

**A STUDY OF NIKOLAI MEDTNER'S  
FORGOTTEN MELODIES PIANO CYCLE OP. 39  
WITH REFERENCE TO  
THE MUSE AND THE FASHION**

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**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
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Master of Arts

2022

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# Summary

Nikolai Medtner (1880 – 1953) was a Russian composer of the early twentieth century. Beginning his career at a time at the turn of the century when musical practices began to diverge, Medtner also wrote a book titled *The Muse and the Fashion: being a defence of the foundations of the Art of Music* (1935) as a response to what he felt was the abandonment of tonal harmony. These writings, which philosophizes on musical aesthetics and compositional principles, reveal aspects of an inner world of a composer.

Medtner's second *Forgotten Melodies Cycle* Op. 39 presents one of Medtner's most significant contributions to piano literature. The synthesis of the miniature and sonata genre reveals intersections with his music compositions which draw on associations to literature, contemporary events, and his religious and artistic creed.

Available scholarship in English is sparse. Much of available literature focuses on musical analysis of selected individual movements, which has not yielded connections with cyclic connections. This presents issues in understanding this Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle as a whole. Even though the Op. 39 cycle hints at a plethora of extramusical references, existing understanding of Op. 39 is limited, and at times conflicted. In addition, scholarship has identified that Medtner's writings in *The Muse and the Fashion* to be intimately related to the *Forgotten Melodies* cycles, which presents a uniquely symbiotic avenue to understand Medtner's compositional strategies and the Op. 39 cycle. Briefly, *The Muse and the Fashion* has not been considered as a lens to read the Op. 39 cycle.

To address the gaps in the musical analysis and extramusical inquiry in Op. 39, this study begins by tracing the underlying ideas in *The Muse and the Fashion*. Guided by these underlying ideas, musical aspects of harmonic support, form and thematic ideas are examined for each individual movement. Cyclical connections in terms of texture, thematic ideas and motivic connections will also be examined. Stimulation from the analysis of the musical features, and aided by relevant allusions, will lead the investigations into the extramusical.

The findings are then compared and contrasted with Medtner's views on compositional strategies in *The Muse and the Fashion*, and Medtner's artistic creed. Finally, this study addresses the challenges of researching Medtner's compositions by evaluating them through his own assertions of compositional strategies. The study of the Op. 39 through *The Muse and the Fashion* also reveals a Medtnerian dimension alluding to the Visual Arts in terms of compositional strategies, which could help understand the problematics of his style.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

Nikolai Medtner (1880–1953) was a Russian composer of the early twentieth century. He began his career at a time when the musical practice of diatonic and chromatic tonality was beginning to be dispersed across multiple compositional strategies. The Second Viennese School of composers led by Schoenberg, the *Les Six* in France, and Stravinsky in Russia, all charted music composition in the Euro-American Art music traditions in diverging paths (Butler, 2004). Medtner's compositional oeuvre was considered old-fashioned (Martyn, 2016, p. 212). Nevertheless, he had among his admirers his peers such as Goldenweiser and Rachmaninoff (Martyn, 2016, pp. 153, 203).

Like Chopin, Alkan and Liszt before him, Medtner dedicated his creative output to writing mainly for the piano. Despite the limits imposed by composing for a singular instrument, Martyn (2016) alluded to Medtner's range of expression to be "as wide as that of composers who written for every kind of medium," adding that Medtner's music is characterized by an assuredness of large-scale forms, with writing that is both "intellectually and musically satisfying" (pp. xi-xii). Apart from that, Medtner also often reflected an underlying narrative in his works.

This is conveyed explicitly through his adoption of the miniature genre *Skazki* (Tales), and at times more subtly in other works (Boyd, 1980). Of Medtner's fourteen published piano sonatas, more than half of them had descriptive titles or some form of epigraph referenced from poetry (Martyn, 2016). This is illustrated in the following figure.

Work	Descriptive Title	Epigraph
Piano Sonata No. 1 Op. 5 in F minor	-	-
Piano Sonata No. 2 Op. 11 No. 1 in Ab major	-	Yes
Piano Sonata No. 3 Op. 11 No. 2 in D minor	<i>Sonata-Elegy</i>	Yes
Piano Sonata No. 4 Op. 11 No. 3 in C major	-	Yes
Piano Sonata No. 5 Op. 22 in G minor	-	-
Piano Sonata No. 6 Op. 25 No. 1 in C minor	<i>Sonata-Skazka</i>	-
Piano Sonata No. 7 Op. 25 No. 2 in E minor	<i>"Night wind"</i>	Yes
Piano Sonata No. 8 Op. 27 in F# Major	<i>Sonata-Ballade</i>	Yes
Piano Sonata No. 9 Op. 30 in A minor	-	-
Piano Sonata No. 10 Op. 38 in A minor	<i>Sonata-Reminiscenza</i>	-
Piano Sonata No. 11 Op. 39 in C minor	<i>Sonata-Tragica</i>	-
Piano Sonata No. 12 Op. 53 No. 1	<i>Sonata-Romantica</i>	-
Piano Sonata No. 13 Op. 53 No. 2	<i>Grozovaya Sonata</i>	-
Piano Sonata No. 14 Op. 56 in G major	<i>Sonata-Idyll</i>	-

Figure 1. List detailing Medtner's piano sonatas and their associated descriptive titles and presence of epigraph (Martyn, 2016).

### 1.1.1. *The Muse and the Fashion*

Medtner felt the need to address the younger generation of musicians with regards to his growing concerns of musical styles that strayed away from tonal practice. Responding to these concerns, he wrote a book *The Muse and the Fashion: being a defence of the foundations of the Art of Music* (1935) (referred to as *The Muse and the Fashion* hereafter). Originally published in Russian through Rachmaninoff's daughter's Paris publishing house, *Tair* (Martyn, 2016, p. 216), the English translation appeared in 1951. In these writings, Medtner adopted a philosophical style which at times ventured into the mystery of creation, at times overlapping into concepts of music theory and the compositional process, and at times addressing questions with regards to aesthetics.

*The Muse and the Fashion* in its polemics may seem extreme when viewed in today's context, particularly in its appeal to "everlasting" laws<sup>1</sup> (Swan 1951, as cited in Medtner, 1951, p. ii). Rimm (2002), with the benefit of hindsight, opined that the very contemporaries Medtner sought to write against—Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Hindermith—in their respective defence

<sup>1</sup> Ascribing "laws" is too strong a term, given that there are a wide variety of musical traditions, whose acoustical preferences differ (McDermott, J., Schultz, A., Undurraga, E. et al., 2006).

of their musical philosophies were much more “persuasive and extensive” (p. 155). Nevertheless, Boyd (1980) wrote that it might be “shortsighted” to dismiss the writings, as Medtner’s own music as proof of his own artistic creed—which increasingly merged with his religious creed—that was capable of producing “vital, powerful and original” music (p. 23). Therefore, the value of *The Muse and the Fashion* lies in its potential to illuminate Medtner’s reflections and declarations of his compositional strategies used in his own compositions.

### 1.1.2. The Forgotten Melodies Cycles

One of Medtner’s most significant synthesis of the miniature and sonata genre is perhaps found in the three *Forgotten Melodies* piano cycles, comprising Op. 38, 39 and Op. 40. These cycles feature the *Sonata reminiscenza* and *Sonata tragica* together with a wide variety of miniatures. Flamm (2005) opined that this synthesis of character pieces with single-movement sonatas, through the means of references across movements within each cycle, indicated an “innovative large scale cyclic structure” (p. 4).

Op. 38 “Nature”	Op. 40 “Dance”	Op. 39 “Lyric”
Sonata reminiscenza	Danza col canto	Meditazione
Danza graziosa	Danza sinfonica	Romanza
Danza festiva	Danza fiorata	Primavera
Canzona fluviala	Danza jubilosa	Canzona matinata
Danza rustica	Danza ondulata	Sonata tragica
Canzona serenata	Danza ditirambica	
Danza silvestra		
Alla Reminiscenza		

Figure 2. Titles of individual pieces in Op. 38, 40 and 39 respectively.

The Op. 38 set is subtitled “*Nature*,” the Op. 39 set “*Lyric*,” and Op. 40 set is titled “*Dance*.” These epithets for each individual cycle highlight the significance of individualised themes emergent in each cycle. In addition to that, the pieces in the cycles individually are marked with rather descriptive titles that elicit associations to a narrative even at face level.

Rowen (2015) noted similarities in Medtner's *Skazki* genre, which invoked the styles of *dances* and *canzonas* with extramusical references to mythical creatures (p. 180). This is a view shared by Martyn (2016), who noted allusions to wood sprites in *Danza silvestra* (p. 198). Therefore, Rowen (2015) is of the view that the *Forgotten Melodies* function "in a fantasy realm that fuses the reality and melancholy of reminiscence with otherworldly symbols of fairy tales" (p. 180).

In conception, Martyn (2016) pointed out that Medtner drew upon the concept of *soggetti* where motifs that came to him were written into notebooks, albeit without developing them (p. 134). This handling of the motifs is reflected in the Russian titling of *Forgotten Melodies* cycles, which is in fact *Forgotten Motifs* (Martyn, 2016, p. 135). To keep the nomenclature consistent, I will continue to refer to the work as *Forgotten Melodies* as it is usually referred to. I will refer and draw attention to *Forgotten Motifs* where necessary.

All three cycles were written around 1919–1920 in the Russian countryside of Bugry. This was a time that marked a major shift in Medtner's personal circumstances as he sought refuge from the harsh conditions in the city due to the Russian civil war (Martyn, 2016, p. 135). During this period, Flamm (2005) noted that it was also the turning point for Medtner's aesthetics, as he realized he could no longer reconcile his beliefs with the growing modernist trends of the time (p. 4). Flamm (2005) added that, by then, Medtner made no attempt to further develop his musical language in the field of harmony but instead adopted a "restorative idiom" that Flamm characterized as a "return to older musical inspirations and his attempt to save them from oblivion" (p. 4).

## 1.2. Purpose of Study

### 1.2.1 Research Problem

The Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle stands out prominently amongst Medtner's *oeuvre*, having been recorded by numerous artists such as Tozer (Medtner, 1922/1999), Milne (Medtner, Medtner: Piano Music Vol 6, 1922/2007), Hamelin (Medtner, 1922/1998), and more recently by Smith in 2018 (Medtner, 1922/2018). Medtner himself also recorded *Primavera*, *Canzona matinata* and *Sonata tragica* (Medtner, 1922/2003).

There has been a recent revival in Medtnerian scholarship (Bitzan, 2019; Emerson, 2016; Miranda, 2016; Mitchell, 2011). Despite the growing interest in the recording studio and in research, the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle has been largely underrepresented in Medtner scholarship. By comparison, numerous studies (Mitchell, 2011; Rowen, 2015; Miranda, 2016; Shin, 2018) have been conducted on the Op. 38 cycle.

This section will outline three main points with regards to the research gap: (1) current research has relied heavily on musical analysis of certain individual movements, (2) present understanding of the extramusical references unique to the Op. 39 cycle is limited and at times conflicting with existing literature, and finally (3) there has yet to be a balanced and neutral examination of the Op. 39 cycle through Medtner's writings in *The Muse and the Fashion* which has been identified to be closely related to in aesthetics, and has the potential to understand compositional strategies of the Op. 39 cycle.

#### **Preferred focus on musical analysis on individual movements in Op. 39 inadequate to address a cycle.**

Existing scholarship on the Op. 39 cycle has had a preferred focus on musical analysis on individual movements, but not as a whole cycle. This is most notable by focusing solely on general features of the *Sonata tragica* such as form, thematic development and Roman numeral harmonic analysis (Keller, 1971; Loftis, 1970). Scholarship covering musical analysis of the character pieces in Op. 39 in English is sparser with a single study by Covatta (1965), which

excludes the *Sonata tragica*. The study by Covatta (1965) did not yield information of a number of key features, such as form which is inextricably tied to harmony. Five decades later, this has still not been articulated clearly, with Rowen (2015) recently acknowledging the ambiguity in classifying the *Romanza* (p. 198). Given that Medtner (1951) had written at length of the importance of form (p. 49) and its function (p. 123), understanding how a particular musical form worked towards articulating its particular genre is important. This major omission in the literature needs to be clarified.

A closer understanding of the cyclical elements within Op. 39 has indicated that *Meditazione* and *Romanza* share a common melodic idea (Covatta, 1965, p. 135). A similar pairing is found between *Canzona matinata* and *Sonata tragica* (Flamm, 2005). These features of cyclicity are observations on the surface at best, since cyclicity could also refer to other features such as textural, and motivic unity.

Given that Medtner (1951) had written emphatically about unity (p. 14), and that recent studies of Medtner's *Sonata romantica* also uncovered a similar appeal to unity through motivic connection throughout the four-movement sonata (Seng-Quinn, 2016), it is therefore meaningful to examine and understand the Op. 39 cycle as a whole to uncover potential underlying connections. By choosing to examine the sonata or the miniatures alone, but not on a larger scale as an entire cycle, depreciates an understanding of the work. This is because there may be underlying musical connections between the movements waiting to be uncovered in Op. 39, just as studies have found the Op. 38 cycle (Mitchell, 2011, pp. 428-431).

**Present understanding of extramusical references unique to Op. 39 is limited and conflicted.**

A direction of inquiry into extramusical aspects of Medtner's music has been identified as a pressing area for research since two decades ago (Flamm, 1995, as cited in Bitzan, 2019, p. 25). Recent additions to Medtnerian literature offer new possibilities and perspectives with regards to approaching Medtner, most notably his position on music, his contemporary life,



religiosity, philosophical underpinnings, and performance practice (Bitzan, 2019; Bondar, 2003; Emerson, 2016; Mitchell, 2011). These studies indicate that there are other dimensions to Medtner's music compositions revealing immersions into poetry, spirituality, metaphysical thought (Bitzan, 2019, p. 24).

Literature available on extramusical issues unique to Op. 39 is limited. Extramusical perspectives of the *Forgotten Melodies* have been approached through studies of the Op. 38 cycle (Covatta, 1965; Miranda, 2016; Rowen, 2015). While this may be a starting point, Covatta (1965) pointed out differences in the framing of the characters of the three cycles (p. 133), which suggests that each cycle bears defining characteristics within itself. This is perhaps hinted through the unique titling of each cycle (see Section 1.1.2.). Comparing across the cycles, Op. 39 appears to slant towards the plane of instrumental music through relatively less descriptive titles.

Given that the *Forgotten Melodies* cycles were in fact titled *Forgotten Motifs*, and that Medtner (1951) had made a distinction between a theme and a melody (p. 48), the Op. 39 cycle subtitled "*Lyric*" suggests that it possess the closest connection to the style of "song". In fact, Rowen (2015) noted literary references to Lermontov's poetry in Medtner's works and philosophical thought, which brings to attention a particular significance of the concept of "song" to Medtner (p. 185). Therefore it would be meaningful to examine Medtner's version of "song" and "melody" not only from a musico-technical perspective, but whether there is a related underlying extramusical allusion. Given that much of what is present in Op. 39 has already hinted at extramusical references through musical means, a blanket inquiry across three cycles is still inadequate in clarifying qualities unique to Op. 39.

Rowen (2015), in his study of the Op. 38 cycle, made passing qualitative musical descriptions and references to literature on the Op. 39 cycle. Rowen suggested that this cycle reflects the transformation of the fin de siècle Dionysian elements in the musical climate in

Europe, referenced by the first two pieces, that is to be kept in check by Apollonian elements in the later pieces of the cycle (p. 195). The Dionysian element implied here by Rowen refers to the bifurcation of compositional practices in the Euro-American Art tradition, represented by the “unstable harmony” of the first two movements *Meditazione* and *Romanza*. Respectively, Rowen referred to them as symbolic of “meditation on spirituality and occult” and the “destruction of nineteenth century ideals and reality” (p. 195). Following that, *Primavera* is symbolic of the “rebirth of culture,” and *Canzona matinata* symbolizes “youth.” The final movement, *Sonata tragica*, represents the “maturity of culture.” The Apollonian elements in this piece, referenced through the order of the sonata form and stable harmonic language, keeps the Dionysian in check. In Rowen’s view, the transformation of the harmonic language of the cycle, and ending of the cycle with a sonata genre reinforces a message of “tonality” and “sonata form” (p. 195). Rowen then connected this to a narrative which he outlined as “analogous” to Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* (p. 195).

While Rowen (2015) makes a valid argument on the harmonic transformations, the suggestion that in Op. 39, Medtner would write to reflect the Dionysian element of disorder and the subsequent taming of it through *Sonata tragica* presents inconsistencies. For one, Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* espouses a restoration through the “irrational, unifying force” of music (Mitchell, 2011, p. 330), the Dionysian, to achieve a balance of both Apollonian and Dionysian forces. Even though Medtner did not allude to the terms Apollonian and Dionysian explicitly in *The Muse and the Fashion*, early sketches of the book revealed that its purpose was to “argue against Apollonism and modernism” (Mitchell, 2011, p. 265). Mitchell (2011) further explained that the *Forgotten Melodies* encapsulates a quality of “remembrance,” and Medtner, through the cycles, was “fulfilling his duty as a composer, performing an act of remembrance, evoking the heavenly realm” in the earthly realm (pp. 425-426). This is a point that resonates with Rowen (2015) himself, who noted that the *Forgotten Melodies* “reflect the

past, and also to reinvigorate music with a specifically Russian archaism” (p. 181). Therefore Rowen’s (2015) interpretation of looking at *Meditazione* and *Romanza* as “meditation on spirituality and occult” and the “destruction of 19th century ideals and reality” (p. 195) presents issues in understanding Medtner’s intentions as it is inconsistent with what seems to be reasonably established. After all, it is unlikely that Medtner would consciously write to reflect styles of music that he was against.

***The Muse and the Fashion* has not been considered as a lens to read the Op. 39 Cycle despite its apparent close relation and potential to understand compositional strategies**

*The Muse and the Fashion* presents a unique resource to read Medtner’s musical works and his compositional strategies. It is a collection of Medtner’s ideas detailing his philosophical discourse on music which addresses ideas in the creative process, elements of music such as “harmony,” form and themes, and extramusical elements coexisting in music.

Rather than just functioning as a set of rules in musical grammar, in outlining his compositional discourse, Medtner explained that he saw “harmony” within a stability/instability framework of consonance/dissonance that gravitated around and towards the tonic (Medtner, 1951, pp. 21-22), which seems to allow additional degrees of freedom from traditional practices of functional harmony. Medtner also hints at frames of references from multiple dimensions. In elucidating the subtleties of his compositional strategies, Medtner drew on themes such as a Nietzschean balance of the Apollonian and Dionysian forces (Mitchell, 2011, p. 265), and the formation of extramusical imagery and narratives (Medtner, 1951, pp. 122-124). These perspectives, and possibly others waiting to be uncovered, could potentially provide new insights into understanding Medtner’s music and compositional strategies.

Available literature in English sources suggests that all three *Forgotten Melodies* cycles are intimately connected with Medtner’s aesthetics in *The Muse and the Fashion* (Flamm, 2005, p. 4; Martyn, 2016, p. 135; Mitchell, 2011, p. 431; Rowen, 2015, p. 192). Rowen (2015) wrote that the *Forgotten Melodies* “function as a precursor to what eventually comes forth in *The*

*Muse and the Fashion*” (p. 192). Similarly, Flamm (2005) saw that there was an underlying shared relation in its advocacy of a “restorative idiom” in the Op. 39 cycle that Medtner later ascribed “aura of universal laws” in *The Muse and the Fashion* (p. 4).

Labels such as “universal laws” or “restorative idiom” are, admittedly, rather strong. In “restorative,” it ascribes a “traditionalist” outlook against “modern,” which has an underlying suggestion that one is better than the other. Granted, Medtner was also guilty of a self-assessment that reflected that of an anachronist at times (Martyn, 2016, p. xii). In addition to that, *The Muse and the Fashion* in laying out its artistic creed, appeals to compositional ideals from the perspective of “everlasting laws” (Swan 1951, as cited in Medtner, 1951, p. i). However, labels could conveniently lead to an oversimplification, which potentially leads to blind spots in understanding the music for what it truly is. In fact, during Medtner’s time in Russia in his earlier years, his works were perceived to be contemporary by Sorabji (Holt, 1955, p. 127) and Josef Hofmann (Martyn, 2016, p. 15). A critical look at Medtner’s compositional strategies, therefore, is needed.

This pairing of the Op. 39 cycle and *The Muse and the Fashion* is also a unique relationship that is potentially symbiotic in feeding off one another in understanding compositional strategies and the frame of references in both the musical and non-musical. No study to date in my research has considered reading the Op. 39 cycle through the lens of *The Muse and the Fashion*. Previous studies (Keller, 1971) using *The Muse and the Fashion* as a means to read other works by Medtner have also been generally compliant. This presents an issue because even though Medtner does not consciously write against himself, what a composer sets out to do may not always result in a perfect correspondence.<sup>2</sup> An over compliant reading without a consideration for balance suggests potentially a premature bias in selecting

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<sup>2</sup> See Straus (1999) discussing Stravinsky’s “serial errors.”

only what appears to concur with analysis, without a regard for the parts that do not fit comfortably.

### 1.2.2. Problem Statement

There is a discernable disparity in the attention given to the Op. 39 cycle, when compared to the existing literature (Mitchell, 2011; Rowen, 2015; Miranda, 2016; Shin, 2018) covering the Op. 38. Existing scholarship on the Op. 39 cycle also has had a greater concentration on musical score analysis of the *Sonata tragica* (Loftis, 1970; Keller, 1971). The four other pieces have been only discussed in a rather limited manner by a single dated study (Covatta, 1965), which did not clarify key information such as features of the themes, understanding of the coordination of the vertical sonorities, as well as the form of the individual pieces. In addition to that, how these features contribute to the overall cyclic nature of this work have not been clarified to date.

Present understanding of the extramusical *Forgotten Melodies* as an entire cycle has been inadequate in explaining the unique qualities of Op. 39. Existing perspectives on Op. 39 by Rowen (2015) while making interesting qualitative observations at times, are also limited as the observations have not been substantiated by closer investigations and appears to disagree with existing literature.

Finally, *The Muse and the Fashion*, in embracing compositional and aesthetic discourse, presents a unique opportunity to understand Medtner's compositional strategies. There is a potentially symbiotic relationship, due to the intimate relationship between Medtner's writings and Op. 39. No study to date has attempted to read the Op. 39 cycle through the lens of *The Muse and the Fashion* and its ideas within. Previous evaluations connecting Op. 39 and *The Muse and the Fashion* raises several issues in terms of assigning labels on Medtner's music that may be too convenient. This could potentially result in the loss of nuance

given that existing studies already allude to more than what seems to be purely musical compositional strategies.

Therefore, a study of the Op. 39 cycle with reference to a close reading of *The Muse and the Fashion* as a lens would first and foremost, benefit an understanding of the Op. 39 cycle in terms of its musical and extramusical factors through managing the interdependencies between them. At the same time, illuminated through the Op. 39, such a study potentially lays out an approach to understanding of Medtner's compositional strategies through *The Muse and the Fashion*,

### **1.2.3. Purpose Statement**

This study aims to address the gaps in the musical analysis, as well as provide an interpretation of the extramusical allusions of the entire Op. 39 cycle. I draw on the insights from *The Muse and the Fashion* as a means to study Medtner's compositional strategies, as well as to approach an interpretation of the extramusical allusions that seem to surround the cycle.

An analytical commentary of the harmonic support and structure will be explained through the musical analysis to highlight Medtner's compositional strategies and style. Thematic ideas are also identified and examined for cyclical connections. The musical analyses will be contextualized with ideas within *The Muse and the Fashion*, together with other relevant historical events or persons in Medtner's life, to provide an extramusical interpretation of the individual movements of the Op. 39 cycle. Comparisons between the features of music observed and compositional strategies espoused in *The Muse and the Fashion* will also be made.

These findings, illuminated by close reading between *The Muse and the Fashion* and the Op. 39 cycle, will help to address the gap in understanding the interdisciplinary nature of Medtner's compositional discourse.

### 1.3. Research Questions

To address the research problems, this study is led by the following research questions:

1. (a) What are, and (b) how do we understand Medtner's compositional strategies in *The Muse and the Fashion* in the context of his aesthetics?
2. (a) Guided by the ideas in *The Muse and the Fashion*, how are the features of melody, form and "harmony" emergent? (b) What are the connections between the music and the extramusical context of Op.39 when guided through lens of *The Muse and the Fashion*?
3. What are the cyclical features in terms of motivic, thematic and textural connections across the cycle?
4. To what extent do Medtner's compositional and philosophical themes in *The Muse and the Fashion* concur with the musical and extramusical analysis encountered in Op. 39?

### 1.4. Methodology

To address research question (1a), I will pick out major themes that I will term *Medtnerian Ideals*, which are relevant to compositional strategies and deal with the extramusical in *The Muse and the Fashion*. To address research question (1b), I will unpack these *Medtnerian Ideals*, elaborating on these ideas, and tracing their influences where possible.

To address research question (2a), I will begin by examining each movement individually, drawing from methods in the tonal practice. This study also offers an additional dimension of approach, guided by ideas in *The Muse and the Fashion*, as I provide a chronological commentary on harmonic support and structure. Roman numerals will be used in describing vertical sonorities, with a priority on the explanation of modulatory links and the establishment of a tonal centre. There will also be references to thematic development and form where necessary. Next, guided by the analysis of harmonic structure, I will arrive at a description of the form, taking inspiration from the models described by Hepokoski and Darcy (2006) and Caplin (1998). Finally, I will identify the main thematic ideas in each movement, as well as point out characteristics such as thematic developmental processes, as well as allusions to tonal centres.

To address research question (2b), I will examine the allusions in each movement through resonating themes found in *The Muse and the Fashion*, guided by provocations found in the musical analysis, and other relevant objects such as: in the music, historical events and persons. This process will be repeated for each movement. Following that, I will examine Op. 39 in its entirety and look for motivic, thematic and textural connections.

To address research question (3), I will examine the thematic groups across the five movements for patterns. I will also rely on intervallic patterns to study motivic connections. Finally, textural connections will draw from patterns in density of the various lines.

To address research question (4), findings from the musical analysis will be reflected against the *Medtnerian Ideals*. A general discussion will follow in order to provide an interpretation, and mediate possible tussles between the *Medtnerian Ideals* and the Op. 39.

### **Delimitations**

This study is strictly limited to understanding primarily the features of music such as form, harmonic structure, thematic ideas, with reference to relevant characteristics such as durational patterns and texture in Medtner's Op. 39 cycle where necessary, understood through resonating themes found in *The Muse and the Fashion*.

### **1.5. Outline**

This thesis involves a study of Medtner's Op. 39 cycle through the lens of *The Muse and the Fashion*. Chapter 1 begins with an overview introducing *The Muse and the Fashion* and the *Forgotten Melodies* cycles. Following that, the purpose of the study is established by examining the research problems, the problem statement, as well as the purpose statement. Following that, research questions guiding the study is presented, as well as the methodology to address the research questions.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review by examining existing scholarship on general features of Medtner's music, and the Op. 39 cycle.



Chapter 3 presents a deeper exposition on *The Muse and the Fashion*, by examining the underlying influences, as well as the frame of references outside music in espousing musical compositional strategies. This chapter will also establish the link between Op. 39 and *The Muse and the Fashion*.

Chapter 4 begins with defining the terms used in this study. Following that, I examine each movement of the Op. 39 cycle individually through the compositional strategies framed by Medtner's ideas in *The Muse and the Fashion*. After that, an interpretation for the extramusical allusions of each individual movements is provided. This chapter concludes with a look at the cyclical elements throughout the Op. 39 cycle.

Chapter 5 examines the concurrences and discord between the Op. 39 and *The Muse and the Fashion*. Through the findings, this chapter serves as a meeting point for discussion of the observations so far. A critique of Medtner's ideals are also approached in this chapter, particularly through the issue of perception.

Chapter 6 serves as a concluding chapter to this study by providing an evaluation of the study. This is through looking at whether the research problems are adequately addressed, the limitations of this study, as well as the implications of the study.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview

Studies on Nikolai Medtner began around 1960, and picked up momentum around the 1970s, tapered off after, only to receive a revival around the beginning of the twenty-first century. A chief difficulty in studying Medtner in English has been the language barrier, as outside of Russia, there has not been much scholarship on Medtner up to the early 1990s. However, this has been easing up with more studies done in English.

While dissertations make up the bulk of the studies, there are also multiple biographies of Medtner. The largest biographical undertaking in English to date is Barrie Martyn's *Nicholas Medtner, His Life and Music* (2016). It is organized in a chronological order, giving details about Medtner's life from birth to death, providing insights to the surrounding figures and his thoughts. It is mixed with a commentary of the musical works, although Martyn did not engage deeply in music analysis, and did not organize Medtner's musical style from a musicological perspective. Another publication by Robert Rimm *The Composer Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (2002) dedicated a chapter to Medtner and Rachmaninoff (Rimm, 2002). Here Rimm detailed Medtner's life, musical style, public and peer reception, his artistic creed inspiration, as well as a discussion on *The Muse and the Fashion*. Similarly, it does not engage in music analysis, but instead is mixed with a commentary and accounts by Medtner's peers. Finally, *The Muse and the Fashion* (1935), which details Medtner's aesthetics, will be covered in the next chapter.

This chapter begins by consolidating relevant findings from several other studies (Bitzan, 2019; Covatta, 1965; Loftis, 1970; Keller, 1971) in the aspect of general features observed through musical analysis to establish the current understanding of Medtner's compositional strategies. Following that, I will cover findings relevant to the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle, which will include both musical analysis and extramusical themes.

## 2.2. Features of Medtner's Music

The earliest dissertations with an analytic focus (Loftis, 1970; Keller, 1971) laid the groundwork on aspects such as thematic ideas, harmony, rhythm and form. Both Keller and Loftis sought to establish general principles and distinctive characteristics employed by Medtner in composition, and to put in perspective the historical position of the sonatas (Loftis, 1970, p. 1; Keller, 1971, p. 2). From my own research, there were few prior studies on Medtner. By analyzing the sonatas, one would be able to get a better sense of Medtner's style as these instrumental works spanned his entire compositional career. Therefore this approach was reasonable at that juncture in time.

More recently, Bitzan (2019) built on the work by earlier authors and reexamined Medtner's style and characteristic features such as melody, rhythm, counterpoint and harmony not just through the sonatas, but the other works as well. Bitzan proceeded to organize and classify these elements, before focusing on a detailed analysis of Medtner's first eight piano sonatas. The study aimed to provide a multifaceted and comprehensive analysis of the music including extramusical aspects (p. 6).

Bitzan's (2019) reasoning for reexamination was that previous studies "produced rather poor analytic results and failed to embed the works into aesthetical and cultural contexts (p. 5)" and were mostly "emanated from a performer's perspective (p. 8)." Bitzan's claim that the previous analytic studies were inadequate due to the lack of consideration for aesthetic and cultural contexts is justified as many of these studies that discussed extramusical issues came much later. The claim that the studies referenced produced "poor analytic results" might be a bit strong, but it is possible that these studies could benefit from more quality and depth. These studies were not identified, but a scan of the available literature reveals that these studies utilized a "touch and go" approach, partly because they have had to cover a large number of

Medtner's works. In addition, Bitzan highlighted that many of the prior available studies are performance oriented. As such, there was less focus on form and/or harmony.

### **2.2.1. Methods**

Keller (1971) examined each sonata individually through melodic construction, structural architectonics, utilizing a top down approach, moving into the thematic and tonal level eventually (p. 2). Similarly, Loftis (1970) looked at features of form, melody, rhythm, and harmony individually (p. 6). It should be noted that on harmony, Loftis looked at the first eighty measures of the first and last movements and classified the type of chords used. This methodology does not cover the development section, which is usually more complex and more subtle details may have been lost.

Bitzan's (2019) approach in identifying general features of Medtner's music differed slightly, in that it drew from not only the piano sonatas, but from the other works such as the miniatures, chamber works, and songs (p. 73).

Thus far, these studies (Loftis, 1970; Keller, 1971; Bitzan, 2019) employed musical analysis using similar techniques such as Roman numerals, with Loftis adopting a slightly different approach at times, choosing to use statistics to survey the general musical features. Bitzan (2019) also encompassed other analytical methods such as *Neo-Riemannian theory* and *Tonfeld Theory* in describing harmonic features at times where needed (p. 135).

### **2.2.2. Findings**

#### **Thematic Development**

Keller (1971) noted that the first theme group featured a "germinal motive or motivic compound (that) as basis for all future thematic development (p. 336). This view was echoed by Loftis (1970), who observed augmentation, diminution, sequential and imitative devices (p. 184). Bitzan (2019) also noted that "most of Medtner's material is arranged in such a way that the consecutive emerges from the preceding in organic sequence, while the diastematic content

of initial motives is often used as a nucleus or core” (p. 102), and that they could be described by terms “devised for analysis of Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms” (p. 102).

Loftis (1970) also found elements of Russian folk melodies in some sonatas (p. 185), a view which Bitzan (2019) also shared, comparing some of Medtner’s melodies to the melismatic cantilena style of Russian folk songs where there was a preference for conjunct motion (pp. 92-93).

## **Form**

In every subsequent sonata written, was something fresh. In the classification of the sonatas, Keller (1971) found a large variety and diversity in approach to sonata forms (p. 321). There were sonatas with titles, sonata in one, two, three and four movements, as well as cyclical elements. While some sonatas were standalones, others were part of a larger cycle. Additionally, there were sonatas that incorporated the exposition repeat (Op. 5 and Op. 11 No. 3) (p. 323). Keller concluded that there is strong involvement with thematic development and cyclic cohesion, citing that in *Sonata-Idyll*, Medtner eliminated the need for cyclic unity by continuously “evolving” the themes (p. 341).

Loftis (1970) and Bitzan (2019) came to similar conclusions. Loftis (1970) found that Medtner had a “striking individuality” in the formal treatment of the sonata form, and the even greater liberties taken in movements in which the cyclic form is employed (p. 182), and Bitzan (2019) is of the view that “Medtner found a distinctive way of dealing with traditional forms in every of his sonatas, imbuing it with new life over and over again” (p. 74). Essentially, these observations suggest that it was the shape of the form that was altered.

## **Harmony and Tonality**

Keller (1971) described Medtner’s harmonic style as nothing new, but unique (p. 330-333). Loftis (1970) came to a similar conclusion that while Medtner could lay no claim to a “mystic chord,” use of foreign tones showed a widening harmonic language in the limits of

tonality (p. 188). Loftis elaborated that Medtner's handling of dissonance should not be considered "haphazard note-splashing", but an orderly balance of consonance and dissonance (p. 188). This view is also echoed by Bitzan (2019), who stated that "with regard to his harmony, which is variously described as conservative or even retrospective compared to many of his contemporaries, I will not overestimate Medtner's way of constructing chords, dissonances, and tonal sequences... .. (but) we will be able to address a number of peculiarities which might be considered typically Medtnerian" (p. 108).

Next, scholarship indicated that Medtner's music generally modulated through sequences and transitory passages (Bitzan, 2019, pp. 112-115; Loftis, 1970, p. 183). On modulations that were deemed "unusual," Loftis (1970) wrote that "the logic of each key change is supported by the majority of the modulations that are achieved by a common chord" (p. 183). This indicates a way in which modulations into secondary tonal centres should have had some form of connection, reflecting Rimsky-Korsakov's (1886/2005) modulatory plans by "enharmonicism" (pp. 91-96).

Especially relevant to this study is Keller's (1971) point made on Medtner's preference to obscure "tonal factors" by "continuous modulation," deemphasizing the tonic chord, cadential patterns, diatonic key relationships in the development sections, and chromaticism in melodic/horizontal voice leading and altered triads. This resulted in increasingly expanded regions of tonal ambiguity from the outset of his very first published piano sonata (p. 342). Keller added that devices that indicate tonal stability were **not** a regular feature but concluded that "Medtner usually makes clear the tonal centres of his theme groups by harmonizing them diatonically (p. 331)."

Loftis (1970) arrived at slightly different conclusion, stating in his statistical analysis that "certain passages in measures studied contain so many foreign tones that they are extremely tonally vague... ..(nevertheless) such passages are generally quite brief and usually

occur as transitions between sections which are tonally secure” (p. 156). He added that the use of traditional key schemes in the sonatas reflected “Medtner’s respect for boundaries of tonality” (p. 182). Nevertheless Loftis’ method of tabulating the statistical frequency of various chord types found may have contained some bias. This is because the author admitted that these chords, arrived at through harmonic reductions, can merely suggest the tertian sonorities that he sought out to tabulate (p. 147). It takes much more to allude to a tonal centre through coordination, whether in a functional way or by other techniques.

Bitzan (2019) in his examination of general features of Medtnerian harmony noted that “it is possible to trace Medtner’s rootedness in tradition, both in terms of application of tonality and large-scale progression, to his harmonic language” (p. 108), thus suggesting encompassing elements of both tradition and a personal style. These peculiarities of Medtner suggested a piece in the puzzle in understanding Medtner’s control, and in particular obscurity, of tonal centres. Bitzan pointed out several examples: (1) Dorian chords ( $i^{add\#6}$ , ii and IV) from the use of melodic minor scale, (2) Augmented Sixth chords in modulation and functioning also as primary dominants, and (3) Multiple Leading Tone Harmonies in which ambiguities in enharmonic spelling allows for modulation, and perception of polychords (p. 110). In addition to that, Bitzan also noted Medtner’s use of non-functional harmony at times, in which appeals to triads or tetrads not derived from the diatonic mode through “chromaticised root progressions and alterations of scalar degrees,” “equal division of the octave, involving symmetrical chords” (p. 111).

On looking at the aspect of scales used in the construction of Medtner’s melody, the general view was for some time that they were principally diatonic pivoting into chromaticism (Loftis, 1970, p. 121; Keller, 1971, p. 335). More recently, Bitzan (2019) highlighted the aspect of the “old” modes and the acoustic scale playing a role in a number of Medtner’s works (pp.

94-97). These moments of modal writing indicated a movement away from functional harmony potentially blurring a tonal centre.

There was a common consensus among the studies of Medtner's ability to allude a tonal center yet coexisting with obscuring devices that blur the local harmonic regions. These findings consolidating the obscuring devices of tonality while useful sets the context for how Medtner established the tonal centre, which could have been discussed in more detail.

### **2.2.3. Summary**

These aforementioned analytic studies looked at features of Medtner's compositional style. The earlier studies sought to establish the general characteristics of Medtner's compositional style through the examination of a large number of works because there was little prior work before. Recent studies built on the earlier studies by further categorizing the features in more depth and detail.

Studies by Keller (1971), Loftis (1970) and Bitzan (2019) in examining thematic development, all determined that a unifying motif subject to transformative processes was a feature of Medtner's music. Bitzan (2019) in particular noted that analytical methods meant to study thematic development by Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms to be suitable for Medtner due to similarities in compositional strategies of patterning of a motivic core subsequent themes and melodies. In examining form, a striking feature observed by all three studies was that of innovation in which the shape of the form is altered. The examination of harmony and tonality also noted a rootedness in tonality, although methods to obscure tonality were also significant.

The studies by Keller (1971), Loftis (1970) and Bitzan (2019) are useful in looking at the general characteristics of Medtner's music. However, several observations could be made. There could be a clearer distinction between a "theme" and a "melody" given Medtner's (1951) own view that a melody was a subset of the theme (p. 48). Secondly, Loftis' methods may not capture an accurate picture due to sampling from a fixed number of bars. Thirdly, other than



the study by Bitzan (2019), the other studies tended to avoid modal descriptions of Medtner, focusing instead on examining mainly describing diatonic modes and the chords built on them. Even though these studies point to symmetrical chords and scales and the use of enharmonic relations that serve to obscure the tonal centre, there is still a consensus of a sense of tonality. This aspect of how a tonal centre is alluded to or emergent has not been given more careful examination yet.

Even as Keller (1971), at the conclusion of his study, took *The Muse and the Fashion* out abruptly as a means of comparison against what he found in the aspect of tonality, it seems to have complicated the issue further. This is because Keller (1971) contradicted himself by first noting that his observations matched what was stated in *The Muse and the Fashion* (p. 331), but at the same time admitting that he observed instances of polytonality in Medtner's sonatas (p. 333). Polytonality was something Medtner wrote against in *The Muse and the Fashion* (Medtner, 1951, p. 96). Understanding Medtner's coordination of tonality suggests that a deeper understanding of Medtner's compositional strategies is needed.

### **2.3. Forgotten Melodies**

Both Mitchell (2011) and Rowen (2015) examined the *Forgotten Melodies* through an emphasis on the Op. 38 cycle. Mitchell's (2011) study examined Medtner's Op. 38 cycle in the wider context of "musical metaphysics," the creation, development, crisis and failure of an Orphic worldview; a view that believed in a figure that could unite society through music. Similarly, Rowen's study of the *Forgotten Melodies* cycle, attempted to bridge the gap between formal aspects of analysis, with the symbolic meaning in the music (p. iii). In this study, Rowen (2015) discussed the political climate and the personal setting around the conception of *Forgotten Melodies*, the implications of the sonata genre and the relation to a cycle, and the allusions surrounding the *Forgotten Melodies* cycle (pp. 26-27).

Mitchell (2011) identified the need for an interdisciplinary study as literary and artistic studies normally does not deal with music in depth, and musicological studies have not examined a broader view in which the music is created, performed and read (p. 29). Rowen's (2015) justification for his study is that despite all the work done in Martyn's (2016) biography, there was inadequate analysis of the hermeneutics. In particular, Rowen pointed out a missing connection between Medtner and the Russian Symbolist movement (p. 10). In fairness, Martyn (2016) conceded in the biography that it was meant to clarify Medtner's career, and the misunderstandings in the reception of Medtner's music, which in itself constitute another huge task (p. xi). In addition, the first edition of Martyn's biography came out in an earlier time, and he had to deal with less available literature. Criticism of Martyn aside, Rowen's justifications for looking into the extramusical in Medtner are reasonable, only because by considering the extramusical aspects on top of the analytic, one is able to better understand the work more intimately, especially with a composer with a predilection for subtext as noted by others (Boyd, 1980).

Mitchell (2011) identified a central concept of "remembrance" evoked in the "symbolic significance" of the titling of *Forgotten Melodies*. "Remembrance" is related to the idea of the "initial melody," which Mitchell explained as "the song of heaven, echoes in the souls of all humans in half-remembered, imperfect form" (p. 426). Mitchell added that "Medtner believed that these melodic fragments were themselves an echo of that first, heavenly melody which served as the inspiration of all earthly music" (p. 426).

Rowen (2015) also observed that with a "look backwards and deliberate use of older styles" in the *Forgotten Melodies*, the cycles actually functioned as musical precursors to *The Muse and the Fashion* which had a similar outlook in writing against the perceived "modernism" (p. 192). In looking at extramusical references, Rowen pointed out that there was a direct allusion to a song cycle on one hand while at the same time, there were references to incidental

music in its fairy-tale like atmosphere and references to spirits in folklore (pp. 178-179). Rowen additionally noted that the cycles appeared to go on an aspirant trajectory, “pushing higher in optimism, striving to reach for a celebration of ideal music,” beginning with a sombre *Sonata reminiscenza* and ending the *Danza ditirambica* which referenced the Greek dance in celebration of Dionysius (pp. 190-192).

With specific focus on Op. 39, Rowen (2015) suggested that there was an underlying narrative through the gradual return to diatonicism and easing of dissonance through the movements (p. 194), closing off with the stability of the *Sonata tragica*. Rowen stated that all five pieces relied on sonata form, even though only the last movement was labeled in that genre (p. 194). Rowen did not elaborate further.

Rowen (2015) suggested that the Op. 39 cycle may have been alluding to Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (p. 195), outlining the essential balance between the Dionysian and Apollonian in the Greek tragedy. He asserted that one could then view, through harmonic lenses, the *Meditazione* and *Romanza* as Dionysian (chaotic) elements as “kept in check”, with *Primavera* acting as the point of rebirth and return, while the *Canzona matinata* and *Sonata tragica* as the restoration of “tonality and sonata form” through the Apollonian spirit (order/form), reflecting how Medtner felt about the contemporaneous musical climate which he disagreed with (p. 195).

Medtner’s early sketches of *The Muse and the Fashion*—by proxy related to the underlying message of *the Forgotten Melodies*—indicated he had sought to write against *Apollonism and Modernism* (Mitchell, 2011, p. 265), and did not specifically write against a *Dionysian* element, as claimed by Rowen. In my opening chapter, Rowen’s mischaracterizing of the Dionysian element as something to be kept in check in Op. 39 is not without some inconsistencies. In fact, Rowen observed that Medtner chose to end off all cycles with a dance

in celebration of the Dionysian spirit. Nevertheless, Rowen's study provided a meaningful starting point.

Covatta's (1965) study of the miniatures in Op. 39 described thematic processes, texture and the form, though only very briefly. Covatta identified that all pieces ended with a perfect cadence, except for the *Meditazione* which ended with a  $II^7 \rightarrow I$  (p. 139). This is likely an implied plagal cadential gesture, though this is not mentioned. At the same time, this raised the possibility of misrepresenting the functional chords progressions and/or harmonic functions in analysis.

On the *Meditazione*, Covatta (1965) described the use of dominant  $V^9$  in "C# minor" in the opening that was "embellished by lower chromatic auxiliaries," as well as several other observations that seemed to want to fit into the picture of a home key of "C# minor" (pp. 134-135). Covatta also identified that a melodic idea from *Meditazione* was used again in the second movement *Romanza*, which is an attempt at cyclicity (p. 136). In the *Romanza*, there are elements of thematic transformation, and that the melody appears to be a function of texture and alludes to a "dramatic colouration" in the development of the theme (p. 136). Covatta pointed out that the chromaticism gives way to a more diatonic language in *Primavera* and *Canzona matinata*, agreeing with Rowen's (2015) observation. In *Primavera*, Covatta also identified that the primary theme underwent substantial development and appeared as a function of texture. (p. 138). In *Canzona matinata*, Covatta identified that the theme was constructed on a two-note motif (p. 139).

Covatta's study about five decades ago provided the foundation to look at the miniatures. However, Covatta's study was very selective in coverage of detail and more descriptive in nature, leaving out explanation for the findings. Covatta also did not elaborate on how the tonal centres were established in the study. This is perhaps a much more complicated task, given that the examples Covatta cited were only short excerpts without the

surrounding context of the other chords. This is exacerbated particularly in *Meditazione*, which Rowen (2015) also identified as “octatonic harmony” (p. 195) which raises the question of attributing a tonal centre of “C# minor” to *Meditazione*.

Another crucial missing element is the understanding of how form is employed. Given that alterations in the shape of form is central to Medtner’s compositional discourse, as found by Loftis (1970), Keller (1971) and Bitzan (2019), a more thorough analysis of the elements of structure is needed. Given Medtner’s predilection for cyclicity, and using germinal motifs to construct large scale works, more could have been done to identify cyclical elements. Finally, to leave out *Sonata tragica* would be losing a key connection in understanding recurring motifs holistically. This is a gap in the literature which this study intends to cover.

A section of Keller’s (1971) study on the *Sonata tragica* (pp. 220-234) highlighted the unorthodox structure of the sonata and showed the interrelations between the thematic materials. Keller also examined the vertical sonorities of selected passages through Roman numeral analysis. Keller appeared to have classified a certain passage as polytonal, which went against Medtner’s ideals set out in writing (Medtner, 1951, p. 96). More could also be done in discussing the peculiarities of the sonata in terms of form, given that Keller noted its “unorthodox structure” (p. 220). As Markson (2017) wrote, examination of Medtner’s form presented the “first step from which other deeper questions needed to be posed” (p. 115).

My study will consider all five movements of Op.39 as the focus of analytical examination as a cycle; which has not been broached thus far. How tonality, form and cyclicity are established or alluded to throughout Op. 39 are questions that need to be addressed. Secondly, studies connecting the extramusical while an interesting point of departure, have not been critically examined or discussed. Rowen’s (2015) characterization of the cycles as a “look backwards and deliberate use of older styles” is a critical question in research literature on Medtner that needs clarification, given much of the surrounding extramusical elements such as

the titling of *Forgotten Melodies* and *The Muse and the Fashion* which point towards a look to restore practices of the past. This study proposes in the next chapter to examine Medtner's own thoughts on compositional discourse, expressed in *The Muse and the Fashion*, to address gaps in literature.

## Chapter 3. *The Muse and the Fashion*

### 3.1. Overview

*The Muse and the Fashion: being a defence of the foundations of the Art of Music* was divided in two parts. The first half illuminates how Medtner perceived music, from a metaphysical standpoint, and how it translated into the language that we are familiar with; the elements of music such as themes, harmony and form which he saw as “fundamental elements.” It also addressed the growing “modernist” trends of his day in the context of compositional strategies. The second part of the book was a collection of views on aesthetic questions, mostly related to “modernism,” and the issue of extramusical subjects and programme music.

While the philosophy of music has long been a subject of discussion, philosophical musings of compositional strategies from “first principles” are not pursued often in writing by composers themselves. Therefore in Medtner’s dealings with aesthetics and music, one finds a unique window into the inner world of the composer.

Around the time of writing, Medtner faced numerous challenges in his professional life. Publishers were resistant to his works citing the technical complexities which made them hard to sell (Martyn, 2016, p. 209). This was compounded by increasingly scarce concert bookings which Medtner contrasted with “the din of the triumphal successes of the ‘cacophonists’ I so detest” (Martyn, 2016, p. 211). According to Martyn (2016), this not only brought about financial, but also psychological strain as he felt that “modernism” continued in “advancement” in contrast to the unpublishable nature of his most important works (p. 232). It was perhaps the provocation of the surrounding events that culminated in putting together his thoughts into *The Muse and the Fashion*.

Medtner’s book was intended to address a younger generation of composers, performers and musicians (Medtner, 1951, p. 1). In Martyn’s (2016) view, this book was neglected in the eyes of the public as it was a book in Russian published in Paris; compounded

by the contemporary trends in music which gave the impression of “backward views” (p. 216). Nevertheless, among Medtner’s supporters counted Rachmaninoff, who believed that Medtner expressed what he and many other musicians could not in words (Martyn, 2016, p. 216).

Even in reading, *The Muse and the Fashion* is not without its shortcomings. Medtner admitted that “I begin to think my book will *not only not* be understood by anyone but generally will not even be read.” (Martyn, 2016, p. 216). This disappointment was in response to his friend and loyal supporter Ivan Ilyn’s difficulty in understanding the book. Swan pointed out that in the attempt to reach a very high ideal, there may have been contradictory statements at times, as well as loose usage of musical terms (Swan in Medtner 1951, p. ii) which could suggest Ilyn’s response. If Ilyn, a rather prominent philosopher, could not understand Medtner’s writings, but that Rachmaninoff did, what did Rachmaninoff see that Ilyn might have missed?

This indicates that at some levels, there was a need to approach reading this book and analysing it from the perspective of musical training, and at the same time consider other perspectives such as logical consistency, and aural perception in order to arrive at a balanced reading. Therefore, even as I adopt a perspective of understanding Medtner’s philosophy through musico-analytical terms primarily, I will attempt point out ambiguous terms and potentially contradictory statements with a careful consideration of other relevant dimensions.

In this chapter, I begin by examining an underlying recurring theme of Nietzsche’s Apollonian and Dionysian constructs which frames further discussions. Next, I examine Medtner’s appeal to compositional discourse through his philosophical musings and synthesize them into five themes which I *term Medtnerian Ideals*. This provides a lens to read the Op. 39 cycle. Finally, I justify the choice of *The Muse and the Fashion* as a lens to read the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle by showing the close connections between the music and the *Medtnerian Ideals*.



### 3.2. Music as Cultural Critique

Some influence behind *The Muse and the Fashion* can be attributed to Nikolai Medtner's elder brother, Emil Medtner (Martyn, 2016, p. 92). Acting as Nikolai's intellectual guide in philosophy and literature, Emil sought to introduce the works of Kant, Goethe and Nietzsche to Nikolai through a Russian reading of these ideas (Mitchell, 2011, p. 247). Emil was an important figure within the Russian Symbolist circles who, acting as a music critic, founded a Symbolist publishing house *Musaget* and a journal *Logos* which was dedicated to German philosophy (Mitchell, 2011, p. 244). Emil's book *Modernism and Music*<sup>3</sup> (1912) written some decades earlier similarly criticised "modernist" tendencies in contemporary music (Martyn, 2016, p. 92). Emil saw music connected to contemporary culture and idealized that divisions in society due to "modernity" could be overcome by music. Emil sought actively to elicit debate over musical "modernism," in pursuit of understanding "social and cultural ills plaguing contemporary Russia" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 249).

Both brothers relied on their reading of Nietzsche to critique contemporary Russian discourse, including discourse on Russian music in which they saw an active and widespread "false Dionysian" trope that pandered to "individualism" (Mitchell, 2011, pp. 266-267), referencing "modernism" in music. In essence, they saw the need for a balance between the Apollonian and Dionysian forces, a pair of opposite forces expressed by Nietzsche from *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, referencing the Greek Tragedy which embodied the perfect balance of both form (Apollonian) and chaos (Dionysian).

Among the Russian intellectual circle of that era, the element of Dionysian reflected these values: (1) unity, (2) theurgy, and (3) communality (Mitchell, 2011, p. 8). Theurgy referred to "the ability of art to transform reality itself, imbuing the fallen physical realm with

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<sup>3</sup> Mitchell (2011) noted that Emil worked on the philosophical interpretation of music's metaphysical meaning and theorized on the significance of music and art, but was not comfortable in dealing with specific questions of music theory or technique (p. 248), which Nikolai developed in *The Muse and the Fashion*.

higher, spiritual significance,” and communality referred to a communal or collective existence, a unity-in-multiplicity (Mitchell, 2011, p. 8). It was in music that the Russians saw as the ultimate symbol of unity, with the power to “transform the multiplicity of the physical world into a unified spiritual whole through collective creative action” (Mitchell, 2011, p. 8). Read in this light then, both Medtner brothers sought a unifying creative force that would unite a culture (Mitchell, 2011, p. 267) as espoused by the “true” Dionysian element.

Even though *The Muse and the Fashion* was written two decades after the period which Nikolai and Emil Medtner spent much time together, archival documents reveal that Nikolai Medtner had in earlier sketches stated that its purpose was to argue against “Apollonism and modernism” (State Central Museum of Musical Culture no. 4603, as cited in Mitchell, 2011, p. 265). This suggests that implicit in Medtner’s writings was the intention to restore Dionysian values in order to achieve a balance of both Dionysian and Apollonian. Even though Nikolai did not use Nietzsche’s terms explicitly, choosing to use more general terms such as “simplicity and complexity” instead, there are numerous implicit references to Nietzsche in advancing his ideas.

This is inextricably connected to the titling and the central theme of the book, in which “*The Muse*” and “*The Fashion*” are in fact symbolic of opposite ideals. In Medtner’s usage, “*Fashion*” refers to the contemporary trends of music, as a passing phase. On the other hand, “*Muse*” refers to the goddesses of inspiration and knowledge, an eternal. This is made explicit with Medtner (1951) writing that

We have turned from the muse to fashion, In other words, having forfeited the center of unity of music itself, and directed ourselves to the plurality of the variegated tastes of the masses, we have unconsciously begun to fulfil many of the latter's orders (pp. 130-131).

In describing the flourishing of art through the ages from the Renaissance in Italy to the blossoming of music in Germany, Medtner (1951) referred to “artistic creation” as “not in the

hands of individuals, but collective forces, not only of geniuses, but whole schools, not of one single generation, but of many (p. 42).” Genuine creation, asserted Medtner (1951), only revealed itself when the artist was intent on serving, thinking about oneself the least (pp. 136-137). Thus *The Muse and the Fashion* could be seen – in Medtner’s eyes – as born out of necessity, a combination of stimulation and provocation by an aspiration/inspiration to ideals, a balance of the Apollonian and Dionysian. This will take us to the next section which will examine the five *Medtnerian Ideals*: (1) *Balance of Simplicity and Complexity*, (2) *Chiaroscuro*, (3) *Renewal of Art*, (4) *Artistic Image*, and (5) *Remembering (the Eternal Song)*.

### 3.3. Medtnerian Ideals

#### 3.3.1. Balance of Simplicity and Complexity

Medtner developed his philosophical thought behind compositional strategies as a balance of binary pairing of opposites. Medtner cautioned that “(the) whole terminology of musical theory will seem to us like a set of dull, arbitrarily imposed rules, unless we have felt behind, the “unwritten’ laws” (p. 12). The figure below illustrates Medtner’s “approximate scheme of the unwritten laws.”

	<b>Centre</b>	<b>Encirclement (Gravitation)</b>
(1)	Genesis of Song (The spirit of music, the unexpressed theme)	The great art of music (the expressed song – its themes)
(2)	Unity	Plurality
(3)	Homogeneity	Diversity
(4)	Contemplation	Action
(5)	Inspiration (Intuition)	Mastery (Development)
(6)	Simplicity	Complexity
(7)	Repose	Motion
(8)	Light	Shadow

Figure 3. Stipulations of the Law which elucidates the fundamental senses of the Musical Language (Medtner, 1951, p. 12).

Medtner’s line of thought reveals a centre with an attractive force which allowed the opposite to gravitate around in the periphery; Apollonian and Dionysian forces implicitly, outlining a striving towards an ideal balance.

For Medtner, the ultimate aim of the artist in the process of creation is the striving for an idealized *unity*. This is arrived at through a coordination of *plurality* of elements, as Medtner (1951) reasoned that “we would not need the concept of *unity* if it were already contained for us in one image” (p. 13). This is through a process of *contemplation*, manifesting in the *action* of the artist, which had to find a way to coordinate the *complexity* and *diversity* of the elements towards *simplicity* and *unity*. Even though different artists may create works that appear differently on the outside, thus *individualism*, there is an intrinsic kinship in the rules in which guides the artists, thus arriving in a *homogeneity*.

In the compositional processes, *contemplation* was invariably linked to *inspiration* (*intuition*), which Medtner (1951) identified as the theme solely (p. 14). On the other hand, *action* constituted coordination of multiple elements such as form construction, vertical and horizontal sonorities together with the theme into a balance of *complexity* and *simplicity*.

To support this view, Medtner (1951) cited several types of balance such as: the simplicity of tonality paving way to complex polyphony, the complexity of Bach polyphony is enabled through the clarity of the themes, the simplicity of Beethoven’s themes and “harmonies” enable the perception the complexity of form, the simplicity of song and dance forms of Chopin and Schubert allows a freedom in the complex continuity of the melodic lines, and that the complex continuity of the sonata form requires a brevity of the melodic lines (p. 16). On the other hand, Medtner (1951) elaborated that “the complexity of polytonality, as a basis, precludes any sensible polyphony, turning its coordination into an arbitrary “simple” cacophony” (p. 16).

Summarily, Medtner advocated for a balance between the elements of form, texture, vertical sonorities, and themes, so that a composition could be perceived and understood. Thus in looking at Medtner’s compositions, one needed to consider a coordination of these elements and the relative degree of simplicity-complexity working in balance such that there is clarity

in the perception of simplicity and complexity at the same time. This in a way, suggests Medtner's assumption of an *idealized* listener. This is a lofty aspiration that is nevertheless difficult to adhere to (see Section 5.2.2.).

### 3.3.2. Chiaroscuro

According to Etymology Online (2021), *chiaroscuro* comes from a “disposition of light and dark in a picture,” which is a literal combination of *chiaro* (clear/bright/light) and *scuro* (obscure/dark). The National Gallery (London) (2021) described *chiaroscuro* as a visual arts technique of strong contrasts between *light* and *dark* in which the shades suggest three-dimensional volume in an otherwise two-dimensional object; a method used by painters such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Caravaggio. Leonardo da Vinci, in particular, was noted in his range of luminance, creating a greater sense of depth, and achieving tonal unity by very subtle gradations (Douma, 2006). Medtner's appeal to the visual arts is not surprising when one considers that, albeit a seldom mentioned fact, Medtner was an amateur painter himself (Iles, n.d.).

In Medtner's writings, *chiaroscuro* is referenced subtly as an analogy to describe an “intrinsic kinship” and “unity” underlying musical works despite difference in “outward appearances.” Medtner outlined it as “thus light determines both the homogeneity (of musical works) and the diversity of the nuances” (Medtner, 1951, p. 13). This suggests that unity of a work came from the subtle gradations of light and shadow. Apart from this, *chiaroscuro* is also referenced in describing embedded sonorities within a theme (Medtner, 1951, p. 44). Even though it is only hinted in the book, I argue it holds the key in which to approach Medtnerian sonorities.

Throughout the book, Medtner dropped several hints that *light* and *shadow* corresponded to *consonance* and *dissonance* respectively. For one, the pairing of opposites of *light* and *shadow*, was also hinted at in an earlier section on *Lawful Art* on the balance of

simplicity and complexity in which Medtner (1951) wrote that “simplicity and complexity in every art correspond to what in music are consonance and dissonance” (p. 15). Medtner (1951) later elaborated on the laws of music as “the tonic and the dominant, consonance and dissonance, contemplation and action, repose and motion, light and shadow” (p. 82). This suggests that the concatenation of chiaro and scuro, the interplay of light and shadow, of consonance and dissonance, became a means to understanding the tonal shadings of Medtnerian sonorities.

In compositional terms, the following table shows how Medtner perceived consonant and dissonant sonorities relative to one another. Examining the table also suggests a dualism, and encirclement of features that surrounded a centre.

	<b>Centre</b>	<b>Encirclement (Gravitation)</b>
(1)	Contemplated Sound (heard by inner ear)	Emitted sound
(2)	Time, plane of music (horizontal line of harmony – placement of sounds)	Movement in time of all musical senses and elements (vertical line of harmony – capacity of musical sounds)
(3)	Tonic (note)	Mode, scale, tonality
(4)	Diatonic Scale	Chromatic Scale
(5)	Consonance (Intervals)	Dissonance (Intervals)
(6)	Tonic (triad)	Dominant (triad)
(7)	Tonality	Modulation
(8)	Consonant chords	Dissonant Chords (sevenths and ninths)
(9)	Dissonant chords	Accidental Harmonic Formations: Suspensions, anticipations, passing, auxiliary and sustained notes.

Figure 4. Approximate Scheme of the Fundamental Senses of the Musical Language (Medtner, 1951, pp. 21-22).

Medtner (1951) elaborated on the table:

- 1) A musical sound is not an external sound heard but contemplated. Only such a sound is subject to musical execution and notation.
- 2) Time is the plane for which all other senses of harmony is included in it. A coordination of the horizontal and vertical.

- 3) The mode<sup>4</sup> has the greatest accessibility to our inner ear, is the simplest coordination of sound along the horizontal line. The greatest simplicity of the foundation of the mode enables the construction of the whole complexity of music. In relative terms, the mode is therefore a form of complexity when compared against the tonic, by which the mode encircles.
- 4) Chromaticism, also a deviation of the mode, is justified only as much as it gravitates towards the mode.
- 5) In vertical plane, the sense of intervals is determined by the degree of “satisfaction obtained by us, i.e. a feeling of repose or achievement”
- 6) The triads that would follow on are also governed by a gravitation to the tonic. This would correspond to the dominant triad, due to the availability of the leading tone.
- 7) On modulation, the potential of chromaticism working hand in hand with the circle of fifths and scales to provide an endless variety due to “enharmonicism.” Departure and return are the purposeful function of modulation. Passing modulations can be seen as harmonic colouring.
- 8) Chords could go no further beyond ninths (five-note formations). This is because to the ears, elevenths, or thirteenths would possess no clear gravitation to a tonic, or any other triad of the mode; these “pseudo-chords” possess the sounds of gravitation, resolution and attraction all at the same time.
- 9) Permissible accidental harmonic formations (suspensions, passing notes), or non-functional harmony as it is frequently termed today, are possible as long as they do not function as “self-sufficient” chords, and must resolve to consonance (pp. 21-31).

It should be noted that *The Muse and the Fashion* did not highlight specific harmonic progressions, or voice-leading procedures. According to Mitchell (2011), it should therefore instead be viewed as Medtner’s way of offering to “uncover the aesthetic basis upon (why) certain progressions appear more ‘correct’ than others” (p. 259). Mitchell added that even though Medtner used the word “harmony,” it was “tonal” in a very loose sense (p. 259). To be more precise, “vertical sonority” is implied. Nevertheless, it is clear that Medtner advocated for working with tonal systems in which there had to be eventual gravitation to the tonic.

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<sup>4</sup> Medtner makes a footnote to clarify he refers to diatonicism mainly but views the diatonic scales as part of the older modes, and that chromaticism allows back and forth movements between them (Medtner, 1951, p. 23).

It should also be noted that the prevailing text during Medtner’s time as a student was Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Practical Manual of Harmony* (1886). In this text, Rimsky-Korsakov outlined the natural major, the natural minor, both harmonic and melodic minor modes in which triads could be built and used to harmonize a given melody (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1886/2005, p. 5; Carpenter, 1988, p. 312)

On the other hand, Medtner's major contention with the "modernists" was their abandonment of the tonal system, asserting the addition of prefixes "a" and "poly" to "tonality" was an "infinitely corrupt" concept, preventing the simplicity of the tonality and the concept of modulation, and dissonance from gravitating back to consonance (Medtner, 1951, pp. 42,65). While Medtner was against atonal/polytonal music because of a lack of perceived "gravitation to consonance", one needs to acknowledge that it was very much a matter of his perception.<sup>5</sup>

Acknowledging the limitations of Medtner's philosophy of tonal systems was Medtner's arguably idealistic perspective in his philosophy of compositional strategies, an ideal in principle lesser in practice. Despite the "strict" outlook that one might get from a reading of Medtner's assertions, there is in fact a relative degree of freedom through the dissonances (*scuro*) of "accidental harmonic formations" and the other "prototype dissonant chords." Additionally, the play on "enharmonicism" allows Medtner's sonorities the flexibility to go beyond the composers of the nineteenth-century practices.

Understanding the interplay of the elements of consonance and dissonance as described by the table above, through vertical and horizontal dimensions, would enable a perception of Medtner's craft in creating allusory tonal centres. This frame of reference outside a purely musical discussion is significant as it presents an additional dimension of perspective in understanding these vertical sonorities in his music.

### **Shape of the Form**

In describing form, Medtner chose not to leave any schemes or prototypical models but wrote instead, of the connection of the complexity of the sonata tied to the simplicity of the song form, the song form tied to the construction of a period, the period to phrase, the phrase

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<sup>5</sup> Webern in *The Path to The New Music* (1963) argued that in differentiating dissonance from consonance, it is in fact a matter of a continuum of nth degree of overtones away (p. 13). In Webern's critique of the "last stage of tonal music," he highlighted the tonal excursions so remote from the home key that "there was no longer any feeling that it was necessary really to return to the main key" (p. 44).



to cadence, cadence to mode, and mode to tonic (Medtner, 1951, 49). Essentially, to Medtner (1951), “form is harmony” (p. 49).<sup>6</sup> He added that one “cannot visualize the contents (of music) outside form” (Medtner, 1951, p. 122), which indicated his view was that form had to direct and organize the contents of music.

If *chiaroscuro* describes a way in which consonance and dissonance are manipulated, then *form* can be seen as the contouring and boundaries as a result of the gradual shadings. Therefore in Medtner’s compositional process, form is inextricably linked to, and identified by harmonic considerations of the cadence and thematic patterns.

### 3.3.3. Renewal of Art

Despite the apparently conservative outlook of *The Muse and the Fashion*, in its arguments against modernist trends, Medtner was not an advocate of stagnation in compositional craft. Rather, he adopted a stance of *renewal* and *renovation*, represented by the symbolic season of *spring*, stating that

Thus it was spring, that was the greatest festival of our art – the eternal renovation of the contents of the inexpressible and the form of that which was renovated. Every man rejoiced not in the strangely new, but in the unexpected encountered with the kindred and familiar (Medtner, 1951, p. 9).

Here it should be noted that there is also a balance of the old (“kindred and familiar”), and the new (“renovation”).

Over the course of *The Muse and the Fashion*, this idea of *renewal* and *renovation* was alluded to several times, and connected to elements of the compositional process, such as “harmony” (sonorities) and form. For one, Medtner (1951) stated that “we have not understood that harmony, in unfolding before us the fundamental senses of music, shows us the way to an inexhaustible coordination of these senses and their constant *renovation*” (p. 68). This was

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<sup>6</sup> Sergei Taneyev also saw form synonymous with tonality and harmony as well (Carpenter, 1988, pp. 428-429), resonating with Medtner’s views.

linked to Medtner's concept of dissonance, most notably through *accidental harmonic formations*, *chromaticism*, and *modes* mentioned in the previous section. This is because a relative degree of freedom enables a potential for possibly new sonorities beyond diatonicism through the coordination of vertical and horizontal plane. Secondly, by choosing not to leave any "schemes" or "models" in *The Muse and the Fashion* on form construction, Medtner viewed form as a potential avenue for *renewal*. This is supported by Medtner (1951) elaborating later that "the demand of a *special form* for one's contents always signifies a realization of the importance of the unity of the one and the other. The very feeling of despair points to a yearning for this unity" (p. 121). At the same time, Medtner did not abandon considerations of harmony in form building, writing that "'a sonata built on senses not found... ... is a sonata (only) insofar as it also sounds (*sonare*)'" (p. 49).

To examine Medtner's compositional process through a lens of *renewal* is to look at deviations from standard practices, from a frame of reference of standard practices, through sonorities and form.

### 3.3.4. Artistic Image

Medtner (1951) discussed extramusical content through two words, "*subject matter*" and "*programme music*" in writing (pp. 122-125). Markson (2017) pointed out that the use of "*subject matter*" is *syuzhet* in Russian, which translates to a narrative of a story (p. 16). According to Medtner (1951),

the contents of music, indefinable through words, demand the most clear-cut form in sounds, while the contents that can be expressed in words and are in reality only the *subject matter* of music... ..

On the other hand the contents of the Beethoven symphonies, though ineffable and irrational to the point of intoxication, have become acceptable to our musical consciousness, thanks to the divine clarity and precision of the musical form. The *subject matter* is a subject (servant) both of the contents and of the form. As a subject it has a right to citizenship in music and in any art. But woe if the subject matter begins to dictate its conditions, where its business is only to be silent... .. Submit it must always (p. 123).

This indicated that Medtner believed any narrative must not be placed above the music in the compositional process. Form and the contents should still dictate. In citing Beethoven's symphonies, despite its rich extramusical subject matter in a few of them Medtner's view was that of the almost inexpressible contents of music expressed through the mastery of form that still took precedence.

Clarifying the link between the inexpressible and the expressible *subject matter*, Medtner (1951) offered some reconciliation stating that "when music or poetry have succeeded in transforming the images of such subjects into its own images, and its own forms, what we are confronted by, is no longer subject matter, but *artistic images* and *forms* (p. 125)." Essentially, to Medtner, extramusical content when merged correctly with the elements of music, arguably elevated the piece of music to a higher form. Thus, an idealized Medtnerian concept of an *artistic image* (p. 124).

Admittedly, Medtner's discussion of these ideas was on somewhat loose terms. For one, Medtner clearly stated that extramusical content must not dictate musical content but should operate independently. However, in creating even the idealized *artistic images*, Medtner admitted the "transformation" of extramusical content through music, which implicit in this statement is an "acting on" *subject matter* by the compositional process. In other words, the musical process had to be influenced or guided by an extramusical stimuli into writing in a particular way, emergent in the composition.

To understand *artistic images* better, one first needed to turn to what did not qualify in Medtner's view. Medtner (1951) wrote that "in many contemporary musical works in which the contents are nothing but an every day (sic) subject matter, the muse, from a queen, has turned into a cook, brewing a hodge-podge from that formerly were musical senses (p. 123)." For Medtner, *subject matter* had to be objects not easily accessible in everyday life, whether physically or cognitively. Next, Medtner was quick to differentiate *programme music* from

*artistic images* encapsulating *subject matter*. He explained that the use of non-purely musical titles like *berceuse*, *reverie* or borrowing from literature did not automatically qualify it as programme music. For Medtner, *programme music* was music in which “form and contents are dictated and justified by a programme or *subject matter*.” He added that, specifically in song, the music may unite with text at times, but never be a mere dictation of text, otherwise it would also fall into the category of *programme music* (Medtner, 1951, pp. 124-125).

Finally, I take one more turn to the reception of Medtner’s *Skazki* (Tales), which bore *subject matter* directly in titling. According to Hamish Milne, at a private performance given by Medtner of the Op. 51 Tales, Rachmaninoff reportedly exclaimed “no one tells such tales as *Kolya* (Medtner)” (Milne, Introduction, 2001, p. vii). Some of these Tales had at most the title of the literary references marked, leaving the musical notation through performance to *narrate*. This indicates that the coordination of musical elements working together had to be compelling enough to evoke certain expressions.

Putting everything together, to understand the extramusical content in Medtner’s works was to refer to an object that was likely idealized or an idealized conception. This would be evoked through coordination of the musical elements of composition into a compelling expression. Even though the music may express narrative elements directly at times, these moments would be transient. This view is also echoed by Markson (2017), who is of the opinion that in understanding the extramusical in Medtner, one should therefore be looking for “form and contents” presenting its own “inner-musical narrative inexpressible in words” but nevertheless provide “brief windows of cooperation with an extramusical narrative” (p. 21).

### **3.3.5. Remembering (the Eternal Song)**

The idea of a theme as the most important element is alluded to throughout *The Muse and the Fashion*. Medtner (1951) wrote that

...In art the principal reality are the themes. The principal themes of art are themes of eternity, existing in themselves. Artistic “discovery” consists only in an individual unfolding of these themes (p. 3).

Medtner connected this elevated status of the theme to a primordial “initial song” which embodied the spirit of music in its inexpressible form of unexpressed themes (Medtner, 1951, p. 10). This acts as a mystical source of inspiration for the art of music in which it is expressed through songs and its themes (Medtner, 1951, p. 12), through an act of remembrance of the “eternal” “initial song” (Medtner, 1951, p. 65). Medtner reinforced this idea through an inscription of Lermontov’s *The Angel* which prefaces *The Muse and the Fashion*. The poetry references the “lost heavenly melodies” that could no longer be heard. Rowen (2015) explained that this suggests a sort of “striving to remember that heavenly song” (p. 202).

From heaven at midnight an angel took wing  
And soft was the song he did sing;  
The moon, and the stars, and the clouds on his way  
Paid heed to that heavenly lay,  
  
The bliss of the innocent spirits he told  
Whom paradise-bowers enfold.  
In praise of the great God of heaven he sang,  
And straight from his heart the song sprang,  
  
A young soul he bore to her birth, and he wept  
The woes which the world for her kept.  
And in that young soul there still echoed for long  
The sound, without words, of his song.  
  
For long in the world no repose she could find,  
Strange desires were haunting her mind,  
The music of heaven she heard at her birth  
Still drowned the dull songs of the earth.

Figure 5. *The Angel* by Lermontov, translation by Patrick Thompson (as cited in Medtner, 1951, p. 5).

Medtner (1951) later clarified and connected to compositional terms this act of recollection, writing that

The theme is above all an intuition. It is acquired and not invented... .While all the other senses of the musical language lend themselves to a certain extent to a schematic definition, the theme is ineffable, and can be defined or

expressed only by itself... ... it is the brightest seal of individuality (pp. 43, 46).

Essentially referring to the process of the acquisition of a theme, Medtner further explained that “the *intuition* of a theme is like an unexpected illumination of its image as by a flash of lightning, after which the artist need only recall it, mentally reconstruct its disappearing contours” (p. 46), and that a composer’s “whole action and work is justified by an uninterrupted contemplation of the theme” (p. 43). This appeal to intuition was also intimately connected to the symbolic inspiration Muse figure.

Even though Medtner believed that a composer should arrive at a theme through a process that is not to be mechanically conceived, this did not mean that Medtner did not develop his themes further through thematic processes. For one, Medtner referred to *theme* as “the kernel of form, its principal contents; and the development of the theme which is, as it were, the opening up of the kernel, the whole form of the composition” (Medtner, 1951, 45). This is also supported by Eiges who recounted that Medtner had remarked that “a theme comes to mind; mostly on a walk. Then the bass is outlined, the rest falls into place (Eiges, n.d.).”

Medtner (1951) added that the *theme* “is the most simple and accessible part of the work. It unifies it and holds within itself the clue to all subsequent complexity and variety of the work. It is the law that regulates each separate work” (p. 44). This indicates the *theme* could be regarded as a fragmentary motivic material itself, or as a larger unit that contains fragmentary motivic material shared throughout a work. In addition to that, Medtner (1951) wrote that “often it needs other themes as its vassals. Suggesting them, calling them forth, it often reveals in its own flowering of seeds (p. 44),” which indicates a developmental nature of the motivic fragments, whether through the merger of a different motivic fragment, or through thematic processes.

Medtner (1951) also added that “the theme is not always, and not only a melody (p. 44)” citing the “continuous melodies” of Bach turning into the most complex construction of form. Nevertheless, he conceded that “more often than not, the theme is included in, and can be most easily and lovingly contemplated, in the shape of a melody.” This indicates to us that the theme is most easily identifiable with a clear-cut line of melodic material. Finally, he adds that “each inspired theme bears in itself all the elements and senses of the musical language<sup>7</sup>; it has its own pulsation (rhythm), its own chiaroscuro (harmony), its own breathing (cadence), and its own perspective (form)” (Medtner, 1951, p. 44).

Putting these descriptions together, the *theme* refers to a singular line of melodic-motivic material that could encompass fragments or a larger unit perceived as a melodic phrase. A *theme* would also encompass elements that is governed by rhythm, “harmony” (sonorities), cadence and form.

Thus far, one sees that the theme in Medtner’s view encompassed two parts, existing as a contemplated sound connected to the inexpressible “initial song,” an *absolute simplicity*, arrived through “intuition.” On the other hand, there was also an appeal to further treatment and development of the theme through various processes. These two parts had to come together as a whole, transferring contemplation into writing and sound.

“Intuition” became synonymous and symbolic of “the Muse” from the title *The Muse and the Fashion*. This concept of “the Muse” appearing as an inspirational figure is a rather significant one in Medtner’s thoughts. Other than appearing as the title of the given book, it appeared as a song title to Op. 29 No. 1, and according to Boyd (1980), inspired the Op. 27 *Sonata-Ballade* and the Piano Quintet (posth.).

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<sup>7</sup> The explanation in parenthesis are Medtner’s. Strictly speaking, Medtner was using the word “harmony” very loosely. Sonority will be more precise.

### 3.4. The Forgotten Melodies and *The Muse and the Fashion*

Having examined the five *Medtnerian Ideals*, I now turn to the strongest resonances where these ideas are felt in connection to the *Forgotten Melodies*. For one, Medtner (1951) asserted that

In art, all things must be experienced not in a new way but anew, in a process of everlasting renovation... ... only the mysterious inspiration remains an eternally new shore (p. 110).

He elaborated further in reference to the homophonic and polyphonic styles:

The new is only a renovation of the old. It repudiates in the old only what removed it from the centre, but in its return to the centre it seeks the past **forgotten** (emphasis mine) ways of surrounding it. In this desire of unity both styles showed a correlation, a balance of the elements of music (melody, harmony, rhythm and structure) (p. 64).

What Medtner was suggesting is that in an ideal composition, one needed to maintain roots to the collective understanding of musical elements (theme, sonorities, form), and at the same time, look to inspire through original individuality; a balance of seemingly opposite forces. Implicit here in a “remembering” an object that is “forgotten” is also a look to the *Medtnerian ideal of renewal*.

The *Medtnerian ideal of Remembering* which I identified earlier as symbolic of “the Muse” and of how Medtner viewed the acquisition of a theme through “intuition” was exemplified through Medtner’s collection of unfinished themes in a notebook, which explained that “ideas, or motifs, would occur to him a second or third time after having been “forgotten”, whereupon he would note them down again,” adding that it was these “insistently recurrent” motifs that he would use in compositions (Martyn, 2016, p. 135). According to Martyn (2016), it was this compositional practice that Medtner used in the *Forgotten Melodies Cycles* (*Forgotten Motifs* in its original Russian meaning) (p. 135). In addition to that, Medtner had



made reference in letters to these notebooks in discussion of the *Forgotten Melodies* (Martyn, 2016, p. 134). These notebooks, encircling the “initial song,” similarly exerted its own pull to “remember” the forgotten “initial song.” Given that Medtner (1951) had written of “melody as the most beautiful form of the theme” (p. 48), “melody” is also symbolic of “initial song.”

Putting “forgotten” and “melody” together, one arrives at the *Forgotten Melodies* cycle. These themes of reminding the reader of not forgetting the collective “rules” of music composition and to seek the intuition of the eternally infinite “initial song,” are underlying throughout *The Muse and the Fashion*. Perhaps as a precis of what there has been said, the final page read:

The songs of the earth must be human; they must have their earthly soil, their roots, their images, in order to be comprehensible to man, But when the seal of the **remembrance of "that song"** (all emphasis mine) is completely effaced, when its one sound "without words, but living" no longer vivifies, no longer inspires our songs, they become dull... ... In listening to them we are seized by great weariness, and in our weariness we helplessly grab after the words, **endeavour to remember something that we have forgotten.**

On the other hand the most artless (without pretense) earthly song that has succeeded in **remembering "that song"**, contains and replaces<sup>8</sup> for every musician the whole wisdom of all theories, all schools.

The one sound of it "without words but living" makes all words unnecessary (p. 146).

While these ideas espoused in *The Muse and the Fashion* should also hold true for all other of Medtner’s works, by titling the cycles *Forgotten Melodies*, Medtner could have been finding a more explicit way to express these thoughts through the music.

The close relation between the *Forgotten Melodies* cycles and the philosophy behind *The Muse and the Fashion* is perhaps also evident in Medtner’s self-written advertisement of the first concert of the *Forgotten Melodies* outside of Russia:

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<sup>8</sup> Here Medtner was likely referencing the perceived Apollonian trope. Medtner was also perhaps looking at matters in an overly idealized manner. This is because even Medtner himself had to utilize an established tradition to communicate his thoughts.

Nicolaus Medtner  
Fresh out of the Russian backwoods!  
Nothing revolutionary!!  
Only a modest revolt!!  
On the programme:  
“Forgotten Melodies,”  
Which he plays from memory all the same (Flamm, 2005, p. 4).

Here “revolt” is indicative of the *Forgotten Melodies* written in reaction to the contemporary trends. Next, “Russian backwoods” is an attempt in humour to refer to the perceived “backward” style of his writing which is implicitly the “remembering” of the collective “laws.” That all these threads were also found in *The Muse and the Fashion* is indicative of the close nature between Medtner’s writings and the *Forgotten Melodies* cycles. In Medtner’s self-assessment of *The Muse and the Fashion*, he noted that “if they (the ideas) should seem to many to be ‘**old and familiar truths**,’ I shall consider myself happy” (Medtner, 1951, p. 4), which also ties in with his perception of these *Forgotten Melodies* cycles.

When one considers that *The Muse and the Fashion* was written some fifteen years after the *Forgotten Melodies*, it is likely that the *Forgotten Melodies* functioned in its place as a means of expression before the rumination. This is supported by Medtner’s correspondence that “it should have been written at least twenty years ago, since my agonizing bewilderment at the prevalent creative practice of the present time began more than thirty years ago” (Martyn, 2016, p. 216). In the *Forgotten Melodies* cycles, the subtle message in music was not easy to grasp, and so Medtner had to find a way in the form of *The Muse and the Fashion*. In sort of a “reverse engineering” process, *The Muse and the Fashion* enabled access to the subtleties of the *Forgotten Melodies* cycles.

Thus far I have established the *Forgotten Melodies* cycles to be particularly related to the *Medtnerian Ideals* of *Renewal*, *Remembering*, and the surrounding circumstances in which both writings and music are inextricably close in thought. The other *Medtnerian Ideals* of *Balance of Simplicity and Complexity*, *Chiaroscuro*, and *Artistic Image* will also need to be

identified through analysis. *The Muse and the Fashion* would therefore be an apposite lens to read the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle through the five Medtnerian Ideals I identified.

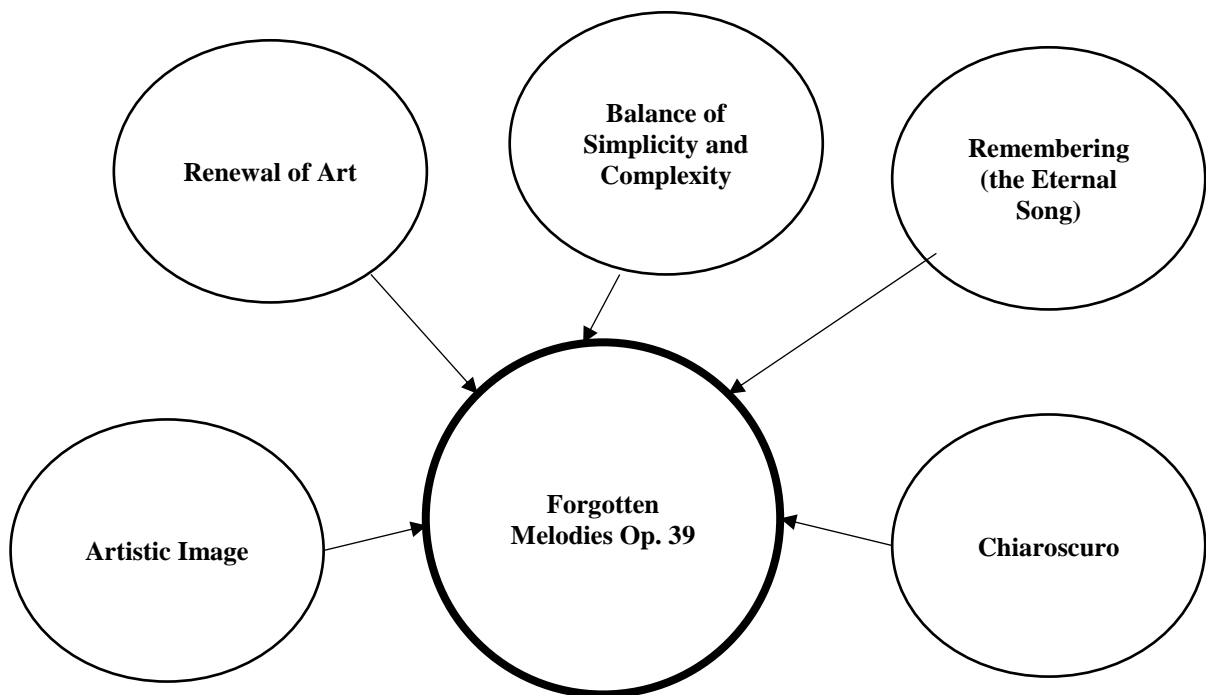


Figure 6. Illustration of the Medtnerian Ideals of *The Muse and the Fashion* that should ideally be exemplified by Op. 39.

### 3.5. Summary

This chapter began with an overview of *The Muse and the Fashion* which took a look at its historical circumstances. This conflicting reception of the writings indicated that Medtner's views had to be considered in multiple dimensions and clarified.

Following that, I examined the influences behind *The Muse and the Fashion*, in which older brother Emil Medtner played a big role. Together using their readings of the German philosophers, particularly through Nietzsche, both Medtner brothers saw music as an avenue for cultural critique. This eventually gave rise to *The Muse and the Fashion*, which critiqued the contemporary trends of music, pitting the symbolic "Muse" against the "Fashion." As much

as the writings were a critique of the contemporary trends, it also reflected a side in which Medtner developed a philosophy of compositional practices, which I synthesized into five themes known as the *Medtnerian Ideals* of (1) *Balance of Simplicity and Complexity*, (2) *Chiaroscuro*, (3) *Renewal of Art*, (4) *Artistic Image*, and (5) *Remembering (the Eternal Song)*.

The following diagram summarizes the compositional process, from the metaphysical contemplation to the action of composition, to the final idealized musical product exhibiting the five *Medtnerian Ideals* which shows a balance of opposite elements.

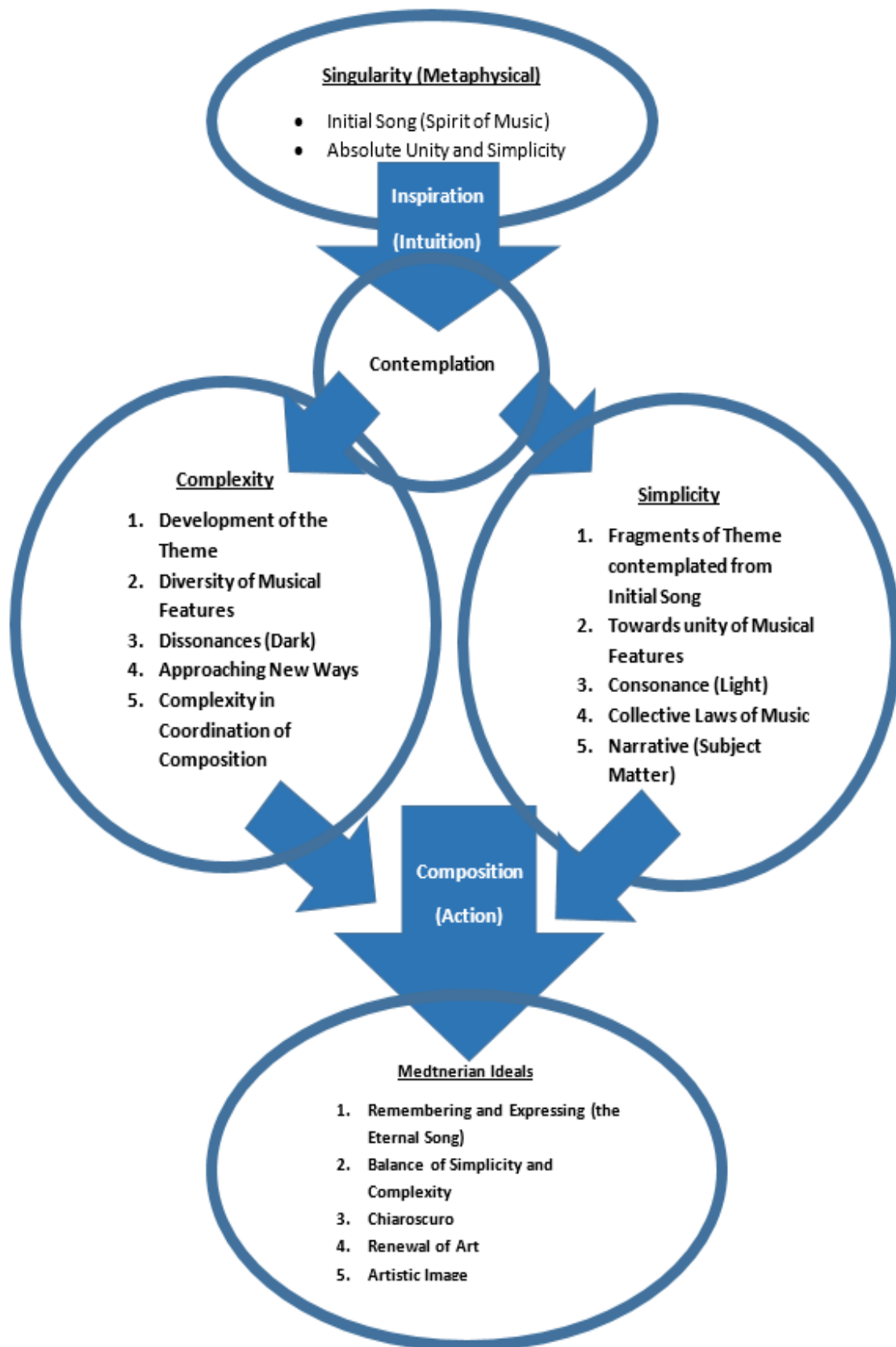


Figure 7. Summary of Medtner's compositional process from the metaphysical contemplation to the action of composition through a balance of opposites of simplicity and complexity. These compositions would encapsulate the Medtnerian ideals.

## Chapter 4. Second Forgotten Melodies Cycle Op. 39

### 4.1. Overview

Medtner premiered all three *Forgotten Melodies* cycles in 1921, giving two identical recitals just days apart at the Moscow Conservatory. According to accounts, the Small Hall was crammed to the brim with students “sitting by the legs of the piano,” and Medtner was well-received (Martyn, 2016, p. 143). The Op. 39 cycle consists of five pieces: *Meditazione*, *Romanza*, *Primavera*, *Canzona matinata*, and *Sonata tragica*. Nevertheless, the 1921 recitals were the only time Medtner ever performed the Op. 39 cycle in its entirety, subsequently choosing to include only selected movements in his programme instead. At the same time, Medtner insisted that the *Canzona matinata* had to always precede the *Sonata tragica* (Martyn, 2016, p. 140), suggesting a link between the two.

The first of the cycle, *Meditazione* has been described as “one of Medtner’s potent inventions,” in which Martyn (2016) compared the introductory ascending three-note figure to rising “out of the depths of consciousness” (p. 138). A similar passage of such writing is also observed in the opening of the Op. 34 No. 1 *Skazka Magic Violin*, though this idea is developed more extensively in *Meditazione*. The element of song is featured prominently through a lyrical theme, which Martyn (2016) characterized as a “melody of meditation... ..imbued with melancholy and tormented introspection” (p.138).

Maintaining a direct link to the preceding *Meditazione*, the second piece *Romanza* opens with a quotation of the theme in *Meditazione* which would feature as thematic material prominently throughout. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable change in the sonorities used, as well as a pivot into chromaticism. A dance-like accompaniment pattern also takes over. Martyn (2016) alluded to this as a transformation of “the same brooding reflection” into a “kind of haunted waltz” (p. 139).

*Primavera* (Spring-Tale), owing to its evocative titling referencing spring, is perhaps the most picturesque movement of the cycle. Marking a departure from the darker tone of the preceding pieces, *Primavera* is optimistic and forward looking. Set in a major key now, the predominant accompaniment pattern comprising of *leggiere* semiquavers imbues the work with a driving momentum. A tender central section marked *con molto tenerezza* offers a brief interlude through its slower tempi, and slowed down harmonic pace. This section also alludes to an element of dance through the use of syncopation.

*Canzona matinata* (morning song) in its tertian vertically configured sonorities that seem to reflect functional harmonic practices, and in its avoidance of harsh dissonances, provides a point of idyllic respite within the cycle. Framed in a ternary design, a darker central section contrasts with the outer sections.

The final work of the cycle, *Sonata tragica*, is a remarkable one-movement sonata charged with emotional intensity and lyricism. At the same time, it features a fascinating structural design. The sonata opens with several large chords which introduces the theme, in which Martyn (2016) described as “blows of fate” (p. 140). The *leggiere* accompaniment pattern also makes a return, though this time with an element of agitation. In an almost relentless fashion, the intensity rarely ever lets up throughout the entire work. Structurally, there are noteworthy differences as compared to the standard sonata-allegro form. The sonata features three theme groups, followed by a peculiarly long developmental region within the exposition. In recapitulation, only the first theme returns, followed by a realization of a substantial *quasi cadenza* section in place of the other themes.

Summarily, each individual movement of the cycle possess distinct and perhaps peculiar qualities that are both musical and extramusical in nature even at surface level. This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of these qualities within the Op. 39 cycle. A section prefaces the musical analysis by clarifying the nomenclature use, particularly between musical terms

and the corresponding analogies to *chiaroscuro*. Following that, individual movements are examined through features outlined in the next section. Guided by the musical analysis, allusory extramusical themes are examined next. Finally, this chapter examines the cyclical elements contained throughout the cycle.

## **4.2. Musical Nomenclature**

### **4.2.1. Local Harmonic Support, Global Harmonic Structures and Chiaroscuro**

#### **Local Harmonic Support**

For each movement, I begin with an analysis of the local harmonic support. This will be by identifying the vertical sonorities on a local scale, how modulation is affected from one section to another. “Localized harmonic support” will refer to the understanding of the patterns in tertian vertical sonorities through harmonic reduction.

#### **Global Harmonic Structures**

From the analysis of the local harmonic support, global harmonic structure will be determined. This will be through examining the tonal centres of each section, and the home tonal centre by explaining how this is established throughout the work. “Global harmonic structure” will refer to the tonal centres of the different sections, that when considered in its entirety, give rise to a perception of form.

As this study involves compositional practices of the early twentieth century, it is needed to make clear the terms used. In this study, “Traditional tonal practice/harmony” refers to the practices aligned along Riemann’s functional harmony, in which in any given key, there are only three functionally different chords: I, V and IV. (Apel, 1974, p. 337).

According to Piston (1951), determining tonality in the traditional sense encompasses examination of the “process of setting forth the organized relationship of the tones to one among them which is to be the tonal centre” (p. 31). Piston emphasized the importance of the scale degrees  $\hat{1}$ ,  $\hat{5}$  and  $\hat{4}$  as the “mainstay of tonality,” and  $\hat{7}$  in its tendency to resolve to the



tonic (p. 31). In addition, the emphasis of  $\hat{3}$  and  $\hat{6}$  in III or VI chords are perceived by the ear as tonal degrees in “another scale” (p. 33). Therefore the chords I, IV, V and II were primarily used, with III and III for variety. In common practice, the strongest indicator of tonality is V, which Piston (1959) elaborated to be more significant than I. This is because IV-V and II-V progressions “cannot be interpreted in more than one tonality” without chromaticism. Additionally, V-VI is also another strong marker of tonality, although this could be perceived I-II in the dominant key (pp. 33-35). Essentially, a chord was usually assigned functional value; to be determined not as an isolated phenomenon by its degree, but by the function within a series of progressions (Apel, 1974, p. 337).

According to Bitzan (2019), Medtner’s music is “basically diatonic, except for occasional passages” (p. 94). Nevertheless, the use of modality and chromaticism, particularly in chromatic alterations of chords, in Medtner’s music—in the theoretical traditional markers of tonality—either obscure the perception of a tonal centre or not have any specific tonal centre. This suggests that Medtner’s music requires a different understanding of tonal *allusions*. Therefore this study refers to a “tonal centre” as an allusion of a traditional tonal centre determined by non-traditional theoretical means.

In order to understand how these tonal allusions are established, I draw from *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice* (2011) by Tymoczko which describes five features that contribute to a sense of tonality, encompassing tonality in a *non-traditional sense*. The features are:

- (1) Conjunct melodic motion
- (2) Acoustic consonance
- (3) Harmonic consistency
- (4) Limited macroharmony
- (5) Centricity (Tymoczko, 2011, p. 4).

According to Tymoczko (2011), **conjunct melodic motion** indicates that in perception of tonality “melodies tend to move by short distances from note to note” since wide leaps tend to

indicate discontinuity. Secondly, **acoustic consonance** in its “sonic restfulness”, is a marker of tonality, as consonant harmonies are preferred to dissonant harmonies, and tend to be used at points of musical stability, in eighteenth century diatonic tonal practice. Thirdly, **harmonic consistency** refers to “(sonorities) in a passage of music, whatever they may be, tend to be structurally similar to one another.” Looking at the figure below, (a) and (b) in their triadic and cluster sonorities exhibit a consistency in sonority type. On the other hand, (c) in the figure below which features an alternation of both tertian and cluster sonorities does not exhibit a consistency.



Figure 8. Harmonic Consistency example: (a) and (b) exhibits consistency in sonorities but (c) does not (Tymoczko, 2011, p. 6).

Next, **limited macroharmony** refers a small number of pitches heard over a “total collection of notes heard over moderate spans of musical time” in both horizontal and vertical domains. This is because “tonal music tends to use relatively small macroharmonies, often involving five to eight notes.” Finally, **centricity** refers to a singular pitch made more prominent than the other pitch over medium period of time, thus “appearing more frequently and serving as a goal of musical motion” (pp. 4-6). This set of markers will be used to determine the allusory tonal centre, especially when **traditional markers** of a tonal centre are not present.

In addition, as noted in earlier, Medtner’s principle of “departure and return” is a function of modulation and form. Therefore, this study defines a “home tonal centre” to be the main allusory tonal centre that propels musical trajectory on the large scale.

Finally, it should be noted that even though these procedures in this study may still appear to be rather closely connected to traditional functional harmonic procedures, it is an

allusory one. The roman numerals ascribed to the sonorities are but a means to refer to the sonorities in light of tonal allusions.

## **Form**

To discuss form, I rely on prototypical models drawn from the models of Hepokoski and Darcy (2006) and Caplin (1998), but only as a point of homage and departure. Even though Medtner did not leave any “schemes” or “models” in *The Muse and the Fashion*, he declared “form is harmony” (Medtner, 1951, 49). Therefore taking this into consideration, my analysis of Op.39 will consider elements of harmonic support, cadential moments, and tonal centres, together with gestures such as considerations of coherence of patterns, continuity and discontinuity.

## **A Visual Arts Frame of Reference**

An illustration that connects the musical terms to the visual arts is as follows. The following figure shows a light beam cast onto a ball. This results in a brighter side facing the light source, and shadows on the other. This is achieved through gradation across the curved surface of the sphere. The gradually changing shades allows a tonal unity through a range of value (not to be confused with tonality). To stress a point, the light and shadows are formless unless coordinated and defined by the gradations. This allows a perception of an emergent volume (three-dimensionality) in an otherwise two-dimensional space. The colours here used are mostly shades of black, indicating a common range of value.

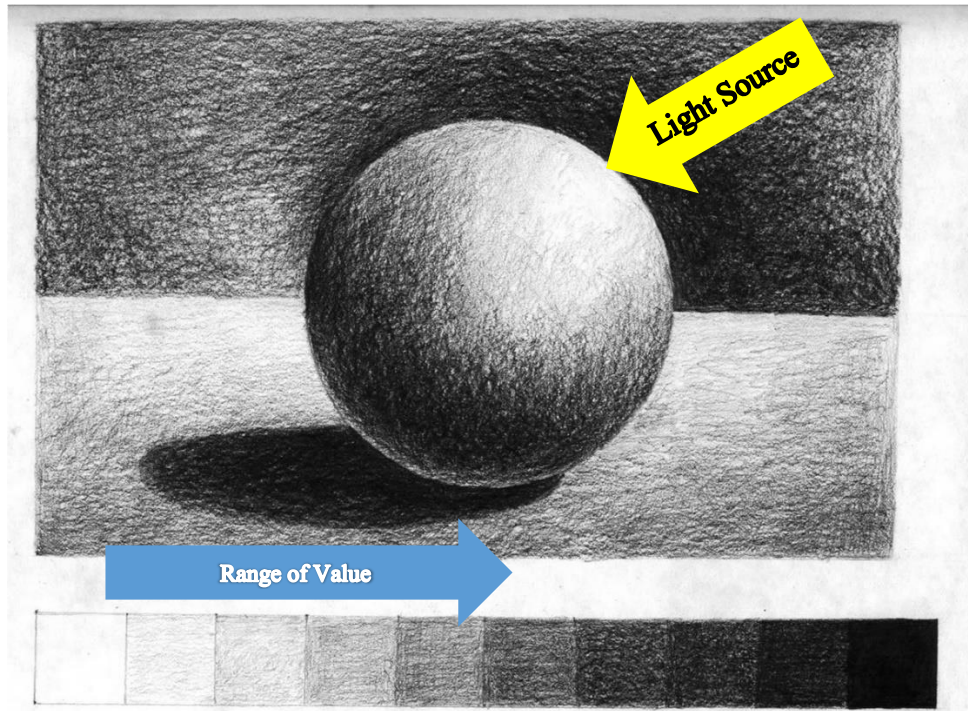


Figure 9. Chiaroscuro Spheres (Sherr, 2020).

Analogously,<sup>9</sup> one could look at an emergent musical work (three-dimensionality) that is created out of strategies that establishes a home tonal centre (main colour) that acts as the centre for which other satellite tonalities (other related colours) encircle. Each tonal centre (distinct colour) is alluded to by functional/extended tonal techniques (coordinated gradation of light and shadow), which is essentially a manipulation of consonance (light) and dissonance (shadows). To stress a point, dissonant (shadows) or consonant (light) sonorities are meaningless alone unless coordinated by strategies of tension building or dissonance resolving to convey tonality/tonal allusions.

These gestures give rise to the boundaries of the section (contours), giving rise to form on a larger scale. Secondary tonal centres (passing colours) can also appear within a tonal centre. Large scale patterns in gradations of sonorities (visual rhythm) can create a sense of motion. By using closely differentiated sonorities of an identifiable harmonic style (close and finely differentiated range of value), one can achieve a region of homogeneity (tonal unity).

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix A for a comparative chart.

#### 4.2.2. Theme and Thematic Development

In this study, the term **thematic idea** will refer to a singular line of motivic material coming together into a clearly perceptible melody that is complete with cadential gestures. References to rhythm, harmonic support and accompanying texture will be made where necessary. Smaller fragments of the theme will be referred to as **motivic material**. **Thematic ideas** that fall under one larger section, with the ending determined by considering cadential gestures, will be referred to as **theme groups**.

To label motivic material, the following symbols will be used for each movement. Numbers in superscript will be used to differentiate the different motivic material. So  $\mu^1$  and  $\mu^2$  are completely different. In addition, the subscripts will denote thematic transformation processes. If a similar process is applied a second time to the same fragment, a number behind will follow. For example:  $\mu_{aug1}^3$  and  $\mu_{aug2}^3$  suggests two different augmentation process applied to  $\mu^3$ .

Movement	Symbol
Meditazione	$\mu$
Romanza	$\rho$
Primavera	$\phi$
Canzona matinata	$\kappa$
Sonata tragica	$\tau$

Figure 10. Symbols use for each movement in labelling motivic material.

<b>Transformation</b>	<b>Short form</b>
Augmentation	$\mu_{aug}$
Diminution	$\mu_{dim}$
Rhythm change	$\mu_{rhy}$
Intervallic change	$\mu_{int}$
Transposition	$\mu_{trans}$
Inversion	$\mu_{inv}$
Retrograde	$\mu_{ret}$
Ornamentation	$\mu_{orn}$
Expansion	$\mu_{exp}$

Figure 11. Nomenclature of thematic processes applied to the motivic material.

### 4.3. I: Meditazione

#### 4.3.1. Octatonic Modes

The octatonic mode will be referred to frequently in the analysis to follow. Two transpositions exist on the original set, thus giving three possibilities. To differentiate among the different transpositions, I will refer to the original set as (Oct<sub>0</sub>), and subsequent transpositions as Oct<sub>1</sub> and Oct<sub>2</sub>.



Figure 12. Octatonic Modes in the various transpositions.

#### 4.3.2. Analysis of Harmonic Support and Structure

A summary of the harmonic structure is given in the figure below. There is a pervasive use of the octatonic collections as harmonic devices. Due to their symmetric nature, this obscures the perception of traditional tonal harmony, alluding to *chiaroscuro*. Nevertheless, there are strategies in which *Meditazione* centres itself in C# minor, coexisting with the octatonic modes in an extended tonal practice. The proportion of the work is balanced, with the introduction and exposition roughly equaling the number of bars in the development and recapitulation with a closing coda.

	Allusory Tonal Centre	Bars
<b>Introduction</b>	V of C# minor → V of A major → V of F minor → V of G# minor	1 – 33 34 – 48 41 – 80
<b>Exposition</b>		
Theme 1	C# octatonic → V of E major	81 – 128
Theme 2	V of E major → V of G major → V of Bb major	129 – 165
<b>Development</b>	-	166 – 224
<b>Recapitulation</b>		
Theme 1	C# minor	225 – 260
Theme 2	C# octatonic	261 – 298
<b>Coda</b>	C# centric	299 – 314

Figure 13. Structure of Meditazione.

The first twenty bars feature a broken triadic ascent three times in which a fixed set of rules governs the order of pitches drawn from Oct<sub>2</sub> in all iterations. The figure below illustrates the second sequence (bars 9-17). There is a symmetrical pitch cycle that outlines tertian triads of descending thirds.<sup>10</sup> Respelled enharmonically, the triads read: [Fm → D → B → G# → Fm ...]. The strategic placement of G# as the lowest note, and bass (bar 17) also hints of a structural importance to this pitch, alluding to  $\hat{5}$  of C# minor.

Figure 14. Octatonic collection arranged as triads in an algorithmic way, second iteration. Bars 9-17.

<sup>10</sup> A similar tertian relationship is in fact described by Rimsky-Korsakov at the end of his treatise under false progressions in the relationship of a third (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1886/2005, p. 99)



A C# minor tonal centre is next alluded to through perceptually the dominant harmony that also encompasses chromatic passing tones in the middle voice (bars 25-31, Figure 15). This reinforces an allusion of a tonal centre since this is the first instance of a prolonged prominent tertian sonority. In addition, that the chromatic passing tones also weakens the octatonic mode temporarily.

Figure 15. Chromatic passing tones over pedal tones. Bars 25-55.

The next sequence involves an inverted pedal [C# and A], with the bass descending in chromatic fashion, and accompanied by accented passing chords in duplets (bars 33-40, Figure 15). This passage outlines a plan to move towards perceptually V of A major (bar 41). Here, another harmonic sequence follows the allusory dominant pedal (bars 49-56). This is essentially a transposition of the previous sequence (bars 25-40). This process leads back to figurations reminiscent of the opening. Nevertheless it is transposed to Oct<sub>0</sub> (bar 57) that eventually pivots into an allusory V<sup>9</sup> of G# minor. This is alluded to by the bass sonority  $\hat{5}$  of G# (bar 73), and terminating with the pitches [F $\times$  D# A#] (bar 80). The following figure illustrates this.



Figure 16. Oct<sub>0</sub> sequence, and allusory V of G#. Bars 71-80.

Despite regions supported by tertian triads, this section outlines an encirclement of the furthest elements from the tonic such as “accidental harmonic formations,” and dissonant chords. The lack of clear cadential gestures compounded together with the pervasive use of Oct<sub>0</sub> and Oct<sub>2</sub>, creates an ambiguity in which the perception of a tonal center is only alluded to. Considering that this begins the entire cycle, this concurs with Medtner’s writings, in which shadows are set up in order to provide potential for resolution into consonance (Medtner, 1951, p. 24).

The first thematic idea begins perceptibly in G# minor, alluded to by #7̂ [Fx] and dominant harmony (bar 83) as shown in Figure 17. Next, B# embedded within the melody enables a shift towards an allusory C# minor centre, supported via a half-cadence gesture:  $vii^{\circ 4}_3 \rightarrow i^6 \rightarrow vii^6$  (bars 88-91). Nevertheless as  $i^6$  is sonically less restful, and that  $vii^6$  is chromatically altered, it is a shaded hint of the tonal centre. The pitches used in the melody (bars 81-94) are also solely made out of the Oct<sub>0</sub>, except for the sole inclusion of G# (bar 91). This indicates that Oct<sub>0</sub> plays a key structural and melodic role. Additionally, the odd inclusion of G# alludes to a C# minor tonal centre.

Meditamente ( $\text{♩} = 52$ )

C# minor:  $i^6$

Figure 17. Bars 81-98.

Next, the thematic idea appears perceptibly over a  $i^6$  of C# minor (bar 97, Figure 18). However, the persistence of Fx (bar 97 – 106) next blurs the perception of diatonicism again. As it turns out, Fx is a pivot into  $\text{Oct}_0$ , which generates the next melodic sequence.

Figure 18. Thematic idea outlining the  $\text{Oct}_0$  collection. Bars 97-106.

Eventually, the appearance of chromatic passing tones (from bars 103) chips away at the octatonicism. The harmonic rhythm also quickens, perceptually  $i^6 \rightarrow V^7/V \rightarrow bII^{Fr6}$  of an allusory C# minor centre (bars 105-109, Figure 19). The symmetry of  $Fr^6$  enables a fleeting allusory modulation to F# minor by approaching a climatic point and approaching  $V^7$  of F# minor (bars 107-110). This pure tertian sonority—relatively consonant—provides momentary relief. This corresponds to Medtner’s (1951) view in which “casual harmonic formations” encircles a relatively consonant seventh chord (pp. 21-22).

105

*crescendo*

C# minor:  $i^6$

$V^7/V$

F# minor:  $Fr^6$

111

*f*

C# minor:  $V^7/iv$

F# minor:  $V^7$

$ii^{\emptyset 6}_5$

Figure 19. Temporary modulation into the climax of first theme group (bars 107-112).

Next, a transitory passage (bars 118-125, Figure 20) is guided by small non-simultaneous movements in the different voices, towards perceptually  $V^9$  of E major, another moment of relative consonance and stability. Given the expectation of standard practices, this is perceptually the dominant sonority of the relative major (bar 125) of the allusory C# minor.

Nevertheless, this is also an illusion as the tonal centre of E major is never established clearly.

This marks an end to the first thematic group.

Figure 20 shows a musical score for a transitory passage from bars 117 to 125. The score is in E major (three sharps). The music features a piano (p) dynamic. The passage includes various chords and melodic lines with fingerings and articulations. A 'diminuendo' marking is present in bar 117, and a 'poco calando' marking is in bar 123. The passage ends with a chord labeled 'E major: V<sup>9</sup> con ped.'

Figure 20. Transitory passage. Bars 117-125.

Thus far in the first thematic group, a pivot into triadic harmonic support with a clear bass support aids in the allusion of diatonicism. This creates the perception of two tonal centres of G# minor and C# minor through the appearance of dominant sonorities. On the other hand the pivot into Oct<sub>0</sub> shades diatonicism.

The second thematic idea pits two seemingly functionally unrelated chords [B<sup>9</sup> and Am<sup>07</sup>] against each other (bars 129-131, Figure 21). Nevertheless, according to Rimsky-Korsakov (1886), Am<sup>07</sup> can be looked upon<sup>11</sup> as an augmented sixth chord (p. 95) as a means

<sup>11</sup> This appears in a discussion of augmented sixths, Rimsky-Korsakov demonstrates an example: vii<sup>#6</sup><sub>4</sub> in C as a means of modulating enharmonically to Eb. The vii<sup>#6</sup><sub>4</sub> in C can be enharmonically read as vii<sup>#6</sup><sub>4</sub> in Eb going into I.

for modulation. This implies  $Am^{\emptyset 7}$  is a modulatory pivot by “enharmonicism.” Following this, and given the lingering effect of the half-cadence allusion in E major closing the first theme group,  $B^9$  and  $Am^{\emptyset 7}$  can be perceived as  $V^9$  and  $vii^{\#6}_4$  of E major respectively, with  $Am^{\emptyset 7}$  also  $vii^{\#6}_4$  in C# minor. Despite the perceived instability in the tonal centre due to the rather dissonant sonorities and non-functional relations, the passage establishes in a way stability through the repetition. The competition between both sonorities leaves  $B^9$ , and by extension the allusory E major, triumphant at the end (bar 141).

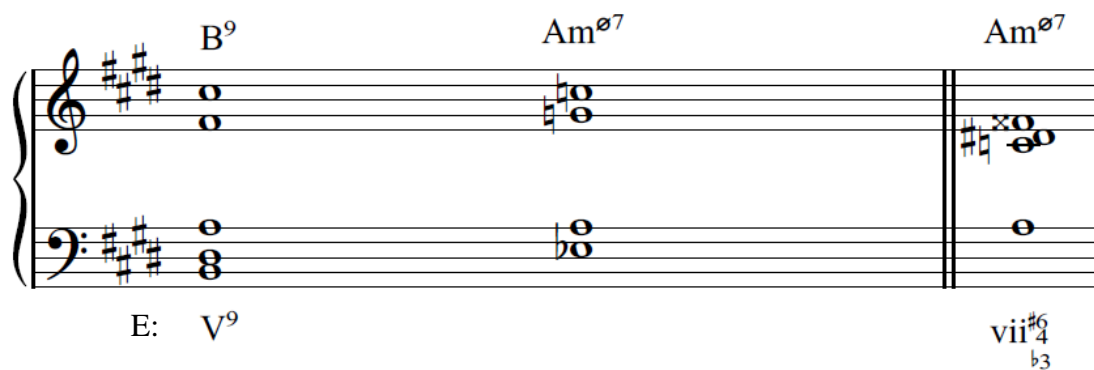


Figure 21. Two competing harmonies in second theme group  $B^9$  and  $Am^{\emptyset 7}$ .  $Am^{\emptyset 7}$  is enharmonically respelled on the right side.

A transitory passage begins next with the appearance of  $Oct_1$  (bar 141), together with  $Oct_0$  in an ascending scale sequenced by descending seconds (bars 141-145, Figure 22). The octatonic mode once again shades the tonal centre. The ascent arrives on competing variants of the motif  $\mu_2$  maintained over perceptibly  $B^9$ , followed by a movement into  $A^{maj7}$  (bars 145-148, Figure 23).



(Rimsky-Korsakov, 1886/2005, p. 95)

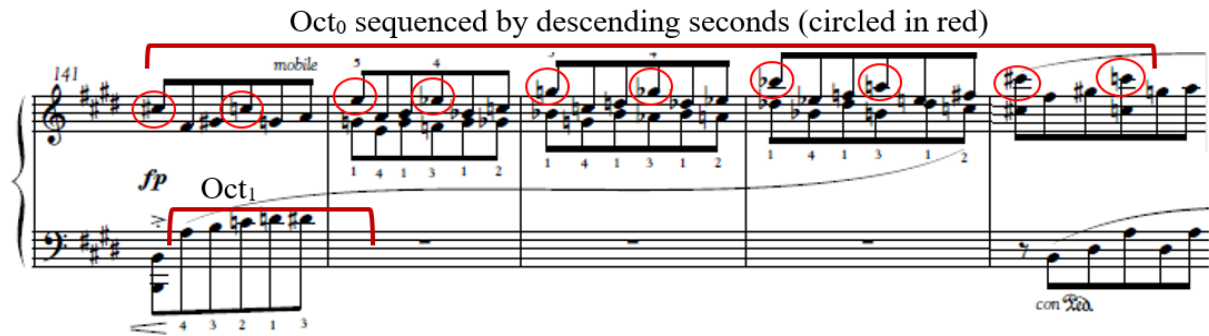


Figure 22. Oct<sub>0</sub> in the top voice of the figuration. Bars 141-145.

B<sup>9</sup>      (B<sup>b9</sup>)                      A<sup>maj7</sup>      (Am<sup>7</sup>)

Figure 23. Transitory bridge bars, bars 145-148.

The next section (bar 149) is a transposition of the second thematic idea heard earlier by a minor third interval. Given the prior framing, G major is thus alluded to next, with a mediating modulatory link between Am<sup>7</sup> and D<sup>9</sup> (ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>9</sup>). The closure of this section on a F<sup>9</sup> chord (bar 165) hints of a modulation into an allusory B<sup>b</sup> tonal centre due to prior framing (bar 141). Though this is once again, a play on the ears, as B<sup>b</sup> is never established.

The second thematic group presents an argument in which Medtner could be perceived as contradicting himself. Here the use of a dominant ninth chord alternating with a half-diminished seventh chord that is not closely related as significant structural anchors, together with the octatonic modes create an extended period of shadows and colours that obscures perception of a tonal centre. Considering that Medtner (1951) was vehemently against atonality, writing that “all attempts of past ‘inventors’ to alter the very foundation of the mode (... by proclaiming the principle of atonality) have turned the musical language into some sort

of jargon which in its extreme poverty showed no capacity for life” (p. 38). Even if Medtner did not mean so, this section could be perceived as a section lack of a tonic.

The development section begins with the characteristic descending second expanded upon into a *Dies Irae*-like contour (Figure 24). The vertical sonorities are built on sequences drawn from all three octatonic modes, with a fixed rotating order:  $\text{Oct}_2 \rightarrow \text{Oct}_0 \rightarrow \text{Oct}_1 \rightarrow \text{Oct}_2 \rightarrow \text{Oct}_0 \rightarrow \text{Oct}_1 \rightarrow \text{Oct}_2$  (Figure 25). These octatonic collections reduced into vertical sonorities generate stepwise a series of tertian dominant-sounding sonorities sequenced by an ascending semitone relation:  $V^7/Bb \rightarrow V^7/B \rightarrow V^7/C \rightarrow V^7/C\# \rightarrow V^7/D \rightarrow V^7/Eb \rightarrow V^7/E$  (Figure 25).

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece, marked "Appassionato". It consists of two systems of music, bars 165-173. The first system (bars 165-170) shows a descending second interval in the melody, which is expanded into a "Dies Irae" contour. The second system (bars 170-173) continues the contour. The score includes dynamic markings like "ff" and "espressivo", and performance instructions like "legatissimo". Red circles highlight specific notes in the bass line that correspond to the "Dies Irae" contour.

Figure 24. Die Irae contour in the melody. Bars 166-173.



165 167 169 171 175 177 179 181

$V^7/B^b$   $V^9/B$   $V^9/C$   $V^9/C^\sharp$   $V^9/D$   $V^9/E^b$   $V^9/E$   $V^7/B^b$

Oct<sub>2</sub> Oct<sub>0</sub> Oct<sub>1</sub> Oct<sub>2</sub> Oct<sub>0</sub> Oct<sub>1</sub> Oct<sub>2</sub>

E major:  $bII_5^6$

Figure 25. Harmonic reduction of dominant seventh sonorities sequenced by ascending semitones. Bars 165-181.

This sequence ends off in the periphery of E major, where  $bII_5^6$  of E is next alternated against  $V^7$  (bars 181-189). Even though the tonic is implied, it is never heard or resolved to; an illusion. Using  $bII_5^6$  of E as a link, the cadenza figurations of the opening introduction are reintroduced here (bar 185) once again highlighting the octatonic modes as a structural feature. This section reaches a climax on the pitch  $A_5$  (bar 197), just as it had in the introduction but this time with bass support. Oct<sub>2</sub> continues to generate the remainder of the bars, which winds down towards a tremolo that concludes on  $[D^\sharp]$ , eventually fading into silence (bar 224).

In the development section, any connection to a particular tonic is difficult to discern due to the octatonic modes as structural features. Nevertheless, tertian sonorities are still used, maintaining an illusion of diatonicism. Destabilization procedures in the development dates back to earlier times, though Medtner appears to be finding new shadings through the octatonic mode.

The next section restates the first thematic idea. This passes through a sequence that culminates on an allusory VI in C# minor (bar 245). As indicated in Figure 26, this is used as a pivot into an allusory E major tonal centre. Next, a lyrical melodic line begins, marking gravitation towards diatonicism, as the passage avoids emphasizing the characteristic half-step/whole-step of the octatonic mode. Following that, a transitory passage picks up and closes the first theme group on a  $V^7$  of C# minor. This alludes to the tonal centre prominently.

Figure 26. Return of first thematic idea. Secondary modulation to E major, with pivot into diatonicism. Bars 245-249.

The second thematic idea returns with competing chords [ $A^7$  and  $F^\#$ ] (bar 261-268, Figure 27). Due to the lingering effect of the closing half cadence in  $C^\#$  previously, this is perceptually  $Ger^6$  and IV respectively, which ambiguously suggests a  $C^\#$  centrality encompassing major/minor.<sup>12</sup> The  $C^\#$  minor tonal centre is briefly hinted through the appearance of  $\#7$  [ $B^\#$ ] (bars 269-270, circled in Figure 27). Both competing chords and  $B^\#$  belong to  $Oct_0$ , once again highlighting its structural significance. Next, a diminished seventh sonority drawn from  $Oct_0$ , in its symmetry, enables a modulatory excursion into the periphery of E major:  $vii^{o3}_4 \rightarrow I^6$  (bars 269-271). This is harmonically significant as  $I^6$  appears without dissonances.

<sup>12</sup> The sharpened submediant is a hint of the parallel major mode, or possibly harmonizing over the melodic minor mode, tracing back to the practices of Rimsky-Korsakov's chorale models (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1886, p. 5).

260 *ffz*

*sempre con moto e agitato*

C#: V<sup>7</sup> “Ger<sup>6</sup>” IV<sup>□</sup> (IV<sup>7</sup>)

265 *fz*

*diminuendo e calmando ma sempre mobile*

E: vii<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub>

270

Figure 27. Bars 260-273.



Next, through voice leading, the musical passage arrives on perceptually  $\flat VI$  of E (bar 274), which is also contained within  $Oct_0$ . Next, the outer voices of the triad expands and forms a tritone, which propels the trajectory to resolve back to the  $A^7$  triad (Figure 28). This brings the musical passage perceptually back to  $Ger^6$ , which alternates against IV again, thus still suggesting a C# centricity.

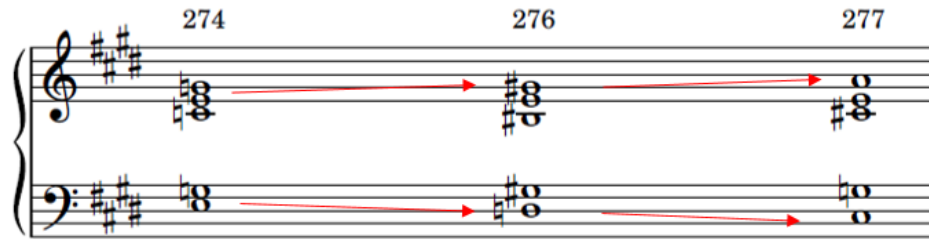


Figure 28. Harmonic excursion into tritone (D-G#) that resolves back into Ger<sup>6</sup> of C# (enharmonically spelled). Bars 274-277.

The image shows a musical score for three systems of bars (285-289, 290-294, 295-297) in a key of D major (two sharps). The notation is for a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The left hand part (bass clef) is marked with 'p' and 'sempre accelerando e mancando'. The right hand part (treble clef) is marked with 'velocissimo' and '(con 2da.)'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The left hand part is marked with 'Oct0' and 'pp'.

Figure 29. Oct<sub>0</sub> spelled out in the left hand part. Bars 285-297.

Next, from Figure 29, the melodic idea breaks off into figurations (bar 285), thus beginning the closing section, spelling out now Oct<sub>0</sub> in full. There is no clear functional movement here, as the right hand part (bars 285-297) outlines rapidly alternating diminished sevenths sonorities built from Oct<sub>0</sub>. Following this, the next point of relative consonance arises from an A<sup>7</sup> triad (bar 299).

This resolves into a perceptibly C# minor triad (bars 299-301), perceptibly  $\text{Ger}^6 \rightarrow i$ . This leads into a tremolo of alternating C#s spaced an octave apart for an extended ten bars (bars 301-309), a stabilizing feature that establishes the prominence of C#. Finally, this leads into a chromatically altered cadence  $\text{ii}^{\emptyset 4}_3 \rightarrow I$ . This procedure of modifying cadences is one Medtner wrote favourably of (Medtner, 1951, p. 37). The use of  $\text{Oct}_0$  generates much of the closing section, except for a brief moment (bars 303-305) and the final chord (bars 309-314). Even though the coordination of these vertical sonorities presents a non-functional harmonic outlook, these chord progressions gravitate towards points of stability encircling the tonic.

Figure 30 consists of two musical excerpts. The left excerpt shows a piano (p) playing a tremolo of alternating C#s in the right hand, while the left hand plays a C# minor triad (i). The right excerpt shows a piano (p) playing a chromatically altered cadence ( $\text{ii}^{\emptyset 4}_3$ ) in the right hand, while the left hand plays a C# minor triad (I). The excerpts are labeled with their respective chords: C#:  $\text{Ger}^6$  and i on the left, and C#:  $\text{ii}^{\emptyset 4}_3$  and I on the right.

Figure 30. Two moments revealing the different mediant of E and E#.  $\text{Ger}^6$  (enharmonically)  $\rightarrow i$ , bars 299-301 (left). Final cadence:  $\text{ii}^{\emptyset 4}_3 \rightarrow I$ , bars 307-309 (right).

Thus far, my analysis indicates a strategy to obscure the main tonal centre even in ending. For one, the use of tertian sonorities creates an allusion of diatonicism. However, the nonfunctional movements make it hard to distinguish between the augmented sixth chords and sevenths chords, and their subsequent resolutions. The octatonic modes also adds to the ambiguity.

To these shadings, nevertheless, there are hints which alludes to a C# minor tonality coexisting with the octatonic mode. Firstly, a pitch centricity of C# is alluded to by several means. In the first theme group of the exposition, C# is a prominent pitch in which acts as a stable tone of convergence (bars 97-105), C# in the melodic line in the closing cadence that spans four bars (bars 125-128). In the second theme group of the exposition, C# is repeated throughout the first half (bars 129-148). In the recapitulation, C# is stable pitch of convergence

for other tones (bars 245). In the coda, the prominence in which C# is given due to the number of bars accorded to a tremolo featuring C# spaced an octave apart in the highest registers, followed by use of the lowest C# in the bass registers, reinforces the significance of the pitch.

Secondly, when *Meditazione* is viewed as a whole, an allusory C# minor is the emergent assertive tonal centre of which closely related tonalities encircle. To briefly recap, first theme group briefly alludes to C# minor (bars 88-91), and cadences on V of E major leading into the second theme group. In addition, the first theme group in the recapitulation cadences on V<sup>7</sup> of C# minor. Towards the end, *Meditazione* also establishes the tonic chords of C# minor and major through Ger<sup>6</sup> → i (bars 209-301) and ii<sup>ø4</sup><sub>3</sub> → I (bars 307-309) respectively. Here in the latter, one might consider that as a *Tierce de Picardie* of C# minor if one takes into the large scale perspective of the emergent tonal centre.

Finally, considering that Medtner wrote four sharps in the key signature, and that the 1921 programme booklet (see Section 4.3.6.) indicates “*cis-moll*,” C# minor is the home tonal centre.

### 4.3.3. Analysis of Global Structure

The analysis of the harmonic support and structure suggest that *Meditazione* features two clear thematic groups. Even though the second theme group is derivative of the first, the difference in texture indicates thematic transformation. There are also significant cadential gestures at the end of each group (bars 125-28 and bar 165 respectively).

The middle section (bars 166 – 224) is also highly developmental, with no clear tonal centre. Despite no cadential gesture, *mancando* (dying away) is marked over a tremolo that converges onto a singular pitch.

The return (from bar 225) of both theme groups feature an alteration and expansion of the melodic material. Both theme groups are also closer to the home tonal centre, suggested through harmonic sonorities that gravitate around closer towards the tonal center. At the same

time, some ambiguity remains as the tonic and dominant harmonies are still avoided. Only in the closing bars, does the tremolo featuring the tonic, and the final modified plagal cadence points towards the centrality of C#. These points put together suggest a resemblance with a sonata structure based on a *monothematic* exposition.

The fact that *Meditazione* is contained within the form of a monothematic sonata, suggests that Medtner felt that he needed the “strict” form of a sonata to contain the more ambiguous tonal centres, to communicate his ideas of stabilising the content of *Meditazione* through form. Given that Medtner’s perception of music has always gravitated towards a tonic connected to and through harmony, which is in turn, is shaped in and through form (Medtner, 1951, p. 49), it is Medtner’s tacit acknowledgement of a tonal center albeit obscured.

#### 4.3.4. Thematic Ideas

The first main thematic idea is shown in the following figure. The motivic fragments here are subject to developmental processes. The first motivic material is a falling two-note motif of ( $\mu^1$ ) spanning the opening bars (bars 81-84). This is subject to an ornamentation of a lower and upper neighbouring tone ( $\mu_{orn}^1$ , bars 86-87). The pitch E $\flat$  plays an important role as a note that resolves into D# repeatedly whether on a smaller ( $\mu^1$ ) or larger ( $\mu_{orn}^1$ ) time scale. The next key motif outlines a tritone via two minor third intervals ( $\mu^2$ ). There is also a sequential expansion of the tritone relation ( $\mu^2$ , bars 84-85) into a longer arpeggio pattern ( $\mu_{exp}^2$ , bars 88-90).

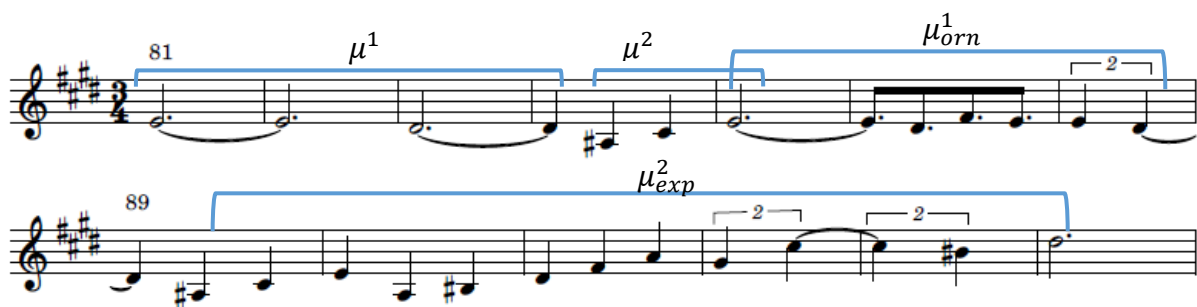


Figure 31. First thematic idea. Bars 81-93.

In addition to durational values and pitches, there is also an internal harmony and cadence within itself. Referring to the figure above, a tonal centricity of G# minor (bars 81-88) is suggested through the leading tone, followed by C# minor (bars 89-93) again suggested through the leading tone B#.

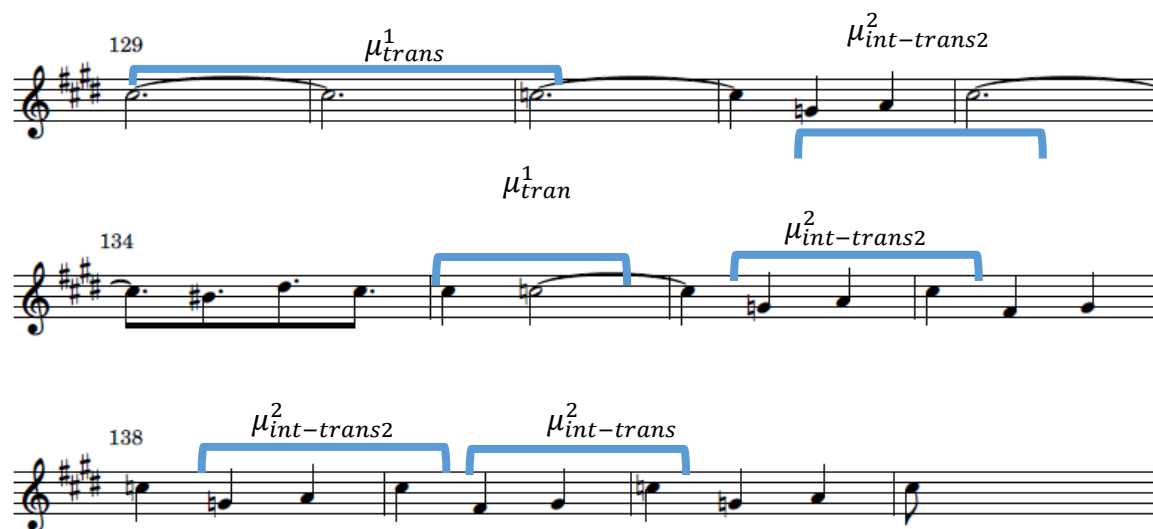


Figure 32. Second thematic idea.

Next, the second thematic idea is in fact a transformation of the first thematic idea. The characteristic minor second interval ( $\mu^1$ ) makes an appearance here again transposed a sixth up ( $\mu^1_{trans}$ ). The three-note motif ( $\mu^2$ ) also appears transposed up, with slight alterations to the melodic intervals between the first two pitches. For one, the melodic interval of the first two pitches within  $\mu^2$  [A#-C#-E], after transposed a sixth up, is contracted to a major second as  $\mu^2_{trans-int}$  [F#-G#-C]. This  $\mu^2_{trans-int}$  fragment is also transposed up, though each pitch not by exactly the same intervals, giving  $\mu^2_{int-trans2}$  [G-A-C#]. Nevertheless the melodic contour is retained.

Both thematic ideas are perceptibly melodic in nature, but contains within them motivic material. This motivic material also connects and unifies both thematic ideas that are located at two different important structural points. Thematic developmental processes are also observed. In addition to rhythmical and pitch considerations, these two main thematic ideas



have within them a tonal empathy. These findings uncovered resonate with how Medtner saw a theme (see Section 3.3.5.).

#### 4.3.5. Summary of Musical Analysis

The analysis of *Meditazione* shows several correspondences to Medtnerian ideals. Firstly, the analysis of harmonic support and structure indicates a significant use of shadows through the octatonic modes that appear as a structural and melodic device. Due to their symmetrical nature, the vertical sonorities generated presents multiple resolutions, thus creating a sense of ambiguity. This is compounded by the lack of clear movements between the tonic and dominant chords. Given that Medtner (1951) saw the tonic and dominant chords as “principal coordinates of tonality” (p. 26), by not including these chords signals a deliberate attempt to obscure the tonal centre. This has also resulted in sections that are largely perceivably without a tonal centre, which is a point of contention with *The Muse and the Fashion*. On the other hand, C# is established as a pitch centricity throughout the different sections. In addition to that, the harmonic support hints of C# minor tonality as the home tonal centre. Also, as the harmonic support is still tertian in nature, this also alludes to diatonicism in perception. Thus considered together, one obtains a *chiaroscuro* of C# minor coexisting with octatonic modes. The analysis of the global harmonic structure indicates that *Meditazione* resembles a monothematic sonata. This concurs with Medtner’s view that form building is tied with cadences and harmonic considerations on the large scale.

On *renewal*, a C# minor tonality coexisting with the octatonic modes suggests a broadening of harmonic vocabulary into an extended tonal practice. Next, on *remembering*, each thematic group develops within motivic fragments deployed extensively in the work. All thematic ideas feature perceptible melody, interrelated motivic material that develops, and a gravitation towards a form of cadence. These features are located within *The Muse and the Fashion*.

So far, as much as the analysis has suggested that the sonata form acts as a stabilizing factor for the instability in perception of tonal centres, the music analysis has not adequately addressed the insistence of the octatonic modes. This obsession with the octatonic mode, which is an anomaly when considered with Medtner's other works, needs an explanation. In the next section, I will approach an interpretation through allusory themes.

#### **4.3.6. Allusory Themes**

This section will look at two main allusory themes. This section will examine the octatonic scale and its association to Rimsky-Korsakov. Next, I will examine shared characteristics between *Meditazione* and *Romanza*, and their associated surrounding allusions.

#### **The Rimsky-Korsakov Scale**

The use of the octatonic mode in Medtner has been observed by Pitts (1999), who found its use from a decorative and structural perspective. Decoratively, it can be observed in the *Skazka* Op. 34 No. 1 *Magic Violin* (Figure 34) (Pitts, 1999, p. 41). The octatonic mode is also found structurally, in the development section of the *Sonata-Tragica*, in the bass line of Op. 30 *Sonata in A* (Pitts, 1999, p. 42), and in *Danza Dithirambica* of the Op. 40 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle. Further examples can also be found in Pitts' (1999) analysis of the Op. 53 No. 2 *Grozavaya Sonata*.

Of all of Medtner's works, the *Meditazione* in Op. 39 is perhaps Medtner's most explicit and extensive use of the octatonic collection, decoratively and structurally, the development section alternating between all three octatonic modes. As such it is a deliberate reference to octatonicism, or something that is synonymous with octatonicism.



Figure 33. *Meditazione*, octatonic collection in figuration. Opening bars.



Figure 34. *Skazka* Op. 34 No. 1 Magic Violin, octatonic collection in figuration. Opening bars.

According to Taruskin (2011), the octatonic scale was a result of the Romantic experimentation with mediant cycles, through descents by minor chords, documented in the works of Schubert. Later on, Liszt would build on this in his symphonic poems and piano pieces. The traceable roots to mediant cycles of earlier composers can be seen in Rimsky-Korsakov's treatise on harmony, in which he guides the student through "false progressions" along minor thirds. Rimsky-Korsakov would go on to impart this to his pupils, such as Glazunov, Lyadov, Tcherepnin and Shteynberg, setting this alongside common practice (Taruskin, 2011).

Due to Rimsky-Korsakov's efforts in teaching, and his frequent usage of the mode, in Russia the octatonic scale is not only known as the tone-semitone scale, but the *Rimsky-Korsakov scale*. Rimsky-Korsakov saw two forms of the octatonic mode, labelling them melody scale (*odna gamma*) and harmony scale (*drugaia gamma*). Even though Medtner was not a direct pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, Medtner held him in high regard according to correspondence (Martyn, 2016, p. 258), having also in his junior years studied harmony with Anton Arensky, who was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov (Martyn, 2016, p. 5).



Figure 35. Sketch for The Tale of Tsar Saltan showing the octatonic mode in their melody and harmony scale form (Taruskin, 2011, p. 174).

The deliberate use of the octatonic mode within his compositional framework laid out in *The Muse and the Fashion*, to construct the work is, in itself, a fascinating feature. No other work of Medtner's uses the octatonic mode as explicitly and excessively. This directness appears to be Medtner's appeal to the octatonic mode as a harmonic and melodic device. In fact, in elaborating on "defending the past positions of musical theory" in *The Muse and the Fashion*, Medtner uses Rimsky-Korsakov's treatise on harmony as an example of a handbook of "past theory" (that is to be defended) (Medtner, 1951, p. 60).

Even though Medtner does not explicitly reference the octatonic scale in *The Muse and the Fashion*, in indirect reference to the whole-tone scale he wrote

All individual shadings, all chromatic or enharmonic coloration of our fundamental senses, all that dazzled us so much in the music of the great masters of the last century, was just so much evidence for us of the inexhaustible and flexible fund of our common musical language (Medtner, 1951, p. 38).

This indicated that Medtner saw the boundless possibilities of the musical (harmonic) language that was already available. In a likely reference to the diverging musical trends, Medtner saw no need to invent new musical grammar.

## Meditazione and Meditazione II

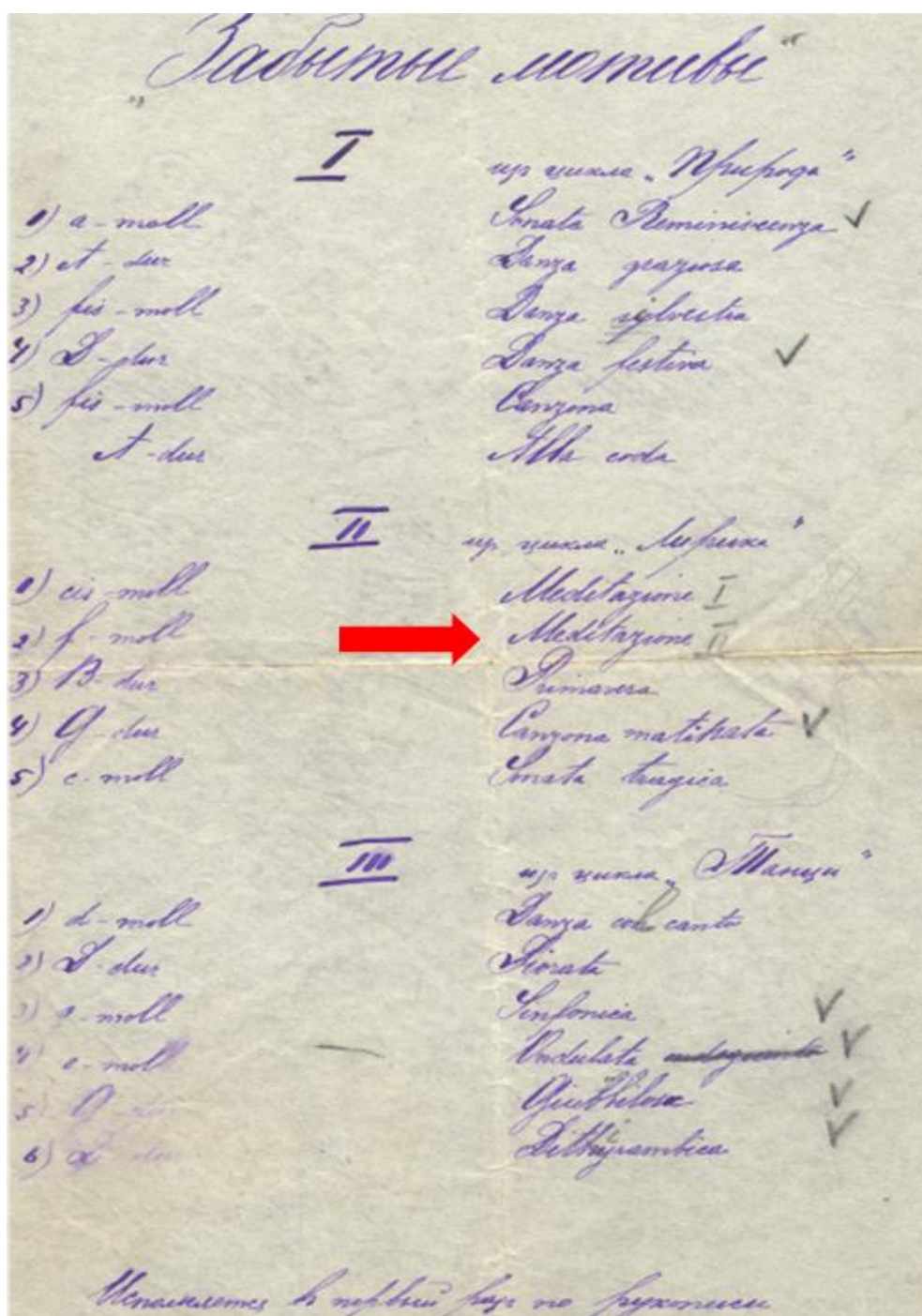


Figure 36. Medtner's recital featuring the Forgotten Melodies Cycles at the Moscow Conservatory in 1921 (Glinka Museum Archive in Shin, 2018, p. 69).

Figure 36 shows the 1921 programme booklet of Medtner's recital of the *Forgotten Melodies*. The second movement in the Op. 39 cycle, *Romanza*, was also initially titled *Meditazione*. There are reasons for Medtner's change in titling from *Meditazione* to *Romanza*, perhaps reflecting other unique allusions (see Section 4.4.5.). Nevertheless, this indicates that

both *Meditazione* and *Romanza* exhibit shared qualities which I will examine next, before returning to *Meditazione*.

### *Dies Irae*

For one, there is a possible reference to the *Dies Irae*, in which a variant appears in both *Meditazione* and *Romanza* shown below. The *Dies Irae*, the sequence from the Catholic Mass for the Dead which symbolizes the day of judgement, evokes a link to despair or death when it appears (Boyd & Caldwell, *Dies irae*, 2001). The *Dies Irae* is also observed in Medtner's *Sonata-Reminiscenza* and *Sonata-Elegy*, the latter written in memory of his brother-in-law.



Figure 37. *Dies Irae* quotation (top). *Dies Irae* variant in *Meditazione*, bars 166-172 (middle). *Dies Irae* variant in *Romanza*, bars 99-103 (bottom).

Even though others have already pointed out that the *Dies Irae* quotation appears more completely in *Sonata-Reminiscenza*, (Mitchell, 2011; Rowen, 2015), *Sonata-Reminiscenza* and *Meditazione* were written around the same time. The recent deaths of his mother and brother Karl Medtner, and the lingering thought of the Russian civil war that he left behind as he sought refuge in the Bugry countryside, could not be too far away from his mind as he was working with either works (Martyn, 2016, pp. 134-135).

### *Contemplation*

Next, a shared performance direction *meditamento* appears in both *Meditazione* and *Romanza*. This draws comparison to the other associated words like *meditativo* that Medtner similarly used as a performance direction. One of such reference is in the Op. 28 No. 7 song

after Tyutchev's *Absorbed and Alone*, which Martyn characterized as the poet brooding the "transitoriness of life", evoked by the "dark, shifting harmonies in combination with the doleful vocal line", creating an "extraordinarily powerful picture of brooding introspection (Martyn, 2016, p. 102)." Medtner's First Piano Concerto also features a section marked *tranquillo meditamento*, though paired together with the word *tenebroso*, thus quietly contemplative and seemingly dark at the same time.

Turning back to *Meditazione*, an atmosphere of contemplation and foreboding is also similarly evoked through the slower tempi and tonal shadows (dissonance). So it is not too much of a stretch to state that *Meditazione* acts as a medium to transport listeners into a contemplative state of mind. It is perhaps harder to pinpoint the reason behind. Nevertheless, reverberations of a contemplative state could be found in *The Muse and the Fashion* in which Medtner (1951) believed that the function of music is "to attract, collect, hypnotically concentrate the feelings and thoughts of the listener" (p. 130). It is possible then, that *Meditazione* serves as an expression and reflection of Medtner's innermost thoughts on music.

Summarily, the musical provocations through the significant use of the octatonic mode alludes to its potential, serving as a reminder that one could create a work of substantial content, generate such instabilities, yet without totally abandoning tonality; thus working with tonal allusions. These tonal instabilities coordinated with the *Dies Irae* quotation, and the titling of "*Meditazione*," seem to work together to invoke a somber picture of inner contemplation—an idealized Medtnerian vision. Thus *Meditazione* forms an *artistic image*, expressing an inner narrative through the coordination of the musical elements.

## 4.4. II: Romanza

### 4.4.1. Analysis of Harmonic Support and Structure

The summary of the harmonic structure is given in the figure below. Sonorities here pivot away from the octatonic modes, into tertian triadic writing shaded by chromaticism. Nevertheless, a home tonal centre of F minor is gradually alluded to. The movement of tonal centres overall suggests a movement between the home tonal centre and that of the relative major. The proportion of the introduction and exposition is slightly shorter than second half of the work. The second theme group is noticeably truncated in the recapitulation, though this is balanced by the coda.

	Allusory Tonal Centre	Bars
<b>Introduction</b>	F minor	1 – 41
<b>Exposition</b>		
Theme 1	F minor	42 – 90
Theme 2	Ab major	91 – 106
	B major → A major	107 – 118
<b>Retransition</b>		119 – 146
<b>Recapitulation</b>		
Introduction Theme	F minor	147 – 162
Theme 1	F minor	163 – 199
Theme 2	Ab major → F minor	200 – 211
<b>Coda</b>	F minor	212 – 275

Figure 38. Structure of *Romanza*

*Romanza* begins with an introductory section that quotes a theme from *Meditazione*. In terms of harmonic support, the tonal centre is only hinted at ambiguously. The initial bar signals an Ab centricity.<sup>13</sup> However, this is immediately disrupted by [Eb] in the next bar, and the

<sup>13</sup> Despite only sounding Ab and C, the bass Ab suggests  $\hat{5}$  through overtones.



harmonic support alternates back and forth between  $A\flat$ ,  $A\flat^+$  and  $D\flat^{07}$  (bars 1-12, Figure 39). Respectively, this is III, III<sup>+</sup> and Fr<sup>6</sup> of F minor, though this is difficult to perceive until the appearance of V<sup>7</sup> (bar 21, Figure 40).

Meditamente (♩. = 52)

F minor: III    (III<sup>+</sup>)    Fr<sup>6</sup>    III    (III<sup>+</sup>)    Fr<sup>6</sup>

8    poco agitato    espressivo

Red. III<sup>+</sup>    Red. Fr<sup>6</sup>    Red. III<sup>+</sup>    Red. Fr<sup>6</sup>    Red. (Fr<sup>6</sup>)

14    accelerando    agitato    veloce

(Fr<sup>6</sup>)    *fz*<sup>1)</sup>

Figure 39. Opening bars, *Romanza*.

The motivic material is next subject to a gradual and sequential rhythmical diminution into quavers (bar 13, Figure 39). Here the rich sonority gives way to an entry of the melody in the second voice, which is subject to intervallic augmentation and expansion. The strongest allusion of F minor is via this V<sup>7</sup> pedal (bars 21-25, Figure 40). Even then, the transformation

of the theme appears to disrupt the stability through its chromaticism, and the hemiola-like effect of grouping of four quavers.

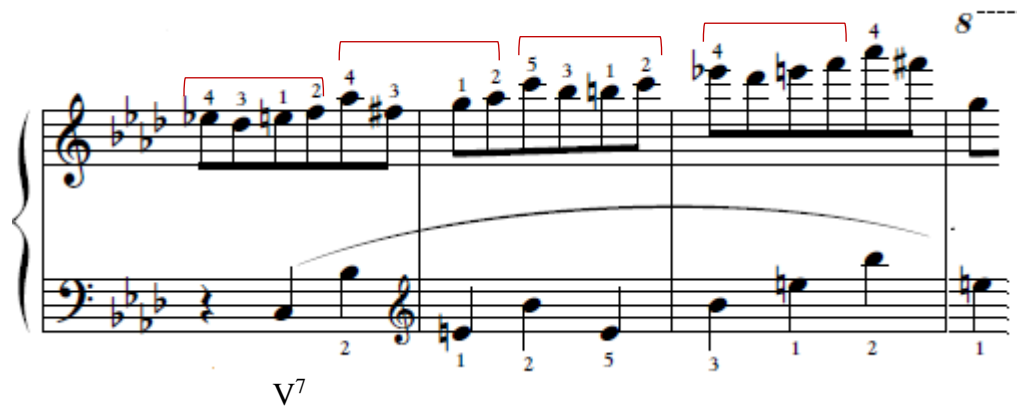


Figure 40. Appearance of dominant pedal. Hemiola-like effect suggested by melodic contour marked in brackets. Bars 21-23.

Leading into a transitory passage next, a new pattern of multiple sets comprising six notes emerges (Figure 41). Here the fourth note resolves into the fifth. A harmonic reduction of this passage reveals a sequence alluding to F minor (bars 28-30, Figure 42). This sequence is next transposed down a fourth interval and repeated (bars 32-33). Following that, the Phrygian dominants of G and C# are alternated with each other, underscoring a structural tritone instability, which finally ends off with an ambiguous sonority hinting at  $V^4_3/V$  of F minor (bar 39-40, Figure 43).



Figure 41. Transitory passage. Bars 28-33

28	30	32	33
<p>F minor: vii<sup>°</sup>7    bII<sup>maj</sup><sub>7/2</sub>    bII<sup>maj</sup>7    ii<sup>°</sup>7    I<sup>+6</sup>    iv<sup>7</sup>    C minor: vii<sup>°</sup>7    bII<sup>maj</sup><sub>7/2</sub>    bII<sup>maj</sup>7    ii<sup>°</sup>7</p>			

Figure 42. Harmonic reduction of bars 28-23 with some enharmonic respellings.

G Phrygian Dominant    C# Phrygian Dominant

F minor:  $V^4_3/V$

Figure 43. Bars 38-40.

Thus far, the introductory passage alludes to a tonal centre of F minor through the means of sonorities formed by pitches contained within the F minor collection (III, Fr<sup>6</sup> and V<sup>7</sup>), in which the V<sup>7</sup> is given durational prominence (bars 21-25). At the same time, the tonal centre is shaded and obscured through multiple means. Firstly, the tonic chord is never revealed here. Secondly, the framing of III<sup>+</sup> and Fr<sup>6</sup> creates ambiguity, since they could resolve multiple ways. The melodic idea is perceptibly non-diatonic, and as it breaks into figurations, the pitch classes circulate very quickly, approaching all twelve tones. In addition to that, the transitory passage features a fast pace of harmonic rhythm.

42

*poco con forza*

(vii<sup>°</sup><sub>4</sub>/V) V<sup>°</sup><sub>3</sub>/V (iv<sup>6</sup>) (i<sup>4</sup>) i

**F minor: i pedal**

48

*dimin.*

54

*cre* *scendo*

Ab: V<sup>7</sup> (I) V (i)

Figure 44. Beginning of first theme group. Bars 42-59.

The appearance of the first thematic idea is centred by a strong tonic pedal tone that alludes to F minor, though there is a digression into the dominant harmony as the secondary tonal centre (bars 43-44, Figure 44). Next, the harmonic support moves into another secondary

tonal area briefly suggestive of a flux between A $\flat$  major/minor (bars 57-61), due to the competing C $\sharp$  and C $\flat$  (bars 58 and 59).

After which, there is a modulation gradually back to the F minor tonal centre through the enharmonic relation of IV<sup>7</sup> in A $\flat$  and Ger<sup>6</sup> in F minor (bar 61, Figure 45). The appearance of the dominant harmonic support of C minor suspended in the accompaniment (bars 61-65) also indicates another brief digression. The closure on the *Tierce de Picardie* (bar 66) allows an allusory half-cadence in F minor. Thus far, in examining the first thematic idea, modulation by enharmonic relations play a big part in ensuring a continuity. This illustrates Medtner's (1951) concept of "enharmonicism" as a modulatory process (p. 26).

**F minor:**      (Ger<sup>6</sup>)      (ii <sup>04</sup><sub>3</sub>)      (Ger<sup>6</sup>)      V  
 VI pedal — — — — —  
**C minor:**    bII Ger<sup>6</sup>      i<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>      V<sup>7</sup>      I

Figure 45. Bars 60-66.

The first thematic idea repeats itself again next, but with added decorative features such as a diminution of the theme appearing as a filler, and octave doublings that serve to thicken the texture. Structurally, the musical passage takes on a different course by the introduction of C $\sharp$  and the vertical sonority suggesting V<sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup> of A $\flat$  (bar 88). This serves to allude to an A $\flat$  major tonal centre next in preparation for the second theme group (Figure 46). The play on expectation, and the surprise, reflects Medtner's (1951) view that modulation can "give new significance and new function to the simplest chords" (p. 26).

The first theme group alludes to a tonal centre of F minor. Firstly, this is through the prominence given to the tonic pitch, through long tonic pedals, that passing sonorities glide across, eventually converging onto the tonic chord (e.g. bars 42-47). This considered together with the triadic vertical sonorities also gives a perception of diatonicism. On the other hand, the tonal centre is shaded with secondary tonal zones, and the use of chromaticism.

The figure displays a musical score for bars 84-98, featuring piano and vocal staves. The piano part includes fingerings and dynamic markings such as *f poco [più] mosso*, *calmando e diminuendo*, and *p dolce*. The vocal part includes the instruction *tranquillo*. Below the staves, harmonic analysis is provided for various bars:

- Bar 87:  $\text{Ab minor: IV}^7$
- Bar 88:  $\text{Ab major: V}_2^4$
- Bar 89:  $\text{IV}_2^4$
- Bar 90:  $\text{V}^7$
- Bar 91:  $\text{I}$
- Bar 92:  $\text{V}^7$  (iv<sup>6</sup>)
- Bar 93:  $\text{I}$
- Bar 94:  $(\text{vii}^6/\text{V}) \text{ V}$
- Bar 95:  $(\text{I})$
- Bar 96:  $\text{vi}^6$
- Bar 97:  $\text{V}^7$
- Bar 98:  $\text{I}$
- Bar 99:  $\text{V}^7$

Figure 46. Bars 84-98.

The second theme group begins with a strong perception of centricity in  $\text{Ab}$  major as the tonic triad is heard fully (bar 91, Figure 46), followed by two half-cadences (bars 94 and 98). The theme is now subject to a filigree treatment which is a departure from the more regularly contoured first theme group.

This is interrupted by the appearance of the *Dies Irae*-like sequence (bars 99-102), over I in A $\flat$  major that allows a modulation into perceivably  $\flat$ VI of C major/minor centricity (bar 99) through enharmonic relations (Figure 47). The bass moving in small steps arrives on a prominent D<sup>7</sup> chord (bar 103) thus alluding to a modulation into G major centricity, but this is fleeting as there is an apparent clash next, of F $\natural$  against F $\sharp$  which suggests V<sup>7</sup> in C (bar 106), anticipating the return of C. However, the passage takes an abrupt turn with the return of the second thematic idea in an allusory B major tonal centre (bar 107), perceived as  $\flat$ VI<sup>7</sup>→I.

*espressivo crescendo*

C:  $\flat$ VI       $\text{vii}^{\circ 5}/\text{IV}$       IV       $(\text{vii}^{\circ 3})$

A $\flat$  major: I

*f*

C:  $i^6$        $\text{V}^7/\text{V}$

*dimin.*      *p dolce*

C minor:  $\text{V}^7$        $\text{B major: } \flat\text{VI}^7$       I

Figure 47. Bars 99 to 107.

After the brief allusion to B major (bars 107-110), the perception of a tonal centre destabilizes quickly. This is due to the abrupt modulation into the periphery of A major through

the enharmonic relation of an  $IV^{Ger6}$  (respelled enharmonically) in B major and  $V^7$  of A major (bars 111-112). This ends on perceptibly a half-cadence in A on  $V^4_3$  (bar 114). Next, the *Dies Irae*-like sequence is now heard over a B $\flat$  pedal (bars 115-116) and F $\flat$  pedal (bars 117-118), over which the musical passage moves towards another half-cadence on a tertian sonority that is perceptibly  $V^6_5$  of A (bar 118), thus ending the second theme group. These cadential gestures helps allude to A major as the tonal centre.

**B major:** I (iv<sup>6</sup>) V pedal vii<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>/V V (B minor): vii<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub>

**A major:** V<sup>4</sup><sub>2</sub> I<sup>6</sup> V<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub> (B major/minor): IV<sup>Ger6</sup>  $\flat II$  pedal – (vii<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>) – (ii<sup>04</sup><sub>3</sub>/IV)

(V<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>/IV) (ii<sup>04</sup><sub>2</sub>/V) (V<sup>6</sup><sub>5</sub>)  $\flat II^{Fr6}$

V pedal – — — — — — — — — —

Figure 48. Bars 107-120.

Summarily, the second theme group alludes to a tonal centre of A $\flat$  major strongly in the first eight bars (bars 91-98, Figure 46). Firstly, the preceding transitory passage converges



$V^7 \rightarrow I$  (bar 90) onto the tonic chord, which lends it a certain prominence. There are also cadential gestures on the dominant sonority. Similar to the first thematic group, the sonorities are also triadic in nature. On the other hand, the tonal centre is shaded by secondary modulations, and other allusory secondary tonal centres after the initial eight bars. In addition to that, the modulations are through less common relations ( $bVI \rightarrow I$ ), and are unprepared ( $IV^{Ger6}$  in B enharmonically shifting to  $V^7$  of A, Figure 48). Next, there is also a significant use of chromaticism in the decorative melodic lines, and in voice leading in the accompaniment voices. Despite the triadic nature of the sonorities, the use of sevenths and the lack of signalling of a prominent triad also obscures a tonal centre.

Next, a transitory section begins with the *Dies Irae* sequence stabilizing harmonically over  $bII^{Fr6}$  of A (bars 119-122). This breaks off into decorative figurations over  $bII^{Fr6}$  (bar 123) that leads into a dominant sounding sonority  $V^7$  of A (spelt enharmonically  $Fb^7$ , bars 127-129). This sets off a chain of dominant seventh sonorities (Figure 49). This sequence also features the appearance of a *Chopin dominant* [ $A^b-C-F^b(E)-Gb$ ] (bar 135), culminating in  $V^7$  of C. Despite anticipating a tonal centre of C next, this leads back to the introductory theme restated in the same opening sonorities, alternating between III and  $Fr^6$  of F minor.

The figure shows a harmonic reduction for the retransition into exposition, spanning measures 127 to 147. The notation is as follows:

Measure	Chord
127	A: $V^7$
131	D: $V^9$
135	C: $bVI^{#6}_5$
139	$V^7$
147	$bVI$

Figure 49. Harmonic reduction for the retransition into exposition. The roman numerals describe the enharmonic equivalent at times for ease of reading. Bars 127-147

After an initial similarity, the return of the first theme group takes on a different course by modulating to secondary tonal centres of  $E^b$  (bar 171) and  $D^b$  (bars 177). This can be seen in the following figure.

169 *pp* *pp* cre -

**F:** (I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>) **E<sup>b</sup>:** ii(?) V<sup>7</sup> (I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>) (I )

175 scen - do

(I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>) I <sup>b</sup>VI IV

**D<sup>b</sup>:** V (V<sup>7</sup>) I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> I i i<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>

Figure 50. Bars 169-180

After which, the musical passage takes an excursion into  $\flat$ II of F minor (bars 189-193, Figure 51). A perfect cadence gesture in F minor (bar 195-196), which in its deliberate convergence after a sequence also provides significance to the moment. This, together with the tertian sonorities, similarly, alludes to F minor as the tonal centre. This reflects Medtner's (1951) words that the tonic and dominant are "principal coordinates of tonality" (p. 26). Passing shades of chromaticism and secondary tonal centres act as decorative colouring.

186

3 3 2 3 4 5

2 3 1 2 1 3

**F minor: Fr<sup>6</sup>** **bII<sup>7</sup>** **III** **bII<sup>6</sup>** **ii<sup>5</sup>/bII**

191

8

*p* *p* *calando* *riten.* *pp*

**C: (bII/V)** **F minor: V<sup>7</sup>** **i**

**V pedal**

Figure 51. Bars 186-196

Following a transitory passage that is supported by motivic material from the first thematic idea, the second thematic idea returns in an allusory tonal centre of F minor (bar 200). This is felt due to the previous lingering effect of the perfect cadence gesture in F minor previously (bars 195-196), and incessantly repeated tonic pedal (bars 196-199) which helped frame the first theme group in the allusory F minor. Nevertheless the appearance of E $\flat$  (bars 197 and 201), suggests a flux between F minor and the relative A $\flat$  major tonal centres (bars 196-203). This is shown in Figure 52.

Next, another transitory passage (bars 204-211) leads into the closing section (Figure 53). Here the transitory passage alludes to a tonal centre of F minor clearly as the V<sup>7</sup>/V makes an appearance (bar 208). Nevertheless, there is an abrupt turn to III of F minor again, alluding to an A $\flat$  major tonal centre in the beginning of the closing section (bar 212).

8 ..... Poco a poco più mosso

196 *pp* tranquillo

200 *leggero*

F minor: i vi<sup>7</sup>/III

vi<sup>7</sup>/III vi<sup>4</sup>/III iv/III III<sup>6</sup>

vi<sup>0</sup><sub>42</sub>/III

Figure 52. Bars 196-204.

8 ..... con moto

204

F minor: iv<sup>7</sup> ii<sup>2</sup>/V

208 *f* *p*

F minor: V<sup>7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> vii<sup>0</sup><sub>7</sub>/III III

Figure 53. Bars 204-212.

Summarily, the tonal centre of the second theme group alludes to F minor, despite much shading and colouring over. Firstly, this is because of the prominence sonorities belonging to F minor are given: a long tonic pedal (bars 196-200) begins and ends with the tonic in F minor, the cadential gestures (bars 204-211). Secondly due to the long range relationship of the F minor tonal centre from constant allusion since the beginning, the arrival of the second theme group via a perfect cadence has a strong psychological effect in suggesting the centre. The harmonic support is also triadic in nature. On the other hand, the tonicization of the relative A $\flat$  major for extended periods, as well as the use of decorative chromaticism serves to shade and blur the tonal colouring.

Moving on to the closing section, the second thematic idea makes another appearance over III temporarily with the harmonic support enunciating I/III  $\rightarrow$  I $^6$ /III  $\rightarrow$  IV/III  $\rightarrow$  vi/III (bars 216-218) in a tertian manner. Nevertheless, there are no definitive cadences, and vi/III is used as an enharmonic pivot into i of F minor, leading into a sequential passage (bars 220-227). Here, the harmonic support attempts several times to move out of this zone, finally achieving this on perceptibly V $^7$  (bar 226) of F minor. This illustrated in Figure 54.

Even though i is expected, the resolution is evaded, instead landing on hemiola-like effect that begins a harmonic sequence that leads back to the tonic eventually. This is through the prominence given to the pitch F and tonic chord, as both converge onto the main beat every two bars (bars 254-260). The final cadential gesture is an alternation of V and  $\flat$ VI faintly hinted over a tonic pedal (bars 262-269) that leads into the tonic chord. A harmonic reduction is shown in Figure 55.

220

5 2 4 1 2 3

5 2 4 1 2 3

cre - - - - - scen - - - - -

**F minor:** IV<sup>Ger6</sup> i<sup>6</sup>

224

do

**V<sup>7</sup>/V** **V<sup>7</sup>**

Figure 54. Bars 220-227

262 - 269 270

(VI) (V<sup>7</sup>) i

i pedal - - - - -

Figure 55. Harmonic reduction showing the alternating VI-V over a tonic pedal eventually converging onto I on bar 270.

In the closing section, the home tonal centre of F minor is made apparent towards the end due to the prominence of the tonic chord, and the closing cadential gestures of alternating (bVI→V) repeatedly, that finally leads into i. The harmonic support is also tertian in nature throughout. Nevertheless this is shaded by decorative chromaticism, and the clear cut triadic harmonic support that is centered on A<sup>b</sup> major which acts as a competing tonal colour. Seen in

the scheme of tonal architectural levels, the *Romanza* begins with an allusory F minor tonal centre, departs, and returns. This reflects Medtner's (1951) view on "purposeful modulation" in the "longer expanses of form" in the "motion towards a new tonality or the return to the original one" (p. 26).

#### **4.4.2. Analysis of Global Harmonic Structure**

The analysis of the harmonic support and structure suggests that *Romanza* features two thematic groups. This is determined by two clear cadential moments for each thematic group (bars 90 and bars 119-122 respectively). In addition to that, even though the second theme group is derivative of the first, the difference in tonal centre, texture, and its development suggests that they are two distinct groups.

The first thematic group in its initial appearance (bar 42), and in the return (bar 163) are both in the home tonal centre of F minor, though with passing secondary tonal centres. The second thematic group is more destabilizing. Cadential gestures demarcate the sections, though weaker in nature. In the exposition, the second theme group ends on an abrupt half-cadence (bar 118). In the recapitulation, the second theme group uses a slowing down of the harmonic rhythm (bars 204-211) as a means to aid the cadential gesture to close the section. The recapitulation (from bar 196), also features a blurring of the delineation between first and second thematic groups. This is because motivic material from the first thematic idea makes another appearance (bars 196-199) and links seamlessly into motivic material characteristic of the second theme group. The closeness of both theme groups also reflects Medtner's (1951) words that the "often it (the themes) needs other themes as vassals. Suggesting them, calling them forth, it often reveals in its own flowering of their seeds" (p. 44).

The reappearance of the second thematic idea in the recapitulation is also very brief (bars 200-203). Being monothematic, Caplin (1998) observed that such a truncation procedure serves to prevent "tautology" of the theme in the home tonal centre twice (p. 169).

The beginning of the retransition (bar 119) is harder to perceive. Nevertheless, this is determined by the closure of the second theme group by a half-cadence, as well as a discontinuity in the melodic line.

Even though there are sonata form features, in the return of the tonal levels, and in the two thematic groups, *Romanza* does not feature a development section. Instead it features a short transitional section (bars 119-146) that does not develop the thematic ideas. Therefore, *Romanza* resembles a variant of the sonata form, described by Caplin (1998) as *sonata without development* (p. 216). The similarities between both thematic groups also suggest a *monothematic exposition* (Caplin, 1998, p. 169). Therefore, putting all of these together, *Romanza* resembles a type of monothematic sonata without development. The final section, that can be perceived as a coda reinforces the home tonal centres.

#### **4.4.3. Thematic Ideas**

The first thematic idea is characterized by a lyrical character with its long line. It consists of several main motivic material. Firstly a three-note fragment that consists of a melodic second interval followed by a leap of a fourth ( $\rho^1$ ), and secondly a two-note descending melodic interval ( $\rho^2$ ), and a combination of the other two motivic material ( $\rho^3$ ) that is established to be significant through the rather long tied dotted minim (bars 52-53). These motivic material are subsequently developed mainly by intervallic changes and extension processes that sequentially repeat the motivic material in the altered forms. The closing line (bar 60-65) disrupts this rhythmical consistency through an ascending scale ( $\rho^4$ ) that is reversed on the way down. The first thematic idea closes with a variant of  $\rho^3$ . The first thematic idea also possesses an internal cadence with the appearance of the leading tone of V (B $\sharp$ ) which allows a resolution towards a half-cadence in F minor at the end.



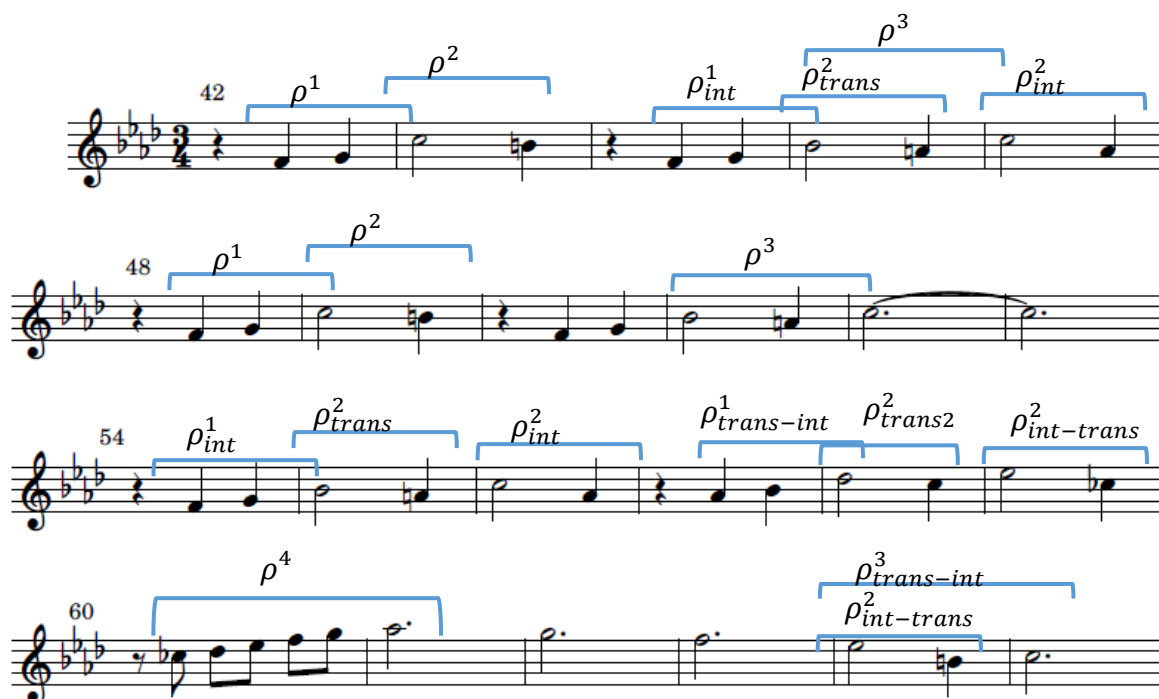


Figure 56. First thematic idea. Bars 42-65.

The second thematic idea is closely related to the first. Similar to *Meditazione*, it is contrasted from the first idea through textural and mood changes. It begins with a descent of a major second interval ( $\rho_{int3}^2$ ). Next, descent continues and is decorated with passing and neighbouring notes, and ends with a fourth interval ( $\rho_{int2-trans}^2$ ). This is heard earlier in the first thematic group (bars 64). A similar pattern follows next, although it is now punctuated with rhythmical devices like agogic accents giving a whimsical character, and increasingly filled with chromaticism.

Following that, the next passage that is transitory in nature, appears and develops  $\rho^2$  by intervallic changes (bars 99-103) that reaches a diminished fifth interval ( $\rho_{trans-int5}^2$ ), before reversing in direction. The appearance of B $\flat$  and D (bar 106) alludes to a half-cadence in C major.



Figure 57. Second thematic idea. Bars 91-106.

These observations resonate with the views within *The Muse and the Fashion* (see Section 3.3.5.). Firstly, the thematic ideas are lyrical in nature, built from motivic material. This seems to concur with Medtner's (1951) idea that "the theme is included in, and can be most easily contemplated, in the shape of a melody" (p. 45). Next, the thematic processes that develops the motivic material exemplifies Medtner's (1951) view that a theme "unifies a work" and "holds within itself the clues to all subsequent complexity" (p. 44). Similar to *Meditazione*, the interrelationship in the *Romanza* between the motivic material alludes to the drawing of motivic material to develop another that Medtner describes as "flowering their seeds" (Medtner, 1951, p. 44). The idea that within the theme itself possesses its own gravitation to a cadence is representative of Medtner's (1951) view that a theme in itself must hold its own "harmony" and "cadence" (p. 44).

#### 4.4.4. Summary of Musical Analysis

In the examination of *Romanza*, concurrences with several Medtnerian ideals are found. Firstly, the analysis of harmonic support and structure is representative of *chiaroscuro*. Here, the home tonal centre of F minor is alluded to by considering the whole, due to the interplay between the shadows and light. On one hand, the F minor tonal centre is quite strongly alluded to in the first theme groups both in the exposition and recapitulation due to the cadential gestures, the long tonic pedals, as well as triadic harmonic support that when combined, allows a perception of diatonicism. On the other hand, there are various shading mechanisms in the second theme group. Features such as decorative chromaticism, and the transposition of thematic ideas to other tonal centres serve to destabilize the home tonal centre. It is in the long-range relations, such as the perfect cadence to close the first theme group, as well as the eventual pivotal allusion back to F minor in the closing sections that stabilizes perception of the main tonal centre of F minor. The analysis of form also mostly concurs with Medtner's view that form building is tied with cadences and harmonic considerations on the large scale.

On *renewal*, *Romanza* resembles a monothematic sonata without a development. While it is certainly not the first in such form, the way this is managed together with the different tonal shades achieved in especially the second theme group in the exposition, creates a blurring of the boundary between sections.

Next, the Medtnerian Ideal of *remembering* is exemplified in its monothematic nature, which suggests a recalling of an "authentic" theme, and the subsequent development of it. The thematic ideas are lyrical, thus illuminating the idea of a Medtnerian *melody* (Medtner, 1951, p. 44).

So far, much of the musical analysis reveals the harmonic support and the form in which *Romanza* is contained in. However, it does not address a key textural feature of *Romanza* in which the accompaniment and melodic writing alludes to a dance in both thematic groups.

This insistence and significance of drawing inspiration from dance would require an explanation. In addition to that, the writing suggests a style of the nineteenth century practices, which resonates with the title “*Romanza*.” To address these questions, I will look at the allusory themes in the next section.

#### 4.4.5. Allusory Themes

In this section, I will pursue one central allusory theme of a nineteenth century ballroom. A discussion on the titling will serve as a preface, and lead in the investigations.

#### A Miniature Product of the Nineteenth Century

The term *Romanza* translates from Italian into *romance*. Nevertheless, *Romanza* in Op. 39 is contemplative (see Section 4.3.6) and dark overall. Therefore, the titling does not seem suggestive of a *romance* between individuals. Instead, it seems more likely to be evocative of the nineteenth century. During this period, Rowland (1992) wrote that terminologies of piano music were in a state of flux (pp. 32-33). This is because pieces of similar natures—slow and expressive—would appear with different names as individual movements such as “Romance,” “Pastorale”, and “Nocturne.” So *Romanza* is also a generic name for miniatures.

- L. van Beethoven, *Bagatelles* Op. 33 (1801–2)
- J. F. Edelmann, *Airs* Op. 16 (1788)
- F. J. Kirmair, *Pièces détachés* Op. 10 (advertised *AmZ* 1807)
- J. Lipawsky, *Romances ou Andantes* Op. 19 (1803)
- N. Séjan, *Recueil de Pièces* Op. 2 (1784)
- D. Steibelt, *Préludes ou Caprices* Op. 5 (1791)
- D. Steibelt, *Divertimentos* Op. 28 (1797) – a collection of single-movement pieces rather than the usual multi-movement divertimento
- V. J. Tomásek, *Eclogues* Op. 35 (1807)

Figure 58. Sample of works in the early 19th Century (Rowland, 1992, p. 33).

Among Medtner’s works, the *Sonata romantica* also features a *Romanza* and *Meditazione* as first and third movements respectively. Therefore the pairing of *Romanza* and *Meditazione* can be seen as a special gesture. Even though the *Romanza* in *Sonata romantica*

is not exactly similar to the *Romanza* in Op. 39 by virtue of metre, a common characteristic is the idiom of the “romantic style.” I will pursue this line of thought next.

### A Vision of the Nineteenth Century Ballroom

The *Romanza* in its two thematic groups appear to allude to a dance-like character. This is suggested through the rhythmical accompaniment. In fact, Martyn (2016) characterized the *Romanza* as a “kind of haunted waltz (p. 139),” alluding to the ambiguity of the form, and the dissonance in the sonorities as we’ve explored.

The first dance-like theme is expressed with accompaniment as shown in the following figure. From the triple metre, the pulse counted in one, and the rhythmical stress that lie on the first beat, one could make out a slow waltz, just as Martyn had referenced. The regular rhythmic patterns of the melodic line and bass also suggest so.



Figure 59. *Romanza*, opening of the first theme. Bars 42 to 47.

Another example of allusion to the waltz can be found in the coda section. Here a derivative of the descending motif in the first theme group appears in the coda section. There is also a hemiola; duple time in the melody, and triple in the accompaniment. Comparing this to Chopin’s Op. 42 in Waltz in A♭, one could also see the direct similarity in the treatment of the hemiola. Examination of the melodic line also shows similarity in melodic profiles through using neighbouring tones.



Figure 60. *Romanza*, bars 228-232.

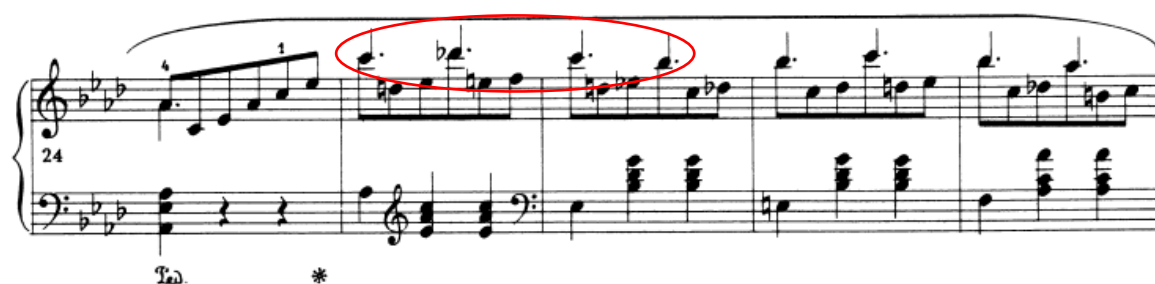


Figure 61. Chopin Op. 42 Waltz in A $\flat$ . Bars 24-28.

The following figure shows the second thematic idea, which even though in the same metre and pulse as the first theme group, displays a different texture reliant on the use of rhythm and expressive gestures in the melody. The melody, as we have noted earlier, is a lyrical variant of the first theme highly decorated with chromaticism. It also retains a strong first-beat stress tendency, but at times it is syncopated. Similarly, the tenuto mark in the accompaniment also alludes to an offbeat syncopation. This is maintained for almost the entire section, creating a sense of stability which is crucial in alluding to a dance, despite the destabilizations in the melodic line.



Figure 62. Romanza, entrance of the second theme. Syncopation circled in red. Bars 91-98.

Summarily thus far, the first theme group is characteristic of a slow waltz, due to its metre and rhythmical regularities. On the other hand, the second theme group with rhythmical ambiguities and expressive freedom in the melody make it difficult to fall within the category of a waltz. Nevertheless, clinging onto the association of a dance to the *Romanza*, is where we will continue our inquiry.

Examining Medtner's piano works, one finds several dance-movement evocations. One particular work of interest is the second piece of the Op. 2 *Three Fantastic Improvisations*, titled *Reminiscence of a Ball* (1898). *Reminiscence of a Ball*, according to Martyn (2016), is a "forlorn reflection on things past and gone forever," suggesting a day-dreaming, and romanticizing (p. 20). Within the same work, at two different thematic areas, Medtner most extraordinarily marks *quasi mazurka* and *Tempo di valse*, incorporating into a single work two dance forms that blossomed during the nineteenth century: the mazurka and waltz.



Figure 63. Medtner's Op. 2 *Reminiscence of a Ball*. Bars 29-34.



Figure 64. Medtner's Op. 2 *Reminiscence of a Ball*. Bars 65-72.

Tracing the roots of these dance forms back to the nineteenth century, perhaps no other composer at the piano evoked as much imagination as Chopin's treatment of them. His waltzes and mazurkas, together with the polonaise, represent an important milestone in the concertization of the dance forms, which Thomas (1992) described as an abstraction, of "distancing from folk impulses" in the later works (p. 151). The rhythm in *Romanza* precludes the Polonaise as it is void of the distinctive rhythm. This leaves us with the waltz and mazurka, both ballroom dances. The difference between the waltz and mazurka is much more subtle. But unpacking the similarities, differences, and ambiguities is perhaps the key to understanding *Romanza*.



Figure 65. Typical mazurka rhythm encountered (Rosen, 1995, p. 412).

To state formally, the Harvard Dictionary of Music describes the waltz as the most popular ballroom of the nineteenth century, in triple time (Apel, 1974, p. 922). There is also a stress on the downbeat, and in the case of Chopin, virtuosic, public and brilliant in style (Rosen, 1995, p. 412; Rushton, 2001, p. 167). On the other hand, Rosen (1995) wrote that the mazurka is often referenced as a dance in triple metre, typically with emphasis on the second or third beats (p. 412). At the same time, He acknowledged the ambiguity and originality of the mazurkas, highlighting that descriptions tend to be vague, citing the New Grove "the dance has



the character of an improvisation, and is remarkable for the liberty and variety in its figures... .. a certain pride of bearing and sometimes a wildness” it can “express all kinds of feeling and shades of mood (p. 412).”

The large variety of characteristics encountered in the mazurkas can be attributed to the fact that Chopin borrowed from three different dance traditions: the *mazur*, *kujawiak* and *oberek* (Thomas, 1992, p. 157). In general, the *kujawiak* and *oberek* are gentler in melodic and rhythmic outline, although Thomas acknowledged there exists ambiguities in terms of tempo boundaries. Most of the mazurkas are a mixture of the traditions. The Chopin mazurkas that draw on one tradition are mostly *mazurs* with the exception of Op. 7 No. 5 and Op. 33 No. 2 as distinctly *kujawiaks*, and Op. 6 No. 4 and Op. 68 No. 4 as *obereks* (Thomas, 1992, p. 157).

The Op. 68 No. 4 mazurka, an *oberek*, is a work that is expressive and intimate with its chromatically decorated lyrical lines and relatively ambiguous tonal centre, perhaps suggestive of a yearning. There is also an implied stress on the third beat (bar 2), which is to be expected. However, there are also moments where one could interpret an agogic stress on the downbeat (bars 13 and 14). Comparing Chopin’s Op. 68 No. 4 mazurka to the second thematic group of the *Romanza*, one can see the textural similarities in (1) rhythmical ambiguities, (2) shifted metrical stresses and (3) expressive lyricism.



Figure 66. Chopin's Op. 68 No. 4 Mazurka in F minor. Stress on downbeat circled in red.

Given these circumstances, the *Romanza* should be looked upon as a work functioning with two dance forms at different thematic areas: the waltz in the first, and an *oberek* in the second. This interpretation is also supported by the fact that Medtner had already hinted at such a model in Op. 2 No. 2 *Reminiscence of a Ball*. In the vision of recreating the nineteenth century ballroom, *Romanza* also forms an *artistic image*. On the other hand, the incorporation of both dances within a single work, and by association Chopin, also suggests an allusion to the concertization of these dance forms. The concertization of these dances perhaps also resonated with Medtner's views on music. According to Emil Medtner, the “the sign of a true musical ‘genius’” had to express the “internal essence of the forerunners, restructuring the musical inheritance of the folk song and church chant into higher synthesis (Mitchell, 2011, p. 261).” Thus, *Romanza* also suggest a Medtnerian quality of *renewal*.

## 4.5. III: Primavera

### 4.5.1. Analysis of Harmonic Support and Structure

The summary of the harmonic structure is given in the figure below. The proportion of the first half, considering the introduction and exposition with the exposition repeat, is slightly shorter than the second half of the work. *Primavera* also features a transitional section in place of a second theme group. This will be discussed later in the analysis of global harmonic structure. The tonal centre of the main thematic groups allude to B $\flat$  major. In addition, there is also a harmonic vista in C $\flat$  major before the recapitulation.

	Allusory Tonal Centre	Bars
<b>Introduction</b>	V <sup>7</sup> of B $\flat$	1 - 10
<b>Exposition</b>		
Theme 1	B $\flat$ major	11 - 19
Transitional → Fortspinnung	B $\flat$ major → F major	20 - 28
<b>Development</b>	→C $\flat$ major	29 - 74
<b>Recapitulation</b>		
Introduction (Truncated)	V <sup>7</sup> of B $\flat$ major	75 - 84
Theme 1	B $\flat$ major	85 - 88
Transitional→Fortspinnung	E $\flat$ major/minor	89 - 96
Coda	B $\flat$ major	97 - 106

Figure 67. Structure of Primavera.

The introduction begins on an extended V<sup>7</sup> pedal of B $\flat$ , supporting figurations that are decorated chromatically. The first thematic idea begins (bar 11) with an accompaniment of a B $\flat$  major mode, again hinting at the tonal centre (Figure 68). However, because the melodic line consists of solely 4 notes B $\flat$ -D-F-G from the B $\flat$  pentatonic mode, this colours the tonal centre away from diatonicism.



Figure 68. Beginning of thematic area, bars 11-13.

The ambiguity in tonal centre eases on  $V^6 - I^6$  of  $Bb$  (bars 14-15, Figure 69) when a durationally significant F coincides with A in the bass, followed by a pure  $Bb$  triad, which gives this moment a restful sonic significance; a cadential gesture. This is a crucial allusion of the tonal center.

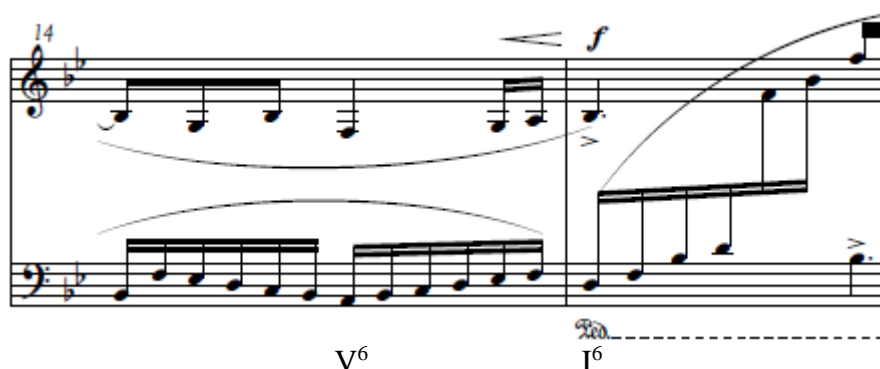


Figure 69. Appearance of a durationally significant F alluding to a perfect cadence gesture. Bars 14-15.

Next, the harmonic pace begins to quicken (bars 16-19), arriving on a pivotal moment:  $vii^{\theta 7}/V \rightarrow V$  (bar 20-21) which signals perceptually a modulation to the dominant tonal centre of F major. The buildup continues and climaxes on  $vii^{\theta 7}/V$  (bar 22) of F, alluding to a modulation to C. The passage almost achieves this, by the first two pitches [C G] in the accompaniment (bar 23), before revealing the F pentatonic mode. Here the theme is now restated in perceivably the tonal centre of F major. The next few bars are cadential in nature:  $I_4^6 \rightarrow V^9 \rightarrow I$ , alluding to a shift to a tonal centre of the dominant, wrapping up the first section. These features are shown in the following figure.

F:  $IV_5^6/V$   $vii^{\circ 7}/V$   $I_4^6$   $(V^9)$

F:  $I$   $I$

Figure 70. Closing section, bars 22-27.

The first theme group alludes to a tonal centre of B $\flat$  as pitches heard are perceptibly consistent to be within the of B $\flat$  major mode. This is notably through the descending B $\flat$  major scale in the accompaniment. Next, the cadential gesture  $V^6 \rightarrow I^6$  is given durational prominence. In addition, the closing of the first theme group alludes to the dominant tonal centre, which when considered with the exposition repeat, reinforces the tonal centre of B $\flat$  major due to expectations of form. On the other hand, the tonal centre is shaded through pentatonic modes, since it signals a shift away from diatonicism. This is compounded by the transitional passage which accelerates the harmonic rhythm into fleeting secondary tonal regions. In a way, this exemplifies the idea of “passing modulations” as “harmonic colouring” of a melody (Medtner, 1951, p. 27).

In the development, the first thematic idea makes an allusory appearance in the F pentatonic mode over a harmonic support signaling  $V_2^4$  of B $\flat$ . Following this, the musical passage moves through several sonorities such as  $iii$ ,  $vi$  and  $vii^{\circ}$ , that can be seen as a strategy

to obscure the tonal centre. Eventually, the musical passage arrives on perceptibly  $V^7$  of G minor, a moment of immense intensity and suspense. Several strategies are invoked: Firstly, the bass is doubled, a procedure that is described as “conscious doubling in order to increase the volume of sound” (Medtner, 1951, p. 34). Secondly, the duration on  $V^7$  is significant—spanning  $1\frac{1}{2}$  bars, as seen in the following figure.

G minor:  $iv_5^6$   
 $V^7$   
 Bb:  $ii_5^6$

Figure 71. Bars 35-36.

Following this, the harmonic support alludes to several tonal centres next: G minor → F minor → E $\flat$  minor → A $\flat$  minor, outlining a modulatory sequence on the large scale (bars 37-43). This is affected by moving through  $bII \rightarrow iv^7 \rightarrow V^7 \rightarrow i$  in G minor followed by F minor (Figure 72). This is indicative of the “passing modulation... ..like a rainbow that glides over various tonalities” (Medtner, 1951, p. 27). In addition, there is a balancing act here between the consistency of the sequence in harmonic support pattern, against changing tonal centres, suggesting the coordination of simplicity and complexity (Medtner, 1951, p. 12).

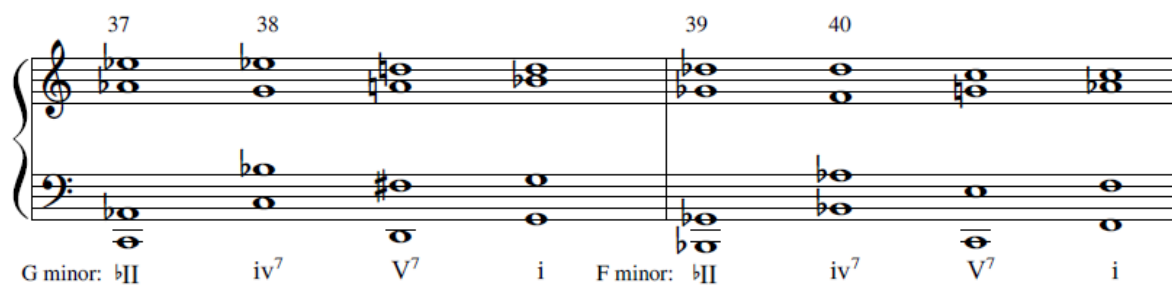


Figure 72. Harmonic reduction of sequential movement. Bars 37-40.

The passage arrives on perceptibly  $\flat\text{II}$  of  $\text{Eb}$  next (bar 41), which is expected by the ear accustomed to the pattern established. Using the shared relation of  $\flat\text{II}^{\text{Ger}^6}$  in  $\text{Eb}$  [ $\text{Fb}$   $\text{Ab}$   $\text{Cb}$   $\text{D}$ ] and the  $\text{Ger}^6$  of  $\text{Ab}$ , this pivotal moment allows an allusory modulation into the periphery of  $\text{Ab}$  minor through a perceptible  $\text{Ger}^6 \rightarrow \text{V}^7$  (bars 41-42, Figure 73). Another feature is the use of five notes alternating whole-tone/semitone, thus alluding to the octatonic mode (bar 42, Figure 74). This introduces the pitch  $\text{Db}$  which weakens the  $\text{Eb}$  minor tonal centre. Next, the motivic material from the first thematic idea is used sequentially (bars 45-48, Figure 75) towards the next climactic moment over a long dominant pedal of  $\text{Ab}$ .

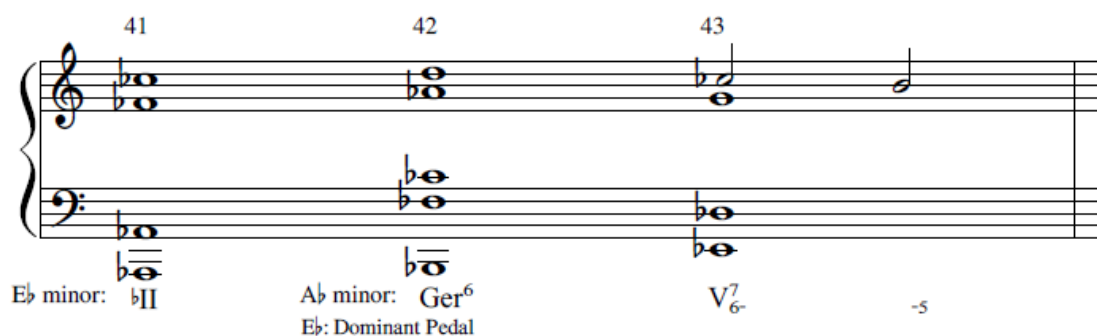


Figure 73. Harmonic reduction. Bars 41-43.

Ab minor: (Ger<sup>6</sup>)

E♭ minor:  $\frac{(bII^{Ger6})}{V \text{ pedal}}$

Figure 74. Whole-step/half-step alluding to octatonic scale (D♭-C♭-B♭-A♭-G) in RH lowest voice. Bars 42-43.

$\phi^1_{trans-int2}$  poco a poco

leggero

$\phi^1$  [portamento]  $\text{♩} = 84$

$f <$   $f$  cantando, vivo [piano, leggero]

con  $\text{♩}$

Figure 75. Motivic material from first theme group reused. Bar 45 (left). Bars 10-11 (right).

Arriving on  $V^7$  of D♭ (bar 49) over a prolonged tonic pedal, the musical passage arrives on a climactic point (Figure 76). This intense moment is supported by the octave doublings in writing. Against the  $V^7$  harmonic support, the bassline takes a stepwise ascent (bars 49-50), forming several tertian sonorities along the way, before eventually resolving to perceptibly  $i^6$  in D♭ (bar 51). Here is indicative of the “prototypes of dissonant chords of the sevenths”, supported by “casual harmonic formations” (passing notes) resolving into “prototypes of consonant chords of the triads and their inversions” (Medtner, 1951, p. 22).



Db: (V<sup>7</sup>) (IV) (V<sup>#3-#3</sup>) (i) i<sup>6</sup>

I pedal-----

Figure 76. Note the stepwise ascending line in the bass clef [A $\flat$  - B $\flat$  – C – D $\flat$ ], bars 48-50.

This moment is used as a modulatory pivot into C $\flat$ , eventually signalled by the arrival of V<sup>7</sup> seen in the figure below. This highlights the “modulation by ‘enharmonicism’” of related pitches (Medtner, 1951, p. 26).

C $\flat$ : ii<sup>6</sup>  
D $\flat$ : i<sup>6</sup>

V<sup>7</sup>

Figure 77. Bars 50-51.

So far, the first half of the developmental section is obscured by the use of chromaticism, modal writing, and the avoidance of establishing any tonic chord as the prime one due to the shifting pitch centres. At the same time, there is still an extent of diatonicism coexisting with the shadings, moving through several tonal centres as the pitch classes within local regions are perceptibly of the same family, and are still tertian in nature. The use of dominant pedals, made prominent by the choice of low registers separated from the other parts, and emphasized by loud dynamics, also hint of the tonal centres.

The next section arrives on the allusory tonal centre of C $\flat$  major (Figure 78). In the perspective of the large-scale architectonics, this alludes to a distant harmonic vista given the framing of a B $\flat$  major centre in the exposition. A performance direction indicates a relaxing of the tempo, which also brings about a slowing down of the harmonic rhythm, counterbalancing the intensity previously generated. The musical passage drones on the tonic for almost four bars before departing. The use of the vi<sup>11</sup> (bar 60) also appears to go against Medtner's own words that chords should not go beyond a ninth (Medtner, 1951, p. 29). The harmonic support arrives on a long pedal on V<sup>7</sup> of C $\flat$  major (bar 61-66), in which the texture splits into five independent voices.

Next, the musical passage slowly works its way back by alternating between perceptibly a tonic and dominant pedals (bar 67), and passing through secondary dominants. The harmonic rhythm intensifies again, eventually arriving on perceptibly V<sup>9</sup> in C $\flat$  (bar 73) which is emphasized by a tremolo (Figure 78, bottom figure).

This section alludes to a tonal centre of C $\flat$  major through the insistent use of tonic and dominant sonorities. There is also a pivot towards diatonicism as much of the harmonic progressions are functional. At the same time, the tonal centre is shaded most notably by passing modulations into secondary tonal centres.

(a) *Con molto tenerezza (meno mosso)* ♩. = 42

53 *p*

4 2 4 4 2 1 2

*Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

Cb major:

I

57 *pp* *pp* *pp*

*legato* [1]

4 3 1 4 3 1 5 4

[4] [4] [4] [4]

*Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

Cb major: ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> IV<sup>7</sup>/IV IV<sup>7</sup> vii<sup>o7</sup> iii vi<sup>11</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/V

61 *pochissimo mobile*

*dolce espressivo*

2 1 [1] 2 1 2 1 2

V

(b)

67 68 69 70 71 72 73

V<sup>9</sup>/IV IV<sup>7</sup> vi<sup>11</sup> ii<sup>9</sup> V<sup>9</sup> -5 -3

Cb major: I (-V) pedal -----

Figure 78. Cb major section. Bars 53-62 (top). Harmonic reduction, bars 67-73 (bottom).

The introduction figurations return next similarly over  $V^7$  of  $Bb$  major, though truncated this time. This leads back to the reappearance of the first thematic idea with similar harmonic support. Nevertheless, the closing of the thematic idea avoids the V-I cadential gesture, choosing to arrive on  $V^4_2/IV$  (bar 89) thus alluding to a  $Eb$  tonal centre. The next few bars, while following the thematic plan similar to the exposition, the musical passage passes through secondary tonal centres in  $bVI$  and even a  $v$  (minor dominant), which suggests a modal flavor. Even though Medtner emphasizes that he “principally” refers to diatonicism in discussions of modes, this is indicative of the “freedom” in returning to old modes through the chromaticism that surrounds the diatonic scale (Medtner, 1951, p. 23).

*poco sostenuto* *cantando*

89

**Eb minor:**  $V^4_2$   $IV^{b7}$   $V^4_2$   $i^6$   $V^4_2/bVI$

**Bb:**  $V^4_2/IV$

92

*p* *legato* *crescendo*

**Eb minor:**  $bVI$   $v$   $Ger^6$

Figure 79. Bars 89-94

This culminates in a  $Ger^6$  sonority with an added 9<sup>th</sup> [ $Cb$   $Eb$   $Gb$   $A+Db$ ], seen in Figure 79. This resolves  $Ger^6 \rightarrow I^6_4$  in  $Eb$ , alluding to a cadence. Nevertheless, this is also an illusion,

as the harmonic support heard as  $I_4^6$  in  $E\flat$  ( $IV_4^6$  of  $B\flat$  major) is used to pivot into a tonal centre of  $B\flat$  major.

The harmonic support intensifies through the quickening of the harmonic rhythm (bars 99-101) culminating on a climactic IV–I cadential gesture, finally arriving on the tonic. A harmonic reduction is shown in the following figure. This is an important moment as the tonic is only implied, but never clearly revealed in the entire work. The introductory motif ( $\phi^1$ ) is heard again in the right hand here, still maintaining pitches within the  $B\flat$  pentatonic. However, this time there is a clearer perception of the tonic as the role of the pitch G is much less significant due to its shortened duration here as compared to its first appearance (bars 11-13).

The image shows a musical score for three bars (99, 100, 101) in a grand staff. The right hand (treble clef) contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the left hand (bass clef) provides harmonic support with chords. Below the staff, a harmonic reduction is provided for each bar. Bar 99 contains chords  $ii_2^4$ ,  $vii_7^{\circ 7}$ ,  $ii_4^6$ , and  $V_7$ . Bar 100 contains  $IV$ ,  $ii_2^7$ ,  $ii_9$ ,  $IV_4^6$ ,  $V_5^6$ , and  $IV_6$ . Bar 101 contains  $IV$  and  $I$  (the tonic). The notation for the tonic  $I$  is  $\flat \overline{\overline{C}}$ , indicating a sustained, emphasized chord.

Figure 80. Intensifying of the harmonic rhythm within three bars. Note the IV-I cadence.

An examination of this final section reveals strategies that allude to a tonal centre of  $B\flat$  major prominently. This is through the cadential gestures, the consistency of the pitches in  $B\flat$  major, and significance given to the tonic chord twice (bars 101 and 105-106), as a point of convergence through stepwise movement. These chords are also accorded an extreme range in registers and in dynamics. Nevertheless, there are also moments in which the tonal centre is slightly shaded. This is through the modulation into secondary tonal centres.

The prominence accorded by Medtner's allusory strategies to the home tonal centre at the end is significant in *Primavera* since it has been only partially hinted at throughout. This is through dissonance that are in some ways in the periphery of the tonal centre, thus contributing and alluding, yet shading the tonal centre at the same time through ambiguity. The excursions

into tonal centres away from B $\flat$  major, going as far as C $\flat$  major and eventually resolving back into the home tonal centre, is also indicative of Medtner's (1951) "departure and return are principal purposeful function of modulation" as part of the process of form (p. 26).

#### **4.5.2. Analysis of Global Harmonic Structure**

An analysis of the harmonic support and structure suggests a less common formal structure of *Primavera*. After a brief introduction (bars 1-10), one clear thematic group emerges (bars 11-28). The first thematic idea closes on a weak cadential gesture on I $^6$  (bar 15) and approaches a transitional section (bars 16-22). Even though this transitional section appears to approach another perceptually cadential moment on vii $^{\circ 7}$ /V (bar 22), suggesting a medial caesura, it is unlikely to be so. This is because the first thematic idea returns once more (bar 23). In addition to that, the passage alludes to a closing of the section on the dominant through cadential gestures.

The middle section (bars 29-74), with its distant tonal centres, and quickened harmonic pace put together with motivic material from the first section shows that it is of a highly developmental nature. There is also the unusual section (bars 53-74) in which a tonal centre of C $\flat$  major is alluded to.

The last section (from bar 75) returns material from the introduction section and the first thematic idea. The tonal centre is made prominent with an allusory plagal cadence (bars 100-101) that strongly alludes to the home tonal centre of B $\flat$  major. Thus in the scheme of tonal drama, this last section can be seen as a "recapitulation" section, that after excursions into distant tonal centres, there is a gravitation back to the home tonal centre, indicative of the writings that "departure and return are the principal purposeful function of modulation" (Medtner, 1951, p. 22).

Summarily, the "middle section" can be seen as a development, and the "first section" can be seen as an exposition preceded by an introduction. Still, the lack of a second thematic

group is an issue to be addressed. From the analysis, the first section resembles what Hepokoski and Darcy (2006) would term as a sonata with a continuous exposition, in which the medial caesura is avoided, with the spinning out of new material, known as the *fortspinnung* (p. 54).

### 4.5.3. Thematic Ideas

The first thematic idea begins with a three-note motif ( $\phi^1$ ). This is subject to a broken chord figuration in consistent quavers. This figuration can also be seen as an intervallic change in direction ( $\phi_{int1}^1$ ). The line also features a consonant skip and back to the original note ( $\phi^2$ ). The regularity in quavers is disrupted by a rhythmical variation ( $\phi_{int1-rhy}^1$ , bar 13) through an introduction of a dance-like rhythm.



Figure 81. First thematic idea. Bars 11-15.

The three note motif ( $\phi^1$ ) also encompasses a prolonged  $\hat{6}$  [G] (bar 11) that creates tension against the accompaniment that outlines the Bb major scale. This provides a forward momentum driven by the dissonance, necessitating a resolution. This is achieved with the arrival of  $\hat{5}$  [F] (bar 14). This reflects resolution of “motion” towards “repose” (Medtner, 1951, p. 12). Apart from that, the first thematic idea features a distinctive colour, through the use of exclusively the pentatonic mode, except for the appearance of  $\hat{7} \rightarrow \hat{1}$  [A $\flat$ →B $\flat$ ], which reflects resolution towards the tonic (Medtner, 1951, p. 23).

The elaboration of the first thematic idea (from bar 16) resembles the transitional *fortspinnung* technique, described as a “relentless ongoing, expansive spinning-out of an initial

idea or its immediate consequences” (Hepokoski & Darcy, 2006 , p. 51). Motivic material is taken and expanded upon without much respite.

From the following figure, utilizing what appears to be passing notes in the closing of the first thematic idea ( $\phi^3$ ), a retrograde and rhythm change process ( $\phi^3_{ret-rhy}$ ) is immediately applied (bar 16). The motivic fragment  $\phi^1_{trans-int}$  also shares a melodic profile to  $\phi^1$ , although the melodic intervals in between are widened.

The spinning out slows down with the lengthening of the durational values (from bar 20), with motivic material derivative of the first thematic idea. Here  $\phi^4_{trans-aug-int}$  [C-G-A] maintains the melodic profile of  $\phi^4$  [G-D-F], though subject to a transposition a fifth lower, augmentation in duration, and a melodic interval alteration in the last two notes from a third [D-F] to second [G-A]. Similarly,  $\phi^2_{trans-aug-int}$  [A-B $\flat$ -A] is the repeated note motif ( $\phi^2$ ) with a lengthened duration, transposed a compound minor second lower, and the consonant skip is altered to an upper neighbor.

The figure displays a musical score in 3/8 time, spanning bars 11 to 23. The notation is on a single staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into three systems. The first system (bars 11-15) contains the following motifs:  $\phi^1$  (bar 11),  $\phi^2$  (bar 12),  $\phi^4$  (bar 13),  $\phi^2_{trans}$  (bar 14), and  $\phi^3$  (bar 15). The second system (bars 16-19) contains:  $\phi^3_{ret-rhy}$  (bar 16),  $\phi^1_{trans-int}$  (bar 17),  $\phi^4_{trans-aug}$  (bar 18), and  $\phi^3$  (bar 19). The third system (bars 20-23) contains:  $\phi^4_{trans-aug-int}$  (bar 20),  $\phi^2_{trans-aug-int}$  (bar 21), and  $\phi^3$  (bar 22). Each motif is indicated by a blue bracket above the staff with its corresponding label.

Figure 82. Bars 11-23 without accompaniment.

In this transitioning-fortspinnung section, one sees the calling forth of motivic material from the first thematic idea and the further development of them. This resonates with the elements associated with a theme in *The Muse and the Fashion* (see Section 3.3.5.). This brings



to mind Medtner's (1951) words that a theme may "draw on" another theme in order to develop in their "flowering" of seeds (p. 44).

#### 4.5.4. Summary of Musical Analysis

My analysis of harmonic support and structure depicts a balanced representation of both elements within *chiaroscuro*. The home tonal centre of B $\flat$  major is gradually established through the work, beginning with a long V<sup>7</sup> introductory pedal and a weak V $\rightarrow$ I<sup>6</sup> cadential gesture, to the thunderous resoundings of the tonic chords in the end. The sonorities in each local zone also contains consistency in pitch classes, and are tertian in nature, which grounds the work in diatonicism. On the other hand, multiple strategies are utilized to *shade* the tonal centre. Firstly, the use of the pentatonic mode, blurs diatonicism since the pentatonic scale is quartal in nature, rather than tertian. Passing secondary tonal centres also serve as a colouring to the tonal centres. Also, particularly in the development section, the pitch classes belonging to a perceptible tonal centre change rapidly, thus obfuscating the prominence of a particular pitch centricity. The analysis of form suggests that *Primavera* resembles the sonata with a "continuous exposition." This is due to the lack of a clear second thematic group in the exposition and recapitulation sections. There is also a tonally stable allusory C $\flat$  major section within the development that could be termed unusual. These sections show clear cadential gestures, concurring with Medtner's view that cadences play an integral part of form (Medtner, 1951, p. 26).

Next, *renewal* is observed in the less common "continuous exposition" technique, combined with the use of a stable section within the development. These deviations to prototypical forms show a way in which there is a balance in retaining "past forgotten ways" (Medtner, 1951, p. 64).

Next, *remembering* can be seen by how the themes and motifs are unified in the entire work, and show an eventual gravitation into cadences. The melodic ideas are also long and lyrical, concurring with Medtner's idea of a melody (Medtner, 1951, p. 44).

On *balance*, the complexity in the form due to the deviations is grounded by the framing of the sonata form. The Cb major harmonic vista, in its unexpectedness and therefore complication of the sonata form, is balanced by stability of the perception of tonality through the tonic and dominant sonorities.

*Primavera* presents a unique shape of the sonata form. These significant peculiarities require explanation. Consider that Medtner (1951) had written of "the demand of a special form for one's content's always signifies a realization of the importance of the unity of the one (form) and the other (contents)" (p. 121). This indicated that to Medtner, one had to find a form suitable to express one's music, and not treat it like "scheme." While analysis of the music does tell us its properties, it does not tell us why. A look at the extramusical may reveal some hints. In the next section I will approach an explanation.

#### **4.5.5. Allusory Themes**

The titling of this piece *Primavera* (Spring-Tale) draws upon a number of extramusical references that refer to the imagery of spring as a festival of *renewal*. This section examines this central theme.

#### **Spring the greatest festival of art: Renewal**

Spring is referenced explicitly by Medtner through Tyutchev's *Spring Waters* both in *The Muse and the Fashion*, and in his Second Sonata for Violin in G major Op. 44. In *The Muse and the Fashion*, *Spring Waters* is alluded to in anticipation of a theme (Medtner, 1951, p. 45), and in violin sonata, words from the poem are marked in the score of final movement (Martyn, 2016, p. 161). According to Alfred Swan, the poem evokes "the image of the

awakening of nature after the long winter sleep. The ice cracks and the rivers and brooks rush ahead proclaiming the return of spring and the coming of the soft, warm May days (Alfred Swan, 1951 as cited in Medtner, 1951, p. 45).”

Although the fields are white with snow,  
Fast-flowing waters speak of spring:  
Rousing the meadows as they go,  
They run on, sparkling, clamouring...

To all the valley they proclaim:  
'Rejoice, for spring is on the way!  
We come as heralds in spring's name,  
Sent on, these tidings to convey!'

Rejoice, for spring is on the way!  
And on its heels the merry round  
Of Maytime, day by tranquil day,  
When warmth and light and life abound...

Figure 83. Spring Waters, translated by Dewey (Tyutchev, 2014, p. 17).

Even though there are no explicit references to Tyutchev's *Spring Waters* in *Primavera*, there are curious similarities. For one, the violin sonata opens with a pentatonic mode in the violin part (Figure 84), which one similarly finds in *Primavera*. For Medtner, the pentatonic mode evoked the idea of spring. In fact, the use of the pentatonic mode referencing spring and pastoralism has had a long history in the Western tradition, tracing back to Weber (Day-O'Connell, 2007). The dotted rhythms in the *Primavera* also hints at the siciliano or musette, similarly closely associated with the pastoral genre (Haringer, 2014, p. 15)

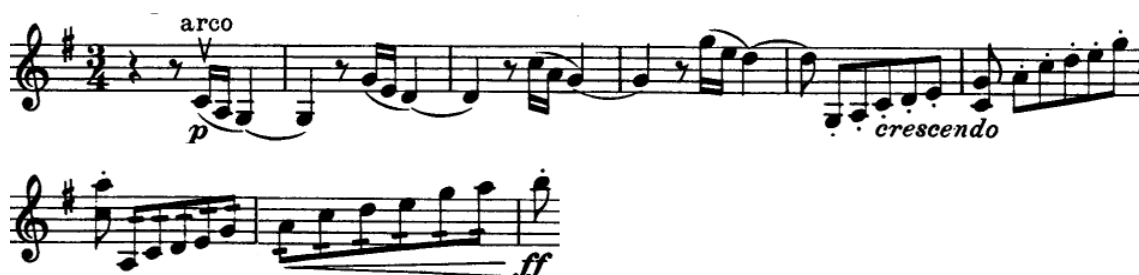


Figure 84. Medtner's Second Violin Sonata, final movement. Opening bars. Note the pentatonic mode.



Figure 85. *Primavera* theme. Note the pentatonic mode in the first line, and the siciliano rhythm.

The themes in Tyutchev’s poem demonstrate an association of nature, streaming waters, dance, and the anticipation of the warmer days of May—after a harsh winter. In *Primavera*, one locates resonances bearing these associations. After the darker *Meditazione* and *Romanza* movements, the introduction with drones on the dominant pedal accompanied by highly chromatic figurations (Figure 86) draws comparisons to the anticipation of spring, reflected in the words “although the fields are white with snow.” It is also perhaps not too much a stretch of the imagination to find in the *leggero* scalic passages in the left hand part (Figure 87) reflecting the “fast-flowing waters speak of spring... rousing the meadows as they go.”



Figure 86. *Primavera* introduction. Unstable chromaticism over dominant pedal.

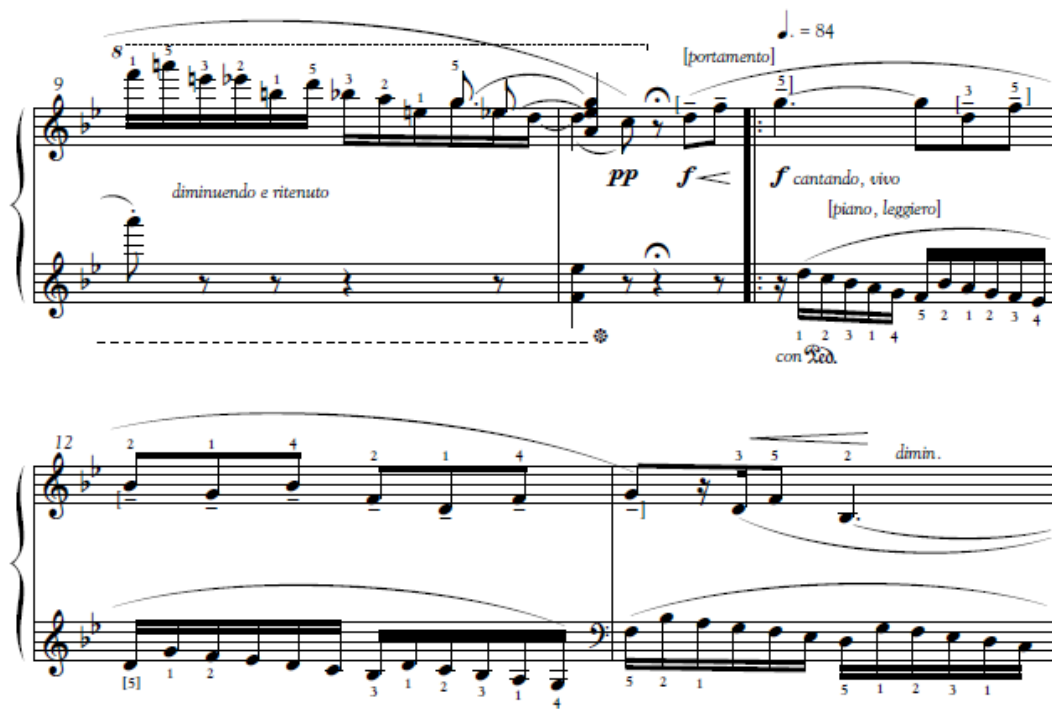


Figure 87. *Primavera* theme. Note the *leggero* scalic passages in the left hand.

In addition to that, the *fortspinnung* technique employed, in a way with an emphasis on its structural role by the omission of a second thematic group, also seems to resonate with spring. This is because, in some ways, the melodic line spinning continuously allude to continuous change without respite brought about by the changing of the seasons.

Next, the harmonic vista in C $\flat$  major marked *con molto tenerezza*, exudes a peaceful and tender quality, and through its slower tempo, and harmony that settles on the tonic and dominant for prolonged periods of time. One also finds hints of dance-like rhythms through the use of syncopation, agogic accents and articulation. In fact, a comparison could therefore be made to the *musette* genre. In classifying eighteenth century music, Sulzer wrote of the *musette* genre:

... Usually set in 6/8 meter...

... (of) naïve simplicity with a soft and delicate melody...

... Frequently the piece is set over the sustained bass note...

... designed for naïve rustic entertainments but it can portray noble shepherd characters as well as lowly peasants (Suzler, 1792-94, as cited in Haringer, 2014).



Figure 88. *Con molto tenerezza* section in Cb major within the development.

This Cb major vista is also possibly a reference to the lines “and on its heels the merry round of Maytime, day by tranquil day, when warmth and light and life abound....” which evokes imagery of a dance in the tranquil month of May, just before the beginning of the Russian summer in June, which is by then much warmer and comfortable.

Haringer (2014) elaborated further that apart from drone/pedal points, the  $\frac{6}{8}$  meter, the musette possesses an “air of simplicity” in an “emulation of Arcadian ideals” (p. 15). This appeal to shepherd song, and rustic pastoral environment has been noted in Medtner’s other works, as seen in his reference to Pushkin’s poem *The Muse* in the Op. 29 No. 1 song titled after the poem, and the *Sonata-Ballade* (Emerson, 2016). Seen in this light, this central section could also possibly be referencing the muses of inspiration by invoking this genre.

In fact, *Primavera*, according to Etymology Online, refers not only to spring but the “first spring” (Online & Etymology Online, n.d.). Apart from the imagery of a Russian Spring, there is an appeal to a primordial point in time, stretching back to the “initial song” and its associated eternal and timeless meanings. This resonates as Medtner also writes metaphorically

that spring meant a rejuvenation of musical speech. In the opening chapter of *The Muse and the Fashion*, Medtner wrote that

Thus it was spring, that was the great festival of our art—the eternal renovation of the contents of the inexpressible and the form of which was expressed (Medtner, 1951, p. 9).

Medtner's choice of spring as a symbolic object for renewal in music is perhaps a deliberate one. Spring, which arrives around a fixed time every year, suggests a stability in nature, which reflects Medtner's perceived stability and immutability of the musical laws. Nevertheless, the landscapes does change from year to year, which suggests a renewal. Reportedly, Medtner also wrote *Primavera* under the stimulus of the spring of 1920 (Martyn, 2016, p. 139). *Primavera*'s musical passages resonate strongly with *Spring Waters* in imagery, and considered together with the enigmatic call for renewal of the primordial laws, *Primavera* forms an *artistic image* of the Russian Spring that is symbolic of renewal.

## 4.6. IV: Canzona matinata

### 4.6.1. Analysis of Harmonic Support

A summary of the harmonic structure of *Canzona matinata* is shown in the figure below. Sonorities here are primarily drawn from the diatonic modes, and the home tonal centre is alluded to without ambiguity from the beginning. The outer sections balanced about a central section.

Section	Allusory Tonal Centre	Bars
<b>A</b>	G major	1 – 22
<b>B</b>	D major	23 – 28
Transition		29 – 36
<b>C</b>	F# minor	37 – 52
<b>B'</b>	D major	53 – 58
Transition		59 – 64
<b>A'</b>	Bb major → G major	65 – 88
<b>Coda</b>	G major	89 – 101

Figure 89. Structure of *Canzona matinata*.

*Canzona matinata* begins with a two bar introduction that encompasses the motif of a second interval. This is over a static harmonic backdrop of I alternating with  $V^9$ . This droning on the tonic and dominant continues as the theme is unraveled, cadencing weakly on IV –  $I^6$  (bars 4 and 6). One feature here is the *pochiss. riten.* over a syncopation (bar 5) which prolongs the tension of the sonority induced by the  $V^9$  of G major (Figure 90).





Figure 90. Agogic accent on D with *pochiss. riten* prolonging tension induced by V9 of G major. Bars 4-6.

The harmonic support travels towards the secondary dominant  $V_2^4/V$  (bar 7) next before resolving partially  $V_2^4/V \rightarrow V \rightarrow iii$  where  $iii$  can also be heard as  $vi/V$ . This prepares for the next section in which the gravitation from the tonic is much more prolonged and further, modulating to A major, or  $V^7/V/V$  of G major. The harmonic tension is gradually resolved by a chain of  $V^7 \rightarrow I$  in each secondary tonal centres (bars 11-12), returning the harmonic support to conclude on a cadential gesture on V of the home tonal centre (bar 12). This is shown in the following figure. In addition to that, there is also the sense of “motion” through the increased pace of the harmonic rhythm (bars 9-10) which coincides with the increasingly developed motivic material.

Figure 91. Harmonic reduction. Bars 7-12.

The theme repeated next, though developed more extensively. There is an intensification of the musical passage through both rhythmical diminution and an increased harmonic pace (bars 20-22). Instead of modulating  $V/V \rightarrow V$  directly as in the previous time, the harmonic support takes a longer journey towards, eventually cadencing on V (bar 22). This

anticipates the dominant tonality in the next main section. At the same time, this procedure of the quickening of the harmonic rhythm in the preceding bars, and the amount of space given to V (bar 22) again highlights the gravitation into “repose” from “movement.” This is shown in the figure below.

Figure 92. Quickening of harmonic rhythm. Bars 19-22.

In section **A**, the tonal centre of G major is perceived to be rooted in diatonicism by consistency in pitch classes within local regions, tertian sonorities, and allusions to frequent V-I harmonic support which Medtner (1951) acknowledged as “the principal coordinates of tonality” (p. 26). On the other hand, the tonal centre is shaded by modulations into secondary tonal centres, and “accidental harmonic formations.”

Section **B** begins with a relaxation of the harmonic rhythm (Figure 93). Despite chromatic voice-leading procedures in the bass, the harmonic support is perceptibly diatonic. The passage presents a cadential gesture on  $V^6_5$  of D major (bar 24), which alludes to a D major tonal centre when heard in the frame of the preceding passages. Next, the musical passage passes through a secondary tonal centre before again closing on another half-cadence gesture:  $I^6_4 \rightarrow vii^{\emptyset 4}_3$  (bars 23-26). This substitution of V for  $vii^{\emptyset 4}_3$  reflects Medtner’s (1951) view on the possibility of a wide variety of cadences (p. 37).



Figure 93. Chromatic passing notes circled in red. Bars 22-26.

The harmonic support and rhythm is intensified through a transitory passage (bars 27-28), through chromaticism and an additional syncopated middle voice. This leads to a half-cadence gesture:  $V^6_{\#3}$  that adds colouring (Figure 94).



Figure 94. Bars 27-28.

Next, the melody condenses rhythmically over an ascending stepwise harmonic sequence:  $ii^6 \rightarrow iii^6 \rightarrow iv^6 \rightarrow V^6 \rightarrow vi^6$  (bars 29-31). This sequence culminates with perceptually a modulation towards the F# minor tonal centre, strongly alluded to by a

durationally significant V-i gesture at the end (bars 34-35, Figure 95). This can be perceived as movement into more distant tonal regions. This is a modulation with a “definite goal” in establishing form, which Medtner (1951) identifies as the primary function of modulation (p. 26-27).

Figure 95 shows a harmonic reduction for bars 29-35. The top staff displays the chords, and the bottom staff shows the Roman numeral analysis. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

Bar	Chord	Harmonic Reduction
29	D major: ii <sup>6</sup>	ii <sup>6</sup>
30	iii <sup>6</sup>	iii <sup>6</sup>
31	iv <sup>6</sup>	iv <sup>6</sup>
32	V <sup>6</sup>	V <sup>6</sup>
33	vi <sup>6</sup>	vi <sup>6</sup>
34	F# minor: ii <sup>ø7</sup>	ii <sup>ø7</sup>
35	I <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>	I <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>
	V <sup>7</sup>	V <sup>7</sup>
	i	i

Figure 95. Harmonic reduction. Bars 29-35.

The tonal centre of D major in section **B** is alluded to by the repeated half-cadential gestures. The tertian sonorities and consistent pitch classes also allude to diatonicism, coloured by secondary modulations, the altered half cadences that adds to the ambiguity, and accented passing notes, suspensions and chromatic voice leading (bars 26-27).

The harmonic support of the central section **C** will be discussed in *Sonata tragica* as it appears exactly transposed a semitone up. On the large scale, the tonal centre of F# minor is distant when compared to the earlier tonal centres.

Next, marking a return of the second thematic idea (section **B'**), the harmonic support is initially similar to the front, alluding to D major. Structurally, the ascending sequence ends on the vi (bar 61). However, the passing note of E $\flat$  is now heard instead of E $\sharp$  earlier, negating the modulation to F#. This section closes with a strong cadential I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> → V which continues a D major allusion (Figure 96).

61

63

*f*

*poco calando*

*pp*

D major:  $I_4^6$

$V^7$

$bVI$

Figure 96. Bars 61-65 with accompaniment patterns. Note the E $\natural$  circled in red, an important difference from the front.

The first thematic idea returns next (Section A'). However, instead of the expected ( $I_4^6 \rightarrow V$ )  $\rightarrow$  I, the passage takes an unexpected turn:  $\rightarrow bVI$ , an allusory modulation to B $\flat$  major. This is a play on expectation described by Medtner (1951) as modulation through “enharmonicism” (p. 26). The harmonic support of the Section A' also follows a similar scheme to Section A, with the main difference being transposed to B $\flat$  major. After arriving on  $V^7/V$  (bar 76), “enharmonicism” again enables the passage to modulate back to the allusory G major:  $IV^{Ger6} \rightarrow V^7 \rightarrow I$ . This is shown in Figure 97.

B<sup>b</sup>major: V<sup>7</sup>/V/V                      V<sup>7</sup>/V

G major: IV<sup>Ger6</sup>                      V<sup>7</sup>                      I

Figure 97. Harmonic reduction. Bars 75-77.

The second half of A' returns to an allusory tonal centre of G major (bar 77). The theme is now treated to scalar figurations and decoration, outlining a short *cadenza*. The tonal centre is coloured by chromaticism, leading into a climactic point on E (bar 83) over a dominant pedal (Figure 98). The C# acciaccatura hints at V/V of the home tonal centre, which resolves partially to V<sup>7</sup> (bar 88). Even though a resolution into the tonic is expected next, the musical passage takes a deceptive turn to vi (bar 89) leading into the coda. A harmonic reduction is shown in Figure 99. Even though  $\hat{5}$  of vi [B] is omitted in the voicing, the doubling of the root is enough to suggest triad through overtones.

Figure 98. Climactic point of the cadenza like section. Bars 83-84.

G major: V<sup>7</sup>                      vi

Figure 99. Harmonic reduction. Bars 88-89.

**A'** in its two parts establishes the tonal centres of B $\flat$  major and G major through a sense of diatonicism through consistent pitch classes within local regions, and identifiable tertian vertical sonorities, and V-I gestures. Framed with the prominence accorded to the consonant sonorities such as I and V of G major, this section therefore alludes to a home tonal centre of G major. Additionally, the temporary B $\flat$  major tonal centre indicates a complementary colouring. The cadenza features “passing notes and chromaticism which serves to shade the tonal centre.

The first two bars of the coda eases the excitement built up earlier, through the expansive note values, slowly moving towards I $_4^6$  (bar 91). From here, the coda restates the second (bars 91-94) and first thematic ideas (bars 95-98) all in a G major tonal centre. Even an ascending chromatic passage, in its colouration that it brings, is centred by a tonic pedal, and ends prominently on the pitch G. Following that, the *Canzona matinata* ends off with a closing gesture that suggests  $V^7/V \rightarrow V^7 \rightarrow I$ . These procedures reinforce the home tonal centre as G major. Here the gravitation without any unexpected surprises enables the inner ear to perceive the “return” to the tonic that Medtner (1951) identified as a key purposeful factor in form (p. 26).

#### **4.6.2. Analysis of Global Structure**

There are two thematic sections which return surrounding a central section. Each section is demarcated clearly through strong cadential gestures. Section **A** begins in the home tonal centre of G major, though it ends in the dominant (bar 22). Section **B** in a D major tonal centre modulates and cadences in perceptually F $\sharp$  minor (bars 34-35). Section **C** features a tonal centre of F $\sharp$  minor, though not without passing modulations into secondary tonal centres. Sections **A'** and **B'** return in reverse order, with section **A'** alluding first to a distant tonal centre of B $\flat$  major, before travelling back to the home tonal centre. A short cadenza leads into the coda. Therefore considering all things, *Canzona matinata* is in arch form with a coda.

### 4.6.3. Thematic Ideas



Figure 100. First thematic idea. Bars 1-12.

The first thematic idea is characterized by a three note motivic material ( $\kappa^1$ ) connected by a minor second melodic interval formed with an upper neighbour tone. This is followed by a repeat of the minor second interval ( $\kappa^{1'}$ ). The motivic material are subject to numerous processes of transposition, expansion and diminution throughout the work. In bar 3,  $\kappa^1$  is transposed, lengthened in duration, and expanded with a lower neighbour tone ( $\kappa^1_{trans-aug-exp}$ ), followed by a reiteration of the descending second interval ( $\kappa^{1'}$ ). This pattern is subsequently repeated, and increasingly developed with each iteration. The development of motivic material in one self-contained section, thus contributing to the perception of form, perhaps reflects what Medtner (1951) referred to as “development of the theme” as the “opening up of the kernel, the form of the whole composition” (p. 43).

The next thematic idea is also derivative of the earlier first thematic idea, characterized by the melodic second interval ( $\kappa^1$ ). It is mostly in conjunct motion, although it features wider leaps of a sixth interval that appeals to an expressive quality. There is deliberate attention drawn to the syncopation, due to the preceding rest. These pitches that last a duration of a crotchet also acts as a stable consonant tone in which passing tones resolve into. At the same time, syncopation is a disruption to the metre, thus propelling motion forward. The syncopation lets



up only in the last bar, where the pattern is finally relieved of rhythmical and harmonic instabilities. This coincides with the F# resolving into E, which provides a half cadence gesture on  $\text{vii}^{\emptyset 3}_4$  of D major. These are indicative of Medtner's idea that a theme should have its "internal cadence," and that "accidental harmonic formations" (passing tones) need to resolve into a triad (Medtner, 1951, p. 31).



Figure 101. Second thematic idea. Bars 23-26.

The third thematic idea in *Canzona matinata*, draws comparisons to the first two thematic ideas, notably through the characteristic syncopation. This matches the words in *The Muse and the Fashion* that reads "often it (the theme) needs other themes as its vassals, suggesting them, calling them forth, it often reveals in its own flowering their seeds" (Medtner, 1951, p. 44). Passing notes also gravitate towards the durationally significant tonic [F#] (bars 37-38). This thematic idea also appears within the third thematic group of the *Sonata tragica*.



Figure 102. Third thematic idea. Bars 37-40.

#### 4.6.4. Summary of Musical Analysis

In *Canzona matinata*, several *Medtnerian Ideals* can be observed. Firstly, harmonic support and structure are representative of *chiaroscuro*, although here *chiaro* takes on a much more prominent role. This is because the home tonal centre of G major seems to be alluded to through consistent pitch classes, constant V-I harmonic support, numerous cadential gestures, and a clear delineation between melody and accompaniment voices. The framing of beginning and ending in G major also accords a significance in perception of a gravitational tonal centre.

*Scuro* takes on a subdued role here, instead, playing extensively on expectation of the listener, through subtle changes in repetition that lead to new tonal centres—modulation by “enharmonicism.” As the other tonal centres still retain the allusion of diatonicism, this can be seen as a competing colour, rather than one that blurs the existing tonal centre. “Accidental harmonic formations” and chromaticism also take on a decorative role instead, due to the prominent tertian harmonic support.

Analysing the form indicates an arch structure [**A B C B’A’** + coda]. The arch is balanced about the middle section **C**. This symmetry is partially disrupted by the coda which lengthens the second half. The coda serves to rebalance the home tonal centre, allowing further harmonic departures into other shadings/colouring created in the initial return of **B’** and **A’**. This concurs with Medtner’s (1951) view that form building is tied with cadences and harmonic considerations on the large scale (p. 49), that tonal drama is part of the trajectory of the work.

In *remembering*, each thematic idea shares certain features with each other, perceptibly derived from the first thematic idea due to the ubiquitous nature of the second interval. There are also a variety of ways in which the thematic ideas are developed extensively, through extension and rhythmical variation. Other than that, the thematic ideals also feature long lyrical lines, expressing Medtner’s (1951) idea that “melody” should be viewed as the “most beautiful form” of the theme (p. 44).

In *balance*, the simplicity perceived of tonal clarity due to the texture and diatonic allusions, allows for the complexity of long and highly decorated melodic lines to be perceived. A similar comparison had been made by Medtner to the song and dance forms of Schubert and Chopin (Medtner, 1951, p. 16).

In *Canzona matinata* is a strong allusion to diatonicism and functional harmonic practices. However, Medtner has been known to obscure tonal centres (see 2.3.3.). Bearing these circumstances in mind, it is precisely this deliberateness in a stability rooted in

diatonicism that requires an explanation. I will approach this through allusory themes in the next section.

#### 4.6.5. Allusory Themes

There are many possible associations with the titling of *Canzona matinata*. This section will follow an examination of two main ideas (1) Nature, and (2) Youth and Renewal.

##### Nature and Pastoralism

One finds similarities in musical traits in *Canzona matinata* with Medtner's *Sonata-Idyll*, which in its own titling suggestive of an Arcadian backdrop. Firstly, the two-note motif in *Canzona matinata* resembles the introduction of the opening movement of *Sonata-Idyll*, titled *Pastorale*. Both works are also in the same key, and are marked *Allegretto cantabile* and *Allegretto cantando* individually.



Figure 103. *Canzona matinata*, opening bars.



Figure 104. First movement from *Sonata-Idyll*, opening bars.

Next, there are hints of birdsong in *Canzona matinata*. This can be seen in the development of the thematic idea which (1) extensively repeats a pitch, and the (2)

*acciaccature* employed here which Martyn (2016) described as “an unusual fondness for a variety” (p. 139). Comparing some of this writing to the *Bird’s Tale* from Medtner’s Op. 54 No. 2 reveals similarities. The figures below show the similarities in the two qualities of repeated pitches and *acciaccature* in *Canzona Matinata* and *Bird’s Tale*.

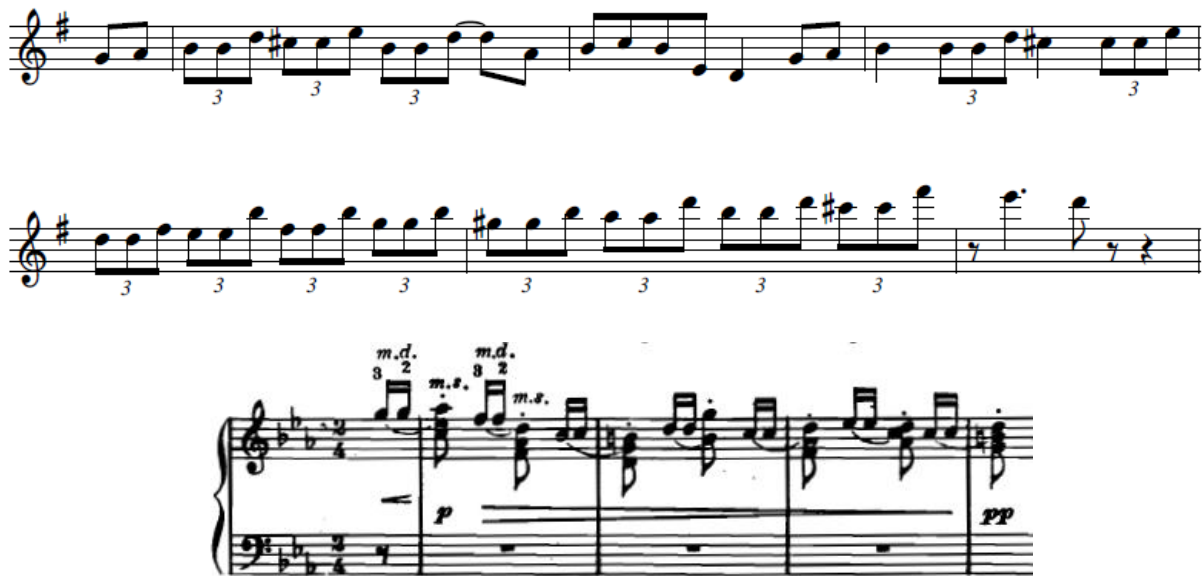


Figure 105. Repeated Notes: *Canzona matinata* bars 16-22 (top), Medtner’s *Bird’s Tale* Op. 54 No. 2 (bottom), opening bars.



Figure 106. Variety of *acciaccature*: *Canzona matinata* bars 37-40 (top), bars 22-26 (bottom).



Figure 107. *Acciaccature*: Medtner’s *Bird’s Tale* Op. 54 No. 2

## Youth: The Spirit of Music

In *Canzona matinata*, the *canzona* quality is evident in the long lyrical lines. In *matinata*, there is an implicit reference to a very specific time of the day. According to Martyn (2016), this depicts the “morn of youth... . generally sunny with occasional black moods, a time of optimism” (p. 140). The concept of “youth” also appears in *The Muse and the Fashion* but not as a passage of time:

It is wrong to identify the past with age, and the present and future with youth, For if we speak at all of time, its passage is from youth to age, and not vice versa. However, the domain of the spirit has no idea of time. Therefore when we think of our youth, our soul is rejuvenated, but when we merely wear clothes that beseech youth, e.g. just follow the fashion, we merely affect youth, but don't get younger (Medtner, 1951, p. 104).

Therefore “youth” is a metaphorical reference to a source of renewal, which appears to imply the “spirit of music”, the driving force behind the “initial song” (Medtner, 1951, p. 12)—the “Muse”. This is evident when Medtner stated that outwardly appearances merely affect “the fashion,” a reference to the type of music he disagreed with. The insistence on diatonic allusions in *Canzona matinata* is perhaps Medtner’s way of reminding one of the “collective laws” which sprang from diatonicism/diatonic scale (Medtner, 1951, pp. 21-22).

Summarily, *Canzona matinata* in forming its *artistic image*, alludes to nature and pastoralism, which at times even suggest imagery of birdsong through the various ornamental figurations. At the same time, there is a metaphorical reference to “youth” as an inspirational source of *renewal*, reflecting “the Muse.” Returning to what Medtner mentioned earlier, that “a composer who is incapable of **inspiring** the fundamental sense of the simplest form of binary song, who is incapable of creating the impression of novelty in absolute simplicity, will never master the complex forms” (Medtner, 1951 p. 49), *Canzona matinata* in its deliberate attempt in “simplicity” of the song form, aspires to demonstrate the compelling expressivity that could still be evoked. This is also clearly referenced through the allusions that seem to work closely

with the functional harmonic framework through the use of primary chords prominently. However it appears to be an illusion nonetheless given the *chiaroscuro* framework pointed out in the previous section.

## 4.7. V: Sonata tragica

### 4.7.1. Analysis of Harmonic Support and Structure

	Allusory Tonal Centre	Bars
<b>Exposition</b>		
Theme 1	C minor	1 – 20 21 – 39 40 – 53
Theme 2	E♭ Major	54 – 65 66 – 78
Theme 3	G minor	78 – 94
(Theme 1+2)	-	95 – 112 113 – 129
Closing	E♭ Major	129 – 150
<b>Development</b>		151 – 178 179 – 202
<b>Recapitulation</b>		
Theme 1	C minor	203 – 222 223 – 235
Cadenza	C minor	236 – 266
<b>Coda</b>	C minor	267 – 305

Figure 108. Structure of Sonata tragica.

A summary of the harmonic structure of *Sonata tragica* is shown in the figure above. The tonal levels outline a mediant relationship, which is a common procedure found in minor key sonatas (Aldwell, Schachter, & Cadwallader, 2011, p. 501). The home tonal centre of C minor is prominently alluded to on the whole. On the other hand, there is a small developmental section (Theme 1+2) in the exposition that obscures tonality through modal writing supported by tertian sonorities. The proportion of the work is well balanced, with the exposition equalling the development and coda.

The exposition begins with the first thematic idea alluding to a tonal centre of C minor through a  $V^7 \rightarrow i$  cadential gesture (bars 1-3). There is also an indication of harmonizing over the melodic minor mode through the use of A♯ (bar 2). A harmonic reduction is shown in Figure 109.

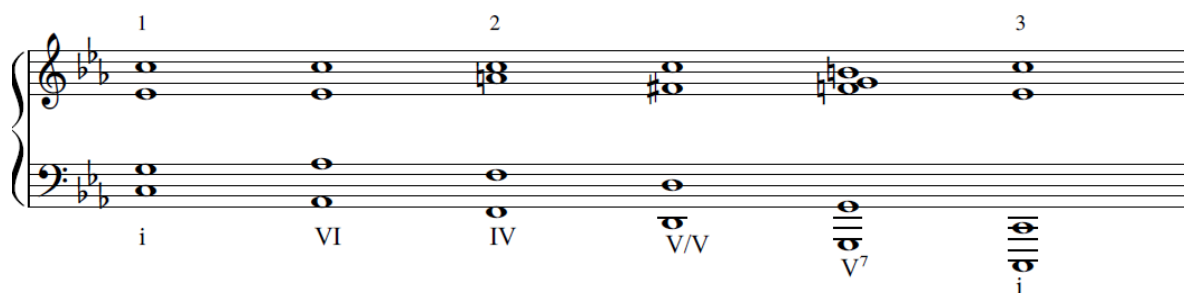


Figure 109. Harmonic reduction. Bars 1-3.

As the theme unfolds, a harmonic sequence is observed over a tonic pedal  $i \rightarrow (ii \rightarrow V) \rightarrow i$  followed by  $i \rightarrow (IV \rightarrow V) - i$ , with IV and ii acting as predominant sonorities, an allusory functional harmonic framework (bars 4-7).



Figure 110. Bars 4-7.

Next, the opening repeated-note motif is sounded again (bar 8), through more dissonant use of passing tones over a tonic pedal, culminating on iv (bar 9). The tension is partially resolved next through the arrival of  $V^7/III$  (bar 9), beginning a sequence of descending fifths that also begins a pivot into lyricism (Figure 111).

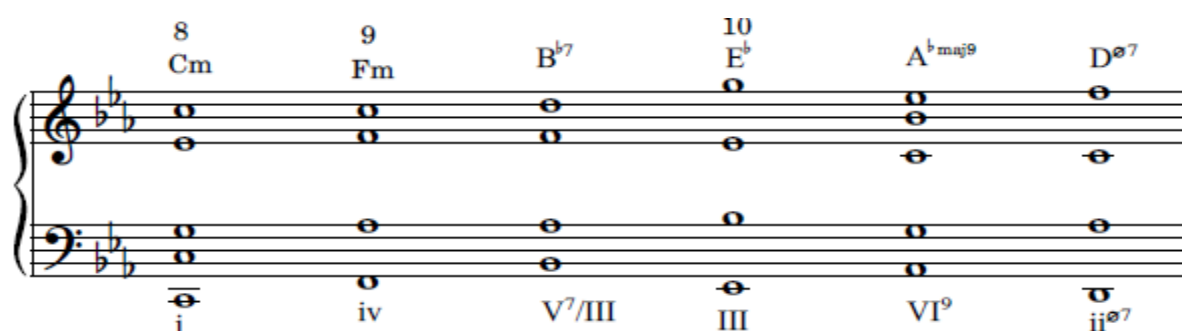


Figure 111. Harmonic reduction. Bars 8-10

Next, the sequence lands on  $VI^9$  (bar 10) with the implied agogic accent on F. Following this, the bass moves in an octatonic fashion  $[D - E^b - F - F^\# - G]$  (Figure 112).



The repeated D in the melody, over a middle voice that descends in chromatic fashion and the stepwise bass, acts as an intensifying devices, resolving  $\rightarrow V^7$  in C minor (bars 12-13). This reflects Medtner's (1951) view that dissonance gravitates into relative consonance of a dominant seventh sonority (pp. 21-22).

C minor: VI<sup>9</sup>      ii<sup>07</sup>      i<sub>5</sub><sup>6</sup>      IV      Fr<sup>6</sup>      V<sup>7</sup>

Figure 112. Agogic accent on F (circled). Bass line moving in an octatonic fashion (circled). Bars 10-13.

Next, through “enharmonicism,”  $V \rightarrow iii/V$  (bar 13) can also be perceived  $VI \rightarrow i$  in B minor as it is purely a triad briefly, thus signally sonic restfulness. Though this is disrupted next when  $A\flat$  appears, which can be read as an  $Bm^{add\#6}$  or a minor  $Fr^6$  in C (Figure 113). This is perhaps a strategy to prepare the ear for the modulation to B minor later. Next,  $Fr^6 \rightarrow V$  is repeated twice again, (bars 14-15, and bars 16-17), before the harmonic rhythm quickens, before ending on V (bar 20). This is illustrated in Figure 114.

Fr<sup>6</sup>      B minor: VI      V      iii/V      i<sup>6</sup>      Bm<sup>add#6</sup>

Figure 113. Harmonic reduction. Bars 12-13.

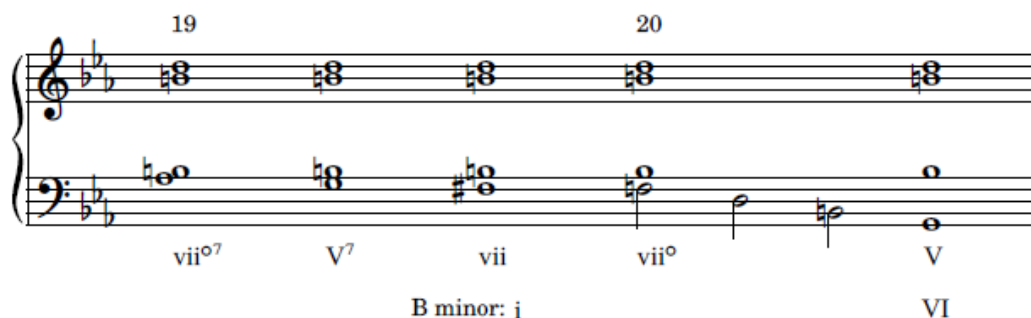


Figure 114. Harmonic reduction. Bars 19-20.

Despite ending on V which creates an expectation of  $\rightarrow i$  in C minor next, the passage alludes B minor (bar 21) next instead. The opening harmonic sequence is now alluded to in the tonal centre of B minor over  $i \rightarrow VI \rightarrow IV \rightarrow \flat II$  (bars 21-22) and modulates to F minor by the means of a shared relation; the  $\flat II^7$  in B minor is perceptually also  $V^7$  in F minor. The tritone relation between B and F minors suggests an unstable quality, and therefore the anticipation of an eventual resolution— in this case an allusory C minor—on a longer time scale. The two allusory tonal regions of B minor (bars 21-23) and F minor (bars 25-27) compete with each other through a similar sequence. At the same time the tritone relation also shows a symmetry as moving in either tonal centres of B minor or F minor in this sequence ( $i \rightarrow VI \rightarrow IV \rightarrow \flat II$ ) will bring the tonal centricity back to each other.

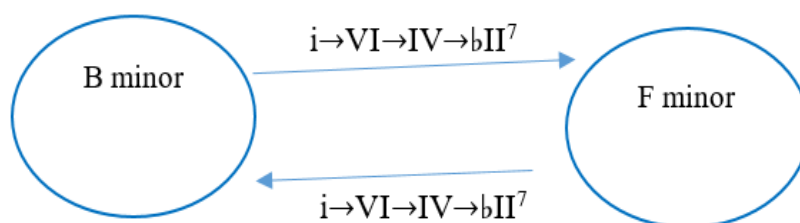


Figure 115. Visual representation of competing tonal centres of B minor and F minor, upon a sequential movement of  $i \rightarrow VI \rightarrow IV \rightarrow \flat II^7$  modulates back and forth into one another. Bars 21-32.

Figure 116. Harmonic reduction. Bars 21-23, and Bars 25-27.

After a few iterations of competing tonal centres, the allusory B minor tonality leads into a variety of decorative figurations that is essentially a diminution of the opening motifs. This marks a transition into an unstable tonal region. Here the increased chromaticism and modal writing obscures the tonal centre (bars 32-35). Eventually, this is counterbalanced by a movement into perceptually Ger<sup>6</sup> in C minor (bar 36) and the chromaticism in the inner voice (bar 37) that brings the musical passage back towards the tonal centre via a cadential gesture Ger<sup>6</sup> → bII<sup>Fr6</sup> → i. Here bII<sup>Fr6</sup> is a dominant substitute by the means of a tritone substitution. This soon gives way to a transitory passage that alludes to the tonal centre of E $\flat$  through the constant droning of V<sup>7</sup> in E $\flat$ .

B minor melodic

B minor melodic

F# minor melodic

B minor:  $i^6$

$i^6$

F# minor:  $i$

F# mode of D acoustic

Eb mode of C minor harmonic

C minor:  $Ger^6$

( $Ger^6$ ) (iv)

Chromatic

crescendo

( $Ger^6$ )

$bII^{Fr6}$

$i$

Figure 117. Bars 32-40.

Thus far, a tonal centre of C minor is alluded to in the first theme group. Firstly, structurally significant cadential gestures such as: the V-I in the beginning, and ending the tonally unstable region with a V-I gesture. Secondly, there is a significant duration accorded to the tonic chord of C minor. Thirdly, there is sense of an allusion to diatonicism through consistent pitches, allusory functional movements, and tertian harmonic support. Contrarily, there are strategies which add a variety of colouring to the allusory tonal centre. Firstly, this is through chromaticism, and acciaccatura chords. Next, allusory modulations into secondary

tonal centres and tonally ambiguous passages for a substantial duration serves to shade and compete with the allusory C minor.

The second thematic idea begins with a stepwise bass movement outlining the E $\flat$  major scale (bars 54-59). The accompaniment voice on the weak beats also outlines a tonic pedal in E $\flat$ , alluding to the tonal centre through repetition (Figure 118). The appearance of D $\flat$  (bar 58) next, signals a secondary tonal centre, reinforced by a  $V^6_5 \rightarrow i$  gesture in F minor (bar 59). One particular pivotal chord,  $ii^{\emptyset 7}/V$  of F minor helps connect these tonalities, as it is also  $vii^{\emptyset 7}$  of E $\flat$ . A harmonic reduction is shown in Figure 119. Next, the return to the tonal centre of E $\flat$  is prominently alluded to by a cadential gesture of  $V^7 \rightarrow I$  over a descending major scale (bars 65-67, Figure 120).

Figure 118. Tonic pedal in middle voice circled in red. Bars 54-58.

58 59

Eb major:  $iv^6/ii$   $V^7/ii$   $vii^{o7}$

F minor:  $ii^{o7}/V$   $V^6$   $i$

Figure 119. Harmonic reduction. Bars 58-59.

63 66

*espressivo*

Figure 120. Bars 63-68. Beginning of descending Eb major scale circled in red.

Next, the theme is restated with an imitative second voice. The appearance of C# (bar 68), alludes to a D minor tonal centre. As seen in Figure 121, read in the frame of D minor, this outlines  $\flat II \rightarrow V_2^4 \rightarrow VI^7$ . A fleeting gesture  $\flat II^{Fr6} \rightarrow I$  (bar 72) momentarily alludes to a tonal centre of D. This is illustrated in Figure 122.

68

Eb major: I  
 D minor:  $\flat\text{II}^6$   
 $\sharp\text{IV}^4_2$   
 $\text{V}^7$   
 $\text{VI}^7$

Figure 121. Harmonic reduction. Bars 68.

72

D minor:  $\flat\text{II}^{\sharp 7}$   
 Eb major:  $\text{I}^7$   
 $\text{V}^4_3$   
 $\flat\text{II}^{\text{Fr}6}$   
 I  
 G minor: V

Figure 122. Harmonic reduction. Bar 72.

The tonal centre of Eb major in this second theme group is prominently alluded to. Structurally, there is a substantial duration spent preparing for the arrival of I through the droning on V<sup>7</sup> preceding this section. Next, after excursions into secondary tonal centres, the return to an allusory Eb major next via a V-I cadential gesture, and a scale in conjunct motion, accented and beginning on the tonic (bar 65), in its ease of perception establishes itself clearly. The tertian and somewhat functional movement of the harmonic support at times also alludes diatonicism. Conversely, numerous features such as “accidental harmonic formations,” chromaticism and movements into secondary allusory tonal centres also provide different shades of colours.

The third theme group, which recalls the middle section of the *Canzona matinata* begins in a G minor tonal centre over a tonic pedal. The use of neighbouring tones in the middle voices

G → F → E → F# , suggest a melodic minor mode. Following this, there are several modulations to other tonal centres via enharmonic relations, while maintaining the thematic idea and texture. The tonal centre eventually returns to G minor, closing the third thematic group on a V of G minor (bar 93) in anticipation of more that is to come.

Figure 123 shows a harmonic reduction for bars 78-82. The notation is as follows:

Bar	Harmony
78	G minor: V
79	i
80	i
81	Bb Major: V <sup>7</sup>
82	I

Figure 123. Harmonic reduction. Bars 78-82.

Figure 124 shows a harmonic reduction for bars 85-87. The notation is as follows:

Bar	Harmony
85	D minor: VI, Bb major: I
86	Ger <sup>6</sup> , i <sup>4</sup>
87	V <sup>7</sup> , i

Figure 124. Harmonic reduction. Bars 85-87.

The third theme group establishes the tonal centre of G minor through several means. Cadential gestures in G minor frame the opening and closing sections. This is supported by the extended duration in which a tonal centre of G minor is heard. Secondly, there is also an allusion to diatonicism due to the tertian harmonic support and allusory functional harmonic support. Conversely, the frequently fleeting modulations affixes different colourful sonorities. Each individual tonal centre presents a distinctive colour that competes with the main tonal centre for attention; a shading with nuances.

Leaving the third thematic group, the next section is developmental in nature, returning to ideas from the first and second thematic group over ambiguous tonal centres due to the use



of modes in both horizontal and vertical dimensions. This passage begins perceptibly on  $A\flat^7$  (bar 95, Figure 125). This insistence of  $A\flat$  in the bass, together with the appearance of  $D\sharp$  suggests the  $A\flat$  Lydian mode. Next,  $C \rightarrow C\flat$  in the harmonic support (bars 96-97) suggests a shift to Lydian  $\flat 3$ . A shade of tonal centricity is hinted by an allusory functional movement:  $ii^{\flat 5}$   $\rightarrow ii^{\flat 5}$   $\rightarrow V_2^4$  in  $E\flat$  (bars 96-98).

*poco tenebroso e tranquillo*  
(*ma a tempo*)

$A\flat$  Lydian  $A\flat$  Lydian  $\flat 3$

Figure 125. Musical passage. Bars 95-98

Before the tonal centre in  $E\flat$  is further strengthened, the passage modulates into a secondary tonal centre, perceptually  $VI_2^4/vii \rightarrow i_4^6/vii$  of  $E\flat$  (bars 98-99), adding to the ambiguity of the tonal centre. Horizontally, the appearance of  $B\flat$  ( $\flat \hat{2}$ ) suggests the A Phrygian mode. Next, the appearance of  $E\sharp$  and  $A\flat$  suggests the  $B\flat$  acoustic scale in the melodic line, the fourth mode of F melodic minor (bars 100-104). This relation also enables the musical passage to quickly shift into a passing modulation into a tonal centre of F minor (bar 102) through harmonic support in the accompaniment. These are shown in the following figure.

Figure 126. Harmonic reduction with some enharmonic respellings. Bars 99-104.

There is also a passing tonal allusion of G minor due to the independent melodic voices suggesting the C acoustic mode (bars 104-105) through the following pitches: [F#, Bb, and Eb]. Eventually, the tonal centre of D minor is alluded to via a  $bII^{Fr6} \rightarrow i$  (bars 105-106) cadential gesture. This is shown in the following figure.

Figure 127. Bars 104-106.

Next, with the arrival of *i* in D on the first beat (bar 106), C $\sharp$  is introduced from the second metrical beat, giving a D<sup>7</sup> chord. Although it is not clear yet, it could be heard perceptually as a IV<sup>Ger6</sup> in A major. This is supported strongly through V<sup>7</sup> of A (bars 108 and 112). Seen in this frame, the harmonic support utilizes augmented sixth chords on  $\hat{4}$  and  $\flat\hat{6}$ , alternating with V<sup>7</sup> and vii<sup>o</sup> of A. Even though I in A is never heard, it is implied as Ger<sup>6</sup> → V is perceptually dominant preparation. A harmonic reduction is shown in the figure below.

The figure displays a harmonic reduction for seven bars of music. The notation is as follows:

Bar	Harmonic Reduction
106	A: IV <sup>Ger6</sup>
107	Ger <sup>6</sup>
108	V <sup>7</sup>
109	Ger <sup>6</sup>
110	vii <sup>o6</sup>
111	Ger <sup>6</sup>
112	V <sup>4</sup>

Figure 128. Harmonic reduction. Bars 106-112.

At the same time, examining the independent melodic lines, the pitches [G $\sharp$  B $\sharp$  F $\sharp$ ] suggests the D acoustic mode (bars 106-108). This is followed by a shift into chromaticism in the lower melodic voice (bar 107) that takes the melodic line into E Phrygian suggested by F $\flat$  and D $\flat$ . Here, there is a struggle between G $\sharp$  and G $\flat$  (bars 108, 110 and 112), which indicates the harmonic support breaking free from the influence of the mode. Finally, the F Lydian mode is heard in the bass which closes this ambiguous modal region (Figure 129).



Figure 129. Bars 105-112.

This entire section stretches the limits of the perception of a tonal centre, together with a familiarity of tertian sonorities. Firstly, the modes seem to influence both melodic writing, and harmonic support at times. Secondly, there are no pitches made especially prominent across the entire section. Thirdly, the counterpoint of two melodic voices creates a layered texture that makes the perception of triadic vertical sonorities much harder. On the other hand, even though there is no clear tonal centricity, there is a way in which within small sections, there is a consistency of the pitches. In addition to that, the harmonic support being tertian in nature, also allows a perception of recognizable chord types. The strong appeal to modes coming together with harmonic support, in which the bass moves chromatically in this section, concurs with

Medtner's (1951) view that through chromaticism, one is able to move freely from the diatonic scales to the old modes (p. 23).

Arriving in the next section on a  $F^7$  chord, the first thematic idea returns over one of the longest and uninterrupted descending cycle of fifths in the entire Op. 39 cycle:  $F^7 \rightarrow Bb^7 \rightarrow Eb^7 \rightarrow Ab^7 \rightarrow Db^7$  (bars 113-117), before working its way encircling the closing tonal centre of  $Eb$  (Figure 130). This reflects Medtner's (1951) description of the secondary function of modulation as "like a rainbow that glides over the various tonalities" (p. 27).

Figure 130. Harmonic reduction. Bars 113-117.

A passing allusory  $F$  minor tonal centre (bars 120-121) is alluded to temporarily:  $V^4_2/ii \rightarrow ii^6$ , where it appeals to an expressive and lyrical moment. After which, the musical passage travels towards perceptually the dominant pedal (bars 123-124).

Figure 131. Harmonic reduction. Bars 120-123.

Before moving onto the closing section, the passage takes one last detour to the descending of fifths,  $Bb^9 \rightarrow Eb^7 \rightarrow Ab^7 \rightarrow Db^7 \rightarrow Gb^7$ , and partially resolves to a  $Cb$  triad (bar 129), perceptually an extension of the descending fifths. This marks the beginning of the closing section, which in its many sequences, approaches cadential gestures on  $V, IV, Fr^6$  repeatedly, until the very end in which  $V \rightarrow I$  of  $Eb$  is finally heard, thus closing the exposition.

Thus far, this region can be seen as a resolution of tonally ambiguous centres into tonal stability, relative dissonance into consonance which matches the writings (Medtner, 1951, pp. 21-22). Bearing in mind that the modal section (bars 95-112) is tonally ambiguous due to the use of modes, the cycle of fifths thereafter (bars 113-117) being a chain of dominant seventh chords, followed by the clear tonal centre of  $Eb$  major is a “relative” gravitation into consonance.

The development section begins with the opening theme in a perceivably diatonic mode due to the cadential gestures closing the exposition. This switches into modal writing next. Nevertheless, there is a centricity of the  $Eb$  modes in the horizontal dimension, made clear with repetition of the pitch.

After which, the passage alludes to an  $Ab$  minor tonal centre due to the appearance of  $\hat{6}$  [ $Fb$ ],  $\hat{7}$  [ $Gb$ ], and a dominant pedal (bar 158-159). The supporting scalar line also draws primarily from the  $Ab$  melodic mode. Nevertheless, the tonic is never heard. A secondary tonal centre of  $Eb$  is tonicized through a  $vii^{\circ 4}_2/V \rightarrow V$  (bars 160-161), but it is weakened by  $b\hat{3}$  [ $Gb$ ] shortly after. Next, a modulation to a  $D$  major/minor tonal centre is hinted by the gesture  $bII^7 \rightarrow V$  in  $D$  (bar 164). Both  $V$  of  $D$  and  $Ab$  tonal centres also compete with each other (bars 165-166) as seen in the alternating sets drawn from their respective diatonic modes that outlines a descending scale. Eventually the tonal centre of  $D$  is triumphant as this leads to a long pedal over an  $A$  triad (bars 167-169).

151 *poco quasi recitativo (ma a tempo e sostenuto)*

*ff secco* *E♭ Phrygian Dominant* *legato espressivo* [*ff*]

*E♭ Diatonic* *E♭ Diatonic*

156 *diminuendo sempre sostenuto secco 11)*

*E♭ minor (?)* *E♭ Phrygian Dominant* *E♭ Mixolydian ♭6*

*Ab minor: V<sup>7</sup>* *(vii<sup>♯2</sup>/V)*

161

*Ab minor: V* *Ger<sup>6</sup>/V/V* *vii<sup>♯</sup>/V* *V*

164 *p* *Ab minor diatonic* *A diatonic* *Ab minor diatonic* *A diatonic*

*di - mi - nu - en -*

*D major: ii<sup>7</sup>* *bII<sup>7</sup>* *V*

Figure 132. Development section. Bars 151-166.

Next, pivoting into a more homogenous texture, the harmonic support takes an excursion from a E major tonal centre into the periphery of the tonal centres of C and C# minors, with the modulation to C and C# minor tonal centres suggested through cadential gestures  $\text{Ger}^6 \rightarrow \text{V}$  (bars 172-173) and  $\text{vii}^{\circ 4}_3 \rightarrow \text{V}$  (bars 176-177) respectively. Following that, the tonal centre of D minor anticipated much earlier is alluded to more prominently  $\text{Fr}^6 \rightarrow \text{i}^6_4$  (bars 182-183), supporting material drawn from the third thematic idea.

Figure 133. Harmonic reduction for the cadential gestures from 172-183.

Next, there is a modulation to an allusory tonal centre of C minor (bar 184) using  $\text{VI}^7$  of D, as they share common pitches. From here there is an increase in harmonic rhythm that changes once per bar (bars 184-191):  $\text{ii} \rightarrow \text{vii}^{\circ 7} \rightarrow \text{iv}^6_4 \rightarrow \text{bII}^{\text{maj} 7} \rightarrow \text{ii}^{\circ 7} \rightarrow \text{i}^6 \rightarrow \text{iv}$ , as the bass line moves chromatically converging on the pitch F#, spelling out  $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}/\text{v}$  (bar 191) of C minor, a region of intensity and dissonance. This sustained  $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}/\text{v}$  over the next eight bars arrives eventually on  $\text{i}^6_4$  in C minor, that leads to the cadential gesture of  $\text{i}^6_4 \rightarrow \text{V} \rightarrow \text{i}$  that brings the musical passage back to the tonal centre of C minor in the recapitulation. A harmonic reduction is shown in Figure 135. It is of worth to point out that over here, the bass line outlines the octatonic mode, also observed by Pitts (1999).





Figure 134. Octatonic mode: F#-G#-A-B-C-D-D#-F used exclusively in the bass line. Bars 191-198.

184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 202 203

C minor: vii<sup>°7</sup> iv<sup>4</sup> bII<sup>°maj7</sup> ii<sup>°7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> iv vii<sup>°7</sup>/v i<sup>4</sup> V V

D minor: VI<sup>7</sup>

Figure 135. Harmonic reduction. Bars 184-203.

Thus far, the development section began with an ambiguous tonal centre. This is because of the frequently modal linear dimension. Even though the horizontal lines at times coincide into perceptible triadic vertical sonorities, the sonorities avoid settling into a stable tonal centre by avoiding cadential gestures. Eventually, the sonorities settle into perceptibly diatonic writing, beginning from a long dominant pedal (bars 167-169). In addition, the writing becomes more chordal, therefore relatively simplifying the degree of dissonance perceived. This eventually leads back to the home tonal centre via a V→i cadential gesture which

exemplifies Medtner's (1951) writings that all dissonances needed to resolve back into the tonic (pp. 21-22). In a way, this also shows tonal shadows coexisting with an allusory functional framework.

The recapitulation section repeats much of the first theme group exactly as in the exposition. The competing allusory tonal centres of B minor and F# minor makes a reappearance, although there is a change in the harmonic support which leads into a cadenza. This is through the movement into perceptibly  $\flat$ II of C minor. Here chromaticism in the figurations are balanced by the tertian harmonic support. This ends the first half on an interrupted cadential gesture  $\rightarrow$  VI (bar 247, Figure 136).

Figure 136 shows a harmonic reduction for bars 237-247. The reduction is presented below the musical notation, which consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The chords are labeled as follows:

- Bar 237: C minor:  $\flat$ II<sup>6</sup>
- Bar 241: ii<sup>o6</sup>/ $\flat$ II
- Bar 242: vii<sup>o4</sup>/ $\flat$ II
- Bar 243: i<sub>4</sub>
- Bar 244: VI
- Bar 245: vii<sup>o6</sup>/ $\flat$ II
- Bar 246: IV
- Bar 247: i<sub>4</sub>
- Bar 248:  $\flat$ II<sup>Fr6</sup>
- Bar 249: VI

Figure 136. Harmonic reduction. Bars 237-247.

The second half of the cadenza picks off perceptibly around an A $\flat$  major tonal centre. Here passage resorts to a number of secondary dominants, which arrives on a climatic I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> in D major (bar 255). Next, over an inverted tonic pedal, the harmonic support progresses towards a cadential Fr<sup>6</sup>  $\rightarrow$  i<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> gesture in C minor (bars 258-259). This leads into the third and final part of the cadenza. Here the tonic and dominant chords are reinforced by their placement on the strong beats. The third section ends on  $\flat$ II<sup>Fr6</sup> of C minor (bar 266), perceptually a half-cadence gesture.

Figure 137 displays the harmonic reduction for bars 249-259. The notation shows triadic chords in a grand staff, with the corresponding Roman numeral and figured bass analysis provided below each system.

**System 1 (Bars 249-255):**

- Bar 249: A $\flat$  major: I
- Bar 251: V $^7$
- Bar 252: vii $^{\circ 4}_2$ /V $^7$
- Bar 253: V $^7$
- Bar 254: vii $^{\circ 7}$ /VI
- Bar 255: VI D: vii $^{\circ 7}$ /iv
- Bar 256: vii $^{\circ 6}$
- Bar 257: Ger $^6$
- Bar 258: I $^{\sharp}_4$

**System 2 (Bars 256-259):**

- Bar 256: D minor:  $\sharp$ iv $^{\circ 7}$
- Bar 257: iv
- Bar 258: V
- Bar 259: I
- Bar 260: C minor: Fr $^6$
- Bar 261: i $^{\sharp}_4$

Figure 137. Harmonic reduction. Bars 249-259.

The cadenza section features triadic writing that illuminates a perception of the various tonal centres. In fact, Medtner spoke favourably of Chopin's Op. 25 No. 8, a work that shares similarities to this cadenza. Medtner (1951) wrote of Chopin's coordination of the "accidental harmonies" into "marvelous and completely natural harmony," through fleeting nature of the dissonances existing with the "simplicity of the fundamental harmony... ..sounding so clearly and luxuriously" (pp. 74–75). Medtner's reference to a clear perception of the tonal centre (simplicity of "fundamental" harmony) existing with the chromaticism (dissonances) into a colourful (luxuriously) portrait of sound in the etude, is a description that could be applied here as well.

The coda begins with two independent voices over a bass line that at times coincides to form perceptible triadic vertical sonorities (from bar 270). From here, there are a number of harmonic sequences that Medtner utilizes to build up tension through secondary tonal centres. In the first section, there is a passing modulation to a tonal allusion of G minor which leads to a small climax, suggested by the texture and performance directions, on iv $^7$ /V (bar 273), before

returning back to the tonal centre of C minor, alluded to by a cadential gesture on V (bar 275).

A harmonic reduction is shown in the following figure.

Figure 138 displays a harmonic reduction of musical bars 267 to 275. The notation is organized into two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. Chord symbols are provided below the staves.

**System 1 (Bars 267-272):**

- Bar 267: C minor: i
- Bar 270: V<sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup>
- Bar 271: V<sup>7</sup>
- Bar 271: i<sup>6</sup>
- Bar 271: VI
- Bar 272: V<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup>/III
- Bar 272: V<sup>7</sup>/III
- Bar 272: III<sup>6</sup>
- Bar 272: i

**System 2 (Bars 273-275):**

- Bar 273: C minor: III
- Bar 273: G minor: i<sup>6</sup>
- Bar 273: VI
- Bar 274: iv<sup>7</sup>/V
- Bar 274: V<sup>7</sup>/V
- Bar 275: Fr<sup>6</sup>
- Bar 275: V

Figure 138. Harmonic reduction. Bars 267 to 275

Next, the opening figurations are repeated with an introduction of a second independent voice in the accompaniment. This together with a pivot into chromaticism thickens the texture further, thus shading the tonal centre. At the same time, bass notes strategically placed on the main metrical beats maintains some form of clarity in perceiving the tertian sonorities. Eventually, the passage arrives on a key structural point, on a G $\flat$  chord, which alludes to a  $\flat$ II of F minor tonal centre (bar 280). From here on, the next few bars slowdown in harmonic rhythm, and outlines  $\flat$ II  $\rightarrow$  V<sup>7</sup>  $\rightarrow$  i (bars 280-282), an allusion to a functional framework. The ambiguity of the descending melodic minor mode in F (bars 282-283) is exploited as to create the appearance of the relative major, which suggests to the ear A $\flat$  major (VI of C minor). This allows the musical passage to arrive on  $\flat$ II/VI of C minor (bar 284). Using a chromatic stepwise movement in the bass, the harmonic support reveals another cadential gesture:  $\flat$ II/VI  $\rightarrow$  Fr<sup>6</sup>  $\rightarrow$  i<sup>6</sup>, alluding again to a tonal centre of C minor (bar 285). Next, through a series

of chromatic voice leading, the harmonic support builds its way back towards another cadential gesture  $\flat\text{II}^{\text{Fr}6} \rightarrow \text{i}$  in C minor (bars 289-290), thus closing this section and alluding to the tonal centre.

Figure 139. Harmonic reduction. Bars 280-285.

Figure 139. Harmonic reduction. Bars 280-285.

From here on, the figurations from the opening section of the coda (bars 290-293) leads to a recurring  $V \rightarrow \text{i}$  (bars 294-302), preparing for the end. In the final bars, the opening bars are repeated again over a similar harmonic support:  $\text{i} \rightarrow \text{VI} \rightarrow \text{IV} \rightarrow V/V \rightarrow V^7 \rightarrow \text{i}$ , thus ending our cycle. Similar to *Canzona matinata*, the *Sonata tragica* is most clear in matching the principle of “departure” and “return” in terms of modulatory strategies (Medtner, 1951, p. 26), as the piece begins and ends in similar tonal centres.

In the examination of the coda section, there is a strong allusion to a tonal centre of C minor on the large scale. Firstly, this is through the cadential gestures that demarcate the ending of each smaller section. Secondly, the final passages of the coda reinforce the home tonal centre with the constantly repeating  $V \rightarrow \text{i}$ . Thirdly, there is perceptually an allusion to diatonicism as there is a macroharmonic consistency within localized regions, and the tertian nature of the harmonic support at its core. Conversely, shades of dissonances colours the tonal centre. Firstly, this is through the multiple independent voices that thickens the texture. Secondly, the frequent consecutive half step movements of the voices indicates a pivot into chromaticism, which Medtner (1951) identifies as “colouration” and “shadings” (p. 38). Thirdly, modulation into allusory secondary tonal centres also provides a competing colouration.

Throughout the *Sonata tragica*, various tonal centres are alluded to and take turns to step into the spotlight. Considering the prominence accorded to the various allusory tonal centres, one could conclude that Medtner's strategies involve alluding to C minor as the home tonal centre, as it is alluded to prominently throughout the entire work, beginning and ending with it. This large scale tonal movement concurs with his writings that "departure and return are the principal purposeful function of modulation" (Medtner, 1951, p. 26).

#### **4.7.2. Analysis of Global Harmonic Structure**

As the title of the work suggests, *Sonata tragica* is a one-movement work in sonata form. The analysis of harmonic support and structure reveals three clear theme groups. Corresponding to how Medtner (1951) saw cadences as integral to perceiving form (p. 26), each of the three theme groups possesses a clear cadential gesture to close the section (bars 54, 78 and 94 respectively). Next, the first and second theme groups share very similar melodic material, though with different textures and tonal centres. This therefore indicates thematic transformation. Consequently, the exposition can be regarded what Caplin (2013) terms a monothematic exposition (p. 495). The third theme group is a direct recall and transposition of the central theme in *Canzona matinata*. The end of the third theme group leads into a lengthy tonally ambiguous developmental section, which is unusual in a sonata form practice before a close to the exposition. The tonal centres are fleeting and never fully established through clear V→I relationships. This eventually leads into the closing area that through a V→I gestures alludes to the tonal centre at the end. Seen in this light, the developmental section within the exposition is a deviation from the typical sonata-allegro form.

The true development section is also tonally ambiguous, compared to the theme groups. This is indicative of a practice from the eighteenth century (Caplin, 2013, p. 420). The development section passes through numerous tonal centres over which motivic material from the three theme groups are called back. The end of the development section is marked clearly

by a cadential gesture:  $i^4 \xrightarrow{6} V^7 \rightarrow i$ . This exemplifies the idea of cadence as an integral part of form (Medtner, 1951, p. 49).

In the recapitulation, the first theme group partially returns, before shifting into a cadenza section, bypassing<sup>14</sup> the second theme and third theme groups. The cadenza section perhaps serves as a balance to the lengthy exposition. The cadenza closes on a cadential gesture on V of C minor, which leads into the coda. The coda prominently alludes to the home tonal centre.

### 4.7.3. Thematic Ideas

The first thematic idea of *Sonata tragica* (Figure 140) is relatively longer than the other works of the cycle. The opening three bars lay out key motivic fragments. This begins with a repeated three note motif ( $\tau^1$ ). Next, a double neighbour tone gives rise to an ascending second interval ( $\tau^2$ ), and an ascending second interval followed by a descent of a third ( $\tau^{2'}$ ). Finally, this ends with a descending perfect fourth ( $\tau^3$ ).

These motivic materials are developed extensively over the course of the first thematic idea. Firstly, bars 4 to 5 features the retrograde of some motivic material as well as a change in the interval of downwards leap to a sixth ( $\tau_{int}^3$ ). This is repeated sequentially in the next line (bars 6-8), following similar procedures. The repeated note motif ( $\tau^1$ ) returns transposed a fifth up, as well as further developing earlier material ( $\tau_{ret}^2$  and  $\tau^2$ ) in the following line (bars 8-10). The subsequent lines feature similar economic use of the motivic material, further developing them. This exemplifies Medtner's (1951) words that a theme would at times call on other themes (p. 44). The long lyrical lines also concurs with Medtner's (1951) writing that "the theme is included in, and can be most easily contemplated, in the shape of a melody (p. 45).

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<sup>14</sup> See explanation similarly described in *Romanza*.





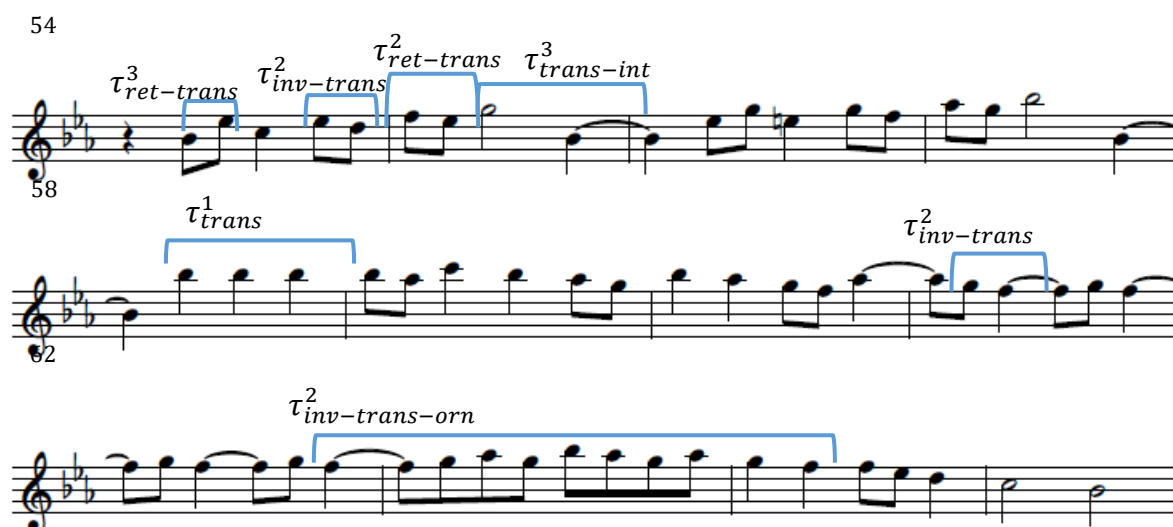


Figure 141 Second thematic idea. Bars 54-65.

The second thematic idea, shown in the figure above, is a transposition of the first thematic idea into the relative major. It consists of similar motivic material, and developmental features that are related to the first thematic idea. The second thematic idea also features a cadential gesture on  $V^7$  of  $E_b$  major, which concurs with Medtner's (1951) view that a thematic idea needed its own cadence (p. 44).

The third thematic idea shared with the middle thematic idea in *Canzona matinata*, now transposed semitone up, from  $F^\sharp$  minor to  $G$  minor. As they are similar, I will refrain from repeating the features previously discussed. In the context of motivic similarity to *Sonata tragica*, this third thematic idea bears some resemblance to the first and second thematic ideas in its conjunct motion, recalling the motivic material of a second interval ( $\tau^2$ ). There is also a droning on  $\hat{5}$  (bars 82 – 84), anticipated earlier (bar 81), which shows an ornamental procedure on the repeated note motif ( $\tau^1$ ). The thematic idea also closes with a fourth interval, which also closes the opening three bars of the first thematic idea ( $\tau^3$ ). Similarly, it possesses a cadential gesture on  $V^7$  of  $B_b$  major, resonating with the views of *The Muse and the Fashion* (see Section 3.3.5.).



Figure 142. Third thematic idea. Bars 79-84.

#### 4.7.4. Summary of musical analysis

My analysis of *Sonata tragica* bears correspondence to several *Medtnerian Ideals*. The analysis of harmonic support and structure is representative of *chiaroscuro*. The tonal centre of C minor is strongly alluded to through the macroharmonic consistency of the pitches, and the numerous cadential gestures. Additionally, thematic areas allude to that tonal centre very strongly and are perceptibly diatonic in nature. The significant role of diatonicism is not surprising, since Medtner (1951) saw the diatonic scale as the “principal” form when discussing “modes” (p. 23).

On the other hand, there is the presence of shadings which serves as colourful contrasts in sonority. Despite alluding to the perception of tonal centres, chromaticism and secondary modulations serve as decorative and competing shadings to the main tonal centre. This is representative of Medtner’s (1951) words that “(the diatonic scales) richness and suppleness, thanks to the chromaticism surrounding it, opened the way to a broad development of the whole musical art” (p. 23). The developmental sections tend to obscure tonal centres by avoiding cadential gestures and using modal writing. The analysis of form also concurs with Medtner’s view that form building is tied with cadential gestures and harmonic considerations on the large scale.

Contrary to what Keller (1971) saw as polytonalities (bars 191-198), I find no juxtaposition of tonal centres but instead see that the “F sharp on C minor” tonal centre should be perceived as  $\text{vii}^{\text{o}7}/\text{V}$  of C minor. In Medtner’s (1951) own words “atonal and polytonal

chords” are chords that the inner ear “cannot embrace” (p. 96). Medtner was unlikely to write in such a way but Keller’s observation once again brings up the issue of perception.

Next, *renewal* can be observed in both form and vertical sonorities. Firstly, the presence of the third thematic group, considered together with the developmental section in the exposition, and the cadenza in place of recapitulating the second and third theme groups, represents structural deviations from the typical sonata-allegro form. At the same time, several features of the prototypical forms are kept, thus exemplifying the return to the “past forgotten ways” (Medtner, 1951, p.64). For one, the theme groups feature a mediant relationship that is typical of sonatas beginning in minor mode. In addition to that, the unstable developmental section and the return of the tonic in the recapitulation are all typical features of a sonata trajectory.

*Balance* can be observed in several ways. For one, the complexity of the form of the work is balanced with simplicity of the unity in the thematic ideas, and the pivot towards diatonicism in harmonic support. However at the same time, there are moments, in the developmental sections where the ambiguous tonal centres are put together with several independent voices which may be perceived as complexity without a balancing force, unless when considered together with the appearance of the germinal thematic material.

*Sonata tragica* alludes to practices of the nineteenth century, with chromaticism surrounding diatonicism. The allusory tonal stability, and its strong rootedness in diatonicism for most parts is not a common feature amongst Medtner’s works. This way of writing needs to be explained in some form. In addition to that, the cadenza section calls for attention. In some ways then, given that both concerto and sonata forms share similarities (Caplin, 1998, p. 243), Medtner could have been possibly alluding to the concerto form. Similarly, this deviation requires an explanation. I will approach this in the next section that examines the extramusical themes.

#### 4.7.5. Allusory Themes

##### The Romantic Connection

In its gravitation towards diatonicism in harmony, *Sonata tragica* features a number of textural writing styles reminiscent of Frédéric Chopin. The most striking example is the left hand accompaniment in *Sonata tragica*, sharing scalic passage work with Chopin's Etude Op. 10 No. 12. Another example is observed between Chopin's Op. 10 No. 10 and the cadenza passage in *Sonata-Tragica*, which Medtner had again written in a similar key. Utilizing textural writing styles that is reminiscent of Chopin is not unexpected. After all, Medtner was fond of Chopin and had studied and performed them throughout his life (Martyn, 2016, p. 221). Having determined that in this movement, Medtner was looking back at a past style, the next section will build on this.



Figure 143. Chopin Op. 10 No. 12 (top). First theme, *Sonata tragica* (bottom).

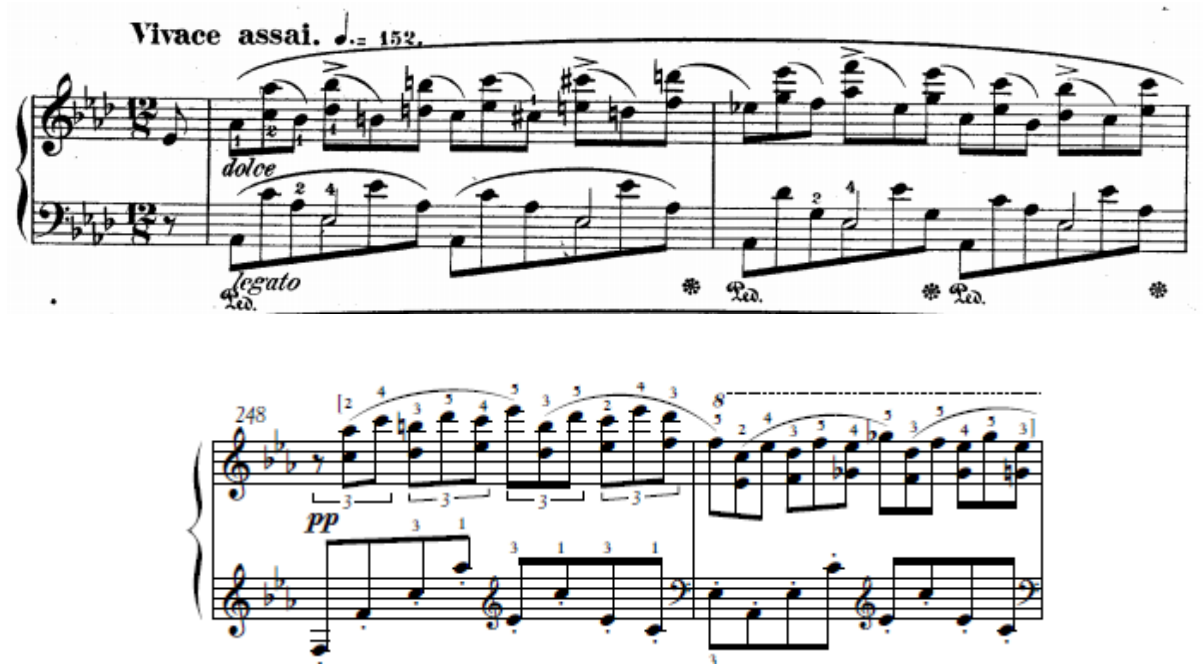


Figure 144. Chopin Op. 10 No. 10 (top). *Sonata tragica*, cadenza section (bottom)

### Nietzsche's Tragedy and the Apollonian and Dionysian Constructs

The *Sonata tragica*, in particular through the “tragic” in title, has attracted a number of explanations over the years. One of the earliest biographers of Medtner, Pinsonneault remarked that “(it) is the real life which suddenly appears, life with tragedies and its struggles (Pinsonneault, as cited in Loftis, 1970, p. 44),” which is a view echoed by Martyn (2016) as well (p. 140). Holt, in referencing the title *Forgotten Melodies* and the *Lermontov* poem *The Angel*, offers the view that “in the effort to bring back these forgotten melodies, the strains of earthly music will inevitably appear. Hence the presence of a tragic sonata in the series; and in this work... .. the spirit is troubled (Holt, as cited in Loftis, 1970, p. 44).” In more recent times, Rowen (2015) writes that *Sonata tragica* “represents the maturity of a culture, referencing the Greek tragedy... .. that the Dionysian element inherent within European subjectivity during this time needed the Apollonian” as a balance (p. 195).” Thus the comparison of the cycle to Nietzsche’s *Birth of a Tragedy*. Even though Rowen’s explanation contradicts existing findings, it is a starting point.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See “Forgotten Melodies” in Chapter 2 for my take on Rowen’s arguments.

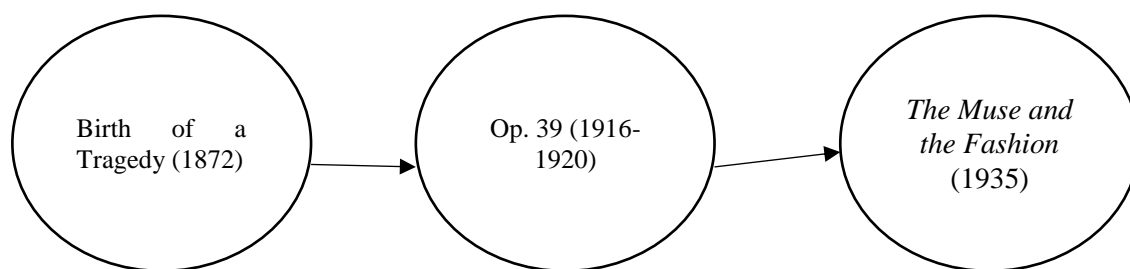


Figure 145. Chronological order of appearance between, Nietzsche's *Birth of a Tragedy*, Op. 39 and *The Muse and the Fashion*.


To establish the connections between *Sonata tragica*, *The Muse and the Fashion*, and *Birth of a Tragedy*, let us consider the following points. As I established in Chapter 3, the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle presages *The Muse and the Fashion* in its restorative idiom. Secondly, in analysing the thematic ideas, harmonic support and form, I demonstrated how the four *Medtnerian Ideals* resonated with *Sonata tragica*. Thirdly, there are striking resonances, between *The Muse and the Fashion* and Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian abstractions as espoused in *Birth of a Tragedy*, also established in Chapter 3. Finally, "*tragica*" evokes comparisons to the titling of *Birth of a Tragedy*. Putting everything together, perhaps then, *Sonata tragica* could be referencing a tragedy within the frame of a Greek tragedy, an idealized notion of the balance of form (Apollonian) to contain the spirit of music (Dionysian). And there can be no more apt form than the sonata form to do so. The chronological order of appearance between *Birth of a Tragedy*, *The Muse and the Fashion* and the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle is shown in Figure 145.

### **Medtner the Tragedy Protagonist**

At the broadest level, I argue this work resembles a concerto in sonata-form due to the cadenza and technically difficult passages. There are similarities between the thematic ideas in *Sonata tragica* and the third movement of the Second Piano Concerto, also in C minor, completed several years later in 1927 and premiered in the same year (Martyn, 2016, p. 182).

This is seen in the figure below. Given the allusion to the Second Piano Concerto, Op. 50, and because a concerto is meant to feature a soloist, perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to look at the *Sonata tragica* as representation of a protagonist. In any protagonist's quest, in looking at things in binary terms, would also suggest an antagonist. To reiterate an important link, such resonances are found in *The Muse and the Fashion* on a whole as the “defence” against the “modernism” of contemporary life (Medtner, 1951, p. 56).

(a)



(b)

Second Piano Concerto, transposed	Sonata tragica. Motif Bars 199-202	Sonata tragica. First theme
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Figure 146. Similarities between third movement of Second Piano Concerto and Sonata tragica. (top) Reduction of the Second Concerto, third movement second theme group. (Bottom) Motivic fragment from Second Piano Concerto transposed (left). Motivic idea from *Sonata tragica* (middle). Appearance of the idea in the first theme group (right).

A sort of knight/hero narrative is regularly referenced in Medtner's works throughout his life: Op. 14 No. 2 *March of the Paladin*, Op. 34 No. 4 quoting Pushkin's *The Poor Knight*, the Op. 58 No. 2 *Knight Errant*, and the Op. 60 Third Piano Concerto *Ballade* which according to Anna Medtner describes a redemption of a knight awakening to “everlasting life” (Martyn, 2016, p. 240). This sort of extramusical association has been termed the Chivalric Style that according to Bellman (1995), references a “Romantic fascination with ancient things: old ideas,

myths, and the glory of days gone by—an idealized noble past” (Bellman, 1995, as cited in Dickensheet, 2012).

Going back to the Greek tragedy, a hero archetype can be found in the form of the tragic hero/ine. This is someone described by Aristotle in *Poetics* as someone who would meet his/her downfall by *harmartia*, by aiming for something exceptionally high and then misses a mark, though by no fault of his/her own (Aristotle, 2006, p. 8). Describing this mark further, Aristotle elaborated that the virtues of the hero/ine aim at action that is “beautiful in itself,” and reaching this mark would mean achieving an extreme excellence (Aristotle, 2006, p. 9).

In Medtner’s first concert which featured the *Forgotten Melodies* after emigration in 1921, his self-written advertisement read:

Nicolaus Medtner  
Fresh out of the Russian backwoods!  
Nothing revolutionary!!  
Only a modest revolt!!  
On the programme:  
“Forgotten Melodies,”  
Which he plays from memory all the same (Flamm, 2005, p. 4).

This is different from his earlier vision of an Orphic hero who sought to unite the Russian people through his music as seen in Mitchell (2011). According to Flamm (2005), beneath the irony of this self-characterization, is Medtner’s realization that the musical trends of the time would no longer receive the non-avant-garde works of his (p. 4).

It is my view, through *Sonata tragica*, Medtner could have been engaged in self-referencing himself as the tragic hero in reality. One could draw a parallel to the events surrounding Medtner’s life. Medtner aimed for something very difficult; seeking to unify Russian culture through music. However due to the shifting trends in the musical world, something which he could not have controlled, he could not realize his lofty vision. It was certainly a thought that never really left his mind even at an advanced age (Martyn, 2016, p.



244). Implicit here is also the fact that Medtner believed in keeping to his ideals despite external pressure.

The *Sonata tragica* was a work that stuck with Medtner throughout his life as well. Not only it is one of the pieces Medtner frequently performed (Martyn, 2016, p. 201), it was, together with the *Canzona matinata*, the first pieces he ever recorded for the Medtner Society in 1947. This is because he thought it would be a fitting representative sample of his output as a composer (Martyn, 2016, p. 248). Having traced the narrative (*subject matter*) to a tragic hero, the next section takes a perspective from the music, to view where the music appear to merge with the narrative, fusing both entities into *artistic images*.

### Artistic Image: Echoes of a Hero



Figure 147. *Sonata tragica*, opening bars.

Several large chords marked *fortissimo* begins the first theme group (Figure 147). The top line of the first three chords, being four repeated notes, recalls the Medtnerian muse motif, an observation also noted by Bitzan (2019). Whether or not Medtner had intended this reference as a gesture as an appeal to the muses, it is open to interpretation. The first thematic is overall rather turbulent, signalling the great challenges of the protagonist. This is suggested through the intense musical texture generated by the rapid scalar passages in the accompaniment. However, this is transformed once again into the most lyrical of textures after another four repeated note gesture (bar 9), appealing to muses again, but this time with more heartfelt lyricism, marked *molto cantando* (Figure 148).



Figure 148. *Sonata tragica*, bars 8-10. Lyrical variant of the theme.

Next, in the second theme group, which is a noted *dolce* and tranquil transformation of the first thematic subject, is perhaps suggestive of this motto theme as representative of the protagonist going through different phases, something Medtner also explored in the Piano Concerto No. 3 Op. 60 (Martyn, 2016, pp. 239-243).



Figure 149. *Sonata tragica*, bars 54-56. Second theme group, a thematic transformation of the first.

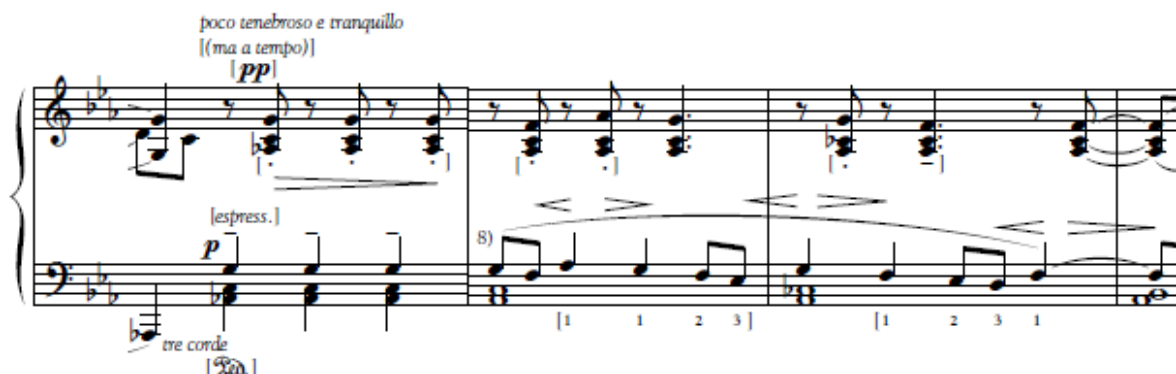


Figure 150. Modal developmental section. *Sonata tragica*, bars 95-98.

Next, the modal developmental section within the exposition shows another instance of narrativity. Here, the musical passage begins quoting the muse motif again (Figure 150), though over more ambiguous and dissonant sonorities. An interesting marker by Medtner is *poco tenebroso e tranquillo* (bar 95), in which the term *tenebroso* is a genre type that is borrowed from painting. *Tenebrism* is similar to *chiaroscuro* but with a more dramatic use of light; highlights goes quickly into deep shadow (Fichner-Rathus, 2012, p.74). The music grows increasingly agitated, as though our protagonist, through the repeated notes, is appealing to the muses in dark times.

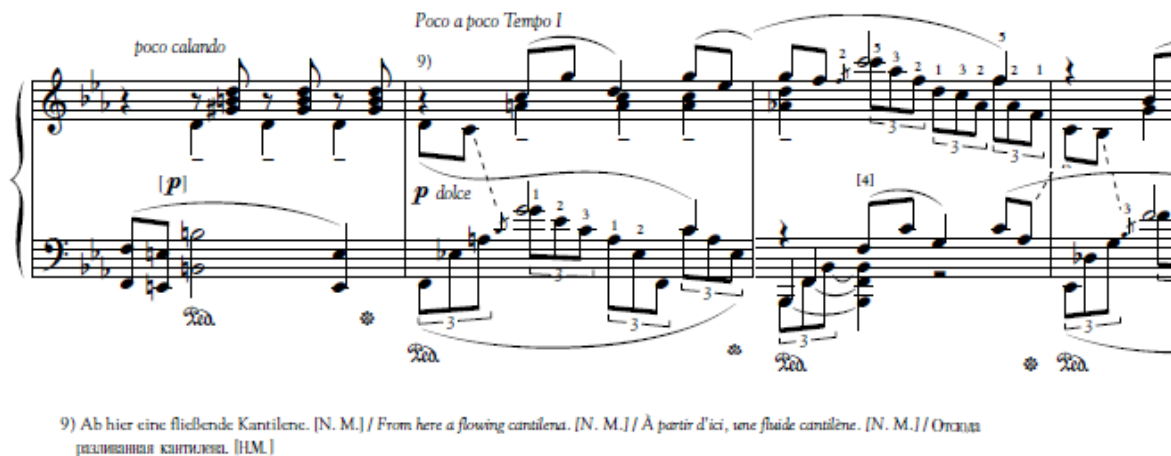


Figure 151. *Sonata tragica*, bars 112-115. Beginning of a long chain of descending fifths in harmony.

This culminates in perhaps one of Medtner’s most unrestrained passages of lyricism in the *Forgotten Melodies* cycle, a cycle of fifths sequenced by descending seconds as seen in the figure above (see also 4.7.1). Marked in footnotes according to Medtner, “*from here a flowing cantilena.*” Cantilenas, which refers to song in general, ties in with the “*Lyric*” subtitle of the Op. 39 cycle. At the same time, cantilenas in Latin is most extraordinarily *old familiar song*, which brings to mind the Medtnerian “initial song,” the source of all music. In a curious coincidence, Medtner (1951) also references his own views in *The Muse and the Fashion* as “old and familiar truths” (p. 4). Therefore perhaps this chain of uninterrupted cycle of fifths is

where the protagonist receives a renewed bout of inspiration from the muses to continue the journey.

Towards the end of the work, the cadenza marked *stentanto* suggests a difficulty in doing something. This could be seen in the light of the immensely difficult feat of reuniting the musical world. This begins optimistically enough, in the allusory secondary tonal centres of D $\flat$  major and A $\flat$  majors. However, by the end of the cadenza, the element of “dramatic shadows” takes over again, suggested by the *tenebroso* (bar 259), pivoting back to the C minor tonal centre that leads into the turbulent coda. In its closing moments, the music ends just the way it started with a quotation of the opening bars again. This suggests that perhaps in spite of all that the hero has done, nothing has changed, resigning himself to fate. This could be interpreted as Medtner’s self-realization and perception of his inability to affect a change in the contemporary musical world.

Putting together everything, this section began by introducing the fact that *Sonata tragica* alludes to a look back at the past styles of nineteenth century pianistic idioms, reflecting the writing of Chopin. Next, the connections between Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*, *The Muse and the Fashion* and *Sonata tragica* are established, most notably in the underlying restorative idiom, reflecting the abstractions of the opposing Apollonian and Dionysian forces. Following that, I suggest that *Sonata tragica* in referencing Nietzsche’s *Tragedy*, is in fact working within a frame of a Greek tragedy, in which encapsulates the idealized balance of both Apollonian and Dionysian, expressing the *spirit of music* through the weight of the sonata form. Next, I establish that a heroic archetype is often referenced by Medtner, which in *Sonata tragica*, the tragic hero is alluded to through allusion of concerto form suggested in writing. Given that a tragic hero is one that aims for a very high mark, but fails by no fault of his own, I suggest how this resonates with the surrounding circumstances of Medtner’s life, in which he felt that he failed in his duty to unite the musical world as his music was being passed aside. Finally, I

examined the musical passages, together with performance directions, which is compelling at times to express the narrative of Medtner's tragedy. The transformative process of the musical passages thus also reflects an *artistic image*.

## 4.8. Cyclical Elements

In this section, I present the cyclical elements that are located throughout the Op. 39. There are broadly speaking two central themes that connect the entire cycle. First, I will examine the shared theme between *Canzona matinata* and *Sonata tragica*, followed by the connection between *Meditazione* and *Romanza*. Next, I point out an underlying motivic connection. All references to motivic material are consistent with the analysis of the individual movements in the earlier sections. Apart from that, I also consider textural similarities across the entire cycle.

### 4.8.1. Cyclical Themes

#### Canzona matinata and Sonata tragica

The figure displays two musical excerpts. The top excerpt is from the middle section of *Canzona matinata* in F# minor. It features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff begins with a 35-measure rest, followed by a melodic line with various ornaments and slurs. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and a steady eighth-note pattern. Performance instructions include 'con molto tenerezza, ma sempre mobile e semplice', 'pp legatissimo', and '(sempre con  $\text{f}^{\text{mo}}$ )'. The bottom excerpt is from the third theme of *Sonata tragica* in G minor. It also consists of treble and bass staves. The treble staff has a 5-measure rest followed by a melodic line. The bass staff features a more complex accompaniment with chords and a steady eighth-note pattern. Performance instructions include 'cantando, con molt[a] tenerezza e mobile (a tempo)', 'pp', and 'legatissimo una corda [e poco  $\text{f}^{\text{mo}}$ ]'. Both excerpts show a clear thematic connection through their melodic and harmonic structures.

Figure 152. Thematic connection. Middle section in *Canzona matinata* in F# minor (top). Third theme in *Sonata tragica* in G minor (bottom).

One of the most commonly pointed out shared themes in the cycle is between *Canzona matinata* and *Sonata tragica* (Martyn, 2016; Bitzan, 2019). This is because the passage reappears, albeit transposed a semitone higher in *Sonata tragica*. Martyn (2016) has observed

that Medtner had indicated that these two works never to be performed separately, affirming the thematic connection between the two movements (p. 140). This appeal to a bipartite cycle, has been noted by Bitzan (2019) as a “combination of a shorter movement with a longer and more important second movement to form the shortest possible multi-movement correlation directed towards its ending” (p. 90).

### Meditazione and Romanza

The figure displays two musical staves. The top staff, labeled '81', represents the first theme of *Meditazione*. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef is marked with a red bracket and the interval  $\mu^1$ . A second red bracket further right is labeled  $\mu^2$ . The bass line includes several measures marked 'Ped.' (pedal). The bottom staff represents the opening bars of *Romanza*, in a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab). It also has a treble and bass clef. Red brackets above the treble staff indicate the intervals  $\mu^1 \rightarrow \rho^2$  and  $\mu^2 \rightarrow \rho^1$ . The bass line is marked 'con Ped.' at the beginning. Both staves include performance markings such as 'poco con forza e espressivo' and 'poco con forza'.

Figure 153. First big connecting theme seen in *Meditazione*, first theme (top). *Romanza*, opening bars (bottom).

The next cyclical element comes from the opening phrase of the first theme group of *Meditazione* which plays a significant role as a cyclical element. This is used again directly in *Romanza*, connecting first two movements explicitly, although with a small difference. Examining the figure above, *Meditazione* outlines a diminished fifth interval leap ( $\mu^2$ ), as compared to a perfect fifth ( $\rho^1$ ) in *Romanza*.

#### 4.8.2. Motivic Connections throughout Op. 39

The shared theme between *Meditazione* and *Romanza* also provides the motivic material for further development of a number of recurring ideas. Firstly, the first two descending notes outlining a minor second interval can also be observed both in *Meditazione* ( $\mu^1$ ) and *Romanza* ( $\rho^2$ ). This descending motif of a second can also be seen in the opening bars of *Canzona matinata* albeit a major second interval ( $\kappa^1$ ).

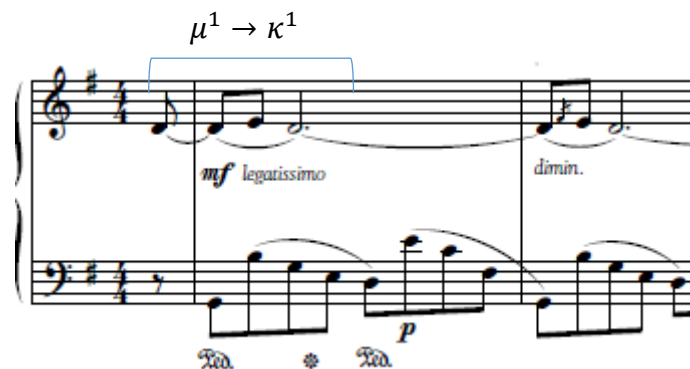


Figure 154. Opening bars, *Canzona matinata*.

Next, discussed in an earlier section,  $\mu^2$  in *Meditazione* is transformed into in the second theme area of *Meditazione* shown in the figure below. This sets up another shift.

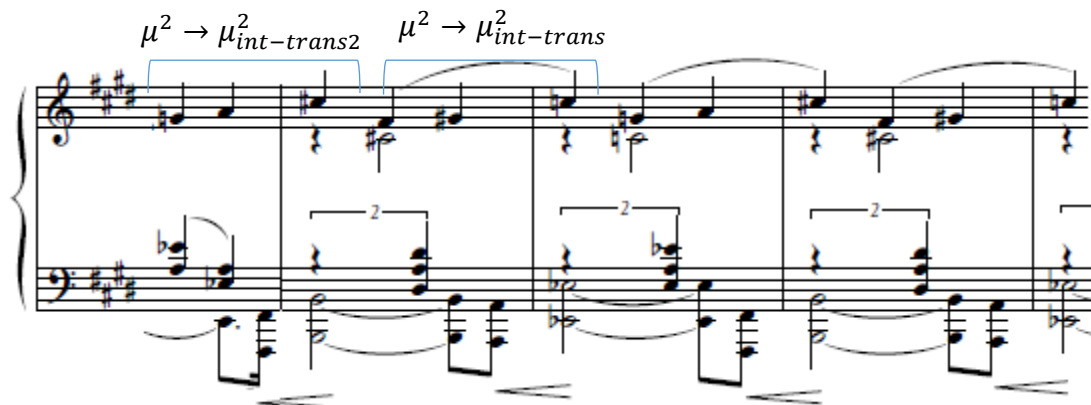


Figure 155. Second theme area. *Meditazione*.

The  $\mu^2$  motif would then be transformed into  $\phi^1_{int-trans}$  in the introduction of *Primavera*, transforming the augmented fourth [G-C#] into a perfect fourth [G-C] (Figure 156), relieving much of the tension perceptually.





Figure 156. Primavera, introduction (top).

### 4.8.3. Texture

Apart from cyclical elements from the thematic and motivic perspective, across the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle several other similarities arises when considered from the perspective of texture.

#### Melody and Accompaniment

Much of the writing is mostly melody and accompaniment, with the occasional appearance of supporting voices. Here, low bass notes are a common feature as well, which contributes to the overall richness in sonority. This can be further categorized into accompaniment in which encompasses (1) tertian chordal/arpeggio sonorities, (2) scalic passages, and (3) a combination of both. The following list is non-exhaustive.

1. Melody with tertian chord/arpeggio based accompaniment:
  - a. *Meditazione* (almost entire work)
  - b. *Romanza* (almost entire work)
  - c. *Primavera* (almost entire work)
  - d. *Canzona matinata* (almost entire work)
  - e. *Sonata tragica* (bars 9-20, bars 54-66, bars 71-94)
2. Melody with scalic accompaniment
  - a. *Meditazione* (bars 202-204)
  - b. *Romanza* (bars 119-112)
  - c. *Primavera* (bars 11-14, bars 46-49)
3. Melody with combination of scalic and arpeggio accompaniment
  - a. *Romanza* (bars 119-122)
  - b. *Primavera* (bars 45-48)

c. *Sonata tragica* (bars 3-8)

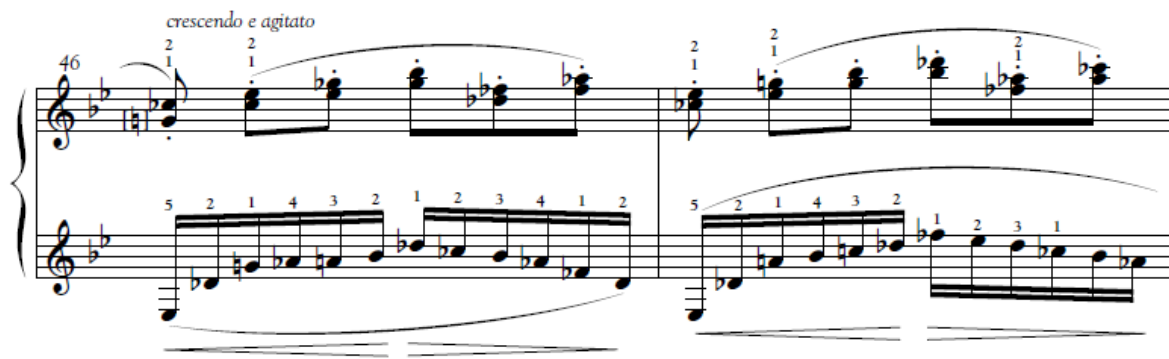


Figure 157. Combination of scalar and arpeggio accompaniment in *Primavera* (bars 46-47)

#### 4.8.4. Summary of Cyclical Elements

There are two main cyclical themes that are shared. The first one being shared between *Canzona matinata* and *Sonata tragica* is a direct transposition from F# minor to G minor in the later appearance. The second cyclical theme is that of *Meditazione* shared with *Romanza*.

The second cyclical theme gives rise to a number of motivic connections. Firstly, the  $\mu^1$  motivic material being a second interval, is rather ubiquitous in any work that uses scalar motifs. Nevertheless, I have examined in this section this  $\mu^1$  motivic material by pointing out moments of significance accorded to the second interval, which is the opening of the theme groups in *Meditazione*, *Romanza* and *Canzona matinata*.

The next germinal motif of significance is  $\mu^2$ , also found in the thematic idea of *Meditazione*. Medtner transforms this germinal three note motif, gradually through the movements. There is also an overall easing of dissonance in intervals approached, as the tritone formed from the bottom and top notes in *Meditazione*, approaches a perfect fourth as a stable tone in the later movement of *Primavera*. The table below summarizes the development of the  $\mu^2$  motif.

	<b>Meditazione</b>			<b>Romanza</b>	<b>Primavera</b>
<b>Motif</b>	$\mu^2$	$\mu_{int-trans}^2$	$\mu_{int-trans}^2$	$\rho^1$	$\phi_{int-trans}^1$
<b>Pitches</b>	A#-C#-E	G-A-C#	F#-G#-C	F-G-C	G-A-C
<b>Interval Between First and Last Pitches</b>	Diminished 5 <sup>th</sup>	Augmented 4 <sup>th</sup>	Diminished 5 <sup>th</sup>	Perfect 5 <sup>th</sup>	Perfect 4 <sup>th</sup>



Figure 158. Summary of the  $\mu^2$  motif transforming over the cycle.

In considering texture, the Op. 39 cycle is predominantly melody and accompaniment throughout, with a tertian based chords/arpeggio accompaniment being the principal form. At the same time, scalar accompaniment are also featured prominently such as in the first theme group of *Primavera*, and at times combined together with arpeggios such as the first theme group of *Sonata tragica*.

## Chapter 5. Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss findings from the analysis of the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycles in the context of *The Muse and the Fashion* by showing how the five *Medtnerian Ideals* are exemplified through the features of music identified in the Op. 39 cycle. I also discuss moments of discordance between the music and the philosophy, by taking a critical look at Medtner's own justifications and assumptions in his philosophy.

### 5.1. Concurrence of Op. 39 with *The Muse and the Fashion*

#### 5.1.1. Balance of Simplicity and Complexity

In studying each movement of the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle, I reveal a *balance of simplicity and complexity*. This is because *The Muse and the Fashion* advocated a balanced approach to both elements to perceive the features of the thematic ideas, the form, the texture and the sonorities clearly (Medtner, 1951, pp. 16-17). By extension, the ideas of *simplicity* and *complexity* as exemplified in Op.39 can be thought of as stabilizing and destabilizing factors. These key features of each individual movements are summarized in the following table.

	<b>Stabilizing</b>	<b>Destabilizing</b>
Meditazione	<p>Sonata form</p> <p>Monothematicism</p> <p>Tertian Sonorities</p> <p>Pitch centric</p>	<p>Octatonic modes as structural feature</p> <p>Avoidance of V-I</p> <p>Exposition does not begin in home tonal centre</p> <p>Extended Regions with no clear tonal centres</p>
Romanza	<p>Sonata form</p> <p>Monothematicism</p> <p>Stable rhythmic accompaniment</p> <p>Tonic-oriented coda</p> <p>Tertian Sonorities</p>	<p>Introduction section avoiding primary triads</p> <p>Multiple secondary tonal centres in thematic areas</p> <p>Complex melodic figurations</p> <p>Abrupt modulations</p> <p>No development section</p>
Primavera	<p>Sonata form</p> <p>Episode within development (balances lack of second theme group)</p> <p>Strong dominant pedal in beginning</p> <p>Closing exposition on V</p> <p>Tertian Sonorities</p>	<p>Continuous exposition (no second theme group)</p> <p>Episode within development (unexpected)</p> <p>Avoidance of V-I</p> <p>Pentatonic mode</p>
Canzona matinata	<p>Arch form</p> <p>Tonal centres of thematic areas are confirmed strongly</p> <p>Tertian Sonorities</p>	<p>Complex melodic figurations</p> <p>Return of thematic section in unexpected tonal centre</p>
Sonata tragica	<p>Sonata form</p> <p>Tonal centres of thematic areas are confirmed strongly</p> <p>Monothematicism</p> <p>Tertian Sonorities</p>	<p>Omission of second and third theme groups in recapitulation</p> <p>Modal regions</p> <p>Cadenza section in recapitulation</p> <p>Complex melodic figurations</p>

Figure 159. Summary of stabilizing and destabilizing features.

### 5.1.2. Chiaroscuro

My analysis of harmonic support and structure of the Op. 39 cycle reveals a way in which the concept of *chiaroscuro* is embodied to give rise to an emergent musical work. The manipulation of the functional/extended tonal techniques—a manipulation of consonance (light) and dissonance (shadows)—reflect a broader strategy conveying allusory tonal centres (secondary colours) and a home tonal centre (main colour). The process of dissonance resolving into consonance gives rise to form (contouring), echoing Medtner's (1951) declamation that "form is harmony" (p. 49).

Even though *chiaroscuro* read through Medtner's writings could reflect functional harmonic practices, I argue that this needs to read this as an allusory frame. This is because the analysis reveals ascribing an allusory tonality with a pitch centre and vertical configurations with seemingly functional meaning through the use of symmetrical scales and the old modes.

### Contouring and Shape of the Form

All pieces, except for the *Canzona matinata*, resemble prototypical sonata forms, drawn from the models of Hepokoski and Darcy (2006) and Caplin (1998). The structures encountered are as summarized:

- (1) *Meditazione*, monothematic sonata.
  - a. Cadenza-like introduction.
  - b. Return of second theme group substantially altered.
- (2) *Romanza*, monothematic sonata without development.
  - a. Lengthy introduction.
  - b. Return of second theme group substantially altered.
- (3) *Primavera*, continuous exposition sonata form.
  - a. Introduction section.
  - b. No secondary theme.
  - c. Substantial stable section within the development just before recapitulation
- (4) *Canzona matinata*, large ternary arch-form.

- a. Features a coda
- (5) *Sonata tragica*, monothematic sonata
  - a. Third theme group directly taken from central section of *Canzona matinata*.
  - b. Substantial developmental section within the exposition.
  - c. Second and Third theme groups do not return in the recapitulation. A cadenza and coda appears in place.

### **An Interpretative Visualization of Chiaroscuro in Op. 39**

*Meditazione* structurally and melodically draws from the octatonic mode. This allows coordination into a great degree of tonal shadows in which vast regions have ambiguous tonal or pitch centres, despite tertian harmonic support and relatively consistent pitches within localized regions. These devices seem to obscure the tonal and pitch centre from a diatonic-harmonic perspective even when what emerges sounds very much like diatonic tonality.

Nevertheless, the recapitulation features a pivot into diatonicism in the first theme group, as well as in the second theme group with two more closely related triadic sonorities that are less dissonant. The arrival of cadential gestures marking the tonal centres of C# in the recapitulation also signals a gradual pivot into consonance. Essentially, the sonorities on the large scale begin to converge into a more limited set of pitches that are closer to pitches alluding to “traditional harmony.” The overall sensing of a pitch centre of C#, obscured in the front half, is gradually brought into foreground in the closing bars reinforced by repetition.

Drawing an analogy to a painting, *Meditazione* is painted via varying shades from the very dark, gradually moving towards light, achieving a range of gradations and colours giving rise to form. In Medtner’s view, one had to begin by looking from the darker regions of the object (Introduction, Exposition, Development), before slowly turning our gaze towards the lighter shades (Recapitulation, Coda), in one seamless continuous manner. The closely and finely differentiated range of value (diatonic → “diatonic sounding”) allows one to visualise the spectrum of shadows and light casted by the octatonic modes into a figure of tonal unity,

thus the homogeneity of sound. Even as *Meditazione* has several regions with no functional harmony, due to the strategies of allusion of tonal and pitch centre allusions throughout, there is still a sense of a unified whole of a perception of several tonal centres surrounding a home tonal centre.

*Romanza* draws from primarily the diatonic modes and adopts a mainly tertian based harmonic support. Nevertheless, *Romanza* similarly embodies a great degree of contrasts by avoiding primary triads in the introduction, passing modulations, multiple secondary tonal centres, and chromaticism. These devices serve to obscure a sense of a tonal centre.

Conversely, the first and second theme groups in both exposition and recapitulation sections accord an allusory clarity of the tonal centres of F minor and A $\flat$  major briefly through the tonic pedals, and cadential gestures that perceptibly prepared as the passages converge onto them. The coda also alludes to a tonal centre of F minor by repeatedly converging on the tonic chord.

Thus *Romanza* in exhibiting strong contrasts of alternating patterns of shadowy, colourful, and light shades, achieves a range of colours; a visual rhythm alluding to a forward driving momentum. The spectrum of closely related range of value (primary triads → secondary triads → dissonant triads within each tonal centre) allows one to visualize the spectrum of light and shadow cast by the diatonic mode coexisting with chromaticism, thus arriving at a homogenous sound colour. Together with the tonal centre enunciated by the coda, gradually allows one to perceive the home tonal centre.

Moving away from the heavy use of shadows, *Primavera* draws primarily from the diatonic modes, adopts a tertian based harmonic support, and adopts an allusory functional grammar. The introduction over a long V<sup>7</sup> pedal, the cadential gestures appearing within the first thematic idea, and the closing on V of the opening tonal centre hints of the tonal centre much earlier on in comparison to *Meditazione* or *Romanza*. Towards the end, a dramatic



cadence converging onto  $\rightarrow I$  of B $\flat$  major also serves to allude to a home tonal centre. At the same time, *Primavera* maintains contrasts by harmonic colouring of the pentatonic mode, passing modulations, secondary tonal centres, distant harmonic vistas, and chromaticism.

*Primavera* in exemplifying *chiaroscuro*, avoids extreme contrasts of light and shadow. Instead, colouring and finely differentiated gradations of light and shadow—due to allusory functional grammar—take on a dominant role as the picture unfolds. Tonal unity is achieved in the common range of value (primary triads $\rightarrow$ secondary triads $\rightarrow$ pentatonic colouring over triads $\rightarrow$ chromatic colouring over triads). A visual repose of pure glistening light could be made to the C $\flat$  major harmonic vista. Viewed as a whole, framed by the return of the opening sound colour, one perceives the home tonal centre.

*Canzona matinata* also draws mainly from the diatonic modes and adopts a tertian based harmonic support. *Canzona matinata* uses modulations, secondary tonal centres, and chromaticism though to a lesser degree of dissonance as a means to shading. Each section alludes to the tonal centre on the onset. A V  $\rightarrow$  I cadential gesture in G major at the end also alludes to the closing tonal centre.

The element of light is brought to the forefront as the various colours are not heavily shaded. A sense of tonal unity achieved through a finely differentiated range of value (diatonic triads  $\rightarrow$  chromaticism). The arch-form arising out of the contouring, (**ABCBA**) also presents a visual rhythm that enunciates a symmetry of departure and return, thus creating a sense of the tonal centre.

In its broad range of tonal palette, *Sonata tragica* achieves, in my view, a dramatic colouring of tonal contrasts featuring extremities of both lightness and darkness. Thematic groups are centred primarily on diatonicism, with tertian harmonic support, with occasional chromatic shadings together with passing modulations or secondary tonal centres. On the other

hand there are regions that relies on modal writing for extended periods that fleetingly at best allude to tertian sonorities.

In *Sonata tragica* therefore, coordination of light and shadow exhibits a balance in which light is gradually shaded into other colours (modulation), and into intense shadows (modal). Nevertheless, even the darkest shadows (modal regions) gradually pivot into light (diatonicism). This procedures allow a perception of contouring. Tonal unity is achieved in the closely related range of values (diatonic→chromaticism→modal) of all individual colours, in their spectrum of light and shadow. A main tonal centre is alluded to in the framing of the departure to and return to tonal centres for the established theme groups.

### 5.1.3. Renewal of Art

My analysis of Op. 39 reveals a way in which the *Medtnerian Ideal* of *renewal* is embodied in deviations of (1) form and (2) harmonic alterations. On a broader scale, Medtner's handling of (3) *chiaroscuro* also indicates an attempt into the extended tonal practice.

### Form

Several movements of the Op. 39 feature alterations in the shape of the form of the prototypical sonata-allegro form. *Meditazione*, *Romanza*, and *Sonata tragica* are monothematic sonatas which reveal substantial recomposing in the recapitulation sections. *Sonata tragica* particularly dispenses with the second and third theme groups, replacing them instead with a *cadenza*. Structural additions also featured in *Primavera* and *Sonata tragica*. *Primavera* in its continuous exposition sonata form which does away with a second theme group, also features a stable episodic section within the development. *Sonata tragica* also features a developmental region within the exposition.

## Harmonic Alterations

Medtner (1951) saw the huge variety of cadential gestures employed in individual ways by different composers as a testament to what Medtner termed “a part of living form (p.37),” suggesting an organic quality. This too, is a feature that is observed in the Op. 39 cycle with a variety of colouration added to the standard cadences, broadening the sonority, and serving their original function at the same time. This is further illuminated and confirmed by Medtner noting that “(sonority’s) main purpose consists in an outward, sensual intensification of the coloration and dynamics of the senses” but could not exist as a fundamental element itself—colourful sonority had to attach itself to serve another element (pp. 52-53). Some cadential allusions include:

- (1) “Plagal cadence” with  $ii^{\emptyset 7}$ 
  - a. *Meditazione* (final bars)
- (2) Dominant functioning  $bII^{Fr6}$ 
  - a. *Romanza* (bars 119-122)
  - b. *Sonata tragica* (bar 39)
- (3) Chromatically raised fifth degree in the dominant chord  $V^{\#5}$ 
  - a. *Canzona matinata* (bar 28)

## Finer Gradations of Shadows: An extended tonal practice

According to Medtner (1951), “chains of dissonant chords or intervals” are permitted as long as they are directed towards an eventual consonance (p. 36). Medtner also wrote that chromaticism enabled the diatonic scales a freedom in returning to the “old modes” (p. 23). These ideas provided a way in which Medtner could move into an extended tonal practice, away from functional harmony at times, into finer gradations of shadows (dissonance). This attempt at *renewal* comes in several ways:

- (1) Avoidance of primary triads (though still within permitted triads of a tonal centre)
  - a. *Romanza*: introduction
- (2) No clear tonal centre

- a. *Meditazione*: introduction, exposition second theme group, development section
- (3) Modal writing coexisting with diatonic harmonic support
  - a. *Sonata tragica*: developmental section in exposition, development section
- (4) Symmetric pitches as structural feature
  - a. *Meditazione*

#### 5.1.4. Artistic Image

In exemplifying the *chiaroscuro* technique, one obtains volume and colour of an image. To add on, very careful procedures can have the transformative potential—which Medtner alluded to—of obtaining an *artistic image* (Medtner, 1951, p. 124). Even though this is glossed over by Medtner in writing, the findings on the allusory themes within each piece of the cycle suggests a closer link between the two *Medtnerian Ideals* of *artistic image* and *chiaroscuro* than previously imagined. This is because the various aspects of composition needed to come together very carefully, to allude to extramusical narratives.

Having looked at all the *artistic images* present in the individual pieces within the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle, collectively, I suggest that the Op. 39 cycle alludes to the realm of music of past styles, and of past composers. In fact, such an approach of alluding to past styles has been discussed by Medtner, writing that:

Both in Tchaikovsky and in Bizet, the old dance is animated by an individual content. This is genuine living form and not a dead scheme. In such an animation of the forms belonging to remote epochs the mystery of genuine creation comes out all the stronger (p. 105).

Here Medtner indicates his affirmation of the revival of old forms and genres in Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame*, and Bizet's *Arlesienne*, through an injection of their very own individuality that Medtner asserts to be “inspired” and connected to the inexpressible “initial song.” This line of thought could not have been too far from Medtner's mind when alluding to

old forms and genres, while striving to maintain his individuality, perceived to be an inspired connection to the “initial song” through his thematic ideas.

Allusion to past styles and composers is perhaps more significant than the other two *Forgotten Melodies* cycles. While not in the purview of this study, Op. 40 features rather forward looking irregular time signatures. Similarly, Shin (2016) also noted the inventive rhythmical structures in *Danza silvestra* of Op. 38 (p. 101). In comparison, the time signatures in Op. 39 are rather regular.

The Op. 39 cycle also features more generic titles such as *Romanza*, *Canzona*, *Meditazione*, and *Sonata*, closer to “absolute music,” and used by other composers. I should clarify that the close proximity of Op. 39 to “absolute music” does not contradict extramusical discussions. Even if the styles and genres alluded could be by themselves “absolute,” reference to composers who wrote such music, like the Chopin allusion in *Romanza*, brings about an extramusical dimension.

#### **5.1.5. Remembering (the Eternal Song)**

In *Remembering (the Eternal Song)*, Medtner believed that themes had to be inspired through intuition, subsequently developed through processes bearing durational patterns, bearing its own chiaroscuro, cadence, and form. At times these themes would also call forth other themes in development (Medtner, 1951, p. 44). In addition, Medtner saw melody as the “most beautiful form” of the theme (Medtner, 1951, p. 48). This section discusses the findings with regards to these features in the thematic groups across Op. 39, and how they come together into forming a *melody*, thus expressing the *eternal song*.

While it is hard to argue what constitutes an “inspired” theme, in the Op. 39 cycle, an appeal to monothematicism, cross-movement thematic recall, and the allusory *Dies Irae*, all indicate a quality of consistency. This could suggest that Medtner saw themes used in here

which significantly inspired enough and connected to the “initial song,” that he chose to retain them, instead of conceiving a new theme. In further development, the thematic ideas examined reveal strategies of patterns and repetition in rhythms and pitches that allow underlying motifs to be identified despite alterations. This also supports the intrinsic value these motifs have in unifying the work.

*Chiaroscuro* in Medtner’s broad use, referred to the use of permissible pitches within a scale that could allude to a possible harmonic centre and colouring. Throughout Op. 39, (1) diatonic scales are encountered most frequently, although at times coloured with chromaticism. At times, Medtner also alludes to the older (2) “church” modes, and (3) other forms of scales. This concurs with how Medtner (1951) saw the diatonic scales as the “primary foundation”, which allows the freedom of moving back to the old and new modes (p. 23). The following examples are taken from the thematic groups.

(1) Diatonic:

- a. *Meditazione*: first thematic idea (bars 81-93)
- b. *Romanza*: first thematic idea (bars 42-65), second thematic idea (bar 91-98)
- c. *Primavera*: transitional (bars 16-20), episode (bars 53-74)
- d. *Canzona matinata*: first thematic idea (bars 1-12)
- e. *Sonata tragica*: first thematic idea (bars 1-13)

(2) Modal:

- a. *Sonata tragica*: developmental section in exposition (bars 95-111)

(3) Other:

- a. *Meditazione*: Octatonic
- b. *Primavera*: Pentatonic

Moving on, the motivic patterns when examined on a broad scale reveals a coherent unit of phrase with a perceivable beginning, as well as an ending. The ending of each phrase is signalled through gestures such as moving towards a (1) relatively acoustically consonant and

stable tone, as well as arriving on a (2) durationally lengthened note value. Several examples (non-exhaustive) are given as such:

(1) Closing on Relatively Consonant/Stable Tone

- a. *Meditazione*: into V (bar 93)
- b. *Romanza*: into V (bar 65)
- c. *Primavera*: into I (bar 15)
- d. *Sonata tragica*: into V (bar 78)

(2) Closing on a significantly lengthened tone:

- a. *Meditazione*: spanning four bars (bars 125-128)
- b. *Romanza*: spanning two bars (bars 76-77)
- c. *Primavera*: spanning one bar with pitch repetition (bar 15)
- d. *Canzona matinata*: spanning almost one bar (bar 12)
- e. *Sonata tragica*: pause note (bar 54)

The thematic groups examined show that within a perceivable unit of melodic phrase, all pitches are confined to range of approximately an octave, with the exception of *Primavera* (two octaves), and the first theme groups in *Meditazione* (a twelfth). Secondly, all thematic ideas examined feature small intervallic changes, with a predilection for conjunct melodic motion. These are crucial in melodic perception, since registral differences comes invariably with timbral differences. A large enough registral difference within a line could be registered as separate sonic events (Tymoczko, 2011, p. 5). Next, there is a harmonic consistency within each melodic phrase, belonging to a certain scale collection which allows a perception of audibly similar sonorities. Finally, all thematic ideas are lyrical and vocalizable to some extent, as the lines are not in too quick tempi, or feature pitches of short duration. Thus putting everything together, exemplifies the concept of a *melody*, an expression of the *eternal song*.

“We do not create anything,” Medtner said, “everything already exists. We are just opening.” (Iles, n.d.)

### 5.1.6. Op. 39, the Muse, and the Paintbrush

This section summarizes the concurrences of the *Medtnerian Ideals* with the Op. 39 cycle. Following that, I discuss how these revelations connect to Medtner's perception of music.

Firstly, Op. 39 reflects an appeal to a *balance of simplicity and complexity* of varying degrees. Medtner felt that this was the best way to perceive the various features of his music. Nevertheless, this is hard to quantify without setting further parameters since simplicity and complexity could be perceived relatively.

Secondly, in *chiaroscuro*, one observes numerous ways of working with tonality and form, from a relatively smaller colour palate in the more traditionally tonally-centered *Canzona matinata* which brings to the foreground finer gradations, to the extremely contrasted shades by concatenation of octatonicism with diatonicism in *Meditazione*, to the dramatic canvas of the *Sonata tragica* which encompasses many alternating sections of contrasting light and dark. This suggests that despite the perception of being “old and traditional,” the analysis of the Op. 39 cycle reveals that Medtner works within the boundaries of tonal practices, but with variations or deviations from standard models through a *coordination* of novel/disruptive forces that could still allude to a tonal centre.

Thirdly, in *renewal*, the deviations from pre-established prior models attests to “the demand of a special form for one's contents always signifies a realization of the importance of the unity of one and the other (Medtner, 1951, p. 121).” The chromatically-altered cadential gestures also point to a colouring without loss of original meaning. Finally, Medtner found ways to create darker shadings through “accidental harmonic formations.” I argue that Medtner through, *chiaroscuro*, was able to claim ownership of an altered model of tonal practice—but not abandoning the underlying rules—to express the inspiration of his Muse.

*Artistic images* tie in very closely to form and volume modelling through skillful manipulation of sonorities, texture, melodic ideas, durational patterns; the transformative



potential of music which Medtner (1951) alluded to (p. 124). The analysis of the compositional practices in Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle has led to allusions of Chopin and Rimsky-Korsakov. The idea of *renewal* is also referenced through *Primavera* and *Canzona matinata* that alludes to rebirth and youth. *Sonata tragica* also brings to the spotlight Medtner's beloved Nietzsche and *The Birth of a Tragedy* which advocates for a balance of individualism and the collective, and a reflection of his own struggles against the contemporary trends; the very reason *The Muse and the Fashion* was written.

Even though each individual piece has its own narrative elements, in putting them together, I suggest these individual pieces come together as a whole as the Op. 39 cycle to reflects Medtner's artistic creed as espoused in *The Muse and the Fashion*, which is to restore the metaphysical spirit of the Dionysian which espouses "unity," "theurgy," and "communal collective." This is achieved through allusion to past practices, albeit renewed through his own *modus operandi*.

Finally, in *remembering (the eternal song)*, the findings suggest that as an embodiment of the authenticity of inspired theme connected to the "initial song," the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle features an appeal to monothematicism, and cross-movement cyclic recollection. This also reveals that Medtner likely saw music as organic and intuitive. This could possibly explain Medtner's withdrawal from Taneyev's counterpoint class, because Medtner reportedly could not accept Taneyev's solution to simply move some element somewhere like "rearranging furniture" (Martyn, 2016, p. 6). Through this, the Medtnerian thematic processes, when coordinated carefully, gives rise to a perception of melody. All thematic groups in the Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle all point towards a reliance on a lyrical melodic line,<sup>16</sup> which ties into the subtitle of the cycle which is "lyric." Given that each

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<sup>16</sup> Which is not uncommon in Medtner's works, but not always the case as well. One just needs to turn to Op. 38 or Op. 40.

movement alludes to an unsung poetic message, which could only be delivered through the different combination of smallest fragments of the theme, this insistence on lyricism perhaps is a way to remind one of the *forgotten* “initial song.”

Having considered the *Medtnerian Ideals* exemplified through the Op. 39 cycle, I offer an interpretation that Medtner viewed tonality as a paintbrush, as a means of providing an allusory frame of reference in visualizing musical complexity and extramusical imagery. Even as the compositional strategies appear to allude to traditional functional harmony at times, the examination of *chiaroscuro* together with *artistic images* indicate that there is much more. This allusory frame of reference could be easily overlooked because of its deceptive nature, particularly when viewed through the lens of functional harmony. This also presents the prospect and problematics of understanding why Medtner’s works appeared to suffer the consequences of an unremarkable review from time to time over the course of history. I will examine the idea of perception of Medtner’s music in the next section.

This discussion leads to a realisation that Medtner’s compositions, notably Op.39, require alternative perspectives beyond structures of institutional framing, both musically and extra-musically. This is because Medtner’s compositions, expressive of his musings in literary and philosophical ideas, are demonstrated by a very uniquely coordinated approach to compositional strategies, particularly the visual arts, in ways one could only term *Medtnerian*.

My emergent argument, that a study of Medtner’s music cannot ignore the influences of his Muse which was a source of intuition and inspiration which he frequently alludes to (Medtner, 1951, pp. 100-101), is made manifest in numerous genres such as song, dance, nature, and tales, and the extramusical imagery which he terms “artistic images and forms” (Medtner, 1951, p. 124). A study of Medtner’s music, therefore, cannot ignore the extramusical dimensions such as historical events as well as a consideration of his musical and non-musical aesthetics outlined in *The Muse and the Fashion*, which explains why he wrote in decided ways,

and how to interpret them. The apparent complexity of his writings revealed through musical and non-musical perspectives also suggest that an alternative study of his writings is long overdue.

## **5.2. A Critique of Medtnerian Ideas with Reference to the Op. 39**

Throughout the analysis, there are moments in which the findings do not seem to concur with *The Muse and the Fashion*. This section will look at the tussles between Op. 39 and the writings in form of (1) difficulties in keeping to the high ideals set, and (2) the issue of perception.

### **5.2.1. Difficulties in Keeping to High Ideals**

#### **Perception of Musical form**

Medtner (1951) saw cadences existing within a harmonic framework as an integral part of form (p. 49). However, the examination of Op. 39 presents several issues with such a view at times. At times, the pieces achieve a degree of coherence despite avoiding traditional harmonic practices.

The end of the introduction and development sections in *Meditazione* have no mediating cadence within the framework of functional harmony, suggesting a divergence between the writing and the musical passage. Form is not only connected to cadences within the framework of functional harmony. It is difficult to ignore perceptions of a “new section” because of textural/mood/rhythmical/melodic shifts, which Medtner utilizes in *Meditazione*.

Secondly, strategies in which discernable connections in the motifs across theme groups, and even individual pieces, are also utilized across the Op. 39 cycle to create a sense of coherence and unity. For example, in the second theme group of the exposition in *Meditazione*, despite the harmonic support that points to no clear tonal centre, it is still coherent and comprehensible by listeners. This is due to the shared thematic material between the first and second theme groups, as well as the use of repetition.

### **Coordination into regions of no tonal centre**

*Meditazione* in its reliance on the octatonic collection generates regions where a tonal centre is difficult to perceive despite triadic vertical sonorities in the harmonic support at times. These regions with a hardly discernible tonal centre indicate some disconnect between the writings and the musical passage, as Medtner (1951) had written against “denying tonality” (p. 95). At the same time, Medtner’s use of triads in these regions implies acoustical consistency. Therefore, a more nuanced classification of these regions would be “triadic atonality.”

### **5.2.2. Perception**

Medtner (1951) believed that listening to musical art is

(the) most unfortunate, inactive, (and) uninteresting. The true function of music is not to entertain or distract, but to attract, collect, hypnotically concentrate the feelings and thoughts of the listener (p. 130).

Referring to both a specialist and general audience, Medtner (1951) believed that one had to “experience music directly,” and elaborated that “if the non-specialist can at first directly experience the main images, the melodies, it will be easier for him to work his way from these themes to a perception of the whole” (p. 132). This indicated that Medtner believed in an idealized way of listening to music, and that the communication process would enable a listening that would allow one to perceive the melodies and perhaps structure. This idea resonates with Lerdahl who believed that it is desirable for a “composer’s grammar” and a “listener’s grammar” to converge in classical music. (Lerdahl in Tymoczko, 2011, p. 24).

These ideas nevertheless presents several issues. As Tymoczko (2011) pointed out, that there is “potential for real divergence between” a “composer’s grammar” and a “listener’s grammar” (p. 24). Firstly, this is because in musical compositions involving complexity, listeners may only receive parts of the underlying ideas, missing out on details such as structure (p. 24). Secondly, individuals vary in their abilities to perceive and recover musical information. Thus, there is difficulty in declaring what an ideal “listening” should be; listening could be for

pure aesthetic enjoyment, or to recover musical syntax. Therefore one could not claim that there is an “ideal” or “competent” listener (p. 25). Thirdly, Tymoczko (2011) is of the opinion that a listener responds to “relatively crude global features of the musical stimulus,” which are identified to be (1) consonant or dissonant harmonies, (2) whether or not the piece keeps to a regular set of pitches over medium time windows, (3) and whether the interval between the pitches are small (p. 25). To extend Tymoczko’s point here, this suggests that if a piece of music lies in middle of the continuum in these aspects, this could potentially cause more issues in perception. The next section takes a look at instances these issues can arise.

### **Institutional Framing**

A recurring theme throughout *The Muse and the Fashion* is Medtner’s (1951) assertion of the relation between the tonic and dominant as “principal coordinates” of the tonic and tonality (pp. 25-26), and that tonality was “closely interrelated with cadences” (p. 27). These cadential gestures are what Schoenberg (1973) termed “the last prevails,” procedures in establishing tonality (p. 9). However, Schoenberg pointed out many composers were aware of how difficult it was to establish a tonal centre and that a persistent emphasis through repetition was necessary for the audience (p. 9). As much as cadential gestures signal tonality, there is an implicit institutional training involved and/or conditioning to perceive the gesture especially when it is ambiguous.

In *Meditazione*, considering the highly shaded and weakened functional use of harmony, Medtner’s use of cadences sparingly at the end of sections could only hint of the tonal centres to a trained listener. For instance, the V<sup>9</sup> of E major which closes the first theme group in the exposition, is an appeal to the expectation of a trained listener. This is because if one hears the first theme group “crudely” around C# minor, the use of a half-cadence in the “supposed” relative major establishes the tonal centres of the first and second theme groups as C# minor and E major respectively.

### **Renewalist or Imitator?**

As much as *The Muse and the Fashion* appeals to a primordial beginning, of the “initial song,” my examination of the Op. 39 cycle found the compositional styles of the late nineteenth century as the dominant practice. This leads one to question, what of the music before? This is a view shared by Swan, who pointed out that there were “vast periods in music history that were closer, at least in time, to that *song*” that Medtner’s writings also discounted (Swan in Medtner, 1951, p. 67). By sticking to mostly nineteenth century practices, with a combination of modifications, in an appeal to *renewal*, one could ask, why not of earlier times?

Medtner (1951) frowned upon the neoclassical movement, critical of the neoclassicists “simply ‘creating’ simplicity” in forgoing the complexity of coordination (of harmony) (p. 54). This indicates that the Medtnerian *renewal* is in fact rather subjective, and restrictive to some degree. At the same time, Medtner’s use of functional tonality concatenated with tonal shadows, identifiably a modification of the nineteenth century practices, could equally lead someone to perceive him as a “neoromantic,” as an “imitator” of styles,” which *The Muse and the Fashion* wrote against. In fact, there was a particularly stinging review by music critic Karatygin which perceived things this way, offering disparaging labels such as “Russian Brahms,” “classicism without a soul,” and “exceptional dryness and rigidity in musical thought” (Martyn, 2016, pp. 98-99).

### **Unbalanced Complexity?**

Mentioned at the beginning of this section, Medtner’s works were intended both for the connoisseurs and the general audience. This is a view also echoed by Tymoczko (2011), who saw that composers added layers of complexity, together with features that appeal well to a general audience (p. 4); essentially, a balance to keep both groups of listeners interested.

However, Medtner’s music is by no means, easy to listen to. Stephen Hough alludes to a period of time in which one needed to get acquainted with Medtner’s music (Hough, 2021).

Implicit here is the complexity of Medtner's writings that one perhaps needed score study or multiple listenings. Similarly, the findings from my analysis reveals a way in which tonality was conceived in an extended practice, with strong contrasts between consonance and dissonance. This, together with structural deviations, will pose some challenge in comprehending musical features, even for trained listeners. Even as Medtner might have intended for a balance of both simplicity and complexity as he alluded in *The Muse and the Fashion* (Medtner, 1951, pp. 16-17), if one takes the side of Karatygin, which one cannot rule out the possibility, Medtner's music could also be perceived as pandering to complexity.

### **5.2.3. A Final Word**

*The Muse and the Fashion*, in its high ideals, has led to several inconsistencies when examined side by side with the Op. 39 cycle. This is particularly through his views on atonality, which are loose and extreme at times, read though with the benefit of being far removed from Medtner's time.

In this section, I began by discussing where harmony in the traditional sense does not seem to play a role in articulating form. Following that, I discuss the use of the octatonic collection in *Meditazione*, which despite tertian harmonic support, leads into entire sections that are obscured of tonal centres. If tonality is what *The Muse and the Fashion* argues for, then these regions indicate some disconnect between musical writing and the text. At the same time, this could be an issue with Medtner's very ambiguous writing, which reveals a possible blind spot of not reading Medtner's arguments on his own terms. Nevertheless I suggest that a more nuanced classification of Medtner's atonal regions as "triadic atonality."

Next, I discussed how Medtner's allusion to tonal centres can be rather loose at times, as it is not so simple to establish a tonal centre. For one, after extended periods of uncertainty, a singular cadential gesture followed by sonorities that does not support the tonal centre, requires contextualization on the trained listener's part. Similarly in considering the

*Medtnerian Ideal of renewal*, and of the *Balance of Simplicity and Complexity*, perception plays a huge role in whether admitting concurrence with *The Muse and the Fashion*.

It is also clear by now that the issue of perception is a problematic issue, in which Medtner seemed to have assumed a highly idealized listener. However, not every listener is equal. This could potentially lead to issues in perceiving sonorities where there is more room for ambiguity. This is compounded by the fact that Medtner did not agree with concert talks that were meant to explain the pieces performed to the general public. (Medtner, 1951, p. 131).

This is not to say that one had to know and agree with every single detail and contextual information to enjoy a piece of music. One certainly need not, and composers were aware of that. At the same time, I argue that knowing the context aids in enhancing the aesthetic enjoyment in listening and perception of the intricacies and craft gone into the work, particularly in bringing the work to a non-specialist audience.

Eventually, I believe that it is about the combined dimensions of analysis and discussion, performance, and listening, that in an endless circle of perpetual motion synergizing each other that enables a work to reach its full potential in perception, not just to the performer, but to the audience consisting of both specialist and general audience. After all, one of the chief roles of art has always been to communicate. This is especially applicable to Medtner, considering that he hinted in *The Muse and the Fashion* that he was supportive of reaching both specialist and the general audience.



## Chapter 6. Evaluation and Conclusion

### 6.1. Evaluation

#### 6.1.1. Addressing Research Problems and Questions

In addressing the first research problem of musical analysis that seemed to focus on only certain individual movements, guided by **Research Question (3)**, I provided musical analysis for each work, and addressed the cycle as a whole.

In addressing the second research problem of the limited and conflicting extramusical perspective of the Op. 39, I provided an interpretative discourse to **Research Question (2b)**, by accounting for allusory themes suggested by the musical analysis, together with allusory themes. In these allusory themes, I uncovered and examined numerous references to literary works which could have inspired the compositional process, indicating an intersection of literature and music. The extramusical accounts of this study fit comfortably with other existing Medtnerian literature on how scholarship has interpreted *The Muse and the Fashion* in terms of his extramusical discourse.

In addressing the third research problem of the lack of studies considering *The Muse and the Fashion* as a lens to read the Op. 39 cycle, I provided interpretative discourse as a response to **Research Questions (1a) and (1b)** by identifying and explaining five *Medtnerian Ideals* emanating from Medtner's writings as a means of qualifying the analysis and interpretation of this musical work. In response to **Research Question (2b)**, and guided by the *Medtnerian Ideals*, I examined features such as melody, form and "harmony," and offer an interpretation as to how these features are emergent in Op. 39.

To understand the relationship between Op. 39 of *The Muse and the Fashion*, I compared the compositional and philosophical themes through the five *Medtnerian Ideals* against the analysis of the music, as a response to **Research Question (4)**. Concurrences between the text and musical passages were found on the whole, though there were moments

that did not. Finally, I provided an interpretation on how Medtner's saw composition through his symbolic muse, and a visual arts frame of reference. This addresses a gap in the understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of Medtner's compositional discourse.

### **6.1.2. Limitations of this study**

#### **Lack of archival sources and personal accounts**

Interpreting the extramusical dimension in the Op.39 cycle involves challenges as I do not have access to much of the archival sources and direct accounts. This raises potential issues of authenticity. Nevertheless, the limitations when acknowledged free up limitations that are in place of a purely musical analysis. Choosing a framework that feeds on the symbiosis between music and extramusical allows one to make meaning of the music encountered through Medtner's own thoughts on compositional discourse through *The Muse and the Fashion* and the Op. 39 cycle.

#### **Analysis and making meaning**

Lewin (1969) acknowledged that implicit in every analysis is skepticism. An analytical study must "decide" the function of certain features observed, "choose" among several conflicting possible readings according to an interpretation consistent on a larger scale. This implies that the features that I have chosen to review is a decided choice, rather than arbitrary. In addition to that, the explanation of the extramusical in each individual piece of the Op. 39 cycle draws sometimes from different parts of analysis of the music and reading of *The Muse and the Fashion*. For instance, *Meditazione* relies primarily on explanations from vertical sonorities. *Romanza* relies partially on vertical sonorities but more on genre/styles such as dance forms, and *Primavera* relies on texture and an appeal to literary themes in *The Muse and the Fashion*. Discussions on *The Muse and the Fashion* and the degree of concurrence with the

Op. 39 cycle, contain some personal bias, particularly when perception is called into play, since one could choose a compliant, or resistant reading if one chooses not to read *The Muse and the Fashion* on its terms and in relation to how Medtner wrote Op. 39.

### **6.1.3. Implications of Research Findings**

#### **Laying the foundation for Op. 39: Extramusical, Reception and Performance**

Just as Kramer (2010) would term that analysis and hermeneutics are “equally capable of making credible descriptive claims of music” (p. 151), implying that hermeneutics can inform analysis just as analysis can inform hermeneutics, the extramusical findings of this study could potentially fuel more critical investigations involving a purely musical analysis. The findings reveal that the Op. 39 cycle is a reflection of styles of a previous era, builds a foundation for further, and perhaps more detailed inquiry into the individual movements through this perspective of styles.

Next, the findings of this study could also serve to inform performance and listening, as it provides musical analysis that clarifies form, and harmony, which in many ways determines how it is perceived in performance in suggesting musical architectonics on the large scale, and the nuances of dissonance/tension and consonance/relief on a local scale. Also, in understanding the appearance of genres, one can appreciate and make an informed choices to replicate or create one’s own set of performance traditions. For instance, in the case of the mazurka, there is an implicit time taking due to the nature of choreography in physical dance itself (Burkholder, 2015). In addition to that, it serves as a means of stimuli through the extramusical that can potentially elicit critical responses that will aid in a more engaged reading and therefore performance and/listening of the work.

## Down the road: Evaluation of Medtner's music and *The Muse and the Fashion*

My findings read through Medtner's ideas in *The Muse and the Fashion* reveal several compositional practices, particularly in *chiaroscuro*, a visual arts frame of reference, that does not fit cleanly at times when read through conventional tools of the tonal framework. While several others (Loftis, 1970, p. 188; Keller, 1971; p. 331) are of the opinion that Medtner's music compositions function amenably within the boundaries of tonality and therefore can be described clearly by standard theoretical framework of tonal harmony, there are moments that cannot be described by functional harmony. This presents issues on tonality and the perception of a tonality when these ambiguous regions are prolonged. This study, in its qualitative nature, thus could potentially serve to inform more quantitative investigations aided by computers, perhaps to study the incidence of different sonorities, or chord movements to see how they contribute on a larger scale to tonal allusions.

The findings also suggest that a number of these miniatures demonstrate a variety of approaches to sonata form. This not only adds to the already huge list of works, that are not titled sonata, to be in sonata form identified by Bitzan (2019), but also suggests perhaps a reevaluation/reinforcement of the perception that Medtner's miniature sounding pieces are by no means musically inferior than the counterparts termed "piano sonatas."

Necessitated by all that has been said, it seems only fitting to return to *The Muse and the Fashion* again. Examining the Op. 39 cycle together with *The Muse and the Fashion* in its philosophical musings on both extramusical and musical issues, suggests that *The Muse and the Fashion* holds quite a lot more dimensions in its outlook, both in flexibility and inflexibility in its nuances, than previously imagined by scholarship. This could potentially serve further research into these Medtnerian conceptions.

## 6.2. Conclusion

2021 marks the centennial of Medtner's premiere of the *Forgotten Melodies* cycle at the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory in 1921. Composers such as Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Webern, among many others, have in some ways found their way into musical mainstream and canon. Medtner's main concern, abandoning tonality, seems somewhat misplaced. Nevertheless, the war on "modernism" certainly provided the stimulus for Medtner's *The Muse and the Fashion* (1935) which provides an insight into a unique blend of compositional strategies and responses to questions in aesthetics with regards to music.

The *Forgotten Melodies* cycles written some fifteen years earlier (1919-1920) also reflected to a similar appeal, embedded within the music and a rich vein of extramusical references that allude to his artistic creed. The Op. 39 *Forgotten Melodies* cycle represents a skillful coordination of multiple complex variables as well as simplicity; characterized by a balance of musical features representative of musical styles of a recent past and contemporary. Medtner's conception of tonality and "harmony" was expressed as *chiaroscuro* at times significantly obscuring any sense of a tonal centre. Yet Medtner never really abandoned tonality and still found ways to hint at a tonal centre. Medtner also relied less on schemes in form construction, which resulted in ways in which he altered the shape of the form to suit what he felt needed to be expressed. Medtner sought to express the "initial song," the forgotten melodies of heaven, through themes that appeared to him intuitively, which he gradually developed, and at times this grew into what he perceived to be the most aesthetically attractive form known as a melody. The transformative potential under Medtner's careful craft, aided by titling at times, also hint at numerous extramusical imageries in its look to past styles of the nineteenth century, and reflecting personal views and struggles.

Even as there may be occasions where the ideas advocated in *The Muse and the Fashion* are not as amenable with the musical text due to Medtner's own idealized vision, or perhaps due to our imposed bias, it is clear that in order to full appreciate Medtner's contributions in navigating this difficult terrain, this study has provided compelling evidence that *The Muse and the Fashion*, and understanding its underlying philosophies, are indispensable to fully appreciate the musical features, as well as the aesthetics.

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## Appendix A

<b>Music</b>	<b>Visual Arts</b>
Emergent musical work	Three-dimensionality
Home tonal centre	Main colour
Other satellite tonalities	Other related colours
Each tonal centre	Distinct colour
Functional and or Extended Tonal Techniques  Coordination of Consonance and Dissonance	Coordinated gradation of Light and Shadow
Consonance	Light
Dissonance	Shadows
Musical Sections	Contour
Secondary Tonal Centres	Passing Colours
Large Scale Patterns in Gradation of Sonorities	Visual Rhythm
Harmonic Style	Close and Finely Differentiated Range of Value
Homogeneity in Sound	Tonal Unity

Table 1. Analogy of Musical Terms and their Visual Arts counterparts.