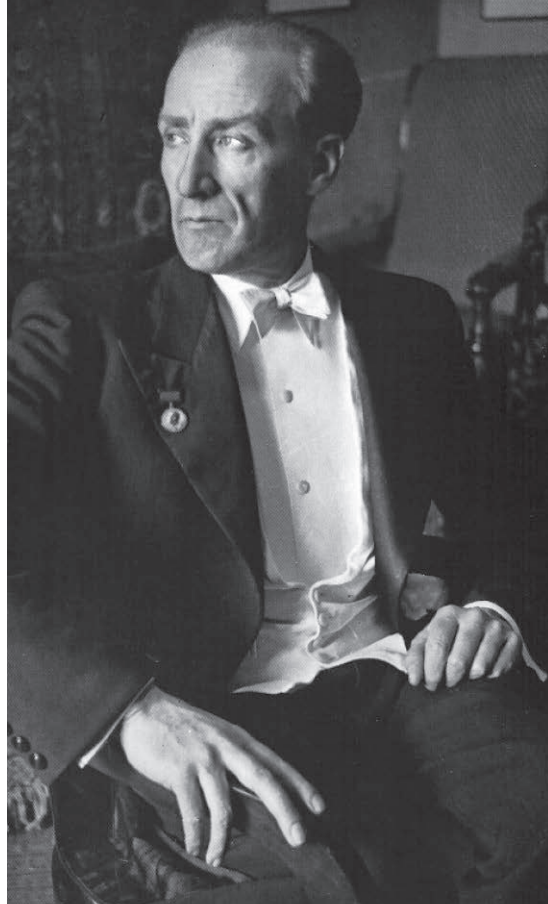


Like so many Russian musicians, Mravinsky seemed first headed toward a career in the sciences. He studied biology at St. Petersburg University, but had to quit in 1920 after his father's death. To support himself, he signed on with the Imperial Ballet as a rehearsal pianist. In 1923, he finally enrolled in the Leningrad Conservatory, where he studied composition with Vladimir Shcherbachov and conducting with Alexander Gauk and Nikolai Malko. He graduated in 1931, and left his Imperial Ballet job to become a musical assistant and ballet conductor at the Bolshoi Opera from 1931 to 1937, with a stint at the Kirov from 1934. Mravinsky gave up these posts in 1938, after winning first prize in the All-Union Conductors' Competition in Moscow, to become principal conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic. He remained there until his death, long ignoring many guest-conducting offers from abroad. Under Mravinsky's direction the Leningrad Philharmonic came to be regarded as one of the finest orchestras in the world, although the world had comparatively few opportunities to hear it aside from the rare tour (about 30 performances in 25 years, starting in 1956), some dim Soviet recordings, and a very few highly acclaimed records for such Western European companies as Deutsche Grammophon and, in the end, Erato. Mravinsky was made People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. in 1954, and in 1973, he received the order of Hero of Socialist Labor. But his more lasting international acclaim came for his performances of Mozart, Beethoven, Bruckner, Wagner, Sibelius, Bartók, Stravinsky, and anything Russian or Soviet. His reputation only rose upon his retirement from the Leningrad Philharmonic.



Mravinsky's rehearsal manner was said to be autocratic and brutal, and the resulting performances were tightly clenched. Yet they were also technically precise, finely detailed, subtly colored, and highly dramatic -- and this not always because he was in the habit of whipping fast finales into a frenzy. His readings had an intensity, concentration, and -- despite the arduous rehearsal -- spontaneity comparable to those of Wilhelm Furtwängler. In the West, Mravinsky was particularly noted as an interpreter of Shostakovich, whose Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth symphonies he premiered, and of Tchaikovsky. His recordings of the Tchaikovsky's last three symphonies, made in 1960 for Deutsche Grammophon while the orchestra was on tour in London, are touchstones of the Russian repertory.



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# Evgeny Mravinsky conducts the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra

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## Richard Strauss Eine Alpensinfonie (An Alpine Symphony)

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**Recorded Live**

An Alpine Symphony, Op. 64, German *Eine Alpensinfonie*, symphonic poem by German composer Richard Strauss that musically re-creates a day's mountain climb in the Bavarian Alps. It premiered on October 28, 1915.

At the time he composed this piece, Strauss was living in the southern Bavarian town of Garmisch (now Garmisch-Partenkirchen), at the foot of Germany's highest peak, the Zugspitze. As a young teenager, he and a group of friends had set out before dawn to climb a mountain, reached the summit five hours later, and been driven back down the mountain by a tremendous thunderstorm. Strauss recounted the experience in a letter, noting that, once he was near a piano, he had improvised a musical version of the experience. For his mature work, Strauss designated an ensemble of well more than 100 performers, including an abundance of brass and percussion, as well as such instruments as organ, wind machine, celesta, and two sets of timpani.

Although Strauss called his work a symphony, it bears none of the characteristics of that form. Instead of the standard four movements, *An Alpine Symphony* is written in one uninterrupted flow of music (roughly 45 minutes in performance length), portraying distinct episodes on the climb. It begins in the hours before sunrise, which are painted in dark and sombre tones. After the brassy emergence

of the Sun, the climbers set forth to a rhythmic, rising theme; phrases of this theme recur throughout the work. Horns and clarinets, perhaps representing hunters and birds, carry them into the forest, where they pass by a brook and a waterfall. The mists rising from that cascade conjure up images of Alpine fairies. Leaving the forest, the climbers ascend to a sunny flower-filled Alpine meadow and then to a mountain pasture, where shepherds call to one another. The clangor of cowbells is heard.

The adventure takes an ominous turn when the climbers become lost in a thicket and then must traverse a glacier and a perilous precipice before they reach the summit. Here a grand trombone fanfare and rich orchestral passages create the effect of a glorious panorama revealed. But clouds cover the Sun, and darkness and turmoil prevail as a tremendous thunderstorm breaks overhead.

The adventurers scramble down the mountain, their descent represented by falling intervals, an inversion of the rising theme heard during the ascent. Each of the previous sights—the glacier, the pasture, the waterfall—passes by in reverse order as the climbers hasten down the slopes. By the time they arrive at the mountain's base, the Sun is setting. The storm has passed, night has come, and they are enfolded in the darkness. Musically and dramatically, Strauss brings the listener full circle.

# Richard Strauss

## An Alpine Symphony

### Evgeny Mravinsky Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra

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|---|---|
| 1. Nacht (Night) 4:51   | 12. Gefährliche Augenblicke (Dangerous Moments) 1:30                                  |
| 2. Sonnenaufgang (Sunrise) 1:33   | 13. Auf dem Gipfel (On the Summit) 4:58   |
| 3. Der Anstieg (The Ascent) 2:15  | 14. Vision (Vision) 4:00  |
| 4. Eintritt in den Wald (Entry into the Forest) 5:46  | 15. Nebel steigen auf (Mists Rise) 0:23   |
| 5. Wanderung neben dem Bache (Wandering by the Brook) 0:49  | 16. Die Sonne verdüstert sich allmählich<br>(The Sun Gradually Becomes Obscured) 1:13 |
| 6. Am Wasserfall (At the Waterfall) 0:16  | 17. Elegie (Elegy) 2:14   |
| 7. Erscheinung (Apparition) 0:52  | 18. Stille vor dem Sturm (Calm Before the Storm) 2:47                                 |
| 8. Auf blumigen Wiesen (On Flowering Meadows) 0:57  | 19. Gewitter und Sturm, Abstieg (Thunder and Tempest, Descent) 3:36                   |
| 9. Auf der Alm (On the Alpine Pasture) 2:37   | 20. Sonnenuntergang (Sunset) 1:58   |
| 10. Durch Dickicht und Gestrüpp auf Irrwegen<br>(Through Thickets and Undergrowth on the Wrong Path) 1:33 | 21. Ausklang (Quiet Settles) 6:09   |
| 11. Auf dem Gletscher (On the Glacier) 1:03   | 22. Nacht (Night) 2:58  |
|   | Total Time: 55:05   |

Recorded by Meloydia Live at the Grand Hall of Leningrad Philharmonic  
Recorded 1962 Transferred from a 15ips tape (Monophonic)



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