

# Scriabin

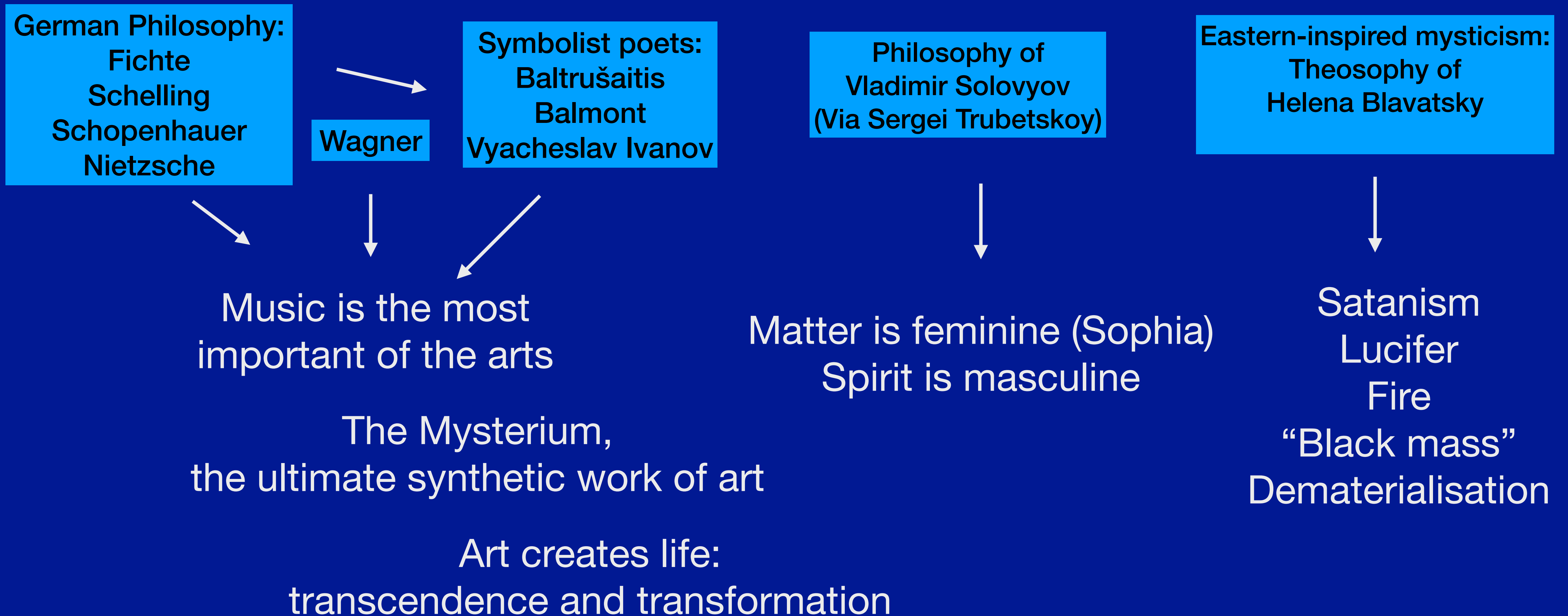
## Towards the Flame



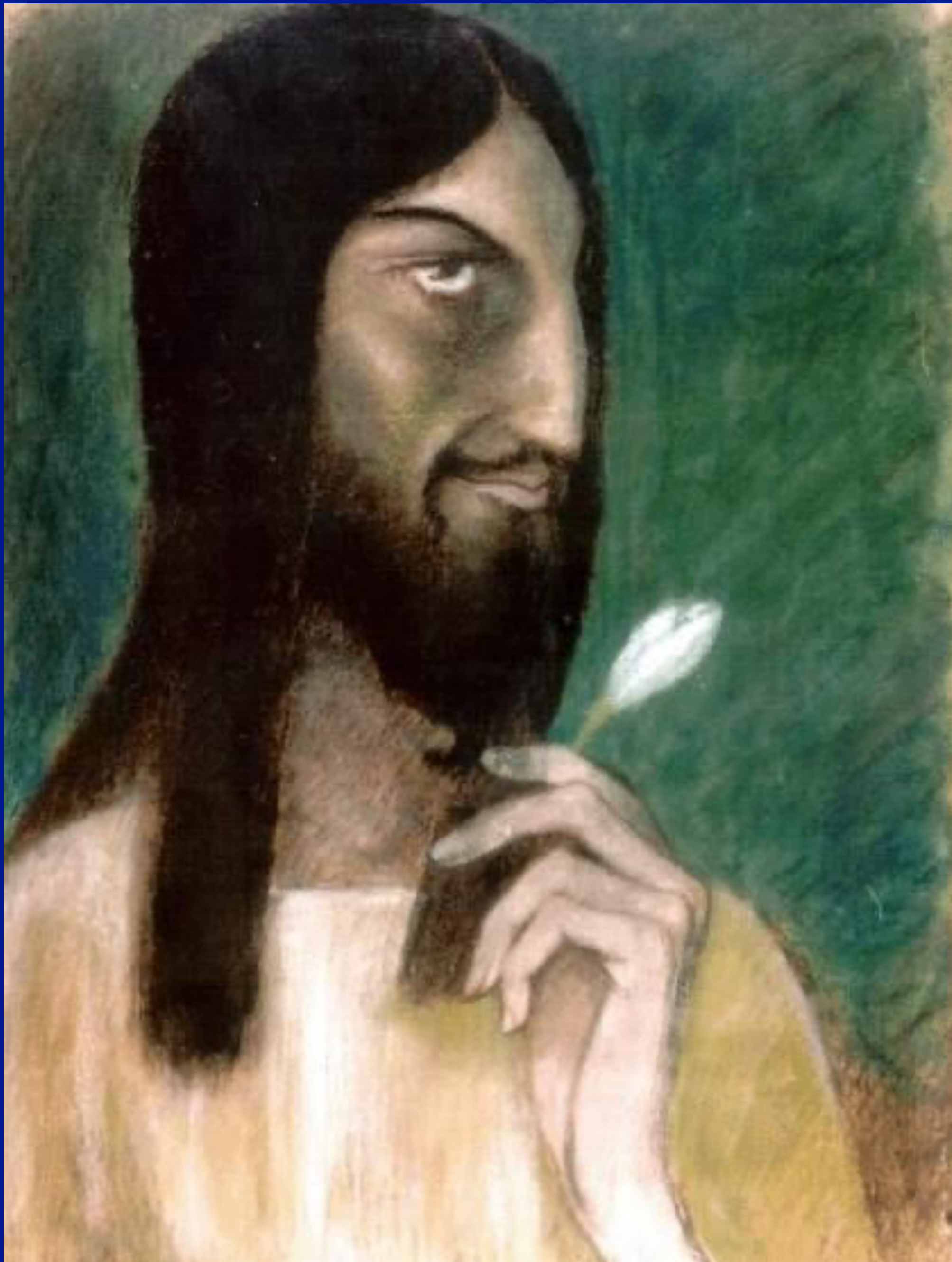
Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis



# THE PHILOSOPHY



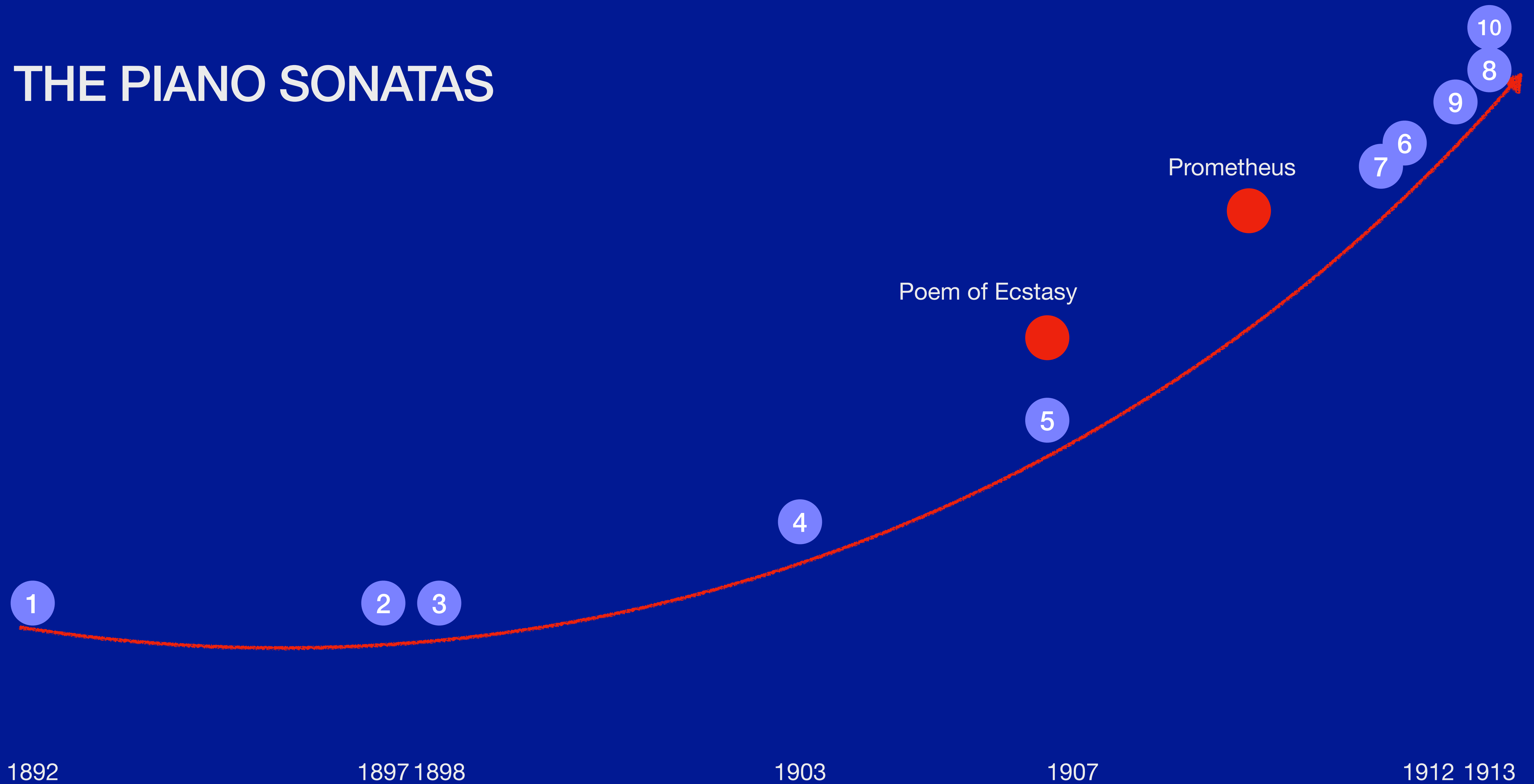




Nikolai Sperling  
Oriental Sage



# THE PIANO SONATAS





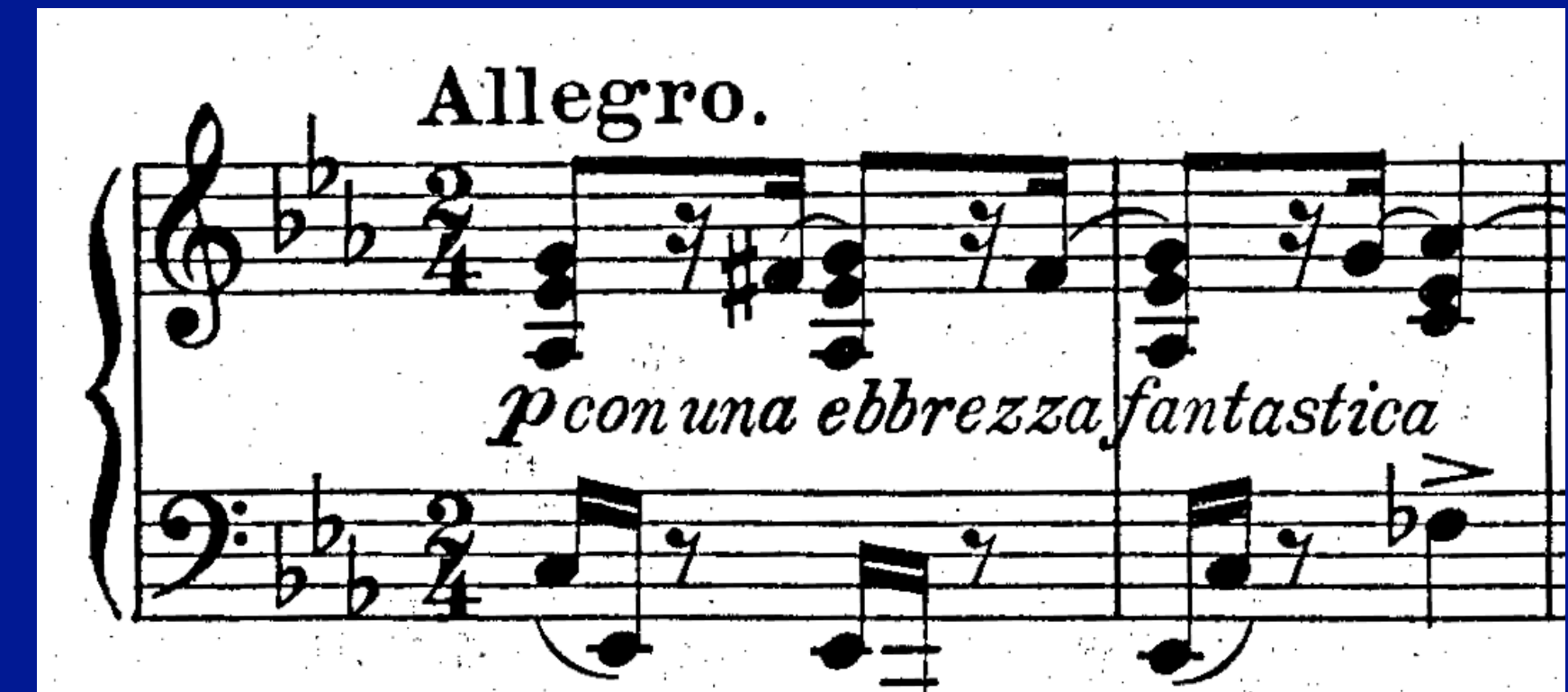
# Striking features

- Extravagant directions

Almost nothing



with fantastical inebriation



Horror surges up, mixed with a delirious dance



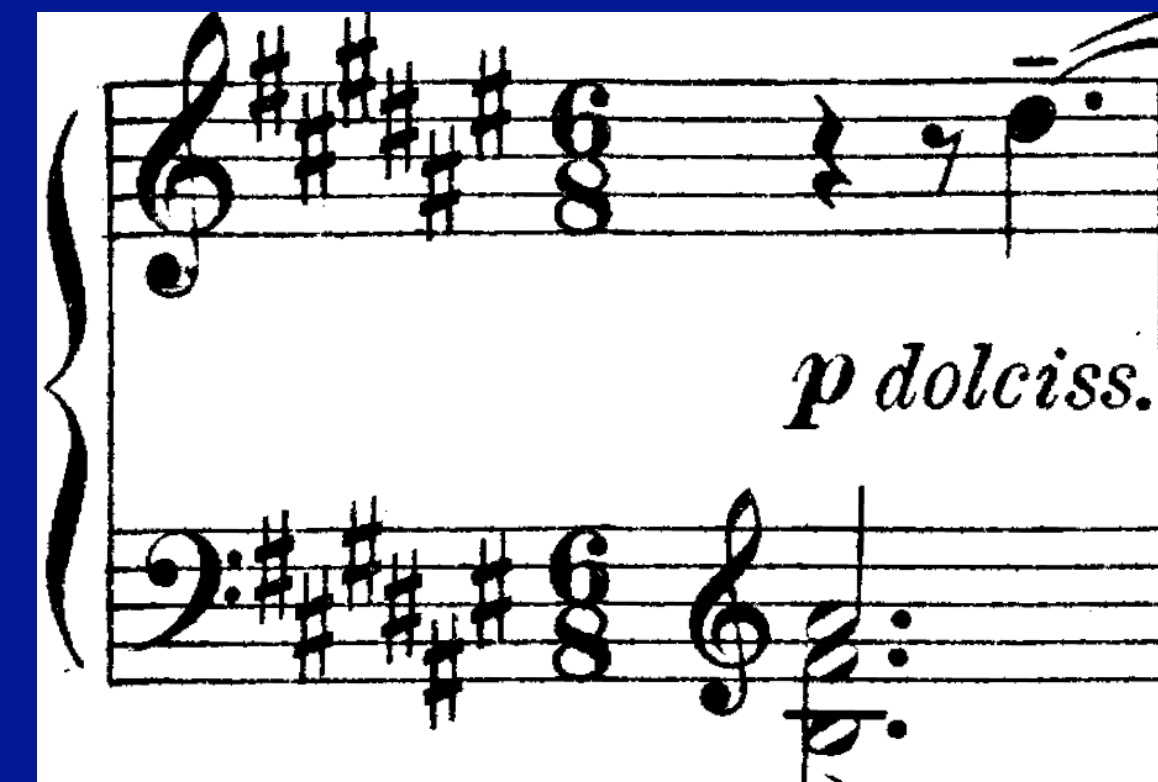
panting





# Striking features

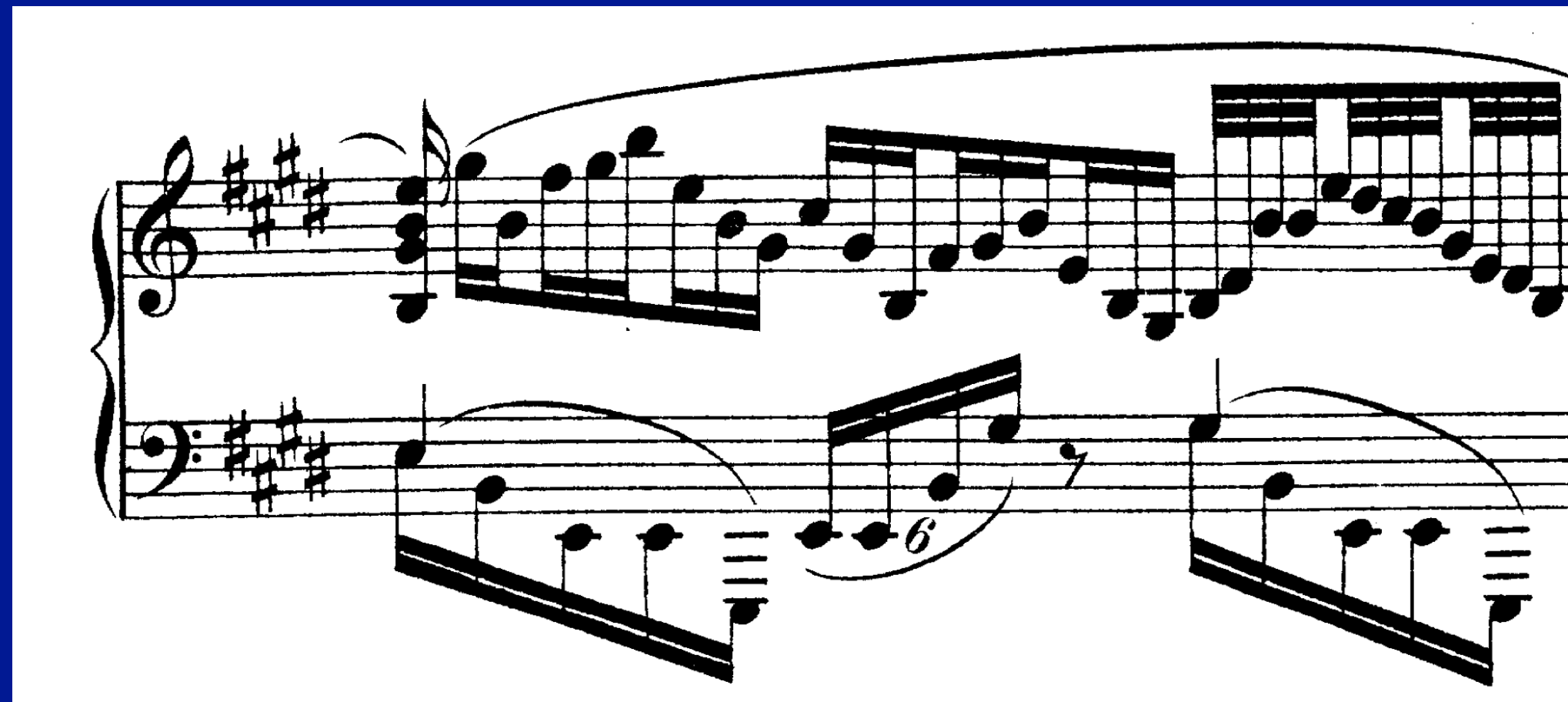
- Extravagant directions
- Extravagant key signatures (and later lack of them)





# Striking features

- Extravagant directions
- Extravagant key signatures (and later lack of them)
- Polyrhythms

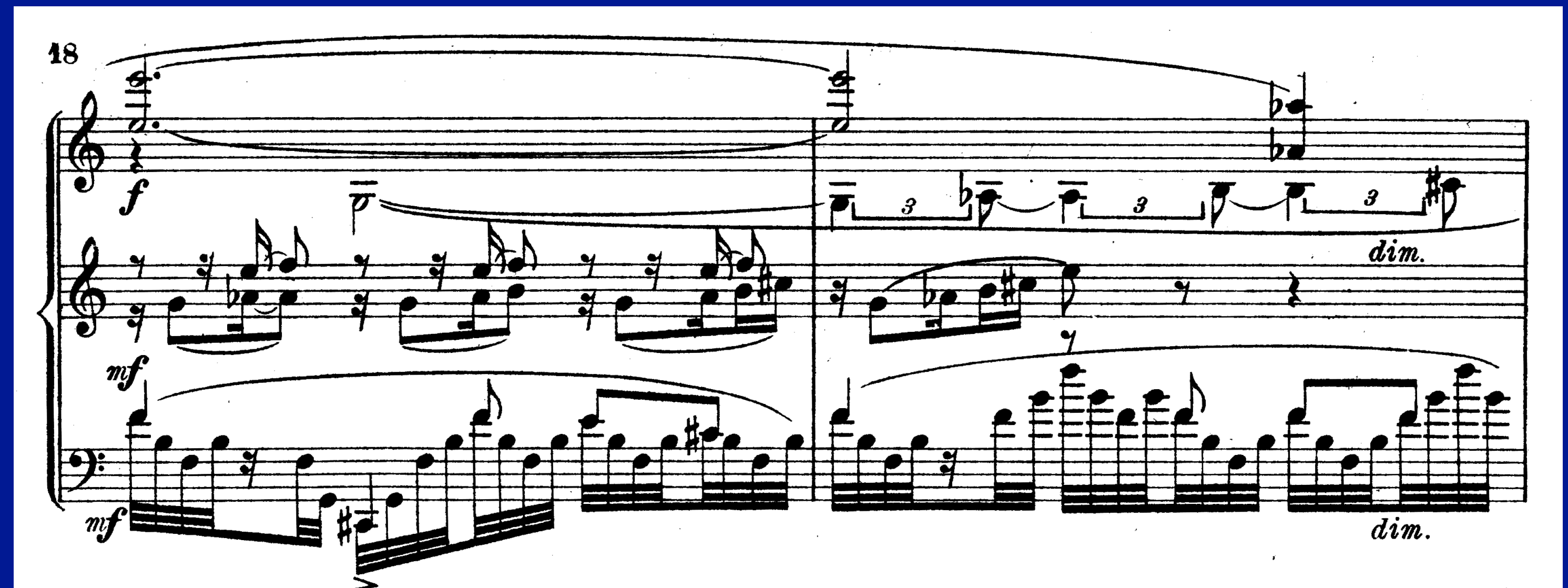
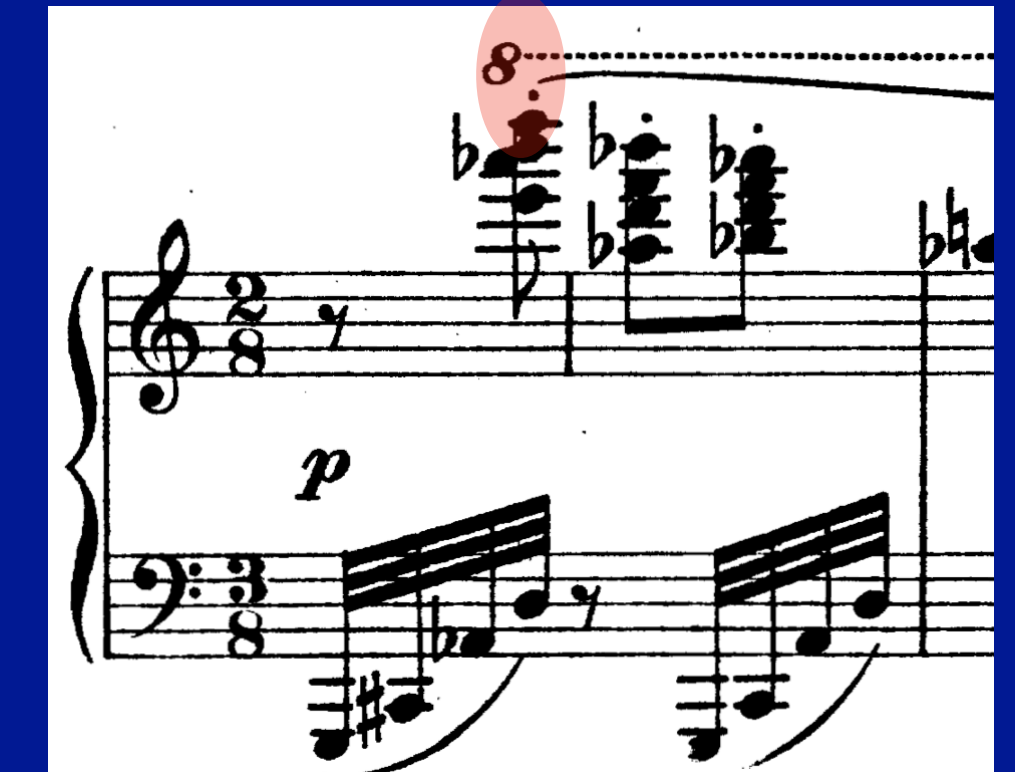




# Striking features

- Extravagant directions
- Extravagant key signatures (and later lack of them)
- Polyrhythms
- Non-tonal harmony
- Multi-layered textures

The note the doesn't exist





## Three types of expression

- WILL (fanfares, wilful ascending melodies)
- EROS (soft, lyrical, caressing, sense of stopped time)
- FLIGHT/ DIVINE PLAY (quick passages and trills, usually more rhythmic, like an ecstatic dance)



# Sonata 1

(1893)

At the age of 20: an infirmity of the hand...

Fate throws an obstacle on the path to a goal greatly desired: of glamour and fame...

Life's first serious misfortune.

The first serious ruminations, the beginning of analysis.

Doubts that good health could ever return, and the darkest of moods.

The first serious contemplation of the value of life, of religion, of God.

A strong belief in Him lingers on...

Ardent prayer and attending church...

Reproaching both Fate and God.

The composition of the First Sonata, with a funeral march...

– from Scriabin's notebooks



Ciurlionis, Funeral Symphony (VII) (1903)



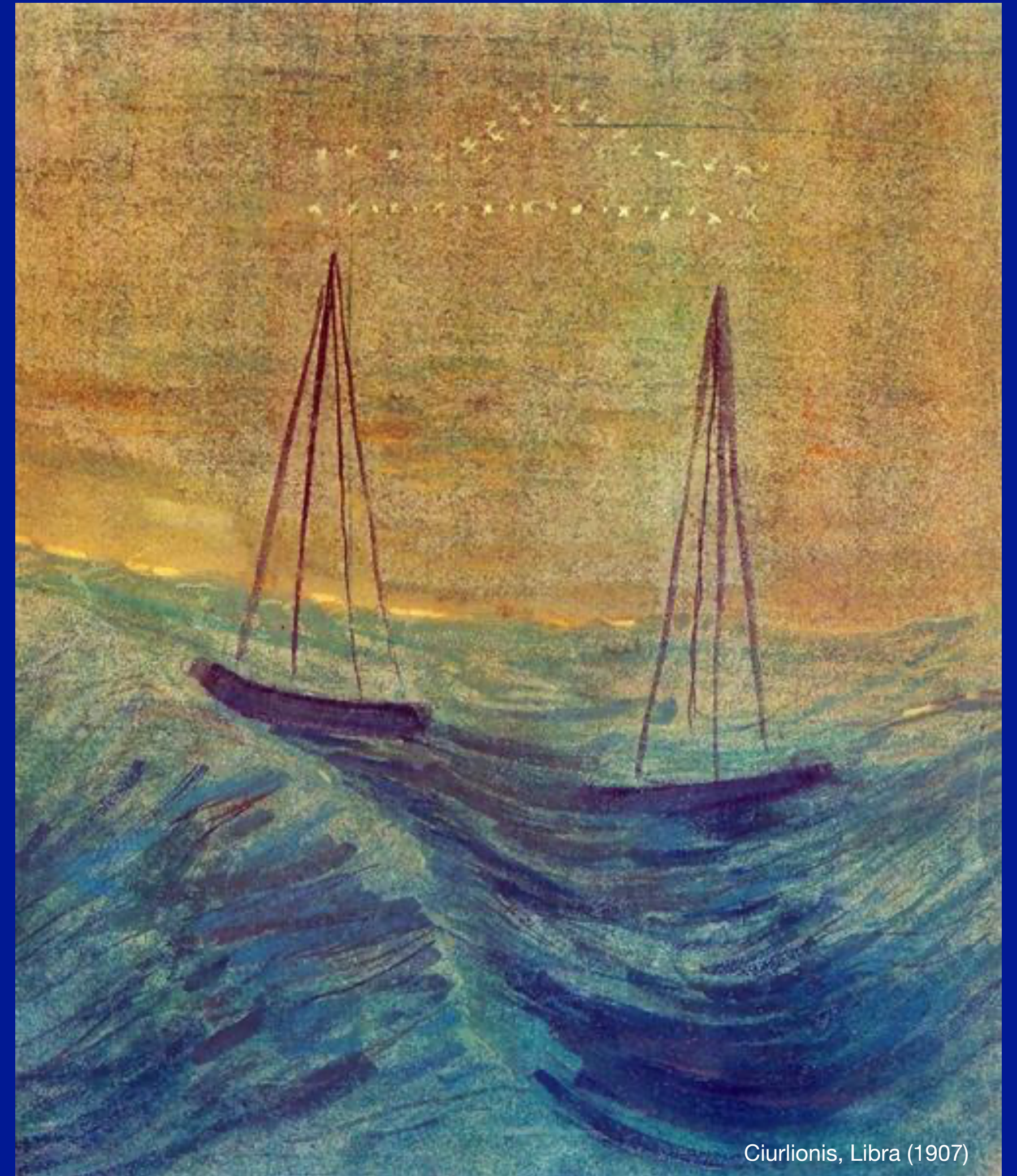
# Sonata 2

## “Sonata-Fantasia”

(1897)

“Scriabin himself said that it was all created from his impressions of the sea. The first movement is a quiet southern night on the seashore. In the development – the dark and stormy high seas. The E-major section – the caressing light of the moon after the darkness. Second movement (Presto) – a broad stormy expanse of sea”.

– Yuli Engel’s memoir



Ciurlionis, Libra (1907)



# Sonata 3

(1898)



Mikhail Vrubel, The Demon Seated (1890)

“The Sonata... will be inaccessible to many pianists, because it presents extraordinary technical difficulties at every step which are sometimes **inconsistent with the spirit of the instrument** and thus **disproportionate for the effect they produce**. Additionally, the **sickly** dramatics, the lyrical refinement and the overall sophistication of the music demand a performer of similar artistic disposition.”

– *Russkie vedomosti*, 1900



# Sonata 3 (1898)



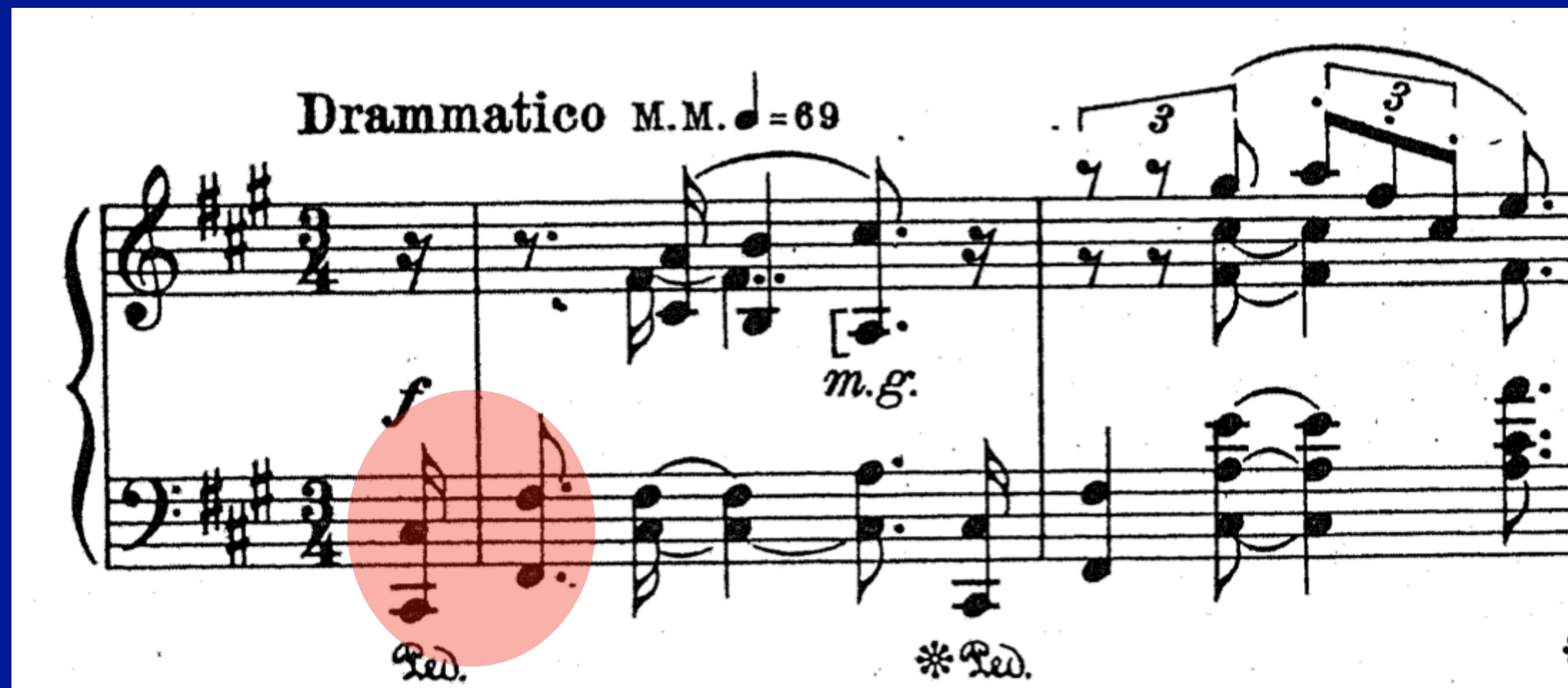
Mikhail Vrubel, The Demon Seated (1890)

Scriabin's music is a product of modern times, where we are anxious and nervous, living lives of heightened intensity. This is an art that has cut itself off from the simple and healthy moods of the masses, from the broad, fragrant expanses of the fields, meadows and forests. The city, the four walls, **refined and complicated dispositions of "the top ten thousand"** – this is the sphere to which such art belongs.

– *The Russian Review*, 1902



# Sonata 3 (1898)



“In my Third Sonata, at the beginning: can this be played with two hands?” And he played the Sonata’s first notes, that fourth C#-F#, with both hands. “It’s terrible, scandalous! It sounds so calm and cosy, but it has to be like a flash of lightning! The mood of the performer depends on what he is playing and how the notes are distributed between the hands. This is why it is absolutely not the same when it is played with the left hand or with the right, with both hands with just one – all of this creates or changes the mood and the articulation”.

– Scriabin, as recalled in Leonid Sabaneev’s memoir



Elena Bekman-Scherbina



Vera Isakovich (Skriabina)



Maria Nemenova-Luntz











# Sonata 4

(1903)

original, full of intoxicating beauty; its ideas are expressed with great clarity and concision.

– Alexander Glazunov

“flight at the speed of light, straight towards the sun – into the sun!”  
– Scriabin



Ciurlionis, My Way I (1907)



# Sonata 5

(1907)



Ciurlionis, Joseph's Dream (1907)



# 5<sup>me</sup> Sonate.

„Je vous appelle à la vie, ô forces mystérieuses!  
Noyées dans les obscures profondeurs  
De l'esprit créateur, craintives  
Ébauches de vie, à vous j'apporte l'audace.“

(Le Poème de l'Extase page 11.)

I summon you to life, hidden longings!  
You, sunken in the sombre depths  
Of creative spirit, you timid embryos of life,  
To you I bring my daring!

(Poem of Ecstasy, page 11)

„Я къ жизни призываю васъ скрытыя стремленья!  
Вы, утонувшіе въ темныхъ глубинахъ  
Духа творящаго, вы боязливые,  
Жизни зародыши, вамъ дерзновенье я приношу.“

(Поэма экстаза стр. 11.)

A. Scriàbine, Op. 53.

**Allegro. Impetuoso. Con stravaganza.**

*sfp sotto voce*

8 con sord.  
Ped.

*f p*

\* Ped.

# Sonata 5

(1907)

“I have just committed to paper a monologue of fantastic beauty. Once again, an immense wave of creativity raises me up to such heights! I am breathless. It is bliss, and I am composing fabulously.”

Letter to Schloezer



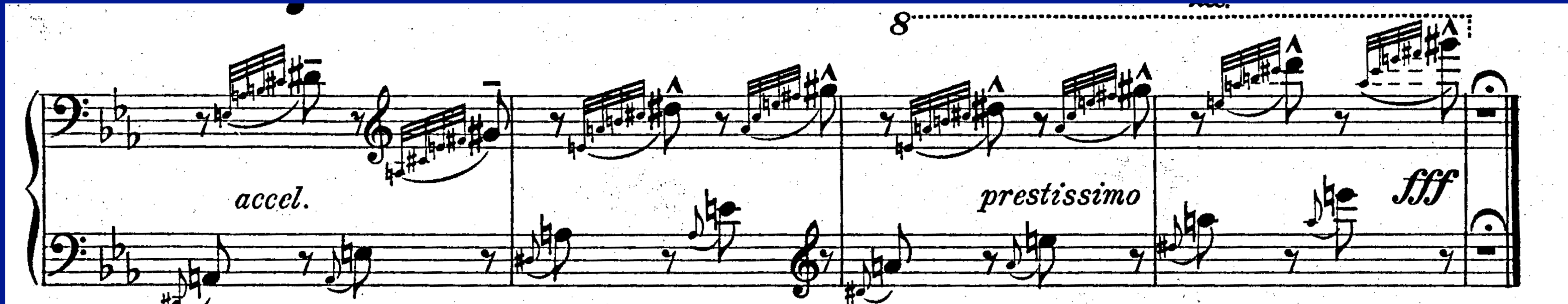
And then in torrents of flowers  
I will lie upon you  
With aromas and scents  
I will bask languidly  
In this play of fragrance  
Now tender, now sharp  
In the play of touches  
Now soft, now harsh  
And sinking into passion  
You will  
Whisper: Again and  
Ever again!

Then I will plunge  
With a horde of fearsome monsters  
With savage torment and terror  
I will crawl upon you with venomous  
nests of snakes  
And will bite and choke you  
And you will want me  
More madly, more passionately  
Then I will lie upon you  
Under rays of celestial suns  
And you will burn with the fires  
Of my emotion  
The holy  
Flames of desire  
For the sweetest,  
The most forbidden,  
Most mysterious.



# Sonata 5

(1907)



The Fifth Sonata, with its fantastical and non-tonal ending, was far above the understanding of the public then, and left them merely bemused. The public didn't even understand whether it was supposed to be finished, or whether the composer has just "fled the stage" for some reason or other. As one well-known singer asked me, "What happened to him? – Did he get stomach cramp? ..."

– Sabaneev's memoir





We spent a very interesting evening at Scriabin's. He showed us his *Ecstasy*, which contains some wonderful music, and he laid out the plan of his next work, conceived on a grandiose, extraordinary and even unrealisable scale. Generally, he is now into philosophy, upon which he builds his works, and as he suffers from megalomania, he has walked into such dense forest that some consider him simply mad...

Could it be that he is going mad from some kind of religious-erotic fixation? I heard his *Poem of Ecstasy* (albeit on the piano), and it is indeed powerful, but still, it is some kind of square root of minus one.

– Rimsky-Korsakov in 1907





# Prometheus

(1910)



Robert Sperl, Premiere of Prometheus (1910)



# Prometheus

(1910)

Yale









# The Mysterium

- A synthesis of music, poetry, dance, ritual, scent...
- originally envisaged in a synthetic language
- to take place in a temple in India
- “Preparatory Act” for quadruple orchestra, piano, organ, choir, speaker, a soprano soloist, light
- the orchestra and choir would moving in a procession, almost dancing
- Scriabin would conduct





# Sonata 7

(1912)



Ciurlionis, Zero (1909)



# Sonata 7



One is repelled by the very spirit of this music, that is often so hysterical and narcotic, with sweet *langueurs* and stormy *vertiges* that revolve far too much around the same “volupté”...

Engel in 1913



# Sonata 6

(1912)



Di Cavallioti, The Demon (1909)



# Sonata 6

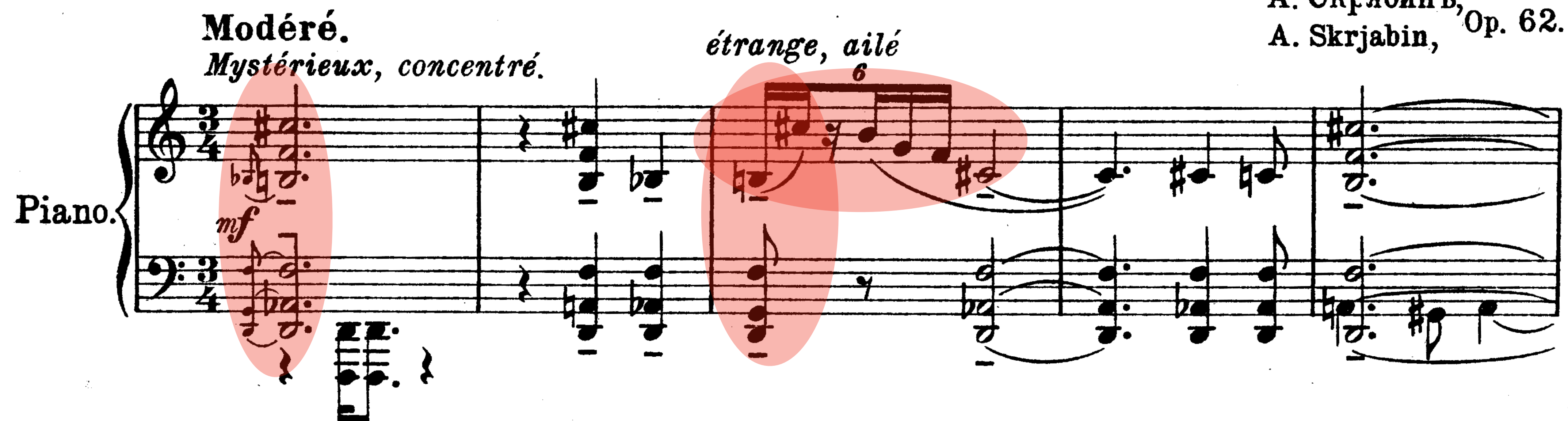
(1912)

A. Скрябинъ, Op. 62.  
A. Skrjabin,

**Modéré.**  
*Mystérieux, concentré.*

*étrange, ailé*

Piano.



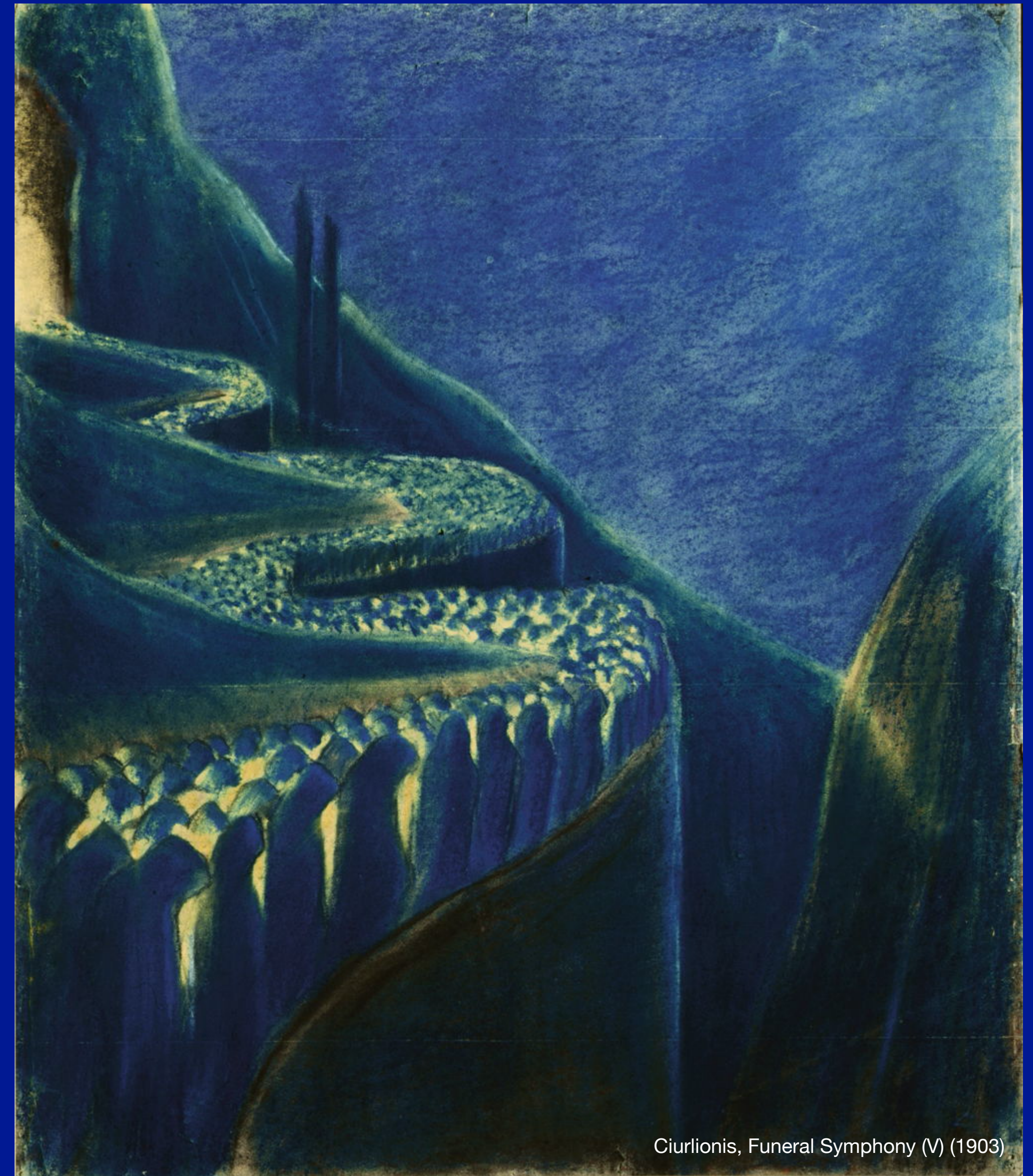
The diagram shows an octatonic scale on a single staff. The scale consists of eight notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, and C. The notes are written as whole notes. The first note (C) is on the first line. The second note (D) is on the second line. The third note (E) is on the second space. The fourth note (F) is on the third line. The fifth note (G) is on the third space. The sixth note (A) is on the fourth line. The seventh note (B) is on the fourth space. The eighth note (C) is on the fifth line. The notes are connected by a horizontal line, indicating they are part of the same scale. The first note (C) is marked with a cross (X) over it, indicating it is the starting point of the scale.

Octatonic scale



# Sonata 9

(1913)



Ciurlionis, Funeral Symphony (V) (1903)



# Sonata 9

(1913)

Scriabin to Nadezhda Rimsky–Korsakov (12 Feb 1915):

Beginning: dark forces

Middle: nightmare

End: dark forces again

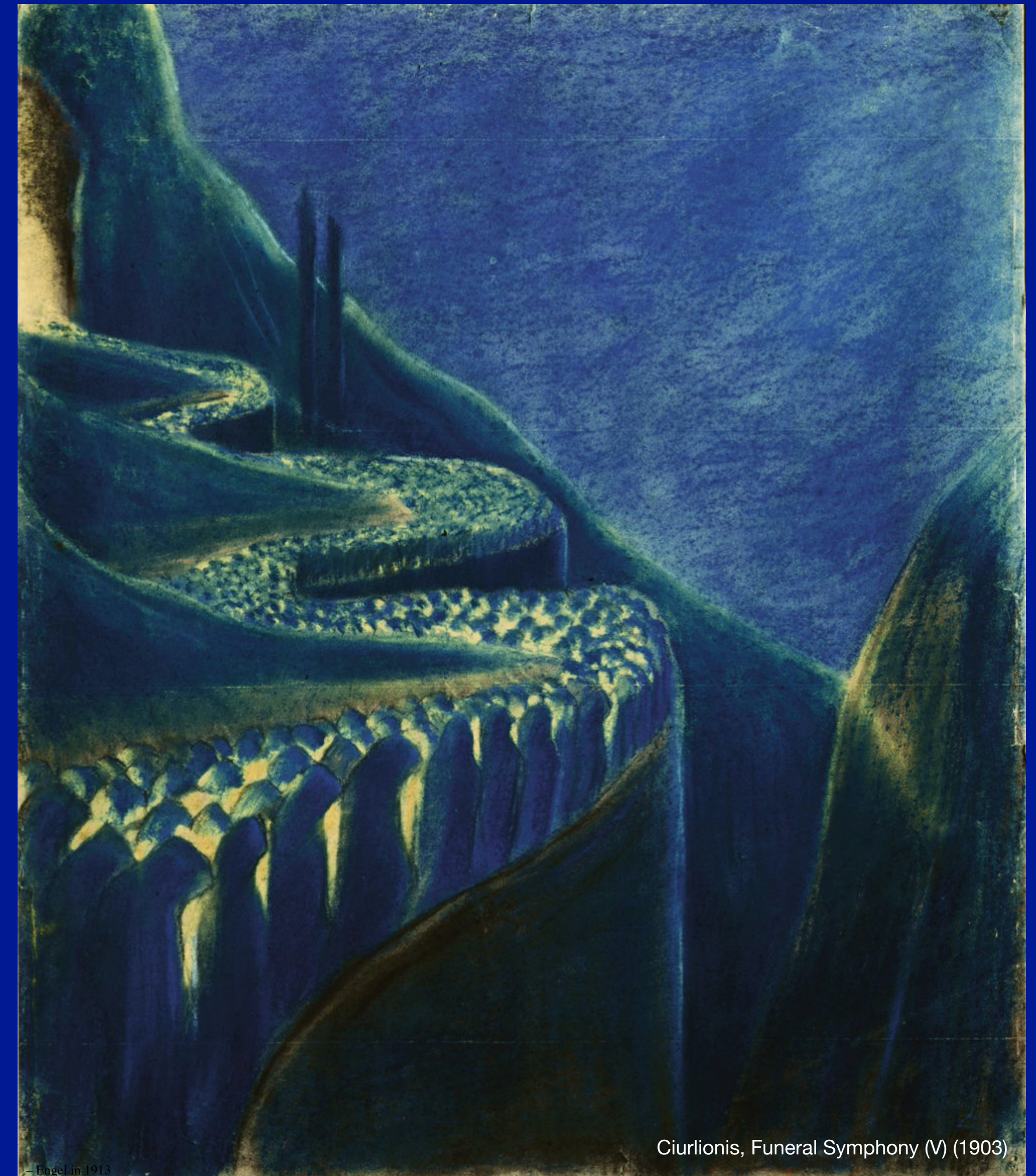
Her own version:

Beginning: death approaching

Middle: delirium and struggle against it

End: death

Scriabin: “defiling of the sacred”



Ciurlionis, Funeral Symphony (V) (1903)



# Sonata 8

(1913)

This sonata is close to the Seventh in mood... and at the end – the same kind of *outpouring*... A dance, *vertige*, and then *this*... It is the most difficult piece I've ever written... I have nine-note chords in here... I have a sense that these harmonies do not fit [equal] temperament...



Ciurlionis  
Angel (1909)



# Sonata 10

(1913)

Insects, butterflies, moths – these are all flowers that have come to life. They are the subtlest of caresses, barely touching... They were all born of the sun, and the sun nourishes them... They are the sun's caress ... as in the Tenth Sonata – a whole sonata of insects...



Ciurlionis, Bridges (1904)

On that last day, in that last dance – I will shatter into a million moths, and so will everyone else... perhaps at the end of the Mysterium, we will no longer be people, but we'll become caresses – animals, birds, moths...



# Vers la flamme

(1914)

Look how everything gradually begins to flourish ... out of the mists and into the blinding light...

