



Smithsonian Associates

The Genius of Sergei Rachmaninoff: 1873-1943

Dr. Rachel Franklin

Wednesday, September 6, 2023 - 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET

Utterly extraordinary as pianist, conductor and composer, throughout his life Sergei Rachmaninoff bestrode the musical world like a colossus. In his 150th birthday year, popular speaker and concert pianist Rachel Franklin celebrates his prodigious mastery of all these fields through recordings, video clips, and live demonstrations at her piano.

British-born Franklin has been a featured speaker for organizations including the Library of Congress and NPR, exploring intersections among classical and jazz music, film scores, and the fine arts.

SEPT 6 Russian Roots

Bells, chant, folk music, nature, and seasonal change: the sounds and sights of his childhood permeated Rachmaninoff's musical language. Before fleeing Russia forever in 1917 he composed in every genre including opera, symphony, choral works, songs, chamber music, and piano solo, rapidly developing the intensely rich timbres that mark his unique style. We begin by exploring these deep sonic roots and how they both framed and underpinned every work he composed. We examine how this "soundtrack" of his culture helped create his famous C sharp minor prelude, his early opera *Aleko*, solo piano preludes and etudes, chamber works etc. The distressing reception to his first symphony, a youthful work of genius, eventually led to his wildly successful second piano concerto. We'll make a full-throated finish with two of his magnificent choral works, *All Night Vigil* and *The Bells*.

Works explored, media used:

(All works by Sergei Rachmaninoff)

Saint Sophia, belfry bells, Veliki Novgorod

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHWyGRJXF6M>

Saint Sophia, great bells, Veliki Novgorod

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJslZ4CtqFU>

Novgorod, znamenny chant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqLfc2ej2R4>

State Ural Russian Folk Choir, 1943

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JduLY3xWgo&t=0s>

Allilulia: Russian Orthodox Male Choir of Australia

- Alex Dmitrieff, basso profondo soloist

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv0nuACLqJE>

C sharp minor prélude, *Morceaux de Fantaisie*, Op. 3, No. 2, 1892

- Sergei Rachmaninoff, 1919

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gyXRp6XV9s>

The Bells (Kolokola) Op. 35, 1913

- Kirill Kondrashin, Moscow Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra & RSFSR Academic Russian Chorus
Tenor: Michail Dovenman
Soprano: Yelizaveta Shumskaya
Baritone: Alexei Bolshakov

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4b08aVZn0w>

- Simon Rattle, Berlin Philharmonic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32aoN2WKm-Y>

Piano Trio élégiaque No.1, 1892

- Piano, Alexander Goldenweiser, Violin, Dimitri Tziganoff, Cello, Serguei Chirinsky, 1947

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9mal8AfnMA>

Aleko, 1892

- USSR State TV, Dmitry Kitaenko conductor, Moscow State Philharmonic, 1986
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILdmNvwqChU>

Spring Waters (Vesenniye vody), 12 Romances, Op. 14, No. 11, 1896

- Elisabeth Söderström, Vladimir Ashkenazy
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX7IRHGM-RA>

Symphony No. 1 in D minor, Op. 13, 1895

- Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffTel_kRaSI

Romance in A, 1891

- Martha Argerich, Sergio Tiempo and Pablo Galdo
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyO0MMJMAAI>

Piano concerto no. 2 in C minor, Op. 18, 1900/1901

- Rachmaninoff, Leopold Stokowski, Philadelphia Orchestra, 1929
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bz5wPjmzXdc>

Sonata for Cello and Piano in G Minor, Op. 19, 1901

- Sheku & Isata Kanneh-Mason
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGmYIPwjdrU>

Isle of the Dead, Op. 29, 1909

- Jascha Horenstein, Royal Philharmonic
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3dxliNpDJw>

Virgin, Mother of God (Bogoroditse Devo) from All-Night Vigil (Vsenoshchenoye bdeniye)
Op. 37, 1915

- Risto Joost, MDR Rundfunkchor, octavist Yuri Vishnyakov
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xW0QbUC0cEU>