

Variations Op. 41 and Etudes Op. 67 by Nikolai Kapustin:
Historical Background, Stylistic Influences, and Performance Approaches

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

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By

Yingzhou Hu, B.M., M.M.

Graduate Program in Music

The Ohio State University

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D.M.A. Document Committee:

Dr. Caroline Hong, Advisor

Dr. Kenneth Williams

Dr. Arved Ashby

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Abstract

The world lost a musical master, Nikolai Kapustin (1937-2020) during the aftermath of the world pandemic. Despite its immediate appeal, his music remains a mystery owing to lack of published scholarship. All that exists is translated interviews, but an ever-growing body of literature in the form of doctoral dissertations. The latter was precipitated by the composer's attendance at Marc-Andre Hamelin's premiere of the *Piano Sonata* no. 2, op. 54 in London during the year 2000. In the spirit of the increasing popularity of Kapustin's solo piano works, this document adds to the body of extant material, examining specifically the *Variations*, Op. 41 and *Three Etudes*, Op. 67. While offering not a theoretical analysis, it offers a look into Kapustin's unique fusion of American jazz music style and classical music forms. Kapustin was devoted to creating a distinctive music style that seamlessly integrates classical structures and vibrant jazz idioms. A heightened interpretive ability can be arrived at by understanding of what is explicitly "classical" or "jazz" in his music and what the performance practices and expectations are in both arenas. This document is intended for the sophisticated classical pianist who already possesses a fully developed technique and is interested in producing an informed interpretation of his music.

Dedication

This document is dedicated to my dear wife Zixiao Nan, and my parents

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my dearest professor, mentor, and committee chair, Dr. Caroline Hong, whose guidance and unconditional support through my studies at the Ohio State University. There is no way to complete with this doctoral journey without her help. Dr. Hong introduced me to the music of Nikolai Kapustin as part of my final recital program and her precise interpretation of Kapustin's music is what I felt more confident to pursue further in my final document.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my doctoral committee members, Dr. Arved Ashby who always provides valuable relative academic materials and insightful final document research direction. Dr. Kenneth Williams continued to share professional comments in academic writing and performance practice experience. Thanks to all my committee members for your incredible patience and encouragement to help me complete this challenging project.

Vita

2010—2013 Bachelor of Music

Piano Performance

Conservatory of Music, Capital University

2013—2015 Master of Music

Piano Performance

Manhattan School of Music

2016—2020 Doctor of Musical Arts

Piano Performance

School of Music, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Music

Piano Performance..... Dr. Caroline Hong

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Chapter One: Introduction

Integration of classical and jazz music has continued to be a subject of concern in regard to academic piano performance practice and compositional style. The first recording I heard of Kapustin's *Variations for Piano*, op. 41, was by Xiaoyu Liu, a talented Chinese pianist, at the 2017 Arthur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition. The work features a distinct and attractive jazz melody in the form of a classical variation. It is a jazz-style piece that has achieved great success in one of the top classical piano competitions, which provides an active motivation to develop a further knowledge of the performance practice and style interpretation from a classical pianist perspective.

The *Variations*, op. 41, is a compact virtuosic piece that takes about eight minutes to perform. I selected this piece as the last piece of my recital, but it could also be a great choice as an encore. The whole piece had sufficient space to show the performer's virtuosic technique and lyrical shaping that draw the audience attention for the entire piece. I received many compliments in the final DMA recital due to the successful performance of this piece.

When I searched the database of Kapustin's related materials, I found a large number of competition performances, CD recordings, and dissertations released in recent decades.

Kapustin recorded many solo piano albums called "Kapustin plays Kapustin" after 1984 and released by a company labeled Triton in Japan, which are now available at <https://www.hmv.co.jp/> to buy the digital version. There are other several albums that could

easily be found and purchased at <https://www.amazon.com/>. These discography of composer's recordings of his own music may aid the performer in acquiring a taste for the style and idioms found in Kapustin's piano music.

He received remarkably more attention around the world in past twenty years. An increasing number of talented pianists are considering a new genre of music in their performances and study. Kapustin has become an extraordinary favorite composer with international fame.

Kapustin is a prolific contemporary Russian composer who composed a total of 161 music works in his lifetime and an accomplished pianist with superior musical training in Russia. Kapustin completed his college studies at the Moscow Conservatory under the supervision of the legendary Russian piano pedagogue Alexander Goldenweiser. His profound pianistic performance knowledge of classical music prompted the writing of a large number of piano pieces. Representative of his compositions are their virtuoso effects. The genres of his solo piano compositions include many major traditional Western music forms, such as Suite, Variations, Preludes and Fugues, Sonatas, Bagatelles, Etudes, Inventions, Ballad, Scherzo, Fantasia, Rondo, Impromptus, Nocturnes, Preludes, Sonatas, Suites, and Toccatas. It is not difficult to recognize that these musical genres encompass many common keyboard forms from the Baroque to the Romantic period.

Kapustin did not gain public attention until the year 2000. Martin Anderson described Kapustin's reputation and accomplishments before his interview with the composer in May 2000 as follows: "A year ago almost no one in the West had heard of Russian composer Nikolai Kapustin, His representation in the discographies was minimal." Kapustin stopped his earlier, active public performance schedule after 1984, saying that he no longer enjoyed and devoted

himself exclusively to recording and composing in Russia. Kapustin explained to Anderson in the interview that “No, I don’t like to play onstage, but I do like to record. . . . But to be famous isn’t important. I don’t want to become famous.”¹

The year 2000 was the beginning of Kapustin achieving public popularity in the Western world. Kapustin traveled three days on a train from Moscow to London for the first time to participate in the European debut of the *Piano Sonata* no. 2, op. 54, by the world well-known pianist Marc-Andre Hamelin in London. Then Hamelin toured the world performing Kapustin’s Second Sonata. This series of performances gained more of the major international media’s attention.² The *Piano Sonata* no. 2, op. 54, also was included on two CDs were released by the major recording company Hyperion. Steven Osborne plays one, including three of Kapustin’s piano solo pieces, *Piano Sonata* no. 1, op. 39; *Piano Sonata* no. 2, op. 54; and *24 Preludes in Jazz Style*, op. 53.³ Another recording titled *Marc-André Hamelin in a State of Jazz* played by Marc-Andre Hamelin in 2007.⁴ Marc-Andre Hamelin recorded several of Kapustin’s piano pieces in various classical genres in 2004. The piano pieces from that CD have become a major attraction for piano solo performers and music scholars in recent years. The recording includes *Variations*, op. 41; *Eight Concert Etudes*, op. 40; *Bagatelles*, op. 59; *Suite in the Old Style*, op. 28; *Piano Sonata* no. 6, op. 62; *Sonatina*, op. 100; and *Five Etudes in Different Intervals*, op. 68.⁵

¹ Martin Anderson, “Nikolai Kapustin, Russian Composer of Classical Jazz,” *Fanfare* 24, no. 11 (September/October 2000): 93–98.

² Anderson, 12.

³ Steven Osborne, *Nikolai Kapustin Piano Music*, Hyperion, CDA67159, 2000.

⁴ Marc-Andre Hamelin, *Marc-André Hamelin in a State of Jazz*, Hyperion, CDA67656, 2007.

⁵ Marc-Andre Hamelin, *Nikolai Kapustin Piano Music*, Hyperion, CDA67433, 2004.

The success of Kapustin's appearance in 2000 resulted in two valuable journal interviews in English, which became primary sources for subsequent scholars interested in his integration of classical compositional forms and jazz style and the specifics of his music and composition background. The first public interview and the interview most referenced in dissertations is titled "Nikolai Kapustin, Russian Composer of Classical Jazz" by Martin Anderson, which was published in the American recording review journal *Fanfare* in May 2000. This article was featured in its jazz column in issue 5. Kapustin talked about his educational background and the influence of his teacher at each period on his piano performance and composition style. He also discussed his early experience of fusing jazz and classical music and how he gradually developed his own distinctive style. Finally, Kapustin explained the traditional application of improvisation in classical and jazz music as well as his attitude toward improvisational playing on his piece.⁶

In the same year, Harriet Smith published an interview titled "Bridging the Divide: The Russian Composer Nikolai Kapustin" in the American comprehensive piano magazine *Piano: International Piano Quarterly*. This interview contains less primary information from Kapustin than Anderson's interview because of translation communication barriers. Smith explains the communication difficulty in the interview thus, "Admittedly, the interview was conducted in Russian via a translator—never exactly a recipe for ease of communication." The article describes how Kapustin's prolonged Russian classical music training background influenced the framework of his jazz-classical fusion to approximate classical music more closely.⁷

⁶ Anderson, 93–98.

⁷ Harriet Smith, "Bridging the Divide: The Russian Composer Nikolai Kapustin," *International Piano Quarterly* 4, no. 13 (Autumn 2000): 54–55.

Nikolai Kapustin gained a prominent reputation in the traditional classical musical field by applying an abundance of jazz compositional aspects in harmony, articulation, and phrasing to inventive classical music foundations. Kapustin became a full-time composer after the 1980s and put extra focus on merging jazz compositional methods with classical textures.

Chapter Two: Biography

Born in 1937 in Horlivka, east Ukraine, Nikolai Grigorievich Kapustin was the child of Grigory Efimovich Kapustin and Klavdia Nikolaevna Kapustina and was also known by his Russian name—Gorlovka. Kapustin had one sibling; an older sister named Fira. His parents were not musicians themselves, but they were supportive of him going down that path.¹ Kapustin's childhood and life were influenced by the drastic changes he experienced. After Germany conquered Ukraine in 1941 when Kapustin was four, he and his family were forced to move to Tokmak in the Kyrgyz Republic. His father, meanwhile, served in the military reserve until the end of World War II.

Kapustin began studying music at seven years of age with his sister's teacher—Piotr Ivanovich Vinnichenko—who taught both violin and piano lesson as a fundamental music teacher. Kapustin was Vinnichenko's pupil for three years, and during this time, he did not receive serious piano performance training. That changed once began his studies with Lubov' Frantsuzova, who received advanced traditional classical music education under the supervision of prominent music pedagogue Samuel Maykapar during his studies at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Lubov' Frantsuzova worked closely with Kapustin to prepare for his pre-college entrance test. The Academic Music College is a preparatory school for the Moscow Conservatory. It was at this time that Kapustin began formal classical music training and built a solid foundation for his future career as a composer and pianist.

¹ Jonathan E. Roberts, "Classical Jazz: The Life and Musical Innovations of Nikolai Kapustin" (DMA diss., University of Alabama, 2013), 15.

In 1950, when he was thirteen, Kapustin composed his first complete piano work. This was a three-movement piano sonata that he wrote before he received any formal composition training. This practical piece was not given an opus number. The composition is similar to a compositional exercise in one of the most traditional classical forms, the sonata. According to Jonathan E. Mann, “Not having heard jazz, the sonata was in an ‘academic style,’ and he did not consider the work ‘serious.’”²

Kapustin’s talents immediately drew significant attention from Avrelian Grigoryevich Rubakh, and he spent four years studying with him from 1952 to 1956. Rubakh, who himself studied with Felix Blumenfeld, positively influenced Kapustin’s career and later life. Rubakh’s students include Alexander Tsfasman, who was a pioneer in the development of jazz music in the Soviet Union, and Vladimir Horowitz, the world-famous 20th-century pianist. Even though Rubakh wasn’t prominent as a music educator, he introduced Kapustin to a variety of music. Rubakh was a music editor at the Moscow Conservatory and wrote arrangements of orchestral works, which influenced Kapustin’s musical compositions. Avrelian Rubakh supported Nikolai Kapustin’s interest in jazz due to his own interests in different musical styles and genres. Kapustin spent the most interesting years of his studies with Rubakh, as he recalled later in life.³

Kapustin lived a fulfilled life at the Academic Music College for three years. The school played an essential role in his later career, even more so than his subsequent studies at the Moscow Conservatory: “In contrast to Fransuzova, Rubbakh taught everything, including technique ... he attached great importance to sound quality,” and “this school offered more

² Jonathan E. Mann, “Red, White, and Blue Notes: The Symbiotic Music of Nikolai Kapustin” (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2007), 28.

³ Yana Tyulkova. “Classical and Jazz Influences in the Music of Nikolai Kapustin: Piano Sonata no. 3, Op. 55.” (DMA diss., West Virginia University, 2015), 12.

courses than the actual conservatory, including form, orchestration, piano duet, folklore, and more.”⁴

After Stalin died in 1953, jazz increased in Russia. It was during this time that Kapustin was first exposed to jazz. Between 1954 and 1955, Kapustin was living with Andrei Mikhalkov’s family, a close friend of Kapustin’s who also studied at the Music College. The experience of living with this culturally rich family provided Kapustin with an opportunity to experience a wide variety of Russian artistic culture, which also included being exposed to a new world of music by listening to jazz on the radio. Kapustin remembered: “I was living in their house for a few years like an adopted son. That’s how we first started to become interested in jazz music, listening at night to the radio station Voice of America”⁵

In 1956, right after graduating from the Music College, Kapustin became a student of Alexander Goldenweiser at the Moscow Conservatory. Goldenweiser is considered a legendary Russian pianist, composer, and author. He was impressed by Kapustin’s performance under Rubakh’s instruction. Kapustin played Liszt’s *Don Giovanni Fantasy* for him at the age of eighteen when was still studying with Rubakh. After the performance, Goldenweiser asked Rubakh, “Where did you find such a pianist?”⁶

Goldenweiser was an important cultural figure in Russia’s art world during that time because of his strong network with other artists. In an interview with Martin Anderson, Kapustin recalled: “He was a very interesting person—he remembered Rachmaninov and Medtner.”⁷

Goldenweiser remained in close relationship with the well-known Russian author Lev

⁴ Nikolai Kapustin, email message to author, December 26, 2011.

⁵ Nikolai Kapustin, interview by author, December 27, 2013.

⁶ Martin Anderson, “Nikolai Kapustin, Russian Composer of Classical Jazz,” *Fanfare*, September/October 2000, 93–97.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

Nikolaevich Tolstoy, who wrote *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. He had tremendous influence on Russian culture and music history.

Unlike Rubakh, Goldenweiser exclusively concentrated on classical music. Kapustin mentioned later in life that “as a teacher he gave nothing because he was very old—he was already 81.”⁸ Goldenweiser died in 1961, making Kapustin his last pupil. Even though Goldenweiser’s teaching did not directly contribute to Kapustin’s development in jazz, his deep insights into classical music performance, his incomparable cultural perspectives, still influenced Kapustin’s works, which are intensive, etude-like works written by a virtuoso.

While working toward graduation at the Moscow Conservatory, Kapustin showcased his great piano skills on bigger stages. Nevertheless, the more he performed, the more he struggled on stage. Kapustin realized that he had more passion for composition more than in performing in public. In the year 1957, Kapustin debuted his composition *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra*, op. 1, with the Yuri Saulsky Big Band in the 6th World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow, which is considered as a milestone in his career because it was his first piece to be performed on the international stage. The festival itself was significant because it helped open Russia to Western culture.

In 1961, Kapustin began to both compose music and perform as a pianist. He toured Russia with the Oleg Lundstrem Big Band for eleven years. The Oleg Lundstrem Big Band had existed since 1934 and was one of the oldest jazz bands in Russia. Kapustin joined the band as it was reaching success, and he composed many works just for the band. These include the renowned *Piano Concerto* no. 1, op. 2, one of Kapustin’s music compositions dedicated to the Oleg Lundstrem Big Band. This piece was played only five times. It is possible that the band was

⁸ Anderson, 94.

not ready for such a serious and structured piece. Before this, the band had played shorter and lighter pieces. As Kapustin mentioned in an interview with Martin Anderson, “They asked me for it, but because it was very long they played it only five times. It was too long for their kind of repertoire, and for their audience.”⁹

Kapustin described his experience with the big band thus, “Eleven years of work with Lundstrem became my ‘Second Conservatory.’ Mostly it was classical jazz—Count Basie.”¹⁰ Count Basie's approach to a recognizable stride accompaniment idiom, which was applicable to many Russian folksongs. Count Basie's style simplifies the musical texture and makes music sound more relaxed and flexible. According to Wolfram Knauer's encyclopedia entry on Basie, “The Count Basie Orchestra, mingling a relaxed and swinging atmosphere with clear roots in the blues, produced a sound distinctive from that of other bands of the swing era.”¹¹ In 1969, Kapustin married Alla Baranovskaya and left the Oleg Lundstrem Big Band to be home with his new family.

In 1972, Kapustin joined the Television and Radio Light Orchestra with Vadim Lyudvikovsky in Moscow, which broadcast its performances live on TV and radio. After that, Kapustin developed a passion for film music and began working with the State Symphonic Orchestra of Cinematography, which recorded music for cinema, in 1977. This organization became his last workplace for seven years, and in 1980 his last public performance — of the *Piano and Orchestra* no. 2, op.14 — took place. Thereafter, he dedicated himself fully to composing.¹²

⁹ Anderson, 96.

¹⁰ Maga Antonina, “Vse moi proizvedeniia – s dzazovim akcentom: Beseda” [All of My Work Is Marked with a Jazz Emphasis: A Conversation], *Muzikalnaya jizn*, no. 10 (October 2008): 40.

¹¹ Wolfram Knauer, “Basie, Count,” in *Oxford University Press*, July 25, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2020. <https://doiorg.proxy.lib.ohiostate.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2240170>

¹² Roberts, 23.

A major shift for Kapustin came in his decision in 1984 to focus specifically on writing music for the piano. His first published piece, “*Toccatina*,” op. 36, was printed by the Music Publishing House. Kapustin mentioned in an interview that he did not like to perform on stage, preferring to record music. He composed twenty piano sonatas, ten of them before the end of 1999.¹³ Kapustin composed about 161 works across his career. Among them, about one hundred pieces were composed in the Western classical musical forms, such as concertos, sonatas, variations, and instrumental music. His piano works included twenty piano sonatas, six piano concertos, some solo piano works, pieces for four hands, and two-piano works.

Kapustin’s reputation has grown as more famous pianists have played his works worldwide. For example, Nikolai Petrov recorded his Second Sonata and Fifth Concerto for piano and orchestra. In addition, Yuja Wang, Marc-André Hamelin, Steven Osborne, John Salmon, and Ludmil Angelov have also recorded pieces by Kapustin.¹⁴

¹³ Roberts, 23.

¹⁴ Yana Tyulkov, “Biography of Nikolai Kapustin,” 2015, accessed July 21, 2020, www.Nikolai-Kapustin.info.

Chapter Three: The Jazz Development History in Russia and Influence of Nikolai Kapustin

To understand the development of Kapustin's music and its subtle relationship with jazz, it is important to examine the development of jazz in Russia. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the population of Moscow — the largest city in the country — began to grow quickly. Members of the middle class demanded more artistic variety and wanted access to Western popular entertainment. During this prosperous time, Russian popular music not only involved folk tunes, also accepted innovative figures in film music. Music was an essential part of Russia's cultural heritage, which had changed dramatically due to several events, such as the beginning of World War I in 1914. The Romanov dynasty weakened rapidly with losses in the Japanese-Russian War and then in WWI, leading to the execution of the Czar's family a few months before the end of the war. As a result of the "February Revolution" and the "October Revolution" in 1917, control of the government shifted to the Bolshevik Party, led by Vladimir Lenin. These revolutions completely changed the direction of Russian culture, which affected every aspect of art and life. Since the foundation of the Soviet Union and the introduction of Communism, Western popular culture and American-style jazz music experienced a century of volatile development in Russia.

At the same time, the United States began to become more influential as a result of its involvement in World War I and industrial expansion. America's unique cultural ideals were quickly gaining popularity among middle class Europeans. In the United States, the government

and the entire society maintained a relatively open attitude to the new popular culture. Jazz was the most widespread popular form in the 1920s — a decade commonly referred to as America’s “Jazz Age,” with novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald writing chronicles like *The Great Gatsby*.

Jazz also became popular in Russia starting in the 1920s. In S. Frederick Starr’s explanation, jazz music was an essential part of America’s music cultural output, which profoundly influenced Europe and Russia:

In the twentieth century there does exist one form of expression—jazz—that has far outstripped the others in its impact upon social life, private relations, and practically every other field of the arts. This form crystallized so completely the values of the times that the post-World War I era became known as the “Jazz Age.”¹

Jazz music embodied one of the most natural desires of people and flourished in the relatively open social environment of the Roaring Twenties. F. Scott Fitzgerald defined jazz by its social character: “The word ‘jazz,’ in its progress toward respectability, has meant first sex, then dancing, then music. It is associated with a state of nervous stimulation, not unlike that of big cities behind the lines of war.”²

Jazz became popular in Russia beginning in 1922, although ragtime had been in vogue for a while. The most conceivable reason for its delayed popularity is due to the Russian Civil War between 1918 and 1920, which delayed its arrival in Russia. Valentin Parnakh first brought jazz to the Soviet Union in 1922. Parnakh, a poet, dance master, and Dadaist artist, was born into a Jewish family in the south of Russia in 1891. He moved to Paris for six years, from 1916 to 1922, during World War I. Parnakh’s first experience with jazz was a concert by the legendary Louis Mitchell’s Jazz King in Paris in 1921. One year later, Parnakh decided to bring this attractive, liberating music to Russia. He published a couple of historical articles, “The New

¹ S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union 1917-1991* (New York: Limelight, 1994), 9.

² F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crackup*, *Edmund Wilson* (New York: New Directions, 1956), 16.

Dances” and “The Jazz Band,” in *Veshch* and *Zrelishcya*, both of which were influential journals in Russia. These articles expounded that jazz music could lift people’s spirits and relieve tension after the civil war in an attempt to convince the Soviet government to be tolerant and to accept this new American music. These articles also represent the first time the word “jazz” appeared in a Soviet publication. In addition, Parnakh established the first jazz band—The First Eccentric Orchestra of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, Valentin Parnakh’s Jazz Band—which brought about the first Soviet public jazz performance at the State Institute for Theatrical Art in Moscow on October 1, 1922. The concert included several American popular songs with syncopated rhythm with new jazz music instruments like saxophone, xylophone, banjo, and the drum set.³

Even though the Lenin-led Bolsheviks won the civil war, the entire economic system nearly collapsed afterward. Vladimir Lenin announced a new economic plan called the New Economic Policy (NEP), which allowed for a more capitalist free market in Soviet Russia. The new policy allowed private enterprises to reopen their businesses and enabled artists to devote more time to their creations without policy restrictions. The NEP period (1922–28) was a vitally important development period for jazz. Russian and American musicians had more substantive communication with each other and two famous American jazz bands toured in Russia. One was Sam Wooding’s Chocolate Kiddies big band, which gave a sensational series of performances with African American dancers, band players, and singers in Moscow in 1926. Another was Benny Peyton’s Jazz Kings band, which was more successful by playing in the hot jazz style with improvisation.

³ Starr, 44.

Along with the rapid increase of American jazz performances in Soviet Russia, musicians were in high demand for authentic jazz transcriptions from America. The young pianist Leopold Teplitsky left from Leningrad for America to learn about jazz performance practice and to collect jazz arrangements. Teplitsky arrived in Philadelphia in 1926 and participated in several combo performances. Teplitsky returned to Russia one year later and brought many valuable music scores with him, including copies of Paul Whiteman's arrangements. Paul Whiteman was widely recognized as the "King of Jazz." His jazz style embodied classical symphonic compositional techniques, which catered more to the taste of Russian audiences, and he played a crucial role in the direction of jazz in Soviet Russia. In a sense, Kapustin was also profoundly influenced by this early Russian jazz aesthetic. Under the NEP, Russian audiences had more opportunities to hear jazz in theaters, which also gave musicians numerous works and performances to learn from. The New Economic Policy was the final flourishing period of jazz before the half-century prohibition by Stalin.⁴

Alexander Tsfasman (1906–71) was a beacon pointing to new directions of American jazz music under Stalin's oppression rule. There was no other contemporaneous Soviet jazzman who exceeded Tsfasman's achievements during Stalin's reign. Tsfasman had more firsts than any other Soviet jazz musician in history. He was the first professional soloist in Soviet jazz and the first Soviet jazz musician to gain the affection and respect of the Western world. He founded the commercially successful AMA Jazz Band (*Amadzhaz*) under the sponsorship of the Association of Moscow Artists, which performed jazz in the hot style without improvisation. AMA Jazz Band made the first Soviet jazz recording in 1928 and also was the first jazz band to

⁴ Starr, 45.

perform live on the radio in the same year. Tsfasman premiered *Rhapsody in Blue* during the 1934–35 season at Moscow theater.⁵

Tsfasman studied with Felix Blumenfeld for six years, from 1925 to 1930, at the Moscow Conservatory. Kapustin's first professional piano teacher, Rubakh, was also a pupil of Blumenfeld. It was not until the 1960s that Kapustin reached Tsfasman, but they both had rigorous training in classical performance technique and music theory. Kapustin admired his jazz predecessor, who considerably influenced Kapustin's interpretation of jazz composition. Kapustin gave the following comments on Tsfasman's compositional style: "we (pianists) liked Tsfasman for his elegance and easy-going style and his perfect finger technique."⁶ Tsfasman advocated that performers should memorize the music as written, without improvisation, not like jazz players, because following the score will enable the player to improve on the perfect. Solo performers could concentrate more on showing off virtuoso techniques by playing by memory. Kapustin took this to heart and followed Tsfasman's suggestions of a classical-jazz compositional synthesis.

The music of Tsfasman with its distinctive Russian graceful melodies and minimized American jazz freedom features matched the Soviet government's guidelines for Western popular music at that period. This particular jazz music style not only allowed his music to develop within a strict political environment but also established the foundation for Russian jazz in the future. In the 1930s, the Soviet government initiated a more Soviet version of jazz by removing the decadent elements and defined the distinction between "Soviet jazz" (sovetskii dzhaz) and the harmful "American jazz" (amerikanskii dzhaz). Sovietized jazz meant minimizing improvisation,

⁵ Starr, 134.

⁶ Mann, 33.

syncopation, blue notes, and a fast swinging feeling, and replacing it with a more lyrical and slow style.⁷

In 1928, Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) led the Cultural Revolution, which was “class warfare” against the capitalist intelligentsia by young communist cultural militants who criticized Lenin’s NEP policy as a legacy of tsarism. Jazz, as the most successful representation of emerging Western capitalism that had developed under NEP policy, was brutally cracked down on by radicals in the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution led to the institution of a system of rigorous censorship in place of the NEP’s liberalism to prevent Western capitalism from undermining the ideology of socialism through cultural exports.

The Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians was created by socialist radicals in order to advocate for more “proletarian” music to serve communist ideology. The RAPM particularly rejected foreign light music like jazz. They believed music should be ideologically cultivated in the proletarian spirit, rather than to indulge personal enjoyment, which was presented as bourgeois in nature. The RAPM firmly believed composers must have a proletarian background, and many jazz musicians were suppressed under this context by USSR officials.

Stalin’s government attempted to defame jazz music by using vulgar words. The famous Soviet novelist Maxim Gorky published a long anti-jazz article titled “On the Music of the Gross” in the Soviet official newspaper *Pravda* in 1928. Gorky described jazz as a “loathsome, maniacal cacophony” designed to appeal to “fat people” and “predators,” that is, those who had benefited economically from the New Economic Policy of the mid-1920s.⁸ Stalin’s government was not only targeting jazz music, but the culture behind it.

⁷ Gleb Tsipursky. “Jazz, Power, and Soviet Youth in the Early Cold War, 1948-1953.” *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, by Bill Kirchner, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005, 337.

⁸ Maksim Gorkii, “O muzyke tol’stiakh,” *Pravda*, April 18, 1928.

Stalin's administration strictly controlled artistic creation after World War II. Jazz, a typical representation of American culture, was forbidden throughout Stalin's rule. The legendary Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninov's music was also prohibited because he had immigrated to the US. Jazz was strictly controlled until the early 50s. The Soviet recording business ceased to serve jazz musicians because it was a symbol of Western capitalism. Things changed for jazz after Stalin died in 1953. After Stalin's death, more Western culture was available, in particular jazz.

Kapustin started to explore, despite his limited resources, at a very young age. However, as the death of Stalin and the fall of his administration provided more opportunities for jazz to spread and take root in Russia, Kapustin was struggling to achieve fame, and he grasped the opportunity to begin his career as a jazz musician. Kapustin heard authentic jazz performances on the radio for the first time in 1953: "At first my friends and I could hear jazz only on the radio. I do not remember which jazz artist I heard first. It could be Glenn Miller or Louis Armstrong."⁹ At this moment, Soviet citizens had the chance to bring back a number of jazz recordings from abroad, and American jazz music gained popularity through radio airplay. Kapustin heard, played, and learned jazz early in his career, which influenced him later as a composer.

During the Cold War period after World War II, Russian youth still had only limited access to Western jazz music. A portion of the Western musical materials imported into the community derived from Western film reels captured in the occupied territories during World War II. The other more popular approach to jazz music was by illegally listening to American and British radio stations. During the late Cold War, in the 1970s and 1980s, as the Soviet

⁹ Kapustin, e-mail message to author.

government's influence over the Baltic states weakened, more professional jazz musicians gathered in this area and actively impacted the development of jazz in the Russian mainland.¹⁰

Kapustin began studying at the Moscow Conservatoire with Alexander Goldenweiser in 1956. During his college studies, he premiered his Op. 1 *Concertino for piano and orchestra* (1957).¹¹ He composed many subsequent pieces employing common classical forms, such as an abundant number of piano concertos, sonatas, and quite a few compositions with different instruments, which showcased his talent as a composer. Nevertheless, he really shone performing as a jazz pianist with his own quintet. He became a member of Yuri Saulsky's band as a solo performer in the same time period. Despite Kapustin's classical music education, his music works were inspired by African American culture. The reason for his early success was the fusion of two different cultures in one music work, at a moment when Western jazz was reviving new music in Russia.

After tasting success, Kapustin spent the next decade after graduation touring the country with Leg Lundström's Jazz Orchestra, which was regarded as the most successful jazz music group in Russia. This experience enhanced his skills in composing and influenced his musical style, including harmony, rhythm, melody, and structure—a complex combination of classical and jazz traditions. This seamless blend of music idiom makes it difficult for music scholars to identify which one held more weight in his music. Kapustin was diplomatic in describing himself as a classical composer rather than a jazz composer. I believe Kapustin's intriguing music was directly influenced by the looser environment during the 1950s in Russia; moreover, his fame led

¹⁰ Tsipursky, 350-360.

¹¹ Yana Tyulkova. "Classical and Jazz Influences in the Music of Nikolai Kapustin: Piano Sonata no. 3, Op. 55." (DMA diss., West Virginia University, 2015), 14-16.

him to explore a unique path in music composition by borrowing jazz elements, even though he denies that fact.

Kapustin attempted to clarify several times that he was not purely a jazz musician because he was not interested in improvisation. Most of his improvisation parts were clearly printed in the scores, the pianist just needs to follow the notation as it is. It is more like a written “cadenza” in early Classical period concertos, where the composer could allow the performer to show off their skill. Kapustin believed improvisation is essential to be a real jazz musician, and considered himself a qualified classical musician who employed a jazz style instead of being an authentic jazz composer. He maintained the classical tradition of polishing works after his initial notations. The following statement is part of the obituary by his publisher, Schott Music. It summarizes Kapustin’s attitude toward the definition of his music works as classical:

I was never a jazz musician. I have never attempted to be a genuine jazz pianist, but have to slip into this role for the benefit of my compositions. I am not interested in improvisation—and what would a jazz musician be without improvisation? Any improvisation on my part has naturally been notated and has improved during the process which has allowed it to mature.¹²

The charm of his music and his personality attracted me to undertake this research, and inspires me in performing his music as well. One of the great benefits of understanding the origins of the jazz elements in his music is that it can assist future performers in playing and expressing his music better.

¹² “Obituary Archive,” *Schott Music*, July 15, 2020, <https://en.schott-music.com/tag/obituary/>.

Chapter Four: Classical with Jazz Influences on Kapustin's Style

Nikolai Kapustin was an extraordinary twentieth-century composer and pianist who integrated the jazz idiom with classical music textures. The classification of his compositional styles has also become a frequent topic of discussion among music graduate students' dissertation after 2000. He is a composer educated in traditional Russian piano performance and Western compositional techniques at the Moscow Conservatory, which is the one of the top music schools in Russia, and his compositions deeply embody the qualities of the nation. The classification of his music should acknowledge the historical background and nationalism specifically.

Jazz music carried many cognizable musical features, such as solo improvisation, successive syncopation, and distinct blues harmony. Kapustin endowed more classical elements, such as polyphonic textures and traditional musical forms. However, the rhythmic walking bass that stimulated the auditory sense of the listener was much more distinguishable than in prior classical music. In fact, there was a compositional tradition wherein composers fused novel musical materials with traditional musical forms. In the view of precedent music pieces, many composers in the early twentieth century explored ways to add modern popular elements of inspiration in their works.

Johann Sebastian Bach contributed abundant musical elements for studying jazz harmony and improvisation. Bach's music is considered the comprehensive music theory foundation for

jazz composers. The Goldberg Variations is a good illustration of a piece by J. S. Bach that has had a profound significance for jazz musicians. There are several Goldberg Variations recordings that were created by well-known jazz pianists, such as Keith Jarrett, Uri Caine, and Jacques Loussier, with their own interpretation in a jazz style. The Goldberg Variations consist of an aria and thirty variations for harpsichord. J. S. Bach provided a unique chord progression arrangement that is unlike other keyboard music in the Baroque period. Normally, variations are arranged by repeating melodic materials in an altered form. However, The Goldberg Variations arrangement follows the chord progression order, rather than the melody of the aria. Harmonic progressions became the core of jazz compositional practice and are found in countless jazz compositions and improvisation. By way of illustration, Clark Johnston composed a jazz variation based on the chord progression from the Goldberg Variations. It clearly demonstrates the feasibility of applying classical chord progressions to modern jazz compositions, regardless of style barriers.¹

J. S. Bach's Goldberg Variations emphasized the bass harmonic tonal progression, which offered a multifunctional musical practice platform for creating a melodic jazz structure, rather than the custom of traditional classical music, which required performers to follow the extract notation in the score. Bach's music innovative spirit and music tonal progressions are beneficial to many jazz musicians and Kapustin as well.²

The term "third stream" is a wildly prevalent term to describe a music style that features two different musical features, such as those in classical and jazz. Gunther Schuller defines the term "third stream" as a new style that is a fusion of two main streams of music, such as jazz and

¹ Clark L. Johnston, "Jazz Compositions Based on the Chord Progression from the 'Goldberg' Variations" (DMA diss., York University [Canada], 2011), 9.

² Gary S. Jones, "A Conceptual Method of Learning Jazz Improvisation through Studying the Music of J. S. Bach" (DMA diss., West Virginia University, 2014), 3.

Western classical music. Western classical artists borrowed the distinctive swinging rhythms of jazz and applied it to the large-scale musical forms and complex harmonic systems of classical music. “The term was originally applied to a style in which attempts were made to fuse basic elements of jazz and Western art music—the two mainstreams joining to form a third stream.”³

According to the above description of the term “third stream,” music critics have engaged in a vigorous discussion of Kapustin’s stylistic preferences. “His style of writing is crossover, in the best sense of the term, and belongs to the ‘third stream’ trend of the later 20th century. Does his music sound more like jazz than classical?”⁴ Kapustin talked about how he prefers not to label his music as “third stream” or “crossover” and has no intention of conforming to a common trend: “I don’t like ... the word ‘crossover’ nor Gunther Schuller’s ‘third stream.’ The thing is that other [composers] (in contrast with me) did the blend intentionally, while my ‘jazziness’ is unpremeditated ... I simply cannot do otherwise.”⁵

In order to evaluate the specific features of the term “third stream” as Kapustin uses it here, an overview of the jazz music perspective is essential. Early jazz derived from ragtime, which became widely beloved by audiences in the 1890s and remained popular until the end of World War I. To trace the genetic essence of original jazz, one must look to its birthplace in New Orleans in the United States. The open atmosphere attracted European, African, and other groups to gather in the city. This multicultural place endowed early jazz music with diverse features.⁶

³ Gunther Schuller, “Third Stream,” *Grove Music Online*, 2013, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252527>.

⁴ Leslie De’Ath, “Nikolai Kapustin—A Performer’s Perspective,” *MusicWeb International*, accessed August 7, 2020, <http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2002/Jun02/Kapustin.htm>

⁵ Nikolai Kapustin, email message to Jonathan E. Roberts, “Classical Jazz: The Life and Musical Innovations of Nikolai Kapustin” (DMA diss., University of Alabama, 2013), 2.

⁶ Edward A. Berlin, “Ragtime,” *Grove Music Online*, 2013. Accessed August 5, 2020. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252241>.

Early ragtime emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, with the piano work “La bamboula,” which was composed by New Orleans composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk. The piece features the core elements of ragtime in its melody syncopation and repetitive rhythmic patterns. Gottschalk, like other early jazz musicians, was profoundly influenced by the compositional techniques of the classical world, and classical repertoire performance was a major focus of their early musical education.⁷

The nature of jazz is rooted between two cultures, both western Europe and Africa. However, the African element of jazz music grew up in relative isolation on the continent over a prolonged time, and it remains highly independent from traditional Western melodies. Composers used the language of traditional classical notation to analyze authentic African music materials to facilitate jazz composition.

The elements of African jazz music employ many aspects of everyday life in Africa, including rituals, dances, and festivals. The scales avoid minor second intervals that do not follow traditional classical tonal musical order and contain unstable pitches. The unique dialogue pattern in each instrument and voice creates a polyphonic structure similar to Bach’s music in the Baroque period. In early jazz music, composers still employed fundamental and slightly antiquated classical compositional techniques. The compositional techniques of eighteenth-century classical music are the primary method to fuse African and traditional Western music, and the chord progression determines the tonal relationship between melody and the harmony the music piece. The phrase structure is also in the tradition of early classical music with a pair of phrases in two or four.⁸

⁷ Terry Teachout, “Jazz and Classical Music: To the Third Stream and Beyond,” in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, edited by Bill Kirchner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 343–56.

⁸ Roberts, 7.

Around the 1920s, the excited character of jazz quickly attracted the public attention of audiences, and more famous classical masters were willing to integrate jazz idioms into their classical repertoire. At the beginning of the twentieth century, composers who succeeded in joining this jazz-classic trend include French composers Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy, Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, George Gershwin from the jazz and Tin Pan Alley cultures of America, and many others. The jazz-styled compositions of these great masters influenced classical composers through their enormous success on radio and in publications and live performances, and their sophisticated compositional techniques greatly enriched early jazz music.

In the early 1920s, along with the growth of American popular music culture in Europe, jazz music gained attraction among young people with its joyful swinging and the classical music composers also borrow jazz compositional technique in their classical music repertoire. Some of the famous classical composers such as George Gershwin, Maurice Ravel, and Dmitri Shostakovich's compositions were profoundly influenced by jazz music.

George Gershwin is an American composer, popular songwriter, and virtuosic pianist. The well-known piece “Rhapsody in Blue” (1924) was the first written orchestral music in the jazz idiom, which was then transcribed by Gershwin himself for piano. This piano concerto was labeled in the program for the premiere as “An Experiment in Modern Music,” which marks the creation of a new musical model, “symphonic jazz.” This large-scale composition, well-recognized as a 20th century jazz-classical work, employed a fusion between jazz language with a distinct rhythmic melody and classical instrumentation. The musical score features precise notation and patterns without improvisation by the performer.⁹

⁹ Richard Crawford, “Gershwin, George.,” *Grove Music Online*, 2013, accessed August 23, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252861>.

In 1945, the premiere of “Rhapsody in Blue” by George Gershwin took place in the Soviet Union. This performance created a tremendous impact on the music world in Russia during the Cold War. This fully notated blues music with a classical form had a profound influence on subsequent Russian musicians. Gershwin was influenced himself by his popular songwriting experience, and his musical style embodies light and lively dance movements. Kapustin also inherited this joyful and energetic style by using fast-flowing triplets in his compositions.

In order to better understand Kapustin's creative style, we need a point of reference. The seamlessness of Kapustin's use of jazz in classical compositions shows many similar features to Gershwin's music. Kapustin's music sounds much closer to the style of compositions in the first half of twenty century, employing jazz compositional techniques while keeping relatively conventional classical compositional structures and virtuosic performance techniques. Kapustin and Gershwin demonstrated remarkably sophisticated compositional ability for incorporating jazz styles with classical forms, and both composers preferred to identify themselves as a classical composer.

It may not be appropriate to classify Kapustin's music as a known musical term and discussion of which known composers' style that his music close to. In a recent interview between Yana Tyulkova and Kapustin in 2015, he expressed his reluctance for comparison to Gershwin's music:

Kapustin: For some reason people always compare my music with the music of Gershwin, I am already tired of it.

Yana: Is that a good or bad thing?

Kapustin: It's not a pleasant thing.¹⁰

¹⁰ Yana Tyulkova. *Conversations with Nikolai Kapustin*. Mainz: Schott Music, 2019, 417.

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) was an outstanding French Impressionist composer and contributed to the development of jazz music. Kapustin was inspired by the jazz-influenced works of Ravel in many aspects, such as the use of diatonic impressionistic harmony to describe the “blues.” Kapustin is fascinated with Ravel’s unique jazz language and compositional techniques. Kapustin says the following of the experience of studying Ravel’s music at the Moscow Conservatory: “During the years of study in the Conservatory I also developed an interest in the music of Ravel and later Bartók.”¹¹

Ravel’s classical-jazz music employs numerous expanded chords, such as 9th, 11th, and 13th, and presents unique diatonic harmony. The application of diatonic, pentatonic, chromatic, and chord clusters makes the distinct harmony correspond to the features of jazz music. Kapustin is not willing to acknowledge that his music is just a simple fusion of jazz and classical music like the term “third stream” or “crossover.” Although Kapustin employs many popular compositional techniques from each jazz period, such as the styles of ragtime, stride, be-bop, and swing, he believes it is just a method to create colors in his new sound: “For me the classical part is more important. The jazz style is there to give color—I don’t like jazz ‘forms’—if you describe them as that—which is why I’ve adopted those from classical music.”¹²

According to the research of Teachout, third stream music typically blends jazz and classical instrumentalists. Ensemble music is fully notated with a complex texture, alternating with a simple improvisation section. The main reason for the failure of late third stream music is the conflict between the two music styles in terms of practical performance problems. Classical musicians, unable to improvise music, also find the unwritten rhythmic nuances inherent in jazz

¹¹ Nikolai Kapustin, interview by author, December 27, 2013.

¹² Harriet Smith, “Bridging the Divide: The Russian Composer Nikolai Kapustin,” *International Piano Quarterly* 4, no. 13 (Autumn 2000), 54–55.

to be difficult to achieve in live performance. On the other hand, jazz soloists are unable to do free jazz improvising within classical forms.¹³

Kapustin believed that he was a well-educated classical composer and pianist rather than an improvisational jazz musician: “I’m not interested in improvisation—and what is a jazz musician without improvisation? But I’m not interested, because it’s not perfect.”¹⁴ His musical language is a fusion of jazz and classical, following in the footsteps of his classical-jazz forerunners. However, his unique style is difficult to categorize under an existing label, such as “crossover” and “third stream.” Kapustin believes that he has a distinctive musical style that merges not only the language of jazz with numerous classical music forms, but also a comprehensive synthesis of twentieth-century music trends.

¹³ Teachout, 355.

¹⁴ Martin Anderson, “Nikolai Kapustin, Russian Composer of Classical Jazz,” *Fanfare* (Sept.-Oct. 2000), 96.

Chapter Five: *Variations for Piano*, Op. 41

The *Variations for Piano*, op. 41, was completed in 1984 and published one year later. That year was an important year of transition in Kapustin's life for his music career. In 1984, Kapustin finished a tour performance with the State Symphonic Orchestra of Cinematography. Since 1984, Kapustin completely turned his attention to composing piano solo works and recording his solo albums instead of engaging in public performances. That year he was quite prolific and composed several large piano solo works that employ classical musical forms, including *Piano Sonata No.1 "Sonata-Fantasy" for Piano*, op. 39; *Eight Concert Etudes for Piano*, op. 40; and the *Variations for Piano*, op. 41.

The variation is the perfect musical model to demonstrate the variety of classical music in accordance with jazz improvisation's desire to seek to create, separate, and enhance the theme of the piece. The variation form was broadly used in classical piano literature by composers in the past. With the prevalence of jazz in the 20th century, more composers were interested in incorporating the liberal style of jazz music with various characteristics of the classical variation genre.¹

The *Variations*, op. 41, demonstrate Kapustin's comprehensive and sophisticated approach in both jazz and classical compositional technique. This piece does not completely

¹ Tatiana Abramova, "The Synthesis of Jazz and Classical Styles in Three Piano Works of Nikolai Kapustin" (DMA diss., Temple University, 2014), 17.

follow traditional variation form with alternating rhythmic themes, but a large portion of the piece carries on continually active motion. Kapustin recreated thematic motives in the jazz idiom by using a typical blues swing pulse and syncopated rhythmic pattern.

Kapustin utilized “medium swing” as a tempo marking to indicate that the variation theme reflects a steady jazz rhythmic pose. Swing rhythm is commonly used in jazz to change the written rhythmic pattern in the music score: “Swing presents a way of playing jazz music that results in a feeling of forward motion or momentum, often accompanied by a propensity to embody the music in some form of rhythmic movement.”² The performer should consider integrating musical features like phrase shaping and the character of the musical pulse when determining how to use swing rhythm properly. In the *Variations*, op. 41, the performer needs to make subtle rhythmic adjustments to accommodate the bluesy gestures while keeping the overall rhythm steady in the classical variation form. The overall feeling in each short separate motive feels like a rubber belt stretching motion, with the beginning of the motive feeling relatively flexible, the mid-range holding a high tension, and the end rebound quickly.

The method of performing swing rhythms was formed in the 1930s. Louis Armstrong’s stated views on uneven eighth-note accents were broadly recognized by jazz musicians of his time. His theory demonstrated that swing players should give more of a sense of stretch and freedom in 4/4 time. The interpretation of swing phrasing suggests that jazz players should accent and shorten the second and fourth beats, which are the weak beats in classical playing. In the meantime, they should stretch the eighth notes on the first and third beats of the downbeat. This approach creates a strong sense of direction and pulse from beat to beat and bar to bar. This method also encourages the addition of breaks and rests to create a sense of anticipation leading

² Howard Spring, “Swing,” *Grove Music Online*, January 31, 2014, accessed October 7, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2258226>.

to the main beats. On the other hand, the player needs to be more flexible in order to avoid the tedious and apparent anticipation of every upbeat accent and break in swing music.³

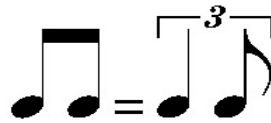


Figure 5.1. Swing rhythm on eighth-notes.

The thematic folk motive is composed of five descending notes plus one ascending fourth, and the last note usually appears as an accent or syncopated long note. The performer needs to show the thematic motive's direction toward the last note with an explicit, crisp touch. The theme begins with a four-bar phrase, but the performance of each short phrase should cross over the bar line rather than creating an accent on the downbeat or pause before the bar line.



Figure 5.2. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 1-2.

The piece starts with a short four-measure introduction, and then follows with a thirty-two-measure theme in D flat major that recalls the solo bassoon motive in the opening of

³ Richard J. Lawn and L. Jeffrey Hellmer, *Jazz: Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles: Alfred Publishing Company, 1996), 161.

Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (*Le Sacre du Printemps*). This jazz-folk tune motive maintains a similar rhythm tempo until Variation V, mm. 180–97, in *Larghetto* tempo, recalling the beginning theme in *cantabile*.



Figure 5.3. Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring*, bassoon solo, mm. 1–3.

The main thematic melody was a reference to a traditional Lithuanian folk song called “Tu, manu seserėlė”. Stravinsky and Kapustin choose to add grace notes to simulate the *dudki* sound.⁴ The *dudki* is unique Armenian wind instrument widely used by Russian composers to present folk tunes in their music. Stravinsky, Kapustin, Glinka, Mussorgsky, and Korsakov all marked *duduk* in their manuscripts.⁵



Figure 5.4. Lithuanian folk tune, “Tu, manu seserėlė.”

The theme of the variations consists of two sections: the A section is from measure five to sixteen and is based on four-bar phrasing. The B section continues from measure seventeen to

⁴ Tatiana Abramova, “The Synthesis of Jazz and Classical Styles in Three Piano Works of Nikolai Kapustin” (DMA diss., Temple University, 2014), 18.

⁵ Cynthia Stacy, “The Use of Bassoon in Russian Orchestral Music” (Honors thesis, DePaul University, 2016), 10.

thirty-six and modulates from tonal D flat major. The theme features a wide register and constantly alternates between different tonal qualities from multiple voices, showing the distinctive articulation of jazz instruments. The piano bass part consists of four notes that form an ostinato rhythmic pattern that imitates the pizzicato quality of the jazz double bass, the frequent and brief pizzicato motives provide a constant energy throughout the piece. The piano soloist can add extra arm weight on the bottom notes to make the overall balance of the sound more antiphonal.



Figure 5.5. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 5–7.

The syncopation widely used in this piece is an essential ingredient of jazz music. The last note of the left-hand bass voice often occurs on an offbeat, and the right-hand thematic motive often falls on an offbeat as well and sometimes with a break notated by a dotted rest. The syncopation of this piece differs from traditional classical music in application. The music motive often ends on a long note or an accent instead of a soft, shortened note as in classical music.

Syncopation is considered one of the most distinct rhythmic features in jazz, which borrows rhythmic characteristics from South American and African music: “The regular shifting

of each beat in a measured pattern by the same amount ahead of or behind its normal position in that pattern.”⁶ The mismatch between the strong beats and accents creates impressive rhythmic strength. Kapustin added syncopated rhythms to each voice to create a kind of polyphonic texture in which the voices connect to each other in fragments.

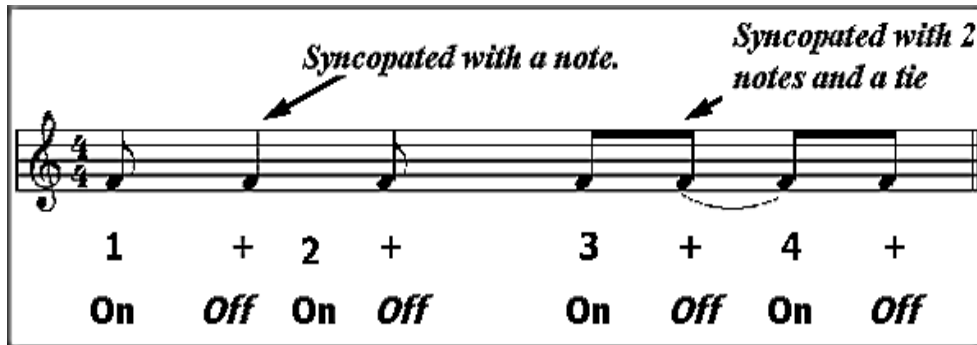


Figure 5.6. Standard syncopation pattern.⁷

When the pianist performs Kapustin’s *Variations*, op. 41, it is necessary to consider different rhythmic accents in order to organize the varied musical tune qualities. The performer needs to imitate the timbre of the different groups of jazz instruments, like conducting a whole jazz big band, and to organize the brief musical motives into a complete phrase by using dramatic contrasts and comparisons.

For instance, measures twenty-nine and thirty are two-bar motives. The left-hand notes are played in a steady beat counted with a solid, deep tenuto articulation. This steady bass voice sounds like the group of wind instruments and drum sets in a jazz big band and provides the crucial harmonic progression in the overall sonority. This powerful and steady bass progression

⁶ “Syncopation.” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed August 17, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27263>.

⁷ Ibid

in the left hand provides clear rhythmic support to ensure that the listener is never lost in the flexible swinging rhythms of the right-hand melodic parts and miss the overall pulse directions of the phrase. The tenuto performance approach is neither staccato nor legato nor sostenuto are held for half their value unless the word ‘ten.’ is placed over them, in which case they have to be sustained.⁸ The piano soloist should maintain a detached style of playing. It is necessary to make fast and decisive movements in attacking and leaving the keys while maintaining as much of the note values as possible.

On the other hand, in both measures twenty-nine and thirty, the right-hand melodic motive shows two contrasting tonal qualities that correspondingly represent different instrument groups in the jazz big band. The right hand begins with vertical intervals and chords that imitate the powerful tutti performance of wind instruments with an intense direction to the accent notes on the offbeat in the middle section of the measure. Then the right-hand immediately changes to a light touch without accent to change the tutti timbre of the wind instruments to the soloist or a section of the big band. The piano player needs to adjust their touch promptly from heavy chords that require mobilizing the whole arm weight to sixteenth notes that are played only with the fingertips. The contrast in timbre used extensively in the variations restores the dramatic musical character of transition in the jazz big band.

⁸ David Fallows, “Tenuto,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed August 17, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27263>.



Figure 5.7. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 29–30.

In the last four measures (33–36) of the thematic variation, Kapustin pushes the piece to its first climax point, then adds a sudden dynamic change by using the marking of “*subito, piano*” to indicate an extremely light touch recalling the beginning folk tune thematic motive. It is also the introduction of the following first variation (37–68). Kapustin is careful to add dynamic musical marks through the entire piece to allow the piano soloist to have more freedom of expression. In measure thirty-three, Kapustin indicates the first *crescendo*, which leads to the first *forte*. The two-hand contrary motion is already obviously intense in tone. Still, Kapustin deliberately adds dynamic marks in order to show the piano player that the climactic sonority demands more exaggerated playing.

The main theme of the variations begins in the key of D-flat major and then follows a sequence modulating to multiple keys. The main key, D-flat major, reappears again for the last time in the final variation to function as an echo, recalling the beginning of the piece.



Figure 5.8. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 33–36.

The beginning of the first variation (mm. 37–68) comes from a sharp ascending two-beat sixteenth note without a crescendo before the double bar line. The fact that a double bar line separates the variation is effective for distinguishing the musical structure of the piece as being for piano soloist since the overall musical character is relatively consistent throughout the piece and the lack of obvious transitions between each variation.

The first variation consists of two musical patterns. The first pattern appears in measures 37–44 and 53–60, the repetitive decisive motive is composed of six notes in the left hand that imitate the pizzicato timbre of a jazz double-bass with a crisp touch. The fragmented right-hand motive alternates with the left-hand pizzicato motive in a dialogue, constantly. The last note of

each motive in both hands ends with a concise *staccatissimo* articulation. The solo pianist should make a clear gesture and give a deep tonal quality to the downbeat long notes of each motive to better show the pulse of the dialogue in both hands.



Figure 5.9. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 37–38 and mm. 53–54.

Another musical pattern of variation is similar to that of Count Basie (1904–84), who was known for his bebop comping. The musical idea of left-hand “*comping*” was not only an accompaniment pattern but made the music more rhythmic than harmonic.⁹ The left hand’s

⁹ John P. E. Roothaan, “Perspectives on Teaching Jazz Piano ‘Comping’ in the College Music Program with Sample Instructional Units” (DMA diss., Ball State University, 1999), 62.

steady chordal walking bass stays in dialogue with the swinging solo melody in the right hand.

According to Gridley:

Basie pioneered in the thin-textured solo style where the left hand plays soft sustained chords or occasional punctuation's ("comping" again) instead of the automatic and full accompaniments of the ragtime and stride pianists. Basie's solo style, while built around simple chords and lean melodies, laid the foundation for bebop solo piano texture.¹⁰

As Gridley explains above, sustained left-hand chordal "comping" should be played with a light touch and provide prolonged rhythmic support for the solo melodic part. The expressive right hand's swinging solo melodies show the diversity of jazz elements in different registers through the technique of hand crossover and ornamentation.



Figure 5.10. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op.41, mm. 47–48.

The second variation two is from measure sixty-nine to ninety-two and is divided into three sections. The first section (mm. 69–76) includes features of ragtime. Ragtime was popular from the 1910s to the 1920s. The main feature of ragtime style is the ragged rhythmic arrangement, which is best interpreted as a syncopated rhythmic pattern. The syncopations commonly occur in the middle of the measure or motive to shift the accent from the downbeat to

¹⁰ Mark C. Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis* (Boston: Pearson, 2012), 129.

a weak beat. In the early period of ragtime, the dotted note was not a common rhythmic pattern until the 1910s. Afterward, the dotted rhythm became popular, since ragtime music was associated more with dancing. The dotted rhythms of ragtime, like many other jazz traditions, are not played exactly as written in the score. The performer should extend the long-dotted notes to reach a 2:1 ratio, which sounds like a more swinging rhythm.¹¹



Figure 5.11. Ragtime: Stylistic convention in dotted rhythm.

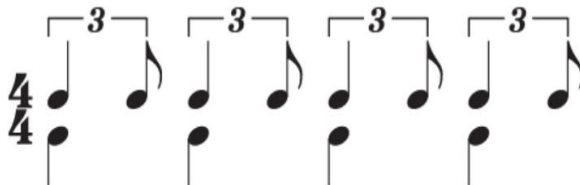


Figure 5.12. Ragtime: Performance practice of dotted rhythm.

There are two typical bass accompaniment patterns, namely walking bass and stride bass, in the second section from measure 77 to 84. Kapustin used a chromatic ascending tenth walking pattern as the bass accompaniment in measures 77–81. The solo pianist should play the bottom note of the left hand simultaneously with the right hand on the beat when the tenth interval needs

¹¹ Edward A. Berlin, “Ragtime,” *Grove Music Online*, October 16, 2013, accessed August 5, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252241>.

to be rolled, due to hand span limitations, so that the left hand can sustain steady rhythmic support.

In measures 77–81, the left-hand accompaniment notation features the typical walking bass figure. Walking bass is typically played pizzicato by the double bass player in a jazz ensemble or band. In a typical four-beat measure, the double bassist tends to emphasize the second and fourth weak beats to create a more swinging tension. The figure X presents the conventional walking bass chord and intervallic progression moving upward and downward, stepwise.¹² The main rhythmic function of walking bass is to hold a constant steady pulse for the ensemble. The piano walking bass is commonly played in the low register in octaves and compound intervals and not limited to harmonic pitches.¹³



Figure 5.13. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 77–78.

Kapustin pushes the piece to a climax of musical textures through an agitated eleven-measure harmonic progression. In measures 82–84, Kapustin employs stride bass style. Stride bass is a jazz piano left-hand accompaniment pattern that was popular before the walking bass

¹² Gunther Schuller, “Walking Bass.” *Grove Music Online*, 2001. accessed August 6, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.29835>.

¹³ Gridley, 24.

style in the 1920s. It showcases Kapustin's ability to apply a variety of jazz piano techniques from different periods. The stride accompaniment pattern was often used in ragtime style piano music. The stride bass style provides a richer musical texture by utilizing the full range of the piano.



Figure 5.14. Stride bass style.

Kapustin uses numerous right-hand octaves and fills the inner voices with rich harmony, attempting to imitate a big band tutti sonority to push the music to a climax. The left hand maintains a ragtime stride bass accompaniment in two octaves to constantly provide steady rhythmic support for the right-hand swinging progression. During this eleven-measure progression, the piano performer could try to open the elbow outward to mobilize all the energy through to the fingers. Both hands also need to keep a firm structure and lean toward the pinky to better outline the melody.



Figure 5.15. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 83–88.

Variation three (mm. 93–103) is a quick transition that connects to the long, agitated fourth variation (mm. 104–79). In measures 93–99, Kapustin applies a bebop jazz language to create an interaction between the right-hand's two different registers, akin to a drum set accompanied by the left-hand walking bass. The left-hand chromatic walking bass offers a steady rhythmic underlying progression that sets a platform for a swinging passage in the right hand. The quick right-hand passage imitates the virtuosic solo showcase of two drum sets in a big band that is unpredictable and is “dropping bombs.” These accents on the end of each musical motive also point out a clear direction. The piano soloist should make these random accented articulations in fast, constant leaps. It is also important to keep the improvisational unpredictability of the accents to avoid making obvious dynamic changes in advance. In measures 100–103, the folk tune thematic melody sounds again in the right hand, serving as a bridge to the next variation.



Figure 5.16. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 93–94.

The fourth variation is the first section in which Kapustin makes many changes in tempo, meter, texture, and style, and it recalls the features of traditional classical variations in making various contrasts between each section. Kapustin keeps a traditional jazz medium swinging style in 4/4 meter until the fourth variation. The marking “Doppio movimento” above the first measure of the fourth variation means “double movement,” a direction to double the tempo. Even though Kapustin writes the new time signature in 3/4 meter, the piano player should group every three eighth-notes as one triplet, as in 6/8 meter. Kapustin adds a one-measure transition in 6/8 meter before the fourth variation to allow the pianist to make the meter change smoothly. In the new tempo setting, a dotted quarter note is equal to the prior dotted half note.



Figure 5.17. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 103–07.

The left-hand remains in a steady ostinato bass pattern over the fourth variation with the faster passages in the right hand creating a rich polyrhythm. This type of straightforward, quick running motion contrasts with the medium swinging character of the folk tune theme at the beginning. It is suggested that the pianist should practice this variation with separate hands. The free style of the right-hand needs to keep great independence when both hands play together and not be interrupted by the strict ostinato pattern of the left hand.

In the later part of this variation, Kapustin pushes the music to a climax by using different rhythmic patterns and adding more sequences in a chromatic setting. For instance, Kapustin amplifies the sonority with a contrary chromatic sequence. The right hand's repetitive fast triplets and left hand's staccato cluster chord syncopation emphasize the forward motion in the polyrhythm in measures 152–55.



Figure 5.18. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 152–55.

There are twelve measures (mm. 168–79) of introduction before the fifth variation. This section starts with a new tonality in C-sharp minor, which is carried into the following romantic *larghetto* section. Kapustin raises the melody register an octave, the same as the previous variation ending section, to create a more spacious impression of the outline thematic motive.



Figure 5.19. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 152–55.

Kapustin expresses the thematic folksong through a classical texture that gives the listener the impression of a saintly Lithuanian girl singing in a peaceful field in the nineteenth century. In this *larghetto* section, Kapustin employs the compositional language of the classical tradition in the Romantic period. The thematic melody of the right hand imitates the lyrical narrative manner of a solo soprano singer, which is independent from the other voices of the

orchestra, which serve an accompaniment role. The bass staccato octaves imitate an orchestral double bass pizzicato articulation, and the piano soloist should balance these octave progressions following the long note of melody to achieve the polyphonic dialogue effect. The right hand not only maintains the note values between the melody and inner voices, but also plays a legato outline soprano voice with fingers 3, 4, 5 to create a big lyrical phrase.



Figure 5.20. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 180–83.

The narrative lyrical soprano melody and orchestral voices subsequently broaden the musical register and rhythm as in the traditional classical ballad music in strophic form. It is necessary to use the damper pedal to hold the full value of the bottom harmony root notes, which clarify the harmonic progression. The three fascinating ornaments of the soprano and following popularized modulating chords could make a more swinging motion with a *rubato* tempo to end the last slow lyrical section.

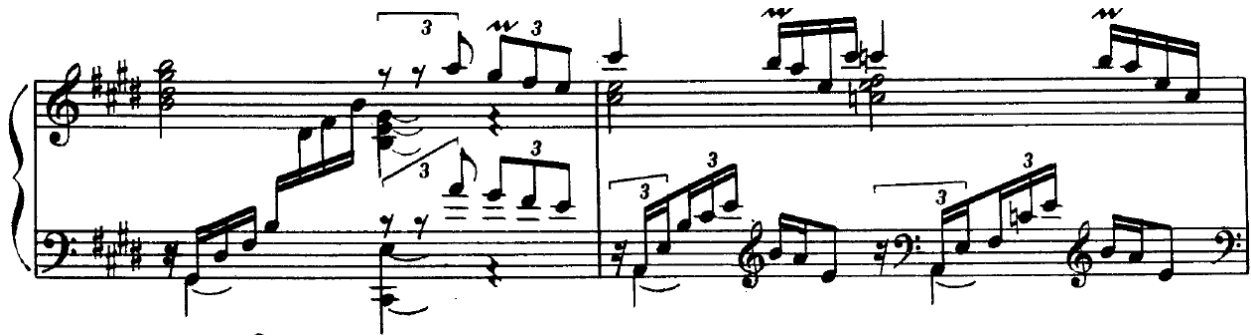


Figure 5.21. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 191-92.

Kapustin applies a quick chromatic transition between the lyrical variation and the fast virtuosic variation, which accelerates from a descending G Major 7th arpeggio to a G half-diminished 7th staccato crispy chord. The final virtuosic section consists of two rapid variations in the same manner. This virtuosic variation starts with a powerful unison in both hands and imitates the big-band tradition where all players encourage each other before playing a show-off section.



Figure 5.22. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 191-92.

The left-hand accompaniment bass strums the quarter notes sustaining a steady blues walking movement. The two-hands unison passage shows up again in the middle section, and then the left-hand voice shifts to a stride pattern with alternating single bass notes and chords.

The right hand maintains a rapid flowing passage with successive eighth notes in a variety of scales, including blues, chromatic, pentatonic, and tonal. Many of the fast-running passages end with a crisp accent, then separate each motive by a brief rest. It is recommended that the pianist keep a non-legato touch and show straightforward and even musical quality in this variation.



Figure 5.23. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 214–26.

The final variation keeps the exciting character of the prior section and reduces the number of breaths to extend the phrase length to a compound eight measures. The right hand's long and quick running passage imitates a brass solo instrumental showcase and has a dramatic stage effect, and it is also a great challenge for holding a long breath. The classical pianist needs

to discover their suitable fingering in these multiple scale combinations and practice in a slow tempo to accommodate fingering orders that are not commonly used in classical music.



Figure 5.24. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 235–42.

Kapustin repeats the Lithuanian thematic motive twice in the brief final coda section. The left hand plays a vertical bass drum steady progression accompaniment to the end. The two hands span a register range of up to five octaves. Kapustin proficiently applies the full range of the piano to imitate the diverse instrumentation of the jazz big band in this piece.



Figure 5.25. Nikolai Kapustin, *Variations*, op. 41, mm. 264–74.

Chapter Six: *Three Etudes*, Op. 67

The French word “étude” is interpreted as “study” in English and is widely adopted for short pieces whose principal aim is the development or exploitation of a musical performance technique.¹ Early etude pieces were mainly aimed at piano students as technique practice materials. The most recognizable composers are Muzio Clementi and Carl Czerny, who composed a large number of pedagogic pieces for piano, such as their well-known collections *Gradus ad Parnassum* (*Steps to Mount Parnassus*), composed by Clementi in 1817–26 and *Nouveau Gradus ad Parnassum* by Czerny in 1854. Clementi’s comprehensive piano work consists of one hundred finger exercises addressing many aspects of technical challenges in piano performance.

Carl Czerny also composed numerous piano etudes that establish a well-defined curriculum to develop the student’s technique step-by-step according to the different levels of etude collections. The collection of Czerny etudes are the most common finger practice pieces used by Chinese students, and the major etude collections for the program includes op. 599, 849, 299, and 740, the order being from beginner to advanced level, respectively.

In the nineteenth century, the Etude genre gradually became an integral part of the piano recital repertoire to show off the virtuosity of the piano soloist. The rapid popularity of the etude

¹ “Etude (Fr.),” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed August 4, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09062>.

from the early nineteenth century until the twentieth century reflected the flourishing of the solo piano performance market. Frédéric Chopin, a remarkable composer of the Romantic period who completed twenty-seven etudes displaying great virtuosity, including twelve each in op. 10 and op. 25, which were extensively performed and another three etudes without opus number that also gradually became popular in public performance. Chopin addressed a specific technique development goal for each etude, e.g., black keys (op. 10, no. 5), parallel sixths (op. 25, no. 8), and octaves (op. 25, no. 10). Chopin not only included the finger exercise feature of the etudes of the early period, but infused more personal characters to allow the listeners to enjoy the pianistic interpretation of the soloist. “Chopin’s etudes are significant artistic content among the first with significant artistic content and as such were often played in concert, inaugurating the genre of the *concert etude*.”² Chopin’s stylistic innovation of the concert etude profoundly influenced subsequent composers, including Kapustin’s *Three etudes*, op. 67.

Kapustin’s etudes follow the tradition of the nineteenth-century concert etude. His etudes were influenced by Romantic composers and reveal not only a remarkable virtuosity of technique, as heard in those examples by Frédéric Chopin and Franz Liszt, but also national content and the heavy musical texture forecasting Russian etude composers like Sergei Rachmaninoff and Alexander Scriabin.

Kapustin composed five sets of concert etudes utilizing a mixture of virtuosic classical etude technique and jazz musical language. These etudes were completed during two periods in his piano compositional journey. There are three sets of etudes composed in the first decade of his compositions for piano, which include *The Eight Concert Etudes*, op. 40 (1984), *Three Etudes*, op. 67 (1991), and *Five Etudes in Different Intervals*, op. 68 (1992). The other two

² J. Peter Burkholder et al., *A History of Western Music*, 9th edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 614.

collections of etudes were completed in his later years when he once again became passionate about recording, including the *Two Etude-Like Trinkets for Piano*, op. 122 (2004), and *Etude Courte mais Transcendante pour piano*, op. 149 (2013). Kapustin performed *Two Etude-like Trinkets*, op. 122, on his CD *Kapustin Returns* (Nippon Acoustic Records [NAR]) in 2008.

Kapustin wrote the *Three Etudes*, op. 67, in 1992, including no. 1 *Glissandi*, no. 2 *Ripetizione*, and no. 3 *Grappole*. In the same year, Kapustin completed another major piano work, *Ten Inventions*, op. 73, utilizing the classical tradition of polyphonic music textures. Kapustin titles his concert etudes so that the piano soloist has a clear indication of the technical difficulties in each, with a well-defined, specific training purpose.

Kapustin's *Eight Concert Etudes* is the most well-known of the five sets and is discussed in many dissertations, music reviews, and public performance videos. However, *Three Etudes*, op. 67, presents more virtuosic effects with difficult techniques. Because of the independent musical character of each etude, the piano performer could choose one single etude as a beginning or encore piece. According to the summary in the *Schott Music* edition of these three etudes:

In some respects, these pieces follow in the traditions of Liszt, Lyapunov and others; but here again the music is infused with a vivacious jazz ebullience. As exercises, they focus on, respectively, glissandi, rapidly repeating notes, and the lightning-fast realization of extended jazz chords.³

The first etude was titled "Glissandi," which has a free swing character in the jazz idiom, and multiple types of glissando passages are used in each phrase. The second etude is titled "Ripetizione." In this etude, the right hand plays repetitive, pulsing sixteenth notes throughout the entire piece. The left hand is arranged in a complicated rhythm, with freely scattered

³ "Exploring the Piano Music of Nikolai Kapustin," *Schott Music*, 2019, accessed August 3, 2020, <https://pianodao.com/2019/07/26/exploring-the-piano-music-of-nikolai-kapustin/>.

materials. The third etude, “Grappole,” features a Russian folk-dance character with many of powerful chord clusters. Kapustin titles this piece with the chords in the appearance of grapes.

1. Glissandi

The first etude features a descriptive title with the French word “Glissandi,” which is equivalent to the Italian term *glissando*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *glissando* is “a slurring or sliding effect produced by a musical instrument.”⁴ This etude contains five types of the glissando: white-key glissandos, black-key glissandos, black-and-white key glissandos, two-hand glissandos, and octave glissandos.

The first etude features the relaxed swinging movement of the jazz idiom. The glissando passages serve as the virtuosic extension of the melody throughout the entire piece. The pianist needs to keep the melodic progression as complete as possible when the glissando passages join in. Kapustin wrote the tempo marking as “Very slow but with a beat,” which reminds the pianist to demonstrate free swing while maintaining the steady pulse of the tempo. On the other hand, all destination notes of the glissando passages mark the beat, which will help the pianist keep time.

The first glissando passage appears in the second measure, with the first note of the glissando overlapping the prior long notes. The execution of the glissando needs to emphasize this prior long note, and Kapustin marks most of these long notes with an accent. The glissando passage is an extension of this long note. The piano player should avoid over-depressing the glissando note and use the sostenuto pedal to hold this long melodic note.

⁴ “Glissando, n.,” *OED Online*, August 2020, accessed August 6, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/78985.

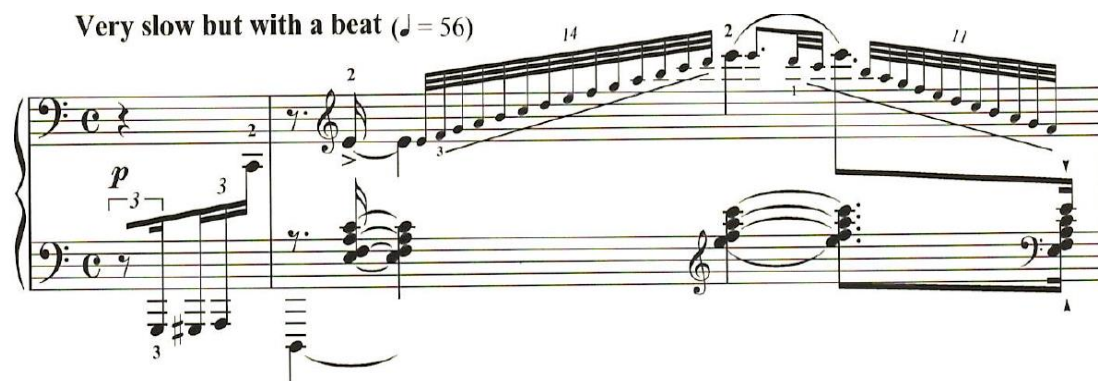


Figure 6.1. Nikolai Kapustin, *Three Etudes*, op. 67, no. 1, mm. 1–2.

The black-key glissando was used extensively in the twentieth century because it fulfills the pentatonic harmonic demands of impressionistic and classical-jazz composers. The first of the five black-key glissandos in the etude appears in the fifth measure. When executing a black-key glissando, the pianist should attempt to increase the surface of finger contact with the black keys to allow for a smoother touch of the keys with multiple fingers. The pianist also needs to pay attention to maintain enough height to prevent the uneven black keys from scratching the skin around the nails.

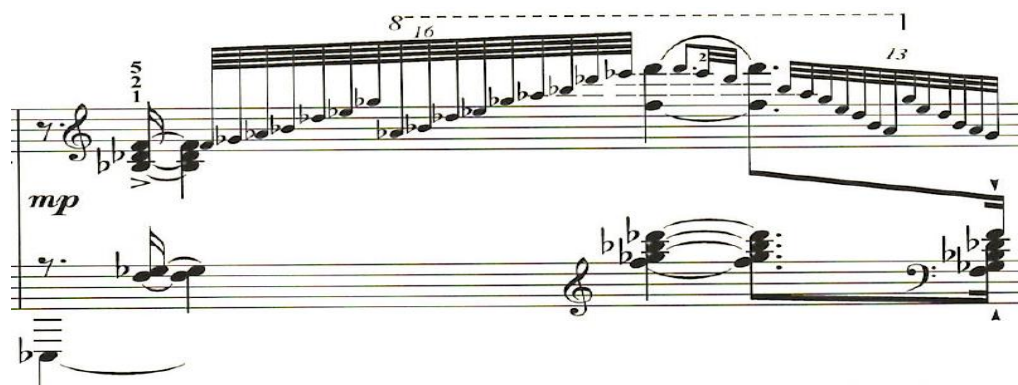


Figure 6.2. Nikolai Kapustin, *Three Etudes*, op. 67, no. 1, m. 5.

Kapustin adds a particular type of combination of the black-and-white glissando at the end of the etude in measure 36. This type of glissando developed in the twentieth century to achieve a richer harmonic effect, such as chromatic and atonal dissonant intervals.

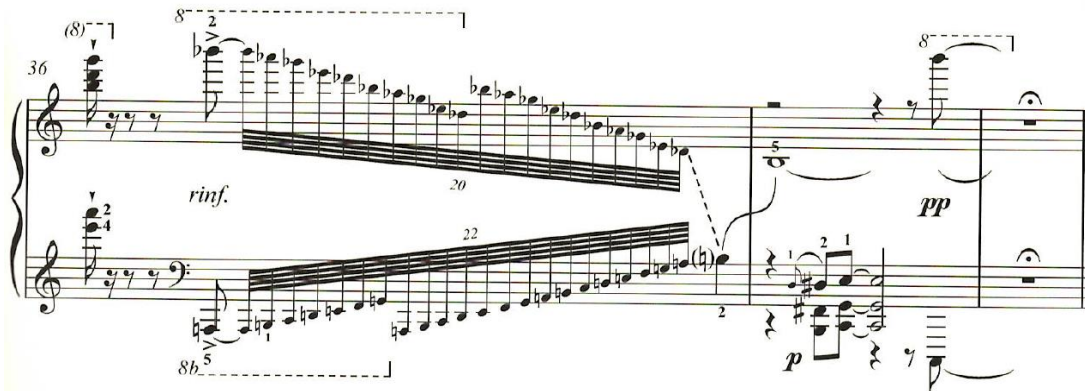


Figure 6.3. Nikolai Kapustin, *Three Etudes*, op. 67, no. 1, m. 36.

The only octave glissando in this etude appears in measure 8. According to Shuennchin Lin's doctoral dissertation, "The Use of the Glissando in Piano Solo and Concerto Compositions from Domenico Scarlatti to George Crumb," on the frequency of octave glissando usage in piano literature, no octave glissandos are used in the piano etude genre.⁵

The octave glissando takes a tremendous amount of energy and endurance to perform each time. In Romantic virtuosic concert etudes, it is evident that the application of the octave glissando does not have enough practical value in performance. The concert etude needs to simplify pianistic style while keeping the high-quality audible effect of virtuosity. Although the music score notates an octave glissando in the right hand, the pianist should use the sostenuto

⁵ Shuennchin Lin, "The Use of the Glissando in Piano Solo and Concerto Compositions from Domenico Scarlatti to George Crumb" (DMA diss., The University of Arizona, 1997), 118.

pedal to hold the left-hand *sforzando* octave until the end of the measure. Meanwhile, the left hand shifts to the lower note of the right hand's octave glissando in the treble clef.

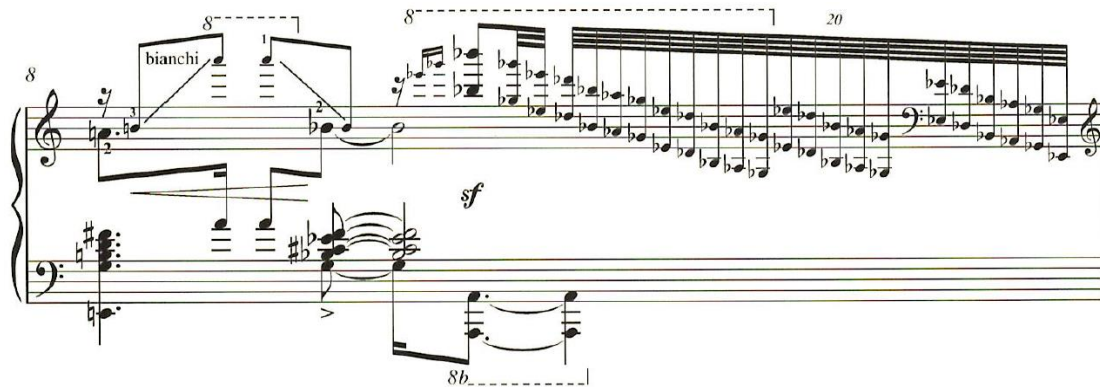


Figure 6.4. Nikolai Kapustin, *Three Etudes*, op. 67, no.1, m. 8.

2. Ripeizione

The title of the second etude is “Ripeizione” in Italian, which translates to repetition. It is necessary to introduce the historical development of the modern piano to better understand “repetition” in piano performance. The piano’s “action” is the result of the impulse of the fingers on the keys, which communicates to the hammers to strike the strings.⁶ Sebastian Erard innovated the earlier single action keyboard and invented the first grand pianoforte with double action, which is also called “double escapement.” The benefit of the double escapement action is

⁶ “Piano Action, n.,” *OED Online*, 2020, accessed July 28, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/243745.

that it allows the pianist to play faster repetitions. Fingers can perform the next keystroke without waiting for the key to be completely reset back to its resting position.

This concert etude keeps utilizing continuous fast repetition with the *Allegro assai* tempo marking. The right-hand repetitions include several types of groupings in sixteenth notes, such as triplets, two-note slurs, four-note repetitions. The left-hand pizzicato motive is set in an irregular rhythm, and the coordination of two-hand playing within a pulse becomes the most challenging technical aspect of this etude.

The sonority of the entire etude requires a relatively light touch. It is quite hard to maintain the repetition motives with an even tone quality with a quiet dynamic marking. It is recommended that the pianist change the common keystroke area from the middle of the keys; the fingers should slide down to the outer edge of the keys rather than repeat on the inward part of the keys to allow them to reset quickly. This performance method, like the double action of the piano, makes the fingers complete each keystroke with only a downward light plucking movement, and the next finger can execute the next keystroke without waiting for the prior finger to lift from the key.

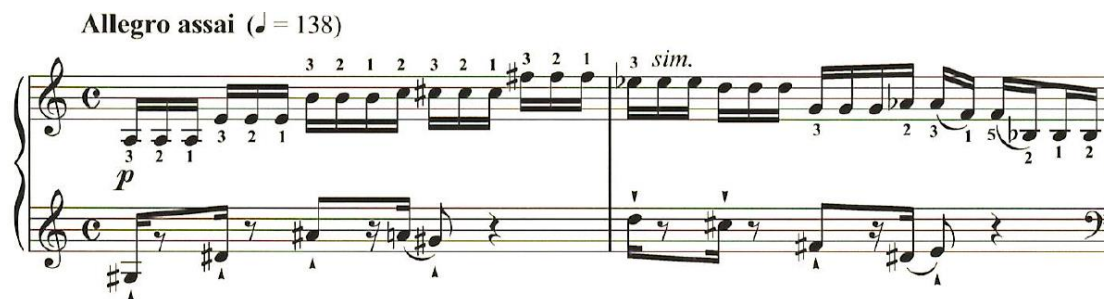


Figure 6.5. Nikolai Kapustin, *Three Etudes*, op. 67, no. 2, mm. 1–2.

A double note is added as a polyphonic melody to the passage of the repetitive notes of the right hand in measures 17–18. In order to play *subito piano*, the pianist must minimize their touch to perform this intricate repetition pattern. Each of the double notes represents an outline voice that should be played more solidly with the fingers standing on the keys by adjusting wrist height.

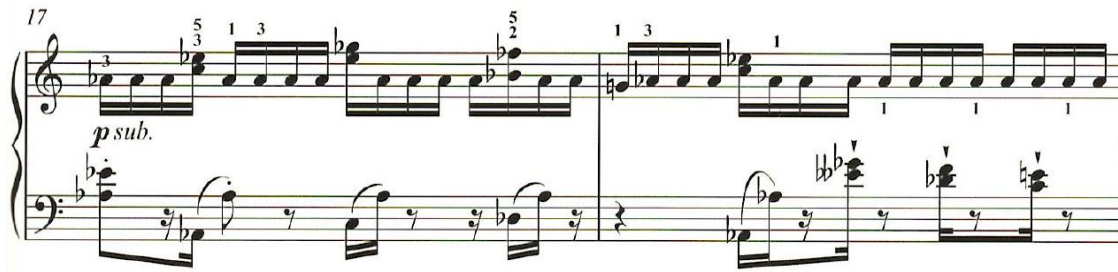


Figure 6.6. Nikolai Kapustin, *Three Etudes*, op. 67, no. 2, mm. 17–18.

3. Grappole

Kapustin titled the third etude “Grappole,” which means a bunch of grapes. Kapustin describes the shape of the tone cluster as a bunch of grapes, which is reflected in the title of this etude. A tone cluster is defined as “A group of adjacent notes sounding simultaneously.” Keyboard instruments are particularly well-suited to cluster playing, as they can play many notes at the same time with the fist, palm, or forearm.⁷

In performing a tone cluster, the piano player should maintain firm palm support to allow many notes to sound at the same time. The solo pianist also needs to consider the smooth connection in each chord cluster and to point out the outline voice contours. Both hands should

⁷ “Cluster,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed September 10, 2020, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.05992>.

lean toward the relatively weak fingers of four and the pinky to add extra weight to emphasize the outline notes. The pianist should use the pedal to release the inner voice notes early, which allows the fourth and fifth fingers more freedom to play the legato articulation of the melody voice.



Figure 6.7. Nikolai Kapustin, *Three Etudes*, op. 67, no. 3, mm. 1–2.

The cluster chord as a typical jazz harmonic pattern contributes a unique Russia folk tune atmosphere to this etude.

In these three concert Etudes, op. 67, Kapustin preserves the pedagogical demands of the classical etude to address different types of pianistic techniques, but also applies the expressive musicianship of the jazz idiom in a virtuosic performance.⁸

⁸ Yangjing Gu, “A Pedagogical Guide to Kapustin’s Eight Concert Etudes, Op. 40” (DMA diss., West Virginia University, 2019), 22.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Kapustin's music is not simply a blending of two styles, but the creation of an entirely new musical language that encompasses unlimited musical ideas, from the harmonic chord progressions of J. S. Bach in the Baroque period to the French impressionistic diatonic scales of Ravel, and also popular jazz styles from all periods. Kapustin never received systematic instruction in jazz composition from the classical music institutions where he studied. When he first heard a jazz performance on the Voice of America in a radio broadcast, he became fascinated by the sexy swinging rhythms of jazz music, as did other young people of the early twentieth century when jazz spread to the European continent. Kapustin's extensive performance experience allowed him to integrate jazz elements into the classical music repertoire sensitively. Nikolai Kapustin's music has gained extensive international acceptance by its fresh musical expression that captures the features of the three major musical prosperous regions, such as the popular jazz idiom of America, the large-scale sophisticated classical music forms of Europe, and Russian composer's virtuosic performance technique.

In recent years, Kapustin's solo piano works have gained momentum as a viable repertoire in the international competition circuit. The compositions are relatively uncharted territory in performance and interpretation. Owing to the compositions' lively rhythmic characteristics, virtuosity, and immediate appeal, Kapustin works have been effective in helping young competitors identify themselves; examples given are Yeol Eum Son won the 2nd place and performed the *Variations*, Op. 41 on the 14th International Tchaikovsky Competition in 2011,

Claire Huangci received Jury Discretionary Award and played the first etude from *Eight Concert Etudes*, Op. 40 on the 14th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2013,¹ and Xiaoyu Liu performed *Variations*, op. 41, at the Arthur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition as a finalist. The enhanced visibility of the compositions in the arena of the highest functioning echelon of performers, and the interest in his music in music academia, I hope that these compositions will become a canon in the piano repertoire. The music is certainly worthy of taking place amongst the most revered of compositions by and for the classically trained pianist. The international piano competition repertoire is a reference point for professional piano players to choose their music. I firmly believe that Kapustin's compositions will soon become a canon in the piano repertoire with its fresh sonority colors and challenging technical virtuoso features.

¹ Yana Tyulkova. *Conversations with Nikolai Kapustin*. Mainz: Schott Music, 2019, 419.

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Appendix A: Nikolai Kapustin's Solo Piano Works

Year	Work	Opus
1976	Daybreak	26
1984	Suite in the Old Style	28
1984	Piano Sonata No. 1	39
1984	Eight Concert Etudes	40
1984	Variations	41
1985	Motive Force	45
1986	Big Band Sounds	46
1987	Contemplation	47
1988	Twenty-Four Preludes	53
1989	Piano Sonata No. 2	54
1990	Piano Sonata No. 3	55
1990	Andante	58
1991	Ten Bagatelles	59
1991	Piano Sonata No. 4	60
1991	Piano Sonata No. 5	61
1991	Piano Sonata No. 6	62
1991	Piano Sonata No. 7	64

1991	Berceuse	65
1991	Three Impromptus	66
1991	Three Etudes	67
1992	Five Etudes in Different Intervals	68
1992	Capriccio	71
1993	Ten Inventions	73
1994	Humoresque	75
1995	Piano Sonata No. 8	77
1995	Piano Sonata No. 9	78
1996	Theme & Variations	80
1997	Piano Sonata No. 10	81
1997	24 Preludes & Fugues	82
1997	Impromptu	83
1998	Seven Polyphonic Pieces for the Left Hand	87
1999	Suite	92
1999	Ballad	94
1999	Scherzo	95
2000	Sonatina	100
2000	Piano Sonata No. 11	101
2000	Piano Sonata No. 12	102
2003	Paraphrase on a Theme	108
2003	By Paul Dvoyrin There Is Something Behind That	109
2003	Piano Sonata No. 13	110

2003	Gingerbread Man	111
2003	The End of the Rainbow	112
2003	Wheel of Fortune	113
2003	No Stop Signs	114
2003	Fantasia	115
2003	Rondoletto	116
2003	Spice Island	117
2003	Paraphrase on Ary Barroso's "Aquarela do Brasil"	118
2004	Nothing to Lose	119
2004	Piano Sonata No. 14	120
2004	Vanity of Vanities	121
2004	Two Etude-Like Trinkets	122
2004	Paraphrase on Kenny Dorham's "Blue Bossa"	123
2005	Piano Sonata No. 15	127
2006	Introduction and Rondo	128
2006	Countermove	130
2006	Piano Sonata No. 16	131
2007	Six Little Pieces	133
2008	Piano Sonata No. 17	134
2008	Piano Sonata No. 18	135
2009	Good Intention	137
2009	Sleight of Hand	138
2009	Holy Cow	139

2009	Freeway	140
2011	Piano Sonata No. 19	143
2011	Piano Sonata No. 20	144
2013	Dialogue for solo piano	148
2013	Etude Courte mais Transcendante pour piano	149
2013	Nobody Is perfect	151
2013	A Pianist in Jeopardy	152
2013	Wandering	153
2015	Curiosity	157
2015	Rainy weather	159
2015	Something Else for Piano Solo	160