

An Eclectic Combination of Classical and Jazz Idioms:
Nikolai Kapustin's Piano Works

By

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ABSTRACT

The piano music of Nikolai Kapustin is a sophisticated synthesis of classical traditions and jazz styles. He has absorbed jazz styles into standard classical form and his approach to jazz idioms is authentic and original compared to other classical composers such as Ravel, Debussy, Stravinsky, and Ligeti, who also wrote jazz-inspired pieces. Kapustin adopted the virtuosic playing of Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum, the unique style of Erroll Garner, and the rich texture and harmony of his experience with big bands. On the other hand, Kapustin's use of forms conforms to the classical tradition and many of his works recall formal and technical influences of classical composers, especially from Romantic and Russian composers.

The Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, published in 1988, is one of Kapustin's most satisfying works and an ambitious genre to exhibit his extraordinary grasp of both jazz and classical music. The Preludes incorporate a large range of jazz techniques and styles with a variety of rhythms, tempos, and melody as well as the clear structural organization of classical music. A classical pianist performing these works must possess a formidable technique and comprehensive understanding of jazz playing.

This study examines on jazz idioms and classical influences in Kapustin's music and how he combined them to create his own style. The document consists of three parts: biographical information and background, Kapustin's unique musical voice and influences, and a detailed analysis of the classical and jazz blend found in the Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, including performance considerations. I hope my study will elucidate his compositional brilliance and encourage even more pianists to explore his music.

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Introduction

The Ukrainian composer Nikolai Kapustin (b. 1937) has become renowned for his virtuosic and imaginative works among pianists and audiences since about 2000. His piano solo repertoire is quite extensive and he has completed nearly 73 compositions for the piano alone. Among his piano solo works are 20 sonatas, suites, a toccatina, etudes, variations, preludes, a sonatina, inventions, an impromptu, and many more. Distinguished pianists Marc-André Hamelin and Steven Osborn have made recordings of Kapustin's music on the Hyperion record label and these recordings have contributed to his growing international fame.

The piano music of Kapustin is a sophisticated synthesis of classical traditions and jazz styles. In a number of articles, critics have commented on Kapustin's blend of formal elements of classical music superimposed onto the harmonic and rhythmic elements of jazz. Martin Anderson described his music as "an idiomatic and convincing fusion of the language of jazz and the structural discipline of classical music."¹ Also, Stuart Isacoff mentioned the influence of jazz figures such as Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, and Erroll Garner as well as the influence of the Moscow Conservatory, where Kapustin received his training as a pianist.² There are also a number of doctoral dissertations written by Jonathan Mann, Ruby Wang, Randall J. Creighton, Susannah Steele, Akane

¹ Martin Anderson, "Nikolai Kapustin, Russian Composer of Classical Jazz," *Fanfare - the Magazine for Serious Record Collectors* 24, no. 1 (2000): 93.

² Stuart Sacoff, "Feature: Marc-André Hamelin Plays the Wild and Jazzy Music of Nikolai Kapustin." *Piano Today* 24, no. 4 (2004): 5.

Okamoto, Jonathan Roberts, and Tatiana Abramova. These scholarly writings discuss Kapustin's musical innovations through formal and stylistic analysis.

This study will examine further research on classical influences and jazz idioms in Kapustin's music and how he combined them to create his own style. I hope my study will elucidate the links and connections that influenced his musical development. The document consists of three parts: biographical information and background, Kapustin's unique musical voice and influences, and a detailed analysis of the classical and jazz blend found in the Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, including performance considerations.

I. Biography and Background

Nikolai Girshevich Kapustin was born in Gorlovka, Ukraine on November 22, 1937. He began his musical training at the age of seven with Ivanovich Vinnichenko, who was a violin teacher of his sister Fira Kapustin. In 1949, at the age of twelve, he started studying the piano with Lubov' Frantsuzova, a graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Without formal training in composition, Kapustin wrote his first piano sonata, which was in "a traditional Russian-Ukrainian style," when he was thirteen.³ After three years of studying with Frantsuzova, he entered the preparatory school associated with the Moscow Conservatory.

In 1952, Kapustin started studying with Avrelian Rubbakh, whom he credits as his first influential piano teacher. "In contrast to Frantsuzova, Rubbakh taught everything,

³ Jonathan Roberts, "Classical Jazz: the Life and Musical Innovations of Nikolai Kapustin," (D.M.A diss., University of Alabama, 2013), 17.

including technique... he attached great importance to sound quality.”⁴ Rubbakh was a student of Felix Blumenfeld (1863-1930), whose pupils included Vladimir Horowitz, Simon Barere and, interestingly, Alexander Tsfasman (1906-1971), who is considered the first jazz pianist in the Soviet Union and the first Russian to make jazz recordings.

The career of Tsfasman parallels remarkably with Kapustin’s. He was also trained as a classical pianist, and then started playing in the jazz orchestra; moreover, he was also a highly prolific composer.⁵ Later, when Kapustin met him in the 1960’s, Tsfasman became a mentor to him, significantly influencing Kapustin’s compositional and technical styles on the keyboard. He explained, “we (pianists) liked Tsfasman for his elegance and easy-going style and his perfect finger technique.”⁶ Kapustin performed Tsfasman’s piano concerto with the Radio Orchestra in the early 1970s.

In 1953, during his time at the preparatory school, Kapustin heard jazz for the first time on the radio, which made a decisive turning point in his career. The first jazz musicians he heard included Glenn Miller, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat “King” Cole, Benny Goodman, and Stan Kenton.⁷ As he was captivated by jazz, his newfound idea of synthesizing classical traditions and jazz styles was ignited. He said, “the very first time I heard it. And as soon as I started playing jazz I understood it was something for me. I understood that I had to combine the two musics—I had that idea from my

⁴ Roberts, 17.

⁵ Martin Anderson, "Nikolai Kapustin, Russian Composer of Classical Jazz," *Fanfare - the Magazine for Serious Record Collectors* 24, no. 1 (2000): 94.

⁶ Jonathan Edward Mann, “Red, White, and Blue Notes: The Symbiotic Music of Nikolai Kapustin,” (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2007), 33.

⁷ Roberts, 18.

youth.”⁸ Rubbakh regarded jazz as an interesting language and encouraged Kapustin to cultivate his fascination with this new musical style. Kapustin mainly educated himself as a jazz musician by transcribing solos he heard from the radio:

It was difficult to get hold of recordings in the early 1950s, but some Soviet people still had an opportunity to travel abroad and brought back recordings. But we mainly tape-recorded ‘Music USA’ on the radio. At the same time I began transcribing jazz improvisations by leading jazz pianists that I heard on the radio.⁹

After studying with Rubbakh for four years, at the age of eighteen, Kapustin began studying at the Moscow Conservatory with one of the major pedagogues, Alexander Goldenweiser. In an interview, Kapustin recalls the first time he met Goldenweiser: “It was he [Rubbakh] who took me to [Alexander] Goldenweiser. I played him the Liszt *Don Giovanni* Fantasy; he liked how I played and asked Rubbakh, ‘Where did you find such a pianist?’”¹⁰ Goldenweiser himself studied with Siloti, Pabst, Arensky, Ippolitov-Ivanov and Taneyev, and among his renowned students included Grigory Ginzburg, Lazar Berman, Dmitry Kabalevsky, Dmitry Bashkirov, Nodar Gabunia, and Tatiana Nikolayeva. Despite the teacher’s great reputation, Kapustin explained that he did not learn much from him as a pianist because of his old age. However, Kapustin acknowledged the strong link with the past as Goldenweiser recounted his memories with Russia’s most notable musical figures such as Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Tchaikovsky. Kapustin commented about memories with him:

Well it was very exciting to have contact with him. He was an old man by that time [aged 81] and of course he’d been a friend of Rachmaninoff, Scriabin and

⁸ Anderson, 94.

⁹ Mann, 29.

¹⁰ Anderson, 94.

Medtner – he even knew Tchaikovsky – and he had many interesting stories about them. But as for piano teaching per se, he didn't give so much.¹¹

Also, he recalled awareness of a link with those composers and said “I felt like they were alive, as if they were here. He told me what they said, how things happened – things you will never read in books about these composers. That was the main interest.”¹² Although Goldenweiser might have been unconstructive as a piano teacher, it is apparent that this experience engendered interest in the past masters for the young Kapustin.

Obviously Kapustin's musical education at the Moscow Conservatory concentrated in classical literature and developed his virtuosic techniques. His graduate recital program included standard repertoire such as the Liszt B minor Sonata and the Beethoven Sonata, Op. 54.¹³ Meanwhile, his aspiration to absorb jazz into his musical world gradually grew. Furthermore, with his growing awareness of the significance of jazz, he developed more interest in composing, which would eventually overtake his ambitions as a performer. He pointed out, “I thought I was going to be a virtuoso classical player, but at 20, 21, 22 I understood that jazz was very important. And I didn't like performing; composition was more interesting.”¹⁴ Unlike many of his colleagues, he did not follow the path of virtuoso pianists, but he was fascinated in fusing classical form and the jazz idiom.

In 1957, Kapustin premiered his *Concertino for Piano and Jazz Orchestra*, now catalogued as Op. 1, with the State Jazz Orchestra at the Sixth International Festival of

¹¹ Harriet Smith, “Bridging the Divide: An Interview with Kapustin,” *International Piano Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 13, (2000): 54.

¹² Anderson, 94.

¹³ Smith, 54.

¹⁴ Anderson, 94.

Youth in Moscow. Over 30,000 teenagers and young adults from around the world were attracted by this event to perform and compete. Through the festival, one of the first jazz events officially authorized by the Soviet government, jazz turned out to be a national issue. It symbolized that the government wanted to break free from the diplomatic and cultural wall established during Stalin's last years.¹⁵

For the competition, the government formed a jazz band of Moscow's best jazz musicians led by the bandleader Yuri Saulsky, in which Kapustin played as a pianist. Saulsky's ensemble won the first prize. Nevertheless, conservative critics attacked the jazz band for misrepresenting Soviet culture.¹⁶ During the same period, Kapustin organized a jazz quintet including a tenor saxophone, trombone, bass and drums. The quintet occasionally performed at the restaurant "National," but he played only for the first month because it was hard to balance with his conservatory regimen.¹⁷ At this time, he started to improve his skill in improvisation.

After he graduated from the Moscow Conservatory in 1961, jazz became an important part of his life as he joined Oleg Lundstrem's Big Band, one of the oldest surviving jazz orchestras in the world. He toured both the Soviet Union and abroad with the orchestra for eleven years. During this time, he established his compositional career completing his first seventeen works, which he composed mainly for the ensemble. Consequently, his output during the 1960s was largely for orchestra or big band. A video recording of his performance with Oleg Lundstrem Big Band available on YouTube

¹⁵ Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 248.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 249-250.

¹⁷ Mann, 31.

evidently shows Kapustin's brilliant technique and artistry. Interestingly, both Kapustin and the orchestra looked rather conservative, like a classical performers, compared to other jazz performers; they were clad in formal black suits and black ties, conducting was rather in a classical manner, and Kapustin's facial expression and posture at the piano were academic.¹⁸

In the 1970s, musicians including those in the jazz world and even artists in general, could not completely avoid the censorship by the Soviet authorities; thus, many musicians immigrated to the United States. Kapustin took advantage of being a legitimate musician by fusing the classical forms and jazz world.¹⁹ He was building his jazz experiences not because he sought to be a true jazzman, but because he aimed to improve his compositional skills. Additionally, when jazz was prohibited, he could always compose focusing on classical form. He said, "I was entirely free; no problems. My music wasn't avant-garde."²⁰ Despite the hardship that the most jazz musicians faced, Kapustin's unique musical world kept him unrestricted.

After Kapustin left the Lundstrem Big Band in 1972, he joined Vadim Lyudvikovsky's Television and Radio Light Orchestra until 1977 and the State Cinematography Symphony Orchestra until 1984. After he performed his Piano Concerto No. 2 in 1980, in later years, he made further changes to his career and devoted most of it to composing rather than performing. In fact, he only appeared in a few public performances with cellist Alexander Zagorinsky in 1990s in Moscow and Germany. He

¹⁸ "Nikolai Kapustin Performing with the Oleg Lundstrem Big Band," Video clip, accessed March 9, 2015, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBO-ZaSaNAQ>

¹⁹ Mann, 36.

²⁰ Anderson, 96.

mentioned, “The more productive period in my life began when I stopped playing with orchestra. So I became completely free as a composer only in 1984, although even before I composed quite a few pieces.”²¹ Meanwhile, he continues to make numerous audio and video recordings of his own playing.

Kapustin is now in his seventies and currently lives in Moscow. He is still productive in writing music, and has composed 157 works with opus numbers to date. His formal education was exclusively in classical piano tradition, while his fascination with jazz led him explore and experience a new musical world. This unique career has created numerous brilliant piano works added to the contemporary piano literature of the last decade. Although his life style is somewhat reclusive as he avoids interviews or public appearances, his imaginative music amalgamating classical form and jazz idiom attracts both pianists and audiences.

II. Musical Styles and Influences

The piano music of Nikolai Kapustin synthesizes classical traditions with jazz idioms. His blend of formal elements of classical music is superimposed onto the harmonic and rhythmic elements of jazz. Indeed, there are many other classical composers attracted to the exotic sound of jazz and fuse these two distinct styles into one musical language. Evidence of the jazz influence, among many others, is displayed in Maurice Ravel’s Piano Concerto in G Major and *Valses nobles et sentimentales*. In these

²¹ Tatiana Abramova, “The Synthesis of Jazz and Classical Styles in Three Piano Works of Nikolai Kapustin,” (D.M.A. diss., Temple University, 2014), 2.

pieces, the harmonic language is deeply inspired by jazz, featuring chords of 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths, diminished chords, and chromatic alternations of standard harmonies. Also, Claude Debussy's *Golliwog's Cakewalk* and Igor Stravinsky's *Ragtime* and *Piano Rag Music* show the influence of ragtime. Likewise, György Ligeti's *Études pour piano, Première livre* features 1980's jazz influence. Many examples of these stylistic combinations in classical music can be enumerated; however, most composers belong mainly in the classical realm using jazz to create a new approach to classical composition.

On the other hand, Kapustin combines two different styles in such an integrated manner, when compared to other classical composers. Also, his approach to jazz idioms is fundamentally idiomatic; especially, his technical style and harmonic use are unmistakably jazz-based.

Jazz Influences and Idioms

Kapustin's works demonstrate a diverse blend of styles of jazz musicians such as Oscar Peterson (1925-2007), Art Tatum (1925-1956), Erroll Garner (1926-1991), Duke Ellington (1899-1974), and many others. The greatest inspiration that Kapustin admires is Oscar Peterson saying "He's No. 1 for me."²² The Canadian pianist and jazz leader Peterson is one of the greatest pianists in the history of jazz; additionally, he is renowned for his extraordinary pianistic capability and persistent swing. His jazz technique is mainly influenced by Art Tatum, Erroll Garner, and George Shearing.²³ Tatum is

²² Smith, 55.

²³ "Peterson, Oscar." *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, 4th ed.. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/subscriber/article/epm/21819>.

regarded as the most influential figure on him and, often, both are compared to each other because of their dazzling technique and comprehensive understanding of jazz.²⁴

Kapustin's music shares one of the stylistic traits of both predecessors, Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum: perpetual motion with virtuoso passagework and rhythmic intensity. Peterson stated characteristics of relentless passages that both himself and Tatum used:

If you speak of pianists, the most complete pianist that we have known and possibly will know, from what I've heard to date, is Art Tatum. I'm not classing myself in the caliber of talent, but Art Tatum was accused of the same thing that I'm being accused of today -- that he played so much in so few bars. Yet in the same reviews or opinions where they say "Oh, he plays too much -- everything is a run," they turn round and say "But he's a genius." So there's no way of satisfying them.²⁵

Likewise, Kapustin uses this breathless forward motion in his compositions and numerous examples can be listed. The last movement of his second sonata, Op. 54, is titled "Perpetuum mobile," meaning "perpetual motion" in Latin (see Example 1a).

²⁴ Bill Dobbin, "Peterson, Oscar," *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, 2nd edition*, Vol. 3, Barry Kernfeld, ed., (New York: Grove's Dictionaries INC., 2002), 270-271.

²⁵ Les Tomkins, "Oscar Peterson: Points," *Jazz Professional*, http://jazzpro.nationaljazzarchive.org.uk/interviews/Oscar%20Peterson_Points.htm (accessed March 24, 2015).

Example 1a. Nikolai Kapustin, Sonata No. 2, Op. 54, 4th movement, mm. 1-2²⁶

IV
Perpetuum mobile

Allegro vivace (♩ = 152)

Other examples can be found in his Prelude Op. 53, I and XIV (see Example 1b and 1c). In these pieces, he featured motoric rhythms and an agitated manner with virtuosic passagework of running sixteenth notes, which Peterson and Tatum also used. Moreover, similar to Peterson and Tatum, he exhibited his tremendous technical agility and fluency as a pianist through this type of music.

²⁶ Nikolai Kapustin, *Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 54, IV* (Moscow: ARAM, London: Music Trading Company, 1989), 47.

Example 1b. Nikolai Kapustin, Prelude, Op. 53 I, mm. 1-2²⁷



Example 1c. Nikolai Kapustin, Prelude, Op. 53 XIV, mm. 1-2²⁸

Allegro (♩ = 138)

The development of thematic elements used by Tatum is strategic to the harmonic structure of his recorded improvisations. Similarly, Kapustin's use of thematic material and transformation reveals Tatum's influence. For example, Tatum's transcribed solo *After You've Gone* (1934), originally composed by Turner Layton with lyrics written by Henry Creamer, displays how he develops the main theme through several variations. The musical examples below show the opening of each variation, including extension of the melody and enrichment of texture (see example 2b); intensification of rhythm and

²⁷ Nikolai Kapustin, *Twenty-Four Preludes Op. 53, I* (Moscow: ARAM, London: Music Trading Company, 1988), 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

harmony (see example 2c); new figure in each hand and a return of melody (see example 2d); and a double-time stride in the left hand (see example 2e).

Example 2a. The first two bars of the melody of *After You've Gone*, by T. Layton and H. Creamer (1918)

Example 2b. Art Tatum, *After You've Gone*, mm. 7-8.

Example 2c. Art Tatum, *After You've Gone*, mm. 27-28.

Example 2d. Art Tatum, *After You've Gone*, mm. 55-56.

Example 2e. Art Tatum, *After You've Gone*, mm. 67-68.²⁹

The thematic transformation of Tatum's improvisation appears in Kapustin's Concert Étude Op. 40, No. 7, *Intermezzo* as one of the examples. The etude has the melodic variation of theme over a repetitive harmonic structure. This theme develops in a different version akin to Tatum's thematic variations. The main theme (see example 3a) reappears in several variations: thickening of the texture and extension of melody (see example 3b); intensification of rhythm and a different manner of figuration in the right hand over the same harmonic progression (see example 3c); and, lastly, a double-time stride in the left hand (see example 3d).

²⁹ Felicity Howlett, "Tatum, Art," *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd edition, Vol. 1, Barry Kernfeld ed., (New York: Grove's Dictionaries INC., 2002), 716.

Example 3a. Nikolai Kapustin, Concert Étude Op. 40, No. 7, *Intermezzo*, mm. 5-8.

Musical score for Example 3a, measures 5-8. The score is in 3/4 time and features a complex, rhythmic melody in the right hand with frequent triplets and sixteenth-note patterns. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor).

Example 3b. Nikolai Kapustin, Concert Étude Op. 40, No. 7, *Intermezzo*, mm. 43-45.

Musical score for Example 3b, measures 43-45. This section continues the complex rhythmic and melodic patterns from the previous example. It features dense chordal textures and intricate melodic lines in both hands, with prominent triplet figures. The key signature remains three flats.

Example 3c. Nikolai Kapustin, Concert Étude Op. 40, No. 7, *Intermezzo*, mm. 51-54.

Musical score for Example 3c, measures 51-54. This section is characterized by a highly complex and dense texture, featuring rapid sixteenth-note passages and intricate chordal structures in both hands. The right hand has a particularly busy line with many beamed notes. The key signature is three flats.

Example 3d. Nikolai Kapustin, Concert Étude Op. 40, No. 7, *Intermezzo*, mm. 75-78.³⁰



Furthermore, Art Tatum's use of complex voicings and textural variety impressed later generations of jazz musicians. He achieved textural diversity by frequently using contrapuntal relationships in different registers.³¹ Kapustin adopted Tatum's fashion of presenting layers and distinct colors in different registers. An example of this style is his Sonata No. 10, Op. 81, the second movement (see example 4). The piece begins with a single low bass note followed by thicker chords in the middle register and a feeble and dreamlike tone of higher register, which adds a sophisticated color. The piece persists in three voices and becomes more intricate in rhythm and texture.

³⁰ Nikolai Kapustin, *Eight Concert Études Op. 40* (Moscow: ARAM, London: Music Trading Company, 1984)

³¹ Felicity Howlett, "Art Tatum," 716.

Example 4. Nikolai Kapustin, Sonata No. 10, Op. 81, the second movement, mm. 1-2.³²

One of the major stylistic characteristics that Kapustin captured both from his precursors and his own experience with big bands is the use of rich texture and jazz harmonies. An essential aspect to identify a musician's harmonic approach is the technique of jazz chord voicing. Because the keyboard is a succession of repeating notes, chord voicings seldom happen in a single octave, but are often spread over the range of the keyboard, which may include additional notes or omit some notes.³³ In most standard and modern jazz, 7th chords rarely create rich resonance, but most chords involve upper structure extensions of the 9th, 11th, 13th, and chromatic alterations. Also, commonly the chords in jazz harmony encompass chromatic inner voices and voice leading. Kapustin employed a jazz chord voicing called "four-voice close," in which the four notes used the root, 3rd, 7th, and the highest extension are harmonized closely together.

This four-voice texture Kapustin utilized in his piano works provides richness in sonority as larger ensembles typically do. His *Big Band Sounds*, Op. 46 exhibits his use

³² Nikolai Kapustin, *Sonata No. 10 Op. 81*, manuscript, 9.

³³ Mark C. Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History & Analysis*, 9th ed., (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2006), 368.

of four-way close jazz technique (see example 5a). In the example, Kapustin voices the four-note blocked chord in the right hand while the left hand doubles the melody. The technique can also be found in the improvisation on Ray Brown's *Gravy Waltz* by Oscar Peterson (see example 5b) as well as in the first chorus of *Bop, Look, and Listen* by George Shearing's ensemble (see example 5c). George Shearing's arrangement using the technique was sensational, creating a fascinating sonority as he added vibraphone to the upper melody of piano and guitar to the low. This style of chord voicing is typically done for the arrangement of a group of four saxophones, trumpets, trombone, and so on.

Example 5a. Nikolai Kapustin, *Big Band Sounds*, Op. 46, mm. 21-22.³⁴

The image shows a piano score for Example 5a. It consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, in a 2/4 time signature. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The right hand (treble clef) features a complex, four-note blocked chord structure in the first few measures, followed by a melodic line with triplets. The left hand (bass clef) plays a rhythmic accompaniment that mirrors the melodic line of the right hand, also featuring triplets. The score is marked with various dynamics and articulation symbols.

Example 5b. Oscar Peterson, improvisation on *Gravy Waltz*, mm. 136-137.³⁵

The image shows a piano score for Example 5b. It consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, in a 3/4 time signature. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The right hand (treble clef) features a complex, four-note blocked chord structure in the first few measures, followed by a melodic line with triplets. The left hand (bass clef) plays a rhythmic accompaniment that mirrors the melodic line of the right hand, also featuring triplets. The score is marked with various dynamics and articulation symbols.

³⁴ Nikolai Kapustin, *Big Band Sounds*, Op. 46 (Moscow: Muzyka, 1987), 37.

³⁵ Oscar Peterson, *The Very Best of Oscar Peterson* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 41.

Example 5c. Beginning of the bridge section in the first chorus of George Shearing: *Bop, Look, and Listen* (1949); transcr. L. Koch.³⁶

♩ = 100

B \flat MI 7 (9) E \flat 7 (9) A \sharp 5 (b9) AMI 7 D $^{(13)}$ D 9 D 7

basic progression: B \flat MI 7 E \flat 7 AMI 7 D 7

Another jazz harmony that Kapustin employed in order to create full resonance resembling a big band sound is quartal harmony that incorporates use of chords made up of notes a fourth away from each other. Duke Ellington, Bill Evans (1929-1980), and Herbie Hancock (b. 1940) shared this trait in their music, influencing Kapustin's output. Ellington who led the most stable and longest-lived big band, in particular, certainly influenced Oleg Lundstrem big band, for which Kapustin served as a pianist and arranger for eleven years.³⁷ In Ellington's *The Gal from Joe's*, his use of quartal harmony may be heard (see example 6a). Similarly, many of Kapustin's piano works exemplify the use of quartal harmony including *Bagatelle II* and *Big Band Sound* (see examples 6b and 6c). In these pieces, he evoked his experience with the big band and wrote with the rich resonance in sonority, exploiting the full range of the keyboard.

³⁶ Lawrence Koch, "Piano." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd edition, Vol. 3, Barry Kernfeld ed., (New York: Grove's Dictionaries INC., 2002), 285.

³⁷ Walter Ojakäär. "Lundstrem, Oleg." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed.. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 01, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.www2.lib.ku.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/J276800>.

Example 6a. Duke Ellington, *The Gal from Joe's*³⁸



Example 6b. Nikolai Kapustin, *Bagatelle II*, m. 12



Example 6c. Nikolai Kapustin, *Big Band Sound*, mm. 40-41



Additionally, in jazz of the 1960s, quartal harmonies were popularized among pianists McCoy Tyner (b. 1938) and Chick Corea (b. 1941). Tyner, influenced by Bill Evans, extensively used voicings in fourths and other pianists broadly adopted it.³⁹ Like Tyner, Corea absorbed the idea of using quartal harmony and his unaccompanied

³⁸ Duke Ellington, "The Gal From Joe's," *Duke Ellington Anthology*, 26.

³⁹ Gridley, 246.

improvisations probably inspired Kapustin's Concert Étude No. 4, Op. 40, *Reminiscence*. Instead of producing a full sound of blocked chords, he exploited fourths in broken chord in the right hand, creating a picturesque atmosphere over the blocked chords in the left hand that are rather sparse in texture (see example 7). Through prolific use of this quartal jazz harmony, he followed the most prominent and imitated pianists in jazz.

Example 7. Nikolai Kapustin, Concert Étude No. 4, Op. 40, *Reminiscence*, mm. 1-3.⁴⁰

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a treble and bass clef. The first system is marked 'Larghetto' with a tempo of quarter note = 60. The right hand plays a melodic line with octaves and triplets, while the left hand plays sparse, blocked chords. Circled areas highlight specific rhythmic and harmonic patterns in the right hand. The second system continues the melodic line with octaves and triplets, and the left hand plays sparse, blocked chords. The third system continues the melodic line with octaves and triplets, and the left hand plays sparse, blocked chords.

A unique figure in jazz history, Erroll Garner (1923-1977) attained his own recognizable trademark quality in jazz piano. The most distinctive component of Garner's

⁴⁰ Nikolai Kapustin, *Eight Concert Étude* Op. 40, 27.

style is repeated left hand chords on each beat resembling the strumming of a big-band guitar in steady beat supporting a soloist. Above these patterns the right hand plays embellished or varied melodic passages, often with syncopated improvisation. In his performance manner, block chords in the left hand would be occasionally played slightly off the beat reminiscent of “kicking” the beat in the manner of a swing drum.⁴¹ This remarkable style can be heard in his *Paris Bounce* (see example 8a). Quite a number of Kapustin’s works reflect Garner’s signature style, including his *Daybreak*, Op. 26 (see example 8b).

Example 8a. Erroll Garner, *Paris Bounce*, A section.

The musical score for Example 8a shows a piano accompaniment for the A section of 'Paris Bounce'. The right hand plays a melodic line with syncopated rhythms, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of block chords. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score includes a first ending bracket and dynamic markings such as *mp* and *mf*. Chords G7, C9, Am7, and D9 are indicated above the staff.

Example 8b. Nikolai Kapustin, *Daybreak*, Op. 26, mm. 51-52.

The musical score for Example 8b shows a piano accompaniment for 'Daybreak', Op. 26, measures 51-52. The right hand features a complex, syncopated melodic line with many accidentals. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment of block chords. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The score is marked with a dynamic marking of *mf*.

The sophisticated style of Kapustin’s writing incorporates assorted standard jazz styles. Stride is one of the most recognizable techniques in Kapustin’s works. It is

⁴¹ Gridley, 92.

directly associated with ragtime and consists of a bass note on the strong beats and a chord on the weak beats in left hand (see example 9a). Also, the use of the interval of a tenth in stride is typical. James P. Johnson (1894-1955), Willie “The Lion” Smith (1893-1973), and Thomas “Fats” Waller (1904-1943) are pioneers of this style and Count Basie (1904-1984) and Duke Ellington also utilized this style when playing as a soloist.⁴² Kapustin emulated double-time stride in his *Étude in different intervals* Op. 68, No. 1 (see example 9b).

Example 9a. A typical stride bass⁴³



Example 9b. Nikolai Kapustin, *Étude in different intervals* Op. 68, No. 1, mm. 10-11.⁴⁴



Boogie-woogie plays an important role in Kapustin’s writing as well. It is derived from the style of blues and characterized by a repetitive bass, usually in the subdivision of eight pulses (see example 10a). Its exponents were such pianists as Meade “Lux”

⁴² Koch, 281.

⁴³ Koch, 282.

⁴⁴ Nikolai Kapustin, *Five Études in different intervals* Op. 68, (Moscow: ARAM, 1992), 4.

Lewis (1905-1964) and Albert Ammons (1907-1949). A common boogie-woogie bass pattern sounds in Kapustin's Concert Étude Op. 40, No. 5, showing rocking motion of the bass pattern (see example 10b).

Example 10a. Typical left hand boogie patterns



Example 10b. Nikolai Kapustin, Concert Étude Op. 40, No. 5, mm. 61-62.



Kapustin's success in exploiting miscellaneous styles of jazz trends helped form his flamboyant musical pallet. He not only paid homage to jazz masters through his music; he also fostered his own musical language in sound, texture, rhythm, and technique. A comprehensive study of jazz idioms and influences found in Kapustin's composition will help to explore jazz devices in his *Twenty-Four Preludes* Op. 53 in the last chapter.

Classical Form and Influence

Despite the fact that Kapustin composed with idiomatic jazz harmony and style, he never thought of himself as strictly a jazz musician:

I was never a jazz musician . . . I have very few jazz compositions that are really jazz . . . I'm not interested in improvisation—and what is a jazz musician without improvisation? All my improvisation is written, of course, and they become much better; it improved them.”⁴⁵

In fact, his works are thoroughly specific with written figuration of jazz idioms so classical pianists can explore a jazz idiom simply by reading the score. Furthermore, he unquestionably stated that he was never interested in jazz forms in particular. He said, “For me the classical part is more important. The jazz style is there to give color – I don't like jazz ‘forms’ – if you can describe them as that – which is why I've adopted those from classical music.”⁴⁶ Indeed, musical genres and forms he composed—sonata, prelude, fugue, etude, nocturne, impromptu, variation, bagatelle, etc.—represent that he conformed to the classical tradition.

Kapustin learned formal structures of classical music through his training at the Moscow Conservatory. Accordingly, many of his works recall formal and technical attributes from Bach through the twentieth century. For example, his *Suite in the Old Style*, Op. 28, saturated in the sound of jazz world and languages of African-American spiritual, is modeled on keyboard suites or partitas of Bach containing stylized dance movements such as allemande, bourrée, gavotte, gigue, and sarabande in strict binary form. Also, one of his masterpieces, *Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues*, Op. 82, definitely resembles classical contrapuntal techniques such as canon, inversion, imitation, and augmentation. Additionally, his *Eight Concert Études*, Op. 40 display the influence of Chopin, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Prokofiev through their richly harmonized

⁴⁵ Anderson, 94-96.

⁴⁶ Smith, 55.

virtuosic writing. His Five Études in Different Intervals, Op. 68 is reminiscent of Debussy's etude set, which also explores etudes made up of different intervals. The Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, consisting of shorter pieces in a single mood exploring different qualities of all major and minor keys, is influenced by the prelude sets of Chopin and Scriabin.

Particularly, the sonata form is Kapustin's favorite and he established his structural development through this form. He has composed twenty piano sonatas as of 2014 and most of the first movements of his sonatas and his Sonatina, Op. 100 are in sonata-allegro form. His sonata-allegro form incorporates clear statement of themes of Classical era sonata form and complex thematic development of Romantic era sonata form. He also utilized ABA form for the shorter pieces such as the Preludes; however, his complex way of using thematic material is closely related to the exposition-development-recapitulation of sonata-allegro form.

Outside of form, Kapustin's works represent influences of romanticism as well as the Russian tradition. Influences of Chopin can be seen in his etudes. As Chopin primarily focused on a single technical issue for each etude, Kapustin fairly treated one particular aspect of a technical problem in each of his Eight Concert Études, Op. 40. For example, the second etude entitled *Reverie* (Dream) obviously shows the influence of Chopin's Op. 10, No. 7, which features mainly a double-notes texture. Kapustin's work evokes not only technical aspects but also Chopin's lyricism (see example 11a and 11b). This brilliant figuration of alternating double-note was also applied to Rachmaninoff's Prelude, Op. 23, No. 9, suggestively making a trace from Chopin to Kapustin (see example 11c).

Example 11a. Nikolai Kapustin, Concert Étude Op. 40, No. 2, m. 1.

Example 11b. Frédéric Chopin, Etude Op. 10, No. 7, mm. 1-2.⁴⁷

Example 11c. Sergei Rachmaninoff, Prelude Op. 23, No. 9, mm. 3-4.

Also, the fifth and last etude form Five Études in Different Intervals, Op. 68 echo unyielding, Lisztian octaves. Kapustin's use of interlocking octaves with chromaticism recalls Liszt's virtuosic and bravura technique, which he invented (see example 12).

⁴⁷ Frédéric Chopin, *Etude Op. 10 No. 7*, ed. Karl Klindworth (Berlin: Bote & Bock, 1880), accessed March 20, 2015, International Scores Music Library Project, http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/e/ec/IMSLP00311-Chopin_-_OP10_7.PDF

Example 12. Nikolai Kapustin, Five Études in Different Interval Op. 68, No. 5, mm. 17-20.



The inspiration of Russian composers can be immediately detected in Kapustin’s Variations, Op. 41, which is one of the most widely played among his works and recorded by several contemporary classical pianists such as Marc-André Hamelin and Yuja Wang. The theme resembles the opening motive of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* played by a solo bassoon. Stravinsky originally took the motive from the Lithuanian folk song “Tu, manu seserėlė” (see example 13a).⁴⁸ He added grace notes to the melody and Kapustin coincidentally added the same ornamentation (see example 13b). The excitement and percussive rhythmic drive of Prokofiev’s music is also associated with Kapustin’s music, as an example shows that the energetic unison of both hands is similar to Prokofiev’s opening of the first movement of Piano Sonata No. 7 (see example 14).

Example 13a. *Tu, manu seserėlė*



⁴⁸ Abramova, 18.

Example 13b. Nikolai Kapustin, Variations Op. 41, mm. 1-2.

Example 14. Nikolai Kapustin, Variations Op. 41, mm. 198-201.

These conspicuous references and quotations from the classical repertoire can be found more in Kapustin's works. A reminiscence of Rachmaninoff's seventh variation from *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* can be found in Kapustin's fifth variation from the Variations, Op. 41. The imitated sound of *pizzicati* in the low strings of the left hand and the choral style of the right hand suggest the texture of piano and orchestral accompaniment of Rachmaninoff's variation (see example 15a and 15b). Also, Kapustin's Toccata shares a same textural construction in the same key with Ravel's Toccata (see examples 16a and 16b). The multiple repetitions of the pitch E alternating between two hands unmistakably resemble each other.

Example 15a. Nikolai Kapustin, Fifth variation from Variations, Op. 41, mm. 180-183.

Larghetto

Example 15b. Sergei Rachmaninoff, Seventh variation from *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.⁴⁹

Var. VII
Meno mosso, a tempo moderato

Example 16a. Nikolai Kapustin, Toccata, mm. 7-8.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Sergei Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody on a Theme and Paganini*, Op. 43 (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1950), 19.

⁵⁰ Nikolai Kapustin, *Toccata* (Moscow: ARAM, London: Music Trading Company, 1983), 20.

Example 16b. Maurice Ravel, Toccata, mm. 1-4.⁵¹



As Kapustin's educational training deeply involved the Russian classical tradition, his music spontaneously embodies his respect for classical form and influence of classical composers. In addition to the colorful sounds he created with jazz styles, the classical influences and forms he mixed together become a unique tool to express his own musical language.

III. Analysis of Classical and Jazz Blending and Performance Considerations in the Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53

Classical Influence and Form

The Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, published in 1988, is one of the most fascinating works of Kapustin's and an ambitious genre to exhibit his extraordinary grasp of both jazz and classical music. The Preludes follow the key scheme of Chopin's Preludes, Op. 28: all major and minor keys are sequenced through the circle of fifths, with a major key being followed by a relative minor key. Interestingly, the genre has been cultivated by several Russian composers, such as Scriabin, Rachmaninoff,

⁵¹ Maurice Ravel, "Toccata" from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1997), accessed March 20, 2015, International Scores Music Library Project, <http://burrto.whatbox.ca:15263/imglnks/usimg/5/54/IMSLP02899-Ravel-TombeaufversDurEd.pdf>.

Shostakovich, and Kabalevski. Kapustin succeeded these composers and contributed to the genre with his Preludes, Op. 53. Furthermore, each prelude, a short work, explores a single technical device and mood similar to Bach, Chopin, and Scriabin's preludes.

Each piece has a distinctive mood and there is no motivic connection between the pieces. Kapustin commented that the Preludes do not necessarily have to be performed as a cycle, "I wrote them so I could get them all onto a single disc. They're very short as a result. I think they're too long that way – pianists can play any part of it. It doesn't matter."⁵² Instead, he linked these discrete pieces by using certain forms.

The Preludes incorporate classical forms such as ternary, monothematic form, and rondo. Provided here will be an analysis of one example of each form. First of all, the first prelude is in a ternary form. The overall structure is ABA' with the B section divided in two parts. The A section begins with relentless sixteenth notes with syncopated rhythm emphasized and becomes more chromatic and harmonically ambiguous towards the B section starting at measure 20. The B section, completely contrasting with the A section, consists of a walking bass line and pentatonic and quartal patterns. The B section can be divided into equal lengths at the measure 36, where the left hand starts with the same figuration. A transition, from measures 52 to 60, contains motives used in the A section and leads into return of the A section at measure 61. Despite the complex harmonic and motivic progression, the overall structure is fairly simple.

Secondly, almost half of the preludes are in a monothematic form. Unlike the preludes in other forms, these preludes develop with one thematic material or motive

⁵² Smith, 55.

similar to Scriabin's Preludes, Op. 11. Prelude IV, for example, is structured around a motive from the first two measures. The motive of swing, notated in dotted rhythms, is transposed and twisted in melodic lines throughout the piece.

Another classical form Kapustin adopted is a rondo form and the Prelude XXIII is in this form. This prelude is relatively balanced and its harmonic progression is clear. Two eight-bar phrases with swing rhythm form the A section followed by the B section which contains Garner-style chords. The A section returns after eight bars in the same key followed by a four-bar transition toward the new material. The C section includes three eight-bar phrases with more improvisatory figurations. Then, the A section reappears at measure 61 with a four-measure coda. Overall, this prelude is comprised of balanced-forms and phrases.

Jazz Idioms in the Preludes

The Preludes contain idiomatic jazz styles such as stride, boogie-woogie, and swing; moreover, these pieces use jazz techniques discussed in the previous chapter, such as idiomatic chord voicings, jazz harmonies, and Garner-style chords. The idioms of stride piano sound in several preludes. Recognizable stride can be found in Prelude XXI, which suggests a typical figure in the left hand. It uses a moderate tempo stride in the thematic material. The Prelude XVII shows use of walking tenth, one of the essential devices of stride to connect chord progressions (see examples 17a and 17b). In addition, Preludes XIII contains stride accompaniment underneath the improvisatory right hand while keeping a steady 5/8 tempo; II and XIX also include elements of stride.

Example 17a. Nikolai Kapustin, Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, XXI, mm.

The musical score for Example 17a is in 3/4 time and marked 'Comodo'. It consists of two staves. The right hand (treble clef) begins with a triplet of eighth notes (F4, G4, A4) followed by a triplet of eighth notes (B4, C5, D5). The melody continues with various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and slurs. The left hand (bass clef) provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and triplets. The dynamic marking is 'mf'.

Example 17b. Nikolai Kapustin, Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, XVII, mm.

The musical score for Example 17b starts at measure 27. It is in 3/4 time and features a boogie-woogie rhythm with broken tenths. The right hand (treble clef) has a melodic line with triplets and slurs, including a triplet of eighth notes (F4, G4, A4) followed by a triplet of eighth notes (B4, C5, D5). The left hand (bass clef) provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and triplets. The dynamic marking is 'f'.

There are several references to boogie-woogie throughout the Preludes.

Noticeable boogie-woogie rhythm can be seen in XVII with use of broken tenths. Also, Prelude II displays a reference to the boogie technique in a style of Count Basie, which use voices to push harmony and rhythm forward (see example 18). The harmony progresses from G7 to C7 within 3 measures because of the boogie style in the left-hand figure.

Example 18. Nikolai Kapustin, Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, II, mm.



One of the vital aspects that Kapustin assimilated from the jazz idiom is his use of chord voicing and quartal harmony to create full textures. The references can be extensively discovered in his preludes. He used many 9th, 11th and 13th chords with chromatic alterations in Preludes V, XIII and XVII. Especially, he used sophisticated jazz chord voicings in Prelude V. Under the lyrical and linear melody, the accompanimental voices encompass chromatic inner voices and voice leading, which creates a richer sonority. He carefully avoided doubling the notes while freely using extensions (see example 19a). Scattered use of quartal harmony is evident in several preludes including the Preludes I, II, VII, VIII, and XIII in either chordal or broken textures. For instance, in the Prelude I, a series of quartal chords in the right hand, which contrasts with the walking bass line in the left hand, imitates the sound of brass in a big band playing (see example 19b).

Example 19a. Nikolai Kapustin, *Twenty-Four Preludes*, Op. 53, V, mm. 1-3.

Example 19b. Nikolai Kapustin, *Twenty-Four Preludes*, Op. 53, I, mm. 44-45.

Furthermore, Garner's trademark chords resembling the strumming of a guitar are often presented in the Preludes. Garner's chord-style is evident in the opening of the Prelude IV. As discussed above, the chords are sometimes played slightly off the beat imitating a swing drum. Kapustin plays in this manner on his recording.⁵³ The most prolonged Garner's chords can be found in the Prelude XII that imitates the rich resonance of a big band sound (see examples 20a and 20b).

⁵³ Nikolai Kapustin, *Twenty-Four Preludes in Jazz Style*, Op. 53. Boheme Music, CDBMR 007149, 2000.

Example 20a. Nikolai Kapustin, Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, IV, mm. 1-4.

Example 20b. Nikolai Kapustin, Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53, XII, mm. 51-53.

Performance Considerations

As a classical pianist it is vital for the authenticity of the performance to consider the interpretive aspects of jazz playing. Kapustin's piano music requires formidable technique, demanding fast tempos and complexity in rhythm and texture. As a pianist he possesses brilliant technique to play his own music. It is also necessary to employ a specific approach to arm weight, fingering, and rhythmic independence of hands, distinct from playing classical music.⁵⁴ Particularly, independence of the left hand is vital: the beats and rhythm between the hands need to be kept separate from each other.

⁵⁴ Leslie De'Ath, "Nikolai Kapustin - a Performer's Perspective," accessed March 12, 2011, <http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2002/Jun02/Kapustin.htm>

His music not only challenges technically, but also requires comprehensive understanding of jazz music. Especially for the classical pianist, learning his music demands distinctive approaches from classical repertoire because notation of jazz music and stylized passages are very limited. Thus, it challenges to read and interpret his music, which is notated with hidden technical connotations.

One of the most challenging notations to identify is the meaning of swing, which is commonly notated in even eighth notes. No jazz musicians would divide the beat in one way, but there is a more common way: a long-short sequence of tied-triplet figures. Kapustin uses bop and jazz-rock straight-eighths styles. Bop is composed mostly of eighth-note and sixteenth-note figures with a more agitated manner than swing and often as too fast of a tempo to swing the eighth notes. Also, jazz-rock straight-eighth style is mainly a style of drumming. Several preludes in this style are in cut time. Therefore, it would be more difficult to identify his intention. However, there are some places he indicated precisely when to swing. In the Prelude XVII, “swinging” is written for even eighth notes, which suggests straight-eighth notes to be played in tied-triplet rhythm. Otherwise, in many cases, swing is notated with dotted-eighth and sixteenth notes. Consequently, it implies that making decisions and interpreting this effect is challenging for classical pianists. However, one can improve his/her ability to play effectively in style by listening closely to examples.

Kapustin’s own recording of the Preludes demonstrates his interpretive choices for the notated music and he is the definitive interpreter compared to other recordings of classical pianists. The Prelude I is performed extremely fast, in perpetual motion. In Preludes IV and XVII, the dotted-eighth and sixteenth note patterns are naturally played

in swing rhythm without over swinging. In Prelude VI, he begins with jazz-rock style eighth notes then, in the B section, he plays in swing rhythm for even eighth notes in right hand over a steady walking bass. Overall, with stylized accents, swing, and syncopations, his performance demonstrates his natural instinct from the experience with jazz bands and intellectual understanding of the style.

Conclusion

The piano music of Nikolai Kapustin has been impressively enhanced with his unique and imaginative style. The sophisticated synthesis of classical tradition and jazz idioms constitutes his distinctive musical voice. Through his education in classical music from the Moscow Conservatory years, he gained profound understanding of classical traditions of Classical and Romantic styles and extraordinary piano technique. As a result, many of his works recall formal and technical attributes from Bach through the twentieth century; moreover, his music reveals references and quotations of classical composers, especially from Romantic and Russian composers. Many influences of jazz musicians can be also found in his music. He adopted the virtuosic playing of Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum, the unique style of Erroll Garner, and the rich texture and harmony from his experience with big bands. These authentic uses of jazz idioms absorbed into standard classical forms created the most distinctive quality of Kapustin's musical world.

There are other classical composers attracted to the exotic sound of jazz and fuse these two distinct styles into one musical language such as Paul Hindemith, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, and William Bolcom among many other. Kapustin combines

two different styles in such an integrated manner, when compared to other classical composers. With his comprehensive understanding of broad jazz styles, he captures the true art of jazz in all of his works.

The Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 53 encompass a large range of jazz techniques and styles with a variety of rhythms, tempos, and melody as well as the clear structural organization of classical music. The work clearly shows the influence of preludes by Chopin, Scriabin, and other Russian composers and idiomatic jazz harmony and rhythm. A classical pianist performing these works must possess a formidable technique and comprehensive understanding of jazz playing, different from learning classical repertoire. The examination of his unique notation can be done by interpreting different recordings, especially Kapustin's own.

Kapustin's stylistic fusion of jazz and classical music provides more accessibility to classical pianists to explore a new musical genre. His highly idiomatic music is now a part of the standard repertoire and attracting both performers and audiences. I hope my study will elucidate his compositional brilliance and encourage even more pianists to explore his music.

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