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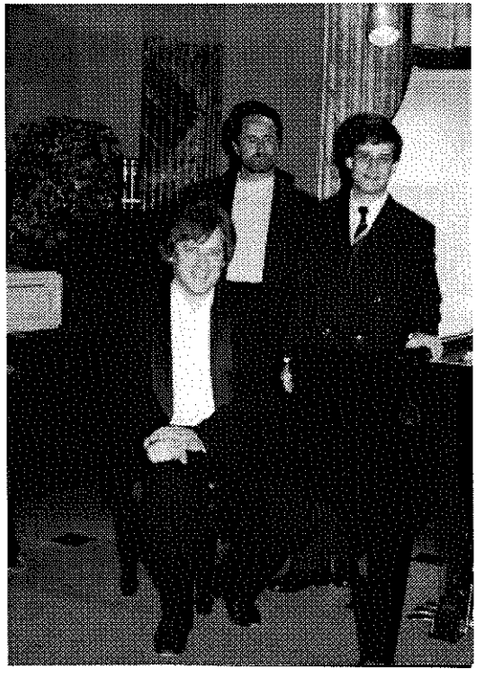
Scriabin Society Of America Update

by Joseph Bloch

1997 was the first full year of activities for the Society, now boasting 132 members. Highlights include the first issue of the Journal which has received much favorable attention, the appearance of the revised version of Faubion Bowers seminal biography of Scriabin, published by Dover Publications and Farhan Malik's exhaustive Discography. The first of a series of concerts at Steinway Hall took place in October with performances by pianists Arthur Greene, Dimitry Rachmanov and Dmitri Novgorodsky of the 12 Etudes, Op. 8, the Fantasia and the Fifth Sonata. Two more are planned in 1998.

The much-anticipated lecture-recital by pianist Alexei Lubimov on the Prefractory Action of the Mysterium was cancelled along with all of Mr. Lubimov's American engagements because of a death in his family. Hopefully this may be re-scheduled.

Attention is called to a remarkable new biography of the American composer Ruth Crawford Seeger by Judith Tick, published by Oxford University Press, which devotes a great deal of space to the influence of Scriabin on this important musician and on others in the 1920s, a time when Scriabin's music was thought to be in eclipse.



Also, in early 1998, we will have a presence on the internet when our newly developed web site comes on line. It can be accessed at http://www.scriabinsociety.com and will feature information about all of our projects. Included is a short biography of Scriabin written specifically for the web site by Faubion Bowers, a list of Scriabin's works, excerpts from the Journal, information on the discography and bibliography, a listing of Board members and officers, a membership form with information on how to join, links to other sites and announcements of upcoming events of interest to Scriabin lovers.

Sviatoslav Richter

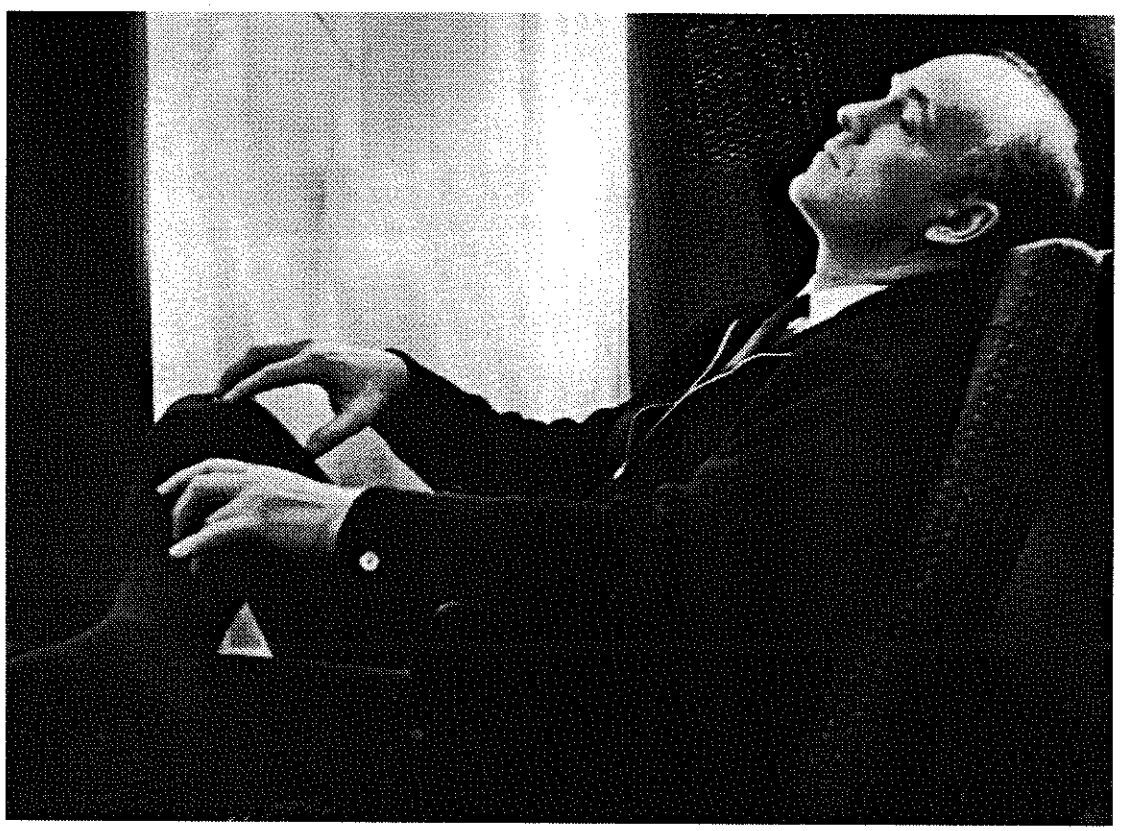
A Tribute:

by Edith Finton Rieber

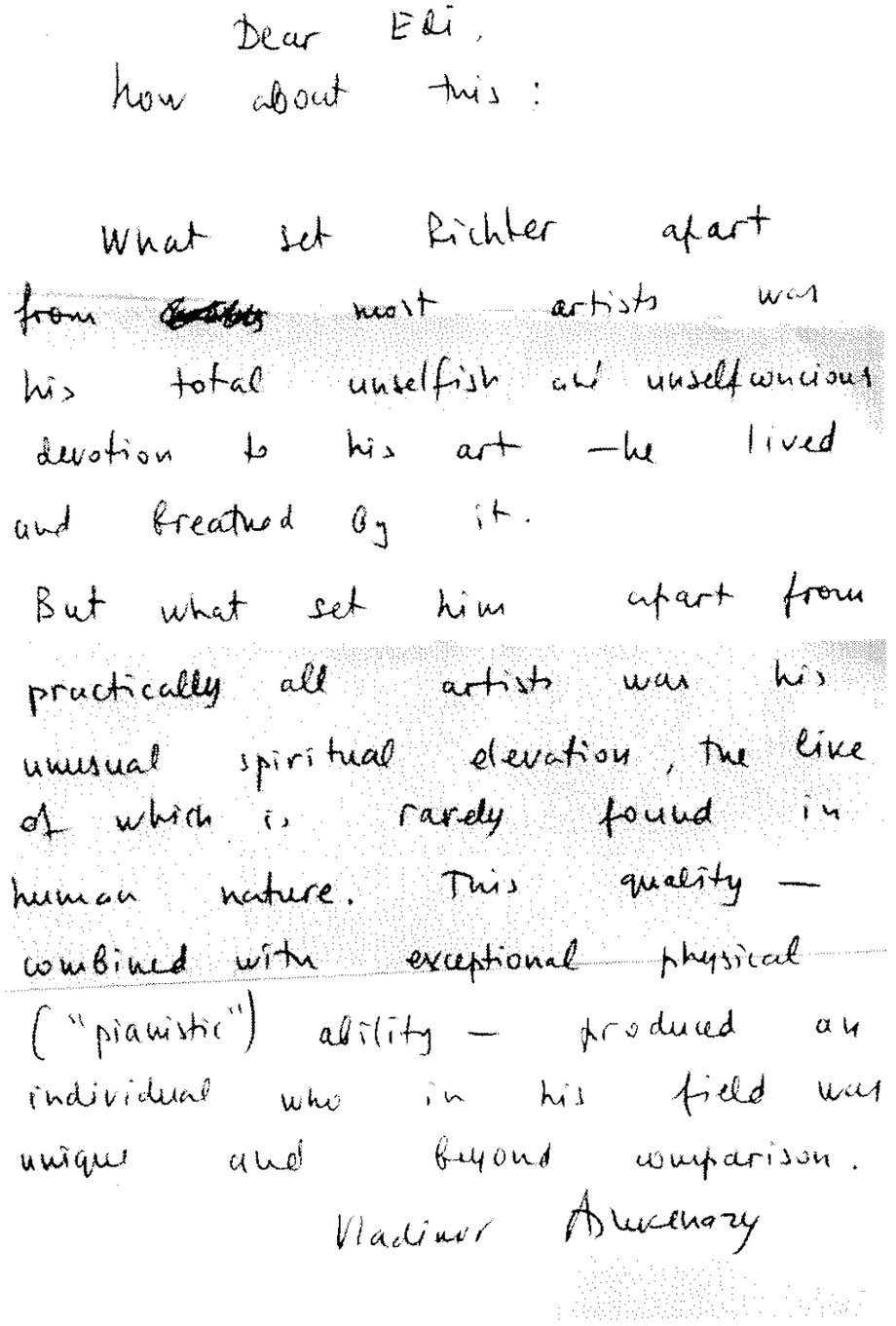
This gentle, modest, open man was one of the greatest musicians of this era. I thank him eternally for going beyond the previous frontiers of performance and opening up boundless new horizons. What an artist with a limitless palette of colors, visions, and ideas! His technique was totally at the service of his art, never to impress. He once quietly whispered to me that he was not pleased with his performance, "too much bravura." What a joy it was to be a part of his world! I shall never forget the visit to the Barnes Foundation near Philadelphia. Whenever the postman delivered an envelope with his unique handwriting, my heart would jump with joy as I read his letters and cards!

My grief to learn of his death on August 1, 1997 was incredible. It was while speaking with Nina Dorliac, his wife, in Moscow the next day that I told her of my wish to dedicate this issue of the Journal of the Scriabin Society to him. Her response was "Yes, I know how much you loved him."

(l-r) Nina Dorliac, Edith Finton Rieber and Sviatoslav Richter



Richter's devotion to Scriabin is well known. At the time of Pasternak's death, May 1960, he sat beside the open casket playing all night, playing nothing but Scriabin's music.


Dear Eli,
how about this:

What set Richter apart from ~~Gorbey~~ most artists was his total unselfish and unselfconscious devotion to his art — he lived and breathed by it.

But what set him apart from practically all artists was his unusual spiritual elevation, the like of which is rarely found in human nature. This quality — combined with exceptional physical ("pianistic") ability — produced an individual who in his field was unique and beyond comparison.

Vladimir Ashkenazy

Vladimir Ashkenazy's response to Edith Finton Rieber's request for a comment re Richter's death.

Richter on Scriabin

By Faubion Bowers

(reprinted from Saturday Review, June 12, 1965)

One day in mid-May, thanks to mutual friends, I called on the Soviet pianist now scattering his triumphs over America, Sviatoslav Richter, to talk about Scriabin. Alexander Scriabin is that curious musical anomaly—born on Christmas Day, 1871, and died at Easter, 1915—who evoked a whole new world of musical sensations only to sink into near-oblivion. Richter, together with Vladimir Horowitz, are Scriabin's chief latter-day exponents.

Richter's comfortable suite on the eleventh floor of the Stanhope Hotel, with three bedrooms divided by a vast sitting room and a concert grand piano, overlooks the Metropolitan Museum of Art. You can also find Richter there, in between trips to Cleveland, Boston, Canada, etc. He travels with a young, pretty, and polite secretary, Miss Kardashova (provided by the Cultural Ministry of the USSR), who speaks no English and a diminutive, red-headed and affable Englishman, Mr. Phillips (provided by the Hurok management), who speaks an expert and accentless Russian. Avid Richter fans, they sit onstage at the side when he plays. The Stanhope suite was his base through his American tour, just concluded on the West Coast.

Richter eschews press interviews partly because unpleasant questions arose when he was known through records to be one of the great pianists of our times, and yet was not on the list of Soviet cultural exports. However, his meet-the-press distaste stems primarily from the fact that, like any number of artists performing before the public eye, it becomes the art which counts.

Again, like most publicity-shy persons, once Richter receives you, he is ebullient, affectionate, stimulated by outside company, and desperately eager for you to understand. Perhaps it is his titanic reputation, but close up he appears huge, broad-shouldered and a giant. His almost Frankenstein-like, square face is ruddy, framed in wisps of sand-colored hair, and pierced by intelligent, cornflower-blue eyes. A hockey-stick line of moles traces his right cheek and chin. In looks, one's first impression is of

a handsome peasant from a gentle Tolstoy novel. As soon as he speaks and his restless hands—soft, string-muscled, wrapped around bones of steel—gesticulate, he becomes an aristocrat of real life. Like an aristocrat, and unlike many Soviet citizens, he speaks of Rossiya, rather than "the Union" or soyuz.

That day he was dressed for summer— the air conditioning was off—in a blue, short-sleeved shirt. His elegant trousers were well-tailored to fit his solid figure. His shoes were expensive and foreign. When Richter speaks, he likes to make a point totally clear. If you, the listener, frown or hesitate he throws in a French or German word to make his meaning inescapable. "*Le décadentisme,*" he emphasized with his hands and a smile to explain why he never plays an "all-Scriabin" program. Such has been the custom however, in the USSR, particularly for Richter's co-musicians: the late Sofronitsky, son-in-law of Scriabin himself and professor at the Moscow Conservatory; and Neuhaus, Richter's own teacher and mentor. Yevtushenko, the young poet in vogue, recently wrote a poem, *Moscow Freight Train*, about students who work all night unloading trains in order to buy a ticket to an all-Scriabin concert.

However, an all-Scriabin recording is a different matter to Richter. "I have several in Russia, but only one is released here [MK 1582]. I like it, but now it's so old [recorded during recitals in the USSR in 1952 and 1955]. How about that etude in ninths?" And Richter played it in the air, like a little boy showing his speed, lightness, and fiendishly broad chromatic intervals, which he tosses off as casually as if they were octaves. "I don't like that other Scriabin record, the one with the Fifth Sonata [Deutsche Grammophon LPM 18 849] . . ." I could not help recalling at this juncture the elaborate process the recording entailed. Every concert note of music Richter played during his Italian summer season of 1962 was taped. The result is a record of skimmed brilliance.

Richter began our interview by saying, "I cannot understand why it is so unusual to play Scriabin in America. In Russia he is part of the mainstream of musical life . . . our heritage. We grow up with him, are nurtured by him, nourished on him. We absorb him, as soon as we are born. I cannot possibly remember when I got interested in Scriabin. He was part of life, always. I was nine when I heard my first big Scriabin, the *Poem of Ecstasy* [Fourth Symphony] in Odessa. Neuhaus influenced me, too. He enlarged my vision. I shall never forget as long as I live how he played the Tenth Sonata . . . never will I forget that."

"Do you play it?"

"No, I don't like it for myself. I play five of the ten sonatas—the Second, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Ninth—and hundreds of other Scriabin pieces . . . pieces I have never performed anywhere in public. I keep them to myself. Too much Scriabin isn't right. He is too difficult, too subjective, for prolonged performance. Ah, *la décadence.* I adore Scriabin, and hate Scriabinists."

"We have mystics in America," I pointed out, "who listen to his music for the theosophical experience of flashes of light, visions, magic...."

"Our countries are the same. Scriabinists are tiresome people, and I stay away from them. What a great composer Scriabin was. You can say he had his weaknesses, but I don't like to talk about them."

"Please."

"Why? No! He had tremendous strengths. Why concern ourselves with his weaknesses? Of course, you can say he is salon, lightweight and flattering to society ladies and gentlemen in some of his early works, or that he derived from Chopin. But you take his very first etude [C-sharp minor, Opus 2, written when Scriabin was sixteen]. Ah, what heart . . . *das Herz.* What strengths he had! I never play show-stoppers such as the D-sharp minor Etude (Opus 8), or the left-hand stuff. I play the Seventh Sonata a lot in America, because it is rarely played. It needs an airing.

"Scriabin's great pity is that he died at his best period. Think, the Sixth Sonata was a dead end . . . a cul-de-sac. It's unknowable. Who knows what it means? I don't. It's an enigma . . . secret . . . mysterious . . . hidden. It is like [pause] night. The French directions help a little. "*L'epouvante surgit*" [the frightening rises up], for example. From there where could he go? The same cul-de-sac for the Seventh. That piece is all heat and fire It is naked, undressed, open, but stifling and you can't breathe it is so hot. And where can you go from there? Nowhere. So Scriabin began to compose entirely differently . . . the Ninth and Tenth. The Ninth is my favorite. It is a storm, a storm of nature in nature. It is elemental, I mean of the natural elements."

"Horowitz likes the Ninth best, too," I said, "but Scriabin's own favorite was the Seventh. The Ninth, with its grotesque, spooky march, was called The Black Mass. It's supposed to be evil, part of Scriabin's Satanic coloring."

"Ah, but nature can be evil, too. It's not all sunsets and evening glow. The Ninth is bad nature What about an earthquake, when the ground splits open? That's not good. But please don't misunderstand me. I am speaking my opinions, my feelings, my images that I see in my head when I play. These are not principles or laws to be followed. . . I think that the Ninth and Tenth Sonatas purged themselves of all uncleanliness, of wickedness. Scriabin moved with them onto a higher level. He had to do something new after the Sixth and Seventh, and he did. He took a further direction and then . . . he died. Pity. For his strengths we forgive him every weakness....

"How very hard it is to talk about music in words. It is the most concrete and, simultaneously, the most abstract art That sounds contradictory, but it's true. Music is like one's subconscious mind...." And Richter pinched the skin of his knuckles as if to say "under the skin." Then, feeling that was not quite right, he tapped his head with his forefinger as if to indicate that music rises from the depths of the under-mind and penetrates deep within the skin layers.

Richter brought the conversation back to Scriabin. "Do you know where all, all of Scriabin comes from . . . in one single passage? Guess." He raced to the piano and played the sinister, sickly-sweet, singing, slow middle-section tune of Liszt's Mephisto Waltz. Yes, I thought, it was Liszt who first put the devil in music. "Hear how it's all there," Richter sang, "the indefinitely held suspensions of ninths and elevenths, the

building of chords not in thirds but in fourths and fifths [the opening]...." And Richter smiled as if he had just synthesized a diamond of musical knowledge.

"Do you play, then, the *Poème Satanique* of Scriabin?"

"No, not it, nor its mate, *Tragique*. I don't like them myself for me."

My last question asked how Scriabin was received in Europe and America where, due to Richter, many were hearing him for the first time.

The answer was unequivocal: "When I play well, Scriabin is liked. When I play badly, he is not. It's as simple as that...."

Sviatoslav Richter - A Scriabin Discography

Sonata No. 2, Opus 19

6/21/55 Live	* Parnassus 96003/4
9/18/72 Live	Rococo 2144
9/24/72 Live	* Praga 254 056
10/27/72 Live	* Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Sonata No. 5, Opus 53

10/30/60 Live	CBS/SONY SONC 15066
11/9/62 Live	* DG 423573, * DG 447355, * DG POCG 2154, DG SLPM 138849, DG LPM 18849, DG 2726 020
9/18/72 Live	Rococo 2144
9/24/72 Live	* Praga 254 056
10/27/72 Live	* Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Sonata No. 6, Opus 62

6/20/55 Live	* BMG/Mel 29470, * Vic/Mel 2122, Mel D 10011 HOF 531, REC HALL 303, MK 1582, * Parnassus 96003/4

Sonata No. 7, Opus 64

4/19/55 Live	* AS Disc 346

Sonata No. 9, Opus 68

6/19/66 Live	* AS Disc 340, * AS Disc 346, * M&A 775, * M&A KICC 2268, * Nuova Era 2363, BWS RR 467
9/18/72 Live	Rococo 2144
10/27/72 Live	* Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Etude, Opus 2 No. 1

1/14/52 Live	* BMG/Mel 29470, * Vic/Mel 2122, Mel D 10011, HOF 531, Rec Hall 303, MK 1582

Etudes, Opus 8 Nos. 5,11

1/14/52 Live	* BMG/Mel 29470, * Vic/Mel 2122, Mel D 10011/2, HOF 531, Rec Hall 303, MK 1582

Preludes, Opus 11 Nos. 2,3,5,9-12,15-18,24

6/21/55 Live	* Parnassus 96003/4
9/18/72 Live	Rococo 2144
10/27/82 Live	* Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Preludes, Opus 13, Nos. 1,4

10/27/72 Live	* Arkadia 910, * M&A 878
9/18/72 Live	Rococo 2144

Fantaisie, Opus 28

10/28/92 Live	* Philips 438627
11/6/92 Live	* Live Classics LCL 441

4 Preludes, Opus 37

9/18/72 Live	Rococo 2144
10/27/72 Live	* Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Preludes, Opus 39 Nos. 3,4
9/18/72 Live Rococo 2144
10/27/72 Live * Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

2 Mazurkas, Opus 40
7/10/92 Live * Live Classics LCL 431

Etudes, Opus 42 Nos. 2,3,4,5,6,8
1/14/52 Live * BMG/Mel 29470, * Vic/Mel 2122, Mel D 10011, HOF 531, REC HALL 303, MK 1582
10/27/72 Live * Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Poeme, Opus 52 No. 1
9/18/72 Live Rococo 2144
10/27/72 Live * Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Prelude, Opus 59 No. 2
9/18/72 Live Rococo 2144
10/27/72 Live * Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Poeme-Nocturne, Opus 61
7/10/92 Live * Live Classic LCL 431
10/28/92 Live * Philips 438627
11/6/92 Live * Live Classic LCL 441

3 Etudes, Opus 65
1/14/52 Live * BMG/Mel 29470, * Vic/Mel 2122, Mel D 10011, HOF 531, REC HALL 303, MK 1582

Vers la Flamme, Opus 72
10/28/92 Live * Philips 438627, * VPRO EIGEN 9301
11/6/92 Live * Live Classic LCL 441

2 Danses, Opus 73
10/28/92 Live * Philips 438627, * VPRO EIGEN 9301
11/6/92 Live * Live Classics LCL 441

Preludes, Opus 74, Nos. 1,3,4
9/18/72 Live Rococo 2144
10/27/72 Live * Arkadia 910, * M&A 878

Symphony No. 5, Opus 60 (Prometheus, Poem of Fire)
4/12/88 Live * Rus Disc 11058 E.Svetlanov, USSR SO

A complete Scriabin discography compiled by Farhan Malik and Taiichi Sato listing all Scriabin recordings made from the beginning of the recording era through to the present day can be ordered from the Scriabin Society for $10. For $15 one can order both the discography and bibliography.

[Reproduced from Youthful and Early Works Alexander and Julian Scriabin, Compiled and annotated by Donald M. Garvelmann, Music Treasure Publications, New York, 1970, Donald M. Garvelmann, by permission.]

Konstantin Igumnov

Nikolai Medtner

FEUILLET D'ALBUM
(Monighetti)

Composed in April 1889. Manuscript No. 648 in the Scriabin State Museum. At the top in Scriabin's handwriting: "'89 11 April. A. Scriabin". First published in S-1(s).

Conservatory days established for Scriabin many friendships among fellow pupils: pianist, Konstantin Igumnov (1873-1948), and violinist, Nikolai Averino (1872-1948), for instance, and later Nikolai Medtner (1879-1951). Friends often visited the Scriabin household, until Aunt Lyubov ruled that calling times must be limited to the evening so that Scriabin could study.

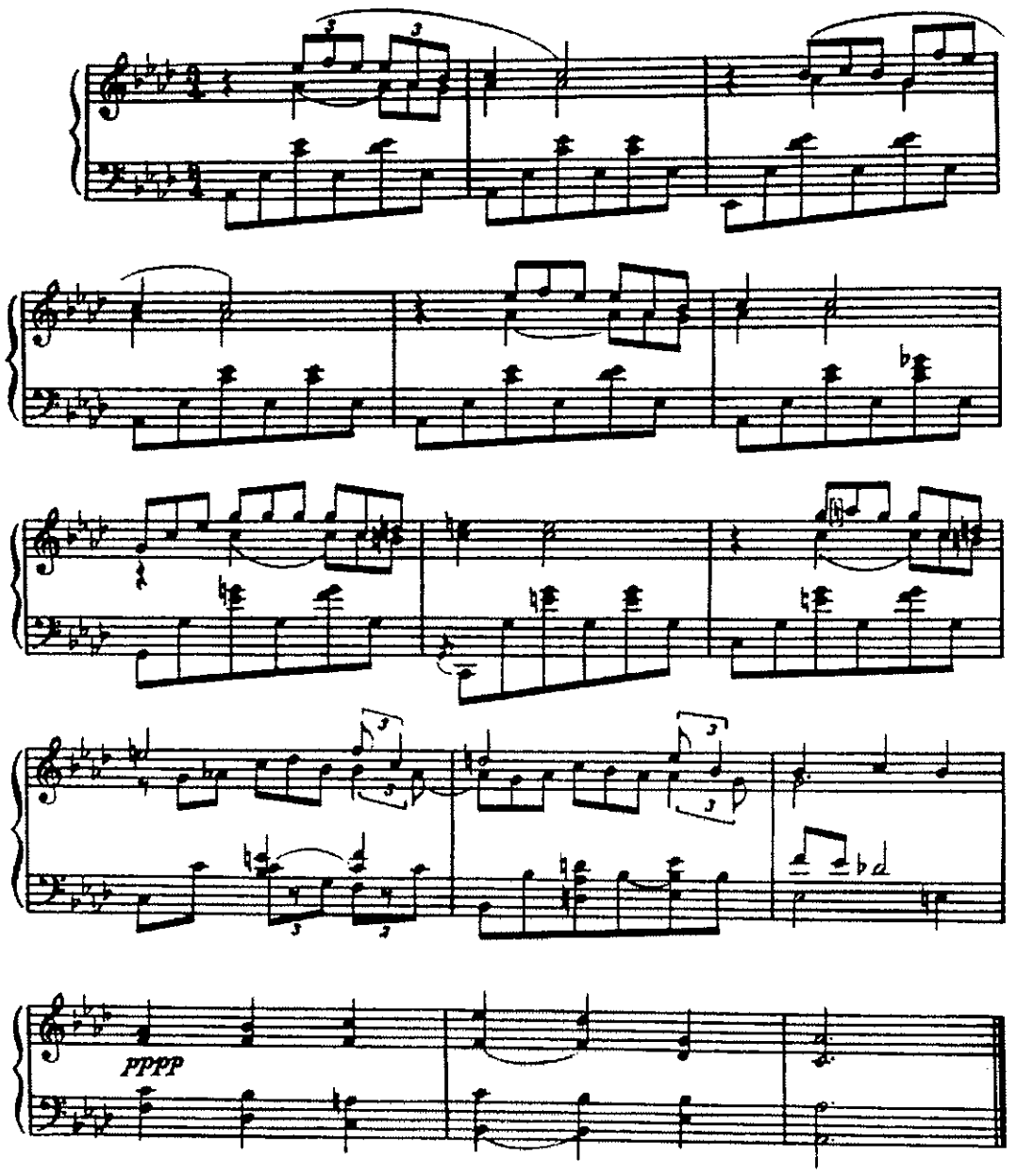
This little musical souvenir written for the Monighetti autograph album was typical of musical "courtesies" common in their day.

FEUILLET D'ALBUM

Monighetti

ЛИСТОК ИЗ АЛЬБОМА

Монигетти



Women, Musical Canons and Culture: Katherine Ruth Heyman

By Hilary Poriss

It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should re-write history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal lop-sided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety?

—Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

1. *Introduction: The Absence of Katherine Ruth Heyman*

Let us begin with a simple question, one which raises concerns relevant today in many debates both musicological and otherwise: why the absence of Katherine Ruth Heyman from the canon? Her book, *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music*,[1] her compositions (primarily songs for voice and piano), her performance and patronage activities, and her active teaching career have all fallen into utter obscurity, remembered only by a handful of her contemporaries and "...by specialists in the most arcane reaches known today."[2] We might contend that her disappearance from musicological memory indicates that she lacked sufficient talent and imagination to warrant a permanent place in the annals of music history. After all, if innovation, beauty, or staying power—qualities deemed *fundamental*—had characterized her output, it would only follow that her musical and prose works would not have tumbled hopelessly into unknown realms. Her biography, then, would simply reconstruct a life filled with a series of (admittedly) above-average achievements, but accomplishments without long-term influence, and thus irrelevant to current musicological discussion.[3] Furthermore, if we are going to write a biography about Katherine Ruth Heyman, why

1Katherine Ruth Heyman, Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1921.

2Faubion Bowers, "Memoir within Memoirs," *Paideuma* 2 (1973), 53.

3Joseph Kerman, in the introductory chapter of his *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 11-30, complains that musicology, indeed every academic discipline, is inundated with useless material which authors have published merely for the sake of placing their work in print. Kerman argues that this proliferation of material has led to a rather difficult situation whereby musicologists are forced to wade through a mountain of irrelevant material in order to find one informative article or book. This viewpoint might be employed to bolster an argument against a biography of Katherine Ruth Heyman.

shouldn't we do the same for every "second-rate" musician who ever graced our stages or our publishing houses? These views, of course, carry with them certain premises about canonical standards and quality. Feminist criticism, both within and without the disciplinary realm of music, is a useful way to bring such concerns to the fore.

Implicitly evoked, if not explicitly relied upon, for example, is the notion of a well defined objectivity—Heyman's music and her academic writings are presently excluded from the canon because they do not merit it: they are not "good enough" to listen to or to read. It is imperative, however, in any current discussion of music composed by women to carefully question this concept of an indisputable objectivity. Ruth Solie, Jane Bowers, and Marcia Citron have illustrated that not only is there no impartial opinion of western music and its scholarship, but belief in such an opinion has perpetually justified the exclusion of women's music, and writings about music, from the canon.[4] Nevertheless, we need not approach an examination of objectivity solely through a survey of ideas presented in feminist literature, for as Carl Dahlhaus demonstrates in *Foundations of Music History*, tangible objectivity does not exist in musicological, or for that matter, any, historical literature. He writes that "...the facts an historian really desires reside less in visible or audible events themselves than in the motives, ideas and trends that gave rise to them"[5]—that, we might append, made them possible. Put differently, concepts we might take as unbiased facts are constructions of the historian's (cultural) perception as well as products of social conditioning. Thus, rather than accept that Heyman has been fairly and objectively judged, or judged at all, we should reconsider her position in music history while simultaneously opening up new areas of inquiry which may help us understand why she has been excluded from the musicological canon.

In doing so I shall invoke Gary Tomlinson's innovative approach to the writing of music history, found, most instructively, in his article "The Web of Culture: A Context for Musicology."[6] By appropriating Clifford Geertz's conception of culture to contextualize musical production, Tomlinson finds it possible to tease out an extremely rich musicological narrative by placing an artist's accomplishments against the particular backdrop (or web) of cultural context. He is concerned with creating a historical account which, rather than seeking out "factual" detail, takes as its focus *meaning*; not what produces art, but how art "makes sense" in its larger cultural and historical backgrounds.[7] This essay will take as "context" both the culture of early 20th-century Europe and New York City in the first half of the 20th century, and select ideas presented in feminist literature over the past fifteen years.

4Jane Bowles, "Feminist Scholarship and the Field of Musicology I and II," *College Music Symposium* 29 (1989), 81-92 and (1990), 1-13; Marcia J. Citron, "Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon," *Journal of Musicology 8* (1990), 102-117; and Ruth Solie, review of *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* by Nancy B. Reich, *19th-Century Music* 10/1 (1986), 74-80.

5Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 36.

6Gary Tomlinson, "The Web of Culture: A Context for Musicology," *19th-Century Music* VII/3 (1984), 350-362.

7Ibid, 353.

The purpose of this project, rather than attempt to prove that Katherine Ruth Heyman's compositions and written works are "great," is to take seriously her absence from the musicological canon. In this way we may rephrase, following Tomlinson, our initial question: *what* does Heyman's absence from the musical canon ***mean***? What does this absence tell us about women and canons?

2. *Searching for Clues: Where Did We Lose Her?*

Until recently, historical discussion of women in music was restricted either to research about those who have just recently emerged as important figures, or biographic accounts of the "Exception Woman."[8] Efforts to uncover the activities of female artists who have been omitted from the history books are manifold. "But," in Ruth Solie's words, "quick upon the heels of one's initial glee at these discoveries comes the uncomfortable awareness that intentional acts of one sort or another have occurred to consign these women to historical limbo."[9] In conducting research on Katherine Ruth Heyman, Solie's observation resounds painfully true, for it is nearly impossible to locate even the most rudimentary information on her life. Note, for example, the paucity of biographical material and large lacunae present in the time-line reconstructed for this study (Appendix I).[10] It should be immediately evident that this short list can not even begin to fully represent the active career of a woman who toured throughout Europe and the United States, wrote a variety of compositions, gave a series of highly original lectures concerning modern music, and whose living room served for many years as one of the most active centers of new-music performance. This lack of information is only one symptom of a larger problem which plagues studies of women in general, and Heyman in particular—their stories are forgotten because they were ***never written down***. But why is this the case? To answer this question we must identify the "intentional acts" which might have played a part in obscuring Heyman's history. Investigating the concept of the Exception Woman provides us with an informative segue way into such an arena of inquiry.

The Exception Woman, according to Solie, is a figure whose achievements made her famous within the span of her own lifetime; she is the alibi scholars present when accused of ignoring the presence of women within the musical canon.[11] Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, and Ruth Crawford Seeger are all examples of this (historically-defined) category of artists, and while studies concerning their compositions and their careers are crucial to the formation of a complete

8But see Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). Also, the situation in ethnomusicological literature is a bit different. For more detailed information on trends in gender research in ethnomusicology see Anne Dhu Shapiro, "A Critique of Current Research on Music and Gender," *World of Music* 33/2 (1991), 5-13.

9Ruth Solie, 1986, 75.

10Sources for this time-line are the following: Reviews in *The New York Times*, Faubion Bowers' article cited above and this author's interview with him (27 November 1993), brief references to her in Elliot Carter's memoirs, and allusions to her in biographies of Ezra Pound.

11Solie, 1986, 75.

musico-historical picture, exalting these women and their work becomes problematic when we consider gender issues as they relate to music. This trouble evolves from what the term Exception Women signifies: a woman able to write works analogous to those by her male contemporaries; or whose performance repertoire is comparable to that of a Horowitz or a Rubinstein. However, as Marcia Citron illustrates, unlike Schumann and Mendelssohn, the majority of pre-20th century female composers and performers did not create music that was equal to that by our canonic male composers, ***not*** because they were incapable of doing so, but because society essentially barred them from those arenas in which musical production could have effectively occurred.[12] Up until very recently, for example, a lack of educational and professional opportunities, as well as exclusionism at the heart of gendered criticism, were among the many factors contributing to the elimination of women from the musical canon.[13] That a few female composers and musicians did succeed under such adverse conditions should not, therefore, completely close the matter. Indeed, the notion of the Exception Woman perpetuates the validity of a masculine paradigm for musical production whereby one either "does as men do" or quits the game altogether. Consequently, audiences may continue to dismiss the majority of female artists as untalented, for they too would certainly have "made it" if they were as gifted as their exceptional counterparts.[14]

It is precisely on these terms that Katherine Ruth Heyman's work may be seen to suffer: even though her activities extended into almost every conceivable facet of the music world, and even though her contemporaries held her in very high esteem, historians and audiences today do not conceive of her as an Exception Woman. Her career as a pianist exemplifies how this process undermines her abilities and diverse accomplishments.

Heyman began studying at a very early age; before she had reached her 12th year she had played all of the Bach Preludes and Fugues and every Beethoven sonata.[15] She appeared for the first time as a soloist with a major orchestra in 1899, at age 22, performing the concerto of Anton Arensky with the Boston Symphony. Until roughly ten years before her death, her presence was in constant demand by orchestras and audiences throughout America and Europe. *The New York Times* continually reviewed her performances favorably, and the laudatory nature of this critical mention is summed up in the following paragraph extracted from a 1934 review of one of her many all-Scriabin programs:

12The concept of a "male," or "man's" music does not require, logically, reference to a particular man. Thus, women can write "male" music; although we do not claim here that such music is male per se, but rather, historically. In this way, certain qualities of music become masculine, or as seen as being the exclusive provenance of male composers.

13Citron, 1990, 108-109.

14Solie, 1986, 75.

15Faubion Bowers, 1973, 56.

> Miss Heyman ... approaches this music with an apostolic glow. But fervor is not enough, and Miss Heyman does not rely on it alone. Hers is a firmly grounded technique that is peculiarly aware of Scriabin's idiom. She plays with a wealth of detail and delicate nuance. She has apparently made herself master not only of Scriabin's notation but has probed deeply into the composer's mind.[16]

Why then, with such a long list of credits, has Heyman been virtually ignored as a great performer of the past? According to her last piano student, Faubion Bowers, one reason may be that she was careful to present only a limited repertoire. "You see, it was fashionable for ladies in turn-of-the-century Europe and America to confine themselves primarily to a group of works that would display their good taste and which would not permit any visible signs of physical exertion upon their graceful countenance."[17] Any indication of strain would be perceived as unbecoming; Heyman, who was raised first and foremost as a "lady," thus intentionally played only material which evoked a sense of romanticism, and that demonstrated a certain ease within herself, and in the souls of her audience. Whereas on the surface her conscious choice to limit her performance material to a small group of 19th- and 20th-century works may be perceived as a measure taken by a player unable to tackle a larger corpus, in context such a decision reflects not a deficiency, but a widely practiced custom preventing myriads of female performers in the first half of this century from attempting more technically difficult pieces and acrobatic repertoires, for fear of being noted by audiences as "freakish" or "unlady-like."

But some women did break out of the cultural norm and expand their repertoires to include more virtuosic and varied works. Consider, for instance, Marguerite Long in distinction to Heyman. Long's repertoire resembles that of their famous male contemporaries such as Rubinstein, Gieseking and Kirkpatrick. Her knowledge of Chopin, for example, (which included almost every work written by this composer) was identical to Rubinstein's;[18] Heyman only performed a few nocturnes and one or two etudes. Her decision to limit herself was culturally dictated, as we have seen, by the demand to be "ladylike"; this in turn determines her place outside a (male) canon. Indeed, during an interview with Faubion Bowers, (unquestionably one of Heyman's most avid admirers) he was adamant that her skill at the keyboard was superior, but repeatedly felt it necessary to make qualifying statements such as "Mind you, she was no Landowska!" or "She was good, but at the same time people do not remember her because she was not as impressive as someone like Teresa Carreño." Not once did he mention the name of a male player in such a comparison, only women whose repertoires he judged as "just as extensive as a man's." Bowers' example thus vividly illustrates how marginalizing it is to many female musicians to valorize those who have learned to play "like men." Heyman's repertoire, albeit innovative and original, was

16"Miss Heyman Plays All-Scriabin Recital," *The New York Times* (April, 1934), 18/5.

17Author's interview with Faubion Bowers, 27 November 1993.

18Janine Weill, *Marguerite Long: une vie fantastique* (Paris, Julliard: 1969), 84.

neither as extensive, nor as replete with standard works, as those of most male pianists and of the Exception Woman such as Marguerite Long; as a result, she cannot gain access to the concert pianist's canon.

3. *More Clues ... In Theory?*

Just as crucial to our consideration of Katherine Ruth Heyman's place in music history is the rather telling truism that most musicians perceived as Exception Women are so marked for their achievements in composition or performance, and ***not*** in the field of writing musicological or theoretical works. Indeed, prior to the 1950s, few women made significant contributions to the discipline of musicology, and there are almost no examples of theoretical treatises whose title pages sport the name of a female author. But, does this position accurately reflect a historical reality or does it personify a marginalization of works whose content does not conform to the mainstream? Specifically, why has Katherine Ruth Heyman's book, *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music*, not received more attention, and what prevents late 20th-century musicologists and theorists from accepting this work as a treatise, or even at least as a piece of musicological literature? Discussing its content and philosophical thrust, and then comparing it to a canonical treatise—specifically Webern's *The Path to a New Music*— will guide a discussion of her book's historiographical significance.[19]

In 1920, the publishing firm Small, Maynard and Company solicited Heyman to submit for publication some of her already popular thoughts on the current state of modern music. Composed of five short essays ("The Modes," "Debussy," "Rhythm," "Parallels Between Ultramodern Poetry and Ultramodern Music," and "Scriabin") she read each in 1916 at a San Francisco conference attended by an extensive circle of dancers, writers, and wealthy dilettantes.[20] Although there were some composers and performers present, Heyman's audience was not an ensemble of well educated musicians thoroughly versed in the complexities of music theory. Many were being exposed to issues in music for the very first time. It is within this context, then, that some of the idiosyncrasies of the work must be understood. Quite often, for example, Heyman employs a highly personalized first person; there are passages running throughout the book that were clearly addressed to a live audience, and sentences such as "But then they go on, these critics, writing between 1910 and 1913—may I show you what I have found in French magazines of those years?" are typical. In other words, her prose is extremely informal and her scholarship is quite unconventional. These seemingly damning characteristics, however, ***did not*** prevent *The Relation of*

19Ruth Solie asks the same questions about Sophie Drinker's book ***Women and Music*** in her article "Sophie Drinker's History" in *Disciplining Music*, eds. Philip Bohlman and Katherine Bergeron (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 23. In particular, Solie asks, "What [would it] take — how canonic practices would have to be different — in order for the participation and experiences of women to appear in the history of Western music[?]"

20Interview with Faubion Bowers. Also, an article in the 19 March 1936 issue of *The New York Times* announces that Heyman will discourse in Greenwich Connecticut on "Ancient Modes in Modern Music."

Ultramodern to Archaic Music from becoming one of the most widely read and highly respected works of the third and fourth decades of the 20th century. Elliot Carter, for example, states in his memoirs that "[h]er book, *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music*, along with Claude Bragdon's *Dynamic Symmetry* and *Ouspensky's Tertium Organum*, was almost required reading for this somewhat Blavatskian circle."[21] The circle to which Carter here refers was comprised of a group of young scholars and musicians, including Emerson Whithorne and Charles Griffes, who frequently gathered together to discuss the music of Charles Ives. These readers were not troubled by Heyman's unstandardized citations or by her habit of combining musical observations with spiritual or metaphysical assumptions. Rather, they, along with uncountable others, placed this work high on their list of requisites because of its multiplicity of creative musical insights and its exciting vision for the future of modern music.

The idea of expansion, of breaking clear away from the norms of tonal composition and societal constraints, constitutes the primary issue around which every idea in this book circulates, and is quite likely the factor which these modernist composers found most thrilling. A short anecdote drawn from a portion of Heyman's memoirs in which she describes her earliest years in Berlin illustrates her determination, from a very early age, to discover new ideas and a novel musical inspiration:

> It was a moist and sunless land! That Berlin. It was American life set in uncomfortable surroundings. *It was the same old kind of music, studied with discouragement* (my emphasis). I remember one evening, when I had been looking up at the stars, my long braid caught on a hook in the window casement and I burst into tears. "Even the hairs of my head hold me down," I sobbed.
>
> I got restless and felt no progress...And the music for the most part, was just as boring as our Sunday afternoons at home. Why couldn't something *happen* in music? (her emphasis)[22]

Heyman's frustration with Western music, so vividly demonstrated in this passage, found an outlet when she was exposed to what was then new music—that of Debussy, Franck, Ornstein, and Scriabin. It is to the innovations she perceives in this music that she addresses most of her attention in *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music.*

Among the qualities she cites as worthy of imitation is the ultramodern composers' incorporation of ancient and exotic modes into their avant-garde compositions. Concerning Debussy, for instance, she asserts that "[His] gift to Tonality was rather *La gamme par tons*—the whole-tone scale—which, it is said, he heard sung by the Javanese at the Paris Exposition in 1896,"[23] and "Debussy has used the ancient modes for color. And in color he excels."[24] For Heyman, Debussy's use of church modes represented a

21Elliott Carter, "Documents of a Friendship with Ives," in *The Writings of Eliot Carter*, Else and Kurt Stone, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 333.

22Bowers, 1973, 58.

23Heyman, 1921, 33.

24Ibid, 34.

simultaneous movement forward and back into time. This connection of the past to the future in music was a theme of vital importance for Heyman, for her purpose in calling for a break from the 19th-century norm was not to reject the old altogether. Rather, she wished to promote works whereby a composer draws spiritually upon a knowledge of ancient musics, combines this wisdom with a fluid comprehension of common-practice tonal procedures, and emerges with a product that moves beyond any piece which has previously been presented. Thus, for her, Debussy's appropriation of the ancient scales was admirable.

Heyman was, however, utterly convinced that Debussy's works were not the proper model for ultramodern composers, and she invoked the following analogy to illustrate her view: "...the prophet who told the world what it already knew, in more beautiful language than it was accustomed to, was crowned with laurels; while the prophet who told the world what it did not know was stoned."[25] To Heyman, Debussy "...invented a new and charming manner, eminently French, in which he told us what we had known before. We had only to accustom ourselves to his language. He did not speak as a prophet."[26] His music, in Heyman's assessment, thus embodied several novel concepts, but in the final analysis, represented only a stepping stone on the way to greater advances in the realm of modern music.

This superior progression *was* taken, according to our subject, by Alexander Scriabin, in whose music, quite simply, "...something was created."[27] Although Heyman never stated exactly what she meant by this "something", she did inform the reader that his greatness in the realm of composition arose from his ability to combine the spiritual verve of the past with a capacity for instilling original, albeit mysterious material, within each and every one of his compositions. At the beginning of the chapter entitled "Scriabin," for instance, she stated that "...unlike [Debussy]...the Russian went back to the mainsprings of art for his inspiration. For this reason we have the continuous growth of Scriabin in his music, and the waning of Debussy's power." Further on she asserted that "a musical creator may have various things to offer us. He may give us new thematic material or new harmonic material or new rhythmic material. Scriabin has given us all three."[28] Put differently, Scriabin's output was highly original, while at the same time, powerfully suggestive of its ancient Russian roots. At the conclusion of this chapter she summed up her entire narrative of the composer, his life, and his music, by noting that "appreciation of Scriabin may mark the evolution of a nation's spiritual receptivity; a higher sensibility if you like, but turned toward the sun."[29] These quotes are meant to isolate those characteristics which are most crucial to an understanding of *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music*: namely, that Heyman

25Ibid, 43

26Ibid, 43.

27Ibid, 43.

28Ibid, 114.

29Ibid, 136.

attempted to justify Scriabin's place in the musical canon, to establish a line of heritage from 19th-century music to ultramodern works, and to expand the musical imaginations of all who listened to her.

Of course, this brief synopsis of the salient issues presented in this book only begins to touch upon the multifarious observations and insights Heyman made. It does, however, illustrate that her *explicit* purpose in presenting such a work was to give an exegesis of the state of modern music and to discuss its novel characteristics. Furthermore, her *implicit* intention was twofold: to encourage younger composers to take the lead of the ultramoderns, and to champion the unusual character of Scriabin's and the other ultramoderns' relatively unknown compositions. Nevertheless, such a summary does not help to explain why her book has been so disturbingly forgotten, for does it not function in a similar manner as many theoretical works regarded by musicologists as canonic? Consider, for example, that its primary purpose is to present to a group of musicians and non-musicians the current state of music. Isn't this aim one of the most fundamental characteristics of works which are today labeled "treatise"? Artusi, in his "Della imperfezioni della moderna musica," for example, discusses the condition of music at the beginning of the 17th century, comparing to that written in the 50 years prior. Similarly Schoenberg, in his article "Composition With Twelve Tones," converses extensively about his own serial compositions and about how this new method has and will effect the manner in which musicians and composers approach material throughout the remainder of the 20th century. Clearly then, Heyman's overall approach was not as radically different from that taken by authors whose theoretical works remain in the canon. However, to accurately investigate whether this line of argument has any merit, we must take many other elements into consideration. Let us thus compare, by way of example, Heyman's *The Relation of Ultramodern and Archaic Music* with Anton Webern's *The Path to a New Music.*

4. *Heyman's Vision and the Canon's*

One of the most striking similarities which *The Path to a New Music* and *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music* share is that neither presents, in any sort of systematic manner, a detailed explanation of the inner workings of a music composition. Instead, both Webern and Heyman adopt a more philosophical stance, concentrating on the overall effect, rather than on the minute details, of their repertoires. Webern's study of twelve-note composition, for instance, opens with the following statement: "...it's a matter of creating a means to express the greatest possible unity in music."[30] While he later qualifies this assertion, he does not do so in the manner of a compositional treatise which might practically illustrate, step-by-step, how a student would incorporate unity into his or her own serial works. Instead, Webern is more intent on establishing how this feature manifested itself in the music of past greats, and how composers such as

30Anton Webern, *The Path to a New Music*, ed. and intro. by Willi Reich (London: Universal Edition, 1967), 42.

himself and Schoenberg fashion this characteristic to their own particular needs. It is impossible to argue, therefore, that Heyman's work has been cast out of the canon because she neglected to include scientifically conceived musical description within her text, for if this were the case then *The Path to a New Music* would certainly have suffered the same fate.

Also identical is the fact that Heyman and Webern both evoke evolutionary models in their discussions of 20th-century music. Heyman maintains, for example, that Debussy's oeuvre represents a crucial stepping stone on the road to the music of the future. According to her, while composers and musicians alike should carefully examine the characteristics which make this music individual, they must also understand that Debussy's work personifies only one of the rungs on the ladder leading to the music of Scriabin. Webern, concentrating primarily on German music, similarly argues that the music of the Second Viennese School characterizes the next logical step in the development of the Western music canon from which the music of Brahms, Bach and Wagner has led. Heyman and Webern are thus clearly concerned with creating an acceptable past for the repertoires which they champion, one with which their audiences are familiar, and to which they might refer in order to comprehend more easily the complex and foreign nature of Scriabin's and Schoenberg's output. In doing so they employ identical rhetorical techniques in discoursing about music. Resemblances between Webern's evaluation of Schoenberg's seventh *George Song* and Heyman's assessment of Scriabin's *Prelude*, Op. 51 illustrate this likeness. In the case of Schoenberg's song, Webern asserts that even though the piece never returns to the tonic degree, "everyone feels the same anyway." He testifies that "there's nothing new here; everything hangs together...only the means are different."[31] Similarly, Heyman demonstrates that Scriabin's choice of scales for his Prelude, Op. 51 stems from his innate familiarity with the Greek modes—a characteristic which many ultramodern composers shared. While "he made a beautiful scale...by combining the lower tetrachord with the Chromatique-Orientale tetrachord superposed," it is "...still a version of our well-known minor scale..."[32] Thus, in striving to define the nature of 20th-century Western music, Webern and Heyman approach individual pieces from similar rhetorical perspectives. In particular, they both isolate and examine for their audiences those sections of music which combine characteristics of more traditional works with elements that are clearly more modern.

Thus, the contents of these two books are not as remarkably distinct as their respective places in the musical canon might indicate. Rather, by holding them up against one another we find that Heyman and Webern take remarkably similar approaches in defining the nature of 20th-century music and that the conclusions to which they both came are comparable. Why then has only one taken a place in the canon while the other languishes in obscurity? If content itself is not the only factor in

31Ibid, 49.

32Heyman, 1921, 116.

creating the Western music canon, then what other characteristics play a role? What would Katherine Ruth Heyman have had to do in order for her book to maintain the popularity which it held during the first few decades of this century?

In approaching these questions let us consider that both Heyman's and Webern's works were, as their prefaces announce, originally lectures. While this might seem to represent yet another likeness, it actually portrays one of the strongest distinctions between the two. This differentiation arises when the chronologies of their publications are taken into account, for Heyman's book went into print almost immediately following her lectures whereas *The Path to a New Music* had to wait nearly 30 years. In fact, Webern never actually meant to issue his in anything but lecture form—instead, it was Willi Reich who took the initiative and transcribed the shorthand notes which Dr. Rudolf Ploderer, a friend and associate of Webern, had recorded. Reich did this because, as he states in his introduction, Webern's music was part of the canon and his writings present an important contribution to the historian and musician's understanding of how the Second Viennese School's corpus came into existence.[33] Thus, *The Path to a New Music* exists as a book today because a music historian, not Webern himself, perceived the lectures as important enough to be produced as such.

Unlike Webern who had died long before Universal Edition issued his work, Heyman was fully cognizant that hers was in print, for *she* was the person, not a student or musicologist, who had gathered together and edited her lectures at the request of the publisher. This distinction between the production of the two works gives rise to the following hypothetical question: if Heyman had not published her book in 1921, would anyone have taken the time to transcribe and to publish her lectures 10, 20 or 30 years later? The answer is almost unquestionably "no." While no hard and fast explanation is available, we might posit that just as Webern's book exists today because he held a secure place as a composer in the long history of Western music, Heyman's is forgotten because she did not. But does this disappearance signify that this book serves no purpose whatsoever within the framework of musical historiography? Returning to Tomlinson, we recall that meaning is only possible in a context, but as noted above, musicological works written by women before 1950 were rare. *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music* was thus one of the first such efforts taken by a woman, representing, in a sense, a volume *without* a history. Consequently, in composing this book Heyman did not merely create a frame of reference for Scriabin's music—she also took one of the first steps in inventing a backdrop against which other marginalized works written by women may be understood. It is thus crucial to keep her work in consideration, not just because the text is enlightening and informative, but because by doing so the book assists in creating a context for musicological studies conducted by women in the 1920s, 1930s, and so on. "For," in the words of Virginia Woolf, "masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice."[34]

33Webern, 1967, 8.

34Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Bruce and Company, 1929), 113.

• • •

"For the biographer of a woman there is the temptation...to see the subject as nothing but a matrix of relationships. Whether we invoke the biblical 'helpmate,' or the cozy 'little woman,' or perhaps the Victorian 'angel in the house,' we have an ample supply of models to suggest that the woman is expected to create, or indeed to *be*, the context for someone else's life."[35] Solie accompanies this assertion with the suggestion that when composing a biography of a women, authors should focus attention on the subject's achievements, instead of concentrating exclusively on her relationships with male companions. Influenced by this notion, this study has avoided discussions of such associations in connection with Heyman. However, the nature of her affiliations with two particular men, Alexander Scriabin and Ezra Pound, provide salient information about her historical position.

5. *Love on the Moon with Scriabin*

> *Perhaps it is a childish fear on my part of being left alone in this room that has made me drag Scriabin in by the hand. But fortified by his presence I have the courage to show you more...*
>
> —Katherine Ruth Heyman, *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music*

Heyman was profoundly moved by Scriabin's art from the first moment she heard his music in 1913. From this year on she focused her public efforts almost exclusively on popularizing his works. In his biographical account, Faubion Bowers narrates a story which poignantly illustrates the close affiliation she felt with the Russian composer. Heyman used to say that she had flown to the moon at various times in her life and had multiple liaisons with Scriabin there. It was these encounters, she maintained, that provided her with the wealth of spiritual and musical knowledge allowing her to interpret his works with sensitivity and authority.[36] Regardless of whether Heyman believed this actually occurred, the anecdote is interesting in light of this image of herself that she consciously constructed. Clearly, she wanted her audience to assume that she was more than just an average woman, and that, instead of standing alone in this world, she was constantly accompanied spiritually by her male companion, Alexander Scriabin. According to Bowers they shared an "elective affinity." Put differently, she served him and he served her. But how exactly did this affinity manifest itself and was it ultimately as useful in bolstering Heyman's reputation as it was for elevating Scriabin's?

Katherine Ruth Heyman was among the first to perform Scriabin's piano repertoire successfully on the public stage. Before her, almost no concert pianist of ability dared

35Solie, 1986, 76.

36Bowers, 1973, 61.

present this composer's works for fear that audiences, not yet accustomed to such modernist tendencies, would reject the music outright. Instead, the only performers who endeavored to play his works publicly were those struggling to make a name for themselves; but most of them did not possess the technical skills, nor the experience, necessary to translate his extremely complicated rhythms into artistically rendered music. According to Bowers, until Heyman took up Scriabin's cause, "pianists who couldn't play Scriabin did, and those who could didn't."[37] Indeed, it was primarily due to Heyman's concentrated efforts that audiences and other successful pianists began, in the beginning of this century, to take Scriabin's corpus seriously. In short, she put his name on the musical map.

Furthermore, Heyman facilitated the spread of this repertoire by creating a technique which helps a student learn how to successfully execute the intricate and somewhat perplexing compound rhythms which saturate Scriabin's music. This technique entails multiplying the number of pitches in each hand and then employing this product as a tool to aid the player in placing the notes in their proper rhythmic position.[38] Until Heyman had devised this method of counting, it was virtually impossible to play Scriabin's rhythms correctly. Due to her efforts as a pianist and as a teacher, audiences and musicians became aware that this music *was*, in fact, performable. Katherine Ruth Heyman thus succeeded in pulling a marginalized composer out from underneath the shadows cast by the "greats" and set his works prominently into the spotlight of the Western music canon.

In turn, Scriabin served Heyman by figuratively lending her his name. While prior to her adoption of this music audiences and musicians recognized her for excellence at the keyboard, she had been incapable of fashioning a truly original stage persona for herself—one which set her apart from the myriad other concert pianists competing for recognition. Following 1913, however, individualized acknowledgment came to her rapidly as newspapers, audiences, friends and family began to refer to her as "the foremost interpreter of Scriabin," or "The Scriabin Lady." Heyman, who had struggled for sixteen years to secure a place in a profession which was extremely inhospitable, especially so for women, had finally discovered a niche in which she could shine. In addition, she did not stop at merely becoming an expert on Scriabin's music; she also became an authority on the composer himself. According to Faubion Bowers, Heyman meticulously researched the Russian's lifelong pursuits and then consciously absorbed into her own personality those traits—particularly the religious ones—which she considered Scriabin's most admirable. She wanted audiences to know her, not just as a specialist of his music, but also as an expert on him. In this pursuit she succeeded extraordinarily well, for until the end of her life almost every newspaper article about her also refered to Scriabin.[39] In this success, however, lies a certain amount of irony

37Interview with Bowers, 27 November 1993.

38See Charles Cooke, *Playing Piano for Pleasure* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1941), 212-225 for a more detailed explanation of how a pianist should apply this method.

39Obituaries in *The New York Times* (29 September 1944) and the *Musical Courier* (15 October 1944) provide evidence to this effect.

for her own name and accomplishments blurred in his shadow.

When considering Heyman, then, the question of influence becomes a crucial one. Since she was the one, not Scriabin, who forged such a deliberate bond between their personalities, can we separate her story from the composer's? Obviously, it is not possible to avoid all discussion of him in reference to Heyman's life. However, if we concentrate solely on their relationship with one another she will always emerge from such a discussion as the weaker of the two musical personalities primarily because she intentionally buried her own achievements in his reputation. Hence, separation between his influence on her, and on her own individual activities, must occur. Not only should we as biographers of Heyman take ***her*** tremendous influence on his reception into consideration, we should also begin to reconstruct the individual achievements and character she possessed. Only then can their elective affinity of which she once spoke continue to thrive.

6. *The Poet and the Musician*

Blue-grey, and white, and white-of-rose
The flowers of the West's fore-dawn unclose.
I feel the dusky softness whirr
Of color, as upon a dulcimer
"Her" dreaming fingers lay between the tunes,
As when the living music swoons
But dies not quite, because for love of us
—Knowing our state
How that 'tis troublous—
It will not die to leave us desolate.

—Ezra Pound, "Nel Biancheggiar,"
dedicated to Katherine Ruth Heyman

Equally compelling as Heyman's relation to Scriabin is her association with Ezra Pound. Here too, the man's personality tends to eclipse the woman's. Whereas Heyman succeeded in obtaining some notoriety through her relationship with Scriabin, her connection with the poet was less than a symbiotic one. In fact, many of their mutual friends feel that she was clearly the more domineering and influential of the pair.[40] Nevertheless, most of the literature containing information about the details of their friendship is restricted to biographical accounts of Pound's life and these tend to portray Heyman as the context for his existence, not the other way around.[41] As a result, the tremendous influence she exerted on his life and on his approach to poetry pass

40Bowers, 1973, 64-65.

41Examples of this phenomena are found in Charles Norman, *Ezra Pound* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1960) and Murray Schafer, *Ezra Pound and Music* (New York: New Directions, 1977).

almost completely out of sight. We must then distinguish her achievements from those of Pound—to provide a sort of corrective whereby readers begin to recognize that she, far from existing merely as an influential factor, was an original thinker whose ideas stood on their own.

Heyman and Pound met in 1904 while she was on a tour through Venice. They became immediate friends and Pound agreed, in 1908, to take on the job of managing her busy schedule. He assumed this position primarily because he was disenchanted with the unsuccessful path his career as a poet was taking him, but also because he was a musician fascinated with the exciting life of a concert pianist. Although he could neither play an instrument nor sing, he was a prolific composer and established himself in Europe and America as a music critic. Throughout 1908, when their association was at its most intense, Pound and Heyman frequently met for tea in the afternoon and held long, detailed discussions about art, literature, and most importantly, about their thoughts on music. During these conversations, Heyman spent much energy working through some of her most complicated thoughts in reference to rhythm and what she perceived to be its innate properties. According to Bowers, Pound listened intently to her long speeches on this subject and it was here that the poet gained a plethora of information concerning the relationship between rhythm, meter, and musical pitches.[42]

After they parted company at the end of 1908, Heyman and Pound continued to reflect on the nature of rhythm and its connection to poetry and music. Essays by both ensued, and it is through certain aspects of these writings that we are able to tease out precisely those ideas which Pound adopted from Heyman. In particular, both authors make a clear distinction between rhythm and meter. "Rhythm," in Heyman' s words, "is not mathematical any more than all law is mathematical, but it is manifested on the earth plane as mathematical in order to be conceivable"[43] This mathematical manifestation of which she speaks is meter. Rhythm itself is ***not*** the uniform ticking off of beats, but rather the common energy pulse which flows through every human being—it is spiritual, not earthly. Pound echoes this hypothesis in an article from *The New Age*: "Rhythm-sense is not merely a ***temps mesuré***, it is not merely a clock-work of bar lengths. Measured time is only one form of rhythm; but a true rhythm sense assimilates all sorts of uneven pieces of time, and keeps the music alive."[44] In other words, Heyman and Pound distinguish themselves from a canonical perception of rhythm by seeing it as the product of the individual's own discovery. In her book, Heyman explains that

> ... the 'Rhythm of individual attainment' is something to be pondered by the individual ... In the repose and peace of his own soul each individual must find his essential being, his enduring and individual self; and this will swing into its own harmonious rhythm in the great cosmic movement ...[45]

42Interview with Bowers, 27 November 1993.

43Heyman, 1921, 47.

44Ezra Pound, *The New Age*, March 7, 1918; quoted in Schafer, 1977, 471-472.

45Heyman, 1921, 49.

Similarly, Pound contends that "A man's rhythm must be interpretive, it will be, therefore, in the end, his own."[46] The definitions Pound and Heyman share are thus self-evident. In essence, Pound, paragon of a certain literary canon, becomes the sole owner of these thoughts on rhythm; Heyman, on the other hand, is at best remembered as Pound's helpmate, at worst forgotten altogether.

7. *Conclusion: Reappearance*

I have touched on only a fraction of the many interesting biographical details of Katherine Ruth Heyman's extraordinary life. Among the others are her theosophical beliefs, her relationship with her father who taught her how to play the piano, the school which she attempted to open in Paris with the help of Faubion Bowers, and her association with Prokofiev. To discuss these fascinating features of her life in detail, however, would defeat the purpose of this essay. I don't want to imply that to "save," or "recall" a female performer, teacher, composer, and musical thinker requires merely to show, by way of litany, that her accomplishments really were up to the par of canonical standards. Indeed, to do so would only make Heyman an Exception Woman. Rather, I wish to confront the reader with someone who has been excluded from music history in an effort to illustrate not just that "intentional acts" of exclusion are responsible for her absence, but also to problematize the very notion of canon. As we have demonstrated, Katherine Ruth Heyman's musicological insights certainly merit inclusion. But her thoughts were wild, her prose was unconventional, and her approaches unorthodox—perhaps then, the canon, as it stands, has no room for true innovation. Reintroducing Heyman to the musicological world therefore signals that a rethinking of the canon itself must occur.

n.b. Faubion Bowers points out that Section 5, re *Love on the Moon with Scriabin,* misrepresents him. The quotations do not appear in his biography nor were in his single interview with author. See page 28 this issue of the Journal of the Scriabin Society of America.

46Ibid, 472.

Katherine Ruth Heyman's Life in Brief

1877 — Born — Sacramento, California. (1874 according to Faubion Bowers)

1891— Moved with her mother to Berlin to study piano.

1891-94 — Studied in Berlin with Heinrich Barth, teacher of Arthur Rubinstein.

1896 — Concert tour with Bronislaw Huberman, violinist and Fanny Bloomfield-Zeisler, another pianist.

1898 — Her mother died.

1899 — Premièred with the Boston Symphony under Emil Paur playing the Concerto of Anton Arensky.

1904 — Met Ezra Pound in Europe

1908 — Ezra Pound briefly took on the role of her manager in Venice and London.

1909 — Introduced American music to St. Petersburg at Prince Baryatinsky's palace. There she played all the "ultraviolet musical secessionists" - Arthur Farwell, Arthur Foote, among others.

1913 — Heard Scriabin's music for the first time. Composed 'Apparuit', a song with text by Ezra Pound.

1910-15 — Lived in New York in the Judson Hotel on Washington Square South. Prokofiev was a visitor to her studio, and Pound may have heard him play there.

1920s — Lived in London and New York.

1920 — Performed Frederick Delius Piano Concerto with Thomas Beecham conducting.

1921 — Published *The Relation of Archaic to Ultramodern Music*.

1924 — Active as a performer of new music. Frequent weekend afternoon performances in her loft apartment on 3rd Ave and 15th street.

1927 — Gave a series of recitals with Laura Williams (singer of Arabic songs) in which they also performed some of Heyman's works.

1930s — Lived in Paris and New York.

1934 — Gave all-Scriabin recital at the Town Hall, New York City.

1935 — Met Faubion Bowers. Gave all-Scriabin recital at Town Hall.

1936 — Gave lectures in Connecticut on "Ancient Modes in Modern Music"; Established a music school in Paris with Faubion Bowers.

1937 — Gave recital at Town Hall.

1939 — Spent an afternoon with Ezra Pound in New York.

1944 — Died in Sharon, Connecticut.

MISS KATHERINE RUTH HEYMAN, Pianiste.

Memoir within Memoirs

By Faubion Bowers

(Reprinted from *Paideuma 2*, University of Maine, Spring 1973)

I was a welcome little child in a house of old people. I see now that each one of them was lonely; and I was lonely too. But the happy disposition with which I was born—a streak of sunshine has always dwelt in my heart—and the tenderness surrounding me served to limit the Weltschmerz or sorrowing over the world to occasional retirement into what came to be known as my "Cry-Corner," a little secluded space between the stairwell and a room.

It was a two-storey brick house with walls a foot thick—or "18 inches"— a phrase that sticks in my mind; a house considered fine in its day, across the road from the Court House. The broad, low, marble steps leading up to the columned portico of the great white Court House are perhaps responsible for the sense of progressive humanity which came later: that each soul stands alone on its own white steps, with one hand extended upward for guidance and one hand reaching downward to aid.

The jail was behind the high brick wall at the back of the Court House lawn. Men were hanged behind that wall, and "Mortimer" was all that one child had to call out to another to make him run, for "Mortimer's Ghost" was a local bogey... a man who had died on the gallows and who returned a rêvenant, refusing to quit this terrestrial life. Chinamen shuffled down the street in the early morning, the bamboo rod over their shoulders balancing baskets of vegetables. We had Chinese servants. One of them slept with a hatchet under his pillow. Another nailed a living mouse to the kitchen table. Another came in while I was practicing piano and told me that his people had had such music long ago.

Few playmates graced my childhood, for environment was as strong a factor as heredity in my Father's estimate of what was conducive to human development. All the early lessons from long division to the way a lady points her toe were given in the guise of play, by my Grandmother, an aged invalid confined to her room. In the Spanish verandah upon which glass doors opened from her room were pots of geraniums and petunias whose color is unforgettable.

My first vision came in that verandah, a vision twice repeated since that starry California night of my childhood: a gigantic, nebulous figure, softly white, with arms extended. That night it had a crown of stars, and though I heard no words, its feeling was "Come!" Then my Grandmother said "Come in, darling. It's getting chilly." But no one ever disturbed the reveries that wove a deep carpet of faith—of which, God knows, there came the need in after years.

There was an easy regularity of life, in which I was taught the value of time. A period of fifteen minutes was enough to be utilized. And in that way my Father led me through all the so-called drudgery of learning to play the piano and to read and write German and French and to write the tunes that I must have been born with—for I cannot remember the time when there were none to write. And I played my own poetry into each Gondolied of Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.

Then came the "dead smell' and I could not bear to go near Grandma's room. Then a winter of rheumatism and bronchitis, of doctors and closed windows, and I was taken to speak to my Father in his room. Never shall I forget the tolling of the fire-bell during that funeral—for he was an "Exempt Fireman", one of the sturdy lot in a new country who had in his time fought fire and flood and worked with the "Vigilance Committee" to keep the new land decent.

They knew at home that the child was afraid of death so during the tragic hours when it occurred, and the days after, I was sent away to friends nearby. But the home was so changed, with only my gentle Mother and the strange, shy, sensitive brother so many years older that he seemed of another generation, that we gave up the house and moved to another city.

Katherine Ruth Heyman—don't be deterred by the unremembered—is a name that only specialists in the most arcane reaches know today. You would have to be close to 50 years of age or over, and still alive, of course, to recognize her. She was born in 1874 I know, though she devoutly lied about her age as the years passed—and she died in 1944. The birthplace was near Sacramento, California. There, her family. Her father was the last pupil of master violinist Louis Spohr, (1784-1859) who had shaken Beethoven's hand, introduced the baton to London orchestras, and written masses of marvelous, now-neglected music. In 1840, during one of those German Socialist Revolutions when students were far more unrestful than even ours were at Columbia and Berkeley, Kitty's father threw a music rack at Spohr and promptly emigrated with his aged mother and an older sister to America. He was headed for the Gold Rush, but docking at Hoboken (how fashionable it was in those days!), he wandered up to Herkimer County in upper New York State and paused long enough to pick up a wife. Marriages were arranged in those days and, often, mixed. It was of her double-barreled middle name—her mother's—that Kitty was proudest, Willoughby-Benchley. To the end of her life, Kitty denied her Jewish blood, and that was fashionable too, before Hitler. While every one of us knew her father was Jewish (if not, where was the double "n" on her last name, like Schumann or Hartmann?), she invariably copyrighted books, songs, poems under her passport one, Katherine Ruth Willoughby-Benchley Heyman. Again and again she spoke of her mother as descended from ancestors "who governed the Colonies before the United States became a country," a rather pretty way of putting it, I always thought.

Her handwriting was immaculate. It never changed from the earliest notes for these memoirs whose beginning you've just read. The manuscript is on stationery from the

now vanished Portland Hotel on Great Portland Street in London W.l. She began them in 1926, and already the past had become insistent to her, as it does for all of us either sooner or later. She sensed in her own life that the break in the fever, the divide in the stairs had come, and the crisis of living was over. The best had come and gone. There would be no more of the new, just more of the same, and a slow, steady decompression, a descent from infinite possibilities into scattered and few probabilities.

Let's let Kitty continue talking to us from the distant past. She moved to San Francisco and heard her first "modern" music—the *Peer Gynt Suite* by Edvard Grieg then avant-garde soon to be wildly popular, forgotten and now in the throes of revival . . . the usual upsweep-downdraft of musical history. She also applied to a local teacher and brought the 11th Rhapsody of Liszt. "Opening the music on the rack," she wrote, "I turned to him and said, 'Do you want me to play the notes, or play it as it is?" Quite cheeky for a ten-year-old.

One of my brother's delights when he came home for vacation during his University course (at Fresno) was to lock his little sister in a room and make her learn roots and derivatives and dialects of American Indian speech. Even this bit of lore was a bond with humanity in later years, when Arthur Farwell inaugurated the movement for American music in 1900 with his Navaho Indian war dance and Omaha chants and Negro incorporations into "serious" music. And in 1927, it afforded me a sense of ease and kinship when I was honored by a visit from Virgil, the greatest singer of the Indians, accompanied by that saintly protagonist of our native martyrs, the fair, nervous, man of power, John Collier, longtime head of the United States Department of Indian Affairs. He worked steadily and hopelessly for the inevitable rights and just desserts of those glorious people who preceded us here where my mother's ancestors ruled before the Colonies became the United States, a country.

All manner of things I learned as a child. In the Big-Tree country, Calaveras County of California, I lured my horse and strapped a braided doormat on its back and rode. When ants got into the sugar barrel at the slovenly "Southern" farmhouse where I was sent for my health, and a kerosene can had been set in the midst of the sugar to drive out the ants, I rode to Comanche, the wild and famous Comanche, and bought a bag of sugar, and rode back again with the sugar sifting out of both ends of the paper bag, stopped only by the gauntlet glove tucked under the string.

Does it seem strange that the child had a gauntlet glove? It was part of that earliest training, to put on gloves before leaving the house. "A lady should be properly dressed before going out of the door—and then forget about it!"

But the sugar from Comanche was surreptitiously put into the big glass bowl where the petroleum-scented sugar had been, and "Aunty" never knew it.

Aunty was musically the greatest extreme at the small end that I have ever known. She could not recognize "Sewanee River" if a chord was put under the tune.

My wish to be "a great artist" led my mother to break up house again, and fare forth on uncharted seas. My brother remained behind to "look after our affairs"—the last thing he was suited for. Our fortunes had dwindled during infancy, in mistaken investments, by many thousands at a time. And while there was still enough to support my mother and me comfortably, the altruism of my dear brother made it impossible for him to collect rents, and his aristocratic sense coupled with socialistic doctrine prevented him from doing anything at all which might be another man's work. And when he did have one case in the law office of a friend, after all his college and law college training he refused to name a fee—for who could accept money for merely giving an opinion?

So one piece of real estate after another, one investment after another, was turned into money, and in the faraway German capital where every sight and sound was strange, the little Mother counted figures when she thought no one was looking, and the artist-child worked with high hopes of greatness, and of fame.

Here, the snippets of autobiography reveal dramatically, importantly—if the past is not to be released into oblivion—Berlin of the 1890's. Kitty was 18 years of age in 1891 when she picked herself up from San Francisco and, leading her gentle mother by the hand, went abroad to the music capital of the world. She wanted insatiably to study. Berlin was an atmosphere, as much as an era, and far more than a place. There, greatness accumulated like so many barnacles on a harbor pier. Triviality too. Women gave flowers to admired men. Young ladies dropped their handkerchiefs, so that corsetted Prussian officers had to creak, huff and puff, bending down to retrieve them. American *gnädiges frauleins* teased gentlemen callers by mixing up the German language. "*So schon?*" (so early) they would say when the men arrived for an evening of music, and "*so spät?*" when they left—reversing the conventional formula for politely welcoming and slowing (not speeding) departing guests.

Now, Kitty is with Heinrich Barth, the greatest piano teacher of his time. Soon, Arthur Rubinstein would arrive to become his prodigy pupil. His esthetics of teaching remain gloriously solid, even now.

Thus passed $2^1/_2$ years in Berlin, the child's gifts recognized from the start. Before I was twelve I had played all the Bach Preludes and Fugues and all the Beethoven Sonatas. At home there had been music on Sunday afternoons which bored me frightfully. For it was dull to sit for hours on the haircloth stool with my feet on a carpet-covered little box in front of the pedals and play the big rosewood square piano (a Steinway, but in the shape of a rectangular box). Such a lot of music that all sounded alike, ensemble music by Haydn and Mozart and Beethoven and Schubert which I could carry on over the page if it was not turned in time. It was all made up of what I practiced every morning: "scales, arpeggios, trills, tremolos, chromatic scales" in unison, thirds, sixths, tenths, octaves up and down the 85 notes of the keyboard. That prescription of my Father's was on a little slip of paper; and to this day I work from my own recipes on just such slips.

Indeed, nothing I ever learned in my childhood was lost. The only trouble is that the years are so few, in which one should learn so much, if one is to feel at home with people from other parts of the world or associate comfortably with those of great attainment. To know only one language is to live in a flat. The echoes of many languages, on the contrary, and my father taught me French and German before I could know this, enrich the range of thought as broad staircases and lofty ceilinged rooms on many floors give magnificence to

the castle of the mind. Thought draws at will from languages, exactly as occasion would lead one into stately apartments or intimately playful chambers. It is fine to be simple. But the simplicity of the great is a very different thing from the simplicity of the untutored. It is a chosen simplicity: it is born not of restriction but of amplitude and discrimination in a wide freedom.

There is nothing absolute about musicality. It is a purely relative quality and is subject to development. The only hopelessly unmusical person is the one so rigidly and persistently trained in one idiom that he can no longer hear with a free mind. My dear giant of a master, Heinrich Barth, during those couple of years in Berlin was never able to comply with my request for other music than the German. I wanted Grieg: Grieg was "national" with his folk dances and legends, it wasn't "music." I did finagle to learn the A Minor Concerto with him, nevertheless, and it came in handy when I had to play with Sir Landon Ronald in London with the Philharmonic but without a rehearsal and with my back to the conductor!

I wanted Liszt: Liszt was "trash," it wasn't music. From my master Barth, however, I did learn valuable things. I learned to notice which tones in a sequence of chords made the idea continuous through the phrase, and I learned beauty of tone itself. "Jede Affe kann Technik haben," he used to say—Any monkey can have technique! And if I have been obliged to find my "technique" since those student days with Heinrich Barth, his pure ideal of beauty has never left me. Technique has only given it wings for higher flight.

Those were the days when Joachim gave quartet concerts with his wife inter alios and as musical director of the Hochschule für ausübende Tonkunst he was hailed by the critics as "the ne plus ultra of excellence." Moszkowski, who never shook Chopin's hand but played like him, tall and fair and lean, sauntered out of the Philharmonic carrying lilies of the valley which I had timidly and adoringly given him. And Max Bruch (violinist and composer), sat in the audience at other peoples concerts. I was too ignorant to hear, but I saw von Bülow and Brahms and Anton Rubinstein. My little empty train of study came into the great music station called Berlin, just as their heavily laden, great trains of art were pulling out. I asked my master to let me study a lesson or two with Rubinstein, the great pianist my fellow Californians had called "Ruby" when he toured America once, and once only. "What he has to give you would not be able to take," Barth answered. There were moments of despair at the thought of ever catching up, no matter how well the classics such as Beethoven were in my head.

Harmony, in which my Father had started me, was pursued there too, and besides continuing French and German, I also studied singing, for surely the greatest teacher of piano playing is vocal. . . to make the piano sing, and breathe, and soar out over the orchestra of keys. Orchestral work was a slow and natural development, and the contrapuntal devices brought themselves into being as a necessary means of expression while the musical ideas developed in the composition.

I must have been a born modernist, for my first composition in Berlin elicited the comment that I had broken all the rules in the harmony book, and my reader in London (Boosey and Hawkes) many years later in 1907 accused me of putting one "immoral

chord" in every work. In composition as in piano technique, I hardly know when the work has been done. I would say I had never "worked" at either, if it were not for the reams of music paper scribbled over with experiments which I find in every old box and trunk and the self-imposed admonitions and dates and angry red pencil marks which deface the worn pages of my repertoire.

The two things absolutely not permissible are Insecurity and Imperfection. "Detail makes the artist," my master said. And to me the whole matter of learning, at least as far as music goes, is summed up in the sequence: Perception, Honesty, Co-ordination.

Barth had said my development would depend on my surroundings. For an artist the surroundings must be of two opposite kinds: great and inspiring people, and solitude with no fear of intrusion. What strange, selective anaesthesia is it which renders the hearing uncannily acute to tone and oblivious to the entrance of a person? Those are the hours of the most rapid advancement in art. A divided mind labors to no avail.

It was a moist and sunless land! That Berlin. It was American life set in uncomfortable surroundings. It was the same old kind of music, studied with discouragement. I remember one evening, when I had been looking up at the stars, my long braid caught on a hook in the window casement and I burst into tears. "Even the hairs of my head hold me down," I sobbed.

I got restless and felt no progress. My most striking recollection is of the polished floors of Barth's big rooms. Then too, there is the Philharmonic on a Tuesday night. Orchestra, smoke, beer, the railed-off length of the hall where people stood. I think a seat at a table in the main hall was 15¢ or 12½¢, if we had a subscription. And the music, for the most part, was just as boring as our Sunday afternoons at home. Why couldn't something happen in music?

In Berlin I began playing without much expression. I had taken up the Leschetizky method from the rigid side, and failed to play the music "as it is." With Barth, detail and tone, and with Leschetizky the emphasis was all on getting the piano key down with a quick stroke. Barth taught me Line, but I was losing my equality of touch in scales, because in my eagerness for rapidity and general effect I simply overlooked it.

The distinction between study and playing was established by detailed work. Study was concentrated attention; for if a mistake occurred during the 13 times, I began again at number 1 in my endless repetitions. But playing was always ecstatic, sometimes with my concentration vanishing into a dream and... vision.

Let me say here that I never got what I was looking for in studying with anybody. What the artist seeks comes in a flash, a gleam, an intuition, an unexpected motion, an inner revelation of tone or phrase, when he is working alone on his own.

I knew Katherine Ruth Heyman exceedingly well. I was a concert pianist of mean ability (better than I am a writer now, I think), and she had been my very first, real teacher. I was, indeed, her last pupil, and with modesty can say I was her favorite . . . largely because there were so few others. In any event the teacher's life is a sad one. Good pupils (and I wasn't) move up, on, out and away. Who remembers who Rachmaninoff's teacher was? I do, because I also studied with him, Alexander Siloti,

who in turn, had studied with Liszt himself. Public applause, of course, is for the cuisine of art, the finished artists, not the kitchen where it is made, as Kitty used to say. The cook is never as welcome at table as a guest is. The stuff of pedagogy is to free the pupil to stand on his own, and good teaching is to make yourself invisible through the work of your students. This is what Kitty did, what Barth did with Kitty, despite her teenage grievances remembered now in adulthood, as we saw in her memoirs above.

Kitty's hair had very early turned grey, but only in a streak down the center of her head. She parted her hair there, so that the grey looked like a white, sometimes yellowish bird. She often made references to the "bird" sitting on her head. She had searched for him, her fantasy bird, and there he was all the time. "He arrived," she explained, "after I had spent 10 years in London and another 10 years in Paris. I returned to America . . . with him." Later, she dyed her hair dark brown, but kept the streak of white. "Some call it tinting, some say touching up, but, my dear," she once admitted, "it all comes out of the same bottle." She smoked long before ladies were supposed to, and all her life a cigarette dangled from her lips. She made herself up as a younger woman, defiant of time and times.

Bright red lipstick. Eyeshadow that made her eyes more enormous than they already were, as if to swallow the beak of her ashamed nose. Her clothes, costumes really, were, how shall I put it? . . . well, affected. Lamé housegowns of pastel and glint for tea, even when I would be the only guest, or came for a lesson. Low, low-neck satins for concerts, and there was one suggestive, heavily metallic brocade of rioting colors with a diamante butterfly over the most pubic pelvis. Yet, if there is a connection between clothes and sex she defied it, for she was fanatically moral. She had never married. She told me she had "never given myself to a man," or woman, for that matter, although some of her best friends et cetera. She broke, for a time, with a Zen priest, because he made a pass at her. But of that, more later. She also sported a wedding ring, occasionally, which made her "a bride of Christ," she said.

How different the Katherine Ruth Heyman of the memoirs is from the Kitty I knew. There is so much that is not in them, and would never have been recorded even had they continued. Oh, certainly, she would have included the fact that she really found the modern music she was looking for. She made her debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Emil Paur playing, of all things, the Concerto of Anton Arensky. She gave another world première sometime in the 1920's, this one by Frederick Delius with Sir Thomas Beecham conducting. How she hated Beecham. He drowned her out in the finale and so she played the concluding ascending arpeggios with the palms of her hands . . . anticipating Ornstein and Cowell.

She often joked about Beecham and how his money came from those vulgar little pills everybody took, like Carter's Little Liver Pills, for unmentionable reasons. And she was curiously, invertedly patriotic. In 1909 she introduced American music to St. Petersburg at Prince Baryatinsky's palace. There she played all the ultraviolet musical secessionists— Farwell, of course (he too was a patriot and once wrote a symphony for General George Patton called "The Heroic Breed"), Arthur Foote, and others. American

music was as strange in those days to Americans as it was to the Russians in their drawing rooms breaking crystal vodka glasses in the fireplace, and chatting cosily while imported artists performed private concerts. Not all Kitty's American composers were giants. Some of her swans turned out to be geese.

She pioneered Charles Ives, by all odds our greatest composer, if not the only, and she actually knew him. It was she who arranged for John Kirkpatrick, who launched today's movement toward American music and is now curator of the Ives Collection at Yale University, to meet Ives, a man who because of illness and downright cussedness was impossible to meet. Ives, for example, despised Paderewski for making Chopin "more effeminate than he already is." And he nearly had a heart attack when Kirkpatrick suggested to him changing an E Flat into a D Sharp, the same note on the piano, when they were discussing the "Concord Sonata" and trying to get its messy orthography into some sort of editable, performing shape.

She also knew Charles Griffes, and I know this because one day, when I was sitting in Kitty's apartment on Perry Street in the Village, the phone rang. Apparently, someone was writing a biography of Griffes, but Kitty, for all her loneliness, refused to see the voice at the other end of the line. "I don't remember anything at all about him." she said politely enough. "I haven't anything really to tell," she said to me, although I had often heard her play his sun-drenched music, like fruit bursting open in an excess of overripeness. And she did know him. . . as a man.

Her real peak began in 1913 when she heard for the first time music by Alexander Scriabin, that great, mystical, Russian composer, who began all the multimedia flurry of colored lights and sounds, touches, tastes, mood and music as physical experience, and who now, thanks to Horowitz, Richter, Kuerti, and dozens of youngsters (and perhaps Life magazine) has become once again wildly popular. Kitty was known as "the high priestess of the Scriabin cult," and in the 1920's and 30's, even when she was down and out in Paris and London, she had her cult. Occult would be a better word for it. She believed all manner of things . . . like Scriabin himself, who dabbled in Theosophy. Victor Seroff tells me she told him she had met Scriabin on the moon and had an affair with him. I can't believe him. She saw visions to his music (and so have many others, including, among big names, the present-day mystical composer, Olivier Messiaen) violet ships on golden oceans of astral, ectoplasmic light.

Long before drugs made these correlations between the senses commonplace, and decades before Zen, I Ching stick tossings, tabletipping, ouija boards, Tarot cards, astrology and the like became so very fashionable among our young, Kitty was a passionate convert and a militant proselytizer to and for all things recondite. One fragment of her memoirs begins, "Those happy people who are born under the water sign of Pisces have a variety of interests which keep life fresh...." Too, once she told me that she had caught a broken plate in midair (what it was doing there I can't remember), said a quick prayer, then looked at her hand and found it unharmed, unscratched in fact.

To Kitty, the logic behind and the reasons for were simultaneous and undifferentiated. She swallowed everything magical, even Sokei Ann Sasaki's stories,

much as a fish rises to bait without thinking of the metal hook in its gill. Sasaki was the first Zen Buddhist priest ever to venture abroad from Japan in any capacity other than that of pilgrim to Asia—China where Zen originated in the 13th century; India, where Buddha was born 500 years before Christ. Sasaki came to preach here in the West before World War I, and it was most unusual for that nonpropagating sect standing for "enlightenment without stipulations." Kitty was the first American he knew well, and the first woman he saw frequently . . . Japan being what it was. He founded a little Buddhist church and it still functions on Waverley Place. But in those early days, and even as late as 1936, when I knew him too, Sasaki held services in various apartments. Kitty's, for instance, when she lived in two rooms in the old Judson Hotel on Washington Square. All he did was to put on his black transparent robes with a gold embroidered stole, shoulder a brown canvas "beggar's bag" (of very expensive cloth, since "poverty" was symbolic, though real), burn incense, recite a Sutra, and then in confoundedly incomprehensible English tell a short, two-minute, anecdotal "sermon."

His English was accented with Cream of Wheat, all vowels and no consonants, and I never understood a word he said until after 1940 when I spent a year in Japan and learned Japanese, and could speak to him directly without the exegetic interpreting of Kitty. One story did get through to me in all sober credulity via Kitty. Or was it a sermon? Sasaki was the son of Japan's greatest Shinto priest, and once when he was a little boy he heard his father complain that the bowl of shaving water was too hot. "Why?" the child ask. "How can it be? You are a famous priest and can do miracles." Instead of doing one by making it cold, the father furiously seized Sasaki with one hand and dipped his other in the water. Blisters appeared on Sasaki. Kitty never once doubted this as fact. And I remember thinking that just as shutters are to the outside what jalousies are to the inside, the windows of her thought were alternately darkened and illuminated by foggy mysticisms of every unabashed sort and kind.

Kitty also steadfastly averred that reincarnation was "just another law." "It's like gravity," she explained, "a law you can't break . . . only demonstrate." She announced who *my* former life had been: The Reverend Arch Perrin in San Francisco, pastor of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin (it's still at Union and Steiner, near the Presidio, and I have visited it). Perrin, it seems, had died on Kitty's birthday, March 2nd, 1918, and in immense haste to get back into this world and finish his business had reincarnated himself as me. I was one-year-old, already born, but this feat is technically known in reincarnation circles as "overshadowing." Normally, Kitty told me, a spirit waits 500 years before returning. Perrin, in any event, had died most mysteriously. His ministerial duties took him to prisons, and there was one, final, horrible experience. A young man whom, in the confidence of last rites, he knew to be innocent was hanged anyway. The head dissevered from the neck and after that gory sight Perrin disappeared. A week later he was found dead and decomposing in a cheap hotel room in San Francisco and there was the smell of alcohol too in the room.

Precisely at that time, I was ill, my mother agreed, with my neck paralyzed against my shoulder. And long before any of this, when I first visited Kitty's apartment, I

mistook Perrin's photograph for one of me. I have that picture now, and I have just looked at it. There isn't much resemblance, but there was when "I" first saw it.

Kitty occasionally speculated on her own reincarnations. She liked to call herself an "old soul," meaning many reincarnations. She would also look in my hand, and it had many, many lines like hers, and call us both "old souls." Quite a flattering observation for a 60-year-old woman to make to a 17-year-old boy, and one which I was not then wont to deny, for in those crisp, green salad days I was passing from obscurity into eccentricity, hopefully, via celebrity.

As for Kitty's hands, they were a pianist's work-hands, with palms lined like acid gone wild on copper plate. She also had a "star" on the Jupiter mound of her left index finger "This means great fame," she would intone, never once minding the vast discrepancy between great fame and the penury in which she lived. Looking at her, I saw that she was a failed luminary, slightly deaf, talking out loud at concerts. She was also querulous, arguing that Roosevelt was a traitor to his class, and how "one of the worst lies in all the world is the oblivion of servitors." She herself could no longer afford a maid, even once a week, and had been reduced to washing her own sheets which she dried in the sooty sunshine on the landing outside her back window.

Still, she sometimes fancied herself an incarnation of Sebenekfru, if not Cleopatra, or some such other queen, but never Ra, the Sun God. Ra was a lesbian friend of hers who ran a gift shop in Greenwich, Connecticut, and who learned ancient Egyptian in a trance one night during World War I. Or so she claimed, and since none of us were qualified to test her, we never challenged. Kitty felt awfully close to hieroglyphics and Egyptology in general. But never was this quite nonsensical. Here is a poem she wrote the year I was born, and as I see it now, it's quite good. No poetastrix she.

She hears, a fragrance blent of forgotten words
Strikes the chill Western air,
A dissonance only half unrest, half-shuddering
Satisfaction.
The warm gold palpitance of Egyptian sands
Glows in the subtle curve of arm and shoulder.
Over these sands she passed—an age ago, I think—
A Queen grown weary of her clouding pearls
Ivory caparisons, obeisance and lust of
Purple-bearded kings and the lithe dancers,
But never weary of the sand that drifted,
Sun-drenched and inexorable
From that far Then to Now.

When Kitty died in 1944 all her papers came to me. The music she composed and the scores she worked from I lodged with the Lincoln Center Library. Her Scriabin recordings have been turned over to the International Piano Library and issued as archival re-releases. The memoirs among the bequeathed documents I put in a closet unopened. For one reason, the war was on, and besides, I had thought her life unimportant . . . a life spent, insinuated and vanished. Frankly, I forgot about her, except as my teacher and the source of my interest in Scriabin and she remained in my life as a force absorbed, transmuted and adapted to my own purposes and currents without acknowledging their source.

The other day, however, I received a letter from Stephen Adams from Canada. He is writing a biography of Ezra Pound and had noted that I had dedicated my recent biography of Scriabin to KRH. Did I have any information about the Pound-Heyman relationship, particularly since their friendship began in 1904, and in 1908 Pound was her concert manager in Venice and London. Well, yes, I did, because Kitty talked to me a lot about Pound. This is why I remembered the memoirs, and for the first time read them through, and now present them before you.

Pound wrote two poems to Kitty. One, called "Scriptor Ignotus" appeared in *A Lume Spento* from which the following lines are taken:

To that lady dwelling in his inmost soul
He would wax greater
To make her earthly glory more.
Though sight of hell or heaven were price thereof,
If so it be His will, with whom
Are all things good, and through whom
Are all things good,
Will I make for thee and for the beauty of thy music
A new thing
As hath not heretofore been writ.

These particular lines appeared in the proofs of *A Lume Spento* separately but before press time were worked into the larger poem.

Ignited by Adams' enquiry I have begun thinking of Kitty's old stories about Ezra, as she called him. One morning in Venice—they were staying at the same hotel—Pound appeared at breakfast with his gorgeous, flaming red, mutton-chop, sideburns gone. He had awakened in the middle of the night, and sensing that he was truly vain, walked to the wash basin half-asleep and shaved one off, so that he would have to remove the other when he woke up properly. Such was the fear hubris inspired in him . . . and her.

Another time, in 1911, when Amy Lowell asked Kitty to play, and play again, and again, to entertain her dinner guests one night, Kitty crossly sent her a bill for a full

concert fee ~$500—pretty high for those days. In hearing about the incident, Pound interrupted to say, "Don't be too hard on Amy. She's the only hippopoetess in our zoo." Kitty requited him when he fell for George Antheil's music: "Don't make a mountain out of an antheil."

Pound too, according to Kitty, negotiated the marriage between Richard Aldington and HD. It was pre-World War I London, and HD was keen on Ezra, but EP wanted to slough HD off. HD was ill in hospital, and Pound made Aldington take her flowers in his name every day until finally the transference was successful. Love burst upon their air, like spring after the wintering snow.

Pound last saw Kitty when he called on her in Perry Street in 1939. But conversation lagged that afternoon over tea. They had sought the past from each other. They wanted to reenact the time of their youth when acts were retrievable, rewards unearned, consequences negotiable, and life was a thing to be lived instead of endured. But the present overwhelmed them. An old flame of Pound's was also there. Kitty had duennaed for the copulating pair in Venice thirty years earlier, and taught Barbara piano. She was now married to a violinist, had grown dumpy, would wet the sofa when excited. Never, it would seem, looking at it from the outside, I thought, had the magic of youth been more elusive, more far distant, so quite nonexistent.

One does evolve away from one's past, as I evolved from Kitty. And life offers no trial heats for any of its main events, which is why we botch so much and lumber on ahead so blindly. Anna Akhmatova, the great Soviet poetess despite the abhorrence Kitty and Pound felt about her for living under the Communists when she could have fled like their friends the White Russians, once said, "Just as the future ripens in the past, so does the past rot in the present." So it was a rotten afternoon . . . for them, and for me, too.

I have been nagged by specters of thoughts, ever since Adams started me thinking about Kitty. As I looked the papers over, there she was before me, as the saying goes, not the person I had known, but the person that remains after life is gone. How disintegrated the memoirs become. She mentions the concert tour of 1896 where she tagged along in a three-star attraction with Bronislaw Huberman the violinist and Fanny Bloomfield-Zeisler, another pianist. In 1898 her mother dies, and she tours—barnstorms, really—with Marcella Sembrich, Campanari and Salignac. In Toronto, she bristlingly remembers playing "Silvery Shower," the kind of music that was popular then and whose composers are unknown now, and she got more applause than Sembrich. This tour netted her $1,000 and $3 a day for hotels. On another tour, this time with the bass Pol Plançon, she remarks on his homosexuality, without condescension. And a ghost once appeared to her and conjured a piano for her with the exact number "82240", When she gets to the opera house, she checks the number inside the lid, and it is, expectedly, "82240."

Pound gets only this mention: "1904 Pound." The death of her brother, Arnold, is omitted. He died on a stranger's staircase carrying a chest of drawers, for he had been reduced to earning a fragile living as a furniture mover. And there is another poem of Kitty's tucked in among the looseleaf pages.

The mind has the way of a child. It knocks,
knocks, knocks.
When it has heard spring sounds on the city's
paving blocks.
The way of the mind is repeating whatever sound
it has heard
But now it needs soft music, and wind, and the call
of a bird.

It is with despair I end my thoughts of Kitty. What do any of us live for and work? Like apples we sit waiting for the sun to turn us red and ripe, but some of us forever remain green. Everything is important, though. Each patchwork piece of wisdom matters. But some quilts last better than others. Ultimately, one asks oneself that most stupid of all questions, "Why?" There is no reason, strive as Kitty did to make sense out of randomness and to control the invisible. At best, we adore a moment and assist another life to make its own little sparkle, and then the flash goes away along with the flash. That's all. And what a waste all the richness of Kitty's experience seems. What a long lifetime it was, and one sprinkled and studded with the moonbeams of eternity. And now, all those years, those acts, deeds, dreams and celebrities, alchemized into memory, like confidences exchanged in whispers . . . in half-light . . . only now half-remembered. Still, it teaches. Yes, it teaches, even now. But *what*?

SCRIABIN

by Katherine Ruth Heyman

**(Reprinted from *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music*
Boston; Small Maynard and Company; 1921)**

How long it takes the light of fame to travel down the side of Mount Humanity from the peaks that first catch the rays of greatness to the broad base at the earth level! Even in his home town, Moscow, that he loved, Alexander Scriabin was not whole-heartedly recognized until after his death.

Parents, teachers, friends—these sum up a man's life. The first two are the occasion of his inclinations and opportunities. The last of the three factors in a man's life—his friends—are the results of inclination and opportunity, and their further cause. When you know about the parents, the teachers and the friends of Scriabin, you will understand how the Light shining through him was broken up into the colours that we call his music.

It is almost an impertinence to write on the subject of Alexander Scriabin when Dr. A. Eaglefield Hull has given us so perfect a result of what clearly was a labour of love, in his book "A Great Russian Tone-poet—Scriabin."

Alexander Nikolaevitch Scriabin was born on Christmas Day, 1871, in Moscow, in the house of the old Colonel his grandfather. The young mother, a pupil of Leschetitzky, and Gold Medalist at the Petrograd Conservatory, was such a child that, as Dr. Hull says, "the young couple did not number forty years between them." When her baby was two years old the little mother died; but the child was brought up in his own family.

In Scriabin we have a rare example of the recording memory, and the still more rare instance of the ripening of such a mind into great artistic originality. When the boy was five he could play without a mistake the smaller classics of a couple of pages, after hearing them once. At the age of eight he composed; he wrote poems; he had a mechanical sense that led him through carpentering to the manufacture of miniature pianos. Now if you regard these gifts separately and synthetically you will see that they point to an intuitive sense of form. This sense of form remained with him so perfectly that in his later compositions, except for the runes he employed, it might be called his only material, almost summoning the tones to their inevitable places. The sense of accuracy, a relic of the early scientific training, is so impeccable that in his most complex compositions a note cannot be fumbled and the right one imagined, as may happen in compositions of the old school. If one note is out, the whole sequence is gone. Thanks to his inner development, the strong mnemonic gift of Scriabin never acted to

his disadvantage. Had he developed a manner, like Debussy, the old material would have been repeatedly used. But unlike the French composer whose fame is coeval with that of Scriabin and whose popularity is more general, the Russian went back to the mainsprings of art for his inspiration. For this reason we have the continuous growth of Scriabin in his music, and the waning of Debussy's power. Under the old regime in Russia the sons of officers were gratuitously educated at a military school; so Alexander Scriabin from the age of nine to his sixteenth year was learning what an officer and a gentleman was supposed to know, and was studying music as well. Of the two teachers, Conus and Zvierieff, we have no knowledge in this country; Taneieff we know through compositions that have been played in New York, and from the fact that he was the teacher of the brilliant young recipient of the Berkshire Quartette Prize in 1918, Tadeusz de Jarecki. A very distinguished teacher of Scriabin was Safonoff, who understood him, protected him, and encouraged him. Just as every artist in the course of his career wears out the patience of more than one patron, so as a student he passes through the vicissitudes of association with teachers of various degrees of greatness and understanding. Arenski was one teacher of Alexander Scriabin—the one teacher who never saw, during their association or afterwards, any reason for his becoming a musician. During the single term that he studied with Arenski he had met a real patron, the kind that makes a country known for its art. That patron was Belaieff the music publisher, whose house was devoted exclusively to Russian composers. Belaieff published all of Scriabin's Symphonies, at the outset putting the young composer at financial ease, which enabled him to do his best work, and this friendship was severed only by the death of Belaieff in 1904 after thirteen years of association.

In Dr. Hull's book you will find such scholarly and detailed accounts of the five symphonies, the ten sonatas, and a great number of the four hundred compositions left by Scriabin, that I will only speak in this Conference from the personal point of view of certain compositions that interest me particularly; and perhaps going on from those you will find others that will be of more individual interest to you. There are of course the pieces for the left hand which you have doubtless already heard. Those were written while the lad had a broken right collarbone. Then the Boston Music Company has published certain numbers of Opus 8 that have an unusual rhythmic interest. The one in B minor, for example, which is number 3, is written in a time of 6/8 and a rhythm of 3/4. By the rhythm I mean the little rhythmic pattern or mould, that little pattern of two notes

which is given its characteristic curve by the corresponding use of the forearm. I mean to say, the curve ⌣ represented by that little group of two notes is made audible when the wrist in its motion portrays that curve. To speak didactically, the action of the wrist would be Down, up, Down, up, Down, up, making three little curves in the six eighth-notes, which is the rhythmic pattern. If you desire the metrical accent as well, it is easy enough in the end to put a little spark of a high light wherever you want it. This etude is a lovely example of

cross-rhythm, and in the middle movement that use of the left wrist making the rhythmic pattern in the bass will keep the whole design clear.

The other etude, Opus 8, is in B flat minor, for when he wrote these, Scriabin was a young boy in his teens and had not yet advanced beyond the customary scale-material of music. This etude in B flat, No. 7, in Opus 8, has straight 4/4 time in the treble—four chords to the bar. But the bass is 12/8; and its pattern is such that it is the third of each group of three that comes with each metrical beat. This again, as in the etude previously mentioned, necessitates a gesture to facilitate the automatic rendition of the rhythmic pattern. As a matter of fact, this principle is indispensable if one would give the peculiar quality of divers tones and complex rhythms which we know as modern music.

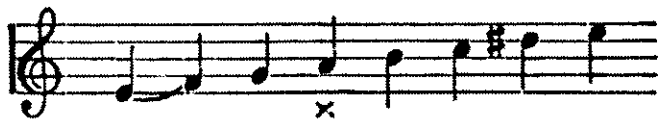
Scriabin wrote ten pianoforte sonatas. The fifth is famous because it is said to mark an era in his work; for, like Corot, he had sharply defined periods. I do not mean roughly defined, because there was gradual and uninterrupted development; but that development made itself manifest at definite stages. The fourth sonata is Opus 30. It is written in F sharp major; and together with the Divine Poem or Third Symphony, the Tragedy, the Poème Satanique and some forty other pieces, it was written in the year 1904. These were songs of freedom after giving up a professorship at the Moscow Conservatory, where Scriabin had reluctantly taught during six arid years.

There are two kinds of pedagogues. There is the kind that has educated itself to teach and is going to teach to the end of the chapter just what it originally educated itself to know. That kind of pedagogue protects itself from the invasion of all new ideas and is as great an enemy to the progress of art as is the sordidly commercial middleman. The other kind of pedagogue walks not with his own little lamp ahead of the pupil, but with the burning glass of love for Art he focuses its blinding rays anew each day the sun shines. Thus the leaderspirit Scriabin had both friends and enemies. In connection with this matter of Scriabin's enemies one may recall the fact of mediocrity's instant appeal. In Scriabin's most original work, that is to say, after self-knowledge and illumination had supplanted his strong mnemonic gift, there is nothing in his composition to flatter our vanity. Even if we accept the music for the worth that our sense of form and our artistic discrimination discern, we are baffled at times; and we may feel ourselves belittled by our lack of understanding. The form is so perfect, the meaning is so fine, and it is all done with such conviction and disregard of approval, that we are reminded of what the critic Alfred Stevens wrote in the nineteenth century: " Painting is not done for exhibitions. Refined work is smothered and shouters come off better." Scriabin never painted a "shouter."

In this Conference I am confining myself to the piano music almost exclusively because it is only ten years since the completion of the last Symphony, and it will probably be another quarter of a century or so before our publishing houses and our orchestras get round to producing the Symphonies. The handful of people in a community who cherish for art an interest that is not purely local, will not require me for a guidepost. They will go direct to Dr. Hull for the deeper information he can give with regard to the orchestral works. The piano literature itself, numbering about two

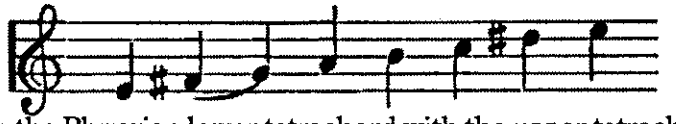
hundred pieces, is sufficient to engage the interest of the musician for a little while. There is a Prelude in Opus 51 in which Scriabin has utilized but not used an old church mode, the Dorian. You will remember the lovely quality the minor second gives, and the harmonies that grow out of that scale, but in case the application of this almost theoretical memory is not easy for you yet in the new-old music, let me recall the scale to you in its divergence from our usual mode. This is the Dorian: E F G A | B C D E.

Scriabin's familiarity with the Greek modes was a matter of course, and he used them in early compositions. So here he made a beautiful scale, a version of our well-known minor scale, by combining the Dorian lower tetrachord with the Chromatique-Orientale tetrachord superposed.



Tonic.

The upper half is identical with our harmonic minor. This is equally valid from the standpoint of logic and of beauty with our well-known arrangement which, as you will



see, is the Phrygian lower tetrachord with the upper tetrachord Chromatique-Orientale. This Prelude is designated *Lugubre* and is Opus 51.

A musical creator may have various things to offer us. He may give us new thematic material or new harmonic material or new rhythmic material. Scriabin has given us all three. Is it the man or the artist who has done that? The quality of the man and the quality of his work are so related that a presentation of either would proclaim the other. Inspiration is inevitably coloured by what it passes through, like light through glass.

Now at the time Scriabin died, in April, 1915, he was at work on what he called a Mystery. It was a high ritual. Scriabin was a deeply religious person who recognized that the need of humanity is for illumination—more light coming through—or a higher plane of consciousness. That idea is always a little objectionable to our vanity. We prefer to say that animals cannot reason, rather than admit that we must take the trouble to do something more. A celebrated doctor in Europe told me that at a medical conference in Berlin the much advertised ant was being exploited as a marvel of intelligence. Referring to my friend for acquiescence in the high esteem in which the medical company held the insect, this doctor startled the company by saying that the attainments of the ant only proved to him how far humanity had yet to go. As you know, this further journey into realms of higher consciousness has been undertaken by various groups of people throughout the world, calling themselves by different names. The Rosicrucians are one of these groups; the Theosophists form another; the Christian Scientists have taken an inspirational shortcut; and the group under the leadership of Rudolph Steiner have undertaken their development along the trail of Mystical Christianity. The Zen sect of the Buddhists are most profound. They have amazing

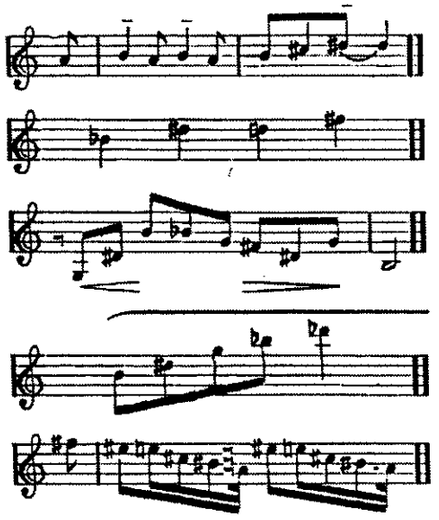
technique, and certainly some of their devotees are saints. But to know their mental activities is to realize the world's need of Christianity as a religion of Love.

Scriabin was a Theosophist; and the composition on which he was at work at the time of his sudden death, called the Mystery, was to be a union of music, speech, gesture, scent and colour. The "passive initiates" as he termed the audience, were to participate, and the purpose of the composition was to engender in the hearers that state of mind in which they might have a vision of the higher planes of consciousness we hope to call our own. Something of this sort is undoubtedly at the back of our common phrase that music exalts us, or that it is an uplifting influence, or that we are the better for having heard it. Scriabin's idea in calling the audience " passive initiates " is akin to the thought in the mind of Coomaraswami, when in speaking of music in India he says, "The audience cooperates with the magician." It is not often, is it, in the music of the past three centuries, and its public performance, that we could employ the word "magician" where we use "musician"! Even the cadenza, originally born of ecstasy, is nowadays published and bought. The Oriental idea referred to by Coomaraswami and brought into our music by Scriabin is doubtless the basic principle of ancient ritual music, whether church ritual or nature ritual, whether Christian Transcendentalism or Natural Magic. In both instances, objects in the world are employed not for what they appear to be, but in their essence, of which the outer manifestation is but a symbol. It is obvious that if there is power in music, the musician should be trained as an initiate, for if material power can be basely used, how much more important is it to be worthy of power from invisible springs! Is it not worth while to think of things on which Plato and Confucius agree ?

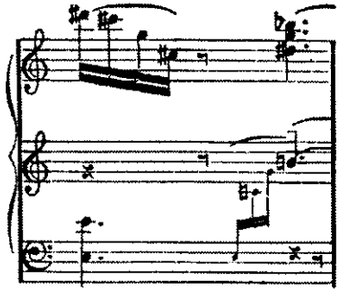
Challenged for my estimate of Debussy, I would like to submit this parallel. Debussy was born in 1862. For thirty-eight years he lived in a decadent France of the end of the last century. He died in 1918. Born ten years after Debussy, Scriabin at the end of the century had lived twenty-eight years in Russia, a land then full of surging idealism. Where France was infidel, turning out her holy men and women, Russia was seeking the transcendental by means of every man who had a vision. " Cults " sprang up, a new cult for each individual revelation, each one a tongue of the great upward-flaming consciousness. Why, so general was the grouping of those who were seeking something higher, that when I did an ordinarily gracious deed for a fellow artist, a Russian literary woman, she asked me if I were a "sectarian," one who had founded a cult. In every land the citizen inhales his atmosphere as the plant is nourished by the air about it. So Debussy adopted a manner, and Scriabin grew into spiritual freedom. Debussy's last works were, accordingly, a feebler expression of his early thoughts, while Scriabin's were a fuller flowering.

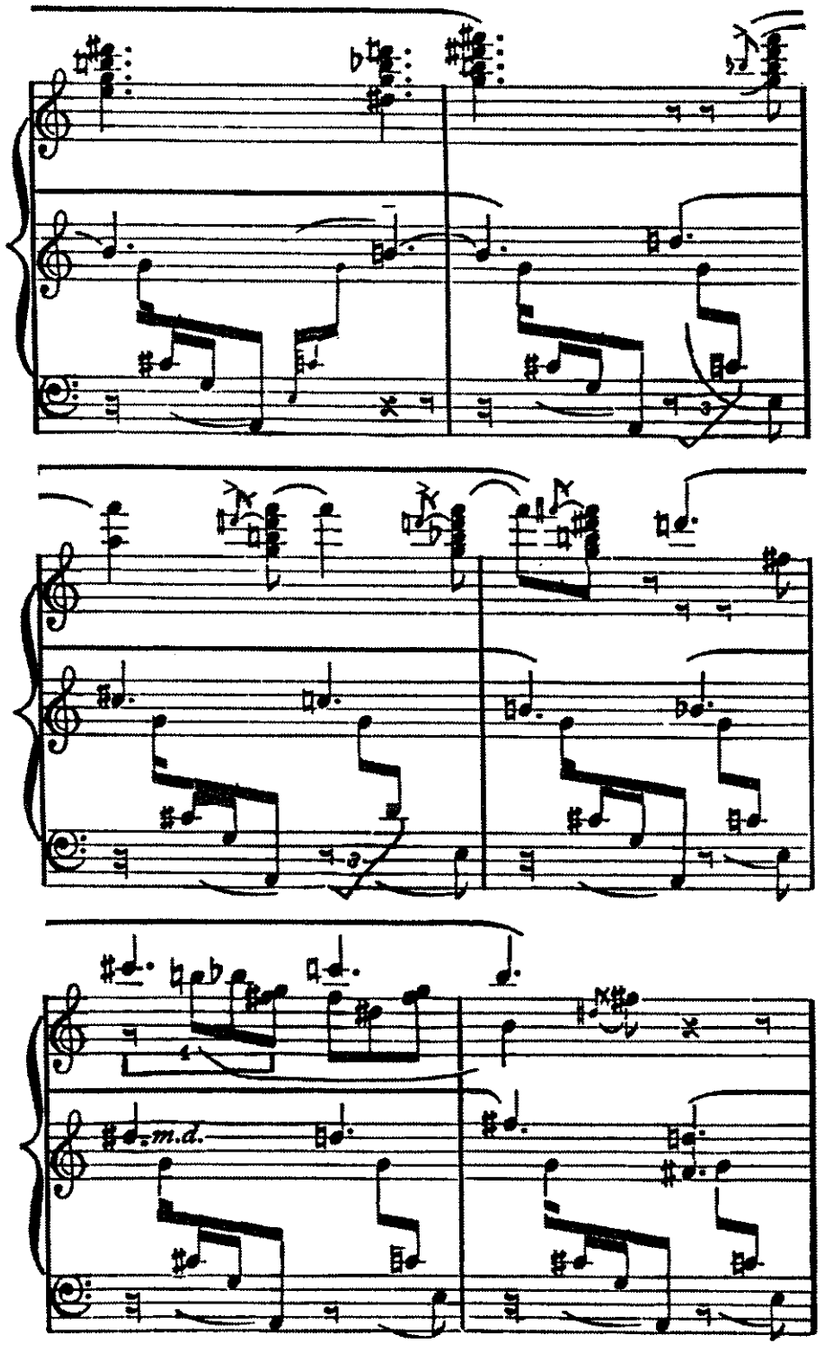
In Russia there has been since ancient times a sect called Khlisti, and they have invocational chants, series of notes that represent the elements. If I may intrude a personal reminiscence, let me tell you of going into a London concert hall one afternoon during the progress of a song recital. Mme. Jarebzova of Petrograd was singing something strangely familiar. I said, " Surely that is the earth-motiv! " Looking at the

program, I found that it was entitled, " Ritual Song of the Sect Khlisti, harmonized by Stravinski"; and it was an invocation for rain. I am not sufficiently familiar with the works of Stravinski, since we have such small opportunity of hearing important new music, to determine from his use of such material whether the basis he is working from is mystical or only mental,—I mean, whether he is inspired or only clever. I have been assured that his sole interest outside of his music is in his wife and children, but this reputation might be the very result of his pursuit of things so fundamental and so profound that their names are kept inviolate. Now whether Scriabin drew the motive that he used in his Eighth Sonata from the Russian sect Khlisti, or from other shrines in which they had been conserved, I have no means of knowing; but there are just five short motivs used as the basis of his Eighth Sonata, and some of them are familiar as nature motivs taught me by an initiate in London. The Eighth Sonata when properly rendered gives one a curious feeling of being out of doors; and if I am correct, these five short motivs are the runes according to tradition given to Scriabin from one source or another, of the five elements.



All through the Sonata these musical phrases are the sole material used, and on the last page they are made prominent to even the casual observer:





Incidentally, Scriabin wrote ten Sonatas: and although the number may have been a chance, it may also have been, since he was a Theosophist, that the ten Sonatas conform in some way to the ten Sephiroth of the Qabalah. In that event each Sonata would have a separate role to play on the stage of creation. Scriabin realized the brutality of the world of sense and the great range of beauty to be perceived by the awakened soul. Reticent and aristocratic, and loving his native town, he was prevented by the jeering attitude of its professional musicians from living and working there. A Japanese artist leaving this country for his home, after four years of employment by a New York merchant of art, was asked on the day of his departure, by his employer, how his work should be carried on. The Japanese replied: "Everything that I have learned in this shop is noted and is in the hands of your secretary: five pages. I have written down for them what mediums are to be used for everything. *Also I mentioned how to treat the artists, as artists treat the mediums.*"

Scriabin had married—with success that left much to be desired. He had made professional tours through Europe and Russia and even to America in 1906 and 1907, but his value was never generally perceived. In January, 1908, he wrote the glowing Poeme d'Extase: and in Brussels the great score of Prometheus, which was the Fifth Symphony, and several smaller things were written in his latest manner that had a mystic basis of vibrational design. Among these latest compositions was the Etude Opus 65,—sharp, scintillant like bright bits of broken glass. To the pianist let me say that this species of piano composition has to be rendered with the light, flat, fleet, coordinated movement of hand and arm that has been popularized during the past two seasons by the pianist Robert Schmitz.

Scriabin's composition was done largely in Brussels and in Switzerland. The Brussels period was of especial interest. From 1908 he had two years of close association with certain other fine minds engaged in delving beneath the surface, such men as Verhaeren, Delville, Mahrhofer; indeed, if I may quote from a letter from Dr. Hull, "There was a remarkable school for the New Art at Brussels during the time of Scriabin's residence there." With this in mind, let us in New York not deceive ourselves into thinking that a city is a musical metropolis because artists have honoured its market with their wares.

During Scriabin's residence in Brussels he married the loyal woman who survives him. I am told by Mr. La Liberté of Montreal, an erstwhile pupil of Scriabin's, that his widow is publishing a collection of all manner of things appertaining to her distinguished husband. The appearance of this book will be of particular interest in throwing more light on this original composer than his friends have been able to supply.

It has been said among artists, and it is true, that beauty should never be explained. They mean that it should be apprehended with another sense than the analytical. I think it is G. R. S. Mead in his volume of Essays called "Quests Old and New" who reminds us of the essential difference between analysis and sympathy. "In sympathy," he says—I quote from memory—" or feeling with the other, we project ourselves into its being, knowing it as it is; whereas in analysis we try to compress the strange thing into a

preconceived sense-experience, into which by its very nature it cannot fit." So, with persistent use of the analytical faculty we are continually the losers. Great new beauty has been born into the world in the past twenty years, since the year 1900, and I will not attempt to explain it. Your receptive attitude will give you more than any words of analysis could do. There is a complete literature for the pianoforte left by Scriabin. In less than nine months of the year 1903, you remember, he wrote the published works from Opus 30 to Opus 43, comprising the Fourth Pianoforte Sonata, the Tragedy, the Poème Satanique, the Divine Symphony and some forty small pieces.

The very first works written when a child are published by Jorgenson of Moscow. The first three opus numbers are an Etude, a Prelude, an Impromptu and Ten Mazurkas; and rarely was there a published Opus of a solitary composition. Unfortunately Scriabin was not always under the tutelage of the greater pedagogues. Safonoff was a good man, and Taneieff, in spite of the traditional limitations of his own original work, was generous in refraining from extending those limitations over the consciousness of his students. But Arenski, that unfortunate house divided against itself, that man of genius who wrote the beautiful pianoforte concerto Opus 2 at the age of nineteen, and whose Opus 28 was a series of musical experiments in half a dozen forgotten rhythms of Greek, Roman and Persian poetry—Arenski from the standpoint of progressively revelatory art was so limited a reactionary and so devoted to harmonic convention, that he found no talent in his genius pupil, Scriabin, who viewed a farther horizon. While Belaieff and Safonoff and Kussewitzsky encouraged and fostered his work, Arenski was of that caliber of professional whose envious opposition continued up to April 14, 1915, when the death of Scriabin united enemies and friends in proud lamentation and a large and enjoyable funeral.

The vital difference between Scriabin and the usual composer lies in the content of his art work. He does not present the human-emotional element, nor does he exhibit vain patterns like Schoenberg. His first Symphony was a Hymn to Art, the fluttering of his wings toward God. The Third Symphony was the Divine Poem; and the Fifth Symphony, Prometheus, was the spreading of those great wings on which he hoped to bear humanity upward and out over the borders of this fettered earth life. Hull writes: " With him we are indeed brought near to the Infinite and we do indeed 'gaze across the cloudy elements into the Eternal Sea of Light.'" I did not know these phrases when I heard his Poème d'Extase played by Mr. Altschuler and the Russian Symphony Orchestra in New York. There may be various ways of accounting for the phenomenon, but the fact is there, that both my companion and I, listening with closed eyes, saw during the ecstatic climax of that orchestral composition, the Poem of Ecstasy, a sea of molten gold on which there floated a ship of violet light, immaterial, supernatural. I cannot tell you the beauty of it or the translucent colour and brilliancy. Does it not bring to mind the words of Claude Bragdon, "This is the essence of art, first to perceive and then to publish, news from that nowhere of the world from which all things flow and to which all things return " ?

Scriabin always has wings; sometimes soaring, sometimes brooding, but always wings. I have no wish in detailing the achievements of Scriabin or showing what I consider to be his processes, to indicate a musical program or attribute conscious meanings to his music. That would be both futile and impertinent. I have endeavoured only to point out the divergence between the content of this master's work and the representational composers on the one hand, the emotional writers on the other. Some one has said, " As soon as the biographers of a creative artist learn that he had the idea of a union between art and religion, they look for external manifestations of that union." They either look for a sign, or find that union itself a stumblingblock. They still seem to think that the creative artist consciously makes works of art according to his beliefs, whereas the ideal of that union in itself opens the mind of the artist to the inflowing which manifests as a masterpiece. The creative artist at his best is but an, instrument. He sits still and records what comes to him.[1] That he must be a perfect instrument goes without saying, and that he must take his position at the center, where all is still, is evidenced by Scriabin's letter to Briantchaninoff,[2] published in the Moscow Musical Journal, *Mousika:* " I cannot refrain from expressing my sympathy with the views which you have expounded in the *Novoye l' rento* on the subject of the educational significance of war.

" You have voiced an old idea of mine, that at certain times the masses urgently need to be shaken up, in order to purify the human organization and fit it for the reception of more delicate vibrations than those to which it has hitherto responded.

"The history of races is the expression at the periphery of the development of a central idea, which comes to the meditating prophet and is felt by the creative artist, but is completely hidden from the masses.

"The development of this idea is dependent upon the rhythm of the individual attainments, and the periodic accumulation of creative energy, acting at the periphery, produces the upheavals whereby the evolutionary movement of races is accomplished. These upheavals (cataclysms, catastrophes, wars, revolutions, etc.), in shaking the souls of men, open them to the reception of the idea hidden behind the outward happenings.

" The circle is complete, and a stage of the journey is finished: something has been attained, the creative idea has made one more impression on matter. We are now living through just such a period of upheaval, and in my eyes it is an indication that once again an idea has matured and is eager to be incarnated.

" And at such a time one wants to cry aloud to all who are capable of new conceptions, scientists, and artists, who have hitherto held aloof from the common life, but who in fact are unconsciously creating history. The time has come to summon them to the construction of new forms, and the solution of new synthetic problems. These problems

1See Cobb, " Mysticism and the Creed." page ~39, line ~5.

2I take the liberty of reproducing this letter entire from Dr. Hull's book on Scriabin.

are not yet fully recognized, but are dimly perceptible in the quest of complex experiences, in tendencies such as those manifested by artists to reunite arts which have hitherto been differentiated, to federate provinces heretofore entirely foreign to one another. The public is particularly aroused by the performance of productions which have philosophic ideas as a basis, and combine the elements of various arts. Personally I was distinctly conscious of this at the fine rendering of Prometheus at the Queen's Hall, London. As I now reflect on the meaning of the war, I am inclined to attribute the public enthusiasm, which touched me so greatly at the time, not so much to the musical side of the work as to its combination of music and mysticism."

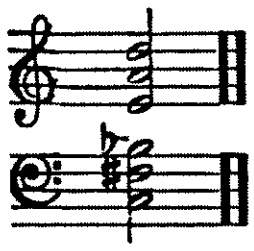
In this connection, and to substantiate in some small degree the sentiment of Scriabin as expressed in that letter, I cull from *The Livivg Age* of March 20, 1920, this trenchant question and answer from an article called "The Unearthly Note in Modern Music ": " And why does the whole texture of modern music, even when it professes to utter ordinary human feelings, shine and shimmer with lights and colours not of this world? Why has so much of it a tang which belongs to no fruit ever gathered from an earthly garden? Why is so much modern music either diabolian or ethereal ? . . . The explanation has yet to be found. Partly perhaps our musicians obey the general movement of the time away from the elementary materialism in science, art and philosophy which satisfied the advanced thinkers of fifty years ago." Tentatively this writer suggests at the end of his article what the modern musicians modestly claim: "Or is it that music is actually leading us to altogether new lines and levels of thought? Are all musicians secretly determined that music shall not be distanced by the higher mathematics in generalizing the universe? We have much the same feeling when listening to Scriabin as when listening to Professor Eddington. Perhaps, unknown to us of grosser perception, our modern musicians already move in the time-space which is still an eerie habitation for persons of common clay."

Scriabin's Opus 60, the Fifth Symphony, called Prometheus, was, if you remember from its unfortunate presentation in New York by the Russian Symphony Orchestra, an experiment with sound and colour. You will recall that Scriabin had a scientific education in his youth, and in the year 1900 when these experiments with sound and colour were being made in various parts of the world, Scriabin was pursuing his own investigations along this line. There is a large bibliography on the subject of sound and colour in the book by Dr. Hull. Perhaps the reason for the failure of the satisfactory union of the two lies in our present concept of the separateness of the senses. To one living at the periphery of being, a dual sense impression would produce what might be called an astigmatic consciousness at the moment. The sudden removal of Scriabin from this sphere of action when by force of magic he was about to unite all five senses in one art ritual, is of peculiar interest in view of the danger to humanity in awakening psychic power beyond its spiritual development.

The chord used by Scriabin harmonically and broken up into melodies has been termed Nature's chord, because it is made of fourths selected from the overtones of a given note, overtones hitherto disregarded. His followers have called it the mystic

chord, probably by reason of correspondences invoked by the association of tones.

Some day I hope I may have definite lore to give regarding the character and potency of sound combinations. My individual experiments have so far been too trifling to put forward as a theoretical basis. Very interesting points do come out sometimes, however—like the experiment with Scriabin's chord (see Hull, page Io6), and the tones



from which the chord was derived. That experiment made the Sun the ruling factor in the chord, and gave the tone its ancient seat of power.[3]

Dr. Hull has been so very kind as to assure me personally that Scriabin's musical material was not a scale, but a chord. I had found a similarity between an ancient mocle and the series of tones chosen by Scriabin for a given composition. Perhaps the ancient modes were made after findings by wise men in the East. When a chord is tall enough, if you lay it down it looks very like a scale. And nowadays many a scale has been squished up into a chord. Are they not, perhaps, the same animal, rampant or couchant?

These compositions no longer sound cacophanous when one has become familiar with the aural material involved. The harmonic stuff taken as a whole is the thing to dwell upon; the harmonic flow, broken up into little separate, numbered chords, is like the rhythmic flow broken up into little separate, measured beats. Scriabin did most of his writing in Brussels. where he had the association of such minds as Delville, who wrote the " Mission of Art," Mahrhofer, who wrote " The Psychology of Tone-colour," Verhaeren, and Geveart, and was in an earnest theosophical set; so it is quite possible, indeed highly probable, that the same method of choosing a given number of tones for use out of the twelve semitones, according to the location of the planets and the twelve signs of the zodiac, was employed by both the ancient lawgivers of music and the modern musical mystic who had somewhat of their lore.

It is well that some one has broken through the convention that a musical house must be built of neat little triads and locked up with a tonic chord for the night. It is no more essential than iambic pentameter or a rhyme in alternate lines. Indeed I feel inclined to say of music as Padraic Column has said of poetry: " The new forms they are creating are likely to further the production of a distinctive poetic literature for America. These forms are words in a new Declaration of Independence. For the future American poet may be the child of a Syrian or a Swede, or a Greek or a Russian. The traditional

3"Histoire de la Langue Musicale," by Maurice Emmanuel. L'Antiquité pratique une echelle mineur, dont on peut dire qu'elle est le Mineur absolu, très different de notre mineur batard. Ce mineur antique (mode de MI on Doristi) tolère autour de lui des modes suffragants, dont il est le maître incontesté (page 5).

rhythms of English verse may not be in his blood and he might fumble in his poetry if he tried to use them. But here are verse measures that he can mould as he pleases."

With the limited material previously employed we had come to gauge every musician, creator and virtuoso alike, by the standard of technique. We had forgotten a very important fact which is so well spoken in a critique of Sufic writing in the *Times* magazine of December 16, 1917, that I cannot resist bringing it to your attention:

"It is a habit of criticism to find technical perfection at the moment when technique has lost its relation to the significance of its subject matter and has thus become a degraded and detached mechanical facility. Technique rightly considered is the result of power over means of expression, and when that power is at its full, technique mounts to its furthest heights." When the means of expression is new, "over-spectacled scholarship," to use Eastman's phrase, does not quite know what to look for. It is as if it had lost its glasses, and while they are being found something happens in art. When, as Amy Lowell says of our day, " ideas believed to be fundamental have disappeared and given place to others," from internal evidence it seems safe to say that in these others we have taken a step forward. Almost without a dissenting voice the young artists are proclaiming verities,—from John Powell, who says: "The artist must begin within—in his own soul. Life is the principal thing. It is a training of the spirit," to Percy Grainger's echo of the same thought: "In art there is no escaping from one's true inner nature; neither for beginner nor for finished artist." [4] The Very Reverend W. R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, might well take heart from this when he thinks what outlaws young artists were supposed to be in earlier days. He asseverates the hopelessness of reconstruction save on a spiritual basis, and says, "We need not be afraid of what is called other-worldliness, for our other world is no city in the clouds, but the deepest truth, the fullest reality, and the ultimate meaning of the world in which we live." In music, then, let the listener strive to " cooperate with the magician," so that we may all advance together, and not as the wild geese fly, the advance guard solitary. We are fortunate in having at least one English critic who feels what he hears. Mr. Ernest Newman gives us a picture of the Poème d'Extase as it was presented in London last Autumn that I must show you, because it is a picture not of the music but of the thing back of the music: " I suppose we do not quite get out of the music all that Scriabin put into it unless we have the same mental picture of its emotional sequences as he had. Unfortunately, few if any of us can do this. We read that the Symphony depicts 'the ecstasy of untrammeled action, the joy in creative activity,' and so on and so on; but all this helps us very little. We have in the last resort to take it in the main as just a piece of orchestral music making itself as clear as it can to us in its own way, and taken thus it must strike even the most casual listener as a masterpiece among masterpieces. It not only takes us into a sphere that was previously unexplored territory for music, but guides us through it with an uncanny certainty, making us almost forget the newness of it all and be conscious only that here

4 " Modern Piano Mastery," 2nd Series, by Harriette Brower.

some of the most secret and mystical of our dreams have become reality. This is what one cannot sufficiently admire and wonder at— Scriabin's perfect command of an absolutely new musical language for the expression of moods so personal that not a hint of them will be found in the music of any other composer. It is all new— new rhythms that seem the very soul of movement set free from moving limbs; new harmonies of a strange force and sweetness and eloquence; a new colour that seems to be compounded of the rarer vibrations of the ether; and a new mental world, the world of a spirit that has no need of the concrete supports of ordinary thought, but weaves direct from the essences behind the concrete."

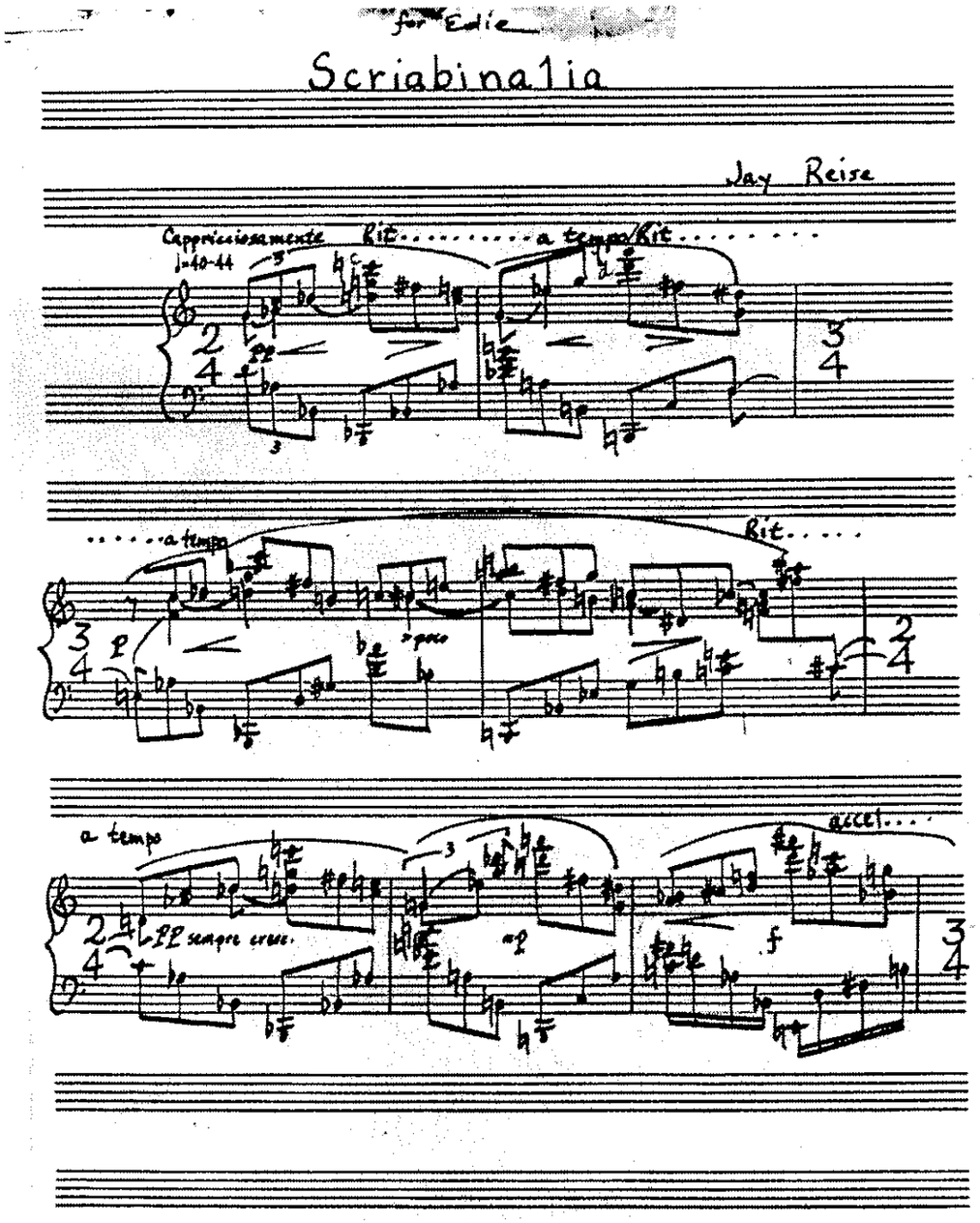
It is surely due the conductor of a performance that could inspire such thoughts to repeat here the measure of praise bestowed upon him by Mr. Newman in that column: "Mr. Coates gave a performance of it that defies description. It will remain with me as one of the half-dozen great orchestral experiences of my life. A more complete absorption of an interpreter in a composer's style it has never been my luck to witness."

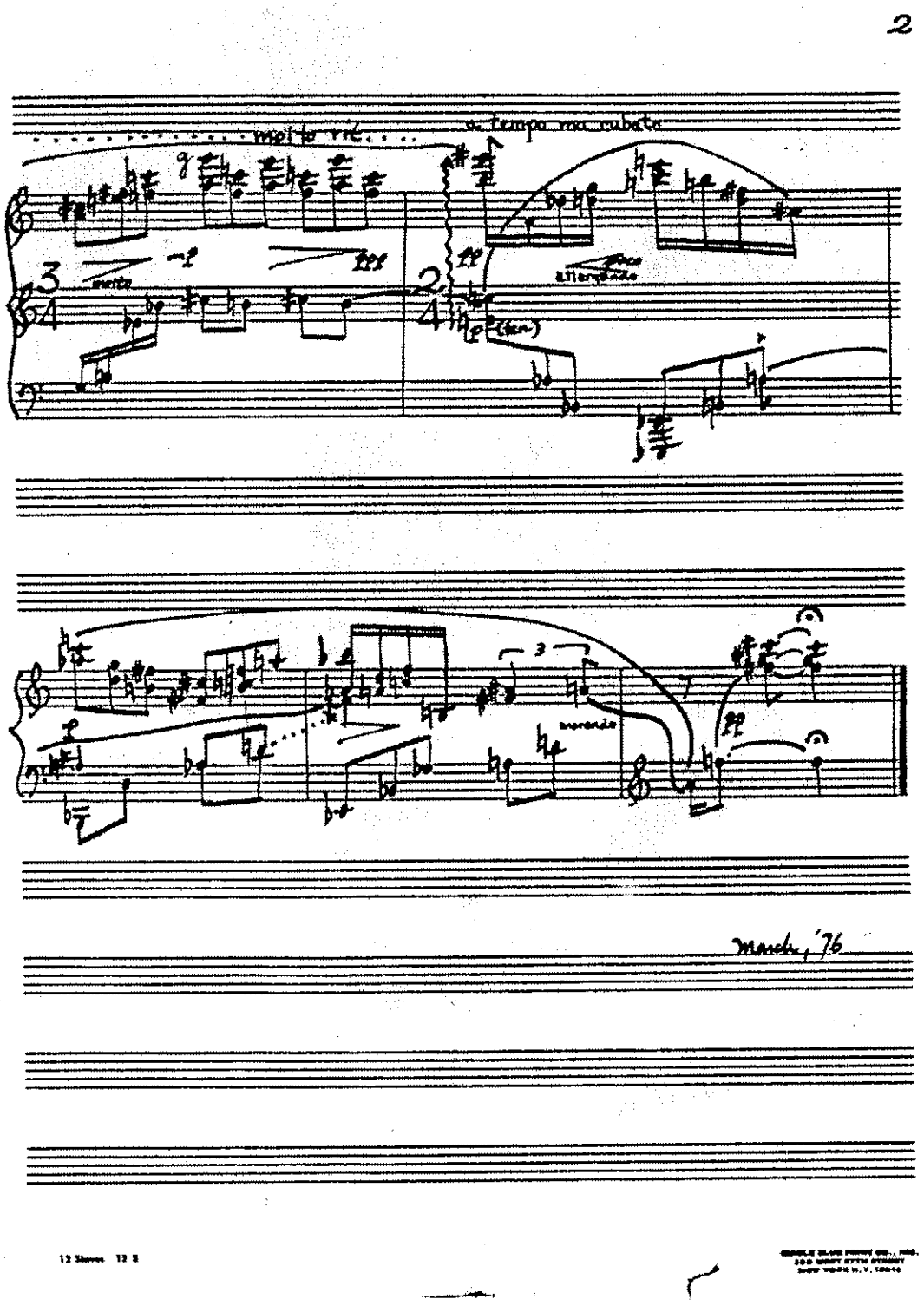
I wonder sometimes if Scriabin is just a clear pool in which each man sees himself reflected. The aesthetic Mr. Paul Rosenfeld looks at Scriabin as an aesthete. But Scriabin has not the negative force of the aesthete. He has the positive force of the mystic; and a "mystic" is one who "sees." I cannot agree with the polished essayist when he says, " To many it will appear highly doubtful that the music of Scriabin, product as it is of an inordinate, a flowerlike sensibility, could be acceptable to any but an over-refined and over-exquisite few."

"An inordinate, flowerlike sensibility" would be only the usual range of sensibilities made more subtle or more rare. With Scriabin it was rather vision than sensibility. It has not to do with overrefinement or the over-exquisite, it seems to me; there is a hardiness, a ruthlessness even, in the human blade of grass that is brave enough to pierce the sod and face the sun.

If a musical message be an emotional message, it can be caught by myriads who would never understand it in words. But let it be a message of human import beyond the average emotional development, and by this I mean the development of perceptions that are not of the intellect, and it will be understood only by those who have attained a development above the average. Appreciation of Scriabin may mark the evolution of a nation's spiritual receptivity; a higher sensibility if you like, but turned toward the Sun. At any rate, what better gauge would you suggest? Majolica, Sèvres, Céladon—I leave you to find their prototypes in ultramodern music.

As for Scriabin, with what exultant joy Arch Perrin exclaimed, "And just think—the vulgar never *will* like him!"





Composition by Jay Reise, March 1976.

LUCE PROJECT GROUP

The organisation

Luce project group. In 1985, the Skryabin Society was founded in Amsterdam with the purpose to propagate Skryabin's work.
From the outset, the realisation of the *luce* part was one of the aims. One felt that despite the attempts that had been made, no performance had so far responded fully to the intentions of the composer.
In 1990, the Norwegian pianist Håkon Austbø, resident of the Netherlands and internationally known for his Skryabin performances, became chairman of the Society and took the initiative for a new attempt towards realising *Luce*. Visits to Russia brought him in contact with scholars and sources there. He is now first vice chairman of the International Skryabin Society, Moscow.
In order to set up the project, Austbø associated with designer and computer specialist Rob van de Poel. Van de Poel was trained as a musician and still performs in various unconventional ensembles. Soon becoming involved with electronics, he has worked for several decades on multimedia projects, including the first Dutch realisation of *Prometheus* in Scheveningen, 1973.
At various stages of the development this team was assisted by other experts. In the initial planning, designer Menno Dieperink, now manager at the Philips corporate industrial lighting design department, contributed with the basic spatial design.
The Norwegian light designer Petter Steen contributed his expertise of colour lighting in the following stage of realistic experiments.
This stage was financed by the *Prins Bernhard Fonds* as main sponsor.

Luce Foundation. In December 1992, the Luce Foundation *(Stichting Luce)* was founded with the aim of stimulating light-and-music performances in general and to provide a platform for the further preparation and management of actual performances of *Prometheus*.
In the course of 1993, the project group concluded the development of the project using experiences made in earlier stages. This stage of the project was subsidised by the Dutch Ministry of Culture.
In the final stage leading up to the first performance at the Hague, stage production assistance was called upon. Stage designer Floris Guntenaar assisted the design and construction of the lighting equipment and, as director of Opera Mundi, Amsterdam, supervised the actual production. Light technician Jan Holsbergen was responsible for the installation in the hall. Financial support in this stage was given by *NOG Verzekeringen* and *Janse Lichtreclame*.

The principles

When Skryabin wrote Prometheus, there was no technology to realise his ideas, as Rimington's instrument could at the best give a faint shadow of what the composer had in mind. What he did have in mind exactly, is very hard to know, and quite an amount of research was done to find out. A score from 1913, with numerous annotations, proved to be a highly valuable source. They were noted down during a lunch in Moscow, in Leonid Sabaneyev's handwriting but dictated by the composer.
This score, preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, contains exhaustive indications to the realisation of the *luce* part. Also, it contains the most detailed description known of the colours corresponding to the notes in the score.

Colours. Skryabin imagined his note-colour relationship purely intuitively and subjectively. However, there is a certain logic to his approach, projecting the circle of colours more or less onto the circle of fifths. Attempts have been made to see a direct relationship between light frequency and sound frequency. This would result in a chromatic scale of colours (C red, C sharp purple and so on). However, neighbouring chromatic tones are dissonant, whereas neighbouring colour frequencies give harmonious relationships. Considering the fifth as the most consonant interval within the octave, it seems plausible to let it represent neighbouring colours.
There has been some misunderstanding around details of the colour scale conceived by Skryabin. This is due to variants of the

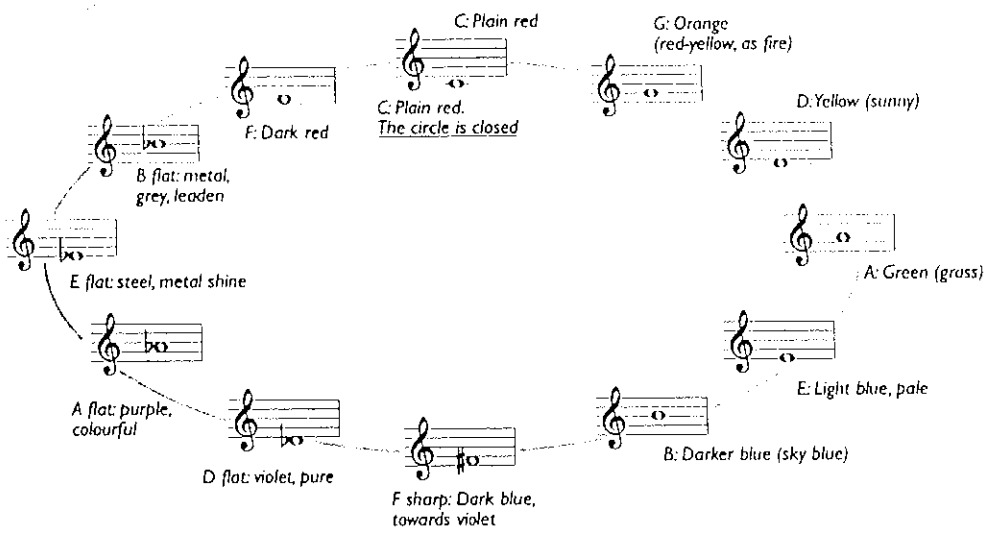


Fig. 1: *Skryabin's colour scale, as noted by Sabaneyev in 1913. Below the original handwritten note, to the right a translation with the circle of fifths. The colours don't correspond to single pitches but to fundamentals of the 'mystic chords' used in the harmonic language of* Prometheus.

scale as transmitted by his friend and intimate Sabaneyev, and to faulty translations of the colour names. In this project the variant of the annotated score was chosen (see fig. 1). Some of the indications in this score refer to the purity (saturation) or, on the contrary, to the paleness of some colour-notes, making it desirable at certain points to modulate the basic colours of the scheme towards white/grey or toward a neighbouring colour.

Counterpoint. Other indications in this very interesting document refer to the shape of colour patterns and the separation of the two independent voices. The two voices of the *luce* part indeed need to be strictly separated. The upper voice follows the fundamental of the harmony that is heard at any given moment. It changes relatively quickly; sometimes in a very fast tempo. This voice is the light counterpart of the music itself; it is the synaesthetic representation of the audible parts in the score.
The lower voice offers a completely independent counterpoint to this constantly changing colour. In this voice, the colour changes only 6 times during the whole piece, apart from a couple of rests. A passing note (E sharp) in bar 459 is due to a misprint in the first edition, and the number of notes is hence 7, a divine number. In fact this voice is full of metaphysical significance. It makes a slow ascent from F sharp in whole-tone steps, ending with the final F sharp; or rather a circular movement through the colour wheel of Skryabin by double steps, representing the pure colours. The pitches don't correspond to any musical element except for the final F sharp major chord but symbolise the steps in the evolution of the human race: the spirit (blue, F sharp) becomes matter and human struggle (red, C) which again transcend into spirit. This voice should in no way mingle with the colours of the upper voice, except at certain points. It should be omnipresent as a kind of overall background, growing in intensity from a barely visible begin to an overwhelming finale.

Relation to the music. Whereas the lower voice lives its own life in a slow, constant progression, the upper voice reflects the musical events in the score. There are eleven themes in the piece; themes that can be ordered in 5 groups: 1) Prometheus or the Creative Spirit, 2) human will, 3) reason or consciousness, 4) lust, joy, ecstasy, and 5) fire, lightning and sparkles. The character of each musical event has to be reflected in the character of the colour and not in the colour itself; the latter being determined by the pitch noted in the part. At some points in the annotated score, the dynamic indications for the colour part (there are no dynamic markings in the original) conflict with the dynamic of the music. This suggests a certain contrapuntal relationship between upper voice and music (see next pages).
In the design of the performance, one cannot ignore such indications. However, being of a rather psychological character, they are impossible to follow literally. Drawing inspiration from the spirit of the annotations the colours should nevertheless give a visual counterpart to the music. A mere rendering of the colours of the upper voice is not sufficient to match the great variety of timbres and the sparkling, vibrating quality in the music. This doesn't mean that the colour play follows the music exactly; rather, it comments and reacts to the musical events.
The colour projections should be varied dynamically and spatially. Staccato, portamento, crescendo/diminuendo, vibrato and tremulando are musical terms that can be translated into the visual field. The colours may be modulated in 'pitch' (detuning within the colour circle), saturation (varying the white component), and intensity. They may be provided with hues of complementary colours in rainbow-like shapes.

All these changes may be made abruptly (staccato) or more or less smoothly (legato, portato); in light technique terms, with cuts or cross-fades. They may apply to a change of colour-note or occur within a single note. Moreover, the colours should not constantly fill the whole visual area. They should be *alive*; one colour may gradually overlap another in a certain spatial gesture; it may grow or shrink within itself; it may vibrate, flicker or shimmer. Here the colours may seem painted on the screens with large gestures; there the screens may fill up with sparks and flames. All this should reflect the extraordinary richness of the orchestral score.

Light projection . The impact of the projections should fill the hall in the same way the music fills it with sound. First priority is given to the orchestral sound and to the quality of the colours displayed. Pure colours can only be displayed on a perfectly white and smooth surface. The orchestra should play in a fine concert hall which by definition has no smooth surfaces and can be only marginally modified without threatening the acoustics. This is why the colour play is confined to the area behind and above the orchestra where the gaze of the audience is normally directed. Hundreds of light sources project their colours on five vertical sheets of translucent projection screen. The background colour of the lower voice fills the gaps and the surrounding area, including the choir, clad in white, at the moment of its appearance. The third dimension introduced by this approach makes it possible to experience the colour counterpoint in a spatial way.
The use of video techniques, laser beams and moving lights were found inappropriate for the performance. Beside other problems, these media don't correspond to the historical aesthetics of the score. Light bulbs did exist in 1910 although the means of controlling large numbers of them only recently came within reach thanks to digital techniques.

Live performance. Perhaps the most important feature of the project is the *live* character of the performance; the *luce* part is played like any other part in the score: by a musician being able to follow the conductor. This excludes the use of traditional light controlling equipment.
Musicians must be able to articulate their notes, to interpret their part within the framework of the total unity, led by the conductor. The same applies to the *luce* player. Some of the interpretation has to be done beforehand; the set-up of the colour synthesizer and the elaborated light score are the given elements. The rest is performed during the concert, using a keyboard specifically developed for this purpose.

Sound Dweller

(for Alexander Scriabin, Hierophant)

by John W. Henry

"Sound Dweller" was originally published in *Alexandria, The Journal of the Western Cosmological Traditions*, vol. 2, Phanes Press. Mr. Henry is preparing an expository paper on Scriabin's "Mysterium" for *Alexandria*, vol. 5.

The immortal theurgist soft-pedals an astral piano within an azure-blue interworld composed of archetypal Image-Sounds. He evokes sidereal gongs and bells that reverberate transfiguring sonic atmospheres in this sacred precinct where sound and light fashion floating starfalls of luminiferous lotus blossoms circumambulating with refracting melodies and versicolored antiphonal harmonies sustained aloft from his tone-painted Recitations of the Heart.

Marc-Andre Hamelin and Robert Taub talk to Farhan Malik about Scriabin.

Pianists Marc-Andre Hamelin and Robert Taub have both recorded the complete Scriabin Sonatas for Hyperion and Harmonia Mundi respectively. In these interviews they talk about why they recorded these works and their views on Scriabin in general. The interview with Marc-Andre Hamelin took place at his home in early November, 1997. The interview with Robert Taub took place in early December 1997 at his studio in Princeton.

Marc-Andre Hamelin interview

Why did you decide to record the Scriabin sonatas?

I was introduced to Scriabin's music at a very young age. My first exposure was the recording by Roberto Szidon. I've been interested in the music ever since. One of the most important reasons is that I don't think there's a weak one in the group. They are all very interesting in their own way. When I broached the subject, Hyperion was very interested.

You recorded one of the posthumous sonatas but not the other?

Yes, it's because the E-flat minor one is in essence incomplete. Of course I could have used whatever ammunition I have and actually completed the second movement, but since Scriabin, in casting the first movement as the Allegro Appassionato, Opus 4, pretty much discarded the idea of playing it as a sonata, I decided that probably wouldn't be such a good idea. I don't really like it that much anyway and decided I could do without it.

Do you have plans to record any more Scriabin?

Only as part of a recording I'll be making shortly reuniting several composer-pianists. The Scriabin portion of the CD will be the Tragic Poem, Op. 34 and the two Poems, Op. 71. I want to give a sampling of two very different periods of Scriabin's development.

You recently recorded a CD of Roslavets piano music and spoke of this music as being a sort of continuation of Scriabin's music. Can you expound on this.

In a way it is. Roslavets did say that the formulation of his atonal and tonal theories were developed independently of Scriabin, but spiritually they share a lot. That was certainly obvious as I was studying the music. If you look for example at the first sonata, Scriabin's influence is all over the place. Perhaps if Scriabin had lived a bit longer he might have come up with something like Roslavets. Already you see in the opus 74 preludes that there's another direction being taken.

In addition to the Sonatas what other Scriabin works have you played?

I remember as a student I worked on several of the etudes. I played the Etude, Op. 8 No. 6 in a competition for example. I've played the left hand Nocturne any number of times, usually as an encore. Also the Etude, Opus 42 No. 5, which is a splendid piece of music. I've read a good deal of the music without actually performing it. I very much agree with Raymond Lewenthal that one has to get to know as much of a composer's work as possible in order to understand what his possibilities were.

You program some sonatas with regularity and there are others you have never programmed. Is it because you feel certain sonatas work better in recital or that other ones don't work so well with audiences?

Well, there are a few I learned specially for the recording. Specifically those would be sonatas 2,8, and to some extent number 10. I'm not saying I'd performed all the others, but those three I had hardly touched at all before the recording project. I also had never played the Fantasie, Opus 28. I included that because it is a sonata movement for all intents and purposes. Incidentally, that is one piece which I am most satisfied with on the recording.

Still, you've never played it in recital.

No, but I'm not saying I never will.

It's interesting that you learned the 8th sonata just for the recording as it's one of the most difficult of the set and in my opinion one of the most impressive recordings in your set. The treacherous double fourth passages sound so easy.

It's tricky because you have to figure out a different fingering each time as there are so many transpositions. If you don't divide these passages between the hands there's a good chance they won't sound well.

Do you think the sonatas work well as a cycle?

No. I think that would be rather counterproductive. One or two sonatas are perfectly acceptable but too much of a good thing is not advisable. For example, I keep advising people not to listen to the Roslavets CD in one sitting. This is not a derogatory comment on the music, but it's too much of the same thing in a way. There are not enough contrasts to justify it as a straight through listening experience. The Scriabin sonatas have more diversification but to me there's no point. If it becomes more of a marathon than a musical experience then there's something wrong.

Can you comment on your approach to Scriabin and how it differs from past Scriabin interpreters such as Richter, Sofronitsky, or Horowitz?

Let me say right off the bat that I'm not that much in touch with interpretive traditions of Scriabin. I would much rather go to the score and make up my own mind. The one tendency I find is of not reading the music properly. This music is in fact orchestral writing at the piano. Voices are superimposed with different timbres and different rhythms. They are meant to be heard, each with their own color, and as independently as they would in an orchestral texture. If all this is to be controlled by a single performer it gets very difficult, and one instinctively looks for simpler solutions such as a blanding or glossing over of complex rhythms. I have tried to go against that as much as possible. If you listen to Horowitz's 9th and 10th sonatas there are simplifications - missing voices, roundings off of rhythms. As wonderful as the music comes out character-wise, and God knows he knew how to project it, it's not exactly what the text is. I also find the same thing in Sofronitsky. I admit that the musical projection of moods was one of his strong suits, but there just was not enough of a careful study of the score. To me that's very important. I wanted something that would authentically represent the text as well as bring across the musical attributes. I figure anything that's in the score - be it complicated rhythms or overlaying of voices - is there for a reason. The fact that there's a quintuplet to be played against a triplet means there is an effect that is sought there. Before gratuitously simplifying those rhythms, I try to find out exactly how they are meant to be projected musically, and I do believe that

everything written in Scriabin's music is possible. Scriabin really, truly knew what he was doing.

You'll be playing the 1st sonata for the Scriabin Society benefit concert in February. Can you talk about this work a little and why it isn't heard more in recital?

This will be my first public performance of it although I did an informal run through of it in 1995 as a juror of the CBC young artists competition. There was a little impromptu concert just among the jurors and I played the first sonata. I was just getting ready to record it. It's a wonderful piece. I guess if some pianists are looking for a flashy ending then they're looking at the wrong piece. It is a difficult piece and requires a great deal of commitment.

Surely it's not more difficult than the frequently played 3rd Sonata?

I would say that it is. I don't find this sort of difficulty in the 3rd Sonata. The 3rd Sonata is the one I play most frequently and by quite a long shot.

Robert Taub Interview

What led you to record the Scriabin Sonatas?

I had just recorded the complete piano music of Milton Babbitt, and after the last recording session I went home and played through two pieces sort of to enter a different world. One was a Chopin nocturne and the other was the Scriabin 5th sonata. I decided to include that sonata on several programs the following season. One of those concerts was in LA and my executive producer for Harmonia Mundi came to the concert. Afterwards we were at dinner and the idea was born to make one CD of Scriabin sonatas. After that the idea came up to complete the cycle.

Do you have any plans to record more Scriabin?

No concrete plans although I would love to do more of the preludes and some of the poemes and etudes as well.

Which Scriabin works do you play frequently in recital?

Almost any one of the sonatas. Also some of the etudes either in groups or as encores, the Poeme Op. 32 No. 1, several groups of preludes as well. I like very much the last opus - the 5 Preludes Op. 74. I play the Nocturne for left hand. I've always loved Scriabin. When I was a young boy I played some of the early etudes and some of the poems.

So you've actually played all ten sonatas at different times in recital?

Absolutely. Before I recorded them I made a point of including them in my concert programs and I have subsequently as well.

Have you ever played them as a cycle?

No I haven't. I would like to, but a suitable occasion has not yet arisen. I think that one has to be judicious about it. I'm not convinced that I would program them chronologically. I'd begin with the first sonata and end with the 10th, but I wouldn't necessarily do the first five one evening and the second five the next evening.

How do you feel about the interpretations by Richter, Sofronitsky, and Horowitz, and do you consider your approach similar or completely different?

I don't feel that I'm in any particular pre-established school. I've never tried to be. I try to take my clues of interpretation from the composer himself. I have respect for the work of others before me, but I take as my most valued guide what the composer has written and the style in which he was working. One of the things which I find most extraordinary about Scriabin is not only the way the notes accrue but the extraordinarily careful notation in the way things die away - what notes are left hanging as others fade out of a particular texture or harmony. I think that that's sometimes sadly overlooked.

Can you talk a little bit about the difficulties involved in playing this music. For instance, the wide chords and awkward stretches which seem unpianistic at times?

I don't view it in quite that way. I see it rather as inventive. I think that he's very forward looking in his writing. An extraordinarily inventive pianism with large reaches and the way sounds amass. Almost an orchestral approach. Sometimes it's near impossible to play all of the notes together but I view that as a challenge. I'm not put off by that at all and find that refreshing. It's a wonderful brand of pianism as well as compositional inventiveness.

You're going to play the 10th Sonata and the Op. 22 Preludes at the benefit concert in February. Can you talk about those works a little.

Each work captures its particular mood or sets of moods so well as Scriabin always seems to have been able to do. The preludes are little gems - very succinct vignettes - whereas the sonata is on a much larger scale. Still within that it's kind of a mosaic of themes. If one were to look at it from a certain point of view, it does fit within a classical sonata form, but within that each structural theme has its own personality. To me it's a totally absorbing piece.

You've recorded a lot of modern music. Do you have any thoughts on Scriabin's influence on later composers or whether some composers have tried to continue where he left off?

Well, I'm not sure that Scriabin has led to anything directly. Certainly not in the same way we can trace a line from Brahms to the second Viennese school with Brahms leading in a way to the complexities and ambiguities of Wagner, leading to Schoenberg, leading to Berg, Webern, and perhaps Babbitt and others today. I don't think there's such a straight line evolution with Scriabin. I think that Scriabin's music is secure in its place because of its extraordinarily powerful structure and expressivity. I can see where it came from clearly, but because of its idiosyncratic nature I don't think I can see quite as clearly where it might be leading. It reaches its own sort of apotheosis.

[Reproduced from Youthful and Early Works Alexander and Julian Scriabin, Compiled and annotated by Donald M. Garvelmann, Music Treasure Publications, New York, 1970, Donald M. Garvelmann, by permission.]

ETUDE
(ALTERNATE VERSION)
OP. 8, NO. 12

Composed in 1894-95. The manuscript belongs to the Manuscript Section of the State Public Library in Leningrad, with a photocopy at the Scriabin State Museum, No. 464. Clearly, this arrangement is the second version about which Scriabin wrote to Mitrofan P. Belaieff: "You have probably already received the etudes. You will find among them a second version of the D♯ minor which I don't want published just yet. Let it remain with you for a while because there's something about it that doesn't satisfy me. Yes, truth to tell, this has all happened because of my fiddling with it." (See, **Correspondence between A. N. Scriabin and M. P. Belaieff**, page 18). Before Scriabin had third thoughts, however, and since publishers make no money while music is in manuscript, it would seem possible that Rimsky-Korsakoff, chairman of the board of the Belaieff publishing house, decided to print the version he liked.

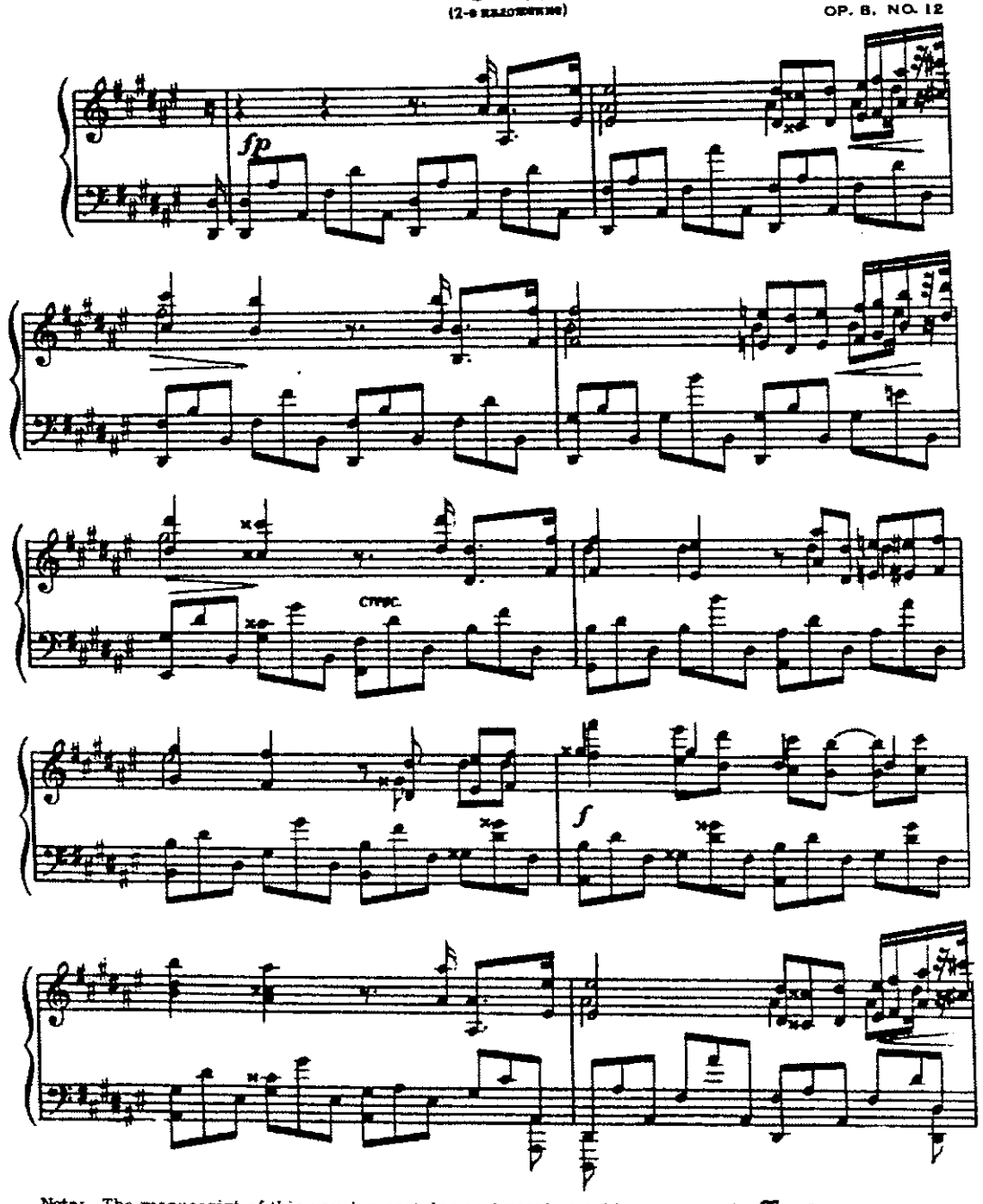
This alternate version of Scriabin's most famous piece reveals a startling number of differences from the known version. The minor mode is strongly felt in the known version; this alternate version has a warmer, more optimistic quality. Also, the version first published is marked "**Patetico**"— or **pafos** in Russian—the real intent meaning a sense of longing or yearning. In my opinion, this composition makes its most telling effect when it is not rushed. Scriabin has marked the first-published version ♩ = 100-112.

The world première of this alternate version was heard nationwide on December 7, 1969 on WCBS Television in a "Camera Three" program called "The Enigma of Scriabin." The performing pianist was Anton Kuerti.

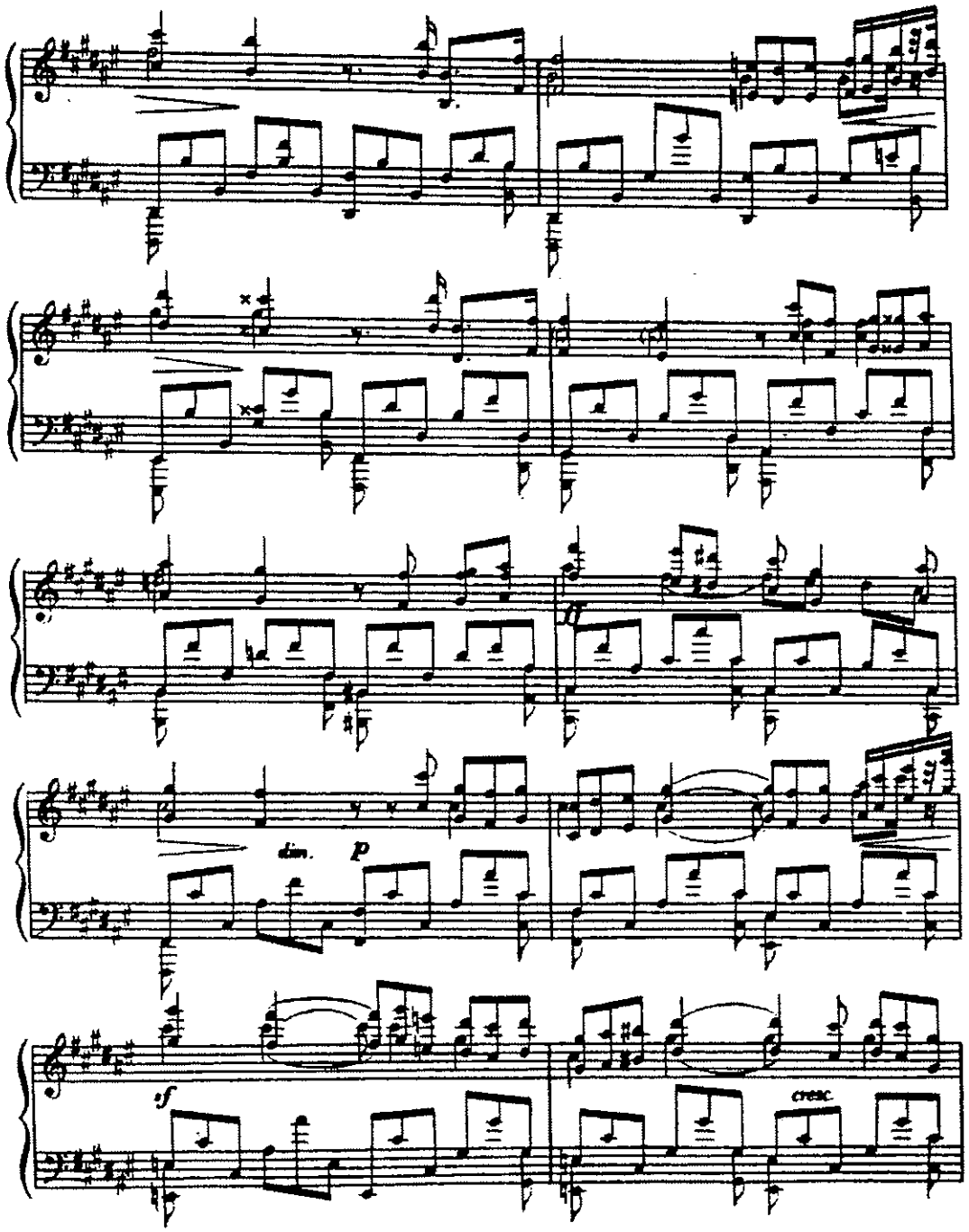
ETUDE
(ALTERNATE VERSION)

ЭТЮД
(2-я редакция)

OP. 8, NO. 12



Note: The manuscript of this version contains no dynamic markings, except the *ff* in the last measure. All other dynamics shown here have been added to follow the manuscript of the first-published version (added to the extent possible, of course, because of textual differences between the two versions). —D. M. G.



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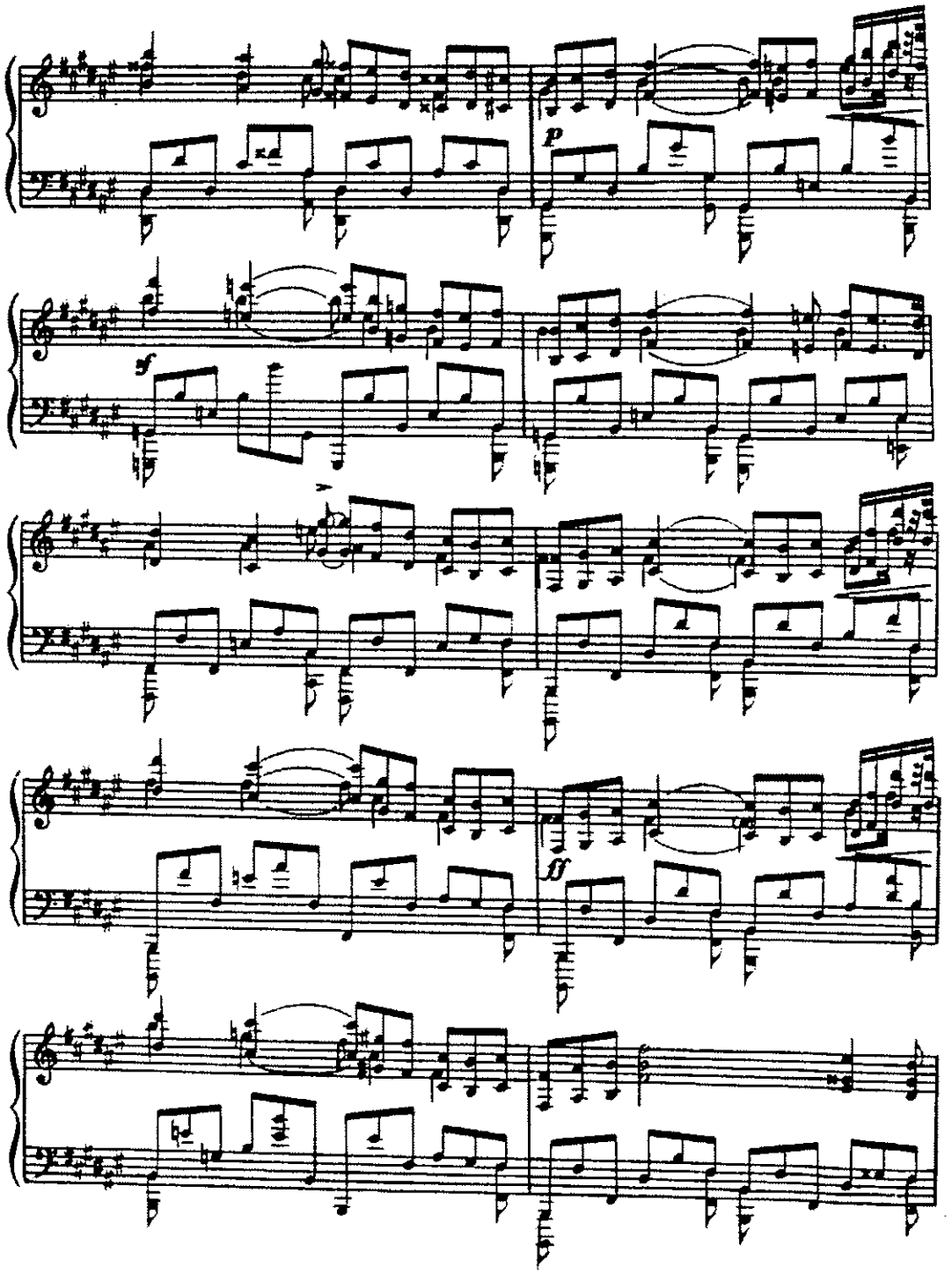
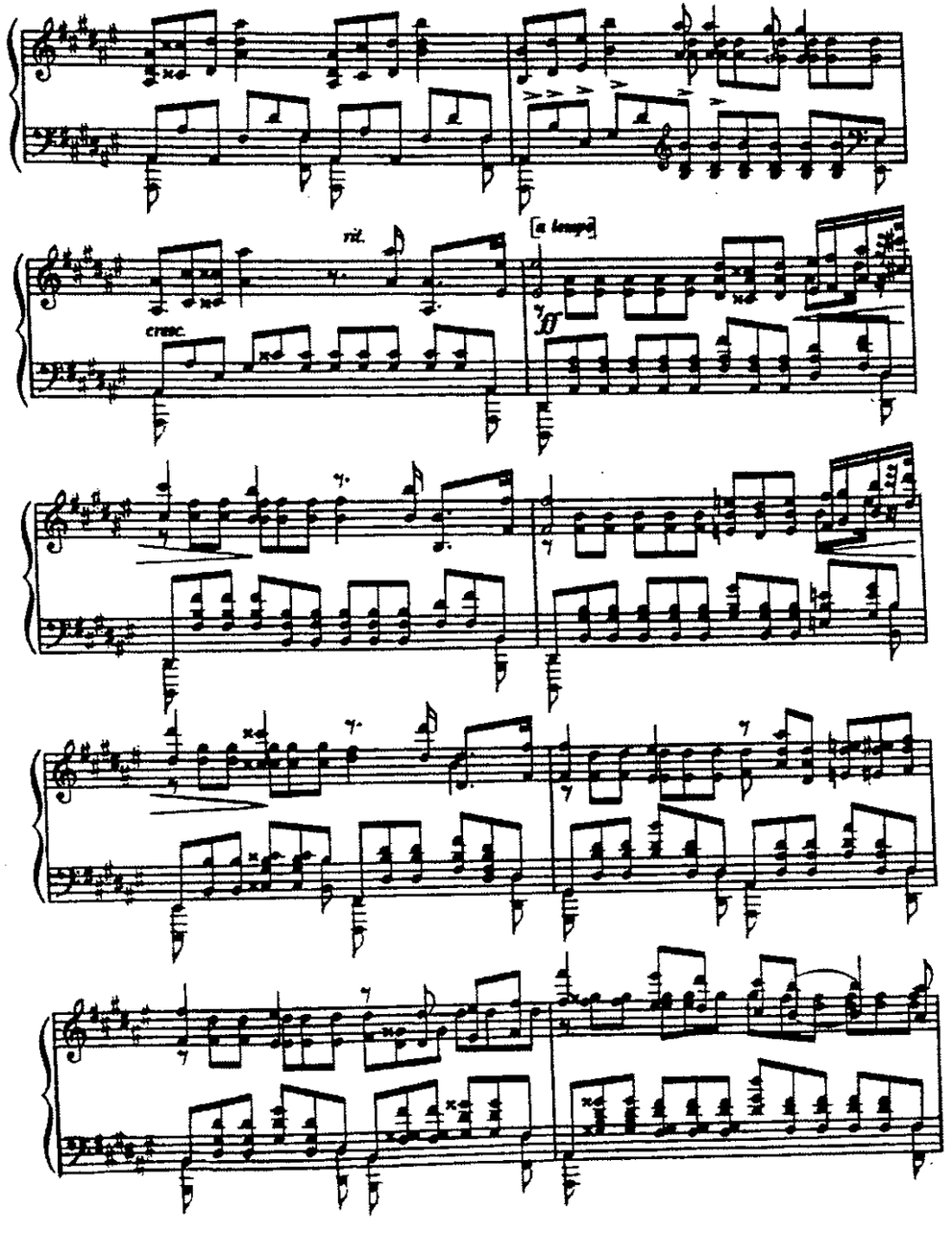
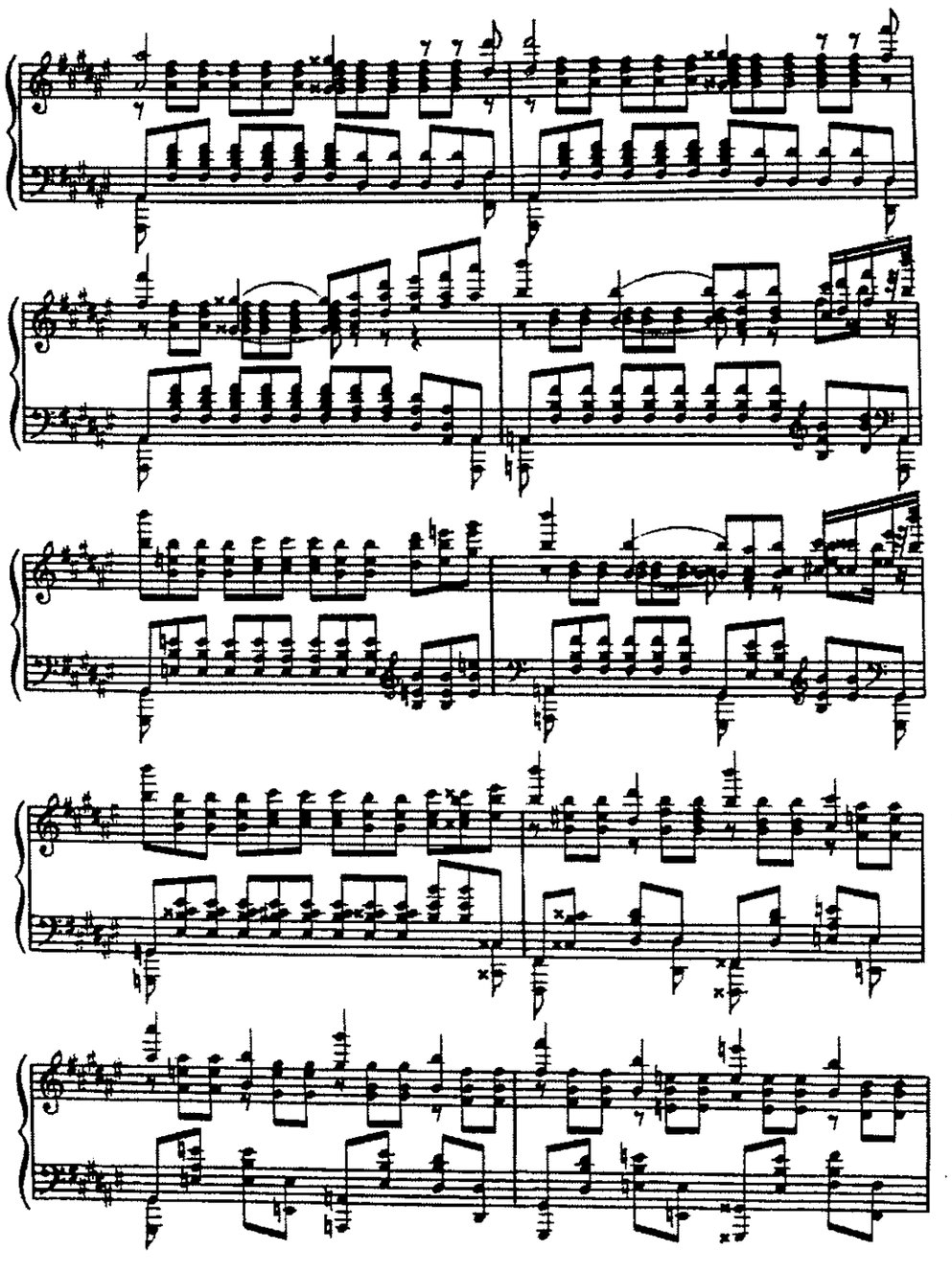
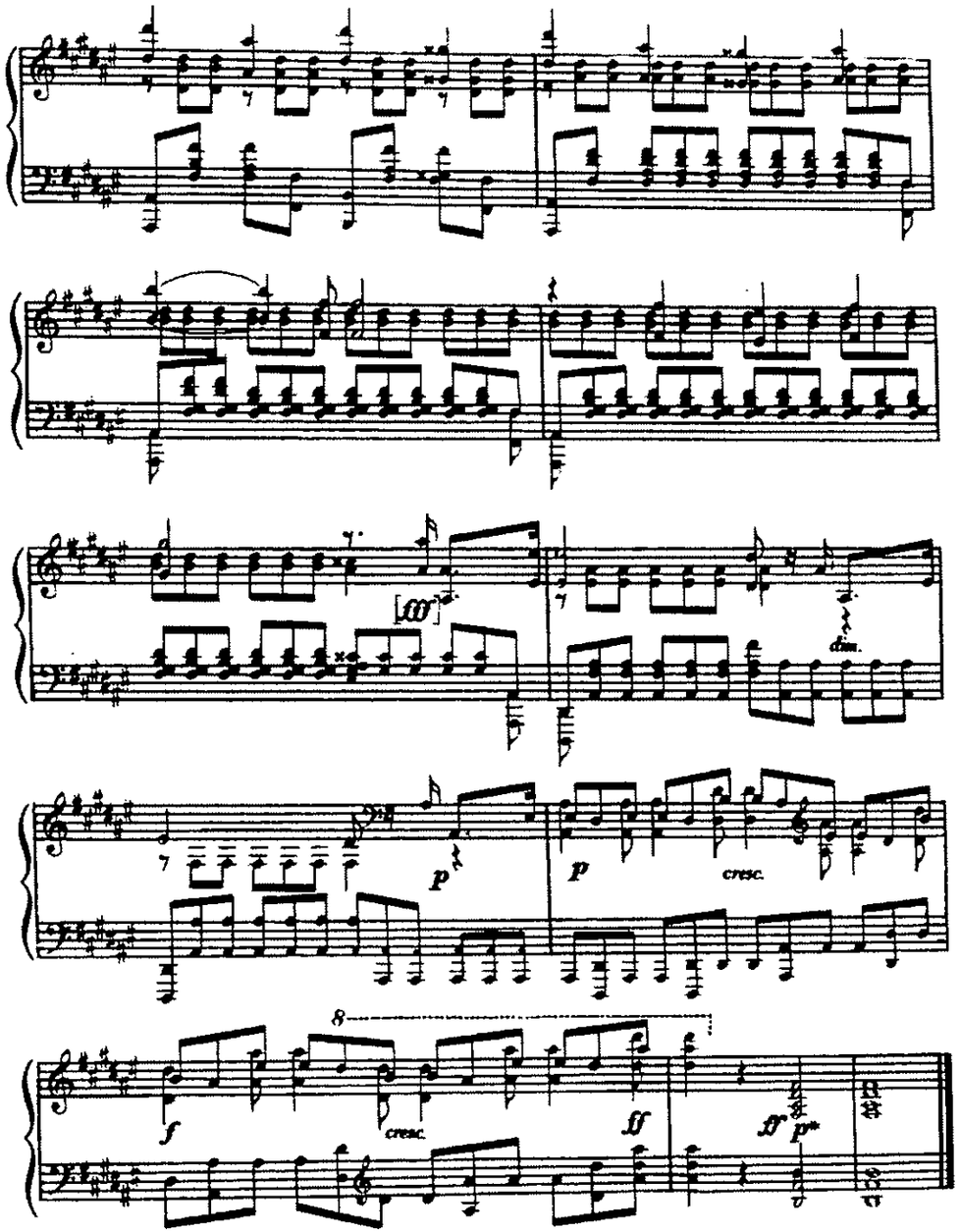


133


rit.
cresc.
[a tempo]
ff





*Note: Scriabin's marking of *p* in the final measure (a departure from performance tradition) occurs in another similar instance in Scriabin where ascending *ff* passages are followed by a *p* ending: In the **Allegro appassionato**, Op. 4. The same sudden dynamic change is also implied at the end of the third movement of the **Sonata Es moll**. —D. M. G.

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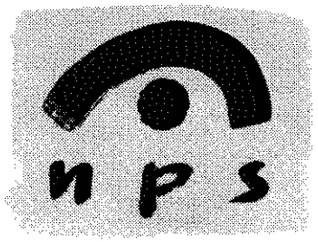

netherlands programme service

A colour space for Scriabin

By P. Struycken

Visual artist Peter Struycken has participated in the television program *Prometheus, Poem of Fire* which will be broadcast on Netherlands TV in April 1998. Pianist Alexander Toradze and conducter Valery Gergiev will perform.

A videocassette of this advanced virtual video using computer techniques and coloured images will be available to Scriabin Society members.

Even a superficial acquaintance with the ideas of Scriabin teaches us that art was the highest goal in life and something which had a decisive influence on the world. Scriabin complemented his views on music with ideas about the changing colours of light. The state of the art in his days went no further than a plank with coloured light bulb.

In his mind's eye, however, Scriabin saw the three-dimensional character of changing coloured light in which his musicians would be bathed while playing.

As a romantic artist, nothing was too far out for Scriabin when he was set on expressing the depths of his soul or solving the world's great enigmas. All the same, his method of combining colour and music is rationally, even mathematically formulated rather than inspired by the intoxication and ecstasy he promises to the human consciousness.

When listening to Scriabin's composition *Prometheus*, one can distinguish the alternation of the directionless, the direction-taking and the culminating. Those movements are contained in eleven themes which are each cased in the same tonal material but differently developed in time. The fundamental tone of a chord determines

the colour, and the entry of the themes the moment the colours change. For the coloured light, Scriabin prescribed two layers which should coincide exactly with the musical changes, but independently of each other. So in fact, we have to devise two colour-spaces which can intermingle at the exact moment indicated in Scriabin's score. To do this, the composition of approximately 25 minutes must be divided into seconds.

When creating a space with developing colours, there is no easy way to translate dynamics and sound into colour. Aristotle, when describing the five senses, pointed out that synaesthesia (deriving similar perceptions from different stimuli), is more a desire for relationships than an actual connection. At best, the acoustical and optical worlds develop simultaneously but autonomously, each within its own idiom. What binds them together is the recognition of a correlation suggested by the artist. Scriabin supplies the indications; I shall add mine to complete the work of art. Because only then, as I said before, the highest aim is served.

In my colour-space, the possibilities for developing the colour relationships in time and space are determined by the increasing and decreasing visual complexity of the colours. This is achieved by the mobility, the rapidity of change, and the fluctuations in number and quality of the particles. Of main importance in a particle system, is the collective movement of large numbers of particles. Apart from the particles themselves, the colour-space as a whole can be rotated.

I make use of mathematical calculations which leave no room for coincidence. The interesting thing is that Scriabin does not mention shape, only colour; in the same way that my colour-space cannot be independently regulated, but is always the result of a difference in colour. The colour structure is fixed, but is comparable with the score of a musical composition. The interpretation of it is to be made by the director.

In my colour-space, spatially infinite and infinitely variable in time, colour is the only changing factor. That is what causes impressions of shape, movement and change. The modulation of three colours of light - red, green and blue - is the obvious technique for this, because this way, all television colours can be made. Many different colours are needed to give the camera a perspective view into the colour-space.

I started designing colour-spaces with changing visual characteristics in the early 1980s.

Ever since, I have used colour-spaces in all my work: in films and my dynamic works of art for colour monitor, theatre and architecture, as well as for static two- and three-dimensional work.

Light can be visualised on a TV-screen in the form of pixels lighting up, and the control of that illumination can be carried out by a computer locally and with great accuracy. The colour monitor then acts like a porthole through which we look at the surrounding space. That space is solidly filled with colour so that every picture on a monitor is in principle a cross-section of that space: a small cross-section of an infinite time-space.

For *Prometheus*, much more is needed than just showing cross-sections. A whole orchestra with all the individual musicians will have to be visible in that space. And it must be possible to film every spatial detail so that the television maker can move them to and from the foreground and background at will. In order to achieve this, dynamics, colour and colour density of the particles should become interactive properties. However, manipulation of the colour space in a particle system always concerns the total structure.

I have never before made such excessive demands on a colour-space, and I expect it to take six months's uninterrupted work. In terms of computer and television technique the execution and control of this colour-space is a complicated matter. One of the special problems will be that the musicians have to be seen as objects with their own coordinate system in a way that we can make them assume the colours of the space surrounding them. Special techniques will have to be developed to prepare the mathematically demanding images and to store them on computer.

Scriabin as composer

The Russian composer Alexander Scriabin has a special place in music history. For some, he is the composer of a large number of charming piano etudes, for others he is the front runner of the twentieth-century avant-garde, being one of the most important musical explorers of his time together with Arnold Schoenberg. Scriabin, like Schoenberg, experimented with atonal music, while Schoenberg also tried to bring visual effects to his music, for example in *Die Glückliche Hand* (1910-1913).

Scriabin's musical value is sometimes underestimated because of his reputation of being more concerned with mysticism than with music. However, nothing is further from the truth, his interest in philosophy and mysticism was always subservient to his musical practice. The extreme character of his ideas made that people forgot about his qualities as a performer and composer. Scriabin was an excellent pianist, which in turn caused people to think that he was less of a composer.

The opposite was true for his conservatory classmate Rachmaninov, who was less magical behind the piano and received more acclaim for his compositions.

Tchaikovsky for example, thought a great deal of the very young Rachmaninov.

Scriabin was succesful too, especially with his piano concerto, but he grew much more experimental in the course of his career.

Scriabin's experiments did not follow the prevailing taste, which led to further underestimation of his work. At the conservatory, teachers found the willfulness of the young composer difficult. Scriabin showed little interest in the classes of music theory, but at the same time incorporated many complicated techniques in his compositions. In much of his work, one can hear how he mastered the use of counter points (the use of different melodies at the same time).

On a rhythmic level as well, Scriabin was hard on his listeners. In the pieces written for piano just after his exams, you will find passages with an unequal rhythm for left and right hand. Scriabin went his own way and was hardly influenced by musical contemporaries. Instead, he mainly focused on Western artistic influences.

In Scriabin's first two symphonies there is still a clear influence of Tchaikovsky, but in the third and fourth symphony (*The Divine Poem* and *The Poem of Ecstasy*) we hear Scriabin's own musical language. After the second symphony his music became less sentimental, the melodies lost their sweetness and the chords remained unfinished in the air. The music was being pushed from dissonancet to dissonancet, with the cadence being disturbed continuously.

Wanting to find musical solutions for unexpressable emotions, Scriabin looked for new clusters of different tones. The use of complicated chords at times resulted in music that had no clear or traditional harmonic direction. The so-called "Prometheus chord" has this effect in itself. By combining the tones *c, fis, bes, e, a, d,* the chord tends both to *f* and *b,* so that it seems to 'float'. This was the almost weightless relation between chords that Scriabin wanted. The rarefied atmosphere he tried to create with his music fitted the ambitious theories that accompanied it. The use of a light-organ in Prometheus underlines Scriabin's desire to create a true synthesis of arts.

Scriabin and his colours

It is known that Scriabin had synaesthetic qualities. The hearing of a sound could bring him associations with certain colours. It is likely that most of these associations were based on feeling, rather than on reason. An experience of synaesthesia is often purely personal. Scriabin has tried to give the audience a synaesthetic experience similar to his own.

To hear and see at the same time is not yet a case of synaesthesia. Neither is simply connecting hearing and seeing. When people hear a noise, they will turn their heads to the source of the sound. They check: where did that bang come from? In a concert hall, the relation between an instrument and the sound it produces is more easily established. Hitting on a drum will give a recognizable sound; no one will think he heard a violin.

But noises merge, different instruments produce similar melodies, etc. The coherence of the music makes the audience unaware of the fact that a hundred men and women are sitting in the orchestra pit with a piece of wood or metal in their hands. Presumably, Scriabin wanted to suppress these rational thoughts even further, by adding artistic colour play. He tried to immerse the visiting listener in an artistic experience that surpassed listening alone.

Scriabin wanted to connect image and sound in an effort to enlarge the powers of art. To express the character of specific sounds in specific colours, with the colour supporting the music, but playing an independent role as well. A synthesis of arts. According to some, Scriabin had wished that the choir in *Prometheus* be dressed entirely in white. Another way to connect colour and music.

At the first performance of *Prometheus* in Scriabin's house in Moscow, the improvised colour organ produced the desired effect. According to several biographies, the effect fell away in larger auditoriums. During the first official performance with colour organ in Carnegie Hall, New York the Rimington light organ simply wasn't strong enough to set the concert hall ablaze. The idea was still stronger than the technique and would remain so during Scriabin's remaining years.