



Smithsonian Associates

The Genius of Sergei Rachmaninoff: 1873-1943

Dr. Rachel Franklin

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 - 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET

SEPT 13 Conquering a New World

The years just before the Revolution saw Rachmaninoff busy and fulfilled, but the chaos of 1917 eventually drove him to flee with his family. Following his eventual arrival in the United States he built a career as a legendary concert pianist and conductor and, despite his quiet, almost dour demeanor, he became a musical superstar worshipped by a mesmerized public, and setting new standards for performing brilliance. With upwards of 70 concerts in a season and homes in both the US and Switzerland he had less time to compose, but the works we have from that period are astounding in their complexity and beauty. We explore his life as an exile, his work, his family and friends, and how he influenced American popular culture and it influenced him right back.

Works explored, media used:

(All works by Sergei Rachmaninoff unless specified)

Études-Tableaux, No. 6 in E flat, Op. 33, 1911

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

- Sheku & Isata Kanneh-Mason

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

Symphony No. 2, Op, 27, 1907

- Antonio Pappano, Staatskapelle Dresden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXxSpl4FrXo>

Isle of the Dead, Op. 29, 1909

- Jascha Horenstein, Royal Philharmonic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3dxliNpDJw>

Star Spangled Banner, John Stafford Smith. Arr. Rachmaninoff, 1918

- Rachmaninoff

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uN71HH2eeU>

Three Russian Songs, Op. 41, 1926: 1. Across The River (Cherez rechku)

- Charles Dutoit, Philadelphia Orchestra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZLzU2eY0KI>

Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42, 1931

- Olga Kern

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oILLr5Lg9OI>

Oscar Peterson and André Previn in conversation and duet, 1974

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFNsywQOW1I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51fUTDWhXys&list=PLMyMZvidm6G5fgxGizosU9LbK8yM4NJCp&index=7>

Walt Disney: *The Opry House*, 1929

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5zdHAspBAQ>

Tea for Two, Vincent Youmans, 1924

- Art Tatum, 1955

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yT0w0Qru02o>

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43, 1934

- Artur Rubinstein, Fritz Reiner, Chicago Symphony Orchestra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2adUBRkxuk>

Works by Beethoven, Schubert & Grieg, recorded 1928, RCA Victor

- Fritz Kreisler & Rachmaninoff

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgnxDaRdK90>

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45, 1941

- Andris Nelsons, Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfAh0CMgYT0>

Documentary about Rachmaninoff, “Harvest of Sorrow”, 1998

- Director, Tony Palmer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUU8gpZWvnA>