

The Piano Sonata in Mi minor flat was composed by Skrjabin between 1887 and 1889, that is to say when he was 15-17 years old and had just been admitted to Moscow Conservatoire; although the Sonata had already been completed and only needed a revision, Skrjabin decided to publish only the first movement which, with a few small changes, was published in 1892 as "Allegro appassionato" op.4. The original manuscript did not reach us as a whole, in fact some short passages from the second and the third movements, which anyway can be easily reconstructed, are missing: hence the several arrangements which followed Skrjabin's death, from the one by his friend and biographer Leonid Sabaneev in 1918, to the one by pianist Roberto Szidon in 1972, to the one by Soviet composer Vladimir Blok who, in order to reconstruct the contents of a torn page in the manuscript between the second and the third movements, made use of some musical elements from the first movement. Although it is possible to disagree on proposing a work in a form which at that time had been rejected by its own composer, in the case of this sonata the recovering operation does not seem inappropriate: the second and the third movements, which follow one after the other without solution of continuity, show in fact evident thematic analogies with the first one, which in turn is slightly different from "Allegro appassionato" op.4. The appellation of Sonata n.0, therefore, suggested by some scholars, does not seem inappropriate. Another reason leads us to allow the recovery of the original version: in 1889 Skrjabin changed his teacher of Counterpoint and Fugue, in fact Arenskij succeeded Safonov, who in the meantime had been appointed director of Moscow Conservatoire. Arenskij immediately started to dislike Skrjabin and did not miss the occasion to scorn him, and there are grounds to believe that it was him to lead Skrjabin to reject the second and the third movements of the Sonata, considering them bad. The Sonata op.0 is the first early work clearly showing the features of Skrjabin's early style. The first movement, in the traditional Sonata form, opens with a panting motif of triplets consisting of rising semitone appoggiaturas which, repeating themselves for as many as 33 bars, contribute to create an atmosphere of particular emotional tension; the use of triplets is peculiar to the whole of Skrjabin's production and is at the origin of the rythmical instability and indeterminatedness which will characterize his further production in a more and more refined way. The second theme appears suddenly, bright and serene, and creates a very effective contrast with the tumultuous development of the first part; this contrast involves all the movement, in a process of opposition which will be typical of many of Skrjabin's next works.