

AN EXAMINATION OF INNOVATIONS IN ALEXANDER SCRIBIN'S

LATE ETUDES FOR PIANO

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Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) stands as one of the most unconventional twentieth-century Russian composers, particularly with respect to his piano works. The overwhelming majority of Scriabin's compositions—sixty-seven of his seventy-four published works—were written for solo piano. His etudes from 1905 forward are revolutionary, especially compared with his earlier Chopinesque style. Among Scriabin's twenty-six etudes, his Op.49, No. 1 (1905), Op.56, No. 4 (1908) and the last three etudes of Op.65 (1912) date from his last period of composition. In the Op.49 etude, Scriabin started to abandon traditional tonality. He omitted the key signature altogether in the Op.56 etude. The final three etudes of Op.65 feature constant dissonances on ninths, sevenths and fifths.

Alexander Scriabin's last five etudes represent the culmination of his compositional development and innovations at the piano. Several factors coalesce in these etudes, including unusual harmony, bichords, non-tonal hierarchy, and structural symmetry. Most of these factors derive in some fashion from Scriabin's increasing reliance upon the so-called "mystic chord" in his late works. This study will illustrate how Scriabin explored new sonorous and aesthetic ideas in his late etudes by means of these innovations.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Biographical background of Alexander Scriabin

In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Jonathan Powell describes Scriabin as “one of the most extraordinary figures musical culture has ever witnessed.”<sup>1</sup> Scriabin started his piano studies at the Moscow Conservatory. From 1888 to 1892, he studied composition with Arensky, and piano with Taneyev and Safonov.<sup>2</sup> The great majority of Scriabin's compositions – sixty-seven of his seventy-four published works – were written for solo piano. Although Scriabin expanded his compositional focus to include substantial orchestral works beginning in 1896, the piano remained his central means of expression.

Scriabin believed that music could not exist independently; it had sensory associations with other aspects of culture and civilization. He had multiple interests outside music, including philosophy, poetry, and mysticism. He read Marx, Nietzsche, Blavatsky and other philosophers' writings.<sup>3</sup> Mystical philosophy in particular influenced Scriabin's compositional ideas. Specifically, he was inspired by the Russian mystic philosopher Vladimir Solovyov,<sup>4</sup> who advocated that the artist is the “instrument of God's revelation of his unified existence.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Powell, “Skrjabin, Aleksandr Nikolayevich”, Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed June 17, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Fabion Bowers, *Scriabin: A Biography*, 2 (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1996), 127-156. Hereafter cited as Bowers.

<sup>3</sup> Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) was a Russian scholar. She and Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) established a research and publishing institute called the Theosophical Society.

<sup>4</sup> Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900) was a Russian philosopher, theologian, poet, pamphleteer, and literary critic.

<sup>5</sup> Nataliya Sukhina, “Alexander Scriabin (1871–1915): Piano Miniature as Chronicle of His Creative Evolution-Complexity Interpretive and Its Implications” (DMA dissertation, University of North Texas, 2008), 101.

Solovyov's goal was to find the communication between the "visible world of sensual phenomena and the world of extrasensory revelation."<sup>6</sup> Adopting this belief, Scriabin became convinced that he was destined to produce an art work that would transfigure mankind and even the universe.

Scriabin also conceived that the final "mystery"<sup>7</sup> would embrace music, color, sound, light, fire, taste – in short, all sensory experiences simultaneously. This concept resulted from his synaesthetic experience. Synesthesia is a neurological response from one sense through direct appeal to another, such as the correlation of visual image to sound. Scriabin associated each musical pitch with a specific color. His perception is most thoroughly developed in his orchestral work, *Prometheus, Poem of Fire*, Op.60 (1910). Scriabin's full score includes a part for a "color keyboard"<sup>8</sup>, which would project colors into the auditorium when certain keys were depressed.<sup>9</sup> Although this idea did not come to fruition, Scriabin's conception of presenting the synaesthetic experience by connecting colors with sound is remarkable, and technically prescient of our multi-media culture.

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<sup>6</sup> James West, *Russian Symbolism: A Study of Vyacheslav Ivanov and the Russian Symbolist Aesthetic* (London, Methuen and Co., 1970), 39.

<sup>7</sup> Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin: A Biography* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1996), vol. 1, 98-105.

According to Scriabin's personal doctrine as stated in his *Swiss Notebook*, "mystery" is the most idealistic state of mental and physical phenomena. This idealistic state is rarely perceived or explained by human beings.

<sup>8</sup> Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed February 8, 2013). The color keyboard was originally called *clavier à lumières*, also known as the *Luce*, which was a color organ designed specifically for performance of *Prometheus*. It was played like a piano, but projected color-light on a screen in the concert hall rather than sound. In the original score of *Prometheus, Poem of Fire*, there is a supplementary stave designated for *Luce*, where musical notes correspond to colors determined by the composer. The British painter, Dr. Wallace Rimington, was the inventor of the "Colour Organ" or so-called "Colour Keyboard."

<sup>9</sup> Scriabin's original idea was projecting the light into the auditorium. Because of technical problem, he changed to projection of lights onto a screen in front of the audience.

Scriabin had complicated views of music that he did not articulate thoroughly. Consequently, audiences are not always able to comprehend his music. His works remain controversial nearly one hundred years after his death.<sup>10</sup>

In the decade following Scriabin's death, some early twentieth-century scholars praised his works. Writing in 1924, the British musicologist Herbert Antcliffe emphasized the importance of Scriabin's music, stating:

We have to realise [*sic*] that the significance of his work lies in its independence of mere technic [*sic*], in its adoption of both ancient and modern principles and its employment of the means to hand.<sup>11</sup>

Other scholars criticized Scriabin. For example, in 1926, the British composer Alexander Brent-Smith questioned:

Has, then, Scriabin's work any permanent value? ...The awful warning from his failure—the warning against attempting to force art into predetermined channels—should be seriously considered by all who are interested in the future of music. Perhaps, then, we may say that his experimental works are of some use to posterity—the same use as that possessed by a sign-post which warns the intending traveller [*sic*] that the road on which he journeys is NO THOROUGHFARE.<sup>12</sup>

In the early 1930s, the Russian operatic tenor Leonid Sabaneev defended him, claimed that Scriabin has more value in terms of extramusical association:

The greatness of the phenomenon, Scriabin, may actually have no place in the musical sphere, but to base a judgment of him on his music alone is inconceivable. It is curious to note that the men who formed the original circle of his worshippers and apostles in Russia were not musicians, but mostly philosophers, literatures, poets, and savants. An overwhelming majority of his intimate personal friends were musical, but not musicians. This is symptomatic. The main, central group of Russian musicians was always sceptical [*sic*], and held aloof from him. Scriabin held that music—

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<sup>10</sup> Lincoln Miles Ballard, "Defining Moments: Vicissitudes in Alexander Scriabin's Twentieth-Century Reception" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2009), 9-11.

<sup>11</sup> Herbert Antcliffe, "The Significance of Scriabin." *The Musical Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (July 1924): 345.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Brent-Smith, "Some Reflections on the Work of Scriabin (Concluded)," *The Musical Times* 67, No. 2 (Aug. 1, 1926): 694.

like poetry, architecture, or any other art—was, and is, only a means to an end.<sup>13</sup>

Since 1930, some assessments of Scriabin's music have combined critical evaluation with discussion of his eccentric personality. More recent scholars including George Perle<sup>14</sup> and James Baker<sup>15</sup> point out that Scriabin revolutionized musical style in the first decade of the twentieth century. A large part of his significance lies in his experimental spirit. He constantly sought new compositional approaches at the piano.

## 1.2 Brief History of Etudes

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines etudes as “fairly short pieces whose principal aim is the development and exploitation of a particular aspect of performing technique.”<sup>16</sup> The genre flourished in the nineteenth century, but keyboard exercises have a long history. Noteworthy examples are Bach's *Clavierübung*<sup>17</sup> (1726-1741) and Scarlatti's *Essercizi* (1738).<sup>18</sup>

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the piano gradually became the domestic instrument of choice among the middle class. The popularity of piano study resulted in an

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<sup>13</sup> Leonid Sabaneev and Ping.S.W., “Scriabin and the Ideas of Religious Art.” *The Musical Times* 72, no. 1063 (Sep. 1, 1931):789-792.

<sup>14</sup> George Perle, *Serial Composition and Atonality*, 4th ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 41-43.

<sup>15</sup> James Baker, *The music of Alexander Scriabin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed February 8, 2013)

<sup>17</sup> *Clavierübung* is a series of publications by Johann Sebastian Bach's, issued in four parts. Part I (1726-1730) included six Partitas, BWV 825-830, Part II (1735) contained the French Overture, BWV831 and the Italian Concerto, BWV 971, Part III (1739) has German Organ Mass, BWV552, BWV 669-689, BWV 802-805 . One volume without part number (1741) included the Goldberg Variations, BWV 988.

<sup>18</sup> Qing Jiang, “Rethinking Virtuosity in Piano Etudes of the Early Twentieth Century: Case Studies in Claude Debussy's *Douze Études* for Piano” (DMA dissertation, New England Conservatory, 2012), 17. Scarlatti dedicated the *Essercizi per gravicembalo* to King John V of Portugal when he served as music-master at his court.

increase in nineteenth-century etudes. Several leading pianists of the day such as Moscheles, Heller, and Czerny contributed to the literature for pedagogical purposes.

It is worth pointing out that, at the same time, the piano was becoming a more sophisticated instrument. Piano manufacturers developed improvements, including such devices as repetition action with double escapement<sup>19</sup>, cross-stringing, cast-iron frame, expansion of keyboard range and built-in pedal board. All these represented significant advances that altered approaches to composing etudes. The changes in the piano's overall structure and internal mechanism stimulated composers to take advantage of increased expressive capabilities in these newer pianos.

Chopin was the first composer-pianist to elevate the etude from a didactic technical exercise to an artistic work worthy of public performance.<sup>20</sup> His two sets of twenty-four etudes, Op.10 (1833) and Op.25 (1837), are highly demanding in both pianistic technique and musical expression. After Chopin, Liszt and many other composers of the Romantic era continued in this vein. Recognized as a prodigious pianist with an international career, Franz Liszt enriched the piano etude with further technical virtuosity. Unlike Chopin, Liszt dismissed the didactic approach of focus on a specific technical aspect in etudes. In addition, he added descriptive content, assigning programmatic titles such as "Mazeppa", "Paysage", and "Wilde Jägd" to several of his transcendental etudes.<sup>21</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, the concept of etude had been redefined from a work composed for cultivating a certain instrumental technique, to a genre exhibiting musical creativity, pedagogical purpose and virtuosity.

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<sup>19</sup> A piano device invented by Sébastien Érard in 1821.

<sup>20</sup>Ching-Ling Yang, "The Development of the Piano Etude from Muzio Clementi to Anton Rubinstein: A Study of Selected Works from 1801 to 1870" (DMA thesis, University of North Carolina,1998), 28.

<sup>21</sup> Liszt's twelve transcendental etudes (*Études d'exécution transcendante*) were published in 1837, and the revision was published in 1852.

### 1.3 State of Research

Scriabin's compositions have already received a considerable amount of scholarly attention. Some of these studies address the left hand technique in Scriabin's etudes. For example, David Clemmons Pinnix's "Evolution of Stylistic Elements in selected Solo Piano Works by Scriabin" has suggested that, as a pianist, Scriabin showed a great ability for unifying the overall shape of Etudes through motivic figurations in the left hand, which play a dominant role both compositionally and pianistically.<sup>22</sup> A similar concept is proposed in Yoojum Kim's DMA thesis "Left-Hand Arpeggiated Figuration in the Piano Works of Alexander Scriabin: Characteristic Types and Their Performance Practice."<sup>23</sup> Kim particularly addresses the left hand stretches that became a crucial part of Scriabin's keyboard style.

Research on Scriabin's individual etudes includes studies on his Op. 8 and Op.42 etudes with an overview of Scriabin's style. Daniel Dewitt Mickey's "An Analysis of Texture in Selected Piano Etudes of Chopin and Scriabin" relates aspects of Scriabin's early style to traits in Chopin's etudes.<sup>24</sup> Mickey categorizes common patterns of pianistic figuration used by both composers. Chien-Wei Lin's "The Scriabin Sound and Style: An Analysis of Twelve Etudes Opus 8" provides textual analysis of and performance perspective on Scriabin's first set of etudes.<sup>25</sup> She also compares these pieces with Chopin's etudes. Ju-Hee Kim's "A Performer's

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<sup>22</sup>David Clemmons Pinnix, "Evolution of Stylistic Elements in selected Solo Piano Works by Scriabin" (DMA thesis, The Ohio State University, 1980), 13.

<sup>23</sup>Yoojum Kim, "Left-Hand Arpeggiated Figuration in the Piano Works of Alexander Scriabin: Characteristic types and their performance practice" (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2012), 44-113.

<sup>24</sup>Daniel Dewitt Mickey, "An Analysis of Texture in Selected Piano Etudes of Chopin and Scriabin" (MA thesis, The Ohio State University, 1980), 10-23.

<sup>25</sup> Chien-Wei Lin, "The Scriabin Sound and Style: An Analysis of Twelve Etudes Opus 8" (DMA thesis, University of Miami, 1994).

Guide to the Piano Etudes Op. 42 of Alexander Scriabin” makes a general survey of Scriabin’s stylistic features and proposes the relative performance consideration of the eight etudes.<sup>26</sup>

There is little scholarly research on Scriabin’s final set of etudes. A brief discussion of performance practice issues in the late etudes comprises part of Chien-Wei Wang’s DMA thesis, “Examples of Extended Techniques in Twentieth-Century Piano Etudes by Selected Pianist-Composers.”<sup>27</sup> Scriabin’s late Etude Op.49, Nr.1 and his Op.65 set, along with some of his earlier etudes, are mentioned in general terms in different chapters of Stephen Paul Weber’s “Principles of Organization in Piano Etudes: An Analytical Study with Application through Original Compositions.”<sup>28</sup> Weber briefly suggests that Scriabin established a new direction in twentieth-century etudes by means of innovative harmonic and rhythmic manipulation in the Op.65 set.<sup>29</sup>

Although Scriabin’s Piano Etudes, Op.8, Op.42, and Op.65 have been individually addressed in several writings, I have not come across any publication exploring the stylistic evolution in his late etudes. This study will do precisely that: showing how Scriabin’s late etudes reflect his compositional and pianistic innovation.

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<sup>26</sup> Ju-Hee Kim, “A Performer's Guide to the Piano Etudes Op. 42 of Alexander Scriabin” (DMA thesis, University of Nebraska), 37-70.

<sup>25</sup> Chien-Wei Wang, “Examples of Extended Techniques in Twentieth-Century Piano Etudes by Selected Pianist-Composers” (DMA thesis, University of Miami, 2010), 80.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Paul Weber, “Principles of Organization in Piano Etudes: An Analytical Study with Application through Original Compositions” (PhD Dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1993), 42-43.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-70.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEXTUALIZATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SCRIBIN'S ETUDES

#### 2.1 Scriabin's etudes

Alexander Scriabin highly esteemed his piano etudes. He had concertized many of these etudes throughout his life. He also recorded several etudes in the twenty-three recordings made at Moscow on the Hupfeld and Welte-Mignon reproducing piano<sup>30</sup> in 1908 and 1910.<sup>31</sup> Many later piano virtuosi such as Vladimir Horowitz, Vladimir Sofronisky, Garrick Ohlsson and Piers Lane have performed and recorded Scriabin's etudes as well.

Scriabin's twenty-six etudes for solo piano reflect different stages of his composing career. The author of Scriabin's biography, Faubion Bowers, pointed out that the Soviets made statistical studies on Scriabin's works. This process was overseen by the Soviet agency GIMN, the State Institute of Musical Science under the auspices of the Academy of Arts and Sciences. They used a biometrical system to explore the frequency of the essential elements such as chords, figurations, tonalities, meters, melodic sequences, and the duration of certain harmonies and tempi in Scriabin's works. By analyzing these elements, the Soviets divided Scriabin's works into three categories: Opp. 1-24 are works of the first period; Opp. 25-48 are works of the second period; and Opp. 49-74 are works of the last period.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> T Frank W. Holland, Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume, "Reproducing Piano" Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed June 1, 2013). It is a type of autopiano (phonola), originally produced by the firm of Michael Welte und Söhne in Freiburg-im-Breisgau, southern Germany. It was later developed at the turn of the 20th century, ideally placed to develop an experimental piano playing device, with the aim of reproducing the recorded performances of the finest pianists of the day.

<sup>31</sup> Anatole Leikin, "The Performance of Scriabin's Piano Music: Evidence from the Piano Rolls", *Performance Practice Review* 9 (Spring 1996). At first Scriabin was invited to make recording in collaboration with Hupfeld in 1908. In 1910, he was invited by Welte company to record nine compositions.

<sup>32</sup> Bowers, 89.



### 2.1.1 Early Etudes

Because Scriabin was a great admirer of Chopin, Scriabin's early etudes fall squarely in a similar style to Chopin's works. The earliest etude, Op.2, No. 1 is a representative example. It is a work from Scriabin's apprenticeship, composed in 1887 when he was fifteen years old. His indebtedness to Chopin is apparent in the chromatic melodic line, chordal accompaniment, frequent use of secondary chords for modulation, and the ternary form. Most of Chopin's and Scriabin's miniatures favored these characteristics.

Four years later, in 1891, Scriabin injured his right hand because of excessive practicing. The injury clearly stimulated his compositional ideas. The best known works from this period are his two pieces for the left hand only, the Prelude and Nocturne, Op.9 (1894). Like these pieces, his twelve etudes, Op. 8 (1894) also require unusually wide spans with special emphasis on the left hand technical development. Many of Scriabin's accompaniment patterns in the left hand are influenced by Chopin's style. Both composers' etudes feature interlocking figures and repeated notes (Examples 1 and 2). These figures often have a prominent secondary melodic line in counterpoint with the right hand melody or inner voice.

Example 1: Scriabin Etude Op. 8, No. 1 mm.1-7

The image displays the first seven measures of Scriabin's Etude Op. 8, No. 1. The score is written for piano in 3/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The right hand features a complex, chromatic melodic line with frequent sixteenth-note runs and slurs. The left hand provides a dense, rhythmic accompaniment consisting of repeated eighth-note chords. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a trill in the right hand in the final measure shown.

Example 2: Chopin Prelude Op.28, No. 10 mm.21-23



They also share the common use of left-hand arpeggiated patterns to provide the basic rhythmic pulse in etudes. This formula represents the legacy of Romantic-era pianism (Examples 3 and 4). In Op.8, No.12, Scriabin expanded the approach by use of octaves, leaps and wider register in the accompaniment (Example 4).

Example 3: Chopin Etude Op. 10, No.3 mm.1-2



Example 4: Scriabin Etude Op. 8, No. 12 mm.1-2



The Op.8 Etudes were the first fruit of the patronage of Scriabin's new mentor and supporter, Mitrofan Belaieff (1836-1903). Belaieff was an important publisher who sponsored and published the compositions of many major Russian composers, including Glazunov,

Rimsky-Korsakov and Liadov. Belaieff knew Scriabin well and started to sponsor him in 1894. He became very influential in Scriabin's life. Because Belaieff thought that Scriabin's musical ideas were most effectively expressed by the composer himself, he encouraged Scriabin to perform only his own compositions in public. Thenceforth, this became Scriabin's basic *modus operandi*. Belaieff's death in 1903 marked the termination of what is generally considered Scriabin's first composing stage.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.1.2 Etudes in the middle period of composing years

The year 1903 was a turning point in Scriabin's life. He resigned his teaching position from Moscow Conservatory. He also divorced his first wife, and began a new relationship with his former pupil, Tatyana Schloezer. In addition, for the first time, Scriabin began to work on an opera. Although he did not complete that project, it appears to have affected the Op.42 etudes. Also starting in 1903, Scriabin used the title of "poem" regularly in his works. He was inspired by both poetry and philosophy. Examples include *Two Poems* Op.32 (1903), *Tragic Poem* Op.34 (1903), *Satanic Poem* Op.36 (1903), *The Third Symphony: Divine Poem* Op. 43(1904), and another *Two Poems* for piano Op.44 (1905).

The eight etudes of Op.42 (1903) are representative of the middle period. These etudes were stimulated by Scriabin's relationship with Tatyana Schloezer.<sup>34</sup> Strong lyricism and emotional power of melodies in the Op. 42 etudes suggest the influence of vocal writing from his opera. Like Scriabin's other 1903 works with descriptive titles, these etudes have increasing tonal ambiguity in harmony. Structurally, like most of his earlier etudes, Op. 42 and these works followed Scriabin's fondness of favoring ternary structure. Nevertheless, all his compositions of this period begin to reveal his creative originality, and through them Scriabin gradually

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 329-330.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 325-326.

developed his own style. For example, unlike his earliest etudes with a clear melody and accompaniment (Example 5), the melody in the Op. 42 etudes is fully integrated into the harmony (Example 6).

Example 5: Scriabin Etude Op. 8, No. 7 mm.1-6

**Presto tenebroso, agitato** ♩ (♩) = 132 (1894)

The musical score for Example 5 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Presto tenebroso, agitato' with a quarter note equal to 132 beats per minute. The dynamic is 'pp' (pianissimo) and the instruction 'sotto voce' is present. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The second system continues the piece with similar notation.

Example 6: Scriabin Etude Op. 42, No. 1 mm.1-3

The musical score for Example 6 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is marked 'p' (piano). The key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The second system continues the piece with similar notation, including a quintuplet in the bass line.

In this period, Scriabin called the amalgamation of melody with harmony “melodiye-garmoniya”.<sup>35</sup> This term refers to his idea of taking melody and harmony as one unit in his music. He perceived the melody as derived from the harmony; conversely the harmony is a combination

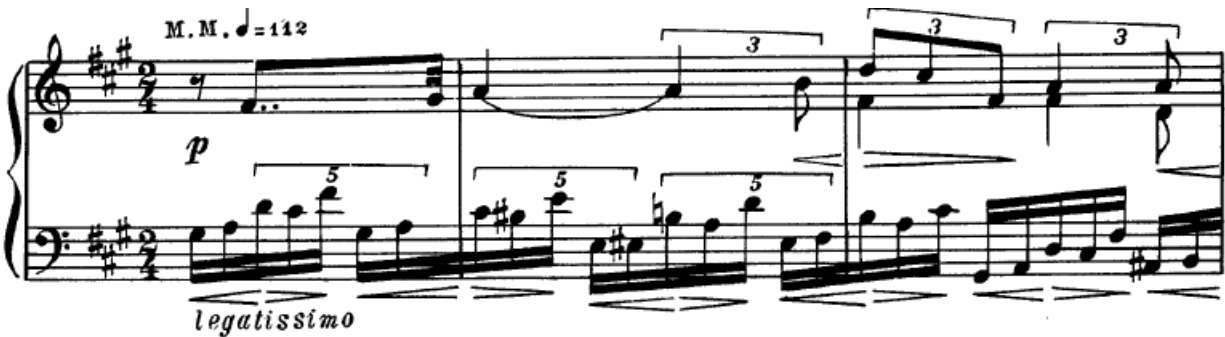
<sup>35</sup> Anatole Leikin. “The Performance of Scriabin's Piano Music: Evidence from the Piano Rolls.” *Performance Practice Review*, vol 9 no. 1 (1996): 17. The term is translated as “melody-harmony”.

of melodies.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the boundary between melody and accompaniment is blurred in the Op. 42 etudes. Most of these etudes feature cross rhythms and shifting meters. Frequently the cross rhythm occurs across the bar lines (Examples 7 and 8).

Example 7: Scriabin Etude Op. 42, No. 8 mm.1-2



Example 8: Scriabin Etude Op. 42, No. 2 mm.1-3



Harmonically, Scriabin often did not resolve dominant chords. This was his approach to reducing tonal stability. Consequently, tonic triads became less common than seventh chords in many etudes of this set (Example 9). Example 9 represents a typical harmonic manipulation of the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>36</sup> Leikin, Op. cit., 103.

Example 9: Scriabin Etude Op. 42, No. 6 mm.1-4

The image shows the first four measures of Scriabin's Etude Op. 42, No. 6. The score is written for piano in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The right hand features a complex, chromatic melodic line with frequent accidentals and a wide range of intervals. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with triplets and a 'legato' marking. Dynamic markings include 'p' (piano) and 'accel.' (accelerando). The piece concludes with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking in the final measure.

In addition to unresolved sevenths, Scriabin often used accidentals and melodies outlining chromaticism to obscure the tonality (Example 10).

Example 10: Scriabin Etude Op. 42, No. 3 mm.1-2

The image shows the first two measures of Scriabin's Etude Op. 42, No. 3. The score is written for piano in 3/8 time with a key signature of three sharps (F-sharp, C-sharp, G-sharp). The right hand features a continuous trill-passage work with frequent accidentals and a wide range of intervals. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with a 'ppp' (pianissimo) marking. The piece concludes with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking in the final measure.

The beginning of the Op. 42, No.3 etude has an ambiguous tonal implication. Chromaticism occurs in the treble register in continuous trill-passage work. Unlike the traditional diatonic melodic lines in the classical and romantic works, this piece has unusual dissonance throughout the entire etude.

Although a similar pianistic approach to that of this etude exists in Karl Czerny's Etude, Op. 849, No.22 (1880) (Example 11), Scriabin's Op. 42, No. 3 etude anticipates the atonal elements that would flourish fully in his late works.



both highly dissonant. These two pieces have one feature in common: the harmonies are constantly dissonant except at the very end of each work, where Scriabin brings the turmoil to a final closure.

Opus 56 includes four short pieces titled *Prélude*, *Ironies*, *Nuances* and *Étude*. This work and another set of piano pieces Op. 57, were later published simultaneously in 1908. The Opus 65 etudes were written in 1912 during the summer holidays in Beatenberg, Switzerland. This set was the last of Scriabin's twenty-six etudes. These late works reveal increasingly atonal implications developed from the tonal ambiguity in Scriabin's mid-period works. The following chapter will examine Scriabin's compositional and pianistic innovations in his late etudes.



## CHAPTER 3

### INNOVATIONS IN LATE ETUDES

This chapter discusses the compositional innovations contained in Scriabin's late etudes in contrast with the more tonal techniques used in his earlier etudes, and comments on how these innovations lead to a break from traditional tonality. First, the mystic chord and its application will be examined, followed by a consideration of the bichords frequently employed by Scriabin. The mystic chord also gives rise to several interval-based motives, specifically ninths, sevenths and fifths. The use of intervals as a means of technical drills are consequently discussed later in greater detail. The chapter concludes with Scriabin's use of symmetry as an aesthetic, with specific focus on symmetry in harmony, in phrasing, and in the use of intervals as well as the octatonic scale.

#### 3.1 Mystic Chord

The term "mystic chord" was coined by Arthur Eaglefield Hull in 1916. It is also known as the "Promethean chord" because Scriabin first used it in *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, Op. 60 (1908-1910). Scriabin's use of the mystic chord is a rare example of a sonority that contains many elements. It consists of the pitch classes: c , f# , b<sup>b</sup> e' , a' , d". This is often interpreted as a quartal hexachord (six-note set spaced in fourth), consisting of an augmented fourth, diminished fourth, augmented fourth, and two perfect fourths. (Such chord may be respelled and transposed in a variety of ways.) The chord has also been regarded as a subset of the overtone scale (with the perfect fifth omitted). With a great amount of structural manipulations, the mystic chord became the quintessential features in Scriabin's music, symbolizing his belief in mystery.

Scriabin employed two transpositions of the mystic chord at the beginning of his Etudes Op.49, No. 1 (Example 12). Here Scriabin simplified them by omitting the notes F# in the first chord and A in the second chord. His treatment of the mystic chord as a featured sonority, rather than as part of a tonal progression, is a distinctive characteristic of his writing.

Example 12: Scriabin Op. 49, No. 1 mm.1-2



### 3.2 Bichords

A bichord is any combination of two chords. Scriabin derived his own bichords from fourth-based chords.<sup>39</sup> Bichordal arrangement occurs frequently in Scriabin's late etudes as with mystic chord, he used quartal harmonies increasingly to replace traditional tertian harmony. Unlike the tonal chordal arrangement which usually serves as an accompaniment providing harmonic background, bichordal arrangement appears as a musical idea in Scriabin's late etudes. Example 13 shows the bichords that concludes Scriabin's Etude Op. 65, No. 3.

Etudes in tertian harmony with major and minor keys usually have melodic skips and steps, but Scriabin's approach of quartal and quintal harmonies (the inversion of fourths) does not clearly distinguish between melody and harmony. Here again, he distances himself from traditional and tertiarly oriented tonality.

<sup>39</sup> Scriabin's fourth-based chord could be any combination of augmented, diminished and perfect fourths. It is slightly different from the mystic chord, which has a precise formula of intervallic segment in specific order.

Example 13: Scriabin Op. 56, No. 4 mm.26-31



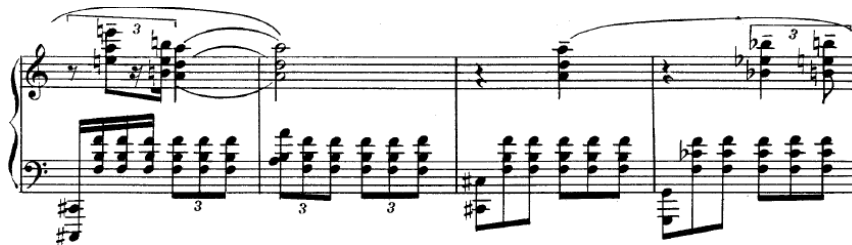
Scriabin broke from traditional tonality by using dissonant bichords. His application of bichords in the Etude, Op. 56, No. 4 (Example 13) is in contrast with the authentic cadence at the end of his Etude, Op. 42, No. 2 (Example 14). The chords in Scriabin's late etudes do not constitute a tonal cadence. Without a particular melodic appearance, the complexity of dissonant bichords creates a momentary suspension of time by avoiding the final tonal resolution.

Example 14: Scriabin Op. 42, No. 2 mm.29-32



Example 15, from Scriabin's Op. 65, No. 3, presents another use of fourth-based bichords. Toward the end, this etude has an extended passage of repeated chords in the left hand, combined with different parallel chords in the right hand.

Example 15: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 3 mm.27-30



The augmented fourths in particular reflect his affinity to tritones. Example 15 features a bass line in a tritone link, connected by C#-G-C# in a symmetrical pattern. This pattern functions as a harmonic dissonance instead of a single prolonged note.

Scriabin's use of bichords in Example 15 contrasts with tonal passages his Etude, Op. 8, No. 12 (Example 16).

Example 16: Scriabin Etude Op. 8, No. 12 mm.33-36



### 3.3 Non-tonal hierarchy as technical drills

All of Scriabin's late etudes are constructed from interval-based principal motives. Primarily derived from the mystic chord, the intervals of ninths, sevenths, and fifths occur most frequently in Scriabin's late works. He places them in a hierarchical order but without involving tonality. Instead of using consonant intervals (thirds, sixths, and octaves), the first two of Scriabin's Etudes Op. 65 embrace dissonant intervals (major ninths and major sevenths).<sup>40</sup> Op. 65, No. 3 combines perfect fifths with minor sevenths, producing continuous dissonance. Scriabin was the first composer to use and synthesize ninths and sevenths as technical drills in piano etudes.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 60.

### 3.3.1 Ninths

Opus 65, No. 1 (Example 17) shows sixteenth notes pattern in parallel ninths, rising chromatically as a glissando-like passage.<sup>41</sup> Scriabin's expansive register stacks different rhythmic values against voice parts often including superimposing duple and triple meters between two hands.

Example 17: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 1 mm.1-2



### 3.3.2 Non-functional dominant sevenths

Non-functional dominant sevenths represent another type of non-tonal hierarchy. Scriabin's use of the non-functional dominant seventh is innovative. Instead of placing these dominant sevenths in the regular root position and resolutions, Scriabin usually applies a fourth or tritone above a seventh. This approach changed the regular direction and pattern of dominant sevenths, and it does not fit within the confines of hands. Consequently, it is a major break from traditional treatments of dominant functions in chord.

This interval becomes an essential element in most of Scriabin's late etudes. Example 18 shows non-functional dominant sevenths periodically appearing in the left hand during the slow section. The idea is an outgrowth of Scriabin's left-hand accompaniment developed in earlier etudes; however, it has no diatonic function in Scriabin's late etudes.

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<sup>41</sup> Bowers, 236. Faubion Bowers points out that, because of his small hands, Scriabin himself was unable to perform this piece.

Example 18: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 1 mm.29-32



Scriabin frequently applied a series of non-functional dominant sevenths with a tritone link in the bass line. This approach often results in rapid leaps. The pattern of constant non-functional dominant sevenths as the left hand accompaniment, with the right hand exploiting dissonant intervals or bichords, also occurs in other late etudes (Examples 19, 20, 21 and 22). Scriabin explored the use of non-functional dominant sevenths to a great extent in these examples. His non-functional dominant sevenths appear in various rhythmic patterns and figurations: triplets, quadruplets, blocked chords, and broken chords of sevenths occur in Examples 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22.

Example 19: Scriabin Etude Op. 56, No. 4 mm.1-4



Example 20: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 2 mm.10-12



Example 21: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 3 mm.1-3



Example 22: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 3 mm.59-61



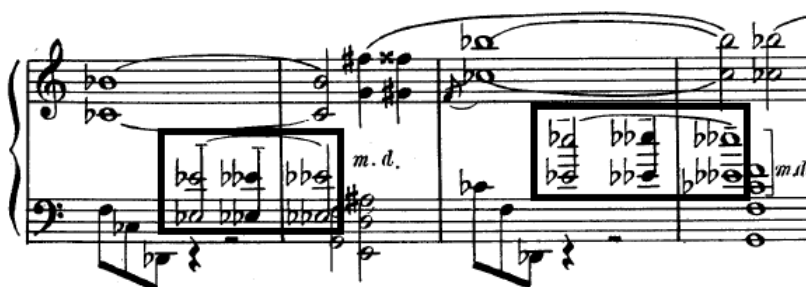
### 3.3.3 Major Sevenths

In addition to non-functional dominant sevenths, major sevenths dominate in Scriabin's Etude Opus 65, No. 2. This is Scriabin's only lyrical etude written after 1905. Parallel major sevenths in the right hand accompanied by broken seventh chords in the left are characteristic of Scriabin's late style. In the inner voice, a group of semitones (minor seconds — the inversion of major sevenths), appears as fragmentary melodic material (Examples 23 and 24).

Example 23: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 2 mm.10-14



Example 24: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 2 mm.24-27



### 3.3.4 Fifths

Technical drills of fifths occur much earlier in the piano literature, notably in Liszt's etude *Feux follets* (1851), in alternation with sixths and thirds (Example 25). In this example, the chromaticism is more distinctive than the feature of fifths

Example 25: Liszt Transcendental Etude No. 5 "Feux Follets" mm.19-21



Scriabin's use of motivic figuration in fifths; however, is pioneering. In his final etude, Op. 65 No. 3 (Example 26), Scriabin effectively juxtaposes two distinct ideas: a broken-chord figure in the left hand, and a wrist-rotation figure in the right. Each idea contains a pair of inverted figurations moving back and forth. From within one octave, he extracts a pair of perfect fifths, a-e' and e-b, and combines them in right hand triplets (Example 26).

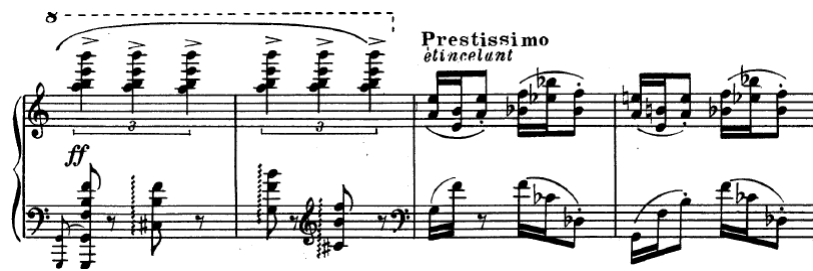
Example 26: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 3 mm.1-3





The left hand has another pair of inverted figurations simultaneously appearing in opposite directions (Example 26). In the *prestissimo* section (Example 27), Scriabin repeats the same inverted figurations with increasing velocity. A similar inverted figuration also occurs in his Presto Prelude, Op. 67 No. 2 (1912-1913), outlining a continuous chromatic progression (Example 28).

Example 27: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 3 mm.61-64



Example 28: Scriabin Prelude Op. 67, No. 2 mm.1-3



### 3.3.5 Combination of intervals

The Op. 65, No. 3 Etude is the culmination of Scriabin's interval-centered approach: all the unusual intervals function as unifying features. It repeats the essential elements of the Op. 65 No. 1 and Op. 65 No. 2 etudes. For example, a number of ninths appear periodically in the right

hand mm.5-6, mm.7-8 (Example 29), and in the recurring section. The left hand sevenths are combined with a different rhythmic pattern: groups of sixteenth-note triplets (Example 29).

Example 29: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 1 mm.4-9

As noted above, the ninths and the sevenths have appeared in Op. 65, No. 1 and No. 2 as structural elements. Op. 65 Etudes can be considered as a set of works with consistent ideas. The rising chromatic scale at the end of Op. 65, No. 3 (Example 30) recalls the opening phrase of the first etude of the set (Example 31).

Example 30: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 1 mm.1-2

Example 31: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 3 mm.59-66

Examples 30 and 31 show an unusual innovation: both passages feature contrary motion and bass lines spanning a diminished seventh. In measures where repeated notes occur in the right hand, the left hand pattern turns into an upward-sweeping gesture. Scriabin's dissonant interval combinations have become his basic feature of writing.

### 3.4 Symmetrical Structures as unifying features

Although Scriabin was not the first composer to employ symmetrical structures, he was unique in his development of the concept as the basis of a new aesthetic. His aesthetic point of view combines different types of symmetrical structures and can be observed in late piano etudes.

Peter Dean Roberts divides symmetrical structure in Scriabin's works into three categories:

- (1) a uniform arrangement of notes around a central axis, which may be stated or implied;
- (2) a succession of notes which have the same intervallic series in retrograde or inversion; and
- (3) a pattern that repeats in one direction as do the minor third segments in the octatonic scale.<sup>42</sup>

#### 3.4.1 Symmetry in harmony

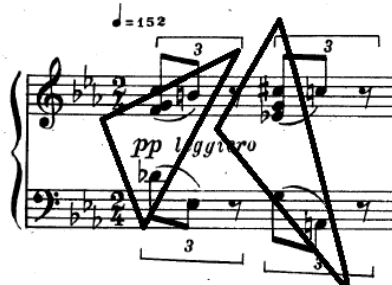
Example 32 illustrates the motivic figuration of Op. 49, No. 1. This piece, which takes only twenty seconds in performance, is based on a symmetrical structure that appears both horizontally and vertically. The cyclic recurrence of two French augmented sixth chords, first introduced at the opening, represents the vertical arrangement (Example 32). Scriabin's use of these augmented sixths is innovative inasmuch as he does not resolve them to the presumed

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Deane Roberts. *Modernism in Russian Piano Music: Scriabin, Prokofiev, and Their Russian Contemporaries*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 61. Hereafter cited as Roberts.

dominant. Instead, he combines these symmetrical formations of augmented sixths, and takes this constructional principle to replace tonal unity.

Example 32: Scriabin Etude Op. 49, No. 1 measure 1, two primary augmented sixths



### 3.4.2 Symmetry in phrasing

In the same piece, there is no tonal cadence until the end, and each phrase concludes with an augmented sixth written in contrasting rhythm, as marked on Example 33 (mm.4, 8, 10..etc).

In the middle section, the two-bar phrases are dominant until the recurring motive appears at mm21.

Example 33: Scriabin Etude Op. 49, No. 1



The dimensions of phrasing are summarized below:

**4 bars (mm.1-4)+4 bars (mm.5-8)+2 bars (mm.9-10)+2 bars (mm.11-12)+2 bars (mm.13-14)  
+2 bars (mm.15-16)+2 bars (mm.17-18)+2 bars (mm.19-20)+4 bars (mm.21-24)+4 bars  
(mm.25-28)+2 bars (mm.29-30)+2 bars (mm.31-32)+ 2 bars (mm.33 plus fermata)**

This diagram shows Scriabin's compositional technique of horizontal symmetry in musical form.

Reduced still further, his symmetrical pattern<sup>43</sup> of phrase is more evident:

**(4+4+2+2+2) + (2+2+2) + (4+4+2+2+2) in 3 large phrases**

In contrast with Romantic tendencies of longer and asymmetrical phrases, Scriabin's Op. 49, No. 1 displays its originality by means of brief slurred figures and numerous eighth rests.

Scriabin also alternates between the triplets and eighth notes, which creates an irregular rhythmic pulse. This metric shifts adds to the rhythmic complexity. The innovative musical effect of split figurations is intensified by the indication of brisk tempo. With the demands of velocity, a symmetrical feature becomes more obvious in performance.

### 3.4.3 Symmetrical intervals

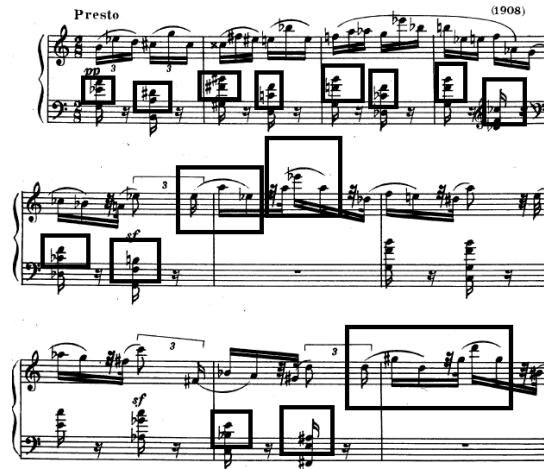
In the Op. 56, No. 4 Etude (Example 34), Scriabin uses the enharmonic equivalent to produce a common tone as the axis of his symmetrical intervals (in this case an augmented fourth enharmonically equivalent to a diminished fifth). For example, the upper two notes of the first chord in the left hand are enharmonically reversed for the next formation on the second beat. The same pattern occurs in each measure. In addition, an augmented fourth intervallic motive appears in the right hand symmetrically at mm.5-6 and mm.9-10. Scriabin's juxtaposition of symmetrical

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<sup>43</sup> This symmetrical pattern of phrase is different from the traditional ternary ABA form, that each section contains tonal cadences, with contrasting themes in the middle section. Here, Scriabin's musical ideas are consistent throughout the entire etude, and there is no tonal cadence.

patterns repeats throughout the entire piece. The components of the mystic chord appear at mm.1-2 in the formation of F-b-e<sup>b</sup>-a-d''-g'', and G<sup>#</sup>-c<sup>x</sup>-f<sup>#</sup>-b<sup>#</sup>-e-a.

Example 34: Scriabin Etude Op. 56, No. 4 mm.1-10

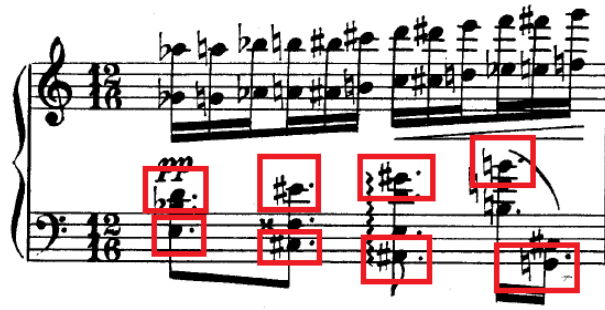


### 3.4.4 Symmetrical Scale (Octatonicism)

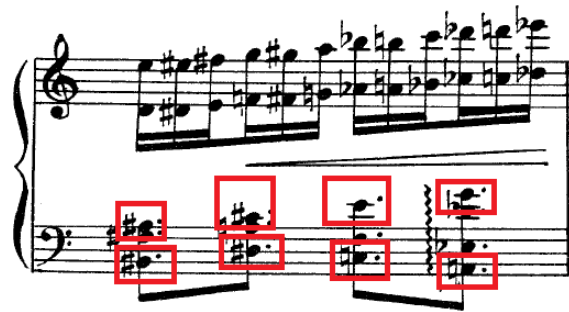
In addition to intervallic symmetry, a symmetrical scale appears at the beginning in the same etude. Example 35 illustrates the top four and the bottom four notes at the first two measures, constructing a pair of diminished sevenths (d-e<sup>#</sup>-g<sup>#</sup>-b, e-c<sup>#</sup>-a<sup>#</sup>-g), which comprise complete octatonic scale (g<sup>#</sup>-a<sup>#</sup>-b-c<sup>#</sup>-d-e-e<sup>#</sup>-g).

Scriabin's use of octatonicism also appears in his Op. 65, No. 1 etude. He separates these two diminished sevenths in a horizontal direction to build up the chords in the left-hand (Example 35). This musical idea is transposed to different scalar degrees as shown in Examples 36 and 37. In Example 36, the two diminished sevenths (a<sup>#</sup>-c<sup>#</sup>-e-g, d<sup>#</sup>-f<sup>#</sup>-c-a) form another octatonic scale: a-a<sup>#</sup>-c<sup>#</sup>-d<sup>#</sup>-e-f<sup>#</sup>-g. In Example 37, the two diminished sevenths (c<sup>#</sup>-e-g-b<sup>b</sup>, a-f<sup>#</sup>-e<sup>b</sup>-c), form an octatonic scale: c-c<sup>#</sup>-d<sup>#</sup>-e-f<sup>#</sup>-g-a-b<sup>b</sup>.

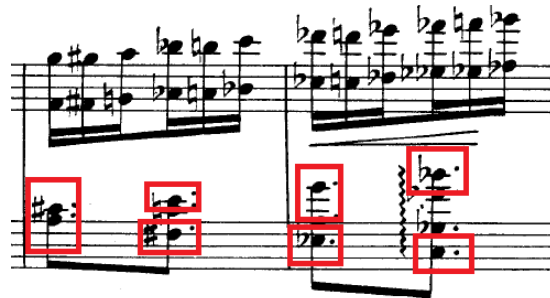
Example 35: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 1 measure 1



Example 36: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 1 measure 22



Example 37: Scriabin Etude Op. 65, No. 1 measure 39



## CHAPTER 4

### SCRIABIN'S LEGACY

Scriabin's last five etudes are especially significant for several reasons. First, these late works are the most revolutionary of his twenty-six etudes. Second, Scriabin's late etudes signal a new direction in the early twentieth century pianism. Third, as this study aims to demonstrate, his late etudes and modernist compositional techniques opened up new paths for the next generation's etudes.

In the previous chapter, Scriabin's groundbreaking style in his late etudes was discussed from a compositional and harmonic point of view. In his hands, these compositional innovations produce numerous innovative musical figurations, which result in a new pianistic approach. This chapter will examine how the compositional techniques discussed can be related to a new pianistic idiom, as well as how these pianistic innovations have influenced etude-writing in the century after Scriabin's death.

#### 4.1 Pianistic Innovations

One of Scriabin's most significant pianistic innovations is his compositional intent that altered the traditional definition of piano techniques. Instead of emphasizing specific physical challenge or subjective musical title, his late etudes are based on sonorous experiments. These experiments require the performer's comprehension of the composer's ideas and compositional strategies. Scriabin's new approach adds an intellectual aspect to piano technique, and it influences a continuous outpouring of piano etudes in the twentieth century.

Scriabin's new compositional techniques, including use of the mystic chords, bichords, non-tonal hierarchy, and symmetry, created new challenges to performers both in technical and



artistic interpretations. Technically, the mystic chord spans a wide range on the keyboard, and its transformations and inversions provide many contrasting patterns. The various patterns require pianists to constantly stretch or reposition their hands in different positions. This continuous alternation between hand expansion and contraction on playing the dissonances is pioneering. Musically, the mystic chord functions as a component that avoids the presumed traditional tonality. The unpredictable harmonic progressions require performers to adapt to a new musical landscape.

Scriabin's bichords present a similar physical demand to the pianist, as they fit less easily in the hands. For the most part, the tertian chords can be performed in one hand position, whereas Scriabin's fourth-based bichords do not fit in conventional five-finger patterns. The wide, rolled bichords require performers' effort in constant leaps over a wide register, causing uncomfortable hand spans and stretches. Sometimes his arrangement of bichords requires performers to play with the awkward position of the little fingers on the black keys, and the thumbs on the white keys. Moreover, the voicing and pedaling of bichords is more problematic than in his earlier etudes.

Scriabin's use of recurring intervals as a method of establishing a non-tonal hierarchy also has an important pianistic implication. It is noteworthy that he usually employs these dissonant intervals of ninths, sevenths and fifths in parallel motion. This approach results in wide range of parallel dissonant intervals exceeding an octave, which provides unusual sonorities. The intended musical effect of non-tonal dissonance requires performer's sensitivity to different timbres and tone colors. The consistent parallel double notes in dissonance also compel pianists to adjust the wide distance. In addition, the constant dissonance of non-tonal hierarchy involving frequent use of accidentals, make music reading and memorization more difficult.

Symmetrical principles unify most of Scriabin's late etudes, in which he combines symmetrical concepts of harmony, phrasing, and intervals altogether in the late etudes. This approach contrasts with the technical emphases of his earlier etudes. It takes pianists a substantial amount of time to clarify textures, and bring out the principal motives with a thorough understanding of these symmetrical principles. In addition, the harmonic and intervallic symmetries also present Scriabin's non-diatonic sonorities from a new aesthetic point of view.

Collectively, Scriabin's innovative use of all these modernist techniques results in new pianistic challenges beyond the traditional sense of pianism.

#### 4.2 Scriabin's influence

Scriabin's modernist techniques influenced several of his younger contemporaries, including Nikolay Roslavets (1881-1944)<sup>44</sup>, Béla Bartók (1881-1945), Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)<sup>45</sup>, Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)<sup>46</sup>, and Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992).<sup>47</sup>

These composers showed their respective debts to Scriabin. The avant-garde Roslavets imitated Scriabin's harmonic technique and used similar constructional principles in his early works. For example, he used the same harmonic vocabulary including the mystic chord in *Three Compositions* No. 1 (1914) (Example 38). Stravinsky composed his Op. 7, No. 1 etude using Scriabin's Op. 42, No. 2 etude as a model.<sup>48</sup> Prokofiev admired and studied Scriabin's music. He reflected Scriabin's influence in his piece, Op. 52, No. 2 (1930-1931) by using the intervals of second, augmented fourths, and major sevenths.

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<sup>44</sup> Nikolay Andreyevich Roslavets (1881-1944) was a modernist composer. He formulated a so-called new system of tone organization in 1913 and 1919, and later he developed a synthetic chord based on the formation of the hexachord, C-B<sup>b</sup>-E-A<sup>b</sup>-D-G.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>46</sup> Antcliffe, "The Significance of Scriabin," 336.

<sup>47</sup> Roberts, 126.

<sup>48</sup> Roberts, 19.

Messiaen shared an interest in Mysticism with Scriabin. His first published work, *Le Banquet céleste*, has similar mystical ideas<sup>49</sup> although Messiaen's beliefs derived from deeply-rooted Catholicism. Like Scriabin, Messiaen used symmetrical structure regularly. Both composers favored the use of octatonic scales and non-tonal hierarchy. Messiaen also added minor sevenths in tonic chords. In addition, Messiaen took one more step to develop a system, the so-called the modes of limited transposition.<sup>50</sup> This system is based on Scriabin's practice of combining harmonies and tones.<sup>51</sup> Messiaen took advantage of this system to explore the maximum possibility of harmonies, combining modes with major and minor keys in various ways. Another aspect of Scriabin's heritage developed even further by Messiaen is non-tonal hierarchy. Messiaen applied this technique, and eventually he combined the pitches with dynamic hierarchy in his compositions.

Scriabin's idea of fourth-based harmony and unusual dissonant intervals as technical challenges has been carried on by several subsequent composers in their own etudes. One of Scriabin's acquaintances and admirers, the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937), benefited from his idea of wide distance intervals. Szymanowski's twelve etudes Op. 33 (1915-1916) constitute a cohesive cycle of miniatures modeled on Chopin and Scriabin. Szymanowski inherited the non-tonal hierarchy in this opus, expanding the ninths to tenths in his first etude (Example 39). In his second etude, he addressed dissonant second and sevenths simultaneously much as Scriabin had in his Op. 65, No. 2 etude. Also in common with Scriabin's Op. 65 three etudes, Bartók's Op. 18 three etudes (1918) represent a summing up of unusual intervals

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<sup>49</sup> It is Messiaen's first published organ piece featuring of his modal practice.

<sup>50</sup> Arnold Whittall, "Mode of Limited Transposition" Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed June 1, 2013). It is a term invented by Messiaen to represent a mode that can be transposed only two or three times before the same notes occur. It is contrast with the conventional unlimited transposition, which allows a major or minor scale to be transposed for eight to twelve times before it duplicate itself.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

including ninths, tenths, sevenths and fifths.<sup>52</sup> Like Scriabin’s Op. 65 etudes, these three etudes also unfold the idea of symmetrical principles in structure.

Example 38: Roslavets Three Compositions, No.1 mm.3-6

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a 3/4 time signature. A rectangular box highlights the first two measures of the treble staff. Dynamics include *p* and *cresc. molto*. The second system also has two staves. A rectangular box highlights the first two measures of the bass staff. Dynamics include *sf* and *pp*. The tempo/mood marking is *Con moto (con amabilità)*. There are also some markings like *tr* and *tr* with *tr* underneath.

Example 39: Szymanowski Op.33, Twelve Etudes, No.1 mm.1-4

The image shows a musical score for piano with two staves (treble and bass clef) in 8/8 time. The tempo marking is *Presto*. The treble staff has a series of notes with fingerings: 2, 3, 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, 3. The bass staff has a section marked *m lentissimo* which is enclosed in a rectangular box. There are also markings like 2, 8, 1, 8, 4, 1 in the treble staff.

<sup>52</sup> Chien-Wei Wang, “Examples of Extended Techniques in Twentieth-Century Piano Etudes,” 60-62.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Scriabin's last five etudes reflect a noteworthy stylistic evolution in musical content as he attempted a more forward-looking idiom in these works. His experimental spirit continued to flourish in piano etudes written long after the composer's death. Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, composers have combined his ideas with other techniques including indeterminacy, electroacoustic equipment, aleatory, and external devices.

The concept of etudes has changed and acquired different meanings over the centuries. It is noteworthy that Scriabin's early etudes follow the tradition established by Chopin; however, Scriabin's five late etudes constitute a new model. From my point of view, his compositional principles and pianistic innovations redefine the goal of the piano etude. The etude is no longer merely intended to display the performer's technical skills and musical expression: it also has become a vehicle for composers to experiment in new sonorities. With this redefinition of etudes, novelty of sound might become part of, or even more important than traditionally physical aspects of pianism. I hope that the findings of this study provide the evidence of Scriabin's contributions to piano literature. It is also my hope that this dissertation may be a starting point for future research both about this unique composer and the genre of etudes.

APPENDIX

LIST OF PIANISTIC CHALLENGES OF LATE ETUDES

Year	Opus	Modernist Techniques	Pianistic Challenges
1905	Op. 49, No. 1	Bichords Non-tonal hierarchy Symmetry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rapid leaps caused by split-figure motives in both hands, with the indication of a brisk tempo</li> <li>2. Alternation between bichords and dominant sevenths in different rhythmic patterns</li> <li>3. Large distance between chords</li> </ol>
1908	Op. 56, No. 4	Mystic Chords Bichords Non-tonal hierarchy Symmetry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hand-alternation figurations</li> <li>2. Wide-distance intervals in the left hand</li> <li>3. Less accessibility of the notation resulted from enharmonic equivalents</li> <li>4. Irregular steps and gaps</li> </ol>
(1908-1912)	Op. 65, No. 1	Mystic Chords Bichords Non-tonal hierarchy Symmetry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Constant wide span of hands</li> <li>2. Complexity of chordal structure intensified by the frequent changes of tempo.</li> <li>3. Stepwise motion of Ninths</li> <li>4. Extended motives of the fourth-based chords in the inner voices</li> <li>5. Less options in fingering due to the expanded chords spreading over a wide register</li> </ol>
(1908-1912)	Op. 65, No. 2	Non-tonal hierarchy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Constant use of linear motive in parallel sevenths</li> <li>2. Manipulation of <i>legato</i> playing on shaping the phrases and the middle</li> </ol>
(1908-1912)	Op. 65, No. 3	Non-tonal hierarchy Bichords	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Glissando-like passage of bichords in repetitive vertical motion.</li> <li>2. Tremolo-like sonorities caused by alternative figurations of fifths and sevenths</li> <li>3. Extended use of wrist rotations</li> </ol>

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