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## Documents Online

**Title:** Alexander Scriabin by Allen Tanner

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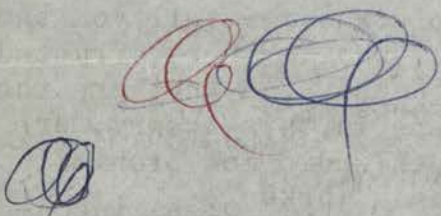
### Contact:

Archives & Special Collections  
Waidner-Spahr Library  
Dickinson College  
P.O. Box 1773  
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

[archives@dickinson.edu](mailto:archives@dickinson.edu)

To  
Benson





I realize that it is currently the fashion with all the young modern music intellectuals to <sup>either</sup> look down, condescendingly upon or scorn and sneer at the music of Alexander Scriabin. And that it is, as well, the obvious pity that the <sup>very</sup> theories with which they apply this condemnation are the exact reason why these aesthetic snobs who as so-called creators do not hesitate to take upon themselves the much more humiliating mantels (if they <sup>only</sup> knew it) of setters of fashions, <sup>and</sup> trends. <sup>etc.</sup> <sup>and</sup> not writing instead, music that belongs to the great state of Art. If one <sup>even</sup> so much as mentions or suggests to them having heard or their own possible interest in hearing a work of Scriabin of let us say the <sup>sheer</sup> magnificence of the Symphony (entitled the Divine Poem) <sup>you</sup> look at you as if you had shamelessly suggested their attendance at a pornographic movie! Or as if you had offered them a bottle of bath-oil from <sup>Richard Hudnut</sup> instead of let us say-Balancinga! It is true that the music of Scriabin, untra-emotional as it is, <sup>and</sup> should have exerted an almost aesthetic strangle hold upon the generation of creative musicians that immediately followed away from the Scriabin aesthetique, out of self-protection and the development of Music in the new hands of one who was obviously des- tined himself also, to change its face and character as it proceeded down the inevitable line of which advances along in history, only to become another phase in what eventually settles down into the state of tradition. This however would have been as natural and expected a process in Stravinsky, had found for himself and preserved certain basic and unalterable essentials of his own <sup>dis</sup>coveries and of his own style. Instead of which <sup>he</sup> through processes of the mind and the evolution of intellectualized aesthetic theories, steadily alienated himself from the true substance out of which Music is made, trading it for a kind of procedure of cutting the pattern of music out with the mind much as the tailor cuts the pattern of ~~the~~ clothes upon his tailoring-board.

The result in Stravinsky's case has been a music, dryer and more fleshless and anemic as it wore on to it's inevitable present state of complete sterility. <sup>How</sup> quickly all the other young moderns fell in with this intellectual <sup>posture</sup>, some through gullibility others through the subterfuge born of the desperation of lack of real creative ability and true emotionality. These are the very people who now tell you that Scirabin was the composer of music of bad taste, <sup>and</sup> who further corrupted it and himself with his questionable esoteric ideas. And they are the very people who, <sup>more or less</sup> intellectually right as they are in this theory, are also the very ones who do not realize that all this did not prohibit this extraordinary genius from having <sup>produced</sup> many works of an incomparable beauty...in fact unique.

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It is possible and <sup>undoubtedly</sup> true that the music of Scriabin, ultra-emotional and imperious as it was, should have and did exert an <sup>undue</sup> aesthetic stranglehold that could have been dangerous, upon the immediately succeeding younger generation of ~~creative~~ <sup>musicians</sup> whose task and obligation it was to maintain ~~their~~ <sup>their</sup> individuality and self-<sup>preserve</sup> ~~protection~~ <sup>assertion</sup>, by resisting <sup>at all costs</sup> the Scriabin aesthetique, in order to function <sup>rightfully and naturally</sup> in their <sup>powerful</sup> place as those through whom ~~music~~ <sup>music</sup> was to change its face and character in its inevitable journey down the line of <sup>historical</sup> progress and development, ~~and~~ <sup>only to be</sup> become another link in the long chain of <sup>its evolving</sup> tradition. This would have been the natural <sup>rough</sup> and logical process in the case of Stravinsky for example had he <sup>firmly</sup> molded and preserved for himself a basic continuity <sup>in the</sup> evolution of his individual style, <sup>based</sup> upon the unalterable essentials of his own musical nature <sup>and</sup> of its discoveries instead of those later adopted of the mind. This intellectualization <sup>of</sup> aesthetic theories which he chose to ~~employ vis-a-vis his~~ <sup>impose</sup> fasten upon his natural <sup>creative</sup> powers did nought but <sup>atrophy</sup> ~~alienate~~ in him the real <sup>sources</sup> ~~forces~~ out of which Music had found in him its true substance, <sup>by which</sup> trading it for a kind of intellectual cutting out of Music by pattern-much as <sup>the</sup> a tailor cuts ~~his~~ <sup>by pattern</sup> clothes on the cutting board!

The result has been a music of infinitely less <sup>inspiration + inventing</sup> interesting <sup>less in design</sup> patterns dry, fleshless and aenemic at times, as it has worn on in its expected journey towards sterility. How quickly <sup>mental</sup>

The symphony of which I spoke, is a work <sup>phenomenal</sup> ...of ~~great~~ <sup>gases</sup> majesty and sublime beauty. It is well integrated as to form, the themes are of an exalted vitality and sweep, and although <sup>undoubtedly</sup> derivative of Wagner, it's harmony is more vast, complex and subtle, its drive onwards to the so <sup>grandiose</sup> ~~extraordinary~~ recapitulation even more relentless. But it is in the long infinitely sustained lyrical passages, that seem to have been <sup>sacred</sup> ~~sandoned~~ from the <sup>(those melodic lines)</sup> anguish of Angels...the "harmonic melodies" that are constantly shifted by <sup>diminution</sup> within the chord) that are of a poignancy that is almost unbearable! Does one cavil with such unique astounding beauty? Yes, it seems there are all those who do, instead of listening to this fantactic creation, with deep respect and the privilege of affording themselves an emotional aesthetic experience any real musician could never even dream of denying..let alone denouncing...!



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Uloeu yeporosi wotumou  
Nat-kesekim

Sketch -

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Uloeu yeporosi wotumou  
Nat-kesekim

Uloeu yeporosi wotumou  
Nat-kesekim

[Alexander Scriabin by Allen Tanner]

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To Bernst

[Page 2]

I realize that it is currently the fashion with ~~all the~~ the young modern intellectual musicians to either look down upon condescendingly or scorn and sneer at—the music of Alexander Scriabin. And that it is as well the obvious pity that these very theories with which they apply back ~~this~~ their condemnation are the exact reason why they ~~these~~ aesthetic snobs who as so-called creators (who do not hesitate to take upon themselves the much more humiliating mantels (if they ~~only~~ but knew it) of setters of fashions, and trends) are not themselves writing instead, music that will belong to the state and tradition of great Art. If one even so much as mentions ~~or suggests to them~~ having heard—or suggests their own possible interest in hearing—a work of Scriabin—of let us say the sheer magnificence of the Symphony (entitled the Divine Poem) you are leered at ~~you~~ as if you had shamelessly suggested their attendance at a pornographic movie! Or as if you had offered them a bottle of bath-oil from Richard Hudnut instead of—let us say—Balenciaga! It is true that the music of Scriabin, untra-emotional and imperious as it is, should have ~~did~~ and exerted an almost aesthetic stranglehold upon the generation of creative musicians that immediately followed the young Stravinsky, for example, and that he they had to turn him away from him—in another direction—from the Scriabin aesthetic, out of self-protection—and the obligation towards the development and progress of Music—in ~~the newer hands of one~~ who obviously was those destined also to change its face and character as it advances down the inevitable line ~~which advances~~ along in history and astounds only to become itself another phase in what eventually settles down itself into the permanent state of tradition. This however would have been as natural and expected a process in Stravinsky ~~had~~ for example had he found for himself and preserved molded who continuous style certain basic and unalterable essentials of his own discoveries and of his own nature. Instead of which through processes of the mind and their evolution in the form of intellectualized aesthetic theories, he steadily alienated himself from the true substance out of which Music is made, trading it for a kind of intellectual procedure a kind of cutting out of the pattern of music ~~out~~ with the mind much as the tailor cuts clothes ~~the~~ out of the pattern of a suit upon his tailoring-board.

The result in Stravinsky's case has been a music, dryer and more fleshless and anemic as it wore on to its inevitable present state of complete sterility. How quickly all the ~~other~~-younger moderns fell in with this intellectual posture, some through sheer gullibility—others through ~~the~~ subterfuge born of the desperation of lack of real creative ability ~~and~~ or true emotionality. These are the very people who now tell you that Scriabin was the composer of music of bad taste, and who further corrupted it and himself with his questionable esoteric ideas. And they are the very people who, more or less intellectually right as they ~~perhaps~~ are might happen to be in ~~this theory~~ regard to his final end, are also the very ones who do not realize that all this did not prohibit this

extraordinary genius from having produced nevertheless many works of an incomparable beauty...in fact unique.

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It is possible and undoubtedly true that the music of Scriabin, ultra-emotional and imperious as it was, should have and did exert an undue aesthetic stranglehold that could have been dangerous, upon the immediately succeeding younger generation of creative musicians whose task and obligation it was to maintain their individuality and preserve self-assertion ~~protection~~, by resisting at all costs the powerful Scriabin aesthetic, in order to function rightfully and naturally as those through whom music was to change its face and character—in its the inevitable journey down the line of historical progress and development, ~~only to become~~ forging another link in the long chain of tradition. This would have been the a natural enough and logical process in the case of Stravinsky for example had he truly found molded and preserved for himself—a basic continuity ~~but~~ in the evolution of his individual style, founded upon the unalterable essentials of his own musical nature and its discoveries instead of those later conceived and adopted out of the mind. This intellectualization of by aesthetic theory which he chose to ~~employ vis-a-vis his fact on~~ impose upon his natural musical powers did nought but ~~alienate~~ atrophy in him the real ~~forces out of~~ sources from which Music had found in him its true substance, or which he traded it for a kind of intellectual cutting out of Music by pattern—much as the tailor cuts his clothes by pattern on the cutting board!

The result has been a music of infinitely less inspiration & invention less interesting in design ~~patterns~~, dry, fleshless and anemic at times, as it has worn on in its ~~expected~~ inevitable journey towards sterility. How quickly

The symphony of which I spoke, is a phenomenal work....of great majesty and sublime beauty. It is well integrated as to form, the themes are of an exalted vitality and sweep, and although undoubtedly derivative of Wagner, its harmony is more vast, complex and subtle, its drive onwards to the so ~~extraordinary~~ grandiose recapitulation even more relentless. But it is in the long infinitely sustained lyrical passages, that seem to have been made from the sacred anguish of Angels...the “harmonic melodies” (those melodic lines that are constantly shifted by diminution within the chord) that are of a poignancy that is almost unbearable! Does one cavil with such unique astounding beauty? Yes, it seems there are all those who do, instead of listening to this fantactic creation, with deep respect and the privilege of affording themselves an emotional aesthetic experience any real musician could never even dream of denying...let alone denouncing...!

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Sketch—(only)—about Scriabin

[notes in French or Russian?]