

My visit to Moscow, October 5-13, 2018

Scriabin Memorial Museum Conference: "100 Years of Attachment"

By Dmitry Rachmanov

In October 2018 I was invited to Moscow, Russia, to participate in the centennial conference commemorating the founding of the Scriabin Memorial Museum "100 Years of Attachment" sponsored by the Museum in conjunction with the Scriabin Foundation, Russian National Museum of Music, the Tchaikovsky Conservatory and the Gnessins Academy. Moscow.

My invitation was initiated and facilitated by Dr. Valentina V. Rubtsova, the Deputy Director for Research at the Scriabin Memorial Museum, the author, scholar and Editor-in-Chief of the Moscow publishing house *Muzyka*. I came as a representative of the Scriabin Society of America, the organization I am a co-founder of, dating back to 1995. While in Moscow, I also presented a recital as part of the centennial museum celebrations and participated in the conference proper, reading a message on behalf of the SSA.

On my first day in Moscow (Saturday, October 6) I paid a visit to the Scriabin Museum, where I had my first meeting with Valentina V. Rubtsova (with whom we had maintained a steady correspondence for the past two years and had previously met in 2014 when I paid an unscheduled visit to the museum while in Moscow to give an all-Scriabin recital program on the *Keyboard Virtuoso* series at the International House of Music). On this occasion I also met with the Deputy Director Elvira L. Zelenina, and then attended a lecture given by the museum's Director of Research, Vladimir Popkov.

On the following day, Sunday, October 7, I was shown the museum's library of books on Scriabin related to my research (an upcoming edition of the Twenty-Four Preludes, Opus 11, which I am preparing for the Alfred Publishing House). I later visited my alma mater, the Gnessin Special Music School, where I was offered a practice studio in preparation of my October 9 recital and where I visited with the school's Director, Mikhail Khokhlov. I was impressed with an amazing transformation the school had undergone in recent years, with its historic 18th-century building renovated from ruins, after being on the brink of disintegration as recently as in 2008, when I had last visited the school, and now, with millions of state money poured in for the capital renovation, and new annexations of adjacent buildings for a brand new dorm as well as new studio teaching/practice/recital spaces. The day was completed with a dinner visit with an old family friend.

On Monday, 10/08, I conducted more of my research as well as having a dress rehearsal for my recital in the new museum concert hall, built in 2013.

My recital was part of the centennial museum celebrations. It was an all-Scriabin program, which attracted a sizable audience, consisting of musicians, students, music lovers and friends. It was warmly received with encores, flower gifts and some reunions.

Here is a copy of the program:

Scriabin Memorial Museum

Grand Hall

Tuesday, October 9, 2018

Dmitry Rachmanov, piano

Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

Nocturne in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 5 No. 1
Prelude in A Major, Op. 15 No. 1
Prelude in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 11 No. 8
Etude In B Major, Op. 8 No. 4
Prelude in B Minor, Op. 13 No. 6
Mazurka in G-Sharp Minor, Op. 3 No. 9
Impromptu in B-Flat Minor, Op. 12 No. 2

Etude in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 42 No. 2
Etude in F-Sharp Major, Op. 42 No. 3
Mazurka in D-Flat Major, Op. 40 No. 1
Three pieces, Op. 49
 Etude
 Prelude
 Revêrie

Three pieces, Op. 52
 Poème
 Enigme
 Poème languide
Feuillet d'album, Op. 58
Sonata No. 6, Op. 62



A review/interview article was published in the online Musical Journal:

<http://www.themusicalmagazine.ru/притяжение-скрябина-музею-композито/?fbclid=IwAR2ii47spWAgf2PfXDettCgcAPc3gixUTDRbe0i9-Q2mB5G3Mw3QPb-KPbw>

On the following night, Wednesday, October 10, the official 100th anniversary opening festivities took place. The formal part, filled with speeches by the museum director, Alexander I. Lazarev, the deputy Mayor of Moscow and other dignitaries was followed by a short piano recital by the well-known pianist Ekaterina Mechetina. The following reception was attended by many musicians and invited guests.



With the pianist Ekaterina Mechetina



With the pianist Pavel Shatsky, visual artist Maria Konova and the pianist and professor of the Gnessin Academy Vladimir Tropp



At the centennial opening ceremony in front of the 100th Birthday Cake:
L-R: Andrei Ustinov, editor-in-chief of the magazine *Muzykalnoe Obozrenie*, musicologist Irina Medvedeva, DR, Dr. Rubtsova, the Museum Director Alexander Lazarev & Dr. Kurtev.

The conference proper took place during the next two days, 10/11-12, with Russian and international musicologists and scholars presenting their lectures. The conference theme was: *"The Creative Archive of a Composer, Artist, or a Literary Figure as the Object of Research and Publication. Textological Issues in the Musical and Literary Documents."* There were many well-researched presentations, from more general, such as "Memorialization of the Name of A.N. Scriabin Before and After the Museum" by the Ekaterina Lobankova, drawing historical parallels, to more specific textological presentations, such as "Regarding the questionable "flat" in the poem "Vers la Flamme," by the German-based musicologist Evgeny Kosiakin, to the esthetical subjects, such as "the Cosmos of Scriabin," by Daniil Topilin and "Russian Cosmism: the Late Piano Works by Scriabin and his Followers," by Vladimir Chinaev, and then to topics only indirectly related to the composer, such as presentations about Tchaikovsky's new Complete Academic Edition, presented by A. Ainbindler, or the one discussing a correspondence between A. Khachaturian and Atovmian, delivered by O. Kuzina. Some of the lectures presented fascinating information, offering plenty of food for thought.

On the first day of the conference, I addressed the gathering on behalf of the Scriabin Society of America. Here is the transcript of my conference greeting:

Honored colleagues, ladies and gentlemen!

I am humbled and excited to address this conference on behalf of the Scriabin Society of America during the centennial festivities of the founding of the Scriabin Memorial Museum, and to speak to you within these venerated walls!

The Museum, created soon after the composer's passing, in the first 100 years has developed into an international center of attraction for all who cherish Scriabin's genius. The museum has also become a living center of musical culture in Russia and beyond its borders. In the house where Scriabin lived and created his masterpieces, the memorial museum brings together leading musicians, pianists and musicologists, helping support the young musicians of today; it attracts all those who hold Scriabin's music dear to their hearts. The museum serves as a center for leading researchers of the music of Scriabin, spearheaded by Dr. Valentina V. Rubtsova, in continuing to lead the research and publications of musicological materials related to the composer's life and creativity.

A milestone for the museum was the dedication of the new concert hall, which opened its doors in 2013, largely due to the efforts of the museum director Alexander I. Lazarev. One should not overlook the significant contributions on the part of the Moscow Scriabin Fund and its role in the museum's activities.

The Museum continues its ongoing relations with the Scriabin Associations worldwide, including the Scriabin Society of America. The first "Scriabin Circle" was created in America in 1934 by the pianist Katherine Ruth Hyeman. Based on an unabated interest in Scriabin's music in the US, the Scriabin Society of America was founded in 1995. The idea of creating this society was in part given its original impetus at the Moscow museum, when in June of 1992, while on a visit to Moscow, I was introduced to Alexander Serafimovich Scriabin, who expressed a desire to see such a society created in line with the then existing European societies. Following this cue, upon my return to the United States, I helped introduce the idea to musicians and Scriabin aficionados in the US, succeeding to get some well-known musicians and musicologists involved and organized who eventually became part of the society's governing board. Among them were Faubion Bowers, the well-known English language Scriabin biographer, as well as the professor of piano literature at the Juilliard School and a confirmed Scriabinist, Joseph Bloch.

For over 20 years now, the society has brought together under its aegis some leading performers, musicologists, composers, pedagogues as well as music lovers and devotees of Scriabin in the US and abroad. The society's activities have ranged from organizing concerts, master classes, sponsoring symposia

and lectures at venues such as universities and conservatories in various parts of the USA, to the publication of the yearly SSA Journal, which includes articles and research papers on Scriabin's life and art, as well as other related topics. Among some events presented by SSA, there have been performances by young musicians, such as winners of international competitions and festivals. Over the years we have introduced recital debuts in New York and other parts of the US of two winners of the Scriabin International Piano Competition in Moscow, Evgeny Mikhailov and Peter Laul, as well as other rising stars, such as Alexander Kobrin and Evgeny Sudbin. The society has also presented such well-known musicians as Mikhail Voskresensky, Aleksei Lubimov, among others.

My own contributions as an active member of the Scriabin Society of America during the last several years were manifested in the form of a series of all-Scriabin recital programs, which I performed in several countries of the world, as well as lectures at universities and musical societies in the USA. These activities were dedicated to the commemoration of the Scriabin Memorial Centennial (1915-2015). Presently I am continuing my work in creating a videography-anthology of Scriabin's major piano works, including performances and verbal on-screen commentaries. The goal of this project is to create a cultural/pedagogical materials with the goal of informing and enlightening musicians and music lovers with better understanding of Scriabin's style and language and spread the composer's legacy by creating a visual/aural aid to pianists, students and teachers.

Today the Scriabin Society of America continues to coordinate its activities related to Scriabin research in the US and abroad. On behalf of the SSA I would like to express our gratitude to the Scriabin Memorial Museum as well as the Moscow Scriabin Fund for their continuous interest and support of the activities of the Scriabin Society of America. Speaking for all the SSA members, allow me to congratulate the Scriabin Memorial Museum with its Milestone 100th Anniversary and to wish you a continuous creative, artistic and scholarly activities for many years to come!

Our societies' cooperation will help promote and widen the circle of musicians, followers and aficionados of Scriabin's music in Russia and the USA!

Dmitry Rachmanov,
Member of the Board,
Scriabin Society of America

All in all my Moscow visit proved a highly rewarding experience for me on the artistic, scholarly as well as personal levels.