Rachmaninoff’s Trio Elegiaque, Op 9: A Performer's Guide

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RACHMANINOFF'S TRIO ELEGIAQUE, OP. 9: A PERFORMER'S GUIDE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
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Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The department of School of Music

by
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INTRODUCTION

The keyboard music of Sergei Rachmaninoff has long been popular with pianists and audiences. His concertos and solo works are still performed frequently in concert halls worldwide. Few in number and less well known but significant nonetheless are his chamber works, in particular his *Trio Elegiaque*, Op. 9, in D minor, which could be considered a hidden gem that should be given more attention among scholars and performers.

This document and the accompanying lecture/recital performance aim to call more attention to this intense and deeply emotional work. Focus will be placed on the technical challenges in the piano part while making recommendations for the performer when appropriate. As background, an overview of Rachmaninoff’s early life and work is presented in order to provide a clearer understanding of what led him to compose this trio. Of particular importance in the writing of this piece was the direct influence of Peter Tchaikovsky’s Trio, Op 50, which will also figure prominently in the background discussion.
CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND EARLY CAREER

The Beginning

Rachmaninoff was born into a family of talented amateur musicians. His paternal grandfather Arkady Alexandrovich Rachmaninoff played “little tunes, consisting of four or five notes”¹ for the young Sergei, and was probably the first person to encourage the boy’s interest in the instrument. Rachmaninoff’s father was an amateur pianist who used to perform and entertain his friends as well. Yelena, Rachmaninoff’s older sister, introduced him to Tchaikovsky’s songs. She was a prominent singer but had her career cut short by an early death.² Another family member who supported his early interest was his Grandmother Lyubov Butakova, who often took him to hear choral music in the cathedrals of St. Petersburg.

Rachmaninoff’s first piano teacher was Anna Ornatskaya, with whom he began lessons at age nine, right after her graduation from the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1882. She convinced his parents to allow him to eventually study at the Conservatory and to pursue a musical career, and so became responsible for preparing him for entry into the St. Petersburg Conservatory. In 1883, he was accepted into the piano class of Vladimir Demyansky at the Conservatory, but continued his lessons for three more years at home with Ornatskaya. In addition to piano lessons at the Conservatory, Rachmaninoff also took classes in music theory, music history and general subjects. Soon after he arrived there, his sister Sofia died

¹ Mark Harrison, Rachmaninoff Life, Works, Recordings (London; New York: Continuum, 2005), 7.
in a diphtheria epidemic. This tragedy was followed by Yelena’s death in 1885. In the meantime, his parents’ marriage suffered a rupture that may have contributed to Rachmaninoff’s depression years later.\(^3\)

In the fall of 1885, Rachmaninoff was accepted into the class of the famous and notoriously strict piano professor Nikolay Sergeyevich Zverev at the Moscow Conservatory, whereupon he left his home and the St. Petersburg Conservatory and moved to Moscow. Rachmaninoff’s daily routine included several hours of practice under Zverev’s rigid supervision.\(^4\) Rachmaninoff and other of Zverev’s most gifted students lived at his house rent-free. He supervised their lives and interests. His pupils experienced the great cultural life in Moscow, attending plays, operas and concerts. As a teacher, Zverev’s main concerns were showing his students how to produce a beautiful tone, how to resolve difficult technical problems without tension and how to project rhythmic clarity (which he considered the foundation of musical structure). On Sundays, Zverev frequently invited some of Moscow’s top musicians, artists and intellectuals to his home to hear student performances.

Although he was still living and studying with Zverev, in 1888 Rachmaninoff began piano study at the conservatory with his very successful cousin and former student of Liszt, Alexander Ziloti, who originally recommended Zverev as a teacher. Later that same year, Rachmaninoff began harmony and counterpoint classes with Anton Arensky and Sergey Taneyev. Arensky’s harmonic theories originated from

those of Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, and were very influential on Rachmaninoff’s own early compositional style. He regularly brought his early compositions to Taneyev for constructive criticism, doing so until the older composer’s death in 1915. As Rachmaninoff’s passion for composition increased, Zverev, unfortunately, did not support this interest, believing instead that the focus should be on performance. The tension became such that Rachmaninoff was forced to move out of Zverev’s house in 1889. They spoke again only after Rachmaninoff’s graduation from the Conservatory. Rachmaninoff took his piano final exams in 1891, coinciding with Ziloti’s resignation from the Conservatory. One year later, he took his final exams in composition. During his final year at the Conservatory, he wrote his Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor (later revised) as well as his required graduation piece, a one-act opera entitled Aleko, based on Pushkin’s poem The Gypsies.

Career After Graduation

Aleko earned Rachmaninoff the Great Gold Medal, which had been awarded only twice before in Conservatory history. Tchaikovsky was a big supporter of Aleko, no doubt contributing to its continued success and, in 1893, the work gained additional prestige by being performed at the Bolshoi Theatre. This effectively launched Rachmaninoff’s career as a major composer. Upon graduation, Rachmaninoff signed with the publisher Gutheil, which released most of his compositions up until 1914. In 1892, Rachmaninoff performed a solo piece at the

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Electric Exposition in Moscow\textsuperscript{6}, the famous Prelude in C-sharp Minor, Op. 3, No. 2, which would help establish him as a concert pianist. The piece was a particular favorite of Tchaikovsky.\textsuperscript{7} During the years of 1882 and 1883, he lived a very busy life as composer, concert pianist and also conductor. He published such important early works as \textit{Aleko}, the \textit{Morceaux de Fantaisie} for solo piano, Op. 3, the symphonic poem \textit{The Rock}\textsuperscript{8}, and other well-received compositions.

\textsuperscript{7} Harrison, \textit{Rachmaninoff}, 49.
\textsuperscript{8} Based on two lines of Lermontof’s poem \textit{The Rock}: “A golden cloud slept for the pleasure all night on the breast of the gaunt rock” (Harrison, \textit{Rachmaninoff}, 54).
CHAPTER TWO: TCHAIKOVSKY’S INFLUENCE

Tchaikovsky’s Death

Rachmaninoff’s admiration for Tchaikovsky’s work and for Tchaikovsky the person began early. In his early years at home, his sister Yelena would often ask him to accompany her in informal performances of Tchaikovsky’s songs. At Zverev’s Sunday house concerts, Rachmaninoff often met his great idol. While studying at the Moscow Conservatory, he made a piano-duet transcription of The Sleeping Beauty ballet score through a commission by Ziloti, although Tchaikovsky was ultimately not satisfied with the result. After his graduation, Tchaikovsky became not only a friend but also a professional mentor. One of Rachmaninoff’s regrets was missing the opportunity to see the great composer conduct the world premiere of his Symphony No. 6, Pathetique in 1893. For shortly after, Tchaikovsky died at the age of 53 during a cholera epidemic in Moscow.9 His death was a shock not only for Rachmaninoff but also for the entire musical world. “He lost not only a fatherly friend who had set him an example as a musician, which, consciously and unconsciously, he had always followed, but a helpful energetic patron of his young but steadily growing musical activities, a loyal supporter and a faithful advisor whom he needed badly for his first faltering steps into the great world of music.”10 Zverev died only one month before Tchaikovsky, forcing Rachmaninoff to deal with the passing of two important mentors within weeks of each other.

9 Robert Walker, Rachmaninoff his life and times (Kent: Midas Books, 1980), 32.
Tchaikovsky’s Trio and Comparisons with Rachmaninoff

Upon Tchaikovsky's death, Rachmaninoff began to work on the Trio Elegiaque No. 2, dedicated to the late master, and specifically modeled on and inspired by the Piano Trio in A Minor, Op. 50. Tchaikovsky's trio was completed in 1882 and dedicated to the memory of his close friend and colleague at the Moscow Conservatory, the pianist Nicholas Rubinstein, who died in 1881. The work is comprised of two long movements (the second movement in two parts), a structural plan that directly influenced Rachmaninoff’s Trio Elegiaque No. 2. The first movement of Tchaikovsky’s trio is in sonata-allegro form. The violin and cello operate more like orchestral support, as the piano writing is quite intense and virtuosic, almost concerto-like. This is a characteristic of Rachmaninoff’s trio as well. Many specific technical similarities in the treatment of the piano between the two opening movements can be observed. Note in Examples 1a and 1b how both composers employ block chord textures in rapid, virtuosic alternating-hand technique, characteristic of solo concerto writing.11

Example 1a. Tchaikovsky, Trio in A minor, mm. 124-126, piano part.

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11 A similar comparison is made by Duckett, p. 74.
Example 1b, Rachmaninoff, *Trio in D minor*, mm. 268-269.

Note in Examples 2a and 2b how each composer allows the strings to carry the melody while the piano supplies accompaniment in ascending broken chord textures. The mood in Tchaikovsky trio at this point is more vivid and energetic, while Rachmaninoff projects a more melancholic effect, perhaps owing to the choice of key (G minor).

Example 2a. Tchaikovsky, mm. 42-43.
Example 2b. Rachmaninoff, mm. 133-134.

In Examples 3a and 3b, note how both composers adopt thick chordal piano textures. In the Tchaikovsky excerpt the cello follows the piano with a single line melody while the violin provides a scale-like flourish. By contrast, in the Rachmaninoff excerpt both string players provide brief rhythmic comments in between the piano's sustained notes.

Example 3a. Tchaikovsky, mm. 186-187.
Both trios employ theme and variations form in their second movement.

Tchaikovsky’s trio contains eleven variations, including a long three-part fugue (variation 8), a waltz (variation 6), and a solo piano mazurka (variation 9). By contrast, Rachmaninoff’s trio contains only eight variations, but balances the overall structure by including a third movement (see discussion in Chapter Three). In each trio the theme is characterized by a simple melody played by the piano alone (see Examples 4a and 4b below).

Example 3b. Rachmaninoff, mm. 100-102.

Example 4a. Tchaikovsky, mm 1-4.
Example 4b. Rachmaninoff, mm 1-4.

Examples 5a and 5b display how, in the respective first variations, each composer adopts a piano texture featuring running sixteenth notes as an accompaniment to the *cantabile* string lines.

Example 5a. Tchaikovsky, var. 1, mm. 1-3.

Example 5b. Rachmaninoff, var. 1, mm. 1-4.
Examples 6a and 6b are taken from the respective third variations, each of which is a *scherzoso* setting featuring string pizzicato chords and fast passagework in the piano, creating a witty effect.

Example 6a. Tchaikovsky var.3, mm 1-3.

Example 6b. Rachmaninoff var.3, mm 1-4.

Tchaikovsky concludes his trio with a final *Variatione finale e coda* at the end of the second movement. Rachmaninoff instead writes a separate third movement,
which includes a short coda that serves the same purpose. As demonstrated in Examples 7a and 7b below, the trios conclude similarly. The main themes of the respective first movements are restated in a slow, mournful setting.

Example 7a. Tchaikovsky, mm 286 – 289.

Example 7b. Rachmaninoff, mm 105 – 108.

Despite the many similarities in the form, melodic style, rhythmic ideas and other technical details between the two works, Rachmaninoff did not wish to merely copy Tchaikovsky’s trio. Though inspired by Tchaikovsky’s compositional techniques, he nonetheless applied his own individual style and personality. The sound of this passionate work displays his own distinctive signature that would be recognizable throughout his career.
CHAPTER THREE: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PIANIST IN RACHMANINOFF’S
TRIO ELEGIAQUE, OP. 9

Rachmaninoff began work on his second trio October 2, 1893 – the day
Tchaikovsky died – and finished it seven weeks later on December 15.\(^\text{12}\) The wide
range of textures, moods, tempi and technical devices in this trio are typical of large
Romantic-style works from this era. Rachmaninoff describes his experience of
writing the trio through a letter he sent to Natalia Skalon\(^\text{13}\) in December 17\(^{\text{th}}\), 1893:
“earnestly, intensely, painstakingly…all my feelings and powers were devoted to it… I
trembled for every phrase, sometimes crossed out absolutely everything and began
to think about it all over again.”\(^\text{14}\) The first performance took place on January 31,
1894, in Moscow. The composer was not completely satisfied with the piece, leading
him to revise it in 1907 and yet again in 1917.\(^\text{15}\) The final revision, 1917, was

First Movement – Moderato

The first movement is in sonata form structure\(^\text{16}\) and poses particular
technical challenges for the pianist throughout, as will be demonstrated in the
selected examples that follow. The opening motive, which extends to measure 60,

\(^{12}\) Robert Threlfal and Geoffrey Norris, *A Catalogue of the composition of S. Rachmaninoff*

\(^{13}\) Natalia Skalon was one of the daughters of General Skalon. The family welcomed
Rachmaninoff in their house in Ivanovka after he broke up his relationship with Zverev.
Natalia became his regular correspondent.

\(^{14}\) Harrison, *Rachmaninoff*, 58.

\(^{15}\) The complete changes and cuts in the 1907 and 1917 revision are presented by Threlfal
and Norris page 52.

\(^{16}\) Ducket presents the complete structural outline of the first movement in his D.M.A. diss.
page 19.
features somber descending chromatic lines in the piano that accompany the sorrowful melodic lines in the strings. The melody is treated to extensive development throughout the movement (Example 8).


The first of the significant technical challenges for the pianist begins in measure 61. In this passage, for two measures the right hand plays octave chords in a descending chromatic pattern accompanied by broken chords in the left. In the two measures that follow, the right hand switches to an ascending broken chord pattern. In the tempo that Rachmaninoff prescribes, it is important that the pianist voice the top notes of the octave lines while playing the descending chords with quick and light wrist motions with overall horizontal movements of the arm. It is of course necessary to use the damper pedal to both sustain the half notes in the left hand, and to also support the rapid crescendo, as in m. 64. In measure 63, the pianist should apply a circular motion of the arm and wrist rotation motion on measure 64 to ensure proper weight transfer to and voicing of the stemmed tenuto notes that are part of the rapid sixteenth note broken chord figuration (Example 9).

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17 A similar passage with descending chromatic chords in octaves happens again in measure 157 although this time left hand follows the descending line in chromatic descending intervals as well.
Example 9. Rachmaninoff 1st mvt, mm 61 – 64.

For pianists whose hands have difficulty spanning the interval of a 10th, the short section from mm. 73- 80 (see Example 10a below) and its counterpart in the recapitulation can be uncomfortable (although, as we know, Rachmaninoff's hands were very large and this posed no problem for him). Note that the composer complicates the life of the performer with small hands by placing a third note in between the wide interval, a typical characteristic of his keyboard music in general. To avoid breaking the chord in performance, if the hand permits it is helpful to place
more weight on the top notes while stretching as much as possible. It may be necessary to experiment with different positions of the hand on the keyboard, moving into the fallboard over the black keys, or moving out to the edge of the white keys. The E-flat major chord in measure 361 (see Example 10b below) is particularly challenging, and breaking the chord might be the only solution for some hand spans.

Example 10a. 1st mvt, mm 73-76.

Example 10b. 1st mvt, mm 361-363.

The use of rapidly moving four-note chords of the octave, also a characteristic that Rachmaninoff displayed throughout his career, is abundant in this trio. A particularly difficult passage, especially for the left hand, is the sequence of chords in mm. 100 – 102 (see Example 11 below) and the companion passage in
the recapitulation beginning in m. 388. The performer must perform this somewhat awkward passage at a fast tempo and with great strength. To guide the phrase effectively, care must be taken to voice the top notes of each chord, using hand and arm motions that allow the weight to settle on the downbeats. In order to reach the chords securely and safely, it may also be necessary to either move the hand in towards the fallboard, or out to the edge of the keys. The use of the damper pedal will aid in producing a solid fortissimo.

Example 11. 1st mvt, mm 100 – 102.

A passage of almost transcendental beauty begins in measure 131 of the exposition (appearing again in the recapitulation). During this passage, the right wrist must adopt a somewhat elevated position, allowing the hand to move freely through the ascending sixteenth-note broken chords, voicing carefully the stemmed melody notes, all while avoiding weight transfer to the thumb. Applying a circular motion of the arm oriented around the melody will help in producing the light, “celestial” sound quality this passage requires (see Example 12 below).
Perhaps the most technically challenging moments for the pianist in the first movement begin at the “Allegro molto” in measure 238. In this virtuosic passage, note that in m. 238 the left hand moves in descending chromatic octaves with simple chords in the right hand. One measure later the right hand plays a rapid ascending line in triplets made more difficult by the use of double notes on the beat. Seemingly unsatisfied with the degree of difficulty, Rachmaninoff writes a sequence of sixteenth notes featuring broken thirds and augmented seconds that accompany a chromatic upper voice – all in the right hand. In performance it is important to keep the hand close to the keys at all times in this section, applying small, quick and precise movements in addition to a circular arm motion on the triplets. Although the composer marks the passage fortissimo, a firm but light octave technique is necessary due to the rapid tempo. Otherwise, fatigue could result. To secure the necessary dexterity in the passagework featuring broken thirds and seconds, it may again be necessary for the pianist to move the hand in towards the fallboard or out towards the key edges while sustaining the long notes. As is often the case in this piece, the use of the damper pedal will help in achieving the desired large sonority (see Examples 13a and 13b below).
Example 13a. 1st mvt, mm 238 – 241.

Example 13b. 1st mvt, mm 242 – 245.
The passage beginning in measure 268 marks perhaps the dramatic climax of the first movement. It is the only instance during the entire work where Rachmaninoff employs the sfff dynamic mark (see Example 14a). The passage features block chord textures set in rapid, virtuosic alternating-hands tremolo technique, similar to a passage in the Tchaikovsky trio cited earlier and also to a passage in Tchaikovsky’s first piano concerto (see Examples 14b and 14c). Once again the damper pedal will help with the triple forte dynamic. The left hand should guide the phrase and both hands should voice the top notes in each chord. When moving from chord to chord, the hands should grip the notes firmly while applying light, short wrist strokes, maintaining as much key contact as possible. As indicated in Example 14b, in performance the author adds additional crescendo marks that suggest a more specific phrase shape in this lengthy and loud passage.

Example 14a. Rachmaninoff Trio first mvt., mm 276-277.

Example 14b. Rachmaninoff Trio first mvt, mm 268 – 269.
Second Movement – Quasi variazione

The second movement is comprised of a theme and eight variations. The theme is adapted from his symphonic poem *The Rock*, but without its chromatic nuances (see Examples 15a and 15b). It is presented in a simple, pastoral chorale-like setting much like the theme to the second movement in Tchaikovsky’s trio. This movement projects a more hopeful tone, with moments of lightness and tenderness, after the darkness and intensity of the first movement.

Example 15a. Rachmaninoff *Elegiaque trio* second movement theme, mm. 1-2.

Example 15b. Rachmaninoff, *The Rock Opus 7*, mm. 39 – 40, theme as played by the flute.
In this movement, we will call attention to five variations that pose significant technical challenges for the pianist. In variation 1, the right hand figuration requires the use of circular arm movements as well as lightly weighted high thumb positions so as to avoid inappropriate accents and unevenness (Example 16a). In the second half, Rachmaninoff adds an inner melody played by the right-hand thumb (Example 16b). Although is necessary to bring out this melody with the thumb, the circular arm movement is still a requirement to be able to perform the rapid sixteenth notes without a break in the flow.

Example 16a. Rachmaninoff Trio second movement, variation 1, mm. 1-4.

Example 16b. Rachmaninoff 2nd mvt. var. 1, mm 33-34.

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18 As a matter of convenience, note that the author has chosen to give each variation its own set of measures number.
In variation 3, agility and accuracy are necessary, and the performer should play the passage with a low wrist, close finger contact with the keys and small arm movements (Example 17a). In measure 14, note that the left hand joins the right hand at the octave, posing difficulties in finding balance and evenness between the hands. It is helpful to adopt a fingering, as suggested in Example 17b, that will allow the thumbs to land together in measure 15, thereby ensuring better coordination of the hands during this passage. Note Rachmaninoff’s original fingering in Example 17c.

Example 17a. 2nd mvt. var. 3, mm – 1-3.

Example 17b. 2nd mvt. var.3, author fingering, mm 14 – 17.
In the polyphonic passage in the second half of variation 5, note that in the right hand the melody in the top voice is combined with a second voice underneath featuring rapid chromatic scale runs. In performance, an elevated wrist will help balance the weight needed to project “singing” top notes and the necessary lightness in the chromatic sixteenth-note sextuplets. Again, it is important to avoid using a “heavy thumb”, which would make the runs uneven (see Example 18 below).

Variation 6 features a texture that is one of Rachmaninoff’s trademark characteristics. Here, in another polyphonic passage, the right hand plays both a melody in the top voice, and an accompanying pattern underneath, primarily in triplet eighth notes. Note that he had employed this texture earlier in the famous C-sharp Minor Prelude, Op. 3, No.2 (see Example 19a). In performance of the trio, the
right hand should employ small circular movements and remain close to the keys. This is necessary in order to project a singing melody while maintaining a light quality to the triplets, all the while maintaining an unbroken flow (Example 19b).


Example 19b. Rachmaninoff trio 2nd mvt. var. 6, mm 1-4.

Variation 8 poses a less obvious difficulty that might be neglected at first glance. Beginning in measure 13 of this variation, the pianist must decide when to start the rolled chords, which begin on the bottom note of the left hand and finish with the top note in the right, in order for the top note of the chord to sound together with the string parts on the downbeats. As shown in Example 20a, Rachmaninoff first writes a five-note chord in the left hand (m. 20), but expands to a seven-note chord in the next measure, each spanning more distance than the hand can reach. Since compared to the right hand the left hand chords contain such a large span, it is necessary to roll the right hand more quickly to make up for the
extra time required to play the left hand notes. Pedal changes should correspond to
the bass notes.

Example 20a. Rachmaninoff 2nd mvt. var. 8, mm 20 – 22.

The texture changes later in the variation, as shown in Example 20b. The left
hand continues to play rolled chords with a wide span, while the right hand plays a
broken chord triplet pattern in double notes. To coordinate with this new right hand
figuration, it is now necessary to play the bottom note of the left hand rolled chord
on the downbeat, not before the beat as in Example 20a. This allows the right hand
to maintain tempo and clears out any harmonic resonances from the previous
measure.

Example 20b. Rachmaninoff 2nd mvt. var. 8, mm 33 – 35.
Third Movement – Allegro risoluto

The third movement is the shortest, is intense and passionate, and demands much strength and endurance from the pianist. It functions like a coda with material from the first movement being recalled. The intense and somber tone of the first movement, as well as its flashes of anger, return in this final movement. Note that as shown in Example 21 the opening theme of the first movement is recalled in a heavy block-chord texture, as if the sadness portrayed at the beginning should now be heard more emphatically.


The movement opens with a cadenza-like piano solo that lasts for twenty-four measures, requiring solid octave technique and also solid control of the chords that often follow awkward leaps. To ensure success in performance, the author suggests that the leaps be approached with precise, well-planned motions that can help prevent rushing the tempo. The pianist should also find ways to shape the phrase and occasionally back off the volume, thereby avoiding an overwhelmingly heavy sonority while also guarding against fatigue in the arm muscles.

Rachmaninoff indicates specific articulations that can help the pianist shape and color the passage, while also providing specific moments for muscle relaxation. The
main motive of this movement is based on the descending chromatic line presented in the first movement (see Example 22).

Example 22. Rachmaninoff 3rd mvt., mm 1-4.

Rachmaninoff introduces new material beginning in measure 36. Here the pianist must control full chords and octaves, syncopated rhythms, accents and phrasing, and contrasting dynamics – all at a fairly rapid tempo. The hands should remain close to the keys, using crisp attacks on the chords while keeping a steady tempo (see Example 23 below).


The canonic section between the strings and the pianist’s left hand line, which begins in measure 68, develops the movement’s opening motive, and perhaps displays the influence of Taneyev’s counterpoint classes on the young Rachmaninoff.
In this passage, the right hand provides a contrasting chromatic line in its top voice while supported underneath by broken-chord, sixteenth-note triplet figuration. To help in clarifying fingering and note accuracy, the author suggests practicing the passage as shown in Example 24a. To further ensure success in performance of this passage, it is helpful to keep the hands close to the keys while concentrating on horizontal arm movements (see Example 24b).


Example 24b. Rachmaninoff 3rd mvt., mm 68 – 69.

Beginning in measure 86, Rachmaninoff writes a passage featuring virtuosic alternating-hands tremolo technique that is strikingly similar to a passage found in Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto, Op. 23. In both pieces, the left hand should lead the
phrase. The right hand octaves should be played with a firm hand position and short wrist movements (see Examples 25a and 25b below).


Example 25b. Rachmaninoff Trio third mvt, mm 86-87.

A powerful and climactic passage begins at the *Meno Mosso* in measure 89. The three instruments play the melody in unison at *fff* dynamic. In the piano, the presentation of the melody in octaves combined with the heavy repeated chords demonstrate a texture similar to that found in Rachmaninoff’s famous Prelude in G Minor, Op. 23, No. 5. In the almost bolero-like passage from the prelude (see Example 26a) as well as the trio (Example 26b), strength must come from the shoulders, arms and back. The elbows should lift up and out in order to land accurately on the notes that follow wide leaps.
Example 26a. Rachmaninoff Prelude Op 23 no. 5 in G minor, mm 63-65.

Example 26b. Rachmaninoff Trio third mvt, mm 88-90.

The passage cited below, although it presents no new thematic material, does project a distinctive idea in piano sound. In measures 103-104, the powerful chords and octaves played in the instrument’s lowest register sound almost like thunder and individual pitches can’t be discerned. This blustery passage, conveying rage and fury, precedes the final restatement of the opening theme from the first movement.

Example 27. Rachmaninoff 3rd mvt, mm 102 – 104.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

“A la memoire d’un grand artiste”

The *Trio Elegiaque*, Op. 9, is a powerful, sorrowful and intensely emotional work, written during a dark moment in Rachmaninoff’s personal life. At the same time however, he was beginning to achieve career success, in part due to the contributions and encouragement of Tchaikovsky. In dedicating his trio to his mentor and friend, Rachmaninoff used the same phrase that Tchaikovsky used earlier when dedicating his work to Nicholas Rubinstein: “A la memoire d’un grand Artist”. As discussed earlier in this document, Tchaikovsky influenced Rachmaninoff both as a mentor, and also as a composer. The Tchaikovsky trio was, of course, a direct influence on Rachmaninoff’s work. It is clear also that techniques Rachmaninoff used in some of his earlier works – such as the famous C-sharp Minor prelude – were refined in the trio, and some techniques used in the trio were revisited in later works – such as the famous G Minor prelude. It can be said that the trio is in some ways a summary of techniques and trademarks that he used throughout his life. The trio also confirms the influence of his other teachers, such as Taneyev in counterpoint but particularly Zverev, with whom he acquired the necessary keyboard technique to support his own ideas for composing piano music. The trio portrays various stages of Rachmaninoff’s grief over Tchaikovsky’s death. The first movement represents mourning, sadness and isolation; the second movement conveys acceptance and feelings of hope combined with vivid memories; the third movement conveys a sense of anger, at times fiercely presented. His
thorough training allowed him to channel his musical ideas effectively in expressing his unfortunate personal loss.

The main goal of this document has been to provide the pianist with a detailed view of the technical challenges, and to provide appropriate recommendations to help ensure a successful performance. As noted in the foregoing examples, the pianist faces a large variety of challenging technical features in performing this piece, all of which are typical of late nineteenth century piano music. To summarize, in order to perform it successfully, the pianist must possess the necessary technical resources to negotiate the following:

1) rapid passages of four-note octave chords
2) rapid broken-chord figuration
3) virtuosic octave patterns
4) double notes
5) wide leaps (some in awkward positions)
6) broken thirds and augmented seconds accompanying a chromatic upper voice
7) virtuosic alternating-hand tremolos
8) rapid single note passagework
9) challenging polyphonic textures
10) widely spaced rolled chords that exceed the reach of the hand
11) heavy chordal sonorities
12) keyboard cadenzas resembling concerto passages
Specific recommendations for using proper body movements have included the following considerations:

1) frequent use of circular hand and arm movements
2) use of an elevated wrist and arm in specific situations
3) attention to proper weight transfer
4) horizontal arm movements in key situations
5) movements in towards the fallboard or out to the edge of the keys for best hand position
6) lightly weighted, high thumb positions
7) proper follow through of elbow and upper arm when playing large chords
8) keeping hands as close to the keys as possible
9) use of shoulder, arm and back muscles for strength

In conclusion, the *Trio Elegiaque*, Op. 9 should be considered an important work in the chamber music repertory, attractive for its passionate emotional content, and noteworthy for the great technical demands it places on the pianist. Therefore, the author hopes this document will encourage more scholarly interest among researchers, and will inspire more performers to program this beautiful and emotional work in concert.
REFERENCE LIST


VITA

Pianist Elisa Galeano was born in Brazil and begun playing the piano and violin in her childhood. She pursued her Bachelor’s degree in piano performance at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. As a graduate student, Elisa moved to Europe and received an award from the Rotary Club in Germany to pursue her Master’s degree at the acclaimed State College of Music in the city of Karlsruhe. She finished her degree Suma Cum Laude in piano performance. In 2012, Elisa begun her studies at the Louisiana State University in the piano performance doctoral program and she is expected to conclude her degree in December 2016. Throughout her academic years, she had the privilege to study with pianists André Pires, Celina Szrvinsk, Michael Uhde, Jan Grimes, and Willis Delony.

After winning several piano competitions in Brazil and Latin America, Elisa was invited to perform at the Musikhoschule Karlsruhe, in celebration of Brazil’s 500 hundred-year Jubilee playing works exclusively by Brazilian composers. The concert received the following critique in the German newspaper Badische Zeitung: “The Toccata by Ronaldo Miranda, played by the pianist Elisa Galleano, had an extraordinary effect in the audience. Elisa let the work shine in its splendor of colors.” Since returning from Europe, she has been performing around the country and abroad recitals in the Rio Folle Journée Mozart à Francesa, Rio de Janeiro; International Concert Season in São Paulo; Concert Series in the Casa Thomas Jefferson, Brasília-DF; Sommer-Akademie Lenk Festival, Switzerland; and many performances broadcasted in Brazilian television.
As a collaborative pianist, Elisa worked at the Minas Gerais State University and Federal University of Sao Joao del Rei in Brazil. Currently, Elisa is the Artistic Director and piano instructor at Grace Notes Music Studio in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.