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Florinela POPA

Alexander Scriabin (2)

In the first decades of the 20th century, some of the professors of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory did not look kindly on the strange, dissonant ventures undertaken by some of the more modernist students. Even Prokofiev was not immune to criticism, as he later recalled in his *Autobiography*. “Everyone wants to be like Scriabin!” his professor, Anatoly Lyadov, admonished him once.

Lyadov’s observation reveals not only the impact that Scriabin then had on the young generation, but also the extraordinary status he enjoyed in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Loved and challenged in equal measure, Scriabin had managed to eschew contemporary conventions by creating a harmonic system and an aesthetic-philosophical outlook that were intensely personal, and by probing an extended syncretism, that is as utopian, as it is seductive. Inevitably, 20th century musicology discovered in Scriabin’s musical thought an extremely fertile site, fit for exploration.

It is not by accident that I reiterate the questions posed in the previous issue dedicated to Scriabin (No. 23, October-December 2015). They are necessary for any thorough overview of the Russian composer: *What can still be written about Scriabin a century after his death? Does his music still have an impact today?* In this issue as well, the “answers” have the same main source: the Musicology Conference by which the National University of Music Bucharest celebrated the Scriabin Centenary, on May 4, 2015.

As such, two thorough musicological analyses of Scriabin’s musical language are undertaken by Laura Vasiliu and her disciple at the George Enescu University of Arts, Mihaela Balan. While Laura Vasiliu focuses on the relationship between musical language and sonic dramaturgy in Scriabin’s late works – Piano Sonata No. 6 and Five Preludes Op. 74 – Mihaela Balan examines the stylistic evolution of Scriabin’s piano sonatas by contrasting two “samples” from different periods: Sonata No. 3 (1897) and Sonata No. 7 (1912).

Vlad Dimulescu's notes as a performer offer an interesting foil to the two rigorous, musicological studies. Dimulescu focuses on Chopin's Preludes Op. 28 and Scriabin's Preludes Op. 11 – a parallel inspired, perhaps, by Scriabin's profound admiration for the Polish composer. The common tonal principle that structures both cycles of preludes (that of the circle of fifths) allows the author to subjectively explore the poetic nature of each of the 24 major and minor keys.

In the *Thoughts* column, pianist Sanda Hirlav Maistorovici calls into question the legitimacy of considering Scriabin a “founder of a school of composition”. Did the composers of the Stalinist-Zhdanovist generation still “want to be like Scriabin”? This is a question to which the present essay might suggest a few answers.

A Scriabin that is, thus, as exciting and inexhaustible even 101 years after his death.

English version by Dragoş Manea