

Variations on a Scheme: Bach's 'Crucifixus' and Chopin's and Scriabin's E-Minor Preludes

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The influence of J.S. Bach's music on Chopin's, and that of Chopin's music on Scriabin's, are well known. This essay considers three works that link these composers in a chain of influence through a shared scheme of musical and hermeneutic relationships: the 'Crucifixus' movement of Bach's B-minor Mass, Chopin's E-minor Prelude op. 28/4, and Scriabin's E-minor Prelude op. 11/4. Annotated scores of each work are reproduced in the Appendix. All three works invoke the shared conventions of the lament topic and have several more specific musical features in common: the key of E minor, the schema of a descending bass line combined with suspended sigh figures, and a narrative of repetition followed by disruption that prevents complete closure on some level. In Bach's 'Crucifixus,' the tonal disruption of the concluding modulation, marked by the textural break of the final *a cappella* ostinato, allows for local closure in the new key but denies global closure in the home key. Conversely, the consequent phrases of both Chopin's and Scriabin's preludes feature melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic discontinuities that undermine local closure while preserving global closure in E minor.

Bach's 'Crucifixus' and Chopin's E-Minor Prelude

Chopin's use of Bach's keyboard works as compositional models is well documented.¹ Chopin's op. 28 preludes have often

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¹ Bach's influence on Chopin is discussed in Robert Collet, "Studies, Preludes, and Impromptus," in *The Chopin Companion*, ed. Alan Walker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 114–43; Simon Finlow, "The 27 Etudes and Their Antecedents," in *The Chopin Companion*, 50–77; Jim Samson, *The Music of Chopin* (Routledge and

been compared to the preludes of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the only score that Chopin brought to Majorca in 1838, where he completed op. 28.² Their genre is the same, although Bach's preludes are followed by fugues while Chopin's preludes stand alone. Both sets feature systematic key organization, although

Kegan Paul, 1985), 58–80; Hartmuth Kinzler, “‘Cela ne s'oublie jamais’ oder Das erste Präludium aus Bachs Wohltemperiertem Klavier als Modell für Chopins grosse C-Dur-Etüde,” *Zeitschrift für Musikpädagogik* 12/40 (1987): 11–21; Nigel Nettheim, “The Derivation of Chopin's Fourth *Ballade* from Bach and Beethoven,” *Music Review* 54 (1993): 95–111; Robert Wason, “Two Bach Preludes/Two Chopin Etudes,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 24/1 (2002): 103–120; Michael Heinemann, “Bach—Beethoven und Chopin: zu Fryderyk Chopins Sonate Nr. 1 C-moll, op. 4” in *Chopin and his Work in the Context of Culture*, ed. Irena Poniatowska (Kraków: Polska Akademia Chopinowska, 2003), 1:404–410; and Jonathan Bellman, “Bach Viewed by Chopin,” *Notes* 67/3 (2011): 621–623.

² On the chronological evidence of the sketches, see Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, “Twenty-four Preludes op. 28: Genre, Structure, Signification,” in *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 168 n3 and “L'achèvement des *Préludes*, op. 28, de Chopin,” *Revue de musicologie* 75/2 (1989): 229–242; see also Carl Schachter, “The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4: Autograph Sources and Interpretation,” in *Chopin Studies* 2, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 162, and Schachter, “The Triad as Place and Action,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 17 (1995): 149–169, repr. Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed. Joseph N. Straus, 161–183 (Oxford University Press, 1999).

Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* and Chopin's op. 28 Preludes are compared in Walter Wiora, “Chopins Preludes und Études und Bachs Wohltemperiertes Klavier,” in *The Book of the First International Musicological Congress Devoted to the Works of Frederick Chopin*, ed. Zofia Lissa (Polish Scientific Publishers, 1963), 73–81; Eunice Tavaglione, “The Influence of the Preludes from the Well-Tempered Clavier of J.S. Bach on the Preludes and Etudes of Chopin” (M.M. thesis, North Texas State University, 1984); Samson, *The Music of Chopin*, 73–75; Eigeldinger, “Twenty-four Preludes op. 28,” 171–73; Eric Raymond, “The Influence of Bach on Chopin's Preludes and Etudes” (M.M. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1991); Jeffrey Kresky, *A Reader's Guide to the Chopin Preludes* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), xv–xvi; Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 83–87; Wason, “Two Bach Preludes/Two Chopin Etudes,” 103; Daniel Sakari Mahlberg, “The Baroque Continuum: The Influence of the ‘Praeludien’ from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* on Chopin's *Préludes*, op. 28” (M.A. thesis, California State University at Dominguez Hills, 2002); and Anatole Leikin, “Chopin's Preludes Op. 28 and Lamartine's *Les Préludes*,” in *Sonic Transformations of Literary Texts: From Program Music to Musical Ekphrasis*, ed. Siglind Bruhn (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 2008), 13–44.

Bach's preludes follow a linear order of parallel-key pairs ascending by semitone while Chopin's preludes follow a cyclic order of relative-key pairs ascending by fifth. Several of Chopin's preludes have figurations strongly reminiscent of Bach's (e.g., #11, #14, and #19), and Mianowski has observed that Chopin's E-minor Prelude evokes Bach's Prelude #20 in A minor from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Bk. 2, since both feature chromatic descending bass lines.³ In the same passage, Mianowski also connected Chopin's E-minor Prelude to a choral work, the opening chorus of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, which is cast in a similarly chromatic E minor with a repeated-note bass part. However, the melodic content and background structures of these Bach works have little in common with Chopin's prelude.

I propose a different choral work as a model for Chopin's E-minor Prelude: the 'Crucifixus' from Bach's B-Minor Mass (1748–49). The functions of these works are quite different—Chopin's prelude is a miniature for solo piano, while the 'Crucifixus' is the centerpiece of Bach's symmetrically structured Credo, the weightiest movement in the Mass. However, they share numerous musical features, as shown in Example 1. Several of these elements, such as tempo, affect, chromatic descending bass, and 6–5 motive,⁴ have been common characteristics of laments since the 17th century, but others, such as the texture, register, diminished-third chord, and discontinuous ending, associate these works more specifically.

³ Mianowski, "24 Präludien von Chopin und die Charakteristiken der Tonarten im 19. Jahrhundert," *Chopin and his Work in the Context of Culture*, v. 1, ed. Irena Poniatowska (Kraków: Polska Akademia Chopinowska, 2003), 327–333.

⁴ Raymond Monelle refers to the descending-semitone sigh figure as the 'pianto' ("crying") motive; see Monelle, *The Sense of Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 66–73.

*Example 1: Shared Traits of Bach's 'Crucifixus' and
Chopin's and Scriabin's Preludes*

	Bach	Chopin	Scriabin
key	E minor (ends in G major)	E minor	E minor
tempo	Grave	Largo	Lento
affect	elegiac	elegiac	elegiac
form ⁵	binary (continuous variations)	binary (period form)	binary (period form with coda)
texture	4 polyphonic voices with orchestral accompaniment	4 voices: melody with accompaniment	mostly 4 voices: melody with accompaniment
accompaniment rhythm	6 quarter notes in $\frac{3}{2}$	8 eighth notes in ♩	6 quarter notes in $\frac{6}{4}$
bass descent	chromatic descent E–B	chromatic descent G–B	gapped diatonic descent B–B
melodic register	B ₃ –E ₅	B ₃ –E ₅ except mm. 16–17 (B ₃ –C ₆)	C ₃ –B ₄ except mm. 7–9 (G ₄ –G ₅)
melodic descent	from $\hat{5}$	from $\hat{5}$	from $\hat{5}$
melodic motive	C–B	C–B	B–A–G \sharp –G \natural
final pre-dominant	Ger. ^{°3} in G major	Ger. ^{°3} in E minor	Ger. ^{°3} in E minor
disruptions	textural, tonal	melodic, harmonic, rhythmic	rhythmic, melodic, tonal

⁵ Bach's 'Crucifixus' can also be interpreted as a ternary form, with a brief B section (mm. 29–36) suggested by ascending motion, absence of the sigh motive, homophony, and a change of text, but the overall structure of the text is binary. All three works feature a prominent arrival on the dominant (m. 36 in the Bach, m. 12 in the Chopin, m. 8 in the Scriabin) followed by a textural break and a return of the opening material.

Eigeldinger has commented on the general similarities between these two works:

Bach had inherited from Monteverdi and the madrigalists the descending chromatic line as a symbol of sadness [and] affliction. Chopin made use of this same symbolism in the Preludes Nos. 4 and 20, which seem to have been derived directly from the 'Crucifixus' of the B-minor Mass, the cantatas *Weinen, Klagen* and *Jesu der du meine Seele*, the three-part Invention No. 9, and the 21st of the *Goldberg Variations*.⁶

The other works Eigeldinger mentioned also feature descending chromatic lines, but not consistently in the bass, and they do not share the other characteristics listed in Example 1. Elsewhere, he connected Chopin's E-minor Prelude to the 'Crucifixus' more directly, describing the left-hand part as "Chopin's response to the harmonic polyphony of the 'Crucifixus' from the B minor Mass."⁷ Leikin has expanded on Eigeldinger's observation:

The E-Minor Prelude, obviously, is written in the same key as the "Crucifixus." The melodic incipits both in Prelude 4 and in the "Crucifixus" (after the orchestral introduction) are nearly identical. The ostinato figure of the "Crucifixus," a chromatic descent from E to B, finds its way into the Prelude as well. It first appears in the upper line of the left-hand part (mm. 1-8) and then is imitated, in a *stretto* fashion, in the bass (mm. 6-12). During the last half of the Prelude, this chromatic descending gesture gradually disintegrates.

In the last few bars, the "Crucifixus" modulates to G major with the concluding tonic featuring B in the top voice. Similarly, but in reverse, the E-minor Prelude is preceded by a G-major Prelude in which the concluding tonic has B in the melody; this B, as a pivot tone, connects both preludes. The key reversal actually renders the Prelude more distressing than the "Crucifixus." While the latter leads from death to life—and to the "Et

⁶ "Bach avait hérité de Monteverdi et des Madrigalists la ligne chromatique descendante comme symbole de tristesse, d'affliction. Chopin fait usage de ce même symbolisme dans les *Préludes* 4 et 20 qui semblent dériver directement du *Crucifixus* de la *Messe en si*, des cantatas *Weinen, Klagen*, et *Jesu der du meine Seele*, de la 9e *Sinfonia* a trios voix ou de la 21e des *Variations Goldberg*." Eigeldinger, "Autour des *Préludes* de Chopin," *Revue Musicale de Suisse Romande* 25/1 (1972): 3-7. Eigeldinger makes a similar observation in "Placing Chopin: Reflections on a Compositional Aesthetic," in *Chopin Studies* 2, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 111 n. 36.

⁷ Eigeldinger, "Twenty-four Preludes op. 28," 176.

resurrexit” as the next movement in the Mass—the Prelude’s path proceeds in the opposite direction.⁸

In a discussion of Chopin’s E-minor Prelude, Tymoczko identifies Bach’s ‘Crucifixus’ as a related progression.⁹ The endings of both works appear adjacently in Gauldin’s harmony textbook as examples of diminished-third chords, but they are not explicitly linked.¹⁰ To the best of my knowledge, these two well-known works have not been compared in greater detail in the published scholarly literature.

The music of the ‘Crucifixus’ is a reworking of the opening chorus from Bach’s Cantata no. 12, “Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen” (1714).¹¹ The original version sets a similar lament text over a descending chromatic bass, with a contrasting middle section. “Weinen, Klagen” was composed in F minor, a new tonality at the time and one as distant as possible from the B minor of the Mass. To adapt the chorus for the ‘Crucifixus,’ Bach transposed it to E minor, omitted the middle section and *da capo* return, slightly intensified the chromaticism, rewrote the final ostinato statement as a striking *a cappella* modulation, and added an introductory statement changing the number of iterations from twelve to thirteen (a number generally interpreted as representing Christ’s betrayal). Bach also made rhythmic changes to accommodate the different language and text, increased the accompaniment pulse in

⁸ Leikin, “Chopin’s Preludes Op. 28 and Lamartine’s *Les Préludes*,” 30.

⁹ Dmitri Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 291 n2.

¹⁰ Robert Gauldin, *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 548.

¹¹ Bach’s “Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen” has been described by earlier authors as being modeled, in turn, on a chorus from a secular chamber cantata with a similar text, Vivaldi’s “Piango, gemo, sospiro e peno,” in D minor (RV 675, 1710); see, for example, Bernard Paumgartner, “Zum ‘Crucifixus’ der H-moll-Messe J. S. Bachs,” *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 21 (1966): 500–3 and Friedrich Blume, “Der junge Bach” (Wolfenbüttel: Mösseler Verlag, 1967), 544–545, translated by Wilburn Newcomb as “J. S. Bach’s Youth,” *Musical Quarterly* 54/1 (1968): 24. However, the two choruses have little in common apart from the structure of the opening text and a triple-meter descending bass.

the bass from half notes to quarter notes, and added flute parts on beats 2 and 3, emphasizing the characteristic chaconne rhythm.¹²

Did Chopin know Bach's 'Crucifixus'? Chopin became intimately familiar with Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* and keyboard suites through lessons with his first teacher Wojciech (Adalbert) Żwiny from 1816 to 1821, although Bach's music was otherwise little known in Warsaw at the time.¹³ Józef Elsner, who taught Chopin from 1822 to 1828, used Albrechtsberger's *Anweisung zur Composition* (1790) and Kirnberger's *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes* (1779), which he particularly admired, as teaching texts in harmony and counterpoint.¹⁴ Significantly, Volume II of the latter contains a discussion of ostinato that includes the 'Crucifixus' bass as an example.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Bach's choral music was not well known anywhere in the early nineteenth century: Forkel's 1802 biography discussed no vocal music, and the sixteen volumes of Hoffmeister's so-called *Oeuvres complètes* (1801–04) included only keyboard works. By the late 1820s choral societies had begun to perform Bach's choral music, particularly in Berlin, the epicenter of transmission for the B-minor Mass.¹⁶ In September 1828 Chopin visited the

¹² The chaconne rhythm is already subtly indicated by the shift to agogically accented degrees of the diatonic tetrachord (the lowered forms of scale degrees 7 and 6) in the second and third bars of the ostinato. This rhythmic pattern is more typical of a chaconne than a sarabande because the phrases begin on beat 2 rather than beat 1. The opening chorus of Bach's Cantata No. 78, "Jesu, der du meine Seele" is another instance of a choral lament cast as a chaconne. For more on dance forms in the B-minor Mass see John Butt, *Bach: Mass in B Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 70–6.

¹³ Jim Samson, "Chopin's Musical Education," *Chopin Studies* 6 (1999): 28–37.

¹⁴ See Halina Goldberg, "Musical Education" in *Music in Chopin's Warsaw* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 107–146, and Jim Samson, "Chopin and the Traditions of Pedagogy," in *New Paths: Aspects of Music Theory and Aesthetics in the Age of Romanticism*, ed. Darla Crispin, 115–127 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Johann Philip Kirnberger, *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes* (C. F. Voss, 1771–1779), vol. 2, part 2, ch. 5: 172. Kirnberger's copy of the Mass was made from the autograph owned by C.P.E. Bach.

¹⁶ The Berlin premiere of the Credo of Bach's B-minor Mass was presented by Spontini on April 30, 1828. The concert was reviewed in the *Berliner Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* by Adolf Bernhard Marx, who quoted the 'Crucifixus' bass in

Berlin library, which owned a manuscript copy of the Mass, but he noted in a letter home only that the collection included very few musical works, mentioning none by name.¹⁷ However, the very paucity of musical works in the Berlin Library's collection at this time increases the chances that Chopin may have seen the B-Minor Mass manuscript. It is also possible that he became familiar with the work through his friendship with Mendelssohn in Paris in the early 1830s.¹⁸ The most likely source for Chopin's knowledge of Bach's B-minor Mass, however, was the piano-vocal edition arranged by A. B. Marx and published by Nägeli of Zurich and Simrock of Bonn in 1834, four years before Chopin composed his E-minor Prelude.¹⁹ Unfortunately, I can find no documentary evidence of Chopin's ownership of this edition.²⁰ Nonetheless, their musical similarities are strongly suggestive of an instance of direct compositional modeling.

The most salient structural feature of the 'Crucifixus' is the chromatic bass line, which descends from scale degree 8 down to

his review, "Berlin am 30. April 1828: Spontini's grosses Konzert im Opernhause," *Berliner Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 5/19 (1828): 154. An earlier public performance of the Credo was given by the Cäcilien-Verein in Frankfurt under its founder Johann Nepomuk Schelble on 10 March 1828, which was also reviewed by Marx in "Freie aufsätze: Bausteine zu einem Lehrgebäude der musikalischen Aesthetik," *Berliner Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 5/17 (1828): 138.

¹⁷ Henryk Opieński, ed., *Chopin's Letters*, trans. E. L. Voynich (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 44.

¹⁸ Mendelssohn knew the B-minor Mass through readings of it with the Berlin Singakademie under Carl Friedrich Zelter in the 1820s. The Singakademie finally performed it in two large sections in 1834 and 1835 under Zelter's successor, Karl Friedrich Rungenhagen. Chopin could also have encountered the Mass through his friendship with Liszt, but there is no evidence that Liszt knew the work before he studied it as a model for his own Missa Solemnis (*Graner Messe*, 1855–8) and variations on "Weinen, Klagen" (1859–63), well after Chopin's death.

¹⁹ Nägeli and Simrock published only the Kyrie and Gloria in full score earlier in 1833; they did not publish the full score of the complete Mass until 1845. Marx's piano reduction is similar to those of modern editions published by Peters (ed. Gustav Rösler), and Schirmer (ed. Frank Damrosch), without the bass doubling at the lower octave.

²⁰ Szymon Paczkowski has corroborated the lack of documentary evidence for Chopin's knowledge of Bach's B-minor Mass (personal communication, 18 April 2013).

5.²¹ The most common harmonization scheme for such basses follows the “Rule of the Octave”: an initial tonic and final dominant in root position connected by a series of first-inversion triads or other sixth chords. The most common melodic scheme descends from scale degree 5, ornamented with an upper neighbor that initiates a 7–6 suspension chain. Sanguinetti has observed that in the partimento tradition of eighteenth-century Naples, “almost all descending patterns are elaborations of a series of 7–6 suspensions” and he presents the scheme reproduced in Example 2 as a favorite realization of a chromatic descending bass.²² Replacing the penultimate melody note with the diatonic scale degree $\hat{4}$ ($A\flat$ instead of $A\sharp$) transforms it into a serviceable reduction of the first two statements of the ‘Crucifixus’ ostinato;

²¹ Diatonic descending-tetrachord ostinatos were used as a basis for laments around the 1630s by several composers: ‘Il Fasolo,’ Frescobaldi, Sances, and Monteverdi. Cavalli established the diatonic tetrachord as a lament topic in his operas of the 1640s, and set the earliest chromatic versions: Hecuba’s lament “Tremulo spirito” from *Il Didone* Act I, Scene 7 (1641) and Climene’s lament “Piangete occhi dolenti” from *Egisto* Act II, Scene 6 (1643). For more examples of descending-bass laments, see Robert Müller-Hartmann, “A Musical Symbol of Death,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1945): 199–203; Ellen Rosand, “The Descending Tetrachord: An Emblem of Lament,” *Musical Quarterly* 65/3 (1979): 346–59; William Kimmel, “The Phrygian Inflection and the Appearances of Death in Music,” *College Music Symposium* 20/2 (1980): 42–76; Rosand, “*Il lamento*” in *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 361–386; Peter Williams, *The Chromatic Fourth during Four Centuries of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 73–6; Kyle Adams, “A New Theory of Chromaticism from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Eighteenth Century” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2006), 152–174; and Alex Ross, “Chacona, Lamento, Walking Blues” in *Listen to This* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 22–54.

²² Giorgio Sanguinetti, “The Realization of Partimenti—An Introduction,” *Journal of Music Theory* 51/1 (2007): 60–63. The figured-bass primer assembled by Bach’s student at the Leipzig Thomas-Schule includes descending diatonic bass lines elaborated with 7–6 suspensions, which are transcribed in Pamela Poulin, *J.S. Bach’s Precepts and Principles for Playing the Thorough-Bass or Accompanying in Four Parts, Leipzig, 1738* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 48 and 55–56, but no chromatic bass lines. Bach’s teachings relied heavily on Niedt’s *Musicalische Handleitung* (1700), a thoroughbass manual that adopted partimento techniques.

later statements have assorted variants, but follow the same basic pattern (see Appendix A).

*Example 2: Typical Eighteenth-Century
Realization of a Chromatic Descending Bass Line
(from Sanguinetti, “The Realization of Partimenti—An Introduction,”
Ex. 7, 63; orig. G minor)*



This contrapuntal pattern is maintained in Bach’s ‘Crucifixus’ until the thirteenth and final ostinato statement (m. 49), which never reaches the home dominant but is instead deflected to the key of G major. The tonal disruption is prefigured by the textural and registral disjunction at the beginning of the ostinato statement, when the final repetition of “sepultus est” is text-painted by an instrumental *tacit* with the voices descending chromatically (except for the tenor) to their lowest possible ranges.²³ Modulating ostinatos were not without precedent at this time, but they typically involved one or more statements of the pattern in the new key(s);²⁴

²³ The intense chromaticism at this point enhances the music’s tragic affect and may also be a music-rhetorical pun on the word “passus,” since the chromatic tetrachord was labeled *passus duriusculus* by Christoph Bernhard in the mid-17th century. There is, however, no direct evidence for Bach’s knowledge of Bernhard’s work. The device of *passus duriusculus* was used to set the same text in earlier masses by S. A. Scherer (*Missa*, Ulm, 1657), and Jan Dismas Zelenka (*Missa S. Caeciliae*, 1711; *Missa Circumcisionis*, 1724; and *Missa Omnium Sanctorum*, 1741).

²⁴ Examples of ostinato basses that modulate are Schütz’s “Es steh Gott auf” (1647), Buxtehude’s Passacaglia in D minor (1690s), the final chorus of Bach’s Cantata 150 (c. 1708) and the opening chorus of his Cantata 78 (1724).

Bach's last-minute key shift in an otherwise monotonal ostinato is extraordinary. This unusual modulation is accomplished via an unusual chromatic pre-dominant, a diminished-third chord that prepares the dominant of G major (m. 51).²⁵ Augmented-sixth chords are comparatively rare in Bach's works, and their inverted forms still rarer. The diminished-third chord allows the bass, after fifty bars of inexorably descending, to ascend to the new dominant while the upper voices continue their downward motion. On a practical level, this striking concluding modulation to G major prepares the key of the following movement, 'Et resurrexit,' with trumpets in the key of D major. On a hermeneutic level, the disruptions of texture, tonality and ostinato pattern suggest a theological interpretation: the change from orchestral accompaniment to *a cappella* vocal texture represents Christ's departure from the world and transformation from the earthly to the divine, the major-key ending symbolizes the end of his suffering and the peace of death, and the disruption of the descending lament bass by upward motion prefigures his resurrection and ascension.

Chopin's descending bass is more expansive than Bach's, beginning on scale degree 3 and descending from tonic to the dominant over the course of twelve bars (m. 12; see Appendix B). In the second half of the prelude, the pattern is truncated and compressed, omitting both forms of scale degree 7 and arriving on the dominant after only five bars (m. 17). Descending semitonal motion is staggered throughout the voices. Since the progression begins on a first-inversion tonic and when scale degree 1 is reached in the bass it supports V⁷/iv (m. 4), there is no stable tonic harmony until the final chord. Nonetheless, the underlying 7–6

²⁵ The notated flats in the diminished-third chord are the first such in the movement: all of the other accidentals are naturals or sharps, which have a visual programmatic function: in German, a sharp is "Kreuz," or "cross." The other three augmented-sixth chords in Bach's Credo also have transformative connotations: in 'Et incarnatus est' at the text "Ex Maria Virgine" (Christ's birth), in 'Confiteor' leading to the Phrygian cadence at "Unum baptisma" (baptism), and at the end of the "Et expecto" (resurrection). See Mark Ellis, *A Chord in Time: The Evolution of the Augmented Sixth from Monteverdi to Mahler* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 111–136, for a discussion of augmented-sixth chords in Bach's music.

schema is still apparent in the outer voices of the left-hand part.²⁶ Unlike Bach's 'Crucifixus,' Chopin's E-minor Prelude closes in the home key, but resolution of the final dominant is deflected three times before a root-position tonic is reached. The long-awaited tonic closure is delayed first by a deceptive cadence (m. 21), which provides melodic but not harmonic closure, then by a diminished-third chord (m. 23), and then by the caesura that follows it, both of which replace an expected dominant. Chopin's use of a diminished-third chord to prepare the final cadence is less surprising than Bach's, since the chord has been prefigured in m. 21.3, and since augmented-sixth chords and diminished-third chords are fairly common in Chopin's works.²⁷ The enharmonic spelling of the chord as a dominant seventh is also prefigured in m. 21 (B \flat is used instead of A \sharp , indicating the downward resolution of this note to A and avoiding a melodic augmented second with the preceding G) and likewise emphasizes the continued downward motion of the bass past the dominant degree.

The motivic similarities between Chopin's E-minor Prelude and Bach's 'Crucifixus' are pervasive. Scale degree 5 (B) is stated prominently at the beginning of each work and elaborated with its upper neighbor (C), a centrally important motive in both works (boxed in the Appendices).²⁸ This particular motivic resemblance is

²⁶ Several other scholars have interpreted Chopin's E-minor Prelude as an elaborated series of 7–6 suspensions: Schachter, "Schenker's Counterpoint," 528–529; Schachter, "The Prelude in E minor Op. 28 No. 4," 171; Schachter, "The Triad as Place and Action," 150; Richard Taruskin, "The Chopinesque Miniature" in *The Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), vol. 3, 355–356; and Matthew BaileyShea, "Teaching Agency and Narrative Analysis: The Chopin Preludes in E Minor and E Major," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 25 (2011): 24–25.

²⁷ Other instances of diminished-third chords in Chopin's op. 28 are #17 (mm. 20, 22, 24, and 25), #18 (m. 17), and #22 (mm. 5, 6–7, and 39). See Ellis, *A Chord in Time*, 204–206 for more examples of augmented sixths in Chopin.

²⁸ Bach used the 6–5 sigh figure in other movements of the B-minor Mass, notably in the subject of the opening fugue (Kyrie I) and the final sections of 'Domine Deus,' 'Qui tollis' and 'Agnus Dei.' The sigh figure is not a prominent two-note motive elsewhere in Chopin's op. 28, although Andreas Boelcke has argued for 5–6 as a unifying factor throughout the set in Boelcke, "Chopin's 24

unsurprising, since the semitonal neighbor (5)–6–5 in minor is an archetypal gesture associated with grief since the Renaissance, and one easily combined with a descending bass. In both works, the neighbor motive is initially stated as a semitone and then expanded to a whole tone, and transferred to lower voices and echoed at lower pitch levels. In the ‘Crucifixus,’ the C–B motive pervades the vocal texture at the beginning of each A section and concludes each bass ostinato statement except the last, where it appears in the soprano part, transformed into scale degrees 4–3 in G major and thus preventing melodic closure in the new key.²⁹ In the prelude, the sequential descent of the motive comprises the melody of the first 8 bars, while the pitches C–B are transferred to the alto voice, becoming the uppermost note in the left-hand part (mm. 5–9) and then shifting to the bass (mm. 9–12). The neighbor motive reappears in the foreground in m. 12 as it is transferred back up from the bass through the middle and upper octaves.

The descending-semitone motive also carries hermeneutic connotations. The A’ section of the ‘Crucifixus’ begins with an ornamented version of the motive that combines the sigh figure with a chiasmus, a notational symbol of the cross: (C)–A#–B–G#–A (mm. 37–8).³⁰ In Chopin’s untexted prelude, the sigh motive has no explicit programmatic associations, but it unquestionably contributes to the plaintive affect. As Schachter has commented, “semitonal intensity combined with downward motion seems an appropriate musical analogue to actions and feelings associated with loss, sadness, and death. These stylistic features could hardly

Préludes, Op. 28: A Cycle Unified by Motion between the Fifth and Sixth Degrees” (D.M.A. thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2008).

²⁹ The final soprano descent, which falls chromatically from G to B, omitting C#, is the same as the bass descent in the first half of Chopin’s prelude, even to the cadential oscillation between C and B.

³⁰ The head of the Kyrie II subject is a similar chiasmus (with a central diminished third, instead of a minor third as here). Bach frequently employed chiastic figures to set the texts “Christus” and “Kreuz” in his cantatas and passion music; many of these are closely related to his eponymous B-A-C-H motive (Bb–A–C–B). The chiasmus in mm. 37–38 of the ‘Crucifixus’ is an inversion of this motive beginning on the same (enharmonic) initial pitch.

be given greater prominence than in this Chopin Prelude.”³¹ Later in the same passage, he offers his personal interpretation of the prelude as a “vision of death”:

I find that many people do seem to have an emotional reaction to the piece that would be compatible with its being strongly tinged with grief, mourning, and the thought of death. That reaction is certainly due in part to associations with the Prelude’s motivic design and to other stylistic aspects, for these relate to countless explicitly death-oriented pieces—funeral marches, threnodies, operatic death scenes, and the like. But the Prelude’s overpowering pathos also inheres in the way it reveals its tonal field, in its governing tonic at first cast adrift without anchor and then pulled further and further down until it finally hits bottom.

Thus for Schachter, the implicit program of the E-minor Prelude resembles the explicit one of the ‘Crucifixus.’ Similarly, the Chopin specialists Alfred Cortot and Hans von Bülow titled the E-minor Prelude “Sur une tombe” (“On a grave”) and “Erstickungsanfall” (“Asphyxiation”), respectively.³² Each of these interpreters of music recognized Chopin’s evocation of the topic of death through genre conventions. This reading is strengthened and invested with additional layers of meaning through recognition of the relationship between Chopin’s E-minor Prelude and Bach’s ‘Crucifixus,’ and their constellation of shared musical similarities above and beyond the generic markers of the lament.

³¹ Schachter, “The Triad as Place and Action,” 152.

³² The pianist and teacher Alfred Cortot’s evocative titles for Chopin’s preludes are listed in the preface to his edition of op. 28: Alfred Cortot, ed., *Frédéric Chopin: 24 Préludes, Op. 28* (Paris: Éditions Maurice Senart, 1926), ii. The conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow’s descriptive epithets for the preludes are transmitted in Julius Kapp, “Chopin’s *Préludes* op. 28: Aufzeichnungen von Laura Rappoldi-Kahrer nach Angaben von Liszt, W. von Lenz und Frau von Mouckhanoff,” *Die Musik* 34 (1909/10): 227–233.

Lament Topics in Chopin's Op. 28

Why might Chopin have incorporated elements of Bach's 'Crucifixus' into his E-Minor Prelude? Associations with topics of lament or death are a common thread linking the slow minor-key preludes in Chopin's op. 28. Of the twelve minor-key preludes, eight are in fast tempos designated Allegro, Presto, or Molto agitato, and are of impassioned character. In contrast, the four slow preludes in minor keys, #2, 4, 6 and 20, all invoke recognizable lament or funeral-march topics. Prelude 2 in A minor was titled "Méditation douloureuse" ("Sorrowful Meditation") by Cortot and "Todesahnung" ("Presentiment of Death") by von Bülow. It is set in a low register with a narrow-range melody, features a march rhythm with a dotted figure on the second beat, and embeds a reference to the famous opening motive of the "Dies irae" requiem chant in the repeating left-hand figuration.³³ The harmony of this prelude is unrelentingly dissonant and its tonality and texture are, famously, the most severely disrupted of the set. Prelude 6 in B minor (called "Le mal du pays" or "Homesickness" by Cortot and "Sterbeglocklein" or "Funeral Bells" by von Bülow) resembles the E-minor Prelude in its slow tempo, elegiac affect, and repeated-chord accompaniment,³⁴ and the opening gestures of the left-hand melody conclude with a motive resembling the "Dies irae"—albeit ending rather than beginning on the downbeat, and ending rather than beginning the phrase.³⁵ The E-minor and B-minor Preludes were marked as elegies by the composer himself, who requested

³³ The initial interval of this motive, a descending semitone, is a descending whole tone in the original chant. Since the motive is interwoven into the middle of the accompaniment texture, Chopin stemmed the four notes of the motive upwards to clarify its melodic importance.

³⁴ The E-minor and B-minor Preludes also share a period form with expanded consequent, large-scale relationship between a stable B and its upper neighbor C, rhythmically isolated final gesture, and gapped *Umlinie* (the B-minor Prelude has no structural 2 in its second half).

³⁵ Leikin argues for hidden or permuted "Dies irae" motives in all of the op. 28 preludes in Leikin, "Chopin's Preludes Op. 28 and Lamartine's *Les Préludes*," 30–42.

that they be performed at his own funeral.³⁶ In Prelude 20 in C minor, the slow tempo, chorale-style homophonic texture and conjunct melody, consistent rhythmic pattern with a dotted rhythm on the third beat, and chromatically descending bass line in the second half have prompted the epithet “Funeral March” (Cortot: “Funérailles”; von Bülow: “Trauermarsch”).³⁷

In a characteristically nineteenth-century conflation of the sacred with the archaic, each of these four preludes, #2, 4, 6 and 20, is associated with lamentation or death through quotation or imitation of older religious music: the ‘Dies irae’ chant, Bach’s ‘Crucifixus,’ and the chorale. The temporal remoteness of these references is enhanced by their generic remoteness, since all are instances of choral music—a genre in which Chopin never composed—transferred to a piano texture. Listeners of the time would not likely have recognized the transformed ‘Dies irae’ motives in #2 and (if there is one) in #6, or known Bach’s ‘Crucifixus,’ so it is likely that these allusions had purely private meanings for Chopin. Homophonic textures in 4 or 5 parts, however, are easily identifiable, particularly in the context of Chopin’s typical bass–chord–melody or figural textures, and they can be understood as referring to historical or religious music or both, by suggesting a chorale or hymn. Chopin used chorale textures in numerous other works, particularly as a way of creating textural contrast in the middle sections of his nocturnes, as in the Nocturnes in G minor op. 15/3 and op. 37/1 and the Nocturne in C minor. In a discussion of the Nocturne op. 15/3, which contains a modal chorale section marked “religioso,” Kallberg discusses the ways in which this work defies the conventions of its genre, but also identifies another potential association of such textures, that of

³⁶ Benita Eisler, *Chopin’s Funeral* (New York: Random House, 2003), 7.

³⁷ For discussion of cultural constructions and representations of death in Chopin’s time as they relate to the Funeral March from the Sonata in B♭ minor op. 35, see Jeffrey Kallberg, “Chopin’s March, Chopin’s Death,” *Nineteenth-Century Music* 25/1 (2001): 3–26, and Lawrence Kramer, “Chopin at the Funeral: Episodes in the History of Modern Death,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54/1 (2001): 97–125.

Polish Romantic nationalism.³⁸ Goldberg takes this same point further, identifying Chopin's funeral marches as having nationalistic connotations as well³⁹—which brings us back to the death-topic preludes. The case for these preludes as expressions of nationalism is unconvincing since they contain no markers suggesting Polishness such as modal melodies or national dances. Nor can we ascribe to them a clearly intended religious meaning: Chopin was born Catholic and died confessing Catholicism, but left little or no evidence of any religious observances or beliefs during his lifetime. As Leikin has noted, however, “Chopin was attracted to [the genre of the funeral march] perhaps more than any other composer.”⁴⁰ In light of this, in combination with the fragmentary, aphoristic nature of the preludes and the intimate nature of their small scale, as well as Chopin's increasing ill health when he composed them, I find the most compelling interpretation of these death topics is as evidence of Chopin's confrontation with his own increasingly precarious mortality.

³⁸ Jeffrey Kallberg, “The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor,” *Nineteenth-Century Music* 11/3 (1998): 255–257, reprinted in Kallberg, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 26–29.

³⁹ Halina Goldberg, “Remembering that tale of grief: The Prophetic Voices in Chopin's Music,” in *The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*, ed. Goldberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 68–70.

⁴⁰ Leikin, “The Sonatas” in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 161. Other instances of funeral-march topics in Chopin's music are (most famously) the third movement of the Sonata #2 in B^b minor op. 35, the *Marche funèbre* in C minor op. 72/2, and the introduction to the Fantaisie in F minor op. 49. The Nocturnes in C minor op. 48/1 and op. 55/1, the Ballade in G minor op. 23, and the Polish Songs op. 74 #13 (“Nie ma czego trzeba” or “Melancholy”) and #17 (“Śpiew z mogiły” or “Leaves Are Falling”) are plaintive laments.

Chopin's and Scriabin's E-minor Preludes

As with Bach's influence on Chopin, Chopin's influence on Scriabin's early-period works (up to 1903) is well documented.⁴¹ Like Chopin, Scriabin composed extensively for the piano, and in many of the same genres: preludes, etudes, impromptus, nocturnes, waltzes, mazurkas, and a polonaise. Indeed, Scriabin's early works were often dismissed as overly derivative of Chopin by contemporaneous critics. For example, Runciman complained, "His piano compositions are Chopin diluted with Henselt and water, and slightly flavoured at times with Russian folk-tune. He is one of the most generous borrowers time has brought forth. While he was playing I could have thought at moments that he had unearthed some unpublished work of Chopin and was playing a practical joke upon us."⁴² Hull observed "the great hold which the Polish composer Chopin exercised over the young Russian pianist" but cautioned more charitably that "we must not blame Scriabin for that unstinted admiration of the greatest master of the genius of the piano, and indeed it would be one of the greatest tributes to call Scriabin 'The Russian Chopin.'"⁴³ The composer Busoni less

⁴¹ The year 1903 is commonly cited as a turning point in Scriabin's compositional career, when he resigned his professorship at Moscow Conservatory in order to dedicate himself to composing full-time. For comparisons of Scriabin's early style to Chopin's, see Daniel Mickey, "An Analysis of Texture in Selected Piano Etudes of Chopin and Scriabin" (D.M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 1980); Wen-Ching Lin, "The Scriabin Sound and Style: An Analysis of Twelve Etudes op. 8" (D.M.A. thesis, University of Miami, 1994); Min-Jung Kim, "Chopin's Influences in Scriabin's Piano Concerto, Op. 20" (D.M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 2002); Seong-Ae Lim, "The Influence of Chopin in Piano Music on the Twenty-Four Preludes for Piano, Op. 11, of Alexander Scriabin" (D.M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 2002); Atsuko Okada, "Chopin's Influence on Scriabin—Concerning Pianistic Vocabulary," *Chopin and his Work in the Context of Culture*, v. 2, ed. Irena Poniatowska, 299–309 (Kraków: Polska Akademia Chopinowska. 2003); and Hwa-Young Lee, "Tradition and Innovation in the Twenty-Four Preludes, Opus 11 of Alexander Scriabin" (D.M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2006).

⁴² John F. Runciman, "Noises, Smells, and Colours," *Musical Quarterly* 1/2 (1915): 153.

⁴³ A. Eaglefield Hull, "A Survey of the Pianoforte Works of Scriabin," *Musical Quarterly* 2/4 (1916): 603 and 605.

charitably and more aphoristically described Scriabin's op. 8 etudes as "une indigestion de Chopin."⁴⁴ In his biography of Scriabin, Bowers describes Scriabin sleeping with Chopin's music under his pillow, yet defensively and tearfully reacting to these constant comparisons: "What if my music does sound like Chopin?! It's not stolen. It's mine..."⁴⁵ Similar comparisons remain commonplace in contemporary scholarship; for instance, Rimm describes Scriabin's early "Chopin-tinted (some would say Chopin-tainted) music."⁴⁶

Scriabin's op. 11 preludes were composed between 1888 and 1896. Until 1892 he was still a student at the Moscow Conservatory, but many of the preludes were completed after his graduation, during his first trip to Europe in the summer of 1895. Scriabin unquestionably knew Chopin's op. 28 preludes when he composed his op. 11, which, like Chopin's set, is organized in pairs of relative keys ascending by fifth. Several of Scriabin's preludes have textures and rhythmic patterns that are strongly reminiscent of Chopin's: the C-major Preludes (#1) of both composers' sets have similar harmonic plans and rhythmically dissonant arpeggiated figurations;⁴⁷ the A-minor Preludes (#2) are both tonally unhinged by their off-tonic beginnings; both F#-minor Preludes (#8) are *moto perpetuo* figurations encompassing a wide register in an Agitato tempo; and Chopin's F#-major Prelude and Scriabin's Gb-major Prelude (#13) have similar rhythms, textures, and contours. Scriabin's Bb-minor Prelude, no. 16, alludes to the melody, register, rhythm and harmony of the funeral march in the same key from

⁴⁴ Letter from Busoni to Philipp, 24 June 1922, quoted in Edward Joseph Dent, *Ferruccio Busoni: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 272, and in Robert Rimm, *The Composer-pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 2002), 106.

⁴⁵ Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin: A Biography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 134.

⁴⁶ Rimm, *The Composer-pianists*, 109.

⁴⁷ Chopin's C-major Prelude uses polyrhythms of 5 against 6, while Scriabin's C-major Prelude uses 3 against 5. The key, harmonic plan, and arpeggiated figuration of both preludes recall Bach's C-major Prelude from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Bk. 1, which is rhythmically consonant but suggests a mild metric dissonance through the contour and repetition scheme of its arpeggios, which divide each half-bar into groupings of 2+3+3.

Chopin's Sonata op. 35. A prelude from a slightly later set, Scriabin's E \flat -major Prelude op. 15/3, adopts the widely-spaced rolled chords of Chopin's Etude in C \sharp -minor op. 10/11. Although Scriabin's early works show Chopin's influence most strongly, even some of his later works reference Chopin's music: for example, the left-hand accompaniment of Scriabin's op. 74/2 is very much like that in Chopin's A-minor prelude, op. 28/2.⁴⁸ Scriabin's E-minor Prelude op. 11/4, the focus of this discussion, resembles both Chopin's E-minor and B-minor Preludes, op. 28/4 and 6.

Scriabin's Prelude No. 4 in E minor (Appendix C) was the first one of the set composed, in 1888. It is the only work in op. 11 that shares the minor key, slow tempo, and repeated rhythms of Chopin's elegiac preludes. Its original conception, however, was not directly modeled on Chopin's preludes: it is a reworking of an unfinished ballade in B \flat minor from 1887. While neither the incomplete ballade nor the prelude is explicitly associated with the topic of death, the ballade manuscript is captioned with a wistful poetic fragment written by Scriabin that describes a visionary other world resembling heaven. The opening phrase of the ballade and the fragmentary poem are shown in Example 3.⁴⁹

Example 3: Scriabin, Unfinished Sketch for a Ballade in B \flat minor



O country of visions!
How different from this life
Where I have no place

But there, I hear voices,
A world of beatific souls
I see . . .

⁴⁸ For more on the relationships between these two preludes, see Leikin, "Chopin's A-minor Prelude and its Symbolic Language," *International Journal of Musicology* 6 (1997): 160–62.

⁴⁹ The Ballade sketch is transcribed in Lee, "Tradition and Innovation," 20, and the poem is translated in Bowers, *Scriabin: A Biography*, 137.

In the reworked version that became his E-minor Prelude, Scriabin changed the meter to $\frac{6}{4}$, doubling the bar lengths and suggesting a slower tempo. The prelude's texture, with the left-hand melody in a cello register and a repeating-dyad accompaniment above it, recalls Chopin's B-minor Prelude op. 28/6, and even more strongly resembles Chopin's C#-minor Etude, op. 25/7, which counterpoints its wide-register bass melody with fragmentary melodic gestures in the topmost voice. However, this prelude is similar to Chopin's E-minor Prelude in many respects, as shown in the two right-hand columns of Example 1 (p. 3). Of the two D.M.A. theses that compare Chopin's op. 28 preludes and Scriabin's op. 11 preludes, Lim's draws no connections between the E-minor Preludes, noting only the textural resemblance between Scriabin's E-minor Prelude and Chopin's B-minor Prelude, while Lee's mentions the melodic focus on B₅, repeated-pulse accompaniment, and chromaticism of both E-minor preludes.⁵⁰ The only published comparison I have found is a brief comment in the introduction to a collection of Romantic piano music: "The slow, relentless, repeated notes of Scriabin's E-minor Prelude create an atmosphere of despair, as do those of Chopin's Prelude in the same key."⁵¹

The beginnings of Chopin's and Scriabin's E-minor Preludes are linked by the opening octave ascent in the topmost voice. Although the octaves are not in the same register, they establish the same melodic pitch, B₅. Scriabin's first chromatic descent departs from this note: B–A#–A–G, moving from the right hand to the left hand in m. 1. Descending-semitone sighs are embedded within this figure and its continuation, as well as in the uppermost voice of the texture (for example, G–F# in m. 2). When this descent returns an octave lower in Scriabin's coda (mm. 20–21), it is set in the same register and formal position as the A–G#–G descent at the end of Chopin's prelude (mm. 21–22), linking their endings. The beginnings and endings have harmonic similarities as well: preludes, the first complete harmony in each work is a first-

⁵⁰ Lim, "The Influence of Chopin," 42; Lee, "Tradition and Innovation," 22–23.

⁵¹ Joseph Smith, ed., *Romancing the Piano: Classics of the Romantic Era* (Bedford Hills, NY: Ekay, 2005), xi.

inversion tonic triad, and a stable root-position tonic is not reached until the very end.

Like Chopin's prelude, Scriabin's prelude is a period form with an antecedent that departs from the home key in the third bar and tonicizes two other closely related keys (A minor and G major in the Chopin; B minor and D major in the Scriabin). In both works, the resolution of dominant harmonies is consistently undermined. In Chopin's prelude, the apparent dominant in m. 2.3 is spelled with E^b instead of D to reflect its downward motion. On the downbeat of m. 3 the harmony moves to an ambiguous French augmented-6th chord that in retrospect sounds like an altered dominant in the home key, but which also prepares the dominant of A minor on the next downbeat (m. 4). The chordal thirds of both this E dominant 7th and the D dominant 7th in m. 7 are lowered, undermining their dominant function and preventing resolution. In Scriabin's prelude, the initial augmented dominant very briefly resolves to the tonic, but the V⁷/V that follows moves to an ambiguous sonority with no chordal third until m. 3.3, the beginning of the next phrase, so that satisfactory closure is denied. The notes on the downbeat of m. 3 consist of the tonic fifth (E–B) and the dominant fifth (B–F[♯]); we expect the dominant but the outer fifth is the tonic, so that these two harmonic functions, normally opposed, become blurred. When V⁷/V returns at the end of m. 4 (now in B minor), its dominant function is undercut by the lowering of the chordal third and fifth (E[♯] and G[♯] become E[♮] and G[♮]), in a process very similar to that in Chopin's mm. 4 and 7–8. Both antecedents end with half cadences on V of E minor, ornamented with the semitonal sigh motive in the melody at two different pitch levels (C–B and G–F[♯]), and marked by a change in texture: in m. 12 of the Chopin the left-hand part drops out, and in mm. 7–8 of the Scriabin the left-hand melody becomes a conventional bass line while the melody is transferred to the top voice. The same melodic shift from bass to treble happens at the analogous point in Chopin's B-minor Prelude, mm. 7–8, which has a similar sentential phrase structure.

Roig-Francolí and Tymoczko have posited a harmonic and voice-leading pattern in the first eight bars of Chopin's prelude: a descending-fifth sequence of dominant sevenths connected by

chromatic passing chords.⁵² Example 4 shows Tymoczko's reduction, in which dominant-7th chords are transformed into diminished-7th chords through progressively lowering the upper chord tones by a semitone, then lowering the original chord 5th a second time to create a new dominant-7th chord. These local voice-leading cycles form a larger harmonic sequence of fifths.⁵³ The opening phrase of Scriabin's prelude embeds an ascending-fifth sequence of dominant harmonies: V of E minor (m. 1), V of B minor (mm. 2–3), and V of F \sharp (m. 4). These harmonies are agogically emphasized by the long notes in the bass melody, iterating the gapped diatonic descent G–F \sharp –D–C \sharp over the course of the first four bars. The bass is then transferred down an octave and ascends chromatically to F \sharp before arriving on the dominant B in m. 8. Its overall trajectory, from scale degree 3 (G) down to 5 (B), is the same as that of the bass line in Chopin's E-minor Prelude.

In both preludes, an expanded consequent diverges from the antecedent not at the concluding cadence but sooner than expected—after three bars in the Chopin, and after six bars in the Scriabin—and in both cases the cadential closure is repeatedly deflected. In Scriabin's consequent, the chromatic ascent to F \sharp in the bass (mm. 5–7) is disrupted by an unexpected rest on the downbeat of m. 15, and when the music begins again, the cadential

⁵² Miguel Roig-Francolí, *Harmony in Context* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 809–811; Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music*, 287–293.

⁵³ In Tymoczko's model, the fifth cycle is B–E–A–D–G \sharp ; Roig-Francolí's model is one step further in the sharp direction (F \sharp –B–E–A–D) because he interprets F \sharp as the chord root in m. 2, locates the B chord in m. 3.3 (Tymoczko's chord 1c), and ends the pattern on the D \flat chord in m. 7 (Tymoczko's chord 4a). This interpretation is less convincing, because the metric and durational accent on B in m. 2 make it a stronger candidate for chord membership than the C. Hoffman offers a different cyclic reading, closer to my own, in which the repeated transformation of dominant harmonies into subdominants contributes to the lament character of the work; see Justin Hoffmann, "Hearing with Two Ears: Conflicting Perceptions of Space in Tonal Music" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2011), 146–159. A more abstract version of the voice-leading model is presented in Brandon Derfler, *Single-Voice Transformations: A Model for Parsimonious Voice Leading* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 140–146.

Example 4: Harmonic Reduction of Chopin's E-minor Prelude, mm. 1–12
 (Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music*, Fig. 8.5.5, 287)

Bar numbers have been added for easier reference and the inversion label for chord 4c corrected

m. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1a 1b 1c 1d 2a 2b 2c 2d 3a 3b 3c 3d 4a 4b 4c 4d

e: i^6 V^4_3 a: Fr^4_3 ii^{b4}_3 $V^7 G$ G vi^7 ct^{o7} ii^4_3 vii^{b02} vii^{b02} $a: iv^7$ ii^{o6}_5 vii^{o4}_3 i^6 e: V^7

e: i^6 a: V^7 $G: ii^4_3$ V^7 a: vii^{o4}_3

drive does not resume. Instead, the sequence of the preceding two bars (mm. 13–4, which restate mm. 5–6) continues, as if the music has lost its place in the narrative. Nor does the sequence proceed as might be expected, with $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}$ – VI^6 in **F# minor**. Instead, the motive is sequenced up a fourth to A minor, breaking the ascending stepwise pattern but allowing the cadential progression to resume, now directed toward the tonic rather than the dominant. The move toward A minor also balances the sequencing of the initial phrase of the prelude down a fourth to B minor (mm. 3–4). The submediant harmony at the end of the motive is delayed until the second half of m. 16, and the rhythmic augmentation and the caesura that follows both enhance the sense that the music is unsure of its own continuation.

As in Bach's 'Crucifixus' and Chopin's E-minor Prelude, Scriabin's E-minor Prelude prepares the final cadence with a diminished-third chord.⁵⁴ In Chopin's prelude, this harmony is approached from a six-four chord and followed by a caesura that delays the final dominant, while in Scriabin's, it is preceded by a caesura and followed by a six-four chord that delays the final dominant. The dominant is reached at last in m. 19, but its resolution to tonic is delayed by yet another caesura. Thus the consequent of Scriabin's prelude is disrupted melodically, harmonically, tonally, and rhythmically. The listener's expectations that the consequent will continue in parallel to the antecedent, that the sequence will continue in its established pattern, or that the music will continue at all in mm. 15, 17, and 19, are denied. The tonic–dominant oscillation in mm. 20–21 strengthens the harmonic closure of the prelude, but melodic closure is not achieved: the left-hand melody repeatedly descends only as far as scale degree 3, and—as in Chopin's B-minor Prelude—the uppermost voice remains on 5.

⁵⁴ In light of the preceding F-major harmony, Scriabin's inverted augmented sixth initially sounds like its enharmonic equivalent, $\text{V}^7/\flat\text{II}$. Chopin did not exploit this enharmonic relationship in the prelude (as he did in other works, such as the Etude in E minor op. 25/5, Fantasia in F minor op. 49, and the Mazurka in B major op. 56 no. 1), although it is perhaps hinted at with the resolution of $\text{B}\flat$ to A in m. 21.

Despite the differences in texture and harmonic language, Chopin's and Scriabin's E-minor Preludes are closely linked by their many shared musical features. They are connected at a larger level by Scriabin's compositional modeling of the op. 11 set on Chopin's op. 28. Like Chopin, Scriabin knew and taught Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, but as with Chopin, I can find no documentary evidence that Scriabin knew Bach's B-Minor Mass or recognized the echoes of the 'Crucifixus' in Chopin's E-minor Prelude. Because this link is unconnected, and because there is no implicit program for Scriabin's E-minor Prelude—the otherworldly poetic fragment is associated with the early ballade version—it is more difficult to make a case for Scriabin's prelude than Chopin's as a representation of *****. Contemporary critics have nonetheless noted a tendency toward melancholy in Scriabin's works: "During his lifetime Scriabin's creations were viewed as veering toward physical exhaustion and world-weariness, even death."⁵⁵ Scriabin's E-minor Prelude adopts several conventions of the lament topic, and through its many disruptions and silences it conveys an even greater sense of hopelessness and despair than its model, Chopin's E-minor Prelude.

Conclusion

Bach's 'Crucifixus,' Chopin's E-minor Prelude and Scriabin's E-minor Prelude are connected by a constellation of salient musical features and meanings, suggesting a chain of compositional modeling. These three historically and stylistically disparate works are related through their topics of lamentation and death, musical resemblances both on their surfaces and in their deeper-level structures, and most significantly, through their narrative schemes of repetition, disruption, and incomplete closure. Traditional laments set to descending chromatic basses are normally highly constrained forms that repeat unchangingly or with minimal

⁵⁵ Rimm, *The Composer-pianists*, 113.

variation, depicting the approach of an inexorable fate.⁵⁶ It is the combination of the lament topic with the trope of disrupted closure that particularly links these works. The differences in texture and scale between the ‘Crucifixus’ and the E-minor preludes reflect the differing conceptions of death represented in the music—the public and ceremonial death of Christ as commemorated in the Mass service, expressed by choral and orchestral forces, versus private and personal elegies expressed by solo performers. Bach’s ‘Crucifixus’ exemplifies many generic conventions of the lament, and in keeping with Baroque musical aesthetics it expresses a single affect, which is transformed only at the very end. Because of the work’s polyphonic construction, the sigh motive pervades the texture; it is heard in different voice parts and different registers, communicating a collective grief. The concluding turn to a major tonality and the shift from descending to ascending bass motion symbolize death as transfiguration. In keeping with their genre, Chopin’s and Scriabin’s preludes also express a single affect, but feature repeated discontinuities before their endings. In Chopin’s E-minor Prelude, the melody is stated in a single voice, registrally and temporally distinct from the accompaniment, signifying a Romantic subjectivity. Scriabin’s E-

⁵⁶ For example, in Hecuba’s lament from Cavalli’s *Il Didone* (1641), Climene’s lament from Cavalli’s *Egisto* (1643), Selino’s lament from Cesti’s *Argia* (1689), and Dido’s lament from Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* (c. 1688), the uninterrupted repetitions of the descending chromatic bass pattern create a sense of the inevitable. Lament-bass ostinatos are more rare in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music, but in more recent vernacular music, with its high degree of repetition, they are used to create a similar affect of inevitability, as in Led Zeppelin’s version of “Babe, I’m Gonna Leave You” (1969), the A sections of their version of “Dazed and Confused” (1969), and the verses of Radiohead’s “Exit Music (for a Film)” (1997), which is based on Chopin’s E-minor Prelude. In Antonio Carlos Jobim’s bossa-nova standard “Insensatez” (1963), also a reworking of Chopin’s E-minor Prelude, it is the oscillating stepwise 5–6–5 melody that inexorably descends, rather than the chromatic bass, which breaks off after the first phrase. In Elton John and Bernie Taupin’s “Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word” (1976), the descending-fifth sequence of the verse gives way to a descending-semitone lament, seemingly modified from the bass line of Dido’s lament; apart from a 1-bar extension in the consequent phrase, it forms a regular parallel period. It is surely not coincidental that the lyrics of all of these songs focus on topics of leaving and failed relationships.

minor Prelude embodies a later Romanticism through its increased use of disruptive silences, heightened chromaticism, and blurring of harmonic and textural functions: Chopin's melody and accompaniment are distinct, whereas Scriabin's are entangled. The greater discontinuities in Chopin's and Scriabin's preludes can be interpreted as depicting the struggle against fate, the hopelessness of despair, or perhaps a subjective self-awareness of the artifice of their own conventions. The common musical and hermeneutic threads that link these works—despite their contrasting styles and genres—enrich our understanding of the relationships between these three composers and their music.

Appendices A, B and C: Annotated Scores

In the scores that follow,

- formal designations are shown above the staff
- harmonies and cadences are labeled below the staff
 - subordinate harmonies are shown in parentheses
 - diminished-third chords are circled
 - applied chords are shown with slashes
 - applied progressions are shown with brackets
 - PAC = perfect authentic cadence
 - IAC = imperfect authentic cadence
 - HC = half cadence
- important motives are boxed
 - solid line = C–B sigh motive and close variants
 - even dashed line = transposed sigh motive
 - uneven dashed line = intervallic expansion of sigh motive and/or ornamentation with lower neighbor

Appendix A: Piano-vocal score of Bach, ‘Crucifixus’ from Mass in B Minor (BWV 232)

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Appendix B: Score of Chopin, *Prelude in E Minor, Op. 28 No. 4*

A section: antecedent

i^6 V^4_3 a: (Fr) 6 ii^6_4 (vii^6_4)
 e: i^6 V^4_3 a: (Fr) 6 ii^6_4 (vii^6_4)
 (a:) V^7 G: (vi^7) ii^4_3 (vii^6_4) V^7
 (a:) (iv^7) ii^6_5 (vii^6_4) $i^6 = e: iv^6$ V^7 (ii^6_5)

12 A' section: consequent

(e:) V^7 HC i^6 a: (Fr⁶) ii^{o4}_3 V^7

16 *trillo* f *dim.* p

e: iv^7 vii^{o4}_3 vii^{o6}_5 ii^{o4}_3 i^6 iv ii^{o4}_3 V (iv) V^{19}

20 *SMOZZ.* pp V^8 V^7 VI $Ger.^{o3}$ $V^4 - 3$ i PAC

Appendix C: Score of Scriabin, *Prelude in E Minor, Op. 11 No. 4*

A: antecedent

Harmonic analysis details:

- Measures 1-4: A: antecedent. Harmonic analysis includes $(I^6 I^6) V^+$, V^7/N , and $b: (I^6 I^6) V^+$.
- Measures 5-8: Section (b). Harmonic analysis includes i , V^7/N , $D: vii^{\circ 7}$, vi^6 , $e: vii^{\circ 7}$, VI^6 , Ger^3/N , and V^7/N .
- Measures 9-12: Section (c). Harmonic analysis includes i , V^7 , V^{7+} , $HC (elided)$, $(I^6 I^6) V^+$, V^7/N , and $b: (I^6 I^6) V^+$.

Other markings include p , pp , mf , $A': consequent$, and 3 (triplets).

(a) i V^7/V $D: vii^{o7}$ VI^6 $a: vii^{o7}$

(b) i VI^6 $e: vii^{o7}$ pp

(c) (iv^6_4) $e: (bII^6)$ (V^4/VI) Ger V^8_4 V^7_3 ppp

(d) i V^+ i V^+ i PAC

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