“Mystical” Motivation: Introducing Scriabin to the Advancing Pianist

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Introduction
Frequently heard in today’s concert halls, the music of Russian pianist and composer Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) captivates audiences with its soaring melodies and vivid musical coloring. The lush harmonic language, including the famed “Mystic Chord,” infused with romantic ideals create a unique sound landscape that is unmistakably Scriabin. Although much of his piano repertoire demands mature technical skills and musicianship, Scriabin’s early phase of composition (1880’s-1903) offers several Preludes appropriate for teaching the advancing pianist. This survey hopes to explore Scriabin’s most accessible solo piano compositions from his early phases, identify potential technical challenges, and encourage teachers to incorporate Scriabin’s music in their studios.

Early Phase Piano Compositions
- Etudes Op. 8
- Piano Sonatas No. 1, 2 and 3

Prelude in B Major, Op. 2/2
- Level 8
- Compact length of 17 measures
- Predominantly triplets in RH with quarter pulse in LH
- Two against three occurs only once
- Finger substitution required

Prelude in D-flat Major, Op. 11/4
- Level 8
- Compact length of 24 measures
- Repetition
- RH accompaniment and LH melody
- Set in 6/4 time
- Melody alternates between duple and triplet figures

Prelude in E Major, Op. 11/4
- Level 9
- Compact length of 36 measures
- Chordal RH requires careful voicing
- Lyrical LH accompaniment with chromaticism and leaps
- Frequent use of rubato markings
- Sensitive pedaling and finger substitution required

Prelude in E Minor, Op. 11/3
- Level 9
- Compact length of 36 measures
- Chordal RH requires careful voicing
- Lyrical LH accompaniment with chromaticism and leaps
- Frequent use of rubato markings
- Sensitive pedaling and finger substitution required

Prelude in G-flat Major, Op. 11/15
- Level 8
- Parallel unison melody introduction
- RH melody with LH steady quarter accompaniment
- LH accompaniment is either a 6th or octave throughout
- Sensitive pedaling needed

Prelude in G Major, Op. 13/3
- Level 9
- Parallel unison melody introduction
- RH melody with LH steady quarter accompaniment
- LH accompaniment is either a 6th or octave throughout
- Sensitive pedaling needed

Level 8
- Prelude in B Major, Op. 2/2 (from Trios Morceaux)
- Prelude in E Minor, Op. 11/4
- Prelude in D-flat Major, Op. 11/15
- Prelude in G Major, Op. 13/3

Level 9
- Prelude in A Minor, Op. 11/2
- Prelude in E Major, Op. 11/9
- Prelude in G-flat Major, Op. 16/3

Pianistic Characteristics
- Widely spaced writing
- Sensitive pedaling
- Melodic leaps
- Irregular rhythmic groupings
- Frequent use of 4ths

References
