

Sergei RACHMANINOFF

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF CHOPIN OP.22

3 NOCTURNES

MORCEAUX DE FANTAISIE OP.3

FRAGMENTS

Sebastian

STANLEY



E225HR

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF, (1873-1943)

1.-Nocturne n°1, F sharp Minor, (1887).....	4:24
2.-Nocturne n°2, F Major, (1887).....	4:00
3.-Nocturne n°3, C Minor, (1888).....	4:58

MORCEAUX DE FANTAISIE Op.3, (1892)

4.-Élégie.....	5:20
5.-Prélude.....	4:09
6.-Mélodie, (1940).....	4:11
7.-Polichinelle.....	3:46
8.-Sérénade, (1940).....	3:08

9.-Variations on a Theme of Chopin Op.22, (1902-03).....	26:41
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10.-Fragments, (1917).....	2:17
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T.T: 60:03



Sergei Rachmaninoff was born on the 1st of April 1873 in the town of Semionovo to a wealthy family. The fortunate economic situation the family possessed did not last long because his father, Vasili Arkadievich, was fairly irresponsible with the money which came from his wife's wedding dowry. Gradually he had to sell the 5 estates gifted to him, to cover his mounting debts, and so the family moved to a small flat in Saint Petersburg. One of the consequences of this family situation was that Sergei could not be enrolled in the Imperial Military School where he was to be sent with his brother. This undoubtedly led him finding his true vocation in music.

His first professor was the pianist Anna Dmitrievna Ornatzkaia in Saint Petersburg. He then studied in the Moscow Conservatory with Nikolai Zverev, who played a very important role in the young Rachmaninoff's musical and pianistic education and later, with professors such as Sergei Taneiev and Anton Arensky, to whom he dedicated his ***Morceaux de Fantaisie Op.3*** (presented on this album). During these early years, aged just 14-years old, he composed the ***3 Nocturnes*** and gave them to Nikolai Zverev, although sadly the ending of ***Nocturne No.3*** has been lost (a simple repeat of the opening is considered a nice way to end the work). These pieces were his first serious attempt at composing for the piano.

They certainly have many of the hallmarks you can expect from Rachmaninoff, but the piano writing can be somewhat clumsy and abrupt, although their innocence is somewhat refreshing and beautiful. Rachmaninoff's grandfather had been a pupil of John Field, and his father was also an amateur pianist. It would be safe to assume that these Nocturnes could have been inspired, in part, by John Field's ground breaking set of *Nocturnes*.

Rachmaninoff's fame started with the premier of his opera *Aleko* with which he obtained the Great Gold Medal, the highest honour from the Moscow Conservatory. At the young age of 20, the success of this Opera brought him to the attention of Tchaikovsky, who would be a great source of inspiration for the young Rachmaninoff. During this period he composed one of his most famous works for solo piano (presented in this recording), the *Prelude in C sharp minor*, which belongs to his *pieces Op.3*. The immediate success of this *Prelude* made him considerably well known everywhere, although its fame led him to hate performing the work later in life. Many years later his biographer Viktor Serof asked him about the origin of the inspiration for this famous *Prelude* and Rachmaninoff cheekily replied "40 rubles... my editor had offered me 200 rubles for 5 short pieces for piano, and this *Prelude* was just one of them".

The other *works of Op.3* are true flights of fancy, with their titles providing a clue as to the emotional contents. They contain some of his most stunning writing, including the significant representation of bells, paving the way to his great late works.

After this period he started touring Russia playing piano recitals before being named Director of the Imperial Opera. In March of 1897 at the age of 24 Rachmaninoff premiered his ***First Symphony***. The almost scandalous failure of this work, booed by the public and destroyed by the critics (César Cut among them) produced a psychological trauma for the young composer, who needed psychiatric help and did not start to recover until 1900, three years after the tragic premier. One of the first compositions which Rachmaninoff wrote for the piano after his major creative crisis, marking his successful revival as a composer, was his ***Second Piano Concerto Op.18***, arguably his most famous and popular work, and the ***Variations on a Theme by Chopin Op.22***, the heart of this album. It was finished in 1903 and contains some of his most creative and beautiful piano writing. Out of these 22 Variations (of which number 12, and the flashy coda are omitted for balance of the entire work) ***Variation 16*** especially, has the hallmarks to be of one of his greatest melodies.

In 1902 he finally, after lots of obstacles against their union, married his cousin Natalia Alexandrovna. He started his international tours including his first trip to the United States where he presented his ***Third Piano Concerto Op.30***. His ultimate success as a solo pianist and composer was established during this time.

During the Christmas of 1917, Rachmaninoff accepted an invitation to tour Scandinavia, finishing in Norway, but it was to be the last time he would ever be in Russia. From Norway, he and his family travelled to the United States where they settled. The piece ***Fragments*** presented as the last work on this disc, was written during his final time in Moscow, and was to be his extremely melancholic and penultimate solo original piano work (only the ***Corelli Variations Op.42*** came later). In the USA he concentrated on his virtuoso pianistic career, rejecting on two occasions the offer to be Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. From this point in Rachmaninoff's life, his exiled existence in the USA consisted of touring, both in the US as well as Europe. He passed away in Beverly Hills on the 28 of March 1943.



Sebastian Stanley is a critically acclaimed British pianist; although of Spanish birth, Sebastian moved back to the U.K at an early age having soaked up the Andalusian way of life and musical spirit which subsequently made its way into his musical direction. Since graduating from the Royal College of Music in 2008 he has travelled extensively with his performances receiving fabulous reviews around the globe, performing in venues such as St Johns Smith Square, St Martin in the Fields and the Leipzig Gewandhaus. Both his Albeniz albums for Piano Classics, and his all-Granados album for EMEC Discos, were lauded with numerous 5-star ratings in magazines such as the American Record Guide, Fanfare, Carnet Critique and Musical Pointers.

Apart from specialising in the music of the Spanish Romantic and 20th Century composers, he has a deep love for Beethoven's works; most recently this has seen him perform all 32 Beethoven sonatas for the charity Macmillan Cancer Support. He would say this is amongst his proudest moments, having managed to raise many thousands for their cause.

Considering his achievements, Sebastian did not start playing until the age of 13, making him very late to the world of the piano. After the astonishing progress he made in his initial two years of study he gained a place at the Royal College of Music (RCM) where he had the help of the esteemed professors Niel Immelman, Ruth Nye and later on, Christopher Elton from the Royal Academy of Music. His biggest musical influences have also come from tuition with the legends Menahem Pressler and Gary Graffman, and the music making of Vladimir Horowitz and Radu Lupu in particular.

Earlier in his career Sebastian added several International competition successes to his name including the coveted Chappell Medal at the RCM, the London Emanuel Trophy and 1st Prize in the International Louise Henriette competition in Germany. He has also represented the small U.K contingent of pianists in the International Grieg, Scottish and Liszt piano Competitions.



Sergei Rachmaninoff nació el 1 de Abril de 1873 en la ciudad de Semionovo en el seno de una familia adinerada. Esta buena situación económica no duraría mucho pues su padre Vasili Arkadievich se dedicó a dilapidar sus bienes que además, provenían principalmente de su esposa a quien abandonaría posteriormente.

Una de las consecuencias de esta situación familiar fue que Sergei no pudo ingresar en el cuerpo de pajes de la Escuela Militar Imperial lo cual ayudo indiscutiblemente a que pudiera encontrar en la música, su certera vocación, un camino en la vida y su destino final.

Su primera maestra fue la pianista Anna Dmitrievna Ornatzkaia de San Petesburgo. Mas adelante estudió con Nikolai Zverev quien influyó notablemente en el joven Rachmaninoff siendo una influencia decisiva en su formación musical. Posteriormente estudió con maestros como Anton Arenski y Sergei Taneiev.

La reputación de Rachmaninoff comenzó con el estreno de su ópera **“Aleko”** con la que obtuvo la medalla de oro del Conservatorio. Con solo 20 años, el éxito de su ópera le proporciono entre otras cosas la atención de Chaikovski.

En esta época Rachmaninoff compuso también una de sus obras más famosas para piano recogidas en esta producción , su ***Preludio en do sostenido menor*** , perteneciente a las ***Piezas Op.3***. El éxito de este preludio hizo que su popularidad se incrementara notablemente en plena juventud. Posteriormente realizaría jiras de conciertos siendo nombrado director de la Ópera Imperial.

En Marzo de 1897 a la edad de 24 años Rachmaninoff estreno su ***Primera Sinfonía***. El casi escandaloso fracaso de esta obra, abucheada por el público y destrozada por la crítica, (César Cui a la cabeza) produjo un trauma psicológico al joven compositor que necesito asistencia psiquiátrica y que no comenzaría a recuperarse hasta 1900, es decir tres años después del fatídico estreno. Es en este momento de resurgimiento mental y anímico cuando escribe su ***Segundo Concierto para piano y orquesta***, su obra mas famosa.

En 1902 se casa con su prima Natalia Alexandrovna. Comienzan sus viajes fuera de Rusia y hace su primera jira en Estados Unidos presentando su ***Concierto n° 3*** para piano y orquesta. Su éxito como pianista solista y compositor se consolida.

En la Navidad de 1917, Rachmaninoff acepta una invitación para una gira en Escandinavia, nunca más regresara a Rusia. Desde Noruega y en un pequeño trasatlántico viaja a los Estados Unidos donde se instalará. Su vida en ese país se concentra sobre todo en su carrera como pianista, rechazando en dos ocasiones el ofrecimiento de ser director de la Orquesta Sinfónica de Boston.

Su vida a partir del exilio norteamericano será de conciertos y giras en ese país y en Europa. Afincado en California murió en Beverly Hills el 28 de Marzo de 1943.

En 1892 Rachmaninoff tenía solo 14 años, escribe una pequeña colección de piezas para piano, es su *ops 3*, dentro de esta serie está el ***Preludio en do sostenido menor***, la primera de sus composiciones que le daría fama mundial. Muchos años después, su biógrafo Viktor Serov le pregunto el origen de la inspiración para el Preludio y Rachmaninoff le dijo, “Cuarenta rublos. Mi editor me había ofrecido doscientos rublos por cinco piezas breves para piano, y ese Preludio fue una de ellas”

Una de las primeras obras que Rachmaninoff escribió para piano después de su gran crisis creativa producida por el fracaso del estreno de su ***Primera Sinfonía*** fueron las ***Variaciones sobre un tema de Chopin Op.22*** Finalizadas en 1903 marcan el resurgimiento de sus nuevas obras para piano.



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