

Andante in Pink

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Andante in Pink is a project created, played, recorded, and edited all by me. In this project, I played both the solo and orchestra reduction part of the second movement of Scriabin's *Piano Concerto Op.20* on a piano. The two parts were recorded and edited together. A light show was added to the playing. I illustrated the ideal choices and instructions of colors and effects in this part based on my former research. The goal of this project is to help me and others understand this movement in another dimension. For example, to express the dynamic change or harmonic change in music, the colored lights could help by luminosity and color changes. The choices of colors and effects in this part are not invariable. It can be different and flexible depends on the instruments and light equipment. The performance practice can be diverse each time depending on the performing situation. See the link to the final video below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCHguluBMfY&feature=youtu.be>

1) Project equipment:

- A piano (two parts could be played either by one person and edited together or be played by a soloist and an orchestra)
- A camera with a microphone: For recording the music and the operation of lights
- LED lights (could be any other equipment as long as it can show the change and different effects of colors)

2) Instructions of Color Using

The movement is in a variation form. The orchestra plays the theme before the solo piano comes in. There are five variations.

Theme: It is in F sharp major. In Scriabin's color scheme, F sharp stands for the saturated blue. It is also used at the beginning of his *Prometheus* to refer to the origin of life in the ocean. In this movement, the orchestration consists of all the strings except the bass through the whole theme. There are no brass instruments and percussions. So the general color choice of the theme will be warm colors. It starts with *piano* and in the middle register starts with the middle C. In my color choice, I started with dim pink (starts at 00:03). The beginning reminds me of dawn before the sunrise. There are four phrases at the beginning of the theme. It is ascending until the third phrase with the highest note F in the theme, and then descending before the next phrase. Each time when it is ascending, I chose a brighter color but still with warmth. I chose bright white on the highest note F (starts at 00:26). It is also the brightest color of the whole theme. It could refer to the sunlight after the sunrise. In mm 4-6, there are two repeated phrases. See Score a below:

Score a



There are no dynamic changes in the scores for the two phrases. However, in many performance editions, orchestras usually play the second time softer. Hence, I made the white dimmer for the second repeat (starts at 00:34). Starts from the fifth phrase, the harmony changes and all the strings play without mute. The orchestra *cresc* into *mf*, which is the loudest part of the theme. I changed to other colors with more intensity, for example, indigo (starts at 00:46). After the change, the theme goes back to the 'highest' and 'brightest' part. The color choice went back to the bright white and then decayed to dim pink, just like a sunset. For each phrase in the theme, the strings

always go from *cresc* to *dim*. The ideal situation on the light would be parallel with the dynamic change. In another word, the more *cresc*, the brighter.

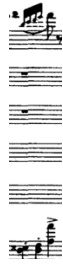
Variation 1: In this variation, the melody of the orchestra part is the same as the theme at the beginning. The orchestra (the clarinet) plays the theme and the piano plays the accompaniment. The solo piano comes in with the seamless arpeggio-like passages mostly in a high register. The key stays in the F-sharp major. The piano tone, especially in the high register, adds some brightness and smoothness to the string tones. I relate the piano part to the sunshine 'spilling' across the clouds. I considered some warmer colors based on orange, but with different intensity and luminosity. In general, the dynamic changes in the solo part is parallel to the orchestra part.

Variation 2: The second is *Allegro scherzando*. The key stays in F-sharp major. It is faster than the theme and the first variation. The piano plays the theme while the orchestra plays a light accompaniment. The solo part starts from *mf* and goes to *ff* in the repeated passage. This variation is energetic and lively. I related the foundation color to blueish green. The woodwind instruments add more articulations to the music. The orchestra comes in mostly on the accents in the solo part. See Score b below. To contrast to the basic color, green, I chose light yellow to stand for the orchestra (starts from 03:10). There are many *staccato* and detached touch in the solo part. It reminds me of squirrels shuttle between trees in the forest. The flutes play along with the F sharp in the solo part. See Score c below. I related the metallic tone of flutes to the color light silver (starts from 03:20). It is also the color of flutes. The short notes of flutes remind me of birds.

Score b



Score c



The texture of the solo part in the middle section is thick with a lot of octaves in low registers. See Score d below. The octaves in the lower register create the muddy sonority. The harmony is ambiguous. The rhythms between two hands are duple against triple. I chose two dark colors, purple and brown, and made them alternate and flash on the beat with the duple (starts from 03:23).

Score d



Variation 3: This variation is the only one in the minor key in the movement. It is *Adagio*. The whole variation is in a funeral marching tempo. The melody of the theme is played by the left hand of the solo part in the d sharp minor. I chose red as the foundation color of this variation. Red is the contrast color of green, which is the basic color in the last variation. The dramatic color change is parallel with the change of the mood, from lively to depressed. Red, blood, and fire can always be related to the funeral, which will suit the mood of this variation. There will be many different types of red lights with different intensity and luminosity to stand for dynamic change and harmonic tension. In general, when the music is building up, the red will be brighter and denser. For example, there are four phrases at the beginning. Each of them is with different red lights

(starts from 03:50). The first phrase starts from a low A sharp in the left hand of the solo part. So I started with a dark and dim red. The color decays when the melody in the right hand is descending. Then the strings take over the conversation in a higher register. The color of the second phrase is the same red as the first phrase but brighter and more intensive. The red builds up with more luminosities and intensities while the melody is ascending with *cresc.* The same application is applied in the middle section and the ending. In the middle section, the texture in the left-hand changes from duple to triple. See Score e below. In the end, the dynamic in the solo part changes from *mf* to *ff*. See Score f below. The red lights change along with each harmony change (starts from 05:33).

Score e



Score f



Variation 4: The key goes back to F sharp major. It's an *Allegretto*. I gave this variation a nickname as 'Dance of the Firefly'. The harmonic progression is the same as the theme. One of the most distinguished features of the variation is that there are many trills and conversations between the solo and the orchestra. See Score g below. I imagined the trills as fireflies with lights in different colors. There will be lights in different colors flashing on each trill (starts from 05:51). The piano has a solo playing near the end of the variation. The two hands play the trills alternately. See Score h below. They get closer gradually. In my interpretation, two fireflies are dancing with each other and getting closer. I arranged two different lights flashing on the trills and they got closer along with the harmony changes (starts from 07:09). In the transition, I adjusted the same

color as it is at the beginning of the next variation. It is dim pink, the same color as used at the very beginning of the theme played by the orchestra.

Score g



Score h



Variation 5: It is the last variation of the movement. It is *Andante* and in the same tempo as the theme at the beginning. The harmonic progression in the orchestra is the same as the theme. The solo part is similar to the first variation. I used the same color choice as I used for the theme. It ends at the dim pink, which is the same color as the very beginning of the theme. It could be interpreted that the whole movement is a cycle.

3) Conclusion: This project is one of the most challenging but exciting projects I have ever experienced. Each process needs imagination and creativity. Before I wrote down the plans and recorded, I was completely an idealist. I always freed my inventiveness by picturing the music with colors in my mind over and over again without considering the limitations of technology. When Scriabin composed the luce part of his *Prometheus*, he would never imagine what the artwork will be like in a hundred years. His aesthetic artistry has never been stuck by the era. The color-changing helps me understand the harmonic changes in a visual way. Adding the colors into the performance broadened my mind and interpretation not only on this movement but also on my performance practice. When I redo this artwork in 5 years, or my students take over this project, the realization of this project would be different. The poet Viacheslav Ivanov, a friend of Scriabin, used to describe *Prometheus* as ‘an art that turns the perceiver into a participant in the creative

act¹. Whoever takes part in the project will be part of the artwork. When all goes to all, no matter visual, aural, osphretic, gustatory, or tactile, they are bridges connecting the outer world with our hearts.

¹ Gawboy, Anna M.; Townsend, Justin (June 2012). "Scriabin and The Possible". Society for Music Theory.