

2022–2023 | 123rd Season

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Thursday, January 26, at 7:30

Saturday, February 4, at 8:00

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Yuja Wang Piano

Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

I. Moderato

II. Adagio sostenuto

III. Allegro scherzando

Intermission

Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 1

I. Vivace

II. Andante

III. Allegro vivace

There will be a slight pause.

Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43, for piano and orchestra

This program runs approximately 2 hours.

Lead support for the Rachmaninoff 150 Celebration is provided by **Tatiana Copeland**. Mrs. Copeland's mother was the niece of Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Tatiana Copeland was named after the composer's daughter, Tatiana Sergeevna Rachmaninoff.

These concerts are sponsored by **Leslie Miller and Richard Worley**.

The February 4 concert is also sponsored by the **Manko Family**.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM, and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.

2022–2023 | 123rd Season

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Friday, January 27, at 8:00

Sunday, February 5, at 2:00

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Yuja Wang Piano

Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30

I. Allegro ma non tanto

II. Intermezzo: Adagio—

III. Finale: Alla breve

Intermission

Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 4 in G minor, Op. 40

I. Allegro vivace

II. Largo—

III. Allegro vivace

There will be a slight pause.

Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43, for piano and orchestra

This program runs approximately 2 hours, 10 minutes.

Lead support for the Rachmaninoff 150 Celebration is provided by **Tatiana Copeland**. Mrs. Copeland's mother was the niece of Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Tatiana Copeland was named after the composer's daughter, Tatiana Sergeevna Rachmaninoff.

These concerts are sponsored by **Leslie Miller and Richard Worley**.

The January 27 concert is also sponsored by **Lee Shlifer, in honor of Yuja Wang's teacher Gary Graffman**.

The February 5 concert is also sponsored by **Claudio Pasquinelli and Kyong-Mi Chang**.

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The Philadelphia Orchestra

The world-renowned Philadelphia Orchestra strives to share the transformative power of music with the widest possible audience, and to create joy, connection, and excitement through music in the Philadelphia region, across the country, and around the world. Through innovative programming, robust education initiatives, a commitment to its diverse communities, and the embrace of digital outreach, the ensemble is creating an expansive future for classical music, and furthering the place of the arts in an open and democratic society. In June 2021 the Orchestra and its home, the Kimmel Center, united to form The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc., reimagining the power of the arts to bring joy, create community, and effect change.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is now in his 11th season as the eighth music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His connection to the ensemble's musicians has been praised by both concertgoers and critics, and he is embraced by the musicians of the Orchestra, audiences, and the community.

Your Philadelphia Orchestra takes great pride in its hometown, performing for the people of Philadelphia year-round, in Verizon Hall and community centers, in classrooms and hospitals, and over the airwaves and online. In response to the cancellation of concerts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orchestra launched the Digital Stage, providing access to high-quality online performances, keeping music alive at a time when it was needed most. It also inaugurated free offerings: HearTOGETHER, a podcast

on racial and social justice, and creative equity and inclusion, through the lens of the world of orchestral music, and Our City, Your Orchestra, a series of digital performances that connects the Orchestra with communities through music and dialog while celebrating the diversity and vibrancy of the Philadelphia region.

The Philadelphia Orchestra's award-winning education and community initiatives engage over 50,000 students, families, and community members of all ages through programs such as Play!N's; side-by-sides; PopUP concerts; Our City, Your Orchestra Live; School Concerts; the School Partnership Program and School Ensemble Program; and All City Orchestra Fellowships.

Through concerts, tours, residencies, and recordings, the Orchestra is a global ambassador and one of our nation's greatest exports. It performs annually at Carnegie Hall, the Mann Center, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. The Orchestra also has a rich touring history, having first performed outside Philadelphia in its earliest days. In 1973 it was the first American orchestra to perform in the People's Republic of China, launching a five-decade commitment of people-to-people exchange.

Under Yannick's leadership, the Orchestra returned to recording with 12 celebrated releases on the Deutsche Grammophon label, including the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*. The Orchestra also reaches thousands of radio listeners with weekly broadcasts on WRTI-FM and SiriusXM. For more information, please visit www.philorch.org.

Music Director

George Etheredge



Yannick Nézet-Séguin is currently in his 11th season as music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra. Additionally, he became the third music director of New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2018. Yannick, who holds the Walter and Leonore Annenberg Chair, is an inspired leader of The Philadelphia Orchestra. His intensely collaborative style, deeply rooted musical curiosity, and boundless enthusiasm have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. The *New York Times* has called him "phenomenal," adding that "the ensemble, famous for its glowing strings and homogenous richness, has never sounded better."

Yannick has established himself as a musical leader of the highest caliber and one of the most thrilling talents of his generation. He has been artistic director and principal conductor of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain since 2000, and in 2017 he became an honorary member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. He was music director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic from 2008 to 2018 (he is now honorary conductor) and was principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic from 2008 to 2014. He has made wildly successful appearances with the world's most revered ensembles and at many of the leading opera houses.

Yannick signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon (DG) in 2018. Under his leadership The Philadelphia Orchestra returned to recording with 12 releases on that label, including *Florence Price Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3*, which won a GRAMMY Award for Best Orchestral Performance. His upcoming recordings will include projects with The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, and the Orchestre Métropolitain, with which he will also continue to record for ATMA Classique. Additionally, he has recorded with the Rotterdam Philharmonic on DG, EMI Classics, and BIS Records, and the London Philharmonic for the LPO label.

A native of Montreal, Yannick studied piano, conducting, composition, and chamber music at Montreal's Conservatory of Music and continued his studies with renowned conductor Carlo Maria Giulini; he also studied choral conducting with Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. Among Yannick's honors are an appointment as Companion of the Order of Canada; Companion to the Order of Arts and Letters of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Quebec; an Officer of the Order of Montreal; an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; *Musical America's* 2016 Artist of the Year; ECHO Klassik's 2014 Conductor of the Year; a Royal Philharmonic Society Award; Canada's National Arts Centre Award; the Prix Denise-Pelletier; the Oskar Morawetz Award; and honorary doctorates from the University of Quebec, the Curtis Institute of Music, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, McGill University, the University of Montreal, the University of Pennsylvania, and Laval University.

To read Yannick's full bio, please visit philorch.org/conductor.

Soloist

Kirk Edwards



Pianist **Yuja Wang** made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in 2008 and her subscription debut in October 2009. She is celebrated for her charismatic artistry, emotional honesty, and captivating stage presence. She has performed with the world's most venerated conductors, musicians, and ensembles, and is renowned not only for her virtuosity, but also for her spontaneous and lively performances, famously telling the *New York Times*,

"I firmly believe every program should have its own life and be a representation of how I feel at the moment." This skill and charisma was demonstrated in her world-premiere performance of Magnus Lindberg's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the San Francisco Symphony and Esa-Pekka Salonen this past October, before it tours in the United States and Europe throughout the season.

Ms. Wang was born into a musical family in Beijing. After childhood piano studies in China, she received advanced training in Canada and at the Curtis Institute of Music with Gary Graffman. Her international breakthrough came in 2007 when she replaced Martha Argerich as soloist with the Boston Symphony. Two years later she signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon and has since established her place among the world's leading artists with a succession of critically acclaimed performances and recordings. She was named *Musical America's* Artist of the Year in 2017, and in 2021 she received an Opus Klassik Award for her world-premiere recording of John Adams's *Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel.

As a chamber musician, Ms. Wang has developed long-lasting partnerships with several leading artists, notably violinist Leonidas Kavakos, with whom she has recorded the complete Brahms violin sonatas and performed duo recitals in Europe this past fall. Earlier in 2022 she embarked on a highly anticipated international recital tour, which saw her perform in world-class venues across North America, Europe, and Asia, astounding audiences once more with her flair, technical ability, and exceptional artistry in a wide-ranging program that included works by Beethoven, Schoenberg, and Ligeti.

Framing the Program

Parallel Events

1890
Rachmaninoff
Piano
Concerto
No. 1

Music
Nielsen
Symphony
No. 1

Literature
Ibsen
Hedda Gabler

Art
Cézanne
The Cardplayers

History
Global
influenza
epidemics

1909
Rachmaninoff
Piano
Concerto
No. 3

Music
Strauss
Elektra

Literature
Wells
Tono-Bungay

Art
Matisse
The Dance

History
Peary reaches
the North Pole

1934
Rachmaninoff
Paganini
Rhapsody

Music
Hindemith
*Mathis der
Maler*

Literature
Graves
I Claudius

Art
Dali
Cousine

History
Lindbergh
baby
kidnapped

As a celebrated composer, pianist, and conductor Sergei Rachmaninoff enjoyed deep ties to The Philadelphia Orchestra that began during his first American tour in 1909 and gloriously culminated more than 30 years later with the premiere of his final work, the Symphonic Dances. During the latter part of his career, Rachmaninoff remarked that he wrote with the sound of The Philadelphia Orchestra in his head and that as a soloist he would “rather perform with The Philadelphia Orchestra than any other of the world.”

Rachmaninoff’s five works for piano and orchestra have particularly intimate connections to the Philadelphians, with whom he composed and premiered the Fourth Piano Concerto and the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, and with whom he recorded them all.

Rachmaninoff began composing his First Piano Concerto in 1891 at age 17, while still a student at the Moscow Conservatory. His Second and Third, which remain the most popular, came in the first decade of the new century when he was most prolific as a composer. He premiered the Fourth Concerto with the Philadelphians in 1927, nearly a decade after moving to America, and the Rhapsody in 1934.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world with three weekly broadcasts on SiriusXM’s *Symphony Hall*, Channel 76, on Mondays at 7 PM, Thursdays at 12 AM, and Saturdays at 4 PM.

The Music

Piano Concertos Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born in Semyonovo, Russia, April 1, 1873

Died in Beverly Hills, California, March 28, 1943



Sergei Rachmaninoff pursued multiple professional careers and juggled different personal identities, often out of joint with the realities of his time and place. He was a Russian who fled his country after the 1917 Revolution and who lived in America and Europe for the rest of his life. He was a great composer who, in order to support himself and his family, spent most of his time performing, both as a conductor and as one of the towering pianists of the 20th century. And he

was a Romantic composer writing in the age of burgeoning Modernism, his music embraced by audiences but seeming to many as from a bygone world alien to the stylistic innovations of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and other contemporaries.

Three Professions Rachmaninoff worried that his triple professional profile might cancel each other out: "I have chased three hares," he said. "Can I be certain that I have captured one?" The remark alludes to a Russian proverb that warned against pursuing two hares, hence spreading oneself too thin. He was an unusually accomplished performer in two domains at a time when there was an ever-increasing separation between performer and composer. Rachmaninoff, in the great tradition of Mozart and Beethoven through Strauss and Mahler, was the principal performing advocate of his own music.

And yet even when he was out of sync with time and place, Rachmaninoff pressed on with a grueling performance schedule (sometimes 70 concerts in a year) and composed some of the most popular and enduring works of the first half of the 20th century. That during the latter half of his career he did most of this with The Philadelphia Orchestra makes the connections here all the more personal and poignant.

The Last Romantic? Rachmaninoff acknowledged his temporal and geographical homelessness. In an interview from the late 1930s he said:

I feel like a ghost in a world grown alien. I cannot cast out the old way of writing, and I cannot acquire the new. I have made intense effort to

feel the musical manner of today, but it will not come to me. ... I cannot cast out my musical gods in a moment and bend the knee to new ones. Even with the disaster of living through what has befallen the Russia where I spent my happiest years, yet I always feel that my own music and my reactions to all music, remained spiritually the same, unendingly obedient in trying to create beauty.

It was exactly the personal, expressive, and spiritual that so often give Rachmaninoff's music its instantly recognizable sound, drawn from Russian folksong, Orthodox liturgical chant, church bells, and a quest for beauty. Two years before his death he declared: "A composer's music should express the country of his birth, his love affairs, his religion, the books which have influenced him, the pictures he loves. It should be the product of the sum total of a composer's experience."

Rachmaninoff's unusual position as a late Romantic was shrewdly assessed by the musicologist Richard Taruskin in his monumental *Oxford History of Western Music*:

There were many, during the 1920s and 1930s, who regarded him as the greatest living composer, precisely because he was the only one who seemed capable of successfully maintaining the familiar and prestigious style of the nineteenth-century "classics" into the twentieth century. The fact that he was in fact capable of doing so, moreover, and that his style was as distinctive as any contemporary's, could be used to refute the modernist argument that traditional styles had been exhausted.

Taruskin puts his finger on the difference between a conservative composer like Rachmaninoff, who is genuinely popular with audiences, and challenging Modernist composers whose music is widely resisted, but whose stylistic innovations earn them a prominent place in history books. Rachmaninoff demonstrated that it was still possible to develop an individual, instantly recognizable, and captivating compositional voice. Samuel Barber, another composer with deep ties to The Philadelphia Orchestra, did something similar, but such figures became rarer in the mid-20th century.

Rachmaninoff in Russia Rachmaninoff was born to a well-to-do family that cultivated his prodigious musical gifts. His mother was his first piano teacher and at age nine he began studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory but floundered. The family finances were declining, as was his parents' marriage, and he transferred to the Moscow Conservatory, where he thrived. He met leading Russian musicians, studied with some of them, and won the support of his hero, Tchaikovsky.

Upon graduation in the spring of 1892 Rachmaninoff was awarded the Great Gold Medal, a rarely bestowed honor. His career as both pianist and composer was clearly on the rise with impressive works such as the Piano Concerto No. 1, the one-act opera *Aleko* (about which Tchaikovsky enthused), and pieces in

a variety of other genres. One piano work written at age 18 received almost too much attention: the C-sharp minor Prelude, the extraordinary popularity of which meant he found himself having to perform it for the rest of his life.

He seemed on track for a brilliant and charmed career, the true successor to Tchaikovsky. But things went terribly wrong in March 1897 with the premiere of his Symphony No. 1 in D minor, which proved to be one of the legendary fiascos in music history and a bitter shock to Rachmaninoff just days before his 24th birthday. Alexander Glazunov, an eminent composer and teacher but, according to various reports, a mediocre conductor, led the ill-fated concert. The event plunged Rachmaninoff into deep despair: "When the indescribable torture of this performance had at last come to an end, I was a different man."

For some three years Rachmaninoff stopped composing, although he continued to perform as a pianist and began to establish a prominent new career as a conductor. He eventually found therapeutic relief and reemerged in 1901 with the Second Piano Concerto, an instant success. The following year, after surmounting religious obstacles, he married his cousin Natalia Satina, with whom he had two daughters. Rachmaninoff was a rare composer who enjoyed a happy family until the end.

Rachmaninoff's first important tour abroad was in 1899 to London, where he conducted his orchestral fantasy *The Rock* and played small piano pieces. (He declined to perform the First Piano Concerto, which would have been the natural vehicle, because he considered it a student work until he revised it years later.) His conducting career flourished, mainly of operas at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. But political ferment in Russia after the Bloody Sunday massacre in January 1905 prompted him to spend more time abroad and concentrate on composition, including two more one-act operas. Beginning in late 1906 he and his family spent most of the year in Dresden, where he finished his Second Symphony, another compositional triumph. This was the piece he chose to conduct for his Philadelphia Orchestra debut in 1909 and it remains a signature work for the Philadelphians to this day. During this first American tour he premiered the Third Piano Concerto in New York and by the end of his three-month stay turned down the offer to become music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. (He would decline again in 1918.)

These years turned out to be Rachmaninoff's most prolific as a composer. He wrote primarily during summers at a pastoral estate called Ivanovka, some 300 miles south of Moscow. But this idyllic world came to an abrupt end with the Russian Revolution in 1917. He and his family left in late December, never to return. The Bolsheviks burned most of Ivanovka to the ground (it has since been reconstructed as a museum). Rachmaninoff sought to recapture his happiest Russian memories in faraway places.

Life after Russia Challenged with finding ways to support his family, Rachmaninoff decided to concentrate on his keyboard career and began to make recordings as well. In 1920 he signed a lucrative contract with the Victor Talking Machine

Company (later RCA). His repertory, in comparison with other star pianists, was initially quite limited, and his technique needed honing in order to compete. These realities left him with far less time to compose and his productivity declined considerably. He wrote some dazzling arrangements that served him well as encores on his extended American and European tours and that fit easily on 78 rpm recordings, but during his last quarter century there were only six more pieces to which he assigned opus numbers. The Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42 (1931), was his final solo piano work. The five others are for, or with, orchestra, and all were premiered by The Philadelphia Orchestra. Three Russian Songs, Op. 41, scored for chorus and orchestra, and the Fourth Piano Concerto, Op. 40, premiered on the same concert in March 1927 with Leopold Stokowski conducting. The Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43, followed in 1934, premiered with Stokowski in Baltimore. His final two works were for orchestra alone: the Symphony No. 3, Op. 44, premiered in 1936 with Stokowski, and the magisterial Symphonic Dances, Op. 45, in 1941 with Eugene Ormandy.

In 1939, to mark the 30th anniversary of his first tour to America and his debut with the Orchestra, the Philadelphians and Ormandy presented a "Rachmaninoff Festival" in Philadelphia and in New York. Rachmaninoff played his first three concertos and the Paganini Rhapsody and for the final program conducted his Third Symphony (which he recorded at the time) and earlier choral symphony *The Bells* (1913). In addition, Ormandy led the Second Symphony and *The Isle of the Dead*. After the first concert the *New York Times* reported that when Rachmaninoff came on stage the audience stood in his honor: "Their admiration for him and their enjoyment of his music were more evident there than words can make them here. The occasion was a memorable tribute to a great artist."

The Festival's success led to Rachmaninoff's final Philadelphia world premiere: the Symphonic Dances. He made six more concerto appearances with the Orchestra and recorded the Fourth Concerto before a last concert playing the Second Concerto in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in May 1942. He died less than a year later, age 69, prompting Ormandy to dispatch a telegram to his widow: "Members of the Philadelphia Orchestra and I wish to extend to you and your family our deepest sympathy in your great loss. The world has lost one of the greatest musicians in the history of music making and our orchestra one of its greatest and most sincere friends."

Piano Concerto No. 1

Although he composed a fair amount of juvenilia, Rachmaninoff decided that his First Piano Concerto should be presented as the official Op. 1. The 17-year-old started composing the work in the summer of 1890 and premiered the first movement in March 1892 at the Moscow Conservatory, from which he graduated a few months later. He dedicated the piece to his cousin, the pianist

and conductor Alexander Siloti, who proceeded to perform it frequently. Although Rachmaninoff soon published the Concerto in a two-piano version, he cooled on the work and declined to play it himself. A decade later he said that he needed to take it “in hand, look it over, and then decide how much time and work will be required for its new version, and whether it’s worth doing, anyway.”

By his mid-30s, Rachmaninoff was a famous composer. The enormous success of the Second Piano Concerto (1901) had helped to secure that stature and people were understandably curious to hear what his first effort in the genre was like—hence the reassessment: “It is so terrible in its present form that I should like to work at it and, if possible, get it into decent shape.” But the Third Concerto (1909), which proved to be yet another triumph when he premiered it in New York, sidetracked him again. It was not until 1917, just before Rachmaninoff left Russia for good, that he returned to his youthful effort. The revisions involved a thinning out of the orchestration, some structural modifications, a new cadenza for the opening movement, and a considerable recasting of the finale. Rachmaninoff gave the first performance of the new version that year at Carnegie Hall with Modest Altschuler conducting the Russian Symphony Orchestra.

A Closer Look Despite the revisions, the First Concerto still sounds like the Rachmaninoff whose music audiences have so embraced for over a century, chronologically situated, as it is, both before and after its phenomenally famous concerto siblings and the brilliant Second Symphony (1907). The original version of the Concerto survives, and so we know that the revision remains relatively close to what the teenage Rachmaninoff initially composed. Even at such a young age many fingerprints of his mature style are already evident, beginning with the lushly expansive first theme of the first movement (**Vivace**) that follows a dramatic opening—a brass fanfare leading to massive double octaves loudly proclaimed by the piano soloist. This and other parts of the Concerto seem to be modeled on Edvard Grieg’s Piano Concerto in A minor, which Siloti was diligently practicing while spending the summer of 1890 at Rachmaninoff’s country estate. The brief second-movement **Andante** offers a lyrical and nocturnal interlude before the vibrant finale (**Allegro vivace**).

Rachmaninoff composed his First Piano Concerto from 1890 to 1891 and revised it in 1917.

Rachmaninoff himself gave the first Philadelphia Orchestra performances of the piece, in March 1919, with Leopold Stokowski conducting. The most recent appearance on a subscription concert was in May 2017, when Haochen Zhang performed it with Stéphane Denève.

The composer returned to Philadelphia during the late 1930s for a series of performances of the piece, during which he recorded it with Eugene Ormandy and the Orchestra for RCA. The Philadelphians also recorded the Concerto for CBS in 1963 with Philippe Entremont and Ormandy and in 2016 for Deutsche Grammophon with Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

The score calls for solo piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, percussion (cymbal, triangle), and strings.

Performance time is approximately 25 minutes.

Piano Concerto No. 2

The Second Concerto came at a crucial juncture in Rachmaninoff's career, following the nearly three-year period of compositional paralysis in the wake of the failure of his First Symphony. In the hopes of getting him back on track as a composer, friends and family put him in touch with Dr. Nikolai Dahl, who was experimenting with hypnosis treatments pioneered in Paris around this time by Freud's teacher Jean-Martin Charcot. Dahl was a gifted amateur musician who took great interest in this case. According to various accounts (perhaps exaggerated), the two met almost daily, with the composer half asleep in the doctor's armchair hearing the mantra: "You will begin to write your concerto. ... You will work with great facility. ... The concerto will be of excellent quality."

The treatment worked—or at least complemented other factors that got the composer back on his creative track. A close friendship with the extraordinary Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin was encouraging, especially when the two were approached after a performance by the great writer Anton Chekhov, who remarked: "Mr. Rachmaninoff, nobody knows you yet but you will be a great man one day." By the summer he was composing the Second Piano Concerto, his first substantial work since the Symphony fiasco, which he dedicated to Dahl. (This is no doubt the lone instance of a composer dedicating a masterpiece to his therapist.) The second and third of its three movements were completed by the fall and Rachmaninoff premiered them in Moscow that December with his cousin Alexander Siloti conducting. He finished the first movement in May 1901 and performed the entire Concerto in November. The work was greeted enthusiastically and opened the way to Rachmaninoff's most intensive period of compositional activity.

A Closer Look To begin the first movement (**Moderato**), the solo piano inexorably intones imposing chords in a gradual crescendo, repeatedly returning to a low F. This evokes the peeling of bells, a preoccupation of many Russian composers and one that had roots in Rachmaninoff's childhood experiences. The passage leads to the broad first theme played by the strings. The core of the Concerto is an extended slow middle movement (**Adagio sostenuto**). The pianistic fireworks come to the fore in the finale (**Allegro scherzando**), which intersperses more lyrical themes—indeed the beloved tunes from all three movements were later adapted into popular songs championed by Frank Sinatra and others.

Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto was composed from 1900 to 1901.

Ossip Gabrilowitsch was pianist in the first Philadelphia Orchestra performance of the Second Concerto, on November 28, 1916, in Cleveland; Leopold Stokowski conducted. Rachmaninoff performed the piece with the Orchestra in 1921 and again during the late 1930s and early '40s. The most recent subscription performances were in October 2019 with pianist Haochen Zhang and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

In addition to Rachmaninoff's and Stokowski's 1929 recording of the Concerto, the Orchestra recorded the work in 1956 for CBS with Eugene Istomin and Eugene Ormandy; in 1971 for RCA with

Arthur Rubinstein and Ormandy; in 1989 for EMI with Andrei Gaurilov and Riccardo Muti; and in 2018 for Deutsche Grammophon with Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. The second and third movements only were also recorded by Rachmaninoff and Stokowski for RCA in 1924.

Rachmaninoff scored the work for an orchestra of two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals), and strings, in addition to the solo piano.

Performance time is approximately 35 minutes.

Piano Concerto No. 3

Rachmaninoff continued to build on the compositional successes of his Second Piano Concerto and Second Symphony during what turned out to be the most productive period of his career. Now in his mid-30s, he was about to undertake his first tour to America in 1909. In preparation, he decided to write a new concerto, again amidst the calm of the family retreat in Ivanovka.

Rachmaninoff dedicated the Third Concerto to Josef Hofmann, the great Polish-born pianist who would later become the director of the Curtis Institute of Music. Soon after his friend's death, Hofmann commented: "Rachmaninoff was made of steel and gold; steel in his arms, gold in his heart." In the end, Hofmann never performed the piece, which Rachmaninoff premiered as soloist in November 1909 with Walter Damrosch leading the New York Symphony Orchestra. Six weeks later Rachmaninoff played the piece again in New York, this time with Gustav Mahler conducting the New York Philharmonic. (The competing orchestras later merged.)

A Closer Look The unforgettable opening of the Third Piano Concerto (**Allegro ma non tanto**) is simplicity itself: a hauntingly beautiful melody played in octaves that has a chant-like quality. Rachmaninoff stated that it was "borrowed neither from folk song nor from ecclesiastical sources. It just 'got written.' ... I wanted to 'sing' a melody on the piano the way singers sing." Rachmaninoff composed two cadenzas, both of which he played. The short coda returns to the opening melody.

The following **Intermezzo: Adagio** begins with an orchestral section presenting the principal melodic ideas, melancholic in tone, until the piano enters building to a broadly Romantic theme. There is a very brief, fast, scherzo-like section that leads without pause into the thrilling and technically dazzling **Finale: Alla breve**. The movement recycles some of the musical ideas of the first one, making this one of the most unified of the composer's concertos.

Rachmaninoff composed his Piano Concerto No. 3 in 1909.

Alfred Cortot was the soloist in the Orchestra's first performances of the Concerto, in January 1920 with Leopold Stokowski. Rachmaninoff himself performed it with the Orchestra in February 1920 (with Stokowski) and in December 1939 (with Eugene Ormandy). The most recent subscription performances were in April 2018 with Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

The Orchestra has recorded Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto four times: in 1939 with the composer and Ormandy for RCA; in 1975 with Vladimir Ashkenazy and Ormandy for RCA; in 1986

with Andrei Gaurilov and Riccardo Muti for EMI; and in 2016 with Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin for Deutsche Grammophon.

Rachmaninoff's score calls for solo piano, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, suspended cymbal), and strings.

The Third Concerto runs approximately 45 minutes in performance.

Piano Concerto No. 4

As early as 1914 Rachmaninoff thought of writing a new concerto to add to his performing repertory, but little came of the idea until the summer of 1924, when he began composing his Fourth Concerto in G minor, which he finished in 1926. It was his first significant composition since he had left Russia nearly a decade earlier. He confided to his close friend Nikolai Medtner, himself a distinguished composer to whom he dedicated the piece, that he was worried some about its length: "Perhaps it will have to be given like Wagner's *Ring* cycle, over the course of several consecutive evenings." He also acknowledged that "the orchestra is almost never silent," which made the work "less like a concerto for piano and more like a concerto for piano and orchestra."

The Concerto is in fact not as long as either his Second or Third, but unlike the great successes he enjoyed with those pieces, it was not well received when he premiered it with Leopold Stokowski and The Philadelphia Orchestra in March 1927. He soon revised the work, rewriting the opening, making cuts and other changes, before its first publication in 1928; he overhauled it again in 1941, less than two years before his death, his final compositional project. This last version he recorded with Eugene Ormandy that year and it is the most often performed. (There are recordings available of the two earlier versions.)

A Closer Look The Concerto displays many of Rachmaninoff's distinctive musical fingerprints and gestures, but updated somewhat for the 1920s. There are fleeting influences, for example, of jazz. Rachmaninoff, along with many musical luminaries, attended the legendary February 1924 premiere of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in New York with the composer playing with Paul Whiteman's orchestra, and the experience left its mark. Unlike the subdued beginnings of his two previous concertos, this one starts with a full-blown romantically Rachmaninoff theme (**Allegro vivace**).

The **Largo** has a hint of the blues and makes use of an earlier solo piano work, the Etude-Tableau in C minor, which Rachmaninoff composed in 1911 but had held back from publication—it only appeared posthumously. The finale (**Allegro vivace**), which immediately follows, offers an energetic tour de force with allusions, as Rachmaninoff so often does, to the "Dies irae" from the Mass for the Dead.

The Fourth Piano Concerto was composed from 1924 to 1926 and revised in 1928 and again in 1941.

The Philadelphia Orchestra, conductor Leopold Stokowski, and the composer as soloist gave the world premiere of the Piano Concerto No. 4 in March 1927. Rachmaninoff and the Orchestra also performed the premiere of the 1941 revised version, in October of that year, this time with Eugene Ormandy. Most recently on subscription the work was performed in April 2017 by pianist Haochen Zhang and Stéphane Denève.

The Orchestra has recorded the Fourth Concerto three times: in 1941 with Rachmaninoff and Ormandy for RCA; in 1961 with Philippe Entremont and Ormandy for CBS; and in 2015 with Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin for Deutsche Grammophon.

The Concerto is scored for solo piano, piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, side drum, tambourine, triangle), and strings.

Rachmaninoff's Fourth Concerto runs approximately 25 minutes in performance.

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

Rachmaninoff composed the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini in the summer of 1934 at his Swiss villa near Lucerne. At the time, he described it as "not a 'concerto,' and its name is 'Symphonic Variations on a Theme of Paganini,'" which he then changed to "Fantasy." But ultimately it was as a Rhapsody that Leopold Stokowski led the Philadelphians in the world premiere in Baltimore on November 7, 1934, with the composer as soloist. The forces recorded the piece on Christmas Eve.

Rachmaninoff had earlier been attracted to variation form and written substantial pieces based on themes by Chopin and Corelli. For the Rhapsody he chose a simple but ingenious tune that has also seduced many other composers: the Caprice No. 24 in A minor by Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840). The great Italian violinist, the first instrumental "rock star" of the 19th century, wrote a dazzling collection of 24 caprices for solo violin that explored everything that the instrument, and the instrumentalist, could do. In 1820 Paganini published the pieces, on which he had worked for nearly two decades, as his Op. 1. Franz Liszt, who at age 20 was deeply inspired when he first witnessed Paganini perform at the Paris Opera and who aspired to become the "Paganini of the Piano," transcribed some of them for piano, as did Robert Schumann. More surprising and impressive are Johannes Brahms's two sets of variations on the A-minor Caprice, Op. 35. Prominent 20th-century composers after Rachmaninoff, including Witold Lutosławski, Alfred Schnittke, and George Rochberg, took Modernist looks at the alluring theme.

A Closer Look The original A-minor Caprice is itself a miniature set of variations. Almost by definition variation sets begin with a statement of the principal theme in the simplest possible way so that listeners can grasp the basis for what follows. After a very brief introduction for the full orchestra, Rachmaninoff begins unusually with a pointillist variation (marked "precedente") before the strings actually state the theme with unobtrusive piano support. The first variations

are dispatched at a quick pace until things slow down with No. 7, in which the rich piano chords introduce another theme that plays a prominent role in what follows. This is the well-known plainchant "Dies irae" from the Requiem Mass for the Dead. Rachmaninoff, who alluded to or quoted the medieval melody in other compositions, associated this motto not only with death but also with the violin's longstanding connection to the devil. (Many contemporaries commented on demonic performances by Paganini, whose name translates as "little pagan.")

Five years after writing the Rhapsody, Mikhail Fokine, the prominent Russian choreographer, used the piece for a ballet called *Paganini*. While in the planning stages Rachmaninoff suggested to him: "Why not resurrect the legend about Paganini, who, for perfection in his art and for a woman, sold his soul to an evil spirit?" He further remarked that "the variations which have the '*Dies irae*' represent the evil spirit." Over the course of the 24 variations Rachmaninoff devises many ingenious transformations of the theme, the most famous being the beautiful 18th variation, which offers a lyrical inversion (upside-down) of the tune as the emotional climax of the Rhapsody.

The Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini was composed in 1934.

Sergei Rachmaninoff was the soloist in the world premiere performance of the Rhapsody, with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski on November 7, 1934, in Baltimore. The most recent subscription performance was on April 28, 2017, with Nikolai Lugansky as soloist and Stéphane Denève conducting.

In addition to Rachmaninoff's recording of this work with the Philadelphians in 1934 with Stokowski for RCA, the Orchestra has recorded the Rhapsody four times: in 1958 with Philippe Entremont and Eugene Ormandy for CBS; in 1970 with Van Cliburn and Ormandy for RCA; in 1989 with Andrei Gavrilou and Riccardo Muti for EMI; and in 2015 with Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin for Deutsche Grammophon.

The score calls for an orchestra of two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, orchestra bells, side drum, snare drum, triangle), harp, and strings, in addition to the solo piano.

Performance time is approximately 25 minutes.

—Note by Christopher H. Gibbs

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