

ALEXANDER SCRIBIN

SYMPHONY  
NO.1

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THE POEM  
OF ECSTASY

Russian National Orchestra  
Mikhail Pletnev

PENTATONE

## Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915)

### Symphony No. 1 in E Major, Op. 26

1	Lento	7. 47
2	Allegro drammatico	10. 54
3	Lento	11. 05
4	Vivace	4. 00
5	Allegro	7. 56
6	Andante	13. 36

Svetlana Shilova, Soprano (track 6)

Mikhail Gubsky, Tenor (track 6)

Chamber Choir of the Moscow Conservatory (track 6)

Alexander Solovyev, Chorus Master (track 6)

### 7 The Poem of Ecstasy (Symphony No. 4), Op. 54

Vladislav Lavrik, Trumpet (track 7)

Norbert Gembaczka, Organ

Russian National Orchestra

Conducted by Mikhail Pletnev

Alexander Bruni, Concertmaster

Total playing time: 76. 56

## О ДИВНЫЙ ОБРАЗ БОЖЕСТВА

### Меццо-сопрано:

О дивный образ Божества,  
Гармоний чистое искусство!  
Тебе приносим дружно мы  
хвалу восторженнаго чувства.

### Тенор:

Ты жизни светлая мечта,  
Ты праздник, ты отдохновенье,  
Как дар приносишь людям ты  
свои волшебныя виденья!

### Меццо-сопрано и тенор:

В тот мрачный и холодный час,  
Когда душа полна смятенья  
В тебе находит человек  
живую радость утешенья.

## O YOU, THE UTMOST GRACE OF LIFE

### Mezzo-soprano:

O you, the utmost grace of life,  
You noble art of harmony,  
We glorify, we praise you here  
And celebrate your melody!

### Tenor:

You enter into our existence,  
Sweetly to adorn our fates,  
Glory, honour, splendour, praise,  
To you, o wondrous art of notes!

### Mezzo-soprano and tenor:

Where want and sorrow of all kind  
Oppress and torment lowly man,  
From heav'nly heights your soft  
approach  
Will comfort him with sound and song.

### Меццо-сопрано:

Ты силы, павши я в борьбе,  
Чудесно к жизни призываешь,  
в уме усталом и больном  
ты мыслей новых строй рождаешь.

### Тенор:

Ты чувств безбрежный океан  
рождаешь в сердце восхищенном  
и лучших песней песн поёт  
твой жрец тобою вдохновленный.

### Меццо-сопрано и тенор:

Парит все властно на земле  
Твой дух свободный и могучий,  
Тобой поднятый человек  
Свершает славно подвиг лучший.

Придите все народы мира,  
Искусству славу воспоме!

### Хор:

Слава исскуству во веки слава!

### Mezzo-soprano:

When, exhausted in heat of battle,  
The warrior seems doomed to fail,  
Yet you support him with your strength,  
And help him fight, help him prevail.

### Tenor:

You are the wellspring of pure joy,  
A godsend to refresh the soul,  
When you fulfill the sorely heart,  
All pain fades gently, seeps away.

### Mezzo-soprano and tenor:

In you, all is granted us  
That gifts the soul with peace and bliss,  
Let us but stay beneath your shield –  
Ne'er comfort in sorrow shall we miss.

So ready lips and throats, resound!  
Sing hail in praise of art!

### Choir:

Hail to the noble, noble art, hail!

**“That Poème de l’extase? Put it on loud. His music sounds like I think – sometimes. Has that far-off cosmic itch. Divinely fouled up. All fire and air. The first time I heard it I played it over and over. [...] It was like a bath of ice, cocaine and rainbows. For weeks I went about in a trance. Something had happened to me.”**

## Henry Miller: ‘Nexus’ (1960)

## Philosophy and ecstasy

The position occupied by Alexander Scriabin in musical life around the turn of the 20th century can be characterised as entirely unique. On the one hand, a phenomenal piano virtuoso and the composer of attractive piano pieces reminiscent of Chopin, on the other, a trail-blazer for the musical avant-garde in search of new modes of expression and – at the same time – a megalomaniac mystic, philosopher and high priest who regarded himself as God, Scriabin’s aim was nothing less than to unite humanity through his theosophically inspired music in an eternal realm of love. Scriabin, who, as a result of his synesthetic abilities, saw colours when he heard chordal formations, wanted to make these colours visible to listeners by means

of a colour keyboard of his own invention. Not surprisingly, his music is difficult to ‘pigeonhole’ and continues to elicit divergent reactions.

Having attained prominence as a piano virtuoso, and before gaining a reputation as a composer, Scriabin, in 1898, secured a position as a piano instructor at the Moscow Conservatory. He soon however found that giving lessons was getting in the way of his composing. With the exception of the Piano Concerto (1896), up to that time, Scriabin’s compositional efforts had primarily been focused on short piano pieces. But now he was becoming more ambitious. In the same year, he composed a short orchestral piece, entitled *Réverie*, which already exhibited several features of his later style. In general, the works of this period can be regarded as ‘finger exercises’ in preparation for the

symphonic projects to come. Following Nikolai Rimski-Korsakov’s sharp criticism of the orchestration of the Piano Concerto, the young composer responded self-confidently: “It is easy to say: ‘study orchestration!’, but there is only one way to do that, namely: hearing one’s own works performed.”

In 1899, Scriabin began writing his most ambitious composition up to that time: the First Symphony. The work still reflects the influence of the traditional four-movement formal scheme. The first movement, in sonata form (Allegro drammatico), is followed by a slow movement (Lento), a scherzo (Vivace) and an Allegro, again in sonata form. But Scriabin also framed the symphony with an introductory movement in slow tempo and a monumental choral finale with a text of his own composition, and, like the finales of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and Mahler’s Second,

it is this movement that can be said to occupy the work’s interpretational centre of gravity. The First Symphony documents a search for salvation and unification, both of which can only be found in art: “*May your mighty and free spirit reign all-powerfully on earth; and humanity, lifted up by you, perform a noble deed. Come all nations of the world and let us sing praises to art!*” With the finale of the First, Scriabin did not however make things particularly easy for himself. The artistic committee of the publishers, Belyayev, declared the symphony unperformable, due to the tessitura of the finale’s vocal parts. And, despite an acerbic response from the composer, the committee got their way: at the work’s ‘premiere’ on the 11th of November 1900, the finale was not performed. It was not until four months later that the first performance of the entire symphony took place, under the baton of

Scriabin’s teacher, Vasily Safonov.

Initially, Scriabin’s philosophy was rooted primarily in natural philosophy and pantheism: “No science provides such clear and simple answers to so many questions as Nature herself.” But after 1900, the composer came increasingly under the influence of such philosophers as Kant, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Solovyov and, above all, the theosophist, Helena Blavatsky. As Scriabin’s friend, the composer and musicologist Oskar von Riesemann, put it: “Music, for whose very sake he came into the world, ultimately offered his boundless imagination a much too narrow room for manoeuvre. This art, which was indeed his life element, would nevertheless cease to exist as an independent form of expression for his creative spirit; it would dissolve to form part of a much profounder creative

process, that would touch the roots of all existence.” In Scriabin’s development of the symphonic genre as a vehicle for his philosophical programme, *Le Poème de l’extase*, would signify a significant milestone...

In the First Symphony, Scriabin expanded the traditional four-movement formal scheme with a prologue and epilogue. The Second Symphony (1902) has five movements, whose first two and last two movements, respectively, form continuous wholes. Scriabin devised the three movements of the Third Symphony, entitled *Le divin Poème* (1902–1904), as one great unified form, a clear indication that it was conceived as a hybrid between the symphony and the tone poem.

While still working on the Third, Scriabin was already putting pen

to paper with the preliminary ideas for a new symphonic work, which would ultimately grow into *Le Poème de l'extase*, a composition which, in essence, was a symphonic poem, but to which Scriabin repeatedly referred as his 'Fourth Symphony.' And rightly so, as its structure indeed unites four traditional components of classical sonata form, viz.: an introduction and exposition, a development, a recapitulation and a second development with a coda. 'The Poem of Ecstasy' is based on a number of extra-musical ideas. Originally, Scriabin intended to place the first line of the Internationale, "Stand up, damned of the Earth," as a motto above the score. But in 1906, his poem, *Le Poème de l'extase*, appeared, which can be regarded as a summing up of his philosophical programme and which served as the definitive philosophical basis for the new symphonic work

of the same name. Scriabin wanted to have the 370-line poem, which describes the struggle of the divine human being for freedom and oneness with all of his fellow human beings in an all-encompassing ecstatic love, included in the orchestral score, but his publisher, who found that the notes alone were sufficient for any conductor, refused to do so.

*Le Poème de l'extase* received its christening in New York, on the 10th of December 1908, after a performance in Russia had had to be aborted due to the score's great difficulty. However, when it finally did take place, the Russian premiere, on the 1st of February 1909, wound up being a true happening. The then young composition student, Sergei Prokofiev wrote: "Myaskovsky and I sat next to each other and consumed the *Poème de l'extase* with the greatest of interest,

although, at different moments during the performance, we were entirely confused by the newness of the music. We had expected something surpassing the *divin Poème*, which we both knew

well and loved. But both the harmonic and thematic material of the work, as well as its contrapuntal voice-leading, resembled nothing we had ever heard before."



Mikhail Pletnev  
© Russian National Orchestra

## Russian National Orchestra

The Russian National Orchestra was founded in 1990 and today is recognized as one of the world's top orchestras. Of its debut at the BBC Proms in London, the *Evening Standard* wrote, "They played with such captivating beauty that the audience gave an involuntary sigh of pleasure." The Russian National Orchestra's towering artistic achievement is grounded in a passionate commitment to excellence and innovation evident in all that it does.

The RNO is a frequent guest in the music capitals of Europe, Asia and the Americas. The founding orchestra of Napa Valley Festival del Sole, the RNO also performs at prominent venues such as the Edinburgh, Shanghai and

Chopin festivals, and the BBC Proms.

The RNO has made many recordings for PENTATONE, including one of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and Beintus's *Wolf Tracks*. Conducted by Kent Nagano and narrated by Sophia Loren and Bill Clinton, the disc received a 2004 Grammy, making the RNO the first Russian orchestra to win the recording industry's highest honor. The RNO's Shostakovich cycle on PENTATONE is widely acclaimed as "the most exciting cycle of the Shostakovich symphonies to be put down on disc, and easily the best recorded." (SACD.net)

The orchestra maintains a full Moscow season and has established the annual Grand Festival, which opens the Russian capital's cultural season each September. Unique among the principal Russian ensembles, the RNO

is a private institution funded with the support of individuals, corporations and foundations throughout the world. In recognition of its artistry and path-breaking structure, the RNO was the first non-governmental orchestra to receive grant support from the Russian Federation.

For more information, visit [www.rno.ru](http://www.rno.ru).

## Mikhail Pletnev Conductor

Mikhail Pletnev's genius as pianist, conductor and composer enchants and amazes audiences around the globe. He was Gold Medal and First Prize winner of the 1978 Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition when he was only 21, a prize that earned him early recognition worldwide. An invitation to perform at the 1988 superpower summit in Washington led to a friendship with Mikhail Gorbachev and the historic opportunity to make music in artistic freedom.

In 1990 Pletnev formed the first independent orchestra in Russia's history. Many of the country's finest musicians joined Pletnev in launching the Russian National Orchestra. Under his leadership, the RNO achieved in

a few short years a towering stature among the world’s orchestras. Pletnev describes the RNO as his greatest joy and today continues to serve as its Artistic Director and Principal Conductor.

Pletnev’s performances and recordings have proved him to be an outstanding interpreter of an extensive repertoire, both as pianist and conductor. His recordings have earned numerous prizes including a 2005 Grammy Award for the CD of his own arrangement, for two pianos, of Prokofiev’s *Cinderella*. He received Grammy nominations for a CD of Schumann Symphonic Etudes and for his recording of Rachmaninov and Prokofiev Piano Concertos No. 3 with the RNO and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich. BBC Magazine called his 1996 Gramophone Award-winning album of Scarlatti’s Keyboard Sonatas “piano playing at its greatest... this

performance alone would be enough to secure Pletnev a place among the greatest pianists ever known.”

Pletnev’s compositions include works for orchestra, piano, strings and voices. Today he is one of Russia’s most respected and influential artists. An advisor on Russia’s Cultural Council, in 2007 Pletnev was awarded a Presidential Prize for his contributions to the artistic life of the country. Pianist, conductor, composer and cultural leader — all are significant facets of Mikhail Pletnev’s life as an artist. Yet he considers himself, simply, a musician.

## Chamber Choir Of The Moscow Conservatory

The Chamber Choir of the Moscow Conservatory was created on the initiative of Professor Alexander Sokolov in December 1994 by an outstanding choral conductor of modern times - the People’s Artist of Russia, Professor Boris Tevlin (1931 2012), who permanently headed the choral ensemble until the end of his days. The chorus has won the International Competition of Choruses in Italy (1998), Germany (1999), Austria (2000), Poland (2003) and Latvia (2014). In 2002 the Chamber Choir was the only Russian chorus to represent Russian choral music at the 6th World Forum of Choral Music in Minneapolis (USA). In 2008 the Chamber Choir’s recording of Rodion Shchedrin’s Russian

choral opera *Boyarynya Morozova* was awarded with an ECHO Klassik.

The chief artistic focus of the Chamber Choir is to perform works by contemporary composers from Russia and other countries. Alexander Solovyev, artistic director of the Chamber Choir of the Moscow Conservatory and associate professor, was a close colleague of Professor Boris Tevlin since August 2012.

## Svetlana Shilova Soprano

After graduating from the St. Petersburg State Conservatory, Svetlana Shilova took her first steps as a soloist as Paulina in *The Queen of Spades* and Olga in *Eugene Onegin* at the Musical Theatre of St. Petersburg Opera.

In 2002 she debuted at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in the role of Marfa in *Khovanshchina* and she sang at the reopening ceremony of the historical/ main stage of the Bolshoi in October 2012.

Shilova has performed on many European opera stages and festivals. She sang Khivrya in *Sorochinsky Fair* (Roman Kofman / Tony Palmer), Gertrude in *Hansel and Gretel* (Bonn),

Amneris in *Aida* (Irina Arkhipova presents Opera Festival, Diego Crovetti, conductor), Spring in Rimsky-Korsakov’s *The Snow Maiden* (Mariinski Theatre, St. Petersburg), Marta in *Iolanta* (Warsaw and Dresden), Olga in *Eugene Onegin* (Madrid), the Death in Stravinsky’s *The Nightingale*, Cat’s Cradle Songs (Festival d’Aix en Provence, Lyon and Quebec).

## Mikhail Gubsky Tenor

Born in Magnitogorsk, Russia. Graduated from Samara Technical University (1993) and Samara Academia of Arts (1997; Prof. Galina Sorokina). From 1994 he was a soloist with Samara Opera Theatre, and a soloist with Moscow’s *Novaya Opera* Company from 1997. Since 2001, he has also appeared at the Bolshoi Theatre. He has toured in USA, Canada, Japan, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Finland, Slovenia and Poland. In 2003, he took part in a Russian National Orchestra performance of J.S. Bach’s Mass in B minor (conducted by Kent Nagano) at Moscow’s International House of Music. In 2004, he sang the role of The Hussar in a performance of *Mavra* at the Igor Stravinsky Festival in Arnhem

(The Netherlands) and took part in a performance of Rakhmaninov’s *The Bells* at the Carnegie Hall (conducted by James Conlon). In 2008, he sang Shuisky (*Boris Godunov*) at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. In 2009, he performed the title role in Prokofiev’s *Semyon Kotko* in Cagliari (a co-production by Teatro Lirico di Cagliari and Mariinsky Theatre).

Since 2004, he has been the co ordinator and artistic director of the *From Heart to Heart Music* Festival, which is held under the patronage of the local government of Samara. In 2007-2011, he was artistic director of the Samara Theatre of Opera and Ballet.

## Vladislav Lavrik

### Trumpet

Vladislav Lavrik, one of the most talented musicians of his generation, is Russia's finest trumpeter and a rising young conductor. Born to a family of musicians, Lavrik's early training included both piano and trumpet.

After completing a master's degree in trumpet performance at the Moscow State Conservatory, he began the opera and symphonic conducting program at the Gnesin Academy of Music.

Since 2006, Lavrik has been a Yamaha Artist in Russia and, since 2008, a member of the trumpet faculty of the Moscow State Conservatory. In 2011 he was elected to the board of the International Trumpet Guild, the first Russian to be given this recognition and responsibility, and he has frequently served as a member of the jury for the

U.S. National Trumpet Competition. Vladislav has played in many countries all over the world. His previous festival appearances include the Europalia international arts festival in Brussels, Bermuda Festival, Beethoven Festival, Western Carolina University Trumpet Festival (USA), Homecoming, Crescendo Festival, Stars on Baikal and others.



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Mikhail Gubsky

Lavrik

Svetlana Shilova

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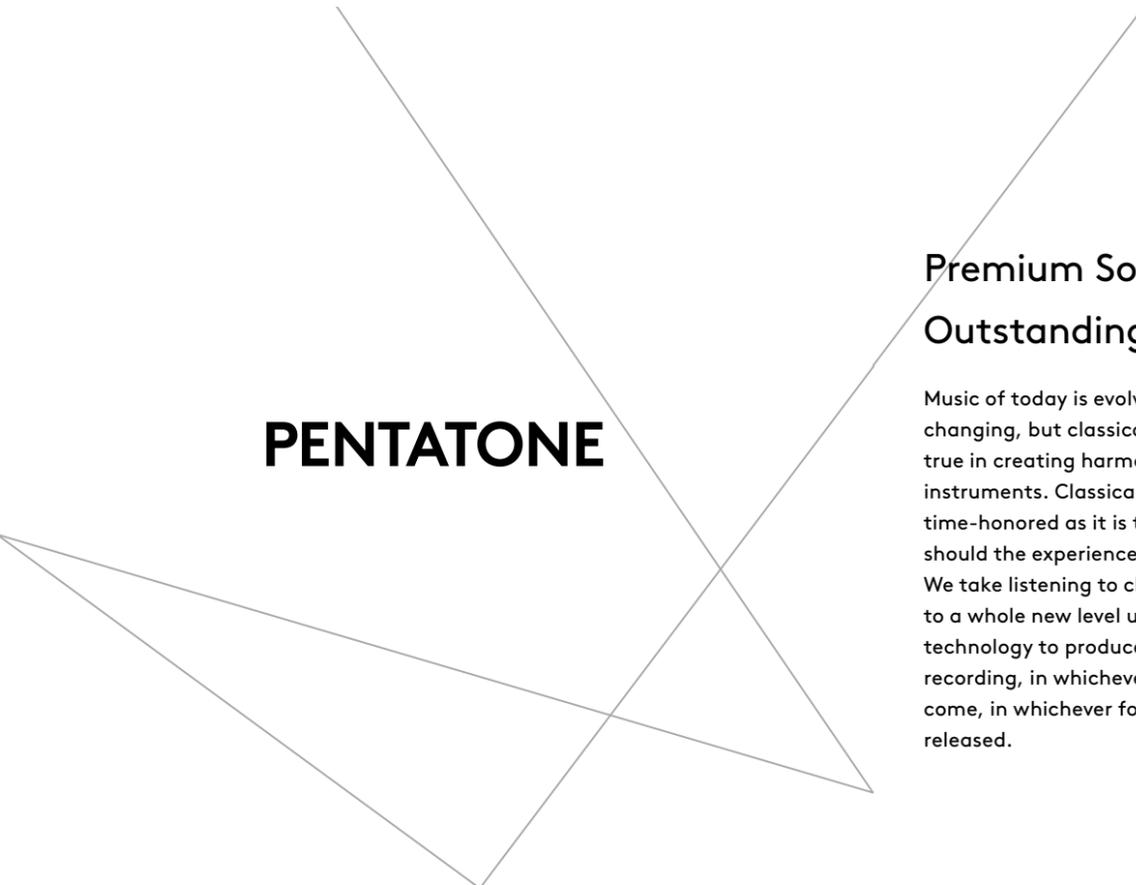
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