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The Life and Works of Alexander Scriabin

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Abstract

Alexander Scriabin was one of Russia's greatest or worst composers. This essay presents a biography of his life in an effort to add context to his creative output. His entire body of work is divided into three periods and discussed. The composition methods of Scriabin and Schoenberg are compared.

1 Youth

Alexander Scriabin was born in Moscow in 1871 into a wealthy Russian family.[1] His mother, a concert pianist and former student of Theodor Leschetizky, had little influence on his upbringing as she died a year later of tuberculosis. His father pursued a military path, and so Scriabin was left in the care of his relatives, including his amateur pianist of an aunt. He began to study the piano at a young age with Nikolai Zverev, notably also concurrently the teacher of Sergei Rachmaninoff.

Scriabin eventually entered the Moscow Conservatoire (where Zverev taught) and studied piano with Vasily Safonov. Another teacher of theory and composition, Sergei Taneyev, was no doubt a major influence on Scriabin; his techniques for combining counterpoint with mathematics likely spurred Scriabin into interdisciplinary composition of his own. Scriabin also temporarily studied with the renowned Anton Arensky, but quickly became frustrated with Arensky's conservative and patriotic tendencies.

Around this time, Scriabin somehow injured his left hand. The details of this injury are controversial, with some sources saying they were the result of strenuously practicing Mily Balakirev's *Islamey*[2] while others claim that he was knocked down by a *droshky* (a sort of open cab, common in Moscow at the time) and broke his right collar-bone.[3] Perhaps elements of both stories are true. Regardless, Scriabin continued to practice with only his left hand. It is popularly accepted that this explains why many of Scriabin's works have an unusually extreme difficulty in the left hand, such as in the first *Impromptu* from op. 12. It was clearly the motivation for the *Prélude and Nocturne for the Left Hand*, op. 9.

When a doctor told him that his hand would never recover, he lashed out at the fates in his first *Piano Sonata*, op. 6.[4]

After finishing study and graduating from the Conservatoire (despite Arensky's best efforts) in 1891, he began a concert tour organized by his friend and exclusive publisher Mitrofan Belyayev (who had also published works by the likes of Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov). He performed his first piano sonata and many smaller works for audiences in Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, and Berlin. Upon his return to Russia, he played similar recitals in Petrograd and Moscow. This set off the beginning of a phenomenal concert carreer that would last the rest of his life. Indeed, until his death he was considered a pianist first and composer second. This likely frustrated Scriabin, who, ever trying to gain recognition as a composer,

[1] Russia officially used the Julian calendar until 1918, three years after Scriabin's death. For that reason, his date of birth could be argued to be 25 December 1971. According to the Gregorian calendar used throughout Europe, it was 6 January 1872. As he died in Moscow, his date of death is similarly disputable.

[2] Scholes, p. 141.

[3] Hull, p. 29

[4] His hand then recovered.

routinely played entire recitals consisting entirely of his own works.

Travelling and composing concurrently came naturally for Scriabin: during this period it was nature that gave him his best inspiration. Particularly the European summer weather inspired the always-sensitive composer and his first orchestral work, the Rêverie, op. 24, was a response.

2 First orchestral works

Scriabin's first two symphonies (both premiered by his former teacher, Safonov) were received with controversy. Scriabin, impatiently progressive, had dared to begin where Beethoven had finished: a symphony for orchstra with choir. Although most audiences seemed to enjoy it, Arensky viciously despised it, saying "anyone who praised this symphony knew nothing at all about music".[5] The second symphony was in danger from the beginning, as in rehearsals, many of the performers openly displayed their distaste for the work and at least one reportedly refused to play it. At the premiere, the work was repeatedly interrupted by yells and calls from the audience, at an event that predated *Le Sacre du printemps* by more than a decade.[6]

The work became one that audiences "loved to hate" - he was "the most notorious composer of the Russian school" - and this led to the beginning of a sort of isolation in the Moscow music community. Professional art critics persecuted him at every opportunity and the public generally paid him no attention. He did have a small circle of supporters, including both Safonov and Belyayev; these supporters (particularly when connected to the Conservatoire) eventually came to be known as Scriabinists.[7]

Similarly, Scriabin's *Piano Concerto* was released to skeptical appreciation. Before its premiere, he had sent the score to Rimsky-Korsakov, who wrote a letter to him in which he pointed out several "errors" and general disorder. Scriabin wrote back "this is neuralgia, and I've been suffering from it for several days. I am so ashamed!" With this, Rimsky-Korsakov agreed to help revise the work, and the ending in particular. Word of this assistance got out, and one critic wrote: "the only good part of this concerto is that which was written by Korsakov."

During this time, two events changed the direction of his life: firstly, he accepted a teaching position at the Conservatoire, only six years after graduating. The structure of academia and his teaching responsibilities did not suit him, and as a result he was unproductive during this period, completely only two *Préludes*, the second symphony, and one other piano work: the magnificent *Fantaisie*, op. 28. His travel was also limited, and he largely stayed in Moscow.

The other major event that would shake up his life was his marriage to Vera Ivanovna Isakovich, another young concert pianist. By all accounts, this marriage was an unhappy one, and that this caused Scriabin to withdraw further into his own world of composing and, ostensibly, philosophy.

Some combination of these factors caused Scriabin to want to leave Moscow. He resigned his post and left in 1903, moving to Switzerland where he is said to have lived for two years, despite spending much time in other major cities, particularly Paris. He frequently travelled, drawn to France, Belgium, Italy, and even the United States, by some combination of giving concert tours and avoiding his wife.

Scriabin's religion became one of his most defining features. He claimed that "there are times in the life of mankind when murder is a virtue and to be murdered the greatest pleasure." Vera told a friend that she "cannot understand the world of philosophical omniscience where Alexander now resides..."[8] As religious liberty was a relatively new concept to Russians, Scriabin was one of a growing group to adopt Theosophy, and sought direct mystical knowledge of the mysteries of life. This is reflected in the titles of many of his works, such as the *Poème satanique*, op. 36, and *Le divin poème*, the subtitle given to his third symphony, both composed in 1903.

Despite that Scriabin used these evocative titles (and often associated poetry), he maintained that he was never writing "program music" in the sense that

[5] Hull, p. 41.
[6] Hull, p. 44.
[7] Hull, p. 45.
[8] Bowers, p. 72.

many Romantic composers had been. This is one of many traits that aligns him more closely with the Impressionists and Symbolists.

In 1903, his financial hardships were lessened when he received a letter from his friend and student, Margarita Morozova. She was wealthy and had decided to become an art patron, beginning with providing Scriabin a monthly pension to fund his travels.[9] His hardships worsened again when his original publisher, Belyayev, passed away a month later.

3 Separation from Vera

Scriabin had been for his entire life both a sensitive and a tempestuous person. He was capable of listening closely to others, but frequently didn't and was always quick to anger, seemingly unprovoked.[10]. Never was this more obvious than when he was with his wife, Vera.

By 1905, Scriabin had separated from Vera and was now accompanied in public by Tatiana Fyodorovna Schloezer, a former student of his. Despite this, Vera continued to perform his works, even giving entire recitals of only Scriabin's music.[11] This evoked an angry response from Scriabin. In spite of this, the two continued to communicate regularly, mostly at Scriabin's insistence. He wrote in one letter to Vera in 1905, he demanded her: "Please write regularly, even if you do not wish to write often. This cannot be a burden. You write very little about yourself. Answer all my questions please, and add something about yourself too!"[12] In another, he rhetorically asked: "Are you not ashamed of torturing me, dear Vushenka? You have not written one single word!"[13]

This was a highly productive period in Scriabin's life, and he quickly composed two of his most carefully studied works: the *Poem of Ecstasy*, op. 54, and his *Piano Sonata no. 5*, op. 53, respectively.[14] The *Poem of Ecstasy* represents his only orchestral work since the third symphony (*Le divin poème*), and so is often referred to as the "Fourth Symphony" although Scriabin never used this name himself. These two works capture perfectly his gradual transition from his early composition style to a newer, less traditional style.

In September of 1908, he moved to Brussels, where he lived for two years.[15] The city was one of Europe's emerging leaders in art, science, philosophy, and international politics. It was home to some of the most professional orchestras in the world, and although he did not produce many works during his two-year stay, he did notably compose most of his final orchestral work: *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, op. 60. Like the *Poem of Ecstasy*, this was a single-movement symphonic poem, and likewise it gained recognition as his "Fifth Symphony". That year, he received a second-place Glinka prize for the *Poem of Ecstasy*. The first-place winner was Rachmaninoff, for his *Symphony*. Scriabin had won the prize at least thrice before; in 1899 for the *Préludes*, op. 11, in 1904 for his third and fourth piano sonatas, and in 1906 for the third symphony.[16]

Here again, his religious connection with Theosophy is well-known. The design that appeared on the cover of the published edition of *Prometheus* was drawn by Jean Delville, the leader of a "theosophist cult" in Brussels.[17]

Scriabin is said to have experienced Synesthesia, a phenomenon of perception which, in this case, combines elements of colour with sounds in a form of hallucination. It is debated whether Scriabin really experienced these sensations, as particularly his *Prometheus* apparently uses a deliberately contrived set of colours based on the circle of fifths. Besides, there seems to be no reason why a person who visually associates colours with sounds would have a use for his colour organ.

4 Return to Moscow

In 1909, Scriabin and his entire family decided to return to Moscow for unclear reasons. It is true that he

[9] Bowers, vol. 1, p. 327-8.
[10] Hull, p. 78
[11] Bowers, vol. 2, p. 19.
[12] Bowers, vol. 2, p. 81-2.
[13] Bowers, vol. 2, p. 20.
[14] Hull, p. 50.
[15] Hull, p. 51
[16] Bowers, vol 1, p. 272.
[17] Hull, p. 193.

was gaining some recognition back home, but he was never unwelcome in Brussels. Various Russian critics could still treat him harshly, one time referring to his "beer-bottle label" titles and consistently berating him for his apparent rejection of the orthodox Russian school.[18] Regardless, it was in Moscow that he gave the premiere of *Prometheus*, with himself at the piano, to predictably mixed reception.

Scriabin was one of few and probably the most notable composer from Russia to completely reject nationalism after Mikhail Glinka. Glinka had set the voice for Russian music since the first half of the 19th century, and his influence had persisted through The Mighty Five (Mily Balakirev, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Alexander Borodin) as well as Tchaikovsky. Even Scriabin's contemporaries Rachmaninoff and the young Prokofiev were not immune from the patriotic style.

For this, he was often called a "Germanophile" and even once a "wilful scorner of Russian culture" within Russia, presumably intended as an insult. This is inaccurate; if anything, Scriabin had an affection for French music and culture. Although as a youth he had some exposure to Brahms and Wagner, it was especially Chopin, and later Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky who most shaped his composition style. Additionally, Scriabin spoke French well, but rarely spoke German and could hardly speak English at all. It is worth mentioning that practically all of his titles appear in both French and Russian, and only one in German.

While the orthodox method would have taken inspiration from folksongs with modal melodies and harmonies, Scriabin had a clear tendency to reject the older modes and use mostly major and minor (early works) or invent his own scales and chords (later works).[19] This is more in the manner of Debussy's style than any other of their contemporaries. This is most clear using the example of Scriabin's so-called mystic chord, which is only differentiated by one note from Debussy's preferred whole-tone scale.

Although Scriabin proclaimed to be uninterested in composers of his own time, he was familiar with Debussy, and on his desk he kept a copy of Debussy's *La mer* for study. When asked to comment on Debussy's work, it is reported that all Scriabin had to say was that he "shouldn't have stolen from our Russian music".[20] Interestingly, or perhaps ironically, musicologist Clemens-Christoph von Gleich identified a passage in *La mer* which was reproduced exactly in the *Poem of Ecstasy* and again in Stravinsky's *Firebird*.[21] Perhaps this explains the nickname he has sometimes been given: the "Mystic Impressionist".[22]

Even after finally making his home in Moscow, he was always on the move, even changing addresses within Moscow several times. In 1914, he visited London for the first time and performed several works, includind *Prometheus*. The British, who had become overwhelmed with the modern styles of Wagner, Mahler, Schoenberg, and even the Cubists, generally tossed Scriabin into the category of "unintelligible hyper-moderns". Despite this, it was agreed that the meaning of his piano music was much clearer when interpreted by the composer, and so he was to be invited back the next year for a tour of solo piano recitals. Unfortunately for all parties involved, in 1914 a minor disagreement between neighbours escalated into a war in Europe, and Scriabin found himself stuck in Moscow.

In the last year of his life, Scriabin worked intently on what was to be his most grandiose work up to that point (and in his mind, the most grandiose work ever composed). It was to be a composition that unified all art forms and embrace all five senses. The audience were to be active participants, and would be led to a state of ecstasy and enlightenment. This work was to be called *Mysterium*, and Scriabin foresaw its premiere in the Himalaya mountains, lasting an entire week. The intended result was that the world would be destroyed and all humans replaced with a race of "nobler beings". Fortunately[23] he died having only barely completed an introduction. Scriabin believed not only that the world's end was imminent, but that it was his destiny to bring it about.[24]

[18] Hull, p. 54.
[19] Bauer, p. 181.
[20] Bowers, vol. 1, p. 87.
[21] Bowers, vol. 1, p. 90.
[22] Bauer, p. 176.
[23] or unfortunately (?)
[24] de Schloezer, p. 145.

5 Early works

Scriabin's musical output can be divided cleanly into three periods, a parallel with Beethoven. In all of his early compositions, the influence of Chopin is strongly evident. Like Chopin, nearly all of his output involves piano, including a total of nearly 400 individual solo piano pieces; he also wrote symphonic poems after Liszt but (unlike most composers) no music for voice at all.[25] In fact, the young Scriabin rarely ventured into realms that would have made Chopin uncomfortable - his early output is littered with Mazurkas, Impromptus, Nocturnes, Waltzes, Préludes (including a set of 24) and Études (including a set of 12). It is without doubt due to this that he was sometimes stylized as the "Russian Chopin".[26]

Chopin and Scriabin have a number of parellels: they both left their homeland to live in France for many years until war interrupted theirs carreers. They shared poetry, literature, temperament, passion, and a certain aloofness.

Chopin and Scriabin were both lovers of nature and the outdoors. Scriabin spent most of his youth in the countryside, and in most of his adult life, he chose to live just outside of the cities rather than within them. He loved to lie in the fields and metaphorically and literally smell the flowers. He watched the rivers flow and the sunsets. Most of his composition work was done outside.

Among the highlights of Scriabin's early period, which lasted until about 1903 and comprise about 30 opus numbers, are the *Second Piano Sonata*[27], op. 19, the *Piano Concerto*, op. 20, and the *Fantaisie*, op. 28. The *Piano Concerto* was frequently performed during Scriabin's lifetime, but has long fallen out of favour among modern performers. The two fantasies, however, have become some of his most beloved works.

Interestingly, with these two pieces, Scriabin has apparently begun to make a more significant departure from Chopin. Although Chopin wrote three works with "Fantasie" in their names (*Fantaisie in F minor*, op. 49, *Polonaise-Fantaisie* in A-flat major, op. 61, and *Fantaisie-Impromptu* in C-sharp minor, op. post. 66), none of them bear much resemblance at all to what Scriabin called his published "fantasies".[28]

Chopin used the title "Fantasie" as an indicator that the piece would break with the convention of unambiguously defined genres.[29] The name implies that the piece would be a free in form, self-contained, and highly Romantic piece likely to violate conservative expectations. By contrast, both of Scriabin's "fantasies" adhere to a relatively conventional sonata form; it appears that he gave this name to these to pieces for poetic rather than formal reasons.

Both are fantastic examples of Scriabin's developing style.[30] They combine elements of Chopin with an almost Impressionistic approach. He equally captured tumultuous moods and peaceful atmospheres. This "Dream landscape" style eventually permeated his works, and so Scriabin came to be considered one of the foremost of symbolist composers.

6 Middle period

Scriabin's middle period is typically said to begin around the time he composed the *Piano Sonata no. 4*, op. 30. This sonata, and the works that follow, mark the beginning of new directions in music.

As the defining works of this period, the fourth and fifth sonatas are of top importance among all of Scriabin's works. Considering the difference in opus numbers, the two works show surprising similarities, most clearly shown in the structure of the each. While all of his previous sonatas had been multi-movement works, with these two he experimented with smaller forms. The fourth sonata is technically two separate movements, but the first is a short, monothematic introduction which leads

[25] However, there are choral parts in the *First Symphony* and in *Prometheus*.

[26] Hull, p. 92.

[27] Also called *Sonata-Fantasy*, but numbered along with his other sonatas.

[28] There is another *Sonata-Fantaisie* by Scriabin, written in 1886 when he was around 15 years old; he also wrote an early Fantasie for two pianos in 1889. Neither of these juvenile works were published in Scriabin's lifetime so they are not under consideration here.

[29] Fryderyk Chopin Information Centre.

[30] Pun intended.

attacca into the second, *Prestissimo volando* movement. The climax of the second movement dramatically restates the first movement's theme, thus making use of Berlioz's cyclic form. The fifth sonata, with only a single movement, likewise begins with a slow introduction which is then repeated at the climax.[31] Scriabin never wrote another multi-movement piano sonata after the fourth.

The *Piano Sonata no. 5*, op. 53 is considered a landmark work in which Scriabin showcased both a new musical language and his *mystic chord*. The chord (and variants of it), which uses the notes of the overtone series built on intervals of a fourth, dominates Scriabin's later works. Scriabin himself considered the fifth sonata to be both a "big poem for piano" and "the best composition I have ever written" (by that time).[32] These two piano sonatas are perennial favourites among pianists.

Indeed, it was during this period that Scriabin began to publish many of what he called "poems": opp. 32, 34, 36, 41, 44, 51, and 52 are all dedicated to this genre. Many of them bear colourful titles, such as the dark *Poème tragique* and the sarcastic *Poème satanique*. Also noteworthy here is op. 43, his third symphony, also known as *Le divin poème*. He seems to use this name in much the way Chopin described pieces as "fantasies". Although other composers had written plenty of tone poems or symphonic poems, no other composer is so associated with this form, particularly for piano solo.

This period is also notable for providing us with many more short Préludes and another set of eight Études (op. 42). Although these pieces are short, they were never composed as a mere trifle of no consequence, written to make some quick money. Instead, virtually all of his smaller works were either intended to be included in some later project that was never realized, or otherwise written to explore the possibilities of some new idea in his mind.[33]

For unknown reasons, Scriabin did not publish any work as op. 50. It seems likely that he was superstitious of this number.

[31] Baker, p. 177.
[32] Bowers, vol. 2, p. 176.
[33] Baker, p. ix.

7 Late works

Scriabin's final years, beginning with the fifth piano sonata and *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire*, represent a direction in music that few composers have since dared to explore. After *Prometheus*, and not including *Mysterium*, all of Scriabin's late works were written for solo piano, and consist of five sonatas and many Poems and Préludes.

The most obvious observation about all of his later works is that Scriabin altogether stopped writing key signatures. This is not to say that he wasn't composing in some key or another - merely that he was not thinking in terms of diatonic harmony. It is presumed that key signatures would have not significantly reduced the number of accidentals he was forced to write. Even when he did appear to be clearly in a particular key to the listener, many notes will be written in unexpected enharmonic equivalents.[34] Scriabin was not thinking mathematically, like Schoenberg,[35] but nor was it at all diatonic. Scriabin's method was purely auditory and intuitive.

Some of these works appear to be of different genres by name only, such as his *Vers la flamme*, op. 72, which has all the hallmarks of a sonata. It is rumoured that he published it in an early state due to financial constraints. Other notable works are the *Piano Sonata no. 7*, op. 64, with the subtitle "White Mass", and *Piano Sonata no. 9*, op. 68, with the subtitle "Black Mass".

Scriabin was extremely superstitious. It is well documented that he would generally decline to play his *Sixth Piano Sonata*, op. 62, when asked, citing its darkness. When coerced, he could only play a few measures of it before he began shivering uncontrollably. His fear of his own composition is contrasted by his apathy toward his *Poème satanique*, which he is said to have performed as much as any other, without difficulty or hesitation. The work is dark, sarcastic, and ironic, and even foreshadows Prokofiev; despite this, it was considered one of his more accessible

[34] A glance at the first two measures of the *Seventh Piano Sonata* should be sufficient to convince the reader that this is true.
[35] Scriabin's post-diatonic harmony predated Schoenberg's 1923 publication of his twelve-tone method.

works. Scriabin himself said "My *Poème satanique* isn't true evil. Everything in it is hypocritical and fake..."

The "White Mass" seventh piano sonata is closely connected to the sixth, but the seventh was explicitly claimed to be an "exorcism" that would free the composer from the darkness of its predecessor. The piece was to be pure, ecstatic, and overwhelmingly sacred. This is another example of creating an atmosphere, or mood, or, one could even say, "dream landscape".

Unlike the "White Mass", the "Black Mass" was not given that name by the composer, but Scriabin found it suitable. The piece is particularly dissonant, even among Scriabin's late works, because of his pervasive use of the minor ninth interval, creating a highly unstable sound.

Like in the other stages of his life, he never stopped writing Préludes. The last opus he ever completed was a set of five, op. 74. They are said to be among the most mystical and mysterious of all of his works.[36]

The ten sonatas, as a set, have been called "one of the greatest contributions to instrumental music perhaps since Beethoven".[37]

8 Scriabin and Schoenberg

Scriabin's most mature composition style, while not as algorithmic as Schoenberg's, bears some striking similarities to it.

Schoenberg's dodecaphonic serialism method serves to make every note of the chromatic scale equal to every other note by using them all in sequence, without favouring any one using a *tone row*. However, non-twelve-tone serialism, used somewhat earlier, was based on the idea of *sets* of *pitch classes* without necessarily using all twelve notes of the chromatic scale.

It seems perfectly logical to look at Scriabin's mystic chord as merely another set of pitch classes, namely the set {0, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9}. He generally spelled this set in intervals of a fourth, but that was neither out of necessity or universally the case. When he used different (variant) chords in his other works, he tended to use them consistently. Considering the *Sixth Piano Sonata* for example: nearly the entire work is built on the same set of pitch classes (specifically {0, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11}[38])

This sonata can be said to be nothing except the pitches of this set: stated at the introduction, then transposed, inverted, reordered, and generally presented in as many ways as the composer could imagine. Looking at the piece this way explains many quirks of the writing, such as his tendency to carelessly re-spell enharmonic notes.[39] It can also help us understand why the harmonic rhythm of these works can feel static, even while the harmonies change.

The similarities do not quite extend to the philosophy behind Scriabin and Schoenberg's methods. Schoenberg was eager to show that his system made rational sense and was the natural direction for music to go as composers increasingly moved away from traditional tonality. Scriabin would have never formalized an analysis of his pieces in the way that Schoenberg did; for Scriabin, to do so would destroy the mystery.

Although careless in most aspects of his life, Scriabin was always protective of his notebooks. He kept them locked away in his drawers when not in use, and if somebody were to visit while he was writing, he would angrily conceal it. They were marked with code letters, as though he thought somebody were trying to steal them. He was secretive about them in every way, and suspicious of anybody who might know of them. Perhaps this was because Scriabin was secretely engaged in developing a new composition *method* rather than only new compositions.

Indeed, using sets in this way has not been forgotten; it turns up often in Bartok and Stravinsky.[40]

9 Death

A criticism of many of Scriabin's works is that, while he can capture certain moods, atmospheres, sensations in ways that no other composer has been able

[36] Swan, p. 104.
[37] Hull, p. 163.
[38] Stated here in the order they appear in the Sonata rather than in the maximally-reduced form of Schoenberg.
[39] Cheetham, p. 19
[40] Cheetham, p. 40.

to match, his compositions often have unsatisfactory endings. Most obviously, Rimsky-Korsakov rewrote the ending to his concerto. The finale to the first symphony fails to reach any conclusion. The second Piano Sonata almost appears to be missing a third movement. The sixth Piano Sonata sets up a magical feeling of unease and then just stops. Many of the *Préludes* are so short that they can barely say anything.

Unfortunately, this is another way that Scriabin's music was an honest reflection of his life. In 1915, just as he was about to leave for another concert tour, he developed a pimple on his lip which became infected. A few days later, he was dead. He had lived to be 43 years old. It was the end of one of Russia's greatest and strangest composers.

After his death, Scriabin's legendary status increased significantly. Overnight, his critics and enemies changed theirs collective minds; he was to be venerated. Rachmaninoff began a concert tour playing only Scriabin's works; this was a radical departure from convention for him as he had only ever performed his own works throughout his carreer.[41]

The Scriabin family did not last much longer. Scriabin's prodigy of a child, Julian, drowned in 1919 in Ukraine. Vera died in 1920, and Tatiana in 1922. Despite this, some of his other children do have living descendants. His legacy lasts not only as a great performer and composer, but as an eccentric visionary. His works continue to be among the most controversial, and the debate continues about whether he was under- or overrated.

[41] Bowers, vol. 2, p. 281.

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