UNIVERSITY OF AGDER
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Freedom in Interpretation and Piano Sonata No. 7 by Sergei Prokofiev

-A comparison of two approaches to piano interpretation-

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This Master's Thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration in the field of music interpretation. In it, two different performances of Piano Sonata No. 7 by Sergei Prokofiev are compared and analysed. The discussion of findings is conducted in a dialectic way, by confronting two possible solutions to the problems of interpretation of said piece. The thesis employs different scientific methods, relying on analytical and observation methods as the main source of data.

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invaluable advice he gave to me when it was most needed

1 Introduction.

1.1 About the topic

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) was one of the most interesting composers in the Twentieth century. His piano sonatas are the main part of his creation for the piano, and among them, the Seventh Piano Sonata is one the most interesting and most successful works. It is a favourite among performers and audiences alike.

Glenn Gould (1932-1982) and Sviatoslav Richter (1915-1997) are among the greatest pianists since the invention of sound-recording technologies. They represent two very different approaches to classical music performance.

Interpretation is a widely-discussed area. The field of hermeneutics and the fields of communication and language (music language and notation, in this case) are enormous, and the research and discussion in this paper will have a narrower approach to piano performance itself, with no ambition to dwell much deeper into these and other wider fields.

1.2 Research question and aim for the project

I have decided to contribute to the important question of freedom in interpretation by:

a) presenting a demonstration of my own analyses of performances by two renowned pianists, ascertaining the elements of correlation and disparity between the performances and the score (and drawing certain conclusions from their playing),

b) presenting the findings of these analyses in a systematic way, and discussing the reasons behind the differences, and

c) explaining my own choices in interpretation of this piece. I believe that my own findings while researching and practising the piece are a very valuable tool for any research on the topic that I may conduct.

What I aim to discover by performing these actions is insight into the different ways of approaching the written text, and motivation in different performers for the interpretative changes of the written text.

There are many challenges in this process. One of the main ones in uncertainty of any verbal interpretation of a musical content. Even the simplest and most basic elements are always up to discussion and re-interpretation, and it is very difficult to make any final

decisions. The other main difficulty is the complexity of Prokofiev's language and multitude of modes of expression.

I chose this topic because it enables me to connect areas of my greatest expertise, which are:

a) piano performance and its aesthetics. I am currently in my final of the Master's programme in Piano Performance at the University of Agder, and I have played the piano actively and considered different aspects of performance since I was 9, that is to say – nearly twenty years)

b) musical analysis, especially music form analysis. Before studying piano performance, I studied General Music Pedagogy, a department at Faculty of Music in Belgrade which incorporated the Theory department as its part (they became two separate departments in the meantime). Here, I had extensive training in music analysis (this training starts in primary music school, but on a lower level) and developed an intensive affinity for finding logical patterns in music, which can be done very much by analysing form,

1.3 Methods.

I chose the methods that I find the most relevant for this topic and the most useful to me and my field of expertise.

-Analytical method, with two subcategories. The first subcategory is analysis of music form, and I will write more about it later, in the analyses part. I am going to use this method to determine the logic of Prokofiev's creation and to shed light on the specific content that his music brings. The second subcategory is analysis of music interpretation, which incorporates collection of objective data (music) by personal perception (listening) and the very process of examining this raw data in order to create usable scientific data out of it.

-Historical method. I will use it to ascertain some facts about the topic(s) of the thesis, and to provide background for the interpretation of the data collected in the analytic process.

-Analytic induction. This method will be used to compare the small-scale findings to their causes on a larger scale (f. ex. the relationship between a performer's life and aesthetic views and his music performance).

-Direct participant observation. This method will be used for collecting and presenting the data connected to my personal experience as a performer, my choices of interpretation and the argumentation for those choices.

1.4 Structure of the thesis.

The thesis consists of four main parts. The first one, Introduction, brings an overview of the topic, research goals and tools of research, as well as the motivation for the choice of topic. The second part lays the ground for better understanding of the composer, the pianists and the process and challenges of interpretation. The third part consists of data collection and presentation, through analysis of music form and music interpretation, and personal observation of the interpretation problems. The fourth part brings an overview of the findings with visual representation, and the discussion about these findings and their meaning. The fifth part consists of a summary of the whole thesis and some end marks, including personal experience of this research, and some other personal views, as well as some possibilities for future research.

2 The composer, the performers and what lies between.

2.1 Prokofiev – life and creation

Sergei Prokofiev was a prolific composer. He was equally adept in composing ballets, symphonies, concertos for different instruments, and solo piano works.

Prokofiev was born in April 1891 in the village of Sontsovka, which is in Ukraine today, but was a part of the Russian Empire at that time. He was raised in a musical environment: his mother was an ambitious amateur pianist, and she planted the love for serious music, and disregard (to say the least) of any kind of "light" music (she also taught him elementary music theory, as well as basic piano playing technique). This seed took root in him very early, so he wrote his first music piece at the age of 5, and he started regular piano lessons with his mother at the age of seven. Still, even though he obviously was a *"wunderkind"*, his parents still tried to give him a normal childhood, and avoid making a *fachidiot* out of him. Throughout his childhood, he continued developing musically at an astonishing rate, which led to his admittance to the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1904, as a student of composition, with Anatoly Lyadov as his composition teacher. He was only 13 at the time, and he had already composed a number of pieces, including a sonata, a symphony and even an opera[1].

His musical spirit thrived in the environment of cultural abundance that St. Petersburg had to offer, and he improved greatly, both as a pianist and as a composer. Here he got in contact with some very important influences, including Alexander Scriabin and Sergei Rachmaninoff, which were, contrary to popular belief, not Prokofiev's stylistic arch-enemies. He differed from Rachmaninoff more than from Scriabin, but only in treatment of the piano as an instrument, and in musical language, while being connected to him through the Russian type of lyricism, which he used in many of his works. He even stated to Lyadov that one of his favourite composers was Tchaikovsky, the epitome of Russian musical lyricism. Another important influence is Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, even though Prokofiev's position towards him was somewhat ambiguous and fluctuating.

During his composition studies, Prokofiev continued improving as a pianist, and he by the time he graduated, he was equally acknowledged as a composer and as a performer. Upon

1 The bibliographic facts about Prokofiev in this and other paragraphs (unless stated differently) are from Robinson's biography of the composer (Robinson, 2002.)

finishing his composition studies, Prokofiev continued studying piano and conducting. He started studying piano with Anna Esipova, a celebrated pianist and pedagogue – "the prima donna of Petersburg piano teachers" (Robinson, 2002, p. 61) in 1909, and it is certain that this period was particularly beneficial for him as a pianist. His teacher in conducting was Nicolai Tcherepnin, who told him immediately that he was not predestined to be a conductor, but that he would help him to become sufficiently adept to be able to conduct his own works well. This plan turned out to be more ambitious than expected, and Prokofiev never did venture deep into conducting, apart from occasionally conducting premières of his orchestral works.

It is no wonder that Prokofiev has created such a quantity of piano works, for his pianistic career flourished greatly in these years, and he had the chance to perform many of his piano pieces himself. His understanding of the piano was getting deeper and deeper, and his very specific treatment of the instrument, both as a composer and as a pianist, could become even more individual and colourful, as his proficiency as a performer increased. He premièred most of the piano works that he composed in this period. After all, the main reason for enrolling in these programs at the Conservatory was to make him able to perform his own works proficiently. In 1914, he won the Conservatory piano competition "Battle of the pianos", performing his First Piano Concerto.

The First World War did not seem to have a great effect on Prokofiev, and he continued in his endeavours, almost unshaken. But, the Revolutions of 1917 were a different story altogether, namely the October Revolution (the first one, in February, was actually relatively convenient to him and his family). The Bolsheviks came to power, and named Russia the first socialist state in the world. The turbulence that followed affected Prokofiev's life in a much greater extent than the War. Even so, 1917 was one of his most productive years. He composed, among other works, his First Symphony, and Piano Sonatas No. 3 and 4. He avoided the most earth-shattering part of the post-revolutionary events by moving away in 1918, alternating between USA, France, England and Germany. Originally planned as a few month tour (mainly pianistic), it turned into years, and even more than a decade. During this emigration, he produced many important works, including his Second, Third and Fourth symphonies, "The Love For Three Oranges", Fourth and Fifth Piano Concerto, and the Fifth Piano Sonata.

When he came back to Russia in 1932, he didn't settle down immediately. He spent

almost equal time in Russia (now USSR) and the West for the next several years, deciding to stay in USSR permanently in 1936. The situation in his homeland had changed drastically by then, Stalin was in power, and was creating more and more of a dictatorship. There was a great division in the artistic world, between those who wished for an even stricter ideological limitation of art, and those who thought that politics and art should not mix in any circumstances. Nevertheless, politics influenced art more and more over time, may this review of Dmitri Shostakovich's opera “Lady Macbeth” serve as an example:

> “(...)The danger of this trend to Soviet music is clear (…) and 'love' is smeared all over the opera in the most vulgar manner. (…) 'Lady Macbeth' enjoys great success with audiences abroad. Is it not because the opera is absolutely apolitical and confusing that they praise it? Is it not explained by the fact that it tickled the perverted tastes of the bourgeois with its fidgety, screaming, neurotic music?”[2]

This review was published on January 28, 1936. in “Pravda”, the media voice of the regime, which wasn't known as a paper to publish music reviews, which makes this review an even more important sign of interest the government had to control all aspects of the Soviet reality. They typically became interested in art only when it came out of the boundaries of the aesthetics provided by the rulers. It is believed that this review actually stems from Stalin himself, who has seen this opera in the end of 1935, or beginning of 1936.

Publishing of this review was actually just the precedent of this kind of involvement, but as Stalin's power and totalitarianism rose, his influence over culture was increasing, since he already had absolute control of most other matters: economy, education and health care, just to name the most fundamental ones.

The effect on Shostakovich's career was immense, he was even referred by the press as “enemy of the people” in the following period[3]. As the most prominent Soviet composer of the period crashed and burned (at least for the time being), most other composers, who had less reasons to feel safe then Shostakovich, started going out of their ways to accommodate the wishes of the regime. Prokofiev, though, wasn't present in USSR at this exact time (he was on one of his European tours), and has actually decided to come back permanently roughly at the time of the incident, probably thinking that he would be able to work around the rules and bend them to his will. After all, he was very capable in business and diplomatic issues. But, he had another thing coming.

2 Robinson, 2002, p. 315
3 Robinson, 2002, p. 316

After his great success with "Peter and the Wolf" and before another great success (music for Sergei Eiseinstein's film "Alexander Nevski"), he wrote several works which remained unpublished, and weren't performed (at least not for a long time), including a Revolution-glorifying "Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October", which was an obvious political move, but he did not produce the expected effect on the regime, because they thought it did not present the fathers of the Revolution in an appropriate light. "Alexandar Nevski" cantata, though, bought a very good place for Prokofiev in the government's eyes, at least for a period of tome. The cantata was made by adjusting the score for the film of the same title, and it had epic proportions.

The next big project was the opera "Semyon Kotko". This opera was to be produced and directed by a close personal friend and colleague of Prokofiev's, Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940). He was a well-known opera producer and director, and the production was planned at the Opera Studio in Moscow. But, Meyerhold had already begun to be a problem to the authorities by then, and his downfall was imminent. He got a chance to explain his position at the National Conference of Stage Directors, in June 1939. He used this chance to express once more his views that the stage directors should have more freedom to experiment and that politics should stay out of art. This was more than enough for Stalin, and Meyerhold was arrested on June 20th, just one week before Prokofiev finished the piano score for the opera. Soon after his arrest, Meyerhold's wife, actress Zinaida Raikh, was found dead in their apartment, beaten and disfigured by "unknown thugs", and Meyerhold was to follow soon, after extended prison torture.

This was the point when Prokofiev understood the full scope of Stalin's power and mercilessness. He probably wasn't able to find out what happened to his friend Meyerhold, but he knew what happened to Meyerhold's wife, and it wasn't a big leap of imagination to suspect that their were both murdered by the State. Yet, he was able to make the World War Two period another one of his creative blooms, not only in quantity, but also quality: Ballet "Cinderella", opera "War and Peace", Piano Sonatas 6, 7 and 8, and many other works.

After the war, the government used the chance to finish the cleansing of the Soviet Union, in all aspects. Prokofiev uses the period immediately after the war to compose the Ninth Piano Sonata (dedicated to Sviatoslav Richter) and the Sixth Symphony. Then came the real downfall.

Vano Muradeli, a Georgian composer, finished his opera "The Great Friendship",

which was intended as a tribute to Georgia, Stalin's homeland, in 1947. Stalin saw the opera and got greatly angered by "historical inaccuracies"[4], and this was a good enough reason for Andrei Zhdanov, a high government official (former chairman of the Soviet Union), to act upon this anger and ban the opera from public performance. This was, once more, a precedent that opened the door for a new tightening of the censorship rope, and the creation of the famous term "formalism", which was used as a reason to ban hundreds of works in the following period. Accusations of "formalism" poured down on many composers, among others (or firstly) Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Nikolay Myaskovsky and Aram Khachaturian. This meant an immediate threat of prison, exile or even execution. The merciless critical attacks on Prokofiev's following works were followed (as was, in many cases, *modus operandi* of the Soviet secret police) by the arrest of his wife Lina, on accounts of espionage. She wasn't to be released until after Stalin's death.

Subsequent works by Prokofiev do not come near to his greatest works in quality, the only things that remained for him were illness, decline and misfortune, leading to his death in 1953. It is greatest imaginable irony that he died exactly on the day that Stalin's death was announced, March 5th, 1953.

2.2 Sviatoslav Richter and Glenn Gould

The object of analysis in this thesis will be performances of Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata by Sviatoslav Richter and Glenn Gould. I chose these two performers for many reasons, including that they both had a very strong artistic will and integrity, and were very careful, but very brave in bringing their own ideas to fruition; they had a very different background, both culturally and, particularly, in their pianism. Also, Richter was the one to première the Sonata, which makes him more tightly connected to the work.

Richter is known as an all-round, tasteful performer with an enormous repertoire, while Gould performed predominantly Baroque and Twentieth-century works, and is considered by many to be quite an eccentric pianist; they both had astonishing technique, but while Richter used his whole body in performing, and had a formidable power and an unsurpassed range of sound, Gould played mostly using his fingers and wrists (he also moved his body, but more to express the overwhelming pulse that took over him when he played, than to utilize it for sound creation). Richter loved the stage, and played publicly all his life,

4 Robinson, 2002, p. 471

all over the world, and wasn't to be found in a recording studio very often (and was not the greatest fan of studio recording), while Gould withdrew himself completely from the live performing, and continued communicating with his huge audience exclusively through recordings (and interviews, radio shows and so on, but never again concerts); Gould started his formal music education at an early age, while Richter was largely self-taught; Gould was a lone wolf, an outcast, an eccentric, he barely had a social life worth mentioning, while Richter led a very rich social life, it seems that he had quite a warm and embracing environment about him.

Both of these pianists had very specific views towards performing, and very personal poetics guidelines. These two poetics are quite different to each other, as we will see through the analysis of their performances.

There are many other notable recordings of this piece, but I excluded them based on one of the following reasons:

a) I find it is not very interesting to compare two pianists coming from the same cultural milieu, so that's why I had to choose at least one non-Russian pianist. I couldn't compare, for example, Vladimir Horowitz and Boris Berman.

b) I avoided choosing live pianists, because it is easier to study a performer's aesthetics and poetics, as well as understand them fully if they have already finished their life cycle.

c) I chose pianists which interpretations have been discussed to a greater extent than most. There is not nearly as much written (or as profound and comprehensive) about most other pianists as about these two.

2.2.1 Sviatoslav Richter – tragedy and power

Sviatoslav Teofilovich Richter was born in 1915 in Zhitomir, today's Ukraine, to a pianist father and mother[5]. The mother, Anna Pavlovna Richter, didn't continue playing the piano seriously after her studies, while his father kept performing and teaching until the end of his life. As a youngster, he showed almost no interest in performing on the piano, but liked to sight-read music. His father attempted to teach him at first, but soon realized there was no effect. The young Richter wanted to do things his own way, or not to do them at all. His

5 The biographic data about Richter in this chapter and others is taken from the biography by Karl Aage Rasmussen, and the film by Bruno Monsaingeon “Richter: The Enigma”, as well as a book by Monsaingeon, closely connected to the film: “Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations”.

extraordinary musical abilities, almost unprecedented in music history, let him learn himself the piano to a point where he could play most of Beethoven's Sonatas. He progressed soon to being able to read complicated orchestral and operatic scores, all of them *a prima vista.*

> “Apparently, he was not primarily interested in playing the piano. He used the piano the way we use a CD or an MP3 player, as a means to listen to music we otherwise would not hear”[6].

His music capabilities were uncanny, and he soon started making use of them. In these economically and otherwise terrible times, he started earning money by improvising music for silent films in the cinema, and by doing other low-grade performing jobs.

In 1934, in Odessa, Richter played his first recital with works by Frederic Chopin: “Polonaise-Fantaisie”, Ballade in F minor, Scherzo in E major and a few of his Etudes. And all those pieces he taught himself, which is a task that seems impossible, considering how much training even a talented pianist needs to play these enormous pieces at that age (Richter was 19 at the time). When he decided to apply for a student at the Moscow Conservatory, he came straight to the man who is considered by many one of the greatest piano pedagogues of all time: Heinrich Neuhaus. When Neuhaus heard the young Richter, he was amazed, to say the least, to hear that he lacks any kind of formal training, but he was much more amazed when he heard Richter play.

At the Conservatory, he had problems with many teachers, probably because he missed most of his classes and never took any of them too seriously. Richter had problems with any kind of artificial authority throughout his life, but he always respected true authority, which had to be earned, in his view. His remarks on his father and Neuhaus are examples of his ability to respect what he considered well-deserved authority.

He went on to have a brilliant pianistic career, and having the most awe-inspiring repertoire list anyone has ever had. He virtually played the whole repertoire for the piano, and there are various web-sites dedicated to the attempts to track down and categorize all the works he performed.

The main impression that Richter's playing makes is the impression of inhuman power lying behind those hands. It is not physical power, but power of will and power of expression.

After all his great successes and a rich life, we see him in the interviews made for Monsaingeon's film with his head hanging down and the saddest possible expression. It is

6 Rasmussen (2010), p. 40

one of these interviews, which were conducted only several months before Richter's death, that he says the famous, haunting words: "I never really liked myself". This statement is the final expression of the tragedy and inner dissatisfaction he always felt and expressed in so many ways, even though he never seemed depressed, he was highly functioning and social and had extreme willpower and determination.

We can illustrate Richter's views on performance by juxtaposing Gould's words about Richter's performance of Schubert Piano Sonata in B-flat Major (from a CBS interview), and Richter's answer to Gould's statement:

> Gould: "It is a very long sonata – one of the longest ever written, in fact. And Richter played it in what I believe to be the slowest tempo I have ever heard, thereby making it a good deal longer, needless to say. But what happened in fact was that, for the next hour, I was in a state that I can only compare to a hypnotic trance....It seemed to me I was witnessing a unity of two supposedly irreconcilable qualities: intense analytic calculation revealed through a spontaneity equivalent of improvisation. And I realized in that moment – as I have on many subsequent occasions while listening to Richter's recordings – that I was in the presence of one of the most powerful communicators the world of music has produced in our time."
> Richter: "Gould doesn't understand; he's talking about me, not Schubert, I only play what's in the notes!"[7]

We will return to this statement by Richter later in this thesis, albeit for different reasons. Richter himself always claimed that he wasn't good with words, and we can see that in his interviews, his verbal expression is more symbolical than explanatory, and many of his statements seem downright cryptic. That is why we have to turn to his performances to understand him.

2.2.2 Glenn Gould – ecstasy and intellect

Glenn Gould was born in 1932, in Toronto, under the name of Glenn *Gold*[8]. His family changed their last name to Gould around 1939[9]. His father was a fur salesman and a gifted singer, and his mother was a music teacher. Gould's mother started to introduce him to classical piano music from a very early age by playing for him at their home. Very soon his parents started seeing his great musical gift. Apart from having perfect pitch, he had a great

7 Both citations from Rasmussen, 2002, p. 20

8 The biographic data on Glenn Gould in this chapter and others is derived from two books: "Glenn Gould: A life and variations" by Otto Friedrich and "Glenn Gould: The ecstasy and tragedy of genius" by Peter F. Ostwald.

9 Ostwald (1997), p. 55

sense of rhythm and sound colour. He started playing the piano under his parents' guidance, and his mother started giving him regular piano lessons when he was three.

Gould started studying at the Toronto Conservatory at the age of ten. As Richter, he was an uncanny sight-reader, and he also had a great technical facility at the piano. Nevertheless, the way he played the piano was completely different. He sat very low on his chair while playing, so he had to carry an adjustable chair hand-crafted for him by his father, because the ordinary piano stools couldn't go nearly as low as he felt necessary. This was an influence of playing the organ a lot as a child (it was his main instrument for a while)m because playing the organ does not require usage of the body as piano does, all the action comes from the fingertips. This enabled Gould to have one of the best techniques of articulation on the piano the world has ever seen, which was perfect for the program he enjoyed most: Baroque and Modernism, but could find less use in Romantic piano music, which interested him much less, anyway.

Glenn Gould started to build a sky-rocketing career, and then, in 1964, he suddenly decided to withdraw from the podium forever. But, this was not the end of his career, it was actually one of the greatest career-boosters in the history of music. He continued playing the piano with the same energy, but did it exclusively behind closed doors. He spent a lot of time in studios (including his personal, home studio) recording the music he loved so passionately, but he kept his oath never again to set foot on a stage.

Gould's artistic *credo* is quite different from Richter's. In writings and films about him, there is one word that surfaces very often: ecstasy. This word is a great description of Gould's musicianship, it is ecstatic to an almost impossible extent, and yet, it seems, always highly intellectual. It was from his intellect and from his appreciation for the nuances of the pieces he played that this ecstasy came. It was not what he *felt* that made him ecstatic, it was what he *heard* and *understood.*

Another very important point for Gould's performing is eccentricity, and it is one of his most prominent features. He re-invented performing styles for all the different music he performed. He played Bach like no one before him, but he did the same with Mozart, Beethoven, and Scriabin. There are two things that make his performances of Bach's, and other Baroque composers' works so popular: his great affinity for polyphonic music, and the lack of exact rules for playing Baroque music. Baroque composers did not use many marks, especially when they wrote for keyboard, and there were no studies of interpretation at the

time, and, of course, no tools to save the performances for future generations. These facts make Baroque music the most evasive for interpretation studies, and that is why the style of playing Baroque works changes so often, almost with every generation of pianists.

The reasons that made Gould popular as a Bach performer – freshness, inventiveness and clarity of polyphony – are the reasons why he is so widely disputed as a performer of other styles. He performed everything by re-inventing the music, and putting many new elements into the pieces he played, and he put so much emphasis to the polyphony that it clouded other aspects of the pieces he played.

He, unlike Richter, *was* a man of words, and he proved that extensively throughout his life. He was very eloquent and very knowledgeable, but he never seemed too eager to put that facility of communication to actual use, by developing close relationships with people. Most of the people that got close to him at a certain time, he estranged by his anxious, unpredictable and erratic behaviour, as well as insanely high demands he put for other people, as well as for himself.

He was a highly private person, even more so than Richter, and very little is known about his personal life, but it is clear that he was very depressed and that he abused many different kinds of prescription medicine throughout his life. He also had a number of quirky habits that people who knew him just took as a part of his personality, and tried to accept him for what he is. The same goes for his performances. He is a "take it or leave it" pianist, and there are few people interested in classical piano music who are indifferent to him and his performances.

2.2.3 About the recordings

With Glenn Gould's recordings of the Seventh Piano Sonata by Prokofiev, I had two choices. One was his CBC television broadcast recording from February 5th, 1975, and the other is the CD recording from 1969, a part of the Sony Classical Glenn Gould series[10]. I chose the CD recording, for several reasons. Firstly, it is the real Glenn Gould, meaning the Glenn Gould in studio, where he felt most comfortable, and where he had most control over the outcome. Also, it is a recording that shows him in much better light, he is at his best here as a performer. The last reason is that the DVD recording is much to eccentric to be taken as an interpretation of Prokofiev, it is more of a deconstruction than a performance, in a similar

10 Volume 34 of the Glenn Gould Complete Jacket Collection, Sony Classical, Catalogue No: 88697148082

way as many performances by Ivo Pogorelich.

With Richter, the situation is quite different. Richter hasn't made any studio recordings of the Seventh Sonata, but there are many unauthorized live recordings, of which some have been published by music production companies. All the recordings I heard (and that means most of them that are digitally accessible) share very similar interpretative concepts, so the choice was not as important as it was with Gould. There is no particular reason why I chose this one, apart from the logistic reasons, it was the easiest to obtain this recording.

Here is a very important point that will be revisited later in this thesis: Gould played works very differently when he had a choice to record them twice, and made a point out of playing them differently, while Richter mostly kept his interpretative choices for the pieces he played throughout his performing career.

2.3 Interpretation and freedom

Freedom of the performer to adjust the score has changed greatly over the centuries, and it was usually considered as "style", which means that a performer which has "style" was able to sense and/or deduce how to interpret the written text, f. ex. how much ornamentation a piece needed (in Baroque harpsichord music), or how much rubato was allowed (in Romanticism). This was especially important in the Baroque era, when composers (for keyboard instruments, at least) often wrote a simple "skeleton" of a movement, and it was not only allowed, but expected of the performer to add ornamentations or cadenzas of his own.

Then came a period of decreased freedom – Classicism. Ludwig van Beethoven, for example, forbade all changes to his score, even the slightest manipulation in tempo or dynamics. Romanticism brought a new freedom, through the works of pianists/composers, especially Franz Liszt and Sigismond Thalberg. If we look at twentieth-century music, we can see an unprecedented attention to details in scores of many composers, especially composers of the so-called Second Viennese School, but also György Ligeti and others. This goes to prove that their expectations were more towards strict following of the score, than freedom in interpretation.

Prokofiev's scores are, however, an exception from this rule, which is particularly surprising, considering his, one could almost state, loathing of Romanticism in music (even though he was, of course, very much influenced by it), and his deep admiration for Classical style, especially form. This lack of instructions evident in Prokofiev's scores in general, is

also apparent in the Seventh Sonata, and it has one obvious implication: performances of this piece are very different from each other, even more so than performances of a Bach's piece, even though Bach wrote even less instructions than Prokofiev. The reason for this is that there is an established way that Bach's music "should be played" (it changes, though, through different periods with different trends in performing) than how Prokofiev's should, stemming from two facts: the first one being that the effect of the time that has passed since Bach wrote his works (in which the interpretation issues of his works were discussed extensively and deeply), and the other being that Prokofiev belongs to a certain style or tendency much less then Bach, because the twentieth century brought a greater stylistic diversity than imaginable in any of the previous eras in the history of art. But, as Baroque music was seen as substantially more diffuse stylistically in it's time then we may perceive it today, it is possible that the stylistic differences that we see as gargantuan nowadays may seem trifles in a century or two.

Generally, in performing, there is very often a question that we come down to: "How much is too much?" (how much freedom, that is). One may choose to turn to one of the three main sources to solve this question (presuming the composer is not among the living): carefully examining the score and all the details in it (including different editions, revisions, autographs, an so on), reading and learning of the composer's intentions in creation and his artistic *credo*, and listening to performers one might consider established or trustworthy, and discovering inspiration and suggestions for one's own interpretation of the score.

It is beneficial to establish a distinction between the three main types of changes to the text itself, and I will name every type, facilitating their later use. The first one is **addition**, and it is fairly common, and (at least in a certain quantity) inevitable, even though it can make the final result go far away from what is written. I will use this term for both the additions coming out of the implications that the composer made, and those that are a purely individual idea by the performer. The second type is **alteration**, which encompasses all the actions that are in disagreement with clear wishes stated by the composer. The third type is probably the least common: **exclusion**, when a performer simply disregards a marking by the composer, and continues playing as if that mark wasn't in the score[11].

Basically, the less detailed the score is, the more freedom is left to the performer (a

11 We must be careful to make the distinction between alteration and exclusion, because sometimes it is not very clear, exclusion doesn't mean following the instructions partially, or doing the opposite to the instructions, it means **ignoring** it completely.

positive feat from the performers' point of view), but he has less guidance in his choices, and has less firm ground on which he can build his interpretation (which is the negative side). As a performer, I can say that it truly is much more complicated to make interpretative choices when the score is not detailed, but it is also much more rewarding. That is one of the reasons I find Prokofiev's music so rewarding to me as a performer, and so challenging as well.

3 Analysis of Sergei Prokofiev's Piano Sonata no. 7

This following section is the central section of the thesis, and is a product of analytic processes and investigation. It consists of a background of the work, followed by one section for each movement. Each of these sections contents an overview of form, followed by analyses of interpretations by Sviatoslav Richter and Glenn Gould. These analyses will be separated into two categories: a) macro- and micro-timing issues: tempo and agogics, and b) issues of sound: dynamics, polyphony, articulation, pedalling.

These sections will be followed by overviews (for each movement) of the different aspects of interpretation and repercussions on the performance as a whole, and a conclusion (also for every movement individually) about the meaning of these aspects, possible motivation and justification. The final section for each movement will be an insight from a performer's perspective: argumentation for my personal views of every movement, and justification of my own interpretative decisions (which are documented on my CD recording, accompanying this thesis).

3.1 The Seventh Sonata

Prokofiev's *magnum opus* in composing for the piano are his nine mature Piano Sonatas (he also wrote six early Sonatas). He published nine Sonatas, started writing his Tenth Sonata, and also planned an eleventh. Out of all his piano sonatas, the ones that are most unanimously acclaimed are the Second Sonata, and the three war Sonatas. The three latter works have been written during Second World War, and they bring an atmosphere of anxiety, fear, and tragedy, but also cynicism towards Stalin's “unifying” omnipotence and tyranny.

Among them, the Seventh Sonata is the clearest in structure and musical message, and also the shortest. This Sonata is the most performed one as well, probably because of a mesmerizing effect it creates for most audiences. It is much clearer in form than the other two, yet much more obscure in language[12]. Where the Sixth expresses predominantly anxiety

12 Especially tonality and tonal centres – often there are none, and even when there is a tonality or a tonal centre at least, it is obscured more or less by polyphony, added notes, frequent modulation and unusual chord relations. The exception being, obviously, the Second movement. Most of the Third movement has a clear tonal gravitation, due to its *ostinato* character, but it bares almost no resemblance to the classic idea of tonality.

in expecting the full terror of a world-wide conflict, and the Eight presents, in a way, an aftermath of it, the Seventh Sonata brings forward the menacing, vicious and malicious machinery of a great army (presumably the Nazi forces), and the emptiness that is left after the battle has stopped. The piece was premièred by Sviatoslav Richter, and here are his own impressions:

> "With this work we are brutally plunged into the anxiously threatening atmosphere of a world that has lost its balance. Chaos and uncertainty reign. We see murderous forces ahead. But this does not mean that what we lived by before thereby ceases to exist. We continue to feel and love. Now the full range of human emotions bursts forth. Together with our fellow men and women, we raise a voice in protest and share the common grief. We sweep everything before us, borne along by the will for victory. In the tremendous struggle that this involves, we find the strength to affirm the irrepressible life-force."[13]

There is another interesting opinion about the essence of expression in this Sonata and its atmosphere. Prokofiev could, obviously, make no objection to the mentioned horrific act of Meyerhorld's assassination by the state (because he could easily have shared his comrade's destiny), and he was even commissioned (in other words, order) at that period by the State to write a piece in celebration of Stalin's rule – Zdravitsa. This piece was accepted by the government with great enthusiasm, and was played often on the biggest squares, through giant speakers, probably to composer's great dissatisfaction. Prokofiev's biographer Daniel Jaffé claims that the Seventh Sonata is an expression of his true feelings towards the cynicism and hypocrisy of the Soviet government, together with the Sixth and Eighth Sonatas[14]. It can be understood as some kind of an atonement (to himself) for succumbing to the rulers' will, even after all the personal losses he had because of the same government. It is ironic that the Sonata won the Stalin prize, highest-ranking art prize in Soviet Russia.

No matter if the picture this Sonata paints is one of the war horrors, or one of personal turmoil and doubt, it is important to establish that it is an expression of human feelings. Prokofiev himself claimed (writing about the Seventh Piano Sonata, First Violin Sonata, "Peter and the Wolf" and the cantata "Alexander Nevsky") that "All these works are extremely varied in genre, theme and technique. Yet they are ale linked by one and the same idea – they all treat of Man, and are created for him. I am convinced that it is this quality that has endeared them to music lovers in many countries of the world, including the United

13 Seroff, 1969, p. 258-259
14 Jaffé (1998), p. 160

States"[15].

The work is composed in three movements, with a classic tempo division: fast-slow-fast. The First movement – *Allegro inquieto* – is, clearly, the point of structural gravity in this piece and, as such, brings by far the most complexity and the greatest wealth of details and the biggest range of expression. It is also the longest, it lasts almost as long as the two other movements combined (at least in most performances). It is the most ambiguous in form, as well, and the most diverse in language and texture.

The term "inquieto" means restless, uneasy, anxious. This feeling of anxiety is persistent in this movement and is masterfully built up to a climax of restlessness in the Coda. The movement is written in 6/8 and 9/8 (second subject) time, and makes extensive use of the rhythmical pattern of quarter-note – eight-note, which makes the movement so driving and full of internal energy.

The movement has two contrasting materials/themes which are not only contrasting in key and expression, but also in tempo and meter. The movement is very complex in musical language and compositional technique, and there are complex polyphonic sections. The development of music material through the movement is most intricate and creative. In this movement, as in many other works, Prokofiev shows his unmatched talent for creating a seamless hybrid of the very old and the very new. While the form is closer to one of Mozart's Sonatas then to one of Scriabin's late Sonatas, the language is very modern, and most of the movement is close to atonality, or at leasts on the outskirts of tonal composing.

The Second movement – *Andante caloroso* – is the lyrical part of the Sonata, and brings well-needed contrast between the two outer movements, both in tempo and expression. It begins as a warm and frank expression of humanity that develops into a cry of passion and torment, which is succeeded by a dive into the murky and cold depths of hopelessness, only to go back to the warm feeling from the beginning. The marking "caloroso" (warm, glowing) ensures this contrast with the other movements, because the outer movements are predominantly cold (but each in its individual way) and leave us without hope.

The Third movement – *Precipitato* – is a brilliant toccata, in which the anticipation and anxiety of the First movement and the humanity of the Second are wiped away, and an unstoppable machinery of war comes forth. The very accentuated rhythmical pulse of this movement may seem to the listener as a depiction of a German tank division rolling forward

15 Martin (1982), p. 51

towards Stalingrad (this Sonata was finished and premièred during the Battle of Stalingrad, which is estimated to have caused more than a million casualties). It is certainly meant to induce a sense of inevitability and carelessness (the character marking at the beginning – *Precipitato* – instructs the performer to play impetuously, forcefully and without second thoughts[16]).

When performing this piece, a pianist needs to solve many problems. The first problem is the technical and musical complexity of the work. It demands a very high level of pianistic virtuosity, but also a very keen ear, and a great sense of rhythm and tempo, topped with a very wide range of piano dynamics, touch and phrasing. Then comes the problem of learning and performing a barely tonal piece – there are less "safety belts" than performers usually have.

The last important problem is one that is generally tied to Prokofiev's works – lack of detailed instructions to the performer. Many issues of interpretation are left to the performer to decide, including the choice of tempo on occasions (f. ex. in this Sonata, the third movement bears only a character marking, without any tempo indications whatsoever). This habit in Prokofiev's writing leads to a conclusion that he expected the performer to "read between the lines" much more than is usually expected by composers. That fact makes his works, including this Sonata, very interesting for performing, as well as conducting performance analyses.

3.2 First movement – *Allegro inquieto*

Before the analysis, I will set some essential terms that I will use in the analysis of form. These terms are a part of the terminology in the theory of music form analysis generally taught in Serbia. It is based on the traditional Western theory of music and music form. This theory has certain methods of analysis, which are widely accepted in Serbia (and some other countries, there is no unifying theory of music form analysis on a global level yet), and I will conduct my analysis using those methodological models. I will not go into detail explaining the details of different methods of analysis in different analytical schools or their sources sources, I will simply use the ones I learned through my formal education.

The book that is the best example of the mentioned theory (and, by far, the most

16 The translation offered on Oxford Music Online is "hurried" ("precipitato." The Oxford Companion to Music. Ed. Alison Latham. Oxford Music Online. 15 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e5331>)

accepted and used book on the subject music form analysis in this country) is “Nauka o muzičkim oblicima” by D. Skovran and V. Peričić (“Science of music form”, it has not been published in English yet).

-Sentence: “A term adopted from linguistic syntax and used for a complete musical idea, for instance a self-contained theme; a sentence is generally defined as the sum of two or four phrases arranged in a complementary manner and ending with a perfect cadence. It therefore has much the same meaning as ‘period’, though it lacks the flexibility of the latter term, being restricted to dance-like and other symmetrically built musical statements. It is sometimes useful to treat ‘sentence’ as an intermediary term between ‘phrase’ and ‘period’.”[17]

-Period: “A musical period has been compared with a sentence, or period, in rhetoric. Zarlino, in *Le istitutioni harmoniche* (1558), associated the two concepts when he described the cadence as a *punto di cantilena*, which could not appear until the sense of the underlying text had been completed (p.221); in this sense a period, however short or long, extends until its harmonic action has come to a close. (...)Symmetry provides another defining element in period structure. Complementary figures and phrases establish a regular pattern of movement that allows the listener to anticipate the final point of arrival in a self-contained unit, for example the last bar of the theme or a variation in a theme and variations movement.”[18]

-Fragmentary structure: a self-standing part of form that does not fit (all) the criteria to be named a sentence or a period.

-Open sentence/period: a sentence/period with an inconclusive cadenza, ending on a dominant chord, or some other chord. In order to be pronounced an open sentence/period, a segment of music needs to have other relevant criteria present in a sufficient manner. The exception is a modulating period, in which the second sentence does not need to have a stronger cadenza (one of the main criteria for a period), the fact that the second sentence modulates makes the ending stronger in effect than the beginning.

I won't go into more detail concerning other specific exceptions of the presented rules.

I used two outside sources for dialectic processing of my analytical findings. The first one is a Doctoral thesis by Rebecca Martin from 1982, and the other is Boris Berman's book “Prokofiev’s piano sonatas : a guide for the listener and the performer” from 2008.

17 "Sentence." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. 16 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25423>.

18 Leonard G. Ratner. "Period." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. 16 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/21337>.

3.2.1 Form analysis

The movement is written in quite a conservative version of the sonata form (conservative considering the moment of creation, of course), with an exposition, development, recapitulation and coda.

a) Exposition/opening

The first subject is gravitating towards B-flat as a tonal centre, but it is not confirmed in any traditional way[19]. It is thematically quite strong, in the way that the main motif is very apparent, but it is immediately met with certain opposing materials, that continue throughout the first subject, making the inner structure of the first subject less firm (but at the same time leaving the overall stability of form in the movement unchallenged). This makes the division between the first subject and the bridge somewhat unclear, so there are different solutions to this, the two most obvious ones being that the bridge starts in bar 77 (Martin, 1982, p. 56) or bar 119 (Berman, 2008, p. 154). In my analysis, I came to the conclusion that the starting point of the bridge is in bar 65 (the reasons being that the last repetition of the main motif of the subject ends in bar 64, and the division signals are the clearest between those two bars). The first subject itself is, accordingly, either a simple binary form (with or without a short coda), or a compound binary form, with the latter part starting in bar 65.

Section **a** of the first subject is a period of two sentences, of which the second clearly has a stronger cadenza, and section **b** is modulating period, with a weaker ending cadenza (but the modulation of the second sentence makes it a period). The bridge is fragmentary, and consist of two chained sub-sections.

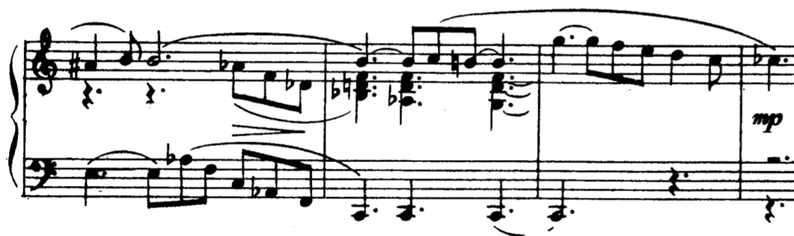
The second subject (starting in bar 124) has a new tempo marking – *Andantino.* This subject starts in A-flat, but is generally atonal, there are some gravities, but they are far from being clear or conclusive. This segment is written in simple ternary form, each sub-segment being a sentence (8 bars, 12 bars, 8 bars), with tonally obscure and indefinite cadenzas. The second sentence brings contrast and development to the idea, and is followed (or extended)

19 I already stated that I consider the somewhat accepted habit of marking this Sonata as a piece in B-flat major erroneous, since it is predominantly atonal, and especially so in the outer movements. Prokofiev noted the Sonata as B-flat major, but it obviously one of his plays on the tradition and codes of the music world, and one more chance to show his famous sarcasm and wittiness. An obvious sign of this is the lack of key signature in the first movement.

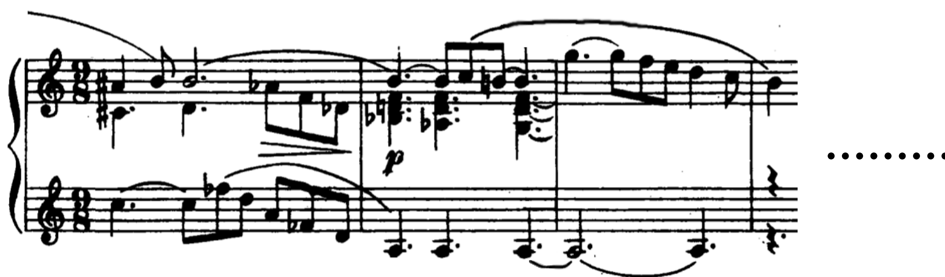
by a half-bar modulating connection. The third sentence is a varied repetition of the first, and this whole section ends in bar 151.

The division between the second subject and the start of development is disputable. Martin puts the end of second subject in bar 154, and Berman claims that it organically changes into the development section, and it happens (in his analysis) somewhere after bar 156 (and he marks bar 182 as the definite beginning of the development section). The second subject dissolves into the development section by extending the same line which ended the first sentence of the second subject on a single note (Examples 1 and 2), the only difference being the enharmonic change of C-flat to b. The polyphonic treatment that follows and the uncommon intervals, which create an impression of constantly changing quasi-tonal relations by imitating typical chord progressions in different keys, but without the proper context of a cadenza, make the exact boundaries of these two sections somewhat obscure.

Example 1 (bars 128-131)



Example 2 (bars 148-150)



b) Development

This section gradually re-introduces the motivic, constructional and dynamical qualities of the first subject. In analysis by Martin, the development ends at bar 304, and Berman puts the end at 303. I must disagree with these views, because the climax of the long build-up with accelerando and crescendo that brings the first motif (and the tempo from the exposition) points very strong that the recapitulation is reached in bar 182. Also, it is very easy to recognize and follow the sections matching those from the exposition, although with much deviation and with different structural divisions. The only confusing point for me is the interjection of a transposed statement taken from the development right after the return of the primary motif (bars 195-209, shown in Example 3, corresponding with bars 168-182 in the development, shown in Example 4).

Example 3 (bars 193-210)

Example 4 (bars 164-184)

c) Recapitulation

The first subject is formally and tonally even less stable and decisive in recapitulation then it was in the exposition. It bears the marking *"Allegro inquieto, come prima"*, which makes it easier to pinpoint the exact beginning of this section to bar 182. The form is similar, but even more dissolved and obscure, with interpolations that greatly reduce consistency of form. I found a very interesting solution to the problem of form in this recapitulation. In this appearance of the first subject, we can find reminiscence of sections **a** and **b** from the exposition of the first subject, but, section **a** is not stated fully, it is only brought thematically, and not formally. The missing part of section **a** actually does appear, but only in the Coda. In my opinion, Prokofiev still felt the need for analogue and cyclic form-building, but he also wanted to make the recapitulation even less rounded (on the micro plan) and less clear than the exposition, and he found a way to make peace between these two needs by dividing the material of the first subject between the recapitulation of the first subject and the Coda.

It is, however, completely justified to choose the opposite explanation, that the composer used some of the elements of the exposition in the development (in the part that I consider as the recapitulation of the first subject), and reversed the recapitulation, so that the second subject comes first, and then the first subject (in the part that I consider to be the Coda), as Berman claims[20]. Here, the recapitulation is missing section **b** completely, but section **a** is brought much more clearly, in terms of form. Another explanation is that only the second subject is present in the recapitulation, and that the elements of the first subject in the development section and the Coda are not sufficient to label either one of them as the recapitulation of the first subject[21].

For me, these solutions, though clearly plausible, bring more problems in finding the exact formal logic of the composer than the one I chose, but, as it usually is with music form, no one can (or at least, no one should) claim he possesses the final word in analysis of a certain work. Of course, there are many examples of straight-forward conception of music form, but it is a general rule that the greatest composers avoided composing “by the book” as much as they could, very good examples are Bach's fugues or Mozart's sonatas (but also Berg's very creative approach to the twelve-tone system).

The bridge is far more developed then in the opening, it brings a different character then the first time, as well as new material, and has interpolations and extensions that make it extremely fragmentary. It ends in bar 337, similarly as the first time, but preparing a different key this time – the original tonal centre of B-flat. Here Prokofiev shows, as in many of his pieces, how deeply he was attached to the classical forms in his composing, and makes the tonal "reconciliation" typical for the classical sonata form, which has little meaning here because of the general tonal instability, or better, predominant atonality of the movement.

The second subject (bars 338-358) brings the same tempo change, and starts with a sentence virtually the same as the third sentence in the exposition of the second subject, apart from being transposed. It is followed by a transposition of the second sentence from the exposition, and the third is missing, and instead of encircling the form, the composer chose instead to jump right into the Coda (after a fermata at the ending of the cadenza of the second sentence).

20 Berman, 2008, p. 156-157
21 Sicsic, 1993, p. 41

d) Coda

The Coda (bars 359-412) brings back the original tempo and the primary motif, which is this time brought in a polyphonic setting, and the ideas are generally even more shredded and inconclusive, they are brought in a primitive, elementary form. Here, the imagined protagonist of this musical narration becomes so agitated and torn apart, that he is not even trying very hard to finish his sentences any more, it is simply a picture of anxiety and disorder. The movement ends in a mocking of the classical language code: we finally see a major triad of B-flat, for the first time in the whole movement. This cannot be a proof of tonality, and **does not** put the whole sonata in B-flat major, even though it seems intuitively correct. The whole tonal pattern of this Sonata (including the ostinato figure in the bass in the final movement, with persistent accents on the B-flat, which will be discussed later in the thesis) is a perversion of the classic sonata code, a deliberate stylistic play by Prokofiev, a nod of sorts to the traditional sonata. This is what neoclassicism is about: imitating the classical (and, in some interpretations, any stylistic era) code, making *homagge* to it, re-interpreting, but also mocking it[22]. This view on historical influences in style later became the foundation of post-modernism (but the post-modernists applied it not only to style, but also to literal musical quotes, which they used, and made them a legitimate source of composing material).

22 “The history and evolution of the term in all its aspects have been traced by Messing. Since a neo-classicist is more likely to employ some kind of extended tonality, modality or even atonality than to reproduce the hierarchically structured tonal system of true (Viennese) Classicism, the prefix ‘neo-’ often carries the implication of parody, or distortion, of truly Classical traits. The advent of postmodern sensibilities since the 1970s has made it possible to see neo-classicism not as regressive or nostalgic but as expressing a distinctly contemporary multiplicity of awareness.” (Arnold Whittall. "Neo-classicism." Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. 14 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/19723>)

Schematic representation of the form

EXPOSITION (1-151)							DEVELOPMENT (151-181)
A (1-64)		Bridge (65-123)		**B** (124-151)			
a	**b**	**c**	**d**	**e**	**f**	$\mathbf{e_1}$	Fragmentary
1-27, 28-44	45-52, 53-64	65-88	89-123	124-131	131-144	144-151	
Period	Period	Fragmentary	Fragmentary	Sentence	Sent.	Sent.	

RECAPITULATION (182-358)						CODA (359-412)
$\mathbf{A_1}$ (182-233)		Bridge (234 -337)		$\mathbf{B_1}$ (338-358)		
$\mathbf{a_1}$	$\mathbf{b_1}$	**g**	$\mathbf{d_1}$	$\mathbf{e_2}$	$\mathbf{f_1}$	Extended sentence
182-218	218-225, 226-233	234-293	293-337	338-346	346-358	
Sentence	Extended period	Fragmentary	Fragmentary	Sentence	Sentence	

Figure 1: a schematic overview of the form of *Allegro inauieto.* The movement is written in sonata form, with all ordinary parts present, except the ending group in both the exposition and recapitulation, which is not a big exception in classic sonata form. The first subject is greatly varied in the recapitulation, while the second subject has only superficial changes, the texture and syntax stay the same.

3.2.2 Analysis of the performances

Before I start the performance analysis, I would like to make a disclaimer: my goal in this analysis is *not* to make an exhaustive list of all interpretative actions by these two pianists. I am just going to explore the general interpretative concepts of the two pianists, and several especially interesting details in both recordings.

a) The time – tempo and agogics

This movement has just several tempo markings, the two main ones being *Allegro inquieto* and *Andantino*, coinciding with beginnings of the first and second subject in both the opening and recapitulation (and one more *Allegro inquieto,* marking the beginning of coda).

There are also several others: the aforementioned *poco meno mosso* that precedes both appearances of the second subject, the prolongated *poco a poco accelerando al (Allegro inquieto, come prima),* ranging from bar 151 to bar 182, as well as *ritenuto* at the end of the second subject in the exposition, *a tempo* at the beginning of the development, and *veloce* in bar 222.

It is very difficult to set the tempi in this movement exactly, because both main markings are somewhat ambiguous (as Prokofiev's markings tend to be). Does *Allegro inquieto* mean that it should be an *Allegro,* but with an anxious and nervous feeling, or does it actually mean “faster than *allegro*”, as it seems to be understood by many pianists? Also, the *Andantino* would be excruciatingly slow if we played the metronomic setting for *Andantino* (which is in itself very imprecise) counting the eight-notes, and it would lose its grieving *dolente* character, and become downright cheerful, or at least dancing, if we would count the dotted quarter-note (which would, of course, be much more typical in a 9/8 meter). So, it is not very clear why the composer hasn't set the tempo of this part to Andante, and even Adagio. This decision actually pushes us towards the conclusion that the tempo of this section is meant to be ambiguous, that it should at the same time keep the grieving character, but still have some of the movement that *Andantino* would bring.

In Sviatoslav Richter's rendition, the beginning tempo is *quasi presto* (around 160 beats per minute), and the *Andantino* is set at around 60 beats per minute, with some fluctuation, due to the aforementioned character of the section. The whole first section of the sonata (up to the *Andante*) is very nervous in tempo, with numerous little changes, but the tempo doesn't go below 150 bpm or above 175. In the end of this portion, Richter makes an obvious, quite extreme *ritardando*, actually leading the tempo into *Andantino*. The *poco a poco accelerando* section is not executed in a very gradual matter in Richter's performance, there are a few steps of tempo change, but the *poco a poco* effect was not fully realized. He actually makes the first of these steps in bar 150, even before the marking *poco a poco accelerando*. The recapitulation is quite similar, apart from a sudden *più mosso* in bar 240 and a somewhat more questioning approach in the second subject. The Coda is in a true *Presto,* going around 170-180 bpm.

Glenn Gould's primary tempo is a bit slower (though it is also obviously faster than a typical metronomic Allegro), and the changes are less dramatic (barely noticable) in the first part. He, like Richter, makes a substantial *ritardando,* leading to the *Andantino.* Gould's

Andantino is a bit more lively at the beginning, but he makes much more agogic changes throughout the second theme, making his second theme last around 15 seconds longer than Richter's, and bringing more tempo variety to the section. The *poco a poco...* is more gradual with Gould, but in a very peculiar matter: he makes *subito meno mosso* in two places, and speeds after each one of those, but the next *subito meno mosso* brings him back to almost the same tempo as the previous one, as shown in Example 5[23].

Example 5 (bars 159-182)

23 Gould's tempo changes are marked in red, and the original marking is in double parentheses. In all following examples, the changes made by the pianists will be marked in a similar fashion.

The recapitulation is also quite conservative in tempo manipulation, the more obvious changes (apart from the *ritardando* towards the end of section) being in bars 228-229, underlining the phrasing (Example 6).

Example 6 (bars 228-231)

rit. molto - - - - - (Quasi a tempo) -rit. - - - - A tempo
molto tenuto

The Coda is completely different than Richter's, tempo-wise: he starts very carefully, with uncertainty, and makes several *rubato* effects in the beginning, picking up the tempo later (Example 7).

Example 7 (bars 359-379)

Allegro inquieto
molto ritardando - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Quasi a tempo
poco ritardando
A tempo
poco rit.
A tempo
ritardando - - - - - - - - - -
Tempo primo
cresc.

b) The sound – dynamics, polyphony, articulation and pedalling

Richter starts the movement in a lower dynamic range (not really *mf,* though), but climbs to a *ff* quite quickly. The articulation is very sharp, and generally this part is quite dry, he adds full pedal only on the most dramatic points, but he does use partial pedal a lot. He also makes the dynamic accents by the composer very strongly, exaggerated, throughout this first section, and adds a few accents of his own. He follows the dynamic directions by the composer in this part generally, but most dynamics are elevated to some extent compared to the written ones (the *piano* parts in the bridge are actually exaggerated in the opposite direction, that is to say he plays everything half, or even one whole dynamic step lower here). He plays the chords at the start of the bridge *forte* and accented, instead of *mf* and *tenuto*. This is a very peculiar alteration of the text, and I personally cannot find justification for this, especially since the chords are marked *tenuto*.

The second subject is played with a very clear domination of the upper voice, and with little dynamic manipulations. He uses more pedal here, but in a very sensitive and careful manner, so the whole *Andantino* sounds soft (this is also underlined by a big change in articulation), but again very clear. The *poco a poco...* part starts in a similar sound, and than he makes a big *crescendo* and increases pedalling leading to the first accented chord, in bar 168, after which he keeps a *ff – fff* dynamics until *Tempo primo,* for the most part of the first subject (and more pedal than in the exposition). The bridge is much less soft dynamically than the first time, which follows what the composer marked in the score, but it is quite wet, with plenty of pedal. The second theme in recapitulation is heavier in sound (from articulation, pedalling, and less domination of the upper voice), creating an atmosphere of doubt.

The Coda starts in a very light dynamic range, with a light articulation, and light pedalling, and the pedalling and dynamics increase gradually towards the end of movement.

Glenn Gould uses a less *staccato* touch in the beginning, but he generally uses less pedal than Richter in the first part. The touch changes in the course of the first part, and he plays motifs that seem analogue to each other with different articulations. He also accentuates the chords in bar 65, like Richter.

In the *Andantino,* Gould uses a much more polyphonic approach, and he brings out different voices, accordingly to their importance at a certain point, and he does it a bit

exaggerated, as one would expect to be done in a Baroque fugue. In the *poco a poco..* Gould uses a lot of pedal, and a very heavy touch, which he continues doing in the recapitulation (but interpolates staccato with no pedal in certain places after returning to *tempo prmo* after the build-up). He is not very true to the score dynamic-wise in this part, especially in the bars 269-274 and 281-286 (Examples 8 and 9).

Example 8 (bars 265-274)

Example 9 (bars 280-284)

The second subject is wetter this time, and less soft dynamically. The Coda brings the same articulation as the beginning, but with the tempo manipulations mentioned earlier, it creates quite a different impression.

c) Overview and conclusions

The interpretation of this movement is a very difficult task for any performer, for numerous reasons: highest level of technical difficulties, complicated language and composing techniques, as well as an uncertainty in the composer's **exact** intentions. This last reason is the most interesting for analytic purposes, and in the performances of these two celebrated pianists, we can see how differently the composer's instructions (or lack of instructions) can be understood by a performer.

Richter's performance brings an elemental power, as many of his performances do, and it seems that that power comes at a price, in this case the price is stability and clarity, as well as moderation (in sound, and especially in tempo). It might be that this lack of moderation IS what makes his performance so powerful and compelling, but it still is a discrepancy with the written text.

Gould, on the other hand, has a very stable overview of the movement, but brings out some very peculiar details. His great diversity of articulation and careful poliphonic voicing makes his interpretation very interesting to hear and analyse, but it can hardly be used as a model interpretation of this movement.

3.2.3 Performer's perspective

I find that the *Allegro* in *Allegro inqieto* should be respected, and that there is no need for playing *Vivace* or *Presto*. That is why my starting tempo in this movement is around 140 bpm. I am very careful with the pedalling in the first subject, and use it when necessary and not more than is needed. I use partial pedal a lot here, and pedal vibrato, which helps in creating a deep and colourful sound with no blurring. I think it is very important not to rush at all in this movement (which is very easy, because of the rhythmical and textural instability), and to have very good control of the sound and tempo.

The second subject is where we finally find an expression of humanity and here, I believe, it is of utmost importance to keep a singing line in the upper voice, and to use a very determinate articulation, a firm, but calm legato. The marking *espressivo e dolente* should not be understood in a sentimental, romantic way (Prokofiev was known as an anti-romanticist), the expression should be simple, natural and flowing. That is why I chose a slower tempo in

the beginning, around 50 bpm for a dotted quarter-note, but I tried to let the phrases sing in a natural flow, which means there is rubato, but it is not exaggerated.

I start the *poco a poco acc.* a little earlier than pianist usually do. Most performers start the *accelerando* at bar 163 (shown in Example 5), trying to preserve the lyrical atmosphere of the melody in previous bars. I tried to reconcile these needs by playing the downbeat of bars 155-161 very *tenuto*, and making a little *accelerando* between them, which makes an impression of speeding up, and keeps the tempo calm at the same time.

In the rest of the movement I simply try to follow the score as closely as possible, and I make certain small agogic and dynamic nuances, which are natural (some of which I mentioned in analyses of Gould's and Richter's interpretations). In the Coda, I keep exactly the same tempo in the beginning, but I make the articulation shorter and lighter at first, and I use very little pedal.

3.3. Second movement – *Andante caloroso*

3.3.1. Form analysis

The second movement is very clear in macro-form, it is obviously a compound ternary song form, with partial repetition of the first segment, **A B** $\mathbf{a_2}$, in which **A** (bars 1-31) is a simple ternary form (**a b** $\mathbf{a_1}$), and $\mathbf{a_2}$ is the modified recapitulation of just the first segment of the **A** part.

Part **A** is also quite clear in its internal form: segment **a** (bars 1-8) is a closed, modulating sentence, segment **b** (bars 8-16) brings development and modulates, and ends openly, preparing a recapitulation of segment **a**. This recapitulation (bars 16-31) is affected by segment **b**, and uses the thematic material that first appears in segment **b**. It ends in a relatively open way, with the third inversion of the A-flat dominant seventh chord. There is a short prolongation (25-31), insisting on this major second interval, and ending with just those two notes – G-flat and A-flat, in a low register and low dynamics.

This soft major second interval in the bass is the ground from which the new theme (derived from both main motifs from part **A**) flourishes (I will refer to this thematic material as “material 3”). This new section (part **B**, bars 31-96) consists of a step-by-step gradation of tremendous power. The form of this part is much less clear, and it is predominantly fragmentary, that is to say, there is often a lack of a clear cadenza at the boundaries of

different sections.

Part **B** begins with section **c** - a clear statement of this new material, “material 3” (Example 10 – relevant part marked with the red bracket), exposed in the form of a modulatory sentence of 8 bars, with a clear cadenza (even though the final chord is inverted). Then a variation of this sentence starts in bar 39, but the material is not stated in its entirety, and is broken with an entrance of a sub-motif (start of section **d**) taken from the same material, but with a new registration, and with different registration and tonality, in bar 46. This two-bar sub-motif repeats two times, in different contexts and registers, before a climactic burst of chords in bar 52 prepares the new material (“material 4”), which is stated partially, and then, after another culmination with chords in descending registers, we hear it stated openly at the start of section **e**, in bars 56-59 (Example 11).

Example 10 – material 3 (bars 31-39)

Example 11 – material 4 (bars 55-59)

This material is not really a motif material *per se*, it is a combination of a chord progression using chromatic mediant chords, and a micro-motif of just two tones, in the interval of a diminished third, with octave accompaniment in the bass, using also only two interchanging tones. This is followed by an interpolation of the previously used sub-motif of material 3 in bars 59-61, and another presentation of material 4 (bars 62-64), which is also followed by the mentioned sub-motif, with a repetition (bars 64-65, and 66-67).

A new material appears at the beginning of section **f**, in bar 69 (at the place marked *un poco agitato*), stated in a three-bar model, with the first repetition being shortened to two bars, and then dissolving until only a descending line is left, leading to funeral-like *pp* chords in bars 79 and 80. These chords are a strange modification of material 4, because we can also detect the repeating interval, but this time it's a minor third, and the chords in the upper register don't change, so Prokofiev introduces only certain parts of material 4 in bar 79, and adding some more (but not all) in bar 81.

Section **g**, starting in bar 79, brings the magical, terrifying anti-climax of the movement in bar 80 (Example 12). This section is based on a perverted and disfigured version of material 4, and it creates a unique effect. We have the chord progression, we have the repeating interval in the middle (this time it is a minor second), and the octave accompaniment in the bass, which is again a repeated minor third (but this time it doesn't have an added two-octave register change between every note). The first time it was in ff, and now it is in *pp* (except for the insisting interval in the middle, which is *mf*). So, everything is there, but nothing is there.

Example 12 (bars 79-87)

This statement of the material (bars 81-86) is repeated (bars 89-97), after a two-bar interpolation of material 3. The repetition is prolonged, and dissolves, until just one fading chord is left – and again, it is an inversion (third) of a dominant seventh chord, same as at the end of part A (this time, the root is A).

The recapitulation (bars 97-107) uses just the first sentence from part **A**, and instead of a developing section **b**, there is just a little hint of a Coda, with bell-like chords bringing dissonance, but at the end resolving back to the main key of E major.

Schematic representation of the form

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">**A** (1-31)</td><td colspan="5">**B** (31-97)</td><td>((**A**))</td></tr>
<tr><td>**a**</td><td>**b**</td><td>$\mathbf{a}_1$</td><td>**c**</td><td>**d**</td><td>**e**</td><td>**f**</td><td>**g**</td><td>$\mathbf{a}_2$ (97-107)</td></tr>
<tr><td>1-8</td><td>8-16</td><td>16-31</td><td>31-45</td><td>46-51</td><td>52-69</td><td>69-78</td><td>79-97</td><td rowspan="3">Extended sent.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sentence</td><td>Sent.</td><td>Sent.</td><td>Sent.</td><td>Open sent.</td><td rowspan="2">Fragmentary</td><td rowspan="2">Fragm.</td><td rowspan="2">Fragm.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Simpe ternary form</td><td colspan="2">Open period</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 2: a schematic overview of the form of *Andante caloroso.* The movement is written in a modified **A B A** form, with the middle part of the form bringing tonal, textural and formal instability.

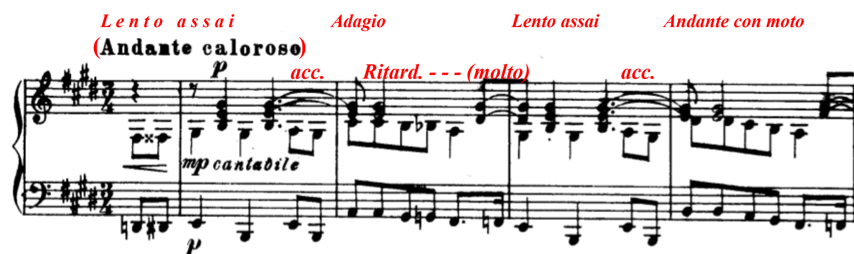
3.3.2 Analysis of the performances

a) The time – tempo and agogics

Richter's starting tempo in this movement is very hard to determine, because of his extensive use of rubato in the beginning, but it goes between around 35 to around 70 bpm for a quarter-note, which puts in the very wide range of tempo between *Lento assai* and *Adagio,* or even a slower *Andante*. Again, we come to the problem of tempo, which is increased by *Andante* being the most unclear of all the standard tempo markings, with the biggest variations in interpretation (together with its younger sibling, *Andantino*). And also, this particular movement can hardly be played in a conventional *Andante* metronomical tempo range, because it would be much too fast.

The general tempo concept that Richter brings in this first part of the movement is: the beginning of every section (**a**, **b**, and $\mathbf{a}_1$) is very slow, dragging, and then he picks up the tempo during the second phrase (Example 13, concerning section **a**, he does a similar thing in the other two sections of part **A**). If we take this tempo, that he gets to in each section after the preparation, as his actual decided tempo, one can claim that Richter does follow the instructions by the composer, though, again, in a very creative (or, in other words, loose) way. It is more likely, in my opinion, that his tempo of choice is Adagio or Lento, and the speeding up is in purpose of more colourful phrasing.

Example 13 (bars 1-4)



The **B-**part starts *Poco più animato*, as indicated in the score, but suddenly we get a completely new tempo, after the first exposition of the material (Example 14).

Example 14 (bars 36-40)

In the *Più largamente* section (part of section **d**), Richter returns to the starting tempo of part **B**, which he mostly keeps until section **g**, he doesn't change the tempo at all at the start of section **f** (bar 69, *un poco agitato*), but he slows down in the bars leading to the anti-climax in section **g** (starting at bar 79). He keeps the same tempo throughout section **g**, until the recapitulation, where he regains *Tempo primo.*

Gould chooses a faster starting tempo – around 55 bpm (compared to Richter's 35-40 in the first bar), but he makes less rubato, and speeds up less inside the phrases, and so his fastest tempo in part **A** is slower than Richter's fastest tempo in this part, which is to say that his tempo changes are less extreme in his interpretation (both the slow extreme and the fast extreme are less extreme in Gould's performance).

He starts part **B** in a tempo around 61 bpm, and he keeps it in the start of section **b**, but he turns *Più largamente* into *Molto largamente,* and reduces the tempo to around 45 bpm (hard to tell exactly, because of the extensive use of rubato). When he gets to "material 4" in bar 56, his tempo is reduced to around 35 bpm, but he picks it up soon, and his general tempo in this section is kept around 40-45 bpm. (he makes one more *meno mosso*, but gets back to 45 bpm). This section is shown in Example 15.

Example 15 (bars 55-66)

Lento assai, acc poco a poco al. - - - Largo

ritardando al Lento *A tempo (Largo)*

ritardando al Lento

acc. al - - - - Largo

He starts section **f** (bar 69) in a tempo around 65 bpm, but gradually slows down so that the anti-climax in section **g** is in *Lento assai* (around 35 bpm). The recapitulation is just a bit faster than this, but is definitely slower than the opening.

b) The sound – dynamics, polyphony, articulation and pedalling

In the second movement, I will focus my attention on analysing dynamics and polyphony, rather than articulation and pedalling, because I believe they are analytically much more interesting here.

Richter brings much affect into this movement. He makes the beginning very poetic and lyrical, and (in my opinion) truly brings the *caloroso* character to the music, and he generally follows the dynamic markings quite closely throughout the movement, at least in the macro-plan. I will just write about a few details that are worth mentioning.

In part **A**, Richter makes quite big differences inside the phrases in all three sections, which, together with the tempo adjustments, serves to underline the phrasing very strongly. It is interesting that he brings out the upper voice in the developing part of section **b** (Example 16), so he keeps a strictly homophonic sound picture, but just changes the main voice from middle to upper. He does the opposite in part **B**, where he brings out the polyphony and works with the voices much more than in the beginning, adding to the contrast between parts **A** and **B**.

Example 16 (bars 10-14)

In the anti-climax, he plays the *mf* notes in the middle *mp,* just a little less soft than the lines marked *pp* (Example 17), and, to me, it makes more sense to play them even stronger than a normal *mf*, more towards *f,* since every note in this line is individually marked with an accent, and also, I think that it is necessary to make the difference between the accentuated voice and the other voices very apparent, and that that difference can make this anti-climax much more effective.

Example 17 (bars 79-84)

In the repetition of the anti-climax, Richter does play the middle voice in a *mf,* but he plays the accompaniment *mp* this time, so he still doesn't make a very big sound space between the different plans.

Gould starts the movement with *mf* going towards *f* very often in the middle (main) voice, and mostly *mp* in the other plans. In section **b**, he brings out different voices at the same time (strong polyphonic approach is, as stated before, typical for Gould's performing). Of course, not all of these voices are of the same importance in his performance, but it is obvious that he chose not to choose a "main voice" in this development in section **b** (Example 18).

Example 18 (bars 10-14)

Gould also takes a polyphonic approach throughout part **B**, which is more polyphonic in itself, so there are more opportunities to experiment with the voicing than in part **A**. He mostly follows the dynamic instructions in this part until the anti-climax. Here, he plays the main voice just a notch louder than the others, and they are all in the *mp* dynamic range. He also makes a strange crescendo towards the end of part **B**, where it seems logical to make a diminuendo (Example 19).

Example 19 (bars 92-95)

There is one important point about pedalling I would like to make: Richter uses a lot of right pedal in the polyphonic first sections of part **B** (sections **c** and **d**), which makes the sound image somewhat blurry. The obvious reason for using so much right pedal is to keep the long bass notes last as long as they should, sometime a whole bar. Gould solves this problem by using the middle pedal a lot in this section, and I completely agree with this method.

c) Overview and conclusions

Both mentioned pianists create a *cantabile* sound in the beginning, and they both create the *espressivo* in part **B**, but Gould (in my opinion) fails to bring the *caloroso* to this movement, which is very important. He disregards the dynamic markings in the beginning and uses a very hard sound for the first theme, while Richter uses a very soft touch, and keeps a low dynamic range in the beginning, which what is needed to get the *caloroso*, in my opinion. This is not a very big surprise, since warmth, as well as precision and clarity of expression, count among Richter's greatest pianistic values, while Gould's strongest features, a fantastic sense of polyphony (and the means to deliver it to his piano performances) and a great variety of articulations (especially the *non legato* ones) don't find so much usage in music of this kind.

One more important thing is that Gould goes a long way to make a point out of creating a contrast between sections **a** and **b**, while Richter emphasises the contrast between part **A** and part **B**. This is also not very surprising, knowing that Gould is a well-known master of detail and peculiar, even quirky, micro-effects, while Richter is all about the power of expression and about the big picture.

As a general decision, I have to put Richter up as the one that follows composer's

intentions more, meaning, predominantly, the main character marking of the movement – *caloroso*, which is, in my opinion, almost always the most important marking to follow. Gould, on the other hand, brings many interesting details in his performance, but lacks the *caloroso.*

3.3.3 Performer's perspective

I start this movement in a very calm atmosphere, meaning a rather slow tempo, very soft touch, and not too much rubato. My main goal here is to keep the warmth and calmness at all costs, saving the affect and excitement for part **B**. The start of part **B** still keeps a part of the calmness but, little by little, it gains more and more *agitato* character. I use a lot of middle pedal in this movement, which helps me bring out all the polyphonic beauty without blurring the sound picture. My idea was to reconcile the two main points of part **B**: polyphonic complexity and passionate musical content. The climax of this passion comes in the bell-like chord passage in section **e** (starting in bar 52). Here I deliberately play the chords in a distorted, swinging, uneven rhythm, emulating the sound of Orthodox church bells, which chime in very interesting uneven rhythms.

I play the anti-climax (bar 81 and following) very soft, especially the octaves in the bass, while I accent strongly the main (middle) line. I play this main line deliberately without any rubato, in an attempt to avoid some kind of sentimental effect. I believe that this music should be sentimental in any moment, all the emotions expressed in it are deep and all superficial affects should be avoided. I also think that this "washed-out" atmosphere, brought by a relentless rhythmical precision, is very moving and brings in my mind the picture of deserted streets of Stalingrad after a bombing, with corpses lying in the streets and wind blowing with no obstacles[24].

I finish this movement with a little pedalling trick: I leave the opposing chords of C major and E major at the end blurred together, while keeping the last E octave in the bass, and then, while keeping the octave in the bass pressed, I release the pedal very slowly and gradually, until only the E octave is heard. This creates a wonderful detail of sudden clarity that rises out of the obscure uncertainty, which is the effect that this recapitulation makes on a macro-plan.

24 Again, it is very important to understand that connections like this are just demonstrations of plausible emotional associations. It is much easier to explain a certain atmosphere by connecting it to a corresponding non-musical content.

3.4 Third movement – *Precipitato*

3.4.1 Form

This movement is written in a rather conservative three-subject sonata rondo form (**A**-**B**-**C**-**B**-**A**). There are three main thematic materials, and their usage coincides with formal divisions. The movement is written in 7/8 time, which by itself interesting, but what makes this movement so energetic, full of drive, and rhythmically rich, is the fact that the long group is in the middle, and it is even accented throughout the first subject. The usual division of a 7/8 piece of music, both in classical and traditional music would be 3-2-2, or 2-2-3. Here, instead, the division of meter is 2-3-2. This makes the meter virtually incomprehensible to a person not having the score in front, and I have yet to find (or hear of) a person who is able to hear (without the score) where the down-beats are in this first section.

The first theme has an *ostinato* figure in bass, which is very insisting and without restraints or subtlety (hence the title of this movement). All the subtlety is depleted, and we remain face to face with the mechanical automatism, a merciless military force, or some other kind of unstoppable, cold power, it is open for different interpretations[25]. The *ostinato* motif is based on one stem-motif, B-flat – C-sharp – B-flat, which is repeated and transformed, but consistently returns in its original form throughout the first section of the movement (Example 20).

Example 20 (bars 1-4)

Precipitato

mp

25 There are many interpretations of the meaning of this movement, but they all have the same foundation, which is obviously incorporated in the music itself. I think it is very helpful to find a meaning outside music to help the performer find a way to express what the music, which does not use words, means. But it is, nevertheless, equally important not to associate this meaning with music in a way that would claim to be the absolute truth (unless the composer himself wrote a program of the piece, or explained his sources of inspiration). There is no right or wrong here, I believe, but only helpful and unhelpful.

This motif is opposed by chord progressions in the right hand, broken by melodic interpolations in several occasions (Example 21).

Example 21 (bars 26-29)

The first section (bars 1-44) is a period of two chained sentences, where the second sentence is a variation of the first, but has a more convincing cadenza.

There is a short bridge section, which begins as the first sentence, but is broken by the new *ostinato* motif, which is clearly the accompaniment in this section. The main melodic motif comes several bars later (Example 22).

Example 22 (bars 50-53)

Section **B** is fragmentary, and consists of a ten-bar model which is repeated transposed a minor third up, followed by a four-bar connection to a varied repetition of the same model, not using the whole six-bar melodic motif, but just the beginning shown in Example 22.

Section **C** is in a general E minor setting. It starts in a clearly homophonic sound picture, with the melody in the low register, and broken chord accompaniment in the upper. This picture is broken by introducing a supplementary motif in the upper voice (Example 23).

Example 23 (bars 82-85)

This supplementary motif is developed further, and after this development the homophonic setting returns, and there is a cadenza. There is a varied repetition of this sentence, which is broken before the development of the supplementary motif, and the material from section **b** returns.

Section **B** starts in a diffuse F-sharp minor tonality, while the first time it was in diffuse C major. Here, Prokofiev plays with the codes again: the classical sonata rondo form takes the tonal relations from the sonata form: the first appearance of the second subject is typically in the dominant key and the recapitulation is in the same key as the first subject, so they are presented on a distance of a perfect fourth. Prokofiev uses an augmented fourth instead, which greatly distorts the mentioned tonal relations[26].

This section is shortened in the recapitulation, the first transposed repetition of the model is left out.

The main subject returns in bar 127. It is again a period of two chained sentences, the second one being varied greatly in dynamics and registration, and with a very extended cadenza, which can also be perceived as a coda. This extended cadenza is the obvious climax of the movement.

26 Polar distance between parts of form or movements is very typical for Prokofiev. Just look at this Sonata as a whole: the first movement gravitates towards B-flat (and ends in B-flat), the main gravitation in the second movement is E major, and the third is obviously in a B-flat tonality. Again, the composer distorts the code: in a typical classicist sonata, the three movements would be set in this order of keys: tonic – subdominant – tonic.

Schematic representation of the form

A (1-42)	Bridge (42-52)	**B** (52-79)	**C** (79-105)	**B_1** (105-126)	**A_1** (127-177)
Period	Fragmentary	Fragmentary	Open period	Fragmentary	Period

Figure 3: a schematic overview of the form of *Precipitato.* The movement is written in three-subject sonata rondo form, after the classicist model of the form, including the imitation (and deviation) of the typical tonal relations.

3.4.2 Analysis of the performances

a) The time – tempo and agogics

Richter starts the movement with around 140 bpm (for a quarter note), but starts speeding up very soon, and gets to a tempo of around 160 bpm after just a few bars. Until the end of section **A**, he gets to a tempo of around 175 bpm. He goes a little bit back in tempo at the start of section **B**, and starts speeding up again. He does the same thing in section **C**, and again starts speeding out throughout the section. He does not slow down as much at the start of **B_1**, but continues the accelerando. This speeding stops at the beginning of recapitulation, where he almost goes back to the starting tempo, and, of course, continues speeding up until the end, reaching a speed of approximately 180 bpm.

He does the same *meno mosso – accelerando poco a poco* at the end of each sentence or sub-section throughout the movement, but to a lesser extent than at the ends of bigger sections. The only obvious change in flow, apart from the mentioned ones, is in the climactic second sentence of part **A_1**, where he slows down very much on the arpeggios in bars 152 and 154 (Example 24). It is physically impossible to play this arpeggio in this tempo without slowing down, but he obviously makes a point on taking much time for playing them, in the goal of underlining the accent at the top of the arpeggio.

Example 24 (bars 150-154)

Gould puts the starting tempo at around 170 bpm. He also speeds up a little bit throughout the movement, which is almost inevitable if one wants to get the *precipitato* character, but he does it to a much less extent than Richter, and finishes the movement in almost the same tempo as he begins it. He does make one particularly strange tempo change in bar 165 (Example 25).

Example 25 (bars 161-167)

b) The sound – dynamics, polyphony, articulation and pedalling

Both pianists follow the dynamic markings in the score quite closely. The main difference is the choice of the plan that gets most attention. In the beginning, Richter does make the accents in the bass line apparent, but otherwise, he treats the left hand as accompaniment, while Gould plays the left hand very prominently and with much expression, while he makes accompaniment out of the chords in the right hand.

The most interesting difference in the two interpretations, sound-wise, is the use of pedal and articulation. Richter's articulation is firm and not too dry in the whole movement, and he does not change it much. His pedalling is a little wetter in the first part and even more in the recapitulation, and very wet in the climax, while he plays much more dry in the middle sections.

Gould employs his fantastic skill of staccato playing throughout the movement, and underlines it by the overall lack of pedal in the main theme. However, in section **B** he suddenly starts playing very wet, with a lot of pedal, and a bit of rubato. This cannot be treated as an addition to the text, even though he added something to the score, because the use of certain amount of pedal in certain moments (or continuously) is expected in piano playing, and goes without saying, unless the composer explicitly puts the marking *secco* in the score[27]. This pedalling that Gould applies in section **B**, though, is very counter-intuitive, and very counter-intuitive actions in music interpretation need to be justified, they need to have a reason (preserving consistency, creating bigger contrast, and so forth[28]). I cannot see a good enough reason to play this part with so much pedal, apart from Gould's habit to play things in unconventional ways, and try to still make it work. The only valid explanation is creation of contrast with section **A**, but that reason is not good enough in itself here, because the accompaniment in the right hand has obvious percussive character, while the melodic line is written mostly in eight-notes, with rests between them. They are also labelled *marcato.* This kind of pedalling reduces both the percussiveness of the accompaniment and the *marcato* character of the theme.

27 Pedalling usually eludes the division of interpretive changes I mentioned before. It does not fall under either of the three categories, because we can almost never claim with absolute certainty what kind of pedalling a composer had in mind while writing a piece.

28 For example, the *meno mosso* in bar 165 can be explained: these chords are an interpolation in the cadenza, and they are very unexpected and daring. Gould slows down to draw attention to the interesting new sound colour.

So, here we lack a good musical reason of an unconventional action, which makes that action unjustified, in terms of style.

The rest of the movement is consistent to the interpretative concept Gould chose.

c) Overview and conclusions

The great differences in general concept, and especially tempo that different pianists choose for this movement come from the very unusual marking that Prokofiev chose as a character label for this movement. It is not a tempo marking, and so, even more than usual, there is no final answer to the question of tempo here. As long as someone can play this movement in the "precipitato" character, he can play it at his will, tempo-wise. It was stated earlier in this thesis that this term means (in musical terms) rushed, impetuous, with disregard and abandon. It may mean "rushed" (but that does not necessarily mean "fast", it can mean "with constantly increasing speed"), but it we understand the mark as "falling down" (which is the literal translation from Italian), it may apply more to touch and pedalling than to tempo.

Richter went for a heavy, "falling" sound, a lot of weight and a lot of pedal, and he also uses *accelerando* a lot in this movement, while Gould plays faster at the beginning, but is stable in tempo and uses a much lighter touch (apart from section **B**). It must be said that in this movement Richter again fulfils the main character instruction to a greater extent than Gould.

3.4.3 Performer's perspective

I believe that the *precipitato* does not mean a very fast tempo, in my opinion it just means that there should be no slowing down, almost no rubato, and that it should be played with a heavy touch, but with not very much pedal until the last two pages. As you can hear on the CD, I chose a slower tempo in this movement (around 155 bpm for a quarter-note), and kept it throughout the movement, speeding up only a little bit near the end, in the climactic second sentence of the recapitulation. I play sections **B** and **C** generally with a short and firm articulation, and with almost no pedal (apart from the interpolated upper-voice melody in section **C**). When the main subject returns, I play with more pedal, and with stronger accentuation of the middle note in the ostinato bass motif.

4 Outcome of the analyses, discussion.

This section is the place for discussion of the findings. The section starts with a table, a visual representation of the findings collected from the analysis. It is followed by the discussion of the results.

The perfomances

	Sviatoslav Richter	Glenn Gould
Tempo	Extreme tempo differences	Controlled tempo, clear concept
Agogics	Moderate generally, occasional exaggerated rushing	Embellished, conceptual
Dynamics	Climactic, elemental, not completely controlled	Very controlled, conceptional
Articulation	Moderate, but diverse	Mostly non-legato, often staccatissimo
Pedalling	Conservative/traditional, generally wet	Experimental/innovative, generally dry
Polyphony	Not emphasised	Highly emphasised

Figure 4: a graphic representation of most important general aspects of the two performances

We can see from the table that Richter and Gould go away from the text in different ways and for different reasons. Richter lacks control, but he substitutes that with a great power of expression, while Gould chooses to give his attention to the aspects that interest him and, on many occasions, ignores other aspects. Also, we can see clearly that both pianists play to their biggest advantages: Richter on his power and communication, and Gould on his polyphonic and articulation skills, as well as his great sense of rhythm.

Most of Richter's and Gould's changes in this Sonata belong to the addition category, at least most of the ones that catch the listener's attention, that is to say, the most obvious and the most extreme ones. This is not a surprising fact, if we accept the ambiguity and dryness of the composer's notation. Most pianists feel the need to add to the score in this Sonata, and it is very probable that the composer meant for the performers of this piece to “read between the lines”, even more than they usually do.

Gould uses exclusion and alteration in a larger amount than Richter. For Gould, it is very usual to make peculiar, eccentric changes to the composer's text, and he does that in

most pieces he plays, while Richter is known for trying to stay true to the score. This fact can be illustrated by their own words. Richter's reaction to Gould's impression about the Schubert sonata, quoted earlier (and many other statements he made during his life), go to prove that he honestly saw his role as a performer, but **not an interpreter**. Continuation of the reaction quoted earlier: “When I play the Sonata, my colleagues often ask: 'Slava, why do you play so slowly?'. The truth is that I do not even play what Schubert wrote, *molto moderato,* but actually only *moderato.* Everyone else always plays it *allegro moderato.* Or simply *allegro*.”

This statement deserves a little investigation: if we look at Schubert's score (Example 26), we can clearly see that the intended unit for counting is a quarter-note. Richter's recordings that I found (an example can be the recording from June '64.[29]) have a tempo revolving around 70 bpm for a quarter-note (at least in the beginning of the movement), which would be a true metronomic *Adagio*, so it is obvious that Richter disregarded these usual metronomic values (he was often criticized for his habit of playing “too slow” or “too fast”), and chose the tempo in the pieces he played by trying to achieve the feeling of the tempo or character marking that was indicated in the score, rather than using a metronomic value as a landmark.

Example 26, beginning of the Sonata in B-flat major by Franz Schubert

This view, is, self-evidently, present in a great majority of musicians, because metronomic values are always an estimate, the tempo depends on many aspects, including time signature, subdivision of the beats, character markings, as well as intrepretational tradition. Also, there are ongoing disputes among researchers about the exact meaning of certain tempo markings before the invention of metronome (in XIX century). Also, *Allegro* (which may be translated from Italian as joyful), lost its character-bearing implications a long time ago, but in the beginnings of its usage, it meant not only fast, by joyful as well (and even

29 BBC Legends series, Catalogue number BBCL4196-2, available at http://hia.naxosmusiclibrary.com/catalogue/item.asp?cid=BBCL4196-2

joyful, but not necessarily fast). The problem of “correct tempo” is a very difficult issue for performers and musicologists alike:

> Theoretically, every piece of music with a tempo indication has a ‘correct’ tempo. In practice, however, such indications vary in usefulness. Metronome marks in 19th-century music cannot always be taken as reliable; many composers (e.g. Brahms) disapproved of the rigidity they imply, and some (e.g. Beethoven) prescribed different tempos on different copies of the same piece. Also some metronome markings are so fast as to be impracticable. Verbal directions are imprecise and subject to different interpretations. In Baroque music they may indicate a ‘mood’ or ‘manner’ of performance rather than a speed (e.g. allegro, literally ‘cheerful’); or they may be used in a purely relative sense in the context of other tempo designations in the same piece. Their meanings and associations have changed over the years. In addition, it is not always clear whether metronome markings or verbal instructions have the composer's authority or are editorial additions.[30]

So, Richter claimed that he only played what is in the score, but here we see where the problem in this statement lies: “what lies in the score” is not some always, if ever, measurable or precisely calibrated, and is always open for discussion. There is not enough space in this thesis to discuss the problems of language and communication in detail, but it is an obvious fact that any language is flawed and imperfect in itself, and that, of course, goes for musical language and notation as well. As the composer Feruccio Busoni wrote, “Every notation is, in itself, a transcription of an abstract idea. The instant the pen seizes it, the idea loses its original form."[31].

If we set things in absolutes, there are two extremes on the scale of interpretative freedom. The first one is metric, robotic playing performed when a score is transferred to a MIDI file and performed by a computer, and the other one is transcription or paraphrase (f. ex. a usual practice in the Romantic era was for the performers to improvise on a given piece of music, or a certain musical theme).

If we compare these two pianists in light of these absolutes, it is clear that Richter is closer to the first one (closer, but not close, of course his playing doesn't resemble a computer in anyway), while Gould is much closer to the other.

There is another important point, closely tied to the personal aesthetic views of the two pianists. We could see those views in a fact mentioned earlier: Richter always played the same piece in the same way, while Gould changed his interpretations thoroughly. Gould even stated the following in an interview with Tim Page in 1982: "All the music that really

30 Scholes, Percy, et al. "tempo." The Oxford Companion to Music. Ed. Alison Latham. Oxford Music Online. 14 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6699>.

31 Busoni, 1911, p. 85

interests me – not just some of it, all of it – is contrapuntal music"[32].

Gould also stated on multiple occasions that there is no absolute truth in performance, and that “If there’s any excuse at all for making a record, it’s to do it differently[33]”. That brings us to the main difference in the two philosophies that the two pianists represent: for Richter, there is only one truth, and for Gould there are many.

32 Bonus CD from “A state of wonder – The Complete Goldberg Variations 1955 & 1981”, published by Sony Classical

33 LP “Glenn Gould: Concert Dropout”

5. Summary. End marks.

5.1 Summary

This thesis used several scientific methods, mainly different analytic methods and the historical method, to discover the differences between the graphical data collected from the sheet music for Piano Sonata No. 7 by Sergei Prokofiev and the sound data collected from the recordings of this piece by Glenn Gould and Sviatoslav Richter. The findings were then gathered, categorized and discussed, drawing certain conclusions about the nature of performance generally, and specifically, the performing poetics of Gould and Richter.

5.2 End marks

I want to state one thing that is very important for me. While conducting the research for this thesis, I came to contact with many interesting dilemmas and problems of performance, f. ex. tempo issues. While thinking about them and analysing the data, I realized how beneficial this research is for me as a performer. The problem is that pianists aren't generally encouraged by their instrument teachers (as their main guides, usually) to go very deep into the analytical and theoretical world, and instead often rely on some kind of "intuition" and "instinct". These terms are wildly diffuse in meaning, and not very useful for ascertaining any clear conclusions about performing. Art is not easily quantified and measured, and maybe even less easily explain, but I believe that it is a duty of any pianist, and especially piano pedagogue, to encourage questioning the codes of interpretation and to broaden and deepen not only the how – technical and musical (practical) training, but also the why – theoretical and deeper (not only superficial) understanding of the aesthetics of performed pieces. Also, it would be immensely beneficial to train students by conducting the kind of research that this thesis does on a regular basis, first with the help of the teacher, and later by themselves.

Possible future researchers can continue the research that was conducted in this thesis in several ways: it would be interesting (and a helpful interpretation study tool) to make an *exhaustive* research of disparity between the sheet music and sound on an example of two or more performances of the same work, possibly including the influence of other outside factors on the sound result, factors which this thesis could not include on accounts of space.

The other extension could be the problem of musical ideas and written music language in a more abstract analytical setting, to determine the possibilities of expressing a musical idea in notation. This field has already been discussed at length, and a researcher could use the findings of these general findings on Prokofiev's score, trying to determine the symbolic content of certain ambiguous markings by the composer, for example.

The last possibility of further research that I would like to mention is a research in the field of pedagogy, connected to the previously mentioned problem of encouragement of students for deep theoretical research. This kind of research could also find use of my findings, and especially my analytic process.

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6.4 Other sources

Personal experience as a performer, providing insight into interpretation and freedom issues, especially the experience of learning, practising, and performing Prokofiev's Sonata No. 7, and the experience of choosing a personal concept for this performance

Extensive education in music theory, providing methodological tools for music analysis

Consistent guidance by different instrument teachers, providing insights into aesthetical and philosophical aspects of interpretation, as well as methods of conducting interpretation analysis

Many different recordings of Sviatoslav Richter and Glenn Gould, providing insight into their general performing styles (these are not mentioned in the discography section because the list is far too extensive)