

RACH MANI NOV

PIANO CONCERTOS 2 & 3

Czech National Symphony
Heiko Mathias Förster

Stewart Goodyear



STEINWAY & SONS

RACH MANI NOV

Stewart Goodyear

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943)

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

I	I. Moderato	10:40
2	II. Adagio sostenuto	12:01
3	III. Allegro scherzando	11:31

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

4	I. Allegro ma non tanto	17:07
5	II. Intermezzo: Adagio	10:41
6	III. Finale: Alla breve	14:06

Playing Time: 76:06

FROM DEPRESSION TO TRIUMPH

The oft-told tale of **Sergei Rachmaninov** emerging from a major artistic crisis to compose his Second Piano Concerto qualifies as urban legend. From the start Rachmaninov seemed destined for greatness. He entered the Moscow Conservatory in 1887, where his overwhelming talent and quiet self-assurance as both composer and pianist did not go unnoticed. At seventeen, Rachmaninov composed his First Piano Concerto (later revised) and, for his graduation piece, the one-act opera *Aleko* that won him the conservatory's coveted Great Gold Medal and, more importantly, Tchaikovsky's admiration and support.

Rachmaninov continued to write songs, chamber music and piano pieces, including the famous Prelude in C-sharp minor. Small wonder that expectations ran high for his first major orchestral work, the Symphony No. 1, to be premiered in St. Petersburg in March of 1897. The premier was catastrophic: insufficiently rehearsed, poorly executed, garnering a scathing review from composer César Cui. Rachmaninov went into a depression, and although he was able to fulfill successful conducting engagements, he composed nearly nothing.

Out of desperation, Rachmaninov's family suggested he consult Dr. Nikolai Dahl, a neurologist specializing in hypnotherapy and an accomplished cellist. The doctor's daily therapy and extensive music talks helped lift Rachmaninov's spirits and restore his creative urge. By the fall of 1900 the Second Concerto's second and third movements had been completed "quickly and easily." The first movement took a little more time. Rachmaninov had aired misgivings in a letter to his friend Nikita Morozov, writing that "only now has it suddenly become clear to me that the transition from the first theme to the second is no good at all; in this form the first theme is not a first theme but an introduction. Not even a fool would believe, when I start to play the second theme, that this is what it is. Everyone will think that this is the beginning of the concerto. To my mind the whole movement is spoiled...."

*“In order to earn enough money for a new car,
Rachmaninov embarked on his first United States tour.”*

Yet the concerto met with instant success, and quickly entered the repertoire. While the music’s thematic inspiration, heartfelt lyricism and emotional sweep communicate with uncluttered directness and concision, numerous interesting and original details may catch casual listeners unaware. Certainly the first movement’s introductory solo piano chords and tolling bell effects have no precedent in Romantic Era concertos, while the subsequent two movements also begin with introductions that modulate into that movement’s ultimate home key. And for all of the piano part’s bravura and scintillation, the soloist frequently acts as accompanist while the various orchestral choirs and first-desk soloists come to the fore, in concertante style. This partly explains the lack of a traditional first-movement cadenza, along with the composer’s increasingly confident, variegated and colorful mastery of orchestration. In addition to the Intermezzo’s delicate chamber-like interplay between piano, strings, solo flute and solo clarinet, notice how the Finale’s soft cymbal crashes create a subtle, slightly foreboding atmosphere in the transitional sections.

In 1909, with his creativity long restored and his career in full swing, Rachmaninov was in a position to pick and choose his performing engagements in order to allow enough time for composing. But there was one problem. Rachmaninov wanted to buy a car. Cars were far less common in Russia than in the United States at that time, and quite expensive. So in order to earn enough money for a new car, Rachmaninov embarked on his first United States tour. He composed his Third Concerto especially for the concerts, premiering it on November 28 with the New York Symphony under Walter Damrosch.

The Third Concerto gives the piano soloist far more opportunities for virtuosic display, although, as in the Second, the piano often plays an accompanying role. Even in the brilliant first movement cadenza, the pianist must pull back when the first-desk winds take up the main theme. Of the two cadenzas Rachmaninov supplies, Stewart Goodyear opts for the more thundering, more

chordal ossia option that Van Cliburn popularized. Subdued strings begin the central Intermezzo, creating a wistful aura enhanced by the poignant oboe soloist. The piano enters with a turbulent chromatic passage that leads back to the main theme. A new section diverts the action in the form of a lithe, waltzing scherzo dominated by clarinet and bassoon. An explosive semi-cadenza leads directly into the Finale's rhythmically vivacious opening. Following an arching, lyrical second theme Rachmaninov presents a set of variations that fuse the Finale's first theme with the first movement's second theme. The second theme returns in a triumphant, uplifting manifestation that brings the movement to an exciting close.

In contrast to the Second's instant success, the Third was a slow starter. Even Rachmaninov couldn't popularize it, and sanctioned several cuts in order to broaden its appeal. Indeed, cut performances used to be the rule rather than exception, including Rachmaninov's own 1939/40 recording with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Today the pendulum has swung, and Goodyear presents the full, unabridged text.

That the Third Concerto eventually established itself as the ultimate virtuoso Romantic concerto showcase is arguably due to Vladimir Horowitz's advocacy. Certainly his performances from the 1930s and 1940s and his 1951 recording with Fritz Reiner inspired several generations of pianists to take up the piece.

In a 1977 interview with Phillip Ramey, Vladimir Horowitz recalled a Eugene Ormandy story: Rachmaninov was recording the Third Concerto at the keyboard, and kept asking the conductor during rehearsals, "Does Horowitz do that? How does he play this — faster, slower?" As for the Second Concerto, Horowitz explained to writer Harold C. Schonberg that he never played it in America because during the third movement climax, "the piano only has neutral chords instead of a big display involving the famous theme." Schonberg went on to write that "Horowitz asked Rachmaninov, 'If I play it, can I double the orchestra's theme on the piano?' Rachmaninov looked at him, shrugged his shoulders, and said '*Nu*, Horowitz, do what you want.' " — *Jed Distler*

STEWART GOODYEAR

Proclaimed “a phenomenon” by the *Los Angeles Times* and “one of the best pianists of his generation” by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Stewart Goodyear is an accomplished young pianist as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, recitalist and composer.

Mr. Goodyear has performed with major orchestras of the world, including Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Bournemouth Symphony, Montreal Symphony, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and NHK Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Goodyear began his training at The Royal Conservatory in Toronto, received his bachelor's degree from Curtis Institute of Music, and completed his master's at The Juilliard School. Known as an improviser and composer, he has been commissioned by orchestras and chamber music organizations, and performs his own solo works. In the 2012 and 2013 seasons, Mr. Goodyear performed all 32 Beethoven Piano Sonatas in one day at Koerner Hall, McCarter Theatre, and Mondavi Center. He performed this program March 2015 at the AT&T Performing Arts Center. His recording of the complete Beethoven sonatas has received critical acclaim and a Juno nomination for Best Classical Solo Recording.

Highlights for the 2015-2016 season are an all-Scriabin concert at Festival de Lanaudière, a performance at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa as part of 2015's Ontario Scene, a Canadian tour with the Victoria Symphony Orchestra (BC), and performances with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, l'Orchestre de Paris under Paavo Järvi, and MDR Symphonieorchester under Kristjan Järvi.

Stewart Goodyear is a Steinway Artist.



Recorded October 15–18, 2014 at CNSO Studio No. 1, Prague

Producer: Keith Horner

Engineer: Jan Kotzmann

Post Production: Robert DiVito, Society of Sound

Executive Producers: Eric Feidner, Jon Feidner

Art Direction: Jackie Fugere

Design: Oberlander Group

Photography: Anita Zvonar

Piano: Steinway Model C (Hamburg)

Piano Technician: Cenda Kotzmann



S T E I N W A Y & S O N S

© © 2015 Steinway, Inc.

Steinway and the Lyre are registered trademarks.

All rights reserved. Made in the USA.