

THE PIANO SOLO MUSIC IN SMALLER FORMS OF NICOLAS MEDTNER

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INTRODUCTION

In the limited literature devoted to Nicolas Medtner there is found sketchy analyses of some of his music. A systematic, thorough analysis of the major portion of Medtner's output, however, has not been done. It was therefore considered to be of historical value to examine in detail the smaller pieces of Nicolas Medtner which constitute half of his piano music and thereby to draw as definite conclusions as possible as to 1) the elements of Medtner's pianoforte style and 2) Medtner's position and importance in the area of keyboard music.

The term, "smaller forms", refers to those pieces in Medtner's repertory which have a simple structure; that is, they are not constructed in formal sections such as "movements". The analytical study has been restricted to these smaller pieces and does not include the sonatas, concerti, songs, violin-piano duets, the piano quintet, cadenzas to Beethoven's Concerto No. 4 and the other larger piano works such as the Second Improvisation, Op. 47 (consisting of fifteen "sketches"), Theme and Variations, Op. 55 and For Two Pianos, Op. 58. Little emphasis has been placed on the biography of Medtner but sufficient biographical data has been presented as was necessary to establish Medtner in his historical context.

The most important source has been the complete collected works of Nicolas Medtner published by the Moscow Government (1959-1963). The letters and papers of Nicolas Medtner which are kept in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., may not be made available to anyone before 1980 by an expressed stipulation of Mrs. Nicolas Medtner who is presently residing in Moscow. Permission was sought from Mrs. Medtner directly and her reply was that the letters must remain sealed until the

specified date. The composer's book, Muza I Moda (The Muse and the Fashion), has been minutely scrutinized. All secondary literature to date has also been reviewed and utilized.

The pieces analyzed in this study are as follows:

Op. 1	- Eight Mood Pictures	- 1902
Op. 2	- Three Improvisations	- 1902
Op. 4	- Four Pieces	- 1902
Op. 7	- Three Arabesques	- 1905
Op. 8	- Two Fairy Tales	- 1905
Op. 9	- Three Fairy Tales	- 1906
Op. 10	- Three Dithyrambs	- 1906
Op. 14	- Two Fairy Tales	- 1908
Op. 17	- Three Novelettes	- 1909
Op. 20	- Two Fairy Tales	- 1910
Op. 23	- Four Lyrical Fragments	- 1912
Op. 26	- Four Fairy Tales	- 1913
Op. 31	- Three Pieces	- 1915
	Fairy Tale in D Minor	- 1915
Op. 34	- Four Fairy Tales	- 1916
Op. 35	- Four Fairy Tales	- 1917
Op. 38	- Seven Forgotten Melodies	- 1919
Op. 39	- Four Forgotten Melodies	- 1920
Op. 40	- Six Forgotten Melodies	- 1920
Op. 42	- Three Fairy Tales	- 1922
Op. 48	- Two Fairy Tales	- 1927
Op. 49	- Three Hymns	- 1928
Op. 51	- Six Fairy Tales	- 1929
Op. 54	- Romantic Sketches for the Young (Four Books - Eight Pieces)	1933
Op. 59	- Two Elegies	- 1945

The first chapter of the study deals with Medtner's position in history as stated by his contemporaries and by writers of our own time. Attention is given to the influences of training, personality, environment, colleagues and the musical idioms of the past and the present. Only in subsequent chapters, however, on the evidence of the music, has an attempt been made to determine to what extent these factors influenced Medtner's creative style.

The second and third chapters constitute the substantial content of the document which is the analysis of the music listed above. The

pieces from Op. 1 to Op. 31 are analyzed in Chapter II and the remaining works are examined in Chapter III. The division was made at Op. 31 since the pieces after this opus seem to have a more elaborate structure, richer texture and more colorful contrast.

The analysis deals with the structure of the music as a whole and the relationships of the units of structure in terms of melody, harmony, rhythm, texture and color. Due emphasis has been given to the stylistic aspects, whether individualistic or relating to those of other composers or of other musical idioms. The influence of any extra-musical association on the form or content has been carefully noted.

The procedure of analysis is to follow through each opus a discussion of each musical element rather than to discuss each piece within the opus separately and inclusively. By this "horizontal" method of comparative analysis within the framework of each musical element a more accurately defined evaluation resulted. Some pieces are discussed more thoroughly than others because they proved to be more significant to a definition of Medtner's art. Characteristic qualities and techniques are repeatedly pointed out as they were discovered in the music as a means of categorizing as accurately and thoroughly as possible the elements of Medtner's pianoforte style.

A summary and conclusion follow the third chapter.

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CHAPTER I

MEDTNER IN HIS MILIEU

"What is generally supposed to be artistic progress can be a movement towards perfection only when it contains no deliberate departure from the simplicity of the fundamental senses of art."¹ This statement was made by the composer, Nicolas Medtner, in 1935 at the age of fifty-five, with fifty-six of his sixty-one works published. It was Medtner's musical creed and he never deviated from it, despite the changing views of the composers of his time. Medtner, on principle, refused to be caught up in the rapid tide of extreme experimentation which existed in the musical world in which he lived. He stood as a solitary figure, reviewing the stream of musical activity during the first four decades of the twentieth century, convinced that new forms of expression could be found within the old framework of writing.

Few details have been recorded of Medtner's early life. Richard Holt, a friend of the Medtners during their years in London, published a memorial volume honoring Medtner, four years after his death. The book is a compilation of essays written by admirers of the composer. The first essay in the volume is titled, "A Short Biography" written by Medtner's wife, Anna.² Some biographical data are also included in the Preface to the Complete Published Works of Medtner which is currently being published by the Moscow Government.³

¹Nicholas Medtner, The Muse and the Fashion (Philadelphia: Haverford College Bookstore, 1951), p. 18.

²Richard Holt, Nicolas Medtner. A Tribute to His Art and Personality. (London: Dennis Dobson, Ltd., 1955), pp. 17-21.

³A. F. Goedicke (ed.), Complete Published Works of Medtner (Moscow: Government Musical Publishing House, 1959), pp. 7-14.

From these sources we learn that the German ancestors of Nicholas Karlovich Medtner settled in Russia before the end of the eighteenth century. His great-grandfather was an actor and singer in the Imperial Theater at St. Petersburg. His father, Charles Petrovich, was a man of wide culture with deep interests in philosophy and poetry, particularly the works of Goethe. Alexandra Carlovna Goedicke, Medtner's mother, one of a family of musicians, had been a singer in her youth. At the age of six Nicholas received his first piano lessons from his mother. A prodigy at the keyboard, he was soon playing the sonatas of Mozart and Scarlatti with a brilliant touch. At this same time, Alexander, his eight-year-old brother, was playing the violin. Nicholas also mastered the stringed instrument and the two boys soon organized an orchestra for their own enjoyment.

At a very early age Medtner showed an interest in composition. Mrs. Medtner writes that " . . . without knowing anything about theory the boy covered every bit of paper he could lay hold of with music. It was, however, to the piano that he turned to express the music that was in him."⁴

After the initial training at the piano given him by his mother, Medtner began lessons with F. C. Goedicke, his mother's brother, at that time a professor at the ~~Imperial~~ conservatory.

At the time of Medtner's birth in 1880 the heated controversy between the Russian nationalists led by "The Five" and their western-rooted counterparts headed by the Rubinstein brothers had subsided considerably. This was due in part to the universal popularity of

⁴Holt, op. cit., p. 17.

Tchaikowsky who, although a member of the Rubinstein circle, was nevertheless appreciated by the nationalists. Tchaikowsky studied composition with Anton Rubinstein at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and later was appointed to the faculty of the Moscow School. This provided a wholesome exchange of ideas which figured significantly in bringing to an end the long battle between the so-called nationalists of St. Petersburg and the eclectics of Moscow.

Thus, at the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the two dominant trends in Russian music differed essentially in method and style rather than focusing on the national and non-national aspects. The distinction at this period was between Russian music which emphasized classical purity and Russian music which looked toward a so-called "liberation" from classical norms. The latter was the direction taken by the National School at St. Petersburg with Rimsky-Korsakov as its leader. The former trend found its champions at the Moscow Conservatory where the contrapuntalist and theoretician, Taneiev, replaced Tchaikowsky as Director. This musical situation existed from the close of the nineteenth century until the October Revolution in 1917. At two centers of musical thought, Moscow and St. Petersburg, a second generation of Russian musicians was being trained.⁵

The musical scene at St. Petersburg during the close of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, showed a master of orchestration with a group of promising students, in an atmosphere of relaxed

⁵Bernard Stevens makes the point that the traditional association of nationalistic thinking with Moscow and the connection of western outlook with St. Petersburg were, in the field of music, reversed. (See: Howard Hartog, ed., European Music in the Twentieth Century (New York: Praeger, 1957) p. 204.

solidarity of opinion, bold experimentation and cosmopolitan influences, free from the strictures of the past. It was a period of broad thinking and rich creativity under the guidance of a great leader.

The musical climate at the Moscow Conservatory was somewhat different. Unlike Rimsky-Korsakov, Taneiev, the Director of the Moscow School, was a purist in academic procedures of writing, and admitted no experimentation. Taneiev's special field was theoretical counterpoint. He wrote a two-volume treatise entitled, "Imitative Counterpoint in Strict Style" which brought counterpoint into focus as a branch of pure mathematics. Lacking a strongly creative impulse, Taneiev's own approach to composition was coldly intellectual. He was a kindly, blue-eyed patriarchal figure in Russian music, a man of complete intellectual honesty, whose personal life was ascetic. He is considered by the Russians as their greatest theoretician and contrapuntalist. Under his influence pupils at the Moscow Conservatory were grounded in the canons of strict contrapuntal style.

It was in this environment that the boy, Nicolas Medtner, found himself when he enrolled at the conservatory in 1892, at the encouragement of his uncle. His wife writes, " . . . this was the beginning of difficult but happy years. His time was taken up with piano lessons and studies in theory and general science. He had no difficulty in becoming proficient in these subjects and there was, therefore, plenty of time left for practising the piano."⁶ Besides his regular studies at the conservatory, Medtner devoted much time to composition. In Taneiev's

⁶Holt, op. cit., p. 18.

class in counterpoint Medtner developed a mastery of polyphony that became a hallmark of his style. Taneiev thought highly of Medtner. When Medtner left the class of Taneiev he did not sever relations with his old teacher. Frequently Medtner showed him his compositions and highly valued his criticisms.

During his early years at the conservatory, Medtner studied piano with P. A. Pabst, an admirable pianist and a student of Liszt. At the sudden death of this outstanding musician, Medtner entered the piano classes of V. I. Safonov who was considered the greatest teacher of piano in Moscow at that time. It is of interest from the point of view of piano pedagogy that during the entire three years that Medtner studied with him, Safonov never once played a note on the instrument, his only practical demonstration being given on the piano lid. Recognizing the extraordinary talent of the young Medtner, Safonov did all in his power to encourage the brilliant pianist in a career of performance. At his graduation in 1900 Medtner was awarded the gold medal for high pianistic achievement, and in the same year won first place in the International Music Competition honoring Anton Rubinstein, with his performance of Rubinstein's Concerto No. 5. As a result of these laurels, Safonov's ambitions for his promising pupil became intensified. He insisted that Medtner perform the same concerto in Moscow and St. Petersburg, despite Medtner's dislike for the work. He also arranged a concert tour that would take Medtner through all the important cities of Europe where he would perform the same concerto. After each concert with the orchestra, solo recitals were planned with music that would demonstrate the virtuosity of the young artist. Medtner declined the tour because he felt that the fullness

of his creative inspiration was to be found in composing. Mrs. Medtner speaks of the reactions of relatives and friends to Medtner's decision:

"This decision provoked the desperate opposition of his relations who saw in it the shattering of all hopes for an exceptionally brilliant career. Nevertheless, Medtner's decision was irrevocable and he was supported by his brother, Emil, and also by Taneiev. Safonov, not unnaturally, was not pleased with this attitude on his pupil's part, and for a long time, cherished resentment. But it is agreeable to relate that ultimately he forgave Medtner, and when, some years later, he was conducting in England, he wrote Medtner enthusiastically about the latter's Nietzsche songs which he had heard in London and invited him to come there and play under his baton."⁷

Although Medtner aspired to composition, he was not to abandon concert work entirely. Throughout his life he continued to appear in recitals, playing his own works and the compositions of the great masters. One author gives his impression of Medtner as a pianist:

"Now, in my experience, no one has equalled Medtner in the extraordinary musical clarity of his playing, particularly in crowded and complex music in the lower registers of the piano (of which there is much in his own works). Moreover, he possessed to an acute degree the rare power of coloring melodically passages that in the hands of others remained mere notes, and his subtleties of nuance and pedal were unforgettable. No one (except perhaps Josef Hoffman) produced so much effect with so little visible means . . . "⁸

In 1908 Medtner took a professorship at the Moscow Conservatory. However, he resigned from this post the following year in order to devote more time to composition. By temperament, Medtner was inclined to writing music of an intimate nature. Large-scale works such as operas and symphonies did not attract him. His early compositions were

⁷Ibid., p. 19.

⁸Ibid., pp. 93-94. (Arthur Alexander, "Medtner as Pianist").

enthusiastically accepted in Russian musical circles. Shortly after 1900 Medtner performed his F Minor Sonata No. 5 before a distinguished group of musicians at St. Petersburg. Present among them were Rimsky-Korsakov and Cui. Their response to the composition was whole-hearted approval. He succeeded in having his music published at this time with no difficulty.

The initial period of Medtner's creative activity coincided with the period of universal enthusiasm for the music of Scriabin - music which brought to the fore a complete re-evaluation of long-accepted musical principles and traditions. It must be remembered that in the early years of the twentieth century creativity in Russian music had become relatively static. With the death of Rimsky-Korsakov in 1908, leadership of the St. Petersburg center had passed on to Glazounov. Under his influence and that of Taneiev in Moscow, the dynamism sparked by such men as Glinka, Moussorsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Tchaikowsky had subsided to a form of academicism, particularly in harmonic invention. Is it any wonder, then, that the apparent novelty of Scriabin's harmony was seized with eager urgency by the young composers of the time.

In 1915, the year of Scriabin's death, Medtner again resumed his teaching at the Moscow Conservatory where he was to remain until 1921. By this same year, Medtner had completed thirty-one of his works, close to half of his entire output. These works included mostly piano sonatas, smaller pieces for the piano and songs honoring the poetry of Heine, Goethe, Lermontov and Pushkin.

Medtner, the teacher, was not only concerned with the development of a musician but also recognized the dimension of the human being, the individual. His pupil, Elena Karnitzka, writes:

"Apart from technical work Medtner worked hard to create a spiritual family united by self-denying devotion to art. Having as we had Medtner's own living example before us we gradually became aware of this, as it were, oath of service to art which Medtner's ideals inspired."⁹

The rise of the Bolshevik Party in 1917 which inaugurated an era of suppression and extermination caused many noteworthy Russians to flee their country. Among them was Serge Rachmaninov, who by this time had achieved considerable popularity as a concert pianist and composer. Before the revolution, Rachmaninov traveled to London and the United States, appearing in concerts as pianist and conductor. Despite the many invitations to stay in America, he continued to live in Moscow from 1910 to 1917. It was in this latter year that Rachmaninov, fearing for the safety of his family, went abroad, never again to visit his native Russia. For a time he lived in Paris and then divided his time between the United States and Switzerland.

Another notable musician to leave Russia under the new political regime was Glazounov. At the time of the revolution Glazounov was still the director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Between 1918 and 1927 he played an important role in the re-organization of the Leningrad Conservatory and exerted considerable influence on the education of the new generation of Russian musicians. In 1928, however, he left Russia and finally settled in Paris.

After the revolution Medtner continued to teach in Moscow. In 1921 he set out on a European tour and was not to return to his native land until 1927 when, by invitation of the Russian government, he undertook a concert tour throughout the leading cities of Russia. After his

⁹Ibid., pp. 100-101. (Elena Karnitzka, "I was a Pupil of Nicolas Medtner.").

departure in 1921 Medtner settled for a time in Germany. The two-year sojourn in that country was a period of trial for the sensitive composer. The musical world in Germany was, at that time, a hotbed of feverish and extreme experimentation. Contemporary composers were in revolt of the nineteenth century German romanticism as manifested in Wagner and Mahler. At the same time a storm of protest was levelled against the experimentations of Hindemith and Schönberg.

For this reason, Medtner welcomed the opportunity to tour America on concert engagements that kept him in the United States for one year. On his return, he and his wife settled in France.

With reference to Germany, Richard Holt speaks of the situation as ". . . out of the frying-pan and into the fire."¹⁰ In every area of artistic endeavor the fate of French expression hung in the balance of a creative crisis. In music the confusion was doubled by the infiltration of the revolutionary achievements of Schönberg and Stravinsky, mingling with the impressionistic experimentations of Debussy and, to some extent, Ravel.

Despite this fiery climate on the French scene, Medtner remained in Paris for ten years. Perhaps the reason for this long stay was his sympathetic associations with Marcel Dupre, Glazounov and Rachmaninov.

During this period Medtner gave a few recitals of his own works in Paris and appeared occasionally in Warsaw, Berlin, England and Leipzig. It was also in the course of this period that he composed ten works from Opus 46 to Opus 56.

Medtner's concert tour throughout Russia in 1927 is indicative of

¹⁰Richard Holt, Medtner and His Music (London: Remington, VanWyck Ltd., 1948), p. 6.

a change in policy by the Russian government with regard to music. In fact, there was some infiltration of western culture, with due approval of the government, between 1921 and 1927.

However, with the supremacy of Stalin in 1927 and the formation of the first Five-Year Plan all western music was excoriated. In line with this policy Rachmaninov's art was attacked by Pravda in 1931. He has since been exonerated.

It will be recalled that Glazounov left Russia soon after the establishment of the new stricture. To this day Glazounov's art is looked upon with disfavor by the Soviet government and bears the label "bourgeois."

The music of Medtner, however, was never the object of political censure. It is possible that while Russian writers acknowledge western elements in Medtner's music, they also recognized certain traits that are unmistakably Russian.

In 1935 Medtner settled in London where he was to remain until his death, November 13, 1951. If the musical activity in Paris was described as sizzling liberalism, the London situation can, by contrast, be characterized as settled conservatism. Despite the appearance of Elgar's art at the close of the century, the Teutonic style was the dominating influence in nineteenth century English music. The status quo and academic competence seemed to be the accepted canons in London's musical scene at the time when Medtner went there to live. It is not to be wondered at, then, that this composer who firmly believed in and defended the fundamental positions of classical theory should find the London musical atmosphere the ideal environment in which to carry on his creative work.

The first signs of his heart weakness appeared in 1943. This necessitated the postponement and cancellation of scheduled concert tours. It was in 1948 that Medtner's music was given enthusiastic endorsement by His Highness the Maharajah of Mysore, a province in South India. Through the Maharajah's representative, Captain S. T. Binstead, funds were provided for the recording of Medtner's piano works.

The recognition gave Medtner new energy and he began the task of recording his compositions with enthusiastic vigor. By January, 1948, he had completed three volumes of records, but the project was not completed before his death. Mrs. Medtner gives the account of Medtner's last years:

After a year's recording Medtner tore himself away from this work in order to finish his last big work, the Piano Quintet. But as soon as he had completed his composition and heard it performed, the state of his heart complaint seriously deteriorated, and for a long time he had to remain in bed. Nevertheless, he firmly believed that he would be able to get up once more to record the Quintet to which he attached special importance. Indeed, after a while his health improved sufficiently for him to be able to make a recording of this work.

Then followed two years' struggle with increasing weakness and the recurring heart attacks. There were days when his strength rallied and he tried to work so that he might record another major composition. . . . he was able to take advantage of a passing improvement in his condition and make recordings of a group of songs with Elizabeth Schwarzkopf as the singer.

Another attack forced him once more to give up working, and five days later the end came. He left the world in a serene and grateful spirit.¹¹

A look at Medtner side by side his colleagues, Rachmaninov and Scriabin, highlights more clearly his position in the musical world of his time. The three composers were students of Taneiev at the Moscow Conservatory. Both Scriabin and Rachmaninov took the gold medal at

¹¹Ibid., pp. 20-21.

their graduation from the Conservatory in 1892, eight years before Medtner won the same honor.

Unlike Medtner, Rachmaninov set out on an extensive concert tour through the principal cities of Russia the year he graduated. Cosmopolitan by nature he soon embarked on a series of concert tours outside of Russia and was caught up in a whirlwind of success. His style of composition is in the tradition of Tchaikowsky with strong western accents. A romanticist at heart, Rachmaninov's music unfolds in the grand Lisztian manner, with a poetic, lyrical quality and rhapsodic texture.

Rachmaninov contrasts with Medtner as did di Lasso with Palestrina and Handel with Bach. Both looked to the keyboard for the expression of their creative impulse. The one, however, is more universal in outlook, more "at home" before the public, more flexible in expression. Yet, for all of his out-going activity, Rachmaninov all his life had grave psychological problems. Fits of depression crippling his creative flow were not uncommon. He looked to Medtner as friend and support, and he recognized in Medtner the self-possession and support that he, regretfully, found wanting in himself.

In a letter to Marietta Shaginyan, dated May 8, 1912, Rachmaninov expressed his feeling for his friend:

It occurred to me yesterday that all you wished to see in me you can find right at hand, face to face, in another: Medtner . . . I consider him the most talented of all the modern composers. He is - as musician and man - one of those rare beings who gain in stature the more closely you approach them.¹²

Scriabin was a professor of piano at the Moscow Conservatory from

¹²Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, Rachmaninoff (New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 180.

1898 until 1904. Previously he was concertizing extensively throughout Europe and composing with a delicacy and refinement that have traditionally associated him with the style of Chopin. After leaving his post of teaching Scriabin, like Medtner, devoted himself almost exclusively to composition. Unlike Medtner's, however, his style changed radically from a tradition rooted in a Chopin and Liszt style to one set in an abstract, mystical mode. The technical realization of his mystic-philosophic thought was an ultra-novel harmonic scheme based on a superposed series of dissimilar fourths. As a result, tonal structures of tradition were destroyed and an harmonic vagueness emerged which was intended to express subtleties of the soul and subconscious abstractions.

The bases of Scriabin's harmony are the intervals of the fourth, seventh and ninth. With Medtner it is the triad. Both composers had a predilection for rhythmic subtleties, but Scriabin's handling of rhythmic devices lacked the sense of integration with the over-all structure of the composition. Medtner, on the other hand, viewed rhythm as a constituent part of melody and harmony.

There can be no doubt that Medtner must have vehemently disapproved of Scriabin's later ventures in writing procedures. In his book, The Muse and the Fashion, he speaks of the "modernist composer" and one wonders if Medtner was not referring directly to Scriabin:

Such a modernist composer always begins by writing "well-mannered" music, but having once earned respect for his accepted stock of "words" and having realized that this stock will not last for a long conversation, he begins to make use of musical interjections or to form new language on the strength of the former respect for their inventor.¹³

¹³ Medtner, op. cit., p. 104.

In the November, 1961 issue of Sovetskaya Muzyka there appeared an article about Medtner under the title of "A Contemporary of Scriabin and Rachmaninov." While the author does not set up a comparative analysis of the three composers, he sees them as contributors to the further development of the Liszt and Chopin tradition and at the same time admits vast differences in the means each of them chose to uphold this tradition.

The author speaks of Rachmaninov, the brilliant virtuoso caught up in concert life, who found his idol and inspiration in Tchaikowsky; Rachmaninov, the romantic, whose creative flow was unsteady, reflecting the grand Lisztian manner in his compositions. Scriabin, also absorbed in concert life, also the romantic, was influenced by Chopin, Liszt, Wagner and later Debussy. Unlike Rachmaninov whose roots remained in western romanticism, Scriabin pressed further into regions of incomprehensible obscurities. The emotionalism of both composers was self-conscious; their lives were filled with neurosis and depression.¹⁴

Medtner, by contrast, possessed a balanced emotional nature and preferred composing to concertizing. In 1915 Arthur Pougin records Medtner among the composers of the time and omits him from the list of pianists.¹⁵ Like Rachmaninov's and Scriabin's, Medtner's art is linked with the composers of the West. As Rachmaninov is traditionally identified with the grandiose flamboyance of Liszt, and Scriabin with the poetic delicacies of Chopin, Medtner is associated with the introspection

¹⁴0. Neygauz, "Sovremennik Skryabina: Raklumaninova," Sovetskaya Muzyka, XXV (November, 1961), pp. 72-75.

¹⁵Arthur Pougin, A Short History of Russian Music (New York: Brentano's, 1915), p. 304 and p. 313.

of Schumann and the craftsmanship of Brahms.

In 1917 Montagu-Nathan declared that "Medtner is in fact a modern Brahms."¹⁶ In the same book the author pinpoints Medtner's position when he says, "In Moscow Taneiev upheld the architectonic element in music. His pupil, Rachmaninov, was romantic . . . perfection of structure appears to have been only a secondary consideration. There is a composer who is to be placed midway between the two."¹⁷ Another Russian historian established Medtner side by side his teacher, Taneiev, both of whom found in the German classical idiom their" . . . natural vehicle of . . . musical thought."¹⁸ With regard to the Taneiev-Medtner tradition, Sabaniev points out that "Taneiev dreamed to be what Medtner became."¹⁹ In 1927 Sabaniev wrote an article for Music and Letters in which he defined what he termed "Medtnerism . . . the deviation of the Chopin-Liszt-Scriabin path in the direction of Brahms-Schumann-Beethoven."²⁰

After Medtner's death most historians continued to place him in the German classic tradition. Asaf'ev speaks of Medtner's music as " . . . strongly permeated by elements of Germanic late-romantic

¹⁶M. Montagu-Nathan, Contemporary Russian Composers (London: Palmer and Hayward, 1917), p. 242.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁸M. D. Calvocoressi, A Survey of Russian Music (New York: Penguin Books, 1943), p. 84.

¹⁹Leonid Sabaneiev, Modern Russian Composers (New York: International Publishers, 1927), p. 135.

²⁰Leonid Sabaneiev, "Two Critiques," Music and Letters, VIII (July, 1927), p. 334.

culture."²¹ Four years later Richard Leonard states in his comprehensive history of Russian music that "Medtner descended from Brahms and Schumann."²² Leonard supports his thesis by listing certain technical mannerisms of Brahms which are found in Medtner's piano music: similarities in contrapuntal technic, deployment of chords and harmonic texture. Leonard also makes the point, however, that the Russian folk idiom can be found in Medtner's works such as the Fairy Tales and the Sonata Romantica. Medtner's link with the Russian spirit is also subscribed to by Harold Truscott, who writes in 1956 that " . . . there is in much of (Medtner's) work what is perhaps a profounder expression of and commentary on the Russian spirit as one finds in the work of Dostoevsky, Tchekov, Pushkin and Turgenev."²³

There is one position given to Medtner on which all writers are in agreement. Medtner is without question conservative. When Richard Holt makes this claim he is careful to define the "conservative" as " . . . one who, while recognizing the need for improvement, adaptation, modification where it reveals itself, yet cherishes and values the labours and traditions of the past and regards it heritage as the only basis for true progress."²⁴ This is perhaps the true basis of the link

²¹B. V. Asaf'ev, Russian Music, from the beginning of the 19th century (Michigan: J. W. Edwards, 1953), p. 251.

²²Richard A. Leonard, A History of Russian Music, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 342.

²³Harold Truscott, "Nicolas Medtner," The Chesterian, XXXI (Summer, 1956), p. 7.

²⁴Richard Holt, Medtner and His Music, (London: Rimington, VanWyck, Ltd., 1948), p. 15.

between Medtner and Brahms. Like Brahms, Medtner sought to write in accepted forms and, within the traditional framework, to express what he felt.

Medtner has been compared with other giants of music history. Mention has already been made of Schumann. Richard Leonard speaks of the " . . . airily poetic, the slyly mysterious, an esoteric element," as Schumannesque qualities found in Medtner's art.²⁵ A connection is made with Beethoven on the basis of Medtner's emphasis of design and structure with a preference for sonata-form. Beethoven was the master of melodic motif-development and rhythmic ingenuity; Medtner excells in these two elements. In 1916 Ernest Newman evaluated Medtner's pianistic writing as a blending of " . . . both the thickness and the fluidity of (the piano's) resonance."²⁶ This statement could very well have been made about Beethoven who achieved sonorous results on the piano that were unheard of in his time.

Another view of Medtner which is taken by most writers is the position of the solitary. "Medtner stands isolated amidst his contemporaries."²⁷ This judgment made in 1927 is an echo of Montagu-Nathan's remark written ten years earlier: "Medtner, one of the most earnest musicians in Russia . . . stands, as to creative style, quite alone. Of late, Medtner, though working on orthodox lines, has shown that while

²⁵Leonard, loc. cit.

²⁶Hubert Van Thal, ed., Testament of Music, Essays and Papers of Ernest Newman, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 193.

²⁷Sabaneiev, "Two Critiques," Music and Letters, loc. cit.

so doing it is possible to invest music with modern feeling."²⁸ In 1951 an article appeared in Tempo which clarifies more concretely this view of Medtner. The author states that " . . . within a comparatively unadventurous framework Medtner has bequeathed to the world a wealth of music abounding in new rhythms, flavours and sonorities."²⁹ As late as 1962 the same evaluation was made. His achievement is considered by the authors of Man and His Music to be the attainment of " . . . a discreet originality by way of his pianistic invention."³⁰

In the January, 1965 issue of Music and Letters, Malcolm Boyd speaks of Medtner's style as springing from two main traditions, the nineteenth century German idiom and the Russian tradition. He speaks of the Medtner-Brahms comparison with restrictions to classical outlook and the use of cross-rhythms. The Beethoven influence he sees as more far-reaching in terms of sonata structure and thematic development. In reference to the Russian traits Mr. Boyd makes the point that while Medtner did not consciously " . . . cultivate a 'national' style," his national interest was so much a part of him that the Russian quality is unmistakably present in his art.³¹

Thus we see Medtner as he stands beside his contemporaries, as history records him from the turn of the century to our present time. However, these evaluations and judgments are made by others observing

²⁸M. Montagu-Nathan, An Introduction to Russian Music, (Boston: LeRoy Phillips, 1917), p. 68.

²⁹Arthur Alexander, "N. Medtner, An Appreciation," Tempo, XXII (Winter, '51 - '52), p. 22.

³⁰Alec Harman and Wilfred Mellers, Man and His Music, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 893.

³¹Malcolm Boyd, "The Songs of Nicolas Medtner," Music and Letters, Vol. 46, No. 1 (January, 1965), pp. 16-22.

from the outside. Our understanding of the creativity of an individual would be clearer and more penetrating if the thinking behind the creative impulse could be revealed to us by the man himself. Fortunately, in 1933 Medtner compiled his beliefs, principles and philosophy of music in a book which is entitled, Muza I Moda (The Muse and the Fashion).³² The book was translated (with some annotations) by Alfred J. Swan of Haverford College, Pennsylvania, in the year 1951. In the preface of his book Medtner tells us that he will " . . . speak of music as of the native language of every musician. Not of the great musical art - it speaks for itself - but of its soil and roots." He compares music to a " . . . single lyre directing our imagination." Referring to the contemporary scene he sees this "lyre" as one which has " . . . obviously gone out of tune."

The book is divided into two parts. Part One deals with detailed analysis of the basic elements of music. The Introduction begins with the poem of Lermontov, "The Angel." The poem describes the heavenly song of the angel heard by mortal man who, once having heard the celestial strains, could no longer bear the "dull songs of the earth." The relation of the "muse" with eternal song weaves its way through the book in an unbroken thread. In the introductory chapter Medtner discusses and categorizes the principles of all art. He speaks of focal points, positions of rest and basic centers toward which gravitating, active elements tend. Motion, for example, seeks repose; complexity must ultimately resolve in simplicity, shadow focuses toward light and plurality tends toward unity. These over-all principles are then

³²Medtner, op. cit., p. 1.

exemplified in terms of the basic elements of music and with reference to composers of great art. "A complexity of rhythm," Medtner writes, "invariably demands the strictest simplicity of metre, whereas a complex division into beats (7/4, 11/4, etc.) becomes intelligible only through a comparatively simple rhythm."³³ Medtner cites works of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin and Schubert to illustrate his points.

The six chapters of Part One deal with each element of music in its own right and in interrelation with the other elements within the framework of its function in the over-all scheme of focal point and gravitation as laid down in the Introduction. Medtner's views are clearly stated with regard to melody, harmony, rhythm, form and theme. He discusses style, sonority and the many constituents of harmonic and contrapuntal structure; i.e., voice-leading, dissonance, and the cadence. Throughout his discussion Medtner is clearly defending his position against the musical innovations of his time. Chapter Three is exclusively devoted to "The Defence of the Fundamental Position of the Past Theory of Music."³⁴

Medtner's musical art is deeply rooted in his unyielding conviction that the traditional laws of music which he holds to be the same for all art must necessarily be preserved and observed for a true and faithful expression. A deviation from these laws results in a pseudo-expression. Medtner views atonality as the foundation of music and polytonality is viewed by him as a "cut in the senses" - senselessness or incongruity. By "senses" Medtner means the inherent principles of music.

³³Ibid., p. 17.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 56-61.

He sees tonality as the focal point of the musical language, consonance is the pivot and dissonance is meaningful only when it relates to consonance. The unresolved dissonance is "senseless." In texture the center or focal point is the horizontal line of harmony; the vertical line gravitates to it.

Medtner places primary importance on the theme, the " . . . kernel of form, its principal contents; and the development of the theme which is, as it were, the opening of the kernel, the form of the whole composition."³⁵ Medtner considers the theme as an intuitive, non-inventive "sense." While he attempts to define other elements of the musical language, Medtner regards the theme as ineffable and therefore beyond a definition outside itself. The elements which constitute the form of the theme are melody, rhythm and sonority. In Medtner's schema every element has its function which springs from the eternal "Muse" - "Caretaker of the spirit and the everlasting laws of art."³⁶ Specifically, this function is to serve the law of unity and coherence. The resulting work of art then becomes an organic synthesis of all the elements with emphasis on structure and design rather than on color.

Part II of "The Muse and the Fashion" deals with a melange of topics related aesthetically and practically to art. The section begins with a poem of Goethe, "The Mirror of the Muse," translated by Henry S. Drinker:

Once the muse in her eagerness followed the brook as it hurried,
Sought at dawn for a calmer spot that would serve her as mirror.

³⁵Ibid., p. 43.

³⁶Ibid., p. 97.

Tossing and tumbling the stream rushed on and never was quiet,
 Never her image was clear; the goddess turned away in anger.
 Then the brook, with scornful derision, called to her, mocking:
 "You are afraid, of course, of the truth you would see in my mirror."
 But she already stood at the farthest end of the lake,
 Looking with joy at her figure, and fitting the wreath on her brow.³⁷

Medtner explains how this poem is aptly applied to the relationship of the Muse to Fashion. The Muse seeks her image in the ruffled waters of a rapid brook, but the restless water distorts her picture and she turns away in anger. The mirror of the restless brook represents the "fashions" of modernism. Medtner then proceeds to speak on seventeen varied topics from adventure and heroism in art to a definition of "Fine Arts." The general tone in Part II is less academic, less formal and consequently more vehement in its castigation of modern trends. The book is indeed the ripened fruit of Medtner's deep convictions on the fundamental nature and purpose of music and of the contemporary innovations of his day.

In the year of Medtner's death, eulogies appeared in many of the music publications of the day. The central idea expressed in these tributes is exemplified in this statement of Richard Holt: "His greatest originality was to create a new atmosphere by familiar materials."³⁸ The familiar materials in Medtner's music are obvious. Through the analysis of his piano music in smaller forms which constitutes the major contents of this study, it is hoped that the "new atmosphere" of which Mr. Holt speaks, in whatever degree it exists, will be made more clearly apparent.

³⁷Ibid., p. 97.

³⁸Richard Holt, "N. Medtner," Gramophone, XXIX (December, 1951), p. 150.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF OPUS 1 to 31

Perhaps the basic characteristic of Medtner's art is complexity, specifically complexity of form within the composition. From the earliest pieces of his youth to the more mature works of his advanced years the element of complexity is apparent. A quotation from the first piece of Opus 1 and from the last piece of Opus 59 exemplifies the complex inner form which results from the concise, inter-relationship of the basic materials of music:

EXAMPLE 1a: No. 1

Meas. 41-44

Ex. 1b: Op. 59 #2

Meas. 40-42

In both examples the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic patterns weave through the fabric in a closely-knit relationship. In a correlative concept the three elements gravitate toward a center of repose which appears at the end of the phrase (not seen in the above examples).

It must be clear, however, that complexity is not considered by the composer as an artistic goal in itself, but rather it results from Medtner's efforts to unify and to interrelate as closely as possible the basic elements of melody, rhythm and harmony. Medtner strives for simplicity and unity in his work, but, as he points out, "Simplicity cannot be grasped simply."¹ Furthermore, he cautions, "Simplicity plus simplicity is equal to emptiness. Complexity plus complexity to chaos."²

Medtner understands simplicity to be the coordination and integration of all musical elements to form an organic whole rooted in tonality.³ So well does he achieve this that it is difficult to find emphasis on a single point. One is aware, however, of the special attention given to form in Medtner's art - form within the composition and the over-all form of the outer structure. The general structure of Medtner's music follows the basic principle applied to the inner form. The principal motives - be they melodic, rhythmic or both - are developed extensively throughout the composition within a framework of symmetry and balance.

Medtner is a graphic artist who stresses design rather than

¹Nicolas Medtner, The Muse and the Fashion (Haverford: Haverford College Bookstore), p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Ibid., p. 15.

color. He is a thinker who has evaluated and categorized all the materials used by the composer and at the same time recognized the need for inspiration in achieving a vital, true art. The inspiration comes with the "most primary, fundamental, supreme 'sense' of music - the theme."⁴ This view of the theme as the focal point of musical art is rooted in the tradition of the classicists. Medtner defines the theme as "the law that regulates each separate work. Every inspired theme bears in itself all the elements and senses of the musical language. It has its own pulsation (rhythm), its own chiaroscuro (harmony), its own breathing (cadence), its own perspective (form)."⁵ In relating the theme to melody Medtner goes on to say that "more often than not, the theme is . . . in the shape of a melody. The melody is, as it were, the favorite form of a theme. If we speak of the theme as of a melodic form . . . we shall see that its fundamental senses are contained in the self-same cadences, in that same gravitation to the tonic, in that same tendency of dissonances to be resolved into consonance."⁶

While Medtner states that the melody is the favorite musical element for the theme of a composition his definition of the theme in no way admits a synonymous relationship with melody. The theme may be embodied in any musical element such as a rhythmic pattern, a coloristic effect or an harmonic progression. Whatever form it takes it must be,

⁴Ibid., p. 44.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 45.

however, the central, motivating force, the organizing principle of the composition. To repeat: the theme is "the law that regulates each separate work." Because it is so organically involved in the structure of the composition the theme rarely is pure melody or pure rhythm. More frequently, it is realized by combining two or three elements. For example, in the first piece of Medtner's Opus 1 the theme is obviously a melody framed in an airy, open texture. The texture is an integral part of the melody and of the essence in rendering the mood of the poem which inspired the piece. Given the same melody and a different texture the effect would be completely transformed. In this instance, the texture remains constant and melody and texture are, together, the theme of the piece.

The complexity of Medtner's craft is characterized by refinement and an absence of sentimentality and the commonplace. He employs an economy of means and a deep concentration which result more often than not in an austere, classical style. Yet, there is not lacking in Medtner's art strong emotion, an emotion described by his friend, Richard Holt, as follows: "The emotion of Medtner, then, is rather that of Wordsworthian quality, arising from dispassionate though none the less profound contemplation of life's problems and mysteries as apprehended by the mind and soul and the spiritual aspects of human existence rather than temporal."⁷

The eight pieces which comprise Op. 1 were written in 1902 after Medtner had completed his studies at the Moscow Conservatory. The "Mood Pictures", as Medtner titles them, are miniatures in ternary form

⁷R. Holt, Medtner and His Music (London: Remington, VanWyck, Ltd., 1948), p. 13.

differing one from the other in mood. The first piece in E Major was inspired by Lermontov's poem, "The Angel". A quotation from the poem is cited above the music:

From heaven at midnight an angel took wing
And soft was the song he did sing!

The diatonic melody is symmetrically arched in a 32-measure line. The four 8-measure phrases are organized in an A-A-B-B melodic scheme.

Both the rhythm and the texture of the song create an airy, delicate effect with the cross beat, rhythmic pattern of $\text{d} \text{d} \text{d}$ in 4/4 meter and the thin, harmonic outline stretching a tenth above and below the melody:

EXAMPLE 2: Op. 1, #1 - meas. 1



The melody is highlighted by doubling at the octave below for the first eight bars. At the repeat, however, an ascending scale-line from Sol to Mi is counterpointed against the melody. The six-note figure is continued through two octaves and overlaps the melody and cadence.

EXAMPLE 3: #1 - meas. 9-15

Handwritten musical score for a piano piece in D major, 2/4 time. The score consists of two staves. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melody of eighth and quarter notes, starting with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a time signature of 2/4. The left hand (bass clef) plays a bass line with eighth and quarter notes, also in D major. The piece ends with a double bar line and the word "etc." written below the staff.

The second half of the 32-measure melody introduces a repeated-note figure, a motif frequently employed by Medtner. The same treatment is given to this portion of the melody as was used for the opening bars: the melody is doubled at the octave below for the first announcement and treated canonically at the repeat. Medtner's predilection for thematic development is evident at the middle section where the first four notes of the song are developed sequentially within the same rhythmic pattern but with richer, harmonic interest. The repeated-note motif is heard in this middle section also as well as a development of the last four notes of the melody. Texturally, this section remains the same as the first part with its 3 against 2 rhythm, extended range and predominantly homophonic style. Dynamically, the soft context *pp* to *fortissimo* within a few bars and then recedes *pp* to the *pp* texture of the opening section.

In contrast to the refined lyricism of the first piece is the forthright, impetuous character of the second mood picture. It contains within its three pages a symmetrically organized song which opens with a chromatically descending line. The same idea is announced beginning a third higher and this is followed by a return of the opening line which brings to an end the first section at measure 16.

A comparison of the melodic material of the second section with the opening bars described above illustrates one method that Medtner employs in unifying the structure as a whole:

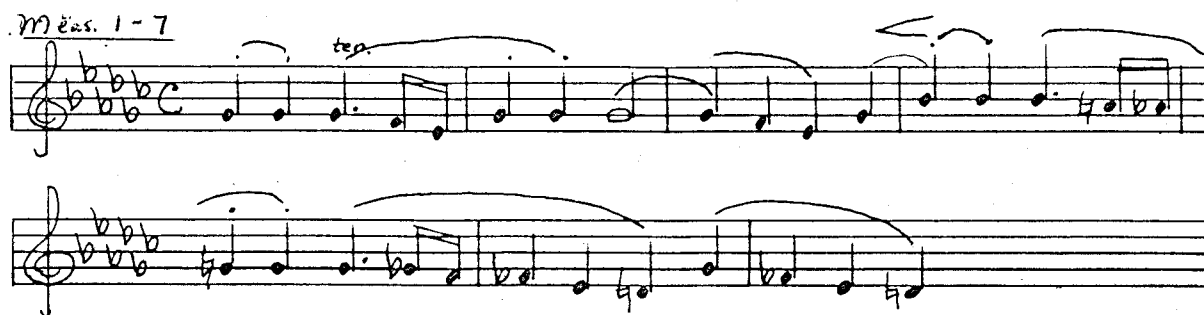
EXAMPLE 4a: #2



In comparing the melodic line of the opening with the bass line of the second section we note the same rhythm, similarity in the texture of the accompaniment and an inversion of the linear direction. The second melody, in the related key of B Major, is more diatonic and chordal. The opening accented sixteenth-note is also found in the second section and the melody of Section Two is also repeated a third higher. Then follows a development of the first three notes of the first melody. treated in ascending sequences and serving as a bridge to the return of the first section.

If contrapuntal thinking and thematic development are manifest in the first two pieces, contrapuntal texture is the actual theme of the third mood picture. Unlike the first two pieces of the set this Number Three, a majestic miniature of 43 measures, is asymmetrical in its form. As in the first two pieces, however, the use of the repeated note in the melodic line and the repetition of this line a third higher appear:

EXAMPLE 5: Op. 1, #3



The repetition of this line is extended to four measures closing on a half-cadence and then repeated to a complete cadence. It will be noted that Medtner employed this type of melodic form in the two previous pieces. The abundance of sustained tones and chromatic movements in the lines give a concentrated and confined character to the piece.

The melodic line of the fourth piece manifests, by contrast to the third piece, greater freedom; each note evolving from the other and flowing in an unending stream of sheer lyricism:


EXAMPLE 6: Op. 1, #4.

M eas. 1-8

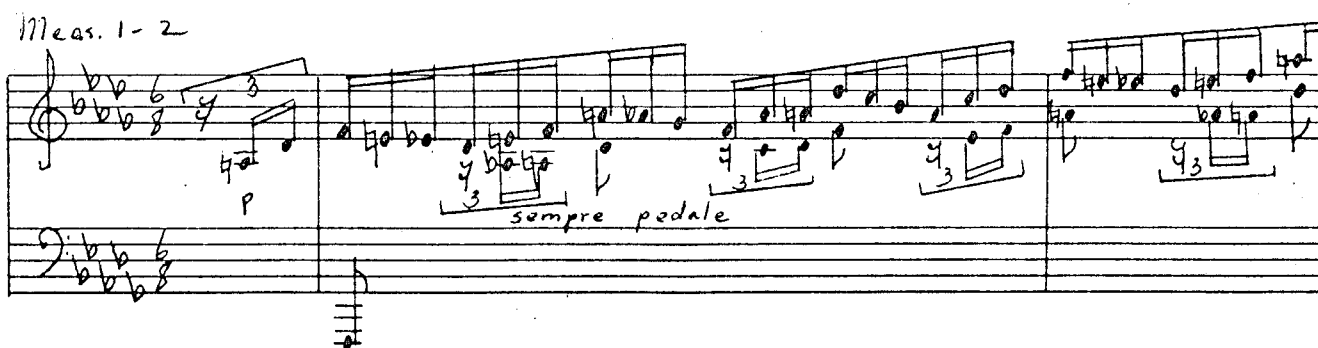
The accompaniment is set in a thin, unimposing texture of broken chords and syncopated harmonies. There is also found in the accompaniment a canonic treatment of the triplet figure of the melody. This type of motivic counterpoint is almost a cliché in Medtner's writing which would instance the careful attention he gives to unified, cohesive structure.

Like the first piece of Opus 1, the etude-like Number Five is an interpretation of lines by the Russian poet, Lermontov:

A snowstorm is roaring and the snow is coming in thick masses.
But through the roar of the wind a far-away bell --- drones,-
This is the echo of the funeral.

This text is interpreted by the virtuosic scale-lines and the harmonic fabric of the music rather than by a significant melodic text. In B-Flat minor, the piece, in its opening six measures, depicts the storm with its cascading line of chromatic and diatonic turns in a rhythmic figure of  as the unit of measure:

EXAMPLE 7: Op. 1, #5



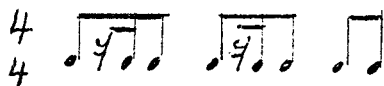
The first five measures of the sixth piece in D-Flat major is significant on two points. First, the thematic material of the composition is stated directly and unadorned in the introductory line. Second, the use of the repeated-note idea appears in the melodic motif of the choral part of the line:

EXAMPLE 8: Op. 1, #6 - meas. 1-5

Little melodic interest is present in the seventh and eighth pieces of Opus 1, the theme in each obviously being the rhythmic content. In this area of rhythm Medtner is especially creative. Rhythmic ingenuity vitalizes his music and makes more meaningful the melodic and harmonic content. Cleverness in rhythm for the sake of cleverness is foreign to Medtner's thinking. Pure rhythm is never admissible in Medtner's esthetics, but rhythm as a part of the "fullness of the musico-sonorous material." In his analysis of rhythm Medtner finds that the very shaping of the melodic contour and the changing of harmonic sounds embody a sense of rhythm. Thus, if a hierarchy of musical elements were to be established harmony and melody would have priority over rhythm.⁸

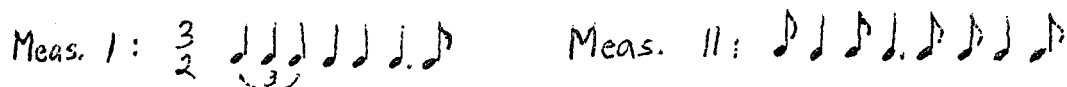
⁸Nicolas Medtner, op. cit., p. 50.

The cross-beat rhythmic pattern of the first piece has already been noted. The triplet figure as seen in predominance in five pieces of Opus 1 (Numbers 1, 4, 5, 6, 8) and varied syncopated effects are among the specific examples of Medtner's rhythmic vocabulary. Worthy of note is the rhythmic pattern in the middle section of the fourth piece:

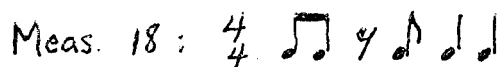


The pattern persists throughout this section and appears again in an eight-measure coda which climaxes the piece after the recapitulation of the first part.

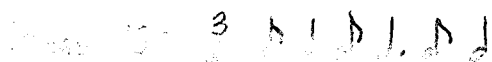
The beginning of the sixth piece alternates the meters $3/2$ and $4/4$. The units in the $3/2$ measures show rhythmic interest as these two examples illustrate:



Medtner's concern with the organic evolution of each element within the structure of a composition is exemplified by comparing the last rhythmic formula quoted above (Measure 11) with the one used at the beginning of the second section of the piece:

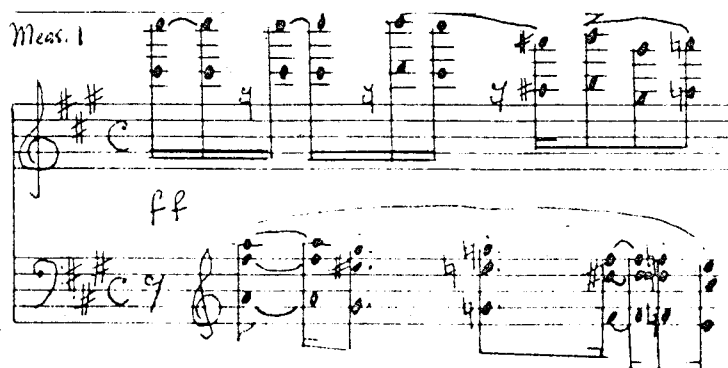


Even more closely related to the $4/4$ example is the pattern of Measure 13:



Two meters are employed in the seventh piece, $4/4$ in the first section and $5/8$ in the second. This short virtuosic piece is characterized by an irregular interlocking rhythmic pattern:

EXAMPLE 9a: Op. 1, #7



EXAMPLE 9b: Op. 1, #7



The rhythmic technic employed in the sixth piece is also present here, i.e., the use of an almost identical pattern in the 5/8 section as in the opening 4/4.

In the final piece of Opus 1 Medtner's originality in rhythmic devices is displayed by indicating a "quasi-valse" style with a duple meter. This is achieved by the writing of quarter-note triplets in the bass in groups of six against the normal pattern of 4 sixteen notes:

EXAMPLE 10: Op. 1, #8



The position of harmony in Medtner's concept of writing is central to the musical edifice - "the foundation as well as the cement in musical construction."⁹ Medtner accepts dissonance but never discordance, the difference being that dissonance is the gravitation of a non-harmonic tone realized in resolution. The self-sufficient non-harmonic is discordance.¹⁰ Voice-leading is the organizing discipline in Medtner's harmonic technic. "To write in counterpoint," Medtner states, "is to give a harmonic coincidence to the separate, horizontal, self-sufficient voices at all points. To write in harmony is to aim at the very same coincidence of points, i.e., at counterpoint."¹¹

The harmonies employed by Medtner throughout Opus 1 give evidence of plagal preferences. In the first piece, frequent use of the super-tonic harmony at principal points of the opening section and at modulatory passages of the middle part are in evidence:

⁹Medtner, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁰Medtner, op. cit., p. 71.

¹¹Ibid., p. 75.

EXAMPLE 11: Op. 1, #1

Meas. 17-18

The plagal harmonies and the frequent absence of the leading-tone in dominant harmonies give an austere, modal quality to this first published piece of Medtner, a quality that has been recognized as an integral part of his style.

The harmonic emphasis in the second piece is on the diminished-seventh chord in a plagal or mediant context rather than tonic:

EXAMPLE 12: Op. 1, #2 - meas. 43-46

It will be noted that the sense of finality is lacking in the last measure of the piece, first, because of the syncopated ending of the

accompaniment line and, second, because of the choice of the fifth of the chord rather than the root as the final note of the melodic line.

The sub-dominant and mediant chords continue to predominate in the third and fourth pieces. This is strikingly apparent in the modulatory passage of the fourth piece which bridges the first section to the second:

EXAMPLE 13: Op. 1, #4

Meas. 12-14

Handwritten musical score for Example 13, measures 12-14. The score is in G-flat major (three flats) and 4/4 time. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature is G-flat major. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The left hand accompaniment includes chords labeled VI7, (II7), VI, and I. The right hand includes a triplet of eighth notes and a measure with a 'poco a poco' marking. The score ends with a measure marked 'M.S.' and 'm.d.'

Dominant harmonies are used at cadential points, but enriched by appoggiaturas:

EXAMPLE 14a: Op. 1, #4

Meas. 24

Handwritten musical score for Example 14a, measure 24. The score is in G-flat major (three flats) and 4/4 time. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature is G-flat major. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The left hand accompaniment includes a chord labeled Bb7. The right hand includes a measure with a 'poco a poco' marking and a measure with a 'sf' marking.

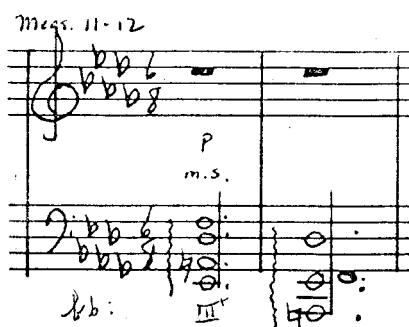
EXAMPLE 14b: Op. 1, #4



The piece closes, again, not with the root of the tonic in the soprano but with the fifth of the chord held through two measures and a final arpeggiated tonic chord which rests in the third.

The harmonic content of the fifth piece is the predominating factor in interpreting the "far-away bell" and funereal mood of Lermontov's poem as quoted above. The "tolling of the bell" is heard in the augmented mediant chord with the sub-dominant note functioning as a pedal:

EXAMPLE 15: Op. 1, #5

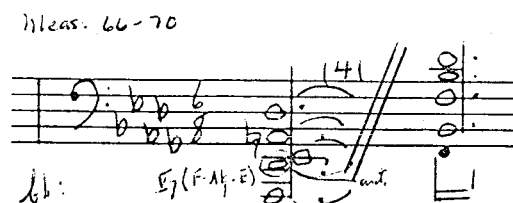


The chords are heard again one octave lower, first undisturbed by an accompanying line and then with the right hand playing the scale-line passage quoted in Example 7. This is basically the substance of the piece aside from a short melodic insertion at the end.

The augmented-second is prominent in the horizontal line just

as other augmented and inverted-augmented intervals predominate in the chord-line. The appoggiatura at the final cadence is a typical Medtnerian device. In this instance, however, the non-harmonic note is technically an anticipation of the third of the final chord:

EXAMPLE 16: Op. 1, #5



The piece closes with the third of the tonic in the highest voice and the final sounds of the "bell" on B-Flat.

The harmonic treatment in the sixth piece is worthy of note. After the delicate and somewhat brilliant first section a new mood is introduced - a lyrical and rather rhapsodic setting in B-Flat minor. The melodic line is heard in treble octaves above a fully chordal and octave accompaniment. The harmonic framework here is extremely simple, consisting mainly of the tonic chord with an occasional augmented-sixth chord. The modal quality of this section is the result of the use of the natural form of the minor scale and the IV_7 to I progression at the cadential passage leading to the recapitulation of the first section. Prominence is given to an harmonic progression of II to VI over a V pedal in D-Flat. This example appears in a principal part of the first section and at the close of the piece. The final cadence, however, is V-I:

EXAMPLE 17: Op. 1, #6

Meas. 59-65

Handwritten musical score for Example 17, Op. 1, #6, measures 59-65. The score is in D-flat major (three flats) and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with chords and a 'pedal' point. The second system features a treble staff with a rapid, ascending scale-like passage and a bass staff with sustained chords. The third system shows a treble staff with a melodic phrase and a bass staff with chords. Dynamics include *p*, *pp*, and *ff*. A tempo marking *ff velocissimo leggero* is present in the second system.

The de-emphasized dominant tonality throughout the piece, the accent on plagal and mediant harmonies and the subtle inter-change between D-Flat and its relative minor all tend to create a quality of coolness, classical purity and reticence.

The tonal organization in the seventh piece follows closely that of Number Six. There is a modal feeling resulting from an almost complete absence of the raised leading-tone in the f#-minor key. As a result, the frequently used mediant chord is an A-Major triad. The A-Major chord and its dominant frequently follow the tonic of f# minor.

EXAMPLE 18a: Op. 1, #8

Meas. 8-10

Ex. 18b Meas. 19-32

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system, labeled 'Meas. 8-10', shows a treble and bass staff in D major (two sharps). The treble staff has a long C# note in the treble, and the bass staff has long notes that ascend in fourths. The second system, labeled 'Ex. 18b Meas. 19-32', continues this pattern, with a 'crescendo' marking and 'AM chord' annotation in the bass staff.

The structure of the bridge passage connecting the second section with the recapitulation is characteristic of Medtner. Here the dominant note, C#, is heard above the changing chords as an inverted pedal for sixteen measures. The harmonies emphasized are IV, III and VI. As the C# is a long note in the treble of each of the 16 measures, the bass, too, has a long note which changes in each of the measures. These bass notes ascend in intervals of fourths. Furthermore, each long note in the bass forms an interval of a fourth with the other bass note which outlines the rhythmic pattern:

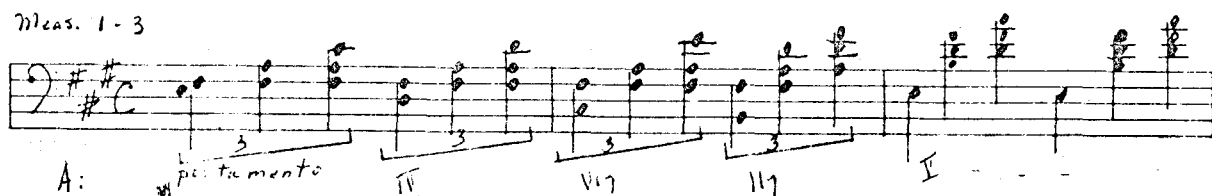
EXAMPLE 19: Op. 1, #8

Meas. 33-36

The musical score for Example 19, measures 33-36, shows a treble and bass staff in D major (two sharps). The treble staff has a long C# note in the treble, and the bass staff has long notes that ascend in fourths.

The harmonic pattern of the six triplets in the eighth piece is a typical Medtnerian scheme:

EXAMPLE 20: Op. 1, #8



Here we note an absence of the tonic harmony and an emphasis on plagal relationships. The leading-tone which strengthens a key feeling is noticeably missing until the half-cadence at the end of the first four measures. These measures are then repeated and close on the tonic. The pattern repeats a third lower and the tonic chord is then very much in prominence.

The piece continues throughout in the same texture of note-spinning and lean chords, but the running sixteenths no longer move chromatically; they combine diatonic scale-line with chordal outlines. The harmonic scheme of this section is in keeping with the previous pattern with the addition of the progression V/VI to VI. Then follows a return to the initial material, this time dropping to the fifth of the tonic chord with harmonic emphasis on V-I. The coda is a repeat of the diatonic eight-measure section all on I and cadencing on V/V to I.

Evidence of German classical characteristics is apparent in Opus 1. The logical development of thematic material, melodic and rhythmic, so strongly rooted in the sonata-form principle and so much a part of western musical thought is a hallmark of Medtner's craft in these early numbers. Specific procedures in this area have been pointed out above. Despite close ties with western styles Medtner nevertheless

manifests a Russian character, not rooted in folklore, but Russian still.¹² An early authority on Russian music, Gerald Abraham, speaks of directness of expression and compressed force, complexities of rhythm and modal tonalities as definite qualities of Russian music.¹³ All of these have been noted above.

Thus, from these eight pieces of Medtner's Opus 1 can be gleaned certain directions in style and craft which continue to develop in depth, more or less.

The three pieces of Opus 2, although written in the same year as Opus 1 (1902), show a remarkable contrast in style and structure. Each piece is extended to the proportions of an "abridged" sonata, but in an improvisatory structure, not loosely conceived, to be sure, but somewhat freer and more spontaneous than the first set. That Medtner can cope with a large musical canvas there is no doubt. Each piece unfolds logically and naturally.

The pieces are titled, "Three Fantastic Improvisations" - curiously reminiscent of Beethoven who wrote improvisations and fantasias from which evolved his distinctive, mature style. In improvisation the composer has at his disposal the full gamut of musical possibilities and creativity. The pulse and definition of his style are more easily determined and more clearly expressed. Directions of his individuality are more clearly manifest. So it is with Medtner in Opus 2.

¹²ed. Richard Holt, Nicolas Medtner, "The Art of Nicolas Medtner (Joseph Yasser)", pp. 56-65.

¹³Gerald Abraham, Studies in Russian Music, p. 8.

The formal structure of the first piece is basically ternary. There is, nevertheless, considerable freedom in the formal framework. The opening section of thirty measures is introductory and significant in two respects. First, the material presented here is heard again before two principal sections of the piece, at one time in a literal statement, and at another time in an abbreviated quotation. Second, two motives are introduced here. The first motif functions as an accompaniment figure; the second motif presents a fragment of the melodic and rhythmic designs which constitute the basic material of the entire structure.

The second and third pieces are in the framework of a more clearly defined ternary form. The middle section of each of these pieces is elaborately extended on apparently new musical ideas but with subtle similarities to the rest of the piece.

The melodic lines are freer, for the most part, with wide leaps outlining chordal patterns and accented by appoggiaturas. Yet, there is evidence of the repeated-note technic so prevalent in the first set. In the first piece the principal melodic line is not only free and rhapsodic but extended in length:

EXAMPLE 21: Op. 2, #1

Meas. 61-68



Continuing the line, there occurs a typical Medtnerian lyric with stress

on the chromatic tones and sequential pattern:

EXAMPLE 22: Op. 2, #1

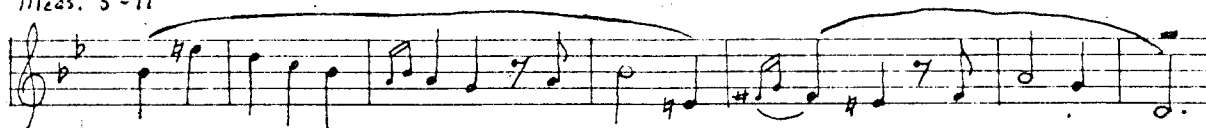
Meas. 70-77



The melodic line in the second improvisation is more diatonic, highlighted by the augmented-fourth interval resulting from the raised sixth in the melodic minor scale. Here, too, there is present a sequential technic, and appoggiatura accent:

EXAMPLE 23: Op. 2, #2

Meas. 5-11



The second melody in Opus 2, Number 2 is a repeated-note line:

EXAMPLE 24: Op. 2, #2

Meas. 75-80



Considerable textural variety is present in the pieces. The first piece consists basically of sweeping arpeggios and scale-line passages. The middle section of the first number has a full, rhapsodic richness with wide-ranged open chords supporting a lyrical line. This is

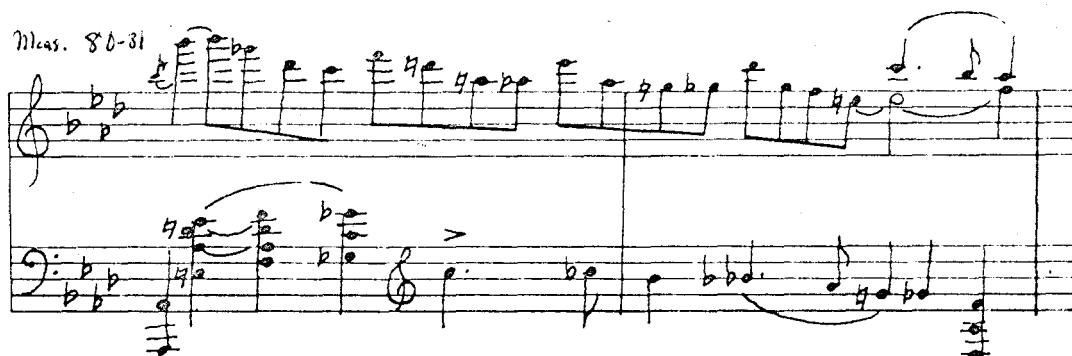
immediately contrasted by a pianissimo section on the same lyrical material. The pianissimo crescends to a full fortissimo and allargando section in the grand manner of Liszt - one of the few instances of this sort of dynamic texture in Medtner's earlier works.

The texture of the second piece is much leaner at the start, but there are moments of richness and fullness. The style is basically homophonic. It is in the third piece that the texture shows interest in its combination of counterpoint and vertical harmony. The opening line is the basis of the contrapuntal workings manifest throughout the piece:

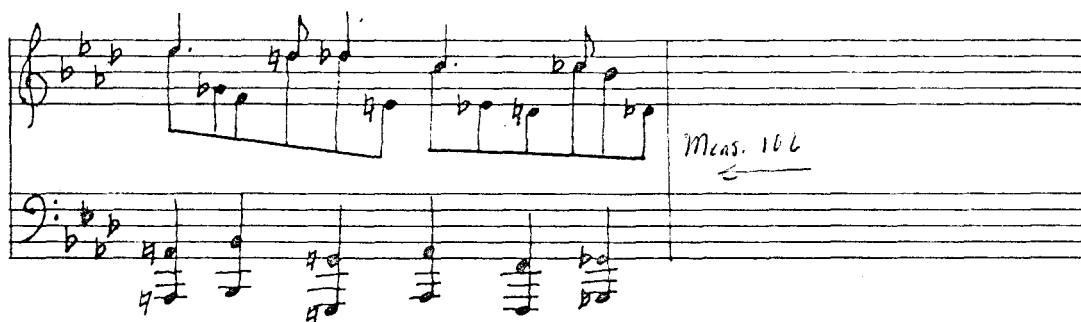
EXAMPLE 25: Op. 2, #3 - meas. 1-4



EXAMPLE 26b:

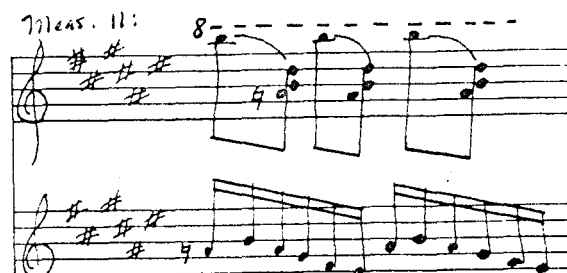


EXAMPLE 26c:

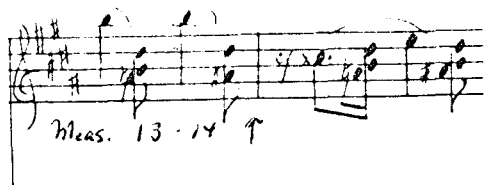


Medtner's predilection for rhythmic ingenuity is again apparent in this set. The meter of the first improvisation is 6/8. In this first piece the hemiola technic is present although it is not the distinctive rhythmic feature of the composition. The theme is primarily the rhythmic motif (as seen in Example 27b) more than the melodic content of the passage:

EXAMPLE 27a: Op. 2, #1

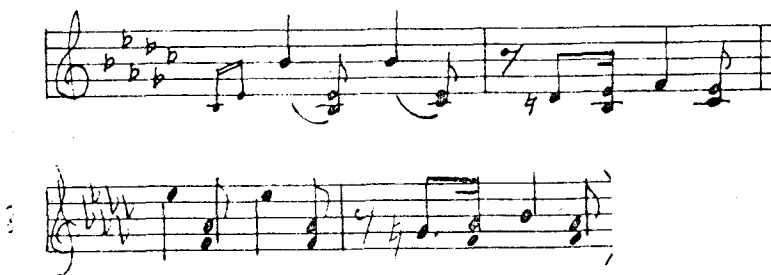


EXAMPLE 27b: Op. 2, #1

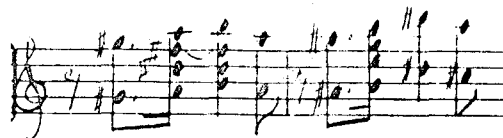


Some examples will illustrate the pre-eminence of the rhythmic motif in the composition:

EXAMPLE 28a: Op. 2, #1 - meas. 61-64



EXAMPLE 28b: Op. 2, #1 - meas. 200-201

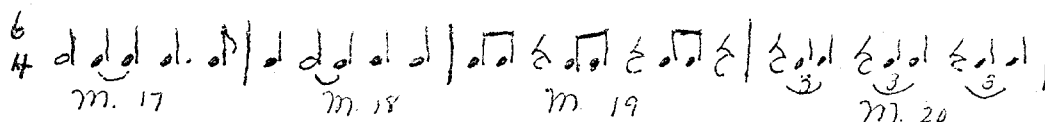


The hemiola is also used in the third piece which is set in a 6/4 meter:

EXAMPLE 29: Op. 2, #3



In this third piece syncopated patterns such as these are present:



The larger dimensional structure and free improvisatory style result in some interesting and varied tonal relationships than were evidenced in the past set of pieces. Number One is in f# minor. The key scheme of the entire piece is as follows:

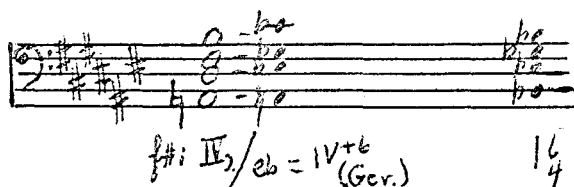
<u>1st section</u>	<u>2nd section</u>	<u>3rd section</u>
f#/m - BbM - f#/m	eb-m	f#-m

Medtner's modulatory technic in the piece may be defined as the employment of enharmonic change and the use of anticipation. Both contribute to the organic unity of the whole.

The technic of anticipation is illustrated in the first section. The piece opens with an arpeggiated chord which pervades the entire harmonic structure of this section (here illustrated in a vertical chord-form):



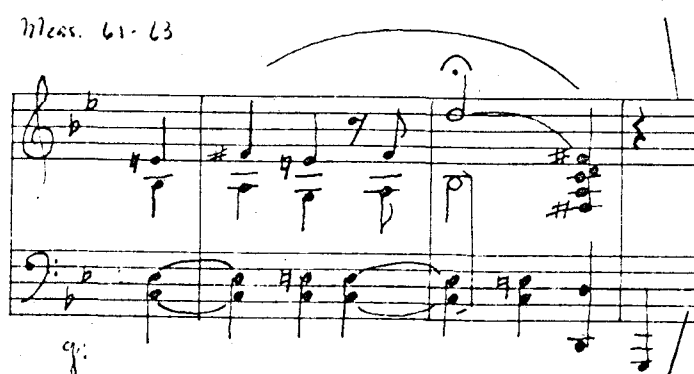
The presence of A-Natural in the chord creates a feeling of anticipation or suspension which is not fully brought to rest until the Bb-Major chord is sounded. The A-Natural functions as a unifying element, common to both keys in two essential tonal positions - the third in f#-minor, on the one hand, and the leading-tone in Bb-Major, on the other. Further, the A-Natural is extended in linking the first section with the eb-minor tonality of the second section. At the end of the first section, a V₇ "sound" is heard as a result of a seventh chord built on IV in the f# melodic minor form. This chord, not functioning as a V₇ but as an inverted augmented-sixth with enharmonic change, becomes the tonic - six-four position - in eb-minor as follows:



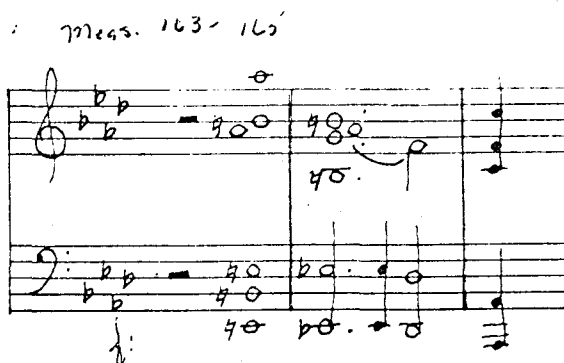
Little modulatory interest occurs in the second and third pieces of the set. The first section of the second improvisation, in g-minor, cadences on a solid V-I progression and the second section begins immediately in the related key of D-Major. The third piece remains in f-minor with the exception of some parenthetical, passing chords.

Harmonically, Medtner's second set is more complex than the first. Plagal preferences are apparent although dominant harmonies are used more extensively. The injection of pedals, appoggiaturas and anticipations as well as the extensive use of the melodic minor tonality tend to obscure the clarity of the harmonies but in no way distort them:

EXAMPLE 30a: Op. 2, #2



EXAMPLE 30b: Op. 2, #3



The next set of pieces, Opus 4, also bears the date 1902.

Collectively they are called, "Four Pieces", but each is given a specific title: No. 1 - Etude; No. 2 - Caprice; No. 3 - Moment Musical; No. 4 - Prelude. They are miniatures in the manner of the character piece of the nineteenth century. All are ternary structure.

These pieces, in comparison with Opus 1 and 2, are characterized by less restraint and less of the academic quality. Present here is the emergence of a more subjective, personal romanticism, a more convincing western nuance.

The pieces of Opus 4 are homophonic in texture with, however, some interesting counterpoint in the fourth of the set:

EXAMPLE 31: Op. 4, #4

Meas. 13-14

p cantabile *pp*

The pattern quoted in Example 31 continues sequentially a third higher (on G) and, again, a third higher (on Bb). There is little chordal texture in any of the four pieces.

Key changes are conservative and effected in traditional ways. The two pieces of the set that are written in the minor mode (Etude and Moment Musical) are in the natural or "normal" minor form with the lowered leading-tone. Thus, a pure, modal quality is present in these pieces. With this in mind, we note that the Etude, in g#-minor, modulates to its relative major through the common note of F#:

EXAMPLE 32: Op. 4, #1

Meas. 34-38

rallentando

The second piece, Caprice, never departs from C-Major. The Prelude, fourth in the set, moves from Eb-Major to its relative minor with the tonic chord in Eb serving as the pivot, i.e., the Eb-Major chord as I in Eb and III in c-minor (natural form). An interest in

plagal chords and enharmonic change at modulatory passages is shown in the fourth piece:

EXAMPLE 33: Op. 4, #4

Meas. 11-12

8b: 117 117 (mi) 117

Despite the standard tonal structure of the set there are points of harmonic interest which underscore the harmonic vocabulary already identified with Medtner. In the first piece, in g^\sharp -minor, the first phrase of eight measures is set almost entirely within a tonic framework. The measures may be outlined in this manner:

I.	I	I	I	I	II ₅	I	II ₇
Meas. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

In the second measure the upper auxiliary of g^\sharp appears (A^\sharp), anticipating the supertonic harmony of the sixth measure. At this point (sixth measure) the A^\sharp is absorbed in the II_5 while the third of the tonic chord, of g^\sharp (B) is suspended into the seventh measure. At the half cadence g^\sharp is suspended into the dominant tonality (8th measure). This type of linear and cohesive harmonic writing points to the fact that Medtner is at all times concerned with the organic whole of a composition. He thinks linearly and contrapuntally rather than vertically and chordally. Herein lies the complexity of his harmonic structure. The same idea is illustrated by the cadence of this first piece:

EXAMPLE 34: Op. 4, #1

Meas. 160-161



The fX, present in the penultimate plagal chord functions as an unprepared appoggiatura emphasizing the finality of the piece. There is no doubt about the prominence of the fX with its triple presence.

The resolution of the lowest-sounding fX to D binds the two chords in such a way that, together, they form a unit in an interdependent role.

The second piece also manifests plagal stress and linear concepts as these examples illustrate:

EXAMPLE 35a: Op. 4, #2

p scherzando

Meas. 9-12 C:

EXAMPLE 35b: Op. 4, #2 - meas. 125-127

Meno mosso

fff

pesante

Red.

In the Moment Musical, in c-minor, three bass figures are heard throughout the piece and form the harmonic framework:

EXAMPLE 36a: Op. 4, #3

EXAMPLE 36b: Op. 4, #3

f

Meas. 1

f

The melodic lines emphasize repeated-note, sequences and appoggiaturas:

EXAMPLE 37a: Op. 4, #2

p cantabile sempre a capriccio

Meas. 1-4

EXAMPLE 37b: Op. 4, #4

Meas. 1-6
Allegro appassionato

As always with Medtner rhythmic interest is present in the Opus 4 set. The rhythm of the first piece is consistently set in a syncopated pattern within a 2/4 meter:



For the first time an irregular meter occurs in these smaller pieces. The meter signature of the Caprice is 5/8. A comparison of the organization of the rhythm in the second piece with the rhythm of Number 3 shows subtle similarities. (Cf. Examples 37a and 37b). Both begin and end on the up-beat; both have a similar linear design. The fourth piece of the set employs a triplet rhythm in 3/2 meter.

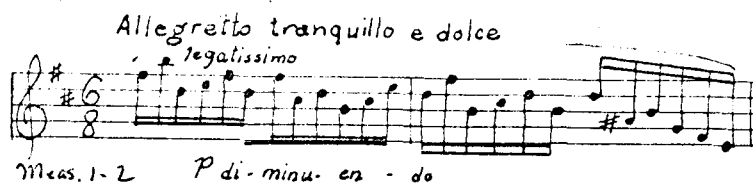
The three pieces that make up the set of Opus 7 are called "Arabesques" and were written in 1905 during the interim between Medtner's graduation from the conservatory and his acceptance of a professorship there. Like the Opus 4, each piece bears its own title. The first, in binary structure, is called "Idyl". The second and third are titled, "Tragedy-Fragment"; the former in ternary form, the latter in a

free, narrative style. All three are in minor tonality.

Each of the pieces is rooted in thematic development and contrapuntal interest. It is specifically with these two areas that the discussion of Opus 7 will deal.

The basic material for the three pieces consists of the ornamentation from which the title "Arabesque" is derived. The arabesque nuance, in its fundamental, general sense of figuration, is present in each piece with its ornamental, interlocking figures. It is heard in the first piece as an accompanimental motif which becomes more chromatic but is ever present with the fragmentary melody weaving its way around it, above and below.

EXAMPLE 38: Op. 7, #1



The character of the arabesque of the second piece is more florid than the example quoted above but less integrated into the total structure of the piece.

EXAMPLE 39: Op. 7, #2



More interesting is the ornamental figure of the third piece, by far the most ingenious of the set.

EXAMPLE 40: Op. 7, #3



It will be noted that the contour of the line is less classic, more decorative and free. The irregular rhythmic phrasing enhances the character of the figure. Within the more extended musical canvas of this third piece the figure is varied in different ways. A few examples of this are:

EXAMPLE 41a: Op. 7, #3



EXAMPLE 41b: Op. 7, #3

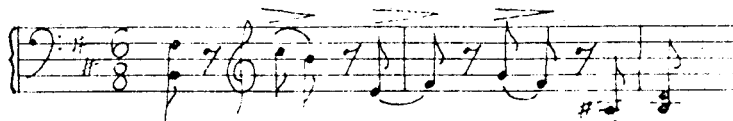


EXAMPLE 41c: Op. 7, #3



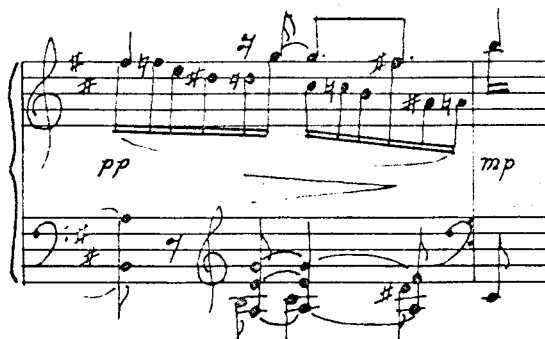
But especially in the area of melodic development is the Opus 7 set praiseworthy. There is no melody as such in the first piece - IDYL. The theme is the accompanimental figure quoted above (Ex. 1) and punctuated by a two-note motif which is ingeniously transformed throughout the four-page composition. At the outset it is heard simply as a quiet statement:

EXAMPLE 42: Op. 7, #1



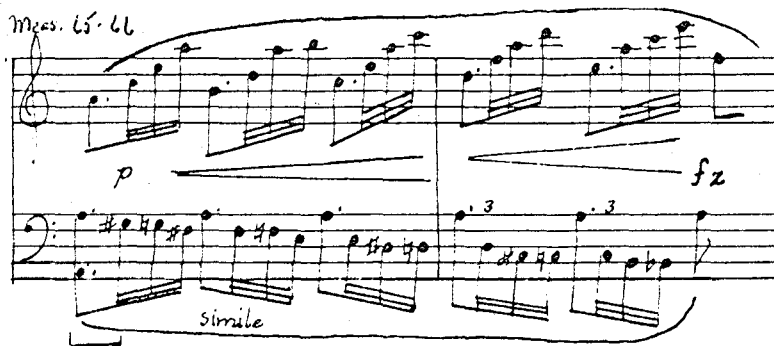
Later, it is absorbed into the structure of the arabesque and treated canonically, slightly varied, within a syncopated rhythmic framework.

EXAMPLE 43: Op. 7, #1



The melodic material in the second piece, the Tragic-Fragment in A Minor - is developed by means of sequences and varied ornamental accompanying lines. The first melody consists of an ascending scale-line in full chords enhanced but undisturbed by the ornamental accompaniment in the bass. Later the melody becomes involved in the ornamental figuration:

EXAMPLE 44: Op. 7, #2



In the second section of the piece a repeated-note motif appears which is developed in a series of sequences.

The third piece of Opus 7 in g minor contains within its nine pages the most distinctive examples of motivic development to be seen in the earlier pieces of Medtner. There are two melodic fragments that form the material for the developmental technic employed in the piece. The first is basically chromatic with a syncopated rhythm:

EXAMPLE 45: Op. 7, #3



The line appears frequently in the piece, canonically treated, slightly altered, with rhythmic variation as these examples illustrate:

EXAMPLE 46: Op. 7, #3

Meas. 51-52

Meas. 91-93

Meas. 95-96

Meas. 117

The second fragment is a typical repeated-note motif:

EXAMPLE 47: Op. 7, #3

Meas. 35-36

The repeated-note idea functions, for the most part, as a link; never does it appear in literal quotation. Each time the treatment is contrapuntal in keeping with the general character of the piece.

EXAMPLE 48: Op. 7, #3

Meas. 75-78

The cadence of the third piece is the first of its kind employed by Medtner although it is a typical example of his plagal preferences.

EXAMPLE 49: Op. 7, #3



Below the title of the third piece is inscribed a Russian phrase which is translated "Premonition of a Revolution". The agitated, strong quality which the piece projects is indicative of the intention of Medtner that this "Tragic-Fragment" should be a vision and a prophecy of the Bolchevik Revolution. It is perhaps the most pianistically challenging piece of the earlier compositions. The accurate performance of the rhythmic complexities which demand polyrhythmic thinking, the projection of the subtle, contrapuntal nuances, and the virtuosic skill required for the execution of extended arpeggiated passages and interlocking octave lines are factors which place this piece among Medtner's foremost keyboard compositions.

In the same year, 1905, Medtner introduced the first of his so-called "Fairy-Tales" in his Opus 8 set. The Russian word is skazka of which fairy-tale is not an exact equivalent. Skazky, though as fantastic as western fairy tales, are more rustic and earthy. Animals with human attributes play a leading role in them. Medtner's Fairy Tales are not descriptive; they are not in the least program music. They are rather tales of one's experiences - conflicts of the

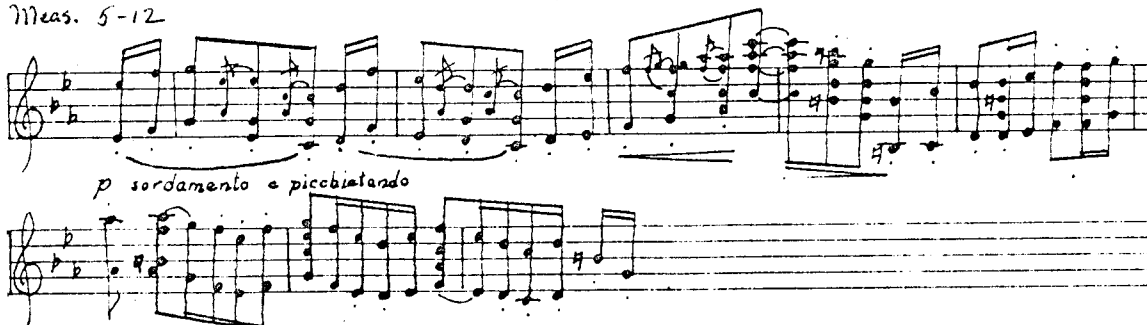
inner life of a man. At other times they are reminiscent of childhood and youth with their airy poetic quality. Like Schumann's, Medtner's sensitivity is well suited to the folk tale atmosphere. Of all his compositions Medtner's Fairy Tales seem to be the most remarkable for balanced texture and perfection of form.¹⁴

The two pieces in the Opus 8 set are linked both by a common key - c-minor - and by identical three-measure introduction which appears also at the close of each piece. Both have contrapuntal texture and homophonic contrasts.

The chief characteristic of the first piece is the developmental technic employed on two melodies. After the introduction the first melodic line is stated as follows:

EXAMPLE 50: Op. 8, #1

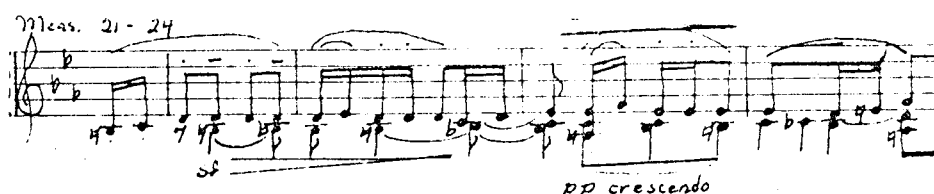
Meas. 5-12



The second lyrical quotation is similar to the first rhythmically, but contrasts with it by a limited range of motion and an emphasis on the repeated-noted:

¹⁴Richard Holt, Nicolas Medtner, A Tribute, (Ivan Ilyin: "Medtner's Fairy Tales"), pp. 175 - 180.

EXAMPLE 51: Op. 8, #1



The up-beat of two-sixteenths is a unifying factor in the piece. Every phrase, without exception, begins with this figure. It will be noted that the highest note in the first melodic line (Example 50) is given rhythmic emphasis. This same effect was employed in Opus 7, No. 3. (See Example 45).

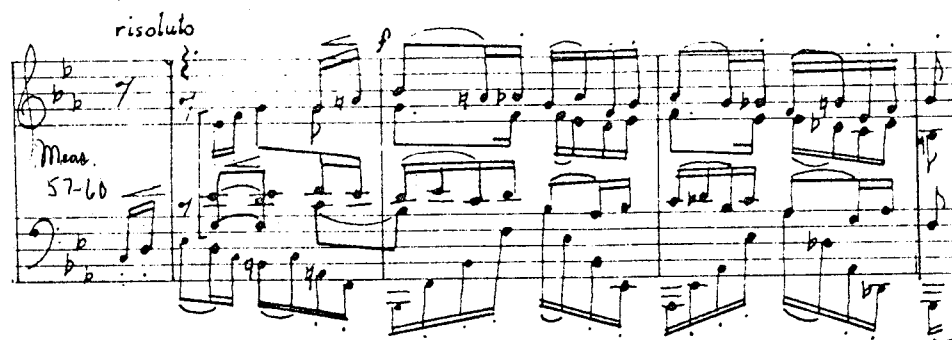
The phrase that follows the first melody (Example 50) is significant because of the contrapuntal development employed in the second section. This phrase is introduced in a contrapuntal texture as follows:

EXAMPLE 52: Op. 8, #1



Later it is developed in a three-part texture:

EXAMPLE 53: Op. 8, #1



The second melodic segment (Example 51) appears frequently throughout the developmental section:

EXAMPLE 54a: Op. 8, #1



EXAMPLE 54b: Op. 8, #1



A glance at the melodic material of the second Fairy-Tale of this set readily reveals rhythmic rather than lyrical interest:

EXAMPLE 55: Op. 8, #2



Here, too, emphasis is placed on the highest note of the line. The same emphasis again appears in the second melodic idea of the second piece:

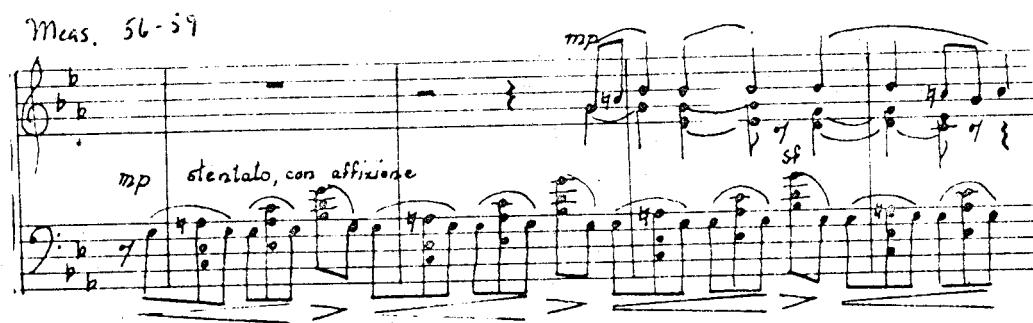
EXAMPLE 56: Op. 8, #2



The similarity of this melodic line with the second line of the first piece (Example 51) is quickly observed.

The contrapuntal thinking of Medtner combined with his interest in motivic development are manifest in varied ways throughout this second tale of Opus 8. In the second section of the piece, which functions clearly as a development of the initial material, a statement of Melody 2 (Example 56) is given against a line that is identical in rhythm and similar in melody to the melody heard at the beginning (Example 55):

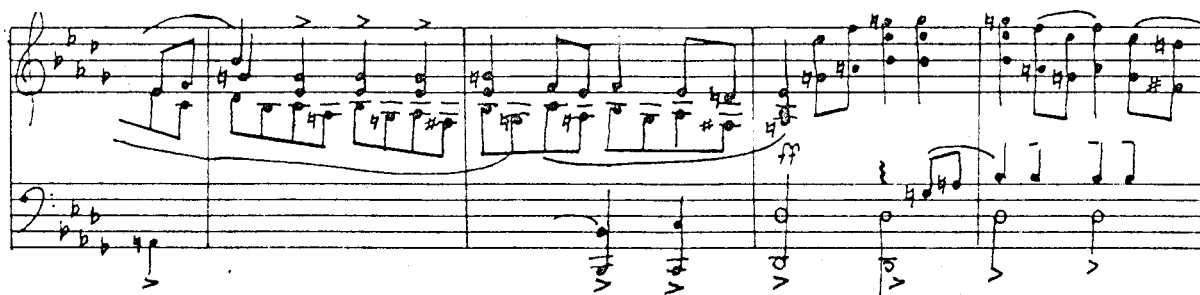
EXAMPLE 57: Op. 8, #2



This idea is then repeated a fourth higher. Melody 1 is later stated with an interesting chromatic, countermelody under it. It also appears in a canonic passage in this second section. Further evidence of the developmental technic is the simultaneous announcement of Melody 2 against a bridge motif which appears in the first section and functions as a link between Melody 1 and 2. More intricate still is a passage which combines two motives, previously announced, in a canon and in augmentation:

College of the Holy Names
Albany, New York

EXAMPLE 58: Op. 8, #2 - meas. 138-143



As has been pointed out, the three-measure introduction is identical in each of the pieces and the same material closes each piece as well. The harmonic analysis of this passage reveals, in practice, the harmonic concepts to which Medtner subscribes. He speaks of non-harmonic tones as "accidental harmonic formations." His harmonic thesis is stated by himself as follows:

Accidental harmonic formations gravitate toward prototypes of consonant and dissonant chords in the same way as a dissonance gravitates towards a consonance. An accidental harmonic formation taken merely in the vertical segment of harmony as a self-sufficient chord having neither outlet nor goal is (contrary to the eternal laws of music). Harmony, besides a vertical line, has also a horizontal one and its laws apply principally to the interrelation of both lines.¹⁵

A look at the introductory measures quoted directly below shows a rigid, vertical approach and a quick glance at the first and second chords manifests a seemingly irreconcilable situation in terms of the above principles. But, the horizontal analysis of the passage shows conformity with the above-stated concept:

¹⁵Medtner, op. cit., p. 71.

EXAMPLE 59: Op. 8, #2 - meas. 1-3



Thus can be gleaned from the Opus 8 set a deeper concentration on contrapuntal texture and thematic development. Especially in Opus 8, Number 2 has Medtner attained a rich blending of strands, an enlivened counterpoint due to rhythmic interest and variety and a unified structure resulting from variations of the same material.

In 1906 Medtner wrote a second set of Fairy-Tales, the three pieces that constitute Opus 9. In ternary structure the tales are miniatures manifesting, more or less, the characteristics already identified with Medtner. In this set the individuality of his rhythm is more pronounced and subtleties in harmonic technic are emphasized.

The rhythmic figures in each piece are varied and always of interest. In the first piece of syncopated pattern forms the principal rhythmic content and this is contrasted with a triplet figure in the second section:

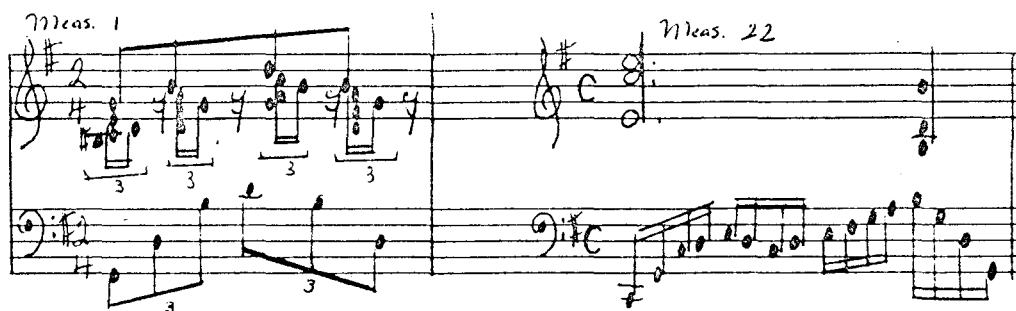
EXAMPLE 60a: Op. 9, #1

EXAMPLE 60b: Op. 9, #2

The same type of contrast between duple and triple units within the same composition is found in the third piece:

EXAMPLE 61a: Op. 9, #3

EXAMPLE 61b: Op. 9, #3



The second piece contains a syncopated pattern which remains constant, a quasi-ostinato effect:

EXAMPLE 62: Op. 9 #2 - meas. 1-2



The stamp of individuality which marks the rhythmic invention of these small pieces is characterized by nobility and grace. In no way are these patterns mere contrivances of a clever technician. If Medtner chooses to write a serenade (Op. 9, No. 2 is called, "alla serenata".) he establishes a suitable movement in the accompaniment with enough of a lilt to enhance the lyrical line rather than disturb it. If the inscription is "inquieto", as Op. 9 No. 1 reads, the motion is a pulsating, interlocking syncopated fragment. Always Medtner's multiform variety of rhythm, a fertility so lavishly displayed within the short compass of these three pieces, conveys a subtle synthesis of the basic

elements of melody and harmony.

The melodic content is simple in its diatonic lines, the most lyrical being the principal melody of the serenade, No. 2:

EXAMPLE 63: Op. 9, #2



The classic symmetry of the line is apparent. The slight chromaticism of the last eight measures contrasts with the pure diatonic line of the beginning phrase.

Pure simplicity of melody characterizes the third fairy-tale of the set. Here there is a total absence of chromatic inflection:

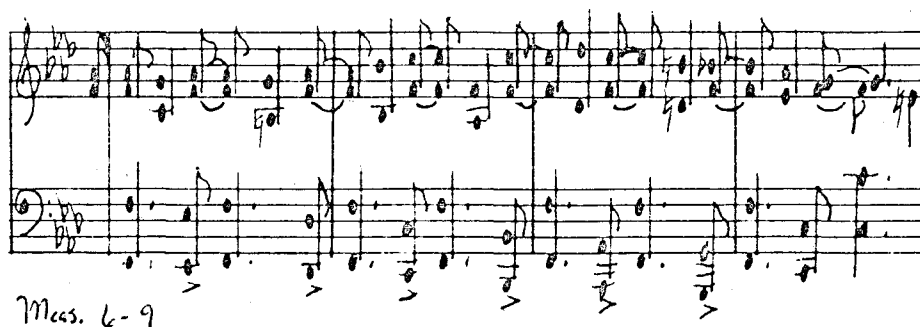
EXAMPLE 64: Op. 9, #3



A comparison of this line with Example 61a will reveal the creative imagination of a composer who can clothe simple thought with delicate, refined adornment.

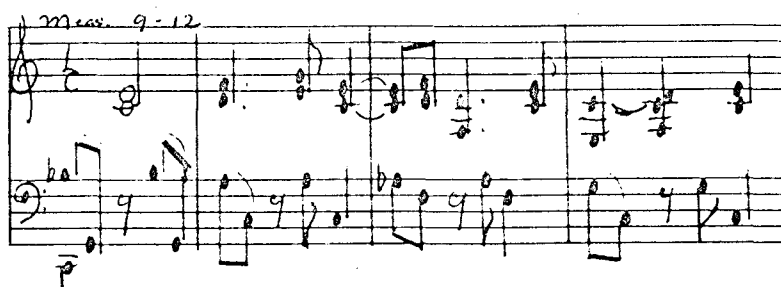
Subtlety and ambiguity describe portions of the harmonic content in Opus 9. There is no substantial counterpoint from the aspect of imitation and thematic variation, but there is evidence of contrapuntal thinking in the linear evolution of the harmony. For example, in the first piece, the bass-line descends in a literal natural minor scale-line against the somewhat static treble part:

EXAMPLE 65: Op. 9, #1



The second piece in C-Major begins with a descending chromatic line from B-Flat which repeats six times against a melody rooted in C-Major:

EXAMPLE 66: Op. 9, #2



The harmony that evolves from the combining of these two lines is ambiguous but aurally satisfying. Rarely does Medtner include in his harmonic vocabulary a pure dominant sound. At cadential points the dominant harmony is present, but it is tempered by non-harmonic tones:

EXAMPLE 67a: Op. 9, #1

EXAMPLE 67b: #2

EXAMPLE 67c: #3

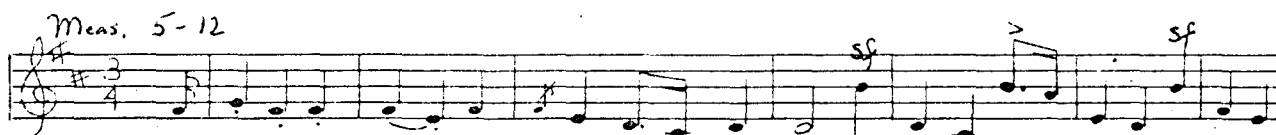


In stark contrast to the three poetic, delicate fairy-tales of Opus 9 are the three pieces which make up Opus 10. The compositions of this set are titled Dithyrambs. As the name implies, they are rhapsodic and free, reminiscent of the exalted strains of a Greek goddess of poetry and song. Written in the same year as Opus 9 these pieces are filled with power and dignity. They are set in a contrapuntal framework of imitative and developmental design. The second of the set is the largest in dimension; the third is a short poem characterized by classic restraint. All three pieces are in major tonality.

In comparison with the contrapuntal structure of the "Tragic Fragments" of Opus 7 the interpenetration of rhythmic with melodic motives is more fully realized in the Opus 10 set.

In the first piece, four motives form the basis of the entire composition. Two are melodic, two rhythmic:

EXAMPLE 68a: Op. 10, #1



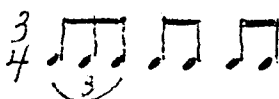
EXAMPLE 68b: Op. 10, #1



EXAMPLE 68c:



EXAMPLE 68d:



A comparison of the two melodic lines shows similarities in rhythmic pattern (Cf. measure 3 of EXAMPLE 68a with measure 1 of EXAMPLE 68b.). After the successive statement of the two melodies quoted above there is a bridge passage based on the rhythmic figure (EXAMPLE 68c). The figure continues and functions as a bass for the re-statement of Melody 1, this time a third lower. The second rhythmic figure (Ex. 68d) is then introduced and it, too, functions subsequently as a bass for the first melody. Then follows a canonic treatment of the second melody and a return of Melody 1 against the rhythmic pattern of Ex. 68c. The piece ends with an extension of the tonic chord through four measures in the rhythmic setting of the Ex. 68c figure.

The developmental technic that is employed in the second piece involves a closely integrated relationship of melody, rhythm, and texture. In E-Flat major the rhapsodic, melodic line unfolds immediately at the beginning of the piece in full chords.

EXAMPLE 69: Op. 10, #2

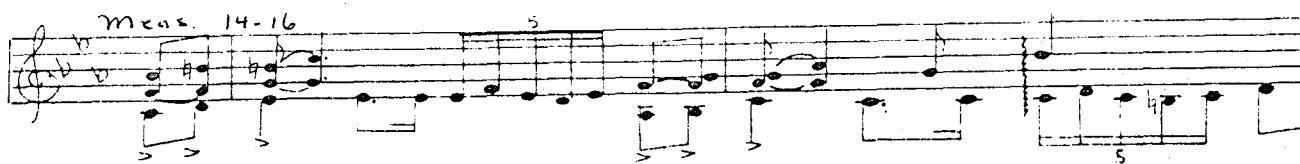
Meas. 1-8



Fragments of the line follow in a contrapuntal fabric with special

emphasis on the quintuplet figure:

EXAMPLE 70: Op. 10, #2



This is heard against broken chordal patterns organized in triplets.

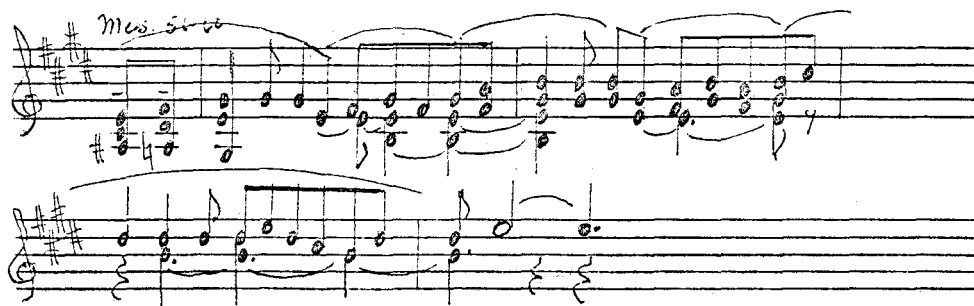
Again the melody appears in an inner voice with some alterations:

EXAMPLE 71: Op. 10, #2



A second section is introduced in 10/8 meter and, within this rhythm is outlined another expression of the same melodic theme:

EXAMPLE 72: Op. 10, #2



This homophonic texture is followed by a contrapuntal one, always on the same melody:

EXAMPLE 73: Op. 10, #2

Meas. 66-68

Considerable attention is given to the quintuplet in this section of 10/8 meter:

EXAMPLE 74a: Op. 10, #2

EXAMPLE 74b: Op. 10, #2

Meas. 71

Meas. 75

In the Coda, too, a relationship with the thematic material is apparent. The meter here changes to 12/8 and the bass-line accompaniment continues in triplets:

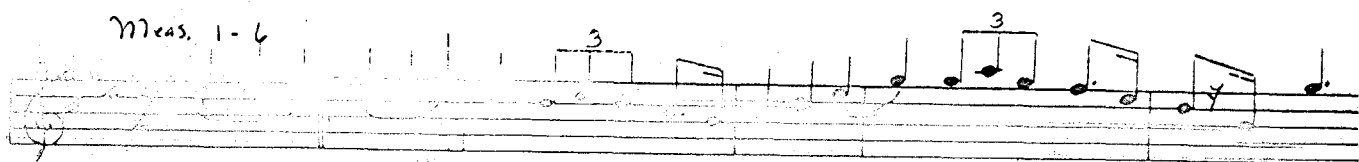
EXAMPLE 75: Op. 10, #2

Meas. 154-156

The final cadential structure in the second piece is similar to the first with an extended four-measures on the tonic chord.

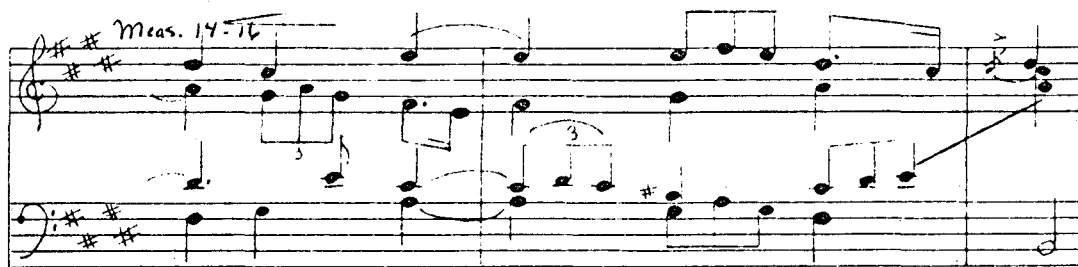
The third piece contains within its three pages an absolute contrapuntal texture with a simple, classically-arched melodic line. Here is one of the many instances when Medtner's music projects the classic, simple lines of a Greek temple, beautiful in its simplicity and structurally solid in its symmetry. In the construction of a classic temple, notably the Parthenon, a special technic was employed by the Greeks which created a feeling of solidity and visual restfulness. The technic, known as entasis, is a system of working with imperceptible curves whereby every line in the building looks straight but, in point of fact, the lines are curved, not noticed by the human eye but scientifically proven to be there. Medtner employs a technic something like this in the third "Dithyramb", the chief difference being that the "curved line" is present both to the eye and to the ear. But the fact that it serves the same function as the architectural entasis is immediately accepted when, by contrast, the "curve" in the musical line is omitted. Medtner's line is heard at the opening of the piece and the triplet in the third measure is the "curve" in question:

EXAMPLE 76: Op. 10, #3




In the imitative contrapuntal section which follows it is clear both to ear and eye that the substituting of a single note for the triplet decidedly weakens the structure of the musical edifice. A portion of this section is quoted in Example 77a as Medtner wrote it. Example 77b shows the substitution of the triplet by a single note.

EXAMPLE 77a: Op. 10, #3



EXAMPLE 77b: Op. 10, #3



Further on there is an interplay of the rhythmic figure, , already introduced in the melodic line, and a scale-line in triplets.

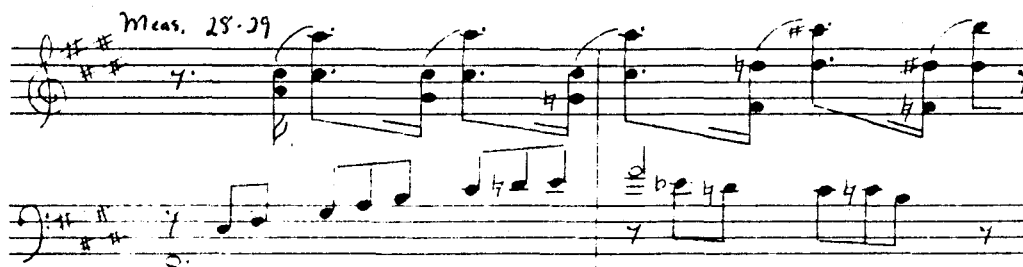
EXAMPLE 78a: Op. 10, #3 - meas. 17-18



EXAMPLE 78b: Op. 10, #3



EXAMPLE 78c: Op. 10, #3



There is at all times in Medtner's art evidence of linear design despite the seemingly vertical construction of his music. The opening measure of the third piece of Opus 10 is a typical example:

EXAMPLE 79: Op. 10, #3



In 1908, the year when Medtner accepted a professorship at the Moscow Conservatory, he added another set to his collection of fairy tales. The Opus 14 shows a decided advance over the earlier pieces bearing that name. There are two pieces in the set and they are starkly different one from the other in style and character. These are the first fairy tales that Medtner writes which bear titles that offer some

enlightenment on the context of the music. The first piece is called "Ophelia's Song"; the second is titled, "March of the Knights."

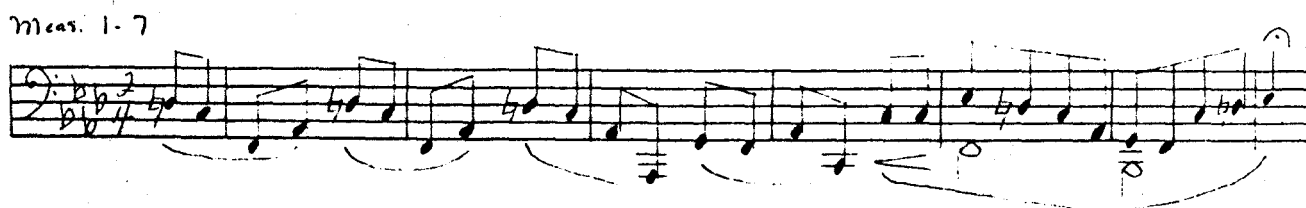
The "song" is a simple one, noble in essence, refined in line and poetic in construction. The phrase structure evolves naturally in a quasi-recitative style as opposed to the rigid four and eight-bar scheme:

EXAMPLE 80: Op. 14, #1



If mathematical symmetry is lacking the balance of linear contour supplies the artistic requirements and clothes the texture with a highly imaginative quality. This type of melodic phrasing is reminiscent of Robert Schumann whose musical poetry is at times clothed in mystery - a quality resulting not only from the melodic organization but also from the harmonic and textural content. Like Schumann's, Medtner's harmonic idiom is linear and, especially when writing in the minor mode, ambiguous. In "Ophelia's Song", written in F minor, the ambiguity of harmony results from a consistent use of the raised sixth step and flat seventh as this example illustrates:

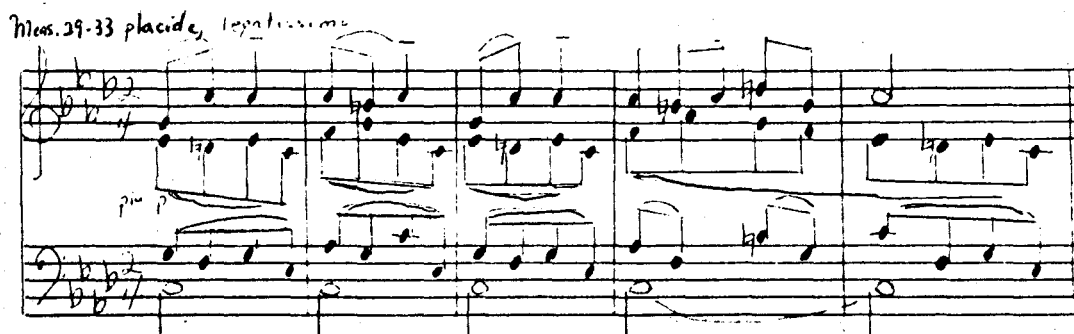
EXAMPLE 81: Op. 14, #1



The piece begins with V_7 on the fourth degree and only at the end of the exposition of the first melodic line is there heard a complete dominant harmony. This same observation was made in the Opus 9 fairy tales.

Another instance of the delicate, linear texture in this first piece is a second melodic phrase which is in the dominant key:

EXAMPLE 82: Op. 14, #1



It is treated canonically at the close:

EXAMPLE 83: Op. 14, #1



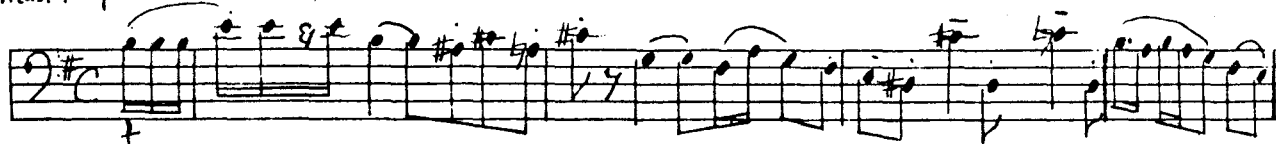
In contrast with "Ophelia's Song" is the "March of the Knights." Completely contrapuntal in content, the March is one of the most elaborately developed of any of Medtner's works.¹⁶

¹⁶Holt, Nicolas Medtner. "The Art of Nicolas Medtner." Joseph Yasser, pp. 53-56.

The structure takes on the form of a rondo with developmental aspects which categorizes the piece more or less as a sonata-rondo form. The two principal themes are brisk in their martial character. The first theme is stated immediately:

EXAMPLE 84: Op. 14, #2

Mas. 1-4



This is followed by an episode of some subsidiary material and then a return of the first line in its entirety. This concludes the section of exposition which is followed by the development section in which a new theme is introduced in b minor:

EXAMPLE 85: Op. 14, #2

Mas. 37-40



Resolute in character and simpler in rhythmic design than the first melody, although stylistically related to it, the second theme is given significant treatment throughout the remainder of the piece. After a four-bar connecting passage the second theme is repeated, now in canonic form:

EXAMPLE 86: Op. 14, #2

Meas. 47-50

More intriguing still is the appearance of the two themes simultaneously; first, in a single two-voiced counterpoint, then in three parts with the second theme forming a canon with itself at the fifth in the two upper parts and the first theme appearing in the bass:

EXAMPLE 87a: Op. 14, #2

Meas. 55-56

EXAMPLE 87b: Op. 14, #2

Handwritten musical score for Example 87b, Op. 14, #2, measures 65-67. The score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass clef, in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The key signature is G major. The tempo/mood is marked 'marcato'. The dynamics are marked 'f' (forte). The notation includes various note values, rests, and slurs. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked 'marcato'. The dynamics are marked 'f' (forte). The notation includes various note values, rests, and slurs.

Further development is present when the second theme is pitted against itself in augmentation:

EXAMPLE 88: Op. 14, #2

Handwritten musical score for Example 88, Op. 14, #2, measures 69-72. The score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass clef, in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The key signature is G major. The tempo/mood is marked 'marcato'. The dynamics are marked 'ff' (fortissimo). The notation includes various note values, rests, and slurs. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked 'marcato'. The dynamics are marked 'ff' (fortissimo). The notation includes various note values, rests, and slurs.

At the close, the structure builds to a climax by a series of brief, modulatory imitations based on Theme 1:

EXAMPLE 89: Op. 14, #2



In 1909 Medtner resigned from the conservatory in order to devote himself exclusively to composing. It was in this year that he wrote a set of "novelettes" which constitute his Opus 17. The three novelettes continue to manifest Medtner's emphasis on thematic development, rhythmic ingenuity and harmonic complexities. The first piece, inspired by "Daphnis and Clœe" whose names are inscribed above the music is basically homophonic in texture with a cantabile melodic line supported by arpeggiated chordal structure. In the first piece Medtner gives more attention to lines which function solely as accompaniments to melody than he has hitherto done. The arpeggiated patterns gain impetus as they become more florid, moving from a sixteenth-note to a thirty-second-note motion. The thirty-second-note line is heard at first diatonically but later it becomes more ornate in a heavily-textured chromatic line.

The structure and dimensions of the second and third pieces are more complex and original in rhythmic and harmonic patterns. In a meter of 3/4 the rhythmic organization of the second piece is intriguing and well suited to the chromatic context of the tonality:

EXAMPLE 90: Op. 17, #2

Meas. 5-8

mf pesante *dimin.*

mf *dimin.*

Ten. *Ten.*

The harmonic context here is linearly conceived. The first two beats in the left hand are developed sequentially and appear throughout the piece.

The third "Novelette" begins with a melodic statement that extends beyond a range hitherto found in Medtner's melodic writing:

EXAMPLE 91: Op. 17, #3

In line with the dynamic character of the melody is the imaginative, non-static rhythmic pattern. The presence of the dotted note and triplet figures are characteristic of Medtner. The linear movement is essentially simple, but the vertical coincidences are rich. The opening measure is a case in point. We note here a movement from I to V through the supertonic harmony, all bound together by suspended and passing notes.

After the initial statement of the melody the opening measure is heard in a canonic texture against an intricately organized

triplet-figured accompaniment:

EXAMPLE 92: Op. 17, #3



A second melody follows, here employing the hemiola:

EXAMPLE 93: Op. 17, #3



This material is given long elaboration in extended arpeggiated lines and in rich, full-sounding chords until the return of the first section which is within a contrapuntal frame treated technically in the traditional manners already described.

The cadences of each of the three pieces manifest conscious attention by the composer to voice-leading. Medtner himself speaks of voice-leading as a concept which "determines the interrelation of chords

and renders their isolated existence impossible... (Voice-leading) determines the function of the separate voices which is connected both with the construction of the mode (the interrelation of the degrees) and with the gravitation of dissonance toward consonance."¹⁷ This is clearly illustrated in the cadences of Opus 17:

EXAMPLE 94a: Op. 17, #1

EXAMPLE 94b: Op. 17, #2

Meas. 85-86

Meas. 101-102

Example 94c:
Op. 17, #3
meas. 150-157

G Major

C minor

dim.

pp

sf

fff

The particular linear interrelation established here by Medtner which respects the gravitation of dissonance and respects the resolving directions of the degrees of the scale results in cadential chords of rich harmony - a writing pattern employing modal interchange and

¹⁷Nicolas Medtner, The Muse and the Fashion, p. 33.

augmented chords which becomes more and more identified with Medtner.

The two fairy tales that constitute Opus 20 each contain striking dynamic contrasts, fine examples of motivic development and solid pianistic writing. The pieces are characterized by a turbulent, menacing and forboding mood. This quality of emotion, freely and dynamically expressed, always refined but less reticent, is of the very essence of Opus 20. Medtner's rhythmic, melodic and harmonic vocabulary is present in this work. Present, too, are certain modifications of Medtner's melodic and harmonic inventions. The interrelation of the two melodic themes in the first piece manifest contrast in direction and unity in rhythm:

EXAMPLE 95a: Op. 20, #1

Mcas. 1-4



EXAMPLE 95b: Op. 20, #1

Mcas. 11-12



Medtner's typical technic of developing the melodies in a series of sequential modulatory passages is present in the second section. There are, however, two developmental technics that appear for the first time in Medtner's music. First is a chain of changing harmonies set to the first melody over a V pedal:

EXAMPLE 96: Op. 20, #1

Mus. 25-27

This pattern is repeated four times, each time a third higher.

The second technic in this section is the employment of a typical Beethovenian dynamic effect as shown in the first measure of Example 96. This subito pianissimo following a climactic forte is indicated three times in the piece. Another example of this is found in the second piece:

EXAMPLE 97: Op. 20, #1

Mus. 32-33

The second fairy tale of Opus 20 is inscribed as follows: "A Song or 'Bell' Fairy Tale, but not about a bell." The theme of the piece is a rhythmic, scale-line figure heard in varied forms throughout the composition.

EXAMPLE 98a: Op. 20, #2

EXAMPLE 98b: #2 - meas. 17

EXAMPLE 98c: #2

Meas. 1-2 Ex. 98b: #2 (meas. 17) Meas. 33

Ex. 98a: #2 - Meas. 116

Against this figure Medtner writes a part for the right hand that is an uninterrupted display of virtuosity - a melodic line adorned by harmonic embellishments:

EXAMPLE 99: Op. 20, #2

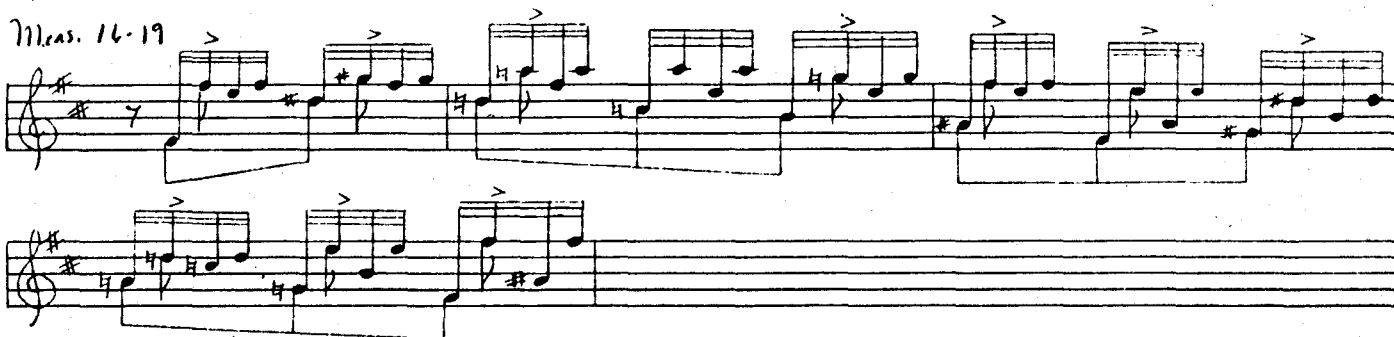
Meas. 8-16

No 1211

Following this is an example of interrelated melodic lines.

Medtner combines the first four measures of the melody as illustrated in Ex. 99 with the second four measures, each note of the second pattern following immediately each note of the first:

EXAMPLE 100: Op. 20, #2



The same idea continues, each hand persisting in its role; the left hand playing bell sounds heavy and ominous, the right hand weaving a melodic line through a labyrinth of dissonance until the long chain of thirty-second-notes accelerate to a triplet-figured line for the last seven bars.

The four pieces of Opus 23 and the four pieces of Opus 26 are similar in structure as well as in harmonic, melodic and rhythmic procedures. All eight pieces are miniatures, all are in ternary form and all are basically in a homophonic framework with emphasis on melody. The Opus 23 set is called "Four Lyrical Fragments" and Opus 26 is a group of fairy tales.

An analysis of the lyrical lines and their harmonic and rhythmic setting are worthy of note and deepens our insight of Medtner's individuality as a composer. It is first of all important to remember that all eight pieces are delicately structured with single-line movement and with little support from sturdy chordal blocks and massive long-phrased arpeggios.

The "lyrical fragments" of the first and fourth pieces of Opus 23 are in c minor:

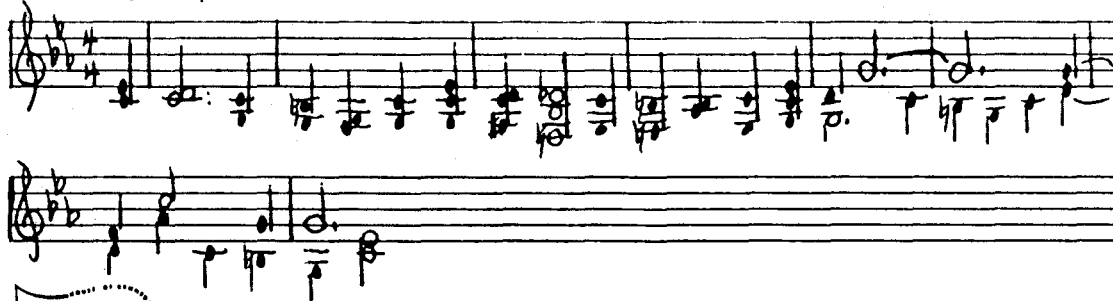
EXAMPLE 101a: Op. 23, #1

Meas. 3-6



EXAMPLE 101b: Op. 23, #4

Meas. 1-8



The similarity of the two lines can be noted in the predominance of step-wise motion, the characteristic use of chromatic inflections and the brief instances of melodic part-writing. In both pieces the melodic mode of C minor is employed, clearly projected by the accompanying lines. The repeated-note is the central figure in the accompaniment of the melody of the first piece.

EXAMPLE 102: Op. 23, #1

Meas. 2-4



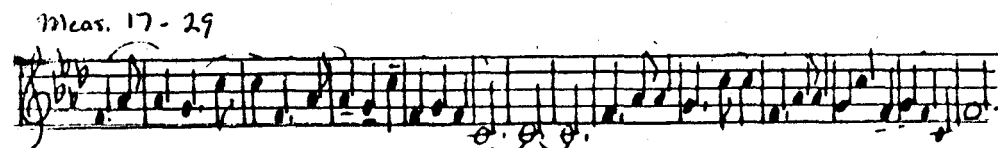
The scale-line bass in Number four moves in eighth-notes, carefully respecting the melodic form of the minor tonality. The phrase lengths of both pieces are approximately the same and each phrase begins on the up-beat.

Similarities are also apparent between the lyrical line of the second and third pieces of Opus 23:

EXAMPLE 103a: Op. 23, #2



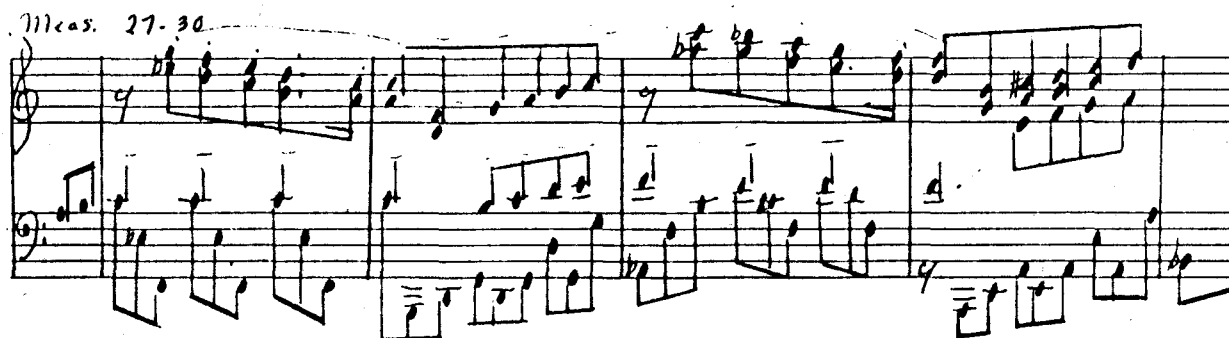
EXAMPLE 103b: Op. 23, #3



Both lines are purely diatonic and set in a lilting waltz rhythm. There is a subtle variation in the rhythm of the melody shown in Example 103b caused by a shifting of beats in the second-half of the line. While this melody is clearly identified with F minor - although the leading-tone is conspicuously absent from the accompanying chords - the tonality of the second piece (Example 103a) is indeed ambiguous. The piece as a whole is written in A minor, but the melodic line as seen above can legitimately be analyzed in C Major. This type of harmonic ambiguity in minor tonalities is characteristic of Medtner.

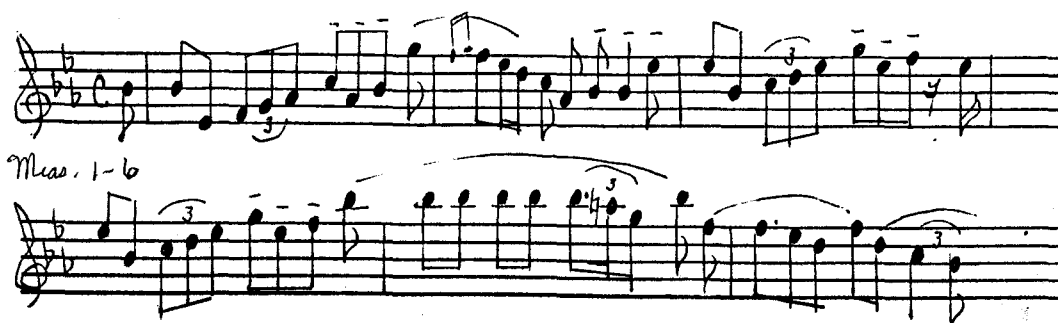
In the developmental section of the same piece there is a sequential treatment - again typical of Medtner - of a fragment of the second phrase of the melodic line (Ex. 103a) set to a delicately framed cross-rhythm pattern. The open texture, cross-rhythm and linear design are reminiscent of the nineteenth century German romanticists, Schumann and Brahms.

EXAMPLE 104: Op. 23, #2



The four fairy tales of Opus 26 are shorter and lighter in vein than most of the earlier fairy tales. The wide range of the melodic line of number one manifests a sense of uninhibited freedom not often encountered in Medtner's music.

EXAMPLE 105: Op. 26, #1



Sequential technic is present in the first four-measure phrase and the repeated-note motif in the second phrase. The treatment of the repeated note here is an instance of Medtner's concern with the organic whole of a composition. This motif of repeated tones anticipates the lyrical line of the second section with its changing mood from "cantando" to "giocoso":

EXAMPLE 106: Op. 26, #1



A further example of this type of organic development is the handling of the repeated-note motif in augmentation against a statement of the first phrase of the principal melody (See Ex. 105):

EXAMPLE 107: Op. 26, #1



The principal theme of the second piece of the set is a repeated-note motif which is developed canonically:

EXAMPLE 108: Op. 26, #2



The lyricism of the third piece is its outstanding feature with three melodic lines introduced into the musical fabric intermittently and returning under various guises throughout the composition:

EXAMPLE 109a: Op. 26, #3



EXAMPLE 109b: Op. 26, #3



EXAMPLE 109c: Op. 26, #3



The second theme in Ex. 109b is heard in a later statement in the bass against a single diatonic line. A series of sequences is worked out on the first theme, and the third theme returns in an imitative passage.

In the scherzo-like fourth piece of Opus 26 there emerge from the complex rhythmic frame melodic fragments that are curiously folk-like and Russian in character.¹⁸ The folk quality is manifested in the element of repetition and short, brisk phrases treated sequentially:

EXAMPLE 110: Op. 26, #4



The rhythmic complexity, directness of expression and emphasis on color

¹⁸Richard Holt, Nicolas Medtner, A Memorial Volume, p. 61.

which are typified in the piece demonstrate a Russian quality.¹⁹

EXAMPLE 111: Op. 26, #4

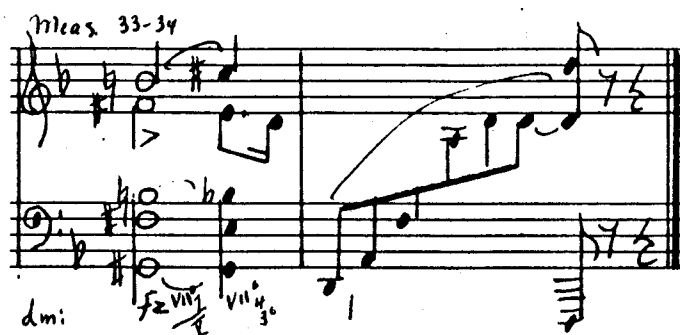


The structure of the piece is organically rooted in episodic treatment with an absence of thematic development and evolution. Present is a return of melodic material but it is never developed in the evolving manner of imitative counterpoint. It is simply a re-statement, direct and unprepared.

No pieces in smaller forms were written in 1914. In the following year Medtner wrote a single fairy tale in D minor and the three pieces of Opus 31. The D minor Fairy Tale has the same style as the fairy tales of Opus 26 with the thin texture and rhythmic interest. Lyrically, however, the piece consists of chordal outlines in short phrases, one diatonic melody treated sequentially and sections with heavy chromatic alterations. A modal effect results from the consistent use of the lowered leading-tone. The cadence is an excellent example of Medtner's characteristic voice-leading:

¹⁹Abraham, Studies in Russian Music, p. 8.

EXAMPLE 112: D minor Fairy-Tale



The Opus 31 trilogy manifests a freer style and a more convincing affiliation with the western romantics than the previous pieces do.

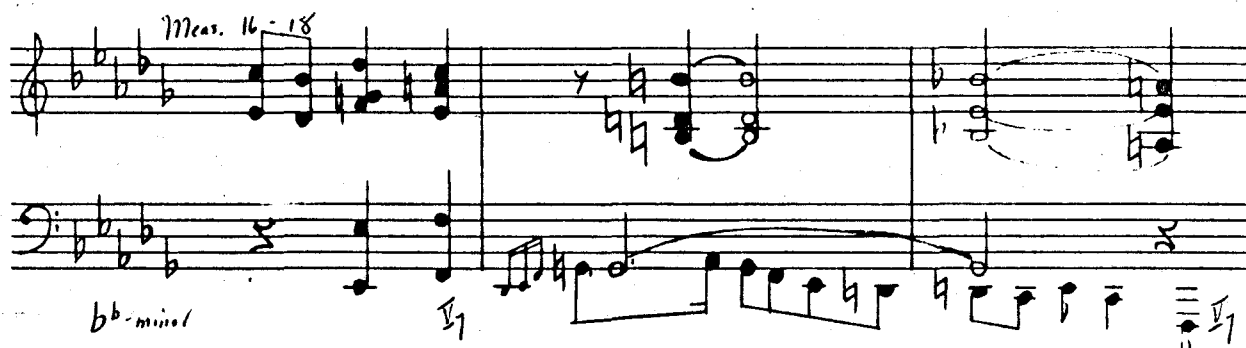
The first of the set is called "Improvisation" and it is in variation form. Here the B-Flat minor tonality is clearly established with the raised leading-tone in predominance in the melodic line. The line unfolds gracefully and freely with no mark of austerity.

EXAMPLE 113: Op. 31, #1

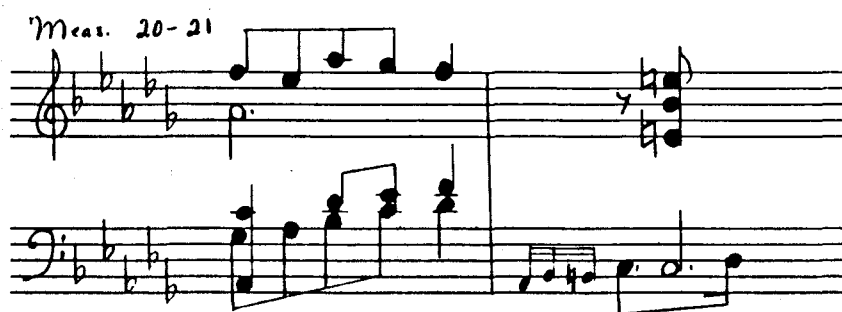


The rhythmic pattern of the last measure above is significantly used in the accompaniment lines that follow, always preceded by the figure:
The harmonic technic is chordal and the chord blocks function at times as passing harmonies:

EXAMPLE 114a: Op. 31, #1



EXAMPLE 114b: Op. 31, #1

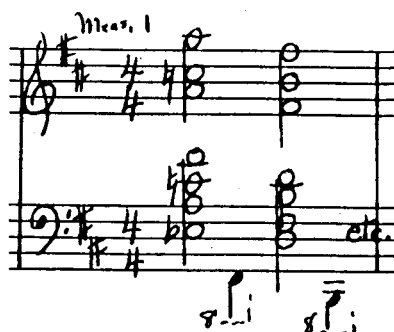


The five variations are virtuosic with long streams of chromatic lines and turns ornamenting the theme. The first variation is a dance-like caprice in a light, airy texture set to a duple meter. The exposition of the theme at the beginning of the piece is in triple meter. This is followed by a variation in the same character with less ornamentation. The theme is then given to the bass line in the original triple meter. The florid effect is at a minimum until the end of the variation when the $3/4$ meter changes to $6/8$. Sixteenth-note passages then take the music from pianissimo to a fortissimo. The next variation contrasts one line in a martial, syncopated, virile texture with an expressive, cantabile line; one effect alternating with the other. Then follows a double-third, etude-like treatment with demonstrations of resolute,

brilliant passages alternating with delicately, light ones. The piece ends with a re-statement of the theme in its original simplicity.

Characterizing the second and third pieces of the Opus 31 set is the same emphasis on melodic theme. "Marche Funebre" is the title given to the second piece and all the musical elements are brought to play in rendering the funereal atmosphere. The martial effect is established by chords and "drum" notes beating out the cadence:

EXAMPLE 115: Op. 31, #2



This persists throughout the piece while the melodic line weaves its way through the middle of the texture. The contour of the melodic line, especially with its chromatic inflections, create a doleful effect. A close look at this line from the harmonic point of view reveals a leaning toward plagal and mediant relationships:

EXAMPLE 116: Op. 31, #2



The procession begins in the distance and the low, tolling or resounding of the drum becomes more incessant as the theme becomes more intense until the texture lightens once again and the procession fades in the distance.

The melodic line in the fairy tale, Opus 31, number three, is somewhat similar in character to the melody of the second piece:

EXAMPLE 117: Op. 31, #3



The compass and leaps of each are wide. Harmonically, Medtner follows along the same pattern of writing as has already been discussed in previous pieces. The emphasis in the linear concept of harmony is always apparent.

This is illustrated by the cadences of the first and second pieces:

EXAMPLE 118a: Op. 31, #1

Meas. 72-76

bb minor

IV m1

N

EXAMPLE 118b: Op. 31, #2 - meas. 30-31

In summary, the directions of Medtner's writing technic in the piano solo music in smaller forms from Opus 1 to Opus 31 indicate a curious interplay of classical principles and romantic expression. The classical style is present in Medtner's primary regard for a symmetrical, cohesive form. The melodic, rhythmic and harmonic content are interrelated in order to establish as unified a structure as possible. Medtner's rhythmic vocabulary is particularly imaginative. Triplets, cross-rhythms, syncopation and hemiola are specifically present in these earlier pieces. The harmonic content creates a modal quality especially when the pieces are in a minor key. In minor, the natural form with the lowered leading-tone is frequently used. Plagal harmonies are preferred in all the pieces. Medtner's harmonic movement is governed by linear direction which indicates his contrapuntal thinking in writing harmonically. Melodies give evidence of the repeated-note motif, sequential repetitions and conservative movement.

Medtner's developmental sections are major parts of the structure of the pieces. Melodies, rhythmic patterns or fragments of these are treated contrapuntally in canon and augmentation. Other developmental technics are found in these earlier pieces such as sequential series, rhythmic variations, combining two or more melodies and ornamentation of a melodic line.

The technical procedures as manifested in Medtner's art up to Opus 31 continue to be part of his vocabulary, but with the subsequent pieces in smaller forms there is an injection of more color, dramatic effects and contrasts of moods.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF OPUS 34 TO 59

Thus far the music of Medtner has proven itself to be architectonic with its obvious emphasis on continuous development. Although Beethoven was Medtner's idol more than Glinka his russian nationality was very much a part of his art. He who was deeply committed to the ideals of his country and he who absorbed its spirit in everyday life would instinctively project a russian nuance in his creative expression. The russian idiom mixed with Teutonic elements in the Beethovenian tradition continue to characterize Medtner's music in the sets to be discussed presently.

In these later pieces from Opus 34 on, however, the emphasis on specific points of the russian style is shifted. It was noted in the previous chapters that harmonic procedures identified with russian music were particularly apparent in Medtner's earlier works. The emphasis in the later pieces is on contrasts of texture and tonal color within the same composition. Rhythmic complexities are minimized in the later sets. Nevertheless, subtle sensitivity to rhythmic change and flow is always present. The element of concentrated conciseness found frequently in the earlier pieces gives way now to a style of free abandon. Extra-musical influences are more prominent in the later works and many of them are rooted in russian everyday life.

Nineteenth century romantic style is evident by a continued use of thematic development which is a prime factor in Medtner's writing procedure. Melodic invention becomes more imaginative. Dynamic markings

and directions for style and expression are more plentiful and detailed. It must be noted that the differences here outlined between the pieces from Opus 1 to 31 and the sets which follow Opus 31 do not indicate a radical change in Medtner's art. They are to be regarded as ramifications of the basic principles of Medtner's aesthetics clearly defined by the composer himself throughout the pages of his book. These principles of the fundamental laws of music are never compromised and are always the essence of Medtner's art.

The four fairy-tales of Opus 34 each bear an extra-musical inscription which sheds light on the content of the piece. The inscriptions deal with fairy-tale ideas such as "The Fairy Violin" which is programmed for the first piece of the set and "The Kind and Mournful Wood-goblin" - assigned to Number Three. The second and fourth pieces of the set bear quotations from the Russian poets Tyutchev and Pushkin respectively. The Tyutchev lines inscribed above the music of the second piece are:

When we call something our own
We lose it forever -

Pushkin's line which inspired the music for the fourth piece is:

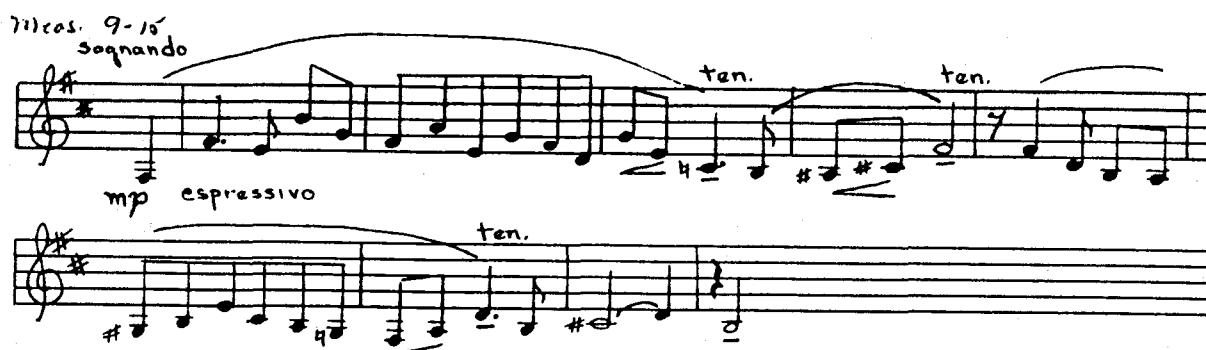
Once upon a time there lived a poor knight.

The general character of the pieces is a free, impromptu-like style, in ternary form. The first of the set is more extended than the other three. All four pieces are in minor tonality and the technique of the lowered second and seventh, frequently used in the earlier pieces is again employed here.

Worthy of note is the melodic content of each piece. The melodies are more ornately arched and free in movement. Sequential effects are

ornately arched and free in movement. Sequential effects are employed in the extension of the melodic lines. The principal melody of the first piece exemplifies these points:

EXAMPLE 1: Op. 34, #1



The second phrase of the line is a sequential extension of the third and fourth measures with rhythmic variations - a typical Medtnerian device. The sudden shifts in melodic direction as exemplified here are typical occurrences in western technic.

In the second piece the melody is strongly orientated to the tonic tonality, moving logically within subtle rhythmic variations. The second phrase departs from the tonic framework to an allusion of the relative major key. In contrast to the melodic line of the first piece this melodic structure is more concise and less free:

EXAMPLE 2: Op. 34, #2 - meas. 3-10



"The kind and mournful wood-goblin" is characterized in the third piece of the set by a playful, skipping line with chromatic inflections:

EXAMPLE 3: Op. 34, #3 - meas. 5-9



Similar to the melodic structure of the first piece is the noble line of the last piece:

EXAMPLE 4: Op. 34, #4 - meas. 1-4



The contour of both lines (Cf. Ex. 1 and Ex. 4) moves in broad skips with terminal points on the lowered supertonic in the first piece and the lowered leading-tone in Number 4.

Consistent with this modal technic the harmonic structure is rooted in plagal and mediant tonalities. In the chords which accompany the melody of the first piece the "Neopolitan", a lowered supertonic harmony, is prominent. The fourth piece in the key of D minor shows an emphasis on the mediant chord which is a Major triad with the lowered leading-tone:

EXAMPLE 5: Op. 34, #4

Meas. 1-2

Allegretto

I - IV V III II I

The same progression is found in the second piece:

EXAMPLE 6: Op. 34, #2

Meas. 7-8

Allegretto

I - IV V III II I

Medtner's cadences are rarely pure in harmonic sound but more frequently are they enriched by non-harmonics. The cadences are always direct and they project a sense of finality despite the de-emphasis of the leading-tone:

EXAMPLE 7a: Op. 34

7a: No. 1 7b: No. 2 7c: No. 3 Meas. 140 - 142

Meas. 236-237 Meas. 41-45 Meas. 61

pp pp ppp

marcando

7d: No. 4

D Major

These cadences exemplify Medtner's attention to voice-leading which results in an architectonic effect at the close. This is particularly apparent in Example 7c. Here an authentic dominant harmony is obscured by a dominant chord on the lowered fifth degree. The A-minor tonality, however, is the foundation of the cadential structure as it appears in the bass-line trill. As with all musical elements Medtner views the cadence as an integral part of the musical edifice. "Cadences must not appear to us as some kind of nails, hammered into the separate pieces of form to hold them together. They are themselves a part of a living form."¹

The architectonic principle and textural contrasts are concomitant

¹Medtner, op. cit., p. 37.

in each piece. In the first fairy-tale of Opus 34 two motives pervade the over-all structure in varying settings:

EXAMPLE 8a: Op. 34, #1

Largamente, cantando *riten.*

Meas. 1-4 *mf*

EXAMPLE 8b: Op. 34, #1

Meas. 21-23 *poco accel.*

These motives return twice afterward in direct quotation alternating first with a capriccioso-styled section in a skipping rhythm and lean texture. The second alternating passage is a stately, vigorous section which, in turn, alternates with the capriccioso part. The melodic material of the second alternating passage returns, after a re-statement of the two principal motives, in a subtly varied form and starkly contrasted setting. Its initial statement is as follows:

EXAMPLE 9: Op. 34, #1

Mus. 67-73

picchietando p subito

sf

The variation is in a $4/4$ meter:

EXAMPLE 10: Op. 34, #1

cantando

pp tenebroso

It is again varied by the use of triplets in the bass accompaniment.

The first motif (Example 8) follows with a florid accompaniment

line:

EXAMPLE 11: Op. 34, #1

Mus. 165-167

pp tenebroso

It is heard, too, as a recitative:

EXAMPLE 12: Op. 34, #1



In contrast to this, the same motif is later given to the bass in a more brisk setting:

EXAMPLE 13: Op. 34, #1



The piece closes with a statement of the second motif (Example 8b) sweeping in a valse-like manner to the end. This first piece in the Opus 34 set instances Medtner's technic of the organic evolution of germinal ideas, but with striking contrasts in style and texture.

In contrast to Number One the second piece moves consistently within a homophonic fabric of melody accompanied by a "brook-like", florid, single bass-line. The third piece is also basically homophonic with its frolicking scale-lines punctuated by octaves.

The principal melody in the fourth piece (Example 4) is treated polyphonically and subtly transformed throughout the structure:

EXAMPLE 14: Op. 34, #4



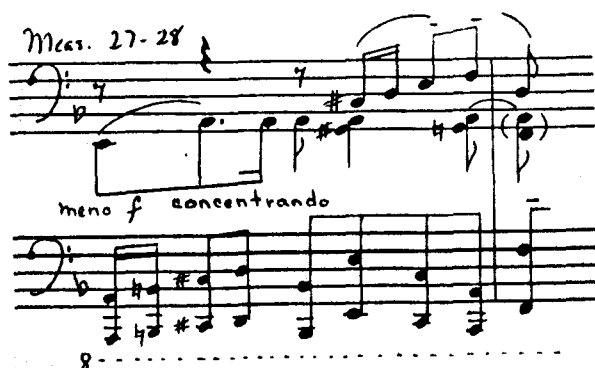
A secondary melodic idea is introduced after the polyphonic treatment of the principal melody as seen in Example 14:

EXAMPLE 15: Op. 34, #4



This motif is counterpointed against the first melody in a three-voiced texture, Melody One entering simultaneously with Melody Two, this followed by Melody One entering at the third:

EXAMPLE 16: Op. 34, #4



This type of polyphonic treatment continues throughout the middle section. A florid coda of running 32nd notes follows the closing section and increases in momentum as the 32nds move into 64ths at the end.

The four fairy-tales of Opus 35 are in ternary form and continue to show Medtner's predilection for thematic development as well as the composer's tendency, in these later pieces, to extend the melodic line and to widen its range. The construction of Medtner's melodies is based on evolution of a germinal idea, sometimes rhythmic, at other times, melodic. This type of melodic structure is exemplified in the Opus 35 pieces as follows:

EXAMPLE 17a: Op. 35, #1

Meno mosso . . .

17a *meno cantando grave* *crescendo*

17b *legatissimo tranquillo* *fere più mosso*

17c *crescendo*

In Example 17a the third measure imitates the second and the melodic idea ends at the middle of the fourth measure. What follows is an extension of the terminal part of the four-measure phrase. The

seventh measure which completes the melodic thought is a repetition, in sequence, of the second measure.

The germinal idea in Example 17b is the interval of a fourth written most frequently from Sol to Do. The interval of a third predominates in Example 17c with evidence of sequential technic (measures 5 and 6). In all examples a syncopated rhythm is prevalent.

The process of evolution followed in the melodic structure is extended to the over-all framework of each piece. In Number One the principal melody as quoted in Example 17a returns in an interlocking rhythm, first with a quickened accompaniment line, second, in the same rhythm as the melody:

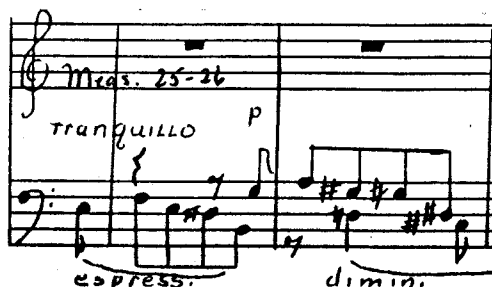
EXAMPLE 18a: Op. 35, #1

EXAMPLE 18b: Op. 35, #1



An ingenious contrapuntal texture is introduced in the middle section of the first piece on a melodic fragment from the principal melody:

EXAMPLE 19: Op. 35, #1 (Cf. Example 17a, second measure)



The four-note motif pervades the entire middle section in sequential patterns which are found in both treble and bass. The closing four bars of the first section appear in a literal quotation in the middle part, thus integrating the melodic material more emphatically.

The fourth piece of the set manifests an interpenetration of the melodic idea in the over-all structure. (The melodic quotation is given in Example 17c.) It is found in successive sequence, in treble and bass, in augmentation and in varied accompanimental settings as these examples illustrate:

EXAMPLE 20a:

20b:

20c:

sempre più agitato

Mcas. 41-42

20a

Mcas. 74-76

20b

il tempo

ff tempestoso

3

Mcas. 85-86

diminuendo

20c

This fourth fairy-tale was inspired by a quotation from King Lear which is inscribed above the music:

"Blow, wind, rage-
Until you break my cheeks."

In the spirit of this text the setting of the piece is a rich, rhapsodic texture of sweeping chord-lines, full sonorous chord blocks and contrasting styles. Medtner's stylistic direction reads: *Allegro appassionato e tempestoso*. The music clearly breathes this spirit. Moods quickly change from agitated fortissimo to menacing pianissimos. There are virtuosic passages which call for chromatic scale-lines against ascending double-sixths. The rhythmic context is predominantly in triplets with many instances of cross-beat complexities.

The second piece of Opus 35 is also characterized by contrasts of texture and moods. The opening section is clearly an etude on broken tenths and octaves. It is in the middle section, however, that contrasts are most striking. This section is introduced by a rhythmic motif which appears throughout:

EXAMPLE 21: Op. 35, #2



Contrasts of mood are indicated by the stylistic directions of "risoluto" and "tranquillo" which are marked for alternating measures. Dramatic effects are achieved by intercepting a "cantabile" section with a "rinforzando" measure:

EXAMPLE 22: Op. 35, #2



Textures vary from the somewhat thin fabric as exemplified above in Examples 21 and 22 to a more substantial one:

EXAMPLE 23a: Op. 35, #2

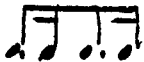


EXAMPLE 23b: Op. 35, #2

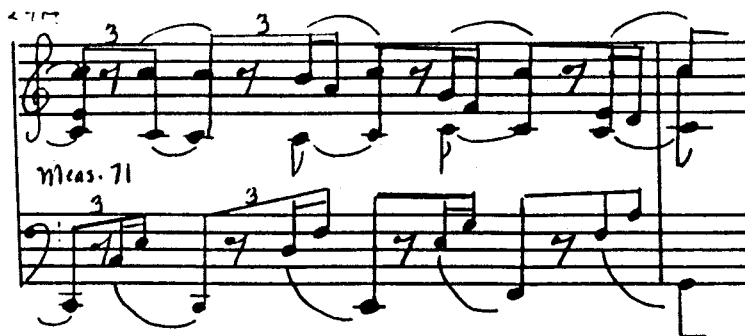


Again, cross-relationships are part of Medtner's rhythmic invention as seen in Example 23b.

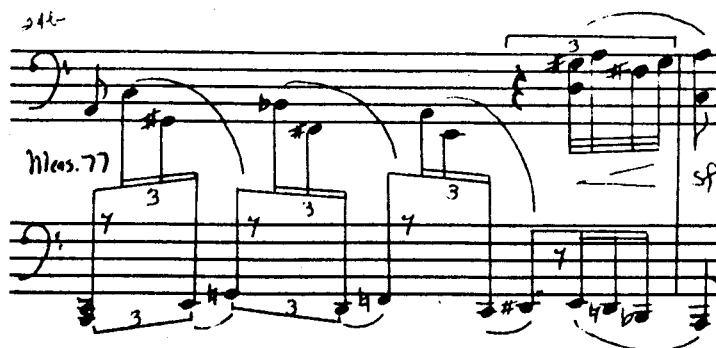
In a somewhat thin, homophonic texture the third fairy-tale of Opus 35 contains stylistic contrasts such as a cantabile, lyrical line followed by a resolute, martial section. The rhythmic motifs in this

piece are basically a dotted figure:  This is present in both the melodic and the accompaniment lines. Medtner's predilection for triplet figures manifests itself in ingenious ways throughout the piece:

EXAMPLE 24a: Op. 35, #3



EXAMPLE 24b: Op. 35, #3



The harmonic content of Opus 35 is consistent with Medtner's previously defined harmonic vocabulary. In Numbers One, Three and Four a subtle shifting from major to minor tonalities is present. Extensive use of the augmented-sixth chords, appoggiatura effects and plagal harmonies is apparent.

The dimensions of each of the four pieces are small, but within the limited canvas of each is an array of color, drama and poetic imagination. The Opus 35 set was completed in 1917, the year of the Bolshevik Revolution. For two years no pieces in smaller forms come from the pen of Medtner.

Under painful circumstances of deprivation and with nostalgic

sentiment of bygone days, Medtner began the writing of seventeen pieces which he titles, "Forgotten Melodies." The pieces comprise Opus 38, Opus 39 and Opus 40. Most of Op. 38 and all of Opus 40 are dances, presumably reminiscent of Russian life before the revolution. The pieces of Opus 39 are more sombre and meditative. Two one-movement sonatas are included in the sets; the Sonata Reminiscenza which is Op. 38 No. 1 and Sonata Tragica, Op. 39 No. 5. As large-dimensional works the sonatas are outside the scope of this study and hence they will be referred to only indirectly.

The dances of the Opus 38 set are lively in character with emphasis on syncopated rhythm, ingenious melodic phrasing and contrasts of style within the same piece. A careful scrutiny of the melodic content of the pieces proves to be most interesting since most of them are rich in melody and, again, most of them use the melodic material as the evolving element in the over-all structure.

The principal melodic line of the "Danza Graziosa", Number Two of the set, which appears after a four-measure introduction, is folk-like in character with its diatonic movement, sequential treatment and syncopated rhythm:

EXAMPLE 25: Op. 38, #1



The third piece, "Danza Festiva", is likewise melodically structured in a folk-like manner. The diatonic movement, repetition of fragments of the melody in shifting rhythmic beats and brisk, simple rhythmic context are all characteristic of the Russian folk melos. In this dance, too, the melody appears after a vigorous introduction:

EXAMPLE 26: Op. 38, #3



An injection of chromaticism distinguishes the melodic content of Number Five, "Danza Rustica". The elements of simplicity, repetition with subtle rhythmic and ornamental variations are again found in this piece. After a four-measure introduction the melodic line appears as follows:

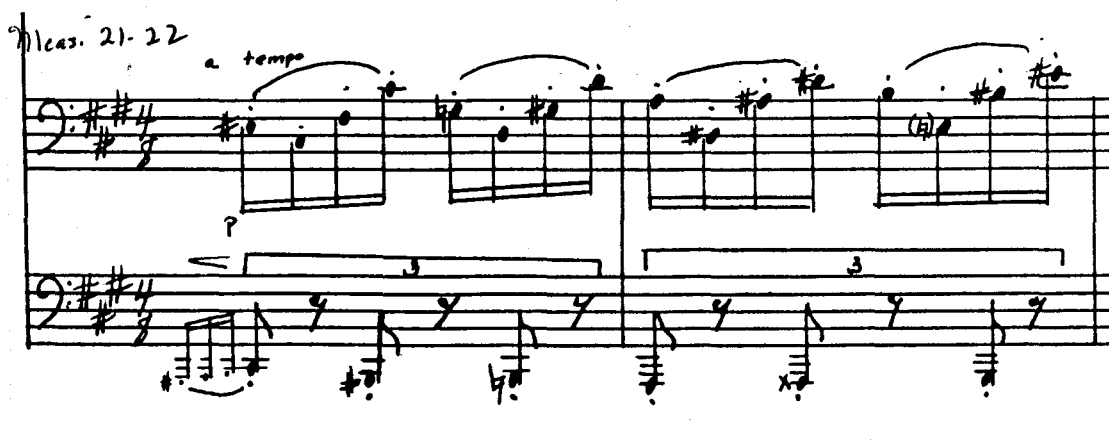
EXAMPLE 27: Op. 38, #5



The next dance to appear in the set is Number Seven - "Danza Silvestra". This forest dance is a display of multi-varied moods and styles from the stately character to a spritely one. The piece begins with a brisk-moving line in $\frac{4}{8}$ time which ends abruptly at the seventh measure. After a tacit measure a stately section is heard first in

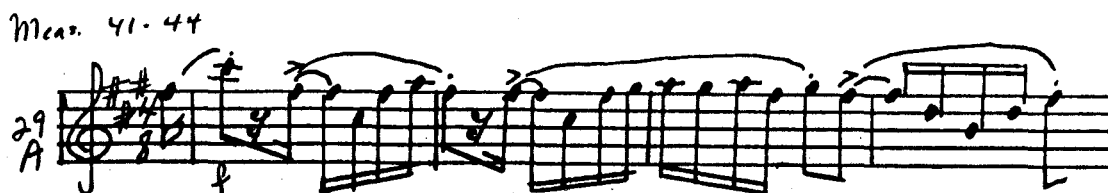
solid chords, then in an arpeggiated fashion. After a return of the solid chord measure a spritely quality is introduced by a thin-textured-toccata-like figure moving in an ascending chromatic line. The rhythmic setting of this passage enhances the delicate effect and one is reminded of "the kind and mournful wood-goblin" - Op. 34, No. 3.

EXAMPLE 28: Op. 38, #7



Two lyrical passages follow in a syncopated rhythm and simple melodic structure. The first is more stately and rigorous; the second is more expressive:

EXAMPLE 29a: Op. 38, #7



EXAMPLE 29b: Op. 38, #7



Again, the principle of sequential development of a germinal idea is used. The technic of extending a melodic thought beyond its terminal point by repeating a fragment of the melodic line - in this case repeated three times - is evidenced in the above Example 29b.

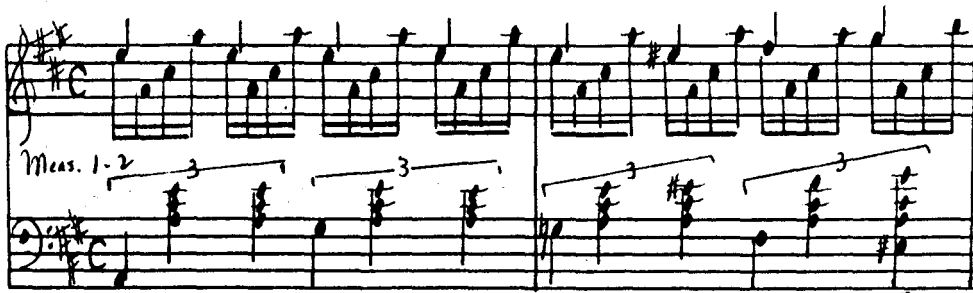
From this point in the piece the thematic ideas hitherto presented re-appear in alternating fashion, sometimes literally, sometimes with variation, sometimes in fragmentation.

The cadence of the "Danza Silvestra" suggests a pause rather than an end. This was evidently a deliberate intention of the composer since an "attacca" is directed at the close and the eighth piece immediately following functions as a "Quasi-Coda" as indicated by the composer directly above the music. The title of the eighth piece is "Alla Reminiscenza", borrowed from the first piece in sonata form. The significance of this is the fact that the opening motive of both pieces, Number 1 and Number 8, are identical - the one in C Major, the other in A Major. The accompaniment line, however, is varied:

EXAMPLE 30a: Op. 38, #1



EXAMPLE 30b: Op. 38, #8



Owing to the nature of the form employed in each piece the dimensions are starkly contrasted. The 21-page sonata contains within its framework all the elements of sonata-form and the four-page coda-like piece, Number 8, never departs from the initial structure except to bring the piece to an end with rolled chords within the last four measures.

Apart from the eighth piece two others in Opus 38 are not dances. The fourth is "Canzona Fluviala", the sixth - "Canzona Serenata."

Characteristic of its title the "Canzona Fluviala" moves in long, flowing sweeps of arpeggiated chord-lines and extended scale-lines. The melodic content is simple and direct, in keeping with the style of a canzona:

EXAMPLE 31: Op. 38, #4



Here again Medtner employs sequential technic and syncopated rhythm. The phrase-lengths here are shorter than most of the melodic phrases in the set and a dance-like character is de-emphasized with preference to a cantabile style.

The "Canzona Serenata" begins in a manner identical with the "Sonata Reminiscenza":

EXAMPLE 32: Op. 38, #6 (Cf. Example 30a, page 16)



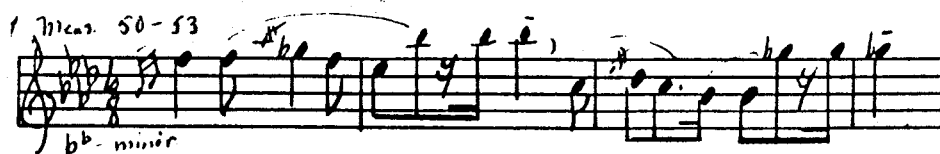
After eight measures in this texture a canzona-type melody is heard which manifests a bolder expanse in phrase length and a wider contour of melodic line. Again the syncopated rhythm is present:

EXAMPLE 33: Op. 38, #6



In the third section of the piece the foregoing melody returns in a different meter and in the plagal key:

EXAMPLE 34: Op. 38, #6



Apart from the syncopation in rhythmic content and melodic phrasing other similarities are evident in the pieces of the set. The principal melodies discussed and quoted above are contrasted by other melodic lines in most of the pieces.

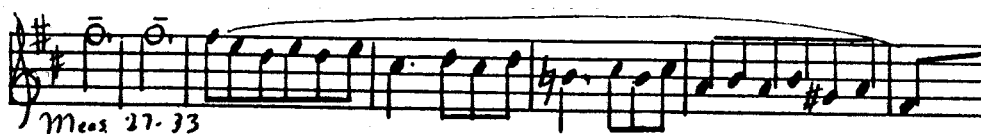
An example of this is the contrast of the A-Major, lively melody in the second piece with the expressive, D-minor line which enters later on:

EXAMPLE 35: Op. 38, #2 (Cf. Example 25, page 14)



The same contrast type is present in the "Danza Festiva", Number 3, between the D-Major, brisk dance and a second melody in F#-Minor. Here, too, the second melody is characterized by a cantabile style. The repeated-note idea appears in this line as well as in subsidiary melodies of the fourth and fifth pieces of the set:

EXAMPLE 36a: Op. 38, #3



EXAMPLE 36b: Op. 38, #4



EXAMPLE 36c: Op. 38, #5



As has been noted in the second and third pieces a change in mode between the first and second melodies in the fourth and fifth pieces is also present. The modal relationship in each of the four pieces is a typical Medtnerian scheme:

Number 2:	A-Major - D-Minor	(Plagal)
Number 3:	D-Major-F#minor-E-minor	(Mediant and lowered leading-tone)
Number 4:	E-minor - D-Major	(Lowered leading-tone)
Number 5:	C-Major - B-flat minor	(Lowered leading-tone)

Introductory passages have a prominent position in the structure of three of the pieces: Numbers, Two, Three and Four. They are similar in their triadic construction and in their function in the pieces. In the "Danza Graziosa", Number Two, and the "Danza Festiva", Number Three, the eight-measure introduction is heard before the two principal sections and, in the "Danza Festiva", it appears a third time before the re-statement of the principal theme in an enriched, harmonic context with florid ornamentation. The "Canzona Fluviala" is introduced by a four-measure line which is identical to the introduction of the third piece. The canzona introductory line is heard only at the beginning.

The developmental technic is ingeniously worked out in each piece of the set. The abundance of melodic material in each piece takes on a variety of settings in stylistic and textural contrasts. Furthermore, similarities in thematic developmental procedures are found in the pieces.

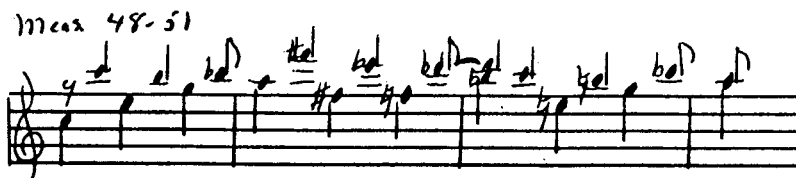
The principal melody of the second piece, "Danza Graziosa", quoted in Example 25, is later enhanced by a chromatic descant:

EXAMPLE 37: Op. 38, #2



The same technic is employed in the fifth piece, "Danza Rustica":

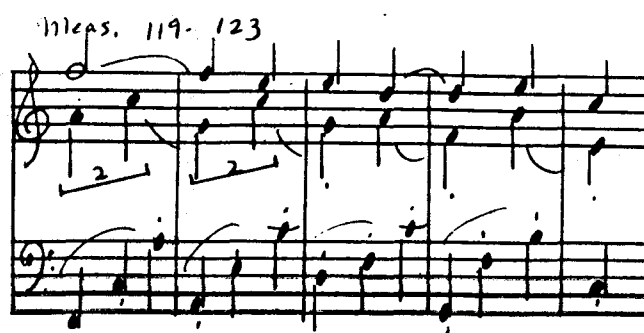
EXAMPLE 38: Op. 38, #5 (Cf. Example 27)



In the second piece, too, fragments from the two melodic lines, starkly contrasted from one another as has been noted above, are heard alternately within a four-measure phrase.

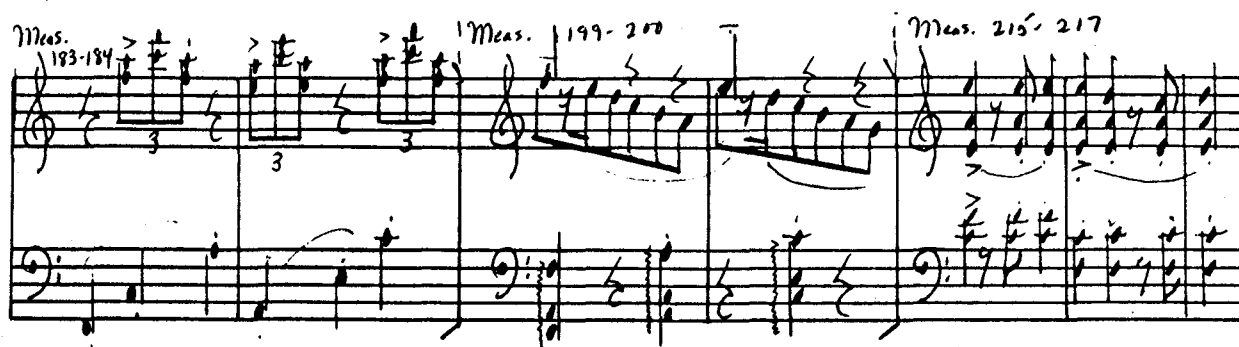
Multi-varied settings of a subsidiary melodic line in the third piece, "Danza Festiva", occur throughout the middle section. The rhythmic content is the distinguishing factor in the varied passages. The melody in question is stated simply and in a cross-rhythmic formula:

EXAMPLE 39: Op. 38, #3



The melody is presented in sequential patterns but with contrasts of dynamic textures. It is heard in a high treble range, a rhapsodic wide range setting and in a stately, majestic, solid-chord fashion. The sequential patterns lead directly into a series of variations on the melody which evolve quite naturally one from the other:

EXAMPLE 40a: Op. 38, #3 EXAMPLE 40b: Op. 38, #3 EXAMPLE 40c: Op. 38, #3



Apart from the emphasis on syncopation the rhythmic vocabulary likewise stresses the duplet figure. The duplet is most frequently employed in the accompanimental line to a new setting of a previously introduced melody as the examples on the page following illustrate:

EXAMPLE 41a: Op. 38, #3

EXAMPLE 41b: Op. 38, #5

Many examples of cross-rhythms are found throughout the set. Passages similar to the pattern in Example 28 occur in the fifth and sixth pieces.

The harmonic vocabulary is comparatively simple. Emphasis is placed to a lesser extent on plagal and mediant tonalities. The dominant-tonic progression is more pronounced especially in the brisk, folk-like dances. Plagal and mediant relationships, however, are prevalent in modulatory passages.

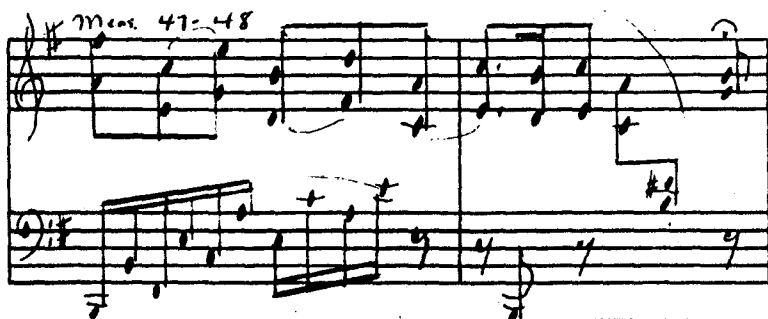
As was noted above, the modulatory scheme in the "Danza Festiva", Number Three, moves from the D-Major key to F#-minor. The F# tonality alternates between the major mode and the minor - a typical Medtnerian technic. In this F# passage the harmonic structure is clearly V - I with passing chords enriching the text. After a solid V - I cadence in F#-minor the same melodic formula is re-stated, this time, in E-minor, and later, it is re-stated again in G-minor. Harmonic, textural contrast is achieved by the insertion of chromatic passages between pure tonal parts.

A modulatory passage in the "Canzona Fluviala", Number Four, also reveals a plagal relationship. The principal section of eight

measures is set harmonically in the tonic structure of E-minor cadencing clearly on V - I. The harmonic texture is enriched by the abundance of chromatic auxiliaries in the accompaniment scale-lines. The second section begins in A-minor, arrived at through IV in "A" which is a major chord built on the lowered leading-tone in the opening key of E-minor. This is not a consummated modulation, but a tonal tendency which reveals Medtner's peculiar harmonic vocabulary. From A-minor the music moves through successive progressions of F#-minor, B-minor and back to A-minor. The relationships between these tonalities illustrate Medtner's individual harmonic pattern.

Medtner's harmonic conciseness is exemplified at the close of the second section in the same canzona. The harmonic context of the two measures immediately preceding the re-statement of the principal part in E-minor is the dominant tonality of E. The dominant is not firmly confirmed, however, until the hearing of the D# just before the entrance of the next section:

EXAMPLE 42, #4 - meas. 47-48



This type of subtlety in the handling of the dominant chord has appeared previously and will appear again.

In a cadential passage in the "Danza Rustica", Number Five, the leading-tone appears in an even less unobtrusive manner than in the previously quoted example:

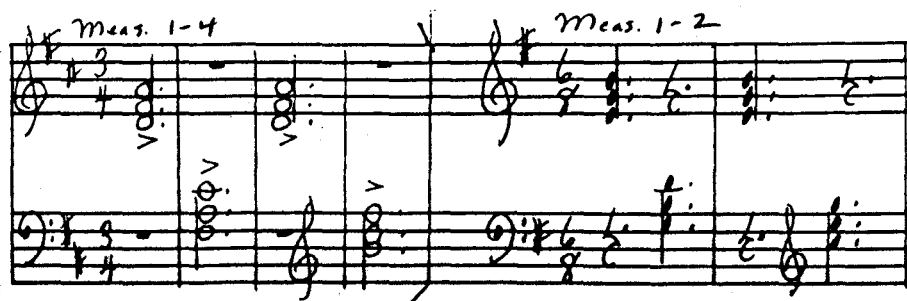
EXAMPLE 43: Op. 38, #5



In the "Canzona Serenata", Number Six, and the "Danza Silvestra", Number Seven, the harmonic framework for the principal sections is basically I and IV cadencing on V - I. Both pieces are in minor. The eighth piece in A-Major cadences on a clear VI₇ - I progression. The fanfare introduction to the third and fourth pieces, identical in content but different in mode, is harmonically set in a mediant tonality. In the D-Major setting of Number Three the mediant chord is minor and the leading-tone is unaltered. A modal effect is achieved in the fourth piece, however, when the mediant chord in E-minor is heard as a major

EXAMPLE 44a: Op. 38, #3

EXAMPLE 44b: Op. 38, #4



Appropriate to the general character of the Opus 38 set is the inclusion of a "quasi-cadenza" passage at the close of the "Danza Graziosa", Number Two, and in the "Canzona Serenata", Number Six; for the general character of this first set of "Forgotten Melodies" may be defined as rich in melodic freshness, imaginatively flexible in rhythm and phrase-structure, vibrantly gay and festive in style and homophonic, for the most part, in a thin but full texture.

In 1920 Medtner wrote a second set of pieces which he calls "Forgotten Melodies" - the four pieces of Opus 39 and the Sonata Tragica which is the fifth number of the set. The spirit of reminiscence pervaded the Opus 38 pieces and the remembrances were gay, recalling happier days and festive times of Russian life. This inspiration "framed" the set, as it were, by the Sonata Reminiscenza at the beginning of the "Alla Reminiscenza" at the close. So, too, in Opus 39 a spirit prevails which is the keynote to the character of the music. The spirit is sombre reflection culminating in a note of tragedy in the fifth and final number. Even the "Tale of Spring" - the third piece and the least grave of the set - reflects a more sober quality in contrast with the exuberance traditionally associated with Spring. Medtner has written no program notes for the "Forgotten Melodies" and his biographers have not discussed them. But, the three sets were written during a two-year period soon after the Revolution and one year before Medtner's departure from Russia. In the light of these circumstances it would seem logical to assume that the pieces were inspired by Medtner's love of the Russia he knew and his sorrow for the new Russia had come upon him and his countrymen.

The introspective character of the Opus 39 set is achieved by

a chromatic harmonic texture, chromatic melodic lines and dramatic dynamic effects. Thematic development, rhythmic ingenuity and a free abandon in style - hallmarks of Medtner's writing - are ever present. The form of the pieces is ternary in structure but somewhat modified.

Chromaticism is the basic characteristic of the pieces. Chromaticism, as defined by Medtner, is an "accidental harmonic formation" or a dissonance. Medtner sharply distinguishes between dissonance and discordance. The latter "is simply an accidental formation... an accident without any harmonic image." He compares the discordance to noise, an "exploded dissonance", a distortion.²

An examination of the chromatic content in the pieces of Opus 39 quickly reveals Medtner's fidelity to his principles. The first piece, in the key of C#-minor, called "Meditazione", begins with an extended introductory line on the V₉ chord. The chord-line is chromatically embellished by the lowered chromatic auxiliaries of chord tones in which they are resolved:

EXAMPLE 45: Op. 39, #1

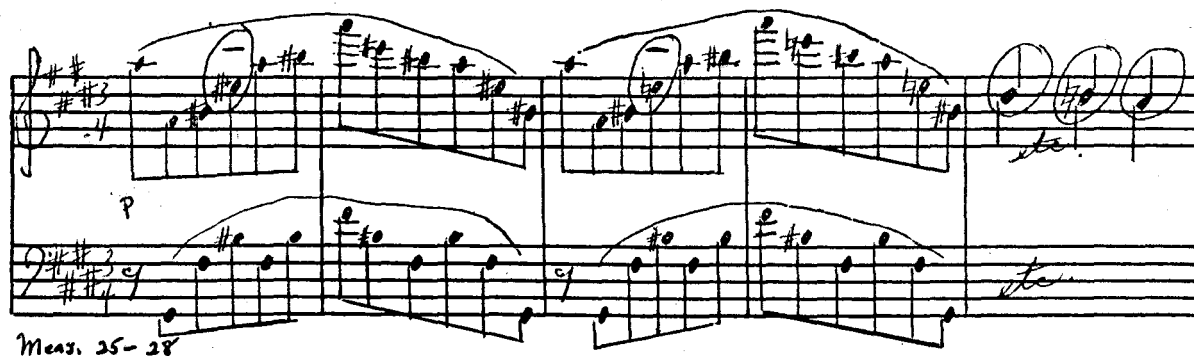


After the 24-measure "Lento" section the introduction continues with a quickened tempo. The general harmonic scheme of the opening

²Medtner, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

line as outlined in Example 45 continues here in a two-line texture. The bass outlines the dominant chord against a treble line which introduces a non-harmonic tone in each measure. The chromatic descending line eventually resolves on I:

EXAMPLE 46: Op. 39, #1



At the resolving C# the bass-line begins a chromatic descending line from the dominant note, G#, and ends on the tonic, C#. The same procedure of introducing one note in each measure is followed. The dominant harmonic tonality moves to the borrowed dominant of VI and finally to the V of V when the introduction closes.

The contour of the principal theme in the first piece, heard immediately after the introduction, is narrowly inflected by chordal outlines and chromatic motion. It is introduced in the dominant tonality but it is repeated in the tonic key of C#-minor.

The second piece of the set, "Romanza", begins immediately with the same melody as the first piece:

EXAMPLE 47: Op. 39, #2

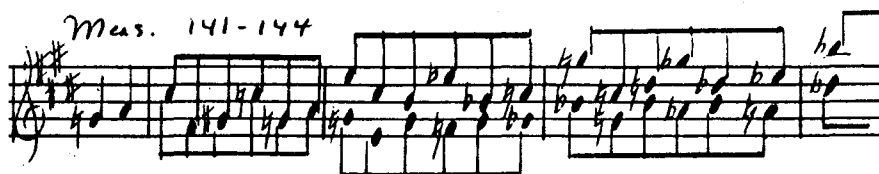


The last six notes of the line are developed throughout both pieces in diminution and in chromatic sequential passages:

EXAMPLE 48a: Op. 39, #2

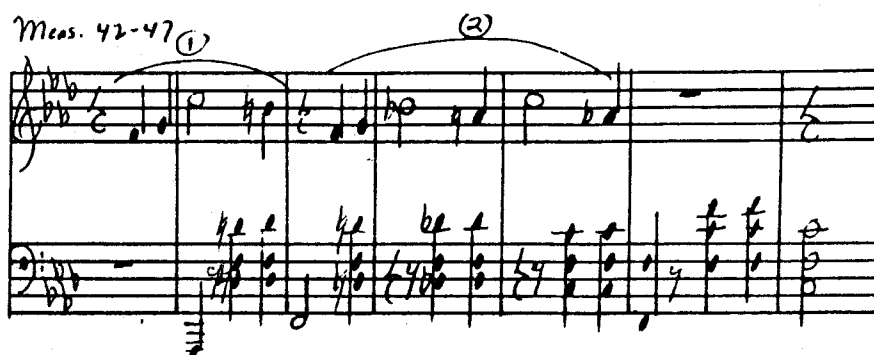


EXAMPLE 48b: Op. 39, #1



The entire melodic line appears in textural contrasts throughout both pieces from a thin statement of a single line accompaniment to an agitated solid textural presentation. At times just the first two-note chromatic figure is treated sequentially, at other times the melody is heard in the bass against a chromatic descant in the treble. In the second piece the melody is slightly altered but easily recognizable as a derivative of the original theme:

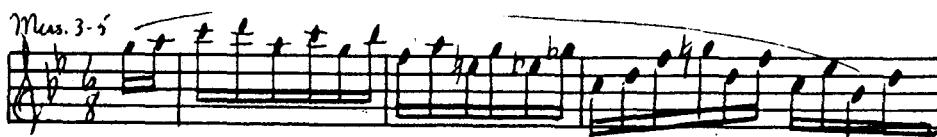
EXAMPLE 49: Op. 39, #2



The harmonic framework in the above example illustrates the homophonic structure employed throughout the two pieces. The harmonic outlook must be viewed over an entire phrase such as the phrase in Example 49. Here, as throughout the first two pieces, Medtner employs the technic of harmonic prolongation. The entire phrase is within the tonic framework. The intermediary harmonies are accidentally formed by the chromatic movement of the lines toward the final F-minor chord. The tonic note, F, pervades the phrase. The complete phrase is then repeated, but the penultimate note becomes the final note this second time. The second part of the line (as indicated by (2) in Example 49) is repeated literally and followed by a sequence of it a third higher thus bringing the harmony into a minor triad on the mediant. This is followed by VI in F-minor which moves to the dominant at the conclusion of the section.

The chromatic texture changes to a tonal one in the third and fourth pieces. The "Spring Fairy-Tale", as the third piece is called, begins with a nine-measure introduction with the bass outlining the dominant harmony, and the treble descending in a pattern of thirds. A comparison of the contours of the introductory treble line and the principal melody reveals a striking similarity - a technic by now so definitely recognized as part of Medtner's craft:

EXAMPLE 50a: Op. 39, #3



EXAMPLE 50b: Op. 39, #3

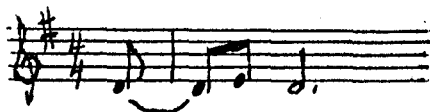


The melodic line continues to weave its way through tonic and plagal harmonies. The unusual range of the melodic line and the emphasis given to "G", the sub-mediante of the key, are worthy of note. Considerable development is given to the first six notes of the theme (Example 50b) in a setting of dramatic coloration. First the motif is heard three times in a bass-line accompaniment, each time a whole-step lower. It is then heard in the treble, three times, each time a major third higher:

EXAMPLE 51a: Op. 39, #3

EXAMPLE 51b: Op. 39, #3

The melody of the "Morning Canzona", the fourth piece of Opus 39, is constructed basically on a two-note motif:



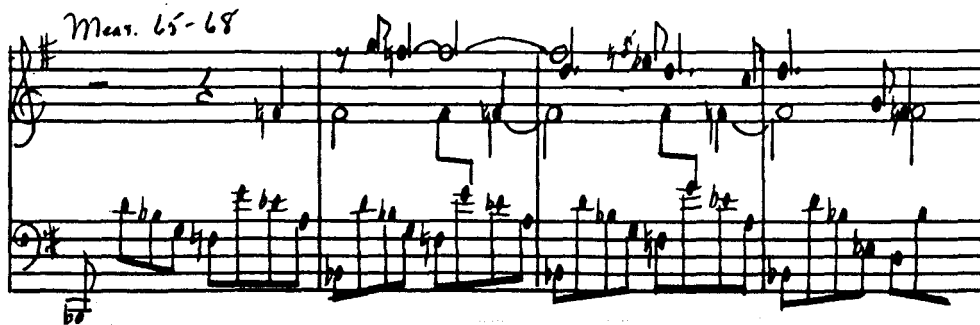
This is the treble line of the opening measure and its predominance in the melodic line which begins in the third measure is readily seen:

EXAMPLE 52: Op. 39, #4



The motif and melodic line appear in a developmental passage further on as the two ideas are ingeniously intermingled:

EXAMPLE 53: Op. 39, #4



The two-note motif is also present at the final cadence in an inverted direction:

EXAMPLE 54: Op. 39, #4



The cadence of the first piece in C#-minor closes on the Picardy third preceded by II⁷. The other cadences in the set are authentic. Prolonged trill passages and velocity lines are found at terminal points

in all four pieces - a technic used often in these later works.

The last set of "Forgotten Melodies" - the six pieces of Opus 40 - are more similar to the Opus 38 set than to Opus 39. They are, nevertheless, more extended, abundant in rhythmic intrigue, thematic development and textural contrasts. The keynote to the style of the set in general can be expressed by the title of the fifth piece, "Danza Ondulata." All six dances move in an undulating manner. The first piece, "Danza col canto" is a three-mood dance with its martial, snappy rhythmic section, its graceful, songlike passage and the fast, swirling, virtuosic third section. The three sections appear in the following scheme:

I - II - I - III - II - I (modified ternary form)

The "Danza Sinfonica", Number Two, is the largest in dimensions. It, too, is characterized by three contrasting moods, considerably extended and thematically related.

The smallest pieces in the set are "Danza Fiorata", Number Three and "Danza Ondulata", Number Five. As their titles suggest they are alike in a flexible, flowing style. This style is achieved by the broad sweep of arpeggiated lines and the irregular meter. The third piece is in a 7/8 meter and Number Five is written in 5/8 with an occasional bar in 6/8.

The "Danza Jubilosa", Number Four, and "Danza Dithiramba", Number Six, are the least colorful of the set but each contains examples of interesting thematic development.

As with the dances in Opus 38 the harmonic vocabulary in Opus 40 is basically simple with little chromaticism and with a preference for plagal harmonies.

The interest in this set seems to be in the melodies. A care-free,

folk-like character, it will be recalled, was found to fashion the melodies of the Opus 38 set. Here the melodic quality is more intense, more expressive by its longer phrases and bolder leaps. These characteristics are exemplified in the first piece, appropriately titled, "Danza col canto". After a fanfare-type introduction a song-line for two voices begins in D-minor, 5/8 meter:

EXAMPLE 55: Op. 40, #1



The line continues for four measures in a double sequence of the first two measures. This is followed by a repetition of the melody in the lower voice with a descant above. The melodic intervals of the sixth and seventh create the expressive quality in the line.

In contrast to the contour of the melody in the first piece the principal melodic line of the "Danza Sinfonica" moves in a diatonic manner. It, too, has a quality of expressiveness and intensity due to the emphasis on the plagal notes, Re and Fa and the upward curve at the end of the line:

EXAMPLE 56: Op. 40, #2



The opening phrase occurs throughout the piece in varied forms. It also appears alternating with the scherzo figure of the first section:

EXAMPLE 57: Op. 40, #2



It is then heard against an accompaniment line set in the skipping rhythm of the fourth measure of Example 57. In a section further on, a line appears which is clearly a derivative from this same melody:

EXAMPLE 58: Op. 40, #2



Again, it is heard in a canonic texture:

EXAMPLE 59: Op. 40, #2



The rhythmic figure seen in the last measure of Example 58 is present throughout most of the piece. Another rhythmic motif is given considerable contrapuntal development in this second piece. The figure first appears at the end of the Scherzo section:



It is treated canonically further on and toward the end of the piece it becomes the subject of a four-part fugato passage.

Similarities are readily seen between the melodic line of the third and fifth dances. It has already been noted that by their titles - "Danza Fiorata" and "Danza Ondulata" - the pieces are

stylistically similar. Both are written in irregular meters, Number Three in 7/8 and Number Five in 5/8. While the melody of the "Danza Fiorata" is diatonically shaped and the melody of the "Danza Ondulata" is constructed of broken chords the organization of the phrases is basically the same. Each phrase in both pieces begins on a double up-beat, i.e., the last two beats of the measure; the opening phrases of each piece is repeated, then heard in a lower sequence. Both melodies are accompanied by a running bass-line in single sixteenth-notes:

EXAMPLE 60a: Op. 40, #3

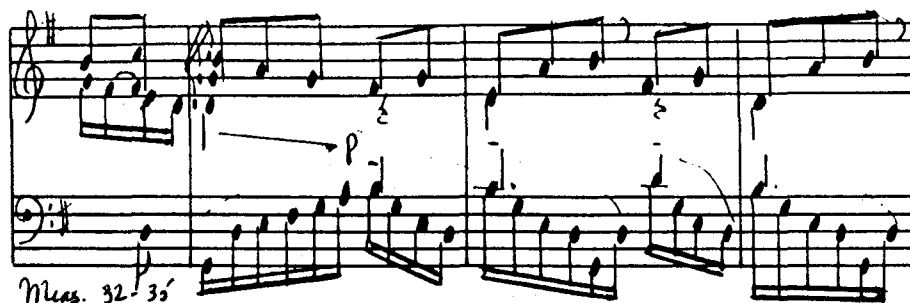


EXAMPLE 60b: Op. 40, #5



Contrasting with the broken chord-line melody in the fifth piece (Example 60b) a diatonic melody is introduced which is set in a quasi-polyphonic texture. This technic of weaving melodic fragments simultaneously in a given passage is a favorite one of Medtner. Most often the melodies are imitative of one another. Again, this instances Medtner's concern for a meaningful structure in the light of every musical element. Examples of this technic of writing are found in most of Medtner's music. Illustrations from Opus 40 are as follows:

EXAMPLE 61a: Op. 40, #5



EXAMPLE 61b: Op. 40, #2



The "Danza Jubilosa", Number Four, projects a martial quality by the use of certain military devices. For example, the piece opens with a trumpet call:

EXAMPLE 62: Op. 40, #4



This motif is heard four times, alternating bass and treble. The vigorous melodic line is then introduced against a typical military bass accompaniment:

EXAMPLE 63: Op. 40, #4



The triplet figure as it appears in the "trumpet call" is found throughout the piece.

The melodic development in the "Danza Jubilosa" manifests an ingenious handling of textural contrast. As it is first introduced the melody is clearly a march tune against the bass quoted in Example 63. In a second section a seemingly new melody is heard which is given equal prominence with the martial melody for the rest of the piece. This second melody is a sweet-sounding song accompanied by the tonic harmony which unfolds in a broken chord-line of triplets. But with careful analysis one becomes aware of the close relationship between the two melodies:

EXAMPLE 64a: Op. 40, #4



EXAMPLE 64b: Op. 40, #4



The "Danza Dithyramb", Number Six, begins with a melodic line of song-like quality, poetic phrasing, and structured on the principle of repetition:

EXAMPLE 65: Op. 40, #6



Here, too, the principle of thematic development is manifested in the second section where the thematic material is in imitation of the

opening melody:

EXAMPLE 66: Op. 40, #6 - (Cf. Example 65)



After much development of the opening melody a new theme is heard in a chromatic setting which establishes the "dolorosa e tenebroso" mood indicated on the score. This melody, too, is developed considerably by placing it an octave higher, embellishing it with non-harmonics, and setting it in a faster tempo of sixteenth notes as opposed to the quarter note context.

Thus, with multi-varied rhythmic patterns, ingenious handling of melodic ideas in relation to one another and within the framework of the rhythmic themes; with the display of a rich, contrapuntal fabric on the one hand and a thin, pure homophonic texture on the other, Medtner has achieved an expression of many-faceted nuances. The "Forgotten Melodies" of Opus 38, Opus 39 and Opus 40 were the last compositions that Medtner wrote on Russian soil. One author in 1953 speaks of Medtner's style in such terms as "heightened emotional temperature... restlessness... yearning... tone of protest and excitement."³ Such qualities are found in the "Forgotten Melodies."

The set of small pieces that followed the Opus 40 pieces was the three fairy-tales of Opus 42, written during Medtner's stay in Germany. The sojourn there was an unhappy one for Medtner and the fairy-tales of Opus 42 reflect his feeling. All three are in the minor mode. The

³Asaf'ev, op. cit., p. 252.

first piece is the only one with a special title. It is called "Russian Fairy-Tale" - indicative of his abiding nationalistic spirit. The three pieces of the set are in ternary form, rich in melodic material, and stylistically tinged with a strong pathos by means of the manner of handling the minor mode.

The Russian Fairy-Tale manifests clear roots in Russian folklore. The melodic material is Medtner's creation but the folkloristic qualities and Russian melos cannot be denied.

The Russian folk song is usually a simple, diatonic line with a frequent appearance of the augmented-second interval. The harmony is simple with a few chord changes and the structure adheres to the principle of repetition as well as includes colorful contrasts. All of these qualities are exemplified in the Russian Fairy-tale. The over-all style of the piece may be labelled a tale of colorful contrasts - a digest of Russian folkloristic phrases in capsule form. Four melodies are found in the piece. The first one heard at the beginning illustrates a simple line, the augmented-second interval and the principle of repetition:

EXAMPLE 67: Op. 42, #1



The same idea is repeated a fifth higher. The eight measures are harmonized on a prolonged dominant chord with passing chromatic harmonies. The dominant note becomes a sustained pedal for the entire phrase.

The second melody illustrates the interchange of the major and minor modes and the modal quality produced by the lowered leading-tone

as well as syncopated rhythm:

EXAMPLE 68: Op. 42, #1



Here, too, the harmony is basically tonic with a passing IV chord and the phrase ends on the mediant major chord in f-minor.

A rigorous tune then follows in C-minor, similarly constructed as the second tune (Example 68), with syncopated rhythm, a lowered leading-tone, repetitions and the major III chord at the end. The melody is heard in the bass against a simple figure of sixteenth notes which emphasize the tonic note of C:

EXAMPLE 69: Op. 42, #1



A fourth melodic idea appears which is in a martial, rhythmic setting, again in an extended tonic tonality of B-flat minor with the lowered leading-tone and the second degree in prominence. The principle of repetition is apparent in the melodic line and in the accompaniment figure:

EXAMPLE 70a: Op. 42, #1



EXAMPLE 70b: Op. 42, #1



The accompaniment figure in Example 70a continues through the melody as seen in Example 70b. The supertonic harmony functions as a passing sound within the B-flat minor framework. Contrapuntal texture is created by imitative development of the fourth melody in one passage and the same developmental technic of the second melody in another passage.

The last eight measures of the piece combine the fourth melody and the rhythmic figure of the accompaniment to the third melody, all on the F-minor tonic harmony. The dominant chord is used as a passing chord without the leading-tone thus highlighting the modal sound.

Although the second tale does not bear the title, "russian", its contents nevertheless manifest Russian characteristics. Medtner does indicate, however, that the piece is in the phrygian mode. This mode contains a lowered second and sixth degrees - a common device in Russian music. Here, too, the melody is basically simple with some syncopation and with the repeated-note idea:

EXAMPLE 71: Op. 42, #2



The texture of the piece is mainly a two-line fabric with the above melody appearing throughout, sometimes with some variation, other times in a literal re-statement. The harmony alternates between the progressions I - II and VI - II. Here the lowered second and sixth are brought into prominence. The harmonic scheme is laid out in a broken chord-line pattern which becomes almost an ostinato in its unending repetitions:

EXAMPLE 72: Op. 42, #2



When the melody is repeated the second time the same figure accompanies it, but the VI chord replaces the tonic in the harmony:

EXAMPLE 73: Op. 42, #3



The piece ends with a V_7 of VI to I cadence.

The third fairy-tale is the most intricate of the set. Like the Russian fairy-tale this piece is rich in colorful contrasts, changing moods and melodic material. The Russian character is not pronounced in the third piece as it was in the first two of the set. The piece begins with a quasi-cello solo line in G#-minor:

EXAMPLE 74: Op. 42, #3



A "scherzando" section follows. The raised third in the same measure with the raised leading-tone instances Medtner's device of intermingling major and minor tonalities within a short passage:

EXAMPLE 75: Op. 42, #3



Before the return of the "callo" theme an agitato passage in B Major is interjected. Syncopation and chromaticism are characteristic of this section. After the re-statement of the first theme and the "scherzando" section the mood changes immediately to a gay, light-hearted air. The key of G#-minor ends on IV and, through enharmonic change on a dominant pivot in G#-minor, the new tune begins in E-Flat major. This melody is folklike in its simplicity and repetitions, its syncopation and irregular phrase lengths. It is harmonized throughout by the E-Flat Major chord:

EXAMPLE 76: Op. 42, #3



The melody is repeated a whole-tone lower. The piece ends with another statement of the first theme and the "scherzando" theme. The accompaniment figures are similar to those found in the second piece. The harmonies employed are substantially I and V.

In 1927, five years after Opus 42 was completed, Medtner wrote the next set of small pieces - the two fairy-tales of Opus 48. By this time Medtner was settled in France where, despite the unsettled artistic climate, he enjoyed the comfort of understanding friends. The Opus 48 pieces are each given a descriptive title; Number One is called, "The Dancing Fairy-tale", the second bears the title of "Elf's Fairy-tale".

The first piece is poly-thematic and considerably extended. Thematic development is brilliantly worked out in both pieces. Rhythmic devices are imaginative and intriguing. Cross-rhythms appear not only in the actual rhythmic patterns but also as a result of the melodic phrasing. It will be recalled that this was a special feature of many of the dances in the "Forgotten Melodies" sets.

An example of this dual-cross-rhythmic technic is found in the opening of the first piece:

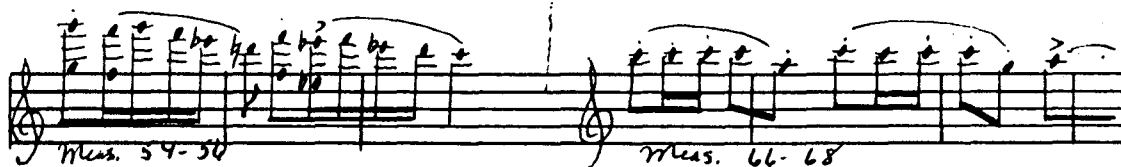
EXAMPLE 77: Op. 48, #1



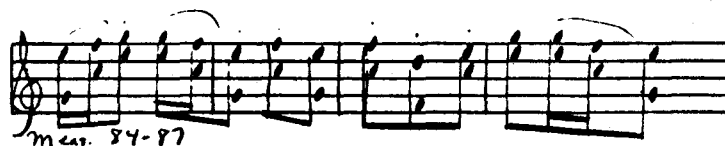
Whenever Medtner writes a dance-melody this cross-rhythm technic in the melodic phrase is certain to appear. Thus, in many dance tunes of the first fairy-tale of Opus 48 this technic is present:

EXAMPLE 78a: Op. 48, #1

EXAMPLE 78b:



EXAMPLE 78c:

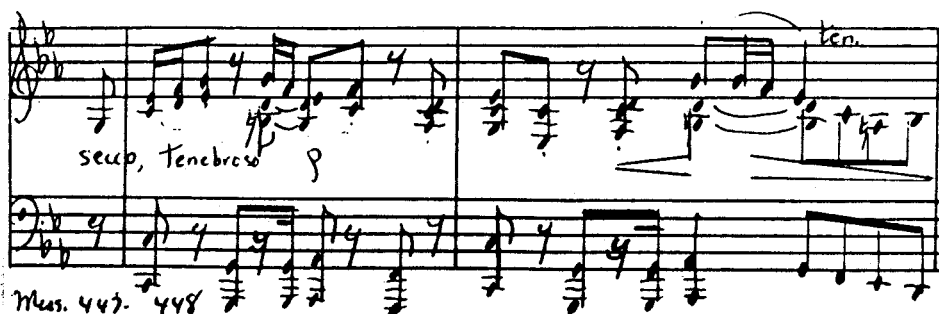


The dance melody in Example 78c appears in the first large section of the piece. It is a fast-moving, light-stepping dance heard against a line of open-fifths on C. The open-fifths are in this rhythmic pattern:



This bass-line is the substance of the dance-beat for the 54 measures of the "Presto" section. In the middle section of the piece the light-quick-paced dance (Example 78c) is transformed into a martial, sombre variation in the key of C minor:

EXAMPLE 79: Op. 48, #1



Using the same framework the theme is then heard in C Major and, finally, a re-statement of it follows as it first appeared in the opening section.

Contrasting with the quick, lively tunes already quoted is a "cantabile" line which follows immediately the "Presto" dance:

EXAMPLE 80: Op. 48, #1



The line continues to move in descending sequences of the last two measures above. The "Presto" tune appears again and closes this section.

A new section begins and a new melody is introduced, but one that is in the style of the "Presto" tune:

EXAMPLE 81: Op. 48, #1

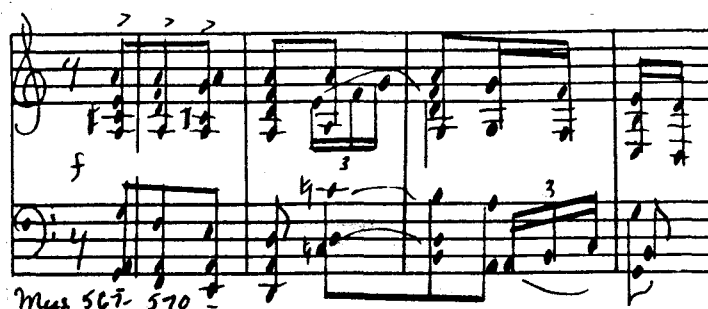


This new melody is also transformed as was the "Presto" tune discussed above. It appears in minor and then it becomes the subject of a fugato passage with entrances at the second and fourth. This contrapuntal part is then followed by the martial arrangement of the "Presto" tune.

Still another idea appears near the close of the piece - a heavy,

"heel" dance in a broadened $3/8$ meter indicated by Medtner as $3/8 = 2/8$:

EXAMPLE 82: Op. 48, #1



The piece is structured by alternations of dance-types and their developmental variations. A diagram of the over-all scheme reveals a balance of contrasts within each major section and the architectonic structure of the piece as a whole; i.e., the first dance frames the musical edifice and a new idea, strong and dramatic (Dance 5) is reserved for the climax.

Dance 1	Dance 2	Dance 3	DANCE	Dance 4	DANCE	Dance 2'	Dance 2 ---	Dance 5	DANCE
Ex. 78a	Ex. 78b	Ex. 80		Ex. 81		Ex. 79	Dance 3 --	Ex. 82	
risoluto	Presto	Canzabile	2	leggerissimo	4	Martial	Dance 2	Pesante	1
I				II				III	

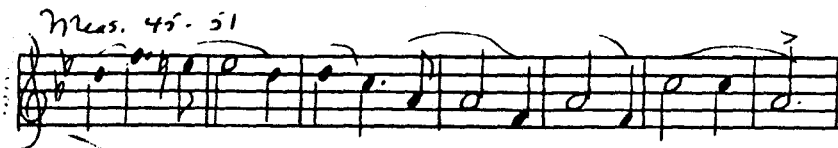
Characteristic of Medtner's harmonic vocabulary in the dances previously analyzed the harmony of "The Dancing Fairy-tale" is free from complexities. The piece remains, for the most part, in C Major with some borrowed harmonies in sequential passages.

The "Elf Fairy-tale" is smaller in dimensions than the first piece of the set and it, too, has superb examples of thematic development. Two melodies are introduced in the beginning section of the piece. They are similar in rhythmic context and general contour:

EXAMPLE 83a: Op. 48, #2



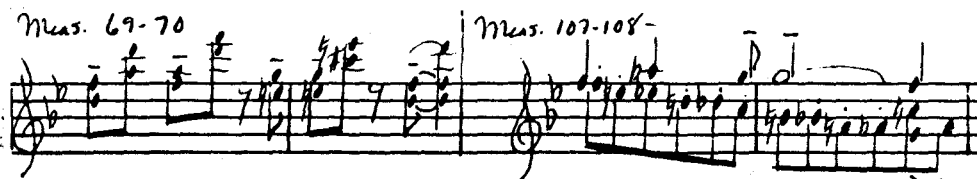
EXAMPLE 83b: Op. 48, #2



The second example appears in varied forms throughout the piece. First it is adorned in a quickened rhythmic passage, then it is accompanied by a chromatic texture:

EXAMPLE 84a: Op. 48, #2

EXAMPLE 84b: Op. 48, #2



The general design of the piece is linear with arpeggiated chords and chromatic scale-lines. The cadence is an authentic V - I over a tonic pedal. The repeated-note idea is very much in prominence. The image of the "capricious elf", finally, is convincingly projected in the piece by alternating expressive passages with light, "giocoso" ones.

In the following year, 1928, Medtner wrote a set of three pieces, Opus 49, which he calls, "Three Hymns on Work." The first one is a hymn "before work", the second, "Hymn at the Anvil", the third, "Hymn after Work." The pieces do not connote the traditional idea of labor songs with their frenzied excitement. Rather they embody a mood of serenity, calm and sanctifying reverence. To achieve this Medtner uses the simplest technical means without obvious or even subtle complexities.

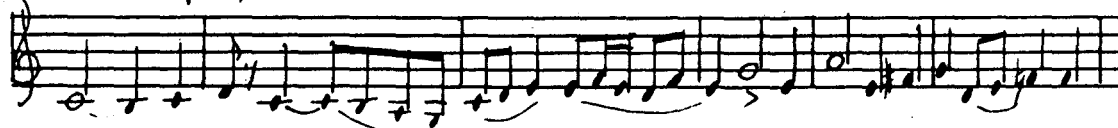
The three pieces are in C Major, time signatures used are 2/4 and 4/4. The rhythmic vocabulary contains no ingenious patterns. The first and third pieces are rhythmically constructed on a sixteenth-note scale-line motion in the accompaniment line against a melody set simply to quarter and eighth notes. The second piece in 4/4 is basically structured on a moving line of eighth notes against a melody rhythmically encased as simply as the other pieces of the set.

The melodies in each hymn are reserved in contour, unadorned and quite extended. Unlike most of Medtner's pieces, the Opus 49 hymns are mono-thematic and it is the "mono-theme" that constitutes the essence of each piece. An examination of the melodies clearly reveals their utmost simplicity. An absence of chromaticism and attention to symmetrical balance in line and rhythm are the notable features that contribute to the simple quality of each melody:

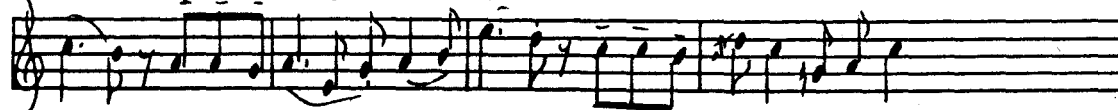
EXAMPLE 85a: Op. 49, #1



Ex. 85b: Op. 49, No. 2 (meas. 5-10)



Ex. 85c: Op. 49, No. 3 (meas. 5-8)



The melody of the first hymn (Example 85a) continues for sixteen measures in a symmetrical relationship to the first phrase. For example, the second eight-measure line descends (The first phrase moved upward.). The rhythm of the first measure in the second phrase is

identical to the second measure of the opening line. Part of the hymn-line is in the E-flat tonality. Through a series of sequences on fragments of the melody the C-Major harmony returns with a literal statement of the hymn. The piece is beautifully balanced by the insertion of a "bell-tolling", four-measure introduction which appears before the re-statement of the hymn and again at the close.

The second hymn, "At the Anvil", is more heavily textured with a syncopated accompaniment part that is both linear and chordal:

EXAMPLE 86: Op. 49, #2



The effect achieved by this accompaniment pattern against a simple melodic line is a vitalizing motion and energizing action. With the exception of sixteen measures this pattern is present throughout the piece. In the sixteen measures when the pulsating motion is interrupted the treble line becomes more active with chromatic octave-lines and sixteenth-note movement.

The melody of the "Anvil" hymn (Example 85b) appears in four modified versions. First, it is heard one octave higher and enriched by chords in the lower register of the treble. The second time it is stated in the dominant key, the third presentation is in C-major with harmonic variation, and finally at the close, it is adorned by an ornamental line above as illustrated in this example:

EXAMPLE 87: Op. 49, #2



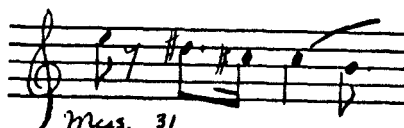
This hymn, too, begins with a four-measure introduction which is not heard again in the piece.

The most colorful of the three hymns is the third, "Hymn After Work." After a four-measure introduction on a descending chromatic scale-line the melody appears against a running sixteenth-note scale-line passage in the bass. The melody is then taken up by the bass and the treble accompaniment is the same as the one heard in the bass previously. In the middle section the first measure of the hymn melody is developed at great length in varied harmonic settings and with modified rhythm:

EXAMPLE 88a: Op. 49, #3



EXAMPLE 88b: Op. 49, #3



Two dynamic, coloristic effects are included in the third hymn. The first is a chromatic scale "con strepito" that extends over three-fourths of the keyboard, heard immediately before the re-statement of the introduction and melody. At the close of this recapitulation a second chromatic passage is introduced. Solid chords in both hands moving chromatically and in contrary motion usher in a coda section of arpeggios in varied patterns on the tonic chord. It is interesting that, in keeping with the inspirational nature of the pieces, the cadence of each hymn is plagal.

The six fairy-tales of Opus 51 are dedicated to Zolushka and Ivanushka, two of the most beloved personages in Russian national lore and commonly referred to as Cinderella and Ivan the Fool. This last set of fairy-tales is full of melodic charm, grace and nobility. In any of the tales that are directly related to Russian life and thought Medtner projects a quality that is undeniably authentic. The individuality of his melodic structure, his rhythm and harmonic vocabulary are expressed with graceful ease and naturalness when his inspiration springs from Russian ties. The reason for this is that the characteristics of Medtner's art in terms of technical devices coincide in large measure with the technical characteristics of the Russian folk-song. This fact was evidenced in the Russian Fairy-tale, Opus 42, No. 1. In a more striking manner does it reveal itself in the Opus 51 set. Concomitant with the Russian quality is the Western-orientated principle of thematic development. Each tale is basically structured on an evolution of the given folk tune.

The folk melody of the first piece in the set is in D-minor. Here is found the repeated-note idea, syncopated rhythm, irregular melodic phrasing, repetition scheme in phrase structures - all characteristics of the Russian melos:

EXAMPLE 89: Op. 51, #1



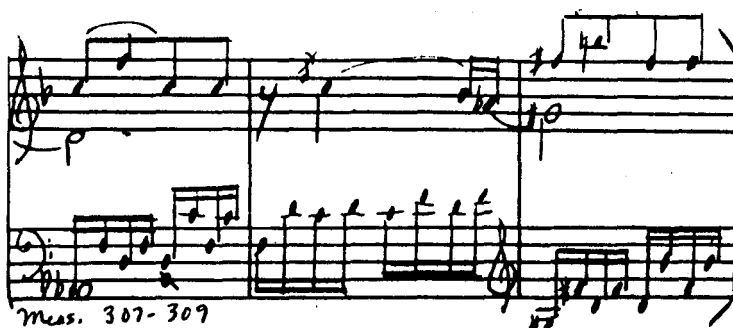
The tune is then repeated, followed by multi-varied forms of the whole or part of the melody. In the following examples the folk tune is

first augmented; second, its brisk style is transformed into a legato, "dolce" mood and two measures only are worked through a series of sequences; finally, a contrapuntal texture is created by one line in augmentation against a line in the original meter:

EXAMPLE 90a: Op. 51, #1



EXAMPLE 90b: Op. 51, #1



EXAMPLE 90c: Op. 51, #1



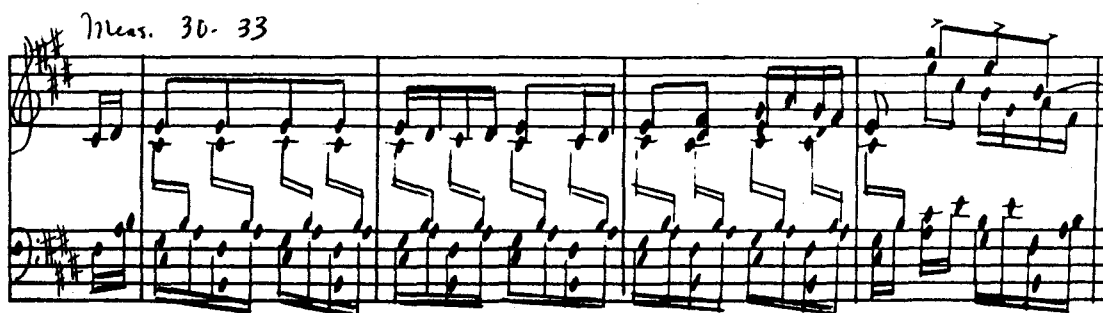
The nature of the folk melody in the third fairy-tale is more chordal than the first. The rhythmic scheme, however, is similar:

EXAMPLE 91: Op. 51, #3



Here, too, the development of the folk tune constitutes the principal content of the piece. The fifth and sixth measures of the melodic line are given extensive development. First, the melodic segment in question is heard, followed by a measure related to the melodic structure. This in turn is followed by the melody of the first measure beginning with the second note:

EXAMPLE 92: Op. 51, #3



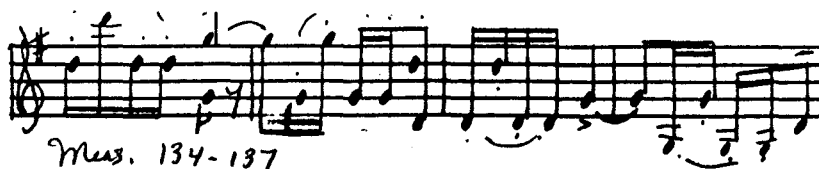
This is repeated and the repetition is followed by a development of the third to sixth measure of the folk tune alternating between treble and bass through a series of sequences. The folk tune then returns in the original key accompanied by the tonic chord arpeggiated in staccato.

The melody of both the fourth and sixth pieces emphasizes the repeated-note idea. The fourth fairy-tale is in F#-minor, the sixth in G-Major:

EXAMPLE 93a: Op. 51, #4



EXAMPLE 94b: Op. 51, #6



The F#-minor tune in the fifth piece again manifests the same Medtnerian procedures in minor-scale melodies, i.e., lowered leading-tone and shifting to the relative major tonality:

EXAMPLE 95: Op. 51, #5



Five of the six pieces begins with an introduction. Most of the introductory passages are different from the main structure of the piece in terms of texture, melody and rhythm. The harmonies employed are normally suspended tonalities that ultimately resolve to the tonic at the end of the passage.

In the first piece the opening texture is legato, the rhythmic pattern is a series of four-sixteenth notes to each beat in 2/4, thus contrasting with the staccato texture and syncopated rhythm of the main theme. The harmonies are within the framework of the borrowed dominant of V. In D-minor this is the tonality of A. The introduction finally resolves on a clear V - I cadence in D-minor:

EXAMPLE 96: Op. 51, #1 (Cf. Example 89)

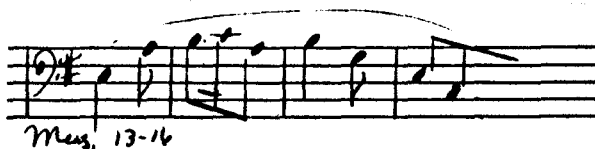


The second fairy-tale of the set, written in A-minor, bears a signature of one sharp, thus placing the tonality in the Dorian mode structure. Its twelve-measure introduction also contrasts with the basic structure of the piece in textural and rhythmic patterns. Melodically, however, the introduction outlines the principal tune which follows immediately:

EXAMPLE 97a: Op. 51, #2



EXAMPLE 97b: Op. 51, #2



The harmonies in the introduction are clearly I and V₇ - in the natural minor mode of A.

The short introductory passage in the fourth piece, unlike the two introductions already discussed, is incorporated in the main structure of the composition and given considerable development along with the folk melody. Harmonically, it is set in a I - V context of F#-minor. The leading-tone is conspicuously absent from the V chord until the

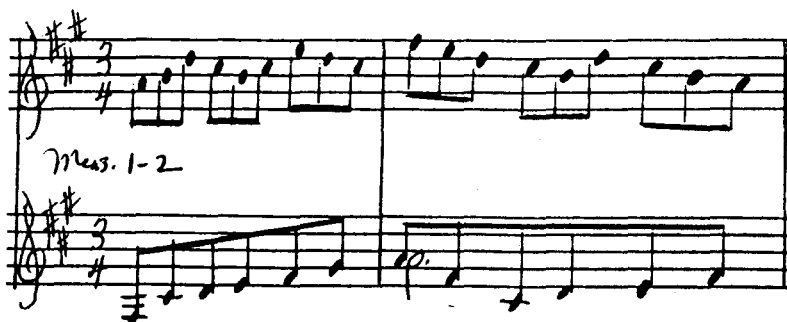
end of the introductory line when the cadence is a solid V - I:

EXAMPLE 98: Op. 51, #4



In the fifth piece the triplet accompanimental figure constitutes the main idea in the introduction. A cross-rhythmic pattern is employed here:

EXAMPLE 99: Op. 51, #5



The four-measure introductory passage in the sixth piece presents the repeated-note idea of the folk tune accompanied by a progression of chords that exemplifies superbly the technic of harmonic prolongation. Here the dominant harmony is prolonged through a series of passing chords and a dominant pedal, appearing at the third measure, serves to solidify the dominant sound. The suspended series finally rests on the tonic at the opening of the principal section:

EXAMPLE 100: Op. 51, #6



The sense of anticipation created by the harmonic framework of these introductions exemplifies Medtner's fine sense of structural values.

Not only does Medtner manifest a similarity with Robert Schumann in rhythmic devices and in his interest in a fanciful, poetic atmosphere as the Fairy-tales exemplify but also, like Schumann, Medtner was inspired to write music for children. In the latter part of Schumann's life he wrote the 43 pieces of the Album for the Young. Medtner, too, in the second-half of his life wrote eight pieces which he titled, "Romantic Sketches for the Young". The eight pieces are divided into four books, two pieces in each book. Each piece has a descriptive title, the first piece of each book is in the major mode, the second is in minor. Like the Album for the Young each piece has some technical problem, and each piece is clothed with an imaginative, poetic spirit and a sense of wonder. In these miniatures there are no harmonic obscurities, no heavy chromaticism in the melodies, no extended passages and no complex developments. There is, however, an abundance of noble beauty and artistic simplicity made comprehensible to the young by an open texture of simple lines and lilting rhythm.

It is not known for how young a player Medtner intended his sketches. An examination of the music readily makes clear that a player

needs some proficiency to play the pieces. The Album of Schumann, reveals the composer's ability to speak musically in an elementary yet none the less artistic language. Medtner never expresses himself in elementary terms. His most light-hearted moments betray his multifaceted outlook on music. Thus, while the Romantic Sketches are structurally and technically simple in comparison with Medtner's other works they nevertheless require a certain amount of musical maturity for full comprehension. They might compare more accurately with Schumann's Scenes from Childhood which can best be interpreted by an adult who is young at heart.

The two pieces of Book One off-set one another by a contrast of ideas. The first piece is a pastorale prelude in A-Flat major and the second, in C-minor, is called "The Little Bird's Fairy-tale". The texture of the first piece is a running line of sixteenths against melodic lines that are constructed in a free, open style. Examples of these melodies are as follows:

EXAMPLE 101a: Op. 54, I, #1



EXAMPLE 101b: Op. 54, I, #1



There is a Schumannesque character to the first example with its diatonic skips and syncopated effects. It resembles somewhat the melodic line in Number 21 of the Album for the Young:

EXAMPLE 102: Schumann (Album for Young) - #21



The second melody, indicated in Example 101b, appears in a development section within a typical Medtnerian framework of linear and vertical motion:

EXAMPLE 103: Op. 54, I, #1



Medtner's polyphonic thinking is clearly seen in a similar treatment of the same melody:

EXAMPLE 104: Op. 54, I, #1



Thus, even in a piece of 48 bars, which is the length of the Pastorale Prelude, Medtner's predilection for thematic development is present. Furthermore, even in a miniature such as this these devices evolve freely and naturally without any forced effect. The piece ends with

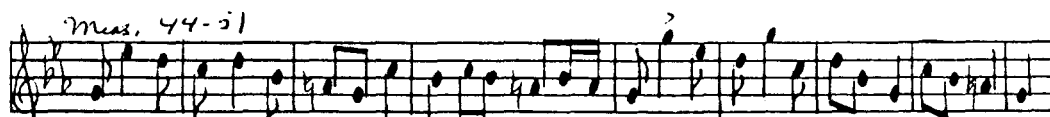
a canonic scale-line for both hands just before the IV - V cadence.

The second piece, "The Little Bird's Fairy-Tale", is thinly-textured with two gay, freely skipping melodies and some syncopation:

EXAMPLE 105a: Op. 54, I, #2

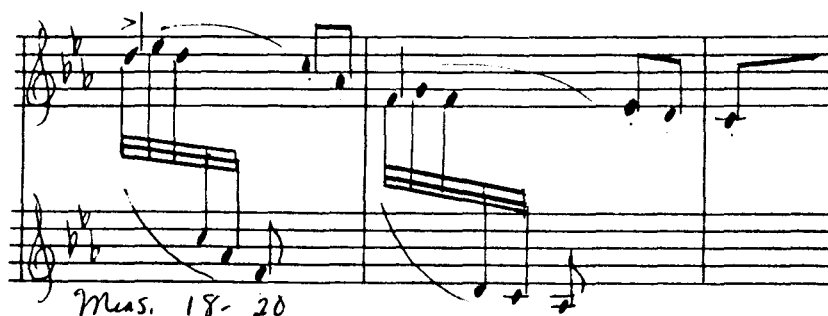


EXAMPLE 105b: Op. 54, I, #2



The first melody is delicately ornamented as follows:


EXAMPLE 106: Op. 54, I, #2




The second melody is accompanied by a scale-line in sixteenths and followed by a series of "bird calls" alternating with the first melody. The "bird call" is depicted by embellished single notes in octave skips:

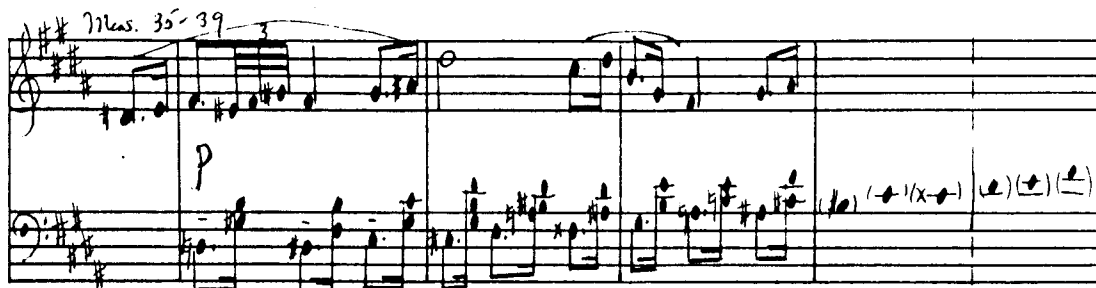
EXAMPLE 107: Op. 54, I, #2



The piece is framed by a section skipping in a rhythmic pattern of .

In the second book of the sketches a contrast is achieved between a stately "Saraband Prelude" and a "Scherzo Fairy-tale." The prelude of fifty measures is in B-Major with the diatonic melody set in the rhythmic figure of . This rhythmic motif is also present throughout the accompaniment line. Medtner's attention to linear motion is apparent in an ascending accompaniment line against a simple, diatonic melody:

EXAMPLE 108: Op. 54, II, #1

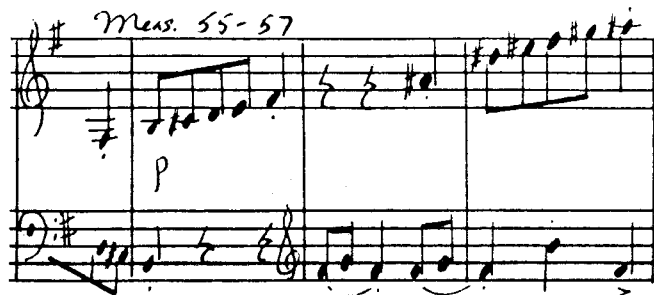


Characteristic devices of Medtner are much in evidence in the "Scherzo Fairy-tale." The cross-bar phrasing of the opening melody is unmistakably a Medtner label as well as the contrapuntal treatment worked out with the same melody. Present, too, are harmonic changes within the polyphonic web. For example, after the presentation of the melody in E-minor a canonic texture is initiated with the first entrance on the dominant and the second on the lowered leading-tone of E-minor. If the harmonic outlook of B-minor is preferred at the canonic entrances then the passage after the second entrance contains the lowered leading-tone of B-minor since this second passage is in a setting of D-major. When, further on, the canon begins again in a B-minor setting the second entrance begins on the raised leading-tone of B-minor, this time in a

D \sharp -minor setting. Both examples are here illustrated:

EXAMPLE 109a: Op. 54, II, #2

EXAMPLE 109b: 54, II, #2



This type of abrupt modal interchange specifically around the leading-tone is a characteristic point in Medtner's harmonic thought.

The prelude in the third book is called "Tender Reproach" and its texture consists basically of scale-lines in a chromatic context. The first two measures typify the content of the rest of the piece:

EXAMPLE 110: Op. 54, III, #1



Further on a setting of a similar texture is found in C \sharp -minor - a mediant relationship with the tonic of A Major. Again, Medtner's consciousness of linear contrast and symmetry is apparent in such passages as this one:

EXAMPLE 111: Op. 54, III, #1



Here a chromatic descending line in the bass moves contrary to an ascending line of fourths and fifths.

Variety in unity is achieved by presenting the treble line of the opening section in diminution against the original bass. This occurs in the re-statement of the theme at the close.

"The Barrel-Organ-Player Fairy-tale" which is the second piece of Book III is a humorous piece with its shifting from diatonic to chromatic settings for the same tune, abrupt alternations of major and minor tonalities, and progression of successive dominants. That Medtner emphasizes plagal harmonies, prefers the natural minor mode and relates keys around the lowered leading-tone is not surprising. The unique factor in the piece is the multi-varied harmonic settings for the same melody. The little tune is rhythmically patterned after the melody in the first prelude of Book I and the harmonic content is D-minor and F-Major - a mediant relationship:

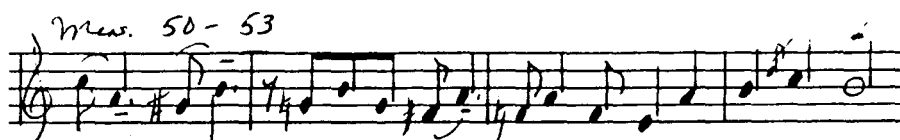
EXAMPLE 112: Op. 54, III, #2



The same idea is repeated a fifth lower, the relationship thus being plagal. The next appearance of the tune shows chromatic changes in the melody and the D-minor tonality is coupled with "Neapolitan" harmonies, as easy transition into C-minor which is the next harmonic setting for the tune.

After a definitive D-minor cadence a new tune is introduced, quieter in mood but related structurally to the first melody:

EXAMPLE 113: Op. 54, III, #2

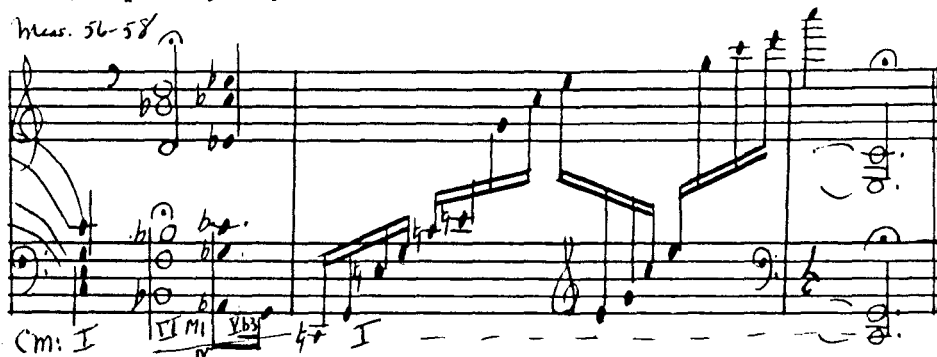


The harmonic setting here is an A-minor tonality with emphasis on the natural mode. A new texture is introduced in the Coda. Interlocking sixteenths support a new song-like melody and the harmonies are clearly V - I in D-minor with some interplay on the borrowed dominant of V. Medtner's change of movement frequently found in his codas serves to add a tone of intensity to the music which, as in his introductory passages, illustrates his sensitive concern for structural values.

The "Hymn Prelude" - the opening piece of Book IV - resembles the structure and texture of the three hymns of Opus 49, especially Number One of the set, "Hymn Before Work." In both pieces the same simplicity in melodic contour and harmonic content is present. Here, too, the melodic line is unusually extended and accompanied by broken chord-lines in sixteenths. The middle section of both pieces moves through the flat keys notably F-minor and E-Flat major. The cadence in the "Hymn Prelude" manifests a "Neapolitan" setting and concern for voice-leading. The progression of the bass-line at the cadence

illustrates Medtner's modal outlook:

EXAMPLE 114: Op. 54, IV, #1



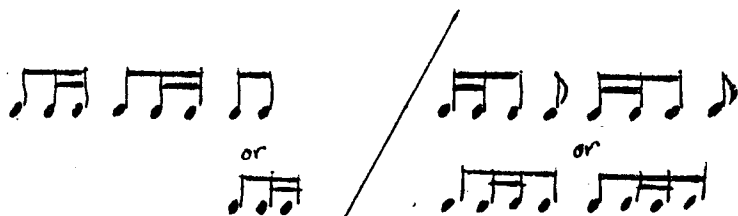
An interchange of 6/8 and 3/4 is the highlight of "The Beggar's Tale" - the last piece of the Romantic Sketches. This interchange is quite obvious in the melodic line which opens the piece in the natural mode of E-minor:

EXAMPLE 115: Op. 54, IV, #2



Phrase-lengths move in groups of three bars rather than traditional four bars. The accompaniment line is characteristic of Medtner with emphasis on the linear aspect resulting here, and in most of his writing, in the harmonic prolongation technic. Characteristic, too, is the repetition of the melody a third higher thus shifting to the relative major tonality. The second repetition follows still a third higher resulting in a shift to B-minor.

The rhythmic subtleties made possible by combining 6/8 and 3/4 are vast. One example which Medtner employs as a unifying device in the piece is the juxtaposition and frequent simultaneous occurrence of these two rhythmic figures:



The first pattern is present in every section of the piece. The alternation of the $3/4$ pattern with the $6/8$ one occurs twice in the first section and is the only rhythmic idea in the closing section. The example below taken from the closing section further illustrates the ingenious voice-leading of the lines:

EXAMPLE 116: Op. 54, IV, #2



The "Romantic Sketches for the Young" were completed in 1933 while Medtner was still in France. Twelve years passed between the writing of these pieces and the next group of pieces in smaller forms that was to be the last set in this medium. In 1945, eight years before his death, Medtner wrote "Two Elegies", Opus 59. By this time Medtner was happily settled in London.

The two elegies are strikingly similar in structure, melodies, harmonic and rhythmic content. The texture of both pieces is rich in dissonance with a mingling of homophonic and polyphonic outlooks. Accompanying lines to the melody are laid out in broad, rhapsodic sweeps and highly virtuosic passages. While unusual rhythmic devices are absent from the music there are present, nevertheless, subtle rhythmic

figurations which result from the linear independence of the structure.

A predominance of the repeated-note idea is visible in both pieces.

The elegies begin in an identical manner, the first in A-minor, the second in E-Flat minor:

EXAMPLE 117: Op. 59, #1



The harmonic outlook illustrated here is continued throughout both pieces. At first sight, the harmony seems to be a complex structure, but when examined linearly, the line is actually simple. The harmony can be reduced to a V - I structure. The opening chord is not the first harmony of the piece; rather, the first harmony is an implied V₇ of A-minor at the sixteenth rest. This is readily admissible by the fact that the opening pattern of the first measure follows the V chord at the end of the phrase.

The two elegies illustrate in a striking manner Medtner's harmonic effect of suspending a harmony of repose, such as the tonic, over a long phrase. This he does by moving lines, sometimes independently and sometimes simultaneously, through a series of non-harmonics until the phrase terminates on an unmistakable chord of rest. It is precisely this type of extended suspension that creates the feeling of tension and pathos.

Medtner's genius for thematic development is clearly present

in the two elegies. The opening measure permeates the entire structure by appearing in varied forms, sometimes in an "agitato" context, at other times in a "cantabile" mood:

EXAMPLE 118a: Op. 59, #1

EXAMPLE 118b: Op. 59, #1

The image displays two musical excerpts. Example 118a, labeled 'Op. 59, #1', shows measures 48-50 in an 'agitato' mood. The notation is in 6/8 time, with a piano (p) dynamic. Example 118b, also labeled 'Op. 59, #1', shows measures 60-62 in a 'cantabile' mood. This excerpt is also in 6/8 time with a piano (p) dynamic. Both examples feature a piano (p) dynamic and a 6/8 time signature.

At the end of the second elegy an ingenious polyphonic development is worked out on the same opening bars:

EXAMPLE 119: Op. 59, #2

The image displays a musical excerpt for Example 119, labeled 'Op. 59, #2'. It shows measures 109-111 in a 'risoluto' mood. The notation is in 4/4 time, with a forte (f) dynamic. The excerpt features a piano (p) dynamic and a 4/4 time signature.

Medtner's preference for the "Neopolitan" harmony at the cadence is illustrated in both pieces:

EXAMPLE 120a: Op. 59, #1

EXAMPLE 120b: Op. 59, #2

Handwritten musical notation for two examples from Opus 59. Example 120a (Op. 59, #1) shows measures 107 and 109. Example 120b (Op. 59, #2) shows measures 107 and 109. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'sf' and 'pp'. There are also handwritten annotations below the staves, including Roman numerals and other musical symbols.

Finally, the Opus 59 pieces epitomize Medtner's western, romantic affiliations. Like the "Three Hymns" of Opus 49 this music is constructed on a single strand of inspiration which evolves from one form to another in a natural manner. Lacking sudden contrasts in texture the music projects a thorough-composed structure.

Thus, the pieces from Opus 34 manifest a composer in the fullness of his art. These sets do not form a separate period of Medtner's creativity such as is seen in the development of Scriabin's and Stravinsky's writing. With Medtner there was never any deviation from the canons and creeds to which he subscribed. However, it is in these later pieces that the principles and outlooks manifested in Medtner's music are crystallized and realized definitely as hallmarks of Medtner's art.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the light of this study we are led to say that the elements of Medtner's pianoforte style spring from two traditions; the one, classical, the other national. The off-shoots of the classical tradition are identified in general by Medtner's consistent interest in structural problems. Specifically, this stress on structure is seen in the perfection of his phrases, their symmetry and balance. Melodic lines are subjected to repetitions and sequences. The melodic contour is generally conservative (triadic and scale-line) with frequent use of repeated tones. The rhythmic setting of the melodies makes them distinctive.

Developmental technics are particularly in the foreground of Medtner's craft. Smaller pieces are never fragmentary. The smallest miniature is a self-evolving, organically unified work. Medtner achieves this by developing any of the musical material presented in the exposition of the piece. Sometimes a short melodic or rhythmic motif of an introductory line is developed extensively, at other times two melodies or rhythmic ideas are treated simultaneously or antiphonally. Within the exposition itself imitation and development are employed in order to bind the structure of the piece together more cohesively. The developmental devices are realized by pure contrapuntal means (imitation, canon, fugato augmentation, diminution) and by an harmonic framework contrapuntally conceived.

Medtner's harmony breaks no new ground, but it is singularly resourceful within the accepted canons. Its resourcefulness is defined by a fusion of harmonic sounds resulting from the subtle employment of

suspensions and appoggiaturas and also resulting from the cross-passages effected by the rhythm which leads to remarkable clashes. This latter factor can be described as a type of polyphony through rhythm.

Medtner's codas achieve the greatest intensity of movement by the use of suspended harmonies and quickened rhythmic motion. The cadences are direct and architectonic in their relation to the over-all structure of the piece. Principal motives appear frequently in the coda and at the cadence.

Side by side the classical tradition in Medtner's art are Russian national characteristics. While Russian folk songs are not literally quoted in Medtner's music esthetic and technical factors of the Russian melos are there present. The Russian influence is seen when the melodies are stated directly, without any developmental treatment. Augmented melodic intervals of a second and fourth are frequently used. Repetition of short, melodic ideas and a syncopated, rhythmic context, all indicative of the Russian style, are found.

Especially in tonality is Medtner's art orientated to Russian music. This is manifested by plagal and modal tendencies, a shifting from Major to minor, consistent use of the natural form of the minor scale and a de-emphasis of the leading-tone. Rhythmic complexities and the use of irregular meters, characteristic of Russian music, are also part of Medtner's writing. An extra-musical connection between Medtner and his country is the frequent quotation of Russian poets and folk characters in the programming of his music.

Apart from the classical and national influences, Medtner's music shows an affiliation with nineteen-century romanticism. The

titles of many of the pieces show an attraction for the character pieces of the west. Coloristic effects in rhapsodic textures and flashing sequences are identified with the romantic style and are found in Medtner's music.

Medtner's association with Brahms is found in certain rhythmic inventions (cross-rhythms and hemiola) and a general classical outlook. The inspirational content of many of his pieces, the harmonic technic described above and novel rhythms compare Medtner to Schumann. Medtner's link with Beethoven is founded on the developmental technic and accent on form.

Medtner's position and importance in the area of keyboard music are not determined by his similarities with the great masters of the past. Rather, they are founded on his contribution to music and the acceptance of his art. Medtner contributed nothing "new" to musical art in terms of what his contemporaries, weary of the traditional forms, were looking for. Hence, he was accepted by an elite few. But, every artist contributes something new by the art of his creating his unique expression through a formal medium. Medtner's position is not recognized among the foremost keyboard writers but, on the evidence of his music, he has bequeathed to keyboard literature a host of pieces substantially sound in pianistic invention and rich in musical thought. On the basis of this analytical study it is believed that Medtner's importance as a composer rests on his unique style of a fusion of western and Russian qualities.

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LECTURE-RECITAL

The composer and pianist, Nicolas Karlovich Medtner, takes his place in history among the so-called second generation of Russian musicians. These were the men who followed Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Moussorgsky and the Rubenstein brothers. This second generation includes, among others, such composers as Liadov, Arensky, Glazounov, Gretchaninov, Scriabin and Rachmaninov. These men, and Medtner is included among them, were trained in the two centers of Russian musical activity during the last decade of the nineteenth century - the Moscow Conservatory and the St. Petersburg Conservatory.

As a student at the Moscow Conservatory Medtner was influenced by the director of the school, Taneiev who was a master of theoretical counterpoint and a purist in compositional procedures. In Taneiev's class Medtner developed a mastery of polyphonic writing that was to become a hallmark of his style.

Enrolled at the Moscow Conservatory with Medtner were Rachmaninov and Scriabin. An interesting and informative article about Medtner appeared in the November 1961 issue of Sovetskaya Muzyka, the Soviet Union's musical publication. The title of the article is "A Contemporary of Scriabin and Rachmaninov." The author views the three composers as contributors to the further development of the Liszt and Chopin tradition and at the same time he admits their vast difference in the means each of them chose to uphold this tradition. The author speaks of Rachmaninov as the brilliant virtuoso caught up in concert life who found his idol and inspiration in Tchaikovsky; Rachmaninov, the romantic, whose creative flow was unsteady, who reflected the grand Lisztian manner in his composition. The author

speaks of Scriabin, also absorbed in concert life, also the romantic, influenced by Chopin, Liszt, Wagner, and later, Debussy. Unlike Rachmaninov whose roots remained in western romanticism, Scriabin pressed further into regions of incomprehensible obscurities. The emotionalism of both composers was self-conscious; their lives were filled with neurosis and depression. Medtner, by contrast, possessed a balanced emotional life and preferred composing to concertizing although he did not abandon performance entirely. Like Rachmaninov and Scriabin Medtner's art is linked with the composers of the west. As Rachmaninov is traditionally identified with the flamboyance of Liszt and Scriabin with the poetic delicacies of Chopin Medtner is associated with the introspection of Schumann and the craftsmanship of Brahms. Such is the view of a Soviet writer of our time.¹

Going back to the writers of Medtner's time we find similar comparisons being made. In 1917, the Russian musical historian, Montagu-Nathan, observed that with Rachmaninov perfection of structure appears to have been only a secondary consideration. His teacher, Taneiev, rigidly upheld the architectonic element of music. Mr. Nathan states that there is a composer who is to be placed between the two. The composer is Medtner.² Ten years later, Leonid Sabaneiev defined what he termed

¹O. Neygauz, "Sovremennik Skryabina: Raklumaninova," Sovetskaya Muzyka, November, 1961, pp. 72-75.

²Montagu-Nathan, Contemporary Russian Composers (London: Palmer & Hayward, 1917), p. 235.

"Medtnerism". His definition speaks of ". . . a deviation of the Chopin-Liszt-Scriabin path in the direction of Brahms-Schumann-Beethoven."³

After Medtner's death in 1951 most historians continued to place him in the German late romantic culture. In 1957 Richard Leonard states in his comprehensive history of Russian music that "Medtner descended from Brahms and Schumann."⁴ Leonard supports his thesis by listing certain technical mannerisms of Brahms which are found in Medtner's music. He points out that the two composers are similar in contrapuntal technical procedures, deployment of chords and harmonic texture. Leonard also finds the influence of the Russian folk idiom in Medtner's works. Harold Truscott writes that ". . . there is in much of (Medtner's) work what is perhaps as profound an expression of and commentary on the Russian spirit as one finds in the work of Dostoevsky, Tchekov, Pushkin and Turgenev."⁵

The latest commentary on Medtner's position appeared in the January, 1965 issue of Music and Letters. Here Malcolm Boyd speaks of Medtner's style as springing from two main traditions, the nineteenth century German idiom and the Russian tradition. He speaks of the Medtner-Brahms comparison with restrictions to classical outlook and the use of cross-rhythms. The

³Leonid Sabaneiev, "Two Critiques", Music and Letters, July, 1927, p. 334.

⁴Richard A. Leonard, A History of Russian Music (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1957), p. 342.

⁵Harold Truscott, "Nicolas Medtner", The Chesterian, Summer 1956, p. 7.

Beethoven influence he sees as more far-reaching in terms of sonata structure and thematic development. In reference to the Russian traits Mr. Boyd makes the point that while Medtner did not consciously ". . . cultivate a 'national style' his national interest was so much a part of him that the Russian quality is unmistakably present in his art.⁶

Medtner wrote a book in 1933 which he called The Muse and the Fashion. Here Medtner compiled his beliefs, principles and philosophy of music. The thesis of the book is summed up in this one statement found in the first chapter: "What is generally supposed to be artistic progress can be a movement towards perfection only when it contains no deliberate departure from the simplicity of the fundamental senses of art."⁷ By "senses" Medtner means the inherent principles of music. This was Medtner's musical creed from which he never deviated despite the changing views of the composers of his time. Medtner, on principle, refused to be caught up in the rapid tide of extreme experimentation which existed in the musical world of the early twentieth century in which he lived. He stood as a solitary figure, reviewing the stream of musical activity during the first four decades of the twentieth century, convinced that new forms of expression could be found within the old framework of writing. This is perhaps the true basis of the link between Medtner and Brahms. Like Brahms, Medtner sought to write in accepted forms and,

⁶Malcolm Boyd, "The Songs of Nicolas Medtner", Music and Letters, January, 1965, pp. 16-22.

⁷Nicolas Medtner, The Muse and the Fashion, (Philadelphia: Haverford College Bookstore, 1951), p. 18.

within the traditional framework, to express what he felt. Any deviation from the traditional laws of music Medtner regards as a pseudo-expression. He looks upon tonality as the foundation of music and polytonality as incongruous. Tonality is defined in his book as the focal point of the musical language, consonance is the pivot and dissonance is meaningful only when it relates to consonance.

Throughout the book Medtner's views are clearly stated with regard to melody, harmony, rhythm, form and theme. Medtner places primary importance on the theme which he calls "the kernel of form."⁸ While he attempts to define other elements of the musical language Medtner regards the theme as ineffable and, therefore, beyond a definition outside itself. The theme may be embodied in any musical element such as a rhythmic pattern, a coloristic effect, an harmonic progression or, more frequently, a melody. Whatever form it takes it must be the central, motivating force, the organizing principle of the composition. Because it is so organically involved in the structure of the work the theme is usually realized by combining two or three elements. For example, in Op. 14, No. 2, the organizing principle of the piece is at once the short, rhythmic motif on a repeated-note and the polyphonic texture. Hence, the theme is realized in both rhythm and texture. Throughout his discussion Medtner is clearly defending his position against the musical innovations of his time. Chapter Three is exclusively devoted to "The Defence of the Fundamental Position of the Past Theory of Music."⁹

⁸Ibid., p. 43.

⁹Ibid., pp. 56-61.

The book is indeed the ripened fruit of Medtner's deep convictions of the fundamental nature and purpose of music and of the contemporary innovations of his day.

What, in definition, are the elements which constitute Medtner's pianistic style? To arrive at a clear and definite answer to this problem we shall go directly to the music and examine representative pieces from a major category of Medtner's pianistic output, namely, the piano solo music in smaller forms. We have chosen four from this repertory which collectively define the art of Medtner. Our discussion of the music and statement of conclusions are premised by Medtner's position in history as evaluated by his contemporaries and the writers of our own time.

From the piano solo music in smaller forms the most popular and best known sets are the "skazky", misleadingly translated "fairy tales." I say "misleadingly" because Russian folk-lore knows nothing of fairies. The leading role in the "skazky" is held by witches, spirits of the water and forest, marvelous animals and monsters of every kind. The French word, "contes", is a more accurate synonym and the English word, legend, would be more appropriate. In speaking of Medtner's fairy tales Ivan Ilyin regards them as introspective works - that is, tales of one's experiences - conflicts of the inner life of a man.¹⁰ Like Schumann, Medtner is well suited to the folk tale atmosphere. Of all his compositions Medtner's fairy tales seem to be the most remarkable for balanced texture and perfection of form. Their lyrical nature and quasi-narrative

¹⁰Richard Holt, Nicolas Medtner, A Tribute (London: Dennis Dobson, Ltd., 1955), pp. 175-180.

tone justify the title.

The "March of the Knights", op. 14 No. 2, exemplifies a basic characteristic of Medtner's music, namely, special emphasis on form; form within the composition and the over-all form of the outer structure. The principal motives - be they melodic, rhythmic or both - are developed extensively throughout the composition within a framework of symmetry and balance. In this piece we are conscious of the fact that Medtner is a graphic artist who stresses design rather than color.

At times, the texture of Medtner's music can be thick and the musical canvas heavily laden with intricate, chromatic lines weaving themselves interdependently of one another. So it is with the "March of the Knights," The piece is set, for the most part, in the lower register of the keyboard and the prevalence of chromatic inflections and the minor tonality all result in a heavy, sonorous quality. Medtner thinks polyphonically. It is counterpoint that is the organizing discipline in Medtner's harmonic technic. In his book he states, "To write in counterpoint is to give a harmonic coincidence to the separate, self-sufficient voices at all points. To write in harmony is to aim at the very same coincidence of point, i.e., at counterpoint."¹¹ Completely contrapuntal in content the "March" has been appraised by Joseph Yasser as "one of the most elaborately developed of any of Medtner's works."¹² The structure takes on the form of a rondo with developmental aspects which categorizes the piece more or less as a sonata-rondo form.

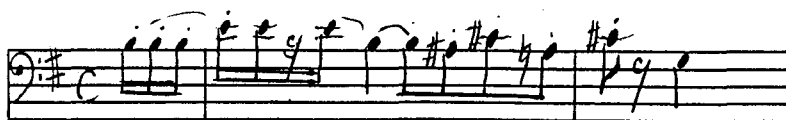
¹¹Medtner, op. cit., p. 75.

¹²Holt, op. cit., pp. 53-56.

The music of Medtner is always energetic. This is accounted for not only by his polyphonic thinking but also by his imaginative rhythmic vocabulary. A curious interplay of triplets, duplets, cross-rhythms and the hemiola is an integral part of Medtner's rhythm. Syncopation is its essential factor. The rhythmic structure of the "March" is founded on syncopation.

Medtner's melodic lines make frequent use of the repeated-note motif, sequential repetitions and a somewhat conservative contour. These factors are apparent in the two principal themes of the "March." The first theme is stated immediately as follows:

EXAMPLE 1: Op. 14, No. 2 - Meas. 1-2



The second theme is more resolute in character and simpler in rhythmic design:

EXAMPLE 2: Op. 14, No. 2 - Meas. 37-38



The contrapuntal techniques employed in the "March" are many. The rhythmic figure of the initial motif (♩♩♩♩) pervades the entire structure and it is particularly intriguing when the two themes appear simultaneously; first, in a single-two-voiced counterpoint, then, in three parts with the second theme forming a canon with itself at the fifth in the two upper parts and the first theme appearing in the bass. This is followed by a

climactic section in which the second theme is pitted against itself in augmentation. The pianissimo section which then follows consists of a series of sequential imitations based on the first theme. Apart from these devices there are instances of inversion, diminution and varied forms of imitation.

Because of the contrapuntal precision of the piece and the chromatic texture the music projects an intellectual, austere quality. Ernest Newman might well be describing the "March of the Knights" when he stated that ". . . Medtner, who has specialized upon the piano as truly as Chopin did... has developed a virile idiom and a system of pianistic sonorities that are quite his own."¹³

We turn now to an examination of the first fairy tale of Opus 34 which Medtner calls "The Fairy Violin." This piece typifies a change in style which became apparent from Opus 34 on. The technical procedures manifested in Medtner's art in the earlier pieces continue to be a part of his craft, but the pieces from Opus 34 are injected with more color, dramatic effects and contrasts of moods. The element of concentrated conciseness found frequently in the earlier pieces gives way now to a style of free abandon. While rhythmic complexities are minimized in the later pieces subtle sensitivity to rhythmic change and flow is always present. Melodic invention becomes more imaginative. This is clearly evident in this first piece of Opus 34. The melodies are ornately arched and free in movement as indicated by sudden shifts in melodic

¹³ed. Hubert VanThal, Testament of Music (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 192.

direction and broad skips in the contour of the line. Sequential effects are employed in the extension of the melodic lines. The terminal point of the line is on the lowered supertonic - a favorite sound of Medtner as are all the plagal and mediant harmonies. Here is the principal melody of Op. 34, No. 1:

EXAMPLE 3: Op. 34, No. 1 - Meas. 1-3



This line just played and the concluding line of the first section are given extensive development throughout the piece.

The structure of the fairy tale as a whole is a modified ternary form based on the sonata principle. In Medtner's structure the so-called "B" section rarely introduces new material. Rather, it is a developmental section on any of the initial material presented in the first part. The opening section, or "A" section of Op. 34, No. 1 is in a quasi-rondo form which can be expressed in the following letter-scheme: A-B-A-C-A. The contrasts in style and texture of the three parts are dramatic indeed. The cantabile principal part alternates first with a capricious, dance-like section, then with a playful, presto part. However, the alternations of themes are not as clear-cut as this description may sound. Medtner never isolates one theme from the other. Thematic material is always inter-related and it is not uncommon for the theme of one section to appear in another, sometimes quite obviously, at other times, more subtly. So it is in the first major section of this piece.

The developmental section makes use of the first theme or cantabile theme principally and also the "presto" theme. The dynamic

coloration and sudden changes in texture are rare dramatic moments in Medtner's music. Typical of the composer is the fact that no matter how lean the texture the vigorous pulse is never found wanting.

This first piece of Opus 34, "The Fairy Violin", exemplifies Medtner's freer and more colorful style and instances the composer's technic of the organic evolution of germinal ideas with striking contrasts in style and texture.

Although Beethoven was Medtner's idol more than Glinka his russian nationality projected itself without a doubt in his music. Medtner was not inclined to quoting russian folk melodies, what he called "ethnographic trimmings". His music nevertheless contains, at times, many characteristics of the russian national style and many of his pieces are inspired by russian tales and poems. A case in point is the Opus 51 set of tales. The pieces are dedicated to Zolushka and Ivanushka, two of the most beloved personages in russian national lore and commonly referred to as Cinderella and Ivan the Fool. This last set of fairy tales which Medtner wrote is full of melodic charm, grace and nobility. In any of the tales that are directly related to russian life and thought Medtner projects a quality that is undeniably authentic. The individuality of his melodic structure, his rhythmic and harmonic vocabulary are expressed with graceful ease and naturalness when his inspiration springs from russian ties. If we analyze russian folk tunes - and this can be said for most folk tunes - we find that they are usually simple, diatonic lines with step-wise or triadic contour structured on the principle of repetition. The harmony is simple with few chord changes and the rhythm is either syncopated or set to alternating meters. If the melody is in minor the lowered-seventh is usually employed thus

producing a modal sound. Another distinction of the minor folk tune is the sudden shifting to the major mode.

The russian folk tune, DOWN THE MOTHER VOLGA, exemplifies the diatonic melodic line and the modal sound:

EXAMPLE 4:



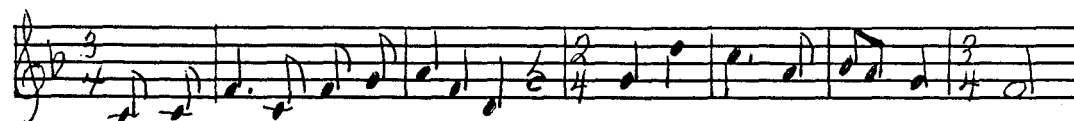
The triadic shape of the folk line and the shift from minor to major sound are exemplified by the folk tune, I WILL GO FAST TO THE RUNNING RIVER:

EXAMPLE 5:



If the tune is in the major mode it is not uncommon to hear a predominance of plagal and mediant sounds. An example of this is the folk tune ROWAN TREE which also includes alternating rhythms:

EXAMPLE 6:



Now turning to Medtner's music, specifically Opus 51, we hear in the first tale a melody set in minor with the typical folk tune contour and the modal sound effected by the lowered seventh:

EXAMPLE 7: Op. 51, No. 1



The second tale, also in minor, has the same characteristics as observed in the first piece with the addition of the shifting to the major mode:

EXAMPLE 8: Op. 51, No. 2



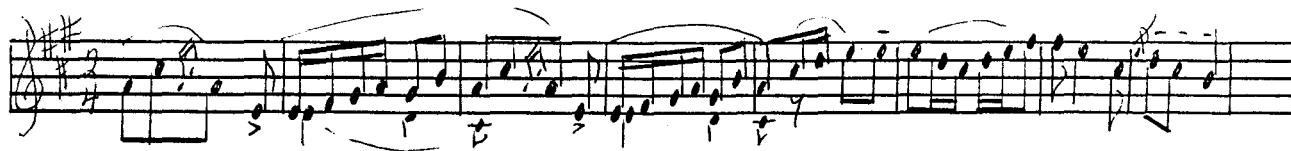
The sixth piece, written in the major mode, exemplifies the emphasis on the plagal sound:

EXAMPLE 9: Op. 51, No. 6



The melodic design of the third piece is both triadic and diatonic in outline. The element of repetition, syncopated rhythm and lack of chromaticism are all apparent:

EXAMPLE 10: Op. 51, No. 3



Again the typical Medtnerian device of thematic development pervades the piece. The three-note motif at the beginning and the second phrase are given extensive development. The two motives alternate between treble and bass in a series of sequences. Medtner's harmonic resources

are always concise, but in this piece the dominant-tonic relationship is more apparent. This third tale of Opus 51 reveals without doubt that the composer had a profound understanding of the Russian folk melos and he is perhaps at his best when dealing with the tales of his native land.

Apart from the 33 fairy tales in Medtner's repertory the category of smaller form pieces includes 61 others which bear such titles as DITHYRAMBS, LYRICAL FRAGMENTS, NOVELETTES, ARABESQUES and IMPROVISATIONS. Some comment should be made on the eight pieces entitled "Romantic Sketches for the Young." We recall that Robert Schumann, in the latter part of his life, wrote the 43 pieces of the Album for the Young. Medtner, too, in later life, was inspired to write these sketches for children. Like the ALBUM each of Medtner's pieces has some technical problem and each piece is clothed with an imaginative, poetic spirit and a sense of wonder. In these miniatures there are no harmonic obscurities, no heavy chromaticism in the melodies, no extended passages and no complex developments. There is, however, an abundance of noble beauty and artistic simplicity made comprehensible to the young by an open texture of simple lines and lilting rhythm. It is not known for how young a player Medtner intended his sketches. An examination of the music readily makes clear that a player needs some proficiency to play the pieces. The ALBUM of Schumann reveals the composer's ability to speak musically in elementary yet none the less artistic language. Medtner never expresses himself in elementary terms. His most light-hearted moments betray his multi-faceted outlook on music. Thus, while the Romantic Sketches are structurally and technically simple in comparison with Medtner's other works they nevertheless require a certain amount of musical maturity for full comprehension. They might compare more accurately with Schumann's Scenes from Childhood.

Another group of pieces that are significant in terms of a defini-

tion of Medtner's pianistic style are the three sets of pieces known as Forgotten Melodies. They were written in 1919 and 1920, two years after the October Bolshevik Revolution. Each piece is imprinted with nostalgic sentiment of bygone days. The pieces comprise Opus 38, 39 and 40. Most of Opus 38 and all of Opus 40 are dances, presumably reminiscent of Russian life before the revolution. The dances are lively in character with emphasis on syncopated rhythm, ingenious melodic phrasing and contrasts of style within the same piece. The Forgotten Melodies were the last compositions written by Medtner on Russian soil. The third piece of Opus 38 titled, "Danza Festiva" epitomizes the pieces of the three sets. It is melodically structured in a folklike manner. This is evidenced by the diatonic movement, repetition of fragments of the melody in shifting rhythmic beats and brisk, simple, rhythmic context. The dance tune in most of these pieces begins after a vigorous introduction. The opening bars of the "Danza Festiva", written in the character of a fanfare, also appear with some extension before the second section of the piece. They appear again in a turbulent setting just before the return of the first section. The second major section of the dance contrasts with the vigorous, jubilant opening by a highly romantic quality. The distinct feature of this second section is the multi-varied settings of the melodic material. The melody is presented in sequential patterns but with contrasts of dynamic textures. It is heard in a high treble range, a rhapsodic wide range setting and in a stately, majestic solid-chord fashion. The sequential patterns lead directly into a series of variations on the melody which evolve quite naturally one from the other. Apart from the emphasis on syncopation the rhythmic vocabulary likewise stresses the duplet figure. Many examples of cross-rhythms are also

found. The harmonic context is comparatively simple. The dominant-tonic progression is more pronounced especially in the brisk, folk-like dances. The piece is rich in melodic freshness, imaginatively flexible in rhythm and phrasing, vibrantly gay and festive in style, and homophonic, for the most part, in a thin but full texture.

Thus, we have seen that the elements of Medtner's pianoforte style spring from three outlooks: the classical, the romantic, and the national. The off-shoots of the classical tradition are identified in general by Medtner's consistent interest in structural problems. Specifically, this stress on structure is seen in the perfection of his phrases, their symmetry and balance. Developmental technics are particularly in the foreground of Medtner's craft. Smaller pieces are never fragmentary. The smallest miniature is a self-evolving, organically unified work. Medtner achieves this by developing any of the musical material presented in the exposition of the piece. Sometimes a short melodic or rhythmic motif of an introductory line is developed extensively, at other times two melodies or rhythmic ideas are treated simultaneously or antiphonally. Medtner's harmony breaks no new ground, but it is singularly resourceful within the accepted canons. His resourcefulness is defined by a linear concept resulting in the interpenetration of two harmonic streams. The cross-passages effected by the rhythm also result in extraordinary harmonic coloration.

Medtner's codas achieve the greatest intensity of movement by the use of suspended harmonies and quickened rhythmic motion. The cadences are direct and architectonic in their relation to the over-all structure of the piece. Principal motives appear frequently in the coda and at the cadence, as we shall hear in these four pieces.

Side by side the classical tradition in Medtner's art are russian national characteristics. While russian folk songs are not literally quoted in Medtner's music we have seen that esthetic and technical factors of the russian melos are there present. The russian influence is seen in the melodies when they are stated directly without any developmental treatment. Augmented melodic intervals of a second and fourth are used. Repetition of short, melodic ideas and a syncopated rhythmic context, all indicative of the russian folk style, are found. In harmony, we find plagal and modal tendencies, a shifting from major to minor, consistent use of the natural form of the minor scale and a de-emphasis of the leading-tone. Rhythmic complexities and the use of irregular meters are also part of his writing. An extra-musical connection between Medtner and his country is the frequent quotation of russian poets and folk characters in the programming of his music.

Apart from the classical and national influences Medtner's music shows an affiliation with nineteenth century romanticism. The titles of many of the pieces show an attraction for the character pieces of the west. Medtner's leanings to the fanciful, coloristic effects in rhapsodic textures and flashy sequences are identified with the romantic style.

The four compositions that I will play demonstrate a fusion of classical, romantic and national outlooks. With Medtner there is never a dichotomy of heart and mind. As we listen to his music we understand more clearly Medtner's feeling for rubato, or, as he preferred to call it, "flexibility of phrasing"; the remarkable resilience and buoyancy of his rhythm, and, above all, his preoccupation with developmental technics.

In an address to a group of Moscow musicians given in Moscow in

1927 on the occasion of Medtner's return to his native country for a concert tour the art of Nicolas Medtner was evaluated as displaying the highest artistic standards. His creative path was looked upon as "straight and unswerving."

Medtner's position and importance in the area of keyboard music are not determined by his similarities with the great masters of the past. Rather, they are founded on his contribution to music and the acceptance of his art. Medtner contributed nothing "new" to musical art in terms of what his contemporaries, weary of the traditional forms, were looking for. Hence, he was accepted by an elite few. But, every artist contributes something new by the fact of his having something to say that is uniquely his own. And he says it in an enchanting as well as brilliant and vitally expressive manner.