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Opera Star to Perform Olympic Anthem at Opening Ceremony

By The Moscow Times

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Anna Netrebko will perform the Olympic anthem at the opening ceremony of the Sochi Winter Olympics. **Simon Wedege Petersen**

SOCHI — Renowned operatic soprano Anna Netrebko will perform the Olympic anthem at the opening ceremony of the Sochi Winter Olympics later Friday, its creative director said.

Netrebko, 42, who holds dual Austrian and Russian citizenship and resides in New York City, is a star of the classical music scene and has performed at many of the world's major opera houses in her 16-year career.

"I will let you in on one secret. The Olympic anthem will be performed by the opera diva Anna Netrebko," said Konstantin Ernst, Russia's Channel One network director general, who is in charge of Friday's show.

"In my opinion she really pulled it off," Ernst added in reference to Wednesday's rehearsals.

The director gave a few more details of the ceremony at the Fisht Olympic Stadium, which is due to start at 8:14 p.m. local time.

Just short of three hours, the show is to involve some 3,000 young performers and 2,700 volunteers, Ernst said.

There will also be references to the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics, he said.

"For everyone in the Soviet Union, this event was really significant. We will be using this image a little bit in the opening ceremony, and in the closing ceremony quite heavily," Ernst said.

The opening ceremony also will pay homage to Russia's industrial and cultural past with nods to its great writers and composers. There will be a performance from piano virtuoso Denis Matsuev and the lighter of the Olympic cauldron has, by some observers, been narrowed down to three people.

They are six-time Olympic gold medal speedskater Lidiya Skoblikova, three-time Olympic figure skating champion Irina Rodnina, and Vladislav Tretiak, the legendary Soviet goaltender who was named the greatest Russian hockey player of the 20th century.

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