PRELUDES, OPP. 15, 35 AND 74
OF ALEXANDER SCRIABIN

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

By

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Denton, Texas
January, 1961
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .................................. iv

Chapter

I. BIOGRAPHY AND INFLUENCES .......................... 1

II. PRELUDES, OP. 15 ................................... 11
    Prelude, Op. 15, No. 1
    Prelude, Op. 15, No. 2
    Prelude, Op. 15, No. 3
    Prelude, Op. 15, No. 4
    Prelude, Op. 15, No. 5

III. PRELUDES, OP. 35 .................................. 23
    Prelude, Op. 35, No. 1
    Prelude, Op. 35, No. 2
    Prelude, Op. 35, No. 3

IV. PRELUDES, OP. 74 ................................... 29
    Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1
    Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2
    Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3
    Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4
    Prelude, Op. 74, No. 5

V. CONCLUSIONS. ...................................... 58

BIBLIOGRAPHY. .......................................... 61
# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Overtone Series showing derivation of mystic chord</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Left hand accompaniment, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 2, meas. 3-4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Rhythmic figure, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Right hand melody, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 4, meas. 1-4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>First melodic theme, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 5, meas. 1-4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Second melodic theme, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 5, meas. 9-10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Melodic line in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1, meas. 1-2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21a.</td>
<td>Chord tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Rhythmic pattern in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 3-6</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24a.</td>
<td>Predominant voice in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 4-5</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Counter-voice in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 4-5</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Ostinato figure in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 3-4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Summary of root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29a.</td>
<td>Chord tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Rhythmic analysis of Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34a. Harmonic tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34b. Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Melodic line in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4, meas. 1-3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Superimposition of major and minor triads in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38a. Chord tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38b. Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Chromatic passage in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 5, meas. 16-17</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Harmonies formed horizontally in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 5, meas. 11</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42a. Harmonic tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42b. Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY AND INFLUENCES

Biography

Alexander Nikolaevitch Scriabin was born on Christmas Day, 1872, in Moscow.¹ His mother, a promising young concert pianist, hoped for a return to the concert stage after his birth; however, her health failed, and she died of consumption when Alexander was only two years old. He was then left to the care of his aunt and his grandmother to grow up in a predominantly feminine environment—a fact that had a definite influence on his naturally gentle character.

Scriabin's formal education did not begin until 1882 when he entered the Moscow Cadet Corps at the age of ten. He remained there until 1889, at which time he entered the Moscow Conservatoire, studying piano under N. S. Zveref. Along with his piano studies, Scriabin studied composition with Taneief and Arensky, the latter taking an avid dislike to him. It was because of the friction between teacher and student that Scriabin left the Conservatoire without a composer's diploma, even though he had received a gold medal in piano.

¹According to Gerald Abraham in Masters of Russian Music (New York, 1936), p. 450, Scriabin later attached a special mystic significance to the fact that he was born on Christ's birthday.
In the ensuing years Scriabin gained a considerable reputation both as pianist and composer. He had the good fortune to have Belaief (of the Russian publishing firm) as business manager and sole publisher of his works. The pair toured Germany, Switzerland and France until 1896, when they returned to Russia, and Scriabin married Vera Ivanovna Isaakovitch, a student at the Conservatoire, and a gold medalist like himself.

Although the publisher Belaief allotted Scriabin a considerable yearly stipend, he found it difficult to support his new wife and prospective family. Thus, he accepted a teaching position at the Conservatoire, a position which lasted for six uneventful years. It was about this time, 1900, that Scriabin was strongly influenced by the mystic philosopher, Prince S. N. Trubetskoy. He read Nietzsche and talked of writing an opera with the superartist for its hero; he read Goethe's "Faust," and began to interest himself in the music and ideas of Wagner.

He resigned his post at the Conservatoire, and made preparations for a stay in Switzerland. It was there on the shores of Lake Geneva that he did his most prolific work. In

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the summer Scriabin gave himself up entirely to the realization of his long-cherished project, the composition of a great art work entitled Mystery. This was to be a creation involving the unification of all the arts in the service of one perfect religious Rite. The secondary arts were to enhance the dominating arts (those subject to the will-power). Symphonies of music, words and gesture were to be accompanied by symphonies of colour and perfume. This Mystery was to end in the transformation of the world. There were to be performers only, no spectators or listeners. Their number was listed as 2000.

During this same visit to Switzerland, Scriabin met and ran away with Tatiana Schlözer, leaving his wife, Vera, to whatever fate she might meet. Due to the alienation of many of his old Moscow friends by the treatment of his wife, and the sudden death of Beliaef, a time of financial hardship faced Scriabin. It was at this critical time that he learned from Russian newspapers that Modest Altschuler in New York was inviting Russian composers to send him their orchestral scores for performance at his "Russian Symphony Society" concerts. He sent a score, and Altschuler arranged for him a concert tour in which Scriabin enjoyed success as pianist and as composer. There were memorable concerts in New York's Carnegie Hall.

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6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.
Hall, in Chicago and Cincinnati. Scriabin's fame was spreading steadily both at home and abroad. His compositions were being performed by the pianists Josef Hoffman and Serge Rachmaninov, and the conductors Kussevitski and Safanoff, among others. During this time Scriabin was concentrating on the completion of his mission in life, the *Mystery*. In the summer of 1914 he wrote with a great concentration of powers the poetic text to the "Initial Act," a sort of prologue to the *Mystery*. The music was not begun, though the composer had it "all ready in his head and could finish it in eight months."

On April 19, 1915, he felt unwell and the following day took to his bed with a boil on his upper lip. On the 26th the blood-poisoning developed into pleurisy and he died a few hours later.

**Influences**

Scriabin's creative work in music is very difficult to separate from his life as a whole. Philosophy remained the guiding motive of his life and his creative work. It is interesting to consider this enthusiasm of the musician for philosophic problems in conjunction with the enthusiasm for abstract thought then general in Russia and particularly in Russian literature. It was especially centered upon the

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8Hull, *Scriabin*, p. 75.
field of the mysterious, the unknown.\textsuperscript{10}

At that time the literature of the symbolists had blossomed forth, showing enthusiasm for black magic, wizards, and magicians. \textsuperscript{7}The music of \textsuperscript{7}Scriabin seems to be a reflection of the literary Russian symbolists at first called "decadents" originated on the one hand as a reaction against art too saturated with "society" and social motives, and on the other hand, as a return to the pure poetical mastery and restoration of romanticism in Russian surroundings. The greatest influences on the symbolists were exerted by the ... idealistic German philosophy and the contemporary poets and writers of the West such as Nietzsche, Maeterlinck and Baudelaire. The most characteristic feature of their creative work was the constant contact of poetry with abstract thought and with mystic philosophy in general.\textsuperscript{11}

But that which in the case of the decadents was a theme for creative work, sometimes merely a beautiful form, occasionally merely a pose, in Scriabin's case morbidly came to be a living part of his very self. He really began to believe in his uniqueness, in his prophetic mission, his messianism.\textsuperscript{12}

Among the musical influences that affected Scriabin during this period was the French impressionist, Debussy. Of course, it is possible that in the general musical air of Europe at that time there were floating ideas of complex harmonic combinations. Nevertheless, it seems that Scriabin was carried away by the search for new chords, new harmonies.

Scriabin was born and musically educated at a time when Russian musical thoughts were still in a slumbering state.

\textsuperscript{10}Leonid Sabaneyeff, \textit{Modern Russian Composers} (London, 1927), p. 63.

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 252. \textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 65.
The Russian musician was almost ignorant of the contemporary achievements of Western music. The very concept of "newness" and "innovation" in music was unheard of.

With Scriabin the romantic period in Russia came to a close shortly before the outburst of the Russian Revolution, just as it had come to a close with Strauss and Mahler in Germany, and with Debussy in France. 13

So continuous is the development of Scriabin's musical personality that it is only with the greatest difficulty that one is able to draw the lines between the different phases of his creative activity. There seems to be a diversity of opinions regarding the musical periods of Scriabin's life; e.g., according to Hull, 14 artistic development divides into three periods:

Opp. 1-40 Chopinesque
Opp. 41-52 Transitional
Opp. 53-74 Mature

Yet in another work 15 Hull divides the opus numbers into four periods:

Opp. 1-18 Apprenticeship
Opp. 19-40 Full personality of old lines


15Hull, Scriabin, p. 84.
Opp. 41-52 Transition
Opp. 53-74 Fully developed

Swan\textsuperscript{16} has yet another suggestion:

Opp. 1-26 Early
Opp. 27-47 Transition
Opp. 48-74 Late

Bauer\textsuperscript{17} offers the following:

Opp. 1-18 Chopinesque
Opp. 19-50 Transitional
Opp. 51-74 Mature

For purposes of the following discussion, the division suggested by Bauer will be used.

The first definite period shows the piano compositions of a poetic, refined, salon type of music in which the hand of Chopin is distinctly visible, even the choice of titles: Preludes, Mazurkas, Etudes. But in this imitative period, a striking personality was emerging in which many of the characteristics of the later Scriabin were in evidence. Even in these days of the Russian school there were attractive original elements in his compositions. The treatment of the instrument is bold, and, at moments, more satisfactory than Chopin’s.\textsuperscript{18} Scriabin, for instance, gives the left hand a

\textsuperscript{16}Swan, \textit{Scriabin}, p. 183.

\textsuperscript{17}Marion Bauer, \textit{Twentieth Century Music} (New York, 1947), p. 216.

greater independence and significance as a rule than this master.19

The second period, a transitional one, covers the works from Op. 19 up to and including the Fifth Sonata, Op. 52. In this period the influence of Chopin fades, and one is able to see traces of Liszt, Wagner, and to some extent, Schumann. (See Chapter III.) More important is the development of Scriabin's own individual style. Although very gradual, the complication of Scriabin's harmony by the ever bolder use of what the theorist calls appoggiaturas, passing-notes, and so forth can easily be traced up to the Fifth Piano Sonata, Op. 52,20 the end of the second period, and beginning of the third. By a perfectly natural path Scriabin travelled harmonically all the way from Chopin to a point where his ear could accept without alarm an advanced degree of discord and where he found it absolutely necessary to employ subtle and complicated chords to express the elusive "soul-states" and spiritual aspirations in which he had become more and more deeply interested.21

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19 This was due, no doubt, to an injury to the right hand sustained by Scriabin while a student at the Conservatoire. Note especially the Nocturne for the Left Hand, Op. 9, composed at this time.

20 Gerald Abraham, This Modern Music (New York, 1952), p. 49.

21 Ibid., p. 52.
It is only in the compositions of the third period, those subsequent to Op. 51, that Scriabin emerges in the fullness of his stature. It is only in them that he finally abandoned the major-minor key system to which he had hitherto adhered. Scriabin had up to then created new consonances vertically, preserving a stereotyped horizontal sequence; with the third period he inclines towards the reverse method— that of Wagner—and while his vertical harmonies seem simpler, their juxtaposition is much more complicated than in the works of the preceding period.23

From this time on Scriabin began using arbitrary scales and chords as his point of departure, often revealing his melodic or harmonic scheme at the close of the composition. "One might liken his methods to the use the Hindus make of the ragas, or modes, tonal combinations for different compositions."24 From these arbitrary choices Scriabin gradually evolved a synthetic chord known as the "mystic chord," out of which the entire score of Prometheus was constructed, as were many other of his compositions of the later years. It is composed of the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, thirteenth, and fourteenth partials in the fundamental series of harmonics, the next step in the evolution of atonal music after Debussy's

22See page 47 for vertical and horizontal harmonies.
24Katherine Heymann, The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music (Boston, 1921), p. 129.
whole-tone scale. (See Figure 1.) Alexander Scriabin not only brings the Romantic period to a close, but opens the doors to a totally new concept in music, a new harmonic technique—a new sound.

Fig. 1—Overtone Series showing derivation of mystic chord.
CHAPTER II

PRELUDES, OP. 15

The five Preludes, Op. 15 were composed in the year 1897 while Scriabin was occupied in concert tours with his friend and publisher, Beliaef. This year brought no less than forty-seven short preludes written at various times and collected in five sets: Opp. 11, 13, 15, 16, and 17. These preludes, though clever and original in melody, show the great influence of Chopin on Scriabin.

Prelude, Op. 15, No. 1

Length 31 measures
Signature 3 sharps
Key A major
Meter 3/4—measures 1-23, 26, 30-32
2/4—measures 24, 25, 27-29
Tempo Andante \( \text{J} = 72 \)

Rhythm

The principal rhythmic figure used throughout the prelude is \( \frac{\text{J}}{\text{J}} \). Presented first in the right hand, it is later used alternately between right hand and left hand. In measures 24-29 the original figure is contracted from \( \frac{\text{J}}{\text{J}} \) to \( \frac{\text{J}}{\text{J}} \) to \( \frac{\text{J}}{\text{J}} \), alternating the patterns between the hands, while the meter correspondingly changes from 3/4 to 2/4. Contrasting rhythmic figures are
used between the hands, creating superimposition of rhythmic patterns. Three patterns are found: \( \text{\textit{y}}, \text{\textit{u}}, \text{\textit{l}} \) and \( \text{\textit{u}}, \text{\textit{u}}, \text{\textit{i}} \).

**Melody**

The melody of this prelude is homophonic, being a single melodic line throughout with accompaniment. As mentioned in *Rhythm*, the melody, presented in the right hand, is later used alternately between the hands. The melodic motif is short, only two beats. This motif is characterized by (a) the utilization of upper and lower neighbor tones in the first unit, and (b) the downward leap of a minor seventh in the second unit. (See Figure 2.) Melodic sequence of this motif appears eleven times in the prelude.

![Melodic motif](image)

*Fig. 2—Melodic motif, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 1, meas. 1–2.*

**Harmony**

Avoidance of the use of the tonic chord in root position establishes a rather weak tonality in this prelude. It begins on a \( I_6 \) chord, which appears six times, and root position of
the tonic is not heard until the final cadence in the last measure. By the combined use of non-harmonic tones and superimposed rhythmic patterns an ambiguous harmonic situation is created; that is, neither harmonic nor non-harmonic tones are accented because of the superimposition, except that chord tones are coincident on principal beats. There are two modulations by common chord to the relative minor, f sharp, and to the sub-dominant, d. In addition to these modulations the keys of f sharp minor and b minor are suggested in passages of melodic sequence in measures 19-29. This is a device found frequently in the works of Chopin, developed more thoroughly and used more subtly by Scriabin. Another favorite harmonic device is the use of the augmented sixth chord, an example of which may be found in measure 30. It is a German sixth chord, dwelt upon by ritardando, thereby making the alteration prominent. It should be noted that this prelude is very similar in all three respects harmony, rhythm, and melody, to Schumann's Eusebius from Carnaval. (See Figure 3.)

Fig. 3--Melodic motif of (a) Schumann, Eusebius, meas. 9-10 and (b) Scriabin, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 1, meas. 1-2.
Prelude, Op. 15, No. 2

Length 35 measures
Signature 3 sharps
Key F sharp minor
Meter 3/4
Tempo Vivo- \( \frac{\text{\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet}}{\text{\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet}} \), measures 1-21
\( \text{\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet} \) = 152, measures 22-35

Rhythm

The left hand maintains a steady eighth note pattern \( \text{\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet\textbullet} \) until the cadence in measure 34. The right hand correspondingly maintains sixteenth notes except at cadential points in measures 8, 16, 21, and the six measure coda at the end. Measures 22-35 are played at a faster tempo than measures 1-21. See "Tempo" previously cited.

Melody

The melody of this prelude is homophonic throughout. It contains many non-harmonic tones in the form of appoggiaturas and passing tones in addition to step-wise passages.

Fig. 4--Melodic line of Prelude, Op. 15, No. 2, meas. 1-2.
The melodic fragment in Figure 4 appears twice consecutively in phrases one, two and four. The first four measures in phrases one and two are identical, while the last four measures in phrase two are an imitation of those in phrase one transposed an augmented fourth lower. Although played at a very rapid tempo, the melody is quite discernible and has a quality of flowing continuity.

Harmony

Harmonies of Prelude No. 2 are outlined in the left hand accompaniment (see Figure 5) while being embellished by non-harmonic tones in the right hand. Except for modulations to the dominant, c sharp minor, in measures 13-16 and the sub-dominant, b minor, in measures 17-18 the harmony is confined to the key of f sharp minor. There are no unusual chord progressions or any altered chords found in the prelude.

Fig. 5--Left hand accompaniment, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 2, meas. 3-4.
Prelude, Op. 15, No. 3

Length 22 measures
Signature 4 sharps
Key E major
Meter 6/8
Tempo Allegro assai \( \dot{=} \) 120-126

Rhythm

The rhythm of this prelude is very definite and regular. The pattern \( \begin{array}{c}
\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\ \end{array} \begin{array}{c}
\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\ \end{array} \) is used fourteen times to break the monotony of the otherwise strict eighth note figure. There is neither syncopation nor unusual rhythmic figure.

Melody

The melody of this prelude is made up of the upper notes of broken chords in the right hand. The melodic line is generally diatonic, containing both step-wise motion and leaps. (See Figure 6.)

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Fig. 6--Broken chord melodic figure, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 3, meas. 1-2.
Chromatic intervals occur only in measures 10 and 15. The single melodic line is always kept in the upper voice of the right hand over an accompaniment in the left hand composed also of broken chords.

**Harmony**

This prelude begins in the key of e major, modulating by common chord to the dominant, b major, in measure 6 for four measures. In the following five measures there is a series of secondary dominant chord relations suggesting the keys of d major, f sharp major and a major. The final seven measures are in the tonic, e major. Extensive use is made of seventh chords in harmonic progressions.

Scriabin obviously patterned this prelude after the Chopin Etude, Op. 10, No. 11. Figures 7a and 7b illustrate the similarity of the two compositions.
Fig. 7a--Harmonic and melodic structure, Scriabin, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 3, meas. 1-2.


Prelude, Op. 15, No. 4

Length 26 measures
Signature 4 sharps
Key E major
Meter 3/4
Tempo Andantino \( \text{d} = 58-60 \)

Rhythm

This prelude contains an excellent example of Scriabin's use of elastic bar lines, that is, carrying a rhythmic figure over the bar line. This gives the feeling of having no bar line at all. (See Figure 8.)

Written \( \frac{3}{4} \)

Played \( \frac{3}{4} \)

Fig. 8--Rhythmic figure, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 4.
When this pattern is combined with the right hand pattern as found in measures 1, 5, 9, 15, 17, and 22 a bimetric feeling is established. Another unusual rhythmic pattern found in the prelude is appearing sequentially in measures 9-11 and again in measures 13 and 15.

**Melody**

The melody, played by the right hand over a left hand accompaniment, is homophonic and diatonic. It is rather angular with skips along the chord outlines being a noticeable characteristic. (See Figure 9.)

![Melody Example](image)

**Fig. 9**--Right hand melody, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 4, meas. 1-4.

Measures 1-4 are repeated in measures 17-20, while measures 5-8 are transposed up a perfect fourth in measures 21-24.
Harmony

Harmonies in this prelude are created around major and minor triads. There is no outstanding use of altered chords, or modulation to a remote key. There are six distinct four-measure phrases with a coda of two measures. Measures 1-8 are in e major, measures 9-16, f sharp minor, and measures 17-26, e major.

Prelude, Op. 15, No. 5

Length 28 measures  
Signature 4 sharps  
Key C sharp minor  
Meter 6/8  
Tempo Andante \( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{f}} = \frac{160-152}{\text{e}} \)

Rhythm

There are three principal patterns found in Prelude No. 5. They are: \( \text{, occurring six times; and } \)
\( \text{, occurring five times; and } \)
\( \text{, occurring seven times. In measures 14, 22 and 23 the pattern is found. The triple meter eighth note rhythm is maintained throughout alternately between right hand and left hand.} \)

Melody

Prelude No. 5 contains two principal melodic themes. The first is a four measure theme found in the right hand in measures 1-4, 5-8 and 25-28. The left hand plays this melody
in inversion in the last two measures of the melody as played in the right hand giving a contrapuntal effect. (See Figure 10.)

![Figure 10](image)

**Fig. 10**—First melodic theme, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 5, meas. 1-4.

The second theme is two measures long, found in measures 9-10, 11-12, 17-18 and 19-20. This theme appears in the right hand over a chromatic accompaniment in the left hand. (See Figure 11.)

![Figure 11](image)

**Fig. 11**—Second melodic theme, Prelude, Op. 15, No. 5, meas. 9-10.
Harmony

Although this prelude is clearly in the key of C sharp minor, it does not have a strong tonic feeling. French sixth chords are used quite frequently with delayed resolutions, sometimes unresolved for an entire measure. The tonic chord appears only in six-four position until the final cadence when it is in root position.
CHAPTER III

PRELUDES, OP. 35

The three Preludes, Op. 35 were written in the year 1903 just after Scriabin had given up his post at the Conservatoire. In the space of nine months he wrote all the pieces from Opp. 30 to 45, including the Fourth Sonata, the Third Symphony, and a large number of Etudes, Preludes, Valses, and Poems.

Prelude, Op. 35, No. 1

Length 23 measures
Signature 5 flats
Key D flat major
Meter 3/4
Tempo Allegro $\frac{\text{f}}{=108-112}$

Rhythm

There are two principal rhythmic figures used in Prelude No. 2. The first pattern, $\text{Rhythm Figure 1}$, is used throughout measures 1-15. The second pattern, $\text{Rhythm Figure 2}$, is used throughout measures 16-23. Contrasting rhythmic figures are used between the hands: $\text{Rhythm Figure 3}$ occurs three times within measures 15 and 16, while $\text{Rhythm Figure 4}$ occurs twice in measure 17.
Melody

The melody of this prelude is made up of the first and last notes of the rhythmic figures cited previously. The first nine measures are characterized by a downward leap, usually that of a tritone, to a non-harmonic tone which is resolved upward. The melody of the remainder of the prelude is made up generally of step-wise and chromatic step-wise motion. (See Figure 12.)

Fig. 12--Melodic line in Prelude, Op. 35, No. 1, meas. 1-2.

Harmony

The tonic chord is not heard until the fifth measure of this prelude, and is not heard again until measure 19. This is one factor in Scriabin's establishing vague tonality. The first four measures are centered around the dominant, a flat. The dominant seventh is embellished by a seventh chord on a flat spelled a flat-c-e-g. (This is written enharmonically a flat-c-f flat-g.) One French sixth is found. This phrase
is then repeated in measures 5–9 on the tonic, d flat. Measures 10–15 contain only suggestions of keys. There is one Neapolitan relationship to the dominant, a seeming modulation to a major, and a harmonic sequence using the French sixth chord in descending chromatic movement. The over-all harmonic aspect of this prelude is a more advanced, more subtle Chopin.

Prelude, Op. 35, No. 2

Length 35 measures
Signature 2 flats
Key B flat major
Meter C meaning 4/4
Tempo Elevato \( \text{\textbf{j}} = 46 \)

Rhythm

This prelude is stately in tempo and regular in rhythm, with the half note being the principal note value. There is only one unusual rhythmic figure: \( \text{\textbf{j}}' \text{\textbf{\textnumero}} \text{\textbf{j}}' \text{\textbf{\textnumero}} \text{\textbf{j}}' \text{\textbf{\textnumero}} \text{\textbf{j}}' \). The figure is found four times.

Melody

The melody of this prelude is very similar to those found in the works of Wagner, in particular Tristan and Isolde. It is very lyrical and chromatic; but Scriabin has not reached the ultrachromaticism of his later period. In the opening four measures of the prelude the melodic motif is presented. It appears, with a slight degree of differentiation, in measures 9–16 and 24–31.
The harmony in this prelude, as in Wagner, seems to be in a constant state of modulation. Non-harmonic tones are used so freely that it is difficult to distinguish them from chord tones. The first four measures are in the tonic, b flat. Measures 5-9 oscillate between b flat and its Neapolitan relation, c flat. There is a similar relation between f and g flat in measures 10-16. The key of d flat major is suggested throughout measures 17-23, while the dominant, f, is reached in measure 24. The last twelve measures are the same as the first eight, with a repetition of the last four.

Prelude, Op. 35, No. 3

<table>
<thead>
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<td>No sharps or flats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meter</td>
<td>9/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Scherzoso ( \dot{=} 126 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rhythm

The rhythm is the most interesting aspect of this prelude. Scriabin employs ties and dotted rhythms so characteristic of Schumann. There are two principal rhythmic figures contained in the prelude. They are: \(\frac{3}{4}\) and \(\frac{1}{4}\).

Melody

There are two melodic motifs in this prelude. The first, as illustrated in Figure 14, is made up of many leaps, with little use made of step-wise motion.

![Figure 14](image)

Fig. 14—First melodic motif in Prelude, Op. 35, No. 3, meas. 1-2.

The second motif, illustrated in Figure 15, is quite the opposite, making no use of leaps. It is made up of exclusive step-wise motion.
Harmony

The Neapolitan relationship is used throughout this prelude. In the first four measures the first and last chords are in C major, but a flat, the Neapolitan relation of the dominant, G, and D flat, the Neapolitan relation of the tonic, C, are used as the intervening harmonies. This same harmonic scheme is repeated in measures 9-12. Measures 13-20 are in E flat, while measures 21-28 oscillate between C and its Neapolitan, D flat. The closing sixteen measures are a repetition of the first twelve with a four-measure coda.
CHAPTER IV

PRELUDES, OP. 74

The five Preludes, Op. 74, along with the Poems, Op. 71, Vers la Flamme, and two Dances, Op. 73, were written in Podalsk, near Moscow, in 1914. In these preludes, the last musical output of Scriabin, there is a complete break with the idea of a conventional central tonality and with the major-minor modal system. Having departed from conventional tonality, it becomes necessary to depart from a traditional type of analysis, and adopt a more applicable method.

Method of Analysis

Of all the contemporary methods of analysis the Hindemith system, as explained in The Craft of Musical Composition, pp. 94-106, and illustrated in the table found at the back of the book, is the most useful for the purposes of this study. This method consists of the extraction of chord roots according to the "best" interval in each chord. The intervals are, in descending order from the "best": perfect fifth, perfect fourth, major third, minor sixth, minor third, major sixth, major second, minor seventh, minor second, and major seventh.

In the Hindemith system there are six classifications of chords:
A. Chords without tritone  B. Chords with tritone

I. Without second or seventh  II. Without minor second or major seventh

III. Containing second or seventh  IV. Containing minor second or major seventh, or both—one or more tritones

V. Indeterminate  VI. Indeterminate—tritone predominating.

Four types of graphs are included in the discussion of each prelude. The first graph illustrates root movements derived in research using the Hindemith method previously cited. The graph is based on the circle of fifths, c being the mediant point, branching out in either direction to f sharp and d flat, respectively. Since there is no point of key overlapping some intervals are, by necessity, written enharmonically, i.e., d—d sharp—e is graphed d—e flat—e. The second graph, below the graph of root movement, is a summary of intervallic leaps as shown by the former graph. The third graph illustrates harmonic tension according to the Hindemith chord classifications. It is arranged with low tension chords at the bottom, building to high tension chords at the top. The fourth graph, below the graph of harmonic tension, summarizes frequency of chord classes as illustrated in the preceding graph.

Also included in this chapter are rhythmical analyses of Preludes Nos. 1, 2, and 3. These analyses are from metric,
harmonic and melodic standpoints.\textsuperscript{1} The three facets of rhythm are so aligned as to facilitate recognition of rhythmic combinations among the members. There are five possible rhythmic combinations:

1. Agreement of meter and harmonic rhythm--disagreement with melodic rhythm.
2. Agreement of meter and melodic rhythm--disagreement with harmonic rhythm.
3. Agreement of harmonic rhythm and melodic rhythm--disagreement with meter.
4. Agreement of all three.
5. Disagreement of all three.

Due to Scriabin's studious avoidance of tonality\textsuperscript{2} \textit{per se}, an applicable definition, for all practical purposes, must be made for his individual use of tonal centers. When the word tonality is used, it shall refer to the realm of the isolated tone itself, having no modal or scalar references. Tonality is thus established by the pitch whose use as root is most frequent.

\textsuperscript{1}"Meter is "the basic scheme of . . . accents which remains unaltered throughout a composition or a section thereof and which serves as a skeleton for the rhythm." Willi Apel, "Meter," \textit{Harvard Dictionary of Music} (Cambridge, 1960).

\textsuperscript{2}"... preference for one tone (the tonic) . . . the tonal center to which all other tones are related," Willi Apel, "Tonality," \textit{Harvard Dictionary of Music} (Cambridge, 1960).
The words of Walter Piston clarify the path that is followed in this chapter.

The intention on the part of the composer must, above all, be taken into account in considering those combinations of notes which are quite evidently used for their particular sonority and color. There the relating of the various notes to a tonality or system is of use only for identification and classification and has little to do with explaining the actual effect, except in a negative way.  

Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1

Length 16 measures
Signature None
Meter 3/4
Tempo Douloureux dechirant

Rhythm

There is no continuous rhythmic figure in this prelude; however, the rhythmic pattern found in measures 1-4, \( \frac{3}{4} \), is repeated in measures 9-12. The inner voice in the right hand furnishes syncopation and rhythmic diversity in triplet, sixteenth note, and quintuplet figures.

The same rhythmic combination (as described on page 31) is used throughout the prelude: agreement of harmonic rhythm and melodic rhythm—disagreement with meter. This is shown in Figure 16.

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Fig. 16—Rhythmic analysis of Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1.

Melody

The entire melodic aspect of this prelude consists of the exclusive use of chromatic step-wise motion. One melody is found in the upper voice of the right hand, while a subordinate melody is found in the inner voices. The two melodies move in contrary chromatic step-wise motion. (See Figure 17.)
Fig. 17—Melodic line in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1, meas. 1-2

Harmony

Having no key signature, the prelude begins in the tonality of $f$ sharp, and ends in the tonality of $c$. There is an oscillation between these two points throughout, as shown in Figure 18.

Fig. 18—Root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1

Throughout this prelude $b$ sharp is used in the manuscript, but the enharmonic $c$ is used in reference.
The tritone is the predominant interval, occurring more often than any other interval. It appears fifty-three times vertically, seven times horizontally, and is the principal chord member in twenty-six chords. As shown in Figure 19, the leap of a tritone occurs five times in root movement, second only to the leap of a fifth, occurring seven times.

![Figure 19](image)

*Fig. 19*--Summary of intervallic leaps in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1.

In a quartal and a tertial analysis\(^5\) chords built quartally, containing perfect, diminished and augmented fourths, appear nineteen times, as compared with twelve chords built tertially. (See Figure 20.)

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\(^5\)Figure 20 contains two analyses of Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1: a tertial analysis, appearing above, and a quartal analysis, appearing below. They are vertically aligned to show both analyses of the chords which may be constructed either in thirds (in most cases only hypothetically), or in fourths. Repetitions of chords within a measure are included in the count of chords but not in Figure 20.
There is little use of low tension chords. As shown in Figure 21 the chord used most frequently is the class VI chord, the chord of highest tension, used nineteen times. The chord of lowest tension used in this prelude is the class III\(_2\) chord, used eight times.
Fig. 21a--Chord tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1
b--Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 1.
Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2

Length 16 measures
Signature None
Meter 4/8
Tempo Tres Lent, contemplatif

Rhythm

There are two rhythmical features in Prelude No. 2. The first is an eighth note figure in the left-hand, an ostinato bass. The second is a dual stream of various sixteenth-note patterns against quarter and eighth notes. Figure 22 illustrates the rhythmic pattern occurring in measures 3-6.

Fig. 22--Rhythmic pattern in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 3-6.

This same pattern occurs again in measures 7-10. Figure 23 illustrates the agreement among all the rhythmical elements: melodic rhythm and harmonic rhythm, as well as meter.
Fig. 23—Rhythmic analysis of Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2

Melody

Over the recurring bass figure appear two voices in the right hand, the predominant voice and the counter-voice.

(See Figures 24a and 24b.)

Fig. 24a--Predominant voice in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 4-5.

b--Counter-voice in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 4-5
Movement in the prelude is principally chromatic step-wise motion interspersed with the leap of an augmented second.

Harmony

An interesting harmonic feature of this prelude is a two-measure introduction in F sharp which is used again at the end as a coda. (See Figure 25.)

![Figure 25](image)

Fig. 25--Introduction and coda in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 1-2.

Figure 26 shows an element of bitonality brought about by an ostinato bass figure suggesting the triads of F sharp and C.

![Figure 26](image)

Fig. 26--Ostinato figure in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2, meas. 3-4.
This element of bitonality is further illustrated in root movements as shown in Figure 27.

Fig. 27--Root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2

The predominance of this tritone leap is shown in Figure 28.

Fig. 28--Summary of root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2.
The chord of lowest tension used in the prelude is the class $I_1$ chord, occurring thirteen times. The chord of high tension used is the class $IV_1$ chord, occurring only once in measure 5. Chord tension is illustrated in Figure 29.
Fig. 29a--Chord tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2
b--Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 2.

Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3

Length 26 measures
Signature None
Meter 9/8
Tempo Allegro drammatico

Rhythm

Measures 1-12 are identical with measures 13-24 in rhythmic pattern. There are two rhythmic patterns in Prelude No. 3: \( \text{\textcopyright{}} \) used in measures 1-8 and
measures 13–20, and \( \frac{3}{4} \) \( \frac{3}{4} \) used in measures 9–12 and measures 21–24. In the left hand are two rhythmic patterns which alternate: \( \frac{3}{4} \) \( \frac{3}{4} \) and \( \frac{3}{4} \) \( \frac{3}{4} \). Figure 30 shows agreement among meter, harmonic rhythm, and melodic rhythm.
Fig. 30—Rhythmic analysis of Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3

Melody

The melody, in itself twelve measures in length, is characterized by an upward leap of a major seventh followed by descending motion. (See Figure 31.)

Allegro drammatico

Fig. 31—Melodic line in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3, meas. 1-2
This figure is repeated three times, each time an augmented fourth higher. The entire first twelve measures are then repeated an augmented fourth higher. A two-measure coda brings the prelude to a close. (See Figure 32.)

Fig. 32—Coda in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3, meas. 25-26.

Harmony
As shown in Figure 33 the root movement is principally by thirds. F sharp is root of ten chords, d sharp of nine, a of six. These chord roots themselves, f sharp, d sharp and a spell out a diminished triad, a chord found in great frequency in the prelude.
Fig. 33—Root movement in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3

The harmony is formed horizontally rather than vertically. That is, instead of the harmony being presented in a chord (vertically), it is stretched out through several beats, one measure, or even several measures. The recurring bass figure, already mentioned under Rhythm, is the interval of a tritone, the interval occurring most frequently in the
prelude. There is a wide variety of harmonic tension in the prelude, ranging from a class IIa chord, appearing once, to a class VI chord, appearing four times. (See Figures 34a and 34b.)
Fig. 31a--Harmonic tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3
b--Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 3.

Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4

Length: 25 measures
Signature: None
Meter: 3/4
Tempo: Lent, Vague, Indecis

Rhythm

There are some unusual rhythmic combinations in Prelude No. 4. The following is found in measure 5 and measure 10:

This pattern occurs in measures 12 and 13:
There is also an excellent example of rhythmic shift giving the feeling of being in duple meter. Otherwise the prelude is made up of quarter and eighth note passages (no sixteenth notes appear).

**Melody**

The prelude is based upon a four-measure melody made up of steps and leaps, both small and large as shown in Fig. 35.

![Fig. 35--Melodic line in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4, meas. 1-3.](image)

There is an immediate repetition up to the last figure which is distorted. This gives a clue as to what will happen next. The remaining fourteen measures elaborate on this distorted figure, change it by one half step, and finally invert it.

**Harmony**

The prelude begins and ends in the tonality of a. (See Figure 36.) Between these two points there is at least one chord built on each note of the diatonic scale: c (2), c sharp (8), d (5), d sharp (6), e (4), f (6), f sharp (2), g (3), g sharp (1), a (9), a sharp (1), b (4).
Harmonies are formed vertically rather than horizontally. Quartal harmonies are found more frequently than tertial harmonies. There is also the superimposition of major and minor triads. (See Figure 37.)

Fig. 37--Superimposition of major and minor triads in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4.
The chord of lowest tension used in the prelude is the class $I_2$ chord, occurring six times. The chord of high tension is the class IV chord, occurring eight times. (See Figure 38a and 38b.)
Fig. 38a—Chord tension in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4
b—Summary of chord class frequency in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 4.

Prelude, Op. 74, No. 5

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meter</td>
<td>3/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Fier, Belliqueux</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rhythm

The principal rhythmic figure in Prelude No. 5 is a sextuplet divided uniquely between right and left hand:
\[
\text{\begin{align*}
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
\end{array}
\end{align*}
\]

In measures 2, 4, 10 and 12 the rhythm is
varied by a sixteenth note quintuplet figure. A syncopated figure \( \frac{\text{\textasteriskcentered}}{\text{\textasteriskcentered}} \) appears in the left hand in measures 5 and 13. The general rhythmic characteristic of the prelude is a continuous rushing forward as if to meet the climax.

**Melody**

There is no real melodic thread discernible throughout the prelude, only upper notes of harmonies. Figure 39 illustrates descending chromatic passages used at cadential points in measures 8 and 16.

![Fig. 39--Chromatic passage in Prelude, Op. 74, No. 5, meas. 16-17.](image)

The distinctive melodic feature is that there is no real melody.

**Harmony**

The harmonies are horizontally formed rather than vertically. (See Figure 40.)
The prelude begins and ends in the tonality of b flat with the principal interval of root movement being the third. (See Figure 41.)
The chord of high tension used in the prelude is the class VI chord, occurring twice; the chord of lowest tension used is the class IIₐ chord, occurring once. The class IV chord is used most frequently, eight times. (See Figures 42a and 42b.)
After sixteen measures of using high tension chords the prelude closes with a simple V7 chord built on e flat.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of these three sets of preludes, each set representing a period of style, it is possible to draw conclusions concerning the evolution of Scriabin's musical style.

The rhythm of the early works was not unusually complex. They had a few unconventional patterns, but the major function of the rhythmic patterns was to set off the melodies. Meter signatures remained static throughout, and tempo indications were specific. Rhythm became more free in the transitional period, while more unusual and interesting patterns were adopted. The freedom of rhythm was further developed in the last period where it became an important feature of the composition. Tempo indications were vague, and rhythmic patterns complex.

Melodically the early preludes were clearly under the influence of Chopin. The long melodic lines and varied treatment of these lines were patterned after the works of the Polish pianist. One of the few indications of original style were the counter melodies which appeared from time to time. Hints of future melodic treatment were seen in the frequent use of one motif throughout a work. The transitional
period is greatly under the influence of Wagner, especially in the use of melodic ideas. Counter melodies became more prominent, and the number of principal melodies was diminished, stress being placed on thematic treatment. The last stylistic period shows further emphasis on the short melodic idea. The principal melodies, as the counter melodies, became increasingly chromatic. Melodies were often overshadowed by complex inner parts.

Harmonically the early preludes remained close to conventional chord progressions. The augmented sixth chord was given special attention, both in purposes of modulation, and in manner of resolution. Dissonance was treated through the use of non-harmonic tones. In the transitional period fewer major and minor triads were used, while seventh, ninth, and augmented chords became less a passing type of harmony and more an acceptable feature of harmonic structure. Complete harmonic freedom is achieved in the last period. Harmonies became more horizontal than vertical. Often one chord would be the basis for several measures. Dissonance became an accepted part of the harmony.

The graphs of harmonic tension show that Scriabin did not favor any set chord progression, even though he does show a marked preference for chords containing several tritones. The graphs of root movement are each strikingly individual. Here again, although Scriabin does not subscribe
to a set pattern of root movement, he does favor the leap of a tritone in root movement.
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