

# Explore Scriabin's Interpretation of Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art in Aesthetic Thought

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## Abstract

Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin is a famous pianist and composer at the turn of the twentieth century in Russia. He plays an important role in the history of western music development. His unique music creation concept and music aesthetics have a great influence on the development of later generations. His music concept continues the famous philosopher, thinker and musician-Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche's artistic philosophy theory in the development, and carries it forward in the process of continuation. Finally, it is integrated into his own music creation and music performance to form a unique Scriabin music style. The characteristics of the theory of the integration of Nietzsche's art and philosophy are constantly changing in Scriabin's artistic creation and piano performance, and integrate Scriabin's strong personal music aesthetics. In this paper, the author will sort out the transformation of Scriabin's music aesthetics under the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy of art, and analyze the unique music style of Scriabin under the influence of various personal aesthetics.

**Keywords:** Scriabin, Nietzsche, music, philosophy

## 1. Introduction

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is a world-renowned philosopher, composer and writer in German history. Born in Germany in the nineteenth century, he became a professor of literature at the University of Basel in Switzerland at the age of twenty-four. His main works include *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Will to Power* and *So Says Zarathustra*. Nietzsche has a great influence in Russia, and it is not accidental that his philosophical theory can be widely spread in Russia. Firstly, Nietzsche's works were introduced to Russia when the Russian academic circle was still in the empty nest period. At this time (Huddleston A., 2024), the trend of positivism and populism in Russian academic circles had gradually declined, and Marxism was also in its infancy. For Russian scholars who lack academic thought, they urgently need a new ideological trend to fill the academic circle. The emergence of Nietzsche's philosophical theory at this time just broke the ideological and theoretical system of the old attributes in the Russian academic circle. At the same time, it brought a new perspective of ideological theory in the Russian academic circle. Russian scholars began to re-frame the examination of things after they came into contact with Nietzsche's philosophical thought.

The previous old world system was deeply questioned by the Russian people under the influence of Nietzsche's philosophical thought. Secondly, another reason why Nietzsche can be so popular in Russia is the Russians' worship of European culture since history. Although most of Russia's territory is located in the Eurasian continent, in the past few decades, the historical European literary thoughts and literary works have never been greatly spread in the Russian academic circles. However, in the 19th century, Russian society was in a great historical environment of change. The serf system began to gradually collapse, and the trend of fresh cultural thoughts began to sprout. At this time, the Russian academic community urgently needed to prove the significance of its own value in the European continent. As a famous philosopher, Nietzsche himself has a high

reputation in Germany and is very popular in the whole Western European countries. This has led to Nietzsche's philosophical thoughts that have aroused great interest among scholars throughout Russia. Scriabin is a classic example influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy in the field of music and art.

## 2. Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art and Scriabin's Creative Ideas

Nietzsche's philosophy of art believes that music is like an ordinary mirror in this world (Halliwell S., 2024), which can directly show the most primitive thoughts and emotions in this world. That is to say, the art form of music itself is a kind of emotion, but it is a kind of higher level, more abstract, not easy to understand the art form, it did not show a certain kind of image, but when it is emotionally speaking, it has the ability to arouse the image. Therefore, compared with sculpture, painting, dance and other art forms that can only be expressed by specific images, because they cannot directly express emotions themselves, they are the next level of music in Nietzsche's philosophy of art theory. In addition, in Nietzsche's view, it is like the type of writing art of poetry and novel. It is an artistic form of expression that uses language to imitate music. Through the summary of this ideological theory, Nietzsche concluded that music is a kind of original art form, which is in a central position in various art categories.

Among Scriabin's numerous music works, there is a "color music" work-symphonic poem *Prometheus: Poem of Fire* as a typical example, which clearly highlights the central position of music in the creation (Atilgan S D & Barutcu E M., 2018). When Scriabin created the score of *Prometheus: Poem of Fire*, at the top of each page of the score, he wrote another line of musical instrument score, which was mainly played by keyboard instruments of various colors that can be accompanied by music performance. (Figure 1) In the process of playing, the music and the light with color are emitted together. With the performance of the music, the color organ will emit the color light to the center of the stage to assist the performance of the music. With the continuous development of music, colors are also constantly changing in order to cater to the emotional changes of music. Scriabin has been looking for an interoperable method, that is, a method that can achieve better performance of music through various artistic categories.

Prométhée. 3

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A. Scriabine, Op. 60.  
Transcription pour deux Pianos  
à quatre mains par L. Sabaneïew.

Lento. Brumeux. M.M. ♩ = 60.

Piano I.

Piano II.

Lento. Brumeux. M.M. ♩ = 60.

miù Lento                      a tempo

calme, recueilli  
m.d.

più f

Figure 1.

It has been recorded in Scriabin's diary: "I can show the world how comfortable my joy is, and I will lure the world with my creation, create the beauty of the world, and devote myself to the complete self... I am God! I exist! I am everything!" (Li Songkun, 2016). Scriabin's self-professed attitude to God has made him an arrogant person in the eyes of others, and failed to make the world understand the deep meaning in this. In Nietzsche's philosophy, the world is constantly creating life. At the same time, the world is constantly destroying life, that is, "an aesthetic game in which the will is used to entertain itself in its eternal happiness". We may as well regard the world as "Dionysian cosmic artist" or "world primitive artist" standing on his position to look at their own pain and destruction, so as to see the world from the perspective of the Creator, or from the perspective of God, the suffering of reality is transformed into aesthetic happiness. Nietzsche's philosophical idea continues the pessimism thought in Schopenhauer's philosophical theory. He believes that people are full of suffering from

birth. He pursues detachment from the material world and is eager to achieve success in will. Scriabin has always been seeking a performance, a performance that can last up to seven days, or can be called a ceremony. Although the performance did not complete its public performance, it is recorded that such 'ritual' fragments have been circulated in the hands of his friends. Scriabin's music concept is very similar to Nietzsche's artistic philosophy, that is, "the will world dominates, can defeat the material world, and then obtain the victory of consciousness". This concept is also the artistic achievement that Scriabin clearly requires in his performance.

Scriabin likens himself to God, and he hopes to use music to save mankind. This idea originated from Nietzsche, who believed that art can be used to save lives. In Nietzsche's view, as an art activity with the nature of salvation, it can be expressed as these points, that is, "the medicine to save cognition is art", "the medicine to save actors is art", "art is the medicine to save the victims".

### 3. Scriabin's Aesthetic Thought

Scriabin lived in the war years for a long time. At that time, Europe was affected by the war, and the spiritual culture was seriously impacted. It can be said that the first family war promoted the development of modern Western philosophy. Scriabin's main life hovered at the intersection of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. At this time, the whole Europe was more inclined to take symbolic meaning as its mainstream ideology. Irrational ideologies such as nature and religion, and even the universe, successfully attracted the attention of scholars.

Russia's historical development itself has a rich religious civilization, this historical situation has also been widely popularized for the above ideas. Under the long-term state of war, the psychological state of all people is in a state of high tension for a long time. Therefore, people psychologically and emotionally need to have faith to help them get rid of the fear in reality. After entering the twentieth century, the progress of the times has promoted the development of natural science. The emergence of new ideas has impacted human beings' original cognition of the universe, and their beliefs have also been destroyed. This also has an impact on Scriabin's philosophy. In the real world of social life, he is a pianist and composer with superb technology, but in his inner spiritual world, he is full of truth. Therefore, all the ideas that appeared in this period can make him escape from reality and gain inner comfort have an impact on his philosophy.

Among them, the most important is the emergence of Nietzsche's "superman" concept. Nietzsche believes in the "superman" concept that "superman" has a strong will to break out of the siege in difficulties and has the ability to improve oneself. With free behavior consciousness, is a kind of with a new outlook on life, world outlook construction value system of "people". The second is the "voluntarism" that Nietzsche and Schopenhauer think. Schopenhauer once said in his theory that everything in the world is the representation of human beings under the action of consciousness. Scientific theoretical research can only discover the laws that appear. Art can watch the will itself within the representation, and music, an art form, is more in-depth than other art categories. Therefore, he believes that music is the objectification of the will itself. Furthermore, "mysticism" and "theosophy", also known as "theology", developed from irrationalism such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, emphasize the return to "self" and the search for truth through the heart.

Scriabin formed a philosophical concept with "self" as the subjective consciousness under the continuous accumulation of these philosophical concepts. He declared to the public that the self-conscious world would defeat the material world, and the material world would be destroyed. Only the self-conscious world can survive forever. As mentioned above, he regards himself as God in the real world and many of his music works. He positions all his music works as a religion. It needs to fully affirm the ideology of "self", so as to guide the real material world to be happy and eternal. Scriabin's typical idealist thought makes him form a unique "self" style in music creation, which has changed with traditional harmony techniques and creative ideas. He believes that philosophical ideas, religious beliefs and music ideas are inseparable and complementary. The previous classical music and romantic music creation ideas, forms of expression and harmony techniques are not able to meet his philosophical ideas. He wants to find a more breakthrough music form, so that the composer can get a greater sense of satisfaction of idealist music.

### 4. The Infiltration of Aesthetic Thought into Music Concept

In the modern music history of Russia, Scriabin is a very famous musician. His highly personal style laid the foundation for the development of European atonal music and pioneered the development of modern Russian music. Compared with the musicians of the same period, his creation was not influenced by the elements of Slavic folk music. On the contrary, he especially liked the music works of Chopin and Wagner. Scriabin's music works have obvious personal style. The philosophical concept of "self" makes his music works extremely complex. In terms of music and sound, the very famous 'mysterious chord' is the unique chord created by Scriabin (Branislava T., 2019).

In terms of Scriabin's creation, it can be roughly divided into two periods: The first creation period is the early

creation stage of Scriabin. During this period, Scriabin's music works had a strong romantic color, especially influenced by Chopin, a representative of romantic music. The works are full of elegance and lyricism in Chopin's music works. At the same time, Scriabin also added his personal characteristics to his creation. In his early works, Scriabin used a lot of piano skills, emphasizing the use of complex chords and strong harmony to express tension. Scriabin used this technique to express his inner conflicts and contradictions. These early works not only have the romantic color, but also have the passion of dramatic music.

The second period was after 1900, Scriabin began to transfer his personal creation to the form of symphonic music. This stage also produced many very famous works. During this period, Scriabin was influenced by Nietzsche's "superman" theory, voluntarism, and the philosophy of mysticism. He began to indulge in "mysterious" colors. During this period, Scriabin crazy admired Nietzsche and his "superman" theory. In the spread of Scriabin's diary, we can also clearly feel the manifestation of Nietzsche's will. Nietzsche's philosophical thoughts constantly influenced Scriabin's music creation. Subsequently, he left the Moscow Conservatory of Music and began his own extraordinary composition process. During this period, Scriabin created many music works that are still famous today, such as *Divine Poems* and *Prometheus: Poems of Fire*. His works are dominated by "mystery" and occupy the dominant position of creation. The philosophical concept of "mysticism" has gradually become the source of ideas for Scriabin's music creation.

Scriabin's works began to become difficult to understand in melody and full of mystery. In harmony, he created a unique "mysterious chord", that is, a chord composed of four-degree intervals of different natures, full of personal characteristics. In the work *Sacred Poem*, Scriabin's distinct personal will is displayed incisively and vividly, and the hard will characteristics are throughout the whole work, which clearly shows Scriabin's affirmation of "self" will. Scriabin's classic work, also the most famous *Prometheus: Poems of Fire*, is a work that fully expresses Scriabin's personal music concept. In this work, he combines music, text and religion perfectly, and shows psychedelic, mysterious and passionate in music. In his later years, Scriabin increased the description of religion in his creation, and became the theme of his concern in the comprehensive drama "religious drama".

## 5. Results

Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin, as a famous composer, is recognized as a pioneer of symbolic music because of the mysterious color throughout his works. His music works clearly reflect his philosophical thoughts. He has continuously explored the expression techniques and creative techniques of music. The works retain the more common creative techniques of romantic music, among which there are more distinct personal colors. Among them, the philosophical thought that has the greatest influence on him is Nietzsche's "superman" theory. The philosopher Nietzsche's "superman" philosophical theory strongly criticizes the traditional Christian world view, and then constructs a new value system. This system advocates that people return their attention to the individual itself, abandon God, respect the individual's instincts, attach importance to the real material world, and pursue the realization of life value with hard vitality.

As a musician, Scriabin perfectly integrates philosophical theory and music concept in his creation. In this regard, he can be called a leading existence. The perfect fusion of Scriabin's music concept and philosophical thought makes his creation have obvious personal color, which also makes him known as the forerunner of symbolic music. After he accepted the philosophy of "mysticism" and "theism", he produced the view of mysterious chord. This characteristic psychological emotion made Scriabin's view produce many new, extraordinary and irrational ideas, which made him produce his own special personal music characteristics in his creation. Scriabin is famous for his music, but at the same time, he has always been interested in philosophy. The ideology of "self" is the core of Scriabin's idealistic thought. This dominant thought has continued from his mid-term creation to his late music creation. Scriabin combines materialist philosophy with Nietzsche's "superman" theory, and even idealistic "mysticism" and "theism". Long-term ideological accumulation has created an abstract and irrational personal religion, thus forming an advanced artistic style. The fusion of Scriabin's music concept and philosophical thought is reflected in his extremely personal music style and advanced creative concept. Without the spiritual support of his philosophical thought, it is impossible to have his music creation techniques and creative ideas.

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