



# *European Scriabin Society*

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## *Europees Skrjabin Genootschap*

Piano Concerto in F sharp minor Op. 20, written in 1896.

00:00 - I. Allegro

07:48 - II. Andante

16:30 - III. Allegro moderato

This work was Scriabin's only true concerto and his first work that involved the orchestra. At only 24 and needing a piano concerto to show off his abilities in concert, Scriabin was still using the idiom set forth by Chopin for his piano writing, and here he took on Chopin's orchestral mannerisms, as well, although Scriabin's orchestra takes a much more active and partner-like role than Chopin's does in his concertos. Scriabin completed the concerto in only a few days in the fall of 1896, but didn't finish the orchestration until the following May and did not premiere the work until 23 October 1897.

The opening Allegro does not go to the emotional extremes that Rachmaninov does, but it does contain greatly contrasting moods and moments of tension, ending without a recapitulation in a generally dark disposition. The middle movement is a poetic Andante and four brief variations, which, even though in the major mode, still have a nostalgic feeling. Muted strings first state the theme, which then switches to the clarinet with delicate, interweaving piano accompaniment. The next variation is more like a piano scherzo; then a darker variation moves mostly into the left hand and lower registers. The fourth variation gives the theme back, inverted, to the orchestra while the pianist has a more filigree solo, including a slow cadenza before the coda. The final Allegro moderato is in sonata-rondo form and is more intensely expressive than the other movements. Its main theme features a soaring arpeggio that flies up to the high end of the keyboard, but the lyrical secondary subject, however, is the one that stays in memory. The movement ends with an extended coda that represents an ecstatic, emotional culmination, with the orchestra rising to prominence at the very end.

Scriabin often performed the concerto, even after he had moved on musically and philosophically into more sophisticated areas. Also a favorite of Rachmaninov's, he conducted the composer in a 1911 performance and later performed the work himself at a memorial for Scriabin in 1915.

Here, in this performance Ugorski spins out the Chopinesque filigree with masculine grace, and his playing is colourful and imaginative. Boulez and the Chicagoans complement it perfectly. This is the best version I know, far better than Ashkenazy's, and even better than Solomon's.

'Scriabin: Piano Concerto in F sharp minor, Op.20 Pianist: Anatol Ugorsk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRkV02Tdcg>