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ALEXANDER SCRIABIN'S STYLE AND MUSICAL GESTURES
IN THE LATE PIANO SONATAS:
SONATA NO.8 AS A TEMPLATE TOWARDS A PARADIGM FOR
INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE

by

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Alexander Scriabin's Style and Musical Gestures in the Late Piano Sonatas:

Sonata No.8 as a Template Towards a Paradigm for Interpretation and Performance

Alexander Scriabin's piano sonatas are largely regarded as the most significant works in the genre since Beethoven. They outline the development of his compositional style from the youthful Chopinesque works, to his mature, idiosyncratic post-tonal offerings. According to his close friend, biographer, and critic Leonid Sabaneyev, despite Scriabin's philosophy suffering "from too many manifest faults", his late music is "incomprehensible and incomplete" when "severed from his philosophy". Consequently, this treatise focuses on Scriabin's unique compositional voice through an examination of his idiosyncratic musical gestures, and the points of their interaction/intersection with his eclectic philosophizing.

Recognizing the absence of a substantial interpretive system that reconciles Scriabin's music with his philosophical outlook in the available Scriabin-scholarship, this dissertation investigates the impact of his mystical beliefs upon his compositional style. This is largely achieved through the identification and scrutiny of symbolic gestures in his idiosyncratic pianistic style. Part 1 constitutes the examination of Scriabin's symbolic gestures that routinely feature in his late works: *unity, summons, light, flight, occult, resonance, sensuality, eroticism, ecstasy,* and *transformation/dissipation*. Part 2 discusses Sonata no.8, which stands to benefit the most from a gestural reading, due to the near absence of the composer's customary vivid French annotations. A brief discussion regarding issues of interpretation and performance of that sonata and Scriabin's late keyboard works completes this dissertation.

The investigative method outlined above, in synergy with the composer's complex belief-system, develops a new gestural framework for perceiving and interpreting Scriabin's work; one that blurs the conventional distinctions between musicologist and performer, enabling informed conceptualizations and gestalt performances of these 'symbolist' works. Sonata No.8 is used as a matrix upon which this theoretical approach is applied. Through relative comparisons and references to the other late sonatas, the Eighth is proffered as an interpretive model upon which analogous interpretations may be based.

CONTENTS

PART 2 - *TOWARDS PERFORMANCE*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

KEY TO ANALYTICAL SYMBOLS

Unity – n.a.

Summons △

Light ◆ ◇

Flight ■ □

Occult ▼ ▽

Resonance ▭

Sensual ◣ ◺

Erotic – Feminine Principle (FP) ↻

Masculine Principle (MP) ⬚

Dance/Ecstasy – n.a.

Transformation/Dissolution ⊕

Introduction

Born on Christmas day 1872, Alexander Nikolaevich Scriabin believed himself to be the 'high priest' or 'messiah' of mankind in the sense that his music would "bring about the Apocalypse and usher in the New Age" of cosmic wellbeing (Godwin 1987, 43; also see Bowers 1973, 125; Leikin 2002, 39; de Schloezer 1987, 269). As it happens, it is a remarkable coincidence that he died during the Easter of 1915, chronologically living up to his self-anointed messiahship. However, it is because of his untimely death combined with the utilitarianism of Soviet-Marxist aesthetics and western positivism, as well as a unique style that left no notable successors, that Scriabin has been unduly neglected for the most part of the twentieth-century. "Scriabin is our bitterest musical enemy…because Scriabin's music tends to an unhealthy eroticism. Also to mysticism and passivity and escape from the realities of life," denounces a young Shostakovich in 1931 (cited Bowers 1969, 1:86; Taruskin 1997, 311). Decades later, Harold Schonberg likewise observes and writes in the *New York Times* [11 April, 1965] that there was "active resentment" whenever Scriabin was performed…critics will go out of their way to condemn the [early] music as nothing but diluted Chopin. Let one of the late piano pieces be programmed, and the musical intelligentsia are up in arms, inveighing against Scriabin's diffuseness, vagueness and fake philosophy" (cited Bowers 1969, 1:86). As a result, his life's work suffered, for what motivated his music was "completely alien to a socialist society guided by the doctrine of dialectical materialism" (Slonimsky 2004, 52). That notwithstanding, it is the strength of this belief that forged the cornerstone of his inspiration, fuelling the evolution of a most unique compositional style and stimulating much of his creative output during his short career. Scriabin enjoyed many accolades during his lifetime and such was the extent of his esteem among his peers and people during the time of his death:

> The funeral was the most fashionable event in Moscow in years. The Kremlin choir sang a mass for the dead. Rachmaninov, Taneyev and uncles were pallbearers for the coffin. There was an endless number of wreaths. Koussevitzky sent one, while his brother composed a sonnet… All-night vigils were held, and four days after his death, Scriabin's corpse was escorted to the burial ground… Among the immense crowd was seen a large number of young people, who, with linked hands made a chain along the procession, singing the Russian anthem for the dead, ending with the impressive words, 'Eternal memory to him!' (Bowers 1969, 1:102).

It is this era in time, what scholars refer to as the Russian Silver Age (Baker 1989, 91; Garcia 1993, 15-34; 2000, 274; Stell 2004, 2), that one must look into in order to better understand the man and his music.

The Russian Silver Age was that country's contribution to the European *fin de siècle* artistic and intellectual accomplishment. Sabaneyev considered that period to have borne a collective achievement of such "depth [as] never before reached by Russian thought and Russian creative genius" (1965b, 366). That particular collective pantheon includes Sergei Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes; painters Lev Bakst, and Mikhail Vrubel; writers Andrei Bely, Alexander Blok, Valery Briusov, and Vyacheslav Ivanov. Russian artists of the period eschewed their own classical tradition in favour of a new spirituality, eclectically influenced by the spirit of ancient Greece (as they understood it), by European symbolists (plays by Ibsen and Maeterlinck were produced in Russian theatres), and the intensified social upheaval and political instability (the failed 1905 revolution, the lost Russo-Japanese War, etc.). They all shared the *fin de siècle* eschatological frame of mind. Such was the climate, that combined with the subsequent First World War and the fall of the Tsar, it "shattered the monolithic dogmatism of the Russian intelligentsia" and prompted many to challenge previously undisputed convictions in search for new answers (Rosenthal 1975, 152). In an era marked by uncertainty, there were many who believed the end of the world to have been nigh; "nowhere else in Europe was the volume and intensity of apocalyptical literature comparable to that found in Russia during the reign of Nicholas II" (Billington 1966, 514-515). In what Saminsky referred to as the "cosmic-conscious era" (1928, 102-114), one of the most dominant artistic movements of the time was Symbolism. And it was "this synthetic basis of Symbolism which makes it at once complex and distinctive and which also gives it a certain fatal, climactic meaning" (Bowlt 1976, 566). Indeed such sentiments were impressed on Vrubel's canvasses, imprinted on Briusov's novels and notated in the surging, searching, inciting music of Scriabin. This art was "grounded in their prophetic self-confidence and reliance on their intuition which allegedly enabled them to 'see' the essence of things without applying logical methods. In these respects, this period represents the culmination of Russian spirituality" (Sabaneyev 1965b, 366).

Russian Symbolism's convictions emerged from a fusion of Nietzschean ideas about art, Christian mystics such as Vladimir Solovyov, and Theosophy. From Nietzsche's

The Birth of Tragedy (1872), the Symbolists called for Dionysus to take his rightful place at the side of Apollo, and rallied for a return of the ancient rituals associated with that god's worship. From Solovyov, they learned to conceive of "art as a force" capable of "transforming reality directly" (West 1970, 44), and that it is only Man who is endowed with the capacity to seek the "ultimate state" in the striving for unity with the divine, when "matter" becomes "spirit" (40-41). Amalgamating Nietzsche and Solovyov, poet-philosopher Vyacheslav Ivanov propagated that art must be a ritual itself (specifically the Dionysian cult ritual), if it is to transform society into a new era of spiritual brotherhood. He further proposed the use of symbols and their organization as myth, to be the means by which one could "penetrate beyond reality to 'higher worlds,'" which was the prevailing Symbolist aesthetic (Rosenthal 1975, 4). Lastly, contemporary Theosophy gave credence and support to the prevailing Symbolist thought, dominated by apocalyptical world-views, the quest for unity with God/Brahma, attentiveness to the religions of ancient cultures with their use of symbols, and the concept of the spiritual "Adept", capable of revealing the hidden truths of the universe.[1]

This was the world that Scriabin knew, and he embraced and adapted various Symbolist[2] and Theosophical[3] beliefs, which became crucial to the development of his art. Thus convinced of his divine role as prophet, high priest, and spiritual adept, it was the "acme of misfortune" for Scriabin to be regarded as merely a musician (Sabaneyev 1929, 42). Despite the composer's claim to the title of the "first true modernist" of Russia (Slonimsky 2004, 13; also see Roberts 1993, 8), Scriabin scholarship has been for the most part relegated to the sidelines, isolated from mainstream musicology; his "mystical beliefs [were] undoubtedly the most serious obstacle to a reasoned assessment of his music in the past," explains Jim Samson (1977, 79). Regarded as an "absolutely unique phenomenon, an almost inconceivable exception" in Russian music (de Schloezer 1987, 314), Scriabin's music language was also so private and exclusive

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[1] Founded by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott in 1875, the Theosophical movement examines the various beliefs, philosophies, and religious texts of various Eastern and Western civilizations past and present. It seeks the fusion of science and religion, propagating the belief that there is one universal truth in all religions, understood only by spiritual Adepts or Mahatmas - masters of hidden truths, allegedly privy to the many secrets of the universe (what Scriabin believed himself to be) – who have exclusive rights of knowledge and disclosure.
[2] For example, the transformative power of art, ecstasy, etc.
[3] For example, the reintegration of mankind or unity with God/Brahma, etc.

(as opposed to the 'universal' music canons of Beethoven and Mozart) that the few composers who chose to follow his path either abandoned it in time (Prokofiev, Szymanowski) or did not possess enough gifts to ensure widespread influence (Feinberg, Krein, Roslavets). The situation was not helped by Scriabin's premature death, which prevented him both from firmly establishing his style and from producing the large works he had planned. His known messianic proclamations undermined his credibility still further inside a political regime fiercely opposed to transcedentalism, thus explaining the lack of serious scholarship on Russian music's 'first, true modernist'.

However, the pervading view of Scriabin as an outsider, should not preclude the notion that he was a child of his time. According to his close friend, Leonid Sabaneyev (composer, critic, and musicologist), there was also little doubt that Scriabin was the "reflection of literary Russian symbolism in music" (1929, 44), absorbing much of Ivanov's teachings (Brown 1979, 49-51; Garcia 2000, 275-276; Matlaw 1979, 5; Morrison 1998, 288-291; Taruskin 1997, 319). Scriabin's brother-in-law, Boris de Schloezer, (also his biographer, a dilettante philosopher, composer, and musicologist), similarly refers to the composer's "aesthetic code" as "remarkably similar to that of the vast intellectual and artistic movement that animated Russian philosophy and art early in the century…an art commonly described as Symbolist" (1987, 314). Under Ivanov's guidance, Scriabin wanted to "turn sound into ecstasy" (Bowers 1969, 1:319). He religiously ploughed through ancient Greek mythology, specifically texts pertaining to Dionysian cult ritual practices (de Schloezer 1987, 223). As the wine acts as an intoxicating agent in making the dancers' senses more receptive to the ecstatic moment, so too Scriabin's expansive harmonies, as exemplified by the 'mystic chord' initially used in *Prometheus* op.60, become "hallucinogens…designed to raise human consciousness to a transcendental locus" (Morrison 1998, 309). "Music is the path of revelation" (cited Bowers 1969, 2:70), exclaimed the composer. Whether his music contained those hallucinogenic agents able to conduce an audience to experience a spiritual transformation will remain conjectural. Proving that his scores on their own should be able to catalyze such chemical reactions in the brain, or contrarily, attempting to defend their inability to do so by considering them merely breakdowns of the chemicals involved, requiring the informed interpretation/performance to achieve the proper conditions or 'mix' to initiate those reactions etc., is immaterial to this research,

as this cannot be determined solely through a discussion, without the results from various laboratory tests. It is enough that the composer believed his music as potentially capable to bring about such transcendental conditions, to at least merit a theoretical and interpretive investigation. At this point, it should be noted that Scriabin himself probably believed even his best music to be unable to generate to generate the cataclysmic events to which he was aspiring by itself, as he felt necessary to employ extra-musical agents (such as colour, fragrance, etc.), in order to stimulate most senses towards his intended eschatological experiences. By acknowledging the requirement of such "enhancements", it should follow that performers/listeners would have to be "open" and psychologically compatible to such suggestions, if they are to partake of anything other than just the strictly musical qualities of the works. It so happens that the composer generally considered his piano works as inextricably connected to those apocalyptic, final concert-events he had planned (de Schloezer 1987, 9-10). This is one more reason why one such analysis and interpretation of his late piano music - as proposed in this dissertation - becomes reasonable, without necessarily laying claims to authenticity, or exclusivity. Additionally, as the composer planned to bring the end of the world solely in those multi-sensory works he would not live to complete, one should not expect to reach higher states of awareness or have an other-worldly experience from the sonatas alone, as – in mystical terms – they are only meant to contain some of the elements of those allegedly 'consciousness raising' agents. Finally, some knowledge about Scriabin's notions would enrich the audience's appreciation of the music (otherwise perfectly able to stand alone on its own aesthetic merits), the same way that knowledge of what a 'waltz' is enriches the appreciation of Johann Strauss' music, and knowledge of the relevant sociological framework facilitates one's discernment of hip-hop, irrespective of whether one deems the music and lyrics trivial and decadent or not.

In light of the composer's frequent claims that much of his music has "specific psychological content" (cited Bowers 1973, 108), a system for reconciling his philosophy and music is yet to be fully explored; publications on Scriabin have been predominantly analytical (see footnote 4) or biographical (Bowers 1969; 1973; de Schloezer 1987; Hull 1920; MacDonald 1978; Swan 1969). While analysts like Baker (1986), Callender (1998), Carpenter (1972), Cheong (1993), Dernova (1968), Perle (1984), Pople (1983; 1989), Reise (1983), and Sabbagh (2001) dutifully expound the

mechanics of Scriabin's compositional style, they either minimize or fail to admit the possibility of any link between his compositional style and his singular mode of thinking.[4] In other words, any purely formal method of enquiry, be it harmonic, set-theoretical etc., cannot by definition accommodate an exploration – let alone explication - of the existing inherent meaning of his late works. In case this was due to those analysts' disinterest in the non-syntactical elements in Scriabin's compositions (ex. wishing to identify harmonic relationships, but not to interpret his extraordinary expression markings or apply hermeneutics), then this research does not purport to augment their findings or claim higher validity for its own. Instead, the offerings herein could potentially complement many of these analyses, towards one possible interpretation of this composer's late piano music.

Conversely, there also are those like Brown (1979), Godwin (1987), Matlaw (1979), and Morrison (1998), who pay excessive attention to Scriabin the mystic or symbolist, at times privileging his dilettantish poetry over the music. Nonetheless, Scriabin scholarship has, more often than not, been of a more theoretical bent under the legacy of formalism, with only a handful of scholars at doctoral levels of study in American universities (Garcia 1993; Yun 1998) seeking to readdress this imbalance. A system of interpreting his philosophical musings is needed, lest Scriabin's music remains "unavailable" to us (Taruskin 1988, 166-167), and our comprehension of the music "woefully incomplete" (Leikin 2002, 25). With the exception of Garcia (2000) and Stell (2004), there remains a need for a system of interpretation that reconciles that rift in current Scriabin scholarship. Without doubt, the following proposed interpretation of Scriabin's codes does not constitute a system comprehensive enough to satisfy Taruskin's and Leikin's criteria of "availability" and "completion". It is however a step towards that direction. Some of those codes are scarcely part-and-parcel of every composer, rather they are mostly introversive, hence the necessity for an interpretive system such as the one proposed in this research. By its nature, and notwithstanding a

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[4] It should be noted that there are primarily two different schools of thought where Scriabin analysis is concerned. On the one hand there are those who consider Scriabin to be a pre-serialist on the verge of dodecaphony (Baker 1986; Perle 1984; Pople 1983), and on the other those who view Scriabin's late music to have evolved harmonically (Reise 1983; Sabbagh 2001). Of particular note is Dernova's (1968; 1979) system of analysis as translated by Guenther, which remains to date the most convincing and exhaustive explanation of Scriabin's harmonic system. Dernova's theory of tri-tonal derived dominants as a possible 'substitute' for traditional dominant-tonic progressions (what she has termed 'departure' and 'arrival' dominants, i.e. Da and Db), is specific to analysing Scriabin's late music.

thorough investigation of the relevant available materials, these interpretations will be subjective. If this statement recognizes the limits of any conclusive attempt at authority or authenticity, it does so unapologetically. Interpretation of this kind – even when informed - remains a personal matter, and its presentation and argument serve as an invitation to share in its particulars and its distinctiveness.

Gesture is a very vague concept in music. However, musicologists have endeavoured to formulate several theories and taxonomies, in order to make the concept useful and versatile.[5] Hatten, one of the authorities on the subject, talks about *stylistic* gestures, as well as *strategic*, *thematic*, *dialogical*, *rhetorical* gestures, as well as the *troping* of gestures (2004, 136-137). Due to the all-encompassing nature of what constitutes a gesture, for the purposes of this dissertation, gesture will be contained within this 'Hattenesque' framework: analogue, contextually constrained and enriched, typically foregrounded, beyond precise notation, psychological and stylistic. A particular symbol/gesture may also take on *agency*, manifesting itself in various ways according to the composer's schematization (225-226). In following the journey or 'different conditions' of the soul, a listener or interpreter embodies Scriabin's symbolic gestures in the imagination; "the intermodality of gesture leads ultimately and naturally to its categorization as a form of thought" (131). The recognition of the existence of musical symbols in Scriabin's music will enhance understanding, not detract from the music. Scriabin's music is after all highly symbolic as shown by his numerous and exotic expression markings. In view of MacDonald's proclamation that *all* of Scriabin's works "share idiom and gesture in a way that will strike many as repetitive" (1978, 7), i.e. the use of certain polyrhythms, repeated chords etc., the herein investigations of the philosophical correspondences of these gestures will be limited to concepts within Scriabin's philosophical grasp, as related in the notebooks and conversations. In other words, we will be investigating the intersection where (a particular concept of) his eclectic philosophizing may be seen to correspond with (a particular type of) his various idiosyncratic pianistic devices. Grabócz (1996, 190-192) applies her typology on Liszt's motifs and themes to create an articulated narrative (see her tables of narrative schemas pages); and Garcia (1993, 2000) plots archetypes and narratives from motifs and gestures (see appropriate references throughout this research).

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[5] See Gritten and King (2006) for a broad overview of gestural investigations albeit heavily focussed on 'performance gestures' – an area of inquiry which lies outside the scope of this research.

I hereby identify motifs, themes, and gestures, some of which are as in Liszt, thematically transformed (for example the 'erotic' second theme - chapter 1.8) in an effort to detect the expressive contour of the piece. Once the expressive contour, or what Hatten has termed *expressive genre* is "recognized or provisionally invoked, it guides the listener in the interpretation of particular features…that can help flesh out a dramatic or expressive scenario" (Hatten 1994, 89). There is limited adoption of some aspects from Monelle's ideas on topics/gestures in *dysphoric* contexts (2000, 62-63) ex. the 'summons' gesture. Similarly, from Hatten is drawn the concept of troping, i.e. the "juxtaposition of established correlations" which in combination yield 'emergent meaning' (2004, 217), ex. 'light' vs. 'occult' gestures, as well as his *marked*/*unmarked* readings (1994, 39), ex. 'occult' gestures. Having arrived at my interpretations independently, it was encouraging to find that they resonated well with those particular concepts above, already established in the discipline by Hatten, Monelle, and other scholars.

Garcia (2000) delineates a list of six specific musical gestures that allegorize specific verbal imagery associated with the Dionysian cult ritual, as pertaining to Ivanov's Symbolist teachings through an investigation of Scriabin's expression markings in the late sonatas. Stell (2004) proposes Scriabin's adherence to a theosophical temporal narrative depicting various cycles of birth and death / eternal recurrences by an examination of pitch motives and the ascending bass line in the Fifth sonata, Op.53. Garcia and Stell prove to be persuasive in their analyses, but fall short of a comprehensive interpretation of these sonatas. On the one hand, Garcia limits discussion on the obvious theosophical influences on Scriabin's thinking (i.e. his preoccupation with the *Mysterium*) during the time of their composition, while Stell on the other hand unfortunately limits his analysis to a single sonata. Hence it remains to be seen if his theory would hold in a more thorough investigation of Scriabin's late works. Using Garcia's (2000) paper and methodology as a starting point, this dissertation expands upon the original list of six gestures ('mystical unity', 'divine summons', 'light', 'flight', 'vertiginous dances', 'Eternal Feminine') by adding a seventh symbolist-gesture ('sensuality'). It further endeavours to take into account Scriabin's theosophical predilections by rudimentarily exploring various theosophical teachings familiar to Scriabin ('occult', 'resonance', 'transformation'), thus identifying

and adding an additional three, for a total of ten musical gestures. In Part 1, the analyses included herein include all the late sonatas (nos.6-10) and various late piano works. In Part 2, special attention is paid to the Eighth Sonata due to its near absence of Scriabin's customary florid expression markings. This lack of specificity arguably hinders performer interpretation and appreciation of this work.[6] Taking a lesson from Dr Strabismus (Monelle 2000, 3-4), it should be noted that this dissertation by no means proffers the 'performer-guide' or 'ultimate' interpretation of Scriabin's late works. Instead, it offers another avenue from which an interested open-minded performer may choose to interpret these works. This would have been an awkward theoretical/musicological undertaking during the days of formalism, when composers like Scriabin who did not fit well-known codes of composition (Neo-Classicism, Nationalism etc.), were mostly passed over. However, the climate is different today; musicological scholarship is more receptive to the possibility of deriving meaning from Scriabin's extra-musical contexts (whereas formalism would have dismissed those contexts as distractions from the music itself), within which its meaning can exclusively reside. Although those contexts deal with Theosophy, messianism, etc., and the uninformed performer would have trouble accessing and expressing them (in what otherwise could be a great and valid musical rendition), the gestures which other scholars and myself ascribe to those meanings, are themselves encoded in a conventional enough way that could possibly elicit accordant interpretations and responses from learned performers and audiences (such as are habitual in abstract metaphysical concepts embedded in Wagnerian leitmotifs).

Shenton's (2008) study of Messiaen's sign system, and (particularly) Straus's *Stravinsky's Late Music* (2001) are two cases in point of today's open-mindedness. Shenton talks about and demonstrates how Messiaen established a sign system that describes his theology, that knowledge of this sign system could help audiences of different faiths to appreciate his music more (2008, 3, 46). Shenton subscribes primarily to a hermeneutical method. For example, he looks into the Book of

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[6] This issue of whether extra-musical knowledge or analysis of any type is required for the performance of a work, is of course debatable. In contrast to a symphony by Mozart or Brahms (music that is more 'accessible' and not burdened with extra-musical concepts), a Scriabin sonata is overladen with extra-musical connotations. Prior knowledge of these extra-musical connotations may help the performer to formulate a scheme of action, or at the least, offer an additional avenue for interpretation. Whether one chooses to heed the composer's notions, or any other suggested interpretation, is of course up to the artistic discretion of the conductor or performer.

Revelation, programme notes, and so forth, to support and enhance his analysis of the 'Liturgie de cristal' from *Quatuor* (65). Straus' (2001, 184-187) topics involve the investigation of specific pitch classes, harmonies, timbre, texture, melodic gestures etc. (in short, compositional devices) and their expressive associations. For example, Straus observes that Stravinsky uses specific pitches to represent specific dramatic states and claims these specific pitches to be imbued with "a consistent expressive charge" (208). These are not topics in the 'topic theory' sense; rather, they are a kind of a perceived private/subconscious ideolect made explicit by Straus. Similarly, Scriabin's ideolects raise questions about the role of the performer and how one can 'perform' such private codes. It is such questions that this dissertation addresses, and for which it attempts to provide some possible answers. By answers, is not meant instructions on, say how a performer should execute a particular gesture. What is proffered, is an identification and interpretation of several gestures in Scriabin's works, but whose practical rendition is left to the professional performer. Consequently, the aim of this dissertation is two-fold: the first and foremost is to further reconcile the otherwise dichotomous state of Scriabin research, i.e. to find a system of interpretation that negotiates the theoretical and the philosophical in Scriabin, and secondly, to apply this system of analysis on the Eighth Sonata Op.66 in preparation for a performance.

Appropriately, this dissertation addresses this imbalance focussing more on interpretive investigations of Scriabin's late piano works. It pays more attention to the hectic "surface" of his music, delineating a probable system of referential signs for identifying the composer's various philosophical tenets in his music, which are based on the various esoteric schools of thought with which the composer identified. Ratner's pioneering work *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (1980) acts as a compendium of socially known musical topics (i.e. *public* codes like the Gavotte, Minuet, Opera Buffa etc.) purportedly acknowledged by eighteenth-century composers and society. However, during the nineteenth-century, these codes became more *private*, more idiolectic (Liszt, Wagner etc.). Finally, the twentieth-century tradition virtually obliterated expression as a reaction to nineteenth-century romanticism and the 'chaos' from social upheavals (Stravinsky, Varèse, Hindemith etc.). Amidst these changes, from one century to the next, Scriabin (more than Wagner and Liszt) took the private codes a step further. His codes became more and more introversive, as he passed from his 'Chopinesque' period to the 'Wagnerian', and further into his highly personal

mature period. So this dissertation should be primarily viewed as an inventory or taxonomy of Scriabin's mature stylistic gestures; an inventory of referential motifs common to the Scriabinic idiom which seem to be carriers of the composer's Symbolist-Theosophical musings.[7] In view of this, any discussion regarding what Agawu (1991, 51-72) terms the 'pure signs' of musical structure and syntax is kept to a minimum: The primary focus and underlying premise of this discussion postulates the aforementioned system of 'referential signs' to be pertinent in divulging the inherently intricate 'psychological content' of Scriabin's late works.[8] The way this research views Scriabin's topics chimes with Straus' when he delineates in *Stravinsky's Late Music*: "'Topic' is defined as 'any musical figure' (pitch center, harmony, melodic gesture, texture, etc.) used consistently as a musical symbol of some dramatic situation or emotional state" (2004, 185).

As a first step, Garcia (1993; 2000) demonstrates the proliferation of Scriabin's French performance-indicators to be harmonious with and descriptive of, his various types of mystical experiences. In other words, the analogizing of his specific musical gestures to his French annotations amounts to a congruent set of musical/philosophical symbols that appears to be consistent throughout his late oeuvre. In the manner that Busoni (1962, 81) likens the musical motif to a "seed" which "obediently follows the law of eternal harmony" as it unfolds into its developed form, so too Scriabin's musical gestures accordingly unfold, develop and thrive within the context of his philosophy. This 'seed' may either flower by itself, or in combination with other 'seeds' interacting with other symbolic motifs. Hans Steger further notes the interaction and layering of different subject matters (or gestures) to be indicative of the "simultaneousness of different moods, the merging of different conditions of the soul" (1972, 35), whose totality forms a final conception of the soul's condition in music. This is made possible by Scriabin's synthesized mystic chord, which harmonically provides a sonorous drone in the background, thus allowing his philosophically imbued themes and gestures to be foregrounded (chapter 1.1.1). The background is remarkably static, while the surface activity is outlandishly hectic. This is the case in *Prometheus*, Op.60, the "most

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[7] Beyond Ratner's seminal work, Monelle's (2000) and Hatten's (2004) respective 'socio-historical' and 'expressive' perspectives on topics and gestures have been considered, with an emphasis on Hatten who investigates the usefulness of expressive gestures in analysis/interpretation and performance.

[8] 'Referential signs', or what Agawu (1991, 26-50) has termed 'extroversive' signs, refers to the "surface" of the music where expression emanates; it draws its significance from the extra-musical context.

complicated polyphonic work" of its time as claimed by Sabaneyev, where five or six different themes are allowed to feature simultaneously due to the "consonance" of the harmonies (1965a, 135). And so it is also the case with Scriabin's late piano sonatas. In all, there are three methods by which this 'seed' develops in Scriabin's late works: 1) it may bloom into full potential by itself, 2) it may blossom among other 'seeds', which is analogous to the concept of counterpoint in music, and 3) it may be grafted with another 'seed', resulting in a hybrid species, which is analogous to the concept of troping (Hatten 2004; 2006).

Garcia's enlightening discussion (1993; 2000) concerning Scriabin's use of a symbolist plot archetype to typify a mystical experience (i.e. the Dionysian cult ritual) serves as a useful starting point towards the formulation of a methodology of how Scriabin may have consciously, or subconsciously, employed specific musical symbols or gestures to convey the inherent expressive content of his late works. "His art, more explicitly than that of any other composer, was (or became) a gnosis, a way of attaining and imparting occult knowledge," writes Taruskin (1997, 308-309). According to Sabaneyev, Scriabin was incapable of regarding music as pure or absolute music, and one must endeavour to overlook the obvious inconsistencies in the composer's system of thought, for Scriabin's music is "incomprehensible and incomplete…when severed from his philosophy" (1929, 41):

> Scriabin very rashly bound his huge ship of musical creativeness organically by ties that were too firm, to the frail and ephemeral skiff of his philosophical views of the world…A genius incomplete in music, owing to these bonds, a genius incomplete in the field of thought, Scriabin threw out of his own hands the instrument with which he might have been able to communicate his gifts of genius to the world. (53)

Unlike Messiaen, Scriabin neither expounded his philosophy as a fixed system nor fully adopted a particular set of beliefs per se, apart from being "too sure of the inevitableness of his own" theories (Swan 1969, 90), which were often "improvised" (de Schloezer 1987, 1). Despite the apparent vagueness, we are able to glean Scriabin's creative-philosophical outlook through the extensive notebooks he kept. These notebooks outline the evolution of his philosophical musings, thus giving clue to the source of his inspiration. It must be stressed at this point that it is neither the purpose of this paper to analyze Scriabin's speculations about the history of the universe and so forth, nor are we interested in the validity or correctness of Scriabin's understanding of

the doctrines he espoused. This paper is an attempt to understand "Scriabin's Symbolism" as this was reflected in his music; for the purposes of this particular approach to interpreting him, it is the messages and feelings that were important to him that we seek to discern, as have admittedly been encoded in his work. It is not required that we share in his beliefs, or point out his obvious topicality and outdated sexuality and notions, in order to attempt to get into his mindset and express it on his terms. After all, there have been other composers since his death (Messiaen, Cage, Rudhyar), who had strong idiolectic codes, as well as current 'New Spiritualist' composers such as John Tavener and Arvo Pärt, all with their own highly individual spiritual codes operating in their music, such as are interpreted and performed by many, without having to subscribe to the theological or metaphysical messages latent in these codes. So long as we understand those beliefs as accurately as possible, we can perhaps communicate them with some clarity, even cogency. Whether one is able to partake of the musical splendours offered while sympathizing with the gestural aetiology, while knowing the sources of that aetiology, is up to the individual, and in no way incumbent on the choice or quality of the methodology employed to bring that aetiology to light, in fact more appropriately, to sound.

Hence, the thorough examination of the validity of Scriabin's concepts is not of the utmost significance; it suffices to have a good idea about them, as the end-goal of this paper (music performance) is not dialectical, but the possibility of realizing a conveyance of transcendental feeling in theory (as explicated below in the appropriate chapters), and – hopefully - in practice (at the hands of a thusly informed performer). Even this task is far from easy, as Scriabin (contrary to say Messiaen or Xenakis) did not leave extant - isomorphic or other - guides to his scores, so that we could accurately, or extremely approximately interpret various groupings of notes in his music, and assign them to particular feelings or messages or mathematical constructs. Be that as it may, through extensive research of his own writings and testimonies and all other available records, we have a very good idea of how and what he thought of himself and his works, as well as the relevant topical and historical context and background. Unfortunately, the dissection into score-detail is a combination of this knowledge, and informed (but ultimately) subjective intuition on the interpreter's part; but how much of musical interpretation isn't subjective?

Despite the absence of specific annotations for every work, Scriabin's notebooks are available to us, currently housed in the Scriabin Museum in Moscow. They have been translated from Russian by Scriabin biographer Faubion Bowers (1969). In doing so, Bowers made accessible a wealth of information from which researchers like myself, or Garcia among others, can draw. Scriabin's daughter, Marina Scriabina, has also dutifully translated these notebooks, albeit into French (Scriabine 1979).[9] Scriabin's interests can be gathered from his personal notebooks. Recurrent themes such as ecstasy, sensuality, transformation, and unity/multiplicity, permeate Scriabin's writings, effectively betraying his penchant for all things symbolist and theosophical. Additionally, Scriabin's specific deployment of theosophical jargon such as the word 'manvantara' (a theosophical term of Sanskrit origin depicting a period of evolution spanning hundreds of thousands of humans years), which appeared for the first time in the 1905 Swiss notebook (Bowers 1969, 59; Scriabine 1979, 22), once again hints at his esoteric predilections.

Other sources that allow one to glimpse into Scriabin's life and mind include his personal correspondences, and his poetry/libretti that accompany the symphonies, the *Preparatory Act*, and the unwritten and unnamed *Opera*. These, like the notebooks, have been assembled and translated in Bowers' Scriabin biography (1969); the originals likewise are housed in the Scriabin Museum as well. Among the numerous correspondences collated by Bowers includes this oft-quoted letter to his mistress - later future wife Tatyana Fyodorovna, written in May of 1905: "*La Clef de la Théosophie* [The Key to Theosophy] is a remarkable book. You will be astonished at how close it is to my thinking" (Bowers 1969, 2:52). This initiation into theosophical doctrine unsurprisingly coincides with Scriabin's first usage of theosophical jargon in his notebook, as mentioned above.

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[9] The necessary funds to make the journey to the composer's homeland and examine these notebooks firsthand were unavailable at this level of research (M.Phil.). Despite this restriction, it is expected that not much can be gained from these original sources that will contradict the available translations, and discovering any essential materials that could shed further light on the composer's beliefs is unanticipated. As Bowers and Scriabina's translations are for the most part harmonious in content (for no translation can be flawless in its adaptation), it would be more for reasons of completeness that one would seek to study the originals, rather than for the likelihood of adding significantly to the available scholarship. In view of this, it is Bower's translation that will be used in this paper henceforth, but not without having cross-checked these with the like passages from Scriabina's translation, for reasons of correctness.

Finally, the intimate association de Schloezer and Sabaneyev shared with Scriabin allows for a deeper look into what motivated the composer. Many discussions of music and philosophy among them have been both faithfully documented, and published in de Schloezer's *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic* (1987) and Sabaneyev's *Memoirs of Scriabin* (1925).[10] From de Schloezer, we estimate the influence the works of Madame Blavatsky had on Scriabin: "I will not discuss with you the truth of theosophy, but I know that Mme. Blavatsky's ideas helped me in my work and gave me power to accomplish my task" (de Schloezer 1987, 69), said Scriabin. This in turn leads one to examine Blavatsky's seminal work, *The Secret Doctrine* (1989),[11] a book with which Scriabin was familiar, as evident from his "ramblings" in his notebooks. On the other hand, Scriabin's symbolist loyalties may be inferred from Sabaneyev, who said that Scriabin considered symbolist poets Jurgis Baltrusaitis, Vyacheslav Ivanov, and Konstantin Balmont to be his closest friends. Of the special kinship Scriabin shared with Ivanov, Sabaneyev writes: "From the time of Vyacheslav Ivanov's appearance on Scriabin's horizon, something began to change rapidly in his conception" (Sabaneyev 1925, 169, cited Brown 1979, 48). "He's so close to me and my thought – like no one else," exclaims Scriabin (ibid., 1925, 162, cited Brown 1979, 43).

In establishing a Scriabin-Symbolist link, Brown provides a brief biographical sketch, documenting Scriabin's association with the Symbolists from his initiation into the Christian mystic teachings of Solovyov in 1889 and his first acquaintance with the Symbolist poets Blok, Bely and Ivanov, to his acceptance to become a contributor to the Symbolist journal *La Toison d'or* (The Golden Fleece) in 1906, and so forth (1979, 43-44, 47, 51). While Brown further delineates the many points of intersection between Ivanov's and Scriabin's philosophical writings, Matlaw (1979, 5-7) similarly places Scriabin within the Symbolist aesthetic by a similar investigation of their writings, and Morrison's investigation likewise led him to the conclusion that Scriabin's *Mysterium* and *Preparatory Act* ultimately were "Theosophical in plot but

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[10] Sabaneyev's *Vospominaniya o Scriabine* (Moscow: Muzykal'nyi sektor gosudarstvennogo izdatel'stva, 1925) [Memoirs of Scriabin] is yet to be translated to English. As such, my references to it are Bowers' translation as incorporated in his Scriabin biography (though not in its entirety), as well as quotations found in works of other scholars such as Brown (1979), Leikin (2002), and Morrison (1998). This is of no big consequence, as Scriabin scholarship is still by a large quantity anglophonous.

[11] While Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy* is generally regarded to be an introductory book to theosophy, *The Secret Doctrine* is Blavatsky's seminal work. As such, it can also be considered to be the central text of Theosophy.

Symbolist in content" (1998, 303). In all, evidence from Scriabin's notebooks and personal correspondence, his documented conversations, as well as the findings of Brown, Matlaw, and Morrison, firmly place Scriabin within the Theosophical and Symbolist aesthetic psychologically. The task thus lies with Scriabin researchers to further investigate the indisputable link between Scriabin's metaphysics and his music, the need of which Taruskin addresses:

> At the very least it should be apparent that musicians who dismiss Scriabin's spiritual vision as "cosmic hocus-pocus," and literary investigators who assume it impossible that a spiritual vision could be "communicated musically," are cut off equally from the vision and from the music. It is only the music that can communicate the vision, but only if we have vision enough to receive the communication (1997, 358-359).

Vladimir Askhenazy, a formidable Scriabin interpreter himself, similarly urges: "one penetrates deeper into his music, if one studies *what compelled* Scriabin" (cited Bowers 1973, x; italics mine).

Scriabin endeavoured repeatedly in his prose to emphasize the cosmic importance of his compositions, oftentimes giving them suitably grandiose titles (*Poem of Ecstasy*, *Prometheus*, *Mysterium*). The *Mysterium* was to be Scriabin's magnum opus, his grand scheme for mankind according to his philosophical ruminations. More importantly, it provides the key to the composer's creative personality. It is the means to deciphering and interpreting the philosophically imbued code of his highly personal late works. Scriabin's final creative phase (1911-1915), during which the *Mysterium* was mapped and its liturgy foremost in his mind, coincided with the period when the late sonatas nos.6-10 were written. Although these works are not titularly programmatic, by his admission they also were part of the process towards the eschatological magnum opus as related by de Schloezer: "All of Scriabin's creations are but approximations gradually leading to the Mysterium" (1987, 9-10); each successive work should be considered to be "transitory phenomena...a closer approximation of his ideal" (91-92). Considered by James Baker to be the next most significant collection of works in the piano sonata genre since Beethoven (1989, 91), Scriabin's late sonatas - or post-Promethean sonatas - share a sense of "spiritual unity" and "cosmic insight" (Saminsky 1932, 104). According to Bowers, those works are "the real Scriabin...where Scriabin approaches what he wanted to...coming fantastically close to producing a supranatural experience" (1972, 20). Hence, it is upon these sonatas that one bases and begins to

formulate a possible framework of interpretation for Scriabin's late works, for reasons of better understanding and enhanced meaning, as a preparation to their performance.

Under the mentorship of Ivanov, Scriabin accordingly adopted the symbolist's view that a musical symbol was a "resonant device" that allowed one to penetrate into the "essence" of reality. It was able to "fix forever moments of insight into other tiers of being" (Morrison 1988, 288-289). This is evidenced in the essay "The Poet and the Crowd" where Ivanov writes:

> Symbols are the experience of a lost and forgotten heritage of the soul of the people…They have been deposited since time immemorial by the people in the souls of its bards as basic forms and categories in which alone any new vision can be framed (cited West 1970, 75).

In "The Testament of Symbolism", Ivanov elaborates upon his theory: "the poet exists on two planes of reality, and possesses the ability to find the link between these, the visible world of sensual phenomena and the world of extrasensory revelation" (ibid., 74). Consequently, Scriabin's late sonatas should be construed on two symbolic levels; the mystical-spiritualistic plane where he fleshes out his particular philosophical scheme, and the manifestation of this supernal cosmic world through sound in the physical plane. As Scriabin chose neither to expound his philosophical canon, nor to share the mechanics of his method of composition, he likewise did not provide a systematic set of referents to his musical symbolism, believing all to be evident – once again aligning himself with the Symbolist aesthetic:

> The Symbolists never agreed upon any single set of myth symbols for mystery-play writing; rather they created an intentionally artificial mythological language, using many favourite images from their poetry…Some used modern, private symbols while others stylized their works in terms from Greek mythology (Kalbouss 1982, 32).

This inevitably raises the issue of how such a privately conceived symbol might be recognized, organized, interpreted, and its meaning transmitted in music. In short, a symbol is a compositional 'gesture' that can be recognized through the consistency of its use throughout the composer's oeuvre. These symbols may then be organized as a myth, and interpreted according to the mythical framework the composer favoured, ex. Biblical texts, Norse legends, and so forth.[12] As for the meaning: "It is we, the receivers

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[12] See for example the literal symbolism of "Elijah's chariot climbing the Heavens" in Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*; an allegory that even if intended as such in the music, would have remained in

of the mythical message, no longer living in the original, untouched mystical consciousness who imbue it with that ideal meaning" (Tarasti 1979, 25). In other words, assuming inherence of meaning in a musical work, the expressive meaning of Scriabin's works is a construct of the performer or listener; it is evoked, but not perforce articulated by the work per se (Kerman 1980; Kramer 1990; McKay 2008). Hence, the meaning or interpretations to be derived from the analyses in this paper are not necessarily in (complete) compliance with what Scriabin may have had in mind. Nevertheless, it is the aim of this paper to explore the meaning of these late sonatas in a manner that corresponds as much as possible to what mattered to Scriabin. Musical meaning is after all situated "firmly in the eye of the beholder" (McKay 2007, 160), and it is this beholder's view that a better understanding of Scriabin's late works may be found by an examination of the points of intersection between the composer's philosophy' and music.

To examine Scriabin's late works purely from a social-political-historical-cultural context, however, falls short of an 'as faithful as possible' reading of Scriabin's late opuses; one must include the extra-musical elements as Scriabin himself firmly espoused that "art must combine with philosophy and religion to produce something indivisible" (Bowers 1969, 2:50). Even the more critical Sabaneyev admitted Scriabin's philosophical thought to have been the "guiding motive" of his life and oeuvre (1929, 44). Many Scriabin scholars have likewise acknowledged this indisputable link between his philosophy and music (Baker 1989, 95; Bowers 1973, 108; de Schloezer 1987; Garcia 2000, 275; Hull 1920, 162, 258; Rudakova and Kandinsky 1984, 24; Sabaneyev 1929, 44; 69; Swan 1969, 78; Taruskin 1997, 308-309). In other words, an investigation into the composer's philosophy and psychology should not be dismissed as being trivial; Scriabin did after all repeatedly and unabashedly proclaim his music to have been imbued with "specific psychological content" (Bowers 1973, 108). In the manner one's understanding and appreciation of a Liszt symphonic poem or a Wagner opera is enhanced with familiarity of the mythical extra-musical elements and leitmotifs, so too would one's understanding and appreciation of Scriabin. Failure to do so, or the reliance on just the cultural-historical-literary context, would result in an

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oblivion, or have been a highly conjectural hermeneutical find, had in fact the composer not made his intentions public.

incomplete contextualization, and thence reading of the text whose composer so decidedly endeavoured to saturate his music with extra-musical content.

The success or recognition of a private symbol may be determined by the consistency of its use and purported meaning. Scriabin's symbolic vocabulary reached its peak between 1911-1913 when the late piano sonatas were composed. MacDonald writes of the late sonatas: "Each is self-contained in one movement, and each has its own character, yet they belong together as a group and form collectively an astonishing work of art" (1978, 59). MacDonald briefly outlines a scheme whereby interpreters may seek to appreciate Scriabin's music. Interpreters must "learn to distinguish the linguistic variations in his music…to identify the portrayal of dark and sinister forces, to perceive the music's constant tendency to take wing, Scriabin's love of fluttering, volatile figures, of trills and birdsong, and to mark the music's emotional intensity" (1978, 10). Therefore, and like Garcia, this thesis will further examine the expression markings and their allotted compositional/stylistic trait in learning to 'distinguish the linguistic variations in his music', then correlate them to possible/probable symbolist and theosophical tenets. These specific compositional traits and their corresponding symbolic/theosophical associations, will be referred to henceforth in this paper as *gestures*. These are gestures on the written score, not to be confused with physical gestures arising in performance (although conceivably there could be correlations).

The symbolic function of these gestures in accordance with the notions of Peircean trichotomies is yet to be fully determined in this line of Scriabin research, although points of intersection could already be drawn with the spiritualistic Messiaen and his personal sign system as shown in Shenton's (2008) book. Discussion on the function of these gestures as musical topoi as per Ratner (1980) and Agawu (1991), i.e. regarding topics as shared codes in society (for example, opera buffa, recitative, sarabande, etc.), is limited in this paper. Likewise, a full cultural and historical treatise on all the aforementioned Scriabinic gestures akin to Monelle's 'noble horse' (2000, 45-63), although most useful, would be unattainable within the confines of this dissertation. That notwithstanding, a consistent body of six symbols unique to Scriabin's idiom was uncovered and catalogued by Garcia (1993, 2000), a catalogue this paper further expands, laying much in store for future Scriabin and topic theory research.

It is safe to say that Scriabin sought to create his own myth during his own lifetime. According to the composer, his works were meant to have had a palpable impact on an audience (and that would be manifested particularly in his last few compositions where he calls for light-shows, scents, etc.). In essence, he was scoring (not underscoring) the Theosophico-Messianico-Symbolist ritual, where his music would not merely serve as an evocative soundtrack, but as the indispensable catalyst without which the ceremony would fall through. As Tarasti suggests, "a piece of music could acquire meaning or content from mythology" (1979, 30). More so perhaps, when the composer has intended that meaning and content to be inherent in the music from the onset, as Scriabin did (as R. Strauss, Messiaen, Cage (intention of absence of meaning), and others have done). In this essay pertaining to the late sonatas of Scriabin, it is that mystical content, metaphors and even onomatopoeic symbols in the form of gestures, that concern our research, ways in which they can be construed, and possible meaning that could be derived and perhaps affect the structure of a performance. There is of course the, until recently, unchallenged trichotomy of analyst, musicologist, and performer, and their discreet *loci operandi* around the aspects of a musical work. This research proposes that links between the disciplines can be forged, without them having to be chains. The discipline of Analysis has certainly aided performance interpretation, and since "accounts that confine themselves to technical niceties usually are incomplete as interpretations because there is more to most pieces than is uncovered by a reckoning of formal or musical elements narrowly construed" (Davies 2002, 248), a musicological interpretation can offer an additional perspective that sometimes can be incorporated in performance; at least this is what this research advocates.

This does not mean in any way that Scriabin's works cannot be presented without the mandatory recourse to their composer's mystical ascriptions to them; they are structurally fine, musically inspired works that meet the discerning music lover's requirements for technical sophistication, as well as intellectual and emotional fulfilment. So are Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* and Debussy's *La Mer*. However, an additional connection to the music is gained by one's awareness of the symbols behind the works. Through such consensus, an added interpretation and appreciation of the musical elements becomes possible, even with the possibility of disagreement as to whether the composers were successful in their onomatopoeic and symbolist metaphors

of birdcalls and wave crests. The use of these examples does not suggest that Scriabin's sonatas should be viewed as programme music in the same vein exactly. However, as will be discussed further on, those sonatas (as virtually every work in Scriabin's late oeuvre) contain the musical referents of his paratheosophical themes and his teleology. In addition, a ritual is not a mental construct; it is a concrete act, and if there is any musical meaning to be drawn from it, 'emergent' or otherwise, it will come through an actual performance in this particular case, more so than through critical discourse. Where the music, according to its composer, has not come into being solely for its aesthetic qualities, but also for its power to initiate a tangible mystical effect on the audience, it must by necessity be carrying such agents that will make this possible (of course this applies mostly to the incomplete, symphonic works the composer would never finish, less so to the sonatas).

Most composers of conventional scoring *intend* the interpretive agents to bind the musical score's constituents into a gestalt whole, and expect of a professional performer to construe them, and add meaning to what whould otherwise be a student-like, unidimensional reading of a score (where the structure would not be brought out, the themes not individuated and separated from accompaniment elements, no dramatic narrative explored, etc.). We know this from the countless examples of interviews, writings, performances of works by the composers themselves, by the reported and anecdotal arguments of those composers with performers and conductors of their works, etc. Stravinsky declares:

> But no matter how scrupulously a piece of music may be notated, no matter how carefully it may be insured against every possible ambiguity through the indications of tempo, shading, phrasing, accentuation, and so on, it always contains hidden elements that defy definition, because verbal dialectic is powerless to define musical dialectic in its totality. The realization of these elements is thus a matter of experience and intuition, in a word, of the talent of the person who is called upon to present the music (1947, 123).

In my own knowledge and experience of actual musical life and practice,[13] whenever available, the composer is almost always consulted as to what he expects in terms of performance and, especially these days, whether any verbally expressible meaning is attached to the work. This tradition has certainly been strong from the Romantics to

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[13] I have been involved in a few premieres of works during the past ten years, ex. Larry Sitsky (*Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No.4* – piano obbligato), Errikos Vaios (Sonata No. 2 *The Outsider*), etc.

this day, and it is in that vein that this research attempts to ask Scriabin these questions, thus attempting to rehabilitate him to those interested. If it doesn't provide an authentic Scriabin interpretation, at least it raises awareness of the framework of his intentions. Sometimes, 'uninformed' performances have communicated wonderful interpretations. The findings herein are not meant to be used exclusively, but they are there for performers to refer to should they so wish. Often, there is specific 'meaning' that many composers hope will be transmitted. To maximize the potentiality of that transmission, those composers resort to prose. They either provide the alphabet, the grammar by which a work was constructed, or their philosophies and motivations that inspired, or are reflected in their art (see Cage 1961; Messiaen 1994; Xenakis 2001). Scriabin did not leave behind a manual (perhaps his untimely death could be one reason), outlining *how* his philosophical tenets were to be interpreted/communicated musically, but he did leave enough prose, and so did his close associates, enabling us to at least approximate his meaning.

This task of "consulting with the composer" for an intended performance when he is only indirectly available to us, also calls for some degree of hermeneusis. However, a purely hermeneutical interpretation of Scriabin's late piano music is not exclusively essential for the intents and purposes outlined in this research. Rather, it is a middle ground, or a fusion of the division between 'Performer's Interpretation' and 'Hermeneutics' that is required. In this way, hermeneutical corollaries will not be imposed on the performer unmitigated, and their interpretation may be enriched by some degree of musicological input. It is Susannah Garcia's (1993; 2000) approach/method of interpretation that has been significant to my own intentions, and it is that body of work on which I have considerably expanded. Garcia advocates the understanding of the text through the points of intersection between the Scriabin's expressive French markings, motivic commonalities/patterns observable in his late piano works, and corollaries drawn from his personal belief system. In this case, the examination specifically involves the identification and cataloguing of stylistic gestures or musical patterns unique to Scriabin's writing style, and their metaphorical content drawn from the exploration of Scriabin's psychology behind the composition, i.e. a meta-reading of his expression markings through subjective correspondences with his

belief system.[14] In doing so, a list of Scriabin's pianistic compositional traits identified by Samuel Randlett (1966) provides a starting point in the cataloguing of the former, while exploration of Scriabin's personal notebooks, correspondence, and memoirs of his closest associates, provide the insights for the latter. This approach is helpful with Scriabin's personal belief system, which was part of his intellectual environment, which was part of a larger consciousness per se. Such is the approach in Part 1 of this paper, that the symbolic gestures are systematically identified and then related to other like gestures in the sonatas and late works, which are in turn correlated with corresponding aspects of Scriabin's personal belief system, which themselves are in turn a reflection of the various belief systems of the times, namely Russian Symbolism and Theosophy where Scriabin is concerned. As Garcia has shown, these gestures are primarily identified through the examination of Scriabin's florid French performance indications which proliferate in his piano works starting from the Sixth sonata, thus looking through what Lawrence Kramer (1990, 9) has termed a 'hermeneutic window' into the world of the Russian symbolists and theosophists of apocalyptic Russia.

This is not to say that the ensuing discussion of the works is to be viewed as a prescriptive straitjacket for the performer, leaving no room for individual readings. The limited scope of this dissertation would disallow even an attempt in that direction. As it is, there is offered no thorough thematic or harmonic analysis of Scriabin's sonatas herein. Instead, this essay is addressing one parameter of those works only - the *mystical* one, for want of a more convenient term. If the performer does intend to not solely partake of these works as just wonderful music, but also consider them carriers of esoteric narratives of teleological significance, and further wishes to project that dimension and involve an audience in that ritual, this research provides one such approach by recognizing, evaluating, and interpreting those materials in the music which, in this author's opinion, are elementary in this respect. They might be able to bring the ritualistic character of those sonatas more into focus, if performed with such notions in mind. As Howell is quoted in Cook, "The role of analysis in this context [performance] is one of raising possibilities rather than providing solutions" (Howell 1992, cited Cook 1999, 249).

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[14] It is obvious that a more substantial investigation of the grammatical and syntactical structures of Scriabin's music, i.e. harmony, voice-leading etc., would be required in the effort to partake of Scriabin's musical grammar.

If there are to be as many interpretations of a score as there are performances of it, it is my aesthetic choice to attempt to bring in my performance / interpretation of Scriabin's music as much of the composer's musical intentions as possible, without necessarily claiming universal validity or authority. Obviously the interpreter's personality will colour the performance of even the most explicitly explained and de-codified work by any composer, and new meanings will be added. So, it is inevitable that any reading of works (such as Scriabin's), which are not accompanied by volumes of prose explaining every notational unit's literal meaning, will be highly subjective. That caveat does not prohibit, indeed it encourages, an informed scrutiny of authorial intention. Appropriately, a foundation will be laid, from which there is much room for alternative interpretations, such as reinterpreting the works in a modern context, or demythologizing the transcendental aspect.

Part 1

SCRIABIN'S GESTURES

1.1 – Mystical Unity

According to Bowers (1969; 1973), the keystone of Scriabin's eclectic philosophical complex is formulated upon the concept of unity, be it the soul's search of union with God through ecstasy - according to Ivanov's Christian-mysticism (West 1970, 63-64), or mankind's "merging" with the mystical Brahma (Blavatsky 1989, 1:266;), and eventual return to the original "pristine unity" (de Schloezer 1987, 263). According to composer Jonathan Harvey, a composer must first create music that is "ordered and unified" before setting his music to a philosophical ideal (1999, 143). Unity, as opposed to the logical ordering of musical elements, entails a "more profound sense that each [element] contributes to a whole…subordinated to the requirements of that whole" (138). The sum of Scriabin's compositional processes, i.e. form, harmony, motif/theme, accompaniment, and stylistic gestures, are the constituent parts that contribute to the composer's overall sense of unity in composition.[15] Scriabin's concept of unity goes beyond conventional notions of Schenkerian *tonal organicism*; it is the macrocosmic unity of the universe epitomized in the microcosmic musical work.

Sabaneyev recalls Scriabin's claim that his music was "constructed as logically as geometry" (cited Bowers 1969, 1:240-241). Scriabin reasoned that melody and harmony are "two aspects of a principle…Harmony becomes melody and melody harmony…they are one and the same" (Sabbagh 2001, 47); "Melody is unfurled harmony, and harmony is furled melody", explains Scriabin (Bowers 1973, 147). This "symbolic ideal" took the form of the so-called synthetic 'mystic', or 'Prometheus' chord for Scriabin (Taruskin 2005, 197), which became a structural element for the first time in his colour symphony, *Prometheus*. It is the chord from which all musical material in the symphony (and much of his late oeuvre) is derived. Consistent with his grand schemes of union and reunion with God for mankind, Scriabin was the first composer to "reduce musical insanity to a peculiar sort of scheme" (Sabaneyev 1923, 46).

1.1.1 – The Chord of 'Pleroma'

The origins and structure of the mystic chord has been explained in several ways. While Bowers (1973, 169) views the mystic chord as an altered dominant chord, Perle

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[15] Interestingly, his intricate rhythmic structures have yet to be explored.

(1972, 40-43) identifies it to be based on the octatonic scale stacked in fourths. Then there are those like Reise (1983, 228) and Taruskin (1997, 344) who note the 'French Sixth' to be the common chord between the whole-tone and octatonic scales, their combination thereof, i.e. the French Sixth with an additional 'A' and 'D' from the octatonic and whole-tone scales respectively, generating the Promethean chord:

Example 1.1a – 'Mystic' Chord   Example 1.1b – 'French Sixth'

Example 1.1c – Octatonic Scale

Example 1.1d – Whole-Tone Scale

Not being either minor or major, Morrison notes that chord's purpose to be to "establish points of stasis…to mark a hiatus in time and space" (Morrison 1998, 313); it creates a sense of "hovering…movement-within-stasis" (Taruskin 1997, 343; Peacock 1985, 503) as Scriabin 'progresses' from one harmony to the next. Unable to progress in terms of functional harmony, and thus relieved of the need to resolve, the 'Prometheus' Chord becomes a suspended sonority, providing an idealistic sonorous lacuna from within which he sets in motion his mystical-philosophical plan. Scriabin described it to Rachmaninoff as "the chord of pleroma" (derived from the Greek word for "plenitude"), symbolizing the "all-encompassing hierarchy of the divine realm, located entirely outside the physical universe" (Taruskin 1997, 341). Consequently, the mystic chord can be construed as the symbolic curtain that rends what Ivanov terms the "external" reality, *realia*, and the "internal", higher reality, *realiora* (Morrison 1998, 314). That Scriabin referred to the mystic chord as the 'chord of plenitude' alludes to the concept of "plenitude as blissful expressive fulfilment" (Hatten 2004, 249), which coincides with the *expressive genre* (1994, 11) of plenitude in the Eighth sonata (to be discussed in chapter 2.3.1). In all, the concept of mystical unity may be synonymous

with the process by which Scriabin unifies the entire composition harmonically, melodically, structurally, and spiritually.

1.1.2 - Unity in the Sonatas

Having based his conception of the mystic chord on Dernova's treatise (1968; 1979), Bowers regards the mystic chord in Example 1.1a as "one among the many dominant chords" based on the 'French Sixth' structure (1973, 169; Sabbagh 2001, 15). In its full form, this chord is the bolt from which all the musical material in the work is spun. However, it must be noted that it is not always presented in this form; it may be presented with or without the root, fifth, or seventh; it can also be presented in segments (Sabbagh 2001, 22; Garcia 1993, 105). As a general precept, the mystic chord for each work is usually stated at the introduction and/or at the end of each work (Garcia 1993, 103-108).

In Sonata no.6, the mystic chord takes the form of his basic 'French Sixth' with added major sixth and minor ninth (G, C♯, F, B, E, A♭). It is stated in its complete form in the final bars of the work:
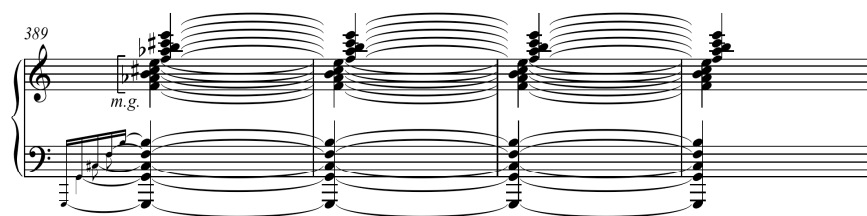
Example 1.1e – Sonata no.6, mm.389-392

Unlike its predecessor, the mystic chord in Sonata no.7 is located in the opening bars. The chord is the same as that of the Sixth, aside from the root of the chord, which is based on C instead of G (C, F♯, B♭, E, A, D♭):

Example 1.1f – Sonata no.7, mm.1-2

In Sonata no.9, it is stated in both the introductory and the concluding bars. Taking the form of the "French Sixth", it is presented as a consonance in the first beat of m.2 (G, C♯, F, B):

Example 1.1g – Sonata no.9, mm. 1-2 and 213-216

The mystic chord in Sonata no.10 (G♭, C, B♭, E♭, B♭♭, A♭) is stated in the introduction, and in the conclusion (transposed a minor third lower):

Example 1.1h – Sonata no.10, mm.1-4 and 371-377

1.2 – Summons (△)

The concept of a fanfare or royal summons is hardly unique to Scriabin's music. The military topic and summons as used in works previous to Scriabin's were adapted to suit the needs of the chamber music genre, as opposed to being directly referential to the various field signals and ceremonial uses as typified by the military trumpet call (Monelle 2000, 35). However, should there be any connection between the military topic and the music, the spirit of that topic has more often than not "preserved its unreality" by evoking past worlds, not contemporaneous to that of the society in question (20). Hence, Scriabin's use of the military-like summons is further removed in the world of topical signification than say, Mozart's or Schumann's. Where they merely evoke a distant society, Scriabin evokes a spiritual world based upon his eclectic philosophizing. The use of the military summons in his music has nonetheless been adapted accordingly, to promote his needs and role as prophet for mankind. Having a natural distaste for the inferiority and coarseness of all matters fleshly and worldly (de Schloezer 1987, 131-132), the trumpet-like summons used by Scriabin should thereby be taken to possess an otherworldly meaning; it has no literal militaristic overtones for it goes against the grain of his philosophical credo.

There are only two instances in his piano oeuvre where Scriabin makes explicit allusion to the trumpet-like 'military summons'. The first is in Sonata no.5 and the second in *Vers la Flamme*, Op.72, where he marks *quasi trombe imperioso*, and *comme une fanfare* respectively. In both cases, note the common 'short-long' rhythmic pattern engendering the Scriabinic 'summons' gesture (Garcia 1993, 81; 2000, 278); an upbeat (of one to three notes) to a longer sustained note on the downbeat often characterizes the prototypical Scriabinic 'summons' gesture. It may or may not be preceded by a rest, and may either leap upwards or downwards to the sustained note. In the Fifth sonata, it is marked by a two-quaver upbeat to a sustained downbeat chord in m.114:

Example 1.2a – Sonata no.5, mm.114-116

In *Vers la Flamme*, an upbeat semiquaver (A♭) falls to a sustained note (G) at the second beat of the bar:
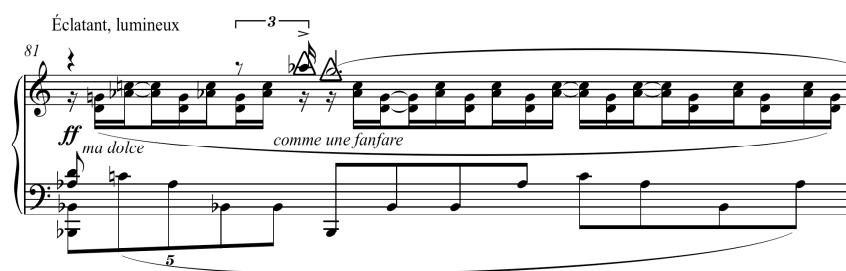
Example 1.2b – *Vers la Flamme*, m.81

In her investigation of the 'summons' gesture in Scriabin's late piano sonatas, Garcia surmises that it is the rhythm, and not the "precise intervallic content" that identifies the trumpet-like 'summons' motif (1993, 81; 2000, 278). Bowers considers this trademark rhythmic gesture to be representative of the composer's mystical "calls, summonings, or invocation." (1969, 1:177). Unswerving in his self-appointed duty to mankind, Scriabin's middle and late oeuvres share the same philosophical thread: "You have heard my secret call, hidden powers of life, and you begin to stir…To life! …I summon you to life…Rise up from the secret depths of the creative soul" (prologue to Sonata no.5, Bowers 1969, 2:59-60; Scriabine 1979, 32). Scriabin's oeuvre from his middle period is based upon that one philosophical goal, his grand scheme for mankind's initiation into the *Mysterium.* The recognition of the possible narrative function of the 'summons' (and 'dysphoric summons') gesture is especially critical to a work's discourse; it is primarily responsible for setting in motion the chain of events of each work from the onset to its conclusion.[16]

1.2.1 – Sonata No.6

Scriabin regularly uses the word *appel* (to call, summon) in Sonata no.6, which is evocative of a "divine or Satanic summons" pertaining to a mystical experience (Garcia 1993, 112). As to whether the forces summoned are divine or satanic in origin is

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[16] See chapter 1.6.4 for a discussion of how the primary 'summons' gesture can be used as a narrative and structural device in Sonata no.7.

entirely contextual and due to be investigated in the subsequent chapters. In Example 1.2c, the descriptor *sombre* alludes to the summoning of darker forces and *mysterious powers*. Although the rhythmic gesture does not subscribe to the 'upbeat to sustained downbeat' locale as described, it nonetheless - and more importantly, conforms to the 'short-long' schematic rhythmic shape:

Example 1.2c – Sonata no.6, mm.188-192

In Example 1.2d, *the terror rises* (*l'épouvante surgit*) when the 'summons' is used in a *dysphoric* context (Monelle 2000, 62-63). The summoning of darker forces is portrayed by the discordant tritones and minor ninths in the bass (chapter 1.5.1):

Example 1.2d– Sonata no.6, mm.112-116

1.2.2 – Sonata no.7

Acting as the prophet, Scriabin imperiously summons mankind, which is represented by the 'erotic' second theme (see Example 1.8c and footnote 16). This *imperious* 'summons' is accompanied by illumining trills of 'light' (chapter 1.3.1), hence the summoning of divine light:
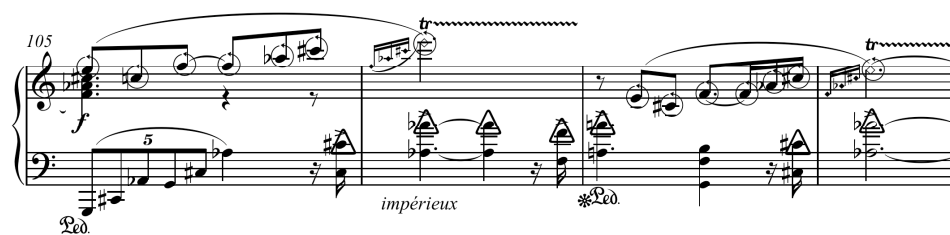
Example 1.2e – Sonata no.7, mm.105-108

1.2.3 – Sonata no.9

There are two significant 'summons' motifs in Sonata no.9; active and passive. The passive 'summons' gesture is analogous to a mystical incantation, emerging as a mysterious murmur. Conforming to the 'short-long' schema, the 'demisemiquaver to crochet' rhythmic pattern is used predominantly in the first half of the sonata:

Example 1.2f – Sonata no.9, mm.7-10

The active 'summons' gesture in Sonata no.9 makes its first recognizable appearance as a demisemiquaver to a sustained dotted-semiquaver in the following example. Initially a somewhat abstruse rhythmic figure, it later becomes a menacing and 'dysphoric summons' from the recapitulation forth, running rampant in the coda:

Example 1.2g – Sonata no.9, mm.69-74

Garcia remarks that the active 'summons' is derived from the opening four-note motif in Example 1.2h where it is disguised as a quaver upbeat leading to the minim (2000, 279-280). Sharing the same intervallic content, the active 'summons' gesture in m.74 is but a condensed (and transposed) version of the opening summons, which may be construed as a gentle evocation of an unknown legendary entity or spirit:

Example 1.2h – Sonata no.9, mm.1-4

1.2.4 – Sonata no.10

Similar to Sonata no.9, the introduction of Sonata no.10 is passive:
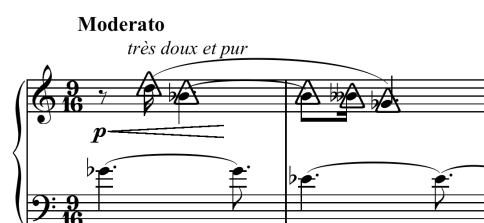
Example 1.2i – Sonata no.10, mm.1-2

The active 'summons' gesture in this sonata is luminous and vibrant. Read as an amalgamation between the gestures of 'light' and 'flight' (chapters 1.3.1 and 1.4.5), the

summoning may be directly referring to the forthcoming flights of ecstasy and divine illumination, brought about by the positive occult power of sound (chapter 1.8):
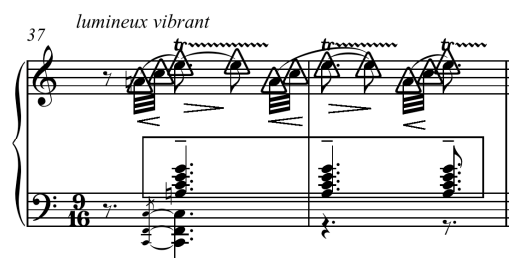
Example 1.2j – Sonata no.10, mm.37-38

1.3 – Light (◆ ◇)

The concept of light was central to Scriabin's philosophy, and an important concept behind his novel compositional style and sound. Scriabin confided in his notebooks that he wanted to be the "brightest light, the greatest (and only) sun…to illuminate the universe with my light" (Bowers 1969, 2:54; Scrabine 1979, 17). Like Olivier Messiaen, who saw "an eternal music of colours [and] an eternal colour of musics" (Godwin 1987, 50), whose insight thereof is a perpetual "*éblouissement*" for the composer, i.e. the dizzy and dazzling feeling that allows him to be in touch with another reality (69), Scriabin went as far as to publicly proclaim himself to be synaesthetic.[17] In the spirit of maximalism (Taruskin 2005, 5), he proceeded to ascribe colours to *Prometheus*, as a starting point to the *Mysterium*; it was to be performed with a *tastiera de luce* (colour organ), bathing the entire auditorium with coloured light.

More than the mere accumulation of bright tones and shining chords, light came to have an otherworldly, transcendental meaning. Fascinated by the myths and legends of ancient Greece, Scriabin shared Plato's belief that the stars in the heavens were gods who "communicated with each other by means of flickering lights instead of speech", that the ideal world was "a place where everything shines" (Bowers 1973, 106-107). As there are various manifestations of light in Occultism, i.e. the clear and penetrating light of God, reflected light, and abstract light - each token of light having a specific theological destination (Blavatsky 1989, 2: 37-38), Scriabin understandably employs an assortment of pianistic devices in order to represent the various types and degrees of light. To Scriabin, all forms of light became synonymous with "divine illumination" (Garcia 2000, 283); it was also the "energy" of a latent, yet powerful creative force according to theosophical doctrine (Blavatsky 1989, 1:337).

Scriabin's fixation with light becomes obvious by the frequent use of expressions such as *de plus en plus radieux*, *étincelant*, *fulgurant*, *lumineux, vibrant*, etc. An investigation into Scriabin's style in conjunction with these markings reveals the following pianistic devices to be utilized in representing the gesture of 'light' in its

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[17] Scriabin's interview with psychologist Charles S. Myers and conclusions drawn by John Harrison have cast doubt regarding the validity of Scriabin's claims to be a synaesthete (Galeyev and Vanechkina 2001; Harrison 2001; Myers 1914).

various guises: (1) trills, (2) high-register chords, (3) tremolos, (4) grace note streams, and (5) rolled chords.

1.3.1 - Trills

Furthering the conventional function of the trill as an elaborative device, Scriabin employs it as a bearer of light in his compositions. In agreement with Rosenfeld that "no composer ever used the piano trill as luminously and effectively" (1936, 160), Rimm likewise asserts that Scriabin "uses trills incessantly for luminosity"; they represent the "palpitation…trembling…the vibration in the atmosphere" (2002, 113). This passage from Sonata no.10, otherwise known as the "trill" sonata (Bowers 1969, 2:244), demonstrates the cumulative use of the trill to project *more and more radiance*:

Example 1.3a – Sonata no.10, mm.148-153

1.3.2 – High-Register Chords

Used primarily as accompaniment devices in his early period, Scriabin's chords began to take on the added significance of creating effects of "intense light" in his middle period (Randlett 1966, 39). A subtle and common form of synaesthesia, the matching of "auditory to visual brightness", i.e. perception of brighter colours as belonging to the higher registers of sound (and vice versa) as reported by Lawrence Marks (Peacock 1985, 489), is a concept familiar to many musicians. As such, the higher registers of the

piano are often utilized when Scriabin chooses to portray brilliant flashes of intense light. In the coda of Sonata no.5, op.53, the word *luminosity* enters Scriabin's expressive vocabulary for the first time and it is made evident by reinforcing the melody with chords in the piano's upper registers:
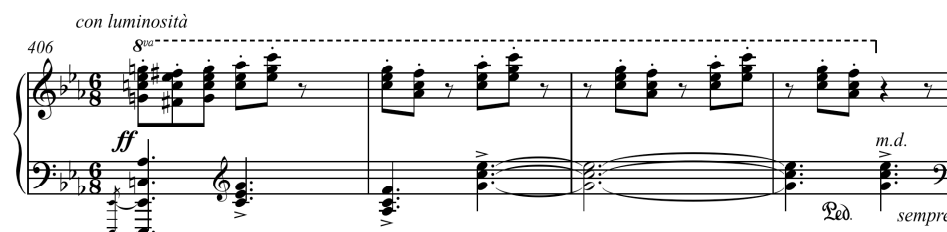
Example 1.3b – Sonata no.5, mm.406-409

Proclaiming the Seventh sonata to be "holy" and of the "purest mysticism" (Bowers 1969, 231; Rimm 2002, 112), Scriabin affectionately nicknamed this sonata the "White Mass". More than the mere representation of intense light, Scriabin fuses the rhythm of the 'summons' gesture to herald the imminent arrival of divine illumination and mystical union. This moment is represented by a twenty-five-note chord - the brightest light (and largest chord) in Scriabin's piano vocabulary in Example 1.3d; it is a superimposition of the mystic chord set of this sonata (C, F♯, B♭, E, A, D♭), which has been transposed up a minor third, respelled and presented without the root, i.e. ([E♭], A, D♭, G, C, F♭). Furthermore, the 'sparkling' gesture of Example 1.3g has also been transformed into resonant bell-like octaves in the lower treble stave, as shown in the following passage (Example 1.3c), the symbolic intent of which is in little doubt: "…as if a thousand bells had gone wild," Scriabin related to Sabaneyev (cited Bowers 1969, 2:231):

Example 1.3c – Sonata no.7, mm.313-316

Example 1.3d – Sonata no.7, m.331

1.3.3 - Tremolos

Likened by Bowers to be reminiscent of a "Roman candle of increasing, magnifying blazes, until it becomes consumed in its own flames" (1969, 2:255), *Vers la Flamme* is a test of the pianist's stamina in sustaining a forte tremolo for two whole pages, producing a "singed" effect (Rimm 2002, 166-167). Further, notice the use of staccatos in Examples 1.3b and 1.3e, which implies a particular tone quality, rather than the literal shortening of the note value (Randlett 1966, 36), to which Yun insightfully ascribes a certain "pulsating" quality affiliated with light (1998, 66):
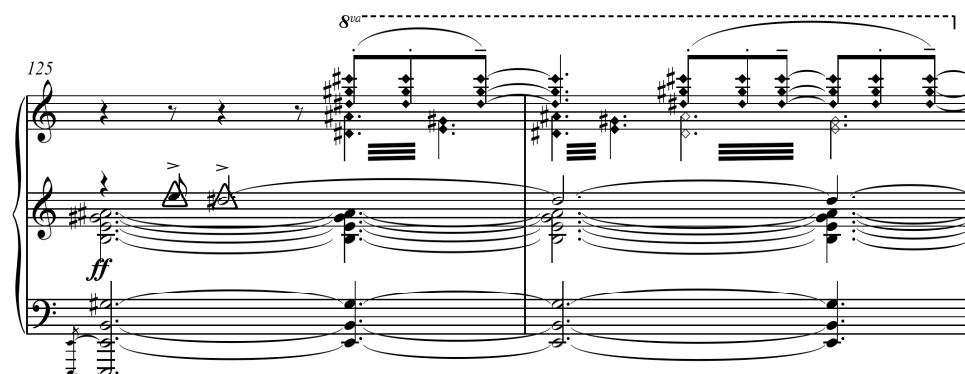
Example 1.3e – Vers la Flamme, mm.125-126

Perhaps the ultimate exemplification of bright, radiant light can be found in the climax of Sonata no.10. Depicted as "blinding white light" by Richard Toop (1991), in a matter of nine bars, normal tremolos fireball into high-register tremolo chords that are symbolic of what Scriabin professed to be the sun that "comes down and blisters the earth" (Bowers 1973, 16; Rimm 2002, 113):
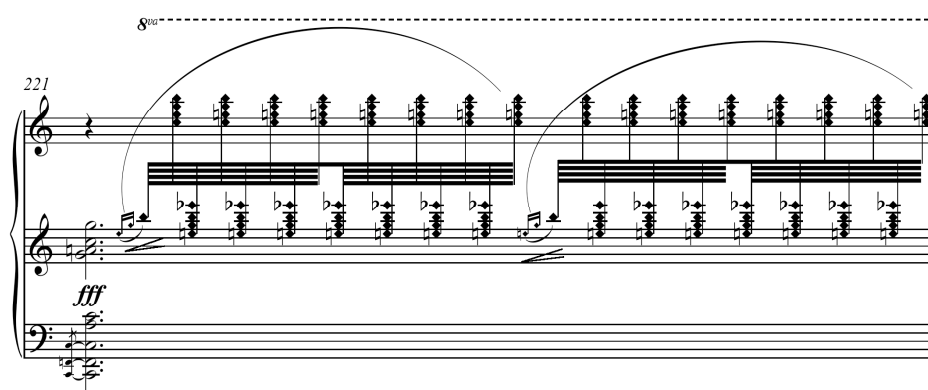
Example 1.3f – Sonata no.10, m.221

1.3.4 – Grace Note Streams

For a more refined and dispersed type of light, Scriabin proceeded to embellish melodies and themes with streams of grace notes. *Sparkling and dazzling*, the following excerpt is representative of a "shimmer of unfocused light"; it is the "glimmering theme" which simulates "sparks from the fountain of fire" (Bowers 1969, 2:231), as described by the composer:
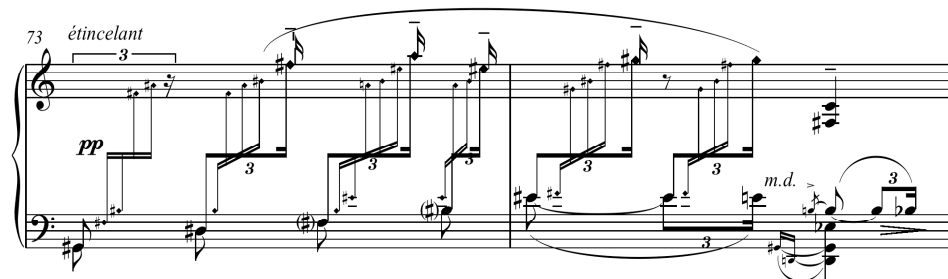
Ex.1.3g – Sonata no.7, mm.73-74

Despite the effusion of arpeggios, *Étrangeté*, Op.63 no.2 (*Strangeness*), tells a tale of "evil's deceptive, illusory world" (Bowers 1969, 2:232). Marked *gracieux, délicat* in the opening bars, Example 1.3h is to be played with *sudden strangeness*, which brings to mind the "Serpent" who is not Satan, but a "bright Angel…clothed in radiance and glory" (Blavatsky 1989, 2:388):
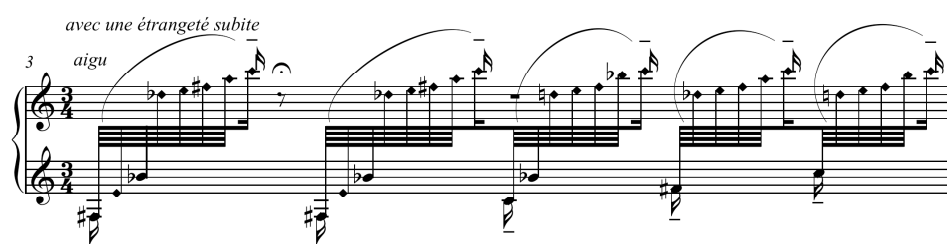
Example 1.3h – Étrangeté, m.3

1.3.5 – Rolled Chords

Rolled chords are used to indicate a faint and indistinct shimmer of light. Against the stillness of the opening soundscape, the C leading to the D in the rolled chord (m.3) is reminiscent of the first shaft of sunlight glistening through the canopy: "It is a forest!...the sounds and the moods of the forest," declares Scriabin of the Tenth Sonata (Rimm 2002, 113). Read in parallel with the rhythm of the 'summons' gesture, it may be considered the harbinger for the forthcoming powerful tremolos of Example 1.3f:
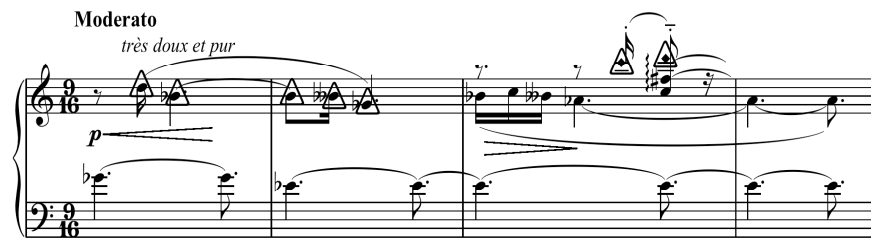
Example 1.3i – Sonata no.10, mm.1-4

One should however exercise caution before categorizing rolled chords to be a gesture of 'light', for its designation is usually contextual. Rolled chords representing 'light' are performed at a slower tempo than those representing 'flight'; a faster tempo would otherwise blur the shimmering tones in favour of an embodied experience of flight and a sensation of 'taking-off' (see chapter 1.4.3).

1.3.6 – Quashing 'Light'

Sonatas nos. 6 and 9 are frequently referred to as 'dark', 'satanic' pieces. That is not to say gestures of 'light' are nonexistent, but that they are often subdued by the darkness that circumscribes them. In other words, the 'darkness' that pervades the work is made conspicuous by the general absence of 'light' gestures. Dubbed the "Black Mass" by his close friend and theosophist Alexei Podgaetsky, Sonata no.9 is a "spitting at all that is holy or sacred" (Bowers 1969, 244). Whereas the continuous use of trills is ordinarily indicative of a growing luminescence, the upward surge from the trill is immediately neutralized by its descent back to the starting note (G in beats 2 and 4 of m.31). Similarly, when the trill is momentarily suspended in flight, a sharp plummet follows as shown in beat 1 of mm.30, 32, and 33:
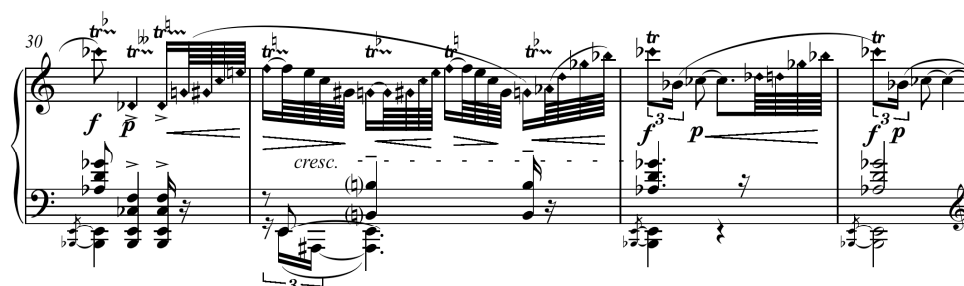
Example 1.3j – Sonata no.9, mm.30-33

A similar case occurs in Sonata no.6, a work Toop (1991) considers to be the "blackest of the ten". Here, a 'sparkling' gesture persistently erupts into a trill that culminates into a radiant *sf* chord in mm.324 and 326. Although this series of 'light' gestures repeats itself it is to no avail, for it becomes extinguished in the depths of the lower registers where the occult intervals dwell (chapter 1.5.1):
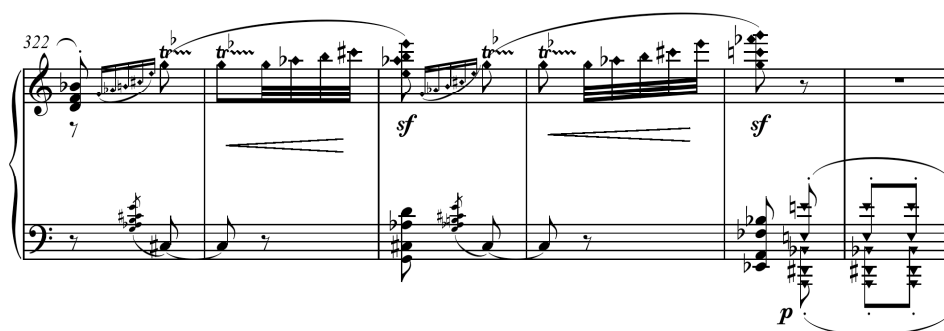
Example 1.3k – Sonata no.6, mm.322-327

Although Scriabin does not explicitly mark expressions of darkness in his sonatas, the prevalence of expressions signifying light and its representative gestures urges one to question the minimal usage and sudden cessation of these light-bearing gestures in the 'darker' works. Bearing in mind that Scriabin's music is to be heard as "prisms of crystals reflecting and refracting thousands of lights and colours" (Bowers 1970-71, 15), it is thus of vital importance to be able to distinguish between the various types and shades of light, or lack thereof.

1.4 – Flight (■ □)

Closely allied with the gesture of 'light' is the gesture of 'flight', whereby the composer aspires towards the heavens, seeking union with the creator through divine illumination and ecstasy. In a conversation with Georgy Plekhanov, Scriabin declared that he could hurl himself into the boulders below without injury for he would be able to "float in the air" through sheer willpower (Bowers 1969, 2:96). Suffice to say, Scriabin did not consent to demonstrate when kindly requested to do so. Scriabin was however able to live up to his oft-repeated maxim - "From the greatest delicacy (refinement), via active efficacy (flight) to the greatest grandiosity" (Bowers 1973, 55, 178) - by devising an array of pianistic figurations such as his various idiosyncratic trills, repeated chords etc., all designed with the purpose of countermanding the natural dampening and decay of sound, to "defy the piano's laws" as such (1970-71, 14). In doing so, the sound was able to soar higher, linger and float for longer in the atmosphere when the pedal releases it, as if it was allowed to 'fly' and transport the composer and his audience to the realm above.

Flight is made apparent by Scriabin's explicit French annotations such as *ailé* and *vol joyeux*, the former meaning *winged*, the latter *joyous flight*. However, the simulation of flight is not exclusive to the mere labelling of passages with words denoting it. In fact, the portrayal of flight in his late period works is the culmination of much experimentation with various pianistic devices starting from Sonata no.4, Op.30, the work that marks the beginning of his middle-period when his philosophizing began to influence his creativity. Although Scriabin did not religiously stipulate expressive markers in his earlier works, he left several clues, enough to chart a possible course for discerning gestures of 'flight' in his later works.

1.4.1 – Towards Flight - 'Lift'

Poème Ailé, Op.51 no.3 (1906), the '*winged poem*', is structured upon the same recurring rhythmic gesture, a quaver - tie - demisemiquaver figuration. The sensation created by the falling demisemiquavers onto the quaver - which in turn is tied to the following group of falling demisemiquavers, creates a sensation somewhat analogous to what Hatten designates as the 'lift' gesture (2004, 157), i.e. the momentum generated

by the falling demisemiquavers carries onto the tied quaver, giving it a mild sense of 'lift' as it attempts to take off. The quaver is momentarily suspended in mid-air before the cycle repeats itself, bestowing the entire work with a constant floating, 'uplifting' sensation. As a supporting gesture of 'flight', rolled chords additionally act as a springboard for flight (chapter 1.4.3) in the following example:
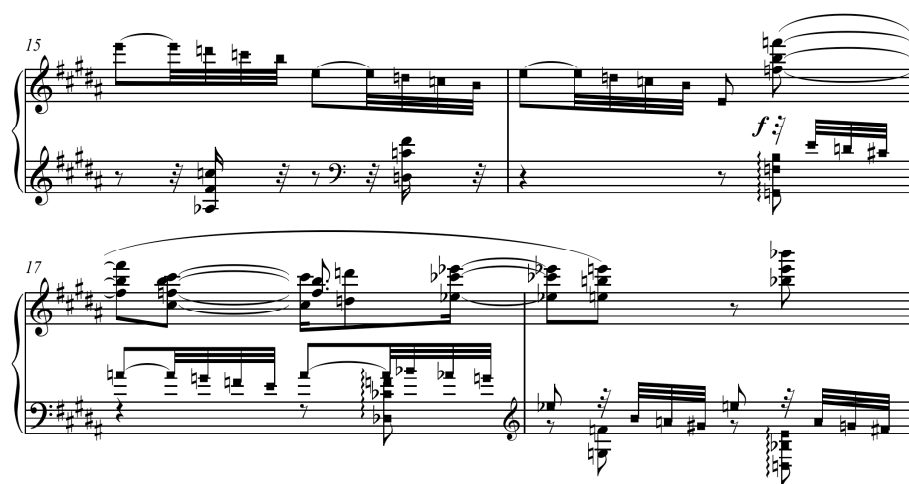
Example 1.4a - Poème Ailé, mm.15-18

In *Énigme* Op.52 no.2, Scriabin marks a rapid rising five-note figuration *envolé*. In preparation for take-off at m.61, the 'lift' quintuplets and the buoyant ascending figuration in m.59 are to be played lightly, as if unhampered by gravity. Also note the (implied) rolled chords in the bass:[18]
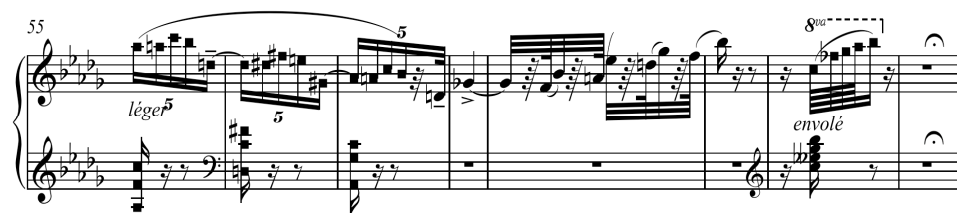
Example 1.4b - Énigme, mm.55-62

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[18] It must be noted that Scriabin often fails to notate the arpeggiation sign for many of his larger spanning chords. Randlett notes the failure on the part of the pianist to play these appropriately, thus diminishing the intended effect of the Scriabin sound and philosophy (1966, 22-24).

In Sonata no.6, Scriabin uses *ailé* for the first time as a performance descriptor. This 'lift' gesture is notated accordingly as per Hatten's formal description of its underlying schema; it is marked by an "energetic rise to a point where energy and gravity seem poised in the balance, a hovering on a released…pitch, then a subsiding fall…by a mediated descent…" (2004, 154). As such, Example 1.4c creates a sense of 'lift' at the released pitch at its apex, which may be experienced as a "weightless release and hovering" (162):

Example 1.4c – Sonata no.6, m.3

1.4.2 – Rapid 5-Note Motif

The rapid five-note ascending or descending one-way motif (Garcia 2000, 284) is Scriabin's most conspicuous symbol of flight. As to why Scriabin chose a sequence of five notes is unknown, but one plausible explanation is that this 'flight' gesture may be due to the merging of the quintuplets and the *envolé* marking in Example 1.4b. The visual effect and embodied sensation (of a 1-2-3-4-5 fingering and vice versa) infers a sense of 'taking-off' as the performer gently pushes off from the keyboard with their thumb or fifth-finger at the tail end of this gesture. In the following passage, Scriabin notates two five-note motifs at m.60, followed by a demisemiquaver quintuplet within an already rapid five-note motif at m.61:

Example 1.4d – Sonata no.7 mm.60-62

The rapid five-note motif is also used routinely with the 'erotic' theme, synchronous with Scriabin's exclamation: "I am on the road to Ecstasy!...What flights!" (Bowers 1969, 2:101; Scriabine 1979, 42). This in turn brings to mind the well-known expression "flights of ecstasy". In the coda of Sonata no.10, *frémissant, ailé* (quivering, winged) is represented by an ascending five-note motif in m.307; it is used with the transformed 'erotic' theme (see chapter 1.8.4) and 'light' gesture, signifying a state of divine ecstasy:

Example 1.4e – Sonata no.10, mm.305-307

1.4.3 – Rolled Chords

As with the gesture of 'light', the use of rolled chords representing 'flight' would likewise require a contextual reading in order to appraise the more probable gestural function. Described by Scriabin as *winged and spinning*, the rolled chords in the treble undoubtedly pertain more to flight than light. Therefore, the unmarked rolled chords in the bass at mm.282 and 283 are flight-simulating rolled chords, acting as a springboard for flight by propelling and transferring the momentum from the left to the right hand in this simulation of taking off:
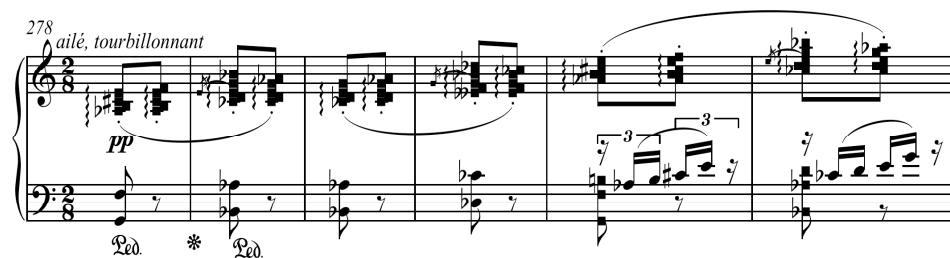
Example 1.4f – Sonata no.6, mm.278-283

In the following example, the rolled chords in the bass act as a launch pad to the rocketing five-note motif which accompany the 'erotic' theme:

Example 1.4g – Sonata no.7, mm.145-148

1.4.4 – Repeated Chords

Being a characteristic feature of Scriabin's entire piano oeuvre, the frequent use of rapid repeated chords renders this device a multifaceted gesture, representative of 'flight' (Examples 1.4h and i), 'light' (Example 1.3e) and 'resonance' (Examples 1.6e and f). Employed as a gesture of 'flight', the repeated chords create a "beating effect through the resounding of the chord masses" (Rudakova and Kandinsky 1984, 26). In the coda of Sonata no.4, Scriabin utilizes masses of repeated chords to carry the melody as he illustrates his flight towards the sun; he demands the coda to be performed fierily and jubilantly (*focosamente, giubiloso*), "I want it even faster…It must be a flight at the speed of light, right toward the sun, into the sun!" (Rimm 2002, 112):
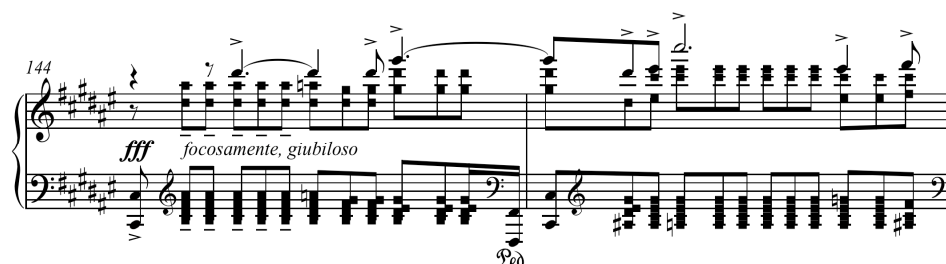
Example 1.4h – Sonata no.4, mm.144-145

Similarly in Sonata no.6, fast repeated chords propel the *joyous and triumphant* melody in its flight towards ecstasy:

Example 1.4i – Sonata no.6, mm.180-181

1.4.5 – Dissipating Trills

The dissipating trill is characterized by an upward surge towards a sustained trill at the apex, which decrescendos into nothingness in due course. This way, the sonority momentarily floats in the air, allowing for enough time to send "an idea out into the void" (Garvelmann 1969, 31). The embodied sensation of this gesture is somewhat akin to the 'lift' gesture. In Example 1.4j, the dissipating trill is to be played as a *caressing wave*, i.e. beat 1 swells up or 'lifts' towards the sustained A♭ trill (the crest of the wave), followed by a descent as the wave gently subsides:

Example 1.4j – Sonata no.6, m.14

In Example 1.4k, following the initial 'lift', the trill floats and lingers, then ever so slightly mellows and dissolves into the A♭♭; there is an almost negligible sensation of descent:

Example 1.4k – Sonata no.6, m.30

The hovering and dissipation into the atmosphere is also suggestive of Scriabin's desire to transfigure man (chapter 1.10). Hence, the dissipating trill remains a constant reminder of Scriabin's grand plan as the work unfolds. In Sonata no.7, Scriabin's allusion to his ideal is firstly stated at m.19; it is subsequently used eight times in the ninety-two bar development alone, the frequent usage of which is a portent of achieving transfiguration in the final bars:
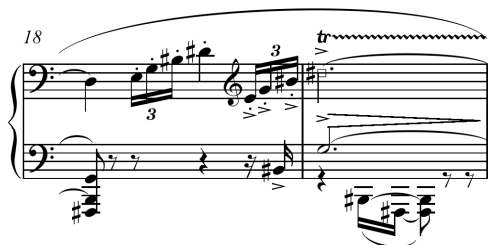
Example 1.4l – Sonata no.7, mm.18-19

1.4.6 – Negating Flight

As light may be quashed, so can flight. In the passage marked *with trouble*, the rapid five-note motif is "brought down to earth", so to speak, immediately after having broken free from gravity's bonds. Its descent is first marked by a sensation of hovering, brought about by the 'lift' gesture in beat 1 of m.128 in the treble, which is then followed by the spontaneous relocation in the bass, where the five-note motif (now in semiquavers) is further held back by the heavy *tenutos* and *ritardando*; flight has been negated:

Example 1.4m – Sonata no.6, mm.124-129

Scriabin's defiance of gravity and embodied experience of flight is evident in many of his compositions, especially when it is combined with the overall upwards, floating, or soaring trajectory of his mystical 'erotic themes' and dissipating codas (see chapters 1.8 and 1.10). Scriabin defies gravity by *fluttering*, *hovering*, *soaring* etc., and in so doing, his music becomes "rarefied in atmospherics" (Garvelmann 1969, 22).

1.5 – The Occult (▼ ▽)

As the musical representative of symbolist Russia, whose artists were "devotees of black magic, wizards, magicians, conjurors of spirits" (Sabaneyev 1923, 44), Scriabin was tempted to "gaze" into the diabolic, and nonchalantly sought to "court the danger of being engulfed in it" (de Schloezer 1987, 137). Espousing the theosophical dictum that "absolute light is absolute darkness" (Blavatsky 1989, 2:96), Scriabin set forth to embrace the darker occult forces as a "contrast" to the light he sought (Bowers 1973, 121). He believed the creation of the world to be the work of Satan, or Lucifer, as well as God; "God must include evil, or stand as the direct cause of it, or else surrender his claims to absoluteness" (Blavatsky 1989, 1:413). As with light and darkness, "Good and Evil are twins…Separate them, by cutting off one from the other, and they will both die…Each has to be generated and created out of the other, in order to come into being" (2:96). Scriabin theorized the "spirit of evil" to be the "creative spirit" (Bowers 1969, 2:232), or the "creative Force, for Good as for Evil" (Blavatsky 1989, 2:510). Without evil, one can neither know nor recognize what goodness is; good and evil are relative values. Consequently, Scriabin paired good and evil successively during his late period, exploring both good and dark occult forces. For example, the horror of Sonata no.6 is contrasted with the holiness of Sonata no.7 "White Mass"; Sonata no.9 "Black Mass" is juxtaposed with the overwhelming radiance of Sonata no.10; *Vers la Flamme*, Op.72, is closely followed by *Flammes Sombres*, Op.73, no.2.

1.5.1 – Diabolical Intervals

It is interesting to observe the use of semitones, minor ninths, and tritones to symbolize the darker occult elements in Scriabin's music. Widely considered as the "devil's interval" for hundreds of years, the tritone is also a staple interval of the symmetrical scales, i.e. whole tone and octatonic, commonly used in Russian folk (and art) music (Roberts 1993, 70-72). Despite the tritone acting as the base of his harmonies as the substitutive dominant (Bowers 1973; Dernova 1968; 1979; Guenther 1983), hence its prolificacy in his music, it is the specific employment of oscillating tritones as a stylistic feature that predisposes Scriabin's tritone more towards the occult. That Scriabin chooses to preserve and highlight the unstable sonorities of the tritone by oscillation, alludes to the calculated decision to privilege the discordant/chromatic over

the consonant/diatonic harmonies. That the tritone is presented in conjunction with other occult intervals (to be discussed) also alludes to its occult disposition, as opposed to it being merely an interval. In the "Black Mass", Scriabin deploys oscillating tritones throughout the entire composition to symbolize the "spitting at all that is holy or sacred" (Bowers 1969, 2:244):

Example 1.5a – Sonata no.9, mm.23-25

In his discussion of Liszt's music, Scott (2003) observes the traditional use of fifths to connote the holiness of medieval church ritual, which when set against a demonic context negates the sanctity of the ritual, "turning, as it were, mass into black mass" (131). In Example 1.5b, bare fifths are used in the treble at mm.75-76 in this dialogue between light and darkness:
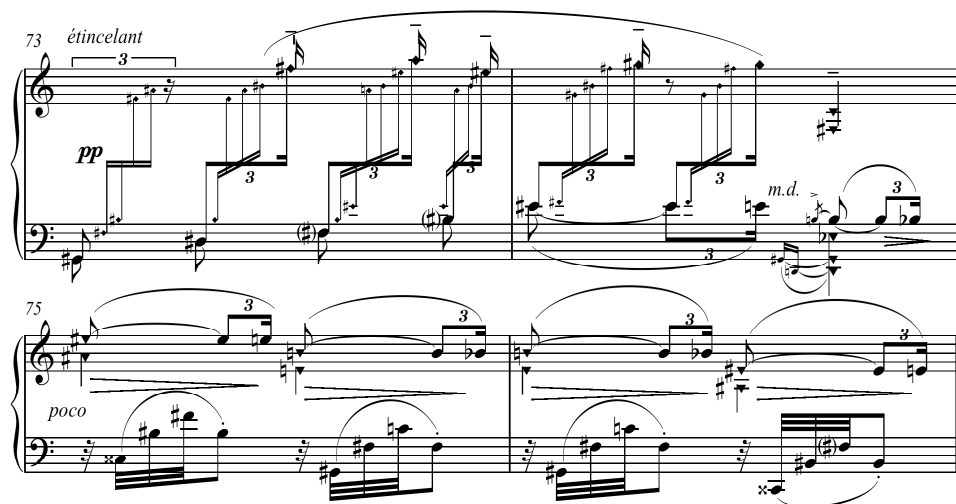
Example 1.5b – Sonata no. 7, mm.73-76

The dialogue between light and dark intensifies as the fifths in mm.307-308 become octaves in mm.311-312 in this futile attempt to counteract the transformed 'sparkling' gesture in mm.309-310:

Example 1.5c – Sonata no.7, mm.307-312

In the "Black Mass", Scriabin merges bare fifths with the 'short-long' rhythmic schema of the 'summons' gesture, whose fusion effects a 'dysphoric summons':
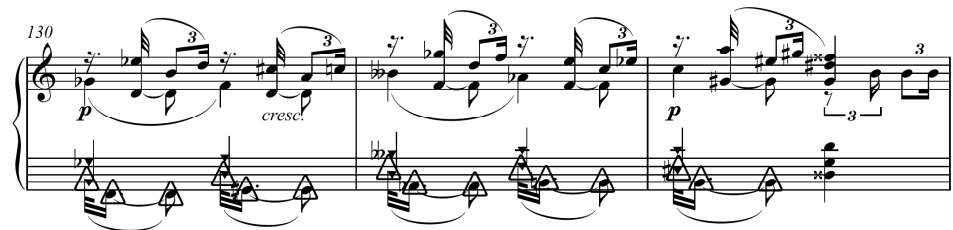
Example 1.5d – Sonata no.9, mm.130-132

Bowers purports the minor ninth and the descending semitone to be symbolic of the "descent of spirit into matter," and "human sorrow" respectively (1973, 111).[19] In the opening bars of the "Black Mass", Scriabin employs a 4-note descending semitone

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[19] The descending semitone has been widely considered for centuries to portray grief. However, this should not be taken too literally in Scriabin's late works; it is contextually dependent. For example, the 'summons' motif of *Vers la Flamme* (Example 1.2b) does not allude to 'embodied human sorrow', but a celebration and triumph of light instead.

motif, whose alto and bass parts (mm.1 and 3, and mm.2 and 4 respectively) are outlined in tritones. Combined with the 'summons' gesture, it implies the summoning of a dark, *legendary* spirit (consistent with Russian Symbolist imagery):

Example 1.5e – Sonata no.9, mm.1-4

Scott also observes the use of grotesque dances and malicious laughter to be representatives of the demonic (2003, 130). In the following example, minor ninths and tritones in the bass are illustrative of *the terror [that] arises and mingles with the delirious dance*:

Example 1.5f – Sonata no.6, mm.298-302

1.5.2 – Triplet Figurations

Scriabin also employs a staccato triplet, or a staccato quaver figuration (in compound time), as another means to represent the occult in his music. In Scriabin's first true Mephistophelian composition, *Poème Satanique*, Op.36, Bowers tells the story of a pair of lovers, whose love is destroyed by the devil's mocking laughter, which is "indulgent at first…[but] gradually becomes exultant as he destroys love…His laughter is poisonous and bitter" (1969, 1:337). In this excerpt, the lovers' *dolce* theme is

relentlessly juxtaposed with the devil's ironic laughter (*riso ironico*). The sardonic laughter is characterised by the use of staccato quavers, which overwhelms the sweetness of love at m.13:

Example 1.5g – *Poème Satanique*, Op.36, mm.9-14

Following Example 1.5e, Scriabin describes the staccato 'triplet' gesture as a *mysterious murmur*, whose combination with the oscillating tritones and 'summons' gesture could be read as an incantation for the summoning of dark forces:

Example 1.5h – Sonata no.9, mm.7-10

Scriabin develops this gesture by altering it rhythmically in mm.143-146; it is now more persistent and insinuating, due to the increased use of repeated notes within the triplet figuration. Also note the 'falling semitone' opening theme in the bass of mm.143-145 and the assertive 'summons' gesture in the first beat of m.146, whose

combination insinuates the imminent arrival of the sinister, dysphoric gothic march (Example 1.5l):
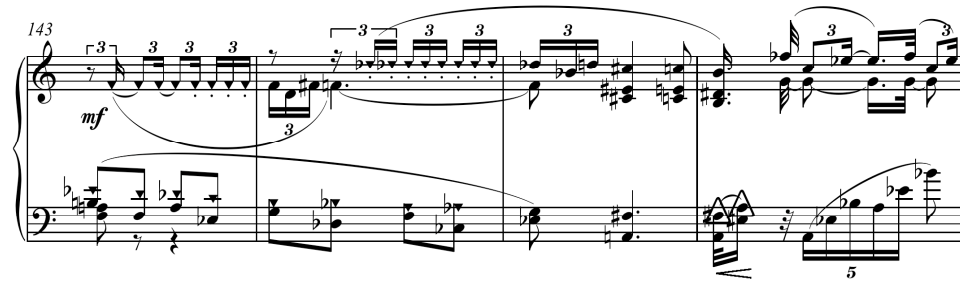
Example 1.5i – Sonata no.9, mm.143-146

The murmuring triplet figuration becomes frantic as it is now played with the hands crossed in rapid tempo; the left hand plays both the lower bass (an accented octave in m.161) and the treble stave, crossing over the right hand in mm.159-162. The unnaturalness of this posture, i.e. the pianist's physical configuration, induces a latent physical tension for the performer (Smith 2004, 182), which compounds the overall sense of agitation in this passage:
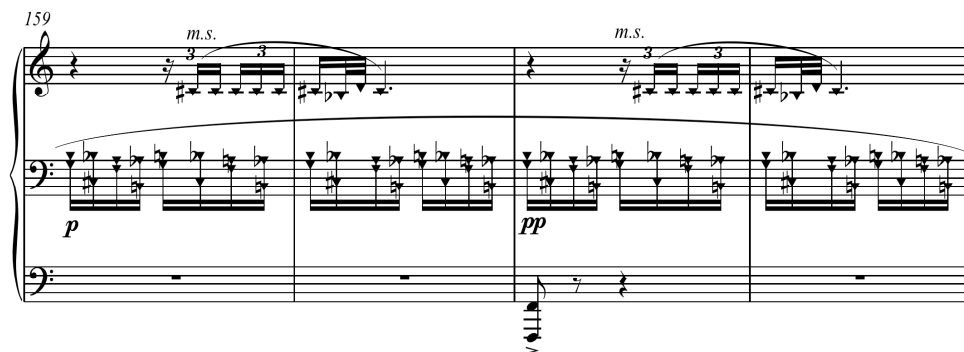
Example 1.5j – Sonata no.9, mm.159-162

1.5.3 – Corruption

Even though Scriabin was primarily attracted to light and divine illumination, he was likewise "peculiarly attracted to moods of sin, corruption, and perversity" (Bowers 1969, 1:338). Perhaps the best example in point would be the "Black Mass". In this

sonata, Scriabin orders the 'erotic' theme (Example 1.8e) to be played *with a gentleness more and more caressing and poisoned*. The long string of tenuto A's in mm.99-101 is suggestive of the pining and doting nature of this excerpt, as are the sensual sweeping arpeggio figures, i.e. the extended 'caress' gesture (chapter 1.7.1) in the accompaniment. This gentle passage is poisoned however, by the oscillating tritones and triplet figuration at m.102, which recur routinely and more frantically, as seen in Examples 1.5i and j:

Example 1.5k – Sonata no.9, mm.97-102

The 'erotic' theme is ultimately poisoned and transforms into the *Alla Marcia*, or what Bowers imagines to be "a nightmare march of Gothic visions, ghosts, and disturbed horrors" (1969, 2:244); Scriabin has effectively corrupted what was pure:
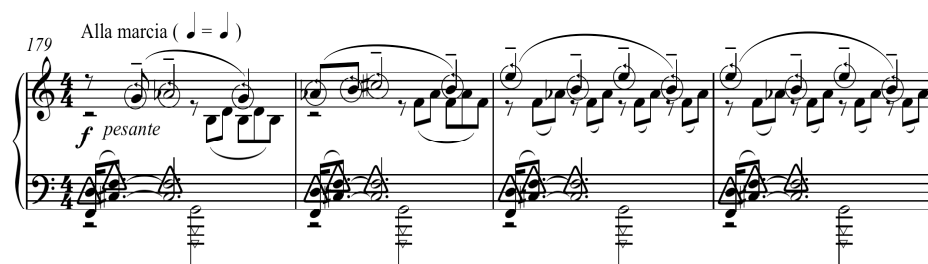
Example 1.5l – Sonata no.9, mm.179-182

1.5.4 - "White" Magic

Bearing in mind the duality of Good and Evil, and Light and Darkness, Bowers claims Scriabin to have mixed "the satanic and the saintly, black and white magic; he was a holy man and a wicked wizard" (1969, 1:338). Hence, Scriabin's occult symbols could be rendered as gestures of goodness and 'light' instead. Observe the oscillating tritones in *Vers la Flamme* in the following example:
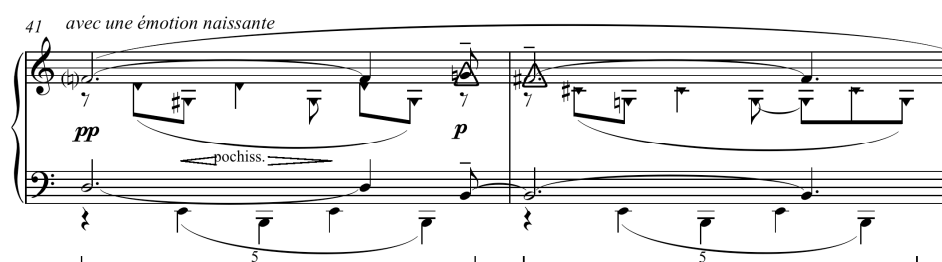
Example 1.5m – Vers la Flamme, mm.41-42

A more conventional, 'dark' reading of the oscillating tritones would ordinarily allude to the summoning of a sinister force. This however, is in direct opposition to the inherent nature of the work. On the other hand, should the occult tritones be read as 'white' magic, they could allude to the gift of flame to mankind, according to the myth of Prometheus. This becomes the summoning of a positive creative force, symbolic of the birthing of mankind, as indicated by the word *naissante*. Scriabin did after all theorize evil, as personified by Satan or Mephistopheles, to be a creative force (Bowers 1969, 2:232), in concordance with theosophical doctrine (Blavatsky 1989, 2:510). Consequently, an alternative interpretation of the oscillating tritones in *Vers la Flamme* would suggest that the occult power of the tritone, be that of a creative force. The

oscillating tritones are *marked* as euphoric as opposed to their typically *unmarked* dysphoric state (Hatten 1994, 39). At the heart of the matter, is how a performer may interpret the above *marked* and *unmarked* contexts of the same passage. Should he convey a sense of foreboding (unmarked), or a sense of expectancy (marked)? It goes without saying that one must firstly be wary of the context of the piece, and Scriabin's philosophy as a whole, before stereotyping the occult intervals as 'dark', for they could in fact take on a positive meaning.

1.6 – Resonance (☐ **)**

Sound is an immense occult power; it is a "stupendous force, which the electricity generated by a million of Niagaras could never counteract the smallest potentiality when directed with occult knowledge" (Blavatsky 1989, 1:555). As such, the Pythagoreans and other mystics regarded the tremendous power of sound and its resonance to be the germinating creative force of the cosmos (1:433; Khan 1987, 261). According to Hazrat Inayat Khan, Indian musician and Sufi as well as Scriabin's contemporary, sound is best used in "spiritual evolution"; the power of sound can tap into the resonances of the soul, allowing it to "evolve spiritually and experience all the different stages of spiritual perfection". In short, sound and its organized form as music, prompts the "awakening [of] the soul…Music is the shortest, the most direct way to God" (263). Plato believes sound to be able to "correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul" (cited Isacoff 2007, 48); it lifts thought above the "denseness of matter; it almost turns matter into spirit, into its original condition" by creating harmonious vibrations that resonate through the whole being, and vice versa (Khan 1987, 267). Expectedly, Scriabin's devoted fascination with mysticism and Theosophy would suggest that he would have, if not wholeheartedly, subscribed to and embraced these mystical pronouncements. He considered the attainment of spiritual and occult powers to be feasible; that his music could "change the inner psyche", facilitate "communal bonding" and "spiritual uplifting" (Morrison 1998, 309), and he created a unique sound-world for his compositions towards realizing his eschatological proclamations in music.

In light of his investigation on Scriabin's pianistic style, Samuel Randlett (1966) expatiated on Scriabin's mystic chord, which he regarded first and foremost as sonority, not harmony: "The sonority comes first…[it is] ultimately responsible for virtually the entire content of the printed page throughout Scriabin's work" (4). Consequently, Scriabin formulated an array of pianistic devices and stylistic gestures especially to capture, enhance, and exploit the piano's natural resonance. Contemplating Dane Rudhyar's claims that the sonority is the "living Tone which is the soul and source of energy" in Scriabin's compositions (1930, 35), the ensuing discussion will accordingly encompass an investigation of Scriabin's allusions to bells

and their resonance, and his use of arpeggios and fast repeated chords as gestures of 'resonance', as per his mystical inclinations.

1.6.1 – Bells

Scriabin had a special fascination for bells and their sonority, so much so that he frequently chattered to those among his intimate circle, about his plans to hang bells from the clouds in his *Mysterium*. Bells played an important role in the secular lives of the twentieth-century Russian people and mystics (Leikin 2002, 35); they can be synchronously "joyous, ominous, alarming and beautiful" (Bowers 1973, 111). Just as the rising incense acts as the conduit for man's prayers on earth to reach the Gods above, the bells' sound was used as a means for emulating heaven on earth as part of the church ritual (Isacoff 2007, 49). Primarily utilized in religious services, the bell-tones designate the boundary between the "real world" and the celestial "more real world" (Morrison 1998, 317). Depending on the context, the literal sound of bells, and its manifestation as resonance – whether soft and atmospheric, or loud and thunderous – is made distinctive in Scriabin's late sonatas by accented/staccato/tenuto octaves and chords, that are repeated either in unison or transposed. They are frequently notated in simple rhythms.

Scriabin often begins his sonatas with a specific resonance or harmony in mind, creating an ambience and mood, not unlike the familiar sense of sacredness, piety, awe and mystery one experiences upon entering a religious domain. The introductions are often marked 'mysterious', befitting his penchant for events cosmic and supernatural: *mysterious and concentrated* in Sonata no.6 below, *mysterious sonority* in Sonata no.7 (Example 1.6l), and *mysterious murmur* in Sonata no.9 (Example 1.6h). In the following example, *tenuto* chords resonate in the tepid atmosphere, providing a still backdrop for the beguiling *strange and winged* figuration to take shape:
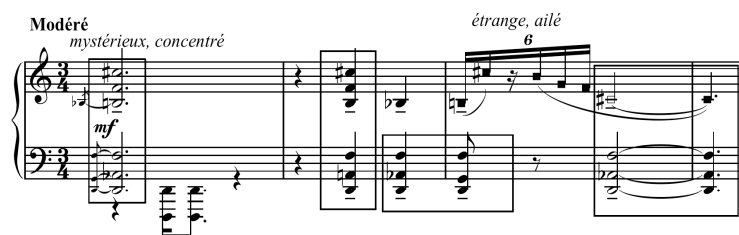
Example 1.6a – Sonata no.6, mm.1-3

At this juncture, Scriabin uses a dark occult combination of chords in the bass (minor-ninths and tritones). A harmonically discordant atmosphere of impending dread has been established, whose effect is intensified as the pianist releases the clashing sonorities with the pedal, effecting disharmonious vibrations inside the soul, a spiritual regression:
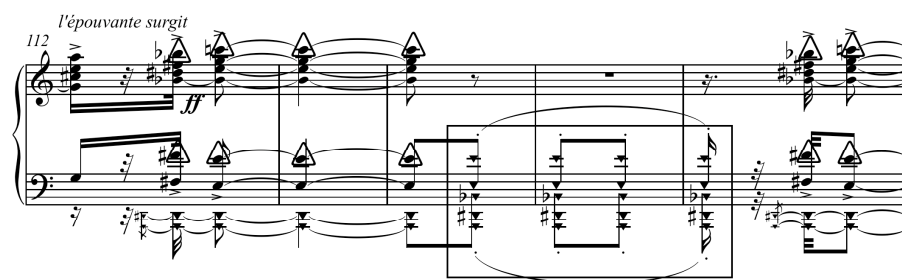
Example 1.6b – Sonata no.6, mm.112-116

In addition to setting the tone and evoking a specific atmosphere for the work, Scriabin also identifies bell-like resonances with celestial phenomena. Written in the higher registers of the piano, he builds the resonance by transposing the same minor-ninth chord up the customary minor-third circle in mm.157-160. Belonging to the skies, the high register is a fitting habitat for the bright flashes of lightning in mm. 161 and 165, while the oscillating tritones in the bass simulate the rumble of thunder before the lightning strikes in this passage marked *comme des éclairs*:

Example 1.6c – Sonata no.7, mm.157-165

As another preparatory study to his *Mysterium,* Scriabin attempts to emulate the sound of bells that hang from the clouds in the climax of Sonata no.7. While the imaginary pealing of bells may be heard in the accented 'sparkling' octaves and in the 'summons-light' gesture of the upper staves, the booming bass and long pedal markings act as a resonating chamber to exponentially amplify the profuse mass of sound. According to Scriabin, "everything here is mixed, blended…as if a thousand bells had gone wild" (Bowers 1969, 2:231):

Example 1.6d – Sonata no.7, mm.313-316

1.6.2 – Fast Repeated Chords

According to Randlett (1966), Scriabin's predilection for repeated chords may be credited to the fact that they give a pulsating quality, a rhythmic vibration, and sustaining power to an otherwise static sonority. He also observes the sonority to pile up wondrously as the sympathetic resonance of the piano strings becomes increasingly stronger when it is played with the sostenuto pedal fully depressed (39). Prior to the *sudden collapse* that signifies the end of the development in Sonata no.6, Scriabin rapidly builds the sonority by thickening the texture and accenting the pulse of the fast repeated chords with *tenuto* markings. Amplified by the pedal, the resonating vibratory effect is representative of the destructive power of sound:

Example 1.6e – Sonata no.6, mm.204-207

Repeated chords may also serve the purpose of intensifying divine light. As the string of trills in mm.148-153 is neither adequate nor capable of actuating the *molto crescendo* (i.e. the presumably higher amplitudes of sound needed to rouse the soul),

Scriabin logically employs fast repeated chords in response to his call, for more and more radiance at m.148, hence more and more sound:

Example 1.6f – Sonata no.10, mm.148-155

1.6.3 – Arpeggios

Another characteristic of Scriabin's pianistic style incorporates the extensive use of florid and hectic arpeggio-like accompaniments. According to Randlett (1966), Scriabin's "wide-ranging bass figures" are essentially made up of broken chords; they may be regarded as the "great-grandchildren of the Alberti bass" in fulfilling their role to provide a "constantly self-renewing bass sonority" (20). Of the wide range of arpeggio-like accompaniments employed in Scriabin's works, the following are most common to Scriabin's idiom: 1) the 'repeated-note arpeggio', 2) the 'one-way arpeggio', and 3) the '(minor)-ninth arpeggio', all three sharing the common purpose of "enlivening a sustained sonority" (59).

In the passage where Scriabin strives to create an atmosphere where *all becomes charm and sweetness*, he employs a sinuous pianissimo arpeggio-like repeated-note figuration in the bass (m.284). Having set the ambience with this serene backdrop, he counterpoints the melody in the treble staves (compare the melody in the foremost treble with the gradual birthing of the 'erotic' theme in the alto line of the middle stave). The repeated-note arpeggios create a domain of ethereal haze, an appropriate habitat for the 'erotic' dream-like theme to evolve (Example 1.8a):

Example 1.6g – Sonata no.6, mm.244-245

The following excerpt features Scriabin's use of the one-way arpeggio. First written as a triplet, then as a semiquaver, a quintuplet, and finally as a sextuplet, Scriabin gradually engorges the resonance, by transposing essentially the same chord up the minor-third cycle in mm.5-7. In all, the combination of (discordant) sound and occult gestures in the opening measures is suggestive of the destructive power of sound, as a preview of the dark events that follow:

Example 1.6h – Sonata no.9, mm.5-10

In Example 1.6i, the 'occult' one-way arpeggio is accompanied by clangourous bell-like chords in the treble. It is symbolic of how sound may resonate and pulsate through the dancers' bodies as they dance their way to a *marked* dysphoric ecstasy, contrary to Dionysian cult ritual practices (see chapter 1.9.3):

Example 1.6i – Sonata no.9, mm.199-200

In his survey of Scriabin's stylistic features, Randlett also observes that Scriabin used the tritonal minor-ninth arpeggio only during his late period works (1966, 69). The incorporation of the occult minor-ninth interval in the arpeggio is coincident with passages where Scriabin endeavours to portray discord (Example 1.6i). In Sonata no.7, the minor-ninth one-way arpeggio is used when Scriabin marks the passage to be conveyed *with trouble*:
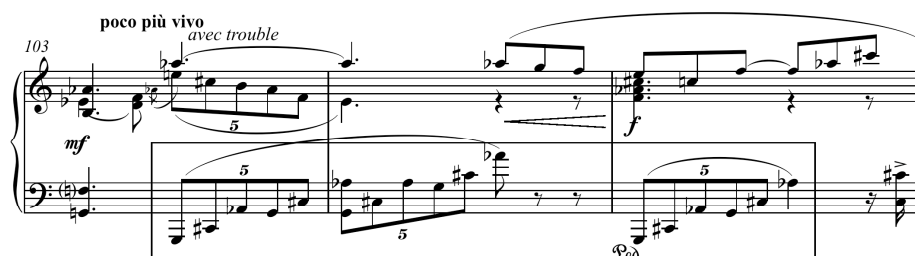
Example 1.6j – Sonata no.7, mm.103-105

In Sonata no.6, the minor-ninth arpeggio is used to foster an atmosphere of dread, in readiness for *the terror [that] arises* in m.112:
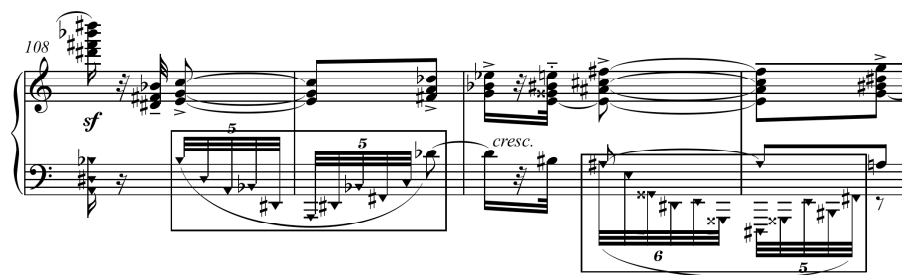
Example 1.6k – Sonata no.6, mm.108-111

1.6.4 – Resonance as a Theme

In his discussion of Schubert's Sonata in A-major, D.959, Hatten (2004) suggests the (overtone) resonance of the fortepiano as a thematic element used for unifying each movement in the sonata. A theme, say the 'erotic' theme, may convey different meanings when played in various articulations, dynamics, and registers of the piano. (This is in addition to the gestural import already conveyed by the performer's body movements when playing the same theme in *fortissimo* and *piano*.) In his analysis, Hatten contrasts the opening theme of the first movement with its restatement in the coda an octave higher, pronouncing the theme in the coda to be "ethereal" and "transcendent…as if suggesting a spectral reminiscence" (184)…the "heroic, physical component [of the introduction] is severely attenuated by the *pianissimo* dynamic" (186). In similar vein, the ensuing discussion will outline Scriabin's use of resonance, or the effect of resonance, as a thematic gesture and expressive tool in Sonata no.7.

In the introduction of the "White Mass", the fast repeated chords steadily intensify as the *mezzo piano* culminates into the resultant crashing *forte* chords, which thereafter fade into the *mysterious sonority* at m.4. Interpretively, the fast-repeated chords act as the undercurrent for the electrifying, pulsating resonances of mm.1-2, while the succeeding wide-ranging two-way arpeggio 'enlivens the sustained sonority' and resonance at m.3, which gradually becomes absorbed into the ambient-setting bells at m.4. Written as such, the dynamically restrained repeated chords and the sparse bass in m.1 permit the trumpeting 'summons' gesture to be clearly heard. Scriabin's 'summons' rings brilliantly over the thrumming accompaniment, especially when the pedal releases the additional resonances effected by the extra force required while performing its accents (keeping in mind that the 'summons' motif is already a superimposition of the resonance and harmonies already accumulated by the fast repeated chords). The accruing resonance brought about by the crescendo is indicative of the urgency of Scriabin's divine message. Just as the sounding of trumpets typically heralds the coming of royalty, the physicality and presence generated by the *forte* 'summons' gesture/chord between mm.2-3 may likewise be a prelude to the imminent arrival of a supernatural event. Read as such, the mysterious sonority at m.4 may be likened to the residue of sound as the resonance dissipates, allowing time for the masses to consider his divine call:

Example 1.6l – Sonata no.7, mm.1-4

The opening 'summons' gesture is also used to announce important structural junctures of this work. For example, it signals the start of the development section at m.77, which is a replica of the opening statement but transposed down a major-third (it is actually a diminished fourth), the recapitulation at m.169, and what Garcia (1993, 176) designates to be a second development following the recapitulation. Furthering the idea of thunder and lightning of Example 1.6c, Scriabin marks *foudroyant*, or *thunderous*, to hail the onset of the recapitulation where the rumbling minor-ninth arpeggios do battle with the flickering chords of lightning. By extending the range and thoroughly exploiting the lowest octaves of the piano, Scriabin is able to dramatically amplify and capitalize on much of the resonance a piano can offer in those low registers, as the pedal releases the masses of sound. This excerpt spans a little over five octaves, as opposed to a little under four octaves in the opening statement. In contrast with the exposition, the accented 'summons' gesture that strives to be heard amidst the deafening commotion in mm.169-170 finally succeeds in blaring its divine message at mm.171-172, where it is reinforced in amalgam with the gesture of 'light'. By initially privileging the resonance (which alludes to the occult power of sound) over the 'summons' message, and bearing in mind that the 'summons', combined with 'light', is able to exorcise the 'dark' as in mm.171-172, this passage may be said to take on an otherworldly perspective – a titanic struggle, or cosmic battle between good and evil as such, should the occult intervals retain their typically *unmarked* state of dysphoria. Consequently, the 'summons' gesture may convey and harbour more angst, strife and immediacy than that in the opening statement, i.e. the fate of mankind as opposed to Scriabin's previous proselytizing:

Example 1.6m – Sonata no.7, mm.169-172

For its final statement, Scriabin indicates the theme to be delivered *brilliantly and with flash*. Note that the pedal should be depressed only during mm.239-240 as indicated by the composer's pedal markings. This may suggest that Scriabin now chooses to privilege the 'summons' gesture, whose accents are allowed to sound clearly above the less sustained and throbbing accompaniments, in favour of 'resonance' in mm.237-238. Further note the additional *imperious* 'summons' in the bass between mm.239-240. The summoning may also be observed to effect the transformation of the *mysterious sonority* of m.4 into a radiant, cascade of pealing bells in a higher register of the piano, which in turn could be interpreted as the conversion from a negative to a positive force of sound. This, in combination with the general absence of the lowest sonorities and the additional streaming gestures of 'light' and/or 'flight' in m.240, insinuate light's impending victory in this cosmic battle, and the soul's imminent attainment of divine illumination through ecstasy. In contrast with the preceding statements, there is a general sense of uplift and expectant joy and celebration as Scriabin advances towards victory:

Example 1.6n– Sonata no.7, mm.237-240

In light of this discussion, it would seem that the use of resonance as a unifying thematic element is of crucial importance in charting the expressive trajectory of this work. This now spins a tale of cosmic warfare and spiritual battle from its inception – from the urgent 'summoning' of the masses - to the savage struggle and anxiety of battle, to the exhilarating anticipation of victory. In viewing resonance as an active principle (rather than mere sound), capable of structuring and varying a theme, one adds an extra dimension to the sounds a composer creates. It compounds the effect of a sequence of sounds in a passage of music, giving it a sense of immediacy, amplifying concepts and sensations the composer may have wished to convey. For example, instead of being a simple occult minor-ninth chord, the consideration of resonance may add a sense of fear, foreboding, horror etc. depending on the context. Resonance may be said to animate and breathe life into the sound structure; it becomes the 'living Tone'.

1.7 - Sensuality

Described by Sabaneyev as the "true poet of tonal erotic caresses" (1923, 61), musical gestures representative of Scriabin's sensuality permeate his scores, complementing his erotic and ecstatic overtures. Predictably, Scriabin often wrote about sex and sensuality in his private notebooks: "You are intoxicated by my fragrance, awakened by my kiss licking you and fluttering over you…I wish to awaken in your consciousness a desire for insane, unlimited bliss…" (Bowers 1969, 2:101; Scriabine 1979, 43). Furthermore, expressive markers such as *ravissement* and *extatique,* also appear regularly as evidence of the sensual overtones pervading his music. However, it must be noted that Scriabin's sensuality is more concerned and connected with portraying the spiritual, rather than the physical aspect of the word. He felt contempt for all matters fleshly; his sensuality was devoid of "carnal materialism", for want of portraying his spiritual ideal in his music (de Schloezer 1987, 131-132). More than being a medium for expressing his philosophical beliefs, Scriabin's entire harmonic system should also be considered as his personal language of sensuality; the composer himself referred to his mystic harmonies as "sensations" (Garvelmann 1969, 32; Rimm 2002, 113). As all musical elements are derived from his all-encompassing harmonic system, the subsequent chapters will accordingly address the 'erotic' themes and the 'ecstatic' codas, while this chapter will set forth to highlight three pertinent methodologies which Scriabin may have applied, consciously or subconsciously, in order to create an aura of sensuality in the late sonatas.

1.7.1 – Caressing Accompaniments

A trademark Scriabin accompaniment is the use of two-note slurs, which are punctuated successively with rests, should they occur as a sequence. These are often notated in semiquavers or lesser values and, more often than not, proceed from the higher to the lower note, and from the stronger part of the beat to the weaker; it is what Randlett referred to as 'Scotch-snap figures' (1966, 124). Note that while this gesture is visually similar to the repetitive two-note gesture of 'resonance', as representative of thunder in Example 1.6c, there is one marked difference; while the gesture of 'resonance' is ultimately rooted and oscillates between the same two notes in order to compound the sonority, the sensual 'caress' gesture appears to flitter about the keyboard; it is as if the pianist is physically caressing the piano while performing this

accompaniment figuration. In Sonata no.9, an effusion of 'caress' gestures underlie the pure and limpid 'erotic' theme (Example 1.8a), imparting a sensation of titillating touch as the composer metaphorically tries to awaken and arouse the theme by his 'licking and fluttering kisses'. With specific reference to this sonata, Scriabin advises the performer to have a "fondling touch, as if making love to the piano" (Rimm 2002, 224):

Example 1.7a – Sonata no.9, mm.87-88

Scriabin extends the two-note 'caress' into what becomes an 'extended caress' gesture. Visually akin to a stroking movement when performed on the piano, the 'extended caress' inherently maintains all the abovementioned features, except that it is comprised of three or more slurred notes; it can be identified experientially as well as by notation. As with the two-note 'caress' gesture, this is not to be confused with the gesture of 'resonance'. For instance, in Example 1.7a, the falling demisemiquavers in the alto line of m.88 should be considered a gesture of 'resonance'. As each grouping of demisemiquavers is repeated using the same notes, they function more as a reverberating body from which the 'erotic' melody responds to the underlying 'caress' stimuli. In the following example, the 'extended caress' is found to support the 'erotic' theme:
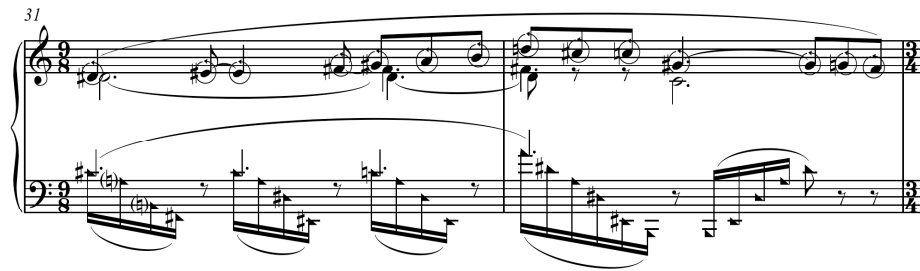
Example 1.7b – Sonata no.6, mm.31-32

1.7.2 – Polyrhythms and Cross-rhythms

Another feature characteristic of Scriabin's works is his use of polyrhythms in cross-rhythmic complexes, which usually consist of the conventional two versus three and four versus three, as well as the more outlandish four versus five, five versus eight etc. According to Randlett, polyrhythms generate an "energetic musical activity within a cloud of pedalled sonority" (1966, 126). The 'energetic musical activity' may be understood as a frictional force, the *metaphorical coitus* or 'heat' arising from the interaction between two opposing metres and/or sensual-erotic gestures.[20] The following excerpt highlights the use of 'extended caresses' in the bass of mm.86 and 88, and the 'erotic' theme in the treble, which come together in 4:3 polyrhythm in those bars. In other words, sensuality as 'heat' may be perceived by the friction of the 'extended caress' rhythm upon the 'erotic' theme. Also note Scriabin's description of this passage as *wavy, sinuous and insinuating*, hence the implication of an intrinsic sensuality:
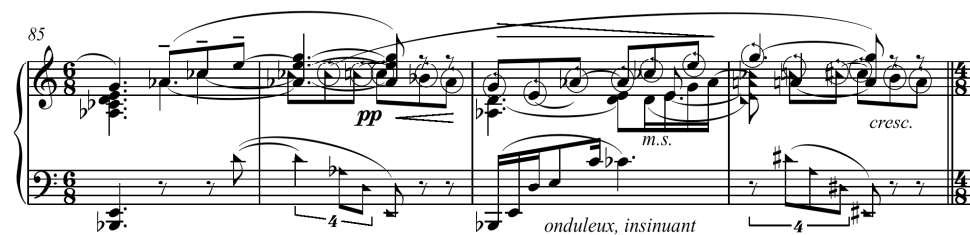
Example 1.7c – Sonata no.7, mm.85-88

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[20] Henceforth the *metaphorical coitus* will be referred to as 'heat'.

As with the previous excerpt, Scriabin synthesizes polyrhythmic 'caresses' with the compound metre of the 'erotic' theme in mm.132 and 134, employing a 4:3 and 5:2 cross-rhythm in those bars respectively. He additionally adorns these sensual gestures with the five-note 'flight' motif in m.133 (compare m.133 with Example 1.4d, m.60):

Example 1.7d – Sonata no.7, mm.131-134

1.7.3 – Counterpoint of Musical Gestures

The interplay of Scriabin's musical gestures upon his various thematic materials appears to have been deftly crafted with the purpose of stimulating and over-saturating the senses. Returning to Example 1.7d, the gestures of 'extended caress' and ecstatic 'flight' surrounding the 'erotic' theme seem to have been endowed with an awareness of their role in Scriabin's grand scheme, seamlessly weaving in and out of each other, while the erotic theme harmoniously 'counterpoints'. Just as Scriabin himself "loved to immerse himself in a sea of sensations, in abundance" (Sabaneyev, cited Bowers 1969, 2:98), the 'erotic' theme is thereby encircled within a 'sea of sensations', the abundance of which (following extensive developments throughout the remainder of the work) eventually stimulates it into ecstasy. In furtherance of Hatten's concept of 'plenitude as blissful expressive fulfillment', the notion of *plenitude* may be brought about by the "textural saturation" of gestures, while 'bliss', one of Scriabin's highest ecstatic states

(chapter 1.9), is effected from the prolonged saturation of materials upon the 'erotic' theme (2004, 249-250).

Scriabin's goal to overwhelm the senses may thus be construed as the method by which he employs multiple gestures simultaneously in counterpoint. A case in point may be found in the coda of Sonata no.10, where Scriabin concurrently uses five different symbolic gestures in the space of eight bars, to convey his ecstasy: 1) an 'erotic' theme starting in m.305, 2) an ascending five-note 'flight' motif in the lower treble of beat 2, m.307, 3) a two-note 'caress' in the bass of m.306 and in the upper treble of m.310, 4) a high-register tinkling bell-like 'resonance' (representative of 'light' as well) in the latter half of m.307, and 5) a sustained trill of 'light' in mm.309-312:
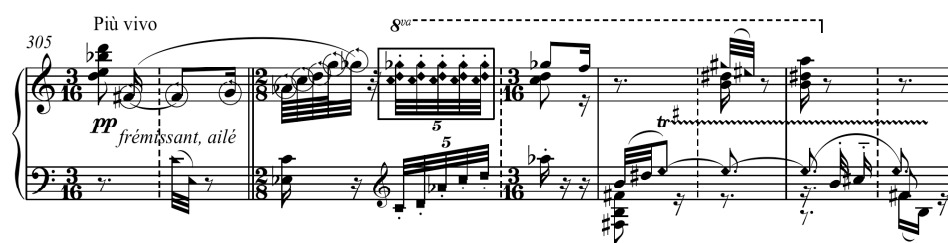
Example 1.7e – Sonata no.10, mm.305-312

Expectedly, the mind boggles to assimilate this overload of information in the performance time of around two to three seconds – an over-saturation and over-stimulation of the senses indeed. This was however, what Scriabin may have wanted, as declared to Sabaneyev: "You must experience everything…Every sensation is a source of knowledge…It is a great mistake to shrink from sensation. You must experience all sensations to the fullest" (cited Bowers 1969, 2:98).

1.8 – Erotic (FP ○ / MP ☐)

Scriabin's second subjects share a similar gentle lyrical and expressive quality common to the melodic second theme of the classical sonata, with one marked difference: they additionally become a vehicle from which Scriabin fleshes out his erotically-charged philosophical narrative in sound. Caution should likewise be exercised in exploring the erotic element of Scriabin's music, especially considering that Scriabin's eroticism, like his sensuality, was not "coarse or vulgar", but elegant (Rimm 2002, 225). It was not the "elemental" or physical eroticism normally ascribed to Wagner; it was more "refined" and "possesses an almost psychological meaning" (Sabaneyev 1929, 61). Hence, it may be said that Scriabin and Wagner essentially worshipped Dionysius, but paid homage to the different faces of the same god: Scriabin's eroticism is not the embodiment of carnal lust as associated with *Tristan*, but is "an expression of *spiritual* striving for an ideal dream" (Rudakova and Kandinsky 1984, 27), a dream shared among the symbolists of Russia.

Symbolism's penchant for the erotic may be traced to the writings of Solovyov, who developed the concept of the 'feminine principle' or Hagia Sophia (Divine Wisdom):

> The unity of the created world or Sophia is identified as a female principle and termed the "Eternal Feminine"…According to Solovyov, the "Eternal Feminine" is herself longing to be giving fulfilment, for this is the natural end towards which world history is moving. The act of love becomes therefore one of the primary ways for man to link himself to God (Davidson 1989, 54).

These ideas were accordingly adopted by Ivanov, and (inevitably) adapted by Scriabin for the sketches of the *Preparatory Act* for the *Mysterium*, whose libretto identifies the Feminine Principle, Masculine Principle, the Light Beam etc., to be the main protagonists in his spiritual drama (Morrison 1998, 302). West (1970) explicates the dynamics between the Masculine and Feminine Principles as according to Ivanov's viewpoint: the role of the Feminine is to lead the Masculine towards the ecstatic union in which "it loses itself in becoming something greater than itself," while the Masculine is the "conscious self, able to exercise its will, and choose between resisting or following the impulse for union with the divine" (64-65). De Schloezer likewise recognized the importance of this theory upon

Scriabin's psyche, that Scriabin "remained, at all stages of the evolutionary process, the Eternal Masculine and his creatures the Eternal Feminine" (1987, 213).[21] Taken this way, the FP - synonymous with the 'created world', may be surmised to be symbolic of mankind, as well as Scriabin's purpose for mankind to transcend the flesh (i.e. from matter to spirit), for want of 'becoming something greater than itself'. Meanwhile, the MP may be synonymous with mankind's divine potential; it is vested with 'consciousness' and permitted to choose its spiritual path. Signifying the "awakening intelligence" of men (Hull 1920, 235), Scriabin's second subject is a "repository of erotic techniques" (Downes 2006, 18); it is also the key to the underlying expressive tangent of each work when it is interpreted concurrently with his gestures.

Scriabin's music may be described as having an erotic aura due to the abundance of insinuating and evocative erotic imagery; expressions such as *avec une céleste volupté* and *avec une langueur naissante* betray the desire for union of the FP in the Seventh and Ninth sonata respectively. The 'erotic' second theme is often represented by a slow, luscious melody in compound time or triple meter, evoking a sense of the pastoral with its lulling languor and purity. Further development of these themes transform the narrative into 'White' or 'Black' masses per se, in what Hatten describes as the "unfolding [of] motivic relationships" that provide "dramatic" coherence in a work (2004, 178-180). As such, chapter 1.8.1 will delineate the 'erotic' MP (first theme) and the 'erotic' FP (second theme) of each late sonata, while chapter 1.8.2 will explore the various settings of the MP and FP (and their various interactions with the other symbolic gestures) as a means to constructing a potential symbolic-theosophical narrative for Sonata no.9.

1.8.1 – Masculine and Feminine Principles (MP / FP) in the Late Sonatas
Sonata no.6

In this sonata, the FP is introduced as a *dream, which takes form*. The dream is *bright, gentle, and pure*. Stated in triple meter, a lilting, syncopated melody rises and lingers on the B♭ apex in mm.39-42, before descending in semitones in

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[21] Henceforth, the Feminine Principle and Masculine Principle will be abbreviated and referred to as "FP" and "MP" respectively.

mm.43-45. Note the ascending trajectory, suggestive of the FP's receptiveness and sincere yearning for enlightenment and transcendence:

le rêve prend forme (clarté, douceur, pureté)
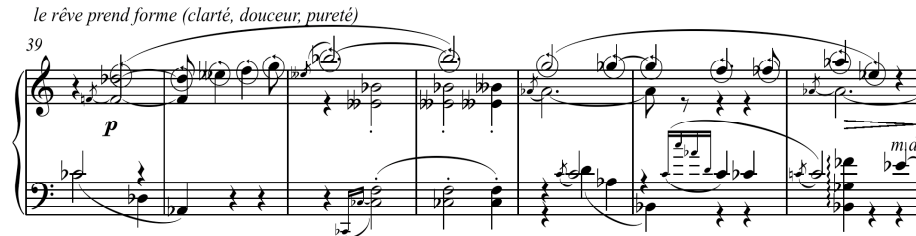
Example 1.8a – Sonata no.6, mm.39-45

The MP is presented in m.11 *with restrained warmth*, and brought prominently to the forefront above the 'caress' gestures in the bass. Symbolic of the 'conscious self', the MP may be seen to have chosen to heed the call for divine union in Example 1.4i:

avec une chaleur contenue
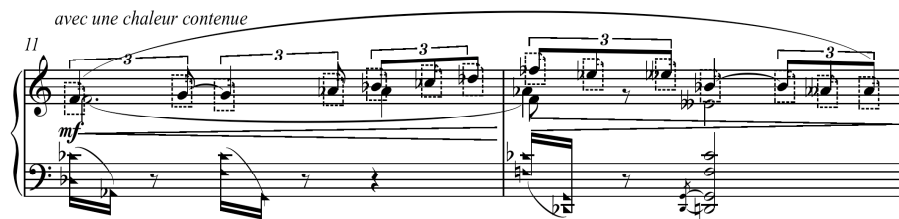
Example 1.8b – Sonata no.6, mm.11-12

Sonata no.7

The 'erotic' FP theme of the Seventh sonata speaks of "man's sensual reaction" (Bowers 1969, 2:231), as indicated by the florid expression mark, calling for this passage to be performed *with heavenly voluptuousness, very purely, and with a profound gentleness*. Furthermore, the lulling drone of the 'caress' gestures in the bass in combination with the compound-duple and simple-triple metre, is also reminiscent of the gentle sway of the pastoral. In evoking this tranquil yet titillating scene, we may venture that Scriabin drew inspiration from nature, pure and untouched, which in turn alludes to his striving to portray an unadulterated and virtuous FP. The choice of the word *volupté* may also be indicative of the virtuous

female's ripeness and desire for union, or mankind's readiness to accept his divine calling, which is signified by the melody's aspiring towards the apex, a prolonged E♯:

Example 1.8c – Sonata no.7, mm.29-34

The MP makes its first appearance as a *dark, majestic,* and somewhat menacing entity due to the 'occult' staccato triplet figurations. Also note that the masculine theme is a derivative of the feminine theme, i.e. both themes share the same intervallic content in the rising endings (compare Example 1.8c, mm.32-33 and Example 1.8d, mm.18-19), which suggests a premeditated agreement for their forthcoming union and eventual transformation into spirit (chapter 1.10.2):

Example 1.8d – Sonata no.7, mm.17-19

Sonata no.9

Described by Scriabin as a "dormant or dreaming saintliness" (Bowers 1969, 2:244), the 'erotic' feminine second theme of the "Black Mass" is different to those of the other late sonatas: it proposes an introductory four-bar passage, whose apparent purpose may conceivably be to gently prod the FP into action. Falling semitones reminiscent of the opening motif (Example 1.5e) are outlined by the left hand. Scriabin marks this introductory passage to be played *with incipient languor*, perhaps portraying the apathy and dormant desire of the FP to transcend. Prompted to make its appearance, the FP eventually arrives at m.39. Although it is notated in simple time, the melody is initially grouped in compound metre, fabricating a sense of tranquillity akin to the gentle sway of the pastoral. The FP is hesitant as it retreats back to its starting point, an A♯ at m.39, and again to the stability of the D at m.40. A perfunctory exertion enables the melody to momentarily break from its lethargy, as it fleetingly lingers at the G apex in m.41 before falling back again; it neither aspires nor soars like the FP themes of Sonatas nos. 6 and 7:

Example 1.8e – Sonata no.9, mm.34-42

As regards the MP, the Ninth sonata proves to be a special case (to be outlined in the following chapter).

Sonata no.10

In contrast to the preceding sonatas, the FP second theme is assertive. It is full of optimism and *joyous exaltation* at its debut, already well on the way to enlightenment. Despite lingering momentarily at the low A♯ in m.73, there is little sense of reluctance; it vigorously soars up the octave to the bright tremolos of 'light':

Example 1.8f – Sonata no.10, mm.73-74

The MP of this sonata shares some properties with that of Sonata no.6: 1) it has the same rising and falling melodic shape, and 2) it is marked to be played *with deep, veiled ardour*, a more passionate rendition of the *restrained warmth* of the Sixth. Also note, that in contrast to the preceding sonatas (with particular reference to the "Black Mass"), the accompaniment in the bass is comprised of major fourths instead of the oscillating tritone. Nor is the tritone or any other occult interval unduly featured; the prevailing harmonies are more consonant. As such, due to the general lack of 'occult' gestures, any dark occult connotations normally associated with the falling semitones, should be kept to a minimum:
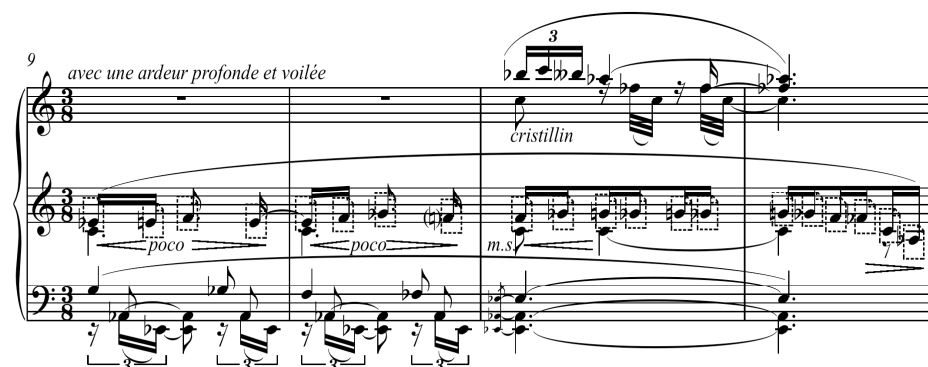
Example 1.8g – Sonata no.10, mm.9-12

Uniquely to this sonata, Scriabin also sanctions the MP to take on a second guise. The second MP, albeit rhythmically augmented, makes its first (unofficial) appearance in counterpoint with the first MP in the tenor voice of the bass in Example 1.8g above. Melodically speaking, it is a derivative of the first MP (compare the falling semitones in the melody of Example 1.8h with the melody starting on the third beat of m.11 of Example 1.8g). The first official statement occurs in the *Allegro* (m.39), where it is presented *with emotion*, portraying what may be construed to be an uninhibited manifestation of the *veiled ardour* of its counterpart:
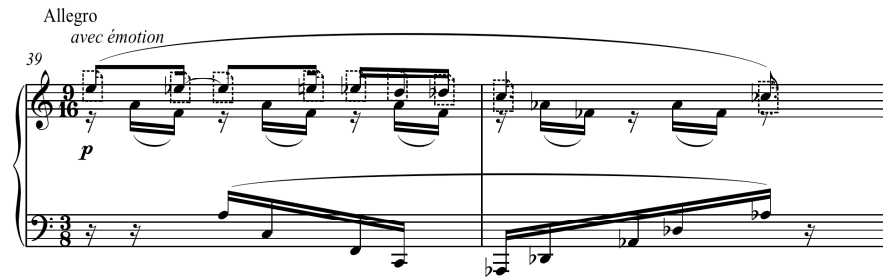
Example 1.8h – Sonata no.10, mm.39-40

Having identified the MP and FP of the late sonatas, it is possible to construct a symbolic narrative based on the examination of these themes in play with the other gestures outlined in the Part 1 (i.e. chapters 1.1 to 1.10). As a case in point, we will attempt to do so in the Ninth Sonata as follows.

1.8.2 – Sonata no.9

The lack of will and striving in the FP (as denoted in Example 1.8e) happens to be an anomaly in Scriabin's philosophical thought, and goes against the trend of the late sonatas. Following from Example 1.8e, it appears that the FP is either unable, or unwilling to exert itself; it is incapable of breaking away from its hazy stupor, the incipient languor designated by the composer. In investigating Scriabin's musical gestures and their interaction with the 'erotic' second theme, we find that Scriabin's choice of musical gestures also corresponds with the general claim of languor. In the development section starting from m.69, the FP is portrayed as *pure*

and limpid, perhaps suggestive of its innocence and obliviousness to its situation. The FP gradually awakens from its daze and finally realizes its divine calling as it wafts over lilting gestures of 'caress' diffused throughout the accompaniment, and begins to take 'flight' (m.92). This venture is however foiled by the unanticipated appearance of dark occult gestures in m.93:

Example 1.8i – Sonata no.9, mm.87-88, 91-93

Realizing its perilous predicament, it harnesses its energies in a desperate attempt for spiritual enlightenment, repeatedly striking and clinging to the apex, a string of *tenuto*-As in mm. 99-101. This endeavour is however long overdue; it has already been predestined to fail, as indicated by Scriabin's expression *avec une douceur de plus en plus caressante et empoisonnée*. Henceforth, it is gradually stripped of its saintliness and purity, becoming increasingly poisoned by the tritones and triplet incantations, which recur with alarming frequency (see Examples 1.5i and j):

avec une douceur de plus en plus caressante et empoisonnée

Example 1.8j – Sonata no.9, mm.97-102

As the amassing dark forces continue to harass the FP, the poisoned FP no longer yearns and lingers on the apex as it previously has, but rapidly tumbles and becomes subsumed by the jeering triplet rhythm at m.139. In fact, it may seem to be eager to hasten its corruption, as shown by the use of rolled-chord 'flight' gestures in the bass (a flight towards *dysphoric* ecstasy per se). As such, the FP of the Ninth sonata may be construed to be a *dysphoric* second theme:

Example 1.8k – Sonata no.9, mm.137-139

The final transformation effected upon the FP distorts its pure and saintly qualities almost beyond recognition. The gentle hint of the pastoral is now superseded by a heavy march, where pounding 'summons' gestures combine with gong-like 'resonances' in the bass, bringing to mind the tolling funeral bell in the introduction of Liszt's *Funérailles*. In this case, the weighty desolation and heavy defeat of the Huns as portrayed by Liszt could similarly portray the total annihilation of the FP:
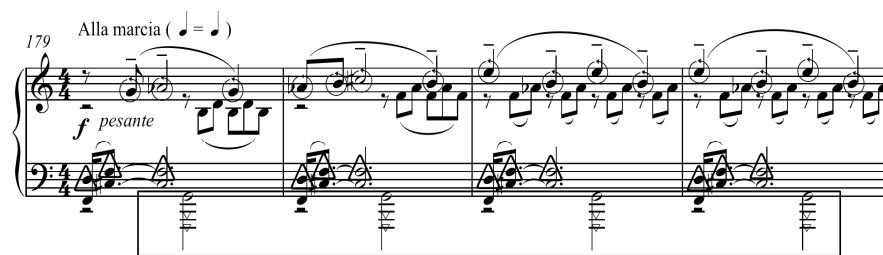
Example 1.81 – mm.179-182

One could hypothesize that the foremost rationale in explaining the failure of the FP to transcend, is due to the absence of the conscious MP, hence the lack of a partner for spiritual-ecstatic 'union'. The masculine protagonist may be represented by what is structurally speaking (according to Garcia's analysis (1993, 178)) part of the transition passage between the opening statement and the second theme. It is however the gestural properties that lead one to this conclusion for the following reasons: 1) the gesture of 'light' as represented by the trills is repeatedly quashed (Example 1.3j), 2) it always appears in conjunction with the negating and resonating oscillating tritones in the bass; and 3) the combination thereof easily silences and engulfs the feeble melody in the tenor, the MP itself. All the aforementioned reasons are indicative of the MP's choice to affront the FP, which may account for the apathy and resultant desolation of its counterpart:
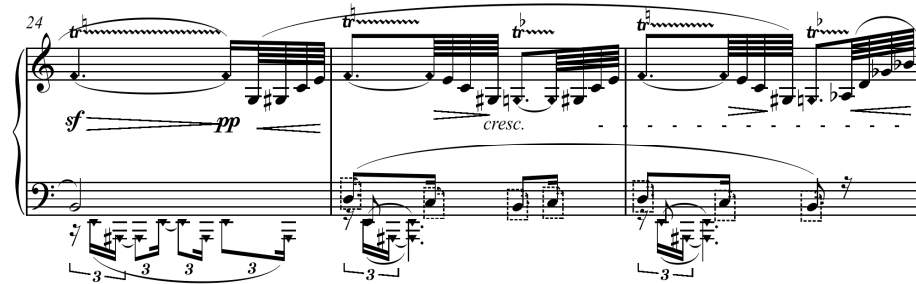
Example 1.8m – Sonata no.9, mm.24-26

In the final appearance of the MP, the slightest hint of any inclination towards 'union' has been all but obliterated. Already having succumbed to the dark forces, oscillating tritones are no longer necessary, neither is the feeble MP featured. Taking its place is the accelerating, distorted FP in the upper treble. The MP is only recognizable by the quashed trills of 'light', whose combination with the absence of melody suggests the total annihilation of its form, but not its symbolism:
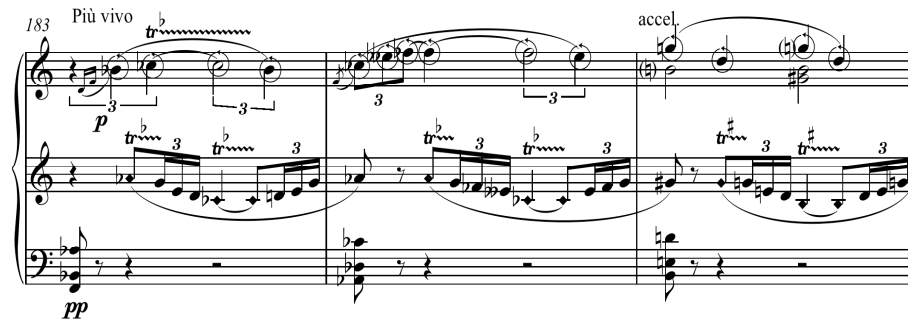
Example 1.8n – Sonata no.9, mm.183-185

In light of this discussion, we may conclude that Sonata no.9 may be construed as a work symbolic of mankind's failure to 'unite' with the Divine by ecstasy. Rather than the often offhanded connotations of Satanism and sacrificial rites which many have presumed, perhaps due to Podgaetsky's infamously christening it the "Black Mass", this work may be more accurately described as, to borrow Toop's phraseology (1991), mankind's unwitting confinement in a "theosophical black fire of ignorance," and subsequent fall from grace.

More than being a repository of erotic techniques, the investigation of the second theme and the interacting gestures have to a certain extent elicited an alternative take on what is otherwise a conventional reading of the "Black Mass". It is to be noted that this is one possible interpretation, and that any interpreter can bring their own meanings into these interpretations according to how they see the gestures and their interactions. In like manner, another alternate interpretation of the "Black Mass" can be formulated (or of any of the other late sonatas), based on the exploration of the expressive trajectory of the 'erotic' FP (and MP) themes and their interaction with the other symbolic gestures in the work.

1.9 – Ecstasy

Scriabin's *ecstasy* is an oft repeated and multifaceted word in his vocabulary as his private notebooks reveal. In terms of his symbolist-theosophical outlook, ecstasy refers to the "highest synthesis…the highest bliss…the highest development and destruction…the summit" (Bowers 1973, 118; Scriabine 1979, 46). It is also the "realization of the idea of God," when the soul becomes reabsorbed into the "real divine Substance" (Bowers 1969, 2:101; Scriabine 1979, 47-48). On the creative level, ecstasy is the "utmost increase of activity" (Sabbagh 2001, 176), and the "joy of unrestrained activity" (Swan 1969, 94). Scriabin describes himself as being "carried aloft to extraordinary heights by the immense wave of inspiration…[It is] the limit of creative urge" (Slonimsky 2004, 49). And finally on a physical level, ecstasy is the moment where Scriabin "loses consciousness and his whole organism experiences bliss at each of its points" (Bowers 1969, 2:105; Scriabine 1979, 75). In all, Scriabin's ecstasy reached such heights, that he was able to describe his joy as being infinitely "so vast that myriads of universes could sink into it without even rippling the surface" (Bowers 1973, 126; Scriabine 1979, 25).

In her analysis of Scriabin's symbolist plot archetypes in the late piano sonatas, Garcia (2000, 285-286) likens Scriabin's codas to a vertiginous dance where participants of the Dionysian cult ritual, aided by the intoxicating effects of wine, dance to the point of exhaustion and collapse, all in the quest for ecstasy. According to Ivanov's Christian mysticism, the soul is constantly seeking union with the Father: the moment of union with the Father is one of ecstasy, and can only be brought about through the Son of God, who is "equated with the Eros of Dionysian myth" (cited West 1970, 64). De Schloezer likewise confirms Scriabin's notion of ecstasy to combine "elements of both Christian and mystic teaching, forming a rather curious synthesis whereby the state of blessedness is included in dissolution…Ecstasy [is] expressive of that final moment of blessed liberation inherent in the Dionysian cults" (1987, 223).

1.9.1 – Sonata no.6

In contrast to his 'erotic' themes and generally fluid compositional style, Scriabin's dance-like passages are often characterized by straightforward rhythms in simple time. In Sonata no.6, rolled chords signifying 'flight' in the treble of this dance-like passage

are (predominantly) based upon the ascending five-note 'erotic' feminine theme (Example 1.8a). Designated *winged and spinning*, they combine and create an illusion of frenetic activity as the FP dances and whirls its way towards enlightenment:
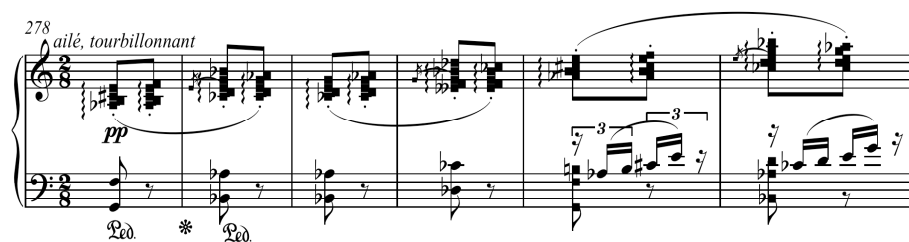
Example 1.9a – Sonata no.6, mm.278-283

However, it is not ecstasy that follows the spinning dance but *the terror [that] arises*, which soon after mingles with the delirious dance at m.330 below. Flanked between *the terror(s)* in m.298 and m.335, this dance alludes to the sensual flight towards a diabolic form of ecstasy:
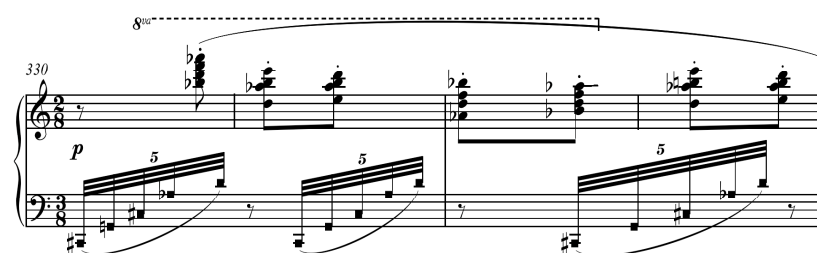
Example 1.9b – Sonata no.6, mm.330-331

Assuming Scriabin even purposed to aspire towards ecstasy in this sonata, the ecstasy portrayed is of a dysphoric type – an ecstasy delivered by negative forces.

1.9.2 – Sonata no.7

Characterized by quick, accelerating tempos in simple time, the "White Mass" delineates the Dionysian cult ritual in great detail, down to the dancers' collapse from exhaustion. The following passage portrays the feverish mania that grips the dancers as the pulsating rhythm and wine drives them into a state of *vertigo*:

Example 1.9c – Sonata no.7, mm.281-285

Dancing their way into *delirium*, gestures of 'resonance' in both the treble and the bass propel the dancers towards ecstasy and spiritual enlightenment. In concurrence with Garcia's interpretation, the climactic chord (m.331) symbolic of the brightest light is representative of the dancers' collapse in exhaustion at the moment of divine illumination (2000, 286). As such, it is with little wonder that Scriabin considered this sonata to be the "purest mysticism" (Bowers 1969, 2:231):
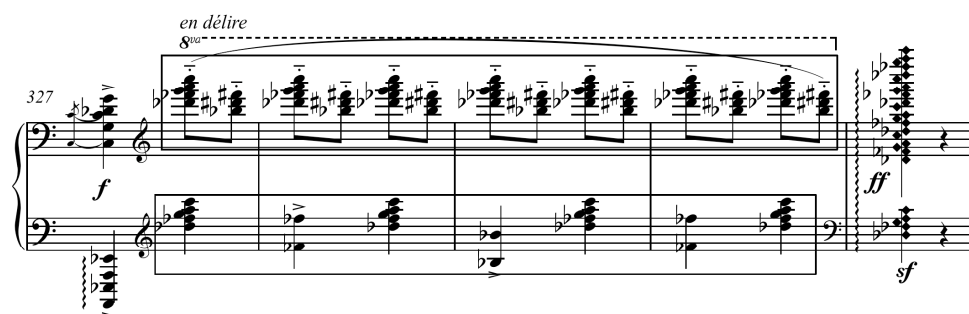
Example 1.9d – Sonata no.7, mm.327-331

1.9.3 – Sonata no.9

Following the dysphoric march in Example 1.8l, Scriabin quickens the tempo to transform the dysphoric march into a dysphoric dance, where the thumping dissonant bass and flying minor-ninth arpeggio catapult its momentum:
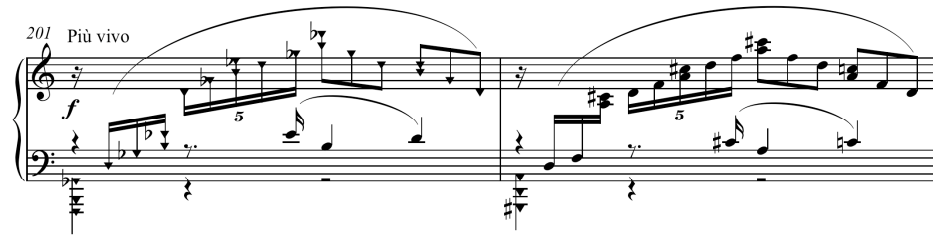
Example 1.9e – Sonata no.9, mm.201-202

If Sonata no.9 is to be regarded as a portrayal of a 'Black Mass', the use of occult gestures plus a ritualistic march and a dysphoric dance may be said to forge an image resembling a sacrificial dance of sorts, Scriabin's "Rite of Spring" so to speak. On the other hand, should the aforementioned elements combine to symbolize the demise of the FP, the ecstasy would be celebratory of the corruption of what is good and pure in mankind. Either way, there is only ecstasy in the dysphoric sense of the word, a diabolical joy that gleefully revels in mankind's spiritual destitution.

1.9.4 – Sonata no.10

Making its first appearance in the treble of m.88 as a *ravishing* and *tender* play of 'light', the dance-theme of Sonata no.10 may be perceived as a hybrid of the second MP (Example 1.8h), as distinguished by the falling semitones:
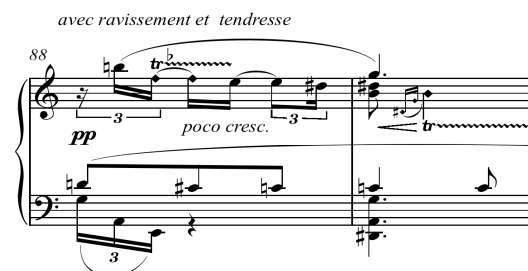
Example 1.9f – Sonata no.10, mm.88-89

The passage above is transformed into a *presto* dance in the coda, preserving the essential sense of joyful play as portrayed by the zesty syncopated rhythms at mm.329 and 330:

Example 1.9g – Sonata no.10, mm.329-332

Scriabin preaches that "the most important sign of life is the wish for new experiences…This is the essence of creativity" (Bowers 1969, 2:102; Scriabine 1979, 53-54). Hence, the due consideration of the symbolic content in Scriabin's music (no matter how outlandish), such as the ecstatic dances in both their *euphoric* and *dysphoric* contexts, mandates the open-mindedness and 'wish for new experiences' to regard his frenetic codas as such. Read this way, they add a new perspective to the otherwise traditional notion of 'bravura' common to codas, prompting the performer to create new interpretations.

1.10 – Transformation/Dissipation - Towards the *Mysterium* ($\updownarrow$)

Being central tenets of symbolism and theosophical doctrine, the concepts of dissolution and transformation are understandably deeply embedded in Scriabin's philosophy. As observed by Bowers, Scriabin's sonatas became more "decompositional" or "self-transforming" as they progressed, in order to achieve mystical "dematerialization…incorporeality…and disembodiment" (1969, 2:178). Vladimir Solovyov, Ivanov's mentor and one of the chief instigators of Russian (Christian mystic) philosophy, preached that it is only man that is permitted to be "completely identified with the divine principle – that will enable matter to become pure spirit" (West 1970, 40). That art must "lead to a real betterment of reality" and a "fuller self-realization of the individual" (172) led the symbolists to believe that music would be able to effect a "transformation of reality" (180). It is this general symbolist credo that drove much of Scriabin's philosophy and creative output.

From about 1908 onwards, Scriabin regarded all of his late works as "sketches" for his *Mysterium* (Bowers 1972, 21; Cooper 1965, 132; Steger 1972, 35), whose intended significance and effects "were to exceed by far any Platonic or Wagnerian ambitions. Beginning with the enlightenment of its beholders, it would spread worldwide to bring about the Apocalypse and usher in the New Age" (Godwin 1987, 43). It was to be divided into seven parts, the performance of each was to last an entire day, as dictated by Blavatsky's number of races (de Schloezer 1987, 215-216). In all, the *Mysterium* seeks to retrace the path from the time of the First Race of Man's creation, and its subsequent transformations at the end of each day into an Astral Race at the end of the seventh day, as part of its powerful ritual. In its entirety, it would unfold the "evolution of the cosmos, mankind, and the individual" and chart their return back to the "pristine unity" of the beginning (ibid., 263). Through the mystical power of his music, Scriabin expected time to be "absorbed into religious expectation, since the instant is immediately open to eternity" (Jouve 1987, 269); the eternity of the cosmos was to be unravelled and rendered during the seven days of the *Mysterium*. Transformation, as preached by the occult, is the way of the universe: "Nothing is created, but is only transformed" (Blavatsky 1989, 1:570).

1.10.1 – Identifying Dissipation - 'Matter' to 'Spirit'

To dissipate or dematerialize evokes an image of dispersion, evaporation, or the general weakening / physical transformation of substance. Dematerialization – being the pinnacle of his philosophic thought along with ecstasy – is a "very great state of activity and the antithesis of inertia. It thereby abandons the force of gravity" (Bowers 1969, 1:331-332). Hence, its main feature is an upward trajectory, symbolic of defying gravity. Keeping in mind that transformation is a blissful event following divine illumination, the "HAPPY IS UP" metaphor - being "maximally coherent with the GOOD IS UP" and "VIRTUE IS UP" metaphors in our (and presumably Scriabin's) culture (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 17-18) - likewise supports the supposition that dissolution should be rendered in an ascending trajectory, from the lower towards the higher registers of the piano. During and after the initial surge, the dissipating figurations and trills, the thinning of textures, and the acceleration of tempo, may all be indicative of - for want of better phraseology - the process of 'melting into thin air'. Signs of dissolution in the concluding bars of *Vers la Flamme* include: 1) the sweeping arpeggio "melody" from the bass to the treble, 2) the unwritten yet implied quickening of tempo as the melody approaches its summit, and 3) the relatively sparse textures by comparison with previous statements of light in this work (Example 1.3e):
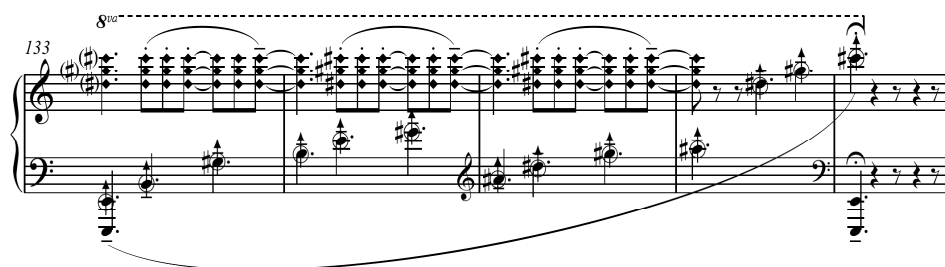
Example 1.10a – *Vers la Flamme*, mm.133-137

In the first instance, the soaring arpeggio spanning nearly six octaves implies the process of breaking free from the gravitational pull of the low E as mankind transcends corporeality. More than being an expressive tool in performance, the implied accelerando could also be representative of the moments prior to dissolution, as mankind impatiently scampers towards the ecstatic moment prior to dissipating into blissful oblivion. And finally, the thinning textures may be analogous to a substance in

the process of dematerializing; scintillating from the bright clusters and tremolos of 'light', it evaporates as if a wisp of smoke. Taken this way, *Vers la Flamme* is a spiritually profound work; man achieves divine illumination and spirits into the astral realm.

Another case in point is Sonata no.5, which Scriabin concludes in the same impetuous manner with which he launched the work. Also note the signs of accelerating tempi, the sparse texture and the upward trajectory, which combine to imply dissolution from divine illumination:

Example 1.10b – Sonata no.5, mm.439-444

1.10.2 – Transformation/Dissipation in the Sonatas

While performing the dance-like coda in a private performance of the Seventh sonata, Scriabin exclaimed: "Here is the last dance before the act itself, before the instant of dematerialization. BY MEANS OF THIS DANCE all is accomplished" (Bowers 1969, 2:231-232). Following this vertiginous dance and ecstatic moment, i.e. the climactic *sf* chord (Example 1.9d), the moment of dissipation/dissolution is characterized by an ascending five-note motif of flight that seeks to defy gravity, accelerating tempi, thin textures, and dissipating trill:

Example 1.10c – Sonata no.7, mm.335-343

In addition to the aforementioned signs, the *diminuendo* and ending *smorzando* may also be illustrative of man's loss of form and substance as he extinguishes into 'nothingness'. Seeing that God (or Brahma) dwells in 'nothingness' (Bowers 1969, 2:232), this rather conforms to the theme of dissolution, as enlightened man transcends the flesh to become one with God – 'matter becomes pure spirit' in this 'holiest' of sonatas.

It is to be noted that neither Sonatas nos 6, 9 or 10 conform to the proposed extroversive signs of dissolution/dissipation. The Ninth and the Tenth, however, share a commonality in the restatement of the introduction in the final bars (Examples 1.1g and h). This could be suggestive of the transformation back to the 'pristine unity', illustrative of the "cyclical return to the original state" (Baker 1989, 95), but only in anticipation of repeating this painstaking, yet joyous process all over again, as man becomes more advanced and enlightened with each spiritual revolution (Bowers 1969, 2:264). This remains a matter of conjecture, as Scriabin's death at the young age of 45, which left the *Mysterium* in sketches, deprived us of the magnum opus of his stylistic maturity, thus prohibiting a comprehensive and final corollary on the cogency of his artistic dicta. As to how Scriabin would have approached and resolved the issue of transformation of each day and race in the *Mysterium* as a compositional/structural system is of course not known to us, with the exception of the dissolution from matter to spirit at the end of the seventh day.

Part 2

TOWARDS PERFORMANCE

(Sonata no.8)

Written in 1913, Sonata no.8 is unique in comparison with the other late sonatas due to the general lack of Scriabin's customary prolific French descriptive annotations in this work, as shown in Table 1:

Sonata nos.	6	7	8	9	10
No. of bars	386	343	499	216	377
No. of French annotations	33	38	3	7	21
Average no. of bars per annotation	**11.5**	**9.0**	**166.0**	**31.0**	**18.0**

Table 1: Frequency of French annotations per sonata

In what may be directly attributed to this, scholarship on this 'wordless' sonata has been scant; the majority of scholars have in fact chosen to focus on the other lexically explicit late sonatas. As such, it may be argued that Scriabin "intended the music to speak for itself" (Hull 1920, 152). Should this be the case, the Eighth is considered to be Scriabin's only significant venture into 'pure' music during his late period. This remains a contentious matter since the composer himself referred to this sonata as "the most tragic episode of my creative work" (MacDonald, 1991, 8). Sonata no.8 also stands as the longest work of his late piano solo repertoire; it is significant for that reason alone. Being practically 'wordless', it also allows for an as objective as possible examination of the gestures delineated in Part 1. It is for this reason that it was chosen over the rest. It is true that the composer could have annotated this work with expression marks, as heavily as he did in his other works, should he have so wished. However, he also never singled it as being a work outside his eschatological agenda, and none of his associates or later analysts have suggested so. In this vein, the ensuing investigation will set to reveal whether this taxonomy can be applied to this unique sonata, hence unifying in this respect this most significant body of works, as well as forming a possible 'template' – in the way of a matrix, towards a performing Scriabin 'paradigm' – in the way of a model, for the interpretation of the late sonatas.

The second part and secondary aim of this dissertation addresses the planning/preparation of Scriabin's Eighth sonata for a performance. The field of performance research

encompasses a broad spectrum of research aims, from the empiricism necessary in measurements of performance and motor processes, to the subjectivity of performance evaluation and improvisation, and so forth.[22] Performance planning, i.e. strategies for optimizing practice, forming mental representations and performance plans for the music (Gabrielsson 2003, 236) only constitutes a subsidiary branch of study in performance research; much of the focus in that research to date has been that of empirical performance measurement (224-225), as exemplified by the work of Bruno Repp, and performance psychology, as exemplified by the work of Jane Davidson (2006; 2007).[23] These do not have any bearing on the investigations of this research, although they would prove valuable in the examination of gestures in relevant future studies.[24]

In the main, there are two differing views on performance literature. On the one camp there are the so-called 'authoritarians' like Eugene Narmour who forewarns performers that "negative consequences" arise should they fail to analyze and convey the formal structures in performance (1988, 319), and Wallace Berry who voices a resounding "yes" that performers must be conscious of all elements of form and structure as a prerequisite to any successful interpretation (1989, x). Then there are those like Dunsby, who are sceptical that analysis and performance actually have much in common; that while they do inevitably interact to a certain extent, there cannot be a complete "overlap" between these disciplines as understanding musical structure through analysis is essentially incompatible with communicating music in performance (1989, 7). Rink similarly is unconvinced that an awareness of musical structure through analysis is essential to a successful performance; the temporality of performance should be taken into consideration as performers, unlike analysts, conceive music more as 'shape' as opposed to structure (1995, 323; 2002, 39). Performers furthermore rely more on what Rink has termed "informed/acquired intuition"

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[22] See Gabrielsson (224, 258-272) for an overview and bibliography of all branches of study pertaining to performance research up to 2002.
[23] For a full listing of Repp's research from 1992-2002, see Gabrielsson (2003, 268-269). For a partial listing of Davidson's research to 2002, see pp.260-261 in that article.
[24] Concurrently, performance research has also heeded Bowen's (1999) call for musicology to investigate music as performance, through the intense study of discography and the various performance styles and traditions (437, 443-444). It set in motion the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM), and the now current AHRC Research Centre for Musical Performance as Creative Practice (CMPCP), whose interests primarily concern the activity of music-making.

(1995, 324-325), which is a more efficient manner of penetrating a work and shaping a performance, than a "one-to-one" mapping of instructions (327). Having said all this, it is my 'informed' or 'acquired' intuition, along with the many years of Scriabin studies (particularly the advice of my former teacher Gábor Eckhardt who is a second generation student of the eminent Scriabin interpreter Heinrich Neuhaus), that forms the basis of much of the discoveries in this paper (which is more or less a formalization of my years of study).

Despite the seemingly (and unavoidably) prescriptive tone due to the aprioristic performance aims of this paper (Rink 2002, 37), it must be noted that the interpretations proffered herein are not meant to be taken as a straitjacket for the performer; this would be entirely presumptuous in view of the many great Scriabin interpreters such as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Vladimir Horowitz, Heinrich Neuhaus, John Ogdon, Vladimir Sofronitsky. Only some of them felt they had to tap into the composer's consciousness as a means to interpretation. This research simply offers the willing performer a possible route to interpretation should they be what Hallam has termed an "analytic/holist" type learner (1995, 118-120). Alternatively, it may serve as a possible psychological backdrop from which performers can formulate and intuit their own interpretations should they be the "intuitive/serialist" type learner (120). The former would employ a top-down approach to learning or interpreting the piece (i.e. conceptual to technical), when the latter would employ a bottom-up approach (i.e. technical to conceptual/interpretive), while the "versatile" learner (121) would use these approaches interchangeably. Regardless of a performer's preferred learning style, it remains the intent of this thesis to furnish the 'analytical' performer, such as myself, with a set of tools (or notions) to help conceptualize and interpret Scriabin's Eighth sonata.

As to how the knowledge of Scriabin's gestures would 'take shape' during a performance, that would be applying the theory, where this dissertation involves itself solely with formulating that theory.[25] Hill stresses the importance of mental and conceptual

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[25] Research on whether and how these gestures 'take shape' or transform into performance would include the analysis of controlled performances and the exhaustive measurement of various performance variables

understanding of a work by an intense scrutiny of the score, which is to be done away from the keyboard and prior to physically learning the work (2002, 133). The is done with the view of having the freedom to explore and develop an individual understanding of the work, unbound by technical challenges that inevitably arise, and which might inadvertently force performers to compromise, and cloud their natural artistic judgment. In short, it is suggested that an a priori mental conceptualization (be it the structure, form, or Scriabin's gestures) may allow a performer's interpretation to shape the performance, instead of letting the performance (with its technical limitations) shape the interpretation. And such is the nature of this present research, where these specially fashioned set of tools are put into use to strengthen the mental conceptualization of the Eighth sonata as a precursor to performance. Hence, it is proposed that these gestures the so-inclined performer may identify on the score, act as meaningful units, form a possible temporal and evocative narrative, and shape the interpretation accordingly. [26]

In what little scholarship there is regarding the interpretation of the Eighth, discussions have been limited to perfunctory comments regarding the "five fragmentary melodies [that] supposedly represent the elements of earth, air, fire, water and mystic ether" (Bowers 1969, 2:244). On another note, Boris Asafiev, Russian composer and scholar, claims this sonata to be associated with the "physical world and the laws of energy: light, darkness; heat and cold; the rhythms of night, waves of the ocean…the feeling of fire and air" (cited Bowers 1973, 179). Even though the scope for interpretation appears to be broad, they conform to Scriabin's claims that its harmonies are "drawn from Nature…bridges between harmony and geometry, life visible and life unseen" (cited Bowers 1969, 2:244).

In capturing the meaning of Scriabin, Bowers advocates the use of the "three '*H's*,' the Hand, the Heart, and the Head. You can have the Hand and the Heart for Scriabin, but if

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connected with these ten gestures in each recorded performance, ie. attack, decay, key velocity, key overlap time, rubato, timing etc., as well as listeners' responses. Although more in line with recent/current performance research (Gabrielsson 2003, 224-230; also see the AHRC Musical Performance as Creative Practice for an outline of the ongoing project on shaping music in performance), this study lays far beyond the scope of this essay.

[26] The scope of this dissertation prohibits an investigation into the possible narrative extrapolations from the herein identified gestural materials, as well as an in-depth exploration of gestural 'troping' (Hatten 2004) in the Eighth sonata.

you have not the Head, it won't work" (Garvelmann 1969, 22). In other words, the performer must be in possession of: 1) a virtuosic technique, 2) a willingness to follow the music's impulses, and most importantly, 3) sufficient knowledge of 'what makes Scriabin tick', which remains the primary objective of this dissertation. It should be stressed, that Scriabin's late piano music stands gloriously on its own, as pure music – that is without the need for metaphysical exegeses. That is why it is not imperative for pianists to look into the murky waters of the composer's theosophy and megalomania, in order to appositely render his late works. However, it would be at least as valid for those pianists to dive into those same waters, unfettered by late twentieth and early twenty-first century notions and prejudices, in order to perchance catch a glimpse of the idiosyncratic spirit under which those masterpieces were born, and attempt to communicate some of its essence to an audience today.

As Palmer has shown, a performer's intent (or lack thereof), can be translated or mapped into the expressive timing of a performance, be it the intent to mark a particular structural feature (melody, phrase boundaries), or the conscious intent to perform in an unmusical or exaggerated manner (1989, 344). It has also been observed that an experienced performer's conscious intentions could be translated into performance timing, through the unconscious application of ingrained performance techniques, ex. playing the melody marginally sooner than the accompaniment (melody-lead) in order to foreground the melody (345). Similarly, DePoli et al. has demonstrated that a performer's expressive intentions of light, bright, dark etc. can be transmitted into sound, ex. using a faster metronome marking and quicker attack/high key velocity to portray a 'bright' sound (1998, 312-314; Bresin and Battel 2000, 219-220, 222; Gabrielsson 2003, 231-232). Although much performance research is often based upon a small sample size, a variable quality of performers/performances, and predominantly a classical-romantic repertoire (hence questioning the validity of applying their findings to Scriabin), these methods can be adapted to examine dynamic fluctuations, texture, or chord voicing while performing Scriabin's gestures of 'flight' or 'light' etc. For instance, consider how one might perform the climactic tremolo trills of 'light' in Example 1.3f with the chordal octave trills leading to the coda in the final movement of Liszt's *Concerto no.1*. In both cases, a fast attack is mandatory for the execution and brightness of

these trills. However, the desire of a more radiant sound in the former (as opposed to a more dynamic/powerful sound in the latter) may cause the performer to subconsciously shift the arm-weight/momentum/follow-through 'upwards' toward the end of the trill in Scriabin (instead of 'downwards' in Liszt), which should theoretically translate into a marginally faster sound decay, hence lighter or flightier sound. In short, what the performer may intend to convey affects the technique employed, which in turn affects the expressive timing, hence sound of the performance. A consummate pianist does not need instructions on how to express, say 'ecstasy', and this system does not presume to advise in that regard; instead it suggests (through appropriate referents) where 'ecstasy' might be called for in the score. It is hoped that this optional heuristic model will be interesting/useful to that pianist. Consequently, it would seem that the taxonomy of gestures or any structural properties, i.e. the *head*, may be transmitted into performance should the performer consciously have the *heart* to do so, and the *hand* of vast (subconscious) experience/training to do justice to the interpretation.

It should be noted that any of the above methodologies (or combinations/permutations thereof) for performing Scriabin, provides for an essentially limited performance, should thorough traditional formal/harmonic analysis be sidelined. It was not within the scope and size of this study to superimpose our findings on top of any existing formal/harmonic manual for Scriabin, or to produce one here for the purposes of exhaustiveness. Merging the model discussed herein with comprehensive formal and harmonic aspects lies beyond the intended and delineated confines of this treatise. It therefore rests with the holistic performer to complete the investigation/interpretation, having been cautioned that a lot will be missed should solely matters of symbolism and meta-formal/harmonic concepts be explored. Additionally, it cannot be emphasized enough, that due to Scriabin's capricious philosophizing, the ensuing findings should also be considered subjective; relativist rather than positivist; they are by no means definitive, but offer an avenue for accessing a plurality of interpretations, upon which a competent performer may draw, thereby fulfilling the '*3-H's*'. In view of this, perhaps a cautionary note from Sabaneyev should round off this introductory section - "One had to be a follower of Scriabin in his queer religion in order to become a genuine Scriabinist" (1929, 63).

2.1 – Sonata no.8 Gestures

This chapter explores the way Scriabin's symbolic gestures may contribute towards the conceptualization of a performance, and how such a conceptualization may potentially shape a performance. As a first step, the list of gestures as delineated in Part 1 are routinely identified and summarized. This is followed by a detailed examination of the Eighth sonata; each occurrence of every identified gesture is charted in what I shall term a 'Gestural Profile' (henceforth abbreviated to GP), which tabulates every said gesture per bar as a means to measure the 'symbolic density' or 'symbolic intensity' at any point of the work. From the GP, it is proposed that the gestural-flow or 'symbolic flow' of this work may be determined, and its implications towards shaping a performance discussed in Chapters 2.2 and 2.3. The gestures identified in Part 1 are by no means absolute. Only future research can determine the verifiability of these gestures where Scriabin is concerned - by adding, omitting, renaming, or re-evaluating these units of meaning – as Monelle has demonstrated with his re-evaluation of the *horse*-topic (2000, 45-63). That notwithstanding, the use of a GP as a measurement of the overall symbolic content and symbolic flow of a piece presents itself as the first venture of this nature towards a 'conceptualizing-Scriabin' paradigm as a prelude to performance.

2.1.1 – Mystical Unity

Of the Eighth, Scriabin declares: "In form and essence, the inner and outer must be the same and one" (cited Bowers 1973, 180; Rimm 2002, 113). While Bowers claims the basic chord of this sonata to be the amalgam of the B and C♯ chords in the bass of the anacrusis to the first chord of Example 2.1a (1972, 16), Hull on the other hand claims the basic chord to be at beat 1 of m.1 (1920, 152). Based on Hull's assumption, it would appear that the mystic chord is based on A (i.e. A, D♯, G, C♯, [E] and B). However, it is proposed that the mystic chord is positioned in the first beat of m.2, i.e. A, D♯, G, C♯, F♯, B. This way, the sustained sonorities of this opening chord are harmonious with those of the concluding bars where the mystic chord of m.2 is restated, effectively unifying the introduction and the conclusion of the work, which is symbolic of mankind's reintegration with the divine:

Example 2.1a – Sonata no.8, mm.1-3 and 495-499

2.1.2 – Summons (△)

The first real occurrence of the 'summons' gesture may be found in the bass of m.5
(B♭ to C) of Example 2.1b. It takes the form of an upbeat quaver to a sustained note,
conforming to the 'short-long' schema. Although this is not as forceful as the opening
'summons' motif of the "White Mass", its frequent deployment denotes a sense of
steadfast, persuasive, yet gentle urging throughout the work. This gesture usually
occurs in conjunction with gestures of 'resonance', which compound the innuendo and
import of the 'summons'. Note that the introductory bars of Example 2.1a also feature
the 'summons' gesture in guise within the sustained chords, albeit rhythmically altered
in the melody of the appoggiatura in the bass (B to C♯). This could be considered the
precursor of the disguised 'summons' gesture in the opening bars of the "Black Mass"
(Example 1.2h):

Example 2.1b – Sonata no.8, mm.4-10

2.1.3 – Light (◆ ◇)

Gestures of 'light' are frequently used in this sonata, but not to the extent they were employed in Sonata no.10. Trills and sparkling streams of grace-notes are prominently featured, especially in conjunction with the lively dance-like themes to be discussed. Although high-register chords are intermittently featured, they do not contribute to the overall sense of divine illumination to the extent that the trills and grace-notes have.

2.1.4 – Flight (■ □)

Two of the four gestures symbolizing 'flight' are presented in Example 2.1b. Astutely observed by Hull all those years ago, the first instance happens between mm.4-5 (1920, 153), where a quadruplet ascends to its apex, a D♭; it complies with the quintuplet patterning Scriabin so often utilizes to represent flight. Not being as active as the rapid five-note motif, this slower and milder depiction embodies a sense of hovering and floating due to its rising trajectory.

The second gesture of 'flight' may be found in the semiquaver-rest-demisemiquaver-quaver pattern in the treble of m.10. This creates a similar sense of 'lift' as in Example 1.4a, where the falling semiquavers generate momentum towards the oncoming quaver. In this case, the momentum generated by the falling semiquavers is halted by a rest, with the sense of 'lift' predominantly created by the subsequent demisemiquaver that abruptly rises to the quaver.

The first instance of the dynamic five-note gesture of 'flight' occurs in mm.22-23. It takes the form of a rapid cascading roulade of double-fourths and frequently follows the 'summons' gesture (mm.21-22), as if responding to its call for ecstasy:
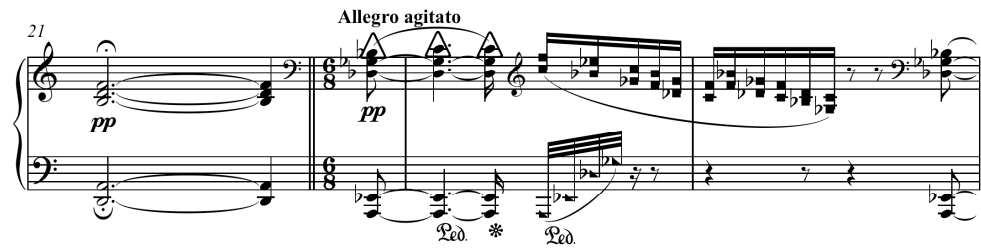
Example 2.1c – Sonata no.8, mm.21-23

The fourth motif of 'flight' may be considered as a genteel version of the rapid five-note motif, being much slower in tempo. In other words, its lack of vigour, yet persistent use of the idiosyncratic quintuplet, renders it to be a passive version of the 'dynamic' gesture of 'flight':

Example 2.1d – Sonata no.8, mm.177-180

2.1.5 – Occult (▼ ▽)

As is the case with Sonata no.10, there is very little - if any - reference to the occult. In spite of the routine presence of the tritone, which is necessary to Scriabin's mystic chord harmonies, it is neither brought to the forefront as in Sonata no.9 (oscillating tritones), nor prominently featured as a series of block-chords alongside other occult intervals as in Sonata no.6 (*l'épouvante surgit*). Hence, any association with the occult should be kept at a minimum. The slightest hint of any 'dark' association may be found in a combination of occult intervals, which takes the form of the resonant minor-ninth arpeggios in mm.186-190 and mm.264-268. Although Scriabin labels this resonant-sensual passage *agitato*, the "destructive" power of sound upon the soul is sporadic and short-lived:
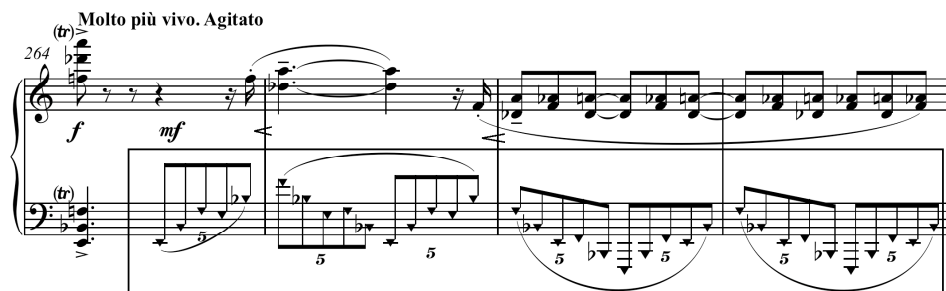
Example 2.1e – Sonata no.8, mm.264-267

2.1.6 – Resonance (▭)

Typical of Scriabin's late works, bell-like sonorities are a regular feature in this sonata. In Example 2.1a, rich sustained chords perfume mm.1-5, creating a sense of awe and mystery as the sea of mystifying sonorities enchants the auditor, opening the door to the spiritual realm. On the occasion when the note or chord (i.e. bell), is struck repeatedly, the sonority is often not sustained, but dampened by a rest, as shown in the alto line of this example; it is somewhat akin to the dampening of sound in the manner by which the percussionist places their hand on the skin of the drum between each strike. In Example 2.1f, the same harmonies are repeatedly resounded and interspersed with the 'short-long' schema of the 'summons' gesture, with each repetition amplifying the effect and the urgency of the 'summons':
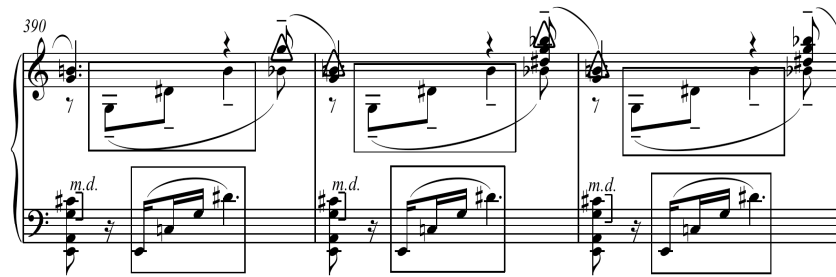
Example 2.1f – Sonata no.8, mm.390-392

As a less dynamic manifestation of bell-like sonorities, notes and chords are often struck just once and sustained, simulating the reverberant or echoing sound of bells, and creating a mystical atmosphere. This is perhaps the most common resonance effect employed by Scriabin in this work. It is also frequently used in tandem with the 'summons' gesture. For example, in mm.5-6 of Example 2.1b, the resonances of the basic 'French Sixth' chord (A, E♭, D♭, G) are sustained beneath the 'summons' gesture. In the following excerpt, the single strike of the bell may be heard in the sustained dotted-minim chords of mm.132-133 and mm.134-135:

Example 2.1g – Sonata no.8, mm.132-135

In cases where Scriabin requires a simple amplificatory pianistic device, he employs either the 'minor-ninth', 'one-way', or 'two-way' arpeggio in the bass, such as in Examples 2.1e, f, and g respectively, and the 'repeated-note' arpeggio in mm.86-87 of Example 2.1h. Where a less sonorous amplification and gradual building up of resonances is needed, a truncated semiquaver figuration akin to a repetitive shortened arpeggio or broken chord of sorts is used, as shown in mm.84-85 below:
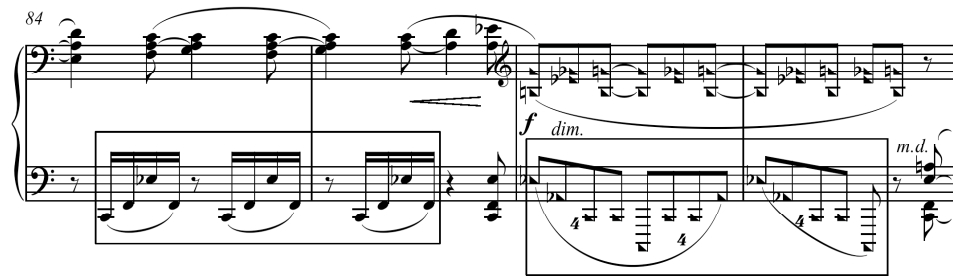
Example 2.1h – Sonata no.8, mm.84-87

2.1.7 – Sensuality (◤ ◹)

In this sonata, sensual gestures may be found throughout the score. For example, the two-note 'caress' is featured in mm.7 and 9 of Example 2.1b, and the 'extended caress' in m.22 of Example 2.1c. Frictional polyrhythmic figurations signifying 'heat' are often combined with powerful gestures of 'resonance', as in mm.86-87 of Example 2.1h. Due to the frictional force (i.e 'heat') between the polyrhythms, a sensation of the occult power of sound acting upon the soul may be implied. As such, this recurring two-bar resonant-sensual interlude may be perceived as an indicator of the spiritual state of the soul at a particular point of time in the sonata.

2.1.8 – Erotic (○ and ▢)

The MP makes its first appearance in the final quaver of m.25 of Example 2.1i. Note that the antecedent segment of this gesture (E♭ – F - E♭ – F) mimics the 'summons' gesture, which in turn connotes a sense of urgency, making this a common theme of this sonata per se. The subsequent segment of the MP (E♭ – F – G – A, [G♭ - B♭ not inclusive]) is mostly drawn from the whole-tone scale as part of the mystic chord:

Example 2.1i – Sonata no.8, mm.25-28

The MP is also often used in fragments. Starting at the final quaver of m.49, the antecedent fragment appears in the tenor line, and the subsequent fragment in the treble:
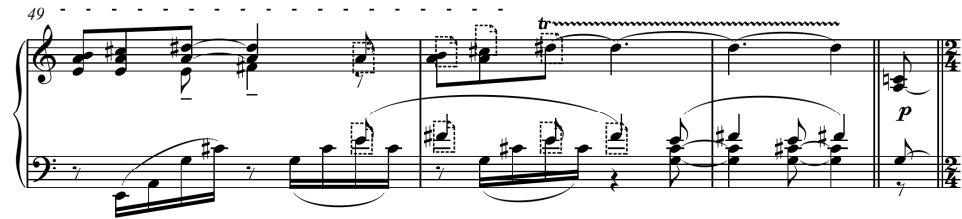
Example 2.1j – Sonata no.8, mm.49-51

The subsequent fragment is also employed in the more structural-philosophically significant passages. In Example 2.lk, it is used in conjunction with sustained trills of 'light', denoting what is possibly the most spiritually enlightened state of the MP in this sonata:
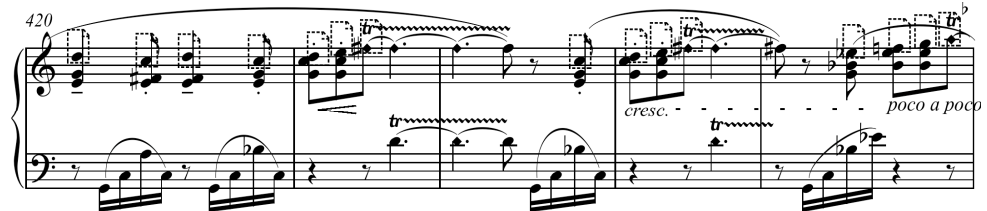
Example 2.1k – Sonata no.8, mm.420-424

Scriabin surprisingly discusses the FP of this sonata in some detail. Regarding the first "appearance" of the feminine theme, specifically in reference to the imposing major tenth ascent to the B apex that falls to the B♭ in m.3 of Example 2.1a, Scriabin dramatically told Sabaneyev to "listen to the tragedy born out of such a dissolution…in two notes I alter hope into despair" (cited Bowers 1969, 2:244). The first real statement of the FP proper occurs in mm.88:
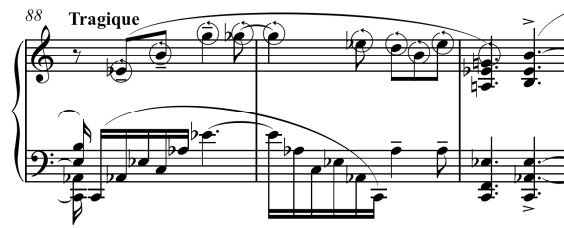
Example 2.11 – Sonata no.8, mm.88-90

Of the peculiar *tragique* marking, Bowers makes mention that the word *tragic* has connotations of the *heroic* in the Russian language; it should not be understood as "pitiable" (Bowers 1973, 179). This is similar to the Greek language, where the term *tragic* is used to describe heroes like Odysseus and Hercules. Consequently, the major tenth ascent may be understood as being heroic prior to the despair of the semitone descent from the G apex to the G♭; the FP (or mankind) is heroic, yet delicate and susceptible to the dark forces if present, an "Achilles heel" so to speak.

The FP also makes its appearance in the guise of a serpentine figuration (Example 2.1a, m.3). Stated in straight quavers, it is a less dynamic version of the second theme proper, having a sense of latent heroism. Also lacking in dynamism, the FP is presented in descent from the apex, bringing to attention the delicate aspect of the female protagonist. In the following example, it is rhythmically augmented and presented in the middle staff, susceptible amidst gestures of 'light', 'flight' and 'caress':
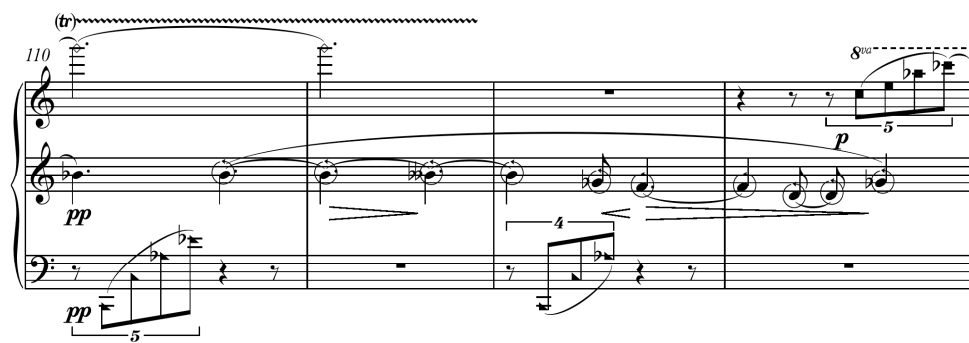
Example 2.1m – Sonata no.8, mm.110-113

Alternatively, the FP is also presented in ascent in conjunction with gestures of 'flight' (mm.8 and 10 of Example 2.1b). Fused with the gesture of 'flight', the feminine may

also be seen to 'lift' and take wing towards ecstasy as the rhythm frenetically recurs from m.284 in the accelerating tempo in the example below:
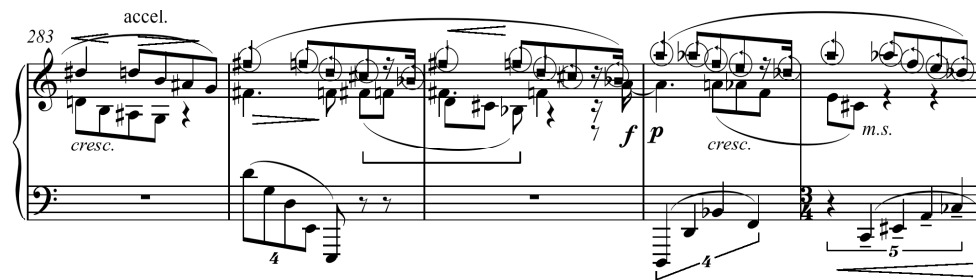
Example 2.1n – Sonata no.8, mm.283-287

2.1.9 - Dance

There are two distinctive dance-like themes in this sonata, one masculine and one feminine. Written in a somewhat fidgety rhythm, the MP's dance in following excerpt recalls the nervous energy associated with the *winged and spinning* dance of Sonata no.6 (Example 1.9a). Being one the rare expression markings Scriabin made in the score, this passage marked *breathless* alludes to the breathlessness experienced from a preceding period of sustained intensive activity:

Example 2.1o – Sonata no.8, mm.51-54

Unlike the MP's dance, the FP's dance-like theme is a dance of light and sensuality. Trills of 'light', sweeping gestures of 'extended caress', and sensual 'heat' constitute this dance, and it is this dance that Scriabin chooses to privilege and develop as the sonata unfolds:

Example 2.1p – Sonata no.8, mm.457-464

2.1.10 – Transformation/Dissipation (⬆⊕)

Although there is no obvious telltale sign of dissipation - i.e. the remarkably conspicuous ascending trajectory associated with the freedom from gravity - there are instances where a gradually ascending trajectory is featured in this sonata (ex. starting from the G – B – C♯ – D♯ ascending quintuplet in Example 2.1a). This, in combination with other gestures suggestive of dissipation - i.e. dissipating trills and the implied accelerating tempi, allude to the transformation of matter-to-spirit.

2.11 - Sonata no.8 Gestural Profile

The following table summarizes the gestures utilized in this sonata; it is the explanatory key for its gestural profile. Note that 'X' refers to the more stereotypical and dynamic aspect of the gesture, while 'x' refers to the more passive and fragmentary version of 'X':

Gesture	Description
Summons (X)	Single statement of short-long schema
(x)	As above, but rhythmically altered
Light – radiant (X)	Trills, broken-chords, repeated notes
- dispersed	Grace-note streams
Flight – dynamic (X)	Semiquaver rapid 5-note motif
(x)	Quaver 5-note motif
- float / hover (X)	Ascending quadruplet (quintuplet) rhythm
	Repeated semiquaver/quaver-rest-(demi)semiquaver schema, 'lift'
Occult – (x)	Two or more dark occult intervals combined
Resonance – bells (X)	Repeated striking of chord or note
(x)	Single strike on the chord, sustained
- sonority (X)	One-way, two-way, minor-ninth, repeated-note arpeggios
(x)	Repeated truncated arpeggio/broken-chord-like figurations among similar harmonies/notes
Sensual – caress	Two-note and extended caress
- 'heat'	Polyrhythm
Erotic – masculine (X)	As written
(x)	Antecedent and/or subsequent fragment
- feminine (X)	As written, and leaping major-tenth tenutos
(x)	In even quavers, and in descent from apex
Dance (X)	Masculine dance
(x)	Feminine dance
Dissipation (X)	2+ signs and ascending trajectory (see 1.10.1)
(x)	2+ signs, no ascension

Table 2 – Key of gestures for gestural profile (GP) of Sonata no.8

Following the identification and description of the gestures at work in this sonata, the following graph is a tabulation of those gestures per bar. Thus, it should be possible to determine how Scriabin's symbolic gestures unfold through time, enabling the identification of *gesturally-significant* passages of music by observing the play and combinations of gestures at work. In interpreting these significant passages of music, it is proposed that the implied experiential gestalt of a section of music, and the entire work, may be ascertained.

Sonata no.8 – Gestural Profile (1 of 10)

(Introduction) Lento   **(Exposition)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Summons	x	x	x	x	X	X							X	X							X	X	X	X	X
Light (radiant) (dispersed)																									
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	XX	XX		X	X	X	X
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	X	X	X	X	X	X							x	x						X	X	x	x	x	x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')							X	X X	X		X X	X X	X X		X X	X X	X X		X	X X		X		X	
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)			x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	xx	xx	xx	x	x					X
Dance																									
Dissipation																									

Allegro Agitato   *accel.*

	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Summons				X	X	X				X	X				X	X						X		X	
Light (radiant) (dispersed)																									X
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)			X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X													
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x		x	X	x	x	X x	X x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')			X		X				X		X														
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	Xxx	xx
Dance																									
Dissipation																									

Allegro

	Molto più vivo				allargando																				
	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
Summons						X	X	X							X	X									X
Light (radiant) (dispersed)	X					X	X																		
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)								X	X	X	X						X	X	X						
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)		X	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')						X				X		x				X		X	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	xx										X	X	X		X					X	X		X	X	X
Dance		X	X	X	X																				
Dissipation																									

Tragique

	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
Summons		X						X	X			X	X				X	X	X	X					
Light (radiant) (dispersed)																				X	X	X	X	X	X
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)																									
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
																	X	X	X	X					
Sensual (caress) ('heat')							X	X			X	X				X									
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	X	Xx	x	x	x	x	X	X	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	x	x								
Dance																					x	x	x	x	x
Dissipation																									

Sonata no.8 - Gestural Profile (3 of 10)

	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125
Summons																									X
Light (radiant) (dispersed)	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X														
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X							X	X
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	X	X	X	X														X	X	X	Xx	x	X	x	x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')	X	X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X		X		X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)				x		X	X	X	Xx	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Dance	x	x	x	x	x																				
Dissipation													x	x	x	x	x								

	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
Summons	X																								
Light (radiant) (dispersed)				X																		X		X	
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)	X	X				X					X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X					
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	x	x	x	x	x		x X	x X	x X	x X	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')	X										X		X			X			X						
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Dance																									
Dissipation																									

Meno vivo

	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175
Summons			X	X																					X
Light (radiant)																								X	X
(dispersed)																								X	X
Flight (dynamic)				X	X	X			X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X		X		x	x	
(float / hover)							X																		
Occult																									
Resonance (bells)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		Xx	Xx			Xx	Xx	X									
(sonority)	X	X	X					X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X						
Sensual (caress)				X						X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X			
('heat')									X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
Erotic (masculine)	X	X	X				x	x	X	x	x		X	x	x	X	X	X	X	x	X		X	X	Xx
(feminine)	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Xx		X	X	Xx
Dance																									
Dissipation																									

(Development) Tragique. Molto più vivo

	176	177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200
Summons	X	X									X	X							X	X					
Light (radiant)	X	X			X	X				X															
(dispersed)										X															
Flight (dynamic)		x	x	x	x		X	x	x																
(float / hover)						X	X		x																
Occult											x	x	x	x	x										
Resonance (bells)								x			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
(sonority)																X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Sensual (caress)		X											X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X
('heat')																									
Erotic (masculine)					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	X	X	X		X	X	x
(feminine)								X	X														X	X	
Dance																									
Dissipation																									

molto accel. Presto

	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210	211	212	213	214	215	216	217	218	219	220	221	222	223	224	225
Summons																	X	X			X	X			
Light (radiant) (dispersed)																X	X			X	X				
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)								X	X	X	X	X	X						x				x	x	x
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	X		X	X	X	X	X										x	X	X		Xx	X	x	x	x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X				
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	x	X	X	x		x	x	x	x	X	X	x	x												
Dance														x	x	x	x			x	x				
Dissipation																									

Meno vivo · **Allegro**

	226	227	228	229	230	231	232	233	234	235	236	237	238	239	240	241	242	243	244	245	246	247	248	249	250
Summons																									
Light (radiant) (dispersed)																	X	X X	X	X		x	X	X	
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X X	X		X		x	x		x	x	x	x X	X	X	X
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)			Xx	Xx			X	X	x		x											x	x		x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')	X	X X	X X	X X	X	X X	X X	X X	X	X X	X	X X	X		X	X					X		X		
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	X X	X X	x X	x	X	X	x X	x	X	X X	X	X	x	Xx	X	X	X	Xx	Xx	Xx	x		X	X	X
Dance																									
Dissipation																									

Sonata no.8 - Gestural Profile (6 of 10)

Molto più vivo. Agitato

	251	252	253	254	255	256	257	258	259	260	261	262	263	264	265	266	267	268	269	270	271	272	273	274	275
Summons														X	X							X	X		
Light (radiant)		X	X	X	X																				
(dispersed)	X	X						X	X	X	X	X	X												
Flight (dynamic)	x	x			x	x	x																		
(float / hover)							X	X												X	X				
Occult														x		x	x	x							
Resonance (bells)	X						x	x		x		x		X	X	X	X	x	x			X	X	X	X
(sonority)																X	X	X							
Sensual (caress)					X	X		X		X		X				X	X			X				X	X
('heat')																				X					
Erotic (masculine)	X	X	Xx	Xx	Xx	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x				
(feminine)	X							x											X	x	x				
Dance																									
Dissipation																									

accel. ——— **Presto**

	276	277	278	279	280	281	282	283	284	285	286	287	288	289	290	291	292	293	294	295	296	297	298	299	300
Summons																									
Light (radiant)																			X	X	X			X	X
(dispersed)																									
Flight (dynamic)			X				X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X									
(float / hover)																									
Occult																									
Resonance (bells)	x	x			x	x														x		X	X	X	X
(sonority)	X				X														X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sensual (caress)			X				X		X		X		X	X	X	X									
('heat')	X		X				X		X		X														
Erotic (masculine)	X	X	x	x	X	X	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	X	X	x	x									
(feminine)	X																								
Dance																	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dissipation																									

Sonata no.8 - Gestural Profile (7 of 10)

	301	302	303	304	305	306	307	308	309	310	311	312	313	314	315	316	317	318	319	320	321	322	323	324	325
Summons	X																								
Light (radiant) (dispersed)		X	X	X	X							X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)												X	X			X	X	X	X	X	Xx	Xx	Xx	x	x
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	X					X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X	X	Xx	x	x	x	x	x	
Sensual (caress) ('heat')	X	X																		X	X	X	x	x	
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X								X	X	X
		X	X	X	X									X	X								X	X	X
Dance	x	x				X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X										
Dissipation																									

	326	327	328	329	330	331	332	333	334	335	336	337	338	339	340	341	342	343	344	345	346	347	348	349	350
Summons	X																								
Light (radiant) (dispersed)		X	X						X													X	X	X	
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)	X	Xx	Xx	Xx	x	x	X	Xx	Xx	Xx	x	x	x	x				xx	x	x	x	x	x	x	
																			X	X	X	X	X		
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	x	x	x	x	x				
													x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					
Sensual (caress) ('heat')	X	X	X				X		X											X		X			
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X		x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
				X	X	X				X		X	X					Xx	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Dance																									X
Dissipation																									

accel.

Allegro

Più vivo

	351	352	353	354	355	356	357	358	359	360	361	362	363	364	365	366	367	368	369	370	371	372	373	374	375
Summons				X	X	X	X	X					X	X											
Light (radiant) (dispersed)				X	X																				
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)						X X	X X	X X	Xx X	x	x			X X	Xx X	Xx X	Xx X	x	x			X	Xx	x	x
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)				x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')				X							X								X						
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)									X	X	X						X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Xx
Dance	X	X	X																						
Dissipation																									

Tragique

	376	377	378	379	380	381	382	383	384	385	386	387	388	389	390	391	392	393	394	395	396	397	398	399	400
Summons										X	X				X	X	X	X	X						
Light (radiant) (dispersed)																			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)																									
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	x	x	x	x	X	X	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X X	X X	X X	X				X		X	X
Sensual (caress) ('heat')					X	X			X	X	X			X											
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	x	x	x	x		x	x	X				XX	XX	Xx	Xx	X	X								
Dance																			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dissipation																									

	401	402	403	404	405	406	407	408	409	410	411	412	413	414	415	416	417	418	419	420	421	422	423	424	425
Summons																									
Light (radiant) (dispersed)	X	X	X				X	X	X			X	X	X	X						X	X	X	X	X
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)			X	X	X	X	X	X																	
Occult										X	X														
Resonance (bells) (sonority)	X															X	X	X	Xx	x		x			
Sensual (caress) ('heat')	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X										X	X
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X							X	X	X						
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)		x		X	X	X	X	x		x	x	x	x	x	x				X	X	X	X	x	x	x
Dance	x	x	x	x																					
Dissipation																						X	X	X	X

Più vivo — *accel.* — **(Coda)**

	426	427	428	429	430	431	432	433	434	435	436	437	438	439	440	441	442	443	444	445	446	447	448	449	450
Summons																						X	X		
Light (radiant) (dispersed)	X	X	X																			X	X	X	
Flight (dynamic) (float / hover)																			X	X	X	X			
Occult																									
Resonance (bells) (sonority)								x	x		X	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	X	X		x
Sensual (caress) ('heat')		X			X				X				X		X										
Erotic (masculine) (feminine)	x	x	x	X	X	X	x	X	X	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	X	X				
Dance																						x	x	x	x
Dissipation	X	X	X																						

Presto — *accel.*

	451	452	453	454	455	456	457	458	459	460	461	462	463	464	465	466	467	468	469	470	471	472	473	474	475
Summons																									
Light (radiant)	X						X		X																
(dispersed)								X		X	X	X	X	X											
Flight (dynamic)														X				X							
(float / hover)																									
Occult																									
Resonance (bells)		x	X	X	X	X		x		X	X	X	X	X	x	x			x	x		x		x	
(sonority)																									
Sensual (caress)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				X					
('heat')											X	X													
Erotic (masculine)															X		x	x	X	X	x	X	x	X	x
(feminine)																							x	x	
Dance	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x											
Dissipation																									

Prestissimo

	476	477	478	479	480	481	482	483	484	485	486	487	488	489	490	491	492	493	494	495	496	497	498	499
Summons						X	X																	
Light (radiant)						X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X									
(dispersed)									X		X													
Flight (dynamic)			X	X	X	X																		
(float / hover)																				x	x	x	x	
Occult																								
Resonance (bells)	x					X	X		x		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
(sonority)																								
Sensual (caress)								X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
('heat')																X								
Erotic (masculine)																X	x	x	x					
(feminine)																x	x							
Dance	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
Dissipation																				X	X	X	X	

2.2 – Sonata no.8 Analysis

Following the tabulation of gestures in the GP, individual graphs per structural section were drawn to show the changing number of gestures from bar to bar (time series). This was done with the purpose of deriving a possible 'shape' in the Eighth sonata, a measure of 'symbolic density' or 'symbolic intensity' per se. It is hypothesized that such a graphical representation may facilitate the mental conceptualization of the symbolic content of this sonata, charting the ebbs and flows of Scriabin's symbolism temporally. In ascertaining the direction or general ebb or flow of symbolic intensity in a given section, it is ascertained whether that section is symbolically heightened or subdued, which contributes to the overall conception of musical shape (or should we say, symbolic shape) of the work.

Whereby the minute details of every gesture is catalogued in the GP, the graphical representations provide an overall "bird's eye" view and sense of temporality of each section of the work;[27] and it is through the constant process of shifting between the microcosmic (GP) and macrocosmic (graphical) levels of the analyses that a possible conception of the symbolic intensity (or a symbolically-based narrative) and consequent emotional intensity, may be studied as a precursor to performance, or as a musicological tool for the relevant works.

Introduction (mm.1-21)

A glance at the GP reveals the gradual accumulation of gestures, i.e. two functioning gestures in mm.1-2, three or four gestures in mm.3-12, and three to six gestures per bar from mm.13-20. 'Summons' gestures are magnified by bell-like sonorities in mm.1-6, awakening the passive FP from m.7, which is enveloped in hovering 'flight' and sensual gestures. A second 'summons' at mm.13-14 rouses a second passive FP, which mingles in tandem with the first at mm.16-18. Bringing an end to this provocative introduction are double hovering 'flight' gestures at mm.19-20. In all, the introductory section's

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[27] See Appendix for a graphical representation of the GP by section for an additional perspective.

'expressive genre' is 'sensual-erotic'; it is built on the prevalence of ecstatic 'flight', sensual 'caress' and 'heat' gestures upon the FPs.

Exposition (mm.21-185)

Masculine Principle (First Theme)

A resonant 'summons' gesture bridges the introduction to the exposition in mm.21-22, announcing the arrival of the MP at m.25, which is enclosed between cascading roulades of dynamic 'flight' gestures. Meanwhile, 'extended caress' gestures are employed in accompaniment to the dynamic 'flight' gesture in mm.22, 24, 28 and 30, exciting the 'flight' motif, and by extension the MP, with its titillating touch.[28] This sequence of events has been brought about by the insistent 'summons' gestures at mm.21-22, 23-24, and 29-30 in the example below. A glance at the GP reveals a pattern where the 'summons' gestures of those bars (and mm.35-36, and 40-41) are juxtaposed with the MP, giving hint to the *dialogical* function of these gestures (Hatten 2004, 164), i.e. the constant entreaty for the MP to take flight:

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[28] This gesture of 'extended caress' may also be considered to be a written-out rolled chord, representative of flight due to its rising trajectory in high velocity, hence the transferral of momentum towards the cascading roulades above (see chapter 1.4.3).

Example 2.2a – Sonata no.8, mm.21-30

The first of Scriabin's rare French annotations instructs the MP to become *joyous* from m.45. In Example 2.2b, resonance-building gestures in the bass tenaciously accompany the MP, cumulatively amplifying the sensation of bubbling joyousness. Additional 'summons' gestures in the alto of mm.47 and 49 further service the MP, hurtling it towards frenzy in this gesturally significant moment: it makes three appearances in m.49 (the tail-end of the MP proper, and its antecedent and subsequent fragments starting at the final quaver of that bar). At this gesturally significant moment, the joyous masculine soul gets its first glimpse of divine illumination at mm.50-51 as it accelerates into dance at Example 2.2c; all appears to be geared towards this first instance of divine illumination at m.50, just as the introduction was geared towards the fleeting double flights of ecstasy:

Example 2.2b – Sonata no.8, mm.45-51

The dance of the MP is rapid and *breathless*, characteristic of the Dionysian cult dances. Sustained chords in the bass are symbolic of the harmonious resonances that pulsate throughout the dancers' body. However, divine illumination is denied at this early stage of the sonata, as the dance abruptly halts at m.56. In its place, another resonating 'summons' gesture is found that is accompanied by a trill, alluding to the need for more divine illumination:

Example 2.2c – Sonata no.8, mm.52-58

The Allegro from m.58 is more or less a restatement of events, minus the dance. The GP indicates so, containing no other gesturally significant moments except in m.71, where there is a double statement of the masculine theme.[29]

Feminine Principle (Second Theme)

The two-bar resonant-sensual interludes at mm.82-83 and 86-87 demarcate important structural junctures in this work, acting as a bridge passage of sorts. They infuse the narrative with a burst of sound, transferring its occult power from one sounding body to another, from the masculine to the feminine protagonist, as indicated by the use of the 'summons' gesture in mm.83-84 and 87-88 which announces the arrival of the FP at m.88. The FP is serviced by a sonorous two-way arpeggio, and immediately followed by hefty bell-like resonances, which have been authoritatively summoned from m.92:

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[29] As this is featured in one bar only, i.e. without repetition or prolonged usage, its presence should be considered incidental, not warranting further discussion. Similarly, incidental occurrences such as this will henceforth be overlooked.

Example 2.2d – Sonata no.8, mm.82-95

The FP then breaks into dance amidst a sea of sensual caresses and trills of light, suggestive of the quest of divine illumination through ecstasy. As the dance continues, gestures of hovering 'flight', 'extended caress', as well as a high degree of polyrhythmic mixes, steadily heighten the sensuality of this dance from m.103. A glance at the GP would suggest that mm.103-110 forms the most symbolically/erotically charged passage since the introduction:

Example 2.2e – Sonata no.8, mm.96-109

The subsequent fragment of the FP is now stated twice in its passive form in mm.110-113 and 114-117. Despite the absence of the primary sign of dissipation (the ascending trajectory), the ecstatic female more or less dissipates from m.114, as identified by the dissipating trills and thinning textures. In the midst of dissipating, the resonant-sensual interlude appears at mm.118-121, rudely interrupting this magical moment by transferring the occult power of sound back to the MP at m.121:

Example 2.2f – Sonata no.8, mm.110-118

Exposition (continued)

In bringing about the close of the exposition, Scriabin employs the MP alongside the FP with more frequency and in closer proximity from m.127. He firstly uplifts the MP with trills at mm.129 and 131, followed by gestures of dynamic 'flight', which now accompany both the MP and FP at mm.136-139, giving hint of their common aspiration:

Example 2.2g – Sonata no.8, mm.128-137

In what should be considered the most gesturally saturated, hence significant passage thus far, the masculine and feminine protagonists are presented *stretto*-like for the first time in m.160, and again in m.164. Just as the feminine theme ends at m.160, the 'short-long' summoning rhythm of the fragmented male theme (C♯ to D) is heard from the second quaver of that bar. This "union" is acknowledged by sweeping gestures of 'caress' and frictional 'heat' from mm.160. The GP of these bars (mm.160-165) indicates this passage to be the most symbolically plenteous point of the sonata thus far, utilizing up to seven gestures per bar at this climactic moment of the exposition:
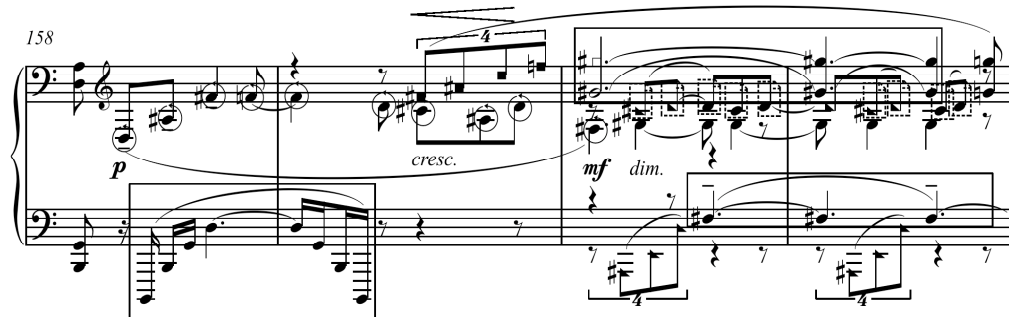
Example 2.2h – Sonata no.8, mm.158-161

The examination of the GP has so far provided a wealth of information for a possible mental mapping of this sonata. In all, there are three significant symbolic moments in the exposition: 1) the spiritual enlightenment of the MP prior its dance (Example 2.2b), 2) the erotically charged latter half of the feminine dance, hence the near-achievement of dissipation in Examples 2.2e and f respectively, and 3) the fleeting "union" of the MP and FP (Example 2.2h). So it would seem that the entire exposition has been carefully structured in a series of upswings to lead towards the gesturally climactic moment of Example 2.2h. In other words, it appears that the exposition is shaped upon a series of three innuendos, each more symbolically imbued and expressively significant than the one preceding it. Following this, a gentle *Meno vivo* from m.173 (featuring the MP and FP amidst many gestures of 'light' and 'flight') eases the music into the development section.

Development (mm.186-319)

This development is announced by the brash resonant-sensual interlude at m.186. For the first time, Scriabin uses a combination of occult intervals as harbingers of the forthcoming trials and tribulations traditionally associated with the development; a sense of foreboding is harboured in Example 2.2i, which escaped the previous resonant-sensual interludes:
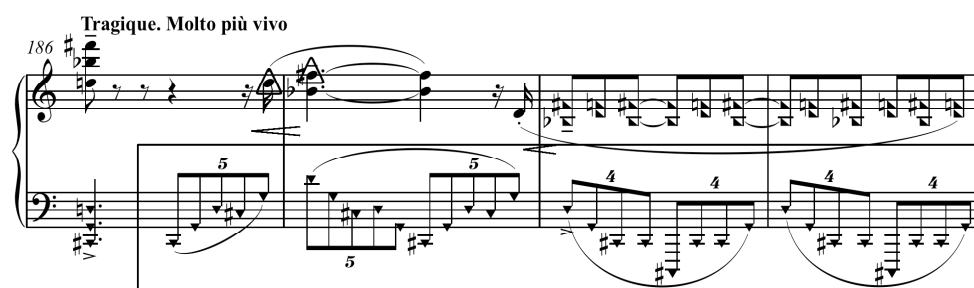
Example 2.2i – Sonata no.8, mm.186-189

When one examines the GP from m.190, we are able to ascertain that Scriabin once again thickens the textures gradually, from an average of two or three gestures per bar in mm.192-207, to three or four in mm.208-213, where GP takes on a more erotic-sensual tone. Striving to reintegrate with the divine, it accelerates once again into dance at m.214. The ensuing *Allegro* (mm.226-241) is one of the symbolically richest sections of this sonata; a minimum of four gestures per bar feature in the majority of those bars. This passage is gesturally similar to the climactic Example 2.2h: a comparison of mm.160-172 and mm.228-240 in the GP would reveal this to be so, with the exception that this *Allegro* is more erotically charged due to the additional 'flight' and 'caress' gestures.

The second *Meno vivo* (mm.241-263) commences as a restatement of the previous *Meno vivo* at a minor third higher. Here, Scriabin modifies the dynamic semiquaver five-note motif into a dreamier quaver quintuplet motif of 'flight'. A glance of the GP of these bars indicates the dominance of 'light' and 'flight' gestures and near absence of 'sensual' gestures, depictive of the state of *spiritual*, as opposed to *carnal*, ecstasy. While the FP plays a subordinate role in mm.248 and 258, the MP reaches its most luminous state with streaming profusions of light in mm.258-263; this is the philosophically most enlightened passage in the sonata, featuring the concurrent use of both types of light-bearing gestures in recurring bars:

Example 2.2j – Sonata no.8, mm.241-248 and 258-263
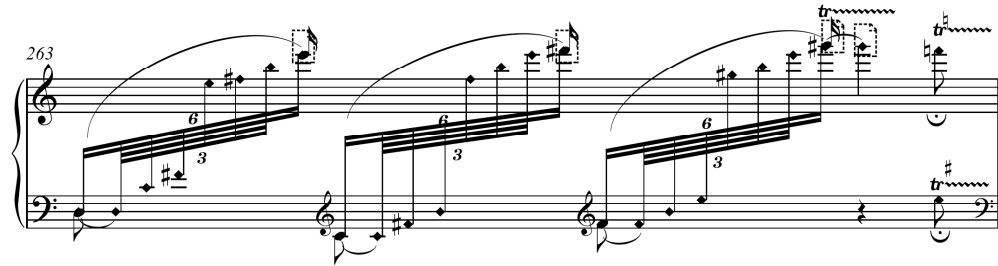
Example 2.2j (cont.) – Sonata no.8, mm.241-248 and 258-263

As before, this magical moment is interrupted by the resonant-sensual interlude at m.263, which features the combination of occult intervals for the second and final time, appropriate to the *agitato* marking at m.267. Mm.282-287 is yet another gesturally significant passage, the only instance where the passive FP is featured in *stretto* for a prolonged period of time. While 'extended caresses' stroke the bass, persistent rhythmically 'lift'-like gestures of 'flight' amalgamate with the FP from mm.282; their combination yet again accelerates towards the caressing dance of light at m.292. The GP likewise indicates the gradual accumulation and sustained usage of ecstatic 'flight' and sensual 'caresses' that effectually stimulate the FP to its dance:

Example 2.2k– Sonata no.8, mm.280-291
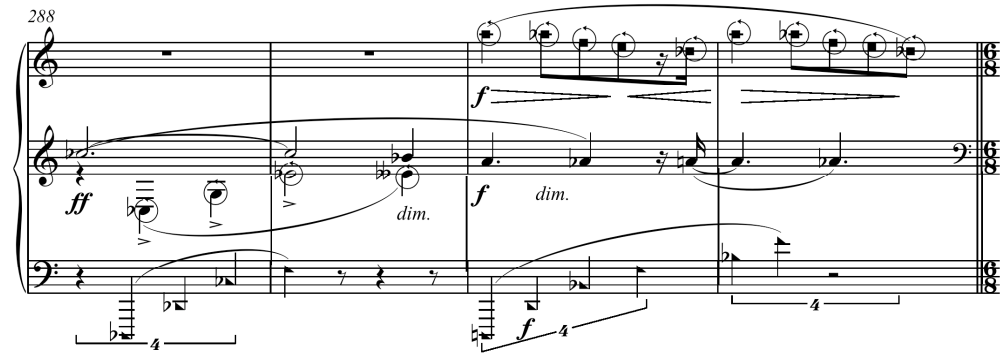
Example 2.2k (cont.) – Sonata no.8, mm.280-291

The next gesturally significant moment may be found towards the end of the FP dance in mm.302-305, where the fragmented masculine and feminine themes appear simultaneously for a successive number of bars, symbolic of their 'union', i.e. the masculine theme (subsequent fragment) being illuminated by the trill while the feminine theme rapidly streams towards its apex before its gentle descent:
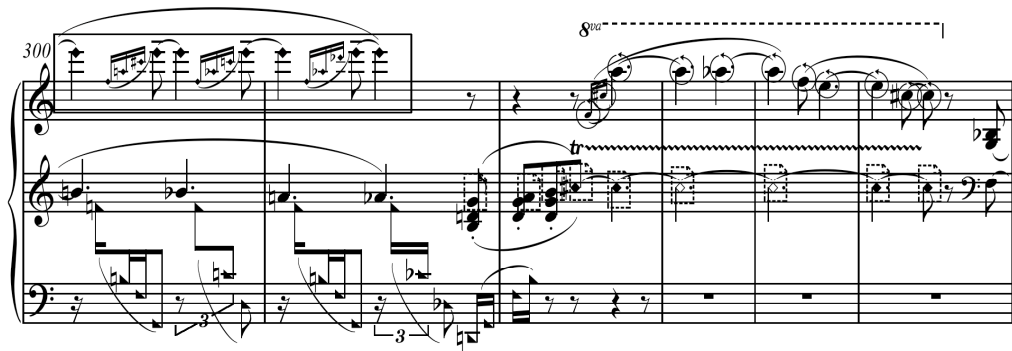
Example 2.2l – Sonata no.8, mm.300-305

A brief bridge passage based on the MP dance from m.305 brings the development to an end. The events of the latter half of the development (from m.241) appear to have been structured according to Scriabin's philosophical scheme and can be interpreted as such: 1) synonymous with divine potential, the MP of Example 2.2j makes known its spiritually

enlightened state and issues a challenge for the FP to 'become something greater than itself', 2) the FP responds at Example 2.2k, swimming in a sea of 'flight' and 'caress' gestures, whose "physical" stimulation excites it towards its dance of light, the aftermath of which, 3) temporarily unites it with the MP at Example 2.2l.

Recapitulation (mm.319-448)

A series of 'summons' gestures announces the arrival of the recapitulation at m.320, whose prolonged usage in the GP (mm.316-322) could be representative of a greater sense of urgency. Customary of Scriabin's recapitulations, events of the exposition are restated in more detail. Here, Scriabin craftily intertwines the passive 'flight' quintuplet of the *Meno vivo*, endowing the recapitulation with an additional sense of heightening:

Example 2.2m – Sonata no.8, mm.319-325

A routine glance at the GP indicates a symbolic intensification from m.321, where the MP is swarmed by gestures of 'sensuality', 'flight', and 'resonance', whose prolonged usage sensitizes the soul towards ecstasy. This effectively subscribes to Hatten's notion of

plenitude as "blissful expressive fulfilment," whereby the desired expressive goal is achieved by a progressive textural (or in this case, symbolic-gestural) saturation of a theme or motif (2004, 249):

Example 2.2n – Sonata no.8, mm.343-348

In elaborating the FP, Scriabin chooses to highlight its 'heroic' aspect by foregrounding the major-tenth ascent, which is marked in tenutos and featured in *stretto* alongside the FP from mm.387-390. This is symptomatic of the general sense of uplift permeating the recapitulation thus far:

Example 2.2o – Sonata no.8, mm.386-392

In its final appearance, the MP blazes with a string of trills from m.421, representative of its attainment of divine illumination, scurrying towards dissipation at m.428. This significant event is identified by: 1) the implied acceleration and eventual slowing tempo (fermata), 2) the final dissipating trills (diminuendo), and most importantly, 3) the ascending trajectory starting from m.422 in the MP:

Example 2.2p – Sonata no.8, mm.420-428

It would seem that the recapitulation is structured specifically to lead towards this moment of dissipation proper ('X'), leading to a possible conclusion that Scriabin structured this sonata in such a manner, as to progressively heighten the expressive intensity of each section: from the first 'mini-climax' of the MP (Example 2.2b), to the near achievement of dissolution (Example 2.2f), to the first "union" (Example 2.2h), to the zenith of spiritual enlightenment (Example 2.2j), to the more intense and prolonged second "union" (Example 2.2l), to the moment of dissolution (Example 2.2p).

Whatever one's take might be on this, it is evident that no absolute interpretation can be formed, that analysis is merely a conduit to providing alternative mental conceptualizations of a work. That a performer may choose to shape the performance towards dissolution by a measured increase of expressive intensity, or taper the expressive intensity to portray the process of dissolution, or choose to interpret Scriabin without consideration of his metaphysical concepts, is left to the artistic discretion of that performer.

Coda (mm.449-499)

A sequence of trills somewhat akin to the 'summons' trills of Sonata no.10 (Example 1.2j), announce the arrival of the coda and final vertiginous dance of the FP at m.449, which is accompanied by the routine abundance of 'caress' and 'light' gestures. The sparser textures from m.467 in the GP hint at yet another plane of spiritual progression (dematerialisation) for the FP to progress, which it does, accelerating into *prestissimo* at m.483 in the manner that dancers of the Dionysian cult may be said to rush towards ecstasy. The eventual transformation/dissipation of the FP (the treble melody) is represented by gradually ascending quintuplets of 'flight', dissipating trills, and the *gentle weakening* of the FP, suggestive of the loss of substance. Bringing about the close of the Eighth, the ultimate spiritual culmination or highest plane of spiritual progression is offered in the final bar, where the FP reintegrates with the divine as symbolized by the enigmatic presence of the (partial) mystic chord in that bar:
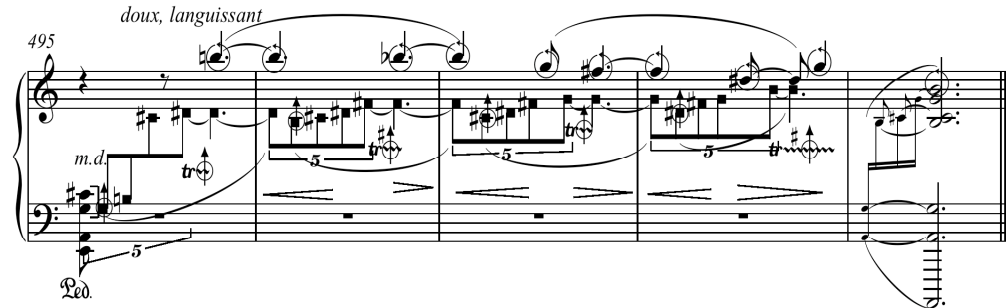
Example 2.2q – Sonata no.8, mm.495-499

Conclusion

Although the close scrutiny of the GP allows for the formation of a possible symbolic narrative, there is another way to observe the overall symbolic intensity of the sonata. We can view the individual gestures more as a gestalt, and an average gestural/symbolic intensity is calculated in order to better conceive the shape of flow in the sonata. This is done by the simple calculation of the sum of gestures of the sonata (and per section) divided into the number of respective bars, which should give the 'average symbolic intensity' of the section and sonata. It is found that a mean of 3.12 symbolic gestures are in operation per bar in the sonata; the sectional means and graph are as follows:

Section	Average number of gestures
Introduction	3.57
Exposition	2.98
Development	3.13
Recapitulation	3.29
Coda	3.24

Table 3: Average number of gestures per section
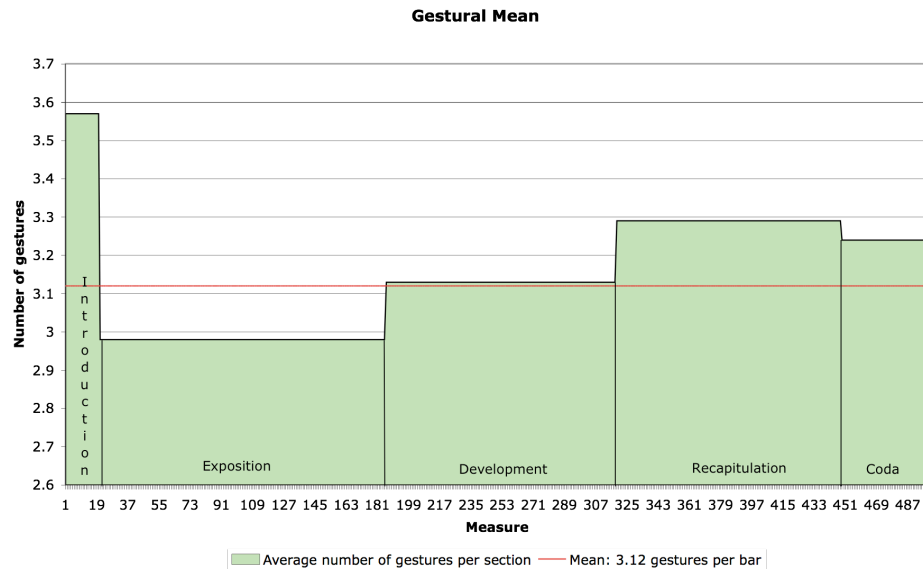
Gestural Mean

Graph 1 – Gestural mean per section

It is interesting to note that while the Eighth sonata appears to have been symbolically structured upon a premise of climaxes, i.e. with the end goal of 'union' (exposition, development) or 'dissipation' (recapitulation, coda) contained within each section, Graph 1 exhibits a shape similar to Scriabin's aforesaid notions (with the exception of the introduction), i.e. the exposition having the lowest symbolic intensity (below the 3.12 mean), the development just above the mean, and the recapitulation and coda above the mean. This appears to be shaped upon innuendo should the notion of 'union' be taken under consideration (with the brief respite after the union of the MP and FP in the coda). However, it may better be described as a shape for dissolution/transformation (with the less intense coda signifying the loss of corporeality as matter becomes spirit). It is interesting to note here that 'symbolic intensity' keeps rising well into the recapitulation, where one would expect the highest gestural concentration to occur inside the development section, when we know that no matter how far he stretched his harmony and pianistic devices, Scriabin did not significantly deviate from established formal structures in his sonatas. This formal/gestural "discrepancy" could be interpreted as the composer's

symbolic upward surge towards his "divine" purpose, as expressed within a formal musical architecture. This observation could prove useful in preparation for a performance.

Obviously, the ramifications of these findings and systems of analyses for Scriabin's symbolic gestures cannot be discussed in this limited scope of the M.Phil. But they do give partial answers, or propose one way a composer's symbolism can be ascertained from an informed study of the score, and how a composer's ideolect may be found idiolectically reflected in the very shape and structure of the composition, which in turn facilitates a mental conceptualization of the sonata as a prelude to learning and performance. An example could be to take care of not being too 'heavy' sounding in the trills of the climax of the recapitulation in Example 2.2p, should a sound of dissipation be desired (which counteracts the natural tendency to be increasingly aggressive and forceful prior to the fermata due to the ascending persistent repetition of the same motif). This branch of Scriabin performance research / the mapping of his symbolist/philosophical/private codes onto music, is still at its infancy and all findings herein are not definitive, and may be subject to future amendments. Research on how these gestures may (or may not) translate into performance or discerned by the listener can be undertaken in the future, as well as how these symbolic gestures might (or might not) affect the physical gestures of performers.

2.3 – Towards Performance

This chapter discusses performance issues of the Eighth sonata and Scriabin's late works in general. It is interesting to note that Scriabin's own performance style may in fact hold the key as to how his symbolism might be communicated in sound and physical gesture. This will not be accomplished by referring to the handful of recordings he left behind, but rather the many reviews and memoirs of his students, which Bowers (1969) has faithfully compiled.[30] Hence, this chapter outlines the main aspects of what may constitute a 'Scriabin-like' approach to performance. This is not to say that Scriabin interpreters should emulate Scriabin's own performance style, rather that a study of how the composer performed and what he preached, might reward us with some important insights to the music (as do records of Debussy's own pedalling and Rachmaninov's "un-saccharine" recordings).

2.3.1 - On Performing Sonata no.8

Complex (artistic) decisions may best be made subconsciously (Dijksterhuis and Nordgren 2006, 106-108), and answers to previously mystifying concepts/notions be found after the performer familiarizes himself with the work's content, and permits it "time to digest" (to borrow my former professor's phraseology). Taking that on account, the GP merely offers a set of tools one may choose towards constructing a narrative. However, consideration of only one aspect of analysis (symbolism) inevitably results in an unbalanced Scriabin interpretation: "Exclusive reliance on any one approach can be dangerous," cautions Rothstein (1995, 238). "Each approach has much of value to contribute, if carried out sensibly, and each can serve as a corrective to the others" (238). Hence, it is with caution that one presents an interpretation and approach to performance based solely on the

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[30] The Welte-Mignon piano rolls made by Scriabin, which have been analyzed by Leikin (1996), reveal that Scriabin, more often than not, failed to follow the printed page faithfully, deviating considerably from dynamics, tempo and even from the notation. The renowned Russian theorist Boris Yavorsky, who attended every Scriabin performance with a score in hand, made a similar observation and further commented that these changes were often made for the better (Bowers 1973, 198). These recordings would provide a most interesting investigation with regard to the performance of his gestures, but as they happen to be inclusive only up to *Désir*, op. 57 (which is just prior to the advent of his late style), they most unfortunately fall outside the scope of this investigation, hence the reliance on the reviews and his students' mémoires.

metaphysical aspect of Scriabin's music. Notwithstanding that, an examination of the GP and their graphical representation allows for a symbolic narrative to unfurl, delineating how a series of events may be portrayed in time by the scrutiny of gestures. It is also observed that 'resonance' is the most routinely featured gesture in this sonata, bringing to mind the positive occult power of sound, which Scriabin may have sought to harness as a means to reaching his philosophical goal. As discussed, the Eighth sonata appears to be structured upon a series of upswings, where each repetition of the masculine, feminine, or dance theme may be regarded as being on a higher plane of spiritual attainment, due to the symbolic intensification of each repetition. The GP of this sonata likewise confirms Bowers' observation that Scriabin's sonatas are structured on a "series of lifts, ascents and upsurges" (1969, 1:331); it also subscribes to what Taruskin has termed the "consummatory" gesture – "an agonizingly prolonged structural anacrusis that at the very last moment achieves cataclysmic resolution/consummation" (1997, 336). The notion of climax in performance, or where the climax is located, is a concept many performers are familiar with. It is also the most important structural feature, to quote Rachmaninoff:

> This culmination, depending on the actual piece, may be at the end or in the middle, it may be loud or soft; but the performer must know how to approach it with absolute calculation, absolute precision, because if it slips by, then the whole construction crumbles, the piece becomes disjointed and scrappy and does not convey to the listener what must be conveyed (Norris 1993, 78).

It may be intuited, or identified from an analysis of the score, depending on the preferred mode of learning for each performer. It has been this notion of the structural climax that I have adopted in my past Scriabin interpretations. And such has been the chastisement from my former Liszt Academy professor, who criticized my interpretations of the Fourth Sonata op.30, and the "White" and "Black" Masses, for sounding like Scriabin, but *not* Scriabin. "It doesn't fit…more energy…'forward'", he used to say, pacing around the room and gesturing emphatically with his hands.[31] It was only after this research that I have come to realize a possible cause for my error, of what 'forward' might have meant

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[31] A similar experience is recorded by Hatten (2004, 111), when his teacher demonstrated a better way of communicating Schubert's nuances. These experiences prove invaluable in later times when one approaches the works with a more sophisticated interpretive mindset, and recognizes meanings that were previously concealed through lack of maturity.

(other than more direction towards the structural climax, which I simulated in varying degrees and it still did not 'fit'); that Scriabin could not be approached in the same manner as one would a canonical composer with the 'one' carefully calculated climax, ex. Brahms, Rachmaninoff, etc., but as a series a mini-climaxes; a *plenitude* of climaxes (to borrow Hatten's term), whose *blissful expressive fulfilment* is analogous to the ultimate dissipation of matter into spirit and the reintegration with the divine in the final bars.

In view of the 3.12 gestural mean of the Eighth sonata, this work may be likened to a Bach fugue; it is polyphonic compositionally (frequently featuring between three and four voices) and gesturally (up to seven gestures per bar). Whereas an amateur would almost always intentionally foreground the *subject* in favour of the counterpoint-voices and their resultant harmonies during its performance, the well-schooled performer would aim to synthesize and weave-in all the other voices as a complement to the *subject*, projecting the fugue as a whole. A similar approach may be taken with Scriabin. That is, rather than conspicuously foregrounding the masculine or feminine theme, all other symbolic gestures should be taken into consideration and synthesized as a whole, as a complement to the main theme(s). The choice to highlight a specific gesture within a specific passage, or the highlighting of say, a particular dissonance in a Bach fugue as a musically significant moment, is of course entirely up to the artistic discretion of the performer, and his conception of the work. This is not to say that a performer should blindly follow the findings of the analysis by bringing out every gesture in performance; to do so would undoubtedly distort and harm the performance (Rink 1995, 256; Rothstein 1995, 222). Performers must learn to distinguish between, and concern themselves with what Rothstein has termed, "analytical truth" and "dramatic truth" (1995, 218-219). For example, despite the attainment of divine illumination being one of Scriabin's chief interests, the overt foregrounding of every gesture of 'light' above all else, such as in Examples 2.2j and 2.2l, will render these passages aurally unbalanced. On the other hand, dismissal of certain gestures - ex. the descending quintuplets representing 'flight' in Example 2.2m and 2.2n, may render the recapitulation unusually flat and heavy. In other words, if too much emphasis is placed on creating a smooth legato in the quintuplet accompaniment rather than using a lighter touch to convey a sense of flight, it may unwittingly detract from the

character (a sense of lightness) associated with the forthcoming MP dissolution. In either case, it is ultimately in the performer's discretion what he may or may not choose to highlight, and how it is to be done, striking a balance between the analytical and the dramatic "truths".

This inevitably brings us to the question of whether knowledge of these gestures is pertinent to understanding and performing Scriabin. For myself, the answer is yes; through the analysis and GP, I was able to ascertain an alternate 'shape' to traditionally conceived notions of climax. However, one can also happily intuit the meaning of a work without reference to these gestures. Much is dependent upon the learning mode of the performer, whether they be analytic/holist, intuitive/serialist, or versatile learners (Hallam 1995, 118-121), or simply 'pure genius'. A word of caution though from Charles Rosen for the analytic/holists like myself: "Too much reflection…will take the edge off the spontaneity that is necessary for a performance to carry conviction…knowledge leads as often to ineffective and misjudged performances as to good ones" (1998, 78-79). And thus, it is a fine line that has to be walked lest the spontaneity and 'magic' of the performance is lost, which goes against the grain of Scriabin's performance style (chapter 2.3.2). This aside, knowledge of these gestures allows the performer to peer into Scriabin's world; understanding of what was closest to Scriabin's heart would be lost otherwise. As has been quoted in the Introduction part of this dissertation, Vladimir Askhenazy agrees with this sentiment.

2.3.2 – On Performing Scriabin

Reports from reviewers and students alike arrive at this fundamental conclusion: Scriabin considered the score as a base from which to flesh out his philosophical ruminations. "He never followed the printed page or his instructions of nuances," recalls his student Maria Nemenova-Lunz (Bowers 1969, 2:91); he captures the audience with a "very strong impression he gives of improvising" (268), says Grigory Prokofiev of the Russian Musical Gazette; "you obediently follow him into all flights of his soul" (196), says an unknown reviewer from that journal. Sergei Prokofiev also relates that every note "soared" when

Scriabin performed the Fifth Sonata, while "all notes laid on the ground" when Rachmaninoff performed the very same work (Rimm 2002, 145). Many reviewers and critics likewise shared similar opinions, with the consensus that even though Scriabin's sound was not huge and often quite thin, he managed to fill the hall with a warmness of tone, brought about by the masterly use of the pedal. Perhaps the two most pertinent aspects of Scriabin's performance style to be noted are: his tone, and his improvisatory manner. This is far from saying that the direct imitation of Scriabin's manner of performance and loose adherence to the score are called for. Rather, there is in fact a special 'Scriabin sound', (just as there is a special 'Rachmaninoff sound' or 'Prokofiev sound'), which is not often captured by the performer: "Well-played Scriabin excites an audience, and poorly played, he leaves listeners baffled in ice" (Bowers 1970-71, 12).[32]

His improvisatory manner would first and foremost suggest that Scriabin did not stick to a formal plan. Whatever the performance plan, it was left 'open' enough to accommodate his spontaneity of thought and feeling. On the other hand, his thin and flighty - yet warm - tone suggests the notions of flight, light, and sensuality, to have been constants in his mind during performance. In other words, Scriabin's performance style may be analogous with: 1) the artistic discretion a performer exercises while making the work/performance their own (improvisatory style), and 2) the need for the performer to have knowledge, and conceptualize - hence convey - the entire array of symbolic gestures as a gestalt (tone). Scriabin's professor of piano at the conservatory, Vasily Safanov, claimed that Scriabin already knew what the masters had known, i.e. "how to make the piano sound other than itself"; he believed the sounds he released from the piano to have been from the "astral world" (Bowers 1970-71, 14). This is consistent with Sabaneyev's (1929, 53) claim that Scriabin's music could not be divorced from his mystical-spiritual-theosophical

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[32] Another reason as to why the 'Scriabin sound' is elusive could be due to the fact that pianists often work towards the development of a 'Russian' sound as demanded by the Russian warhorses of the concert arena, (i.e. Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky concertos), and by extension, their solo piano repertory. These types of sounds are inappropriate for, and completely alien to Scriabin's manner of playing and conception of music: Rachmaninoff had in fact angered the audiences while touring Russia exclusively with Scriabin's repertoire following the composer's death; they felt the mystery and sensuality to have been "drained out of the music" (Rimm 2002, 145). Scriabin likewise had reacted against the bravura sound of Russian pianism. While he acknowledged Rachmaninoff to possess a deep, beautiful tone, there was too much "materialism" and "meat" in that sound for the effective performance of his own ethereal music (Seroff 1950, 169).

inclinations. In the performance of his music, Scriabin specialist, Marc-André Hamelin, purports that a convincing Scriabin performance is inevitable when one realizes the "interior drama between the lines" (Rimm 2002, 167). Scriabin's performances always offered something fresh, even in the same work; they were fanciful and spontaneous. Thus, it is plausible that Scriabin may have 'played' with his musical gestures during performance, choosing a specific one to highlight in one performance, and another in the next, all according to the mood of his capricious philosophizing at the time. In other words, the supposed (spontaneous) decision to highlight 'flight' in one performance, and 'summons' in another performance, and 'resonance' in yet another performance of the same passage, would result in a considerably different perception on the part of the audience each time, hence giving the impression of improvisation. Despite his abstract philosophical thought and characteristic irregularities when performing, there remains the constant of his unique perception of the world and the cosmos, which influenced his inner ear for both composition and performance. Scriabin lived in a unique sound world, his own 'harmony of the spheres'.

As a first step towards Scriabin performance, it is logical to assume that a specific sound-world be conceived mentally before it can be evoked. Rudhyar likens the sounds of the piano to belong to the class of "bells and gongs…destined to produce masses of resonances, homogenized by the pedal" (cited Randlett 1972, 11). Randlett further adds that "gongs can shimmer as well as boom, and the notion of the piano as an idealized gong can be helpful in the interpretation of Scriabin" (10). The conception of the piano as an idealized gong rings true when one bears in mind the occult power of sound and the prevalence of the 'resonance' gesture in the Eighth sonata. However, this idealized gong should be imbued with a sense of spirituality. Scriabin did not like a "materialistic" sound, i.e. the rich 'Rachmaninoff' sound, and insisted that the "deepest *forte* must always *sound* soft"; it must not sound like a "toppling chest of drawers," he instructs Nemenova-Lunz (Bowers 1969, 1:293). All is brought about by his masterly use of the pedals: "The pedal is the soul of Scriabin," states Bowers (Garvelmann 1969, 31). A well-schooled pianist can use the pedal in an infinite number of ways; from no pedal, incrementally to the fully depressed pedal, flutter-pedalling and so forth (Banowetz 1985; Randlett 1972, 12). The

conscientious experimentation of a variety of pedalling techniques (and an excellent ear) logistically enables the pianist to make the piano *not* sound like the piano, breaching the real world into Scriabin's spiritual-astral soundscape.

Scriabin placed particular emphasis on the production of an organic, sensual tone. Instructions such as "You must caress the keyboard"…"Everything must *live*"…"The *thrill* before all else!"…"The atmosphere of art above all!"…"Get drunk on the music," are often repeated during his lessons (Bowers 1970-71, 14; 1969, 1:289-293). According to Bowers, Scriabin used "many different kinds of 'touches'" (1970-71, 17), this principle being foremost in his mind in composition (the notion of 'sensual' gestures), which also affected his performance. Konstantin Balmont, Scriabin's close associate and renowned poet, exclaims that "it is not a piano which Scriabin plays, but a beautiful woman, and he is making love to her" (1969, 2:240). Scriabin's sensuality is manifested in his erotically charged accompaniments, the notion of *plenitude*, and the structuring of climaxes. The ecstatic performance of Scriabin's music beckons the pianist to become drunk in the Dionysian wine of his music, to experience the *thrill* of the moment. In other words, well-played Scriabin tasks the performer to defy the "objective" criteria enforced by academia and the competition circuit (for want of assessment). Scriabin wanted his music to bewitch the senses. "Give the passage flight. Make it soar in the air"…"Perfume this phrase…make it fragrant with feeling," and above all else, "Don't be pedestrian"…"When you play, be unearthly," instructs Scriabin (Bowers 1970-71, 14). As advised by Hamelin, a performer must get "as much *juice* out of the piano" as humanly possible in order to satisfy the spiritual and emotional needs of Scriabin's music (Rimm 2002, 167). To Scriabin, the art of performance is the "art of experience" (Bowers 1973, 198), contrary to Stravinsky's performance-philosophy, which eschewed emotional involvement, a danger that could lead to "egregious blunders of rendition" (Stravinsky 1947, 124).

The identification of Scriabin's motifs or gestures should not be considered to be an end in itself. They constitute a guide, as a series of landmarks to be used for differentiating aspects of his complex and polyphonic musical language, which an interpreter may draw upon in search of the *thrill* of performance, breathing life into the music depending on

what catches their fancy at that particular moment in time. A quote from Scriabin specialist (and son-in-law), Vladimir Sofronitsky, on what constitutes Scriabin: "Life, light, struggle – that is where Scriabin's true greatness lies" (Bowers 1973, 9); 'life', his desire for the eternal wellbeing of mankind; 'light', his consuming quest for spiritual enlightenment and divine revelation; 'struggle', the strife mankind must face and overcome in order to reintegrate with the divine in concordance with his cosmic scheme.

Conclusion

Scriabin's grandiose views and his self-appointed messianic role to effect the universal transformation of mankind were rather megalomaniacal and far-removed from reality. These views however were in vogue with the *fin de siècle* mentality, and quintessential to much of his creative output. As such, a mode of analysis that takes into consideration these otherworldly views has been proposed in order to better understand and ascertain the expressive trajectory of his late piano sonatas; it seeks a link between the analytical/theoretical, and the philosophical in Scriabin. The taxonomy of gestures presented in Part 1 is not altogether unambiguous. In the manner Garcia (1993; 2000) has identified the gestures of 'unity', 'summons', 'light', 'flight', 'dance/ecstasy', and the 'erotic' feminine, this thesis has explored those gestures and augmented upon her gestures of 'light' and 'flight'. It has furthermore identified new gestures representative of the 'occult', 'resonance', 'sensual', and 'transformation/dissipation'. As with topic theory where the amount of topics is continually expanding and new interpretations are proffered, so too other future scholars may well re-interpret, or expand upon the gestures that this research (building on Garcia) has identified and interpreted.

It has been substantiated from my own experience that the grafting of symbolist and theosophical concepts upon Scriabin's stylistic gestures (according to the composer's general aspirations) and their detection on the score, aids the mental conceptualization of a possible shape and 'expressive genre' for his late piano works. Although this paper is formulated with practical applicability in mind, it does not implement it. This compelling prospect can be explored in further research. In the case of the Eighth sonata, the notion of a *plenitude* of climaxes has been submitted to be the expressive shape upon which the sonata is based. As to the way a performer wishing to convey Scriabin's symbolist-theosophical notions in performance will utilize this analysis, remains to be seen. Meanwhile, the performer is encouraged to consider the ideas and interpretations herein towards a holistic reading of the works, ex. marking the difference between 'light' gestures in different contexts, both in their deployment within a work, as well as in their recurrences interspersed among different sonatas.

The interpretational prism of this dissertation is but one of several different ways of surveying the complex interaction and counterpoint of the symbolically imbued thematic and harmonic materials in the works. Speaking of the *Five Preludes*, Op.74 -

his final opus, Scriabin claimed that they "could be played to mean *different concepts*"; that "it is like crystal, the same crystal can reflect many *different concepts*" (Bowers 1969, 2:265). Hence, Scriabin's late sonatas may also be likened to a crystal, the amalgam of his eclectic philosophical brew. In the manner a crystal prismatically reflects the light spectrum, so too his symbolist gestures intermingle and disperse to effect a plurality of concepts and meanings. In short, there is not one definitive description per passage of music, less so per sonata; what has been proffered in Part 2 is but one of the many spectra as refracted by the crystal that is the Eighth sonata. Whatever interpretation one may be inclined to form, one must keep in mind that *all* of Scriabin's late works are sketches towards his *Mysterium* (de Schloezer 1987, 9-10), where *all* the events of the cosmos, past, present, and future, are transcribed. Consequentially, each of the late sonatas may be considered an etude of composition; they are studies of light, darkness, ecstasy, flight, etc.

As the scope and aims of this Masters dissertation are wide, a variety of alternate routes of future investigations may stem from the findings herein, and may include: 1) the possible topical significance of Scriabin's 'light', 'summons', 'occult' etc. gestures with his fellow countrymen, and among composers whose idiom is philosophically imbued (ex. Messiaen, Tavener), along a Monelle-like (2000) line of inquiry, 2) the interaction between the 'structural' or pure signs, and the referential signs of his gestures as per Agawu (1991) and Hatten (2004), and on a more practical application, 3) the analysis and/or comparison (and possibly the practical realization) of the symbolic gestures in sound, in both Scriabin's and other noted Scriabin-specialists' recordings. The gestures investigated herein are idiosyncratic to Scriabin and confined to his own idiolect. However, the constituent parts may share signals with other composers; Scriabin's use of trills of 'light' for example, may allude to birdcalls, and have the underlying connotation of nature. Therefore a trill, as well as other devices, may represent different concepts with other composers. Absorbing a composer's philosophy through his personal writings in correlation with his compositional style may prove fruitful in providing a new way of 'hearing' his/her works. Many concepts and approaches discussed in this dissertation - modified appropriately - can conceivably be applied to performance-analysis investigations of other composers, whose music is considered 'spiritual' (such as Cyril Scott, Olivier Messiaen, Karlheinz Stockhausen, George Crumb, etc.), or composers whose music in different ways

inheres strong extra-musical concepts (such as John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, etc.). With the above and other conceivable interpretive approaches, a performer's arsenal is greatly improved, as everything passes through the filters of evaluation, syncretism, integration, instinct, sensitivity, and technique. It is this kind of 'informed' performer, one who uses the *head, heart,* and has the *hand*, that will best integrate all the elements of a composition, and shape the sound accordingly.

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APPENDIX – Sonata no.8 Gestural Profile (GP) Intensity by Section

This is a graphical representation of the GP frequency/intensity by section in the sonata. It provides for a more detailed and visual survey of symbolic content in the work, and may be utilized in a variety of ways. For example, it can be superimposed on similar Cartesian representations of dynamic intensity, harmonic rhythm, etc. for scrutiny, and interpretation towards a performance.

GP Introduction (mm.1-21)

GP Exposition (mm.21-185)
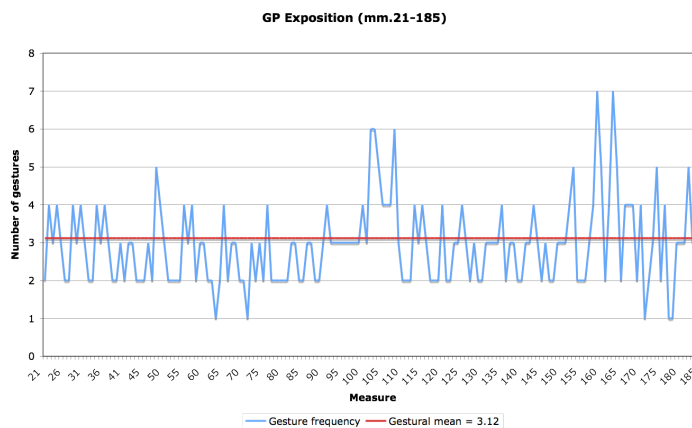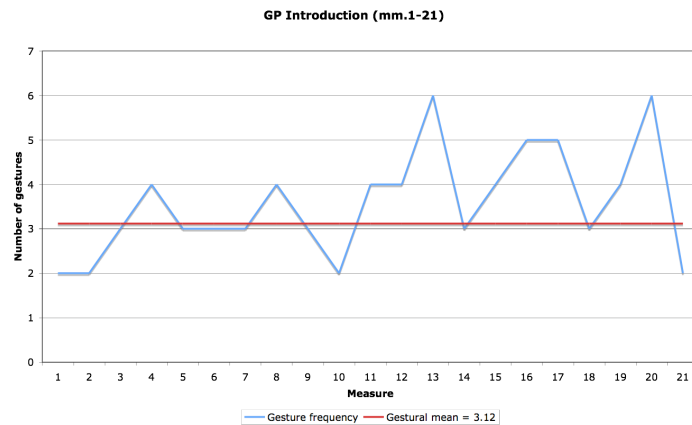
GP Development (mm.186-319)
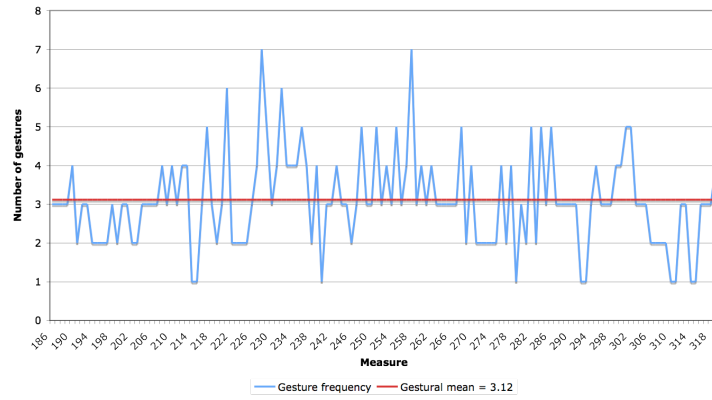
GP Recapitulation (mm.319-448)
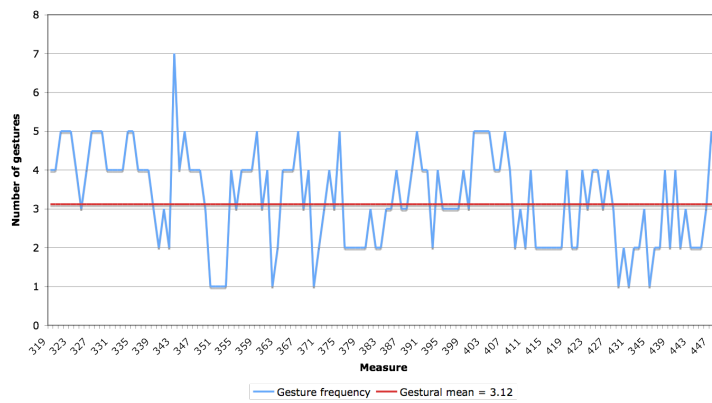
GP Coda (mm.449-499)
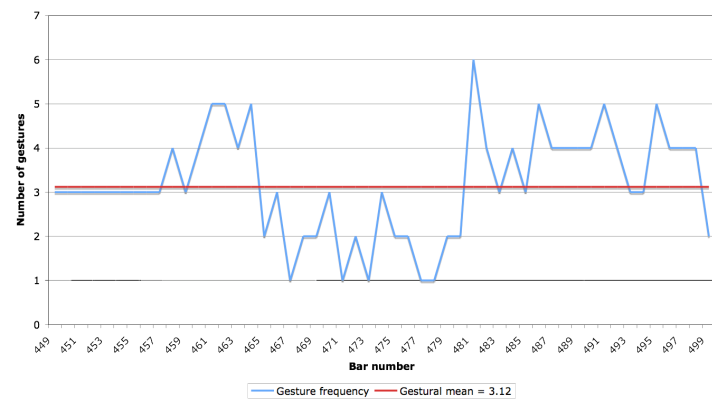
GLOSSARY: Scriabin's French Terminology

aigu - sharp
ailé, tourbillonnant – winged, spinning, whirling
animé, ailé – lively, winged
appel mystérieux – mysterious call
avec éclat – with brilliance
avec élan lumineux, vibrant – with dash, vibrant, rousing
avec emotion – with emotion
avec entraînement – with gusto
avec ravissement et tendresse – with rapture and tenderness
avec trouble – with trouble
avec une ardeur profonde et voilée – with deep, veiled ardour
avec une céleste volupté – with heavenly voluptuousness, delight
avec une chaleur contenue – with restrained warmth
avec une douce ivresse – with gentle, sweet intoxication
avec une douce langueur de plus en plus éteinte – with gentle languor that is more and
        more extinguished
avec une douceur de plus en plus caressante et empoisonnée – with a gentleness,
        sweetness more and more caressing and poisoned
avec une émotion naissante – with incipient, budding emotion
avec une étrangeté subite – with sudden strangeness
avec une joie exaltée – with overexcited joy
avec une joyeuse exaltation –with joyous exaltation
avec une langueur naissante – with nascent languor
avec une sombre majesté – with dark majesty, stateliness
avec une subite douceur – with sudden sweetness
avec une volupté douloureuse – with painful voluptuousness, delight
avec une volupté radieuse, extatique – with radiant voluptuousness, ecstatic

charmes – charms
comme des éclairs – like lightning
comme une fanfare – like a fanfare
cristallin – crystalline

de plus en plus entraînant, avec enchantement – more and more alluring, stirring, with
        enchantment, magic
de plus en plus radieux – more and more radiant
de plus en plus sonore et animé – more and more sonorous and lively
doux, languissant – gentle, languishing

éclatant, lumineux – brilliant, luminous
effondrement subit – sudden collapse
en délire – delirious
en un vertige – dizzily
envolé – to fly, take off

épanouissement des forces mystérieuses – blooming, unfurling of mysterious powers
étincelent – sparkling
étrange, ailé – strange, winged

frémissant, ailé – quivering, winged
foudroyant – thunderous

haletant – breathless

impérieux – imperious

joyeux, triomphant – joyous, triumphant

legendaire – legendary
l'épouvante surgit, elle se mêle a la danse délirante – the terror arises and mingles with
        the delirious dance
le rêve prend forme (clarté, douceur, pureté) – the dream takes shape (brightness,
        gentleness, purity)
lumineux, vibrant – luminous, vibrant

mystérieusement murmuré – mysterious murmur
mystérieusement sonore – mysteriously sonorous
mystérieux, concentré – mysterious, concentrated

onde caressante – caressing wave
onduleux, insinuant – wavy, sinuous, insinuating

puissant, radieux – powerful, radiant
pur, limpide – pure, limpid

sombre, mystérieux – dark, mysterious

tout devient charme et douceur – becoming all charm and sweetness
très doux et pur – very sweet and pure
très pur, avec une profonde douceur – very pure, with profound gentleness, sweetness

vol joyeux – joyous flight