

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: ALEXANDER NIKOLAEVICH SKRJABIN:
FROM ROMANTICISM TO THE MYSTIC
CHORD, THE TEN PIANO SONATAS AND 24
PRELUDES, OPUS 11.

Aldo Ragone, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2007

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Alexander Nikolaevich Scriabin, Russian pianist and composer, was a rarity — a musical mystic. Influenced by the writings of Fichte, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, by Russian Symbolism, and the theosophy of Madame Helena Blavatsky, he developed his own ecstatic conception, believing that creation is the emanation of a Divine Principle and placing himself as a Promethean player in the drama that would change the destiny of the human race.

Born in Moscow on Christmas Day, December 25, 1871 (Julian calendar) and dying prematurely on Easter, April 14, 1915, Scriabin assigned himself the role of Messiah. In fact, he elaborated a theory that foretold the end of the world through a colossal cataclysm after the performance of his

messianic work, “Mysterium,” an event that would purify humankind and give birth to a joyful superhuman race, free of disease and struggle.

Skrjabin, like many Russian composers of the last part of the 19th century (Liadov, Glazunov, Cui, and others), fell under the sway of Chopin. As soon as 1897, though, Skrjabin diverged from his early style in the first sonata in F minor Opus 6 and later the twenty-four Preludes, Opus 11. Although he composed five symphonies, Skrjabin dedicated himself mainly to writing piano works, including the short forms favored by Chopin. However, it is his set of ten sonatas, written during a twenty-one-year span between 1892 and 1913 that represents the core of his musical output.

The ten sonatas can be divided into three compositional periods: sonatas 1-3 belong to the first period (late romantic); sonatas 4-5 belong to the transitional period (from late romantic style towards atonality); and sonatas 6-10 are clearly in Skrjabin’s late style, characterized by tonal instability and the use of musical symbols such as trills and intervals of the tritone, seventh, and ninth. However, the most important of his musical innovations was his famous “Mystic Chord” (based on the notes C-F#-Bb-E-A-D), not only because it was meant to represent the initial chaos of the universe, the origin of the whole, but also because through it Skrjabin conceived the revolutionary harmonic system of all of his late works.

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by

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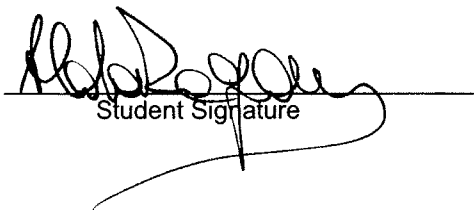
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