

# Alexander Scriabin:

## *Piano Concerto in F sharp minor, Op. 20*



1. ***Allegro***
2. ***Andante***
3. ***Allegro moderato***

# Alexander Scriabin

- ♪ Scriabin was brought up by his aunt, great aunt and grandmother
- ♪ His romantic early works earned him the title ‘the Russian Chopin’
- ♪ His first piano sonata (1892) ends in a funereal slow movement that anticipates the finale of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony
- ♪ From 1903 his music became more complex and chromatic
- ♪ His best works include the Third Symphony (*The Divine Poem*) and the *Poem of Ecstasy*.

# I. *Allegro*

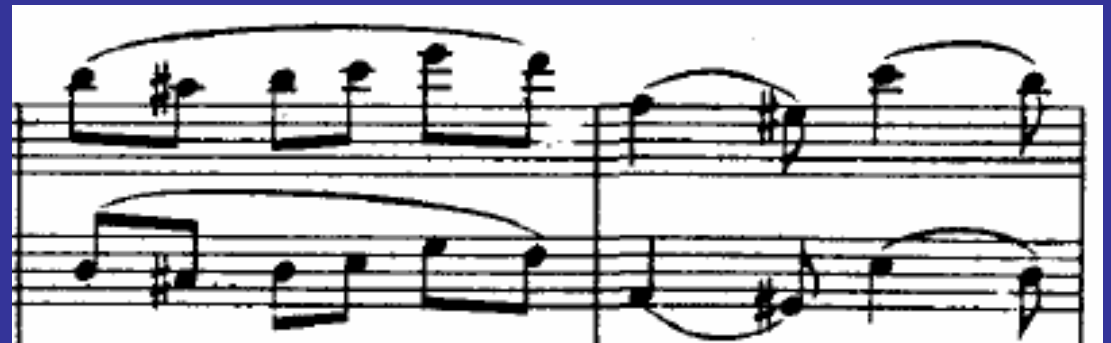
- ♪ The piano introduces the main theme:



- ♪ The orchestra takes up the theme while the piano accompanies in octaves.
- ♪ The 3-note falling phrase is important throughout this movement.

# I. *Allegro*

- After a series of the 3-note fragments, the main theme provides a major climax of the movement



## I. *Allegro*

- ♪ The second theme, with its lilting mazurka-like inflections, provides a contrast to the opening material

*più mosso, scherzando*

*mf* *p* *cresc.* *mf*

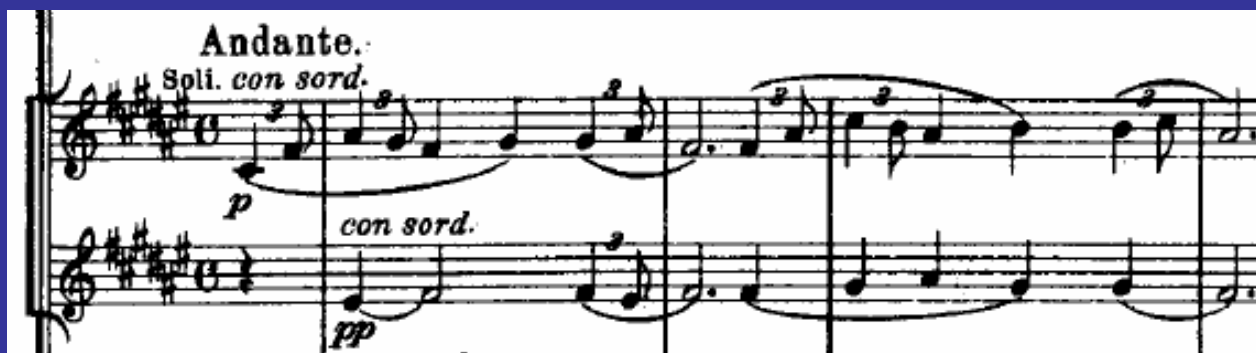
*più mosso* = faster; *scherzando* = playfully

## I. *Allegro*

- ♪ The varied moods of the first two movements mirror those of the composer: *“Sometimes I am filled with anxiety. Sometimes at the height of bliss. At moments I fall into depths of despair.”*

## II. *Andante* – theme and variations

- ♪ The *Andante* begins in F-sharp major. The orchestra quietly introduces the theme.



Andante.  
Soli. con sord.

*p* con sord.  
*pp*

This image shows the beginning of the musical score for the 'Andante' movement. It consists of two staves. The top staff is marked 'Soli. con sord.' and the bottom staff is marked 'con sord.' and 'pp'. The music is in F-sharp major and begins with a quiet introduction of the theme.



*pp* *pp* *cresc.* *mf* *cresc.* *mf*

This image shows a continuation of the musical score for the 'Andante' movement. It consists of two staves. The music is in F-sharp major and continues with the theme. The dynamics are marked 'pp', 'cresc.', and 'mf'.

## II. *Andante* – theme and variations

- ♪ The piano enters with the first variation, accompanying the orchestra's theme with arpeggios in shifting polyrhythms.

The image shows a musical score for the first variation of the Andante movement. The score is written for piano and is titled "Var. I." in the upper left. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. The upper staff, in treble clef, features a series of arpeggiated chords, with a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) and a fermata over the first measure. The lower staff, in bass clef, features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *legato*. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, and the music is written on a grand staff with a brace on the left side.

## II. *Theme and variations*

- ♪ The second variation is marked *Allegro scherzando*, so is much faster  
(♩ = 108 compared to ♩ = 46 for the *Andante*)



## II. *Theme and variations*

- ♪ The third variation is a slow funeral march marked *Adagio*  
(♩ = 40)

Var. III. **3**  
Adagio. M. M. ♩ = 40.

*mp* *mf*

8

The image shows a musical score for Variation III, marked Adagio with a tempo of 40 beats per minute. The score is written for piano and features a slow, somber funeral march. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. The first staff is the treble clef, and the second is the bass clef. The piece begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and transitions to mezzo-forte (*mf*) later. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the variation.

## II. *Theme and variations*

- 🎵 The 4<sup>th</sup> variation (*Allegretto*) features intricate ornamentation. The clarinet introduces the melody, and interweaves counterpoint with the soloist.

The image shows a musical score for Variation IV, marked *Allegretto*. The score is for Clarinet (A) and Piano. The Clarinet part is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 12/8 time signature. It begins with a melodic line that includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and a first ending instruction: *1. Solo. espr.* (Solo, expressive). The Piano part is written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It features intricate counterpoint and ornamentation, with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and a first ending instruction: *1. Solo. espr.* (Solo, expressive). The score is labeled *Var. IV.* and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and ornaments.

## **II. *Andante* – theme and variations**

**♪ The movement ends with return of the theme to the orchestra, almost identical to the first variation:**

**Tempo I (*Andante*)**

**with a return to the sleepy mood of the movement's opening bars.**

### III. *Allegro moderato*

- 🎵 The first movement's theme is condensed into the first two bars



followed by arpeggios that fly up to the high end of the piano and back





### III. *Allegro moderato*

- ♪ The beautiful, slower second theme (*Cantabile*) is a song without words



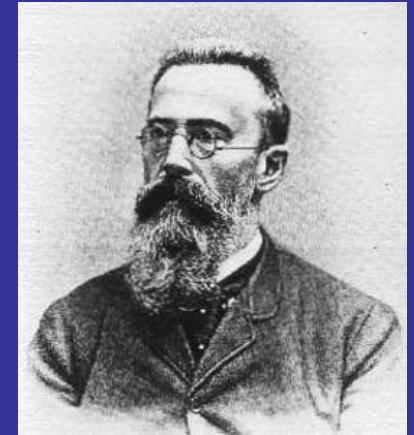
- ♪ *Cantabile* = “In a singing style”  
i.e. with the melody smoothly  
performed and well brought out

## 2. Alexander Scriabin:

### *Piano Concerto in F sharp minor, Op. 20*



*“Look at this filth! I am in no condition to cope with such as mush-headed genius!”* - Rimsky Korsakov



Perhaps we should listen to Rimsky Korsakov's own Piano Concerto one day....

# Recordings of Scriabin's Piano Concerto

♪ Konstantin Scherbakov with Moscow SO/  
Golovchin (Naxos)



# Nikolai Demidenko with BBCSO/Lazarev (Hyperion-Helios)



# Vladimir Ashkenazy with LPO/Maazel (Decca-London)

