



KEEP AN EAR OUT

Channeling Scriabin

Pianist Xiayin Wang dives into beauty and tragedy.

By Brian Wise

ALEXANDER SCRIBIN placed sex high on his musical agenda. He added directions in his scores like “poisonously” and “satanically” and composed erotically charged pieces like *Desire*, *Danced Caress* and *Sensual Delights*. The composer also introduced madness into music. He dreamed of a vast multimedia work called *Mysterium* that was to be performed in a specially built temple in the Indian Himalayas and would drive the audience into a transcendental state.

The Chinese-American pianist Xiayin Wang recently recorded a survey of Scriabin’s piano pieces, including some that foreshadowed *Mysterium*. She also recently commissioned new works by American composers Richard Danielpour (*Enchanted Garden*, Preludes, Book II) and Sean Hickey (*Cursive*).

“I’m very attracted to drama — beauty,

tragedy,” said Wang. “Scriabin went from being a normal person to a crazy guy to the end. He manages to put that in his music. He had very advanced ideas about what piano music could be — with harmonies, with chromaticism. He was absolutely taking a risk for his time. Love it or hate it, he came out with his definition of music.”

Earlier this year, Wang had her own brush with music’s power over the subconscious when visiting a friend whose wife has Alzheimer’s. “It was very sad. The couple was married for such a long time and she does not know who he is. But when she hears music, she is so quiet and she tells you, ‘Please do not talk.’ And she started to talk normally, exclaiming how beautiful it was. She had some tears. You see, at that moment, music has healing power.” ■