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Sonata No.1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80,by Sergei Prokofiev: A Guide to Interpretation

Boris Blagoev

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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SONATA NO. 1 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 80, BY SERGEI PROKOFIEV:
A GUIDE TO INTERPRETATION

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
in
The School of Music

by
Boris Blagoev
B. M., “P. Vladigerov” Conservatory of Music, Sofia, Bulgaria, 2002
M. M., Louisiana State University, 2006
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ABSTRACT

Sergei Prokofiev was an extremely prolific composer whose career brought him success throughout Europe and the U. S. as well as Russia and the Soviet Union. He wrote for nearly every genre, and his most popular works today include operas, ballets, symphonies, and concertos. As a pianist, most of the concertos and sonatas that Prokofiev wrote were for the piano. However, his contributions to the violin repertoire are significant.

Prokofiev wrote two concertos and two sonatas for solo violin. Of these, *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80* is unique for many reasons. The piece took Prokofiev eight years to finish, an unusually long amount of time for a composer who normally wrote quickly. He began the piece in 1938, shortly after permanently returning to the Soviet Union. At this point, Prokofiev's career and popularity seemed to be at its peak. By the time the piece was premiered in 1946, Prokofiev had been subject to Soviet censorship and travel restrictions.

In addition, the overall tone of the sonata is significantly harsher and more melancholic than Prokofiev's other works for violin. These characteristics give the sonata unparalleled potential for meaningful individual interpretations. It is the interpretation of this piece that is of primary focus in this instance. Several factors regarding the origins, context, and schools of interpretation are considered. These factors include details of Prokofiev's biography leading up to *Op. 80's* completion, a brief history of *Op. 80's* composition and early reception, a formal analysis of the piece, a review of available recordings, interviews of professors at major conservatories in the U. S., and a comparison of available editions.

INTRODUCTION

From the first time that I studied and performed Prokofiev's Sonata *Op. 80*, I felt that Prokofiev's composition has great potential as a dramatic and highly personal piece. Over the years, it has become one of my favorite pieces. I find that each time I approach *Op. 80*, there are new dimensions of the piece to be explored and interpreted. It is the depth of this piece which led me to choose it as a topic for my lecture-recital.

Developing an interpretation of any musical piece is a complex process. The performer must consider every possible factor relating to a piece's history, as well as past and present conventions of performance. Any informed interpretation of music must begin with a basic understanding of the historical context which led to the composition of the piece. An historical perspective of Prokofiev's life and music is especially important in the case of *Op. 80*, as each movement relates directly to some element of Prokofiev's past. Because there have already been significant scholarly contributions made to this area of study, these chapters were largely factual in nature. My interpretation of these chapters consists mainly of the selection of material which applies specifically to understanding Prokofiev's motivations as a composer, including the historical events Prokofiev experienced, basic personality characteristics, and the events in Prokofiev's career which led to the composition of *Op. 80*.

A basic understanding of the structure of a piece is absolutely necessary to its proper interpretation. Because no comprehensive formal analysis of *Op. 80* has been published, I have provided my own. In addition, I have discussed several stylistic elements which are characteristic of Prokofiev's music and explained how each of them applies to *Op. 80*.

It is generally acknowledged within academic circles that the general level of musicianship has increased over the past decades. There are several reasons for this shift. One of the most important developments which have occurred in the twentieth century is the development and refinement of the music recording industry. There have always been great musicians, however their interpretations were mainly expressed in public performances and teaching. Throughout the twentieth-century, as the art of recording was pioneered and refined, students were given an additional opportunity to learn about famous virtuosi and interpreters. Well into the 1970s and 1980s, however, the privilege of recording was reserved for a small number of musical elite, and recordings were often difficult to find. Only in the past generation have a large number of musical recordings become easily accessible.

Although musical interpretation is often informed by recordings, another important factor is the input of major professors and pedagogues. To examine the way in which young musicians are guided to form interpretations of Prokofiev's music, I have interviewed professors from several major conservatories in the U. S. I have reprinted interviews with Professor Kevork Mardirossian of Indiana University and Professor Oleh Krysa of the Eastman School of Music, as I believe their perspectives provide insight into alternative approaches to the piece as well as first-hand accounts of how ideas about *Op. 80* have changed over the decades.

The final chapter of this document will focus on the different editions of *Op. 80* which are in circulation today. A common mistake made by students is to assume that all editions are basically the same. In fact, a survey of editions reveals a variety of expressive and technical options, including phrase markings, tempo indications, and notated bowings and fingerings. Study of multiple editions is also necessary because it allows the musician to detect simple printing errors.

CHAPTER 1: SERGEI PROKOFIEV: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

This short biography will describe the events which led to the development of Prokofiev's compositional style, as well as factors which led to his return to Soviet Russia, where he began and concluded his *Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 80*. The following chapter describes the composer's education in Russia, his professional life in Paris and the United States, and his return to the Soviet Union. Throughout Prokofiev's education and early professional career in St. Petersburg and Moscow, he was considered a musician and composer of exceptional ability and vision. His compositional language was considered ahead of his time, and even caused some issues with his professors in the Conservatory, whom he thought of as old fashioned.

After developing connections to the music scene in Russia, Prokofiev traveled to Paris, where the public considered his music backward and old fashioned compared with the Parisian avant-garde. Prokofiev began to work with Sergei Diaghilev, who had a reputation for using Russian exoticism with his Ballet Russes. Despite becoming a favorite of Diaghilev, Prokofiev had limited success in Paris, and was constantly compared to the more successful and popular Stravinsky.

In contrast, Prokofiev's tours to the USSR at this time were warmly received by the people, critics, and the government. Considering Prokofiev's mixed success of in the West, returning to Russia seemed to be a favorable option for the composer. Prokofiev began composition of *Op. 80* shortly after his return to Russia. At the time, he was given a great deal of freedom, and still had the ability to travel back to the West to perform and meet with colleagues whenever he chose. Furthermore, he was assured that the censorship which had already begun to affect the performances of Shostakovich's compositions would not trouble him.

A few years later, his international travel visa was revoked when he received several offers from the West. Over time, more of his freedoms were restricted and Prokofiev became subject to the politics of the Soviet bureaucracy. Furthermore, the composer's health began to fail in the following years, starting with a series of strokes after World War II. This, among other factors, led to the late completion of the sonata.

1.1 Formal Education and Early Career (1891-1918)

A central aspect of Prokofiev's personality was his self-confidence. From a very early age, his music contained several of the unique characteristics which would define his mature style. The fact that Prokofiev maintained these unusual tendencies throughout his life was only possible because of the nurturing environment he enjoyed throughout his early years. As we shall see, Prokofiev's mother was an especially important figure in his life. Her intense devotion to his education resulted in his admittance to the St. Petersburg Conservatory, as well as directly leading to his establishment of connections in Western Europe.

Prokofiev was born in 1891 on the rural estate of Sontsovka, located in present-day Ukraine. He was the only one of his parents' children to survive childhood; his two older sisters had died as babies.¹ As a result, Prokofiev's parents placed all their energy into raising him. As his parents were well-educated, it was the focus on education for their son which became the most important element of Prokofiev's childhood. From an early age, governesses from France and Germany were brought to the family estate to teach Prokofiev foreign languages.

Prokofiev's father, Sergei Alekseyevich Prokofiev, who had been educated in Moscow, taught

¹ Dorothea Redpenning, "Sergei Prokofiev," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/22402>.

Sergei mathematics, geography, history, and Russian throughout his years of formal education.²

Although Prokofiev made friends with some of the local peasant children, it was always very clear to him that he was different than the other children, both through his class and his education.³ This attitude of superiority would become a central aspect of Prokofiev's personality.

His mother, Maria Grigorevna Zhitkova, was a strong influence in Prokofiev's early studies and life. As an amateur pianist herself, Maria Grigorevna began teaching Prokofiev to play the piano at a young age. In the early years, she avoided the use of scales and arpeggios in favor of short pieces, which Prokofiev found more interesting.⁴ This attitude toward scales and arpeggios would later be reflected in Prokofiev's own compositional style. He shows a distinct preference for scales over arpeggios, and uses both elements as filler material. Because Prokofiev was exposed to classical music so early in life, he was always most comfortable expressing himself musically. His early attempts to compose music began at the age of four. Although Prokofiev's first compositions were limited to the piano, by 1900 he was attempting to compose opera and chamber music.⁵

The decision was finally made to send Prokofiev to St. Petersburg after he was introduced to Aleksander Konstantinovich Glazunov, who strongly campaigned with Maria Grigorevna to bring Prokofiev to study with him.⁶ Instead of leaving her young son alone in a new city, Maria Grigorevna moved with Sergei to St. Petersburg so that she could supervise his

² Sergei Prokofiev, *Prokofiev by Prokofiev: A Composer's Memoir*, Guy Daniels, trans., David H. Appel, ed., (Doubleday, 1979), 16, 34.

³ David Nice, *Prokofiev: from Russia to the West, 1891-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 7.

⁴ Harlow Robinson, *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 12.

⁵ Prokofiev (1979), 35.

⁶ S. Shlifstein, ed., *Sergei Prokofiev: Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, Rose Prokofieva, trans., (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.) 21, 87.

studies. Her husband stayed in Sontsovka, and for the rest of their lives, Sergei Prokofiev, Maria Grigorevna, and Sergey Alekseevich Prokofiev would be together only during holidays and summers.⁷

Prokofiev was 13 years old when he entered the Conservatory in August of 1904, and was attending school during a chaotic time. The revolutionary movement which would eventually end tsarist Russia and result in the Soviet Union had already begun, and was becoming more powerful. In the fall of 1905, when Prokofiev and his mother returned to St. Petersburg from summer vacation, they found that the entire student body of the Conservatory was on strike. In addition, most of the music faculty had either resigned or been fired.⁸ Maria Grigorevna told her son that they had come to St. Petersburg to study and not to become entangled in politics. Mother and son did their best to continue their lives without acknowledging the charged political climate.⁹ Because his teachers were no longer teaching at the Conservatory, Prokofiev took lessons in their homes. Classes were restored the following spring, when Glazunov was appointed Conservatory Director and Rimsky-Korsakov and Lyadov were rehired to teach orchestration and composition.¹⁰ Even though they tried to remain neutral, Sergei and his mother were living through an historic event. This personal experience was to become a theme in Prokofiev's later life. Despite his attempts to avoid involvement in politics, he became associated with many of the most dramatic political changes of Soviet culture.

When he returned to the classroom in 1906, Prokofiev began to gain a reputation as a difficult student. He was accustomed to receiving the full attention of his instructors, as well as respect and consideration of his musical ideas. Of course, these conditions were impossible to

⁷Nice (2003), 70.

⁸Robinson (1987), 43.

⁹Prokofiev (1979), 128.

¹⁰Ibid., 181.

achieve in a classroom setting. Prokofiev was quick to think of his teachers as either lazy (Lyadov, his first composition professor) or uninspiring and inflexible (Rimsky-Korsakov).¹¹ The professors at the Conservatory were conservative in their tastes, and Prokofiev's writing, even at such an early stage, was highly unusual in comparison with current trends in composition. At first, his professors tried to correct Prokofiev's eccentricity. Eventually, they gave up, considering Prokofiev a lost cause.¹²

Prokofiev's professional career began while he was still a student at the Conservatory. In early 1908, he was introduced to the organizers of a concert series called "Evenings of Contemporary Music." This organization featured avant-garde composers, such as Schoenberg, Debussy, Ravel, Dukas, d'Indy and a young Stravinsky.¹³ The avant-garde circle was to become very important to Prokofiev's early career. Since Prokofiev had entered the Conservatory, his compositions had received constant criticism. For the first time, the "Evenings of Contemporary Music" society provided praise and encouragement. In the summer of 1909, Prokofiev's father became ill. He was diagnosed with liver cancer, and died in 1910.¹⁴ Prokofiev barely mentioned the event in his diaries and letters. The only sign of any reaction was the composition of "Autumn," a symphonic sketch for small orchestra inspired by Rachmaninoff's "gloomy" *Isle of the Dead* and Second Symphony which is written in a somewhat darker style than Prokofiev's other works of the period. The easiest explanation for this cold reaction is that Prokofiev was not affected so much by his father's death because they had never been close. However, the death of

¹¹Robinson (1987), 47.

¹² In the Conservatory, it was said that Prokofiev was "unable to hear two right notes in succession...because his piano at home is out of tune and he's gotten used to it." Ibid., 57.

¹³ Robinson (1987), 57.

¹⁴ Nice (2003), 70.

Prokofiev's mother fifteen years later would produce a similar reaction.¹⁵ Throughout his life, Prokofiev fails to comment in any of his diaries or letters on death. Instead, he prefers to discuss the technical details of his premieres, compositional process, and the careers of his colleagues. This attitude is closely connected to his adopted attitude toward politics; just as he was instructed to avoid entanglement in politics and focus on his studies, he refuses to allow personal tragedy of any kind to interfere with his career.

Other events helped to establish and promote Prokofiev's career, such as the graduation present given to him by his mother. When he completed his studies at the Conservatory, Maria Grigorevna arranged a trip through Western Europe for her son. On this trip, Prokofiev was in Western Europe on the day of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria's assassination.¹⁶ True to form, however, Prokofiev had little profound reaction to the event; it is marked in his diaries, but he did not allow the event to affect him personally.

Less than a week after the assassination, on July 3rd, Prokofiev was introduced through his connections with the "Evenings of Contemporary Music" to Sergei Diaghilev, who was at the height of his career as the director of the Ballet Russes. Upon hearing a few of Prokofiev's compositions, Diaghilev was impressed. The two agreed to produce a ballet together and planned to meet the following summer. The ballet, which was eventually named *Alla and Lolly*, was to be based on Russian mythology, a popular theme after Stravinsky's *Firebird* and *Rite of Spring*.¹⁷

To Prokofiev, this must have seemed like the opportunity of a lifetime. However, the young composer did not understand that the tastes of European audiences were quite different

¹⁵ Robinson (1987), 75.

¹⁶ Nice (2003), 100.

¹⁷ Robinson (1987), 103.

from the expectations of Russian audiences. Prokofiev had gained the reputation of a rebel in the conservative St. Petersburg Conservatory. However, his compositions were often considered out-of-date by European audiences. After receiving the scenario for Diaghilev's ballet, Prokofiev was only allowed a few months before he was called to Rome to discuss his piece with Diaghilev. He worked quickly, but Diaghilev was disappointed with Prokofiev's writing, and *Alla and Lolly* was abandoned.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Diaghilev arranged a piano concert for Prokofiev in Rome. *Alla and Lolly* would eventually be reworked into Prokofiev's "Scythian Suite," an early example of Prokofiev's recycling of themes.¹⁹

Prokofiev's relationship with Diaghilev was complex. On one hand, Diaghilev's support was extremely important to Prokofiev's career before his return to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Through Diaghilev's influence, Prokofiev received commissions, booked concert tours, and was able to reach a much wider audience. Diaghilev called Prokofiev his "second son," a title which Prokofiev clearly relished.²⁰ On the other hand, Prokofiev never seemed to find the relationship with Diaghilev that Stravinsky enjoyed. Diaghilev disliked many of Prokofiev's compositions, those pieces of which he approved often encountered major delays in production. An example of this is *The Buffoon*. Prokofiev finished the piano score to the ballet in 1915, with a performance planned for May of 1916. Prokofiev planned to meet with Stravinsky and Diaghilev in Italy in 1915 to discuss further revisions of the score, but was not able to leave Russia because of the ongoing war. Diaghilev refused to work on productions without the composer present at all rehearsals, and so progress on the ballet stopped. In addition, the Ballet Russes was in an unstable position, and could not afford to launch many new productions. In 1920, Prokofiev was

¹⁸Gutman (1988), 52.

¹⁹ Robinson (1987): 113.

²⁰Stravinsky was Diaghilev's "first son." Ibid., 109.

finally able to meet with Diaghilev, and the project was renewed. Prokofiev spent the summer of 1920 accommodating Diaghilev's suggested revisions.²¹ The ballet was premiered in 1921 but did not do well due to poor choreography. Leonid Massine, who had been the Ballet Russes' main choreographer, had left the company shortly before *The Buffoon* was ready to be staged. He was replaced by Fyodor Slavinsky, a dancer from the company with no previous experience in choreography. As a result of Slavinsky's unpopular choreography, the Ballet Russes dropped the production after 1922.²² These events are an early example of the administrative problems Prokofiev would experience throughout his career.

1.2 Years Abroad (1918-36)

While Prokofiev had been helped and protected by his mother during his childhood and education, his decision to leave Russia at the time of the 1918 Revolution marked the beginning of his life as a self-sufficient composer and musician. In Russia, the major obstacles to Prokofiev's career had been a result of the unstable political climate of the time. After leaving Russia, Prokofiev found himself struggling with production concerns such as contract negotiations and the constantly changing tastes of European and American audiences. As Prokofiev struggled to build connections outside Russia and please the more demanding European avant-garde audiences, his style often took on an experimental character.

In 1918, Prokofiev had planned his first concert tour of the U. S. and Canada, and was planning to return to Russia within a few months to reunite with his mother, although he was aware of the Revolution and the increasing difficulty of travelling. Prokofiev believed that his mother would be safe in Kislovodsk until his return and that any instability in the Russian

²¹Seroff, 114.

²² Robinson (1987), 163.

government would be settled by the end of his tour.²³ He began his tour in St. Petersburg (at this time renamed Petrograd) to obtain travel papers, and then spent some time in Japan.²⁴

In Japan, Prokofiev had been well-received by both Japanese and European audiences, and he probably expected a similar reaction in the United States. Unfortunately, the musical atmosphere of New York was still growing in sophistication and refinement, and American audiences were not used to experimental harmonies. As a result, audiences were confused by Prokofiev's compositions, and local critics had soon reduced him to a Bolshevik stereotype. In 1906, Scriabin had received the title of a "Cossack Chopin;" in 1918, Prokofiev was named the "new Cossack Chopin."²⁵

The most important result of Prokofiev's first trip to New York was his introduction to Carolina Codina, an intelligent young soprano who was to become Prokofiev's wife. Carolina, or "Lina," as she was known, was the daughter of two singers. Her father, originally from Catalonia, and her mother, from Poland, met in Italy but moved to Madrid before Lina's birth. Lina ultimately spent much of her childhood in Cuba but attended school in Geneva and frequently visited her grandmother in the Caucasus. At the age of 10, Lina moved with her parents to New York.²⁶ As a result of her eclectic upbringing, Lina was fluent in Russian, French, and Spanish and spoke excellent English.²⁷ Her international upbringing made her an ideal partner for Prokofiev, who spent the majority of his career traveling Europe to give concerts and attend rehearsals of his pieces.

²³ Nice(2003), 141; c.f. Robinson (1987), 142.

²⁴ The justification used for allowing Prokofiev's travel abroad was "on matters of art and to improve his health." Nestyev(1960), 159.

²⁵ Nice(2003), 152.

²⁶ Robinson (1987), 146.

²⁷ Harvey Sachs, "'Never Stop Fighting' or Why Lina Prokofiev Never Wrote Her Memoirs," *Three Oranges* 9 (May 2009), <http://www.sprkfv.net/journal/three09/neverstop>.

At the conclusion of his concert schedule in New York, Prokofiev travelled to Chicago, where he met with Cyrus McCormick, Jr.²⁸ Mr. McCormick was a supporter of the arts, and was especially well-connected with financial supporters and administrators of opera companies. Much like he had arranged for Prokofiev's visa Prokofiev to enter the U. S., McCormick was responsible for arranging Prokofiev's concerts in Chicago. These concerts were very well-received, and it is likely that McCormick was at least partially responsible for the 1919 commission by the Chicago Opera Company of *The Love for Three Oranges*. The production of this opera would serve as an early example of the administrative difficulties which would characterize Prokofiev's career. *The Love for Three Oranges* was set to be performed during the 1919-20 opera season. Prokofiev completed the score, only to learn that Cleofonte Campanini, the conductor of the Chicago Opera Company, had died. The opera was postponed indefinitely, and would be reset and cancelled again before its premiere in 1921.²⁹

By 1920, Prokofiev had settled in Western Europe. With Diaghilev's support, Prokofiev was able to find enough work to support himself with a combination of concert tours and commissions. He finally reunited with his mother, who had been evacuated to Constantinople after the Bolshevik rebellion in 1920. They settled in Paris after spending two years living in southern Germany. Lina soon moved in, and spent her time taking care of Maria Grigorevna, who was losing her eyesight and becoming weak. Prokofiev married Lina in 1923 after she became pregnant. All evidence points to a happy family life during their early years of marriage.³⁰

²⁸ Robinson (1987), 132.

²⁹ Ibid., 148, 161.

³⁰ Nice(2003), 198.

In December of 1924, Maria Grigorevna suddenly died of a heart attack.³¹ Prokofiev faced the situation with characteristic silence, but the event could not have been easy for him. It is around this time that Prokofiev deliberately began to change his compositional style, searching for a “new simplicity” in his music. It is difficult to know exactly why he made this decision. He may have simply thought that this was the logical progression of his work. On some level, it may have been a reaction to his mother’s death.³² It is also possible that he was already considering returning to Russia. He had begun to communicate with his old friends in Moscow by this time, and the subject could not have been far from his mind.³³ In any case, his letters and diaries are vague on the subject.

1.3 Return to the Soviet Union (1936-1953)

Prokofiev’s decision to return to the Soviet Union has been one of the most often debated aspects of his biography. At a time when many musicians were trying to leave the Soviet Union, Prokofiev may have been the only Russian to choose to return to his home country. Traditionally, American musicologists have claimed that Prokofiev’s decision was fueled by promises of financial security and popular success, provided at a time when he was often not completely understood by European audiences. Musicologists from Russia and other Eastern European countries have argued that Prokofiev was moved by nostalgia for his native land, and felt guilty for leaving during the Revolution. Interestingly, some Russian scholars have also claimed that Prokofiev was tricked into returning to the Soviet Union, and that he had no prior knowledge or understanding of the darker side of the Communist Regime.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., 207.

³² As discussed earlier in this chapter, Prokofiev went through a brief stylistic change following the death of his father.

³³ Robinson(1987), 199.

³⁴ Morrison (2008), 2.

One of the reasons for this debate is a lack of evidence. Until recently, important documents regarding Prokofiev were kept in separate Russian libraries which did not share a common catalogue database or system. Sensitive materials were often difficult to locate and impossible for anyone, especially Western musicologists, to access.³⁵ This put most biographies at a disadvantage and made biases likely. Furthermore, no personal reflections by Prokofiev are available to indicate whether he felt guilt for leaving the Motherland, or if he had grown to miss Russia during his absence. In his available diaries, he did not discuss his motivations for returning to Russia, and his autobiographies, written while he was living in Russia, were subject to censorship.³⁶

Recently released letters and diaries reveal that, before his reentry to the Soviet Union in 1936, Prokofiev was shielded from the worst aspects of Soviet life. Even his old friend Miaskovsky could bring himself to only hint at Russia's poverty and violence.³⁷ Prokofiev must have known about some of the problems in the Soviet Union, because two of his cousins had been arrested in the years since Stalin came to power. However, there is evidence that Prokofiev believed he would be safe from many of the problems in Soviet society. He was told repeatedly that he would be free to come and go from Russia as he pleased, and that his projects would be produced without any interference.³⁸

At the same time, Prokofiev had never been completely successful in Europe. The French critics often complained that Prokofiev's compositions were outdated, and he was constantly

³⁵ Ibid, ix.

³⁶ Noelle Mann, "Prokofiev's Autobiographical Writings," *Three Oranges* 13 (2007), <http://www.sprkfv.net/journal/three>.

³⁷ Robinson (1987), 199. Miaskovsky's most ambiguous letters were written before Prokofiev's first Soviet tour in 1926; letters written after this period were more negative, but became almost positive and optimistic just before Prokofiev's return to the USSR in 1936.

³⁸ Morrison (2008), 11-13.

compared to Igor Stravinsky, who was more popular with the European music critics and audiences. Meanwhile, performances of Prokofiev's works in the Soviet Union were often very well-received.³⁹ For Prokofiev, the Soviet promise of steady work and state-funded commissions must have been very tempting. In addition, Prokofiev knew that he would be considered the top composer of the USSR upon his arrival. He would not have to compete with Stravinsky, who he knew would not return to Soviet Russia.⁴⁰

Although Prokofiev did not officially relocate to Russia until 1936, the Soviet government began to arrange for his arrival as early as 1925. In the late summer of that year, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the same man who had granted Prokofiev's travel visa in 1918, convinced Josef Stalin that it was in Russia's interest to welcome back its more successful expatriates. He arranged for letters to be sent to Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and the concert pianist Aleksander Borovsky, inviting them to return to the Soviet Union, ensuring amnesty for any past offenses against the government, and promising unlimited international travel visas. Prokofiev was the only one to respond favorably to the invitation, which led to a Soviet tour in early 1927.⁴¹

Prokofiev's 1927 tour of Russia and the Ukraine was extremely successful. His concerts were well-attended and well-reviewed, in contrast to his often controversial concerts in Europe. Several companies also offered to stage Prokofiev's operas, which he had been having difficulty staging in the West.⁴² When he returned to Paris, he was invited to events at the Soviet embassy. Josef Ivan Arens, the editor-in-chief of the French newspaper *Le Journal de Moscou* and an employee of the Soviet embassy, personally prepared future travel papers and offered advice on the best way to prepare for a return to Russia. However, Prokofiev was not ready to move to

³⁹Malko,.

⁴⁰ Claude Samuel, *Prokofiev*, Miriam John, trans., (New York: Grossman, 1971): 101.

⁴¹ Morrison (2008), 6.

⁴² Robinson (1987), 204.

Moscow. Examination of Prokofiev's recently released letters reveals that he was already aware of government phone taps and the mysterious disappearance of Soviet citizens, as well as the arrest of two of Prokofiev's own cousins. However, it is unclear whether Prokofiev realized the extent of these abuses of power in the Soviet Union.⁴³

Prokofiev's second tour of the Soviet Union took place in October and November of 1929. This visit was less successful. He began to plan a production of *Le Pas d'Acier*, a ballet commemorating the new Communist government which had been successful in Paris. However, the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM) found the ballet unsuitable for public performance. Prokofiev was strongly criticized, and his ballet was barred from the Soviet Union. Prokofiev naively associated this rejection with the RAPM. When the RAPM was dissolved and replaced with the Union of Soviet Composers in 1932, he believed his problems with Soviet censorship were over and planned another tour of the Soviet Union.⁴⁴

In 1932, Atovmyan, a music editor and publisher of the Soviet Union, was hired by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to convince several prominent Russian musicians to return to the Soviet Union. Like Lunacharsky in 1925, Atovmyan arranged for letters to be sent to the musicians.⁴⁵ Again, Prokofiev responded the most positively. He was promised an apartment in Moscow and several concerts in the Soviet Union. Prokofiev's third Soviet tour, in late 1932, was even more successful than his first. He was treated as a celebrity, interviewed, and honored at banquets. Prokofiev was particularly touched by the warm reception he received from the Russian masses; he had been worried in the past that he would not be welcomed back to the Soviet Union, but the public was truly welcoming. Atovmyan also made sure to give

⁴³ Morrison (2008), 11.

⁴⁴ Robinson (1987), 239-263.

⁴⁵ Morrison (2008), 191.

Prokofiev his personal attention. He promised Prokofiev Soviet commissions, and continued to write letters to Prokofiev after he returned to Paris. He arranged to send Prokofiev money as incentive to return for another Soviet tour. In addition, Prokofiev was awarded a position of “consultant” professor of composition at the Moscow Conservatory.⁴⁶

Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1934, where he met with the writer Maxim Gorky. 1934 was also the year that the official artistic doctrine of Socialist Realism was developed; this doctrine served as the basis of all judgments about the value of music throughout Stalin’s rule.⁴⁷ With Gorky’s help, Prokofiev formulated and published his own interpretation of Socialist Realism in art. From this point, it was only a matter of time until Prokofiev made his final move to the Soviet Union. The move was further ensured by the influence of Vladimir Potyomkin, the Soviet ambassador to Paris from 1934-1937. Potyomkin repeated the promises that Prokofiev had received in the past: commissions, performances of his works, security, freedom to travel internationally, and an apartment. Potyomkin added new pressure as well: Prokofiev would no longer be allowed to travel to Russia if he remained in Paris. Further, he would lose the commissions for several of his Soviet works if he did not relocate to the Soviet Union.⁴⁸

Prokofiev’s first years in Russia brought him success and freedom as he had been promised. He began writing several pieces for the Soviet government, but also left Russia on concert tours and met with friends in Western Europe and the United States.⁴⁹ Lina, however, soon became concerned about the true nature of the Soviet Union. She, much more than Prokofiev, was recognized as an outsider who, in xenophobic, postwar Russia, was not desirable.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁷ Robinson (1987), 293.

⁴⁸ Morrison (2008), 23-30.

⁴⁹ Robinson (1987), 317, 331, 333.

To some extent, Lina was shielded by her husband's celebrity. However, the authorities were much less polite to her than they were to her husband. As the government controlled all musical contracts, her vocal performances in the Soviet Union became increasingly rare.⁵⁰

In 1938, Lina was arranging to travel to a performance of Prokofiev's compositions when she was informed that her visa had been revoked. Lina found this experience deeply disturbing, and she began to search for a way to permanently leave the country. Prokofiev seemed to have been either indifferent or unsupportive of her struggle. There is no evidence that he tried to help her make travel arrangements at any point.⁵¹ Prokofiev's own international travel visa was suspended in the same year, immediately after his return from a very successful tour of the U. S. At the conclusion of this tour, Prokofiev had been courted by Hollywood as a soundtrack composer. He received several offers, and appears to have seriously considered them.⁵² This may well have been one of the reasons that his passport was cut off.

Prokofiev's marriage to Lina began to fall apart in the summer of 1938, while the couple was vacationing in Kislovodsk. Shortly after the couple's arrival, Prokofiev met Maria Cecilia Abramovna Mendelson or Mira, as she was known. Mira's parents were well-connected to the Soviet government, and Mira, at 24, had entered the Literary School in Moscow and was developing her talents as a translator and poet.⁵³ As most information regarding Prokofiev's romantic life has either been obtained from Mira or Lina, there is very little objective perspective regarding the exact nature of Prokofiev's early relationship to Mira. Lina was apparently aware

⁵⁰ Morrison (2008), 86.

⁵¹ Ibid., 86.

⁵² Ibid., 76.

⁵³ Robinson (1987), 365.

that her husband was spending large amounts of time alone with the younger woman, but tended to dismiss Mira as a harmless admirer, somewhat desperate but of no interest to her husband.⁵⁴

At the time of their initial meeting, Prokofiev was exactly twice as old as Mira. He had already achieved fame and prestige, while she was still completing her studies. There is no record from Prokofiev of an intimate involvement between the two in the year that they met, but even the most forgiving reader must admit that a relationship with Mira had the potential for serving a practical as well as romantic purpose. Although Prokofiev received special treatment from the government as a composer, he was experiencing difficulties with the bureaucracy and began to be viewed more greatly as an outsider. The situation was worsened by his association with Lina, a foreigner who was uncomfortable in Russia. Mira, on the other hand, was a native Russian, the daughter of a well-established family, and by all accounts totally enamored with Prokofiev. As a gifted translator and scholar of literature, Mira could also help Prokofiev find new libretti in a career that was becoming increasingly focused on opera.⁵⁵

In 1941, Prokofiev left his family. For the rest of his life, he continued to financially support Lina and their two children and maintained contact with his sons, but he rarely saw or spoke with Lina. All documented conversations Prokofiev had with her after their separation were formal and short.⁵⁶ He and Mira lived as nomads; the majority of their life together was spent living with Mira's parents, in hotels, and in dachas. This was a completely normal existence for Prokofiev, who had traveled frequently beginning with his childhood visits to St. Petersburg and Moscow. Even the suspension of his international travel visa in 1938 did little to slow Prokofiev's travels within the Soviet Union. Traveling seemed to inspire Prokofiev and

⁵⁴Morrison (2008), 157.

⁵⁵Robinson (1987), 366-386.

⁵⁶Morrison (2008), 160, 468.

provided him to escape bureaucratic responsibilities that enabled him to focus on composition.⁵⁷

Prokofiev's early years with Mira were among his most successful in the Soviet Union. Inspired by his newfound freedom, Prokofiev set to work on *War and Peace*, as well as several smaller projects. Any conflicts Prokofiev had been experiencing with the Soviet Arts Committee were greatly diminished during World War II. In an effort to increase national pride, all Prokofiev's works were praised by the Soviet Arts Committee.⁵⁸ However, once the war ended, Prokofiev's bureaucratic difficulties began to return.

1948 was a difficult year for Prokofiev, but a far worse one for Lina. In January of 1948, after 10 years of separation, Prokofiev decided to file for divorce from Lina so that he could marry Mira. The courts refused this request, filing instead that Prokofiev's marriage to Lina had never been legitimate and therefore could not be annulled or ended. Prokofiev responded by marrying Mira, leaving Lina more an outsider to Soviet Russia than ever before.⁵⁹ Three days later, Lina was arrested and sentenced to thirty years hard labor in the gulag system.⁶⁰

Prokofiev was a disciplined and prolific composer, often working on several compositions simultaneously and working late into the night to complete his commissions. However, once he arrived in the Soviet Union, his work load significantly increased. All Prokofiev's compositions written while he was in the Soviet Union were reviewed by the Soviet Arts Committee and Prokofiev was often required to make extensive revisions of his work before it could be released.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Nice(2003), 185.

⁵⁸ Morrison (2008), 177.

⁵⁹ Gutman(1988), 134.

⁶⁰ Nice(2003), 307.

⁶¹ Robinson (1987), 313, 338, 341, 427.

Although Prokofiev's chamber works were generally immune to political attacks by the Soviet Union, he did not spend much time writing chamber music during this stage of his career. This was a major factor leading to the delayed finishing of Op. 80, which Prokofiev started in 1938 and finished in 1946. His operas, film scores, ballets, and symphonies were postponed, recast, and reworked according to the changing political wishes of the Soviet Arts Committee. Prokofiev had never rested during his summer vacations; he relied upon them to get work done that had gone unfinished during his busy touring schedule. In effect, Prokofiev never stopped working. This, combined with his increased work load, began to affect his health.

After 1948, Prokofiev's career began a slow and steady decline. Once famous for insisting not a single note of his printed music be changed, Prokofiev agreed to make increasingly frequent and sweeping musical revisions as ordered by the Soviet Arts Committee.⁶² After a series of strokes in 1945, Prokofiev's health began to fail. He was not always able to maintain his travel schedule.⁶³ When he began to miss rehearsals, the producers, other composers, and bureaucrats present took advantage of the opportunity and made their own changes to his scores. A good example of these sweeping changes can be found in Prokofiev's ballet *Cinderella*. Prokofiev attended the premiere only to discover the addition of several musical numbers which he had not been informed of.⁶⁴ Prokofiev did spend a short amount of time recovering in a sanatorium, but returned to his demanding work schedule almost immediately after he was released. He died only a few years later, at the age of sixty-two.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., 458.

⁶³ Ibid., 457.

⁶⁴ Morrison (2008), 266.

⁶⁵ Redpenning.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF *SONATA NO. 1 FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 80* (1938-1946)

As discussed in Chapter One, the production of Prokofiev's musical compositions was often a long and complicated process. This is also true of *Op. 80*, which was premiered eight years after Prokofiev began its composition. In general, Prokofiev completed his compositions quickly. *Op. 80* is unusual among Prokofiev's works, because the compositional process was long and difficult, however its premiere happened quickly and without complications. It was premiered by David Oistrakh almost immediately after it was written, and soon received the praise of the Soviet censors. Prokofiev's writing for violin is also unique among his compositions because he actively asked for the advice of violinists. These violinists shaped the way that Prokofiev wrote for violin, and they should therefore be discussed as well.

Prokofiev began composition of *Op. 80* in the summer of 1938, shortly after moving to the Soviet Union. He had just finished what was to be his last international tour before his international travel visa was revoked.⁶⁶ As had been his lifelong custom, Prokofiev settled into a summer residence and devoted himself to composition. By this point in his career, he had already written two concertos for violin, as well as arranging his *Five Songs* for violin and piano, a string quartet, and the *Sonata for Two Violins in C Major*. His most recent composition for violin, the second concerto, had been especially successful both in the Soviet Union and abroad.⁶⁷ This may have motivated Prokofiev to begin the initial sketches of another violin piece. However, the work was soon abandoned so Prokofiev could focus on official Soviet commissions, particularly music for the film *Alexander Nevsky*, the opera *Semyon Kotko*, the

⁶⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁶⁷ Robinson (1987), 306.

ballet *Cinderella*, and a hymn honoring Stalin.⁶⁸ Prokofiev's new load of commissions was only one reason that he did not finish the violin sonata, however; he wrote to Myaskovsky that he found the piece "difficult" to finish.⁶⁹

It is not surprising that Prokofiev struggled with *Op. 80*. As discussed in Chapter One, Prokofiev generally had difficulty expressing his darker emotions. He rarely discussed war or death, subjects with which he had considerable experience. Similarly, his musical style is usually described as witty, cheerful, or even sarcastic, but the atmosphere of *Op. 80* is best described as aggressive, frightening, and dark. Prokofiev seems, in life as well as music, to always avoid focusing on tragedy. *Op. 80* was to be the most notable exception to this rule.

2.1 Collaboration with Violinists

Although he had written pieces for violin in the past, Prokofiev had very little practical knowledge of the instrument. He compensated for this by regularly consulting with professional violinists to make sure that his pieces were technically sound.⁷⁰ Andrew Maddick, a graduate of the University of Queensland, has implied that Prokofiev's writing was influenced at a fundamental level by his collaboration with these violinists. Maddick makes a strong case. He illustrates elements of each violinist's style which are transferred to the pieces in which they were involved.⁷¹ However, one must be careful not to exaggerate the importance of the collaboration. Prokofiev was always most interested in developing his own ideas. Although he was famous for his collaborations with figures such as Diaghilev and Eisenstein, Prokofiev's musical ideas were always a product of his own imagination.

⁶⁸Nestyev(1960), 298, 328.

⁶⁹Morrison (2008), 277.

⁷⁰Minturn(1997), 145.

⁷¹ Andrew Maddick, *The Effects of Collaboration: A Study of the Influences of Violinists on the Violin Repertoire of Sergei Prokofiev*, M. Phil. Diss., University of Queensland, 2006, 5.

One of the first violinists mentioned in Prokofiev's diaries was Cecilia Hansen, who was married to Prokofiev's classmate and friend, the pianist Boris Zakharov.⁷² Prokofiev documents their friendship throughout his early diaries. At first, Cecilia was somewhat distant toward him, but they became closer once she married Zakharov. He visited the couple occasionally between 1916 and 1935, and sometimes showed them his violin compositions. He wrote in his diaries that Cecilia played "magnificently," and eventually dedicated a movement of his *Five Melodies* to her. When Prokofiev was unable to find a violinist to premiere his Violin Concerto No. 1 in 1921, he gave the piece to Cecilia hoping that she might perform it. However, Prokofiev was unhappy with her interpretation, claiming that she did not understand the concerto.⁷³ In general, Prokofiev referred to the couple mainly as friends rather than collaborators.

The first violinist that had a major effect on Prokofiev's writing was Pawel Kochanski. Kochanski was a child prodigy, and by age 14 he had graduated from the Warsaw Conservatory and won the position of concertmaster of the newly formed Warsaw Philharmonic, in addition to maintaining a busy solo career. It was during this period that Kochanski became friends with Karol Szymanowski and Arthur Rubinstein. They would become Kochanski's lifelong friends, and he would have an influence in their careers.⁷⁴

In 1903, Kochanski traveled to the Brussels Conservatory for additional studies with Cesar Thomson. He graduated with top honors after only one semester, and spent some time touring Western Europe. He returned to Warsaw in 1907, where he won a position as professor of violin. He succeeded Auer as violin professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1913.

⁷²Anthony Phillips, trans, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1907-1914: Prodigious Youth* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006): 100.

⁷³ Ibid., 136, 712.

⁷⁴ Teresa Chylinska, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Works* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, School of Music, 1993): 97.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Kochanski was forced to remain in Russia for two years. In 1919, he was given permission to return to Warsaw. Soon after this, he made his way the U. S. In 1924, after three years of concertizing in the U. S., he won a position at the Juilliard School.⁷⁵

Although Prokofiev probably knew about Kochanski after his appointment to the St. Petersburg Conservatory, their first documented meeting occurred in 1915 in Kiev. Prokofiev was in town visiting his former tutor, Gliere. Gliere had recently joined the faculty at the Kiev Conservatory and was trying to convince Kochanski's close friend, Karol Szymanowski, to join the faculty as a composition professor.⁷⁶ Gliere wrote, in a letter to his wife, that Prokofiev attended a concert during his visit. He added that this concert featured Szymanowski's *Sonata, Op. 9* and at least one movement from Szymanowski's *Myths*. Both pieces were performed that evening by Kochanski.⁷⁷

Perhaps the best-documented event between Kochanski, Szymanowski, and Prokofiev took place the following year. This time, Kochanski performed Szymanowski's *Myths* for the "Evenings of Contemporary Music," a society in which Prokofiev was very active. On this occasion, Prokofiev was so impressed by Szymanowski's composition that he approached the composer with congratulations and requested to hear the piece again.⁷⁸

Myths was an innovative piece in the violin repertoire. It is a series of three programmatic movements inspired by Persian poetry Szymanowski had collected on his international travels. It was unique in two major aspects, its structure and its use of virtuoso

⁷⁵ Alistair Wightman, *Karol Szymanowski: His Life and Work*, (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999): 23.

⁷⁶ Jim Samson, *The Music of Szymanowski* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1981):78.

⁷⁷ Chylinska(1993): 97.

⁷⁸ Wightman(1999),160.

effects. *Myths* is one of the first pieces written in Szymanowski's mature style.⁷⁹ Instead of following a traditional form, each movement resembles a kaleidoscope of nonrelated themes. There is no progression in the traditional sense, only a succession of ideas. The virtuoso effects of the piece are not new in themselves. Techniques such as left-hand pizzicato, double stops, *glissando* and *tremelando* had already been used for centuries. However, until Szymanowski, these techniques had usually been reserved for ornamentation and showmanship. Szymanowski was one of the first to integrate the techniques into the fundamental structure of the piece. He often preferred to write in the violin's highest register to produce a timbral soundscape unique to the instrument.⁸⁰

It is a well-documented fact that Kochanski was actively involved with the composition of Szymanowski's works for solo violin.⁸¹ Of the violinists with which Prokofiev worked, he seems to have had the best opinion of Kochanski. While Prokofiev often complained about various qualities of the violinists who performed his works, he had only positive things to say about Kochanski. This may be because of the timing of their friendship. They met at a time when Kochanski's career and reputation were more established than Prokofiev's, and they met again during Prokofiev's second trip to New York, where Prokofiev was skeptically received as a Bolshevik while Kochanski enjoyed considerable success.⁸² Prokofiev also mentions in several diary entries that Kochanski was extremely helpful in his advice about the technical aspects of writing for the violin. Prokofiev's opinion of Kochanski was so high that, when he left Russia

⁷⁹ Samson(1981), 79.

⁸⁰ Wightman(1999), 143.

⁸¹ Ibid., 23.

⁸² Mieczysława Hanuszewska, "Pawel Kochanski," *Grove's Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/15236>.

for Japan in 1917, he debated whether he should leave Japan at all, hoping Kochanski might be able to join him for a tour of the Far East.⁸³

Prokofiev composed the majority of his first violin concerto alone, while vacationing in northern Russia. He consulted with Kochanski when he returned to St. Petersburg in the fall, after he had already written the major themes of his piece.⁸⁴ However, this does not mean that Kochanski had no influence on the concerto. As previously mentioned, Prokofiev had been impressed with Szymanowski's *Myths*, which he heard shortly before he began composing his own violin concerto. This piece had been written in direct collaboration with Kochanski, and Szymanowski later wrote that many of his ideas for the piece came from Kochanski⁸⁵. *Violin Concerto No. 1* uses several of Szymanowski's ideas regarding instrumentation and virtuoso techniques, including extended use of the solo violin's highest register as well as melodic use of double-stops, harmonics, ponticello, and trills.

Prokofiev's initial idea was to write a concertino for violin and orchestra. By the time he finished the piece, the single movement of the concertino had grown into three separate movements and was therefore considered a concerto, but it is a short work compared with other violin concertos written at the time. Because Prokofiev wrote the majority of the concerto at the same time as his Classical Symphony, the two pieces are often discussed together, and critics refer to both pieces as neoclassical in character.⁸⁶ Like Szymanowski's *Myths*, Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 1* is written to produce several distinct coloristic sections. Prokofiev produces these separate sections using several techniques. One such technique combines virtuosic elements such as ponticello, glissandi, pizzicato, and extended tremelando in the solo

⁸³ Phillips(2006), 292.

⁸⁴ Ibid.,194, 201.

⁸⁵ Chylinska(1993),80.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 130.

part with static ostinato rhythms in the orchestral part. In other sections, the violin accompanies melody in the orchestra, often expressed in the lower voices for timbral effect. These sections often are not clearly separated, giving the entire piece an atmosphere of shifting colors rather than separate ideas. Because the violin is not treated as a soloist but rather as an equal partner with the orchestra, the concerto has more in common with the tone poem than with the traditional classical concerto.

Prokofiev had already decided to leave Russia by the time he finished Concerto No. 1, but he planned to stay until the piece's premiere, which was scheduled to take place in November of 1917 under the baton of Ziloti and featuring Kochanski as soloist.⁸⁷ When he finished the concerto, he delivered the orchestral score to Ziloti to be copied and left a copy of the solo part with Kochanski for final editing. Because he had effectively finished the concerto, at this stage Prokofiev expected mainly technical suggestions from Kochanski, including bowings, fingerings, and small melodic alterations. However, when Prokofiev learned that the premiere of Concerto No. 1 had been postponed due to the Russian Revolution, he had no reason to remain in Russia and left for Japan.⁸⁸ Although Prokofiev had some version of the violin concerto with him when he left Russia, he clearly valued Kochanski's suggestions and was glad to receive Kochanski's self-edited solo part, which was returned to him by the violinist when they met in Paris in September of 1920. He was also able to recover the orchestral parts from Ziloti when he reunited with his mother in July 1920.⁸⁹

Despite Prokofiev's high opinion of Kochanski as a musician, he did not have the kind of collaborative relationship with the violinist which helped form Szymanowski's career. Unlike

⁸⁷ Phillips(2006),206, 238.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 230, 289.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 536, 530

Szymanowski, whose works often reflected the musical influences of others, Prokofiev developed his own original style.⁹⁰ He also had limited contact with Kochanski over the years; they lived on different continents for the majority of their careers. As a result, he writes relatively little about Kochanski, although it is common knowledge that he consulted with Kochanski regarding his *First Concerto for Violin*, the *Hebrew Overture* and, later, his transcription of the *Five Songs Without Words* for violin.⁹¹ He also writes in his diaries that he gave Kochanski a copy of his *Sonata for Two Violins*, although he does not specify whether he wanted Kochanski to perform the piece or simply give him technical suggestions.⁹²

Once Prokofiev left Russia, he still hoped that Kochanski would premiere Concerto No. 1, if not in Russia, then perhaps in Japan or London. However, the concerto was not premiered until 1924. Even this premiere would not have happened without the help of Koussevitsky, a conductor Prokofiev had known in Russia. Several prominent violinists turned the concerto down, and Marcel Darrieux, the concertmaster of Koussevitsky's orchestra in Paris, was left to perform the premiere.⁹³

Although Prokofiev did not know it, Kochanski had expressed some reservations about the piece; he wrote to Szymanowski in 1917 that "After a long and great suffering I am afraid that Prokofiev's Concerto will be a disaster, because to me it is rather unperformable; however, if performable, then it is not tuneful."⁹⁴ The Paris premiere was attacked by the Parisian avant-garde, who, ironically, considered the piece old-fashioned and passé. Audiences outside France

⁹⁰ Wightman, 23; c.f. Samson, 79.

⁹¹ Phillips, 614; c.f. Nestyev(1948), 86.

⁹² Harlow Robinson ed., trans., intro., *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998),151.

⁹³ Phillips(2006), 536.

⁹⁴ Chylinska(1993), 117.

had an initial opinion similar to Kochanski's reaction; that the concerto was strange and ugly.⁹⁵ However, the piece did have some admirers. Only three days after the Paris premiere, the violin-piano transcription was included in the repertoire of the duo Nathan Milstein and Vladimir Horowitz. Their support of Prokofiev's concerto improved the piece's reputation, as well as exposing it to a larger audience.⁹⁶

Josef Szigeti, a Hungarian-born violinist and supporter of new music, also became a strong supporter of Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 1*. Through Szigeti's efforts, the concerto was spread throughout the Soviet Union as well as the United States, where it became increasingly popular. He was in the audience at the Paris premiere of the piece, and soon included it in his own repertoire.⁹⁷ Szigeti was an ideal promoter of Prokofiev's works. Although not the most technically accurate musician, Szigeti was charismatic and not afraid to express his opinions.⁹⁸ While most violinists were initially afraid to play Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1, Szigeti insisted on performing the concerto frequently, and even arranged for its first recording through Columbia Records. He paid no attention to Prokofiev's critics. He even framed the most severe and unreasonable attacks on the concerto and hung them on the wall of his study.⁹⁹

Robert Soetens was the next violinist to influence Prokofiev's writing. Relatively little is written about Soetens; however, it is known that he was a child prodigy of the Franco-Belgian school, a student of Ysaye and a graduate of the Paris Conservatory. His acquaintance with

⁹⁵ Szigeti, *With Strings Attached With Strings Attached: Reminiscences and Reflections* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953), 223, 240.

⁹⁶ Robinson (1987), 179.

⁹⁷ Phillips (2006), 712.

⁹⁸ Boris Schwartz, "Joseph Szigeti," *Grove's Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/27314>.

⁹⁹ Szigeti (1953), 143, 240.

schoolmate Darius Milhaud would later tie him to *Les Six*. He spent the majority of his career as a soloist.¹⁰⁰ Soetens met Prokofiev at a concert he played in Belgium. This led to his involvement in the premiere of Prokofiev's Sonata for Two Violins, which he played with Samuel Dushkin. Prokofiev preferred Soetens' and Dushkin's interpretation to the performances of the piece he heard in the Soviet Union, although he remarked in his diaries that Soetens "doesn't have even one-half of [Boris] Fishman's tone."¹⁰¹

The origins of Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 2* are currently under debate. Most sources claim that Prokofiev was approached by admirers of Soetens, who commissioned him to write a piece for violin which Soetens could perform. Prokofiev originally planned a smaller-scale piece, but ended up with a full-scale concerto. According to Prokofiev's own diaries and a letter Prokofiev wrote to Vernon Duke, the piece was developed and composed in 1935 in the cities of Paris, Voronezh, and Baku, and premiered in Madrid in December of the same year.¹⁰² He then toured internationally with Soetens, who was given exclusive rights to perform the piece for a year.¹⁰³

However, in an interview with *Strad* magazine prior to his death in 1997, Soetens disputed most of this information. He claimed that Prokofiev had written the concerto on his own instead of commission, that the entire concerto was written in Paris, and that he had been given exclusive rights to perform the concerto for two years rather than one. He also claims that he provided Prokofiev with the idea to begin the piece on the G and D strings.¹⁰⁴ Most of these claims are impossible to prove or disprove independently. Prokofiev himself did not write much

¹⁰⁰ Edward Sainati, "Desperately Seeking Soetens," *Strad* 107: 1274 (June 1996), 614-615.

¹⁰¹ Boris Fishman was a Russian violinist with whom Prokofiev was acquainted. Robinson (1998): 322, 307.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 51, 153.

¹⁰³ Nestyev (1946): 128.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Sainati, "Desperately Seeking Soetens," *Strad* 107: 1274 (June 1996), 614-618.

about the concerto, and even Soetens admits that there is no written record of his exclusive performance rights.

Regardless of the exact origin of the piece, Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 2* was an immediate success. It was written in a different style than the first violin concerto. Prokofiev wrote that, in composing *Violin Concerto No. 2*, he was searching for a "simpler style."¹⁰⁵ Its sections are more clearly delineated than his first violin concerto, consisting of alternating cantilena and motorically-driven sections. Themes are developed in a more traditional manner, using clear tonal shifts and modulation, making the piece more accessible than in the first violin concerto. Unlike the first violin concerto, which relies more heavily on virtuoso techniques such as *ponticello*, left hand *pizzicato*, harmonics, and double stops, the second concerto presents the listener with an almost constant stream of sixteenth and thirty-second notes in the violin part, often providing countermelody to the orchestral melody. Large sections use Szymanowski's technique of playing on a single string, in this case the G and D strings.

When Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1937, the obvious choice for future violin collaboration was David Oistrakh, who was professor of violin at the Moscow Conservatory. Oistrakh, who had been educated by Stolyarski in Odessa, already had a reputation as an impressive violinist. He won nearly every competition he entered.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to Prokofiev, who fell in and out of favor with the Soviet government over the years, Oistrakh was destined to have nearly constant support of the Soviet Arts Committee.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Robinson (1987): 305-306.

¹⁰⁶ Soroker(1982), 24, 33.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1.

Oistrakh and Prokofiev often lived close to each other. Their apartments in Moscow were in the same neighborhood, and they sometimes attended the same summer residences.¹⁰⁸ They shared a passion for chess and discriminating taste; while Prokofiev did not hesitate to criticize musicians who performed his works, Oistrakh often turned down pieces which did not meet his musical standards. Prokofiev's own *Sonata for Solo Violin* falls into this category. Oistrakh felt that the piece was beneath Prokofiev and refused to perform it at any point in his career.¹⁰⁹ Prokofiev's collaboration with Oistrakh is particularly well-documented. Most of the credit for this goes to Oistrakh, who wrote about Prokofiev in his own publications and referred to him in several interviews. In general, he was a strong supporter of Prokofiev's music. Although political pressure sometimes silenced him, he was one of few musicians who refused to sign the 1948 Zhdanov petition condemning Prokofiev for composing "formalist" works.¹¹⁰

Prokofiev's admiration of Oistrakh was not unconditional. Oistrakh's first experience with the composer was far from ideal. Prokofiev's first tour of the Soviet Union in 1926 included a stop in Odessa, where he attended a concert featuring the best students of the Odessa Conservatory. Among the performers was a young Oistrakh, who presented Prokofiev's own *Violin Concerto No. 1*. As Oistrakh later wrote, everyone in the audience seemed pleased with the performance except for Prokofiev. Once Oistrakh had finished playing, Prokofiev interrupted the applause by coming onto the stage, informing the young violinist that he did not understand the piece at all, and immediately sat down at the piano to demonstrate the correct interpretation of the piece. According to Oistrakh, Prokofiev remembered the incident but not

¹⁰⁸ Blok(1978), 202.

¹⁰⁹ Soroker(1982), 86, 94.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 124.

the violinist. Several years later, he was surprised when Oistrakh informed him that he was the same performer who had been lectured so many years ago.¹¹¹

It was Oistrakh who convinced Prokofiev to modify his *Flute Sonata, Op. 94* for performance by the violin.¹¹² Such an idea was not new to Prokofiev; he often borrowed themes from his own compositions and had already rewritten his *Five Melodies*, which had originally been a vocal piece but was more popular as a violin piece.¹¹³ Prokofiev provided Oistrakh with a score for the Flute Sonata and Oistrakh reviewed the part and identified passages which he believed needed to be changed. He then provided Prokofiev with several notated possibilities for each modified section, as well as notated phrasing and bowing suggestions. After receiving this edited version of the score, Prokofiev decided which suggestions to include in the final version, and the *Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 94a*, was completed.¹¹⁴ The work was done remarkably quickly. No changes were made to the piano part. This means that any changes Oistrakh made to the violin part were superficial and the structure and length of phrases and sections were preserved. Most of the changes were meant to accommodate violin bowings. However, Oistrakh's advice was valuable to Prokofiev because the violin version of the sonata quickly became more popular than the flute version.¹¹⁵

2.2 The Composition and Development of *Op. 80*

Prokofiev had begun his First Violin Sonata in 1938, shortly after his return to the Soviet Union. However, the work was unfinished until 1946, when it was premiered by Oistrakh on violin and Lev Oborin on piano. Prokofiev told Mira that he had initially been inspired to write a

¹¹¹Shlifstein, 240

¹¹² Robinson (1987): 422.

¹¹³Nestyev (1948): 86.

¹¹⁴Soroker (1982), 84.

¹¹⁵ Robinson (1987), 422, 427.

violin sonata by some music he heard by Handel, but the musical style of the sonata shows little influence of Handel.¹¹⁶ It is much more similar to his *String Quartet No. 1*, which he wrote after studying the late quartets of Beethoven. It has also been compared to Chopin's *Piano Sonata no. 3 in B Minor*.¹¹⁷

Although Oistrakh claims that he had urged Prokofiev to finish the sonata he had begun so many years ago, he did not hear the piece until it was basically finished. Prokofiev called Oistrakh to his dacha in Nikolina Gora in the summer of 1945. Both Oistrakh and Myaskovsky were extremely enthusiastic about the sonata from the start. Oistrakh himself later remarked that "I never worked with such passion on any other work...Until the sonata's first public performance; I couldn't play or think about anything else."¹¹⁸ Oistrakh and his accompanist, Lev Oborin, immediately began rehearsals of the piece. They received numerous coachings from Prokofiev, and premiered the sonata in 1945.¹¹⁹

Although the premiere performance was extremely successful, Prokofiev was not completely pleased with Oistrakh's interpretation. Although he could not complain about the technical execution of the sonata, he wrote that Oistrakh and Oborin played the piece without passion, "like two old professors," and he immediately began revising the score. The majority of his revisions were expressive in nature, including "more accents and dynamic markings in an effort to prevent Oistrakh and Oborin's interpretation from becoming standardized." Although *Op. 80* was awarded a Stalin Prize, considered to be the top honor in the Soviet Union, in 1947, he did not release the score to be published until 1951.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 449, 454.

¹¹⁷ Morrison (2008), 277.

¹¹⁸ Robinson (1987), 451.

¹¹⁹ Soroker (1982), 87.

CHAPTER 3: FORMAL ANALYSIS OF *OP. 80* AND ITS EFFECT ON INTERPRETATION

3.1 Characteristics of Sergei Prokofiev's Compositional Style and Their Incorporation in *Op. 80*

Prokofiev's compositions are not easy to classify. At first, his works seem tonal, but any in-depth analysis immediately begins to struggle with chromatic anomalies present in all of Prokofiev's pieces.¹²¹ Prokofiev's music is filled with nontraditional chords, unusual harmonic progressions, and melodic quirks which defy traditional theoretical explanations. Prokofiev's music rarely follows traditional harmonic progressions. Even basic dominant-tonic progressions are hard to find. In addition, Prokofiev's compositions often do not develop themes using traditional transpositions and elaboration. Instead, he prefers to juxtapose non-related themes. All of these factors have discouraged theorists from devoting time and energy to Prokofiev's music.

Most music theorists focus on one particular aspect of Prokofiev's compositional style, generally referred to the "wrong note" principal. As early as his years in the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Prokofiev's critics joked that his compositions were a reflection of his out-of-tune practice piano, and therefore contained as many "wrong notes" as correct notes.¹²² This term

¹²⁰Morrison (2008), 277- 278.

¹²¹ For the purposes of this chapter, I am using the definition of "tonality" provided by the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians: "A system of relationships between pitches having a "tonic" or central pitch as its most important element." The definition of "atonicity" as used in this chapter is taken from the same source: "A term that can be used to describe three senses: 1) to describe music that is not tonal. 2) to describe all much which is neither tonal nor serial. 3) to describe specifically the post-tonal and pre-12 tone music of Berg, Webern and Schoenberg." Carl Dahlhaus, "Tonality," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Stanley Sadie, ed., Vol 19, (New York: Macmillan, 1980): 51. Paul Lansky and George Perle, "Atonality," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Stanley Sadie, ed., Vol. 1, (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 669.

¹²² Robinson (1987), 56.

refers to examples in a mostly diatonic phrase or harmony where one note is replaced by its chromatic neighbor. One of the most famous examples of “wrong notes” in Prokofiev’s music can be found in the melody of “March” from *A Love for Three Oranges*. In this case, the fifth pitch, B-natural, is the “wrong” pitch in a phrase written in E-Flat Major. The following measure, it is replaced by the diatonic neighbor pitch of C, only to be returned to the chromatic pitch of B-natural by the end of the measure.

The way in which Prokofiev uses “wrong notes” is especially dramatic. Prokofiev was not the first composer to use chromatic substitution, but his treatment of the chromatic pitches is unique. While most composers traditionally prepare dissonance using a tonicized V-I progression, Prokofiev simply inserts a chromatic note in place of a diatonic note. There is no preparation of, or reaction to the sudden chromaticism in the other voices; the music simply continues as if nothing unusual has occurred. This gives the impression that the wrong note was a mistake made by the composer.

Although the term “wrong note” implies that a single note of the texture is replaced, Prokofiev often extends the concept to a chord or even several measures of a phrase which interrupt a diatonic phrase. An example of this can be found in the second movement of the Op. 80, in measures 50-65. In this example, the melody moves from an obvious orientation to A in measure 50, to a brief section oriented to B-flat in measure 55. The tonal orientation of the melody returns to A in measure 60. In this case, the accompaniment in the piano part also changes its tonal orientation to match the melody in the violin part.

Figure 1: 2nd Movement, measures 50-64¹²³

The image shows a musical score for the 2nd movement of Prokofiev's Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, measures 50-64. The score is in 4/4 time and features a Violin and Piano. The Violin part starts with a 'mm 50' marking and an 'eroico' instruction. The Piano part has a 'IV' marking. The score includes measure numbers 55 and 60. The Violin part has a 'V' marking above measure 55. The Piano part has a 'V' marking above measure 60. The score is marked 'espress.' and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

As a composer, Prokofiev's style was always evolving. He wrote for nearly every genre and was not afraid to experiment as he tried to adapt to the tastes of audiences in Europe, the United States, and Russia. However, the “wrong notes” appear consistently in nearly all Prokofiev's works, and therefore may be considered a basic unifying characteristic of his music. As a basic characteristic which is unique to Prokofiev, theorists are mainly concerned with understanding this aspect of Prokofiev's compositions.

Another reason that Prokofiev's “wrong notes” are the subject of so much debate is because the “wrong notes” make Prokofiev's pieces tonally ambiguous. It is often unclear

¹²³Sergei Prokofiev, *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80*, ed. David Oistrakh (New York, G. Schirmer, n.d.), movement 2, measures 50-64. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

whether a chromatic note is an embellishment or substitute of a diatonic note, or whether the chromatic note has structural importance on its own. If the chromatic note is understood as a substitute for a diatonic note, it is sometimes difficult to tell which note it is meant to replace. There are often many possible interpretations of a single chromatic note.¹²⁴

Traditional analysis of Prokofiev's music is sometimes useful, but usually cannot explain Prokofiev's "wrong notes" in a meaningful way. In these cases, "wrong note" passages are often considered atonal.¹²⁵ This is technically correct; Prokofiev does not follow any recognizable system of organized atonality. However, Prokofiev's music does not sound atonal; episodes of atonality are short and usually are contained within larger diatonic sections.¹²⁶ This encourages the theorist to find other ways to understand Prokofiev's compositions.

Schenkerian analysis can usually explain "wrong notes" as foreground occurrences, often as neighbor tones or passing tones. However, this explanation implies that the "wrong notes" are not important.¹²⁷ Most theorists hesitate to use only Schenkerian analysis because the wrong notes are often an essential part of Prokofiev's music.¹²⁸ Deleting "wrong notes" from a piece often completely changes its character, and such notes therefore must be considered important.

Several theorists prefer a system of analysis which uses motivic repetition, because this system both recognizes the importance of "wrong notes."¹²⁹ It also accounts for common patterns in Prokofiev's writing, such as chains of ascending thirds and descending fifths or fourths. Another advantage of motivic analysis is that the definition of a "motive" is loose; a "motive" may be a segment of only three or four notes, but the same concept may be applied to

¹²⁴ Richard Bass, "Prokofiev's Technique of Chromatic Displacement," *Music Analysis* 72 (1998), 201, 203.

¹²⁵ Rifkin, 265.

¹²⁶ Bass, 198.

¹²⁷ Minturn (1997), 15.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19; c.f. Bass, 200.

¹²⁹ Rifkin, 265.

larger sections of music. This would explain Prokofiev's frequent restatement of themes at different pitch levels throughout a movement. This type of repetition is a central aspect of *Op. 80*. The entire first movement, for example, is filled with motives which are repeated, fragmented, and transposed by step. These operations generally occur in transitional sections, such as measures 25-27, measures 45-49, and measures 51-57.

Figure 2: 1st Movement, measures 45-49¹³⁰

The musical score for measures 45-49 of the first movement of Prokofiev's Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80, is presented. The score is in G major, 3/4 time, and marked 'a tempo'. It features a Violin part and a Piano part. The Violin part begins with a piano (p) dynamic and a melodic line. The Piano part features a bass line with a 'p legato' marking and a right hand with a 'mp' marking. The score includes a 'G & D str.' marking for the Violin and a 'Gtr' marking for the Piano. The measures are numbered 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49.

Although the previous examples mention the most prominent motives, the middle voices of the piano part also contain repetitions, such as the figure found in the right hand of the piano in measure 55 that reappeared in measures 57 and 59.

In his autobiography, Prokofiev wrote about five major characteristics which usually occur in his writing. Although he wrote that these characteristics were mainly found in the pieces he wrote before graduating from the Conservatory, he illustrates each characteristic with

¹³⁰Prokofiev, *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80*, movement 1, measures 45-49.

examples written throughout his career.¹³¹ It can therefore be understood that these five characteristics, or five “lines”, as he calls them, are not limited to his earliest works but were used throughout his career. The first of Prokofiev’s “lines” is called the classical line. This refers to Prokofiev’s preference to write pieces using classical forms, such as sonatas and concertos. It also refers to his tendency toward thin textures in his orchestration.¹³² As discussed in Chapter One, Prokofiev was constantly exposed to the works of great Western composers beginning in his childhood in Sonstovka. Although his style was almost immediately unique, Prokofiev considered himself to be continuing the work of his predecessors, not trying to create a new system.¹³³ *Op. 80* follows the classical line because it is made up of four movements and is called “Sonata.” In addition, the movements follow the slow-fast-slow-fast pattern common in the Baroque Sonata.

Prokofiev labeled his second “line” as “modern.” “Modern,” to Prokofiev, is anything that differs from tradition.¹³⁴ However, it is clear from the way Prokofiev describes his use of the “modern line” that he is referring to the same phenomenon that we know today as “wrong notes.” An example of the “modern line” in *Op. 80* occurs in measure 20 of the first movement, where the diatonic bassline, in C Major, is briefly interrupted by F-sharp octaves.

Prokofiev’s third “line” is labeled as the “toccata line.” This refers to his tendency to write technically challenging, rhythmically motoric passages. Prokofiev claims that this characteristic is the least important “line” in his compositions, probably because it was often

¹³¹ Bass, 198.

¹³² Minturn, 52, 57.

¹³³ Ibid., 18.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 28.

Figure 3: 1st Movement, measures 17-22¹³⁵

overemphasized by music critics, especially in the West.¹³⁶ In fact, the “toccata line” is often an important feature in Prokofiev’s pieces. Although *Op. 80* does not feature the toccata line as much as some of Prokofiev’s other pieces, for example his *Violin Concerto No. 1*, an example of this type of writing can be found in the fourth movement, beginning in measure 22.

Figure 4^a: 4th Movement, measures 22-24¹³⁷

The fourth “line” as referred to as the lyrical line is a very important theme in Prokofiev’s compositional style. Prokofiev often alternates his toccata-style, rhythmically driven sections

¹³⁵Prokofiev, *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80*, movement 1, measures 17-22.

¹³⁶ Minturn (1997), 25.

¹³⁷Prokofiev, *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80*, movement 4, measures 22-24.

with long, singing melodic lines. The accompaniment of these lyrical lines is often simple, both harmonically and rhythmically; the accompaniment is meant to define and support the melody, rather than providing complexity. An example of the lyrical line is the main melodic theme of the third movement of *Op. 80*, which begins in measure 7 and continues until measure 25.

Figure 4^b: 3rd Movement, measures 7-10¹³⁸

The image displays a musical score for measures 7-10 of the 3rd movement of Prokofiev's Op. 80. The score is written for Violin and Piano. The Violin part begins in measure 7 with a melodic line marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *tenero ed espress.* (tender and expressive). The Piano part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The measures are numbered 7, 8, 9, and 10, with measure 10 highlighted by a box.

The fifth “line” of Prokofiev’s compositions is labeled “grotesque.” Prokofiev claims that he does not like this term because it implies ugliness and aggression. He believed that the “grotesque” could be extended to anything in his writing which was humorous or sarcastic. This is the least obvious line in *Op. 80*, which is generally very serious in nature. A good example of

¹³⁸Ibid., movement 3, measures 7-10.

the “grotesque” line could be found in the March for “A Love for Three Oranges”, where a very serious, official royal march is distorted with dissonant notes.

Aside from these basic guidelines, Prokofiev’s music displays a few characteristics which are central to the composition of *Op. 80*. These characteristics include the relationship of melody and accompaniment, contrasting sections, and precise score marking. Each of these topics, as well as its application to Prokofiev’s music, will now be discussed at length.

Prokofiev was a composer for whom the melody of the composition was usually the most important element.¹³⁹ The accompaniment for melodic lines often only exists to outline and support the melodic line, and is usually very simple. The most common accompanimental figure is the *ostinato* and typically it is sometimes so simple that it only contains a single note or chord that is repeated regularly. Various types of *ostinato* can be found in the second movement of the *Violin Concerto No. 1*, as well as in measures 43-45 of the fourth movement of *Op. 80* and in the opening measures of “Romeo and Juliet” from the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*.

As mentioned earlier, Prokofiev’s themes are usually not developed in the traditional way. Prokofiev makes his music interesting by using a variety of other methods, including use of “wrong notes.” Another method Prokofiev uses to make his music interesting is to create

¹³⁹Minturn (1997), 26.

Figure 5: 4th Movement, measures 40-46¹⁴⁰

The musical score is for measures 40-46 of the 4th movement. It is written for Violin and Piano. The Violin part begins at measure 40 with a tempo marking 'mm. 40'. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some trills indicated by 'V' above the notes. The Piano part is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 40-44) shows the right hand playing a sequence of chords and the left hand playing a continuous trill. The second system (measures 45-46) shows the right hand playing a single chord marked 'pizz.' and the left hand playing a trill. The score is marked with a forte (ff) dynamic at the end of measure 46.

contrast between sections. He has several methods of providing this contrast. One of his most common methods is to change the texture of the accompaniment for each theme. This is especially common in pieces which have similar melodies, such as the first movement of *Violin Concerto No. 2*. Another example can be found in the first movement of *Op. 80*, measures 39-46. In this example, very light accompaniment in the piano part is replaced by a slow, measured, written-out trill. Although the basic register, and even the orientation of the accompaniment on

¹⁴⁰Ibid., movement 4, measures 40-46.

D, is maintained, the texture in measure 45 is immediately much thicker than in the previous section.

Figure 6: Movement 1, measures 45-47¹⁴¹

The image displays a musical score for measures 45-47 of Movement 1. It features two staves: Violin and Piano. The Violin staff is marked with 'G & D str. a tempo' and a dynamic of 'p'. The Piano staff is marked with 'a tempo' and a dynamic of 'p legato'. The score shows a dense texture with chromatic lines in both instruments. The Violin part consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the Piano part features a more complex, chromatic accompaniment. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. The measures are numbered 45, 46, and 47.

Prokofiev often provides contrast between sections by radically changing the register of the melody, the accompaniment, or both. An example of this occurs in the second movement of *Op. 80*, measures 251-263.

Prokofiev also often changes the rhythmic character of the melodic line. For example, he may follow a slow, lyrical line with a virtuosic, “toccata”-inspired passage. Often these passages have chromatic notes and a mechanical rhythm. These sections are often followed by much simpler, more lyrical phrases.

Because Prokofiev consulted with violinists when composing works for violin, his scores are filled with precise technical instructions and details. He used string-specific terms, such as *pizzicato* and *ponticello*, and specifies many different bowing techniques as well as harmonics. He exploited the percussive quality of the instrument, was aware of techniques to achieve

¹⁴¹Ibid., movement 1, measures 45-47.

Figure 7: Movement 2, measures 247-266¹⁴²

Violin

Piano

247

250

a piacere un poco rit.

cresc.

mf

rit.

255

a tempo

p

mp

cresc.

p a tempo

cresc.

265

espress.

f

f

f

¹⁴²Ibid., movement 2, measures 247-266.

Figure 8: Movement 2, measures 135-140¹⁴³

The image shows a musical score for measures 135-140 of Movement 2. The top system is for Violin and Piano. The Violin part begins at measure 135 with a tempo marking 'mm 135'. The Piano part has a 'Poco più tranquillo' marking at measure 140. The score includes dynamic markings 'p' and 'espress.' and a triplet in the Violin part at the end of measure 140.

specific timbres on the violin, and made specific notes in certain passages regarding which string he wanted the performer to use. He specifically placed the opening figure in the lowest possible range of the violin, so it can have the resonance, and specific character of the G string.

3.2 Formal Analysis of *Op. 80*

As mentioned above, *Op. 80* consists of four movements. The first and third movements are written at a slow tempo, while the second and fourth movements are marked at faster tempos. As we will see, each of the movements is distinct in character and reflects a different aspect of Prokofiev's career leading up to the composition of *Op. 80*. The first movement begins in the lowest register of the piano and gradually increases its range in an upward direction. The first entrance of the violin in measure 4 consists of only two notes and cannot be considered a melody, but has the character instead of an invocation. The repetitive, primitive character of the violin line in measures 4-12 is similar to the character of the introduction to Prokofiev's first

¹⁴³Ibid., movement 2, measures 135-141.

ballet, Alla and Lolly, which he wrote for Diaghilev as his own interpretation of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring. These factors give the impression that the entire first movement is an introduction to the sonata proper.

Figure 9: Movement 1, measures 1-7¹⁴⁴

it is in 3 / 4 time, in reality it is barred in a series of alternating 3 / 4 and 4 / 4 measures. This unusual barring, in addition to an alteration of the pattern in measure 3 (the passing tone is replaced with an embellished version of the previous note) confuses the ear.

Figure 10: Movement 1, measures 1-8.¹⁴⁵

The musical score for measures 1-8 of Movement 1 is presented for Violin and Piano. The tempo is marked 'Andante assai' with a metronome marking of 60. The key signature consists of four flats. The time signature is 3/4, but the measures are grouped in pairs of 3/4 and 4/4. The Violin part starts in measure 4 with a trill. The Piano part has a continuous bass line. Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, and *mf*.

Tonally, the theme is also ambiguous. Although it is possible to analyze the phrase motivically, as a chain of transposed falling fifths, it is diatonic and centered on F, a key which agrees with the key signature of four flats. However, if the theme is to be understood in the key of F Minor, it must be noted that the leading tone has not been raised. The entrance of the violin line in measure 4 further confuses the intended tonality of the piece, as it places strong emphasis on A-flat rather than F.

The key change to A minor in measure 17 presents the second theme (b) of the A section. Although the bass line in the piano is similar to the opening theme, remaining in the same low register and containing a number of perfect fourths (an inversion of the main theme's perfect fifths), both the piano and violin parts are more complex and have a more flexible range. This section transitions through a descending chain of rising half-steps in the violin to a shortened

¹⁴⁵Ibid., Movement 1, measures 1-8.

restatement of the original theme in measure 28. Instead of reproducing the entire a subsection, Prokofiev isolates the last measure of the first restatement of the theme and subjects it, as well as the accompanying violin part, to a series of half step transpositions which lead to the C theme of the rondo.

Figure 11: Movement 1, measures 17-27¹⁴⁶

The musical score for measures 17-27 of Movement 1 is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 17 to 20, and the second system covers measures 21 to 25. The Violin part is written in treble clef, and the Piano part is written in bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Poco più animato' with a metronome marking of mm 17. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes dynamic markings such as 'cresc.', 'f', 'mp', and 'dim.', as well as 'poco rit.' at the end. Measure numbers 20 and 25 are indicated in boxes. The Violin part starts with a half note F#4, followed by eighth notes, and ends with a half note G#4. The Piano part starts with a half note F#3, followed by eighth notes, and ends with a half note G#3. The score shows a series of half-step transpositions in both parts.

The transition to the C subsection of the opening is characterized mainly by half-step motion. Although the key signature of this section implies a tonal center of C Major or A Minor, the preponderance of accidentals in the violin part would imply a tonality of D-flat Major, while the bass is obviously centered on a D pedal. Again, the violin part is characterized by a series of descending minor and major seconds, which may move up or down in later reiterations by

¹⁴⁶Ibid., movement 1, measures 17-27.

stepwise motion. A key change in measure 51 signals the beginning of the C subsection, which is diatonic to the key of B Minor.

The original theme reappears in measure 69, this time in the violin part. Although the violin line is immediately recognizable as the opening theme, it is not allowed to proceed past the second measure. Instead, it is cut off, and the opening two bars are again reiterated. The piano, meanwhile, accompanies the violin with an upward-moving, basically scalar passage. Once the violin finishes, the piano begins a meandering descend which returns the register to that of the opening and acts as the close to the A section.

The movement's B section is completely different in character from the A section. It is short, beginning in measure 79 and ending in measure 98, and has a completely different texture from the A section. The main feature of the section is the violin part, which consists of scalar runs of 32nd notes which are muted with the specifically noted intent of producing a cold, distant timbre (*freddo*). This violin part is accompanied by block chords in the piano part. Unlike the previous section, the B section is entirely diatonic to the key of A-flat Major, with the exception of measures 89-92, which are a variation of the opening theme. However, the chords presented in the piano part do not strongly support this tonal framework. The entire section contains only five chords, or rather pitch collections, as the chords do not make any functional sense. When analyzed, the chords are best described as two alternating sets of stacked thirds, which are made up of the pitch collections F, A-flat, C, E-flat, G, B-flat and B-flat, D-flat, F, A-flat, C.

Figure 12: Movement 1, measures 69-76¹⁴⁷

The musical score for Movement 1, measures 69-76, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 69 and 70. The Violin part begins in measure 69 with a 'V' and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The Piano part also starts in measure 69 with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 70 is marked with a box containing the number 70. The second system covers measures 75 and 76. Measure 75 is marked with a box containing the number 75. The Piano part in measure 75 is marked *mf legato*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics.

Throughout his education and career, Prokofiev had a unique understanding of scales. As discussed in Chapter One, Maria Grigorevna did not require her son to learn or perform scales as part of his beginning piano studies, as she felt the scales might bore him and discourage him from his studies. Once he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Prokofiev's piano teachers undoubtedly corrected this oversight. However, examination of Prokofiev's use of scales shows that he did not use them in the same way as traditional Western composers. In the Western tradition, scales are almost always used to move a melody from one tonal area to the next. An

¹⁴⁷Ibid., movement 1, measure 69-76.

example of this usage of scales is clearly shown in *Beethoven's Leonore Overture, No. 3*, where the bassoon connects phrases in the flute at various pitch levels with scalar passages.

In contrast, Prokofiev usually uses scales almost as filler material; the scales are clearly diatonic, but often return to their original pitch and rarely lead to new tonal centers. This is definitely the case in the B section of the first movement; as the piano part plays a nonsensical series of chords which cannot be classified as a true progression, the violin plays an A-flat Major scale which is characterized by an increase in range but begins and ends on the same pitch. This is an excellent example of Prokofiev's reinterpretation of classical forms; although he often composes using traditional forms and concepts, he never follows all the rules of traditional practice.

The closing A section of the first movement begins in measure 98. The opening theme is stated again, in the original register, in the piano part. It is accompanied by a pizzicato figure in the violin, which is fragmented and presented in retrograde after its initial statement. The theme in the piano is interrupted in measure 103 by a series of chords which eventually return the orientation of the piece to F Minor.

The second movement is marked Allegro. In contrast to the first movement, which moves slowly and cautiously through various tonal centers and textures, the second movement has a warlike, aggressive character and is governed by the idea of elaboration of a single pitch. This single-pitch motive can be interpreted psychologically in a number of ways. It could be

Figure 13: Movement 1, measures 98-end¹⁴⁸

Violin

pizz. recitando

6

100

6

mp

p

Piano

p

mp

105

mp

p

dim.

pp

1

2

3

4

5

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considered as a metaphor for the single-mindedness of rage and aggression, or as an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to break out of prescribed norms.¹⁴⁹ It is in a modified sonata form, with the development beginning in measure 103 and the recapitulation in measure 228.

Exposition	Development	Recapitulation	End
1-----	103-----	228-----	300

¹⁴⁸Ibid., movement 1, measures 98-end.

¹⁴⁹Ronald Woodley and Glen Watkins are two theorists who have expanded on this characteristic of Op. 80. They refer to this tendency as an expression of irony. Glen Watkins, *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York : Schirmer): 1988. c.f. Ronald Woodley, "Strategies of Irony in Prokofiev's *Violin Sonata no. 1 in F Minor, Op. 80*," *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1995): 170-196.

Figure 14: Movement 2, measures 1-7¹⁵⁰

Allegro brusco ♩ = 96
marcatissimo e pesante
 Violin
f
 Piano
mf marcatissimo e pesante
 G str. -----
 5

The opening theme occurs in measures 1-8. It consists of a hocket-like series of percussive chords in both the violin and piano parts. As mentioned earlier, the entire movement can be understood as elaboration of a single pitch, although different statements of a theme are often presented at different transpositions of this pitch. This idea is clearly illustrated by the first theme of the exposition, which can be found in measures 1-37. This entire section is built around the opening phrase, which occurs in measures 1-8. Although highly chromatic, this phrase is clearly centered on C; if the melody is reduced to its most fundamental notes, we see a progression from C to B, B-flat, B, and C.

The tonal orientation of the piece begins to shift before the second statement of the theme, which begins in measure 14 and is now centered on D-flat rather than C. This transposition by half step is a more extensive example of Prokofiev's "wrong-note" practice. From there, the theme appears to modulate briefly to B minor before transitioning back to the original key of C in measure 30.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰Prokofiev, *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80*, movement 2, measures 1-7.

¹⁵¹ The recurrence of the theme in B minor represents another half-step transposition from C.

Figure 15a: Movement 2, measures 50-64¹⁵²

The musical score for measures 50-64 is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 50 through 59, and the second system contains measures 60 through 64. The Violin part is written in a single staff, while the Piano part is written in two staves (treble and bass clef). The tempo is marked 'mm 50' and the mood is 'eroico'. The Violin part begins with a rest in measure 50, followed by a series of notes that lead into a long, lyrical line starting in measure 55, marked with a 'V'. The Piano part provides a complex, chromatic accompaniment throughout the section, with a 'V' marking above measure 60. The score is marked 'espress.' (espressivo) and includes a 'IV' marking below measure 50.

Following the complete restatement of the opening theme in measures 30-36, the violin and piano enter a transitional hocket which leads to the second theme in measure 47, which is marked *eroico*. This transitional section is marked by descending chromatic motion, especially in the left hand of the piano part. The second theme features a long, lyrical line in contrast to the percussive opening theme. Like the opening theme, the *eroico* theme is too chromatic to truly fit into any diatonic scale. However, if the theme is reduced to its fundamental notes, an arch beginning on A, climaxing on D, and returning to A becomes apparent. The harmonic

¹⁵²Ibid., movement 2, measures 50-64.

underpinning of the section implies a tonality of D minor, but the structure of the melody implies that A is the more important pitch, suggesting a mixolydian modal quality to the section. The melodic arch is interrupted in measures 54-59, when the melody abruptly transposes up by a half step, but returns to A Mixolydian by measure 60. This pattern of tonal interruption is repeated in the elaborated version of the *eroico* theme, which begins in measure 66 in the key of A, transposes to B-flat by measure 70, and returns to A in measure 78. Again, the transition to the next section is characterized by chromatic motion; in this case, measure 85 is a downward transposition of measure 84 in the piano part, while the violin part proceeds in an upward scalar pattern.

Figure 15b: Movement 2, measures 65-71¹⁵³

The third theme presented in the exposition may be found in measures 86-100, and is marked *con brio*. Like the other themes presented in the exposition, the violin line displays a strong tendency toward a single pitch; the theme begins and ends with a strong emphasis on A, but contains temporary transpositions to B in measures 90-91 and G-sharp in measures 92-94.

¹⁵³Ibid., movement 2, measures 65-71.

At the same time, the piano part is more strongly oriented to F Major (with interruptions in B and E) than A.

Figure 16: Movement 2, measures 82-84¹⁵⁴

The development section begins in measure 103 and continues until measure 228. It is characterized by both accelerated tonal shifts and the synthesis themes. The transitional figure beginning in measure 103 provides a crystallized interpretation of the principal driving the entire piece; a simple pitch (in this case, the dyad F-A) is expanded (beginning with the inclusion of E

Figure 17: Movement 2, measures 92-95¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴Ibid., movement 2, measures 82-84.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., movement 2, measures 92-95.

in measure 105, continuing with the D added in measure 106, and extended by the addition of an increasingly wide range of piano notes beginning in measure 106). A is the only pitch which is repeated in every chord until measure 112, where it is replaced by G-sharp in a downward transposition. The effect of this particular transposition is to build tension by increasing dissonance; this contrasts sharply with the following restatement of the opening theme in measure 115, which is written at a greater subdivision of the measure and is characterized by a much thinner texture in comparison. In addition, Prokofiev further builds the tension in this section by increasing the range of the instruments.

Figure 18: Movement 2, measures 103-114¹⁵⁶

The musical score for Movement 2, measures 103-114, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 103 to 109, and the second system covers measures 110 to 114. The Violin part is in 4/4 time, starting with a half note G4 in measure 103, followed by a half note A4 in measure 104, and then a half note B4 in measure 105. The Piano part is in 4/4 time, starting with a half note G3 in measure 103, followed by a half note A3 in measure 104, and then a half note B3 in measure 105. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *cresc.* (crescendo) for both instruments. Measure numbers 103, 105, and 110 are indicated at the beginning of their respective measures. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., movement 2, measures 103-114.

The restatement of the A theme in measures 115-128 is obviously developmental in nature. The phrase is not allowed to develop past its first two measures. Instead, the phrase is allowed to resolve downward, where it is then repeated at a different pitch level by another voice. The theme is followed by the C theme from the exposition, which is clearly centered on F, but transitions to a tonal center of D in measure 137 to prepare for new material in measure 139. The new melody is similar to the *eroico* theme of the exposition in that it follows the more “lyrical” line of Prokofiev’s compositional styles. However, it is marked both *espressivo* and *poco più tranquillo*; it has a much more sedate character than anything which had come before it.

Figure 19: Movement 2, measures 135-141¹⁵⁷

The musical score for Movement 2, measures 135-141, is presented in two systems. The top system covers measures 135 to 140, and the bottom system covers measures 140 to 141. The score is for Violin and Piano. The tempo is marked 'Poco più tranquillo' and the dynamics are 'p' and 'espress.'.

Violin: The melody begins in measure 135 with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a series of eighth notes. The melody is marked 'p' and 'espress.'.

Piano: The accompaniment begins in measure 135 with a half note G3, followed by a quarter note A3, and then a series of eighth notes. The piano part is marked 'p' and 'espress.'.

Measures 140-141: The melody continues with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a series of eighth notes. The piano part continues with a half note G3, followed by a quarter note A3, and then a series of eighth notes. The tempo is marked 'Poco più tranquillo' and the dynamics are 'p' and 'espress.'.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., movement 2, measures 135-141.

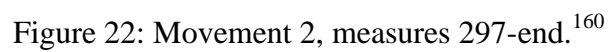
The retransition leading to the recapitulation begins in measure 153, when a fragment of the A theme abruptly interrupts the lyrical melody which had been introduced in measure 139. The fragment of A is repeated incessantly and passed constantly between the violin and piano, as if to wake the listener up and return to the aggressive essence of the movement.

Figure 20: Movement 2, measures 152-156.¹⁵⁸

Measure 167 reintroduces the opening motive of the A theme, but this time the fragment contains an element of melodic development; rather than elaborating a single note, the melody moves down the scale with each measure, where it is gradually met by a rising bassline. A very interesting approach used by Prokofiev to escalate tension is to juxtapose the repeating dissonance between the two instruments. It seems that, this is a way by which the composer tried to express his inner feeling regarding the circumstances in which the piece was written. The entire section from measure 139-174 is paraphrased in measures 180-195. The following section, which occurs in measures 196-216, is a synthesis of the *eroico* theme in the violin part and fragments of the A theme, which are used as accompaniment in the piano part. This section

¹⁵⁸Ibid., movement 2, measures 152-156.

Figure 21: Movement 2, measures 167-169¹⁵⁹



The third movement, labeled “*Andante*,” has a completely different mood from the rest of the sonata. While each of the other movements has an aggressive character, the third movement is peaceful. Its focus on slowly changing accompanimental arpeggiation and a graceful, slowly moving melodic line are similar to the impressionist works of Debussy. Prokofiev was exposed to this type of music through the Evenings of Contemporary Music in his student years as well as

¹⁶⁰Ibid., movement 2, measures 297-end.

A 1-----29-----58-----96 End

Figure 23: Movement 3, measures 1-4¹⁶¹

mm. 1
Andante $\text{♩} = 66$

Violin

Piano

pp legato

con sord.

pp

p

¹⁶¹Ibid., movement 3, measures 1-4.

adopted a largely chordal nature; the figure is only changed by chromatic alteration of its existing chord members.

The second major musical idea found in the A section is a dotted eighth note figure first seen in measure 4. Although only appearing briefly in the opening, this figure is featured more prominently in the return of the A theme at the end of the movement. The dotted nature of the figure is echoed in the transitional figure leading to the B section, which begins in measure 25.

Figure 24: Movement 3, measures 25-29¹⁶²

The musical score for measures 25-29 of Movement 3 is presented for Violin and Piano. The Violin part (top staff) begins in measure 25 with a half note B-flat, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, including a dotted eighth note figure. The Piano part (bottom staff) features a complex arpeggiated figure in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand. Dynamics include *mp*, *p*, and *dim.* The score concludes in measure 29 with a final chord in the Piano and a whole note in the Violin.

¹⁶²Ibid., Movement 3, measures 25-29.

The third element of the A section is the melody, which is first given by the violin in measure 7. It is characterized by an opening leap of at least a third and chromatic motion leading up to and away from the climax of the phrase. Each occurrence of the melody increases its range; the first melodic phrase, in measures 7-10, fills in the interval from B1 to E1. The second phrase, which lasts from measures 10 to 12, extends the range downward to the lower G, while following measures allow the phrase to expand upward to D2.

Figure 25: Movement 3, measures 7-10¹⁶³

The musical score for Movement 3, measures 7-10, is presented in two systems. The first system shows measures 7-9, and the second system shows measures 10-12. The Violin part features a melody that begins in measure 7 with a half note G2, followed by a quarter note A2, and then a series of eighth notes: B1, A1, G1, F1, E1, D1, C1, B0. The Piano part provides a continuous accompaniment of sixteenth notes, primarily in the right hand, with some octaves in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'mm 7' and the expression is 'tenero ed espress.' with a 'V' marking. The dynamic is 'mp'. Measure 10 is marked with a box containing the number 10.

A short transitional passage in measures 25-28 prepares the way to the B section. For the first time, none of the elements of section A is present in its entirety; the sextuplet accompaniment is entirely absent, while the dotted rhythm first seen in the figure in measure 4 is found in both the violin part of measures 25 and 27 and throughout the accompanying figure in the piano part. The chromatic motion of the melody is preserved in both the piano and violin

¹⁶³Ibid., movement 3, measures 7-10.

parts in measure 26. However, the triplets present in measure 28 prepare the listener for the metric shift presented by the B section, which is written in 12/8 rather than 4/4 time.

Figure 26: Movement 3, measures 25-28¹⁶⁴

The musical score for measures 25-28 of Movement 3 shows a Violin and Piano arrangement. The Violin part begins in measure 25 with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a triplet of eighth notes in measure 28. The Piano part features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 25 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 28. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano). The score ends with a double bar line and a 12/8 time signature change.

The B section begins in measure 29 and continues until measure 57. The section itself contains a miniature rounded binary form. The main melodic section, which occurs in measures 40-55, is sandwiched between sections featuring the nearly constantly repeating motive of a falling sixth followed by a rising fifth ([137]). This motive is interesting because it provides a dramatic leap in the melody which is nearly erased by its conclusion. In other words, it presents the illusion of motion which is immediately frustrated.

The main melodic element of the B section is based on a two-measure phrase of arpeggiation which moves down by half-step in the second measure and therefore ends on a pitch

¹⁶⁴Ibid., movement 3, measures 25-28.

a half step lower than the beginning pitch. Each time the phrase appears; it is presented at a different pitch level and elaborated to a different extent. Prokofiev counteracts the downward-motion of each phrase by placing the following phrase at a higher pitch level than the beginning. In this way, the downward inertia of the phrase is frustrated and the B section retains the same illusion of stationary (or slowly-changing) variation which characterized the A section's sextuplet figures as well as the melodic pattern from the A section, which generally began with a leap to create the impression of motion but continued in a chromatic stepwise fashion to fill in the interval, effectively erasing the space that had been created by the leap.

The melodic segment of the B section is followed by a shortened version of the opening motive, which acts as a transition back to the reappearance of the A section. Although the introduction to the A section begins a fourth lower than its initial statement, the melody which appears in measures 62-73 is identical to the melodic statement in measures 7-18. From there, the piano takes over a slightly lengthened version of the melodic line which appears in measures 18-25. Instead of ending there, however, in its second occurrence the melodic line is allowed to continue, drifting downward to end in the key of B-flat Major in measure 83. The tonality immediately shifts up by a half-step, where the transitional figure first seen before the B section is repeated a half-step above original pitch. This leads to a closing passage which slows melodic and harmonic variation to a standstill, finally ending on an F Major chord and returning the movement to its opening key.

Figure 27: Movement 3, measures 35-39¹⁶⁵

The musical score for Movement 3, measures 35-39, is presented for Violin and Piano. The Violin part begins at measure 35 with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Piano part features a piano (*p*) dynamic in the right hand and a bass line with sustained notes in the left hand. The score continues to measure 39, where the dynamics change to mezzo-forte (*mf*) for both instruments. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 12/8.

The fourth movement does not fit neatly into any traditional formal pattern. The majority of the movement is a set of variations on the opening theme, which can be found in measures 1-12. The asymmetrical meter of this theme, as well as the tempo (marked *Allegro*) and the simple harmonic accompaniment all suggest reference to a Russian folk dance, most likely of the *choro* tradition Prokofiev was exposed to as a child in Sonstovka. The theme is made up of three identical four-measure phrases, each presented at a different pitch level and punctuated by a single percussive major chord.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., movement 3, measures 35-39.

Figure 28: Movement 4, measures 1-4¹⁶⁶

The second variation on this theme begins in measure 13. Prokofiev contrasts this variation with the opening by thinning the texture to a *pizzicato* violin melody accompanied by a single line of staccato counter melody in the piano. The second phrase is similar to the first, but in this instance the counter melody in the piano is replaced by a series of simple chords designed to emphasize the pulse of the music.

Before the third phrase can be stated, the next variation begins. It returns to the thicker texture of the opening, and the violin plays a toccata-like passage to accompany the piano's melody. The second phrase places this toccata counter melody in the right hand of the piano part, leaving the theme in the piano's bass line and the violin. The third variation returns the toccata line to the violin for the first two measures, before the violin takes over the melody from the piano.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., movement 4, measures 1-4.

Figure 29: Movement 4, measures 22-25¹⁶⁷

The opening theme recurs in two further incarnations before a series of rhythmically placed; wide-ranging arpeggios and plucked chords signal a change in character which leads to the first new theme. This theme is signaled by a change in marking (*poco piu tranquillo*) in measure 50, but does not truly begin until the end of measure 52.

Figure 30: Movement 4, measures 52-55¹⁶⁸

The B section ends abruptly in measure 81. After only one measure of transition, a measure of plucked C quarter notes, the violin returns to the altered form of the opening theme which is observed in the first variation.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., movement 4, measures 22-25.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., movement 4, measures 52-55.

Prokofiev's next section dramatically ties the entire sonata together. What follows, without any warning, is a reinterpretation of the *freddo* section which serves as the B section of the first movement. The *pizzicato* motive which was initially seen in measure 89 of the first movement is now played *arco*, which produces a much more forceful effect. It also provides the impression that material is being developed, brought to its natural conclusion. Where the *pizzicato* figure had seemed out of place and tentative in the first movement, here it appears as an essential part of the movement. In this moment, the two opposite aspects of the sonata, the consonant, impressionistic and the dissonant, aggressive, are placed in direct opposition to each other. It is the impressionistic, mumbling character of the piece which eventually wins out; the harsh intervals of the aggressive theme eventually disappear.

However, Prokofiev apparently did not want the audience to walk away from the *Op. 80* with a sense of closure. Rather than ending the piece at its natural conclusion, at the end of the *freddo* section, Prokofiev prolongs the ending tonality of F with a series of falling half-step and whole-step motives leading to a restatement of the second theme of the movement, which was first seen in the piano part in measure 59. At the restatement, the theme has been transposed up by a half step and augmented. The effect of this section provides a complete departure from the violent, dramatic nature of the preceding *freddo*. The most likely explanation for this bizarre change of character is that it was added to appease the Soviet censors, who felt that consonant, "happy" music was preferable to dissonant, or "sad" music, which might be interpreted as disturbing or decadent.

Figure 31: Movement 4, measures 227-end¹⁶⁹

The image displays a musical score for the final measures of Movement 4. The score is written for Violin and Piano. The Violin part begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line starting on a half note G, marked 'p' (piano). The Piano part features a complex, arpeggiated texture in the left hand, with a sustained bass line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. A rehearsal mark [230] is present in the Piano part. The tempo is marked 'mm 227' and the instruction 'G str. al fine' is written above the Violin staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4.

3.3 Comparison with other Violin Works by Prokofiev

Before finishing *Op. 80*, Prokofiev had written two concertos for violin, one sonata for two violins, and adapted his flute concerto for performance by violin and piano. Of these pieces, *Op. 80* has the most in common stylistically with the violin concertos. Both of Prokofiev's violin concertos were originally conceived as smaller works which eventually outgrew their titles and were therefore adapted into concertos.¹⁷⁰ It is not surprising, then, that *Op. 80* is such a

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., movement 4, measures 227-end.

lengthy sonata. A typical performance of the entire piece takes at least half an hour. The origin of the concertos as smaller scale pieces also means that they have much in common stylistically with *Op. 80*.

The most prominent characteristic that *Op. 80* shares with Prokofiev's violin concertos is the unique relationship between the orchestra and violin. In both of the concertos, the violin and orchestra work together as equal partners, but the solo line is always clearly audible and separate from the orchestra. Prokofiev achieves this separation in three main ways. The first method, similar to Szymanowski's method of orchestration, is to place the soloist and orchestra in different registers. In addition, the orchestra keeps to sparsely scored, nearly transparent lines. Lastly, the soloist and orchestra are divided between "fast" and "slow" lines; if the soloist is playing a passage of sixteenth notes, for example, the orchestra will play either a slow-moving melody or a quarter-note or eighth-note ostinato. Very rarely are both the orchestra and soloist playing passages employing the same subdivision of the beat.

The separation between the orchestra and violin present in Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 1* is reflected in the piano part of *Op. 80*. The thin textures favored in the concertos' orchestral parts are reproduced in the piano part of *Op. 80*, which has a strong preference toward octaves and very little use of counterpoint between the left and right hands. In addition, Prokofiev avoids placing the piano and violin in the same register for the majority of the piece. In passages which feature both instruments in the same register, Prokofiev is careful to provide distinction between voices in one of two ways. The first method places one voice at a "faster" smaller metric subdivisions than the other. Examples of this can be found in the fourth

¹⁷⁰Prokofiev's first concerto began as a concertino; the second concerto started out as a sonata. Lyn Henderson, "The Violin Concertos of Prokofiev," *The Music Review* 54, no. 3 (August, 1993), 258, 261.

movement, in measures 52-58; as well as the second movement, in measures 50-55. The second method, especially prominent in the second movement, ensures that both voices are heard by using the hocket technique.

Figure 32a: Movement 4, measures 52-55¹⁷¹

Violin

mm 52 ord. *p* 55

Piano

p 55

Figure 32b: Movement 2, measures 50-55¹⁷²

Violin

mm 50 eroico *V* *IV* *espress.* 55

Piano

V 55

The most extreme variation of this separation between soloist and orchestra takes place during the sections of rapid passagework in the violin, which is generally accompanied by either melody in the orchestra part or a very slow-moving ostinato. In *Op. 80*, scalar passages define the first and last movements of the piece. Both Prokofiev and Oistrakh remarked in interviews

¹⁷¹Prokofiev, *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80*, movement 4, measures 52-55.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, movement 2, measures 50-55.

that this passage was meant to imitate “wind blowing over a graveyard.”¹⁷³ The marking of *freddo* as well as the indication to play the section with muted strings indicate that the passage is meant to sound distant and effortless. The violin part is accompanied by a very slow, nonfunctional chord progression featuring mostly seventh and ninth chords.

Prokofiev’s *Violin Concerto No. 2* contains similar passages. Like *Op. 80*, the rapidly moving passages in the violin are accompanied by a slow-moving line in the orchestra. Prokofiev’s *Violin Concerto No. 1* contains a similar passage near the end of the third movement. In this case, the violin’s scalar passages act as accompaniment to the melody, which is being played by the lower voices in the orchestra.

Despite these basic similarities, *Op. 80* is a highly original piece within Prokofiev’s violin compositions. The most obvious factor separating *Op. 80* from the violin concertos, *Five Melodies*, *Hebrew Overture*, *Sonata for Two Violins*, and string quartets is the emphasis on the lowest register of the violin in the opening of the first movement. Prokofiev’s violin pieces almost always begin in a higher register. *Op. 80* stubbornly remains low, as if rebelling against convention and melody.

The dramatic nature of *Op. 80* is most similar to *Violin Concerto No. 1*. One of the major factors contributing to this dramatic quality is the nearly constant use of staccato in the solo or orchestral texture, or both. In contrast, *Violin Concerto No. 2* is much more likely to feature legato accompaniment to a legato melody. In addition, *Violin Concerto No. 2* often features ostinato patterns which outline a melody, while *Concerto No. 1* and *Op. 80* contain static ostinato patterns.

¹⁷³ Blok, 204.

In conclusion, music theorists often use a combination of techniques to analyze Prokofiev's music, which are often mostly but not completely tonal. Specific problems presented in Prokofiev's compositional style include a lack of traditional harmonic progressions and the frequency of "wrong notes"; notes which lie outside the tonal orientation of the piece and are often chromatic substitutes for "right notes", notes within the tonal orientation of the piece. Compositional characteristics common to Prokofiev's music were described by the composer in his autobiography as five "lines" and consist of classical, modern, toccata, lyrical, and grotesque tendencies present in most if not all of his music. In addition, Prokofiev's style is defined by contrasting sections, a unique and consistent relationship between melody and accompaniment, and precise marking of the score.

A basic formal analysis of *Op. 80* reveals that the first movement is written in a modified ternary form. The opening section is further divided into a five-part rondo. The second movement is written in sonata form, although the recapitulation is shortened. The third movement is the simplest in the sonata, and contains a basic ternary form. The fourth movement is formally the most unique movement of the sonata. It may be divided into three major thematic sections. The first section is a set of variations on a dance-like theme. The second section is an elaborated version of the B theme from the first movement, and the third section contains material, which was initially used earlier in the movement, but at the end, the same theme was presented in a quite different way, as a gesture of optimism to please Soviet censors. The *Op. 80* is most similar to Prokofiev's violin concertos, which were both originally conceived as small-scale pieces. The most obvious similarity lies in orchestration; the unique relationship between soloist and orchestra is preserved in the sonata between the violin and piano. Of the two concertos, *Op. 80* is most similar to the first concerto.

CHAPTER 4: A HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

Chapter Two discussed the violinists who affected Prokofiev as he was writing his compositions for violin. This is only part of the information needed to create an informed interpretation of Prokofiev's music. Once a piece of music is released to the public, it is interpreted largely by the public and not the composer, often popular interpretations differ from the composer's own concept of the piece. In some cases, these reinterpretations are positive and add depth and nuance to a piece. In other cases, performers make choices which are not faithful to the original style of the piece. Therefore, one of the most important duties of the performer is to identify the interpretational ideas which are tasteful and justified by the harmonic and metric structure of the piece.

This chapter will discuss the development of *Op. 80* in performance by examining written documents as well as recordings. I will analyze the recordings of the musicians who have performed *Op. 80* since its premiere. In order to understand how the interpretation of the piece changed from its first performance and through the subsequent years, we need to consider the conventions of playing style and musical taste. I have chosen the recordings of several artists to map out the evolution of the piece as well as the evolution of the conventions that they represent. These musicians have had a role in the composition of the work, its popularization, and created renowned interpretations recognized by the music world and the general audience. The first two violinists who had the most influence on the sonata were Oistrakh and Szigeti. Oistrakh worked with the composer and premiered the sonata. Szigeti played the sonata after Oistrakh; nonetheless he is a representative of an earlier generation's musical style. In order to understand Oistrakh and Szigeti's interpretations, we need to understand the historical backgrounds of these performers and the styles of music making and the different schools of violin playing. Then the

influence of these performers on the performance practice of the sonata by later generations can be evaluated.

4.1 David Oistrakh

Of all violinists, Oistrakh had the most extensive contact with Prokofiev as he completed Op. 80. As noted in Chapter 2, Prokofiev met with Oistrakh several times to offer advice in preparation for the first performance of the piece. Szigeti, on the other hand, is representative of an earlier generation of violinists. Once the piece was premiered by Oistrakh, Prokofiev made additional changes to his manuscript based on his performance. For these reasons, an understanding of Oistrakh's interpretation of this piece is critical to understanding Prokofiev's original concept.

As a performer, Oistrakh believed he should develop an interpretation which was true to the composer's original intentions, especially in the case of Prokofiev's music. He expressed these views quite clearly in his eulogy for Prokofiev, which was reprinted in the book *Sergei Prokofiev: Articles, Materials, Reminiscences*. Oistrakh was quoted as saying the following:

[Prokofiev's music] is music in which nothing can be omitted, not a single turn of the melody, not a single modulation. It requires the strictest attention to every detail of expression, a fine, but not over-refined, execution of each individual intonation, as in the case of well-enunciated singing. The chief thing is that it does not tolerate any artistic liberties. The best performance of Prokofiev's music, or of any other good music for that matter, is one in which the personality of the performer does not obtrude in any way.¹⁷⁴

This belief was likely influenced by Oistrakh's experiences with the composer, who had the reputation of being very harsh with musicians who did not exactly follow his score.¹⁷⁵ It is therefore not surprising that, in general, Oistrakh provides a very close reading of the score. Of

¹⁷⁴Blok(1979), 201.

¹⁷⁵ Berman, Boris *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas: A Guide for Listeners and the Performers*,(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 46.

the recordings examined, Oistrakh remains most faithful to Prokofiev's metronome markings. He does not use expressive tools that are not specifically notated in the score, and he refrains from using expressive tools such as *glissando* and *tempo rubato*.

Oistrakh recorded *Op. 80* several times throughout his career. For the purposes of this document, I have compared recordings made in 1953 and 1955. It is important to note that each recording features a different pianist. Oistrakh's own interpretations of the sonata are also slightly different in each recording. However, each recording remains relatively close to Prokofiev's score markings.

4.2 Joseph Szigeti

As the oldest violinist discussed in this chapter, Szigeti could be considered a transitional figure in the world of violin performance practice. A concert violinist whose career began in 1905, his early success depended on his mastery of the musical style popular throughout Western Europe at the time. However, many elements of this style began to become less popular after World War II. Szigeti remained one of the most popular solo violinists until he began to shift his focus from performing to teaching and writing in the 1960s because he combined the old familiar conventions with more modern forms of expression.

Szigeti was a student of the Hungarian violinist Jenő Hubay, who had studied with Joachim.¹⁷⁶ This means that Szigeti inherited several technical conventions from Joachim specifically and the German violin school in general. The most fundamental of these was the German style bowing arm, which is held close to the body and uses a very loose grip, with the wrist held above the bow and fingers held close together, gripping the bow at a nearly

¹⁷⁶Boris Schwart, "Joseph Szigeti," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2009)
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/27314>.

perpendicular angle.¹⁷⁷ This posture has several major effects on sound production, which defined the German violin school. Although this posture produces a sweet sound, it is very difficult for the violinist to play with sufficient bow pressure to produce the louder dynamics and sharp, clear articulation which became increasingly popular in violin music after World War II.¹⁷⁸

Szigeti did his best to compensate for this dynamic discrepancy between music written before and after World War II by altering his preference of bowing techniques, especially off-the-string techniques such as *ricochet*, to emphasize the percussive qualities of the violin. This idea shows Szigeti's flexibility as a musical interpreter as well as performer.

The German violin school popularized by Joachim considered *vibrato* to be only an expressive tool. During the early 1900s, it was common for violinists to reserve the use of *vibrato* for the climaxes of phrases. In other words, vibrato was generally used for embellishment of notes which needed to be emphasized.¹⁷⁹ By the 1920s, however, violinists increasingly incorporated vibrato into their basic concept of sound, until the nearly constant *vibrato* popular today was achieved.¹⁸⁰ Szigeti followed this trend to some extent, but retained the very wide *vibrato* which had been favored by Hubay instead of the narrower, more subtle *vibrato* favored by younger violinists.¹⁸¹

Another major change in musical practice in the years following World War II was the understanding of rhythm and use of *rubato*. Before the war, the romantic concept of *rubato* was used by almost all musicians in the interpretation and performance of music. The exact nature of

¹⁷⁷ Philip, Robert, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 98.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 98.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 100.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 99.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 106.

rubato in the early twentieth century has not been clearly defined, but examination of musical dictionaries published during this period as well as early musical recordings indicate that *rubato* consisted of nearly constant subtle variation of rhythmic relationships at the local level, while the overall tempo of the larger musical structure was preserved. It is important to emphasize that *rubato* was considered a rhythmic device rather than an alteration of tempo. Musicians of the early twentieth century considered tempo to be an unchanging fundamental basis; without a consistent tempo, *rubato* would lose its meaning and expressive usefulness. Often, use of *rubato* resulted in lengthening notes which were considered the climax of a phrase, while notes at the very beginning and end of the phrase were usually shortened.¹⁸² This was the interpretation favored by Szigeti, and is especially obvious in sections such as measures 6-7 of the second movement of *Op. 80*.

Because the concept of *rubato* is to emphasize important notes by lengthening them, basic musical logic implies that shorter notes must generally not be as important as long notes. For this reason, short notes were usually played shorter than indicated. This often leads to the tendency to double-dot or over-dot dotted rhythms and acceleration in fast technical passages.¹⁸³ The special relationship of *rubato* and tempo as described in the early twentieth-century often resulted in sudden changes in tempo between sections. The freedom of rhythm made sudden *accelerandi* and *ritardandi* easy to achieve, while the idea of a consistent tempo as the basic requirement for *rubato* required that transitional tempos be kept as short as possible. These concepts are all present in Szigeti's recording of *Op. 80*. An example of this occurs in the second movement, where the *piu tranquillo* section in measure 175 is performed at a much faster

¹⁸² Ibid, 70.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 70.

tempo than Oistrakh's interpretation because Szigeti needs to maintain a consistent tempo in order to use *rubato* effectively.

At the time of *Op. 80*'s premiere, Josef Szigeti was one of the most popular violinists in Western Europe and the United States. He was a strong promoter of contemporary music, and especially Prokofiev's first violin concerto. While both he and Oistrakh were international soloists, Szigeti had a more active concert schedule and therefore he had more influence for spreading Prokofiev's music throughout the world. This fact alone makes Szigeti's interpretation an important factor in any informed interpretation of Prokofiev's music.

4.3 Modern Trends

After World War II, several aspects of musical style began to change. This applies to music in general as well as the common practice of violin performance. The popularization of the Franco-Belgian school by Eugene Ysaye led to a preference toward the Franco-Belgian style of grip and posture. In the Franco-Belgian school, the right arm is held away from the body, the right hand wrist is held in a way which allows the index finger to separate slightly from the other fingers, which are more widely spread and slightly curved as they grip the bow. This results in a much greater potential for performance of loud dynamic levels, as well as more sensitivity and variety in the general sound production and allowing crisper articulations.¹⁸⁴

Consideration of the Russian school of violin is also important to the interpretation of this piece, as it must be remembered that Prokofiev consulted with violinists who were educated in the Russian tradition.¹⁸⁵ The Russian bowing arm is an extension of the Franco-Belgian bowing arm, but in this case the bowing arm is held even higher. This allows the index finger to be

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 98.

¹⁸⁵ This is discussed in Chapter 2.

wrapped around the bow. This results in even greater potential for loud dynamic levels and short, accented articulations.¹⁸⁶

During the second half of the twentieth century, musicians changed the way they thought of rhythm and tempo. Musicians in the early decades of the century frequently relied on rhythm as an expressive tool, but in the final decades it had become much more popular to create expression with dramatic tempo changes.¹⁸⁷ The basic relationship of rhythm and tempo remains the same; rhythm is meaningless without tempo, and tempo is meaningless without rhythm. Therefore, expressive changes of tempo lose meaning without a strict observance of rhythmic proportions. Logically, this approach requires longer transitional passages to reach new tempi. Therefore, it is easiest to change the tempo gradually so that the basic rhythmic proportions of the music are preserved.

This shift in perspective could be seen as a new focus on musical detail. As exact reproduction of score indications became more important, and expressive devices such as *portamento* and *expressive vibrato*, which had been common in previous decades, began to go out of style. Musicians were forced to seek new methods of expression. One major way in which violinists today achieve variety in their music, influenced by the new possibilities of the Franco-Belgian bowing arm, is to produce a variety of tone colors. This concept may be applied on the large scale, for example to make a difference between a *piumosso* and a *piu tranquillo* section, or as an expressive device within a phrase. This second possibility works especially well with Prokofiev's music, which often features temporary tonal shifts as described in the third chapter. Many violinists today choose to emphasize these tonal shifts by briefly altering the tone

¹⁸⁶ Robert, (1992), 81.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 70.

color used to play them. Examples of expressive use of tone color in *Op. 80* are presented in Victoria Mullova's¹⁸⁸ interpretation of measures 69-72 in the first movement, which includes an echo effect achieved by lessening the dynamic level and vibrato of the phrase in measures 71-72; the section between measures 52 and 74 of the fourth movement, in which Isaac Stern produces a sweeter sound by using a mute; and the last four measures of the fourth movement, where Joshua Bell¹⁸⁹ achieves a warmer quality of sound by increasing the speed and intensity of his *vibrato*.

4.3.1 Comparison of Recordings

By the time *Op. 80* was premiered, Prokofiev had basically withdrawn from his career as a concert pianist. He usually used young pianists from Russian conservatories to perform and premiere his works.¹⁹⁰ It is a well-documented fact that, in his younger days, Prokofiev used the sustaining pedal only rarely, especially when performing his own works.¹⁹¹ However, the pianists with whom he worked over the years did not necessarily share this tendency. Stanislav Richter,¹⁹² for example, was widely considered to be Prokofiev's preferred pianist and favored the use of the sustaining pedal in most of his playing. This was a natural tendency, as most of his

¹⁸⁸ Victoria Mullova is a graduate of the Central Music School and the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. Her major teachers include David Oistrakh and Leonid Kogan. Her early career includes first prizes in the Wieniawsky Competition in 1981, Sibelius Competition in 1982, and the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1982. In her 1994 recording of *Op. 80* with Philips, Mullova shows a strong interpretation similar to Oistrakh's early recordings of the piece. Margaret Campbell, "Viktoria Mullova," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/44580>.

¹⁸⁹ Joshua Bell was born and educated in Bloomington, Indiana. His teachers were Mimi Zweig and Joseph Gingold at Indiana University. His debut was in 1981 with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Margaret Campbell, "Joshua Bell," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/42214>.

¹⁹⁰ Plaskin, Glenn, *Horowitz: A Biography of Vladimir Horowitz* (New York: William Morrow, 1983), 121.

¹⁹¹ Berman(2008), 44.

¹⁹² Sviatoslav Richter was widely regarded as Prokofiev's favorite pianist. Although born in Odessa, Richter's main teacher was Heinrich Neuhaus at the Moscow Conservatory. Over the years, Richter was chosen by Prokofiev to premier his Sonata No. 7, Sonata No. 9, Sonata for Cello and Piano, and Sonata for Flute and Piano. David Fanning, "Sviatoslav Richter," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/23408>.

formal education had emphasized the works of romantic composers; Lev Oborin, who premiered *Op. 80* with David Oistrakh, had similar tendencies. The question of how much pedaling is appropriate in *Op. 80* is therefore open to debate.

Of the recordings considered, the earliest recordings have the greatest range of interpretation. There are several reasons for this variety; the most obvious reason was that early interpretations of *Op. 80* were so different from each other is that the piece was new. This means that there were no established norms regarding the performance of the piece. There is always more freedom given to the interpretation of a new piece simply because it is new. At the time of the recording, there were usually a limited number of individuals who have studied the piece in detail, so the performer was free to take greater risks in interpretation than might normally be allowed.

A second factor which contributed to the variety of early interpretations is the availability of recordings. In the 1960s and 1970s, recordings of music were generally much harder to find than they are today. Recording was still a young industry which has become much more efficient and accessible with each decade. At the time of *Op. 80*'s premiere, however, most musicians were not able to make their own recordings, so there were simply fewer recordings made.¹⁹³ The large databases of musical recordings available to most students today did not exist even twenty years ago. Most musicians learned of a piece by studying the score, and possibly by attending a public performance. However, it was often simply not possible for a musician in the 1960s to prepare the kind of informed interpretation which is considered standard today.

¹⁹³ Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). 92.

The most obvious trend in recent recordings is that interpretations of *Op. 80* are becoming increasingly similar.¹⁹⁴ While many different ideas were presented regarding the interpretation of *Op. 80* in the years immediately following its release, today's interpretations are mostly based on these early interpretations, which have been criticized and debated. A recent recording of *Op. 80* may extend or reinterpret an idea expressed in an earlier recording, but completely new interpretations are rare. In summary, each decade experiences increased pressure to conform to established performance practice which dictates which interpretations are acceptable and which ideas lay outside "proper" interpretations of the piece.

The opening phrases of the first movement are among the most dramatic of the piece, and are interpreted differently in almost every recording. Nearly every aspect of the violin entrance in measures 5-9 is subject to variation, but most interpretations of this phrase relate to articulation and length of notes. The passage begins with an unmarked G eighth note, followed by an A-flat eighth note which is marked with a dot, an accented trill, and an A-flat nachschlag at the end of the trill.

Oistrakh's 1953 recording with Lev Oborin¹⁹⁵ reveals a fairly legato interpretation of this figure. Oistrakh plays the first two notes without separation, lifts his bow at the end of the second note, and simply holds an A-flat briefly at the end of the trill. Szigeti's interpretation of this passage is much more marked; there is a short silence between the first two eighth notes, and

¹⁹⁴ Conclusion based on the review of the recordings discussed above.

¹⁹⁵ Lev Oborin was a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, where he studied with Yelena Gnesina and Igumnov. In 1928, only two years after his graduation, Oborin began teaching piano at the Moscow Conservatory and was an appointed professor in 1935. He won the Chopin Competition in 1927 and began a career-long collaboration with David Oistrakh in 1943. In addition, Oborin and Oistrakh founded a piano trio with cellist Knushevitsky in 1943. Oborin received numerous coachings from Prokofiev in preparation for the piece's premiere; his students therefore display the interpretation which is likely the closest to Prokofiev's original concept. He also premiered Prokofiev's second sonata for violin and piano. James Methuen-Campbell, "Lev Oborin," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/20226>.

the second note is played shorter and with crisper articulation than Oistrakh. The silence between the eighth notes gives the impression of a short breath. In contrast to this marked character, Szigeti does not articulate or emphasize the A-flat nachschlag; he ends his trill on A-flat, but does not acknowledge an additional nachschlag. Gidon Kremer's¹⁹⁶ interpretation is similar to Oistrakh in that his eighth notes are somewhat connected. However, his second eighth note is shorter than Oistrakh's, and he actually rearticulates the A-flat trill nachschlag with a small thrust of the bow. Further, the repeat of the figure in measures 6 and 8 reveals a progressive shortening of the first eighth note, placing increasing emphasis on the second eighth note.

Of these interpretations, I prefer something combining Oistrakh and Gidon Kremer. These interpretations are closer to the actual score markings. I also think that it is important to acknowledge the nachschlag; adding a slight rearticulating similar to Kremer's or Oistrakh's interpretation conveys a more mystical atmosphere which emphasizes the atmosphere of the entire first movement. In addition, crisper articulations and shorter notes draw attention to the unique function of the violin in this passage. In this case, the normally lyrical violin voice is given a percussive function, while the normally percussive piano carries the lyrical function.

Measure 51 is another point of departure regarding bow stroke and left hand articulation. Unlike other sections discussed in this chapter, there are no clear-cut choices or trends of interpretation. Instead, each duo seems to have its own interpretation of the function and color of the section, which ends in measure 66. In Szigeti's recording, we can observe that he plays the

¹⁹⁶Gidon Kremer studied under Sturesteps at the Latvian Academy of Music and Oistrakh and Bondarenko at the Moscow Conservatory. Kremer's career began in the mid-1960s, when he won prizes in the Tchaikovsky, Queen Elisabeth, Paganini and Montreal competitions. His first public performance outside of Europe occurred in 1975 with the London Symphony under Karajan. His 1992 recording of Op. 80 under Deutsche Grammophon features Martha Argerich on piano. Margaret Campbell, "Gidon Kremer," *Grove Music Online*, (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/44576>.

section with slight use of *portamento* between some notes. This has the effect of smoothing out the voice leading of the arpeggio which occurs throughout the section. Oistrakh prefers a more vibrant interpretation of the section, playing the passage with a subtle vibrato to emphasize the intervals which occur on the beat. Joshua Bell, in contrast, seeks a thin, transparent color, playing the section at least one dynamic level below any of the other recordings considered in this chapter and with very little or no *vibrato*. Yet another possibility is presented by Kremer, who prepares a fragmented version using *portato* bowing. My interpretation of this section favors a more transparent reading of the section; although I do not play the section as quietly as Bell, I generally use very little vibrato and focus on connecting notes following Prokofiev's original slurs.

The *freddo* section beginning in measure 80 is another important point of comparison between recordings. There are two main approaches to this section. Some violinists prefer to create a more transparent texture, which is achieved by focusing on smooth articulation in the left hand. The other approach, favored by Oistrakh in his 1953 recording, features more distinct articulation of the scalar passages. This approach creates a more virtuosic impression, where the violin line is treated as melody. In either case, the pianist must contrast his articulation with that of the violin. In other words, a violinist playing with smooth articulation should be accompanied by clearly articulated, even bell-like, chords in the piano. A violinist featuring the more virtuosic interpretation should be accompanied by muted chords in the piano. This balance provides the character of the section.

As mentioned above, Oistrakh favors the more virtuosic interpretation of the *freddo* section. Most other recordings, however, tend toward the more transparent texture. Gidon Kremer's approach extends this principal by sometimes adding a *ponticello* effect to color the

passage. In this instance, the “shimmering/transparent” violinists are closer to Prokofiev’s intentions. Prokofiev marks the passage *freddo* as well as indicating the use of a mute, both of which imply a less distinct articulation. In addition, we are reminded of Prokofiev’s famous remark that the section should sound like “wind in a graveyard.”¹⁹⁷ The danger of using this transparent texture is that it can become boring. Martha Argerich’s¹⁹⁸ solution to this problem is achieved by voicing the chords to bring out the movement of the inner voices, which adds interest to an otherwise static section.

The *pizzicato recitando* figure, which begins in measure 89, is especially varied. In this case, there should be some freedom applied to the rhythmic interpretation of the part. Oistrakh plays the figure with a slight *accelerando* toward the middle of the phrase, and a *ritardando* at the end of the phrase. This is the approach adopted by most violinists. In contrast, Szigeti plays the figure almost exactly in tempo, with no change in rhythm. Kremer’s interpretation is the most interesting of those considered in this chapter; he seems to apply *tenuti*, *accelerandi* and *ritardandi* randomly. Although this approach is interesting and fits into the character of the movement, it is too free to fit within standard interpretation of Prokofiev’s style.

The last four measures of the movement are also interpreted slightly differently by violinists. In these measures, the violin and piano alternate a series of chords. The piano’s chords lie within the key of F Minor. Meanwhile, the violin chords begin with a G half-diminished seventh chord and move through an A-flat Minor chord to an F-C dyad. These

¹⁹⁷ Blok, (1978), 204.

¹⁹⁸ Martha Argerich’s career began in 1949, at the age of eight. The Argentine pianist distinguished herself by winning the Busoni and Geneva competitions in 1957, as well as the Chopin Competition in 1965. She included Prokofiev’s Toccata for Piano on her first recording with Deutsche Grammophon in 1960. Her 1992 recording of Op. 80 with Deutsche Grammophon is characterized by precisely and expressively voiced textures. Bryce Morrison, “Martha Argerich,” *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/01223>.

chords are generally performed in one of two ways. The interpretation favored by Oistrakh breaks the chords more slowly, with a slight *ritardando* placing emphasis on the soprano voice. This strategy is then matched by the piano to preserve the style. The second interpretation, first demonstrated by Szigeti, is to play the entire chord very quickly. In both cases, the pianist generally matches the strategy of the violinist. The violin/piano duo of Victoria Mullova and Bruno Canino¹⁹⁹ provides an exception to this general rule. Mullova rolls the chord slowly, in the same manner as Oistrakh, but Canino responds to this with percussive, quickly rolled chords. This gesture does not fit into the character of the movement, and therefore gives the brief impression of the grotesque element.

The second movement is marked *allegro brusco*. The more specific definition of this term, and how it should be applied to the movement, is subject to much variation among violinists. The opening of the movement is clearly aggressive in character, but there are different ideas about exactly how much this aspect should be emphasized, and in which way. Oistrakh plays this movement with an assertive, rich tone. Victoria Mullova follows in this trend, although her tempo is slower than Oistrakh's. This has the effect of slightly decreasing the energy of the opening statement. Szigeti shows his romantic background by choosing an even slower tempo to accompany the *forte* dynamic and *marcato* character of the opening. Gidon Kremer, meanwhile, chooses to introduce an element of the grotesque by using vibrato only rarely, usually at the climax of the phrase. However, his use of open strings and harsh colors departs from the romantic tradition of the early 1900's. Instead, his use of *rubato* moves toward the trend, common in the 1960's and 1970's, of interpreting modern music almost without

¹⁹⁹ Bruno Canino is Mullova's collaborating pianist in the 1994 Philips recording of Op. 80. A graduate as well as current professor of the Milan Conservatory, Canino's career began when he won prizes in the international competitions at Bolzano in 1956 and 1958, and Darmstadt in 1960. Dominic Gill, "Bruno Canino," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/04733>.

beauty.²⁰⁰ This is an interesting idea which fits Prokofiev's general compositional style, but it is an effect which is difficult to reproduce in the piano. Because the hocket character of the opening treats the violin and piano as equal partners, it is very important that both interpreters share very similar ideas on the execution of this passage.

Another variation in interpretations occurs at the very end of the movement, which features descending whole note octaves in the piano part. The violin part consists of two scalar runs of 13 notes. The first scale leads to the top E within the violin's range, and the second leads to the highest C of the violin's range. The last measure of the movement contains only whole note C's covering six octaves from the violin note to the lowest piano note. Some violinists, such as Oistrakh and myself, choose to place a small tenuto on the first note of the first scale. Other violinists, including Szigeti, Kremer, and Bell, prefer to play the passage without this pause. However, both Kremer and Bell place a slight pause just before the articulation of the final C. This emphasizes the C as the natural and inevitable conclusion of the piece. Bell exaggerates the effect by placing a short fermata over the final C. Of the four movements, the second movement is the most revealing of Szigeti's German training. The concepts of *rubato*, *over-dotting*, and *vibrato* discussed above are all clearly demonstrated to the point where the violinist seems to ignore some Prokofiev's tempo indications in the score.

The third movement is unique among the movements of *Op. 80* because it does not contain any major tempo changes. The entire movement maintains a slow, peaceful character and simple arched phrases. This simplicity allows more freedom of interpretation than any other movement of the sonata. Instead of showing variety in alternating themes, tonal areas, and tempo markings, the violinist must rely mainly on phrasing to provide interest. Personally, the

²⁰⁰ Robinson (1987), 326.

third movement offers the most options for musicians to develop their interpretations by exploring the nuances of the movement, without being constrained by a specific character such as the dance in the fourth movement. The phrases could be built in numerous and different ways: the same phrase can be started at *pianissimo* and *crescendo*, or *mezzo forte* and *decrescendo*, but more importantly both interpretations of the phrase are equally valid. The way I choose to develop the phrasing in the third movement depends of what I choose to convey, and what character I want to portray.

As in the first movement, the performers must decide which texture they wish to develop for the best effect. This is especially important in the movement's introduction, where the violin and piano alternate in playing the same phrase. In this case, the most logical interpretation achieves a similar effect in the piano at the beginning of measure 17 between the piano and violin. This becomes even more important during the return of the A section, when the violin and piano reverse roles in measures 73-77. However, the desired texture must be applied to the entire movement. In other words, the slower phrases, such as the melody played by the violin in measures 69-72, should have a similar effect to the character used in the beginning of the movement. Overall the movement has very intimate atmosphere, I see the first twenty five bars as an unreal dream, a dream about a fond memory. I play the section with warm sound and vibrato, nevertheless avoiding the tendency of depicting a romantic sweetness. This is still a dream, not the reality. In measures 15 and 16 Prokofiev changes the atmosphere. The sonorities in the piano part change from C-sharp harmonies in the previous measures, to an augmented A-flat chord with a single line descending by semitones which leads to A-flat Major. I feel that here I need to differentiate between the sustained C notes by expressing them differently with both the right and left hand. The first and the second C's are extremely unstable- they are

carrying the worries and desperation and dark color of the whole piece. This is the moment where I feel that the peaceful and beautiful beginning was just a moment. The 3rd C is a fleeting relief, and the piece returns to the original melancholic atmosphere. As an interpreter I approach the 3rd C in measure 16 by completely changing the approach to the sound production as well as playing with very limited or no *vibrato*. It is then supported by the major sonority in the piano .

A violinist imitating the piano should connect his notes as smoothly as possible, even possibly allowing a small *crescendo* leading from one note to the next. This connection between notes imitates the effect of the sustaining pedal which is generally used. A similar effect may be achieved with left hand technique, by slowly depressing the string, which produces a much smoother articulation. If the pianist chooses to play without the sustaining pedal, of course, the effect will be completely different. Of the recordings discussed in this chapter, Olli Mustonen,²⁰¹ who recorded with Joshua Bell on Decca records, and Vladimir Ashkenazy,²⁰² who recorded with Itzak Perlman,²⁰³ both use little or no pedal. Generally speaking, however, the reverberation of the piano strings and the articulation of the pianist will produce a somewhat

²⁰¹ Olli Mustonen is a Finnish pianist and composer who studied with Palf Gothoni and Eero Heinonenin at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, but lists Lev Oborin as a colleague and mentor on his website. This recording was made in 1995, four years after Mustonen and Bell formed a piano trio with the cellist Steven Isserlis. His interpretation of Op. 80 is one of the few that uses very little sustaining pedal. Jessica Duchon, "Olli Mustonen," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010),

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/44490>.

²⁰² Vladimir Ashkenazy was a graduate of the Moscow Central School of Music, where he studied with Anaida Sumbatyan and Lev Oborin. He won prizes at the Queen Elizabeth Competition and the Tchaikovsky International Competition. After defecting to Iceland in 1963, Ashkenazy recorded frequently with Decca Records. During this period, Ashkenazy recorded most of Prokofiev's compositions for piano, including all of the piano concertos. Stephen Plaistow, "Vladimir Ashkenazy," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010),

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/01404>.

²⁰³ Itzhak Perlman began his career as a violinist at a very young age in Israel; although he was self-taught in the beginning, he soon enrolled in the Tel Aviv Conservatory, where he studied with Rivka Goldgart, and the Julliard School, where he studied with Dorothy Delay and Ivan Galamian. As a chamber musician, Perlman has collaborated with many well-known pianists, including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Martha Argerich, and Bruno Canino. Tully Porter, "Itzhak Perlman," *Grove Music Online* (2007-2010),

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/21349>.

sustained effect. The other approach, favored by Oistrakh, is to clearly articulate each note, even when the pianist is playing with more legato articulation.

The choice between these options is a matter of personal taste. It is difficult to criticize Oistrakh's choices because he believed that a good interpretation should follow the wishes of the composer, which in this case he knew very well. Because there is no specific expressive marking left by Prokofiev, we must assume that Oistrakh's interpretation of more clearly articulated notes is equally as valid as the more connected interpretation favored by Szigeti and Kremer. My preference is to connect the notes to imitate the legato articulation of a pedaled piano, because it emphasizes the stepwise motion of the phrase.

In addition, the opening of the third movement allows and even seems to require *rubato*. Violinists differ in the extent to which they choose to use this concept. As might be expected, Szigeti's interpretation is quite extreme as he rushes toward and away from the sustained climax of each phrase. Even Oistrakh shows some flexibility of rhythm, placing his notes near the end of each beat rather than at the beginning. I prefer Oistrakh's more nuanced approach. The nearly exact placement of notes is much more powerful than outright changing of rhythms. The easiest way to achieve this effect is simply to perform the piano part in exact rhythm and unchanging tempo. Although the violin may fall slightly behind or push slightly ahead, it remains tied to the piano part and therefore keeps its rhythmic integrity. This approach also makes the tension between the actual tempo and the tendency of the phrase to push or pull more obvious to the listener.

The transition to the B section in mm. 25-29 is a source of different interpretations among recordings. The main issue is how much energy should be expressed in this short section, which connects two basically lethargic sections. The extremes of interpretation of these measures are

presented by Kremer and Bell. Kremer has a more energetic interpretation. He brings out the energy of the dotted rhythms by over-dotting the short notes. The trills are also highly nuanced. Kremer begins each trill with a *sforzando*, which immediately drops back to a *piano* dynamic, briefly crescendos to a loud *mezzo forte*, then fades into silence. This approach, combined with a very fast trill speed, gives the impression of laughter, possibly another expression of the grotesque as defined by Prokofiev.

In contrast, Bell's rhythms are much truer to the original notation. In general, Olli Mustonen, Bell's pianist, shows a preference for clear articulation and a *marcato* approach. He rarely uses the sustaining pedal, a fact that Bell chooses to contrast with a more legato interpretation of his own part. Vladimir Ashkenazy, who recorded with Itzak Perlman, shows the same tendency toward clear articulation and only subtle use of the pedal. Like Bell, Perlman chooses to contrast this articulation with a more legato style. However, his trills are more accented. This approach preserves the contrast between the voices, but produces a more lively effect than pure legato playing in the violin. In contrast, the transitional section in measures 25 to 28 is an episode that can be described as a joke, something not serious. The way I approach the section is by making a small change in the sound color and slight *ritenuto* at the end of the ascending scale in measure 26, and changing the color of the A-flat trill two measures later, at the end of measure 28.

Measure 29 is originally suggested to be played on G string. For me this is the most lifeless place of the entire movement, reminiscent of the feeling of hopelessness feeling from the moments of the first movement. I play this four bar section without vibrato and a very unexpressive white sound. Even though measure 40 is marked *mezzo-piano* and the melody is placed in the middle register of the instrument, this section is one of the most expressive places

in the movement. This is why I personally play it on D string which in my opinion, the specific timber of D string adds additional depth in the expression.

Violinists often disagree on the bowing in measures 90-92, near the end of the movement. These measures contain a written-out *ritardando*; an F-A dyad in the violin part is played first as thirty-second notes, then as sixteenth-note triplets, then finally as sixteenth notes. This effect gives the impression of a figure which gradually loses its energy. Oistrakh and Kremer prefer *detache* bowing, while Szigeti and Mullova play the figure with *spiccato* bowing. Both approaches have advantages. While it is possible to add more weight to *detache* bowing, *spiccato* also provides very clear articulation. In my own interpretation, I use *spiccato* bowing; by approaching the first note of the group from the air, however, both options are acceptable.

The first twelve measures of the fourth movement are the basis of an extended section of variation. Therefore, the interpretation of these opening phrases defines the character of most of the movement. The melody is similar to the Russian folk dance tradition, which is often made up of alternating asymmetrical and symmetrical time signatures and often features a modal rather than tonal orientation. This dancelike melody requires an energetic character from the very beginning of the piece, which Prokofiev marks as *forte allegro*. This is a clear indication of the energetic nature of the movement, and most violinists play the opening measures with similar energy.

Violinists tend to disagree on the bowing of these phrases. This decision must be based on the overall tempo of the piece, as well as the effect the violinist wishes to achieve. One popular method, used by Kremer, is to begin the piece playing slightly off the string; in measures 3-4 and 7-8, bowing may remain off the string or, in some cases, switched to *detache* bowing. A second interpretation begins the piece on the string, then switches to off-string bowing in measures 3-4 and 7-8. Oistrakh provides another alternative by playing the entire passage *detache*. Although I prefer to play the entire passage on the string, Victoria Mullova achieves a very nice energy with off-the-string bouncing stroke bowing. Similar considerations must be

made in sections such as the ascending and descending scales in measures 138-142 and 153-158. In these passages, Kremer and Oistrakh again use *detache* bowings, while Szigeti chooses *ricochet* bowing and Mullova plays *spiccato*.

There is significant differentiation regarding the chords punctuating each four-measure phrase. Oistrakh breaks the chords quickly, but allows a short breath before continuing the next phrase. This gives the impression that the chord has the function of punctuating of the phrase. Szigeti does not break the chord at all, but simply moves through it as a brief interruption of a twelve-measure phrase. Of these interpretations, Oistrakh's is probably closer to Prokofiev's original intentions, as it preserves the dance-like quality of the melody. I prefer an interpretation with an even bigger breath after the chords and the chords should be broken even in a slower, more roller way to bring out the Russian/Slavic dance character.

Measure 195 marks the next important section of interpretation in the fourth movement. This is the return of the *freddo* section from the first movement, and is marked *poco meno*. Both ideas from the *freddo* section, the scalar runs and the *pizzicato recitando*, are presented in this section with a new and more assertive character. The beginning of the section, in this case, is marked *fortissimo* instead of the *pianissimo* of the first movement, and the *pizzicato recitando* phrases are now to be played *arco*, with the recitative character notated in the first movement but extended in extreme dynamic and tension level. Violinists differ on the tempo they perform this section; Joshua Bell and Gidon Kremer tend toward slower tempos than notated, while Oistrakh and Szigeti actually push the tempo slightly beyond Prokofiev's metronome marking of 112. This has an immediate effect on the bowing stroke used for *arco* versions of the *pizzicato recitando* phrases from the first movement. The violinists who choose a slower tempo for this section usually play these measures *detache*, while those choosing faster tempos use *spiccato* technique. My interpretation includes a slightly slower tempo; this increases the dramatic nature of the section, which is the climax of the entire piece.

CHAPTER 5: COMPARISON OF EDITIONS

When preparing an interpretation of a piece, it is a common mistake not to learn about different editions. It is often assumed that all editions are basically the same, when in fact they contain different expressive markings, articulations, and different notes. Although Prokofiev had a reputation for being very exact with his written instructions, editions of *Op. 80* today contain some variations in these categories. My approach to the comparison of editions is to compare the violin and piano parts separately, because the changes made to piano score are different from the changes made to the violin part.

Most editions in circulation today are based on one of two manuscripts, edited by David Oistrakh and Josef Szigeti. We know from several biographies of Prokofiev that he did not release his manuscript to be published until 1951.²⁰⁴ However, Szigeti's first edition of the piece was published by Leed's Music in 1948. This was adapted from Szigeti's copy of the manuscript, which he received from Prokofiev.²⁰⁵

Generally speaking, the piano scores in these original editions are very similar. However, there are some minor differences. The most obvious difference between the piano scores is that the Oistrakh edition, currently published by Edition Peters, is written in a way which is slightly easier for the pianist to read. At first, it appears that Szigeti's edition would actually be more accessible to the pianist, because the size of the manuscript is slightly larger. However, this results in several awkward page turns. In addition, the placement of clef changes in Szigeti's version is often slightly uncomfortable for the pianist; while the Edition Peters version often places such clef changes at the beginning of a musical figure, the Leeds version is much more

²⁰⁴ Robinson (1987), 450.

²⁰⁵ Szigeti(1953),65.

likely to place the clef change in the middle of the musical figure. One example of this can be observed in measure 21 of the first movement.

There are also a few notes which differ between the piano scores. The first occurs in the piano part in measure 23 of the first movement. Oistrakh's version begins the measure with a notated F in the right hand, while Szigeti's version places the downbeat on a written D in the right hand. In this case, the D octaves are the most appropriate interpretation, because the violin is simultaneously playing a D in a figure which is mirrored by the piano part.

Another major difference between the two editions occurs in the fourth movement. In this case, the last two eighth notes and their corresponding beats are omitted in the violin part in the second measure of the phrase starting in measure 83. This phrase is a variation based on the opening theme, which is presented in measures 1 through 12. While Oistrakh preserves the theme exactly in both occurrences of the violin part, Szigeti chooses to delete two eighth notes in measure 84, changing the meter of that measure from 7/8 to 5/8. This omission can also be observed in Szigeti's recording of the piece with Columbia Records, which contains the same measure as written in Szigeti's edition. In this case, I agree with Oistrakh's interpretation, because this would be the only example of the alteration of the phrase in this way; it is never repeated, even within the variation.

Several differences between editions can be found in the violin part. Although all editions contain the same basic tempo markings, there are a variety of notated bowings, fingerings, and slurs which differ among editions. In most cases, these markings are suggestions that were made by the publisher, and may or may not have anything in common with Oistrakh or Szigeti's interpretations. An example of both of these ideas can be found by examining the Edition Peters and Moskva Music publications of *Op. 80*. The Edition Peters version of the

violin part contains relatively few bowing and fingering suggestions. However, the edition I first used to learn the piece, published by Moskva Music, contains many more such suggestions. Both editions credit Oistrakh as editor, so it must be assumed that the decision to include different bowings and fingerings was made by the publisher rather than the editor.

An example of the variation in suggested fingerings and bowings can be found in measures 40 and 41 of the third movement of *Op. 80*. In the Moskva Music edition, the suggested fingerings advise the violinist to play the rising melody on the G and D strings. Usually, it is more natural for the violinists to perform these notes on the D and A strings, because they are quite high in the tessitura of the instrument. In this case, the passage sounds better on the G and D, because the quality of the timbre on these strings is closer to the *tenero espressivo* marked by Prokofiev at the beginning of the phrase. Also, the use of the A string rather than the D string in measure 41 will prevent the timbre from matching the beginning of the melodic phrase.

Some musicians strongly feel that they should create their own fingerings. Each violinist has a unique physiology, so the best combination of fingers in a specific passage is different for each performer. Therefore, to a certain extent, everyone should come up with the combination of fingering that will work the best for him. This is why some of the editions, such as Peters prefer not to offer any such details. In my first experience with *Op. 80*, I used an edition of the piece, published by Moskva Music, which contained many bowing suggestions and fingerings. As I learned the piece, I changed several of these suggestions to fit my own interpretation of the piece. I believe that this approach is equally valid to the approach mentioned earlier. The only danger of such an approach is that the violinist cannot allow himself to play suggested bowings and fingerings without critical analysis.

CONCLUSION

Developing an interpretation of any musical piece is a difficult and complex process. The performer must consider every possible factor relating to the history of the piece, as well as past and present conventions of performance. The purpose of this document is to examine some of the major issues relating to an informed interpretation of Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Op. 80*.

I believe that *Op. 80* is a unique piece, because its musical language combines a variety of musical characters. These characters include both more conventional styles of composing, such as lyrical and technical passages, as well as unique compositional characteristics featured in Prokofiev's writing. In the case of *Op. 80*, these passages are often dark, aggressive, frightening, and even grotesque in character, however they are almost always followed by themes expressing, dance-like qualities, and lyrical beauty.

The first chapter briefly describes the events in the composer's biography which outline the development of his musical style, and led to Prokofiev's decision to return to the Soviet Union. Due to his unique compositional language, the composer was received very differently in Russia, France, and America, where each audience focused their judgments and tastes on different aspects of Prokofiev's compositions. In Russia, Prokofiev's high work was a possible reason that the piece took almost eight years to complete.

The second chapter is a historical account which concentrates on the sonata itself. Prokofiev, unlike other composers such as Brahms and Szymanowski, did not actively consult with violinists while he was forming his concept of a piece. He usually worked on his own,

composed the piece using only his own ideas, and then consulting with violinists for technical advices. Therefore, these violinists had more an indirect than direct influence on Prokofiev's writing. He often heard them perform in another context while he was writing a piece, and his interpretation of a piece would have been altered as his understanding of the capabilities of the instrument changed. Each of his violin pieces is therefore colored by composer's exposure to these violinists.

The harmonic, melodic, thematic and formal analysis of the sonata, discussed in Chapter Three, helped me to further understand the structure of the piece. With this knowledge, I am better able to justify my phrasing and interpretational ideas, which are based on the harmonic and metric structure of the piece.

In order to understand Prokofiev's musical language in general and *Op. 80* in particular, I researched his biography and the historic context which influenced the creation of the sonata. Through this research, I found that several violinists from this period influenced Prokofiev and the composition of *Op. 80*. In particular, Prokofiev's experiences with Pawel Kochanski influenced the way he wrote for the violin. The collaboration with Oistrakh directly influenced the composition of *Op. 80*. Another violinist that was also influential was Szigeti. His role in popularizing the composition was also very important.

As I was studying the sonata and preparing my own interpretation, I listened to many different recordings. I was amazed by the different interpretations of the performers and how they changed the character and the message of the piece. This is one of the reasons that I originally wanted to do a thorough study on the major factors that played a role in the interpretation of the piece. The research also allowed me to understand the importance of earlier

recordings, such as Szigeti's and Oistrakh's. I am now able to place their performance style into the context of the historical and musical conventions that influenced their style. Understanding their interpretations, then comparing how the interpretation and style of the piece changed through the following years, was the next step in my research.

Although *Op. 80* has been part of the violin repertoire for seventy years, the composition has undergone many interpretational changes. This project was extremely helpful to me, because my research not only gave me a much deeper understanding of Prokofiev's unique horizons, but also added variety to my technical and expressive vocabulary.

The comparison research and all collected data in the previous chapters is intended to serve as a guide for performers seeking a better understanding of the piece and its various interpretations. The main purpose of this project is not only to provide valuable interpretational ideas, but also to help the reader to further build and extend his own interpretations and ideas.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR KEVORK MARDIROSSIAN²⁰⁶

1. While writing *Op. 80*, Prokofiev consulted with David Oistrakh, who represents the Russian violin school. How does this affect the way you approach this piece in terms of sound production and articulation?

We use the same text that Oistrakh used in his performances. However, our general perception of life is quite different. The way we think, the way we represent things has changed to match the temperament of our time. The conventions of playing violin have changed over the years. Performers today have a richer and more expressive vocabulary; they are able to express much more contrast throughout the composition than we heard in the past.

Recent trends in performance use articulation to produce much more variety of expression. Variety can be achieved by using different articulations in the right hand, left hand, and also even including vibrato as an articulating effect.

2. What is your advice for your students to help them understand Prokofiev's music better? Which aspects of *Op. 80* are most important to your interpretation?

The first thing I strongly encourage my students to do is become aware of Prokofiev's style through extensive research of the circumstances of the Sonata's composition. I also think

²⁰⁶This document was intended to provide as many resources on how to approach and interpret *Op.80* as possible, so in addition to the historical research and the comparison of recordings I have interviewed two international soloists and pedagogues and asked for their opinion on some of the major issues regarding the interpretation of *Op.80*. The transcripts of these interviews are presented here.

Kevork Mardirossian's teachers include Anton Hadjiatanasov, Vladimir Avramov, Artur Grumiaux, Yfrah Neaman. He has concertized throughout Europe, the USA and Asia. He was the Concert Master of the Baton Rouge Symphony and on the Faculty of LSU School of Music. He has many chamber collaborations and is currently on the faculty of the Jacobs School of Music, University of Indiana-Bloomington.

that it is important to consider the other pieces which Prokofiev wrote approximately at the same time period. It is also extremely important for them to study the scholarly articles which have been written about the piece and Prokofiev's music language in general. This is absolutely necessary to truly understand Prokofiev's music. When I teach Prokofiev's music to my students, I encourage and help them to develop a variety of colors to express the different moods which are found in Prokofiev's music. In order to perform Prokofiev's music effectively, the performer must first present everything that is written in the score; and at the same time, must find something that is very personal, and apply it to his interpretation of the piece. Thus, there is great demand to create innovative ideas, attend to very specific melodic lines using an incredible variety of textures, and a wide range of colors. This is what we communicate to the audience.

3. Has your interpretation of the piece changed over the course of your career?

During my early studies, when I was still in Eastern Europe, my choices of performance style of playing were more similar to the Russian style of interpretation of the sonata at that time. Later, when I moved to Western Europe, my expressive vocabulary became more versatile. The way I interpreted the piece became more influenced by western schools of playing. I realized that there is actually much more expression available, for example, by sometimes using less bow and experimenting much more with a different types of vibrato.

4. How does your interpretation of the piece change each time you perform it?

My interpretation may shift slightly to facilitate the interpretive tendencies and ideas of the pianist I am playing with; the colors and the feeling of tone production can change slightly in these circumstances. The two of us send a signal about our mutual ideas and images of the music which show the power, variety, and the imaginative writing of Sergei Prokofiev.

The state of the violin playing is now reaching a very high level, as of only thirty or forty years ago, very few people have reached such a high artistic level and such a high technical level. Today, a new generation of violinists has been taught to have a much higher technical proficiency, and as professionals they present such a flawless way of playing to the audiences of today. However, I still think that the top artists today still have not found the magnetic spirit of the giants from the past.

Also, the number of performances of this particular sonata has increased. In recent international violin competitions, the number of participants who present this piece is much greater than what would be expected in previous generations. In addition, everyone is playing the fiddle in a very superb way.

5. How have audiences changed over the years?

One could say that the audience always approaches the piece, not with demands, but with expectations of what they will hear. I don't think that the expectations of the audience have changed substantially. However, due to the increased level of the performers today, the expectation of the audience is probably that they will hear something performed at a very high technical level compared to thirty or forty years ago, when there were only a few people who played the sonata well musically and technically.

7. In Prokofiev's music, how much freedom is acceptable regarding tempi, vibrato, phrasing, and bowing?

In general, the interpretation of the piece has changed to the extent that every performer is trying to come up with a better instrumental and emotional input into the sonata. I believe that you can play this composition with different types of energy, while not necessarily in different tempi, because the exact tempos have already been indicated specifically by Prokofiev himself.

The phrasing, however, has changed to the extent that you can always modify a phrase spontaneously according to the mood of the performance at that moment. When these modifications are viewed retrospectively, we learn much about the possibilities of the piece. These spontaneous and instantaneous changes often have the effect of making the piece much more expressive and interesting. Nevertheless, one simply cannot praise interpretations which overstep the boundaries of good taste by exaggerating the characters of a piece to the point that it appears to be a caricature. Certainly, in this piece, you can use anything in your technical and expressive vocabulary: different types of vibrato, phrasing from dark to light, using different colors and nuances, all according to your ideas as a performer in the moment. It actually all comes down to how they are compressing and communicating it.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR OLEH KRYSA²⁰⁷

1. There are many theories about what Prokofiev was trying to express when he wrote *Op. 80* because it has such a dark character. What is your opinion?

I do not know many of the theories but I think that Prokofiev simply wrote the history of Russia, which is really very dark.

To describe the sonata briefly: the first movement, especially the *freddo* section in the coda is the wind blowing through a cemetery, the second movement symbolizes war, the third movement is just a lyrical episode, and the fourth movement is the celebration of victory.

2. While writing *Op. 80*, Prokofiev consulted with David Oistrakh, who represents the Russian violin school. How does this affect the way you approach this piece?

I was lucky that I learned this piece with David Oistrakh, and he was the best source on how to approach and how to play the sonata. I do not think that it needs some special approach from Russia or from Germany. Of course the Russian people understand Prokofiev's musical language a little better, especially his very long melodies, and what he is expressing with them. I think that it is easier for people with Slavic background, or have lived in that region to understand Prokofiev's music and Russian music in general, or have studied with a Russian teacher. I was very lucky that I have the opportunity to study with Oistrakh.

²⁰⁷Professor Oleg Krysa studied at the Lyiy Music School and the Moscow Conservatory with Konstantin Mikhailov and David Oistrakh. He is a winner in the International violin competitions in Montreal (1966), Tchaikovsky (1966); Paganini (1963); Wieniawski Competition.(1962). He has premiered many new compositions for violin and has been on the faculty Moscow Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music. He is currently on the faculty of the Eastman School of Music.

3. What is your advice for your students to help them understand Prokofiev's music?

It is understood that Prokofiev was very sarcastic, very rude, and very dark. I always explain to my students that, but also I try to explain and focus their attention to the most fantastically beautiful melodies that he wrote, especially the ballet music which is full of laughter and scenes which are purely lyrical and melodic, and all of the beauty and nobility in his music as a whole. I also encourage them to read a specific book, *Letters from Prokofiev to Miaskovsky and Miaskovsky to Prokofiev*, but unfortunately it is not available in any of the western languages. It was a correspondence set in the old style used by the Russian aristocracy. They always wrote letters to each other, and the letters were so intimate, beautiful, and so fragile. Nevertheless if Prokofiev wanted to be rude or sarcastic, of course he was, but it was a mask because he actually was very fragile and very clean as a person. So that is my advice.

4. You have been a violinist on the international stage for several decades, how have the demands of the audience changed and what has remained the same?

I do not think that the audience has changed. The audience has always liked to perceive the beauty of performance, and they always appreciate personal details that any performer can present, so I do not think that that has changed. Unfortunately the audience is getting older, so that is what has changed.

5. Has your interpretation of the piece changed over the course of your career?

Basically not, there are some slight changes of tempi and bowings, and slightly different colors; but the basic things remain the same.

6. In Prokofiev's music, how much creative freedom is acceptable regarding features such as tempo, vibrato, phrasing, and bowing?

An interpretation has to have the right balance. Prokofiev wrote precisely what he wanted so you have to follow the score markings, and you have to respect what the composer wanted. Nonetheless, we are interpreters who cannot just follow what is written without any personal approach - so of course there is a freedom, but as I said earlier it has to be very well balanced. What I understood personally from Oistrakh and his contact with the composer was that Prokofiev hated bad taste. I think that what he meant by “bad taste” was that it was something that absolutely did not belong to the piece, so you have to be careful and at the same time you have to be free in order to show your personality.

7. While you were studying with Oistrakh, did he talk about his meeting with Prokofiev? What did he want the sonata to sound like, and what were his demands for the performer? What was his advice for you?

Yes, of course he talked about his meetings with Prokofiev; he said that “This was the most valuable gift that I got from anyone” so he was very happy and appreciative that Prokofiev dedicated the sonata to him. He remembered his first meeting with Prokofiev and it was not very successful for him. As a student, Oistrakh was in Odessa and performed Prokofiev’s first violin concerto with the composer in the audience. After Oistrakh finished the piece, Prokofiev interrupted the applause by walking to the stage and very loudly said to him “Young man, everything that you did was wrong!” Later on, they became good friends, and Oistrakh presented the second sonata and the concerti.

8. You are one of the most prominent performers and ambassadors of contemporary music, what is the difference between *Op. 80* and the current solo music for the violin?

The style of the music developed of course, and modern music is different, however the goal of the music remains the same. It doesn’t matter if it is Bach, Mozart or Shostakovich if the

music is high quality. I seriously consider any piece of high quality from any historical moment: from Baroque to Classical, and from Modern to Romantic; to be equal. When someone asks me “What is your favorite composer?” or “What recordings of music you prefer?” my response is that I love the piece that I am playing right now. It has to be your favorite piece, otherwise you cannot perform it.

APPENDIX C:

LETTER OF PERMISSION

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Boris Aleksandrov Blagoev, a native of Bulgaria, begun his musical education at the age of seven at the Bulgarian National Music School “L. Pipkov” in Sofia. Later he received a Bachelor Degree in Music from the Bulgarian Music Academy “P. Vladigerov” Sofia. His violin teachers under the course of his studies were Angelina Atanasova, Dora Ivanova, Neli Zeleva, and Verka Stefanova. In 2002 Boris Blagoev started his Masters of Music degree at Louisiana State University studying with Kevork Mardirossian. In 2005, Mr. Blagoev started his doctoral studies in Louisiana State University. Currently Mr. Blagoev is a student of Espen Lillenslatten and a member of the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra.