

# 3-in-1: Exploring Three Musical Time Periods in Vladimir Rebikov's Solo Piano Literature

2023 MTNA National Conference

## BACKGROUND

### Composer Biography

Vladimir Rebikov (1866-1920) received his musical education at the Moscow Conservatory studying piano with G. Muller and theory with N.S. Klenovsky, a student of Tchaikovsky. Between 1901-1909, Rebikov had successful concert tours in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Leipzig, and Florence. He settled in Yalta (Crimean Peninsula) in 1909 where he lived until his death in 1920.

### Influences

Early influences include Tchaikovsky and Grieg as many early works are miniatures written in a late Romantic style. He later set to carve his own path in music and became highly influenced by the symbolist movements in art and literature by figures such as poets Bryusov and Balmont, painters Böcklin, Stuck, Klinger, Segantini, and philosophers Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.

### Musical Style

Rebikov's compositional output can be divided into three periods. The first period (1887-1897) displays Rebikov's formation as he assimilated the popular trends of Russian music making of the time. These pieces are of a late Romantic style. The second period (1898-1909) was a time of innovation and experimentation. Rebikov wrote early examples of Impressionistic music including whole-tone scales. Further developments include quartal and quintal harmonies, seventh and ninth chords, and parallelism. Rebikov also sought to develop music that depicted human emotions and created new genres of *Melomimics*, *Meloplastiques*, and "musical-psychographical pictures." During his third period (1910-1917) we find a mixture of simplicity and complexity, primitiveness and sophistication, and traditionalism and modernism. Works during this period are written without meter or measures, and Rebikov uses chord clusters and expands on quartal and quintal harmony.

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2023 MTNA National Conference

## SURVEY OF LITERATURE

### With Opus

Work	Level	Notes
6 Morceaux, Op. 2	4-8	Romantic. See Nos. 2, 4, and 6. Nice melodies and character.
3 Pieces, Op. 3	7-9	Romantic. See No. 2. Dramatic moments. Large hand spans.
7 Morceaux, Op. 5	6-10	Romantic. Not his best works. No. 5 has several contrasting characters and is of quality writing.
4 Morceaux, Op. 6	8-9	Romantic. No. 2 is very beautiful with a three-layer texture.
Autumn Daydreams, Op. 8	4-8	Romantic. See Nos. 6, 7, 14. Denser textures, more chromaticism, some challenging voicing.
Around the World, Op. 9	5-10	Romantic. Stylized pieces from Russia, Austria, Italy, France, Spain, America, Japan, China, India, and Turkey. Pieces not necessarily representative of each country. See Nos. 5, 7, 8, 11, 17, and 18.
Mood Sketches, Op. 10	4-8	More experimental. Some Impressionistic techniques. Interesting time signatures, use of three staves, lovely melodies, interesting harmonies. See Nos. 2, 5, 8, and 9.
Melomimics, Op. 11	4-10	Writing style changing. Programmatic. No. 4 has a nice chorale, No. 5 has a beautiful melody and dramatic harmony, No. 6 is like a funeral march and very sad with despair.
Clay Seals, Op. 13	5-7	Not his most interesting writing. Nos. 6 and 9 are the best in the set.
Ballet Suite, Op. 14	4-10	No. 7 has a lot of character, similarities to Liszt. No. 8 is a catchy waltz that sounds like a music box.
Dreams, Op. 15	8-9	Impressionistic. Whole tone scales, atmospheric. See Nos. 2, 4, and 5.
Melomimics, Op. 17	7-8	Impressionistic. No 2 has interesting rhythms and articulations.
Slavery and Liberty, Op. 22	10+	"1 <sup>st</sup> Musical-Psychological Picture." Several contrasting sections. Virtuoso with octaves, tremolos, polyrhythms, octave chords, etc.

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## 2023 MTNA National Conference

In the Mist, Op. 23	4-6	Impressionistic. Beautiful melodies and interesting harmonic progressions. See Nos. 1, 5, 7, and 9.
Song in My Heart, Op. 24	10+	"2 <sup>nd</sup> Musical-Psychological Picture." See Op. 22.
Aspiration and Achievement, Op. 25	10+	"3 <sup>rd</sup> Musical-Psychological Picture." See Op. 22 and 24.
In Their Country, Op. 27	5-10	Very chromatic, almost atonal. Whole tone scales as well. See Nos. 2, 5, 7, and 8.
Pastoral Scenes, Op. 28	6-10	Folk-like characters. Whole tone scales. Contrasting characters. See Nos. 3 and 5.
Autumn Leaves, Op. 29	6-8	Gorgeous set; a favorite. A bit more in the Romantic tradition, but lots of chromaticism and interesting harmonies. Challenging textures and voicing.
Silhouettes, Op. 31	4-6	One of his better-known sets. More Impressionistic. See Nos. 3, 6, and 9.
From the Diary, Op. 33	6-9	Challenging double notes, accompaniments, polyrhythms, and large hand spans. Nos. 2 and 3 are particularly nice.
Among Them, Op. 35	5-7	Clear exploration of composition entirely with whole tone scales. A bit repetitive. Nos. 4 and 5 are the most interesting in the set.
Story of the Princess and King of the Frogs, Op. 36	5-7	More exploratory of combining music and theater. The pieces do not really sound like the story. Some uses of Impressionistic techniques.
Children's Scenes, Op. 37	5-7	More Romantic in style. No. 2 is a hoot titled "Preparing for the Lesson" where Rebikov writes wrong notes on purpose. Tells the story of a child's day.
A Party, Op. 38	6-8	Not his most interesting. Lots of ostinato accompaniments. Chromaticism and chord clusters. No. 6 is the most interesting.
Snow White, Op. 39	10+	90 minutes of music. Includes subtitles depicting the story of Snow White. More successful at depicting the story here.
In the Forest, Op. 43	5-7	Impressionistic. Some good uses of rhythm, but not the most interesting set. No. 3 has the most interest.
Beyond, Op. 47	4-7	Impressionistic. Use of whole tone in harmonic intervals. Contrasting styles. Rebikov is experimenting in this work, so ideas do not seem fully formed. No. 3 is the best work of the set.

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2023 MTNA National Conference

White Songs, Op. 48	6	Composed entirely on the white keys. Interesting melodies, polyrhythms, parallelism. See Nos. 1 and 2.
Three Idylls, Op. 50	6-10	Modern. Improvisatory with no meter or bar lines. Chord clusters, wide hand spans, rolled chords, double 3rds and 4ths. Best work in the set is No. 2
Three Dances, Op. 51	6-10	Bitonality, quintal harmony, chromatic, and whole tone. A bit primitive. Large hand spans, scales in 4ths, some challenging rhythms. Nos. 2, 3, and 4 are of interest.
They are Funny, Op. 54	N/A	No score or recording exists.

## Without Opus

Work	Level	Notes
Through the Slavic Countries	3-5	Some of Rebikov's easiest works. Romantic. Several waltzes.
Three Ballades	5-8	Some large spans in the LH, octave leaps, interesting harmonies. See No. 3.
The Christmas Gifts	2-7	14 pieces, including <i>The Bear</i> . Mix of styles. Some nice melodies and characters. See Nos. 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, and 13.
Three Etudes	5-7	True gems! Good energy, harmonic twists and changing meters, great use of rhythm. Effective in concert.
Evening Fires	6-8	Gorgeous pieces, especially Nos. 1, 2, and 4. Great opportunity for phrasing and rubato. Lovely melodies and interesting harmonies.
Autumn Flowers	7-8	Some challenging voicing. A bit atonal and chromatic. Not his best writing, with the exception of No. 1
Sound Games	6-9	Chromatic writing and interesting harmonic progressions. Good use of rhythm. See No. 2.
Meloplastiques	8-10	Interesting experimentations here, but not his best writing. See Nos. 6 and 8.
Moments of Happiness	5-6	Folk-like character, good use of rhythm, interesting harmonies and some Eastern sounding melodies. Nos. 2, 4 and 6 are of interest.

# 3-in-1: Exploring Three Musical Time Periods in Vladimir Rebikov's Solo Piano Literature

## 2023 MTNA National Conference

Pages of a Forgotten Manuscript	5-8	Melancholy melodies, unexpected contrasting harmonies, good opportunities for phrasing and rubato. See Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6.
Little Ballet Suite	6-8	No. 2 has some nice dissonances and a lovely melody. No. 3 is a waltz with a Romantic and French sound. No. 4 sounds like butterflies.
Dreams of Happiness	6-8	Not his best writing. Fragmented melodies, uninteresting dissonances, quite repetitive.
Remembrance of Times Gone By	7-10	More mature harmonic writing. No. 2 is almost jazzy. Contrasting characters of energetic pieces and others with melodies of despair. See Nos. 2, 4, and 5.
Melancholy Memories	7	No score or recordings for No. 1. No. 2 has a nice melody, octave chords, and some LH leaps.
Musical Snuffbox	6-7	Dance pieces. Charming melodies, often in the high register, octave chords, unison scales, and arpeggios all add to the character. See No. 1.
Slavic March	10	Challenging work; a bit repetitive.
Sadness	8	Quite a beautiful piece. Interest in the tenor line. Some difficult voicing.
Album of Easy Pieces for the Young	5-7	Romantic writing. Several waltzes and a lullaby. See Nos. 1-4 and 6.
Capricious Mood	5	Triplets, RH octaves, 5ths throughout. Not particularly interesting.
Song Without Words	7	Transcription of a cello solo. Beautiful longing melody in the alto. Lovely harmonic shading and nice character in the b section.
Ballet Music from. Princess Mary	7	Transcription. A really beautiful waltz with French harmony. Challenging alto melody is difficult to voice.
The Immortals	8	Harmonic progressions of interest. Some challenging LH leaps and 10ths. Harmonic intervals are in the RH throughout.
Visions of the Past	3-8	Mixture of Romantic and Impressionistic compositions. No. 3 is in 7/4 meter which is quite interesting. No. 8 is fast with octaves, harmonic intervals, and a nice LH melody. No. 6 is quite good, a bit of a funeral march.
Legend	4	Transcription. Introverted in character. Simple, yet some interesting harmonies.

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2023 MTNA National Conference

## RECORDINGS

### Poster Examples

1. *Around the World*, Op. 9, No. 5
2. *Autumn Daydreams*, Op. 8, No. 10
3. *Song Without Words*
4. *Melomimics*, Op. 11, No. 6
5. *Clay Seals*, Op. 13, No. 9
6. *Dreams*, Op. 15, No. 2
7. *In the Mist*, Op. 23, No. 7
8. *In the Forest*, Op. 43, No. 3
9. *Three Idylls*, Op. 50, No. 3
10. *Dances*, Op. 51, No. 3

### Other Recordings

1. Near Complete Recording: Gamma1734 (YouTube)
2. Rebikov: Piano Works by Anatoly Sheludyakov (2021)

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2023 MTNA National Conference

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