

AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE DEVELOPING AESTHETIC CONCEPTS IN
SERGEY PROKOFIEV'S *CHOSSES EN SOI*, OP. 45

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The purpose of this study is to analyze the compositional techniques in *Choses en soi* op. 45, by Sergey Prokofiev, and to explore the new aesthetic concepts he claimed to include in this composition. Through the examination of the compositional elements and discussion of its salient characteristics.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the aesthetic concepts developed in *Choses en soi*, Op. 45, by Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953), which he had not implemented in his earlier compositions. These concepts included non-traditional forms, atypical melodic lines, contrapuntal voice leading, and chromatic harmonies. Through the examination of the compositional elements and discussion of its salient characteristics, this study will help pianists gain a clearer understanding of the composition and will serve as a reference to help guide their interpretation.

1.2 Significance and State of Research

Prokofiev's compositions can be divided into three periods: the Russian Period (1891-1917), the Foreign Period (1918-1935), and the Soviet Period (1935-1953).¹ The Russian period refers to his years in school at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, as well as the years before he left Russia in 1918 during World War I. The years in which he traveled to Siberia, Japan, the United States, and Europe are categorized as his Foreign Period, and the Soviet Period begins when he returned to the Soviet Union in 1935.

During his foreign period, Prokofiev showed a predilection for large-scale compositions, such as symphonies and ballets. He did not write any piano music after his fifth sonata (Op. 38, 1923) until *Choses en soi*, composed in 1928, ten years after his last set of character pieces, *Four*

¹ Minturn, Neil, *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997)

Pieces (Op. 32, 1918). *Choses en soi* consists of two short character pieces, referred to as *Chose en soi A* and *Chose en soi B*.

When Prokofiev initially introduced his compositions in Paris in 1923, audiences and critics did not appreciate his music, and he struggled to find a new musical language that would be approved by Parisian audiences. After the premieres of both his Sonata No. 5 and Symphony No. 2 (1925) were considered failures, Prokofiev felt lost and became depressed. He expressed his disappointment as follows:

...my friends preserved an embarrassed silence. This was perhaps the first time it occurred to me that I might perhaps be destined to be a second-rate composer. Paris as the undisputed dictator of fashion has a tendency to pose as the arbiter in other fields as well. In music, the refinement of French tastes has its reserve [*sic*] side-- the public are apt to be too easily bored.²

Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1927 for a series of concerts, and found the public there more enthusiastic and admiring of his compositions during his visit. This acceptance rebuilt his confidence, and he gained a new sense of determination. After returning to Paris from his tour of Russia, Prokofiev wrote about his motivation for composing *Choses en soi* in 1928:

Besides the symphony, I worked on two rather long pieces for the piano in which I wished to indulge in a little musical introspection without trying to find some easily accessible form for my ideas. (I don't wish to defend this method of composition, but I do think that having written quite a quantity of simple comprehensible music I might occasionally be permitted the luxury of composing something for myself.) I called the pieces *Things in Themselves*, Op. 45.³

In this quote, Prokofiev confirmed that *Choses en soi* incorporated different aesthetic concepts and that it was a more complex work and, as such, not easy to comprehend. Prokofiev performed this work privately for his colleagues before its premiere in Brussels in 1929 to

² Ibid., 65.

³ Ibid., 73.

demonstrate the different aesthetic direction of this composition. With regard to Asafyev, Prokofiev wrote, “ He agrees that it represents a new side to me,”⁴ while Rubinstein “did not fully grasp the middle section of the first *Choses*.”⁵ From these comments, it can be inferred that *Choses en soi* was not easily accessible in its first hearing.

The title, *Choses en soi*, was derived from a philosophical concept of Kant. In his early piano works, Prokofiev created strong and evocative titles like *Diabolical Suggestion*, *Phantom*, and *Sarcasm*.⁶ In this particular instance, however, his title prioritized mature and introspective thoughts over extroversion and virtuosity. Prokofiev believed that some people were misled by the title and did not sufficiently base their judgment on the music itself:

Unfortunately, the title created the mistaken impression that these were abstractions, mere juggling with sounds. After reading the title and noticing some complexities in the texture, some people did not take the trouble to try to understand the music itself.⁷

It can be seen, therefore, that Prokofiev highly regarded this work. More evidence comes from the letter he wrote to Myaskovsky, in which he said that he had worked on the two pieces of *Choses en soi* “very slowly, since I don’t want to dash them off on the spur of the moment.”⁸ Prokofiev also tried to introduce this particular work to the public during several of his concerts from 1928 to 1930, but it never gained the prominence of his piano sonatas.

It is possible that the tendency to misunderstand *Choses en soi* can be related to the interpretations of several scholars. Nestyev criticized it by stating “melodies like those in *Things*

⁴ Sergey Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries 1924-1933*, trans. and ed. Anthony Phillips (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012) 720.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 781.

⁶ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁸ David Nice, *Prokofiev, From Russia to the West 1891-1935* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 256.

in Themselves were not felt to be an expression of human emotions, but rather the result of a contrived combination of sounds.”⁹ In *Prokofiev’s Piano Music: Line, Chord*, Patricia Ashley commented on *Chosen en soi*:

Deliberate attempts to depart from his already formulated unique style could never be quite successful; one does not, similarly, learn to do arithmetic in a language acquired in adulthood.¹⁰

However, she also mentioned that Prokofiev carried forward some of the compositional elements present in *Choses en soi* into his later piano works:

Elements from the new approach were to endure ultimately, along with much from the old one, in the mature style of what Nestyev calls the “Soviet period.”¹¹

It is possible that the critics’ misinterpretation of *Choses en soi* played a role in not only the unenthusiastic response it initially received, but also ultimately in its lack of popularity compared to Prokofiev’s other character pieces. Indeed, after the initial critical response, Prokofiev claimed:

Hence the barbs so frequently leveled at the *Things in Themselves* usually fall wide of the mark since the criticism is based on a false premise, on a misunderstanding.¹²

Scholars have noted there were stylistic changes in Prokofiev’s piano works during his foreign period. In *Prokofiev’s Piano Music: Line, Chord, Key*, Patricia Ashley offers a short introduction to *Choses en soi*, which includes generic elements such as its harmonic language and identification of the themes. However, she does not go into extensive detail to explain these points. Ashley’s approach centers more on an aesthetic criticism. My approach is to analyze Prokofiev’s score and to draw evidence of compositional techniques from the existing research.

⁹ Israel Nestyev, *Prokofiev*, trans. Florence Jonas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 255.

¹⁰ Patricia R. Ashley. “Prokofiev’s Piano Music: Line, chord, key” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1963), 188.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 73.

Stephen Fiess's *The Piano Works of Sergei Prokofiev* also briefly introduces *Choses en soi*. Fiess offers a more objective view than Ashley. However, Fiess focuses on the compositional techniques seen in Prokofiev's foreign period as a whole rather than on those in *Choses en soi* itself. While he does include examples of the techniques that are significant in this work, he includes only brief descriptions of them.

Robert Eidschun writes a detailed analysis in his dissertation titled, *Prokofiev's Chose en soi B (Op. 45b): Analysis*.¹³ It includes a detailed theoretical analysis of topics like the motivic material. However, Eidschun's dissertation is centered on analysis and does not incorporate much outside research. In addition, *Chose en soi A* is not included.

There is, however, relevant preexisting research, which I will utilize here as solid supporting evidence. One of the most significant features in *Choses en soi* is the textural shift from melody with accompaniment figures to contrapuntal voice leading. As Minturn noted:

Around 1928-1935, Prokofiev shifted his musical emphasis from harmony to counterpoint. During these years, he seems to have had a particularly serious turn of mind. --- The overtly contrapuntal textures of *Choses en soi* (1928); *String Quartet No. 1* (1930), Op. 50; *Sonatinas* (1932), Op. 54; and *Pensées* (1934), Op. 62, are hallmarks of a new approach to composition.¹⁴

The inclusion of heavily chromatic harmony is another notable feature of *Choses en soi*, and according to Berman, it is indeed a characteristic of Prokofiev's foreign period:

Influenced by the artistic trend, Prokofiev tried his hand at many contemporary styles and techniques: He ventured into complex, dissonantly chromatic writing (Symphony No. 2; Piano Concerto No. 5, 1932), and also, conversely, into the diatonic style exemplified by the ballet *La pas d'acier*, Op. 41 (1925). Prokofiev remarked that, in the language of the latter work, the 'radical changes were from the chromatic to the diatonic... many of the themes were composed on white keys.'¹⁵

¹³ Robert Eidschun, "Prokofiev's Chose en soi B (Op. 45b): Analysis" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1998).

¹⁴ Minturn, Neil, *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 46.

¹⁵ Boris Berman, *Prokofiev's Piano Sonatas* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 7.

Throughout *Choses en soi*, it is possible to see Prokofiev's attempts to incorporate musical concepts which he had not included in his earlier compositions. Instead of the extroverted, strongly rhythmic, highly energetic intensity featured during his Russian period, he was looking for a calmer, more thoughtful, and tranquil serenity in this composition. He enforced this effort by including a greater number of stylistic markings in the score.

In addition, he turned toward a more complex style of writing, using elements like contrapuntal voice leading and chromatic harmonies.

Prokofiev outlined five principles in his compositions: classical form¹⁶, lyrical melody (theme), motoric drive, harmonic language¹⁷, and scherzo-like gesture. To provide further clarity on the complexities of *Choses en soi*, my study will incorporate how these compositional elements are integrated in this work. I have decided to include texture in place of sarcasm, as there are pertinent textural characteristics in this particular work. In addition, motoric drive will be discussed as an element of texture. By incorporating relevant research, drawing evidence from Prokofiev's own writing, and providing examples of the techniques he utilized, pianists will gain a clearer understanding for their own performance, and this composition will become more accessible for both pianists and other musicians.

The analysis of Prokofiev's *Choses en soi* will examine each compositional technique individually in detail in order to identify and discuss its most significant elements. Form will be presented first, as an awareness of the structure of the entire piece will facilitate the understanding of the remaining analysis. The next element I will discuss are the Melodies

¹⁶ In Prokofiev's biography, it was originally translated as "classical line", but it is referred to as "classical form" in this dissertation because it primarily describes form.

¹⁷ In Prokofiev's biography, it was translated as "modern trend", but it is replaced with the term "harmonic language" in this dissertation because Prokofiev used this term to refer to his harmonic language.

(Themes) which have been used in different sections, as well as the ways in which Prokofiev manipulates them each subsequent time they return. The third section will discuss the Texture of each section, how the texture varies in each passage, and Prokofiev's possible reasons for departing from his typical usage of texture. The final section will examine the harmony with regard to tonal center, choral analysis, and chord progressions. This analysis will also observe the ways in which Prokofiev focuses on the voice leading of individual lines, as well as how the ways in which he created tonal ambiguity.

The conventional compositional skills of Prokofiev's early period will be presented in the beginning of each section of analysis, and followed by a discussion which focuses on the differences between *Choses en soi* and his early piano works. This will be accomplished by giving examples and illustrations, and will serve as a reference to help other musicians better understand this work.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *CHOSSES EN SOI*

After leaving Russia in 1918, Prokofiev travelled to the United States, Asia, and Europe, before settling in Paris in 1923. He stayed there until he returned to the Soviet Union in 1935. In the United States, Prokofiev was initially introduced as a pianist, but he also introduced his compositions in the performances. However, his music did not attract the audience's interest, and life in America was not as good as he expected.¹⁸ Prokofiev thought the audience was still not mature enough to appreciate his new compositions.¹⁹

Prokofiev also struggled financially while in America. He eventually did get commissioned to write the opera *Lyubov' k tryom apel'sinam* (Love for Three Oranges , Op. 33, 1919), which was premiered in Chicago. While Prokofiev was working on the opera, he also published two sets of character pieces: *Skazki staroy babushki* (Tales of Old Grandmother, 1918), Op. 31, and *Four Pieces* (1918), Op. 32.

When Prokofiev travelled to Paris in 1920 and witnessed the success of Diaghilev's Ballet *The Tale of Buffoon*, he realized that Parisians' taste in music was more similar to that of the audiences in Russia, and this was one of the reasons that he left the United States and settled in Paris in 1923.

However, the Parisian musical world was not what Prokofiev expected: Parisians' taste in music was too fickle to receive his music well. Prokofiev had difficulty writing music that suited French tastes. With the failure of the première of his second symphony in 1925, Prokofiev was depressed about the situation he faced in Paris. Though he had adjusted his compositional style

¹⁸ Dorothea Redepenning. "Prokofiev, Sergey." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 19 Jul. 2017. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22402>>.

¹⁹ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 55.

to suit the French musical tastes, he still could not achieve the success he had experienced in Russia.

The situation improved when Diaghilev invited Prokofiev to write ballet music for his new production called *Le Pas d'acier* (The Steel Step, Op. 41, 1926), suggesting that Prokofiev “write in his own style”²⁰. This commission encouraged Prokofiev during a time when he was still trying to establish the musical language in his foreign period and pursue the compositional success.

In 1927, Prokofiev returned to Soviet Russia: it was the first time since he left it in 1918. Unlike his time in the United States and Paris, his music was well received by audiences. After experiencing the massive success which had eluded him during his ten years abroad, Prokofiev considered returning to his own country as a Soviet composer, where his music was appreciated. However, he also wanted the freedom of composing without the control of the Soviet government.

Choses en soi was composed after Prokofiev’s return from Russia in 1928. He had not composed any piano work since his Piano Sonata No. 5 in 1923. The piano was the instrument that Prokofiev was most familiar with, but the struggles he undertook in his life abroad may have also decreased his confidence. In *Choses en soi*, Prokofiev incorporated what he had cultivated in his large-scale works, and he showed those ideas into the format of these piano character pieces.

Prokofiev stated that *Choses en soi* was a work that he composed for himself as a “luxury”²¹, and in addition to aspects of his traditional style, he included many elements and

²⁰ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 65.

²¹ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 73.

compositional techniques which he had not previously used. However, the complexity of the form and themes still may mislead audiences and cause this work to be inadequately understood.

In addition to the *Tales of the Old Grandmother* (Op. 31) and *Four Pieces* (Op. 32), Prokofiev also tried to compose other character pieces in this period: *Two Sonatinas* (Op. 54), *Three Pieces* (Op. 59, 1933-1934), *Pensées* (Op. 62, 1934), and *Music for children* (Op. 65, 1935).

The foreign period was Prokofiev's most experimental phase among the three.²² During his travels, he attended numerous concerts and performances, observing the stylistic diversity of the twentieth-century. He also met several of his contemporaries such as Ravel, Stravinsky, and *Les Six*, who shared their music with him and inspired him to explore new compositional possibilities. As Feiss mentioned, "the works of this period reflect the influence of his fellow composers as he attempted to satisfy the fashionable tastes of contemporary Parisian audiences."²³ In *Choses en soi*, it is possible to discern French influences, notably the use of three staves and extended tertian harmony (such as eleventh chords).

²² Berman, 102.

²³ Feiss, 54.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF *CHOSE EN SOI A*

3.1 Form

The form in *Chose en soi A* is not characteristic of the forms which Prokofiev had previously utilized in his piano compositions. In order to compare the form of *Choses en soi* to Prokofiev’s previous character pieces, the typical structure of his piano compositions will be showed first as a comparison. According to Rebecca Martin’s *The Nine Piano Sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev*,²⁴ the forms of Prokofiev’s piano sonatas No. 1-No. 5 (Figure. 3.1.) are mostly in sonata form, with some in ternary, and a few in rondos.

Figure 3.1: Forms of Prokofiev’s piano sonata No. 1-5

	Sonata No. 1	Sonata No. 2	Sonata No. 3	Sonata No. 4	Sonata No. 5
MVT. 1	Sonata form	Sonata form	Sonata form	Sonata form	Sonata form
MVT. 2		Ternary form		Ternary form	Ternary form
MVT. 3		Double-binary form		Rondo form	Rondo form
MVT. 4		Sonata form			

Since *Choses en soi* is a set of character pieces, it is best to compare it to one of his earlier character pieces. The form of *Ten Pieces for Piano*, Op.12 (1906-1913), will be provided as a reference (Figure. 3.2.) In *Ten Pieces for Piano*, Prokofiev wrote seven pieces in ternary form, two in rondo form, and one in binary form.²⁵

²⁴ Rebecca Martin, “The Nine Piano Sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev” (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1982).

²⁵ Jung Hee, Park. “A Performer’s Perspective: A Performance History and Analysis of Sergei Prokofiev’s *Ten Pieces*. Op. 12.” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2009).

Figure 3.2: Forms of Prokofiev’s *Ten Pieces*, Op.12

Op.12	Form
No. 1 “March”	Ternary
No. 2 “Gavotte”	Ternary
No. 3 “Rigaudon”	Ternary
No. 4 “Mazurka”	Ternary
No. 5 “Capriccio”	Rondo
No. 6 “Legend”	Binary
No. 7 “Prelude”	Ternary
No. 8 “Allemande”	Rondo
No. 9 “Humorous Scherzo”	Ternary
No. 10 “Scherzo”	Ternary

The structure in *Ten Pieces*, Op.12, No. 7 *Prelude* is in clear ternary form (Figure. 3.3.).

Each piece in *Ten Pieces* is much shorter than the duration of *Choses en soi A*, and the phrases in Section A of *Prelude* are quite regular and straightforward, as exemplified by their even numbers of measures (Figure 3.4.). Also, there is neither a transition to connect Section A to B nor a transition for the return from Section B back to A. Moreover, in each section, Prokofiev only focuses on developing one theme in order to retain the consistency and simplicity of the structure. In his early period, the form and phrase structure are still regular, clear, and easily comprehensible, with few connections between the sections such as introductions, transitions, or codas.

Figure 3.3: Structure in Prokofiev’s *Ten Pieces*, Op.12, No. 7, *Prelude*

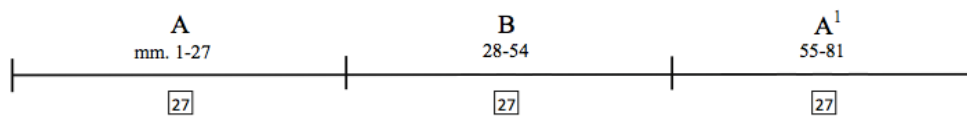
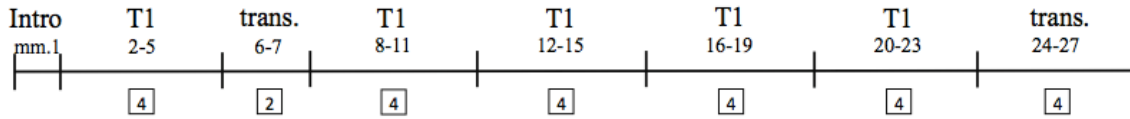


Figure 3.4: Phrasing of Section A in Prokofiev's *Ten Pieces*, Op.12, No. 7, *Prelude*



During Prokofiev's Russian period, he commonly used standard classical forms such as binary, ternary, and rondo in his piano works. Prokofiev stated:

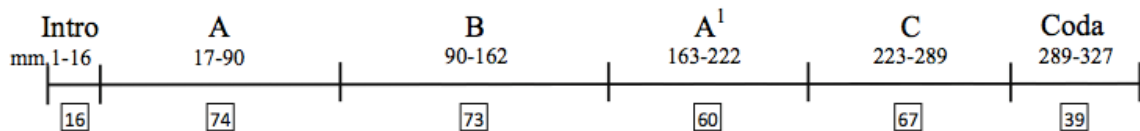
The first was the classical line, which could be traced back to my early childhood and the Beethoven sonatas I heard my mother play. This line takes sometimes a neo-classical form (sonatas, concertos), sometimes imitates the 18th century classics (gavottes, the *Classical Symphony*, partly the *sinfonietta*).²⁶

In traditional ternary form, the piece ends with the return of Section A, sometimes with a coda afterwards. In *Choses en soi*, Prokofiev abandons these forms. In *Chose en soi A*, Prokofiev adds a new section, Section C, creating a second development which further elaborates on the thematic materials. This additional development section also included segments of the themes from previous sections.

Chose en soi A can be divided into an introduction, sections A, B, A¹, C, and a coda.

(Figure 3.5.) Excluding the introduction and the coda, each section is indeed fairly balanced in its duration.

Figure 3.5: Structure in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45



Chose en soi A begins in ABA form. However, the introduction is recalled after the recapitulation of Section A, and instead of returning to Section B or going to a coda, Prokofiev creates a new section, Section C. This section cannot be treated as a coda because it has its own

²⁶ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36.

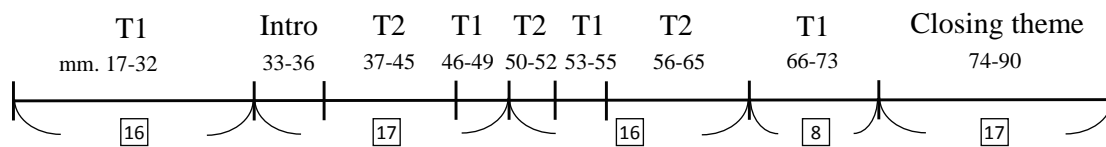
thematic material, and the duration is far too long. Section C eventually does lead to a coda, which provides closure for the piece.

The form in *Chose en soi A* contrasts to Prokofiev's earlier work because of the return of the introduction, as well as the addition of a C section. The function of Section C also provides a sense of balance to the form, which can also be seen as AB + AC.

In *Chose en soi A*, Prokofiev treats form differently than in his previous piano works. The flexibility of the form makes the structure more ambiguous and initially more challenging to comprehend. Prokofiev claimed classical form to be one of his five principles, and this is evident in his early character pieces, which primarily used the traditional binary and ternary forms, in addition to through-composed structure.

This atypical structure and the unusual returns of the thematic materials may have been one of the elements which confused listeners. An introduction, such as mm. 1-16 in *Choses en soi A*, is an unusual device for Prokofiev, who typically announces his theme at the beginning of the piece. In *Chose en soi A*, however, the theme is not presented until the beginning of Section A (Figure 3.6.).

Figure 3.6: Structure of Section A in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 17-90.

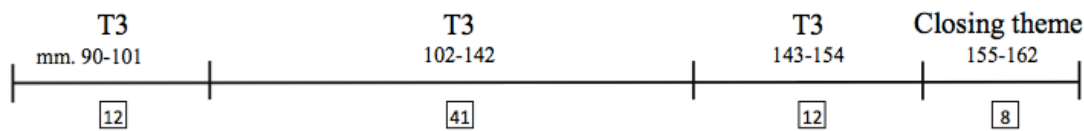


The first theme group (mm. 17-32) can be symmetrically divided into four phrases. After a brief fragment of the introduction that returns (mm. 33-36), Prokofiev introduces the second theme group (mm. 37-45) which has a looser formal structure. During the remainder of Section A, Prokofiev breaks from the formal conventions and alternated different combinations of the theme fragments from Theme 1 and Theme 2, often scrambling the order of the phrases. While this frequent shifting of the thematic fragments may be confusing at first glance, a broader view

clearly shows that Prokofiev still maintains a fairly symmetrical structure, with Section A divided into four equal parts if the repeated phrase in mm. 66-73 is excluded.

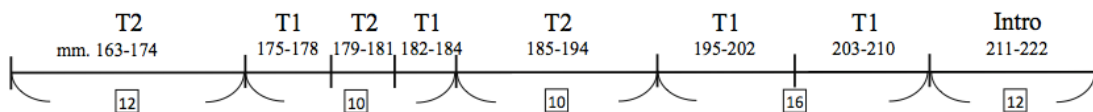
The structure is much more straightforward in Section B (Figure 3.7.) since Prokofiev focuses on the development of Theme 3 which is derived from the second phrase (mm. 21-24) of Theme 1. Prokofiev repeats the initial phrase at mm. 143-154 in order to balance this section, and then inserted the closing theme, which is taken from the end of the Section A (mm. 74-81).

Figure 3.7: Structure of Section B in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 90-162



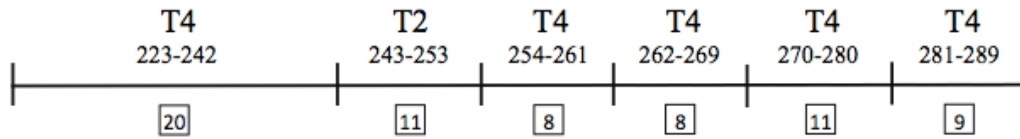
Prokofiev then returns to a modified version of Section A (Section A¹) (Figure 3.8.). From the beginning, Prokofiev introduces Theme 2 before Theme 1, but followed the exact same phrases as Section A until m. 195. At this point, the melody reverts to Theme 1 (mm. 195-210) to close out Section A¹, which also leads to a return of the introduction which was presented at the beginning of the piece.

Figure 3.8: Structure of Section A¹ in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi*, Op. 45, mm. 163-222.



The introduction (mm. 211-222) is best treated as the beginning of Section C, but it is also an elision, functioning as the end of Section A¹: Prokofiev reorganizes the phrases found in Section A¹, which includes elements of retrograde. In Section C (Figure 3.9.), the structure of the Theme 4 group (mm. 223-238) matches the Theme 1 group (mm. 16-32) in Section A. Theme 4 is a loose inversion of Theme 3. However, Prokofiev briefly interrupts the development of Theme 4 with a return to Theme 2.

Figure 3.9: Structure of Section C in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi*, mm. 223-289.



The Coda (mm. 289-329) of *Chose en soi A* begins with development of material derived from Section C. Several elisions are utilized to help drive the piece to the end. Section A utilizes chromatic harmony, whereas diatonic harmony is utilized in Sections B and C. Section A, as suggested by musical directions such as *tranquillo* and *espressivo*, drifts and wanders, with frequently ambiguous tonal centers. In contrast, Sections B and C may be treated as the destination of the A sections. The musical directions, such as *animato* and *con brio*, reflect its bright and pleasant character, and the frequent arrivals on the tonic distinguish it from the chromatic harmony of the A sections.

3.2 Melodies (Themes)

Lyrical melody is one of the five principles of Prokofiev's compositions. Stephen Press described Prokofiev's lyrical writing as "characterful and colorful."²⁷

To discuss the typical melodic writing in Prokofiev early compositions, the character piece *Visions Fugitives*, Op. 22 No. 11, is presented as an example. The melodies in this piece showcase Prokofiev's contrasting melodic styles, and they are examples of his two most typical styles of melody writing. In his early character pieces, Prokofiev only developed one theme in each section. Theme 1 (Example 3.1) is based on a rhythmic figure in his ironic style, and Theme

²⁷ Stephen Press, *Prokofiev's Ballets for Diaghilev* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006) 253.

2 is (Example 3.2) is in a lyrical singing style.²⁸ Prokofiev also did not elaborate on the existing material when the A section returned.

Example 3.1: Prokofiev, *Visions Fugitives*, Op. 22, No. 11, mm. 1-3, Theme 1



Example 3.2: Prokofiev, *Visions Fugitives*, Op. 22, No. 11, mm. 17-20, Theme 2

The manner in which the themes are manipulated is one of the characteristic features in *Chose en soi A*. Prokofiev creates new themes based on elements drawn from motivic material that occurred earlier in the piece. In his early character pieces, this was not the case. The themes in Section A and B did not relate or correspond to each other, and if the theme in Section A was in a scherzo-like style, the theme in Section B would usually be in a more lyrical style to provide a contrast with Section A. Those two styles of melody were an essential and characteristic element of Prokofiev's writing style during his early period.

However, the four themes in *Chose en soi A* are all derived from the same motive: they are merely different variants. This was a new approach for Prokofiev: it made the form ambiguous, and it may have been confusing to listeners familiar with his previous works.

²⁸ Pei-yi Tsai, "Interpretation of Sergei Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives*, op. 22" (PhD diss., National Taiwan University of Arts, 2015).

In *Chose en soi A*, rather than writing a melodic line that is lyrical and easily recognizable, the melodic writing is contour-based, with an ascending line as the primary feature. This would hardly be recognizable as a melody from one of Prokofiev's earlier piano works. Theme 1 (mm. 17-20) is built on a stepwise ascent, which is a recurring element in motives throughout the piece (Example 3.3). Prokofiev then derives all four of the themes in *Chose en soi A* from salient characteristics of Theme 1.

Example 3.3: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 17-20, Theme 1



After the initial phrase of Theme 1, the next phrase (Example 3.4) responds with a descending line (mm. 21-24), which is a loose inversion of Theme 1.

Example 3.4: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 21-24, Theme 1 in an inversion



Theme 2 (mm. 37-42) is still centered in chromatic harmony, and Prokofiev progressively stretches the intervals: starting with a half step, progressing to prominent thirds, and eventually to fourths (Example 3.5). Compared to the symmetrical structure of Theme 1, the structure of Theme 2 is very loose.

Example 3.5: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 37-42, Theme 2



A significant change happens with the arrival of Theme 3 (mm. 90-93): Prokofiev shifts from chromatic harmony to diatonic harmony (Example 3.6).

Example 3.6: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 90-93, Theme 3



Theme 3 can be seen as a variant of Theme 1: while the response of the Theme 1 starts with an ascent, Theme 3 starts with a descending gesture, and then steps up to the tonic. The other two voices both feature an ostinato based on stepwise ascents: eighth notes in the middle voice, and octave quarter notes in the bass line.

Prokofiev ends the ostinato in m. 98, but he still retains the motoric rhythm that the bottom two voices create, and it continues throughout the rest of the section. In mm. 98-102, the octave in the bottom line is divided into two voices, and a segment of Theme 3 is hidden in one of them. In the transition to the climax of the section, the melody is also hidden in the middle line (mm. 126-130). The peak arrives on m. 131 (Example 3.7), marked *ff* and *sostenuto*.

Example 3.7: Prokofiev, *Chosen en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 131-134, climax arrives in Section B

Example 3.8: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 223-226, Theme 4

Più mosso (ma pesante)

Theme 4 (Example 3.8) is a loose inversion of Theme 3, with a diatonic stepwise ascent ending on the tonic. In mm. 233-236, Prokofiev inserts Theme 3 as the transition to the next Theme 4 group (mm. 239-243). In addition, Prokofiev briefly interrupts the development of Theme 4 again with a return to the Theme 2 group (mm. 243-253).

To further strengthen the intensity, Prokofiev creates hemiola beginning in m. 262 (Example 3.9), which he derives from the underlying rhythm of Theme 4. Prokofiev recalls Theme 3 before the arrival of this section's climactic moment in m. 289, which elides with the beginning of the coda (mm. 289-329). The Coda develops Theme 4 and works to maintain the intensity to the very end of the piece.

Example 3.9: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, mm. 260-264, Hemiola rhythm used to intensify the end of Section C

Section A utilizes chromatic harmony, whereas diatonic harmony is utilized in Sections B and C. Section A, as suggested by musical directions such as *tranquillo* and *espress.*, drifts and wanders, with frequently ambiguous tonal centers. In contrast, Sections B and C may be treated as the destination of the A sections. The musical directions, such as *animato* and *con brio*, reflect its bright and pleasant character, and the frequent arrivals on the tonic distinguish it from the chromatic harmony of the A sections.

With each return of Theme 1, Prokofiev elaborates or makes minor adjustments (Example 3.10 and 3.11). Prokofiev does not use the complete 16 measures of Theme 2 again in the rest of *Chose en soi A*, instead taking fragments of Theme 2 and using them as a link. To contrast the way Themes 1 and 2 are treated in the A sections, Prokofiev frequently presents completed versions of Themes 3 and 4.

Example 3.10: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 25-28, demonstration of Theme 1 adjusted with a different rhythm



Example 3.11: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 64-67, demonstration of Theme 1 adjusted with a different rhythm

The image shows a musical score for Example 3.11, measures 64-67. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The time signature is 7/8. The music features a melody in the treble staff and a bass line in the bass staff. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The piece begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and includes *espress.* (espressivo) and *cresc.* (crescendo) markings.

During this time, Prokofiev sought a balance between tradition and innovation. The flexible structure that Prokofiev used was new to his piano works, and it avoids many of the elements of a typical classical form.

3.3 Texture

The textures of Prokofiev's early piano character pieces are mostly homophonic. The textures can be categorized in different styles. "Toccata Line"²⁹ is the most salient textural feature in Prokofiev's compositions: it is also called "motoric drive". "Toccata Line" refers to an ostinato pattern which is repeatedly played throughout the whole piece to maintain the intensity. The most commonly known examples are *Toccata*, Op. 11, and the third movement of Sonata No. 7 by Prokofiev (Example 3.12).

Example 3.12: Prokofiev, *Toccata*, Op. 11, mm. 1-4, motoric drive figures



In his early character pieces, Prokofiev also wrote a good amount of homophonic music, which consists of a significant melody line and accompaniment figures (Example 3.13).³⁰ Prokofiev started to develop contrapuntal writing in his early character pieces, but the contrapuntal lines were not imitative of the main melody: instead, they moved independently, often in half steps (Example 3.14).

²⁹ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36.

³⁰ Press, 45.

Example 3.13: Prokofiev, *Tales of the Old Grandmother*. Op. 31, No. 3, mm. 1-4, melody alone with accompanying figures.



Example 3.14: Prokofiev, *Four Pieces*, Op. 3, No. 1, mm. 7-10, contrapuntal line in the middle voice as a supporting part.



Prokofiev also tried to develop a three-part homophonic texture in his early character pieces, but the non-melodic lines are merely accompaniment figures rather than true counterpoint (Example 3.15.).

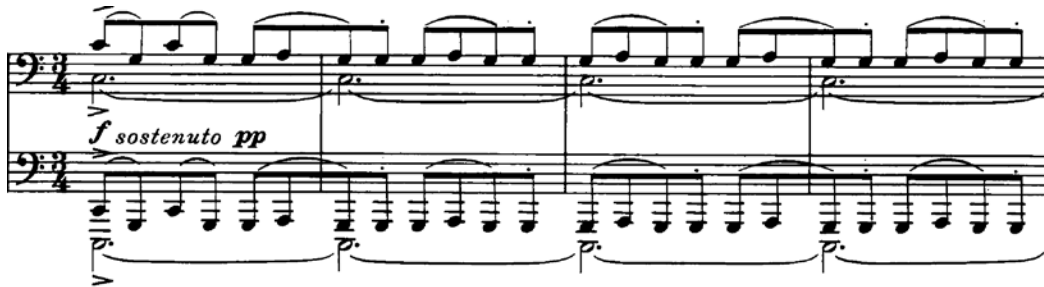
Example 3.15: Prokofiev, *Ten Pieces*, Op. 12, No. 5, mm. 9-13, three- part homophonic texture with accompanying figures in the top and the bottom lines.



Compared to *Chose en soi B*, the texture in *A* is thinner. Prokofiev uses different types of texture in *Chose en soi A*. He starts with monophony in the introduction, progressed to a mostly homophonic texture with multiple lines in Section A, and extends to four-part contrapuntal writing in the transition, creating the most dense texture of the piece.

Chose en soi A starts with a unison figure in the introduction, in which each hand plays the same two-part harmony. Since it only consists of a melody and a sustained drone, the introduction can be considered as monophony (Example 3.16).

Example 3.16: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 1-4, monophonic texture



In Theme 1, four independent lines are clearly presented: The top voice plays the melody, the middle two lines function as accompaniment figures consisting of fragments similar to the introduction and the half step ascents found in the Theme 1, and the bottom voice plays more sustained notes (Example 3.17.). The Theme 1 group is regarded as homophonic texture since there are no significant melodies on the other three lines. At 46-49, Prokofiev removes the contrapuntal lines in the left hand with the return of Theme 1 at m. 46-49, instead doubling the bottom line in octaves, which is similar to the left hand texture of Theme 3.

Example 3.17: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 17-20, Theme 1 with melody in the top, contrapuntal lines in the middle voices.



The texture of Theme 2 is similar to the introduction: in mm. 37-41, the two hands double each other in octaves, with the melody in the higher voice of each hand and along a sustained

lower voice. Later, Prokofiev switches the moving lines to the lower voices in mm. 42-45, utilizing the melody from the first half of Section B.

Despite the monophonic texture in Theme 2 (m. 37-45), in the next section, Prokofiev starts to develop contrapuntal lines which respond to the top voice (Example 3.18). In this section, Themes 1 and 2 are recalled, and in m. 56, part of Theme 3 is hidden in the second voice before it officially appears at m. 90.

Example 3.18: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 50-52, the imitative figure responses on the third line with the top line

The image shows a musical score for two staves, treble and bass clef. The top staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and a dynamic marking of *mp* in the third measure. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a lower melodic line that imitates the top line, with a dynamic marking of *p* in the first measure. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score spans three measures.

The transition from Section A to Section B (mm. 74-90) starts with three lines, but Prokofiev adds additional lines in the lower voices (Example 3.19), and the texture is transformed into four-part counterpoint.

The texture of Theme 3 consists of three lines, with the melody in the top voice, repeated eighth notes in the middle, and quarter notes in octaves as the bass line. The continuity of the eighth notes and quarter notes on the lower two parts can be seen as motoric drive, which is a characteristic of Prokofiev's early piano works. Prokofiev claimed that motoric drive (toccata-line) was one of the five principles of his compositions,³¹ and he used it to build tension via the unceasing repetition of a rhythmic figure. In *Chose en soi A*, the motoric drive occurs at a slower pace, which produces a decrease in intensity when compared to his typical usage of it.

³¹ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36.

Example 3.19: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 74-90, the extension of contrapuntal voice from three-part to five-part

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system shows a three-part texture with a melody in the right hand and two accompaniment lines in the left hand, marked 'pp legato'. The second system shows the texture expanding to four parts, with a new middle voice entering, marked 'p tranquillo' and 'un poco cresc.'. The third system shows a five-part texture, with the melody moving to the left hand, marked 'mf' and 'rit.'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Theme 4 is reduced to two lines in the beginning, but quickly becomes three as a middle line enters, restating the melody as an elision. The melody most frequently appears in the top and middle lines and is accompanied by an eighth-note pattern in the left hand. The melody line moves to the left hand in m. 254 in preparation for the climax of the work in m. 262.

Prokofiev progresses to gradually more complex textures in *Chose en soi A*, starting with monophony, moving to homophony, and eventually progressing to loose polyphony. Although it mainly remains in a three to four part homophonic texture, the concept of composing in a contrapuntal texture is frequently applied in *Chose en soi B*.

3.4 Harmony

Prokofiev's unique harmonic language has been discussed and analyzed using the terms

“Wrong Notes” and “Tonal Ambiguity”. “Wrong Notes” refers to notes in Prokofiev’s chords or melodic lines which are non-chordal tones and which frequently do not belong to the corresponding diatonic scale.

“Tonal Ambiguity” is the consequence of “Wrong Notes” in Prokofiev. Since he used “Wrong Notes” so frequently, the tonal center is often difficult to recognize, and there are many accidentals which are too ambiguous to analyze using traditional harmonic analysis. A better way to explain the harmony in *Choses en soi* is to focus on the voice leading, which Prokofiev used to determine the harmony. The melodic lines shape the harmonic decisions, and the “Wrong Notes” make sense in the context of the voice leading.

In Prokofiev’s Russian period, his “tonal and cadence points are clear.”³² While Prokofiev’s chord progressions were not traditional due to the usage of “wrong” notes to enrich the sonority, it is still based around a tonal center and follows functional harmonic progressions.

Prokofiev defined his harmonic language:

... the modern trend, begins with that meeting with Taneyev when he reproached me for the “crudeness” of my harmonies. At first this took the form of a search for my own harmonic language, developing later into a search for a language in which to express powerful emotions... Although this line covers harmonic language mainly, it also includes new departures in melody, orchestration and drama.³³

The *March* from *Ten pieces*, op. 12, will be used as an example of the harmonic language in Prokofiev’s early period (Example 3.20.).

³² Feiss, 13.

³³ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 36.

Example 3.20: Prokofiev, *Ten Pieces*, Op. 12, No. 1 *March*, mm. 1-8, chords progression

The image shows two systems of musical notation for the first eight measures of Prokofiev's *March*. The first system covers measures 1-4, and the second system covers measures 5-8. Chord progressions are labeled below the staves: Fm: I, V, III, VI, VI for the first system, and V7/VI, V, I for the second. Two notes in the first system are circled in red and labeled "Wrong notes" in red text. The first "Wrong note" is a G-flat in the bass line of measure 1. The second "Wrong note" is a G-flat in the bass line of measure 3. The second system includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) with an 8-measure repeat sign. Dynamics include *pp* and *pp cresc.*

As indicated in the example, the harmony in *March* is not too far from traditional chord progressions, and it still shows a clear cadence. Prokofiev had started developing the concept of “wrong notes” during this time by raising or lowering the original notes by a half step. Another relevant feature of Prokofiev’s harmonic language was the way in which he used chromatic motion to drive toward climactic moments. (Example 3.21)

Example 3.21: Prokofiev, *Diabolical Suggestion of Four Pieces*, Op. 4, No. 4, mm. 84-89, chromatic motion to reach the climax

The image shows two systems of musical notation for measures 84-89 of Prokofiev's *Diabolical Suggestion of Four Pieces*. The notation is primarily in the bass clef, showing a series of chords and a melodic line. Dynamics include *sf sf* and *sf pp cresc.*. The piece features a strong chromatic motion in the bass line, moving through various chromatic intervals to reach a climactic point.

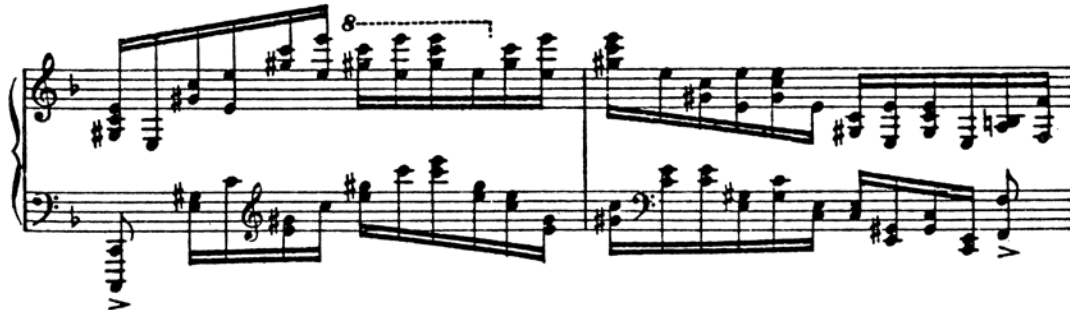
The chromatic motion still occurs frequently in *Chose en soi A*, but it functions more as a contrapuntal line (Example 3.22).

Example 3.22: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 80-84, chromatic motion as contrapuntal voice.



Prokofiev mainly used augmented triads and seventh chords to extend the harmonic language in his early period (Example 3.23). In *Choses en soi*, however, ninth and eleventh chords are featured, particularly in *Chose en soi B*.

Example 3.23: Prokofiev, *Four etudes*, Op. 2, No. 1, mm. 40-41, the use of augmented triads



In *Choses en soi*, the melodies are mainly in diatonic harmony, but the contrapuntal lines are written in chromatic harmony, which makes the voice leading is much more important than the vertical harmonic chords that is written in non-chordal harmony, and it is one of the features of sonority in this work.

In *Chose en soi A*, the introduction (mm. 1-16) is mostly in C major. Section A (mm. 17-32) begins with a C chord (m. 17), and then the harmony of the first phrase (mm. 17-24) shifts to

other key areas before returning to finish back in C at m. 24. In the second phrase (mm. 25-32), the harmony progresses to a minor as the final cadence of Section A (Example 3.24).

Example 3.24: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 29-32, Theme 1 ends in A minor chord



At m. 17, the harmony is based on a C major chord, and the D-sharp is a good example of a “Wrong Note”. The G-sharp at m. 19 is also a “Wrong Note” against the F major chord, as is the F-double-sharp at m. 20 (Example 3.25). The “Wrong Notes” often appear in chromatic lines, which provide more tension that is then resolved by the tonic notes.

Example 3.25: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 17-20, wrong notes device in Theme 1



Compared to the vertical harmonic progressions, this voice-leading provides more clarity for these notes. As discussed in the last paragraph, if the harmony is viewed vertically, the D-sharp will be categorized as a wrong note. However, if the harmony is viewed linearly, it becomes apparent that the top voice of the first phrase (mm. 17-20) is an E major scale, and the D-sharp is the leading tone, which gets properly resolved to E. The next phrase (mm. 20-24) shifts to F minor before returning to C major at m. 24.

At the end of Theme 1 (m. 32), the harmony ends in A minor. A minor is both the relative key of C major (which predominates this section) and the dominant of D minor, which it resolves to in the next measure (m. 33).

The harmony in Theme 2 (mm. 37-45) is hard to define. Because the texture is monophonic, the melody dominates the whole section. It starts in D minor, but then becomes more chromatic. While the melody is presented clearly, it breaks with Prokofiev's traditional "singable" style, as it is disjunct and heavily chromatic.

In Section A, except for the very beginning section with Theme A, the harmony is ambiguous, and there is no significant cadence during the entire section. Prokofiev focuses on preserving the integrity of the voice leading than he was with providing a clear harmonic progression.

As previously discussed, the harmony can be examined in two ways: voice-leading, and vertical chords. In Theme 1 at m. 46, the top voice is mostly in D major. However, the chords supporting the phrase (mm. 46-49) are in B-flat major (Example 3.26).

Example 3.26: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 29-32, D major harmony in the top voice and B-flat major in the bottom voice

Theme 1 is also presented in m. 53 with an F major chord (Example 3.27), and if the A-flat is respelled as a G-sharp, the top line can be considered to be in A major. Prokofiev relies more on voice leading than a chord progression in this section.

Example 3.27: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 53-55, F major chord in vertical harmony with A major harmony in the horizontal line



Furthermore, the chromaticism of the Theme 2 melody helps to make the underlying chords more chromatic, which in turn makes the key center more ambiguous. However, some of the chords can still be recognized, such as the D chord in m. 58 and the G-flat chords in m. 61 and m. 62 (Example 3.28). For this section, it is unnecessary to define the harmony for each measure, as the composer focuses more on developing the voice leading lines.

Example 3.28: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 61-64, chord progression



In the transition (mm. 74-90) to Section B, the harmony starts with a C major chord, just as in the beginning of Section A (m. 17). Again, harmony is not the priority in this section, although Prokofiev still writes a significant chord progression to begin this section. Notable

harmonic moments include the C triad in m. 74, B-flat minor triad in m. 75, F-sharp minor in m. 77, F-sharp minor to B-flat major in m. 79, and a C triad to finish the first phrase in m. 82 (Example 3.29). The chord progression of the following phrase (m. 83-90) uses the same basic harmonic progression as the first phrase. However, the last few measures modulate to B-flat major to set up the key area of Section B.

Example 3.29: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 74-84, chord progression

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is titled "Tranquillo ed un poco doloroso" and includes the instruction "pp legato". Below the notes, the chords are labeled as C, B^b, F[#], F, and B^b. The second system includes the instruction "p tranquillo" and "un poco cresc.". Below the notes, the chords are labeled as G, A^b, and C. A red circle highlights a chord in the second system.

The harmony in Section B (mm. 90-154) is generally straightforward and mostly remains in diatonic harmony. B-flat major is the key center for this section. At mm. 107-108, Prokofiev tries to modulate to the B-flat minor scale in the top voice by lowering G and A (Example 3.30). Starting at m. 111, the harmony begins to modulate. The top line of the modulation section starts on an F and eventually arrives on a B-flat in m. 119. The top line of the second phrase then restarts on an F in m. 120; again, it eventually arrives on a B-flat in mm. 129-131.

Example 3.30: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 107-110. B-flat minor scale in the top

voice

For most of Section B, the triads are easily recognized. To use the first phrase (mm. 90-101) as an example here, the chord progression is I-VII-(VI-VII)-I-V₇-I (Example 3.31). The VII here functions as a dominant chord, so the harmony is basically moving from the tonic, to the dominant, and then back to the tonic again. Prokofiev tries to simplify the harmony in Section B as a contrast to Section A. In Section B, the harmony mainly shifts between tonic and dominant chords. The simplicity is also applied to the texture, melody,

Example 3.31: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 89-97, Chord progression

Un poco animando

pp

p dolce

B^b: I | VII | VI III

I | V₇ | V₇ | I

In the transition (mm. 155-162) to Section A (mm. 163-210), Prokofiev writes the same texture as mm. 74-90. The voice leading lines mostly move by steps, and there is no significant

melody. However, the chord progression and triads can be clearly recognized: G minor in m. 155, A-flat major in m. 156, G-flat major in m. 157, E minor in m. 158, E-flat major in m. 159, A-flat major in m. 160, and B-flat major in m. 162 (Example 3.32). Section B ends with a B-flat major triad, returning to the key center that Section B began in.

Example 3.32: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45, mm. 153-162, chord progression

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is marked 'Tranquillo ed un poco doloroso' and includes dynamics 'p' and 'legato'. The second system is marked 'poco rit.'. Below the staves, chord progressions are indicated with letters and accidentals: gm, A^bm, cm, G^bM, fm, em, E^bm, A^bM, and B^b.

The introduction returns as a transition (mm. 211-222), and has moved up a step to D major. Section C begins in D major: the harmony of Theme 4 is straightforward, as are the texture and the melody, which is based on an ascending scale pattern. After the first phrase (mm. 223-230), Prokofiev briefly changes the key signature to no sharps or flats (mm. 231-238). However, the key center in this section is not in C major: it is instead loosely in B-flat major, which can be inferred from the accidentals B-flat and E-flat. In addition, the B-flat key center can be confirmed by the presence of Theme 3 in the top line (mm. 233-237).

Prokofiev does not continue Theme 4 in the following section. Instead, the segments of Theme 2 are recalled here as the transition (mm. 243-253). It modulates through different keys such as E minor in m. 244, B minor in m. 246, and G minor in m. 249. After a short passage of Theme 2, Prokofiev returns to Theme 4. This is initially presented in the bass line in E major (m.

254) before shifting to A-flat major (m. 258), and arriving at the climax in B-flat minor. The harmony stays in the area of B-flat, and a presentation of Theme 4 written in C minor is used as a way to connect to the Coda in C major, where the key center is established clearly until the end of the piece.

In Section C, Prokofiev uses parallel keys several times, shifting between major and minor, which makes the harmony sound richer and more colorful while creating room for more tonal freedom.

CHAPTER 4

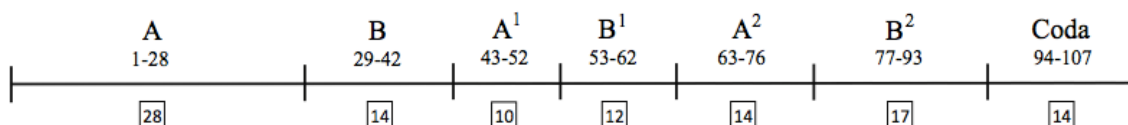
ANALYSIS OF *CHOSE EN SOI B*

4.1 Form

The form in *Chose en soi B* is more clearly divided than *Chose en soi A*, as new sections are accompanied by significant changes in tempo. As in *Chose en soi A*, Prokofiev frequently rearranges the order of the passages when they return toward the end of the piece.

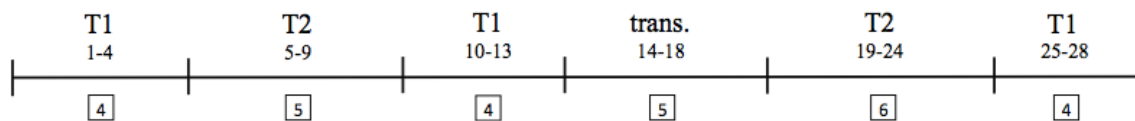
The structure in *Chose en soi B* is A, B, A¹, B¹, A², B², and Coda (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Structure in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45,



Section A (mm. 1-9) begins with two phrases. The first phrase is four measures long, and the second phrase is five measures long. These two phrases are used frequently throughout the piece as the motivic material, and are treated in this analysis as Theme 1 (mm. 1-4), and Theme 2 (mm. 5-9). The structure of Section A can be detailed in the following table (Figure 4.2).

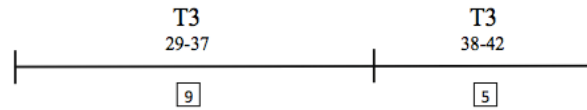
Figure 4.2: Structure of Section A in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45



There is a five-measure connecting passage (mm. 14-18) which is inserted between the return of Themes 1 and 2. It can be regarded as related to Theme 1 because the rhythm imitates that of Theme 1, though the melody and texture are quite different to Theme 1. This passage only occurs twice during the entire piece, however, and it should not be considered as a separate theme.

There is only one theme presented in Section B (mm. 29-42), and it can be divided into two phrases (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Phrasing in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45,



The first phrase is from m. 29 to m. 37, which ends with a dominant chord in the top two parts, and the second phrase continues from m. 38 to the end of this section (m. 42) as an elision to the next section. An additional reason to divide this passage into two sections is that these phrases will occur individually later on in the piece, and this division will help to clarify the later sections.

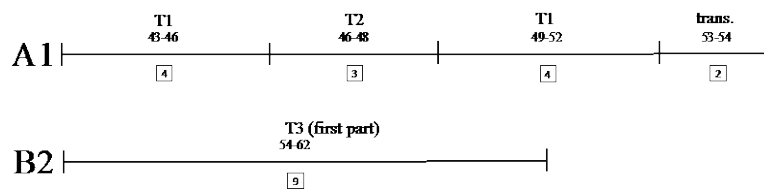
After the F major chord which marks the end of Section B, Prokofiev returns to Theme 1 for the beginning of Section A¹ (mm. 43-46). However, the ending of the Theme 2 group (mm. 22-24) is also brought back (mm. 46-48). After this insertion of material from Theme 2, Prokofiev develops the second part of Theme 1 for four measures (mm. 49-52). The next two measures (mm. 53-54) function as a transition to Section B¹.

Prokofiev only includes the first phrase of Section B (mm. 29-37) during the return to Section B¹ (mm. 54-62). The melody is modified but the texture and phrasing are preserved. Section A² (mm. 63-74) starts with the Theme 1 group for three measures, but instead of completing the phrase, it progresses to a connecting phrase (mm. 66-70) which was derived from mm. 14-18. Just like in the structure of Section A, this is followed by the second phrase of Theme 2 (mm. 21-24). Although it still proceeds with Theme 1 on the bottom line, the music transitions to the introduction of the Section B² (mm. 80-93). The phrases are the same as the initial structure as Section B, comes with two phrases: one that is nine measures long (mm. 80-88), and later one that is five measures long (mm. 89-93).

A segment of Theme 3 (mm. 34-37) is the motivic material during the climax of the final section. This climax arrives at m. 94 and elides with the beginning of the Coda (mm. 94-107). After the restatement of Theme 3, Theme 1 returns for the ending, finishing the piece with a response to the very opening of *Chose en soi B*.

Except for Section A, which is twenty-eight measures, each section in *Chose en soi B* is relatively balanced (see Figure 4.1). However, the motivic materials are arranged differently each time, taking fragments of the theme groups to vary the constitution of each section. However, the form (A, B, A¹, B¹, A², B²) cannot be considered to be double variation form, even though the themes are modified in each return. There are several reasons that this is the case. In variation form, each variation contains an equal length of the measures. In this piece, the content of each return is different. For example, in Section A¹, Prokofiev uses Theme 1 for four measures, Theme 2 for two measures, and Theme 1 again for four measures. But in Section A², he used Theme 1 for three measures, a connecting phrase from Section A for five measures, and Theme 2 for four measures (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Use of Themes in Prokofiev's *Chose en soi A*, Op. 45,



The fragmentation of the thematic material and the modification of its location keeps *Chose en soi B* from fitting into variation form.

4.2 Melodies (Themes)

As Prokofiev stated about the features of *Chose en soi B*, “The second had two elements—chromatic and lyrical”.³⁴ The melodies in *Chose en soi B* show the diverse characters and style of Prokofiev. Theme 1 (mm. 1-4) is based on a figure consisting of four eighth notes. The initial presentation is staccato, with a skip of a third followed by stepwise contrary motion. This is followed by a slurred imitative response in another voice, which is a loose inversion (Example 4.1). The imitation continues, fragments, and finishes with a major chord on the tonic. This four eighth-note figure along with its imitative response is the main motivic material in *Chose en soi B*, which is used frequently though out the piece in various permutations.

Example 4.1: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 1-3, Theme 1

The musical score for Example 4.1 is presented in two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 4/4. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Moderato scherzando' and the dynamics as 'p'. The right hand begins with a staccato figure of four eighth notes (G4, B4, D5, G4) and then continues with a slurred imitative response. The left hand begins with a similar figure and continues with a smooth, lyrical line.

Theme 2 (mm. 5-9) consists of two different figures (Example 4.2). The primary one is a five-note figure which steps down with sixteenth notes. Unlike the contrapuntal Theme 1 group, which responds with an imitative pattern, Theme 2 consists of two contrasting styles that do not directly interact with each other. The first half of Theme 2 is rhythmically fragmented, while the second half is smooth and lyrical. Each half of Theme 2 represents one of Prokofiev’s typical melodic styles: however, Prokofiev normally treated each style separately rather than combining them to form one theme.

³⁴ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 73.

Example 4.2: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 7-9, Theme 2

p espress. e calando

mp

The next phrase (mm. 14-18) is considered as development of Theme 1 because it is based on the four eighth-note figure derived from Theme 1 (Example 4.3). It should not be considered as an independent theme because there are no significant features and it only returns once in the rest of the piece. The four eighth-note figure is elaborated on again as the connecting phrase back to Theme 1 (Example 4.4).

Example 4.3: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 14-16

p dolce

p

Example 4.4: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 22-24

un poco rit.

f

mf

p

Compared to Themes 1 and 2, which have clear rhythmic motivic material, the Theme 3 group is lyrical and devoid of distinctive rhythms.³⁵ Theme 3 starts on a G and ascends to the G an octave above, then gradually descends down (Example 4.5). The phrasing is ambiguous here, partially because Prokofiev outlines much shorter passages with slurs. However, m. 28 to m. 37 can be divided into two phrases: the first one is mm. 29-33, and the following one is mm. 33-37.

Example 4.5: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 28-39

³⁵ Prokofiev, *Autobiography*, 73.

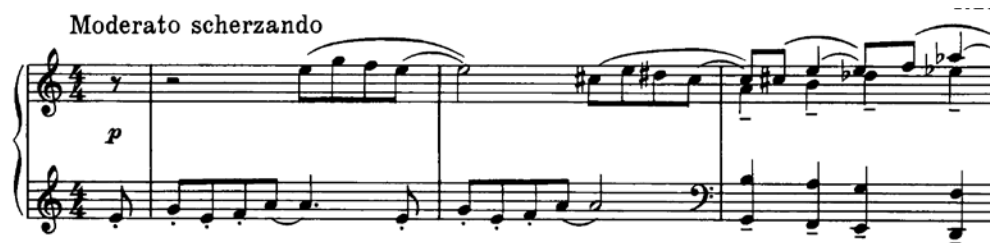
In the return of Section A (Section A¹, mm. 43-52), Prokofiev inverts the first and second voice. The top voice begins the melody, and the lower voice responds. In comparison to *Chose en soi A*, Prokofiev does not elaborate the theme very much. However, the Theme 3 is slightly varied, with a different rhythm in the beginning of B². This is particularly significant in the second voice (Example 4.6).

Example 4.6: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 55-57



Besides the main themes, there is an important motive which Prokofiev develops in *Chose en soi B*, and it is based on the four eighth-note figure. This motive is used in Theme 1 (Example 4.7), presented mostly in thirds. It is also frequently utilized in the transitions (Example 4.8).

Example 4.7: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 1-3



Example 4.8: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 14-16



However, there is no regular melodic pattern found in this four eight-note figure, and it would be a presumptuous to define them by their pitches if Prokofiev does not intend to do it. In Section B, the theme also has several groupings of four notes, though they begin as quarter notes (Example 4.9.). Groupings of four notes are a unifying element in the piece, and can be seen in each theme group, the transitions, and the accompaniment figures. In both *Chose en soi A* and *B*, Prokofiev does not use motoric drive to maintain tension as he did in his early period. Instead, he uses motivic transformations to unify the whole piece.

Example 4.9: Prokofiev's *Chose en soi B*, mm. 29-30



4.3 Texture

The texture in *Chose en soi B* is more dense than in his earlier piano works. Unlike the texture in *Chose en soi A*, Prokofiev writes more polyphonically in *Chose en soi B*. In the beginning of Section A, Theme 1 presents a four eighth-note group, which is imitated an octave higher (Example 4.10).

Example 4.10: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 1-3, imitation of Theme 1



In Theme 2, when the top line plays the rhythmic pattern in Theme 2, the chords in the bottom voice create a homophonic texture (Example 4.11). However, when the top voice has a more lyrical melody in the second half, the bottom voice changes to a lyrical style in response to the top voice in mm. 5-6.

Example 4.11: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 4-6, homophonic texture in Theme 2



The texture in Section B consists of either three or four lines. In mm. 29-37 (Example 4.12), the top line in the right hand presents the lyrical melody with two voices, and the lower voice (second voice) is mostly supporting the top voice as a harmonic base. There are also two lines in the left hand: a sustained whole note chord, and quarter note broken chords. Starting in m. 38, the treble staff is further divided into three voices (Example 4.13), and the melody is hidden in the lower and middle voices. Even though there are four distinct lines in *Chose en soi B*, the texture is still considered to be homophonic because only one of the voices has the melodic line. This four-part texture also continues in the next section (Section A¹).

Example 4.12: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 28-36, four-part texture in Theme 3





Example 4.13: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 37-39, four-part texture in Theme 3



In the return of Section A¹ (m. 43-46), Prokofiev creates a more dense and more complex texture. He accomplished this by adding a bass line and by extending each four eighth-note figure to include additional notes (Example 4.14).

Example 4.14: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 43-45, return of Theme 1 with more dense texture



In Section B¹, instead of using quarter notes as in Section B, Prokofiev includes smaller note values (eighth and sixteenth) to create an even more dense texture.

In Section A², Theme 1 is introduced three octaves apart, and the pitch range has been extended to more than five octaves (m. 63), which creates a higher intensity level than the original presentation of A. In the transition to Theme 2 (mm. 66-70), Prokofiev even adds one more voice in the bass clef to create five-part counterpoint (Example 4.15), and this density of texture is rarely seen in his early piano works.

Example 4.15: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 67-70, five-part counterpoint



In Section B², the very last section of the piece, Prokofiev starts with three-stave writing to present each voice clearly. The bottom staff plays the sustained bass notes, and the middle staff contains two lines: sustained and tied whole notes which last for more than three measures (Example 4.16), and the four-note motive from Theme 1 (Example 4.17).

Example 4.16: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 77-79, the use of three staves



Example 4.17: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 80-81, the top staff plays the variants of Theme 2, and the middle staff plays the variant of Theme 1.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is marked with *m.d. dolce* and *p*. It contains a melodic line with sixteenth-note patterns and fingerings (1, 2, 1, 1). The middle staff is marked with *m.s.* and *p*, and contains a more rhythmic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes. The bottom staff is mostly empty, with some chordal accompaniment in the bass clef.

The top staff also contains two voices in mm. 77-79. Once the melody is presented in m. 80, the top staff is divided into two lines: one typically has the theme, and the other typically has a contrapuntal line with sixteenth notes, though they occasionally switch roles. While Theme 3 is introduced on the top staff, Theme 1 also occurs as the accompaniment figure in the middle staff.

Example 4.18: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 94-97, five-part contrapuntal lines

The image shows a musical score for five-part contrapuntal lines, divided into two systems. The top system has two staves, with the top staff marked *ff espress.* and the bottom staff marked *mp*. The bottom staff includes the instruction *tenuto e legato*. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs and chords, with various fingerings and dynamics like *dim.* and *p*.

This combination is significant, as Prokofiev rarely overlapped his themes in his Russian Period. The texture is reduced to two staves in m. 88, and the middle part with the Theme 1 figure is removed. The Theme 3 group is still developed into the Coda in m. 94. With the final arrival point of this section, the texture is expanded to five lines again. Four of the five

contrapuntal voices in the Coda present their own melody (Example 4.18), and is evidence of one of the most contrapuntal moments in Prokofiev's piano works.

4.4 Harmony

Except for the lyrical melodies, Prokofiev mentioned that this work is "chromatic".³⁶ The melody is diatonic, but the countermelodies are frequently chromatic. The unorthodox cadences make it challenging to define the key. However, some of the chords are still clearly identifiable. As Ashley mentioned, it is a piece "where the functional harmony is non-existent-there"³⁷, and the composer focuses on the voice leading lines much more than the vertical chords.

The piece begins on the third scale degree without the stabilizing presence of the root note C. The opening passage can even be considered to be in Phrygian mode³⁸. In mm. 3-4, a C scale descends, and the final C major chord confirms the key of the first phrase. While the lower voices are mostly members of the C major scale, the top two voices suggest an A major chord and a D-flat major chord. There is even a group of notes suggesting a D major ninth chord (Example 4.19). From m. 5 to m. 9, Theme 2 is harmonized with C major and A major chords. The G-sharp found in m. 5 and the C-sharp in m. 6 could be considered as "wrong notes."

The harmony in the next transitional passage (mm. 14-18) is difficult to define, as the harmony is moving horizontally. It begins with sustained Ds in each voice that include C-sharp and B-flat, so it is possible to think of the transitional passage as in the D minor key area. The harmony moves to an F major chord in m. 15, and a G ninth chord in m. 16. After establishing

³⁶ Prokofiev, *Autography*, 73.

³⁷ Ashley, 197.

³⁸ Eidschun, 17.

the G ninth chord, the next two measures develop four contrapuntal lines, and the top three voices combine to form a B-flat minor chord. B-flat minor is the VI of d minor, and the C-flat octave on the bottom can be regarded as “wrong notes” (Example 4.20).

Example 4.19: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 1-6, the use of chords

Moderato scherzando

1928

p Phrygian mode

D9 CM CM AM

Wrong notes

Wrong notes

Example 4.20: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 14-19, the wrong notes

p dolce

p

F G9

rit. *pp* a tempo *mf scherzando*

Wrong notes

The return of Theme 2 starts with a G major ninth chord, moves to an E diminished seventh, and shifts to a B-flat minor ninth in m. 20. The top voice consists of a descending C minor scale (Example 4.21). In mm. 22-24, the focus is more on the voice leading, but the non-chord tones briefly resolve to a D-sharp minor chord in m. 23, then the end of the phrase again arrives on a C major chord. The very last time Theme 1 is presented before moving to Section B, the key modulates up a fifth and settles on the dominant G chord in m. 28.

Example 4.21: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 20-24, C minor descending scale and chord progression

The image displays a musical score for Example 4.21, consisting of two systems of music. The first system shows the beginning of the phrase, with a red oval highlighting the first few notes of the top voice. The second system shows the continuation of the phrase, ending with a C major chord. Chord symbols D#m, Am, and C are indicated below the bass staff. Performance markings include 'espress.', 'p', 'mf', and 'un poco rit.'

Section B continues with the G dominant chord in m. 29, and the following phrases can be considered as eleventh chords. There is an F eleventh chord in m. 30, an E eleventh chord in m. 32, a G eleventh chord in m. 34, and a B eleventh chord in m. 36 (Example 4.22).

The next phrase starts with an E ninth chord in mm. 38-39, and an F-sharp ninth chord in the top two lines in m. 40, along with a B eleventh chord on the left hand, and a G ninth chord in m. 41. There is a descending scale that suggests C major, but finishes with an A minor chord, which is the parallel minor of C major (Example 4.23).

Example 4.22: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 28-36, chord progression

Andante

p *pp* *dolcissimo*

G7 F11

E11

G11 B11

Example 4.23: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 37-42, chord progression

mp *poco cresc.* *mf* *poco rit.*

B9 E9 G9 Am

The harmony in Section A¹ is particularly ambiguous: the chords gradually ascend by half steps, but do not result in stable triads (Example 4.24). There is no clear tonal center until mm. 50-52, during which the bottom voice brings a descending C major scale.

Example 4.24: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 43-45, chromatic motion on bass line

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.24, consisting of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is marked 'tempo primo' and 'p'. The bass line in the bottom staff shows a descending chromatic scale from G4 to C3, which is circled in red. The top staff contains a melodic line with various intervals and accidentals.

After the C major chord in m. 52, it continues with a G ninth chord in m. 53 as it enters Section B¹. The top voice can be considered in G Mixolydian scale, which is set against a B major ascending scale in the second voice, and also against a F Phrygian scale in the bottom voice. The bi-tonal device in m. 53 shows that voice leading carries particular significance in *Chose en soi B* (Example 4.25).

Example 4.25: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 52-54, G mixolydian scale in the top voice, B major scale in the middle voice, and F Phrygian scale in the bottom voice

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.25, consisting of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is marked 'ritenuto' and 'pp'. The top staff shows a G mixolydian scale (G-A-B-A-G-F-E-D-C-B-A-G) circled in red. The middle staff shows a B major scale (B-C-D-E-F#-G-A-B) circled in red. The bottom staff shows an F Phrygian scale (F-E-D-C-B-A-G-F) circled in red.

Led by the D-flat major scale in the bottom voice, Theme 3 of Section B¹ arrives on D-flat major in m. 55, accompanied by a G-flat eleventh chord in mm. 55-56, and an E-flat minor chord in mm. 57-58. Surprisingly, the key switches to E major for two measures (mm. 59-60), then goes to the E-flat minor key area in m. 61.

Unlike the texture of A¹, Prokofiev extends the accompaniment figures which are used in the previous section. Immediately after the E-flat minor area in m. 59, Theme 1 is presented in E major in the return of A², with a D minor chord as an accompaniment figure. While entering the transitional passage to Theme 2 (mm. 66-70), the harmony becomes ambiguous again. In m. 66, it can be considered to be in C major due to the top voice and the sustained G. In m. 68, the harmony begins with a C major ninth, moves to A-flat minor in m. 69, and ends with an E-flat minor chord in m. 70 (Example 4.26).

Example 4.26: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 64-70, use of chords

The image shows a musical score for two systems of piano music. The first system (mm. 64-66) features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a D9 chord. A red circle highlights the E major triad in the treble clef. The second system (mm. 67-70) features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a C9 chord. A red circle highlights the A-flat minor triad in the bass clef. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'mp dolce', 'p', and 'pp', and performance instructions like 'rit.' and 'm.s.'

Theme 2 in m. 71 remains in E-flat minor, and the next measure shifts to a C major seventh chord. While the texture returns to two voices in m. 75, the harmony returns to C major. The transition in mm. 77-79 contains two keys: C major and E major. In the middle line, the sustained C octave serves as the pedal with the B, which also suggests a C major chord when considered along with the E and G in the top line. Theme 1 begins in E major (Example 4.27).

Example 4.27: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 77-79, middle voice in E major harmony

The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment, measures 77-79. The key signature is E major. The tempo marking is 'Poco meno' and there are 'm.s.' (mezzo-soprano) markings above the staff. The score consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The music features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

Theme 3 presented in the top line of Section B² mostly consists of notes in the D major scale, and when Theme 1 enters, it also begins in D major. But later the harmony of Theme 1 switches to a C minor chord shortly for two measures (mm. 85-86), then returns to D major in m. 87. The G eleventh chord is sustained from m. 81 to m. 82, and the E minor seventh is sustained from m. 83-84. It then switches to an A eleventh chord in m. 85-86 to harmonize Theme 1, then returns to D major in m. 87 (Example 4.28).

Example 4.28: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 80-87.

The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment, measures 80-87. The key signature is E major. The score is annotated with 'D major' above the first staff. There are markings for 'm.d. dolce', 'p' (piano), and 'm.s.' (mezzo-soprano). The score consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The music features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. Red circles highlight specific melodic lines in the top staff and a chordal progression in the middle staff. The annotations 'G11' and 'E11' are placed below the score, and an asterisk is at the bottom right.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a treble clef staff with a complex melodic line and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system is annotated with the word "All" above the treble staff. A red circle highlights a specific melodic phrase in the treble staff, with the text "D major" written in red below it. A green circle highlights a note in the treble staff, and a blue circle highlights a note in the bass staff.

In the next phrase (mm. 89-93), the bass line is moving chromatically, and the harmony begins with an E ninth chord, moves to an F-sharp ninth chord, and ascends to a G ninth chord. From m. 92, the harmony is led by the ascending scale in the top voice, and it arrives on an E-flat minor scale in m. 93 (Example 4.29).

There is a significant resolution with the F minor chord in m. 94, which is the climax of the section, before it progresses to C minor in m. 95. With the contrapuntal lines moving chromatically, the individual voices eventually lead back to C major, matching the beginning of the piece.

Example 4.29: Prokofiev, *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, mm. 88-93.

The image displays a musical score for Prokofiev's *Chose en soi B*, Op. 45, measures 88-93. The score is presented in three systems, each consisting of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes several performance markings: *animando* (measures 88-90), *mp* (measures 88-90), *rit. assai* (measures 91-93), and *cresc.* (measures 91-93). Red circles highlight specific musical features: the first system has a red circle around a chord in the treble staff; the second system has a red circle around a chord in the treble staff; the third system has a red circle around a chord in the treble staff and another red circle around a series of chords in the treble staff.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In Prokofiev's foreign period, he initially struggled to establish a writing style which would satisfy the audiences in the United States and Europe. He attempted to change his work to fit audiences' preferences, and lost belief in his own abilities. As Prokofiev stated, *Choses en soi* is a work in which he wanted to enjoy composing for himself without adjusting his compositional style to audiences' taste.

From the previous analysis, we can determine that Prokofiev incorporated compositional approaches and elements in *Choses en soi* which he had not previously explored. These elements include irregular phrasing, asymmetrical form, precedence of motive development over lyricism, heavily chromatic harmony accompanying diatonic melodies, and gradual textural progressions: from monophony to homophony to polyphony.

In *Choses en soi*, Prokofiev took compositional techniques from his early period and combined them with ideas from the new musical trends he had experienced while traveling abroad. This combination established many of the characteristics which helped to define his foreign period. One additional characteristic of his foreign period piano compositions is a predilection toward writing character pieces: after *Choses en soi*, Prokofiev's piano compositions consisted exclusively of character pieces until his return to Soviet Russia, at which time his piano compositions consisted exclusively of sonatas. However, the compositional approaches which Prokofiev developed in *Choses en soi* can be found in several of his later piano works, such as *Two Sonatinas* (Op. 54), *Pensées* (Op. 62), and *Three pieces* (Op. 59), which enhances the significance of this work in the piano literature.

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