THE SECOND AND THIRD SYMPHONIES OF RACHMANINOFF
THEIR PLACE IN THE
EVOLUTION OF ORCHESTRATION AND FORM

By

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CHAPTER ONE

RACHMANINOFF'S PLACE

IN THE

EVOLUTION OF ORCHESTRATION

Today the principle of decrystallization heralds itself on the horizon as the driving force behind all the drastic changes remolding society. This fluidic, unifying principle is stirring from the roots all departments of the civilization now emerging, and it is no longer possible to consider any person, art, or entity as an isolated separate unit distinct in itself. Modern science has so decrystallized our solid world of separate objects that there is nought left of it but a fluidic, constantly changing stream of electrons and protons. All is relative, flowing, and moving. The world of static separateness is gone, and the whole earth melts into a ferment as the era of merging unity, integration, and relativity anguishes through its birthpangs.

In the realm of the arts this relating principle holds true more than at any other period in history. An artist's works are meaningful only in their relation to the trend as a whole, and to treat a separate composer's works in any more isolated sense would be inorganic and out-of-date. Considering the subject of our thesis from the basis of this present day psychology, we shall not study Rachmaninoff's symphonies for themselves alone as distinct entities unrelated to the general trends, but we shall place them in the stream of musical evolution in order to find their relative place and significance. Therefore, before

undertaking a closer scrutiny of Rachmaninoff's scoring, it may be helpful to digress momentarily with a brief summary of the evolution of orchestration. Such a background sketch is of especial interest concerning Rachmaninoff, for, regardless of the modern orchestral technique available today, he has returned to the emphasis on the strings used by Haydn and Mozart. His technique is also linked strongly with other sources which we shall mention.

In the beginning of orchestration we see everywhere a latent, unindividuated aspect of all the instruments. The art of orchestration is in its nebulous unformed stage, unconscious of its very existence. In the scores of Bach and Handel, it is interesting to see how the instrumental lines have little individuality but are merely 'parts' of equal prominence, every instrument joining in the contrapuntal movement regardless of suitability, balance, or effect. The history of orchestration shows us how out of this bound condition or unity, the potentiality of each instrument is gradually exploited and made manifest as each group of instruments and each separate instrument develops its special and particular functions.

The first step in this individualization of parts came in the transition period of Gluck when the element of imitative counterpoint was declining, being replaced by a type of writing more orchestrally conceived. During

this period many of the instruments began slightly to settle into their more appropriate ranges and functions, and the woodwinds, though still somewhat dependent on the string section and rarely heard alone, were beginning to be relieved of the necessity of constantly echoing string passages. But it is not until Haydn's time that we can see more concrete evidence of the gradual liberation of the woodwind, collectively and independently, from their state of dependence on the strings. Although Haydn's first two symphonies and his "Farewell Symphony" are little more than embellished string quartets with the addition of non-essential wind parts, we see Haydn as he grows out of this style, gradually allowing all the wind instruments as soloists or collectively as a section, to take responsibility for essential melodic matter on equal footing with the strings, and continuing to advance this trend until, in his much later "Military Symphony", he starts the exposition proper with the woodwind alone. With all this advance there is still no progress in the use of the brass which is as yet never independently assertive.

Mozart, in his later symphonies, built definitely upon Haydn's foundation but gave more and more freedom and independence to the woodwinds. His more polyphonic handling of the orchestra produced scoring of finer transparency and distinction despite the stagnancy of the brasses, and the cellos still shackled to the basses.

It remained for Schubert to give motivating power to the static potentialities of the brass and to liberate the cello from the bass. Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" marks a milestone in our story of the individualization of instruments. The cello speaking as an independent melodist, the brass sharpening the line, the more assertive horns, the occasional individualizing of sections against each other, all suggest the technique used later by Tschaikowsky. This same symphony contains also a remarkable foreshadowing of Sibelius in the development section of the first movement with its diversified hints of the approaching figure of the recapitulation. In turn, both Tschaikowsky and Sibelius were to be powerful influences in the later scoring of Rachmaninoff.

The bold trends set forth by Schubert were also notable in Beethoven's scoring which makes soloistic use of the kettle-drum and double bass, as in the "Fifth Symphony". Beethoven's varying orchestral dynamics, beginnings of complex textures, (as in the "Ninth Symphony"), and simultaneous conceptions of theme and its instrumental expression, even further anticipate the Sibelius technique.

After Beethoven a new level is born for the orchestra. This next cycle focuses itself most sharply through Tschaikowsky whose revolutionary scoring marks an incredibly progressive and epoch-making leap. As the orchestra

yielded to his shaping power, it became an entirely new and dramatic vehicle of expression. Tschaikowsky drew forth from it a brilliant clarity of tone and broke away completely from the strings as the backbone of the orchestra. In his scoring, the brass, now completely emerging from its more or less static condition, breaks through as a section co-equal with the strings and woodwind. The cellos also soar into still more expressive upper ranges. Tschaikowsky's individualizing of complete sections against each other became almost a mannerism.

An exactly opposite approach is seen in the scoring of his friend and protégé, Rachmaninoff, who takes no advantage of this advance but favors a promiscuous reinforcing of themes, and a mixing of instrumental groups which too often eliminates the possibility of the dramatic color schemes produced by the answering of complete sections. Rachmaninoff does not consistently individualize any one section over a prolonged stretch. Seldom, if ever, does the brass or woodwind stand alone as in other modern scores. His scoring shows no straining after effect; whatsoever effect there may be is derived mainly from legitimate contrapuntal treatment. Unlike Tschaikowsky, he opens no new level of orchestral development but forms perhaps a very necessary foil to the rapid growth of this trend away from the strings. He returns with vehemence to the emphasis which Haydn placed

on the string section. The lyric melodic type of writing so characteristic of his "Second Symphony" absolutely demands emphasis on the singing quality of the strings to express it. The dull uncompromising tone of the woodwind and brass, though excellent in producing colorful and dramatic contrast, is of little value for prolonged expressive passages, and Rachmaninoff never makes the mistake of using them for this purpose. Aware that the wind instruments lack the warmth and elastic quality so characteristic of the strings, he wisely lets the string-tone permeate almost continually through the woodwind and brass. His scoring is somber and conservative when contrasted to the dazzling, colorful effects in the scores of both Tschaikowsky and Korsakoff. Yet Rachmaninoff achieves phenomenal results not anticipated from the printed page, and we marvel that with such a conventional approach he can attain such amazing effects as we hear in the Scherzo and Finale. His rather unsensational scoring is but another proof that a composer will of necessity score in a way to fit his music as did the conservative Brahms and Franck who were not innovators but merely adapted prevailing orchestral technique to fit the profound quality of their music. Similarly Rachmaninoff is more interested in the vitality of the music proper than in exploiting orchestral colorings. In this respect he is a striking contrast to his two contemporaries, Stravinsky and Korsakoff, composers whose scoring is unbelievably brilliant but who often have little to say.

After the "Second Symphony", two powerful innovators appeared on the scene - Stravinsky and Sibelius. Their revolutionary treatment, one of harmonic methods and the other of the management of thematic material, finally disturbed the unruffled complacency of Rachmaninoff who, until this time, had composed music untouched by the harmonic and rhythmic innovations of the present. In considering the influence of Stravinsky and Sibelius on Rachmaninoff's scoring, it will be necessary to slightly digress from our sketch of orchestral development. For true though it is that Stravinsky did further fractionize the orchestra by his exploitation of the instruments of percussion and his elaborately divided woodwind, his chief influence on Rachmaninoff was through those bizarre harmonic combinations created through polytonality and other means. Rachmaninoff, however, like Prokofieff, (even after thirty years) remains firmly rooted in the old harmonic system, only occasionally coloring his music with radical departures into the new harmonic idiom which Stravinsky (like Schönberg) employs so persistently as the very foundation of his writing.

In Rachmaninoff's "Third Symphony", we still see his adherence to the traditional and concentrated type of scoring which is based on the idea that the ear cannot satisfactorily follow more than three independent tone lines at one time. We see in this symphony very little use of the diverse independent Stravinskian type of scoring in

which, for instance, every instrument in the woodwind section is given an independent line.

As to Sibelius' influence upon the "Third Symphony", we can clearly see Rachmaninoff, up to a certain point, adopting the former's technique. The upward rushing passages of the strings in the introduction, the mosaic-like handling of thematic bits and emergence of these germinal motifs to full thematic manifestation, the finely-built transitions, are characteristic traits which show Rachmaninoff at least appropriating portions of the structural trends manifested by Sibelius. In this symphony Rachmaninoff deliberately breaks through the limiting shell of tradition but maintains his poise throughout. He is not thrown off balance by the wildly novel tendencies of modern innovations. He never departs into cheaply sensational and meaningless passages, nor does he strive for effect, yet his scoring is thoroughly alive. He consistently preserves his sincerity of expression, and while maintaining a firm hold on the traditional principles of form, he is at the same time able to project himself into the modern idiom without becoming eccentric. He takes his place among those serious writers and liberal conservatives who place music itself above every other consideration, thus carrying on the structural standards which we have seen developing through the centuries of evolution from Bach to Beethoven, Brahms, and Sibelius.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SECOND SYMPHONY

SECOND SYMPHONY - THE SCORING

Rachmaninoff is a thorough advocate of the principle that important themes must always be re-enforced if they are to cut through, and that never more than three of them should be used simultaneously. This doubling-up, which he consistently employs throughout this symphony, is done anywhere. The trombones, for instance, with independent thematic material, will be moving against horns and part of the woodwind with another theme, while passages in triplets will be independently used by flutes and strings. However, in soft passages where there is less need for doubling, there is plenty of independent treatment, While producing everywhere a sound texture, Rachmaninoff's contrapuntal treatment of the orchestra often leads into a veritable maze of independent parts as on page 32.* The page is also a typical example of his appropriation of Haydn and Mozart's technique in the use of augmentation, diminution, shifted rhythm, and change of rhythmic pattern, for the creating of independent parts from one theme. (In this case both parts of theme I are used.)

Another interesting example of Rachmaninoff's contrapuntalism is seen on pages 87 and 88 where rapid passages in eighth notes in the woodwinds move against passages in eighth notes in the strings through partial contrary motion. A fine example of Rachmaninoff's plentiful indepen-

* The Harcourt, Brace Edition; edited by A. E. Weir.

dence in the woodwind parts, particularly the flutes against the strings, is shown on pages 158 to 167.

Despite his appreciation of the brass as able to assist in carving out the melodic line or to cut through the general mass of tone with independent material, never does he let it stand alone. Even the woodwind rarely stands alone. Rachmaninoff's general practice of promiscuous doubling (as mentioned in Chapter I) prevents this, and also precludes the vivid contrasts of individualized sections against each other so characteristic of Tschaikowsky. His scoring, though productive of many colorful and novel effects not anticipated from a silent perusal of the score, definitely lacks the color found in Korsakoff's scoring, the ethereal quality of either Debussy's or Ravel's scoring, or the freedom and independence of Stravinsky's scoring. Rachmaninoff's scoring often has a gloomy, somber, almost leaden hue, largely due to his abundant use of the lower registers in the woodwinds and brass. Furthermore, he holds to the strings even more tenaciously than did Haydn, Mozart, and Schubert. While Rachmaninoff's scoring is finely planned and contrapuntally fluent, it is nevertheless conventional when compared to that of the modern writers noted above. As mentioned in Chapter I, he falls in line with such orchestrators as Brahms, Franck, Elgar, and Vaughn Williams, whose scoring, while entirely adequate, is yet of secondary importance to the music itself. Rachmaninoff's profound

sincerity and directness inhibit him from pursuing the more sensational, bizarre trends of modernism, His aristocratic, grave, reserved musicianship demands a conservative orchestral treatment.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND SYMPHONY

As the Harcourt-Brace miniature score edited by A. E. Weir (the only score available at the time the analysis was made) describes in detail the formal structure of the symphony, we will make no measure by measure analysis or chart of the music. We shall merely point out aspects of it which reveal Rachmaninoff's peculiar technique and methods of development.

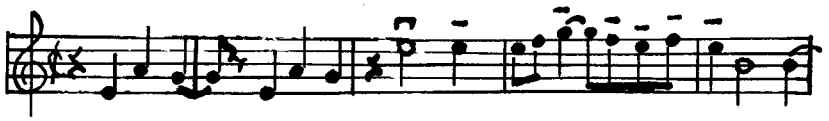
The reader is referred to the Victor Book of the Symphony for a colorful description of this work.

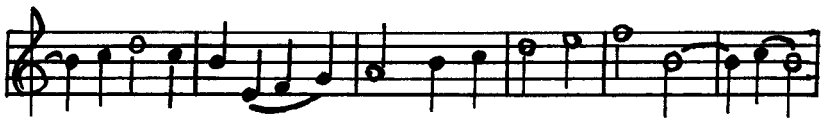
SECOND SYMPHONY - THE MUSICAL STRUCTURE

The introduction foreshadows the material to be used in the first theme of the exposition.

Introduction

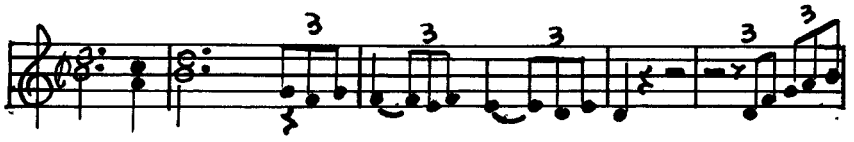
First theme



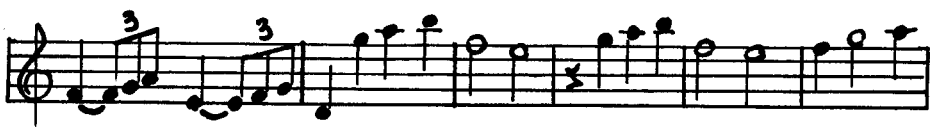


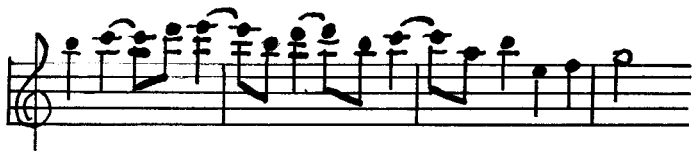
The narrow range covered by this opening material is suggestive of Sibelius' themes. The manipulation of the subject matter throughout the exposition by shifted rhythm, diminution, and augmentation, is an innate characteristic of Rachmaninoff's technique. The Second Theme beginning with a figure taken from Theme I, or from the introduction and given to the clarinet,

Second Theme



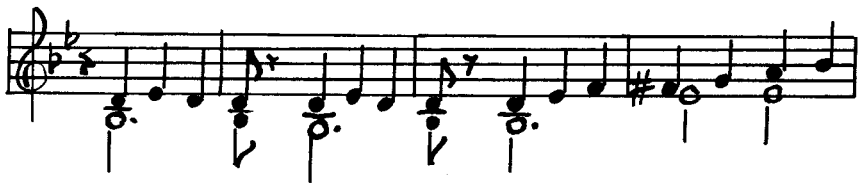
expands into a more complete expression on pages 17 and 18.





Against it are hints of the first theme. All the thematic material is firmly knit together.

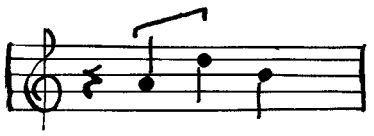
The Development begins with a variation of the opening figure of Theme I.



On page 24 a portion of Theme I is presented in augmentation.

All through the Development, Rachmaninoff, in his attempt to avoid all that is obvious, rather than adopting the older sequencing of Mozart or Haydn in which the thematic parts are easily followed, resorts to random reference and disguising of mere bits of his themes. Often augmentation, diminution, and shifted and altered rhythm appear simultaneously with the original presentation of the theme. Because the first and second themes have figures or motives in common (the second theme being partially drawn from the first), it is not always easy, especially where only fragments are referred to as is so often the case, to ascribe every portion of the development to a definite source.

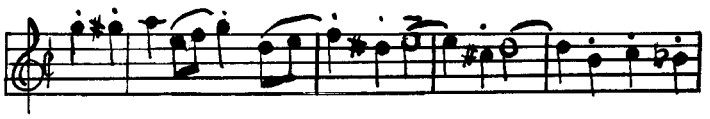
The First Theme (which started the Development) continues until page 3, where the figure, appearing on page 9 is carried abreast with it in developed form. The First Theme then continues on page 33, with references, on pages 35 to 37, to the upward leap in the first subject.



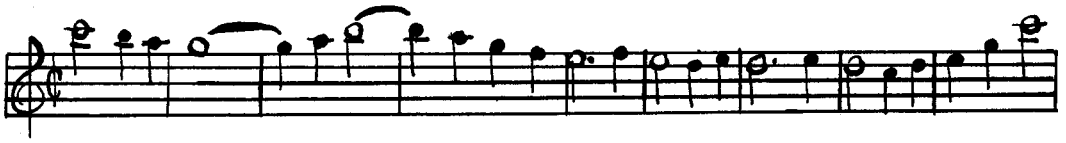
A recurrence of the triplet formations of the first theme from page 13 appears on pages 36, 40, and 41, and a return to the development of this theme leads into the Recapitulation. The Recapitulation begins and continues with the second theme throughout, although references to the first theme appear against it. The Coda deals with the first theme alone. This irregular procedure, of giving over the entire Recapitulation to the second theme alone, preserves the even distribution of thematic material and is thoroughly logical when one considers that the first theme predominates throughout the Development section, and that the Introduction and Coda also present only the first theme. Thus the contrast provided by the material in the Recapitulation is much needed before the positive return of the first theme in the Coda.

The closely knit thematic material of the first movement extends into the second movement where the three-note figure in the horns at the Introduction, page 60, (from which Theme I is projected) is a repetition of the begin-

ning of the first subject of Movement I. The second movement is a "Song-form with Trio" in which the Principal Song is a First Rondo-form.

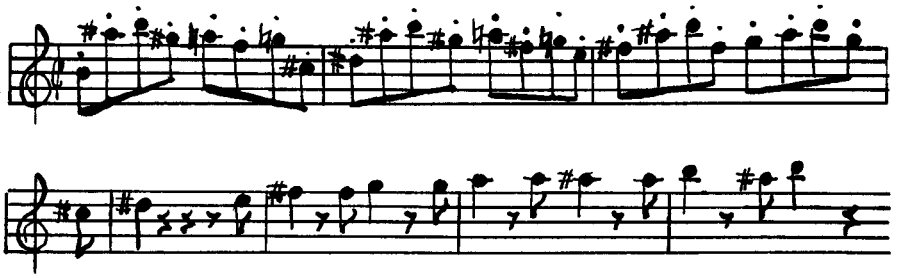


The triplet figure in the woodwind at the opening of the principal section appears in augmentation in the bridge-passage on page 69 against the subordinate theme which, in turn, is similar to Theme II on pages 17 and 18 of Movement I,



and continues even in the following bridge-passage on page 73, thus forming a continuous thread which knits these sections together.

The Trio makes use of two figural patterns



drawn from the thematic material of the Principal Section. Part 4* of the principal theme, which has already made a return directly after the subordinate theme, is omitted

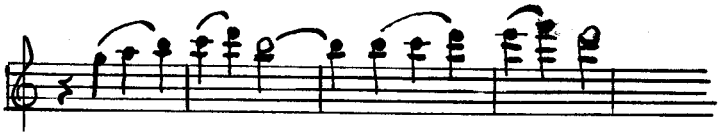
*The editor of this score has divided the themes into parts.

entirely in the return of the principal section succeeding the Trio. Also, the triplet figure which appeared so continuously throughout the Principal Section, bridge-passages, and Subordinate Theme of this Section, is likewise omitted at the first return of the Principal Theme on page 76; it appears only momentarily in the Trio, and comes back definitely at the return of the Principal Section and Coda. This even scattering of material is reminded of Beethoven's instinct for balance.

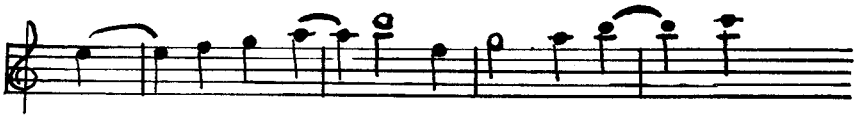
The repetition, in the Coda, of the figure from Theme I, Movement I,

and the similarity of parts of the Subordinate Theme to the five-note ascending figure in the Subordinate Theme from Movement I, again reveal Rachmaninoff's instinct for unifying his movements.

Theme from Movement I



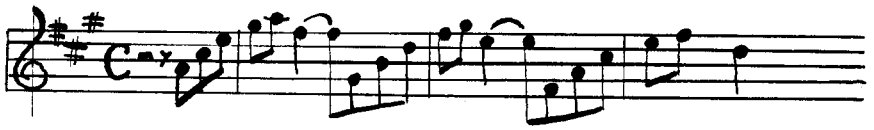
Subordinate Theme of Movement II



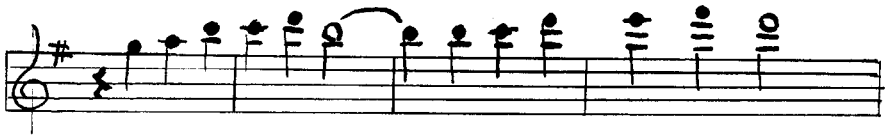
THIRD MOVEMENT

This movement is in Sonatine form, and the technique employed is similar to that in one of the species of double-fugue where each theme is treated separately until the Recapitulation when both are carried abreast. The first theme is taken directly from the Subordinate Theme in the First Movement on page 18.

First Theme

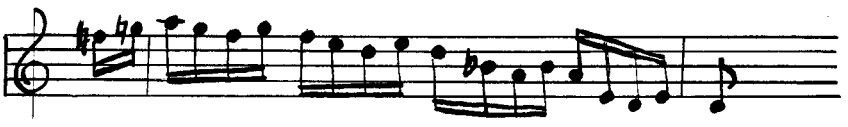


Theme from page 18



The second theme, however, is the most characteristic of the two, for, from its opening announcement which is little more than the continuous repetition of a figure in sixteenth notes (taken from the introductory figure on page 1), something more thematic gradually emerges in each succeeding part.

Opening announcement of Second Subject

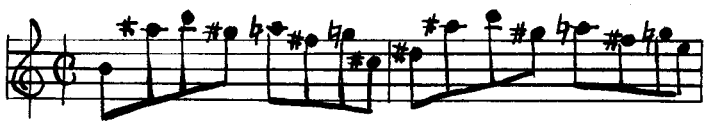


Following his usual practice, Rachmaninoff takes full advantage of the bridge-passage on page 121 to anticipate the section to come. Here the pronounced return to the material in the Recapitulation so completely disguises the bridge-passage that the listener could regard the bridge-passage itself as the Recapitulation.

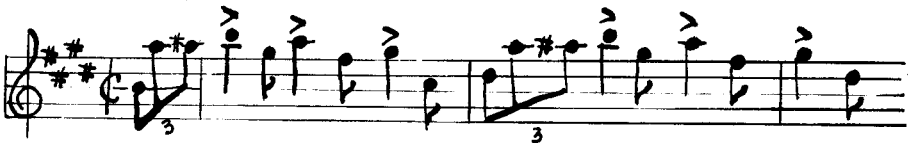
FINALE - FOURTH MOVEMENT

In the Finale the thematic material is treated differently from that in the other movements. Theme I, which grows out of the Trio theme from Movement II (page 81),

Trio Theme

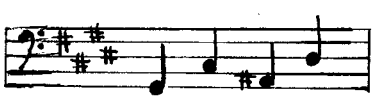


Theme I

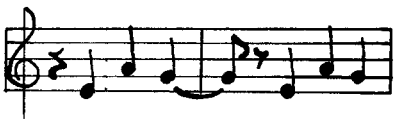


continues without any radical departures which would necessitate a separation into parts. On page 137 there is an augmentation of a figure from the theme which closely resembles the opening figure of the first subject in the first movement, page 9.

Page 137 - figure



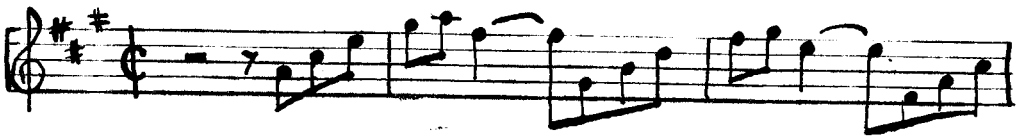
Page 9 - figure



Rachmaninoff's themes, which cover so narrow a range, resemble those of Sibelius in which characteristic turns in the melodic line generate endless possibilities of development. The remote, sometimes close, affinity of all of Rachmaninoff's themes, and their linking together by recurrent prominent figures (a trait also suggestive of the Sibelius technique) is again strikingly illustrated in the second subject of the Finale which is related in both mood and figures to the first subject of the Third Movement on page 109.

Second Subject of Finale

First Theme of Third Movement



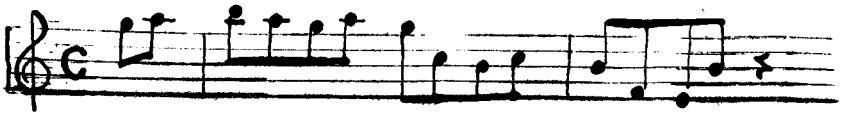
This second theme of the Finale, like the first, holds so consistently to the same material throughout that it defies any division into parts.

The Development begins with a brief return of the introductory figure of the First Movement (used also in the Recapitulation of the Third Movement). Then the First Theme of the Finale is developed, and eventually against this, the introductory figure of the First Movement, page 1, (a figure which is also repeated in dimin-

ution in the second subject of the Third Movement) appears from page 161 (last measure) to page 165. At this point only the opening figure of the second theme, Third Movement, remains, similar to its form on pages 162 to 163.

Figure from page 161

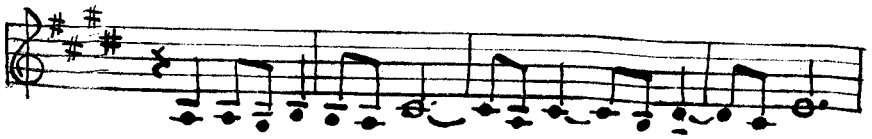
Introductory figure - page 1



On pages 166 to 170 the three descending notes of the theme are further augmented into quarter notes and even whole notes (as on page 166), with the original augmentation in eighth notes appearing with it, the first theme of this movement being dropped completely except for a suggestion of its triplet rhythm in the timpani. However, on page 169 just preceding the Recapitulation, the downward progression of the second theme is accelerated from eighth notes to triplets, thus, at least rhythmically, suggesting the return of the first subject of this movement at the Recapitulation and creating a rhythmically smooth transition from one section into the other.

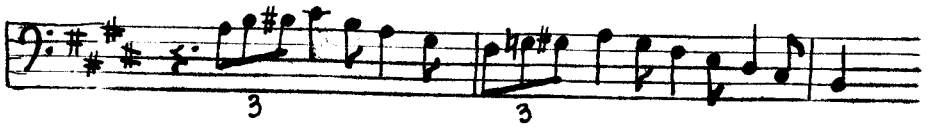
On page 180 the figure in the second violins and violas, an inversion of a figure from the first theme

of this movement,



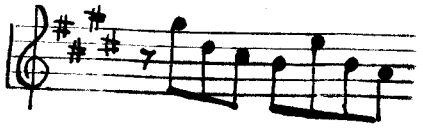
could also be regarded as an inversion of the characteristic figure of the first theme of the Third Movement, on page 107, in the first violins.

Much use is made of this figure up to page 184 against further augmentation of it in the brass and woodwind, and against Theme I itself.



On page 185 this figure returns in its original form in the bassoons, serving as another instance of the closely knit manner in which Rachmaninoff's whole structure is woven together.

While the Coda concerns itself principally with the First Theme of the Finale, there is also a final reference to the second or "subordinate" theme which appears in diminution in the strings and woodwind on pages 193 to 194.



SECOND SYMPHONY - SUMMARY

The first movement, though in no way rhythmically or harmonically outstanding or individual, is, however, strong, intensely expressive, adequately scored, well integrated, and closely knit. Nothing foreign or aesthetically unrelated is introduced such as strangely enough happens in the otherwise more mature writing of the Third Symphony. Even the allegro following the slow introduction maintains the mood. Rachmaninoff's characteristic sequential building to climaxes and logical consistent drawing away from them is especially powerful.

The Scherzo is perhaps the strongest movement of the symphony. Stern, sometimes tragic, the dull and ominous chords cutting in on every attempt to be carefree, its saturnine humor is an entire departure from the Mendelssohnian playful type of scherzo. The "trio", however, is far lighter and gayer in character, and provides the necessary contrast in mood. The whole movement is masterfully scored with somber emphasis on the low register of brass and woodwinds. The concluding measures with their heavy unyielding chords are reminiscent again of Tschaikowsky, though Rachmaninoff's message is perhaps not so vital, objective, and direct, as that of Tschaikowsky, despite his profundity and amazing technique. Rachmaninoff's music has tremendous reserve when contrasted to the excess of emotion found in Tschaikowsky.

The opening theme in the slow movement, though starting out promisingly for the first five measures, drifts into the prosy, sentimental, and saccharine. The second theme is even more indeterminate, lacking in dignity, and definitely the sentimental "salonesque" type of melody whose too-long-drawn-out lyric meditations are stabilized only by Rachmaninoff's wonderful polyphonic treatment, and powerful climactic building.

The First Theme of the last movement ranks with the Scherzo in quality. With all its vitality and character it is distincly Russian, just as many of Beethoven's themes are distinctly Germanic. The Second Theme, however, is far more expressive. Although a great contrast to the first subject, it yet preserves the pronounced triplet figure of Theme I (now in quarter notes) as a background accompaniment, thus tying the fabric together and welding the second subject firmly into the prevailing rhythmic current. However, the necessity for inserting a theme of more emotional quality is a debatable point with many composers today. Rachmaninoff's procedure here recalls the old idea of emphasizing contrast in the A B A design, rather than continuing throughout with the opening mood. The Coda is conventional and prosy.

The Second Symphony as a whole, in spite of being long drawn out, has passages of great power. It is permeated (especially throughout the Scherzo and Finale) by

the old Russian gypsy spirit, and while far more prosy, it nevertheless hangs together more consistently than the Third Symphony in its establishment of a definite mood.

CHAPTER THREE

THIRD SYMPHONY

THE SCORING OF THE THIRD SYMPHONY

In this symphony, as in the second, the scoring, though adequate and handled in a way that fits the orchestra, producing everywhere contrast and color, is nevertheless greatly dominated by the music itself and the remarkable handling of its thematic material. The scoring presents very little that is new or especially individual when compared with that of such innovators as Korsakoff, Tschaikowsky, Debussy, or Stravinsky.

Outstanding, characteristic passages in this score are:

Page 7	Muted clarinet
Page 11	Divided cellos and violas, but here only the chord is subdivided and the scoring therefore not to be compared to the polyphonic treatment found in Strauss and others.
Page 23	Muted trombones
Pages 38, 39	Xylophone, triangle, etc.
Page 43	Trombones marked FF with all other instruments, but muted, thus softening the tone so they will not overpower violins and woodwinds. Rachmaninoff evidently wishes the muted quality of tone, for otherwise simply marking the trombones F or MF would reduce the power without any necessity of muting.
Page 48	Cello solo
Page 59	Flute solo, harmonics in violins, more elaborate division of strings

Pages 60-61	Unusual accompaniment, provided by horn and harp.
Page 65	Horn solo with harp.
Pages 68-70	Subdivision of strings and flute solo with harp accompaniment.
Pages 69-71	Unusual harp and celeste accompaniment against divisi strings. (Such fragilely scored passages as these in which Rachmaninoff catches the Debussy spirit, are a great contrast to his more vigorous scoring.)
Pages 72, 73	Four solo violas. Here also, despite the reënforcement, there is a fine instance of individual treatment in separate parts.
Page 76	Independent thematic use of celeste against clarinets.
Pages 88, 89	Colorful touches in woodwind against strings.
Pages 87-90	Tambourine, cymbals, triangle, and celeste.
Pages 98, 110, and 111	Repetition of figure in the trumpets through alternation of players. Stravinsky technique.
Page 101	Brass alone.
Page 103	Glissando in celeste heightening the effect of the upward rush in strings and woodwind.
Page 109	The colorful use of brass in the last measure.
Pages 116, 117	Color gained through strings answering woodwind. Not vivid color. The purpose of producing color seems more or less defeated, or at least limited by the combining of celeste and brass with strings. The dramatic answering of one section by another is rarely seen.

Page 132	The seemingly independent flute passage is only an ornamentation of the theme in the strings. The same is true of the horn part, although here the main function of the horns is to supply the chord.
Page 133	Strings answer brass and woodwind in a more pronounced way. It is rare that the entire string-section moves in unison or the octave. This is generally limited to the violins and violas.
Page 144	Muted trombone. This passage reveals Rachmaninoff's appreciation of the more colorful tone of the muted trombone in place of the horn which would ordinarily have been used in such a passage.
Page 155	Woodwind in unison, not octave, against strings in unison.
Page 156	A momentary individualizing of three sections against one another - strings, brass, and woodwind.
Pages 161-162	Impressive use of the trombone choir.
Page 160	Muted clarinet.
Pages 185, 191	Color.
Page 195	Fine independent use of woodwind.
Pages 196-206	The percussion, timpani, triangle, tambourine, constantly employed.
	Muted horns are scattered throughout the symphony.

The strings are almost continuously in evidence. However, we occasionally encounter just the second violins as on pages 3, 46, and 47; cellos and basses alone, page 172; and silence of the complete string section on

pages 2, 65, 82, 116, 117, 122, 144, and 192; and on pages 195-196, the longest tacet throughout the entire symphony.

Thematic lines are always well reënforced and limited to not over three at a time. Rachmaninoff's fine polyphonic handling of the orchestra recalls the attitude of Ernest Bloch who never regarded orchestration as a subject of serious import in itself. To him the orchestra was simply another instrument to which imitation, canon, and fugue could be applied. In Rachmaninoff's scoring, polyphonic devices such as augmentation, diminution, and shifted rhythm, continuously present the original thematic material in an ever-changing variety of ways; for instance on page 14, the passage in sixteenths in the woodwind is at least a partial diminution of the passage in the strings. All swiftly moving passages are constructed from the themes. There is little or no waste. Note for example on pages 20 and 21 where the triplets in the woodwind are directly drawn from the material in the violins. Rachmaninoff has a keen appreciation of the brass as sufficient in power to penetrate independently through any massed scoring against it, as shown on pages 14, 56, 58, 113, and 169. He also employs constantly that technique, used so much by Haydn and Mozart, in which seemingly independent parts are constructed from a definite source. For example, on page 39, note the close resem-

blance of the passages in violins to that in the wood-wind section.

Other outstanding passages which show more explicitly where Rachmaninoff's scoring fits the mood or character of the music are:

1. The pianissimo beginning of the first movement with cello, clarinet and horn in unison. Here the very thinness of the scoring, and the lack of harmonization of this narrow invocation-like figure is suggestive of the monotonous intoning of the Gregorian chant. There is something spaceless and floating about it, remindful of Rachmaninoff's love for the Russian church music.

2. The delicately scored first strains of Theme I (First Movement) which seem only a re-echoing of the far-off chant of the introduction. Here the rarified tone quality of the high divisi oboes and bassoons over the monotonous incantations of the violins creates an effect entirely Eastern and Oriental.

3. Page 7 - the divisi trombones entering with ominous tread. This is the first hint of the subtle but harsh military undercurrent of the symphony. The accompanying timpani and cymbals further intensify this mood.

4. The scoring of the first pages of the development of Movement I and the following pages. Here Rachmaninoff shows an instinct for tone-color suggestive of Wagner or Sibelius. The dark rhythmic mutterings of the violas on the monotonous low F, with the divisi bassoons and clarinets "soloing" above, create an atmosphere of sinister foreboding and suspense. The laments of the bassoon and the wailings of the violin, on page 18, further intensify this mood. The mysterious staccato footfalls of the viola and violin persist to the end of the section on page 25, where their low monotonous pattering converts even the lyric motto of the introduction into something stealthy and dogged.

5. Section two of the development, Movement I, on page 25. Here an interesting effect is created by the long blare of the horn over the B-flat repetitions in the strings, preparing for the brisk rises in the following section. The short syncopated scoring of the latter section is notable chiefly for its dynamics and sheer motor vitality.

6. Pages 36 to 38. The martial figure, hinted on page 7, now emerges more forcefully, striding in through the marcato brass. The turmoil of this military marching, ceasing so abruptly with the unison brass, at (22), is

superseded suddenly by a marked change in dynamics, a pianissimo interlude beginning in the low violins whose tonal line floats up in gradual crescendo over a long sustained horn tone, trilling timpani and low strings, then descends, ending with horn solo over the same accompaniment.

7. Page 63 - third measure. Here the trumpets interrupt forcefully, giving us another brief glimpse of the veiled martial undercurrent; then the movement ends, still in suspense, the stealthy pattering footfalls of the plucked strings still shadowing in the background.

8. Pages 86 to 112. This scoring is turbulent, brilliant, high-spirited, and at times even fantastic.

9. Page 113. This is one of the most colorful passages that Rachmaninoff has scored. While again suggestive of the breaking and receding of a wave, this scoring with violins wheeling down to meet the rising cello line, and the triangle and trumpet calls contributing to the intensity, is remindful of Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries".

10. Theme I of the Finale. This scoring - sparkling, bright, and joyous - is yet vigorous and robust.

11. Page 164. Here the urgent driving horn tones are remindful of the scoring of Sibelius' "Night-ride and Sunrise".

The scoring of this symphony, however, taken as a whole, is not outstanding when compared to those writers previously mentioned. There is color through the use of muted horns, trombones, and clarinets, frequent use of many instruments of the percussion, but such features introduce nothing new. They appear constantly in the scores of practically every writer. Consider, for instance, the subdivision of strings. With Rachmaninoff it means only a widening of the canvas for greater tone-material; we see no such independent treatment of the separate parts as one finds in Wagner, Debussy, Strauss, or Stravinsky. Rachmaninoff's scoring is overcast by a somber hue. Due to the almost too continuous mixing of instruments, vivid contrast between sections of opposite color is lacking. The brass is seldom, almost never, employed independently. Apparently Rachmaninoff does not regard its dramatic powers and contrasting possibilities as especially necessary toward the expression of his music. Last of all, we mention again his extraordinary persistence in the use of the strings. With Rachmaninoff the strings permeate almost every combination and give it life.

While it is true that their singing quality of tone makes the strings the most valuable section of the orchestra (a fact clearly appreciated from Haydn to Brahms), the brass and woodwind perform a vital function in providing momentary color in those startling contrasts from a too continuous use of the strings alone, and in this capacity they are invaluable and imperative. Yet Rachmaninoff fails to make use of such possibilities. Neither is his scoring individualized with any particular technique. One must turn to the music itself, and to the masterly handling of the thematic material which approaches that of both Sibelius and Ravel, for a true estimate of his powers. He is, first of all, a profound musician with a definite message; next, a great polyphonist dispersing his polyphony and its various devices over the orchestra, thereby imparting genuine interest to the separate line.

Like Brahms, he is never the innovator or showman, exploiting the possibilities of the orchestra for their own sake. Always his scoring is adequate, sound, sometimes brilliant with its polyphonic display, but permeating it all is that classic restraint which fits the restraint and reserve of his serious thought.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD SYMPHONY

Before proceeding with the musical, structural, and harmonic analysis of the symphony, it will be well to make a brief summary of modern technique, its use and abuse by modern writers, and where and how Rachmaninoff fits into it.

The most vital factor in modern harmonic combinations, such as chords of the 11th and 13th, chords built up by fourths and fifths, and simultaneous use of chords from the two whole tone scales, is whether or not the composer has gotten the right distribution of tonal material; or, if he is working in polytonality, whether he has made a judicious selection of keys. To get at the vitality of sound is a problem similar to the painter's or writer's strivings for the exact pigments or words; to secure the most satisfying combination, is a process which requires continual testing. Ravel and Debussy, pioneers in modern harmony, had an innate sense for the right blend which many of the modern composers strangely lack. With all their vastly more extensive development of the new harmony in modern writing, their chords are indiscriminately blended; vital dissonance has degenerated into mere noise. Modern composers can no longer justify their neglect of these more subtle matters under the pretense that they are still but pioneers in these new tonal regions and therefore not to be held for the finesse

of their usage, because modern technique has been developing now over a period of thirty years. The careless putting-down of just any bizarre or dissonant combination has no longer any place in this advanced stage of modern composition.

The duodecuple system of twelve tones, used so extensively by the moderns and hinted by Rachmaninoff in his "Third Symphony", offers even more freedom to the composer than do the new chord formations. Beginnings of the duodecuple influence are seen in the works of Debussy in which we find sudden dramatic departures into new keys. But in the modern exploitation of the duodecuple system, the temptation lies in taking the easy way out by discarding entirely any tonic center. Chords can progress so abruptly and freely into diverse keys that if we are to avoid harmonic chaos it is imperative, though far more difficult, to preserve harmonic fixity through a dominating key. The same principle is involved in polytonality.

Likewise the new freedom available in modern rhythm can easily degenerate into rhythmic chaos when the important pulsating beat is no longer discernible as an ordering influence.

It is program music which is largely responsible for much of the careless use of the new chords, key combinations and rhythms. The attempt to depict a definite program often leads modern composers into harmonic absurdities which would

never be tolerated by the Absolutists. However, among the contemporary composers of program music, the works of Strauss and Stravinsky form two great exceptions to this general rule, for nowhere can be found a surer or more sensitive feeling for vital harmonic associations than in Strauss' "Salome" or Stravinski's "Sacre du Printemps". In both of these works an expression of all that is ugly, fierce, gruesome, or barbaric, is inspiringly depicted.

The same harmonic vitality which characterizes these works is evident in Rachmaninoff's "Third Symphony". Also Rachmaninoff is ever careful to preserve unity of key and rhythmic order, which holds his entire fabric firmly together.

MEASURE BY MEASURE CHART OF THE THIRD SYMPHONY

Movement I - Sonata Form

Measure	
1 - 11	Introduction A minor
12 - 99	Exposition
12-30	Theme I A minor
30-48	Bridge
48-99	Theme II E major
100 - 233	Development
100-142	Section I in F major
143-204	Section II
204-233	Section III beginning in A minor
234 - 302	Recapitulation
234-250	Theme I A minor
251-255	Bridge
255-302	Theme II C major
303 - 322	Coda

Movement II - Modified Rondo Form

Measure	
1 - 88	Adagio
1 - 9	Introduction F sharp minor
10-25	Theme I F sharp minor
25-29	Bridge
30-49	Theme II E flat minor
50-55	First Recall of Theme I in E flat minor
55-81	Development of Theme II

Measure

82-84 Second Recall of Theme I in C minor

85-88 Bridge

88 - 236 Allegro Vivace section

88-118 A triplet figure developed

118-134 New Theme III F minor

135-182 New development of triplet figure

183-190 Theme III in F minor again

191-236 Triplet development continues again

236 - 259 Bridge

260 - 261 Recapitulation of Adagio - beginning with Theme II in F sharp minor

262 - 270 Recapitulation of Theme I in F sharp minor

270 - 281 Codetta

Movement III - Sonata Form

Measure

1 - 95 Exposition

1 - 2 Introduction

2 -18 Theme I in A major

19 -29 Bridge

30 -50 Theme I (B) continuing in D major

51 - 66 Theme II in C sharp minor

67 -94 Bridge

95 - 247 Development

95-209 Fugue in D major

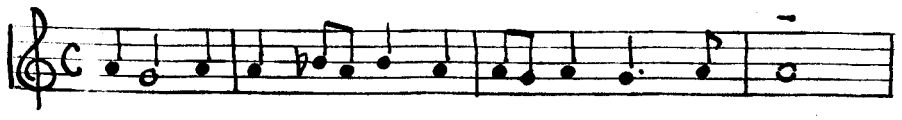
210-219 Moderato section Inset - B flat major

220-246 New section in which fragments of fugue return; really a Bridge-passage

Measure	
247 - 323	Recapitulation
247-262	Theme I in A major
263-282	Bridge
283-294	Theme II E flat minor
295-323	Bridge
324 - 376	Coda in A major

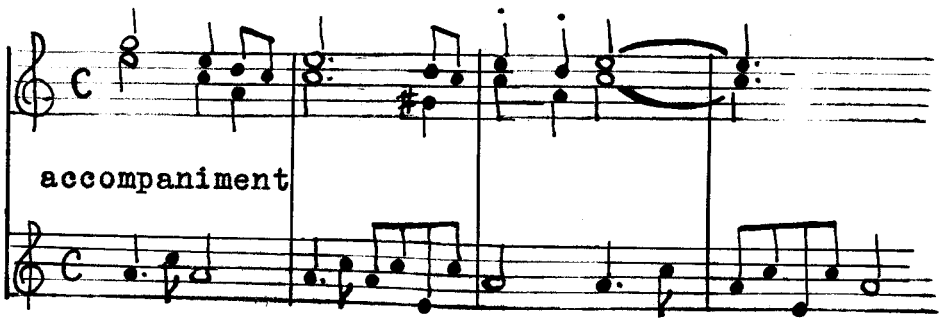
THIRD SYMPHONY - THE MUSICAL STRUCTURE

The opening of this symphony is far more suggestive of Sibelius than the "Second Symphony". At the beginning of the first movement (Lento) the thematic material to come is merely hinted in a monotonous use of three notes covering a range of a minor third only. (This three-note figure, despite the proportions into which it eventually expands, preserves its identity as a motto throughout, and persists in its own right).

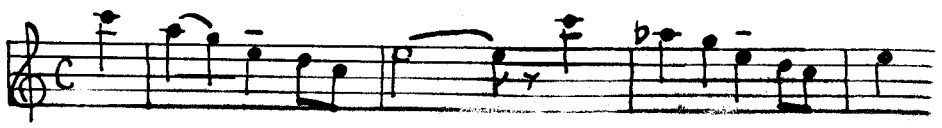


From this a definite theme is gradually evolved, first at (1), and then emerging into a positive announcement at (2) in violins on the same page.

(1)

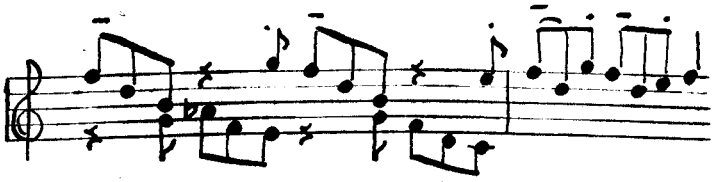


(2)

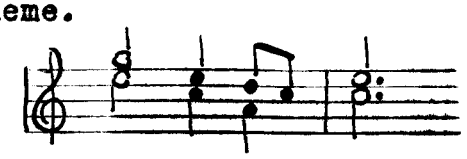


At (3) this gradually merges into a triplet formation

built on the motto



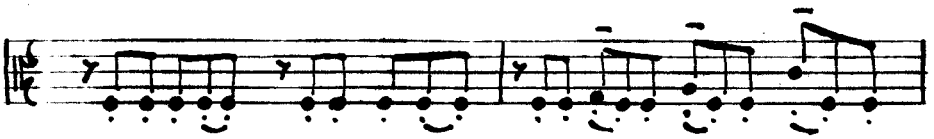
and assumes a more definite appearance on page 5. This treatment, however, is only momentary - episodic in character - for the more sustained presentation of the first theme on page 3 returns on page 7, although not in the complete form, and leads into the second theme at (5) which is a partial inversion of the opening of the first theme, and contains within it figures (in their original form) from the first theme.



This is followed by a return of the first theme which continues to the last measure on page 9, at which point Theme II is then continued, working in an ever rising up -swing to a climax at (8). The latter proves only a stepping-stone for a new continuation which leads with ever increasing momentum, this time to the full unfurling of Theme II at (9), after which references to Theme I continue to the end of the Exposition. This Exposition is a remarkable example of how closely Rachmaninoff holds to his themes. They must have been painstakingly tested

against each other during the early formative period of the work, so closely related are they, so perfectly do they agree regardless of any polyphonic treatment in their joint association.

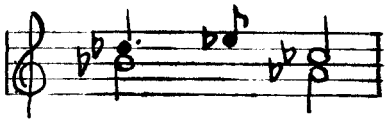
The Development starts with a statement of the first theme in developed form in the bassoons on page 18. This is followed by a reiteration of its opening figure in the clarinets and the reiteration in the oboe of a later figure from the same theme. (Compare this treatment with the theme as a whole on page 3.) All this occurs against a prevailing accompaniment in triplets drawn from the extension of the first theme on page 5.



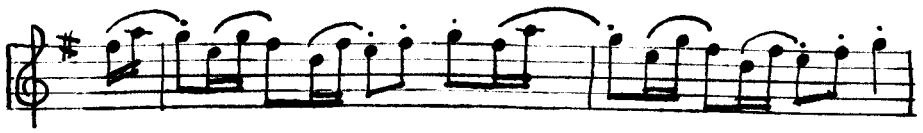
The varied and interesting rhythmic treatment of the motto, measure 7 on page 18, in the second violins against the same figure in slower rhythm in the violas, aptly illustrates one of the most prominent features of Rachmaninoff's technique, namely: the closely knit organic unity which he gains by constructing seemingly independent voices from a single thematic source. Throughout this whole development, he makes full use of scant material, constantly presenting the same figures in a new guise through his contrapuntal treatment. The new material at (13) seems to be a projection or expansion of the preceding repeated figure

in the strings, which in turn is only a development of the first theme.

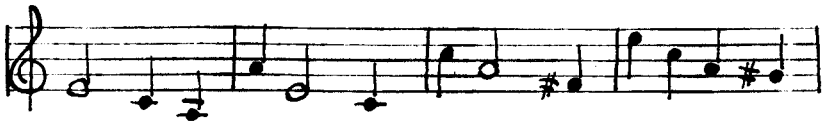
In the last measure on page 23, the trombones give out, in augmentation, this figure from the preceding measure in the first violins.



In the Development so far, the triplet rhythm has formed a constant accompaniment which persists without pause to page 25 where, in the last measure, the violas announce a figural pattern (modification of material at (13)) which is repeated by the second violins and then transferred to the first violins on page 26. The figures contained in this pattern are then consistently developed in cellos, basses, and woodwind through Rachmaninoff's characteristic broad line to page 31 where, against the triplet background, the brass announces the first theme of page 3 through partial augmentation. At (17) we have a continued reiteration of the opening downward progression of the first theme of page 3 which breaks into triplets on page 35. From here to (20) the material hints of the second theme in developed form. At (20) the apparently new material in the piccolo and bassoon, typically Russian in character, is taken from the second theme at (5) but presented now in partial diminution.

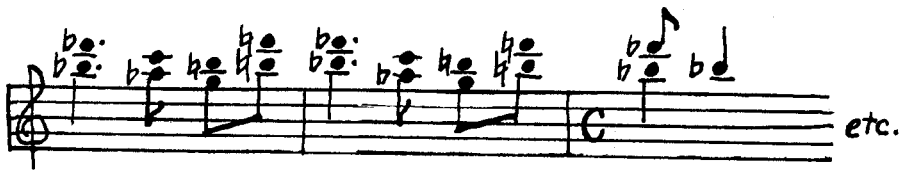


In the basses and cellos is a suggestion of the opening downward descent of the first theme. On page 42 is a modified return, in the trombones, of the motto from page 1, through partial augmentation. At (22) the first violins sweep upward with material which strongly suggests the opening of the second theme at (5)



and at (23) the second theme is unmistakably announced. There is now a gradual descent of this material from a "fortissimo" climax down to a modified return of the material on the opening page, the motto, which hints of the more positive return at (25). The material from pages 42 to 46 is really a bridge-passage which anticipates the subjects in the approaching Recapitulation at (25).

The Recapitulation introduced by the opening motto from page 1 begins with the accompaniment figure from the last two measures of page 2, against which Theme I appears on page 46 followed by the second theme on page 50. This merges at (31) into an extension of the first theme.



At (33) the second theme returns in the flutes as it appeared on page 50, but with a portion of the theme in augmentation against it. A codetta theme, faintly resembling Theme II, is announced at (34).

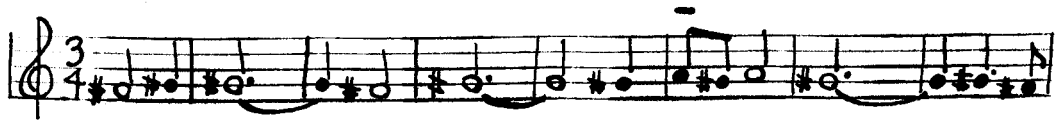
This theme continues in gradual diminuendo to almost the end of the movement, with continual reference to the 'motto' giving it identity. The motto alone is given out in the last five measures of the movement.

Rachmaninoff's subtle handling of material makes him closer to Sibelius than any other writer. In this "Third Symphony", especially, he makes use of the Sibelius technique by at first only vaguely hinting the themes to be developed. Both writers employ a very limited range for their figures, and the marvel is, with such frugal thematic material, with such close correlation between the themes and such complete avoidance of sequences and other points of corroboration, that any feeling of thematic unity can prevail. His sequential progressing toward and away from climaxes is the one

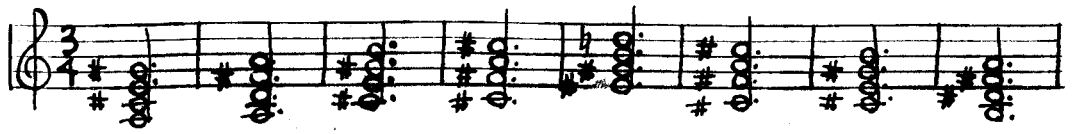
factor that preserves the broad line and counteracts this constant evasion of the obvious.

SECOND MOVEMENT

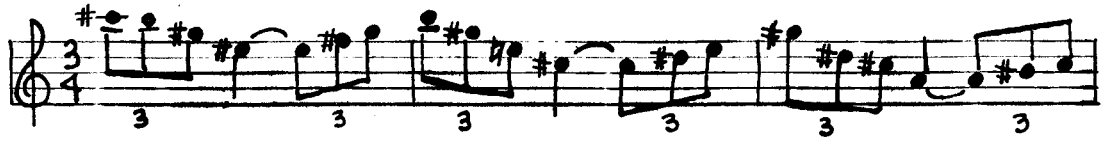
The Second Movement might be regarded as a modified Rondo-form. It begins with an alternation of two adjacent tones which is a return of the motto from Page 1.



Beneath is an accompaniment figure in the harp from which Theme II is eventually developed.

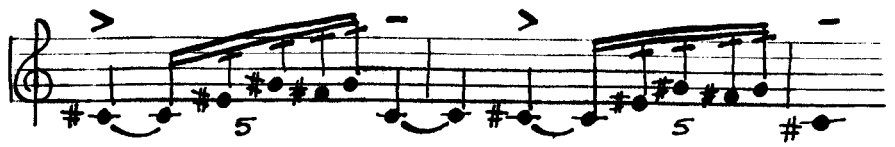


Theme I is then stated in descending sequence at (36),

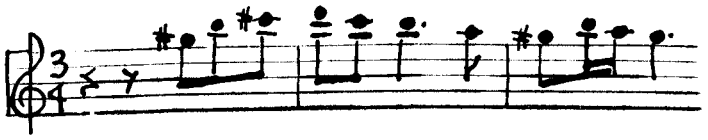


and expands in the following way at (37).

The bridge-passage at (38) contains within it the triplet formation from the second and fourth measures after (37),

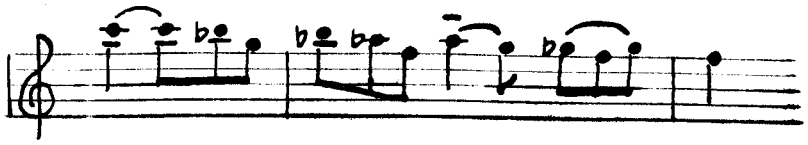


and leads into the second subject on page 68 where partial augmentation in the strings is used against it.



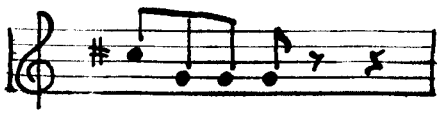
The opening figure of Theme II is nearly identical with that in the second theme of the first movement at (5). From (40) to page 73, measure 2, diminution of Theme II appears in the strings against shifted rhythm of the theme in the woodwind. A modified version of this material appears in triplets in measure 2 on page 73. The bridge-passage, starting with the last measure on page 73, contains portions of Theme I in shifted rhythm, thus concealing the entrance of Theme I at (41). After a very brief recall of Theme I, Theme II in the cellos, measure 7, page 75, is developed canonically between the celeste and clarinet on pages 76 to 77, and then expands in divided strings on pages 77 to 81 with its opening figure sweeping on upward and creating the broader line.

On page 79 diminution of Theme II appears in the woodwind and trombones against the original formation in the strings. (Compare with page 72). The persistent sequential development of Theme II is maintained to page 81 where the theme takes on the character of the first theme from which various figures are drawn.

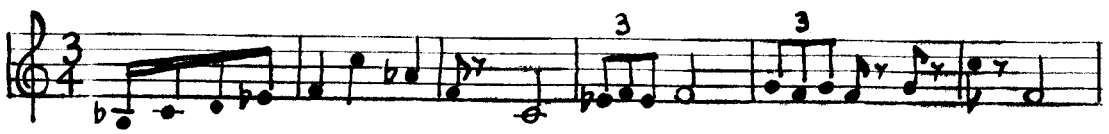


This leads to a definite return of the first theme in the English horn on page 82, followed by a bridge-passage similar to that used between Themes I and II at (38), after which a triplet figure, taken from the development of the first movement, converts the preceding adagio into a vivace.

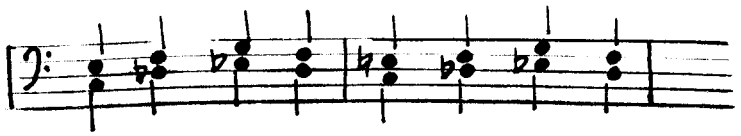
In the Vivace we encounter a new figure



mixed with figural references to the first theme. There is a return of Theme II, slightly extended, in the strings on page 86; its downward descent in the next measure is an extension of the original downward tendency of this theme on pages 68 to 69. Thus the Allegro Vivace, aside from the new figure it contains, is a mixture of both first and second themes in developed form. At (49) is an inversion of the new figure and at (51) a new theme emerges from the new figure.



It is interrupted at (53) by a return of the new triplet figure from the opening of the Allegro at (47), now used as an accompaniment. The opening of the second theme appears periodically against it, first in the violas, then in the second violins, while an augmentation of Theme II (first note omitted) appears in the bassoons at (53).

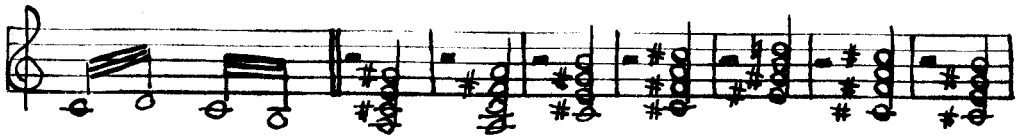


(The latter figure continues prominently in the following pages.) Other portions of Theme II are presented on page 95 in both the bass clarinet and English horn, (compare theme on page 68) while oboes and clarinets present a figure, the general line of which has developed from the new theme at (51). As this thematic material continues on page 96 it resembles more nearly the outline of Theme II from page 68. (Note especially page 96, measure three, where the first violins present within their accompaniment the opening figure of the second subject, which in turn is repeated above in a more definite way by the flutes and oboes, the woodwind and horns returning with the augmentation of Theme II already seen at (53)). On page 102 the new theme is re-stated in the flutes, piccolo, and oboe as it appeared on page 90. From pages 105 to 111 there is continual reference to the opening figure of Theme II (stated in the violas at (60)) interspersed with the new figure. On pages 112 to 113 this

figure dominates almost completely. The scale-wise passage (development of Theme II) which appears in the celeste on pages 116 to 117, is further extended at (66) in the Alla Breve. Thus the Allegro Vivace or Development section combines fragments from the first and second themes (mostly Theme II) with the new figure and the new theme which has grown from the new motif, developing all these factors by the various methods mentioned.

The transitional material, (66) to (68), leading back to the Recapitulation, is again built on the motto or from a figure of Theme II. This is followed at (68) by a return of the original bridge-passage from pages 67 and 83,

Transition figure; with this harp accompaniment



which leads into the Recapitulation of the Adagio on page 121.

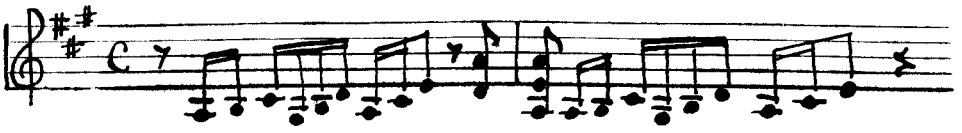
The first four measures of the Recapitulation present an episodic statement of Theme II in partial augmentation and abbreviated form in the strings, with the English horn echoing it in diminution. This leads, in measure two, page 122, directly into an extended recapitulation of the first theme. A brief codetta

ends the movement with diminution of the opening material of this movement. This is really but another statement of the motto which begins and closes both the First and Second Movements.

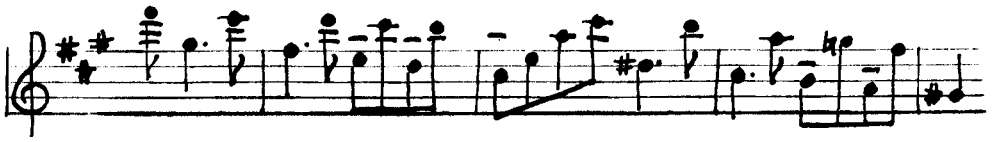
In this Recapitulation we see Rachmaninoff exhibiting Beethoven's instinct for evenly spreading out his thematic material. The Second Theme, so extensively developed in the Vivace section, is referred to only briefly, while Theme I, so scantily used in the Development, returns here in extended form.

THIRD MOVEMENT

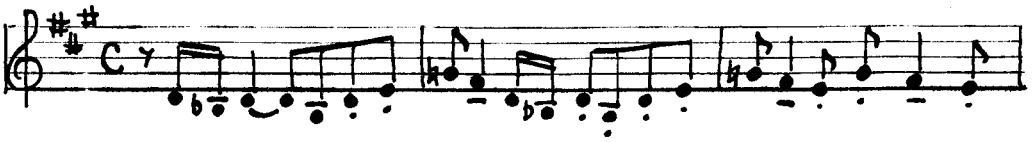
The Third Movement is in Sonata form. It begins with an introductory upward rush from which Theme I is hurled.



This theme serves as a generator from which new figures and novel treatments of the same material are evolved. All of the thematic material from page 127 to page 140 hangs together as Theme I with the exception of bridge material on page 132 which here takes on the character of an episode.



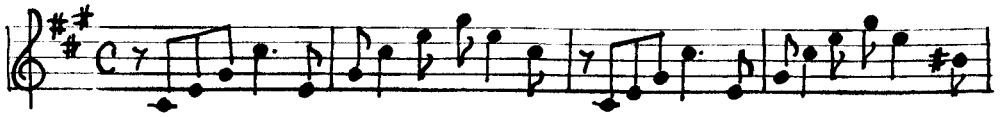
On page 134, the augmentation of the figure in sixteenth notes in the second measure of page 127, and especially the addition of the two notes in the next measure, page 135, bring about a more definite thematic utterance.



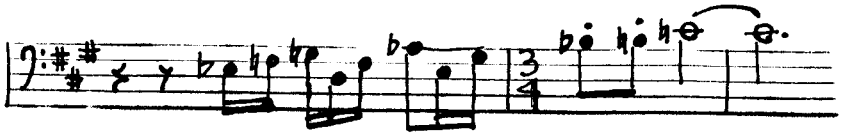
(This passage is a typical example of how Rachmaninoff's original themes logically and consistently expand and widen themselves, thus providing a continuously richer

field from which to draw for the development section).

Four dark woodwind chords then introduce Theme II at the Meno Mosso. The leaps in the opening figure expand into a higher register in the next measure.



These two measures provide all the material up to page 143 where the bridge material from page 132 returns in more episodic form. On page 144 the thematic bits in the woodwind from pages 135 to 136 re-appear (now in extended form)

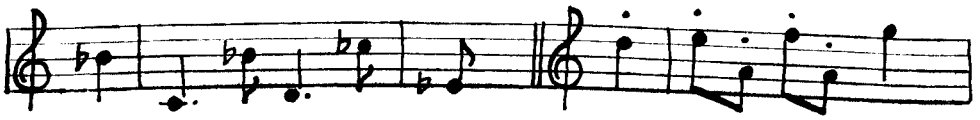


as a preparation for the storming-out of the tutti at (80) with its marcato reiterations of the motto which opened and closed both the first and second movements. On page 146 a few further repetitions of the fragments from page 144 complete the transition, stating the subject matter to be worked out in the Development which begins on page 147 with a vigorous four-voiced fugue derived from Theme I. Its first four notes are an exact duplication of Theme I with rhythmic change alone.

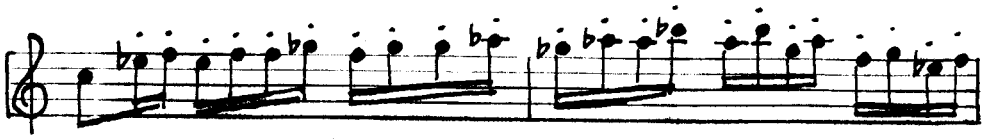
Theme I Fugue Subject

The next figure of the fugue is derived from a figure of the bridge-passage.

Beginning of Bridge-passage Fugue figure



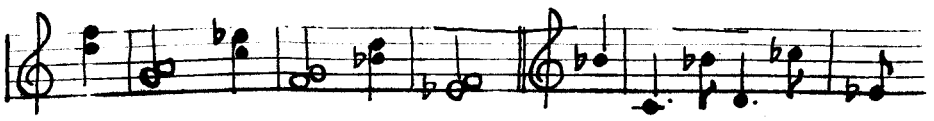
From (86) to (92) the strictness and vigor of the Fugue slackens, giving way to more modified and episodic treatment. From measure five on page 158 to (88) is an embroidering of Theme II from Movement II.



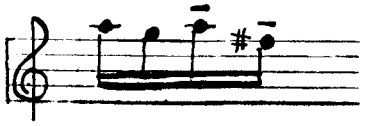
(We see the same scale figure used again in the last two measures of both pages 164 and 165.)

From (92) a more positive thematic return pulls the Fugue together and culminates in the climax on page 168. On page 171 is a return in more episodic form of the bridge material of page 143, now in augmented form and in the woodwind.

Bridge material from page 171 Page 143

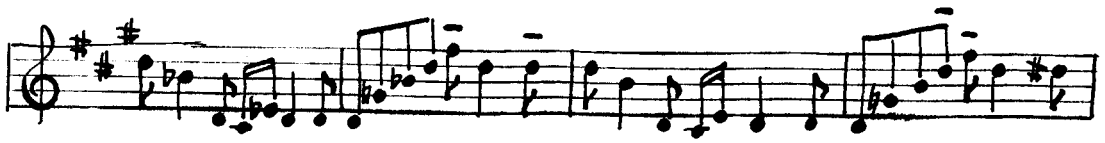


The thematic material which formed the opening subject of the Fugue on page 147, reappears at the Allegro Vivace on page 173 but in rather fragmentary form, with the bassoon and cello giving out in augmentation this part of the opening figure.



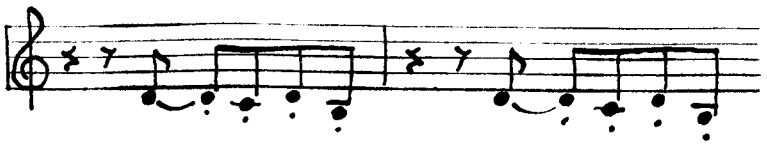
All this appears in more extended form on pages 176 and 177. This Allegro Vivace section, which is merely a bridge-passage preparing for the Recapitulation, is somewhat similar to the bridge-passage preceding the Development.

The Recapitulation proceeds with a slightly varied, but for the most part exact, repetition of the Exposition until page 185. Here a figure taken directly from Theme II (with the exception of the sixteenth note figure) has the appearance of a new theme because of the original treatment it receives.



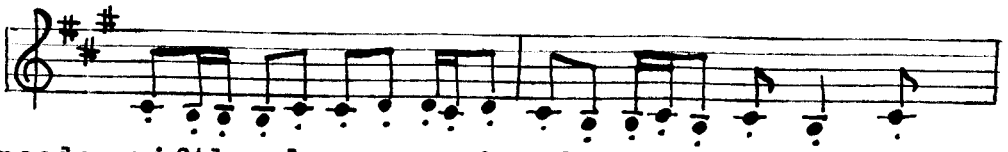
This practice is a prevailing characteristic of Rachmaninoff's methods. This variation of Theme II serves as a bridge-passage which leads directly into Theme II itself at (105). At (107) the material from the bridge-passage

also returns, and on page 190 the material is again only an augmentation of this figure from the Fugue subject.



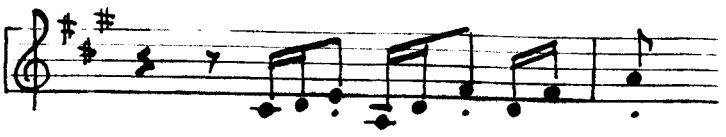
This augmented figure on page 190 continues on page 191 in syncopated form.

The Coda begins on page 193 with Theme I (in the flute) over an accompaniment in the strings built from the motto. Accompaniment figure



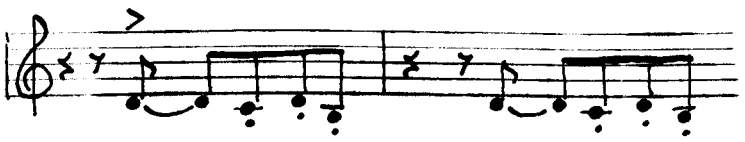
It speeds swiftly along, pausing from measure three, page 194 to (112), for a passage in the woodwinds which is an expansion of this figure,

from measure one on page 193. On page 196 (last measure), material resembling the Fugue subject on page 129 appears in the second violins



and works up to a forte at the Allegro on page 199 in the strings. That portion of the Fugue subject which appears

in augmentation in the horns on page 190



can be traced throughout the remainder of the movement on pages 191, 198 (in wind), 199 (last measure in horns) to 203. The tempo changes to 3/4 at page 202, thus presenting the same tonal pattern in a new rhythmic guise. At (116) the slight variation of Theme I from page 128, fourth measure, returns and brings the Finale to its conclusion.

THIRD SYMPHONY - SUMMARY

FIRST MOVEMENT

The opening motto with its eastern, chant-like, modal character definitely establishes the ancient mood. But unfortunately, the whole movement is not cast in the mood of the motto. When the middle of the first subject is reached there is little of the ancient quality left, even though the theme itself is still drawn from the motto, and when we arrive at the second theme, there remains not even a trace of the modal feeling. This lyric, but rather weak (even cloying) second theme, is saved from the commonplace only by Rachmaninoff's powerful sequential expansion of it through climax upon climax and the subsequent masterful sequential receding from these climaxes.

The opening of the Development, with its weird and sinister scoring, draws us back forcefully to the original mood which persists throughout, the music becoming more barbaric and Stravinskian in character as it proceeds. The periodic return of the opening motto, especially its powerful intoning in the brass on pages 37 to 38, aids in consistently prolonging the mood which suffered such an unaccountable relapse in the exposition. With the coming of the Recapitulation, however, the ancient character is again blotted out. The prolonged treatment of the weaker *second theme completely dispels the slightest trace of the*

opening mood and the abrupt return of the motto in the Coda does not save the situation.

SECOND MOVEMENT

The opening chant which re-establishes the mood of the introduction (on page 1), is broken again by the entrance of the first theme which, despite its rare beauty and grace, has little aesthetic relation to the modal atmosphere of the beginning. The somewhat liturgical second theme might possibly be considered as a slight reversion to the chant, but the succeeding scherzo section with its pouncing phrases and darting accents entirely shatters any continuity in the movement and leaves the listener bewildered as to Rachmaninoff's original intention. Despite its brilliant scoring, powerful broad lines, and perfection within itself, it seems more of an entertaining feature, disrupting the sustained continuity of mood as grotesquely as does the ballet in a serious drama. The recapitulation has the appearance of a mere appendage, and the coda ends with the same motto theme still stalking stealthily in the background, thus bringing us back arbitrarily once more to the opening mood.

THIRD MOVEMENT

Beginning with a spirited and vivid theme, and progressing through bridge-passages and the secondary theme to a powerful, vigorous fugal development, the Third Move-

ment has, despite its frequent formal reminiscences of the motto, little linking with the mood of the beginning of the symphony. Neither does it always hang together within itself. Though logical enough in general design, certain of the passages are illogical in mood and spirit.

Throughout every movement of the symphony, Rachmaninoff at some place leaves the mood of the opening material stranded, and develops incidental new ideas and moods instead. With all these extraneous unintegrated features (however fine in themselves) one does not feel as though there is an underlying mood or message permeating the work. On the contrary, the symphony leaves one with a baffling conglomeration of impressions which is difficult to explain or reconcile, since this symphony is neither impressionistic nor program music. The opening motto, while distincly modal and atmospheric in character, is not used as a means of drawing the work together in the establishment of a predominating mood, but is simply used as a generator from which much of the music is evolved.

CHAPTER FOUR

RACHMANINOFF'S PLACE

IN THE MODERN IDEAL OF FORM

RACHMANINOFF'S PLACE IN THE MODERN IDEAL OF FORM

As suggested in the opening chapter, the pervading feature of present day scientific and social trends seems to be the relating and integrating of all isolated separate factors. We can see this unifying principle at work in every department of modern civilization; in the new flow and convertibility of light and space in modern organic architecture; in the standardizing and integrating of all the elements in interior decoration; in the more plastic and flowing forms of the new poetry; in the breaking away from representational form in the realm of painting; in the revolutionary adaptable trends of the new educational techniques. Science itself having liberated the core or generative nucleus of the atom, has now ceased to work from the separate, crystallized, fixed side of matter, atomic discoveries having made it possible to convert almost any element into any other. The set, limiting boundaries of the old, being thus dissolved, scientists, architects, mechanics, and artists are now free to unfold their structures and patterns according to a more basic and natural law, beginning with the motivating purpose or seed-essence and subsequently unfolding its inherent structure step by step. What Wright says of modern architecture, that "Any great building grows from within outward; it is not a shell into which life is after-

wards crammed", is true of every other modern art, the field of music being an especially clear example.

This functional development of an idea in organic sequence is as a principle sweeping aside entirely the old separate unrelated units that made up the musical form of the past. Whether it be a symphony, a movement, a two or three-part song-form, either the separate movements or parts are telescoped into one division or the initial dynamic impulse creates the inner alliance of all the movements. The new technique demands that the composer maintain at least a predominating hold on fundamental opening material.

Beethoven anticipated this trend in his Fifth and Ninth Symphonies. He was a pivotal point between the old and the new techniques and from his advances it was but a step to the modern consistent evolution of themes in a functional way. His constant presentation of the returning theme in a new guise, his organic codettas, conclusions, and bridges, so carefully concealing the design beneath, were a great step toward the modern organic unification of structure underlying a complete work.

The short works of Debussy and Ravel are also outstanding examples of this organic consistency. Franck, Debussy, and D'Indy of the Modern French School, made further advances in this unifying trend when they launched out with the cyclic principle, evolving a whole work from just a few themes, drawing together an entire series of

movements through their transformation and re-combination. Likewise D'Indy's "Istar Variations" were a beginning step in the evolvement of the new variation-form in which hints of the theme in the opening variation are, with each succeeding variation, focused into greater clarity, the full unfoldment or revelation of the theme itself coming at the conclusion instead of being stated at the beginning. The old formal finished statement of the theme at the beginning and the subsequent toying-with and re-working of its parts, is today being outgrown in favor of a progressive unfolding of idea step by step toward a culminating center or objective. Each separate variation as an entity within itself loses its identity under this process.

This blurring of the old definitive, separative outlines is even more startling in its revolutionizing of operatic form. Consider for instance how Wagner, by the use of recurrent leit-motifs, organically connected and merged the conglomeration of heretofore arbitrary, separate, unfunctional arias, trios, choruses, and scenes, into a more concentrated unified dramatic whole with no mood unrelated to the general mood.

Debussy's "Pélleas and Mélisande", with its absence of defined vocal melody, shows even more clearly this melting-down of the old separate disjointed outlines and elements.

In absolute music, we see the final emergence of this trend in the Sibelius Seventh Symphony which is a continuous development of its original statement and mood from beginning to end, everything being generated from the powerful opening ideas. This gradual organic expansion from mere germinal motifs into complete crystallization of the initial idea with all separate elements of the structural design concealed, is the complete realization toward which the unifying process has been tending, and Rachmaninoff, though suggesting this technique in his Third Symphony, only partly achieves the ultimate goal. In the face of the integrating trends which are molding modern music, it seems strange that many composers of absolute music, such as Rachmaninoff, seem to be still hanging on to the old disconnected suite ideal of the symphony, with its incongruous diverting scherzos. Why is it that music, which beyond all other arts requires a clear organic form, should even now be slavishly adhering to the unrelated dance forms out of which the symphony sprang, when long before the organic trend began to marshall all the elements of civilization, many artists in all other fields had pioneered in the new way? To mention only a few fields, take, for instance, the schools of impressionistic and expressionistic painting, and the great dramatists and architects, with their unfailing organic unity of mood or purpose. Is it not then a bit strange that a serious messaged symphony should not pursue

a leading thought, or motif with this same coherence and consistency, but should slavishly end in the traditional merry gigue?

The Impressionists, and writers of program music in sharp contrast to the Absolutists, have, by the continuous development and projection of one dominant message, held all movements aesthetically together in its expression. For example, Macdowell, despite his loose handling of material, definitely anticipated the modern trend in his last two Sonatas by discarding the entertaining scherzo as extraneous in the suggestion of his Norse and Keltic subjects. But in spite of these advances, Rachmaninoff, like many other absolutists, persists in the old separate, disjointed way of incorporating elements which not only do nothing to further the original idea, but even halt its development, just as the ballet or aria interrupted the action of the older operas. This is the basic dilemma of all the absolutists who, like Rachmaninoff, conservatively hang on to the old forms even while dabbling in the new techniques, retaining no dominant mood or opening material throughout their forms. Rachmaninoff is a strange hybrid mixture of the old and the new. He stands on the brink deliberating between both methods, for neither does he remain an out-and-out conservative absolutist nor does he come forth wholly into the new way. His Third Symphony,

though beginning with the Sibelius method of development, lapses back to the old techniques without retaining any initial idea throughout. Thus his music, colorful, vital, alive, as it is, does not mirror clearly the essence of contemporary trends.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1873 - Birth

1892 - Graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire

1895 - First Symphony composed and produced: (a failure)

1905 - General Manager and Conductor of the Grand Theater of Moscow

1907 - 1909 - In Dresden. Wrote the Second Symphony, First Piano Sonata, "Isle of the Dead".

1909 - First journey to America to accompany Max Fiedler and Boston Orchestra on a short tour. Conducted Second Symphony with Philharmonic and Chicago Orchestras.

1909 - Vice President of the Imperial Russian Musical Society.

1911 - 1913 - Permanent Conductor of the Philharmonic Concerts in Moscow

1913 - Composed Chorale Symphony "The Bells"

1917 - Left Russia

1918 - Arrived in America and made his home here

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Approved Cecil Burleigh
May 22 - 1942.

May 21, 1942