

Investigating Nikolai Medtner's Piano Concertos

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Attending the monthly colloquiums have been helpful towards my progress. The focus and direction of my topic have altered drastically since its inception. My initial topic was too broad and lacked focus.

At first, I could not relate the general concepts of intertextuality to specific examples in Medtner's music. Approaching the piano concertos requires a broader contextualization within Medtner's piano oeuvre. I thus started intensive score study of the piano works; I analyzed and presented the following works during the colloquium: Piano Sonata, Op. 5, f minor, Piano Sonata Op. 22, g minor, Piano Sonata Op. 25. No. 2, e minor (*Night Wind Sonata*), Piano Sonata Op. 39, minor (*Sonata Tragica*) from *Forgotten Melodies II*. After discovering the impact of contemporary Russian music theory on Medtner's works, it turned out that the aspect of intertextuality will probably not be at the centre of my research. Rather I will aim at a broad historically informed analysis of the three piano concertos. I also presented a general analysis of the Piano Concertos No. 2 Op. 50 and No. 3 Op. 60.

However, my initial analysis of the concertos was not based on any scientific accepted method, therefore Christian Utz suggested I consult *Two-Dimensional Sonata Form* by Steven Vande Moortele (2009). Medtner's three piano concertos (opp. 33, 50 and 60) present structural and architectural problems. After Beethoven's middle period, the composition of large-scale and monumental musical forms became increasingly problematic (Vande Moortele 2009: 202). Two-dimensional sonata form does more, however, than express the impossibility of the unbroken large form after Beethoven. This leads to the research question I intend to pose towards Medtner's concertos: They incorporate a variety of outlines and conceptions of musical form, following sonata movements in cycles of smaller pieces (*Forgotten Melodies*, opp. 38 and 39), hybrid forms between single-movement and multiple-section conceptions (op. 22, op. 53 No. 2), and extensions of the single-movement sonata to an enormous tone-poem of symphonic dimension (op. 25 No. 2).

Moortele ascertains that "although composers relentlessly attempted to solve the tension between sonata form and sonata cycle, it never entirely disappeared: the complete integration of both dimensions in a two-dimensional sonata form failed" (ibid: 199). This problem was particularly relevant to the concerto genre where at least since Schumann's Piano Concerto (1841–45) concepts of multidimensional cyclic integration had played a key role. Hence my research question: How did Medtner achieve unity and overcome architectural and structural

problems in his piano concertos?

Researching Russian music theory around 1900 (Carpenter 1983) made me aware of the relevance of Georgy Eduardovich Conius (1862–1933) and his theory of *metrotectonicism* as well as Yury Nikolaevich Tiulin's (1893–1978) theory of modality for the analysis of Medtner's work. Although I have presented these two theories in the colloquiums, I am still acquiring further knowledge on Russian theorists. I have started a thorough metrotectonic analysis of Medtner's Piano Concerto No.1 in c-Minor, op. 33.

I do, however, still need to go to the British Library in London to examine *The Edna Iles Medtner Collection* which contains some of Medtner's letters, notes, manuscripts, photographs and other memorabilia.

The appendix below offers a preliminary table of contents.

I have begun typing my dissertation, a task I plan to consistently undertake and finish in the next two years. My goal for the year ahead is to finish my meticulous analysis of Medtner's piano concertos whilst continuing to do extensive research on the development of the Russian piano concerto genre until 1900. After finishing my analysis of the concertos, I shall once again return to the investigation intertextuality regarding Medtner.

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