



## Alexander Scriabin Attempted to Cause/Score Armageddon

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We here at Rocks Off are fascinated not only with the end of the world, but with the people who are convinced that they're going to see it. We [spend quite a bit of time](#) playfully using the light-hearted headlines from Yahoo! News about the music industry as a springboard into the Book of Revelation, but, and don't tell anyone this, we don't really think that any kind of apocalypse is imminent.

Russian composer Alexander Scriabin did. Not only that, he wanted in on the ground floor, and he wanted to write the soundtrack.

Scriabin, who would be 140 today, is the poster child of the Russian Symbolist musical movement. He was big into Chopin, our favorite original goth nocturne master, and liked to link atonal qualities as well as mysticism and a theory of chords as colors into his poetic compositions.

He was also a genius, and by genius we mean like a Nikola Tesla kind of genius, and by that we mean he was equal parts brilliant and batshit crazy. The history of classical music is full of prodigies like Mozart who turned out piano works at a young age. Scriabin did them one better. He turned out pianos for guests to play them on. Seriously, he built them at the same age most of us are still having trouble with shoelaces.

Building keyboard instruments was a lifelong thing for Scriabin, who also invented something called a *clavier à lumières*. He built it sometime in the 1910s for a special work called *Prometheus: Poem of Fire*. Following his personal system of linking colors with sound, the *clavier* would project hued lights onto a screen as he played, meaning that Scriabin invented, oh, every single big budget concert idea you've ever seen plus Laser Floyd.

In addition to his uncanny mind Scriabin was a man completely unburdened with fucks to give. He had nary a one. As a child he attempted to conduct the neighborhood children in orchestra performances. When they turned out to not be very good, he stomped off and instead arranged highly popular operas entirely performed by himself and some puppets.

As a student, he was embarrassed by his small hands and the pieces he was unable to properly play because of them. His solution was simple, he just practiced those pieces until his hand broke, then kept practicing them, and eventually he gained the necessary reach despite a doctor saying he would never use the hand again. He went on to write a sonata using his new ability specifically as a kick in God's balls.

Even though he was an excellent student, Scriabin didn't complete his composition degree. Why? Because fuck you, that's why. He refused to compose in forms that didn't interest him, and one teacher refused to sign his diploma because of it. Immediately after his departure one of the pieces he did deign to finish became required study for decades. We weren't kidding. The score was Scriabin 1, Fucks to Give 0.

Then he decided the world should end at one of his concerts.



The piece was called *Mysterium*, and it would be an orchestra for all the senses, not just music, and Scriabin aimed for it to be the overture for Armageddon.

Music as a key to the creation or destruction of the universe isn't a rare idea. You see it in the Bible, in J.R.R. Tolkien, even in *the Legend of Zelda*. When you can get God, Ganon, and Gandalf to agree on something, that is a powerful freakin' idea, friends and enemies.

Scriabin's own notes record:

There will not be a single spectator. All will be participants. The work requires special people, special artists and a completely new culture. The cast of performers includes an orchestra, a large mixed choir, an instrument with visual effects, dancers, a procession, incense, and rhythmic textural articulation. The cathedral in which it will take place will not be of one single type of stone but will continually change with the atmosphere and motion of the *Mysterium*. This will be done with the aid of mists and lights, which will modify the architectural contours.

In fact, the setting as to be the roof of the world itself, the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains, and the concert itself would last seven days. The end of the world was penciled in as an encore, then humanity would take its bow while "nobler beings" would replace us as the Earth's masters.

Unfortunately, or not depending on whether you're a supervillain, Scriabin died before he completed it from an infected shaving cut, possibly because the only thing powerful enough to thwart him was his own magnificent mustache. Alexander Nemtin took his notes and spent 28 years cobbling them together into a three-hour performance piece that you might have noticed did not cause even something as crappy as the Rapture. It's not Nemtin's fault, he just wasn't born the flaming wackaloon maestro that Scriabin was, and so the world was saved by a lack of penicillin and a brave mustache that perished with the master it betrayed.

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