussing possible performance implications for this and similar repertoire.\footnote{It is assumed throughout that the reader has scores of the works under consideration for reference.}
CHAPTER II: *Etude-Tableau in C Minor, Op. 39, No. 1*

*Introduction: Programme and Form*

As previously noted, this *Etude-Tableau* was likely inspired by Böcklin’s painting *Im Spiel der Wellen*. The title alone could predispose one to hear the continuously undulating, sometimes violent motion of ocean waves in the constantly fluctuating dynamics and continuous triplet-sixteenth-note gestures of varying lengths surging and receding up and down the keyboard. Without seeing the painting, however, the performer may not recognize the need to convey a sense of not only the power of the unsympathetic natural world but the menace of the supernatural—both of which may concern someone preoccupied with death, as the composer was at this time (even more than usual).\(^74\) The painting depicts three Rubenesque mermaids swimming in a choppy ocean while two Centaurs approach them. Two of the mermaids, apparently unconcerned, continue “at play,” as the title suggests, but the third looks out at the viewer from the center foreground with an expression of quiet terror while one Centaur, smiling with evil glee, extends a hand around her upper back. Immediately behind them a fish has surfaced, looking on with a disapproving expression on its anthropomorphized face.\(^75\)

While Rachmaninoff employs typical pianistic gestures to evoke aquatic images (e.g., rising and falling arch shapes to depict waves), he also depicts the inner horror of the scenario harmonically by beginning on the unstable subdominant and avoiding authentic cadences until twelve measures from the end. The resulting relentless tension, compounded by nervous syncopation in the LH, could represent continual fear in the face of

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\(^{74}\)Rachmaninoff may have found the image genuinely frightening, anxious as he was about not only the existential problem of death, but literal hazards, potential or imaginary, to his life and well-being. Martyn, 271.

\(^{75}\)Leon Botstein, “Brahms and Nineteenth-Century Painting,” *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Autumn 1990), 164. Botstein’s article regarding the relationships among Brahms and various visual artists of his day, including Böcklin, includes a plate of this painting with the comment: “Böcklin’s famous paintings of Tritons and Centaurs possess a pacified, aestheticized, if not highly erotic, version of danger and evil.”
first one hazard, then the other. The chromatic dissonances and the relative strength or weakness of the various cadences (none but the last of which offers complete relief from tonal tension) might suggest the degree of threat, as perceived by our unfortunate protagonist, from either waves or creatures at any given moment.

The first theme of 39/1, a compressed sonata-allegro structure, consists of an ascending semitonal motive linked to a Dies irae (DI) variant, both buried in “wave” figures that rise and fall piano but agitato over a syncopated, tonally unstable bass line and climax fortissimo in the minor dominant. At m. 12 the second theme bursts out in a rattling, descending sequence of syncopated tremolandi figures (probably representing Centaurs) as altered wave figures in the LH ascend from and return to a G pedal point. At m. 16 the waves return to the RH, displaced from the LH by an intervallically expanded DI—a timely musical expression of mortal fear—and the exposition concludes diminuendo.

As mentioned previously, the mermaid in the foreground, isolated in her terror, contrasts starkly with the other characters, who exhibit no fear of the waves or anything else. However, given the DI associations with both the “wave theme” and the “Centaur theme” and the absence of lyric contrast often associated with (but not essential to) second themes in sonata-allegro form, one might speculate that Rachmaninoff musically amplified the role of the waves to make them as ominous as the creatures, purposely contrary to the intent of the artist—perhaps because the visual contrast, though compatible with the musical form, would have been difficult to convey within the narrow technical and acoustical parameters of a motoric virtuoso etude. Such a problem could be solved by music-

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76 The opening bass fifth contracts from F-C to F♯-B, creating the set-class (0167), whose symmetry injects the first element of “stress upon the functional system” (Johnston, 103) in 39/1.
77 Given the clear whole-tone emphasis of this theme, such an association would correspond with the aforementioned kuchkist practice of portraying supernatural characters with symmetrical pitch structures. Contrastingly, the prospect of death at the hands of Mother Nature is represented by the asymmetrical DI.
ally modifying the image to one of shifting but ubiquitous peril, as opposed to Böcklin’s “pacified, aestheticized...version of danger”—at least for the duration of the exposition.

At m. 19 the principal theme develops by modulating sequentially from the minor dominant downward. The harmonic rhythm slows dramatically at m. 25, and the syncopation that characterized the LH relaxes somewhat by way of rhythmic augmentation. The waves appear to have abated somewhat, and there are no creatures in sight; notwithstanding the increase from triplet-sixteenth motion to seven sixteenths per beat, the figuration is less angular and the dynamic level is lower. Perhaps intentionally depicting the protagonist temporarily adrift in comparatively calm waters, the relative harmonic and melodic stasis from here until m. 33 may appear discursive at first; however, it is harmonically and motivically unified with the material that precedes and follows it, as will be shown.

An abrupt change in musical parameters at m. 33 may represent a renewed sense of threat. The arrival at that point on \([V^7]\) iv, which is then prolonged in the pedal for thirteen measures, signals a retransition to the subdominant, on which the recapitulation begins at m. 46. This restatement of the primary theme is varied by the intrusion in the LH of the expanded, octave-doubled DI motive from the conclusion of the second theme.

It may seem a simple task to proceed from the subdominant harmony of the recapitulation to the tonic pedal point to recapitulate the second theme in the tonic. However, as Rachmaninoff apparently realized, avoiding the pitfall of prematurely releasing the harmonic tension accumulated from so much tonic evasion meant that the path to the long-anticipated tonic would have to be much more tortuous.\(^78\) Accordingly, m. 53 begins an extraordinary internal extension of the primary theme over a (nearly) chromatically rising...

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\(^78\) See footnote 54, p. 22 herein. This was also necessary for registral reasons: the character of this Etude requires that the second theme recapitulate a fourth above, not a fifth below, its appearance in the exposition.
bass line, above which the omnipresent triplet figures deviate from the established pattern of four-beat-long arch shapes to follow continually rising sequences in a $\frac{6}{8}$ context.

The arrival on a D pedal point (mm. 57-58) signals the most convincing motion yet to the dominant (and thus the culminating point), which, aided this time by a cadential $\frac{6}{4}$, finally has sufficient momentum to continue to the tonic after its own eight-measure prolongation. At this point the hands diverge again toward the extremes of the keyboard; in mm. 65-66, the final measures of the dominant prolongation, the bass is a fifth lower and the RH a fourth higher than at the parallel passage in m. 11. Leaping LH chords fill in the intervening space, creating the densest sonority yet heard in the work.

Finally the expected authentic cadence occurs at the fortissimo climax of the entire Etude (m. 67),\(^7\) where the second theme, with its attendant whole-tone properties and supernatural associations, makes its first appearance in the tonic. Although this cadence, like its expository counterpart, is accompanied by multiple suspensions—doubled, even tripled in this thicker texture—the harmony remains clear, with the complete Cm triad underpinning the massive sonority. Compensating for the evasion of tonic and weakness of the dominant in the exposition, the tonic pedal point continues for six measures, extending the V-i cadence to fourteen measures.\(^8\)

As in the exposition, the tremolando figure leads to spinning-out figuration over the bass DI variant (m.71); it then descends, diminuendo, until it reaches the registral low point of the piece. It may appear that the Centaur has spirited our hapless victim away to some nether realm—unless this low point represents the ocean ominously receding to

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\(^7\)This is one instance where the “culminating point” and the climax are not the same. That m. 67 is the climax is visually obvious in the score and aurally so in performance, but m. 59 is where the grip of the subdominant is finally broken.

\(^8\)The pedal tone of the second theme was surely calculated for both its contrast with the harmonically unstable principal theme and its impact in the recapitulation when transposed to the hitherto evaded tonic.
gather strength before unleashing its final furious onslaught. Suddenly at m. 74 the coda shifts from the scorrevole texture that has pervaded the etude heretofore to scherzando block chords, accelerating and rising to a breathtaking peak at m. 77, “and then, almost stationary at its apogee, gradually accelerating as it falls to smash itself to pieces.”

**PART I: Toward a Schenkerian Interpretation**

Fig. 2.1 below examines the beginning and end of each phrase for a more detailed picture of the harmonic structure of 39/1. In order to separate local harmonic events from those of deeper significance, potential prolongations of fundamental structural sonorities, including horizontal progressions and linear intervalllic patterns (LIPs), are considered. Some intentionally variant MG readings are offered, with the Bassbrechung represented at a deep MG level. All of this is presented in a vertically aligned graph (all examples except Ex. a are condensed into bass clef to conserve space), followed by explanatory comments and contrasts with Cunningham’s interpretation. As one follows the graph from local to deepest levels, one can also trace a hypothetical evolution of thought from one of concern with vertical sonorities to a perception of harmonic prolongation by means of contrapuntal (i.e., horizontal) processes.

**Exposition**

The first phrase (mm. 1-5) already brings out major divergences between Cunningham’s reading of this work and mine. Viewing the brief Cm triad at the ends of mm. 1-2

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81Martyn, 272. Martyn’s description of this work omits any reference to the characters in the painting; evidently it was lost for some time and he had only the title to go on. Cf. Patricia Brady, “Rachmaninoff’s *Etudes-Tableaux*” (D.M. diss., Indiana University, 1986), 73-74.
as the initial structural tonic of the piece, he considers the much longer iv\(^7\) chords in mm. 1-3 entirely subordinate to the Cm triad. He also suggests that the phrase is six measures long and ends in an authentic cadence, embellished by another iv\(^7\). Thus he renders the progression (iv\(^7\)-i-(iv\(^7\))-i-iv\(^7\)-V-(iv\(^7\))-i, reducible to i-iv\(^7\)-V-i.\(^{82}\)

Not only does this reading take great pains, including distortion of phrase lengths, to minimize the subdominant (contrary to his stated aims)\(^{83}\) in order to manufacture a V-i progression, but it perpetuates the freshman misconception that every V-I progression is a

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\(^{82}\) Cunningham, 183-184.

\(^{83}\) Ibid., 21-22.
Mm. 6-8 restate 1-3 almost identically, beginning with two “false starts” of the primary theme followed by a more extended iteration. The complete identity of mm. 6-7, like that of mm. 1-2, indicates that the two measures belong to the same phrase. These two parallel phrases are articulated not by an authentic cadence at m. 6, but by a half cadence in m. 5. Cunningham’s forced reading, perhaps arising from certain assumptions regarding tonic primacy, almost willfully ignores the obvious parallelism of mm. 1-5 and 6-11, although he notes it himself:

Many structures [in Rachmaninoff] are based on…tonic-subdominant polarity. These structures…are not restricted to the foreground but extend to deep middleground levels. Rachmaninoff’s backgrounds, on the other hand, are consistently based on authentic progressions…. In the few cases where S function appears to succeed D on the musical surface, closer examination reveals that S is better understood as an embellishment to the following T and is thus associated with a lower hierarchical level. A typical instance is provided by the opening [of] 39/1…. On the musical surface, the iv\(^7\) harmony at m. 6 succeeds V. As can be seen from the thematic parallelism with m. 1, however, m. 6 initiates a new phrase, within which the subdominant embellishes the following tonic, just as in the opening measure. The true structural successor to V, therefore, is not iv\(^7\) but i.\(^86\)

There are two problems with this analysis: 1) having said that tonic-subdominant polarity can exist even at deep MG levels, Cunningham immediately reveals his discomfort with that concept by citing an example in which he denies that possibility at any level deeper than the musical surface; 2) he tries to explain away a problem that does not exist: an apparent V-iv progression, contrary to the usual TSDT paradigm. But if indeed “m. 6 initiates a new phrase,” then m. 5 ends in a half cadence, i.e., an interruption—unless one hears m. 6 as a phrase elision, the case for which is so weakened by the prolonged restatement of iv that only a priori reasoning about the iv-i relationship can condition one to

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\(^84\)His V-i progression is highly suspect in the first place, given the interposition of another long iv\(^7\) between the V at the end of m. 5 and the brevity of the Cm triad at the end of m. 6.

\(^85\)Another example of this tonic fixation is his observation that in m. 5 the UNTs E♭ and C happen to spell a tonic triad with the G chordal root. Since it is actually the dominant that is prolonged here, he accounts for this as a “hybrid harmony.” By this reasoning he should view G, B, and D, the lower NTs of the iv\(^7\) in mm. 1-2, as a dominant triad that forms a “hybrid harmony” with the subdominant. Yet his responses to suggestions of non-tonic harmonic implications of NHTs can be rather dismissive. Ibid., 180-184.

\(^86\)Ibid., 76-78 [emphasis mine].
hear it. There is no “successor to V” because there is no progression from V. If one sings “Happy Birthday” and starts over after “dear,” the fact that the next word sung is “happy” does not mean that “dear” progresses to “happy.”

Rather than marginalize the subdominant and manufacture an authentic cadence, I read the first phrase as iv\(^7\)-(v/iv)-iv\(^7\)-(v/iv)-iv\(^7\)-V, turning Cunningham’s analysis on its head. It seems more “perceptually valid”\(^{87}\) to me to hear all three iv\(^7\) chords as one MG subdominant, interrupted in its progress toward V by brief intrusions of Cm (Fig. 2.2b). In this context Cm acts more like v/iv, akin to Schenker’s “back-relating dominant” (hereinafter “BR-V”), which “relates back to and expands the initial tonic, but does not reside at the same structural level as the other members of the higher-ranking progression.”\(^{88}\)

\[\text{Fig. 2.2: 39/1, Contrasting Views of Mm. 1-6 (a. Cunningham,}^{89}\text{ b. Pisano)}\]

A more contrapuntal explanation of the same phenomenon lies in Schenker’s concept of the “consonant passing tone” vis-à-vis the role of the subdominant in a progression like I-IV-I-V-I (or i-iv-i-V-i). Fig. 2.3a below treats the subdominant much like Cunningham treats the iv\(^7\) in mm. 1-2: as a “neighboring harmony” that serves only to embellish (i.e., prolong) the tonic and to prevent the treble \(\sharp\) from being dissonant with the bass. In

\(^{87}\)Ibid., 21.
\(^{88}\)Cadwallader and Gagné, 414. In this case I am applying the concept to a secondary dominant that “relates back to and expands” not an initial tonic but an initial subdominant. Cunningham himself allows for minor primary and secondary dominants (Cunningham, 21, 99).
\(^{89}\)Inferred from Cunningham, 182-183, 190.
Fig. 2.3b, by contrast, i-iv-V-i (not i-V-i) is seen as “embedded” in the larger progression; iv, though subordinate to the tonic-dominant axis, has its own identity as a fundamental harmony, whereas the subsequent tonic triad “does not provide a point of closure...but rather must be thought of as an interpolation”; it “converts a dissonant 7 into a consonant interval above the bass, but...does not have the weight of a fundamental harmony.”

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Drabkin, 149-155 [emphasis mine]; see also pp. 9-11 herein.
gation (a scenario that Cunningham readily admits is possible)\(^9\) that gives 39/1 a highly individual character. To the Cm triads I assign not structural tonic status, but rather that assigned by Drabkin to the triad that supports the consonant PT: “interpolation[s]” that lack “the weight of a fundamental harmony” because they embellish and prolong the sub-dominant (hence the [v] labels in Fig. 2.2b).

One commonality between our analyses is an emphasis on diatonic harmonies (or closely related applied harmonies) at BG and MG levels. Despite frenetic activity, chromaticism, and tertian sonorities on nearly every eighth note in mm. 4-5, every tone that does not fit into the fundamental progression can reasonably be accounted for as a PT, NT or other NHT. This approach reveals the artful prolongation of the sub-dominant in mm. 3-4, as Cunningham notes; though less explicit in his graph, the bass arpeggiates the entire iv\(^7\), then ascends by third again in m. 5 to arrive on the dominant.\(^9\) Subsequent UN motion to A♭ is prolonged via an enharmonic A♭m arpeggio that leads the bass back to its original register, where the UN is resolved (Fig. 2.4).

\[\text{Fig. 2.4: 39/1, Voice-Leading Reduction of Mm. 1-5}^{93}\]

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\(^9\)Review Cunningham quote and ensuing discussion, pp. 30-31 herein.

\(^9\)Cunningham, 182-183.

\(^9\)At times the root and/or third of the iv\(^7\) are raised chromatically, hence the added Ger. \(^{+6}\) and [vii\(^6\)]. My choices of enharmonics, like Rachmaninoff’s, sometimes reflect true scale-degree function, at other times
In contrast, mere chord-grammar analysis of this and similar passages often produces a tangle of useless details, like that which one would get by looking for a driving route from New York to Chicago on a street map of Manhattan instead of in an atlas of interstate highways. Though combinations of NHTs occasionally align in tertian simultaneities, many have no functional relationship to a Cm tonic. For instance, in mm. 4-5 an apparently random series of sonorities (E♭M7-A♭m6-Bm6-Am7-Bm-G+-A♭m-A♭6-Cm6-EM6-A♭m-G7) hurries by at the rate of one per eighth note, nearly unintelligible to the ear at performance tempo.94 A more linear reading (Fig. 2.4) underscores the coherence of the passage by revealing the simple half cadence beneath the elaborate embellishment.

The next phrase (mm. 6-12) is harmonically similar except that, after once again arpeggiating the iv7 (m. 10), the bass moves to G not by ascending third but by descending fifths. Unlike m. 5, this leads to an authentic cadence on the minor dominant, which is prolonged by a bass pedal point for the entire exposition of the secondary theme (mm. 12-19). For reasons to be addressed later, this analysis rejects Cunningham’s view that this passage represents the first structural dominant in an interrupted Ursatz.

**Development**

This section appears to break down into three primary harmonic events: 1) a sequential pattern (mm. 19-25) prolonging Gm; 2) a semitonal descent (mm. 25-33) in all voices at different times from a DM harmony to 3) a powerful [V]iv pedal point with extended tertian variants (mm. 33-45) that prepares the recapitulation of the subdominant-laden primary theme (see Figs. 2.1b and c, p. 29). No harmonic function is assigned to

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94 This is an example of the “unprecedented harmonic rhythm” that Coolidge described. Coolidge, 181-182.
the individual triads of the descending-fifth sequence\textsuperscript{95} in mm. 19-25; contrapuntal analysis yields a more meaningful interpretation, particularly since the bass moves conjunctly rather than from root to root. A lower-MG reduction reveals that beneath Rachmaninoff’s chromatic and textural enrichments, two LIPs—parallel tenths and a chain of 7-6 suspensions that recalls fourth-species counterpoint—recreate the Baroque formula i-v\textsuperscript{6}-iv\textsuperscript{6}-V, a derivation shared by this excerpt from the Handel Chaconne in G, HWV 435 (Fig. 2.5a).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig25.png}
\caption{LIPs in Handel HWV 435 and Rachmaninoff 39/1}
\end{figure}

This comparison confirms that the motion from Gm to DM in m. 25 is not a modulation but merely an extended half cadence in Gm (approached via an augmented-sixth resolution), after which the influence of Gm begins to wane.\textsuperscript{96} Despite the sense of arrival conveyed by the marked change in harmonic rhythm and texture, no harmonic motion supports DM as a key area. Its only significance is as a BR-V: it extends the tonicized Gm area that precedes it, but is not related to the material that follows.

In reality, the harmonic path begun at m. 19 does not end at m. 25; DM is only a pause in the deeper progression to the [V]iv pedal point in m. 33, which signals the reca-

\textsuperscript{95}The term “descending-fifth sequence” is employed herein instead of the more common “circle-of-fifths progression” to avoid confusion with the Schenkerian “fifth progression” described on pp. 13-14 herein.

\textsuperscript{96}The 6-V resolution is essentially a chromaticization of the Phrygian cadence in the formula i-v6-iv6-V.
pitulation on iv\(^7\) at m. 46 (Fig. 2.1c and d). More significant, then, than the v-i relationship between Gm and Cm is the ii-i relationship between Gm and Fm. Though typically the supertonic in minor is diminished and cannot be tonicized, this obstacle is removed when the melodic minor #\(^6\) transforms the triad to minor. For precedent one appeals to Schenker himself, who gives a similar analysis of an excerpt from the Mozart Piano Sonata K. 332. In the recapitulation of the first movement he reduces mm. 181-184, a local progression of IV\(^6\)- V\(^6\)-I-IV\(^6\)-ii\(^6\)-V, to IV-V at a higher level, considering everything in between a prolongation of IV. While his graph depicts this prolongation more contrapuntally than harmonically, one can only infer that, chord qualities notwithstanding, he hears the ostensible V\(^6\)\(_5\) as an applied major-minor supertonic, and the apparent tonic triad as an applied dominant. In light of this the local progression can be reinterpreted (omitting inversions) as IV(-II\(^7\)/IV-V/IV-IV)-ii-V. As Schenker perceives a II/IV function in a diatonic major context, so do I hear the Gm sonority in mm. 12-19 as ii/iv in a minor context.\(^97\)

Beyond proving hypothetical possibility, mine is the burden of demonstrating the exegetical plausibility of such a secondary subdominant relationship in this case. I submit that Rachmaninoff simultaneously pursued DM (the dominant of Gm) and C\(^7\) (the dominant of Fm) as harmonic destinations, much as a so-called “pivot chord” simultaneously serves one function in one key and another in a new key. Context for such a procedure is created by substantial overlap between the paths from Gm to DM and from Gm to C\(^7\).

The initial and final triads of a descending-fifth sequence such as in mm. 19-25 usually reveal a deeper-level progression (or prolongation, if the triads are identical); to

\(^97\)Schenker, The Masterwork in Music, Vol. II (1926), ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent, William Drabkin, John Rothgeb, and Hedi Siegel (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1. A perusal of any collection of Bach chorale harmonizations will turn up several in minor keys that have progressions like IV\(^6\)_7-V\(^6\)-i that, like the ii/iv in mm. 12-19 of 39/1, derive from the raised sixth degree of melodic minor.
ascire precise functions to all the intervening chords is often difficult and unnecessary. However, it is worth noting here that a typical diatonic descending-fifth sequence in Gm from tonic to dominant, i.e., Gm\(^7\)-Cm\(^7\)-F\(^7\)-B\(_\flat^\prime\)M7-E\(_\flat^\prime\)M7-A\(_\flat^7\)-DM, would privilege the tone D over D\(_\flat\) and A over A\(_\flat\), as did the modulation to the second theme. The opposite would occur in a similar progression from Gm to Fm, which would more likely pass through D\(_\flat^\prime\)M than DM (i.e., Gm\(^7\)-Cm\(^7\)-Fm\(^7\)-Bm\(^7\)-E\(_\flat^\prime\)M7-A\(_\flat^7\)-D\(_\flat^\prime\)M7-G\(_\flat^7\)-C\(^7\)). As it happens, the actual progression, Gm\(^7\)-Cm\(^7\)-Fm\(^7\)-B\(_\flat^\prime\)m\(^7\)-E\(_\flat^\prime\)M7-G\(_\flat^7\)-C\(^7\), is a hybrid of the two that paradoxically favors D over D\(_\flat\) but A\(_\flat\) over A (until the half cadence on DM).

In mm. 27-33 Rachmaninoff resumes the path to Fm via repeated chromatic inflection of the DM triad, mutating it through Dm, D\(_\flat\)M, D\(_\flat\)m, to C\(^7\). While he could have employed a strict descending-fifths sequence all the way back to Fm, skirting DM altogether, the detour to DM avoids the dull formulism that would have resulted from such direct pursuit of the next harmonic goal. On first hearing one might argue that his alternative—a combination of major-minor alternation and SLIDE relations\(^98\)—merely trades concise monotony for discursive variety, but it underscores a D-D\(_\flat\) conflict that, in light of motivic considerations to be addressed later, will prove very germane to the work.

Viewed together, mm. 19-25 and 25-33 are not separable events, but constitute a single MG progression from Gm\(^7\) to C\(^7\), the ii\(^7\) and V\(^7\) of Fm (in turn the iv of Cm). This motion finds horizontal expression as a pair of descending fifth progressions—G-C in the bass and B\(_\flat\)-E\(_\flat^\#\) in the treble—in parallel tenths (Fig. 2.6c); as Cunningham notes, these tones combine to spell a CMm\(^7\).\(^99\) Subsumed within that pattern are two pairs of fourth


\(^99\)Cunningham, 192.
progressions. In Fig.2.6a, B♭-F♯—a diminished fourth in the treble—and the bass G-D tonicize Gm. The second pair, B♭-F♮ over G-D♭ (an augmented fourth that implies Fm), subsumes the first and adds F♮ and D♭ into the equation. This has the effect of canceling out the DM established in m. 25\textsuperscript{100} and reversing the tonicization of Gm, already weakened by the A♭ in the treble progression, by transforming it horizontally into Gø7 (i.e., ii\textsuperscript{iiø7/iv}), which it spells with its combined first and last tones. This longer LIP is more organically related to the “parent” LIP that horizontalizes the ii\textsuperscript{iiø7-V7} progression in Fm and spells not the Gm but the Fm scale, confirming that Gm as ii/iv functions at a deeper structural level than Gm as v.

Cunningham likewise notes this “dual role” of Gm and agrees that it occupies a “more peripheral” place than Fm in the tonal structure; paradoxically, he considers it the

\textsuperscript{100}To Cunningham’s credit, he does give the bass D♭ structural preeminence over D♮ and points out that the role of DM is overplayed by others. Ibid., 190-191, 193-195.
first structural dominant in an interrupted Ursatz, suggesting that it simultaneously inhabits a deeper structural level than the prolonged subdominant (mm. 19-58) and functions as a subordinate supertonic of the same subdominant. While admittedly intriguing (along the lines of the famous Escher drawing of stair steps that perpetually ascend, yet repeatedly return to the same point), the idea that a component of the Ursatz could embellish something that operates at a lower level than itself seems inherently contradictory.  

More to the point, to call this Gm a structural dominant suggests a narrow view of interruption structure. It is true that the first dominant in an interruption may occur in the second theme of the exposition, as Cunningham asserts, to be composed out for the remainder of the exposition and the development. However, he does not explain how anything from mm. 27-45 (two thirds of the development) serves to prolong Gm, and by dismissing D♭ out of hand he underestimates the structural weight of Fm.

Indeed, by mm. 19-21 D♭ has already begun to pull Gm into the orbit of Fm; there we see a local manifestation, with the same telltale D-D♭-C voice leading in the tenor, of the same ii-V-i progression (allowing for an applied minor dominant) that prolongs itself at a MG level across the entire development. Moreover, Cunningham’s arbitrarily symmetrical division of the fifth-progressions into thirds—conveniently arpeggiating a Cm triad in the bass and suggesting that the transitory passage of the descending-fifth

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101 “Within the development, on the other hand, G minor harmony serves a subtler, less commanding role… embellishing the subdominant at m. 46 and implicitly according higher status to the latter.” Ibid., 194 [emphasis mine].

102 Another possibility conceives of the entire exposition and development as an elaboration of the initial tonic and delays the first structural dominant until the arrival of the dominant pedal point just before the recapitulation. Cadwallader and Gagnè, 164.

103 On a more intuitive, audible level, one notices that the tension that this Ursatz is supposed to interrupt accumulates only as the influence of Gm recedes. If anything, Gm actually alleviates the tension generated by the frustrated iv-V progression in mm. 1-5 by replacing the LT of Cm with the subtonic B♭, the hitherto absent 4 of Fm—allowing the subdominant to entrenched itself and resist later attempts to pull it toward the tonic.
sequence through EbM at m. 23 amounts to a harmonic *arrival* thereon—fails to reflect the actual phrase structure.\(^{104}\) Perhaps in an effort to correct those who read too much into the cadence at m. 25 and turn it into a key area,\(^ {105}\) Cunningham’s graph ignores it entirely, notwithstanding striking changes of texture, rhythm, right-hand figuration, dynamics, harmonic motion, and harmonic rhythm that occur at that point (and the absence of any such changes at m. 23). Above all, his reading misses the artfully elaborated Baroque progression highlighted in Figs. 2.5 and 2.6a.

After the double-fifth LIP completes itself at m. 33, the dominant of Fm persists for the remainder of the development (mm. 33-45). Neapolitan-dominant relationships, a preoccupation of many of Rachmaninoff’s post-kuchkist compatriots (including Scriabin and Stravinsky), are exploited in mm. 41-45; after an accelerated alternation of the two harmonies, they fuse together into V\(_7\)♭—Scriabin’s “tritone nucleus,” comprised of the roots and thirds of both ♭II and V. At this juncture Taruskin’s view of the rhetorical purpose of the *Petrushka* chord bears repetition:

> The *Petrushka* chord is conceived, nay motivated, by a sense of struggle and antagonism, of order and chaos…we are meant to hear C and F-sharp in terms of an active, not a static, polarity—as competing centers, not merely as docile constituents of a single, static, octa-tonically referable ‘hyperharmony’\(^ {106}\)

This description is so applicable to mm. 41-45 that it might appear intentional were it not for the overt reference to *Petrushka*. Clearly “a sense of struggle and antagonism… [between] competing centers” C and F#/Gb is evident, the latter being chromatically related to the subdominant as an applied Neapolitan and to the tonic as the leading tone of V. It is also organic to 39/1 through motivic relationships to be explored subsequently.

\(^{104}\)Cunningham, 190-192.
\(^{105}\)Surdell, 32; Brady, 290.
\(^{106}\)Taruskin, 756-57 [emphasis mine]; quoted in Johnston, 103.
Recapitulation and Coda

On first hearing, the recapitulation of the principal theme at m. 46 sounds more orthodox than it really is. Had it been prepared by a typical dominant pedal, the resulting V-iv motion would have stood out as an interruption of a progression that seemed intended to go elsewhere. Instead Rachmaninoff employed a V⁷/iv pedal to this end, which paradoxically sounds more natural in this context than a dominant pedal.

![Musical notation](image)

**Fig. 2.7: 39/1, Recapitulation and Coda (Mm. 46-78)**

The first phrase of this section (mm. 46-50) performs the same elaboration of Fm⁷ as its expository counterpart. In the extended consequent phrase (mm. 51-67), Fm is supported nearly to the point of modulation by the introduction of its LT, its subdominant, and related sonorities such as ♯iv⁷ (i.e., vii⁰/V) and the German augmented sixth. For all appearances the goal of the phrase is a cadential ⁶ in Fm at m. 57 (Fig. 2.7).\(^{107}\) The B⁶₃ that arrives instead, though mildly surprising, hardly thwarts expectations; it could still function as [vii⁰⁷]V and proceed to the anticipated cadential ⁶. Its resolution, however, is both unexpected and ingenious: just when it appears that Fm is about to depose Cm unequivoca-

\(^{107}\) The ⁶ in m. 56 is not cadential but passing, as the pivot of a chromatic voice exchange between[vii⁰⁷]V and Ger. The notation “(57?)” refers to potential listener expectation in m. 57; “57!” is what happens instead.
cally as the ruling tonal center, Rachmaninoff pivots on the apparent \([\text{vii}^6_5]\)V of Fm by giving it the enharmonic function of \(\text{ii}^7\) of Cm. Though it is of the “wrong” quality for a supertonic in Cm—one would infer \(\text{vii}^6_5\) from its spelling—its strong bass motion by fifth into the cadential \(6\) clarifies its function as a predominant sonority.

The best explanation for the “misspelling” of this sonority lies in Johnston’s concept of hyperdissonance. After a series of harmonic changes twice per measure over a rising chromatic bass line (mm. 53-56), the harmonic rhythm suddenly pauses for two measures (57-58); yet the accumulated harmonic tension continues because the symmetrical OCT\(_{1,2}\) collection prolongs the \(\text{ii}^7\). Indeed, though the second half of m. 56 through m. 58 appears highly chromatic, all forty-four tones (plus their octave doublings) are in fact diatonic in OCT\(_{1,2}\) except for a single E♭ in m. 57. Such contraposition of symmetry against the tonal system, a practice few would think to attribute to Rachmaninoff, generates high tension because OCT\(_{1,2}\) is a hostile environment for the tonic tone C, making the substitution of B for C, the usual seventh of \(\text{ii}^7\) in Cm, not only possible but necessary. It is as if the two LTs, D and B (the root and seventh of \(\text{ii}^7\)), are bearing down on C but are held at bay as long as OCT\(_{1,2}\) can resist the definitive assertion of Cm as the tonal center.

This hyperdissonant \(\text{ii}^7\) forms the “culminating point” so essential to Rachmaninoff’s view of musical structure, yet Cunningham’s analysis of the recapitulation misses its significance.\(^{108}\) It heralds the arrival of the structural dominant, which follows a subdominant that has been prolonged so tenaciously since the very beginning of the Etude as to deny \(\text{any} \) strong statement of the major dominant up to this point. This enormous (albeit

\(^{108}\)Cunningham, 190, 195-196.
incomplete) release of tension could indeed be construed as “a liberation from the last material obstacle...between truth and its expression.”

To address any lingering doubts about the highly disproportionate impact of the subdominant on this work, I return to Schenker’s analysis of Mozart K. 332, which contains a striking parallel between his reading of that excerpt and my interpretation of the MG of 39/1 (Fig. 2.8). While his analysis comes from the recapitulation and uses far fewer Roman numerals, I have applied it to the parallel passage in the exposition in CM and added such Roman numerals as his reading implies in order to facilitate comparison with our Cm Etude. The clear similarities between Schenker’s Mozart analysis and my analysis of the 39/1 MG—and hence the applicability of his logic to my thesis of subdominant prolongation—should thus become more readily apparent to the eye.

Fig. 2.8: a. Mozart K. 332, FG/MG (Schenker); b. 39/1, MG/BG (Pisano)

Extended dominant and tonic pedal points (mm. 59-66, 67-72) combine to “right the ship” after the imbalance created by the lengthy prolongation of iv\(^7\). The recapitulated second theme (mm. 67-73), underscored by both the ff dynamic and density of the texture, marks the first authentic cadence in Cm. While these measures clearly mark the climax of

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109 Marietta Shaginyan, quoting a letter to her from Rachmaninoff; quoted in Bertensson and Leyda, 195.
the Etude—distinct from the culminating point in this case\footnote{One may infer that the coincidence or divergence of these two designations depends on the coincidence or divergence of the formal and dramatic content of the work under consideration. In other words, one might refer separately to the “structural climax” and the “dramatic climax.”}—I find Cunningham’s inference of Kopfton \footnote{Cunningham, 190.} somewhat unsatisfying, tonic harmony notwithstanding.\footnote{Ibid., 187.} Considering the monumental release of tension suggested by such a signal event, there seems to be too much energy yet to dissipate before that event can occur. Equally if not more plausible is the idea that the E♭s in which these two phrases terminate melodically (on the downbeats of mm. 69 and 71) represent a return to $\frac{3}{4}$. Hence Fig. 2.7 offers a reading with an interruption at m. 67 and a second branch of the Ursatz, the realization of which plays out in the coda. Cunningham correctly notes the tonicized Neapolitan of the coda (mm. 74-78), prolonged by a I-IV-V-I progression in D♭M and followed by an emphatically final authentic cadence in Cm;\footnote{Ibid., 179-180} only here is the overriding tonal tension finally dissipated.

**Conclusion: Contrasting Ursatz readings of 39/1**

The strong emphasis in 39/1 on the subdominant at the expense of the tonic (and even of the dominant) has led to confusion on the part of some analysts, as Cunningham indicates.\footnote{Ibid., 179-180} While it is true that Cm is the real tonal center, I hasten to reiterate that the prolongation of iv\textsuperscript{7} forestalls the realization of the implied tonal logic so effectively for so long that, far from merely supporting the Cm tonality, Fm often seems nearly to subvert it. Fig. 2.9 below illustrates our divergent views of the deep structure of this Etude.

Cunningham’s limited view of the role of iv\textsuperscript{7} in the exposition—and his apparent assumption that the interrupted Ursatz must apply to all sonata forms in the same way—leave him no choice but to designate mm. 12-19 (the exposition of the secondary theme in
Gm) as a structural dominant supporting Kopfion $\frac{5}{3}$. This Etude, however, does not lend to analysis as a typical interruption. Terrific tonal tension does accumulate just before the recapitulation—much greater than that generated by $\frac{2}{3}/v$—and its resolution is thwarted by a return to the beginning; but this tension comes not from the tonic-dominant axis, but a iv-[V]iv “pseudo-axis” within the context of the prolonged subdominant. Ultimately the tension generated by the true axis proves even greater, but the major dominant does not assert its role in the tonal scheme until m. 59 (preceded by subtle foreshadowing in m. 5).

![Fig. 2.9: 39/1, Deep-MG and Ursatz Readings (a./b. Pisano; c./d. Cunningham)](image)

The tension that culminates in m. 45 derives not from $\frac{2}{3}/v$, but $[b^{3}_2]/V^{3}_5$ iv, and it is not resolved in m. 46, Cunningham’s “implied” resolutions to the contrary. Just as the treble $\hat{2}$ that ends the first branch of a typical interruption does not resolve to the bass $\hat{1}$ that be-

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115Cunningham, 340; his MG4 graph on this page lends most easily to comparison with Fig. 2.9 below.
gins the second, neither in this case does E♯, the treble secondary LT, resolve to the bass F. The resolution is interrupted because it does not occur in the same voice; instead E♯ is neutralized to E♭, recapitulating Kopfton ♯. Nor do the other tendency tones resolve smoothly into the iv: B♭, the seventh, ascends to C instead of resolving to A♭, and the b² G♭ frustrates the chromatically intensified urge to resolve via descent by recapitulating the A♭ of the opening Fm⁷ sonority. In sum, all the right resolutions are frustrated at the right time for a classic interruption—in Fm! One might call it the “pseudo-interruption” of an incomplete “pseudo-Ursatz” in Fm (Fig. 2.10; note the “pseudo-Urlinie” in the tenor).

This conclusion begs the question of how the tonic of the Etude is established. To call Fm a subdominant presupposes Cm as the tonic, yet this analysis denies that any true tonic appears prior to the recapitulation. The Cm triad in m. 1, viewed by Cunningham as a structural tonic, is interpreted as v/iv, the Gm triad in mm. 12-19 as ii/iv—insufficient, despite its fifth relationship, to tonicize Cm due to its minor quality and resulting lack of leading tone. How then does one aurally infer that Cm is the initial tonic of 39/1?
One solution to this problem is simply to take the absent structural tonic at face value and argue for a subdominant prolongation at even the deepest BG level. This results in a variant *Ursatz* reading of $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ over iv$^7$-V-i, suggesting that the tonality is unclear until near the end. In Schenkerian theory this is called an auxiliary cadence; as an example Schenker cites Brahms Op. 118, No. 1, which begins in CM but ends in the relative minor, from which one infers an *Ursatz* of $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ over III-V-i.\(^{116}\)

However, the projection of tonality in Brahms 118/1 differs enough from that of Rachmaninoff 39/1 to warrant consideration of other possibilities. The repeated opening of 118/1 actually *cadences* in CM, whose function as a prolonged mediant is not revealed until later in the piece. By contrast, the exposition of 39/1 implies the Cm tonic, despite its apparent absence, by reiterating its upper and lower LTs both in the primary motive and at the half cadence in m. 5.\(^{117}\) While the tenacious Fm$^7$ sonority, abetted by the recurring Db in the opening motive, forestalls an authentic cadence in Cm for a very long time, it also fails either to lead toward such a cadence in Fm (though it very nearly succeeds at the latter in the recapitulation, as we have seen) or to prevent a half cadence in Cm.

These factors suggest that Fm, though extraordinarily prolonged, does not qualify as a secondary key area (inasmuch as it is never truly tonicized as III is in Brahms 118/1), but only as a very obstinate harmony. At first (mm. 1-54), Fm is entrusted with its own supertonic and dominant “underservants,” Gm and CM (harmonic arrival points at mm. 12 and 33 respectively), perhaps because they are also closely related to Cm. But Fm arouses suspicion when it enlists B♭m (m. 55) and D♭M (coda), both diatonic in Fm but fairly re-

\(^{116}\)The resulting *Bassbrechung* spells an Am triad. Schenker, *Free Composition*, Fig. 110d3; cited in Cadwallader and Gagné, 376-377.

\(^{117}\)The half cadence iv$^7$-V also implies Cm by supporting the first two tones of a “$\hat{3}$-line” (a phrase-level diminution of the *Urlinie*) in Cm in the upper voice.
mote from Cm. They in turn have access to G♭M (via iii-I and V-I relationships respectively), a sonority even more alien to Cm that helps to tonicize D♭M in the coda. The Cm tonic sends its more trustworthy dominant against these foreign invaders in m. 59 (in the form of a $6\quad5\quad4\quad3$ cadence) and again in m. 77 to restore order.

Though not literally present for most of the work, Cm clearly governs from afar and is thus deemed a conceptual initial tonic, signified by the parentheses in Fig. 2.9 and the dotted-line figures at the beginning of Fig. 2.10. The treble E♭ in mm. 1-4 and 6-11, dissonant as the seventh of the prolonged iv$^7$, is originally consonant as Kopfton $\flat 3$ over the conceptual tonic, becoming dissonant only after being suspended into the subdominant.

**PART II: A Grundgestalt Perspective**

The foregoing was intended as a fairly orthodox (though not necessarily definitive) Schenkerian interpretation of 39/1. It embraces principles of harmonic prolongation that, while ignored or underemphasized in Cunningham’s analysis, are corroborated in Schenker’s own writings and resonate with Schoenberg’s views regarding relationships among tonal regions. However, such relationships in 39/1—indeed, throughout the opus—can be more fully explained via a Grundgestalt approach to the roles of motive and dissonance in shaping a tonal work. Such a stance pulls this analysis even further from Cunningham’s reading of the Etude, a primary point of contention being the value, function and implications of the individual tones of the opening melodic motive, D♭ in particular.

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118 The significance of the structural NTs (Figs. 2.8a and 2.9), expressed here in Schenkerian notation, is easier to convey through simultaneous Schenkerian/GG analysis, to be pursued at the end of this chapter.

119 Similarly, the D to which E♭ resolves in mm. 5 and 12, while consonant in a foreground context, serves at deeper levels as a lower-neighbor dissonance of Kopfton $\flat 3$. It is not, however, Kopfton $\flat 2$; as previously indicated, the dominant that supports it is not the structural dominant of the Bassbrechung.

120 Dahlhaus, 209-210.
Grundgestalt and the Exposition

Preliminarily, a disagreement over the basic pitch content of the motive must be addressed. In his text and foreground graphs, Cunningham suggests an initial motive of C-D♭-D♮-E♭ on the downbeats of mm. 1-3. Although C4 is only a semitone removed from what is here called the AC (“Ascending Chromatic”) motive and could easily merge into it, I contend that it is a harmonic tone only, introduced and reiterated above and below the AC by the RH arpeggiation of Fm7 and syncopated LH octaves.

One reason for this concerns rhythmic placement: due to a substantial registral shift in the RH, C4 is the last note of the first triplet-sixteenth figure, but D♭4 and D♮4 each appear directly on the first note of the subsequent triplets. Audible inclusion of C4 in the motive would add an unnatural “hiccup” to the melodic motion and, more importantly, is unsupported by later sequential treatments of the motive in mm. 3-4 and 8-9. Indeed, a pattern of RH registral shifts or rests immediately preceding each appearance of the AC reinforces the rhythmic perception of a melodic eighth rest—a much-needed musical inhalation in this texture, which does literally appear in mm. 3-4 and 8-9—followed by seven eighth notes (three as the phrase structure tightens) supported by an octave-doubled bass on strong beats and syncopated LH octaves in the middle range.

Another argument for excluding C4 from the motive is that, for all but the last beat in mm. 1-2 and 6-7 (where a local harmonic change occurs), the second and third

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121Cunningham, 180-181.
122This pattern is altered slightly on the fourth eighth note of the measure due to the convergence of the AC and the arpeggiation of the harmony on E♭4. Altering the triplet figure to keep E♭ on the eighth-note beat would be unpianistic and, once D♭ and D♮ have established the pattern, the aural effect of shifting E♭ to the middle of the figure is negligible at performance tempo.
123A chord or bass note on the downbeat, followed by the entry of a theme or motive on the second half of the same beat, may in fact be a style trait of Rachmaninoff. Examples abound in the first three piano concerti, the Preludes and Etudes-Tableaux, the Second Suite for Two Pianos, the Moments Musicaux, etc.
notes of each triplet comprise a simple octave doubling of the arpeggiation of the Fm\(^7\) harmony. Given this clear pattern, C4 is merely an octave doubling of C3, the chordal fifth immediately above the bass. The ascending leap from C3/C4 to A♭3/A♭4 in contrast to the arpeggiation by third thereafter has the effect of separating the Cs from the triplet figures that follow and assigning them a primarily harmonic function.

The reader will notice a distinction here between figures and motives. Schoenberg distinguished them as follows:

The figure is relatively noncommittal…and in its repetitions usually appears more freely than other small components…. The motive—so to speak, the unadorned, abstract underlying basis—can occur entirely or partly in the figure or gestalt, and the latter two are simply the adornment of the underlying abstractions.\(^{124}\)

While I do not always conform precisely to Schoenberg’s sometimes fluid definitions,\(^{125}\) this one is very germane to 39/1. The triplet figures prolong harmonies and inject an underlying scorrevole motion into the work. Though they have recognizable intervallic shapes, as do motives, these tend to adapt to harmonic context, voice leading, and/or technical expediency, thus lacking some of the distinctiveness that would qualify them as motives. The figures are ever-present, like the set and props on a stage on which the tonal-motivic drama is played out. Revealing imagery (e.g., Böcklin’s waves) may be painted thereon; they may be handled by actors (i.e., motives); but they are not actors themselves. The eighth-note AC is the motive embedded within the continuous triplet figures.

The more critical disagreement with Cunningham concerns the function of the AC tones. When he takes issue with Patricia Brady’s suggestion that 39/1 is in Fm,\(^{126}\) I concur despite his cavalier dismissal of D♭ as “a mere passing tone within the chromatic ascent


\(^{125}\)Clemens, 3-5.

\(^{126}\)She also refers to “a C minor tonality, with an emphasis on the sub-dominant.” Patricia Brady, “Rachmaninoff’s *Etudes-Tableaux*” (D.M. diss., Indiana University, 1986), 290.
from C4 to E♭4.”¹²⁷ Far from a “mere passing tone,” D♭ is the pivotal tone of the Etude; a positive rather than negative assessment of its role makes a better case for a Cm tonic by demonstrating how that tonal center is challenged, how it marshals the forces necessary to repulse that challenge, and how this process ultimately shapes the work.

For the moment, however, I will confine discussion of the role of D♭ to mm. 1-5. Though it is the most remote tone from Cm in the entire phrase, so many factors combine to emphasize it that simply following each repetition of D♭ with D♮ is insufficient to neutralize it immediately, namely: 1) its position as the first tone of the AC (and the first melodic tone of the piece); 2) its consistent appearance in a “friendly”¹²⁸ harmonic context; 3) its consistent entrances over rhythmically supportive left-hand syncopations; 4) its insistent repetition throughout the work; and 5) its distinctive identity as b♭, suggesting an attempt to inject a Neapolitan sixth chord into the progression.¹²⁹ While the attempt is temporarily frustrated as the AC ascends to the seventh of the iv, D♭ nevertheless colors the phrase and the chord by implying its own voice-leading tendency of b♭-♭⁷, a motive (hereinafter “Descending Chromatic”) in its own right. Indeed, DC is the precise inversion of AC, with D♭ acting as an axis of symmetry between the two (Fig. 2.11b.).

AC repeatedly attempts to neutralize D♭ to D♮, while DC seeks to resolve it to C.¹³⁰ By association with its usual harmonic context, DC suggests (or presages) progressions

¹²⁷Cunningham, 180-181. The following admonition from Schenker appears almost as a direct rebuttal: “If we all too often talk away such a chromatic change as a mere passing note or some such thing, this merely proves our general incapacity to follow the real meaning of the tones or, what amounts to the same thing, to hear musically.” Heinrich Schenker, Harmony, ed. Oswald Jonas, trans. Elisabeth Mann Borghese (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 257 (emphasis mine).
¹²⁸As the iv of Cm and the iii of D♭M, Fm is an effective potential bridge between these two key areas.
¹²⁹While this may sound arbitrary in the abstract, the consistent appearance of ♭ over 4 in the bass and ♭♭ in the alto strengthens the Neapolitan association.
¹³⁰Despite the D♭-C motion, the continued descent to B♭ is necessary in order to reinforce Cm, whose leading tone is weakened by the implication of an Fm tonic (and by extension the tone B♭).
Fig. 2.11: 39/1, Pisano-Schenkerian and Grundgestalt Reductions of Mm. 1-5

such as N⁶-V⁴-V-i and N⁶-[vii⁰]-V-I, wherein AC reintroduces ♭2 while DC dissipates the descending momentum of ♭2, illustrating both processes of neutralization and resolution. In this case, however, AC and DC are left to operate for four measures over an essentially stationary subdominant; the bass attempts to effect harmonic change, but the F-F♯ motion is repeatedly thwarted in its progress toward G, which would complete a BC (“Bass Chromatic”) version of the same motive. Without harmonic support, AC and DC are insufficient (individually and collectively) to counter the implications of ♭2, which simply re-insinuates itself in mm. 2-3. When the harmony finally does change, BC and longer-range projections of AC and DC are able to complete themselves.

131 Different levels of motivic projection, similar to BG/MG/FG levels in Schenkerian analysis, are communicated in Fig. 2.11b through variously sized note heads, stems, beams, and motive labels. In 2.11a and b I have reinterpreted the B♭ in m. 5 (second half of the third beat) as C♭ in order to show the horizontal prolongation of the UN tone A♭ on beat 2. In this case the composer’s enharmonics favor tertian spelling of vertical simultaneities. The designation “Pisano-Schenkerian” serves only to distinguish from Cunningham’s Schenkerian analysis.

132 Cadwallader and Gagné, 152-153.

133 The set class [012] as used later refers to the basic three-note motive from which AC, DC, and BC are derived; on the musical graphs the tones of these three motive forms and their variants are beamed together and labeled accordingly. Implied but incomplete motives are shown in parentheses. In some cases a fourth tone is added that illustrates the resolution toward which each “urgently points beyond itself,” i.e., AC = D♯-D♭-E♭-D♭ (to V), DC = D♯-C-B♭-C (to tonic), BC = F-F♯-G-C (to tonic). It could be argued that only in these cases the motives complete.
On deep-FG to deep-MG levels, such repeated cycles of dissonance and neutralization/resolution have an effect analogous to that of a trill on the musical surface: as long as a dissonance and its resolution (or a chromatic tone and its neutralization) continue to alternate without either yielding to the other, it is as if the two were fused together,\(^\text{134}\) conferring upon the dissonance nearly the status attributed to it by Schoenberg. At the very least, \(\text{D}_b/\text{G}\) behaves here more like an emancipated dissonance than a “mere passing tone.”

If indeed \(\text{D}_b\) must be justified by means of contrapuntal considerations,\(^\text{135}\) its descending tendency (realized in the voice leading) would make it not a PT in the soprano voice but an UN to \(\text{C}_4\) in the alto, leaving \(\text{D}\) as a LN to the soprano \(\text{E}_b\). This may appear counterintuitive if one assumes that \(\text{AC}\) belongs only to the soprano, but makes sense if one distinguishes between the upper voice in harmonic voice leading and actual melodic material. One may say that \(\text{AC}\) fills in the arpeggiation between the alto and soprano voices but belongs to neither entirely. This idea finds support in Schenkerian thought as well:

> Lower-level melodic motions...cannot always be extrapolated to higher-level voice leading, because *passing tones may establish connections at lower levels among tones that belong to separate voices*.... In such cases the principle cited by Schachter determines the underlying voice leading: where possible, successive harmonies are connected in each upper voice either by a common tone or by conjunct motion.\(^\text{136}\)

Hence \(\text{D}_b\) and \(\text{E}_b\), though components of the same *melodic* motive (\(\text{AC}\)), belong to different *harmonic* voices because each is a distinct dissonance with its own resolution tendencies. The chordal minor seventh \(\text{E}_b\) implies a resolution to \(\text{D}\) (i.e., \(\frac{5}{2}/\text{V}\)); \(\text{D}_b\), by virtue of its foreignness to the tonality and the prevailing harmony—and by virtue of centuries of voice-leading tradition—telegraphs its implicit Neapolitan tendency toward a \(\text{b}_2\)-\(\text{b}_7\)-\(\text{b}_2\) resolution.

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\(^{134}\)Schenker would most likely disagree with this near-equality of treatment.

\(^{135}\)Dahlhaus, 209-210; see p. 16 herein.

\(^{136}\)Cunningham, 43 [emphasis mine]; see also Cadwallader and Gagne, 17, 20, and 27 regarding “melodic fluency.”

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solution, likewise supported by motion to the dominant. The simultaneity of these two resolutions demonstrates that, instead of a single textural voice passing chromatically from D♭-E♭, the AC motive is a horizontalization of the combined soprano and alto voices.

Despite the harmonic progressions implied by these motives, however, the actual harmony underneath them remains stagnant, prolonging the subdominant in mm.1-2 and leaving D♭ free to make mischief and assail the tonality. As if summoning greater momentum to counteract this, in mm. 3-5 the harmony finally moves toward the dominant; the theme fragments into a rising, accelerating sequence of AC motives, which themselves continue to fragment in a process of liquidation.¹³⁷ Though the bass arpeggiates the diatonic iv⁷, abandoning attempts to complete the BC directly, other voices incorporate the F♯ and G through the process of coupling,¹³⁸ permitting multiple projections of BC in a higher register before returning its last tone to the bass (Fig. 2.11 above).

Although the harmony of mm. 1-5 can be reduced diatonically to iv⁷-V, the voice leading behaves more like that of a N⁶-[viiº⁷]-V progression because greater forces than iv⁷-V are required—namely, various diatonic and chromatic scale degrees (and their related tendencies of motion) generated by the three different permutations of the fundamental [012] motive—to neutralize and resolve the D♭ and to restore the tonal balance upset by its implications. For D♭ points far counterclockwise from Cm on the circle of fifths; the suggestion of a D♭M tonic, however faint at this point, implies the addition of the even more alien G♭. For now those tendencies are suppressed: any enharmonic perception of F♯ as G♭ is negated by its function as the root of the F♯º⁷ chord (and thus as ♯4, the LT of V), while A♯, still plausible in Cm as the melodic-minor ♯6, is decidedly chro-

¹³⁸Cadwallader and Gagné, 142.
matic in D♭M and Fm. Both F♯ and A♮ point clockwise from Cm on the circle of fifths, counterbalancing the initial counterclockwise momentum of D♭.

By presenting the primary motive of 39/1;139 positing the tonal problem and suggesting its solution; establishing rhythmic and figural patterns for the whole work; and representing its BG structure in miniature, the opening phrase presages how imbalance is introduced and balance restored over the course of the work. As such, it constitutes a Grundgestalt, whose implications, fully realized, become the musical idea.140 Presently these implications will be traced through the rest of the piece.

As previously noted, in mm. 1-2 AC and DC exert simultaneous opposing influences on the D♭ over a static harmony and seem to cancel each other out, allowing it to extend itself through repetition. At the half cadence in m. 5, D♭ is convincingly neutralized but less convincingly resolved. While the resolution of E♭ (upon which the neutralization of D♭ depends) is inherent in the motion to the dominant, it seems unwilling to stay resolved. D quickly returns to E♭ via upper-neighbor motion, even touching briefly on E♮, the leading tone of Fm; as insignificant as this detail may appear at first, it has significant repercussions in both the recapitulation and the coda. The eventual return to D is only implied, and the half cadence averts the tonic resolution of D itself, leaving Cm just as vulnerable to further challenges as it was after the first neutralization of D♭ in m. 1.

Notwithstanding the second phrase begins very similarly to the first, it establishes a very different scenario from mm. 1-5: here the resolution tendencies of DC are frustrated.

139The fact that AC, DC and BC are essentially the same motive recalls Schoenberg’s remark that “[before] I spoke of ‘new motives,’ while I now believe in the availability of only a single motive.” Bryan Simms, “New Documents in the Schoenberg/Schenker Polemic,” Perspectives of New Music 16 (1977), 122.
and the neutralizing AC comes to the fore. The modulation to Gm in m. 12 negates the B♭ toward which DC gravitates, while AC emphatically accomplishes its purposes through enharmonic reinterpretation (Fig. 2.12). This temporary tonal environment permits AC to recast D♭ as C♯, #4 of the dominant, forcing it into a tritone relationship with the G pedal point. The resulting fortissimo dissonance throws a harsh light on the erstwhile ♭2, which in the piano context of mm. 1-3 and 6-8 had enjoyed a consonant, pseudo-diatonic rapport with the complicit, prolonged 4 in the bass. In the virtual absence of the tonic, this relationship had allowed D♭ to operate almost undetected until m. 12.

The infiltration compromised, C♯ resolves to D, a temporarily stable ♯ of the minor dominant (m. 12 AC), as opposed to D♭ neutralizing to D as a diatonic but still unstable UN of the tonic. AC continues upward to E♭, reflecting (but not really duplicating) the unruly momentum exhibited in m. 5; in 14-15 it returns an octave lower, repeats the same course, and finally manages to resolve E♭ to D. Meanwhile the BC resolves the collusive
F through F♯ to G, more convincingly this time than in m. 5. The pedal point is interrupted just long enough to permit a brief but decisive cadence in Gm (mm. 18-19).

Such a motion toward temporary stability and relaxation of the preceding tension offers further evidence against Cunningham’s suggestion of a structural dominant (which should represent an *increase* of tension) at m. 12. It is worth noting that AC and BC retain their precise pitch content in this latter part of the exposition, though functioning quite differently than in the opening due to the change of supporting harmony. This seems to correspond to “modal reharmonization,” one of three *peremennost* techniques mentioned by Johnston. Speaking of *peremennost* rhetorical associations in general he observes:

> Peremennost idioms… generally have introductory, expository, or post-climactic functions whereas equal-interval structures (octatonic in particular) tend to be intensifying and climactic.\(^{141}\)

In a monotonal context the “resolution” of C♯ is merely an enharmonically veiled neutralization of D♭ to D♮. Neutralization without resolution leaves the tonic susceptible to further attempts at subversion; simultaneous neutralization and resolution can only be effected by means of an authentic cadence in Cm, which is not forthcoming. For present purposes I will call this phenomenon the *prolongation of dissonance*. While prolongation in Schenkerian theory is usually associated with consonance, Schenker’s aforementioned Mozart citation indicates that dissonances may also be prolonged.\(^{142}\) Here I simply apply the same principle to key problem tones (the most likely subjects of dissonance prolongation at deeper structural levels) and to the motives in which they consistently recur.

One means by which dissonances are prolonged has already been mentioned: the “fused trill” discussed on pp. 52 herein, i.e., repeated introduction and resolution/neutrali-

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\(^{141}\)Johnston, 166, 168 (emphasis mine).
\(^{142}\)Schenker, *Meisterwerk* II, 1.
zation. Another is “secondary dissonance,” a contrapuntal analog to a secondary dominant in harmony: as primary dissonances can prolong consonances by intensifying motion toward them, a secondary dissonance like the UN of a suspended tone can intensify such motion (yet delay its conclusion) even further by prolonging a primary dissonance.

The operation of these processes has already been observed thus far in 39/1. At multiple levels (and in striking parallel to the prolongation of the Kopfton 3), the problematic D♭ is prolonged primarily through the aforementioned cyclic treatment. Since the resolution path of b² is distinctive enough to form the DC motive (from which AC and BC are clearly derived), it follows that if b² can be prolonged, the motives that it generates may be prolonged (or projected) at various levels. Just as a 3-2-1 or 5-4-3-2-1 line can be identified within a phrase, over a longer passage or section, or as the Urlinie over an entire work, a prolonged b² will require neutralization and resolution at deeper structural levels, just as it does at more local levels. Such treatment of basic motivic material will become more apparent as we proceed through 39/1.

**Development**

Processes of harmonic prolongation in this section were thoroughly examined previously (see pp. 34-40 herein). From a GG perspective, the chromatic voice leading of the descending-fifths sequence that begins the development at m. 19 generates chains of [012] motives in all four voices (Fig. 2.13) until the arrival on DM at m. 25. Here the harmonic

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rhythm slows down markedly; the few harmonic changes (along with continued [012] chains) are effected by means of alternating parallel-minor and parallel-fifth “SLIDE” transformations\textsuperscript{144} through DM, Dm, D♭M, and D♭m, finally arriving on C\textsuperscript{7} at m. 33.

The applied dominant pedal essentially continues until the recapitulation (m. 46); in m. 41 G♭M muddies the harmonic waters temporarily, but in mm. 43-45 the C\textsuperscript{7} sonority gradually assimilates the G♭ by flattening its own fifth.\textsuperscript{145} Whereas in harmonic terms the end of the applied dominant pedal point represents an altered version of the interrupted Ursatz model, in terms of motivic projection the end of the five-measure G♭ pedal point (41-45) signifies an interruption of a BG-level BC motive (F from the exposition, F♯ as an enharmonic of G♭). As the interrupted “false Ursatz” resumes from the beginning at the recapitulation, the BC “Ur-motive” resumes at the same point.

\textit{Recapitulation and Coda}

After a slightly varied first-theme recapitulation (m. 46 onward), a remarkable turn of events takes place in m. 53. The bass ascends from F to D, utilizing every semi-\hfill

\textsuperscript{144}Kopp, 175-176.
\textsuperscript{145}See p. 20 herein for discussion of Neapolitan-dominant relationships, Scriabin’s “tritone nucleus,” etc.
tone except G (Fig. 2.14); this statement of BC with a delayed resolution to G (the preceding G♭ spelled F♯ for present purposes) recalls the GG, wherein BC attempts to establish itself twice before a third statement, stretched out by the slow bass arpeggiation of iv7, manages to complete it. Even greater tension accumulates in mm. 53-58 as the nearly chromatic bass line further delays motivic completion. Other contributing factors include greater expansion into the treble register, the *stringendo* effected by the sudden shift from simple to compound meter (m. 53), and the hesitation on the supertonic (57-58).

![Fig. 2.14: 39/1, Mm. 51-59 (Bass Clef Reduction)](image)

Another key factor concerns a minute but prescient detail from the GG. At the first half cadence, E♭, the seventh of the iv7 chord, ostensibly resolves to D, but in the rush of simultaneities that embellish the cadence, E♭ and even a brief E♮ (the LT of Fm) keep bubbling to the surface (Figs. 2.7 and 2.8, m. 5). Significantly, the virtual absence of E♮ from those parts of 39/1 where Fm7 is most directly prolonged is largely what preserves its subdominant function and prevents it, despite its extraordinary tenacity, from seizing tonal supremacy from Cm (which is protected in part by its LT, B♭). This issue is revisited when E♮ is prolonged via the V/iv pedal at the end of the development (Fig. 2.6, mm. 33-45), but the tremendous accumulation of energy that points toward a resolution to F is frustrated at the recapitulation. Now (mm. 53-54), in a tremendous act of subversion, an E♭-E♮-F transposition of the [012] motive does indeed establish the LT of Fm, supported by a bass line
with the same apparent tonal objective. The robust centrifugal force brought to bear against the Cm tonic now that other members of the Fm diatonic set (such as its subdominant B♭m) are allowed to come into play earns this motive its own designation in Figs. 2.14 and 2.15 as the SC ("Subversive Chromatic") motive.

In m. 59 the long-delayed bass arrival on G completes the three-note versions of the "structural" BC and AC and finally counteracts the prolongation of the D♭ dissonance sufficiently to move the structural DC along to the second note of the motive. All of this immediately follows the culminating point and corresponds to the harmonic arrival on the structural dominant, which finally turns the tide in favor of Cm.\textsuperscript{146} But one more ferocious defense rises against Cm in m. 74, where the previous obstinate repetition of $\flat 2$ bears fruit in the form of the D♭M key area, including all of its primary triads (Fig. 2.15).

![Fig. 2.15: 39/1, Mm. 46-78 (Hybrid Schenkerian/Grundgestalt Analysis)](image)

The other purpose of SC (mm. 53-54) is to support D♭ in its overarching objective of transforming the iv\textsuperscript{7} chord into a D♭\textsuperscript{6} by raising the chordal seventh stepwise. This pro-

\textsuperscript{146}The cadential $6\infrac{4}{3}$ resolves DC to B♯ in tandem with the $3\infrac{2}{3}$ Urlinie descent; compare with Fig. 2.14.
cess comes to full fruition in m. 74 as the iv\(^7\) moves directly to the Neapolitan, bringing the tonal problem fully into the open; for this task the preparatory motion of AC and SC is no longer necessary, as the idea has already been suggested since the beginning. On the other hand, complete four-note versions of the DC and BC are recapitulated starkly and forcefully at the final N\(^6\)-[vii\(^9\)]-\(V^7\)-i cadence, leaving no doubt that Cm has finally crushed all opposition to its tonal sovereignty. At the BG level, the coda also completes the realization of large-scale motivic projection in 39/1, concurrently with the Ursatz.

**Conclusion**

The “highly original and subtle tonal structure”\(^{147}\) of 39/1 offers a fruitful study in Schoenberg’s *Grundgestalt* theory in general and the concept of tonal problem in particular. From Schoenberg’s perspective, the struggle for tonal sovereignty between the tonic and a rival tone could hardly be more vividly depicted than in this work. While Cunningham’s Schenkerian study purports to acknowledge a strong and active presence of the sub-dominant, his exclusion of it from all but the most superficial levels of structure fails both to represent its role adequately and to reflect the intent of the composer. The manner in which the primary players in this tonal drama marshal their forces against each other results in remarkably cohesive motivic development at multiple levels. Symmetrical pitch organization, by definition another generator of chromaticism, appears in passages that lead toward points of climax, and modal passages tend to lead away from such climaxes, contributing to the structure of the work in accordance with Johnston’s concept of hyper-dissonance. These factors argue persuasively that Rachmaninoff’s chromaticism, far from merely decorative, serves carefully planned, even ingenious compositional objectives.

\(^{147}\)Cunningham, 179.

The word “tableaux” in the title of Op. 39 allowed Rachmaninoff to intersperse slower, lyrical pieces among the more virtuosic etudes. The first in the series, though not lacking in programmatic content, is clearly an “etude,” while Op. 39, No. 2 is more of a “tableau.” Beyond this obvious contrast, additional comparisons lay a useful foundation for subsequent analysis:

1) Whereas 39/1 avoids cadencing on the tonic for as long as possible, an extended tonic pedal accompanies the opening theme of 39/2 along with a DI ostinato.

2) In 39/1 a problem tone (♭2) immediately mounts a full frontal assault on the tonic, abetted by the subdominant. The tonal problem (TP) in 39/2 proves more subtle: with no chromatic tones to disturb the diatonic surface, the apparently peaceful coexistence of the TP with the tonic pedal lulls the listener into tonal security, as it were, until it simply outlasts the tonic. In this case the traitor is 5, the closest aide to the tonic for acoustic reasons but equidistant from the sovereign and the pretender (P5 above 1, P5 below 2). Unlike the tonic-avoidance strategy of 39/1, one might call this process “tonic imposture.”

3) Quotation of the DI in 39/1, while frequent, seems incidental to the structure, or at least develops on a different track from the motives involved in the TP and GG. Conversely, 39/2 is saturated with the DI, which in this case is integral to the TP and GG.

4) In contrast to the overall common-practice harmony and voice leading of 39/1 (and due in part to factors described above), 39/2 exhibits many extended tertian sonorities, parallel or nearly parallel voice leading, and striking modal inflections that lend an almost Impressionistic quality to the work.
In Chapter II it was necessary to pursue separate Schenkerian and GG analyses of 39/1 in order to respond clearly to Cunningham’s Schenkerian analysis of the same etude. As the following study of 39/2 does not respond to that of anyone else, observations (including graphic representations) will be made from both viewpoints concurrently.

**Formal/Tonal Plan**

In the broad outlines this etude follows a typical rounded-binary tonal plan, modulating from the tonic to the relative major and back. Within this “macro-cadential” structure, however, the slow FG harmonic motion derives less from functional root progressions than from LIPs that vary only slightly from outright parallel motion. This accounts in part for the less functional MG progression III-♯iii-iv, the essentially conjunct bass motion, and quasi-Impressionistic flavor of the work; it also creates an ideal environment for the operation of this particular GG motive and TP.

One notable feature of this etude is that, while a typical $\underline{5-4-3-2}$ *Urlinie* can be traced throughout, it is obscured through much of the piece by a double pedal point on the fifth and ninth above the tonic. Reiterated motivically on open fifths and fourths, this E-B dyad pervades the texture of the A and A' sections, occasionally migrating but usually repeated at the same literal pitch level, even over changing harmonies.\(^{148}\) As we shall see, the dyad “aspires” to become the root and fifth of an Em tonic triad simply by remaining steadfastly immovable, as if anticipating that once other elements begin to move they will be caught in its orbit.

\(^{148}\)This and other characteristics, including the similarity of programme (Bertensson and Leyda, 218; previously cited on p. 5 herein), invite comparison with “Oiseaux tristes” from Ravel’s *Miroirs*, composed approximately twelve years previously.
Fig. 3.1: 39/2, FG/MG/BG

Section A

After two measures of tranquil LH ostinato that introduce the DI, the A section proceeds with a parallel period. The only pitch classes present in mm. 1-7 are the arpeggiated Am tonic triad and B; the latter first appears in the DI, then projects up into the pri-
mary motive of descending and ascending fourths and fifths.\textsuperscript{149} The melodic arch (mm. 3-13) conveys a complete musical thought, despite the lack of significant harmonic motion.

Herein lies the TP: since the melody alone does not strongly imply a particular series of sonorities, this first phrase could be harmonized just as convincingly in the Em tonality implied by the dyad. Perched atop the open fifth as a dissonant descant tone over the \textit{Urlinie}, B hangs above the texture for three measures,\textsuperscript{150} resolving weakly in mm. 7-8 in disproportion to the imbalance it creates. It soon returns as the falling-fifth motive re-appears a fifth higher (mm. 8-9), introducing and reiterating F#. This latter tone may be taken at face value as a Dorian #6; at this point in the Etude such a view is supported by Johnston’s observation that tonally static modal structures often signal “introductory, initiating, digressive, and/or post-climactic rhetorical functions in the context of the section in which they are heard.”\textsuperscript{151} However, in this case one must also consider possible implications from a TP perspective: the pure A Dorian modality of the RH is tainted by a D# in the LH, and both tones, though chromatic in Am, are diatonic in Em, functioning as the upper and lower LTs respectively. A LH G# (mm. 9-10) attempts to assimilate F# into a melodic-minor context, but the prominent melodic repetition of G# in the melody immediately thereafter (mm. 11-13) negates that solution. An approaching cadence neutralizes D# in m. 13, but the unneutralized F# retains a foothold in Em/A Dorian.

The parallel phrase (mm. 14-26) repeats the motive at the identical pitch level, but this time over the mediant. The dyad seems to be accomplishing its objective of tonicizing

\textsuperscript{149}The bass answers the first descending fourth motive with a descending fifth; both descend from 5; perhaps the resulting 5-2-5-1 is an intentional expansion of 3-2-3-1 (i.e., the DI).

\textsuperscript{150}Though not literally sustained for three measures, the continual presence of B, like that of the tonic A in the bass, is implied by the absence of anything that cancels it out (resolution, etc.).

\textsuperscript{151}Johnston, 161.
the dominant when a complete harmonic minor scale and an apparent cadential 6 present themselves in Em (17-18), followed by a descending arpeggiated figure that reemphasizes the dyadic tones. While this threat to the sovereignty of Am is finally repulsed by the neutralization of F♯ and D♯ when the 6 moves to a diminished 5 (m. 22), the process undergone in these two opening phrases is precisely the function of a GG.

Having thus far described the opening of 39/2 in Schoenbergian terms, I would be remiss not to bring more of Johnston’s Russian perspective to bear on it. For not only does the aforementioned Dorian example correspond in rhetorical function to his observations of the operation of church modes in mature Rachmaninoff, but the harmonic motion of the Etude to this point exemplifies in virtually textbook fashion the application of liturgical peremennost idioms in an art-music context.

*Peremennost* idioms involve some kind of oscillation between or superimposition of diatonically but non-functionally related chords…which together form a kind of harmonic network that is distinctly less center-specific than conventional tonal syntax and in some cases even approaches a limited form of pan-diatonicism. In the present context, “peremennost” refers to a family of related, non-functional diatonic structures. *Peremennost* idioms in Rachmaninoff’s usage usually involve chords related by diatonic third.  

Following this general description he goes on to describe three specific types of *peremennost*, the third of which, “modal reharmonization,” is perhaps the defining characteristic of 39/2: having been stated once over one harmony, a theme or motive is restated exactly, but the harmony “emphasizes a different local pitch center, such that a larger-scale oscillation between pitch centers occurs around an unchanging melody.”

A third statement of the primary theme leads to a stepwise slide of the entire texture by way of two tandem LIPs; embedded within descending tenths is a 5-6 pattern that

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152The passage still hints at Em: the B pedal point in mm. 23-24 that “should” be the dominant preparation for the theme restatement in m. 26 is a fifth off, as in the opening of the Overture to Bernstein’s *Candide*.

153Johnston, 165.

154Ibid., 168.
distinguishes the passage only slightly from the stark parallelisms that one finds at times in Debussy. Likewise in the melody, the virtually parallel motion produced by the sequential statements of the open-fifth motive over Am, Gm, and FM in mm. 26, 35, and 42 is moderated only by their diminution to tritones and (briefly) perfect fourths in the intervening measures—essentially a chromaticized 5-4 LIP. From m. 42 the motive, transposed to G/C, remains fixed in place while the tenths continue their descent from FM, now pivoting as a secondary IV, to CM (with some alteration for cadential motion, heralded by a brief suspension of the continuous triplets). Thus the dyad achieves its “goal” of functioning as a $\mathfrak{3}/\mathfrak{1}$ pair, albeit only by transposing itself to a temporary key area.

Section B

The triplets and DI ostinato resume in the LH (m. 50), shifting developmental focus from the dyad to the LN motion of the DI. Strictly semitonal LN motives move out of phase with each other; the resulting chromaticism causes ambiguity as to which tones are chordal and which are NHTs in relation to the C pedal point (mm. 57-59). The blurring sonorities create such a soup of potential triad qualities and functions that eventually one could aurally reinterpret the C pedal as a leading tone and accordingly adjust the scale-degree function of the motivic tones above it. In particular the $\#\mathfrak{5}-\flat\mathfrak{5}-\#\mathfrak{5}$ ($\flat\mathfrak{6}-\mathfrak{5}-\flat\mathfrak{6}$) motive generates an ascending, chromaticized 5-6 LIP that reverses the previous descending pattern and transfers the dyad to the LH, inasmuch as quasi-parallel fifths continue in the bass (though not expressed motivically as in mm. 26-42). Hence the intentionally crude III-♯iii motion (another instance of the SLIDE triadic transformation), which in mm.

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155Kopp, 175-176. On a more local level, one could enharmonically reinterpret the $C^+$ triad that results from the $\flat\mathfrak{6}-\mathfrak{5}-\flat\mathfrak{6}$ motion as $V^+$ of $C#m$, or contrapuntally as the beginning of a chromaticized 5-6 LIP.
50-60 prepares for a new variant on the DI; a similar process leads to sequential restatement over the subdominant in m. 72.

The formerly descending parallel tenths now ascend, prolonging the subdominant in mm. 72-85; they create two horizontal third-progressions (F♮-A in the treble, D-F♯ in the bass), while the vertical sixths of the 5-6 pattern lead from D-B to F♯-D♯. This double LIP produces a double chromatic voice exchange over the course of these fourteen measures, raising D and F to D♯ and F♯ (the two leading tones of EM) and making mm. 84-85 the point of greatest horizontal dissonance with the initial tonic in 39/2. The significance of this becomes clear as one examines how operations in several other parameters of the work all bring musical-dramatic tension to a head simultaneously.

The crescendo that leads to m. 84 peaks at the arrival of the bass F♯ on the downbeat; the *forte* dynamic level is maintained precisely until the lone D♯ on the second beat of m. 85, highlighting the two problem tones from mm. 8-9. The A6 in the RH of m. 84 represents the registral high point of the piece. The hemiola implied by the opening four-beat DI motive in triple meter is only partially exploited in the A section; beginning with the *più vivo* tempo marking in m. 76, it becomes fully manifest and continues until the cadence in m. 88. Concurrently with this, the motivic development tightens, the harmonic rhythm accelerates, and the motion of the double LIP changes from semi- to whole-tone, as if it were trying to get somewhere faster by taking two stairs at a time.

With all these factors converging on mm. 84-85, clearly the composer took great pains to convey that they are the climax of the piece. The conspicuous simultaneous appearance at this point of the *chromatic* problem tones—leading to the cadence at m. 88 on

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156 Each segment of the LIPs in these measures corresponds to one hypermetric unit of three measures in 4/4.
EM, a harmonic expression of the diatonic problem tones (i.e., the dyad)—was no coincidence, but a well prepared, structurally essential event. Again it would seem that the dyad had accomplished its objective, this time without disguising itself through transposition.

Yet a mere measure later an F♯ betrays the EM triad’s dominant (as opposed to tonic) function. Whereas in m. 13 F♯ appeared the more steadfast of the two chromatic tones in supporting E’s pretensions to the tonal throne, now (m. 89) it is D♯ that resists neutralization. The standoff between F and D♯, a typical♭6-♯4 augmented sixth interval or its inversional equivalent, lasts for nine measures (89-97). Even when D♯ finally does yield (98), it overshoots the “goal” of D♮ by continuing the chromatic descent beyond it. This introduces so many NHTs and simultaneities against the dominant (reiterated in the bass only at mm. 90 and 92) that by the time the original tonic returns in m. 103 the listener, performer, or analyst who hears only local phenomena and does not retain an aural memory of the underlying dominant prolongation may experience some confusion.

As one seeks the culminating point in response to Rachmaninoff’s subjective description, two possibilities emerge. The analogy of “a ribbon snapped at the end of a race” may indeed fit the arrival of the ritardando and diminuendo at Meno mosso and piano respectively (m. 88); however, if “liberation from the last material obstacle…between truth and its expression” is the standard, one might argue that this event has yet to occur.¹⁵⁷ Although F♯ is quickly neutralized, the resilience of the resulting F proves comparable to that of D♯ as it becomes a treble pedal tone, resisting resolution to the end (mm. 97-102).

¹⁵⁷Rachmaninoff letter to Marietta Shaginyan, Bertensson and Leyda, 195.
**Section A**

The return of the primary theme (m. 103) interrupts the *Bassbrechung* but not the *Urlinie*, which has simply prolonged 5 from the beginning. The i-III-V progression, occurring both within the original A section (mm. 1-22) and over A and B together (1-102), is now mirrored in 103-114 by *descending* thirds (i-VI-iv). The ramifications of these progressions vis-à-vis the tonal problem are twofold: 1) as the i-III-V triads ascend toward the fixed E/B dyad, its function metamorphoses from fifth/ninth into third/seventh and then root/fifth; conversely, as the i-VI-iv triads descend *away* from the dyad, it becomes seventh/eleventh and then ninth/thirteenth, the most remote relationship possible to the root—as if it were being punished or ostracized for its recalcitrance; 2) the extension of the VI-iv segment of the progression over seven measures (108-114), prolonging F and D in the bass, suggests a sustained attempt to neutralize F♯ and D♯ at a deeper structural level as the work approaches the structural cadence.

Mm. 115-132 comprise the elaboration of the structural dominant over a lengthy pedal point, whose continuity throughout is strongly implied. This is one of many examples of Rachmaninoff's mastery of the art of prolongation. Minor ornaments to cadential voice leading are elaborated for measures at a time while sustaining listener interest, in part because D♯ and F♯ continue to resist neutralization in spite of prolonged suspensions of the diatonic seventh and ninth. Stalling on the dominant pedal after a prolonged absence of these chromatic allies, the dyad takes matters into its own hands in mm. 127-128 and desperately employs another strategy to resist the inexorable momentum to the tonic. Separating the compound melody into two strands, one finds a descending chromatic line B-B♭-A, which, paired with the implied bass E, revisits mm. 26-48, wherein the dyad was
contracted to a tritone and then a perfect fourth on exactly the same pitches an octave higher. In that case the chordal fifth E was dislodged and pushed down by step (m. 35), transposing the dyad to D/A, and the process was repeated until a modulation to CM could be effected. This time, however, the strategy fails: the firmly entrenched E pedal tone offers too much resistance, and the melody is pushed back up (A- B♭-B♮).

After eight measures of D and F pedal points (mm.121-128), even these “friends of the tonic” must prove their fealty by subsuming themselves into the Am triad. Attempts at resolution, notably F-E in the treble (the bass-clef D only gets as far as C♯), are made in mm. 129-130. D♯ and F♯ make one last stand and are again neutralized by chromatic voice exchange in mm. 131-132; D and F then resolve into the final structural cadence, where-upon the dyad, returning to its original fifth/ninth function, spins itself out over the tonic in various registers (mm. 133-136), first an octave higher, then an octave lower than it previously appeared. The symmetry of the latter gesture is analogous to that of both the deep-MG i-III-V/i-VI-iv progression and the functional transformation of the dyad itself.

**Coda**

At first glance the final five measures may appear as merely an extended plagal cadence, but from a GG perspective it serves as a brilliant little postlude, recapitulating the tonal problem (including both the dyad and the chromatic tones it had generated) and its solution. It is also a wonderfully symmetrical gesture that is difficult to discount as coincidental. The dyad motive, previously spun out over the tonic, is rhythmically augmented

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\(^{158}\) Another inference of this procedure could be drawn from m. 24-25; chromatic melodic fragments involving the same pitches similarly intervene between a neutralization of D♯ and F♯ and a cadence in Am.

\(^{159}\) Another attempt is made in the LH in mm. 129-130; this time B♭, the ♭2, is not only neutralized but, as in the DC motive of 39/1, resolved into the tonic at the cadence.
in m. 137 over a reminiscence of the i-VI-iv MG progression from the mm. 103-114, but the VI immediately returns in m. 138. This reversal continues, albeit embellished by two intervening chords, until the final tonic. The subsequent $B_{b}^{3}$ chord reintroduces $D#$ and $F#$, the two LTs of Em; although the $F#$-$G$ bass motion in m. 139 recalls the Em-tinged melodic fragments of mm. 11-13, the $G^{13}$ sonority neutralizes $D#$ and $F#$ permanently in a single stroke. This apparently non-functional extended tertian chord also incorporates into one sonority the only remaining diatonic triads—subtonic VII and ii°, whose roots are themselves symmetrical around the $^{lat}$ axis—that had not participated in the aforementioned i-III-V/i-VI-iv progressions.

One final sonority undergirds the last statement of the stubbornly mutinous dyad. The $AmM^{9}_{7}$ in m. 140 incorporates complete tonic and dominant triads, symbolizing the dyad-tonic conflict. From a Schenkerian perspective, the disappearance of the ninth and LT implies their resolution into the root (m. 141); however, the lack of any voice leading in their own octave allows for the perception that they were merely subtracted or silenced, while the underlying tonal problem remains unsettled, however slightly, even at the very end. As has been observed regarding other post-Romantic repertory, even after “articulations of functional tonality prevail,” there often remains “a palpable sense of their impermanence and vulnerability.”

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160 This brief progression provides an inverted counterpart to the lower-MG i-III-$v(5)$ of mm. 1-22, which projects itself as the upper-MG i-III-V of mm. 1-102.

161 Mm. 138-139 also evoke the hemiola suggested by the initial DI motive but not fully expressed until the B section, as the climax of the tonal problem approaches.

Chapter IV: Etude-Tableau in F♯ Minor, Op. 39, No. 3

Section A: Grundgestalt Manifestations in Multiple Parameters

This study has focused exclusively heretofore on tonal, harmonic and motivic analysis of the works in question. While this will remain the primary emphasis, 39/3 offers an opportunity to demonstrate how one might apply Schoenberg’s concept of problem and neutralization/resolution—or, analogously, the progression from consonance to dissonance and back to consonance suggested by Schenker’s Ursatz—to other parameters as well, as suggested by Severine Neff. Following the lyricism of 39/2 we return to the more concentrated, virtuosic style that one typically associates with etudes, which opens up another avenue of inquiry into this concept. A “technical problem” immediately appears in the RH as a rapid series of dyads of alternately large and small intervals. Without sufficient technical control to refrain from accenting the larger intervals that involve the thumb (which tends to be relatively clumsier than the other fingers), these dyads could easily sound as if they are grouped in pairs, contrary to the triple compound time signature.

Viewed horizontally, the alternating dyads form two lines of voice leading: the soprano straddles 1 with upper and lower NTs, while the alto reiterates 5 until it rises to 6 at the downbeat of m. 5. Though slight in itself, this change is emphasized by: 1) the convergence of the hemiola and the underlying triple meter, which instantly 2) changes to duple meter; 3) a subito dynamic shift from mf to f as 4) both hands leap toward the extremes of the keyboard; and 5) the tonal instability of 6 relative to 5. Here the RH establishes Kopfton 3, from which a long DI sequence descends, mirrored by an arpeggiated LH ascent until both hands return to the starting point for a slightly varied thematic restatement.

163“The Grundgestalt articulates the work’s basic material—it’s character, phrasing, surface rhythm, tempo, register. The point of unrest within it is the problem.” Severine Neff, electronic correspondence with the author, January 6, 2005.
The parallel phrase (mm. 7-12) is identical but for a slight yet significant intervallic expansion at m. 11, where the parallel C#-D (♯-♯) motion of m. 5 splits into contrary motion between C#-B and C#-D♯ (♯-♯♯). This ♯-♯/♯-♯♯ conflict, and that between semitone and whole-tone motion in general, constitute the tonal problem for 39/3 (Fig. 4.1).

![Image of musical notation](image1)

**Fig. 4.1: 39/3, Tonal Problem (Bass Clef Reduction)**

The primary motive, which presents the TP, resembles the 39/1 motive in that it is shared by two upper voices; in this case the subtonic E bridges the two, acting simultaneously as a LN of ♯ and a PT between ♯ and ♯. The soprano portion of this compound motive, ♯-2-♯-♯-♯, contrasts the longest whole-tone segment of the natural minor scale with the ♯-♯ semitone in the alto. The parallel statement contracts the descending ♯-♯ tritone to a perfect fourth to accommodate the expansion of ♯-♯ to ♯-♯♯ (Fig. 4.2). This has far-reaching implications for motivic projection, as will be seen; however, the resulting ♯-♯♯ semitone, unlike that introduced early on in 39/2, has nothing to do with Dorian modal ambiguity but is a mere by-product of the tonal problem, which foreshadows conflict between the tonal function of the various degrees of the minor scale and the sonorous function of the

![Image of musical notation](image2)

**Fig. 4.2: 39/3, Grundgestalt As Expressed in Compound Primary Motive**
whole-tone scale, the catalyst between them being the aforementioned whole-tone segment of the natural minor scale highlighted by the motive.

Meanwhile, rhythmic tension between two and three, implicit in the $\frac{9}{8}(\frac{3}{8})$ time signature, rapidly develops into a multilayered “rhythmic/metric problem.” Triple compound meter may be said to represent a “metric diatonicism” into which duple and simple meter insinuate “chromatic” elements. Though compound meter prevails initially, the binary nature of the technical problem introduces an element of conflict from the very beginning. The duple aspect of the hemiola in mm. 3-4 presages the shift to $\frac{2}{4}$ meter in 5-6, wherein metric dissonance continues via simultaneous duple and triple subdivision.

The tonal and rhythmic problems interact felicitously near the end of the second phrase. When the meter extends to $\frac{3}{4}$ in m. 12 (unlike its counterpart in m. 6), the problem $D\#$ is neutralized precisely on the added quarter-note beat that partially resolves the rhythmic/metric dissonance. Given the sequential development that follows these two contrasting statements (a procedure similar to that seen in 39/1 and 2) from m. 13 forward, this seems an appropriate juncture at which to consider the GG fully expounded.

The unequal harmonic rhythm of the descending-fifth sequence (mm. 13-20) emphasizes alternating bass tones, suggesting a conjunct $\hat{1}$-$\sharp\hat{7}$-$\hat{6}$ line and implying that $\hat{6}$ (m. 21) will leap to a rhythmically weak $\hat{2}$, then to a strong $\hat{5}$. Instead, the $\hat{6}$-$\hat{2}$ tritone ascent is chromatically filled in (mm. 23-26), forcing a phrase extension that delays the arrival on $\hat{2}$ such that it becomes the downbeat of a new hypermetric unit: a protracted 4-3 suspension over a G# pedal (mm. 26-40). The tritone, which the previous harmonic rhythm would have downplayed, now finds itself accentuated by the shifting focus.
The arrival on the dominant at m. 42 completes a bass line that ornaments the first branch of the *Bassbrechung* and privileges the tones 1-7-6-2-5, reflecting the distinctive intervallic content of the compound GG motive and projecting it into the bass at a deep-MG level (compare Figs. 4.3 and 4.2c).\(^{164}\)

![Fig. 4.3: 39/3, Projection of Reordered GG Motive into MG Bass (Mm. 1–42)](image)

The MG progression DM-G♯7-C#M in mm. 21-42 functions as VI-[V7]-V (or, in Schenkerian terms, VI-II7-V) in F#m; Fig. 4.3 includes an alternate reading as ∆II-V7-I in the major dominant region. While the latter may appear unnecessary and at odds with the monotonal paradigm, strictly speaking, the following factors contribute to make representation of the secondary relationship desirable:

1) As mentioned earlier, Scriabin, like many of his compatriots, had an early fascination with the tritone relationship between the Neapolitan and the dominant. The roots and thirds of this chord combine to spell the symmetrical V♭57, which may function enharmonically as the dominant of either of two tonics a tritone apart and comprises the lower four tones of Scriabin’s “mystic chord.”\(^{165}\) If not already aware of it, surely Rachmaninoff would have noticed this ∆II-V fixation as he prepared the Scriabin recitals; as previ-

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\(^{164}\) Though the pitch order is altered, both versions descend from 1 toward 5, interrupted by an upper 2; however, the initial motive leads away from stable 5 to problem tone 6, whereas the bass projection temporarily reverses this process.

ously noted, he exploits the same relationship in 39/1. In this instance he bridges the two harmonies in the smoothest possible way: by simply suspending all of the tones of the former into the latter, including the C♯ PT that becomes a fourteen-measure 4-3 suspension over the applied dominant.

2) To the ear accustomed to Western tonality, the distinctive tonal color of two adjacent major triads a tritone apart implies the bII -V progression and, by extension, a tonic triad a semitone below the first triad. Hence in m. 26 the supertonic, by appearing in its II⁷ (i.e., applied dominant) incarnation a tritone away from the VI⁷ in mm. 21-23, simultaneously tonicizes the succeeding dominant and underscores the latent secondary bII-I relationship between VI and V. In the C♯M context of this secondary bII-V⁷-I progression, D, the root of VI (or [bII] V), acts as an applied b♯ that appears to be neutralized by the applied dominant in m. 26166; in the larger monotonal context, however, this apparent neutralization (i.e., of D to D♯) is actually a chromaticization of the original ♯, projecting the original ♯-♯-♯-♯ GG conflict up to a MG level (Fig. 4.4; compare with 4.1c and 4.3).

The applied dominant function of II⁷ (mm. 26-41) is weakened and the ♯-♯ ambiguity highlighted when D♯ falls back to D♯ (mm. 30-39). This results in part from prolongation of the 4-3 suspension by means of the hexatonic scale, which can be generated by superimposing two augmented triads a semitone apart from each other. In isolation, its symmetry gives it a rootless, wandering quality; beginning in m. 30, the juxtaposition of HEX₁₂ (the hexatonic in C♯-D transposition) onto the tendency-tone-laden II⁷ combines this quality with the opposite tendency to point toward a very specific goal. In fact, everything but the bass II pedal point in mm. 30-33 and the LH in mm. 34-39 is generated by

166Typically the ♯ root of a “true” Neapolitan is neutralized by the fifth of the succeeding dominant (♯♯).
HEX$_{1,2}$, which includes the subset \{1256\} that corresponds to $\hat{5}$-$\hat{6}$-$\hat{7}$-$\hat{1}$ of F$\#$ harmonic minor, plus $\hat{3}$ and $\#\hat{3}$. Hence it supports the tone D to the exclusion of D$\#$, weakening the $\hat{6}$-$\#\hat{6}$ conflict; however, it supports both A and A$\#$, which may be seen to anticipate a transposition of that conflict to C$\#$$M$, the dominant to be prolonged in the imminent B section.

HEX$_{1,2}$ also supports the $\frac{9}{4}$ double suspension over the dominant, delaying its resolution (which it does not support) to $\frac{8}{5}$. Of the two augmented-triad (048) subsets, \{159\} (C$\#$- E$\#$-A) includes the suspended tones, while \{26T\} (D-F$\#$-A$\#$) includes their UNs, plus the equally motivated chordal seventh. The former subset, prominent in mm. 31-33, supports the suspensions, while in mm. 34-36 the hemiola emphasizes the UNs to delay the resolution of the suspensions even further. For present purposes this process will be referred to as “prolongation by symmetrical arpeggiation” (PSA—Fig. 4.5).$^{167}$

Paradoxically, despite the release of tension in mm. 40-42 as the 4-3 suspension is finally resolved and the cadence completed, the modulation to the major dominant adds an element of tension that is conspicuously absent at the beginning: the LT of the original tonic. Shortly thereafter, mm. 45-48 conspicuously present the complete diatonic C$\#$$M$ scale in the LH, reaffirming D$\#$ and giving special prominence to A$\#$, the most difficult member of that scale to assimilate into the original tonic. At m. 53 A$\#$ returns, signifying transposition and further development of the $\hat{6}$-$\#\hat{6}$ tonal problem in the dominant region.

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$^{167}$The term PSA was coined before I became acquainted with Johnson’s hyperdissonance; aside from the former’s specific reference to arpeggiation, they are essentially synonymous.
Section B: Grundgestalt Manifestations over Dominant Prolongation

From a Schenkerian standpoint, the middle section of 39/3 is essentially a $\overline{6}/V$ pedal embellished in the RH by chromatically descending augmented triads, themselves embellished mostly by simple arpeggiation. However, the first two legs of the sequence proceed via alternating augmented and minor triads whose voice leading once again reflects the Grundgestalt—in this case by pitting whole-tone motion in the lowest of the three triadic voices against semitonal motion in the other two (Fig. 4.6). Thereafter the descent continues simply by the planing motion of the augmented triads; nevertheless, semitonal descent of a whole-tone sonority can of itself symbolize the GG.

Fig. 4.6: 39/3, Dominant Pedal Point (Mm. 59-70)
Section A': Variants of the Tonal Problem and Bassbrechung

Varied pianistic treatment aside, the first twelve measures (89-100) of thematic re-statement portend no change in the manner in which the tonal problem will manifest itself, yet the prominent D♯ that one might expect, which first signaled the 6-♯6 problem in the parallel passage at mm. 11-12, is absent in 101-106. The BMm7 sonority that contained it is replaced with DMm7, an apparent German augmented sixth; however, Rachmaninoff rightly spells the ♯4 as ♭5, as it descends to 4 over the subdominant rather than ascend to 5 over the expected dominant or cadential 6 (Fig. 4.7 and m. 107 of Fig. 4.8).

Fig. 4.7: 39/3, Variant of Tonal Problem (Mm. 89-106)

Fig. 4.8: 39/3, Mm. 107-132

168 The shift from the parallel voice leading of 5-6 in both hands (mm. 1-5) to contrary motion in the consequent phrase, however, is preserved in mm. 89-101 (Fig. 4.7), indicating perhaps yet another “problematic parameter” to be considered as part of the GG (see pp. 75-77 herein).

169 In tracing the ♭5-♭4 resolution over these two figures, one must allow for octave displacement, bearing in mind that 4.7 is a GG representation, whereas 4.8 is Schenkerian.
The passage in Fig. 4.8, which ends as the coda begins, presents several curious structural details from both Ursatz and Grundgestalt perspectives. The second branch of the interrupted Bassbrechung, like the first, is ornamented by a reordered projection of the primary melodic motive, but transposed so as to lead back to the tonic instead of away from it. Fortuitously, transposition is achieved not by significantly altering the pitch content of the first descending-fifth sequence, but simply by making weak fifths strong and vice versa (Fig. 4.9; compare mm. 13-42 with 89-117).

Fig. 4.9: 39/3, Schenkerian/Grundgestalt Analysis of Complete Bassbrechung

The final measures before the coda (mm. 127-132) project the same motive in both clefs at higher and lower FG levels. The Neapolitan ♭2 in mm. 115-116 (whose parallelism with mm. 21-23 confirms the composer’s intent to exploit secondary ♭II-V relationships in the latter) is essentially suspended into the succeeding dominant, resulting in the V♭5 “tritone nucleus.” Whereas common-practice convention would require that the chromatic tone be neutralized before the cadence on the structural tonic at m. 117, Rachmaninoff delays this procedure until after the fact (Fig. 4.10). The tenor-voice (012) motive, a precise inversion of the original ♯-♭♭-♯-♮ motive, may serve to neutralize once and for all the problem tone A♯, first presented by the secondary theme, “just in case.”

170 Cadwallader and Gagnè, 152-153.
The coda in mm. 132-152 firmly neutralizes D♯ (i.e., #6), but the diatonic 6, recalling the original tonal problem, resists resolution to 5 to the very end—resembling the final two measures of 39/2 except that the resolution in this case, however delayed and weak, does occur in the “correct” octave, leaving no room for doubt as to its occurrence.
Chapter V: Conclusion

To examine the compound syntax of Rachmaninoff’s mature idiom in the *Etudes-Tableaux*, Op. 39, Nos. 1-3, I have taken a similarly “compound” approach, synthesizing the methods of Schenker and Schoenberg not only with each other, as did Jon Clemens in his admirable study of Wolf’s *Italienisches Liederbuch*, but with the post-kuchkist perspective articulated by Blair Johnston. In the process I hope to have:

1) convinced performers of the inadequacy of Roman-numeral and sectional-thematic analysis to the task of shedding light on the “highly original and subtle tonal structure[s]”\(^{171}\) found in Rachmaninoff;

2) corroborated Johnston’s argument that by the time of this opus, Rachmaninoff was not a Romantic but a post-Romantic composer\(^{172}\) who shared a common heritage and even some style traits with contemporaries such as Scriabin and Stravinsky;

3) demonstrated that the *Ursatz* and *Grundgestalt* paradigms, which may be said to highlight Rachmaninoff’s common-practice roots and post-Romantic tendencies respectively,\(^{173}\) are largely compatible and, applied perceptively together, often elucidate the structure of a tonal musical work more effectively than either alone;

4) accounted to some degree for the distinctly Russian quality that pervades these works, yet eludes precise analysis by either of these more Germanic techniques; and

5) equipped performers with sufficient analytical tools to find the “culminating point” that Rachmaninoff considered crucial to musical structure, in order to enable them to build their interpretations of his works around this concept.

\(^{171}\)Cunningham, 179.

\(^{172}\)Johnston, 28.

\(^{173}\)Care is taken here to distinguish Post-Romanticism from its subset Post-Wagnerianism, taking a cue from Johnston’s observation of “Rachmaninoff’s adjacency to the German Postromantic tradition” [emphasis mine]. Ibid., 281.
I have not attempted to prescribe, from any perspective, the definitive analysis in all details for each of the Etudes in question. Though Rachmaninoff held well-defined views about musical structure and its communication in composition and performance, he did not lay down a theory that would allow others to see and hear every work (nor even every work within any defined stylistic parameters) the way he would have interpreted it. However, we can infer from his description of the culminating point as a “liberation from the last material obstacle between truth and its expression” a certain resonance with concepts like tonal problem and hyperdissonance. This study is intended as a sample exercise in combining and applying these concepts to arrive at specific, convincing, but not necessarily definitive structural interpretations of these and similar works.

At any rate, it would be impossible audibly to convey in performance every structural detail that can be identified by these methods. It may be more useful to settle on a few general objectives: 1) to project tonal function by clarifying BG- and MG-level harmonic arrivals; 2) to achieve melodic and contrapuntal coherence by conveying essential voice leading, especially in textures that are dense with figuration and would potentially overwhelm aural comprehension; and 3) to communicate the dramatic contour of each work and lead the listener to its culminating point and other lesser climaxes, taking cues from hyperdissonant symmetrical passages and more static modal passages respectively as to when to increase or decrease intensity.

In the case of 39/1 in particular, additional objectives might include highlighting the ambiguous function of the subdominant, the instability it creates, and the collusive role played by the primary motives (and ultimately the chromatic D♭) in creating such ambiguity and instability for the purpose of wrestling tonal sovereignty from Cm. These objectives
are generally aided by: a) voicing and pedaling the LH accompaniment of FG-level AC motives so as to sustain true bass tones on strong beats as much as possible through syncopated octaves or single tones that belong to inner voices and have weaker harmonic implications; b) voicing principal motives slightly more than the surrounding triplet-sixteenth-note figuration (which for the most part simply arpeggiates harmonies) while keeping the RH articulation clear; and c) maintaining a quick enough tempo that changes in vertical simultaneities are not perceived as actual shifts in the harmonic rhythm.

For instance, to clarify the motivic content of m. 1, one could voice the bass F octave on the opening downbeat slightly louder but warmer than the initial RH triplet, as the latter generates rhythmic momentum and prolongs the harmony but lacks melodic function. By immediately shifting the balance to the RH for the remainder of the measure, slightly emphasizing the motive with a brighter tone (without obscuring the articulation), one could convey a larger, compound motive, comprised of a bass tone on the downbeat followed in the treble by the AC motive and its brief *Fortspinnung*. This process could then be repeated in all subsequent measures of similar motivic content.

As another example, at m. 11 the LH octaves ascend to the point of taking over the melodic voice heretofore embedded in the RH. The semitones D-E♭ and C-C# represent sequential treatment and liquidation of the motive, while the bass octaves E♭ and A♮ initiate a bass circle-of-fifths descent that continues to D and G in succeeding measures. To clarify this complex voice leading for the listener, the brighter RH voicing in m. 10 should transfer seamlessly into the top (i.e., thumbs) of the LH octave-doubled semitones.

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174 One could argue that these bass downbeats are part of (or at least inseparable from) the AC motive itself, much like the bass pedal tones in the finale of Beethoven’s *Waldstein* Sonata, Op. 53.

175 This result could be even more convincingly conveyed through careful use of various degrees of pedal to sustain the bass F as long as possible without audibly causing the motivic tones in the treble to overlap.
in m. 11, while the supporting bass function of the lower E♭ and A♮ octaves could be distinguished by heavier emphasis on the lower tones played by the fifth finger.

In keeping with the assertion that the end of the development accumulates more tonal tension than the exposition of the second theme, the latter should be more relaxed than the former; the *forte* “mini-climax” at m. 12 should quickly relent in terms of dynamics and rhythmic drive. Of course this contrast must be subtle enough that one not lose sight of the programme of the second theme (i.e., the menace of the Centaurs).

Symmetrical passages that precede culminating points and lesser climaxes in all three of these pieces, as well as the modal passages that follow where applicable, have been indicated in each chapter. These are fairly objective and straightforward and thus less subject to personal taste, assuming that one accepts Johnston’s premises regarding hyper-dissonance as a determinant of structure; dynamics, rubato, tone color, and other parameters should be shaped accordingly to convey dramatic contour to the degree allowed by explicit indications in the score (which, as previously noted, tend to be rather specific and supportive of structure, not unlike those of Beethoven).

As a performer myself, I realize that some performers of these works may dismiss much of this discussion as “verbal superabundance,” to paraphrase Abraham’s criticism of Rachmaninoff. While I can sympathize somewhat with this sentiment, I maintain that one of the beauties of Schenker’s method and its notation (which I have attempted to adapt to my own *Ursatz-Grundgestalt* analysis) is that they allow those familiar with them to communicate highly nuanced conceptions of musical structure in musical notation, bypassing hundreds if not thousands of words that may yet fail to do justice to the ideas behind them. Indeed, this document would be considerably shorter had I presumed a solid background
on the part of my primary audience in Schenker’s and/or Schoenberg’s views on the inner workings of tonal music, but such a presumption appeared unreasonable; hence some preliminary explanation seemed necessary in order to establish common ground.

Given Rachmaninoff’s views on musical structure and performance, it should be clear that spontaneous intuition without premeditated analysis is unlikely to produce performances of his oeuvre that he would consider effective. Whether or not any composer’s opinion about the interpretation of his or her own works is the only opinion that matters is a question that we cannot even begin to address here. If even a handful of pianists come away from this discussion better equipped to form interpretations of Rachmaninoff’s music that are not only technically immaculate and lyrically compelling but also musically logical and well crafted, this document will have fulfilled its purpose.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


