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**Tradition and Innovation in the Twenty-Four Preludes, Opus 11
of Alexander Scriabin**

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**Tradition and Innovation in the Twenty-Four Preludes, Opus 11
of Alexander Scriabin**

by

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Treatise

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Dedication

To My Parents, Jongsuk Lee and Kwanhee Kim

To My Sister and Brother-in-law, Sookyong Lee and Byounghee Jin

To My Brother, Soongoo Lee

To My Parents-in-law, Byoung-Ik Lee and Suk-Nye Kim

To My Sister-in-law, Shin-Young Lee

To My Beloved Husband, Jinkyu Lee

And

To Professor Danielle Martin

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**Tradition and Innovation in the Twenty-Four Preludes, Opus 11
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Supervisor: Michael C. Tusa
Co-Supervisor: Gregory D. Allen

The Russian composer Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin (1872-1915) is best known today for a number of highly experimental pieces written in the later days of his career. In contrast, his early music is less well known and less frequently studied because it is considered too derivative of Romantic composers, especially Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849). While it is true that Scriabin most certainly was influenced by Romantic composers, even during the early stages of his career Scriabin began to cultivate his own characteristics, especially in harmonic and rhythmic treatment. The Twenty-Four Preludes, Opus 11, one of Scriabin's most important early works, demonstrate the emergence of an original voice in pieces that are normally considered to be imitations of Chopin. The present study investigates the interplay in these preludes between Scriabin's debt to tradition and his desire to develop an original style of his own.

This treatise begins by introducing relevant pieces of the historical background: Scriabin's early biography; Chopin's influence on Russian music; and Chopin's conception of the prelude for piano as attested by his Twenty-Four Preludes, Opus 28. The bulk of the study proceeds piece-by-piece through Scriabin's Op. 11 to discuss the traditional and innovative features in his preludes. There are indeed many similarities to Chopin: the number of preludes; the tonal ordering of the set; the concept of the prelude as a small-scale independent piece; the styles and forms in individual pieces; and even certain harmonic details. Scriabin, however, clearly shows the beginnings of own compositional style in various ways, as his treatment of rhythm, his harmonic language and his treatment of left-hand technique and pedaling all stand out even in his early works.

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Chapter 1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A number of pieces by Alexander Scriabin often appear in piano recital programs, such as the late sonatas after No. 4, the poems after Op. 32, the preludes after Op. 45 and the etudes. The later pieces are also frequently mentioned and studied in many musical articles and books as examples of the distinctive features of Scriabin's late style, such as his so-called mystic chords. But what of the early pieces such as the Twenty-Four Preludes, Opus 11, or the waltzes, mazurkas and nocturnes? These are also often performed. Yet compared to later pieces, the position of the early pieces in writing about Scriabin is weak because they are considered too derivative and too "Chopinesque". *The Music of Alexander Scriabin* by James Baker¹ and Boris de Schloezer's *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic* only focus on Scriabin's late style². In *Skryabin*, Hugh Macdonald barely mentions Scriabin's early style and formative influences in the introduction³. Whether they were influenced by Chopin or not, however, surely the early pieces are still good pieces.

Of the early pieces, the Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 11 are considered some of the best. However, only a few studies discuss them. One is a D.M.A dissertation from Ohio State University that deals with the relationship between Scriabin's Op. 11 and Frédéric Chopin's Preludes, Op. 28⁴. In this present study, I will not just compare the preludes by Scriabin and Chopin, but offer more insight on the originality of Scriabin's

¹ James M. Baker, *The Music of Alexander Scriabin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

² Boris de Schloezer, *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).

³ Hugh J. Macdonald, *Skryabin* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁴ Seong-Ae Lim, "The Influence of Chopin in Piano Music on the Twenty-Four Preludes for Piano, Op. 11 of Alexander Scriabin," D.M.A. diss., Ohio State University, 2002.

Preludes, discussing his harmony, rhythm, structure and style. Through this study, I will show that the early works lay the foundation of a number of later features of Scriabin's later style.

1. 1. EARLY BIOGRAPHY OF ALEXANDER SCRIBIN

Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin was born in 1872 and died in 1915. His father was a law student and mother was a professional concert pianist. His mother died before he was even one year old, so his grandmother and young aunt had to take care of him. Even though his aunt was a pianist, she was not a professional like his mother was. Scriabin received his first musical inspiration from his aunt. Scriabin spent most of his time under her care, watching her play the piano, especially the way she used the pedals⁵. The piano was one of Scriabin's favorite toys. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why his pedaling technique became so developed later in his life.

Scriabin did not start formal music education until the summer of 1883, when he was ten years old. Under the influence of his father, young Scriabin attended a military school, at his own insistence. While he was attending Corps School, he started to receive formal music education from Georgy Konyus (1862-1933), his first composition teacher. Konyus said that Scriabin's playing was not strong enough, even though he understood everything very quickly, because he was pale, short, and looked younger than his age. The teacher assigned Cramer studies, some of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* and easy Chopin works to him. Due to a serious illness in 1884, however, Scriabin had to cease taking lessons. Meanwhile, he composed his first nocturne, in A-

⁵ Alexander Scriabin, *The Early Scriabin*, from liner note by Stephen Coombs, Hyperion Records, <http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/notes/67149-N.asp> (accessed April 16, 2006).

flat major, influenced by John Field (1782-1837). Not only from the title ‘Nocturne’, but also from other titles of his works, such as prelude, mazurka, and etude, one can observe that Chopin was a major influence on Scriabin. While he was a Cadet, he received composition lessons from Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915) and piano lessons from Nikolai Zverev. Young Scriabin regularly performed not only works of the romantic period, but also his own compositions, such as waltzes, in gatherings of educated Russian society at Zverev’s house. Scriabin entered the Moscow Conservatory in 1888 and studied with Vasily Safonov (1852-1918) who was also a teacher of Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)⁶.

There are three ways that Scriabin was exposed to Chopin. First, through his teachers: Konyus, Taneyev, Zverev and Safonov and from his friends: Rachmaninov and Anatoly Liadov (1855-1914). Rachmaninov, who adored Chopin’s music, was one of Scriabin’s classmates in the Moscow Conservatory. Liadov, a lifetime friend, was one of the performers who spread Chopin’s music to Russian society. Second, from Scriabin’s frequent travels to Western Europe to give recitals, especially in Paris and Switzerland. Third, from Russian society that was filled with Chopin’s music. Furthermore, Scriabin’s playing style and appearance very much reminded Parisian audiences of Chopin⁷. By all accounts, Scriabin was intoxicated with Chopin. He even slept with the score of Chopin’s nocturnes under his pillow⁸. Ironically, Scriabin denied the similarity to Chopin’s works later on.

⁶ Scriabin’s early biography is based on *Grove Music Online*.

⁷ Richard A. Leonard, “Chapter XI: Scriabin,” In *A History of Russian Music* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 236

⁸ Donald Brook, “Scriabin,” In *Six Great Russian Composers: Glinka, Borodin, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin* (London: Salisbury Square, 1947), 176.

1. 2. CHOPIN'S INFLUENCE ON RUSSIAN MUSIC

As mentioned, Chopin's influence on Russian music was profound⁹. The Russian could easily welcome Chopin because of shared Slavic heritage. Russian musicians considered Chopin a modernist. Chopin's music was introduced into Russian society in 1829 at a concert in St. Petersburg. By the 1840s, many pianists performed Chopin's pieces, especially the etudes. One of the leading proponents of Chopin's music was E. Gretch, who was a Russian student of Chopin. His music was praised in Russia not only by performers, but also by critics and publishers. As B. P. Botkin wrote in his book, *On the Esthetic Significance of the New Piano School*,

The piano began to speak with the tongue of poetry for him, with a kind of sad-yet-passionate romanticism. His original melodies, melancholic and somewhat misty, are always enveloped in a kind of sunset semi-gloom, communicating by these their transparent majestic harmony. His smaller works are especially splendid – truly lyric inspiration! He was the first to break away from the pattern of contemporary pianists, flinging hackneyed passages and figurations, replacing them with new forms and tonal combinations. In the invention of these melodies, poetic animation and the envelopment in the most interesting and marvelous turns, Chopin showed his genius¹⁰.

To Russian society, Chopin was one of the three or four most original musicians of the period¹¹. He could be separated from other Western composers as a modern nationalist composer rather than a contemporary Western European. Many Russians turned away from the Western style, which they felt pursued only brilliant technique with

⁹ Gennadi M. Tsipin, "Chopin and the Russian Piano Tradition," trans. Beatrice L. Frank, *Journal of the American Liszt Society* vol.37 (1995): 67.

¹⁰ B.P. Botkin, *On the Esthetic Significance of the New Piano School*, vol.3, (1893): 71, cited after Gennadi M. Tsipin, "Chopin and the Russian Piano Tradition," trans. Beatrice L. Frank, *Journal of the American Liszt Society* vol.37 (1995): 70.

¹¹ *Illustrirovannaiia gazeta*, 13 march 1869, p.173, cited after Swartz, "Chopin as Modernist in Nineteenth-Century Russia," In *Chopin Studies* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1994), 42

too much ornamentation and a lack of clear, understandable melodies and forms. On the other hand, Chopin's music exhibited genuine beauty through clear melodies that expressed deep sadness, tenderness, and melancholy. Because of these characteristics, he was considered not only as a composer, but also a poet and genius, especially when he improvised at the piano. He did not treat the piano merely as a mechanism to show off.

Under Chopin's influence, national dances captured Russian interest. Many Russian composers adopted national dance in their own musical style. Chopin was not only a performer, but also a musician who inspired the nationalist spirit in Russia. To Russians, Chopin was a model for how to be nationalist composers at least 1870s long after native Russians have begun writing nationalist music of their own¹².

1. 3. CHOPIN'S CONCEPT OF TWENTY-FOUR PRELUDES, OPUS 28

Rather than treating the prelude as an introductory piece, Chopin raised it to a level of unprecedented independence. Op. 28 was composed under the influence of Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685-1750) *Well-Tempered Clavier* and Hummel's Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 67, with regard to the key relationship and the scope.

There are several characteristics of Chopin Preludes. First, each of the preludes is a miniature. The length is not as long as a typical etude or other works of Chopin. The lengths vary from sixteen to ninety measures. Second, Op. 28 is a compilation of various styles and genres: etude, nocturne, waltz, and so on. Each prelude shows distinct characteristics of Chopin's other genres, especially the etude. Robert Collet states that half of Op. 28 can be called studies and another seven or eight preludes can be

¹² Preceding Study of Chopin's Influence on Russian Music is based on Tsipin and Swartz.

classified as ‘quasi-studies’ as well¹³. Third, each prelude typically has only one character, idea or mood. Fourth, Chopin followed traditional formal structures with basic regularity in phrase structure. He often used two-part structure (A-A’ or A-B) consisting of an antecedent phrase and an expanded consequent phrase plus coda, and also used the A – B – A ternary form. These four characteristics are not only typical of Chopin’s preludes but also characteristics of Scriabin’s Op. 11. In addition, Chopin often employed contrapuntal style within complex figures, an aspect that reveals Chopin’s debt to Bach. Chopin presents his own harmonic style with free and radical harmonic progressions especially at the end and even the middle of the pieces. For instance, in the middle of pieces, Chopin often delays the resolution of harmony by means of a harmonic parenthesis. The B-flat major prelude offers one of the examples of harmonic parenthesis. Many of the preludes in major keys do not sound as if they have achieved closure but instead sound incomplete inviting continuation in the following minor-mode prelude. The most obvious example occurs in F major prelude, Op. 28, No. 23, which ends with an unresolved seventh. He also used progressive tonality in some of preludes. According to William Kinderman:

The tonic key may be treated not as an initial point of orientation, but as the goal of a directional process. In this case, a piece will begin not in the tonic but in a secondary tonality, which in turn can be presented in such a way as to imply and prepare for the tonic key. Such a procedure has been described as ‘progressive’ or ‘interlocking’ tonality, but perhaps most aptly as directional tonality¹⁴.

The A minor prelude No. 2 of Op. 28 is a prominent example, starting on a secondary key in E minor, rather than A minor and modulating to other keys without confirming the

¹³ Robert Collet, “Studies, Preludes, and Impromptus,” In *Frederic Chopin: Profiles of the Man and the Musician*. ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie Books Ltd., 1966), 138

¹⁴ Newlin qtd. in William Kinderman, “Directional Tonality in Chopin,” In *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 89

tonic until it gets to the very end. In terms of mood, Chopin's preludes are often romantic lyrical miniatures that adapt the *bel canto* style in Italian opera. Many of his preludes are inspired by the melodic style of Italian opera¹⁵.

¹⁵ Collet, 139

Chapter 2. ANALYSIS OF TWENTY-FOUR PRELUDES, OPUS 11

Scriabin's compositional career can be divided into three stylistic periods: Early (1872-1896), Middle (1896-1906), and Late (1906-1915). The set of Twenty-four Preludes, Op. 11, are often regarded as one of the best of his early works. On their trip to Western Europe, Scriabin and Mitrofan Belaiev (1836-1903), his patron and publisher, made a bet about the composition of two sets of twenty-four preludes¹⁶. There is no indication that the bet had any relation to Bach, but one might assume that Bach was on their minds because of the number forty-eight. Ultimately, Scriabin did not write all forty-eight preludes, but only forty-seven. He put twenty-four preludes in Op. 11. The remaining twenty-three preludes he divided into different opus numbers: six preludes in Op. 13, five preludes in Op. 15, five preludes in Op. 16 and seven preludes in Op. 17. Op. 11 was composed between 1888 and 1896. In the first edition, published in Leipzig in 1897, Belaiev divided them into four parts: Nos. 1-6 (1888-1896), Nos. 7-12 (1894-96), Nos. 13-18 (1895) and Nos. 19-24 (1895-6)¹⁷. Scriabin put the date and place of composition at the end of each prelude. He did not compose the twenty-four preludes chronologically. No. 4 came first in 1888 in Moscow when Scriabin was sixteen. No. 6 followed in 1889 in Kiev. No. 10 followed in 1893/4 in Moscow. No. 14 was written in Dresden. Nos. 3, 19 and 24 originated in Heidelberg, and nos. 17, 18 and 23 in Witznau, Switzerland, on the 1895 tour. Nos. 7, 13, 15, 20, and 21 were composed

¹⁶ Alexander Skrjabin, *24 Preludes Opus 11*, ed. Valentina Rubcova, iv (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1996).

¹⁷ *ibid*

later that year in Moscow. Nos. 1, 2, 9 and 16 were composed in November of that year (Table 2.1)¹⁸.

Table 2.1 Chronology of Op. 11

1888	No. 4	Moscow
1889	No. 6	Kiev
1893/4	Nos. 10	Moscow
1895	No. 14 Nos. 3, 19, 24 Nos. 12, 17, 18, 23	Dresden Heidelberg Witznau
1896	No. 5 No. 8, 22 No. 1, 2, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 20, 21	Amsterdam Paris Moscow

The overall structure of this set is similar to Chopin's Op. 28. Both sets consist of twenty-four short preludes (in general, Scriabin's preludes are shorter than Chopin's), and both sets begin in C major and end in D minor, proceeding by alternating major keys with their relative minor, following the ascending circle of fifths (Table 2.2).

¹⁸ Alexander Scriabin, *Complete Preludes*, from liner note by Simon Nicholls, Hyperion Records, <http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/notes/67057-N.asp> (access on April 16, 2006).

Table 2.2 Key Scheme of Chopin's Op. 28 and Scriabin's Op. 11

Number	Op. 28	Op. 11	Number	Op. 28	Op. 11
No.1	C major	C major	No.13	F [#] major	G ^b major
No.2	A minor	A minor	No.14	E ^b minor	E ^b minor
No.3	G major	G major	No.15	D ^b major	D ^b major
No.4	E minor	E minor	No.16	B ^b minor	B ^b minor
No.5	D major	D major	No.17	A ^b major	A ^b major
No.6	B minor	B minor	No.18	F minor	F minor
No.7	A major	A major	No.19	E ^b major	E ^b major
No.8	F [#] minor	F [#] minor	No.20	C minor	C minor
No.9	E major	E major	No.21	B ^b major	B ^b major
No.10	C [#] minor	C [#] minor	No.22	G minor	G minor
No.11	B major	B major	No.23	F major	F major
No.12	G [#] minor	G [#] minor	No.24	D minor	D minor

Scriabin obviously had Chopin on his mind, because some preludes are very reminiscent of Chopin in dimension, style and formal approach. As Simon Nicholls says many of Scriabin's pieces are "short as a sparrow's beak or a bear's tail¹⁹." They are written in small forms with the refined taste and technical mannerisms of a miniaturist²⁰; each prelude fits into its own miniature form. They range in length from twelve to seventy-two measures, with most of the preludes in the range of thirty to thirty-five measures. As Scriabin wrote in a letter of 23 March 1896 to Belaiev, "Each prelude is a small composition capable of standing on its own, independently of the others²¹."

Many of the Scriabin preludes recall Chopin's signature styles, such as the nocturne, the mazurka and the etude. Like many of Chopin's preludes, most are based on a single idea or style, but in some cases a prelude shows multiple styles. So, broadly speaking, Scriabin's Op. 11 looks very similar to Chopin's Op. 28 and to other pieces by

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Richard A Leonard, *A History of Russian Music: Scriabin* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 219.

²¹ *Briefe* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1988), 115.

Chopin. For example, Scriabin's No. 16 in B-flat minor resembles Chopin's *Funeral March* from the Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35, with repeated-note dotted rhythms, an ostinato rhythmic pattern, and melodic voice leading within the accompanying pattern. Scriabin's Prelude No. 17 in A-flat major and Prelude No. 23 in F major also remind one of Chopin. The A-flat prelude alludes to Chopin's frequent use of dance characteristics and his fondness for harmonic parentheses and rapidly changing chromatic harmonies, and the F major prelude also has a fast dance-like character, with echoes of the waltz and mazurka. Scriabin follows traditional formal structures similar to those used by Chopin. Sixteen out of the twenty-four preludes are constructed in ternary form with an immediate repetition of the first phrase, and most of them have an emphatic reprise. The rest of the preludes are constructed in binary form, but with various relationships between A and B (Table 2.3).

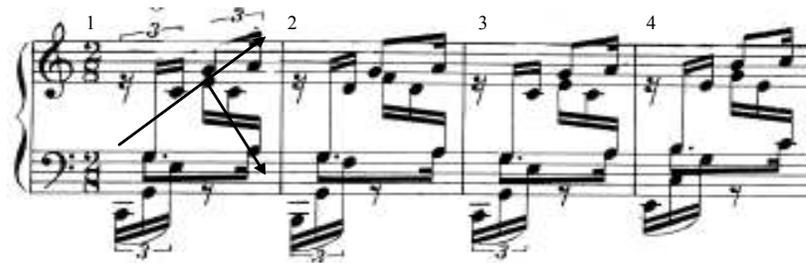
Table 2.3 Formal Schemes Used in Op. 11

Ternary Form	A(a-a')-B(b)-A'(a'')
Binary Form	A(a-a')-B(b)
Binary Form	A(a)-B(b-b')
Binary Form	A(a-a'-b)-B(a-a'-b)

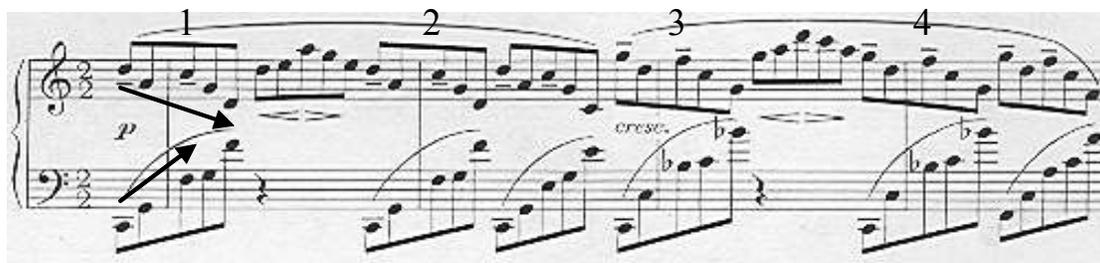
2. 1. PRELUDE NO.1 IN C MAJOR

The C major prelude was composed in November 1895 in Moscow. This prelude demonstrates a number of typical features of Scriabin's approach to the genre in terms of scope, form, and thematic process. The entire piece, a twenty-six measure miniature, is based on a single idea, a quintuplet figure in 2/2 meter that consistently cuts across the bar-line by starting two eighth-notes before the downbeat. Except for mm.

13-16, each phrase contains four groups of eighth-note quintuplets. As in Chopin's Prelude, Op. 28, No. 1, contrary motion of arpeggiated figures is prominent (Ex.2.1 and Ex. 2.2).



Example 2.1 The C major Prelude by Chopin, mm. 1-4

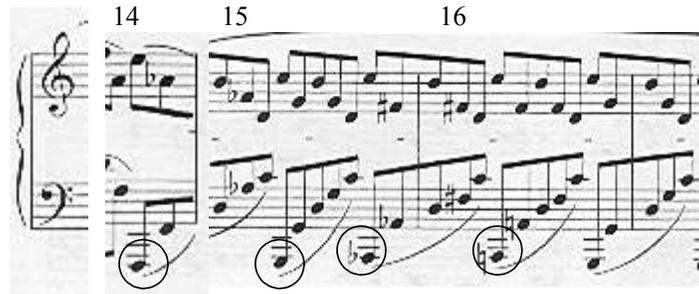


C major → F major

Example 2.2 The C major Prelude by Scriabin, mm. 1-4

The structure of the prelude is also based on a traditional form: A (mm. 1-8) – B (mm. 9-18) - A'/coda (mm. 19-25). Within this traditional form, certain personal characteristics appear, such as the fact that the number of measures in each section is irregular. The basic phrase unit of section A is 2+2+4. Section B has ten measures divided 2+2+2+4. Section A' has only seven measures structured as 2+2+2+1. Section A starts with a non-chord tone in the top voice and moves from an initial dissonance towards clarity, the arrival of the tonic chord of C major at the end of the first phrase in m. 2. In m. 3, the second phrase immediately moves to the sub-dominant, F

major (Ex.2.2), a shift that is characteristic of a number of other preludes of Op. 11. Toward the end of section B at mm. 15-17 a stepwise progression of the bass creates instability that ends in a half-cadence in C major that prepares the reprise (Ex.2.3).



Example 2.3 Stepwise Bass-line, mm. 14-16

The reprise, starting in m. 19, is shortened, with Section A' functioning as both climactic reprise and coda, with *fortissimo* dynamics and a broadening of register with octave doublings in the right hand and wide-ranging chordal patterns in the left. Furthermore, Scriabin increases the tempo with an *accelerando* from the last quarter note of m. 22 to the very end. Therefore, the ending of the first prelude is brilliant.

The use of *tenuto* and *rubato* suggests Chopin's influence on Scriabin. Scriabin's fondness for wide ranges is observed particularly in the left-hand arpeggios. This characteristic, as well as the immediate turn to the sub-dominant in the second statement of the 'a' phrase, are both very characteristic of Scriabin and of the preludes, Op. 11. Thus, while some of the features in this Prelude suggest Scriabin's debt to Chopin, one can also see Scriabin's more personal and modern style in rhythmic treatment, harmonic language and treatment of the reprise.

2. 2. PRELUDE NO.2 IN A MINOR

Stylistically, the A minor prelude in 3/4 meter has a character that is very similar to the dance rhythms in Chopin waltzes, just as Chopin's own A major prelude, Op. 28, No. 7, had exhibited dance character, in this case, that of a mazurka. Of course, the use of dance rhythms in preludes can be traced back to Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier*, many of whose preludes reflect dance styles.

In comparison to other preludes in Op. 11, this Prelude is relatively long. The overall structure of this prelude is ternary form: A (a-a') - B (b) - A' (a'). Section A (mm. 1-32) occupies almost half of the entire piece. It is divided into two sixteen-measure phrases, each of which is built from 4+4+2+2+4 structure. As in the previous prelude, the opening phrase progresses from harmonic ambiguity to clarity, starting away from the tonic and arriving at the third beat of m. 4 on the first inversion of the A minor triad. To be sure, the notes c', a', and e''²² are present in m. 1, but the C in the bass and the E in the top voice move too quickly as passing notes for one to consider them as members of a clear tonic chord (Ex.2.4).

1

p *rit.* *a tempo*

Am: Fr.⁶ i⁶

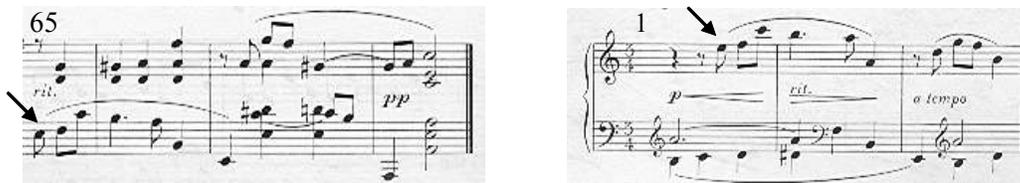
Example 2.4 Harmony: Starting Away from Tonic, mm. 1-5

²² The notation of notes and register follows Schenkerian analysis: C₁ – C – c – c' (middle C) – c'' – c'''

Phrase a' begins at measure 17 as a repetition of phrase a, but closes in E minor, the dominant of A minor. In both the a and a' phrases, descending linear motion occurs in the bass through seven measures from m. 8 to m. 14 from m. 25 to m. 30. A similar pattern occurs in the reprise, section A' (mm. 56-62).

Section B has sixteen measures divided into two eight-measure phrases, b and b'. The internal phrase structure is regular with 4+4 structure in both phrase b and phrase b'. Phrase b starts in E minor and moves to G major in m. 39. Phrase b' repeats this progression sequentially, starting in G minor and arriving in B-flat major at m. 47, which is reinterpreted as the Neapolitan of A minor and leads immediately to a dominant chord on E.

The last section, A' comprises twenty measures with 4+4+2+2+4+4 structure and combines reprise and coda functions. The first three measures of section A' are the same as the start of section A, but in the fourth measure, the melody moves down a step and is extended by means of step-wise descent in the bass that leads to a final cadence in which the left-hand takes over the melody of phrase a (Ex.2.5).



Example 2.5 Left Hand Motion in Coda, mm. 65-68 & Right Hand Motion in Phrase A, mm. 1-3

The Fr.⁶ chord at m. 64 resolves right away by traditional means, but the second-inversion tonic chord at m. 65 has a more prolonged resolution stretched out over the last four measures of the piece (m. 65-68) (Ex.2.6). This resolution perhaps recalls

Chopin's own A minor prelude, which similarly prolongs the final cadence by means of a slow progression from augmented sixth chord through dominant harmony to the final presentation of the tonic (Ex.2.7).

64

Fr.⁶ i⁶₄ V⁶₅ i

Example 2.6 Resolution of Fr.⁶ (Fr.⁶ - i⁶₄ - V⁶₅ - i), mm. 64-68, A minor Prelude by Scriabin

13

Fr.⁶ i⁶₄ V

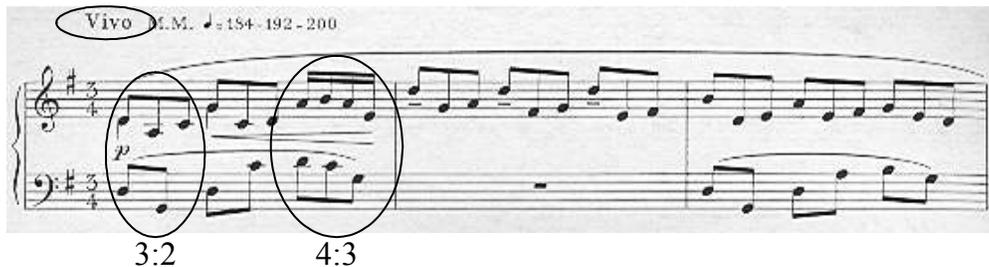
17

i V V/V V i

Example 2.7 Resolution of Fr.⁶ (Fr.⁶ - i⁶₄ - V - i), mm. 13-23, A minor Prelude by Chopin

2.3. PRELUDE NO.3 IN G MAJOR

One of the most Chopinesque preludes from Op. 11 is the G major prelude, No. 3, which is similar to Chopin's G major prelude. Both G major preludes present *leggiero* linear motion under a lively tempo marking, *Vivace* and *Vivo*, respectively. In contrast to Chopin's G major prelude, however, which is a left-hand study with chordal right-hand progressions, Scriabin's G major prelude is a study for both hands in polyrhythm (Ex.2.8).

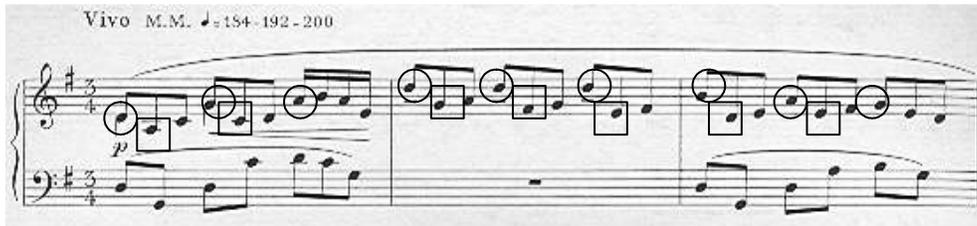


Example 2.8 Tempo Indication and Rhythm of G major Preludes by Scriabin, mm. 1-3

Based on 3/4 meter, the rhythmic figuration is fairly complex, combining duplets in the left hand with triplets in the right hand. The tempo marking, *Vivo*, makes this particular prelude very difficult to perform, even with its simple linear melodic texture. Furthermore, three successive *accelerando* markings make this prelude very exciting.

Prelude No. 3 starts and ends clearly in G major; therefore, in contrast to the first two preludes, there is no ambiguity in defining the key. The overall structure of this prelude is three-part form based on multiple statements of section A: A-A'-A''. Like Chopin's G major prelude Op. 28, No. 3, this prelude also has many phrase repetitions. Section A comprises sixteen measures with 4+4+2+2+4 phrasing. Section A' has

twenty-measures with 4+4+2+2+8 phrasing. Section A' functions both as reprise and coda and consists of ten measures. The first statement is very clear in harmony with the chord progression I – V - I. Also, as often seen in Chopin's works, the right-hand figuration implies multiple voices. Every first note in a group of three eighth-notes presents the main melody, while the second note is part of a secondary voice line (Ex.2.9).



Example 2.9 Voice Lines, mm. 1-3

The first three measures of the second phrase in section A (mm. 5-7) are exactly the same as the first statement. Starting with m. 9, the music departs from the model with an eight-measure extension. In measures 12-15, the left hand starts phrasing across the bar-line. The overall harmonic progression in section A is from G major (mm. 1-11) to B minor (mm. 12-14) to D major (mm. 14-16).

Section A' comes back to G major at measure 17 and then moves directly to the sub-dominant key, C major. As noted earlier, a sudden modulation to the sub-dominant degree is one of Scriabin's favorite moves in the preludes of Op. 11 (Ex.2.10).

17 18 19 20 21

I V V⁷/IV I/IV

G major----- C major-----

Example 2.10 Modulation to the Sub-Dominant Key, mm. 17-21

The harmonic progression of section A' is very clear, moving from G major (mm. 17-20) to C major (mm. 21-28) to E minor (mm. 28-30) to A minor (mm. 31-32) to G major (mm.32-36).

Section A'', beginning at measure 37, again acts as a shortened reprise and coda, returning to and staying in the tonic. The method of sustaining one note throughout several measures at the end of the piece in one voice, while adding short and long chords occurs in some of the other preludes of Op. 11 (Ex.2.11). The note B in the last right-hand chord perhaps anticipates the beginning note of the following prelude, E minor.

41 42 43 44 45 46

Example 2.11 One of Favorite Endings of Scriabin's Preludes, mm. 41-46

2. 4. PRELUDE NO.4 IN E MINOR

The E minor prelude is known to be a reworking of an unfinished ballade in B-flat minor that Scriabin wrote in 1888²³ (Ex.2.12 and 2.13).



Example 2.12 E minor Prelude, mm. 1-3



Example 2.13 B-flat minor Ballade of 1888, mm. 1-3

The Ballade is based on the following poem²⁴, written by Scriabin in 1887.

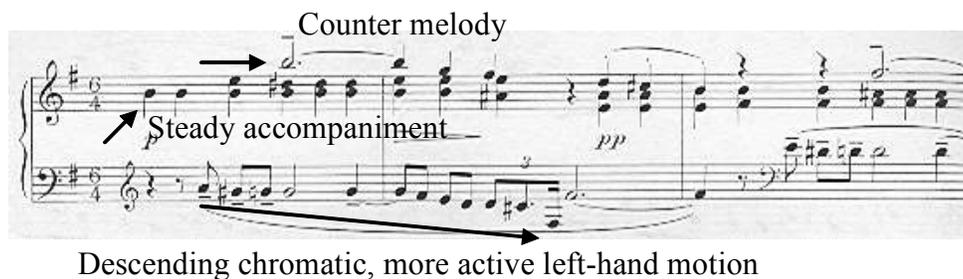
O country of visions!
How different from this life
Where I have no place
But there, I hear voices,
A world of beatific souls
I see.....

²³ Fabuion Bowers, *Scriabin* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 137.

²⁴ *ibid.*

The start of the prelude corresponds to the first and second verses of the poem. According to the liner note by Simon Nicholls, “The poem is prophetic of the intense inner world which Scriabin was to build for himself, and the 'difference' of that world is evoked by augmented harmonies - significant because of their tendency to suspend the 'normal' laws of tonality²⁵.” The meter of the Prelude was originally 3/4; however, Scriabin changed it to 6/4 in the manuscript²⁶. The use of compound meter is typical of Chopin’s ballades, with the G minor Ballade, Op. 23, specifically in 6/4 meter for its main section.

The E minor prelude presents three layers of texture: a descending chromatic melody in the left hand (motive a), a counter-melody in the soprano (motive b), and overall steady quarter-note motion in the middle voices (motive c). The left hand is rhythmically more active than the right hand (Ex.2.14), and the piece resembles Chopin’s C-sharp minor Etude, Op. 25 No. 7, as mentioned in Kang’s dissertation²⁷ (Ex.2.15).





Example 2.15 Chopin's Etude, Op. 25, No. 7, mm. 1-3

The formal strategy of the E minor prelude is different from previous preludes. Instead of three-part form, this prelude is formed of two sections with coda: section A (mm. 1-8), A' (mm. 9-19) and coda (mm. 20-24). The basic phrase unit contains two-measures. Section A has 2+2+1+1+2 phrasing. The left-hand melody is initially characterized by descending chromatic motion. As it unfolds it introduces a triplet dotted rhythm. The second half of the melody presents a shorter motive that rises with a succession of seventh chords (Ex.2.16).

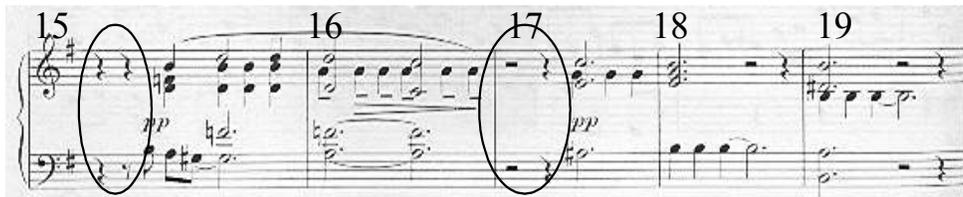


Example 2.16 Interval of Diminished Seventh, mm. 5-6

Both Chopin's and Scriabin's E minor preludes begin with the note b that is already anticipated at the end of their preceding preludes. The middle voice in Scriabin's piece continues to emphasize the note b, the dominant of E minor, in the first phrase of sections A and A' and in last five measures of the coda (mm. 20-24). The beginning sounds like E major rather than E minor because of the chromatic writing in

the left hand. Scriabin often uses secondary dominant chords, diminished chords, and half-diminished chords.

Section A' is basically a repetition of section A. It is constructed in 2+2+1+1+5 phrasing. The last five measures of section A' present a new continuation with an unexpected interruption in mm. 15 and 17 (Ex.2.17) during the presentation of the second motive, the one involving the interval of the seventh.



Example 2.17 Unexpected Interruption, mm. 15 and 17

The coda of Scriabin's E minor prelude starts in m. 20. The purpose of the coda is to liquidate into the opening idea. The opening idea is gradually reduced and finally dissolves into one single note, which is the tonic note (Ex.2.18). The overall harmonic progression of this prelude is $i - V$ (section A), $i - V$ (section A'), and i (coda).

The E minor prelude resembles both the E minor and A minor preludes from Chopin's op. 28. Like Chopin's E minor prelude, Scriabin's hovers around the note B and its inner voices move in a constant pulse with chromatic voice leading. Further, both preludes present the melodies within the same dynamic range and both fade out at the end.

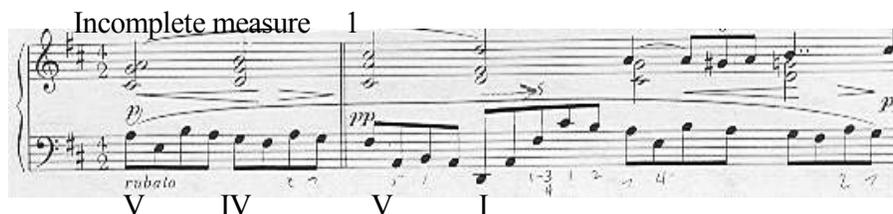


Example 2.18 Liquidation of the Opening Idea in Coda, mm. 20-24

The E minor prelude is also similar to Chopin’s A minor prelude, Op. 28, No. 2 because of its overall mood and form. Similar to Chopin’s A minor prelude, the tempo marking of the E minor prelude is marked as *Lento*.

2. 5. PRELUDE NO.5 IN D MAJOR

The D major prelude is a nocturne-like piece with eighth-note “wave” motion in the left hand. Stylistically and texturally, this piece is similar to Chopin’s F-sharp major prelude, Op. 28, No. 13. The right-hand melody begins with a distinctive cadential progression leading stepwise from the dominant to the tonic, supported by the progression V-IV-V-I (Ex.2.19 and Ex.2.20).



Example 2.19 Cadential Motion of the Melody, m. 1

The image shows a musical score for three measures of cadential motion. The top staff is the treble clef, and the bottom staff is the bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 1 is labeled '1' above and 'I' below. Measure 2 is labeled '2' above and 'V7' below. Measure 3 is labeled '3' above and 'I' below. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note pattern, while the treble line features chords and melodic fragments.

Example 2.20 Cadential Motion of the Melody, Chopin Op. 28, No. 13, mm. 1-3

The D major prelude presents a main idea (A) three times in slightly varied fashion: A (mm. 1-4) – A' (mm. 5-11) – A'' (mm. 12-14). Section A contains three sub-phrases (a – a' – b), with the second component varying the opening idea with the addition of triplet and double-dotted rhythms in the melody. The structure of Section A' is a – a – c. At a larger level, section A' acts as a consequent section A. The first statement of the sub-phrase is the same as the varied motive from m. 2. This motive, however, immediately moves to the sub-dominant key, G. From m. 7, Section A' starts to depart from the model of Section A with an extension that leads back toward D major: the range of the left hand becomes wider; a rising bass line from E to B^b starting in m. 8 supports an expansion of m. 3; syncopation and acceleration of tempo specified by the indication *con anima* build toward the climax of the piece (Ex.2.21).

Example 2.21 Expansion of m.3 Leading toward the Climax, mm. 6-11

The marking, *con anima*, is one of Chopin’s favorite markings, appearing often in his nocturnes and preludes. Two other markings, *ritardando* and *rubato*, appear at the same time in m. 10. In Chopin’s works, *rubato* typically indicates that the melody in the right hand is to be freed up from synchronization with the left hand.

The coda-like section A’ begins with the sub-phrase a’ of section A in a softer dynamic, *pp*. As is typical of codas, this section has a cadential quality, with two statements of the opening harmonic progression over tonic pedal. A continuous *diminuendo* (*p-pp-ppp*) through mm. 10-14 releases the tension caused by the climatic point. Accompanied by rolled chords and stated in a higher register, the final *pianissimo* statement of the main idea at m. 11 in *pp* creates the effect of fading away at the end.

The overall harmonic progression is very clear in this prelude. Most of the chords are major triads: I, IV, and V. Section A begins on V harmony in D major, moves in the direction of the relative minor, and returns to V in m. 4. Section A’ returns

to D, moves through G major and then builds toward V after the climactic extension. With A'' the music returns to the opening idea in D, now supported by tonic in the bass.

2. 6. PRELUDE NO.6 IN B MINOR

The B minor prelude is composed on a single idea in an etude-like style that is based on a canon at the interval of a ninth²⁸. The main idea of this prelude involves octave patterns in both hands that rhythmically fill in the spaces left by each other. In other words, the principal melodic line is created from the alternation of long notes in the left hand and the right hand. This main melody is a step-wise line, but the local motion inside the melody progressively steps down and leaps up. The use of octave patterns in a fast tempo with loud dynamics and wide register makes the piece similar to Chopin's G minor prelude, Op. 28, No. 22.

The basic unit is an eight-measure phrase with four measures (mm. 1-4) of stepwise ascending motion (B-C[#]-D-E-F[#]-G-A[#]) followed by four measures (mm. 5-8) of descending motion (Ex.2.22).

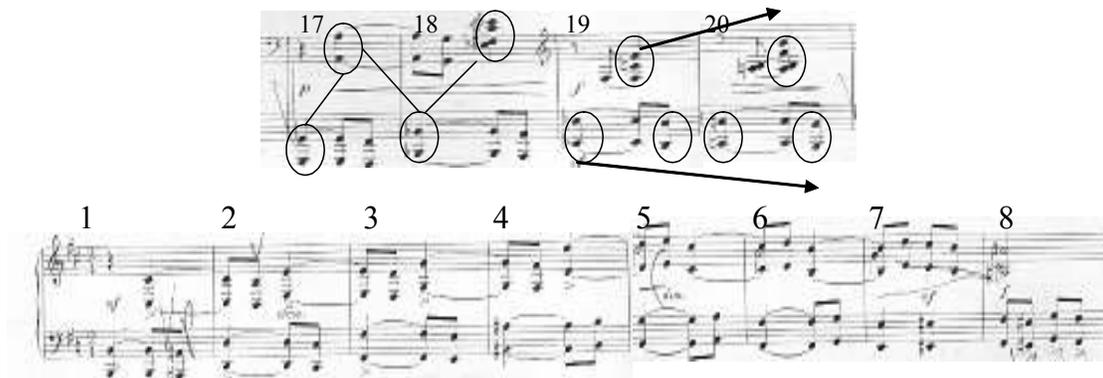
The image displays a musical score for the first eight measures of the B minor Prelude. The score is written for piano in B minor (two sharps) and 2/4 time. It consists of two staves: the right hand (treble clef) and the left hand (bass clef). The first four measures (mm. 1-4) feature ascending motion, starting with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic and a crescendo (cresc.) marking. The last four measures (mm. 5-8) feature descending motion, starting with a decrescendo (dim.) marking and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. Circles are drawn around notes in both hands to illustrate the canon at the interval of a ninth. The notes in the right hand are B, C#, D, E, F#, G, A#, and B. The notes in the left hand are B, C#, D, E, F#, G, A#, and B, an octave lower.

Example 2.22 Main Idea of the B minor Prelude, mm. 1-8

²⁸ Kang, p.36

Like many of the other preludes, the B minor prelude is in ternary form: A (mm. 1-16) – B (mm. 17-34) - A' (mm. 35-58). Section A has two eight-measure phrases. The first phrase ends in m. 8 on half-cadence of B minor. Because of the constant suspensions caused by the contrapuntal melodic idea, the sound is ultimately dissonant. The second phrase (mm. 9-16) is a repetition of the first phrase at the sub-dominant, the key of E minor. The close of the second phrase is different from the first phrase. Whereas the first phrase ends on the dominant of the starting key, the second phrase cadences in G major, the relative major of the key at the start of the unit (E minor). Kang considers Section B as a variant of the opening section, A'²⁹. But this section is different from the previous section. The rests in the right hand on the first beats as well as the harmonic motion from mm. 26-34 make this a contrasting section even though the left-hand pattern is similar to section A. The beginning of the B section is in the key of G minor, the parallel minor to the conclusion of section A. The basic phrase unit is 4+4+10 phrases. The first four measures (mm. 17-20) are a compression of phrase a (mm. 1-8), as the first two measures ascend by alternation between the hands, and the third and fourth measures descend stepwise in the left hand, while the right hand has a short ascending motion (Ex.2.23).

²⁹ Kang, p.36



Example 2.23 Reduction of the First Phrase, mm. 17-20 & mm. 1-8

As before, the second phrase (phrase b') of section B is a repetition of the first phrase (phrase b) of section B at the sub-dominant area, starting in C minor. C major in phrase b' immediately turns to Neapolitan of B major because the C is flatted half step from C-sharp. Measures 25-34 prolong the dominant of B by motion between the sixth and fifth degrees in the bass in measures 25-27 and descending arpeggiation through the major third cycle $g-d^{\#}-B-G$, which steps down to F-sharp in measure 32.

Measure 35 starts section A' with a varied repetition of phrase a, adding an extra voice in the middle of an octave figuration. This reprise seems heroic because it is written in a louder dynamic and has a thicker texture than the original statement. From the second half of m. 41, the model of section A is extended by a continuation of the descent that starts at m. 39 so as to postpone the arrival at the dominant until measure 47; the descent accelerates at mm. 43-45, changing from once every measure to every quarter note. At the same time, a *ritardando* in tempo begins at m. 43. Following the arrival on the dominant at m. 47, there is a slow resolution in sustained chords, first with neighbor-note motion in the bass to the II^7 with raised third in m. 49 (Ex.2.24); this chord (G-B-C#-E#) sounds as a Fr.⁶ chord.

45

V Fr.⁶

Example 2.24 V-Fr.⁶ Progression, mm. 45-49

Despite the slowing of motion, the dynamics remain loud to the end of the piece. Finally, the last eight measures (mm. 51-58) resolve the tension at the loudest dynamic level, *fff*, using the traditional cadence: V (with added fourth, mm. 51-52) – V⁷ (with added sixth, mm. 53-54) – i (mm. 55-58).

Section A mostly stays *mf* with local dynamic changes. The level suddenly drops to *p* at the beginning of section B, which also makes local changes. The small fluctuations in dynamics in the first two sections give way at m. 25 to a prolonged *crescendo* from *f* to *fff*, that grows continuously to the loudest dynamic at the very end of the piece.

2. 7. PRELUDE NO.7 IN A MAJOR

The A major prelude is a relatively diatonic piece. It has the character of a barcarolle, with a middle voice that sounds like flowing water. This prelude exhibits a number of Scriabin's typical features, such as three-note groups, short repeating phrases, and mono-thematic construction³⁰. Octave-doubled pedal points are another of its main

³⁰ Kang, p.40

features. The prelude unfolds through the repetition of a short, one-measure phrase unit. Each voice has its own distinctive rhythmic idea. The top voice is mainly built from a five eighth-note group and the middle voice from a five sixteenth-note group; these two voices move in contrary motion. Groups of three eighth-notes in the bass keep crossing the bar line. This kind of rhythm creates a harmonic blur at the surface level (Ex.2.25). Even though the music looks very clear and diatonic, there is a frequent clash between the voices.

Example 2.25 Ideas of Each Voice, mm. 1-4 (a: five eighth notes, b: five sixteenth notes, c: cross over the bar-line with three eighth-notes)

The prelude is constructed in ternary form: A (mm. 1-8) – B (mm. 9-16) – A' (mm. 17-24). Like many of the preludes, the phrasing is based on four-measure units. Phrase a can be subdivided into 1+1+2. A consistent pedal point on the note A emphasizes the key, A major. The progression is I – ii⁷ – V, with a half cadence at the end of the first phrase. Phrase a' presents the music slightly differently than phrase a. The range is slightly expanded, especially in the top melody (Ex.2.26). The overall

harmonic progression is I – ii⁷ – V – I, with a full cadence at the end of the second phrase).



Example 2.26 Different Melodic Statement in Phrase a', mm. 1-2 & mm. 5-6

Section B begins in m. 9. The phrase units of this section become twice as long as the phrase units of section A: 2+2+4. The sentence structure, which is a reminiscent of traditional style, is formed by four measures of antecedent (two times two measures of basic ideas) and four measures of continuation (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Sentence Structure, mm. 9-16

mm. 9-10	mm. 11-12	mm. 13-16
Basic idea	Basic idea	Continuation
Antecedent		Continuation

The middle voice, sixteenth notes, become more continuous in section B, and the top melodic pattern changes from groups of five eighth-notes to three eighth-note groups that cut across over the bar lines in mm. 9-11. Here, Scriabin adopts a Chopinesque harmonic progression that reinterprets the final chord in a sequential progression as ii in

the subsequent progression: f^\sharp (ii) - B (V) – E (I) and e (ii) – A (V) – D (I) in mm. 9-12. In this case the E major chord at the end of the first unit is converted into a ii chord by moving from g-sharp to g-natural on the last beat of m.11 (Ex.2.27). The same progression occurs in Chopin’s G-sharp minor prelude, No.12 (Ex.2.28).

7
3 note grouping

10
ii (f^\sharp)

V (B) I (E) ii (e) V (A) I (D)

Example 2.27 Different Pattern and Chord Progression, mm. 7-12

21
B(II) E(V) A(I)

25
A(II) D(V) G(I)

Example 2.28 Sequential Progression, mm. 21-28 in Op. 28, No. 12

Section A' begins with the return to tonic A major at measure 17. The reprise reinterprets the a phrase with loud dynamics (*ff*), octave doublings in both hands and persistent tonic pedal. At m. 20, the reprise deviates from the model by adding an extra measure as an extension of m. 19 (which corresponds to m. 3). A short coda follows the cadence in the middle of m. 20, breaking the concluding gesture of the phrase into successively smaller units (Ex. 2.29). The dynamic changes radically over the course of the reprise (*ff* - *dim.* - *mp* - *dim.* - *pp* - *ppp*).

Example 2.29 Coda, mm. 19-23

A number of features in the piece are reminiscent of Chopin's G-sharp minor prelude, op. 28, no 12: the texture, the harmonic progression of the middle section, the expansion of range in the reprise, and the fading dynamics at the end. Liszt also comes to mind, as the leaping left hand, flowing sixteenth-note motion in the middle voice, and slower moving melody in compound meter are similar to traits found in Liszt's "Au bord d'une source" from *Années de Pèlerinage* Book I (Swiss).

2. 8. PRELUDE NO.8 IN F SHARP MINOR

From its look on the page, the F-sharp minor prelude resembles a nocturne, with wide-ranging arpeggiation in the left hand over a pedal point. Because of its tempo and the technical difficulty in both hands, however, the character of the piece is more etude-like. The right hand combines large ascending leaps with fast descending triplet motion that conflicts with the duple divisions of the beat in the left hand.

The form of the prelude is based on three statements of a main idea: A (mm. 1-16) – A' (mm. 17-36) – A'' (mm. 37-56). The first two sections are similar, with a four-measure extension in section A' in comparison to A; the third section, however, is more cadential or conclusive in nature in comparison to the first two sections. Section A is formed as a compound sentence (four-measure basic idea - four-measure basic idea – eight-measure continuation). Here, a compound sentence is defined as a sentence extended to sixteen measures (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Compound Sentence

Basic idea	Basic idea	Continuation
mm.1-4	mm.5-8	mm.9-16
Antecedent		Continuation

The basic phrase (idea) is itself divided into two two-measure units. The first unit (mm. 1-2) involves large ascending leaps in the right hand, a tenth (note a'-c''') and an augmented ninth (note a'-b[#]'), and wide ranging left-hand arpeggios. Fast descending eighth-note triplets over the ongoing nocturne-like accompaniment constitute the main features of the second unit (Ex.2.30).



Example 2.30 Basic Idea, mm. 1-4

The second statement of basic idea (mm. 5-8) repeats this material at the subdominant, still over the C[#] pedal point. The continuation in the following eight measures starts with this C[#] in the bass, but the bass line begins to move up chromatically, eventually reach in A on the downbeat of m. 15. As the music approaches the cadence in m. 16, the harmonic rhythm accelerates. The left hand of mm. 13-15 presents a hemiola rhythm, while the right hand starts to move in continuous groups of triplets (Ex.2.31).

Example 2.31 Compound Sentence, mm. 1-16

Chopin's Nocturne in D-flat major, Op. 27, No. 2, uses a similar hemiola in the bass to create tension as it approaches a half cadence in the second half of m. 45 (Ex.2.32).

The image shows a musical score for measures 44 and 45. The bass line in measure 45 has a hemiola rhythm, which is a 3/2 note value over a 2/2 time signature, creating a sense of tension. A bracket is drawn under the bass line in the second half of measure 45 to highlight this hemiola.

Example 2.32 Hemiola Bass in Chopin's D-flat major Nocturne Op. 27, No. 2, mm. 44-45

The Gr.⁶ chord that appears over a C-sharp pedal in every second measure of the basic idea resolves traditionally in each of its four presentations in A and A' (Ex.2.33).

The image displays four pairs of musical staves, each representing a presentation of the Gr.⁶ chord resolution. In each pair, the top staff is the treble clef and the bottom is the bass clef. Arrows point from the notes of the Gr.⁶ chord in the top staff to the notes of the resolving chord (i or iv) in the bottom staff. The first pair (measures 2-3) is labeled 'F# minor' and shows resolution to 'i'. The second pair (measures 6-7) shows resolution to 'iv'. The third pair (measures 18-19) is labeled 'B minor' and shows resolution to 'i'. The fourth pair (measures 22-23) shows resolution to 'iv'.

Example 2.33 Traditional Resolution of Gr.⁶ Chord, mm. 2-3, 6-7, 18-19, and 22-23

Section A' (4+4+12) begins in m. 17. Measures 17-30 closely follow the corresponding measures of the first section, transposed to the subdominant. The first eighth note of m. 17 serves a double duty. It is the first time that f-sharp is presented as the root of the tonic triad, but the f-sharp is immediately converted to the fifth of the subdominant chord. The f-sharp is not only an actual cadence (tonic of F[#]) of the descending melody from m. 16, but also the beginning of the sub-dominant modulation to B minor. The end of section A' is extended by four extra measures in comparison to the model. The extension begins at m. 31, which deviates from the pattern set at m. 15 by continuing the motivic sequence in the right hand over a prolongation of the Neapolitan chord of F[#] (G – B – D). Measures 33 to 36 expand the running triplet figuration from mm. 15-16, still over the sustained Neapolitan harmony.

The third section begins at m. 37 with yet another presentation of the main idea (Section A'': 4+2+2+2+2+2+2+1+1). Unlike the first two sections, which start with tonic and move away, the final section starts away from tonic and moves toward the tonic, progressing from Neapolitan harmony through a French augmented sixth to a second-inversion F-sharp minor chord at mm. 39-40. Following this is a process of liquidation, as the melody is reduced from four measures to two (m. 41-42, 43-44) and then to just one (m. 45-51), in which the melody focuses only on the falling gesture, which is made to overlap itself in one-bar entries over tonic pedal (Ex.2.34). Over the course of the reprise, the music grows quieter. The tonic triad in root position finally arrives at m. 48.

Example 2.34 Liquidation of Phrase Structure, mm. 37-56

The overall shape of the F-sharp minor prelude differs from that of the previous pieces. In contrast to the previous preludes, the highest point in the prelude occurs in the middle of the piece, m. 31, not in the reprise, which starts only *mf* and dies away to the final *smorzando*.

2.9. PRELUDE NO. 9 IN E MAJOR

The E major prelude is a study in harmonic ambiguity. Similar to Chopin's A minor prelude, Op. 28 No. 2, this prelude avoids the tonic, in this case the E major triad, until the very end of the piece. Moreover, even at the end the cadential progression is not a PAC but instead the progression is ii^7-iii^6-I , with the iii^6 (m. 34) is used as a dominant substitute. An analysis could show it to be an incomplete dominant with an anticipation, the note g^\sharp (Ex.2.35).

ii^7 iii^6 I
 ↓
 iii^6 =incomplete V with anticipation

Example 2.35 Cadential Progression, mm. 31-36

In her dissertation, Kang writes that the various expression markings, such as *rubato*, *ritardando*, and *accelerando*, and the expressive melodic writing make this prelude very nocturne-like³¹. However, mazurka character is also present in this piece through various rhythmic patterns, and the *rubato* marking at the start of the piece is in line with Chopin's association of *rubato* performance with the mazurka (Ex.2.36).

Example 2.36 Mazurka Characteristic, mm. 15-20

It is hard to ascertain where the principal melody resides in this prelude, as the piece can be considered to be a duet between a lyrical and active left-hand and a slower-moving right hand.

The overall structure is in three parts: A (4+4) – A' (4+2+2+4+4) – B (2+2+2+6). Section A starts with the afore-mentioned double melody. The left-hand melody starts

³¹ Kang, p.45.

first, suggesting C-sharp minor and F-sharp minor;³² above this, the right hand hints at the tonic key (as well as A major), but the first measure does not give tonic harmonic support. The nearly constant presence of seventh chords makes the harmony ambiguous. Up to the eighth measure, there are no cadences. At measure 8 the music finally arrives at a half-cadence on a dominant seventh chord, but expectations are immediately subverted by a deceptive resolution, with the seventh note moving up chromatically rather than resolving downward by step, as expected (Ex.2.37).

7th note moves up chromatically

Example 2.37 Unexpected Resolution of Half-Cadence, m. 7-9

Section A' starts in m. 9 with a slightly varied right-hand melody. In this section the mazurka character comes out clearly in both expression markings and rhythmic treatment. The right-hand melody of every unit begins on a weak beat. Furthermore, the changes of tempo (with *ritardando* and *accelerando*) enhance the mazurka effect even more. Formally this is an unusual section because there are no strong breaks. Therefore, it can be understood as either one large section from mm. 9-24 or two sections, from mm. 9-12 and from mm. 13-24 (one could also understand this section to extend all the way to measure 30). Scriabin extends the pattern of m. 5 in mm. 13-14, giving the left-hand a particularly mazurka-like rhythm. Measures 15-16 are a

³² *ibid.*

sequential repetition of mm. 13-14. Measure 17 combines two separate figures. The first is the right-hand figure of mm. 1-2, and the second is the left-hand figure from mm. 13-14 in a new variant. Measures 21-24 are a repetition of mm. 17-20 at the fifth below (Table 2.6). This section ends with a *fermata* appearing on the last beat of m. 24 preceded by a short *ritardando*.

Table 2.6 Sequential Harmonic Progression, mm. 17-24

m.17	m.18	m.19	m.20
f ^{#6}	b ⁷	f ^{#6}	d ^{#ø7}
m.21	m.22	m.23	m.24
c ^{#6}	f ^{#7}	c ^{#6}	a

Section B (mm. 25-36) has same left-hand motion as the second half of section A'. In this section, the bass progression (G[#] - F[#] - E[#]) of the first beat of every other measure is in contrary motion to the rising motion (E - F[#] - G[#] - A) of the right hand. There is an augmented G-sharp chord in mm. 27-28 whose function is not to effect harmonic change but to facilitate a voice exchange between the previous and successive chords, as the soprano (F[#] - G[#] - A) and bass (A - G[#] - F[#]) notes are exchanged (Ex.2.38).

G[#] Augmented chord
exchanges chords

Example 2.38 Voice Exchange via G-sharp Augmented Chord, mm. 25-30

The overall harmonic progression in section B is an alternation of iv and ii, which implies the tonic but postpones its definitive arrival.

The music from measure 31 to the end could be understood either as a brief coda (for thematic reasons) or as the conclusion of section B (for harmonic reasons). However one construes it, the closing measures start with the same phrase as the beginning of section A', carrying over the note C# in the left hand from the previous measure. After the presentation of the opening idea, the music prepares the final cadence in E major. The harmony moves between vi and ii through the four measures. Finally the incomplete V - I progression discussed above occurs at the very end of the piece.

Interestingly, there is no single *a tempo* marking after any of the *rubato*, *ritardando* and *accelerando* markings. One assumes that Scriabin expected performers to interpret the delicate and flexible local change of tempo based on the suggested tempo marking of *Andantino* and the melodic and harmonic character of any particular phrase.

2. 10. PRELUDE NO.10 IN C SHARP MINOR

The C-sharp minor prelude demonstrates a number of Scriabin's personal traits. The music is built primarily from descending figures that seem to lack energy, an effect that is enhanced by the *rubato* marking and the soft dynamic, *pp*. The *rubato* indication and the empty down beats in the right-hand melody recall typical mazurka features; however, this prelude resembles more a waltz than a mazurka, and the genre closest to this prelude is perhaps the barcarolle, as the C-sharp minor prelude also brings to mind Felix Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* op. 19, No. 6, the "Venetian Gondola Song." Adding to its somewhat folkloric or exotic character is the use of the lowered second

degree in cadences at mm. 3-4 and mm. 7-8 instead of the normal cadence with the whole step from 2 to 1. Neapolitan implications are also present at m. 15. The use of augmented fourth and diminished fifth intervals also adds color to the sound.

This prelude is only twenty measures long. The basic phrase structure is very regular (4+4+4+4+4). Kang divides this prelude into two A sections with an interlude between the sections³³. In an alternative reading, it can be considered as a sectional binary form: A (a-a') – B (b-a'') – closing.

Section A has two phrases. The first phrase is in the key of C-sharp minor (mm. 1-4) and the second phrase is in the key of F-sharp minor (mm. 5-8). The first phrase descends from m. 1 to the start of m.4 over an overall progression from i to V/V to V. The Fr.⁶ chord on the fifth beat in m. 1 is used as a neighboring chord between two C-sharp chords. Accents and a louder dynamic level bring out a middle voice (from the last beat of m. 1 through the second beat of m. 2) that perhaps resembles a boatman's call over the rocking waves. A progression from V – iv connects the first phrase with the first beat of the second at m.5 (Ex.2.39).

continuous descending-melody

1 2 3 4 5

V iv

human voice or crying rocking waves

Example 2.39 Unusual Features, mm. 1-5

³³ Kang, p.47

The second phrase starts on the sub-dominant, a fourth above the opening, which happens frequently in Scriabin's preludes. The first three measures are an exact transposition of the opening to the subdominant, but the closing measure is different because m. 8 presents a perfect close in minor rather than major. The music at the end of the first section fades away with a *diminuendo* and *ritardando* and a *fermata* on the third scale degree.

Section B begins in E major, the relative major of C-sharp minor. Scriabin treats this section differently from section A by means of different articulation and a new expression marking. In contrast to the previous section, the music is played *portato* and *pp* and *con anima* in order to create a lighter mood than before. Scriabin also makes a radical change in the local dynamic. The dynamic suddenly changes from *pp* to *f* from in one measure by means of *crescendo*. In m. 13, the dynamic suddenly reaches *fff* and both hands return to the opening idea with octave doublings as the climax of this piece. In contrast to the first phrase, both the top melody and the middle voice in mm. 13 and 15 are accented, and the bass confirms the tonic with a C[#] pedal point from m. 13 through m. 16 (Ex.2.40).

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system is labeled '13' and contains four measures. The top staff has notes with accents (>) and a dynamic marking of *fff* circled. The bottom staff has notes with accents (>) and a dynamic marking of *fff* circled. The second system is labeled '17' and contains four measures. The top staff has notes with accents (>) and a dynamic marking of *pp* circled. The bottom staff has notes with accents (>) and a dynamic marking of *pp* circled. A box labeled 'ritardando' is placed over the bottom staff in the second measure of the second system. A box labeled 'ii^{o7}' is placed below the bottom staff in the third measure of the second system. A box labeled 'pp' is placed below the bottom staff in the fourth measure of the second system.

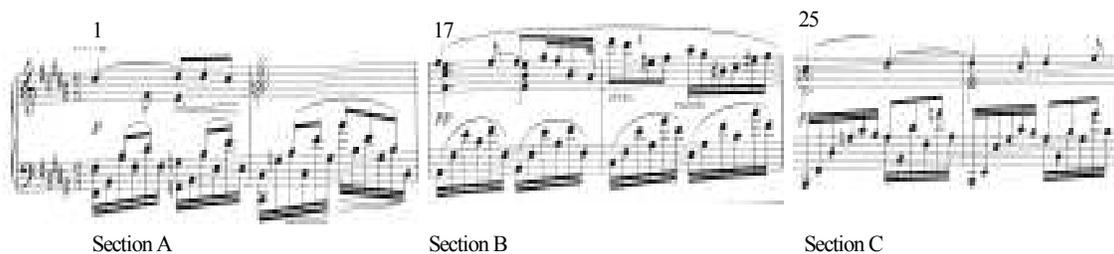
Example 2.40 Phrase a'' and a Closing Phrase, mm. 13-20

Through the prelude there is a tendency to make deceptive cadences. One last deceptive cadence occurs in m. 16. Furthermore, there is no strong tonic triad until m. 19, where the tonic is attained by means of a voice-leading cadence, $ii^{67} - I$, a cadence (Ex. 2.40) that is easily found in Chopin's pieces.

This prelude has very detailed indications for the performer, and the principal challenges for the pianist in this piece include balancing the voices, making radical dynamic changes in a short period, and managing the flexible rhythms created by *rubato* and *ritardando*.

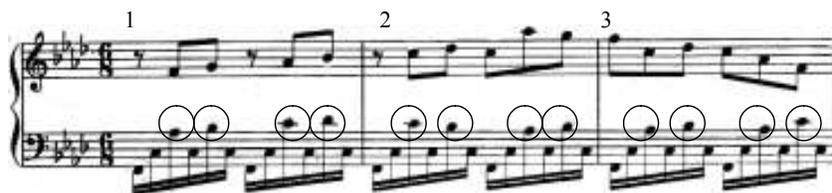
2. 11. PRELUDE NO.11 IN B MAJOR

The B major prelude is the first through-composed piece of the collection, the first one not to make a reprise or restatement of the first phrase. It is composed of three different sections: A (mm. 1-16) – B (mm. 17-24) – C (mm. 25-39). This kind of structure occurs in several of Chopin's nocturnes, such as Op. 15, No. 3 and Op. 32, No. 1, which replace the reprise with new music in the last section. The structure of Scriabin's piece is articulated in terms of the different textures and accompaniment patterns of each section. Section A utilizes four different voices: melody in soprano voice, a middle-range alto voice, a leaping tenor voice played by the left-hand thumb, and rapid broken-chord pattern in the bass. Section B utilizes a different left-hand arpeggio pattern from section A and a more active right-hand melody with *rubato*. Furthermore, the harmonic progression in section B is not stable. The last section, C, begins in m. 25 with an ascending melody on the top, chordal progression in the middle voice, and wide ranging arpeggios in the bass over a B pedal point (Ex.2.41).



Example 2.41 Different Textures of Each Section, mm. 1-2, 17-18, and 25-26

Section A has two eight-measure phrases: a (mm. 1-8) and a' (mm. 9-16). Phrase a is formed of a sentence with 2 (basic idea) + 2 (basic idea) + 4 (continuation) structure. The top voice and the tenor voice move in contrary motion. The first note of each sixteenth-note group in the left hand is reinforced by octave doubling. This left-hand figure is reminiscent of Chopin's F minor Etude, Op. 10, No. 9 (Ex.2.42). The note b in the tenor voice rings out in every measure and functions as a pedal point in this particular section.



Example 2.42 Similar Pattern in Chopin's Etude Op. 10, No. 9, mm. 1-3

Phrase a begins on tonic, but not in root position. The first four measures alternate between I and ii^{o7} chords. The continuation alternates between augmented chords and ii^{o7} chords in mm. 5-6, and then ends with a $ii^7 - I_4^6 - V$ progression in mm. 7-8. The first four measures of phrase a' follow the same harmonic progression as the beginning of phrase a. The remainder of phrase a', however, presents a different

melodic and harmonic continuation, with augmented chords on the downbeats of each measure from m. 13 to m. 16 (G^+ , $Fr.^6$, B^+ , $Gr.^6$) (Ex.2.43). The bass line chromatically ascends in mm. 12-16: $c^\# - d^\# - e - e^\# - f^\# - f^* - g^\# - g^* - a^\#$, functioning as a bridge to section B.

The image shows a musical score for measures 13 through 17. The bass line is circled and labeled with chords: G^+ , $ii_5^6_r$, $Fr.^6$, I_4^6 , B^+ , iv_5^6 , $G.^6$, and iii_4^6 . A bracket below the bass line is labeled "Sequential Motion".

Example 2.43 Continuation of Phrase a', mm. 13-16

Section B (2+2+4) employs a different texture and figuration than section A. The first four measures of section B use a more active and flexible right-hand “wave” motion with *rubato* marking against a strict left-hand arpeggio motion, thus requiring the non-synchronized independence of hands typically found in Chopin’s nocturnes. The bass begins with the note $a^\#$ carried over from the second half of m. 16; however, the harmony at m. 17 is changed to the first inversion of a F-sharp dominant seventh chord, which is prolonged by passing motion in the bass through mm. 17 and 18. Measures 19-20 repeat this sequentially, prolonging $G^\#$ seventh chords. From mm. 21-24, the harmony returns to the dominant of B major by means of a traditional cadence: ii^7 (m.23) – V (m.24) (Ex.2.44).

17 18 19 20

pp *cresc.* *rubato* *f*

F#7 B4+ F#7 G#7 C# G#7

Dominant prolongation G #7 prolongation

22 23 24

rit. *f* *dim.*

first inv. I ii⁷ V

Example 2.44 Section B, mm. 17-20 and mm. 22-24

Section C (4+6+5) begins with a form of deceptive cadence. The bass in m. 25 arrives on the tonic B, but the harmony turns into V⁹ of IV. The register for the left-hand arpeggio expands over two octaves. The right-hand melody also expands upward, moving between the note c^{#'''} and d^{'''}. A tonic pedal point presents throughout section C, over which the melody pushes up to the resolution in m. 28. Following a repetition of this music at mm. 29-32, the cadence is extended by two measures (mm. 33-34) that repeat the music from mm. 31-32. The final cadence, approached through the last five measures, is somewhat weak because of fading dynamic level and the harmonic progression (all over a sustained double pedal B/F#): iv (m. 35) – ii⁷ (m. 36) – I (mm. 37-39) (Ex.2.45).

Example 2.45 Final Cadence, mm. 35-39

2. 12. PRELUDE NO.12 IN G SHARP MINOR

Like the B major prelude, the G-sharp minor prelude is a through-composed piece: A (a-a') – B (b) – C (c-c'). This prelude also utilizes a wide-ranging left-hand arpeggios. Furthermore, the two hands in section C work in contrary motion, similar to the soprano-tenor relationship in the B major prelude. For these reasons, one can consider these two preludes a pair. However, this piece is slower than the B major prelude and does not have such a prominent nocturne style. The G-sharp minor prelude demonstrates Scriabin's willingness to create rhythmic flexibility and hesitation through the independence of the hands, creating a dream-like sound with *sotto voce* sound quality and rhythmic conflict between hands.

The basic phrase unit is once again a four-measure unit. The a phrase of section A employs a shortened sentence with two statements of a 1-measure basic idea followed by 2 measures of a continuation. The bass rests on a G[#] pedal point. The right-hand melody also begins with the tonic, G[#]; from the downbeat of measure 1 to the end of measure 4 the harmonic progression is i⁷ – iv⁷ – VI⁶ – iv⁷. Phrase a' starts in the same manner as phrase a; however, the bass starts to move chromatically from G[#] - G* - A[#] to

initiate a modulation to D-sharp at the downbeat of m.8. The harmonic progression is shown in the following example (Ex.2. 46).

Example 2.46 Harmonic Progression, mm. 4-8

Section B is shorter than other sections, only four measures long. At the start the melody of the left hand is a fragment of phrase a, but quickly the left-hand melody changes to a descending chromatic progression, against which the right hand plays a chordal progression that leads to a cadence on F-sharp major (Ex.2.47). Converting F-sharp major into F-sharp minor, the pattern is repeated sequentially, leading to a cadence on E major at m. 12, which becomes the tonic chord for the next section.

Example 2.47 Melodic Motions, mm. 9-12

Section C comprises three four-measure phrases. It begins in the middle of m. 12, carrying over the E from the preceding cadence as a pedal point for three measures.

2. 13. PRELUDE NO. 13 IN G FLAT MAJOR

As presented in the first edition, Part III of Op. 11 starts with the G-flat major prelude. This prelude resembles a slow nocturne played *Lento*. The left hand is more active than the right-hand, unfolding a line that is frequently embellished by neighboring notes and non-chord tones that make this prelude harmonically complicated. The basic harmonic function of the first phrase is simple, moving from I to V⁷ between m. 1 and m. 8. But whenever one voice resolves to a chord tone, another voice introduces a non-chord tone to avoid a triadic sound. The use of parallel motion between the voices is another of the distinguishing features in this particular prelude (Ex.2.49).



Example 2.49 Parallel Major Sixths (or Diminished Sevenths), mm. 19-24

In this, Scriabin follows J. S. Bach's use of parallel major sixths, such as is found in various preludes and episodes within fugues in the *Well Tempered Clavier*. Chopin also employs this idea in his E minor prelude, Op. 28, No. 4, in which the left-hand accompaniment slides down with parallel motion (Ex.2.50).



Example 2.50 Left-Hand Parallel Motion in Chopin's E minor Prelude, mm. 1-4

The structure of this prelude can be understood as rounded binary form: A (mm. 1-18) - BA' (mm. 19-35). Phrase a (4+4) begins on tonic and ends on the dominant seventh chord in m. 8. In contrast to simple overall harmonic motion, the left-hand melody begins on the non-chord tone C as an embellishment. The first seven measures of phrase a' (4+2+4 or 4+6) correspond exactly to the first seven measures of phrase a, but the phrase is extended to a ten-measure phrase. Although phrase a' starts at a softer dynamic than phrase a, a *crescendo* takes the dynamic level to *f* by the climax in m. 18, where each note of the left-hand arpeggio is emphasized with accents. By the end of phrase a', the harmony has moved to the dominant of E-flat minor.

The second section comprises only six measures (phrase b) and is built from a string of descending parallel sixths; its rhythm is derived from the mazurka-like figure in the second half of phrase a'. In comparison to phrase a, the harmonic rhythm accelerates, with changes on every beat. Diminished or half-diminished seventh chords appear on most of the beats in phrase b. The ending of phrase b leads back into the reprise of phrase a by means of a classical half-cadence that resolves to the tonic on the downbeat of m. 25 by PAC (I 6/4 - V⁷ - I; Ex.2.51).

Example 2.51 PAC Motion, mm. 23-25

The reprise entails both compression and expansion of the original model (4+3+4). The first four measures of the reprise restate phrase a, but change it into a cadential phrase by moving up from f^{\flat} to g^{\flat} at m. 28. As in several of the previous preludes (nos. 7, 8, and 11), the melody at this point breaks up by splitting off and repeating the last two measures. The harmonic complexity of the left-hand melody resolves in the codetta (mm. 29-35). (Ex.2.52)

Example 2.52 Harmonic Resolution, mm. 25-35

2. 14. PRELUDE NO.14 IN E FLAT MINOR

This prelude is the first prelude with an unusual time signature, 15/8, a compound meter in which every measure comprises three groups of five eighth-notes, usually

divided into subgroups of 3+2, although at the start of the piece the even-numbered measures add extra emphasis. The end of the piece hammers home the five-note pulse in m. 23 by means of *fff* accents on every eighth note (Ex.2.53).



Example 2.53 Unusual Meter, mm. 1 and 23

This prelude resembles an etude in many respects: fast tempo, monothematic construction, octave doubling, and the interlocking of hands to create a continuous rhythmic drive all stem from the etude tradition.

The structure of this prelude can be construed in either of two ways. It can be considered either A-A'-coda (8+12+4 measures) or A-A'-A'' (8+10+6 measures), as the function of mm. 19-20 is ambiguous. Melodically and harmonically m. 19 marks a varied return to the opening idea (which supports a division into three sections), but the strongest cadence occurs at m. 21, which marks the start of a coda (Ex.2.54).

Example 2.54 Sectional Ambiguity, mm. 15-24

Section A follows the traditional sentence form: 2 (basic idea) + 2 (basic idea) + 4 (continuation). The basic idea is constructed from one measure of diatonic ascending motion and one measure of chromatic descending motion. The overall shape of the dynamics goes from *mf* in m. 1 to *ff* in m. 7 by means of two successive *crescendi* in mm. 5-6. At the end of the phrase, the dynamic immediately softens by use of *diminuendo*, which only lasts for half of m. 8. Harmonic changes occur on every dotted quarter beat, with the overall motion from *i* to *V* (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Rapid Harmonic Changes, mm. 1-8

m.1	m.2	m.3	m.4
i VI	VI It. ⁶ iv V	i VI	VI It. ⁶ iv V
m.5	m.6	m.7	m.8
V ⁷ vii VI V iv VI	V ⁷ vii VI V iv VI (in A ^b minor)	Gr. ⁶ i	V

Section A' presents the same melody as section A, but an octave higher and with a different conclusion because of the extension at the end, with mm. 15-16 representing an expansion of m. 7 and mm. 17-18 an expansion of m. 8. The left-hand technique in section A' becomes harder because of the extra work required in the middle voice.

From m. 17 to the end there are three dynamic waves, irrespective of how one segments the piece: *p-f* (m. 17), *mf-ff* (m. 18), *f-fff* (mm. 19-21-end). Measure 21 is the climax of the entire prelude, arriving by means of falling fifth cadence in the bass on the tonic with the loudest dynamic, *fff*.

2. 15. PRELUDE NO.15 IN D FLAT MAJOR

Scriabin applies a unique conception of structure, key and harmony in this D-flat major prelude. This prelude is a study for the development of legato double-note technique mainly in the left hand and mainly at the interval of a third. This piece is in rounded binary form: A (a+a') – B (b+a''). The first phrase (mm. 1-8) introduces the main idea, played only in the left hand. The right hand enters with a counter-melody in mm. 9-16 while the left hand repeats its pattern almost exactly.

Interestingly, there are no accidentals in this piece at all, no hint of a chromatic progression. Although written in D-flat major, the frequent doubling of notes a third below makes much of the music sound as if it were in B-flat Aeolian mode. The modal inflections in this piece are somewhat reminiscent of the “Promenade” from *Pictures at an Exhibition* (Ex.2.55) and link Scriabin to the Russian nationalist composers of an earlier generation like Balakirev and Mussorgsky who used modality as a way to assert Russian identity.

scale degree: 1 5 1 2 5 3 1 4 upper notes only

Scale degree: 6 5 1 2 5 3 2 5 3 1 2 6 5

Example 2.55 Modal Harmony, mm.1-2 and Promenade of Mussorgsky, mm. 1-4

The ambiguity arising from the under-placement of the third in this passage points also towards one of Scriabin’s later techniques, the superpositioning of thirds into a ‘supertertian’ structure, such as one finds in the seventh sonata, whose supertertian set is built up from C in the following manner: C – E – G – B^b – D^b – F[#] – A. From such supertertian structures it was but a short step to the so-called Mystic Chord built on the fourth (C – F[#] – B^b – E – A – D - G).

This prelude contains four phrases: a (mm. 1-8) – a’ (mm. 9-16) – b (mm. 17-22) – a’’ (mm. 23-28). The first phrase is constructed in the sentence structure 2+2+4. The harmony arrives on the dominant chord in m. 8, but it resolves not to I but to vi (Ex.2.56).

Because of the extensive presence of double-notes, it is hard to determine whether the last chord is a tonic or sub-median chord.

Example 2.56 Sentence Structure, mm. 1-8

Phrase a' begins with the same left-hand melody and adds a counter-melody in the right hand. Although the basic unit in the left hand has a kind of stop-and-start effect, the right-hand counter-melody causes the music to flow more continuously thanks to anticipations on the last eighth-notes of m. 10 and m. 12 (Ex.2.57).

Example 2.57 Continuous Right-Hand Melody, mm. 9-13

The beginning harmony of phrase a' is again gives the suggestion of B-flat Aeolian mode, which is carried from the end of the previous phrase; a' ends with a more

clear cadence to the tonic, although the resolution to the fifth scale degree in the right hand on a weak beat undercuts any sense of closure.

The left and right hands exchange their particular roles at the start of the b phrase (mm. 17-22). The section ends with a cadence gesture derived from m. 8 that, typical for this piece, is a deceptive cadence (V-vi). At this point phrase a'' briefly returns with the original texture for two measures (mm. 23-24) before extending into sustained chords, functioning as much as a coda as a reprise, bringing the piece to an end with the first rhythmically strong PAC in the tonic.

The overall mood of this piece is somewhat similar to Chopin's A minor prelude, Op. 28, No. 2. Both preludes start with a left-hand double-note pattern in *Lento* tempo as well as with a dynamic of *pp*. The right-hand joins a few measures later. Therefore, achieving a good balance between the double-notes in one hand and between the two hands is an important technical issue. The harmonic progression is also somewhat similar in both preludes, as both of them postpone a clear cadence until the very end of the piece. However, there is a distinctive difference. The D-flat major prelude of Scriabin is completely diatonic. In contrast, Chopin's prelude is exceptionally chromatic, especially in the middle voice of the left hand (Ex.2.58), and much more ambiguous in its definition of key.

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's A minor Prelude, measures 1-2 and 5-6. The score is written for piano in A minor, 4/4 time. The left hand plays a double-note pattern in chromatic motion, while the right hand plays a counter melody. Brackets and labels identify these parts: 'left-hand double note motion (rather in chromatic motion)' and 'right-hand counter melody'.

Example 2.58 Chopin's A minor Prelude, mm. 1-2 and 5-6

2. 16. PRELUDE NO.16 IN B FLAT MINOR

The unusual meter (5/8 + 4/8), *una corda* pedaling, and *sotto voce* dynamics create the Misterioso mood indicated in the performance instruction for Prelude No. 16 in B-flat minor; harmonic blurring contributes to this mood as well. Scriabin employs two different meters (5/8 and 4/8) that alternate, sometimes predictably, sometimes not (Table 2.8). In general, the metric structure in section B is more regular than it is in section A.

Table 2.8 Structure of Beats of the B-flat Minor Prelude

A		B		A'		Coda
a	a'	b		a	extension	
54545554	54545554	55545554	55545555	54545554	54545454	55544

(Numbers 5 and 4 indicate five eighth notes and four eighth notes in every measure)

This prelude consists of an *ostinato* rhythmic pattern played in octaves by both hands (alto and bass voices), while another melody featuring repeated notes and dotted rhythm is presented in the soprano and tenor voices (Ex.2.59), played by both hands at the start but taken over entirely by the right hand at the beginning of the reprise.

Musical score for the first four measures of the B-flat Minor Prelude. The score is in B-flat minor and features a complex 5/8 + 4/8 meter. It includes an ostinato pattern in octaves in the bass clef and a melodic line in the treble clef. Performance instructions include "Misterioso M.M. 160-168", "sotto voce", "p", and "con sord.". A diagram below the score shows voice leading within the ostinato pattern, with arrows indicating the flow of notes between measures 1, 2, 3, and 4. The measures are labeled with their respective meters: 5/8, 4/8, 5/8, and 4/8.

Example 2.59 Melodic and Rhythmic Features, and Voice Lines mm. 1-4

The opening of the piece is reminiscent of the famous third movement (*Funeral March*) of the B-flat minor sonata by Chopin because of the key, the low register, and the combination of dotted rhythms with an ostinato. Another Chopinesque feature is the way that the lower ostinato subsumes multiple voices within a single line (Ex.2.59).

The piece follows a traditional ternary form with coda: A (mm. 1-16) – B (mm. 17-32) - A' (mm. 33-48) – Coda (mm. 49-53). Section A contains two sentences. The first sentence moves from i to V, although the tonic in m. 1 is obscured by the movement of the lower ostinato, which immediately introduces non-chord tones; the top voice, however, clearly arpeggiates through the notes of the tonic triad: b^b in m. 1, d^b in m. 3 and f[♯] in m. 5. The harmony arrives on the dominant chord in m. 7, and this chord carries over to the beginning of next sentence, which moves from v to the relative major (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9 Harmonic Progression in the Second Sentence of Section A

m.9	m.10	m.11	m.12	m.13	m.14	m.15	m.16
v		V/iv		iv ⁶	v/III	III	

Section B is formed as a compound sentence: basic idea (mm. 17-20) – basic idea (mm. 21-24) – continuation (mm. 25-32). The harmonic progression is as follows (Table 2.10)

Table 2.10 Harmonic Progression, mm. 17-29

m. 17-18	m. 19-20	m. 21-22	m. 23	m. 25	m. 27	m. 29
VI	N	N/iv	V ⁷ /iv	iv	Fr. ⁶	V

Up to m. 30, the melodic patterns stay within the bar-line. However, at m. 31, the music starts to cross the bar-line. The music creates a certain degree of syncopation by grouping the eighth notes in a 3-2-3-2-3-3-3 pattern. The rhythmic irregularity of this section is supported by rather advanced harmonic language: the use of notes from the octatonic scale $c - d^b - e^b - e - g^b - g - a - b^b - c$ in mm. 27-28 and the whole-tone segment $a - c^b - d^b$ in measures 31-32 (Ex.2.60).

The image shows a musical score for measures 29-32. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the right hand and a bass clef staff for the left hand. The music is in 3/4 time. The right hand part features a melodic line with eighth notes, marked with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) dynamic. The left hand part features a dense accompaniment of eighth notes, marked with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) dynamic. The key signature has two flats. The score ends with a 'con sord.' (con sordina) marking. The number '29' is written above the first measure of the right hand staff.

Example 2.60 Grouping of the Eighth Notes, mm. 29-32

We should perhaps not put too much emphasis on the presence of octatonicism in this example, which shows Scriabin using the octatonic scale at the outset of his compositional career as a ‘special effect’ at a particular point in a piece, similar to the way that nineteenth-century composers had treated it from time to time. Even Chopin used the octatonic scale in a very limited way, for example, in the Mazurka in C-sharp minor, Op. 50, No. 3. Only in his later works would Scriabin employ the octatonic scale as a pervasive device, like the Mystic Chord, to free himself of traditional tonal functions.

The reprise employs typical features of a ‘heroic’ return: restatement of the main idea in a higher register than at the beginning and octave doubling of the lower ostinato in the left hand (which forces the right hand to take over the both voices of the repeated-note figure). However, the combination of *una corda* pedaling with an *ff* dynamic once again creates a mysterious mood. The two eight-measure phrases in the reprise have

different harmonic goals. The first phrase moves from i towards the Neapolitan, C-flat major. The second phrase, marked *p*, begins on the Neapolitan chord and moves to the dominant.

The coda (mm. 49-53) resolves the rhythmic complexity by employing a consistent 3+2 five-beat pattern. The harmony is stable in the tonic, with a final arpeggiation of the dotted-rhythm line through the notes of the tonic triad. However, the persistence of the lower-voice ostinato continues to blend non-chords tones against the tonic until the second half of m. 52. The coda begins quietly and fades away with a final dynamic marking of *ppp*.

2. 17. PRELUDE NO.17 IN A FLAT MAJOR

The A-flat major prelude is the shortest prelude in Op. 11, at twelve measures the same length as the C minor prelude from Op. 28 by Chopin. Both preludes also share the same form: A - B - B. Other Chopinesque features of the A-flat major prelude include its dance-like character and its use of rapid chromatic progressions similar to those found in so-called 'harmonic parentheses' in Chopin's work. The use of 3/2 meter creates a bit of rhythmic tension; although Scriabin does not mark two time signatures in this piece, alternation between three groups of two quarter notes and two groups of three quarter notes is an important feature in this prelude (Some editions mark this piece as 6/4.). For such a short piece Scriabin marks a surprisingly high number of performance indications to require tempo flexibility: within the first two measures, he calls for *accelerando*, *ritardando*, and *a tempo*, and mm. 3-4 repeat this pattern.

This prelude is formed of three phrases: a (mm. 1-4) – b (mm. 5-8) – b' (mm. 9-12). The basic melodic unit is a two-measure unit. The first of these progresses from I

(6/4) to V to I. The second unit repeats this a third below, in F minor. The two-measure opening gesture of phrase a is converted into a closing gesture at the end of both phrase b and b' (Ex.2.61).

The image displays a musical score for Example 2.61, consisting of eight measures. The score is divided into two parts: measures 1-4 and measures 5-8. The first part (measures 1-4) shows a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The second part (measures 5-8) shows a similar melodic and bass line. Annotations include:

- Measures 1-4 are labeled with numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- Measures 5-8 are labeled with numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8.
- Measure 5 is labeled with the chord symbol IV.
- Measure 6 is labeled with the chord symbol iv.
- Measure 7 is labeled with the chord symbol I⁶.
- Measure 8 is labeled with the chord symbol ii⁷.
- An arrow labeled "opening gesture" points to the beginning of measure 5.
- An arrow labeled "voice-leading" points to the transition between measures 6 and 7.
- An arrow labeled "another voice-leading" points to the transition between measures 7 and 8.
- An arrow labeled "closing gesture" points to the end of measure 8.

Example 2.61 Converting Gestures, Harmonic Progression and Voice Lines, mm. 1-8

The overall harmonic progression of the whole piece is a cadential progression: I-vi (mm. 1-4) – IV- ii^o (mm. 5-6) – I - V - I (mm. 7-8); mm. 9-12 repeat the progression of mm. 5-8. This simple harmonic plan is embellished, however, by rapid chromatic harmonic progressions in mm. 1, 3, 7, and 11 (Ex.2.62) that resemble Chopin's harmonic parentheses, for example like those found in the B-flat major prelude, Op. 28, No. 21 (Ex.2.63).

harmonic parenthesis

Example 2.62 Rapid Chromatic Harmonic Progression, mm. 1-2

Example 2.63 Harmonic Parenthesis in Prelude Op. 28, No. 21 by Chopin, mm. 13-16

The harmonic progression in the beginning two measures of phrase b and b' is a IV – iv - I⁶ -ii⁷ progression that supports a descending middle-voice line in the right-hand thumb (Ex.2.64).

Example 2.64 Harmonic Progression of Beginning of Phrase b, mm. 5-6

2. 18. PRELUDE NO. 18 IN F MINOR

The F minor prelude is one of the most technically demanding preludes in the entire set because of the two-against-three rhythmic conflicts in *Allegro agitato* tempo. While one hand presents fast triplet rhythm, the other hand has a duplet rhythm. The main technical feature of this etude-like prelude is fast octave playing required of both hands. Furthermore, large leaps in a fast tempo, mainly occurring in the left hand, make this piece even more challenging (Ex.2.65). This prelude is colored by its prominent use augmented harmonies, and it differs from the others by employing a faster tempo marking (*Presto*) in the coda.

The image shows the first four measures of the F minor prelude. The score is written for piano in F minor, 2/4 time, with a tempo marking of 'Allegro agitato M.M. ♩ = 138'. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords on the off-beat of every measure, while the left hand (bass clef) plays consistent triplet rhythms in octaves. The first two measures are marked with '1' and '2' above the right hand, and the last two with '3' and '4'. Below the first two measures, there are markings 'III+' under the left hand, indicating augmented harmonies.

Example 2.65 Overall Features, mm. 1-4

The prelude is in ternary form: A (mm. 1-16) – B (mm. 17-30) – A' (mm. 31-41) – Coda (mm. 42-52). The basic phrase unit is an eight-measure period: a four-measure antecedent is followed by a four-measure consequent. Section A consists of two such periods. In the first period (a) the right hand plays chords on the off-beat of every measure, while the left hand presents consistent triplet rhythms in octaves. The antecedent phrase has ascending motion in the right hand and the consequent has a descending motion with a prolonged *diminuendo*. In the second period (a') the right-hand part grows more fluid with a more continuous melody that fills in the spaces

between the off-beat chords. Harmonically, the first period suggests F minor but avoids any presentation of the tonic triad through the use of augmented chords and non-tonic harmonizations of the pitch F; it ends on a secondary dominant (V/V) in m. 8. The second period (a') does end with a PAC in tonic (Table 2.11).

Table 2.11 Harmonic Progression, mm. 1-16

pickup	m. 1	m. 2	m. 3	m. 4
III ⁺	iv ⁷ III ⁺	iv ⁷ vii ^{♭6}	iv ⁷ ii ^{♭7}	V ⁷ vii [♭] / _{vi}
	m. 5	m. 6	m. 7	m. 8
	vi ^{♭7} It. ⁶	iv ⁹ I ⁶ ₄	Gr. ⁶ i ⁶ ₄	V/V
	m. 9	m. 10	m. 11	m. 12
(Same Harmonic Progression as mm.1-4)				
	m. 13	m. 14	m. 15	m. 16
	vi ^{♭7} It. ⁶	iv ⁹ I ⁶ ₄	Gr. ⁶ V	i

In section B (mm. 17-30) the hands exchange the two types of motion in two-measure units: the first two measures (mm. 17-18) present the triplet rhythm in the right hand and the off-beat melody in the left hand, and then the hands exchange in the following two measures (mm. 19-20). Measures 21-24 repeat this pattern a minor third higher. Measures 25-30 are an extension of mm. 23-24. The harmonies change slowly in the first part of the middle section, with cadences every two measures, but the harmonic rhythm speeds up over a rising bass line that ascends stepwise from G^b to D^b between m. 23 and m. 29 as the music builds tension in anticipation of the return of the A section (Table 2.12).

Table 2.12 Harmonic Progression, mm. 16-30

m.16	m.17	m.18	m.19	m.20	m.21	m.22	m.23
f	-----	D ^b		A ^b	-----	F ^b	
m.24	m.25	m.26	m.27	m.28	m.29	m.30	
C ^b	A ^b /D ^b	-----	B ^b /	-----	B ^b /	-----	It. ⁶ C(V/f)

The reprise (mm. 31-41) uses the version of the opening melody as presented in the second period of section A, now in *ff* dynamic. Measure 35 is a variation of mm. 13-14. Measure 37 is a variation of m. 15, now with wider leaping patterns in the left-hand octaves. Measures 38-39 are an extension. From m. 35 to the end of the reprise, Scriabin calls for the tempo to speed up with two successive *accelerandi* markings taking the place of the *rubato* that occurs in m. 12. The harmonic progression in the reprise is the same as phrase a' up to m. 37. Measures 37-40 prolong the dominant chord by means of upper and lower neighbor-note motion. A PAC at measure 41 brings the reprise to a close.

The coda (mm. 42-52) begins right after the cadence. This coda differs from those in the previous preludes. First of all, the coda starts in *presto* tempo, presumably an even faster tempo than that attained through the two *accelerandi* in the reprise. Second, the material of coda comes not from the opening phrase, but from the cadential motion of phrase b, with the hands exchanging roles every two measures up to m. 49 (Ex.2.66). The piece ends with both hands carrying a 2-1 cadential pattern in *fff* octaves (with *crescendo*) through a six-octave range.

Example 2.66 Coda Treatment, mm. 41-52

The regularity in the structure, clarity in form, and octave doubling technique can be related to Chopin's G minor prelude, Op. 28, No. 22 (Ex.2.67). The octave technique and the prominence of the augmented triad are also reminiscent of Liszt in general, and the formal strategy of tacking on an even faster coda at the end of a piece recalls specifically the *Transcendental Etude* in F minor.

Example 2.67 Chopin's G minor Prelude Op. 28, No. 22, mm. 1-3

2. 19. PRELUDE NO.19 IN E FLAT MAJOR

At first glance it is easy to recognize that the E-flat major prelude is very complicated as the two hands are out of synchronization with each other from the outset. The left hand continuously presents quintuplets except for mm. 22-24, and the quintuplet patterns start on the last quintuplet-sixteenth of each measure. Against this, the right hand presents varying rhythmic figures, such as duplets, triplets and quintuplets. The rhythmic idea of this prelude seems to originate in Chopin's legendary *rubato* style of playing requiring rhythmic independence of the hands, which finds written form in a number of his nocturnes. Scriabin has seemingly exaggerated this Chopinesque device in this piece. The change of color with every statement of the melody is another Chopinesque feature.

The E-flat major prelude follows ternary form again: A (mm. 1-8) – B (b: mm. 9-24) – A' (mm. 25-32) – Coda (mm. 33-41). This prelude is the first piece in the set of Op. 11 to indicate a change of key through a change of key signature, changing to A major at measures 13-15, reflective of the modulatory presentation of the theme, which moves from E^b in the first section to C^b and A in the second section, and back to E^b in section A' and coda. Section A contains one eight-measure phrase (2+2+2+1+1). The basic motion of the melody is a succession of descending and ascending motions in the right hand, while the left hand presents arpeggiated motion in one-bar units that rise over a wide range over an E^b pedal point. Scriabin also indicates different dynamic levels between the hands: the left-hand quintuplets are to be played *p*, whereas the right-hand melodies are marked *f*. The middle voice in the thumb of the left hand ascends (a^b - b^b - c' - d') over the E^b pedal point. In section B, this middle voice but it returns in the reprise. Scriabin employs innovative harmony in this prelude. Although both the

melody and bass start on the tonic and although the first phrase sustains a tonic pedal point, there is no strong presentation of tonic harmony at the start of the piece; instead the opening harmonies combine sub-dominant, super-tonic, and tonic together. This complex chord suggests as well a supertertian structure of the type discussed earlier in conjunction with the D-flat major Prelude. In early Scriabin, therefore, certain harmonies are ambiguous, understandable both in terms of traditional functions but also in terms of the newer intervallic structures that would come to dominate his later music.

Section B begins with a variant of phrase a' a third degree higher than the melody of phrase a, hinting at C^b major in the right hand. The harmony becomes simpler and, in contrast to phrase a, the bass starts to move away from E^b in the second phrase, moving chromatically in mm. 11-17: E^b (mm. 9-10) – E^{bb} (m. 11) – D^b (m. 12) – C[#] (m. 13-14: enharmonic modulation) – C (m. 15) – C^b (m. 16) – B^b (m. 17). The first half of m. 17 is a point of sectional overlap, functioning as a pivot between the first and second halves of section B (Ex.2.68). The harmony arrives by means of half cadence on the dominant chord of E-flat major, the goal of the bass descent described.

overlapping point

15 16 17

Gr.⁶ (C^b E^b G^b A) B^b (V of E flat major)

Example 2.68 Overlapped Point, mm. 15-17

The second half of section B (mm. 17-24) can be understood as a dominant prolongation, built from two four-measure phrases that exchange thematic material

between the hands. In measures 17-20 the original texture obtains; in measures 21-24 the quintuplets move to the right hand while the left hand takes and develops the descending motion derived from m. 1. As in many other examples, the reprise (mm. 25-32) is treated heroically, with *ff* dynamic, octave doubling and extra counterpoint in the right hand and an octave reinforcement of the first note in the bass. The ascending middle voice in the left-hand thumb comes back. Similar to the beginning of phrase a, an E^b pedal point holds until the end and the harmony is complex until it clarified with a progression from ii⁷/IV – IV⁶₄ – V – I in mm. 29-32, a diatonic clarification of the chromatic cadence that earlier took place at measures 7-8.

The coda (mm. 33-41) in this prelude is like many others in the set, drawing its material from section A' by repeating and liquidating the final cadence through a process that shortens the phrase units from 4 to 2 to 1. The harmonies move V⁷ – I over a tonic pedal point in mm. 35-41, as the melody emphasizes and repeats the descent from the third to the tonic, with and without passing motion through scale degree 2 (Ex.2.69).

Example 2.69 Coda, mm. 33-41

2. 20. PRELUDE NO.20 IN C MINOR

The C minor prelude is a very interesting piece harmonically. Like Chopin's prelude No. 2 in A minor, this prelude does not effect cadential motion until the very end of the piece, but it pushes the concept of tonic avoidance even further. The whole piece is composed as if it were in F minor, and only in the final plagal cadence does C minor come close to feeling like the tonic. The harmony wanders between subdominant and dominant (sometimes secondary dominant). Moreover, some of the chord progressions, especially the progression $ii^7 - V$, evoke a Wagnerian sense of chord progression. Furthermore, the first beat of m. 2 contains the sound of Wagner's *Tristan* chord, with the presentation of the chord $F-B-E^b-A^b$, enharmonically equivalent to Wagner's $F-B-D^\#-G^\#$ (Ex. 2.70).

1 2 3 4

Appassionato M.M. ♩ = 116

iv^6 V V i^6 V^7/V

$F-B-E^b-A^b = F-B-D^\#-G^\#$

Example 2.70 Wagnerian Sense of Chord Progression, mm. 1-4

In general, both hands play triplet rhythms with octave-doubled figures throughout the whole piece. Mirroring the right-hand idea in phrase a of the preceding E-flat major prelude, the right hand of the C minor prelude combines descending and ascending motion to complete the basic phrase. Scriabin spreads the chord progressions in both hands through a wide range of the keyboard.

The C minor prelude, comprising only twenty two measures, is structured in three sections: A (4+4) – B (2+2) – A' [or C] (4+3+3). The basic melodic unit is the four-measure phrase. Both of the first two phrases start on the first inversion of the subdominant in m. 1 and m. 5. The first phrase ends on V^7 of G minor. The overall harmonic motion of the first phrase is $iv - V/V$. The second phrase starts again in F minor and moves to V/iv in m. 8. As mentioned earlier, the way that the music dances around the tonic by invoking subdominant and dominant functions is reminiscent of Wagner's harmonic practice.

Section B, only four measures long, reinforces the F minor feeling of the piece even more. The basic phrase unit of this section is a two-measure unit in descending motion, derived from m. 1 (Ex.2.71). This section also starts on iv , and it ends on the third inversion of VI^7 (A-flat seventh chord with G-flat in the bass).

Example 2.71 A, mm. 1-2 and B, mm. 9-10

The third section, starting at m. 13, can be understood either as a reprise (A') or as new music (C). Melodically, the section starts as if it is as reprise, with the opening melody now in the left hand: the falling motion of mm. 1-2 come back in mm. 13-14, and the right-hand ascending motion of m. 3-4 reappears in the left hand at m. 15. However, the reprise is not a full reprise, and the music is now on the dominant of C minor, rather than the subdominant. This dominant almost achieves a PAC in C minor at the

downbeat of m. 17, but the cadence is avoided by reinterpreting C as the root of a dominant ninth chord of F minor. In m. 17, the right hand takes over the melody, and rhythmic compression starts to signal the approach of the end. Finally the C minor tonic triad appears in m. 21, the second-to-last measure of this entire piece. Even here, the cadential progression is not a PAC, but a plagal cadence, moving from an F minor chord with an added E^b in the left hand to the long-delayed tonic chord.

If one thinks of Op. 11 as a work that is to be performed as a complete cycle, the preludes nos. 18, 19 and 20 mark a climatic point in the entire set. The technical demands, dynamics, and tempo indications (*Allegro agitato* in No. 18, *Affettuoso* in No. 19, and *Appassionato* in No. 20) make these three pieces the high point of the cycle.

2. 21. PRELUDE NO.21 IN B FLAT MAJOR

The mood suddenly changes from the passion of the C minor prelude to a nocturne-like calm in the B-flat major prelude. This mood is created by a simple two-voice texture that contrasts flowing left-hand patterns that recall traditional nocturne basses with more sustained melodic motion in the right hand. In a certain sense, the piece has etude value for the left hand, which must present long legato lines without creating unwanted accents when the hand is required to negotiate large leaps (Ex.2.72).



Example 2.72 Overall Features, mm. 1-4

Melodic momentum is frequently interrupted by rests between the phrases and by means of *ritardando* markings. The rhythm of the piece is also made irregular by the fact that it alternates between three different time signatures, 3/4, 5/4 and 6/4, as the meter frequently changes from measure to measure. The following table summarizes the succession of meter changes over the course of the piece, which falls into a two-part form (Table 2.13).

Table 2.13 Meter Changes

A (mm.1-12)			A' (mm.13-26)			
a	a'	b	a	a'	b	extension
3536 ³⁴	3536	5555	3536	3536	5555	63

Even though Scriabin consistently uses four-measure phrase units, because of the irregularity and asymmetry of the beat count, the piece seems to be in a more modern style, at least rhythmically, a trend that can be observed in a number of the later pieces of Op. 11. Also, even though the texture looks quite simple, the harmony is fairly complex because the music does not settle in one key. The first section stays away from the tonic triad. The second section starts with a hint of a cadence, but moves toward the sub-dominant and only establishes the tonic triad at the b phrase of A' in m. 21.

The structure of this prelude is different from that of the previous preludes, basically consisting of two A sections: A (mm. 1-12) and A' (mm. 13-26). Even though the first measure is notated as a complete measure, this prelude sounds like it begins with an incomplete measure because the left-hand melody starts on a weak beat. Both voices begin with the note B^b (but not at the same time) and the bass holds B^b as a pedal point. However, the harmony and melody tend to make the B^b sound like the dominant

³⁴ The number indicates the numbers of quarter notes in one measure.

of E-flat major. Phrase a' (from m. 5) is an exact transposition of phrase a into the sub-dominant key (E-flat major) up until m. 8 (Ex.2.73), which affects a different cadence than m. 4. At the end of phrase a, the harmony arrives on a B-flat seventh chord that resolves into the key of E-flat major. In contrast, the E-flat seventh chord in m. 8 is reinterpreted as a Fr.⁶ chord, which resolves to D as the fifth of a second-inversion G minor triad at the start of section B.

The image shows a musical score for Example 2.73, consisting of two systems of music. The first system (measures 1-4) is in 3/4 time and ends with a ritardando. The second system (measures 5-8) is in 3/4 time, marked 'a tempo', and also ends with a ritardando. Harmonic analysis labels are provided below the notes: B^b: IV (measures 5-6), V (measure 7), I (measure 8), and Fr.⁶ (measure 8). A '+7' label is also present above measure 8.

Example 2.73 Exact Transposition to Sub-Dominant Area, mm. 1-8

Measures 9-12 present a melody in a fixed time signature of 5/4. The right-hand melody becomes longer and more active in these four measures. The D pedal point supports an alternation between G minor (m. 9 and m. 11) and D minor (m. 10 and m. 12). The phrase ends on dominant of the original key, B-flat major in m. 12.

Phrases a and a' in section A' (mm. 13-26) repeat the corresponding phrases of section A, but for the conclusion of phrase a' (m. 20). The last chord of phrase a' moves up from E-flat to E-natural and builds a G-flat Gr.⁶ chord on this note instead of the Fr.⁶ chord over E-flat that appeared in m. 8. Thanks to the alteration at the end of m.

20, the pedal point of phrase b changes from d to f, which is attained by means of chromatic ascent from e^b (the second eighth note of m. 20) – e' (the fourth quarter note of m. 20, Gr.⁶)- f' (the second eighth note of m. 21). F becomes a dominant pedal and brings the tonic B-flat into focus. At the end of m. 24 the bass moves off f to inaugurate a cadential progression that leads to the final cadence on the downbeat of m. 26 (Table 2.14).

Table 2.14 Harmonic Progression of Phrase b of Section A', mm. 21-26

m. 21	m. 22	m. 23	m. 24		m. 25	m. 26
I / B ^b	ii	V ⁹	V ⁷	vii ^o /vi	V ⁷ /ii	ii V I

2. 22. PRELUDE NO. 22 IN G MINOR

Linear progression is one of the main characteristics of the G minor prelude. As in Prelude No. 4 in E minor, the G minor prelude weaves a contrapuntal texture from four different voices. This piece relies extensively on descending sequential motion, often with parallel motion between the voices. These are features that we have seen before in the E major prelude, No. 9, but the G minor prelude emphasizes descending motion more than other preludes (Ex.2.74).



Example 2.74 Descending Motions, mm. 1-4 and E minor Prelude, mm. 1-3

Like several of the other pieces in Op. 11, this prelude demonstrates several mazurka characteristics, such as triple meter, the *rubato* marking as a performance indication at the start of the piece, and, most obviously, certain fundamental rhythmic gestures, especially in the left hand. On the large scale, the basic harmonic progression is simple. As is the case with many of the later preludes in the set, however, the piece generally avoids clear cadences to the tonic, and because of local dissonances created by contrapuntal activities in a slow tempo, the piece does not sound simple.

The G minor prelude is shaped as a binary form with coda: A (mm. 1-8) – A' (mm. 9-20) – Coda (mm. 21-25). The theme type of section A is a sentence: 2+2+4. The overall gesture of the melody in section A is four measures of descending motion followed by four measures of ascending motion. All the voices in the basic idea move in similar motion. For example, in mm. 1-4 the soprano voice descends from d'' to f[#]', the bass voice descends from the note g to B, the alto voice also follows this, descending from the note b^b' to c', and the tenor voice also descends, but not as much. In the continuation, the top voice ascends from g' to d''. The final note d'' of the continuation is the same note on which the sentence began. The harmony at the start of the piece

contains a tonic triad in the soprano, alto and bass voices, but Scriabin adds the sixth, E^b, in the tenor voice to suggest another possibility, an E^{b7} in first inversion (VI⁶₅). The first four measures move from this seventh chord toward the dominant, which is resolved at the start of the continuation with a V⁷ of C minor (iv). The continuation resolves to the sub-dominant at m. 7 before reaching a half-cadence on the dominant in m. 8 (Table 2.15). Before it can resolve to the tonic, D major is converted into D minor on the last beat of m. 8.

Table 2.15 Harmonic Progression of Continuation, mm. 5-8

m.5	m.6	m.7	m.8
V ⁷ / C _m i / C _m	Fr. ⁶ / C _m vii ^{o7} / C _m	i V	i / C _m V / G _m i / D _m

Section A' (mm. 9-20) starts in D minor and repeats the opening progression at the lower dominant, moving from D minor with added sixth at m. 9 to a half-cadence on the dominant of D minor at m. 12. The exact correspondence with the opening breaks in the second beat of m. 14, in the middle of the continuation. Measures 15-16 are a sequential statement of mm. 13-14, and mm. 17-20 extend the section by repeating a mazurka-like idea in the bass, which alternates between d and e^b. All in all, the bass rises chromatically from F[#] to e^b between m. 13 and m. 20 (Ex.2.75).

The image shows a musical score for measures 13 to 17. The bass line is circled and includes markings for 'accel.' and 'cresc.'. The notes in the bass line are: m. 13: F#, G, A, Bb; m. 14: C, D, Eb, F; m. 15: G, Ab, Bb, C; m. 16: D, Eb, F, G; m. 17: Ab, Bb, C, D.

Example 2.75 Left-Hand Motion, mm. 13-17

The right hand also ascends, preparing the climax of the piece with ascending motion from g' to c[#]'' in mm. 15-20 coordinated with a series of *accelerandi*. The harmonic progression of the continuation in section A' (mm. 13-16) is thus different from section A's continuation, moving mostly along the circle of fifths: from A7 (m. 12) to D7 (m. 14) to g (m. 15) to G7 (m. 16) to C minor (m. 17-18) and from there chromatically to a Fr.⁶ chord with fermata over the note e^b in the bass (m. 20), the climax of the piece. The Fr.⁶ chord in the last measure of section A' resolves to the second inversion of tonic at the beginning of the coda. The coda borrows its melodic idea from the first measure of section A. The one-measure basic idea repeats a third lower in m. 22 and arrives on a *fermata* iv⁶ chord in m. 23. At long last, a clear cadence to G minor comes at the very end of the piece with a V – i progression.

2. 23. PRELUDE NO. 23 IN F MAJOR

The F major prelude is the most Chopinesque prelude in the Op. 11, as it is reminiscent of Chopin's own F major prelude, Op. 28, No. 23, sharing with it clear, diatonic harmony, and fast arpeggiated melody in one hand while the other hand supports with a chordal progression (Ex.2.76). The piece also resembles Chopin's Etude, op. 10, no. 8, also in F major.



Scriabin's F major Prelude



Chopin's F major Prelude

Example 2.76 F Major Preludes by Scriabin and Chopin, mm. 1-4

Of course, there are also differences. As in a number of other preludes, there is an underlying mazurka character in this piece, particularly in the left-hand patterns at m. 1 and m. 5, which put a characteristic dotted rhythm on the downbeat. The notation of the left-hand rhythm changes in section B (m. 9, m. 11, m. 13, m. 17, m. 19, m. 21), where the rhythm is written as a triplet (quarter note plus eighth note). Are these two passages to be played differently? According to editors of the Henle edition, both passages should be played with triplet rhythm, because “even though Scriabin notated a dotted rhythm in his autograph, he puts the sixteenth note beneath the triplet of the right hand³⁵.” But even if Scriabin desired a triplet realization, I believe that he marked the opening rhythm in the left-hand as a dotted rhythm to point out the mazurka character of the piece, even if in *Vivo* tempo the pattern would have to be accommodated to the right-hand triplet subdivision of the beat (Ex.2.77).

³⁵ Alexander Skrjabin, *24 Preludes Opus 11*, ed. Valentina Rubcova and Michael Schneidt, 43 (Munich: Henle, 1996).



Example 2.77 Different Notation of the Left-Hand, mm. 1-2 and 9-10

Another mazurka-like characteristic is the frequent repetition of short melodic ideas³⁶. Chopin's A-flat major mazurka Op. 7, No. 4, resembles the F major prelude in a number of respects, although in this piece the principal rhythmic characteristics appear mainly in the right hand (Ex.2.78).



Example 2.78 Chopin's Mazurka Op. 7, No. 4, mm. 1-4

The structure of this prelude is another version of rounded binary form, one with a written-out repetition of the second strain: A (mm. 1-8) – BA (mm. 9-16) – BA' (mm. 17-24) – Coda (mm. 25-26). The phrase structure is traditional, with regular eight-measure phrases: aa'(4+4) – bb'a'' (2+2+4) – bb'a'' (2+2+4) – coda. Phrase a is constructed as a period: four-measure antecedent (I – V) and a four-measure consequent (I - iii). Section BA starts in m. 9 and contains more chromatic notes than section A. The harmony moves within the circle of fifths: A (m. 9) – D (m. 10) – G (m. 11) – C (m. 12) – F (mm. 13-16). The melodic structure of this section is a sentence: two-measure

³⁶ The melodic idea from mm.1-2 occurs nine times in a twenty-six measure piece.

basic idea (mm. 9-10) – two-measure basic idea (mm. 11-12) – four-measure continuation (mm. 13-16). The second statement of the basic idea is a sequential repetition of the first a major second lower. The four-measure antecedent of section A is converted in the four measure continuation of section BA, leading to a PAC on the third beat of m. 16 (Ex.2.79).

The image shows a musical score for Example 2.79, consisting of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 9 to 12, with the first two measures (9-10) and the next two (11-12) both labeled "basic idea". The second system covers measures 13 to 16, with the entire four-measure phrase labeled "continuation". A bracket under measures 13 and 14 of the second system is labeled "exactly same as mm. 1-2". The score concludes in measure 16 with a V⁷ chord in the bass clef and a final I chord in the treble clef.

Example 2.79 Converted Phrase, mm. 9-16

Section BA' (mm. 17-24) is the exact repetition of mm. 9-16 except that the PAC in m. 16 is replaced by a deceptive cadence (V-vi) in m. 24, which prompts a two-measure extension to resolve the piece with clear cadential motion from iii to V⁷ to I.

2. 24. PRELUDE NO. 24 IN D MINOR

The last prelude of Op. 11, the D minor prelude, assembles all of Scriabin's characteristics of rhythm, harmony, and piano technique. Repeated chords constitute the main technical feature of this prelude. In terms of rhythm, the music alternates between two different meters, 6/8 and 5/8 (Ex.2.80), and duple subdivisions in one hand

clash with triple subdivisions in the other, with periodic synchronization occurring on the last two eighth notes of every other measure.

rhythmic resolution in even measures

Example 2.80 Main Features of the D minor Prelude, mm. 1-4

The rhythmic tension is ultimately resolved in the last five measures of the piece, which employ only 6/8 meter, and especially in the last three measures (mm. 35-37), which eliminate the antagonistic rhythms between the hands.

The D minor prelude comprises three sections in ternary form: A (mm. 1-16) – B (mm. 17-26) – A' (mm. 27-37). Section A presents two eight-measure phrases: phrase a (mm. 1-8) and phrase a' (mm. 9-16). Although the basic phrase unit is a two-measure unit, because of the continuous motion in short note values, momentum carries through the longer phrase until the right hand rests; this effectively divides the two eight-measure phrases of section A into 6 + 2, a division that is reinforced by moving the triplets into the left hand at mm. 7-8 and mm. 15-16. If anything, section B is even more continuous, as there is no break in the chord repetitions until the last eighth note of m. 26. The opening section moves overall from D minor to the relative major, F major, with fairly clear harmonic functions throughout, although once again the music has its share of dissonance, like the suspension in mm. 1-2 and the augmented harmony in mm. 3-4.

The harmonic progression of phrase a is d (m. 1) – III⁺/d (m. 3) – d (m. 5) – d (m. 8), and the progression in phrase a' is B^b (m. 9) – V/F (m. 11) – F (m. 13) – F (m. 16).

In general, the last two pieces of Op. 11, the F major prelude and the D minor prelude, speak a more traditional harmonic language, with a clearer sense of key in comparison to many other of the preludes; perhaps this reflects their placement at the end of the set, as a kind of resolution of the entire opus. Harmonic changes do not occur on every chord, but every two measures except for the cadential units at the ends of the phrases, for instance, mm. 7-8, 15-16, and 33-34, where the harmony changes more quickly as the hands move apart in contrary motion toward the cadence (Ex.2.81).

Dm: VI V iv III v i FM: vi V IV iii v i

Example 2.81 Harmonic Progression in Cadential Units, mm. 7-8 and 15-16

The phrase structure of section B is 2+2+2+1+1+1+1. The section begins with the dominant of F major and at first moves sequentially towards G minor. From m. 19, a long *crescendo* builds towards the reprise, and in the closing measures of Section B, rising chromatic motion in the bass (g – g[#] – a) leads to the dominant of D minor in m. 25. The reprise is the climax of this piece, bringing back the main idea *ff* with octave doubling in the left hand and a thicker texture and higher register in the right. The phrase structure is extended from the original 6+2 into 6+5. The last five measures resolve the harmony powerfully to D minor by PAC and resolve the rhythmic tensions in a certain sense by staying in 6/8 meter throughout.

Thanks to its fast tempo, loud dynamic and full use of the piano's range, the D minor prelude makes a brilliant conclusion for the entire set. Furthermore, the harmonic and rhythmic resolutions at the end seem fitting for a concluding piece.

2. 25. POSTLUDE

Students of Scriabin's Op. 11 must confront the same question as faces those who deal with Chopin's Op. 28: does the set constitute a cycle or merely a collection of individual pieces of similar dimensions and construction arranged in a systematic tonal order? There is no written evidence from Scriabin to suggest that he thought of Op. 11 as a unified cycle, and we know that he composed the pieces over a fairly wide span of time. Yet, certain features suggest that Op. 11 can be thought of and performed as a cycle, particularly the way in which a climax in terms of expression and complexity occurs in Nos. 18, 19, and 20, about three-quarters of the way through the set. These pieces mark a climax because of their fast tempos, loud dynamics, and difficult harmonic, rhythmic and pianistic techniques. In the last two pieces, however, the harmonic language becomes clear with progressions that are relatively straightforward. This feature seems to suggest a resolution of sorts at the end of the set. Lastly, the last piece of the set, No. 24 in D minor, is a heroic piece that makes an effective conclusion. Thus, even though each prelude from Op. 11 can be performed as a single piece or, as is common, short groupings of a selected few of them, it is feasible and indeed satisfying from both analytical and performance perspectives to regard the set as a cycle.

Chapter 3 Conclusion

Like many Russian composers of his time, Scriabin was certainly influenced by Chopin, whose music had spread to Russian society since the late 1820s and who was embraced by Russians as an important role model. As a young composer, it is therefore no surprise that Scriabin followed Chopin in a number of ways, for instance, composing in the same genres as Chopin, such as etudes, nocturnes, mazurkas, waltzes, and preludes. As we have seen, Scriabin's Preludes, Op. 11, share many features with Chopin's Op. 28. Both composers treated the prelude as an independent genre. Both sets of preludes follow the same key scheme, alternating between relative major and minor keys up the circle of fifths. For both composers, the prelude is a miniature piece that expresses only one character or idea. Both Chopin's Op. 28 and Scriabin's Op. 11 are compilations of various styles and genres, such as nocturne, waltz, and, most especially, the etude. Like Chopin, Scriabin tends to employ traditional formal structures like ternary or binary form built from regular four-measure phrase units. Scriabin's harmony occasionally reflects such Chopinesque touches as the cadential progression from $\text{II}^7 - \text{I}$, and harmonic parentheses. Finally, just as Chopin's Preludes, Op. 28 occupy a grey zone between being a collection of individual pieces and a cycle, it is similarly ambiguous whether Scriabin's set of preludes are meant to be performed as a cycle or not, although the way that the set ends with resolutions of harmonic and rhythmic complexity in the final pieces and a heroic piece at the very end suggests that the Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 11 can be successfully performed as a cycle.

In these early pieces, however, Scriabin did not *only* follow Chopin. On the one hand, one can see that he was also influenced by other, more recent composers. For

instance, the treatment of codas or endings and some of his harmonic progressions suggest more strongly the influence of Liszt and Wagner. On the other hand, Scriabin also begins to reveal his own, original compositional style in a number of ways, especially in rhythmic treatment, harmonic language and piano technique.

Scriabin's rhythmic innovations can be seen in rhythmic conflict between the hands, the suggestion of shifting meters, and accompaniments that cross the bar-line. As examples of the first idea, one can point to No. 3 in G major, No. 18 in F minor, and No. 24 in D minor, in which one hand unfolds a duplet, while the other hand has a triplet in very fast tempo. Especially in the F minor and D minor preludes, this creates a thick and complex texture that serves to push strongly toward the climax. On the other hand, in the third phrase of No. 12 in G-sharp minor, three-against-four rhythms stress independence of the hands. Also in this prelude, *fermatas* appear only in the right hand, while the left hand plays a regular rhythm. In general, it seems that Scriabin did not want rhythmic strictness, but instead wanted some flexibility. This effect comes not only from the treatment of rhythm but also from expression markings like *rubato*, *accelerando*, *ritardando*, and *a tempo*. Sometimes, he places successive *accelerando* instructions at the very end of a prelude to create excitement. Prelude No. 3 in G major offers an example of this idea. Interestingly, these markings are not always followed by the specification *a tempo*. Also, Scriabin seems to leave much to the performer's interpretation.

Scriabin's use of shifting meters in Op. 11 reflects a trait found in music by other Russian composers such as Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881), and Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). Preludes No. 16 in B-flat minor and No. 21 in B-flat major have distinctive metric structures. The B-flat minor prelude uses both 5/8 and 4/8, alternating irregularly, while the B-flat major prelude does not have a fixed time

signature; the meter changes every measure. Even though Scriabin uses a consistent four-measure phrase unit, because of the irregularity of beats, both pieces sound more modern.

In certain preludes, Scriabin writes left-hand accompaniments that cross over the bar-line, causing the strong beat of the accompaniment to fall on a weak beat in the measure. Prelude No. 1 in C major, No. 3 in G major, and the whole of No. 19 in E-flat major are good examples of this.

In the Op. 11 Preludes one can find evidence that Scriabin is starting to create his own innovative approach to harmony and tonality. Scriabin frequently obscures the key of the piece at the very start, establishing the tonic only by the end of the first phrase. For instance, Prelude No. 18 in F minor starts away from the tonic by alternating between augmented triads and IV chord, and the subsequent harmonies involve diminished, half diminished, It.⁶ and Gr.⁶ chords; only at the end of the first phrase, at m. 16, does a V - I progression confirm the tonic. The middle section and the reprise continue to avoid the tonic. Only in the coda, beginning in measure 41, does F minor have any real weight. In other pieces, such as Nos. 9 in E major and 20 in C minor, Scriabin avoids the real tonal center until the very end of the piece. In the E major prelude, the right-hand melody starts with the tonic pitch but is not supported by tonic harmony. Until the eighth measure, there are no cadences at all, and when one finally reaches a B⁷ chord is finally reached as a half-cadence in E, it is immediately subverted by an incorrect resolution that resolves the seventh by a rising half step rather than by descending step, as is expected. The tonic chord only appears at the very end of the piece, yet even here it does not come out of a perfect authentic cadence, as the progression is II⁷ - III⁶ - I, with the III⁶ used as a dominant substitute that can be analyzed as an incomplete dominant with an anticipation (G-sharp). The C minor prelude takes the idea of delayed tonic

definition even further. The whole piece is composed as if it were in F minor, and only in the final plagal cadence does C minor come close to feeling like the tonic. Even in the pieces that are tonally relatively clear, Scriabin offers some consistent contrasts with Chopin. In general, Chopin establishes the tonic area in a double period at the start of a piece and waits until the middle section to modulate away from tonic. In contrast, Scriabin's preludes tend to modulate immediately in the consequent phrase, sometimes even before the confirmation of the key in the first phrase, often moving towards the subdominant key, rather than the dominant, as in Nos. 1, 6, 8, 10, and 21. The effect is to destabilize the tonality very early in the piece.

In many respects Scriabin takes Chopin's harmonic language as a starting point, emulating the older composer's use of shifting voices and certain details, like the $\text{II}^7 - \text{I}$ resolution. But Scriabin's harmony departs from Chopin's harmonic language in certain other ways. Prelude No.15 in D-flat major seems to invoke modality, not using any accidentals at all. The modal harmonies create an archaic sound that is very similar to the "Promenade" from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Other pieces use much more modern harmonic devices. If Op. 11 is viewed chronologically, one can see Scriabin's gradual turn away from Chopin and towards Wagner and Liszt, whose influence is most prevalent in the last pieces composed of the set. Frequent use of augmented sixth chords, especially the Fr.⁶, and augmented intervals in the melody create a modern sound that is very different from Chopin's. In Scriabin's No. 20, a Wagnerian kind of harmony is observed as the first chord in m. 2 (F-B-E^b-A^b), the same sound as the famous Tristan chord (F-B-D[#]-G[#]: augmented fourth, major third, and perfect fourth). Also the chord progression IV - V in the first phrase sounds like Wagner.

Technically and artistically, there are many difficulties in performing Op. 11. Scriabin's preludes offer certain parallels to Chopin's technique, such as nocturne-like

accompaniments, embellished right-hand writing, good part-writing in the middle voices, and an etude-like conception of technique. At the same time, Scriabin's preludes demonstrate a number of technical idiosyncrasies. The first distinctive feature is Scriabin's left-hand technique of which it is said that Scriabin did not have any problems managing difficult left-hand passages³⁷. In many of his preludes, the left-hand part has busier and more difficult figures than the right hand. Scriabin uses the whole range of the keyboard, especially in the left hand. There are many broken chords and arpeggios, sometimes covering more than two octaves in very fast tempo. To avoid mistakes, the performer needs not only to practice the left hand alone, but also to measure the distances and make the correct hand positions. The right-hand part also requires a high level of technical mastery. At a more interpretive level, managing tempos, especially in the reprise or ending, is also difficult. In the ternary-form preludes, the reprise often uses octave doublings and loud dynamic markings, and sometimes specifies multiple *accelerandi* for a heroic ending. The coda of the F minor prelude functions in this way. Here Scriabin adopts a Lisztian figuration, alternating fast passage-work in octaves between the hands. Also many preludes have three-voice melodies. So presenting each voice clearly is important. Proper pedaling is also one of the paramount issues in Scriabin's works because of the harmony and tricky rhythmic treatment in each hand. Sometimes the pedal needs clarity, but for the mysterious chord changes and exotic sounds, a clear pedal change is not always the best solution.

In the Preludes, Op. 11, Scriabin's rhythmic treatment, harmonic language and treatment of the piano all stand out as signs of an emerging originality. Valuable pieces in their own right, they reveal that even in his earliest days Scriabin was starting to work toward an individual style that would become increasingly radical in his late works.

³⁷ Faubion Bower, *Scriabin* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1996), 150.

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