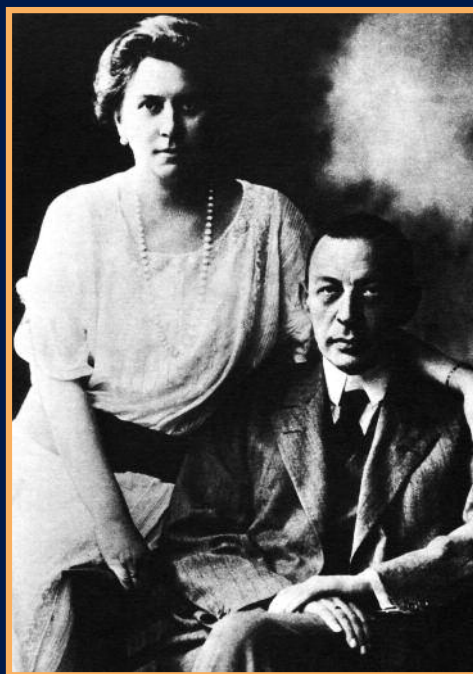




Great Pianists • Rachmaninov • 3

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RACHMANINOV

Preludes

Etudes-Tableaux

Oriental Sketch

Lilacs

Polka de V.R.

Serenade

Humoresque

Transcriptions

Sergey Rachmaninov

Historical recordings 1925-1942

[1]	Serge Rachmaninov (1873-1943): Polka de V.R. Recorded on 4th April 1928 <i>mat. CVE-25651-6; cat. Victor 6857</i>	3:49	[11]	Moment musical in E flat Minor, Op. 16, No. 2 Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048176-1; cat. Victor 2124</i>	2:53	F. Schubert (arr. Rachmaninov): Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795: [21] I. Das Wandern Recorded on 29th December 1925 <i>mat. BVE-34145-7; cat. Victor 1196</i>	1:44	[24]	P. I. Tchaikovsky (arr. Rachmaninov): Lullaby, Op. 16, No. 1 Recorded on 26th February 1942 <i>mat. PCS-072131-1; Unissued on 78rpm format</i>	4:06
[2]	Etude-Tableau in A Minor, Op. 39, No. 6 Recorded on 16th December 1925 <i>mat. BVE-34156-1; cat. Victor 1184</i>	2:34	[12]	Oriental Sketch in B flat Major Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048185-2; cat. Victor 2127</i>	1:48	M. Mussorgsky (arr. Rachmaninov): Sorochintsy Fair: [22] Gopak Recorded on 13th April 1925 <i>mat. BVE-25108-10; cat. Victor 1161</i>	1:55	[25]	F. Kreisler (arr. Rachmaninov): Liebesfreud Recorded on 29th December 1925 <i>mat. BVE-34154-3 and 34155-3; cat. Victor 1142</i>	7:01
[3]	Prelude in C sharp Minor, Op. 3, No. 2 Recorded on 4th April 1928 <i>mat. BVE-25650-23; Victor 1326</i>	3:41	[13]	Mélodie in E Major, Op. 3, No. 3 Recorded on 9th April 1940 <i>mat. BS-048174-4A; cat. Victor 2123</i>	3:50	N. Rimsky-Korsakov (arr. Rachmaninov): Tsar Saltan: [23] The Flight of the Bumblebee Recorded on 16th April 1929 <i>mat. BVE-51805-1; Unissued on 78rpm format</i>	1:15	[26]	F. Kreisler (arr. Rachmaninov): Liebesfreud (abridged) Recorded on 26th February 1942 <i>mat. PCS-072133-1; cat. Victor 11-8728</i>	5:05
[4]	Serenade in B flat Minor, Op. 3, No. 5 Recorded on 3rd January 1936 <i>mat. BS-98396-3; cat. Victor 1762</i>	2:58	[14]	Humoresque in G Major, Op. 10, No. 5 Recorded on 9th April 1940 <i>mat. BS-048175-2; cat. Victor 2123</i>	3:29					
[5]	Prelude in G flat Major, Op. 23, No. 10 Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048177-1; cat. Victor 2124</i>	3:20	[15]	Daisies, Op. 38, No. 3 Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048184-2; cat. Victor 2127</i>	2:11					
[6]	Prelude in E Major, Op. 32, No. 3 Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048178-1; cat. Victor 2125</i>	2:20	[16]	Lilacs, Op. 21, No. 5 Recorded on 26th February 1942 <i>mat. PCS-072132-1; Unpublished on 78rpm format</i>	2:22					
[7]	Prelude in F Major, Op. 32, No. 7 Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048179-2; cat. Victor 2125</i>	2:11		J. S. Bach (arr. Rachmaninov): Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006: [17] I. Preludio [18] III. Gavotte [19] VII. Gigue Recorded on 26th February (track 17) and 27th February 1942 (tracks 18-19) <i>mat. PCS-072127-3 (track 17) and PCS-072128-2</i> (tracks 18-19); <i>cat. Victor 11-8607</i>	3:16 2:48 1:03					
[8]	Prelude in F Minor, Op. 32, No. 6 Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048179-2; cat. Victor 2125</i>	1:18								
[9]	Etude-Tableau in C Major, Op. 33, No. 2 Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048182-2; cat. Victor 2126</i>	2:14		F. Mendelssohn (arr. Rachmaninov): A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 61 [20] Scherzo Recorded on 23rd December 1935 <i>mat. CS-87283-6; Issued only on HMV DB3146</i>	4:06					
[10]	Etude-Tableau in E flat Major, Op. 33, No. 7 Recorded on 18th March 1940 <i>mat. BS-048183-2; cat. Victor 2126</i>	1:46								

Great Pianists: Sergey RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

Solo Piano Recordings Volume 3 • His Works and Transcriptions

Sergey Rachmaninov was born in Novgorod, Russia in 1873. After studies with a few local teachers, Rachmaninov's cousin, Alexander Siloti (1863–1945), arranged for him to go to the Moscow Conservatory to study with Nikolay Zverev, a renowned disciplinarian. In fact, Rachmaninov and two other boys lived with Zverev under a strict regime of rigorous practice. In this environment, however, the young Rachmaninov met and heard the greatest musicians of the time, including Anton Rubinstein, Anton Arensky, Sergey Taneyev and Pyotr Tchaikovsky. At the age of fifteen, Rachmaninov began piano studies with Siloti, and also took harmony with Arensky and counterpoint with Taneyev. In 1891 Siloti resigned from the Moscow Conservatory, and rather than have a new teacher for his final year, Rachmaninov was allowed to take his final piano exams a year early.

The 1890s were spent in composition and conducting and it was in November 1901 that Rachmaninov gave the first performance of his famous *Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18*. He made his American debut in 1909 playing his newly written *Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30*. The years up to World War I were taken up with touring, performing and composing, and in 1914 Rachmaninov toured southern Russia with Serge Koussevitzky giving concerts for the war effort. At the end of 1917, however, Rachmaninov received an invitation to perform in Stockholm and he took his wife and two daughters with him, never to return to his homeland. Having left all his possessions in Russia, Rachmaninov decided at the age of 45 that he would have to start a new life and support his family by performing on the piano.

Although he had hated his previous experience of America, Rachmaninov decided that his best chances of success were in the New World. In four months at the end of 1918 he gave forty concerts there and within the next three years had bought a house in New York and signed a contract with Victor Records. For the next 25 years of his life he toured America each year for six

months, performed in Europe for one month, and spent five months composing and resting, with winters in New York and summers in Europe.

Rachmaninov's reputation as a composer waxed and waned over the twentieth century. Popular during his lifetime, ten years after his death his music was described thus in the *Grove Dictionary of Music*:

'The enormous popular success some few of Rachmaninov's works had in his lifetime is not likely to last, and musicians never regarded it with much favour.'

With the musically informed public Rachmaninov's music has always been popular. Granted, for many years this popularity was founded on a few works only – particularly the *Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor* and the *Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 3, No. 2*. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, his *Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor* was taken up by many pianists, receiving as many, if not more, performances today than its popular sibling.

As a pianist though, Rachmaninov is far less familiar to the general public. For a survey carried out in 2010 by *BBC Music Magazine* it was decided not to ask the general public, but 'one hundred of today's leading concert pianists to name the finest players of the recorded era'. With only three votes allowed from each, the overwhelming majority voted for Rachmaninov over the other greats of the Golden Era – Hofmann, Lhevinne, Godowsky, Friedman, Cortot, and the titans of the next generation such as Horowitz, Rubinstein and Richter. Is the conclusion to be drawn from this that Rachmaninov is a pianist's pianist – a term often levelled at Leopold Godowsky? Probably not exclusively, although his combination of perfect technique, utter clarity and supreme musicianship obviously appeals to pianists as does his style of composition.

This third volume of Rachmaninov's Victor recordings contains discs he made of his own solo compositions and arrangements from the year Victor

introduced electrical recording in 1925 to a year before his death in 1943. It may seem strange that a musician as important as Rachmaninov was not asked to record his complete works for the gramophone. To hear him in his *Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 36*, or the *Suites* for two pianos with Horowitz would be a real pleasure as well as being an historically important document, but as with the case of Busoni offering to record Bach's complete *Well-Tempered Clavier* for Columbia, record executives were running a business that had to show profits. The works Victor wanted were the works the public wanted to hear and buy – the famous *Prelude in C sharp minor*, the *Polka de V.R.* and Rachmaninov's arrangement of his friend Fritz Kreisler's *Liebesfreud*. All of these works were recorded more than once and it is a testament to Rachmaninov's perfectionism that the recording of the *Prelude in C sharp minor* from April 1928 heard here is take 23, (although only takes 18-22 were recorded electrically).

It was in March and April of 1940, near the end of his life, that Rachmaninov recorded a number of his less well known works. It is fortunate for posterity that Victor were in agreement so that we can now hear the composer in three *Preludes* from his *Op. 32*, two of the *Etudes-Tableaux* from *Op. 33*, and various other short pieces. Eleven works were recorded on 18th March and on that very same day Victor were recording his *Suite No. 1, Op. 5*, for two pianos at their Hollywood studio with the famous two-piano team of Vronsky and Babin. Rachmaninov returned to the studio on 9th April to

record further takes of his song transcription *Daisies* and the *Mélodie* and *Humoresque*. These works were recorded in their new revised versions which were published in 1940 by Charles Foley who printed Rachmaninov's works in America as well as those by Kreisler. The works show many facets of Rachmaninov's playing style – his brilliance and clarity of touch and strong rhythmic flair, particularly in the *Prelude in E major* from *Op. 32* and *Etude-Tableau in E flat* from *Op. 33*; his flexibility with rhythmic accompaniment in the *Prelude in G flat* and *Mélodie*, and sheer virtuosity in his own transcriptions and the *Moment musical*; and while the *Polka de V.R.* may not have the charm, wit and beguilement of a player such as Shura Cherkassky, it has a stunning control of technical aspects that is breath-taking.

Fifteen years before the 1940 sessions Rachmaninov had made an early electrical recording of his *Etude-Tableau in A minor, Op. 39, No. 6*. It was in December 1925, and at the same session he recorded his own transcription of *Liebesfreud* by Kreisler. Ever the perfectionist, Rachmaninov was not satisfied and returned to the studio on the 29th December to record a third take of each side. His later recording of this work, (displaying a cast iron technique only a year before his death) the Bach transcriptions and the transcription of his song *Lilacs* come from his very last sessions which took place in February 1942 in Hollywood where he was then living.

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SERGEY RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)
Solo Piano Recordings • 3
Victor Recordings 1925-1942

Playing
Time
75:03

Sergey Rachmaninov:		
1	Polka de V.R. (4th April 1928)	3:49
2	Etude-Tableau in A Minor, Op. 39, No. 6 (16th December 1925)	2:34
3	Prelude in C sharp Minor, Op. 3, No. 2 (4th April 1928)	3:41
4	Serenade in B flat Minor, Op. 3, No. 5 (3rd January 1936)	2:58
5-8	Preludes (selection) (18th March 1940)	9:09
9-10	Two Etudes-Tableaux (18th March 1940)	4:00
11	Moment musical in E flat Minor, Op. 16, No. 2 (18th March 1940)	2:53
12	Oriental Sketch in B flat Major (13th March 1940)	1:48
13	Mélodie in E Major, Op. 3, No. 3 (18th March 1940)	3:50
14	Humoresque in G Major, Op. 10, No. 5 (9th April 1940)	3:29
15	Daisies, Op. 38, No. 3 (18th March 1940)	2:11
16	Lilacs, Op. 21, No. 5 (26th February 1942)	2:22
17-19	J.S. Bach (arr. Rachmaninov): Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006 (selection) (26th February (track 17) and 27th February 1942 (tracks 18-19))	7:07
20	Mendelssohn (arr. Rachmaninov): A Midsummer Night's Dream: Scherzo (23rd December 1935)	4:06
21	Schubert (arr. Rachmaninov): Die schöne Müllerin, D. 795: I. Das Wandern (29th December 1925)	1:44
22	Mussorgsky (arr. Rachmaninov): Sorochintsky Fair: Gopak (13th April 1925)	1:55
23	Rimsky-Korsakov (arr. Rachmaninov): Tsar Saltan: The Flight of the Bumblebee (16th April 1929)	1:15
24	Tchaikovsky (arr. Rachmaninov): Lullaby, Op. 16, No. 1 (26th February 1942)	4:06
25	Kreisler (arr. Rachmaninov): Liebesfreud (29th December 1925)	7:01
26	Kreisler (arr. Rachmaninov): Liebesfreud (abridged) (26th February 1942)	5:05

This third volume of Rachmaninov's Victor recordings contains discs he made of his own solo compositions and arrangements from the introduction of electrical recording in 1925 to a year before his death. The works recorded were those most in demand by the public, each piece subject to Rachmaninov's perfectionism and the version released always the best of a number of takes (for example, the recording of his famous *Prelude in C sharp minor* is Take 23). Whether it be in the 1925 recording of his transcription of Kreisler's *Liebesfreud* or the February 1942 recording of the same work (in which he displays a cast iron technique only a year before his death), the sheer virtuosity, utter clarity and supreme musicianship of Rachmaninov's playing style are undiminished. The first two releases in this series have been acclaimed for their superb remastering.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Ward Marston
Special thanks: Raymond Edwards, Lawrence Holdridge and Donald Manildi
Cover Photograph: Rachmaninov and his wife Natalya Alexandrovna Satina
[Private Collection]

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