

Alexander Vertinsky - Legend of the Century (1999)

Written by bluelover

Saturday, 21 January 2012 09:43 - Last Updated Monday, 25 April 2016 19:46

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01 - tango magnolia 02 - snilsya mne sad 03 - dorogoi dlinnoyu 04 - molis', kunak 05 - katorzhnaya 06 - minutka na puti [play](#) 07 - zhelti angel 08 - snezhanaya kolibel'naya 09 - malenki kreolchik 10 - jonny 11 - marlen 12 - polukrovka 13 - temneet doroga 14 - v sinem i dalekom okeane [play](#) 15 - pozdnaya vstrecha 16 - ti uspokoi menya 17 - v goluboi dalekoi spalence 18 - dim bez ognya 19 - klassicheskie rozi

Alexander Vertinsky is certainly the pride and soul of Russian musical culture, whose gift appears to withstand anything. When Vertinsky, who had emigrated from Russia during the Soviet revolution, asked the authorities for permission to come back during World War II, the horrible dictator strangely feeling some interest in the artist's songs, allowed him to return and even let him perform on stage.

Alexander Vertinsky's fairy ballads sang to a piano accompaniment all bear a distinct touch of his graceful artistry and refined taste. Possessing a refined taste he never wrote a single mediocre song. Generation after generation get some special charge out of his affecting creations. Today one can observe a new surge of interest in this outstanding poet, singer and actor. His songs are nowadays performed by a number of musicians close to rock music (B.Grebenshchikov, Alexander F. Sklyar, etc.)

Alexander Vertinsky was born in Kiev on March 21, 1889. His childhood was far from being joyful. His father could not marry his mother, (though they had already two children) as his first wife was against their divorce. After the parents' death Sasha and his sister were brought up in different families by their mother's relatives. For a long time they knew nothing of each other's life. They met many years later when both were already grown up artistes.

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Alexander Vertinsky From childhood Alexander Vertinsky was bent upon becoming an artiste. When a schoolboy he was attracted by various sorts of 'performances' - he equally liked going to church and theatre. Kiev was known for its rich cultural traditions and was visited by many celebrities, among who there was also Fyodor Shalyapin, a great Russian singer.

By 1905, the year of the first Russian revolution, Alexander was expelled from gymnasium and left his aunt's home to become a 'Bohemian'. He mixed in artistic circles, wrote fashionable decadent stories and took on various jobs to make both ends meet: he sold cards, loaded water-melons, worked as a corrector at a printing-house, and what not. Soon he left for Moscow and started performing at a theatre of miniatures with his poetic parodies. In 1913 he applied to the Moscow Art Theatre but was not admitted. At that time much was on his way to the desired goal of becoming an actor: his innate timidity and burring, which he soon took the best of finding his peculiar French-like manner of speech.

With time Vertinsky adopted his unforgettable performing style based on the peculiarities of his half-speaking and half-singing voice. Every song of his he turned into a small play with a developed plot and one or two characters. Their images were laconic, portrayed with a few vivid strokes.

Alexander Vertinsky The 'child of the 20s', Vertinsky first came on a variety stage in 1915 singing about poor lonely kids crucified with cocaine on wet Moscow streets. First he performed in a costume of Pierrot, which gradually was cut down to the make-up of snow-white mask of the face and bright red lips. Later Vertinsky would appear on stage in a black top hat and a tailcoat with a snow-white shirtfront, which made him look elegant and mysterious. The Pierrot costume was in line with the actor's absorbing play of hands: every jesture was an all-sufficient implication expanding the meaning of the text. Vertinsky's songs were called 'arriettas' or 'Pierrot's sad songs'. The artiste himself was referred to as 'Russian Pierrot' at first.

Vertinsky gained fame before the October revolution. His songs were remembered and reproduced by word of mouth. Lots of women were impressed by Vertinsky and he easily went into romance.

In the 1920s his life changed greatly. As many other figures of Russian culture he could not accept the revolution and had to emigrate from Russia in November 1920. Along with Fyodor

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Shalyapin and Anna Pavlova, later called 'children of the Silver Age' Vertinsky gradually gained love of the audience in Europe and later in America. The subject of his songs saw changes too. While before the revolution he used to sing about exotic lands, now he nostalgically muses on Russia and its salvation.

From 1923 Vertinsky lived in Poland where he met a girl named Iren and soon married her. Yet their marriage was not to last long. From Poland he left for France and later to the States. After the successful tour in America he returned to France but soon left for China. There he got married for the second time and soon a daughter was born. To feed his family, the artiste had to work much - he gave two concerts a day. Naturally, his creative work went through certain changes.

His songs turn into small ballads. If earlier his heroes were whimsical ladies in chic opera-cloaks and clowns, lords and vagabonds, pages and cocainists now these are common people. They tirelessly strive for happiness and grieve when failing. In the 1930s he starts writing songs to verses by Soviet poets. All those long years of emigration Vertinsky dreamt of returning to his homeland. Not once he petitioned Soviet authorities to let him come back yet every time they would refuse.

Perhaps his return home in 1943 during the patriotic war was to symbolize solidarity of the Soviet people fighting against fascism. Vertinsky's songs became close and dear to Soviet people. He performed for the injured and orphans and toured all around the country, including Siberia and Middle Asia. After the war he played in movies, Soviet film directors making use of his peculiar aristocratic appearance.

Vertinsky did not make capital in emigration and upon return to Russia he had to start everything from the beginning at the age of 55. He gave 24 concerts a month touring all around the Soviet Union rarely finding conditions suitable for performing. Together with new subject matter his songs conveyed old motives of exotics, nostalgia and longing for new sensations.

In spite of anything Vertinsky felt free because people needed and wanted his creations. He worked till the last day of his life and died when on a tour, evidently from a heart failure.

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