

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 25 March 2023
1.00pm

Elégie: Rachmaninov – A Heart in Exile

Lucy Parham piano
Henry Goodman narrator

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)	From <i>Morceaux de fantaisie</i> Op. 3 (1892) Elégie • Polichinelle
	Prelude in G Op. 32 No. 5 (1910)
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)	November: On the Troika from <i>The Seasons</i> Op. 37a (1875-6)
Sergey Rachmaninov	Prélude from <i>Morceaux de fantaisie</i> Op. 3 (1892)
	Etude-tableau in E flat Op. 33 No. 7 (1911)
Aleksandr Skryabin (1872-1915)	Etude in C sharp minor Op. 42 No. 5 (1903)
Sergey Rachmaninov	Moment musical in B minor Op. 16 No. 3 (1896)
John Stafford Smith (1750-1836)	The Star-Spangled Banner (c.1773) <i>arranged by Sergey Rachmaninov</i>
Sergey Rachmaninov	Moment musical in D flat Op. 16 No. 5 (1896)
Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962)	Liebesleid (1910) <i>arranged by Sergey Rachmaninov</i>
Sergey Rachmaninov	Moment musical in C Op. 16 No. 6 (1896)

Friends of Wigmore Hall – celebrating 30 years of friendship

Over the past 30 years, Friends have been providing transformational support for the Hall, ensuring this historic building remains a home for great music making. Enjoy the benefits of friendship by joining as a Friend today, and be a part of the Wigmore story. Visit: wigmore-hall.org.uk/friends | Call: 020 7258 8230

FRIENDS OF
WIGMORE HALL

30

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan

Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

'I am a ghost forever wandering the world.'

The words of Sergey Rachmaninov, the last truly great Romantic composer/pianist of the 20th Century. Russian-born, he spent the second part of his life in self-imposed political exile – mainly in America – having been forced from his homeland in 1918 by consequences of the Russian Revolution. At the age of 44, he left Moscow for Sweden on an open sleigh, accompanied by his wife and two daughters and carrying nothing but a suitcase. He was never to return – but he left his heart forever in Russia.

Sergey Vasilievich Rachmaninov was born on 1 April 1873 in Novgorod, into an aristocratic family. When his father, an army officer and an amateur pianist, married his mother, he squandered the dowry of five estates that she brought with her on her wedding day. The marriage did not last and the young Rachmaninov was brought up by his mother and his beloved grandmother who owned a farm called Borisivo. He spent many blissful summers there, also discovering the sound of the bells of the Russian Orthodox Church, which shaped so much of his music. 'The bells accompanied every Russian from childhood to the grave,' he later said, 'and no composer could escape their influence.'

Rachmaninov was one of six children, though two of his sisters died when he was still a boy. He started to play the piano at the age of just four, but he earned a reputation for laziness. When he was 11 his cousin, the composer Alexander Siloti, recommended he enrol at the Moscow Conservatory with the teacher Nikolai Zverev, a notorious martinet. His gruelling time with Zverev had a powerful formative influence on Rachmaninov's early career as a pianist and his meetings with Tchaikovsky also left an indelible impression upon him. Eventually, Zverev and Rachmaninov parted company, since the teacher could not accept his pupil's desire to be a composer.

Several bleak years followed. Rachmaninov even became so deeply depressed that he had to be treated – successfully – with hypnosis. He became engaged to his first cousin and fellow pianist Natalya Satina, whom he had known since childhood. The Russian Orthodox Church and Natalya's parents both thwarted the young couple's plans by opposing their marriage, which plunged Rachmaninov into a still deeper depression. They finally married in May 1902. It was at Natalya's family house, Ivanovka, that Rachmaninov found most solace, but in 1917 the Bolsheviks burnt it down, leaving him devastated. After his flight from Russia he spent the rest of his life trying to recapture the peace and happiness he felt at Ivanovka. Finally, in 1932, he found it in Switzerland,

on Lake Lucerne, where he built a house and named it Senar (derived from 'Sergey and Natalya Rachmaninov'). This home became a retreat from his busy professional life as a pianist and conductor, and the only place where he composed anything substantial during his time as an exile.

In the 25 years between 1918 and his death in 1943, Rachmaninov, living in both the US and Europe, completed only six compositions, including the famous *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* and the *Symphonic Dances*. He was celebrated and feted as a performer, particularly in America, and made numerous recordings and concert appearances. While he earned vast sums of money, he composed relatively little – a consequence of both his busy schedule and his homesickness; he seemed to have left part of his inspiration behind in Russia. Shortly before he died, Rachmaninov said, 'I am a Russian composer, and the land of my birth has influenced my temperament and outlook'. When he lived for a time in Beverly Hills, he would only see Russian doctors, eat Russian food and see his Russian friends – many of them also great Russian musical luminaries.

During a concert tour in late 1942, Rachmaninov fell ill and was subsequently diagnosed with advanced melanoma. His family was informed of the seriousness of his condition, but he was kept in ignorance of its true nature. He died in Beverly Hills on 28 March 1943.

During his lifetime, Rachmaninov's compositions were often criticised for their enduring Romantic nature, indulgent melodies and lack of progressive thinking. Deeply hurt by this criticism, he never recovered from it. But the public felt differently and today a number of his works are among the most frequently played and best-loved pieces in the classical repertoire. His substantial compositional output includes three symphonies, the *Symphonic Dances*, five piano concertos, 24 preludes for piano, two piano sonatas, a cello sonata and numerous other solo, orchestral and choral works.

As with all my 'Composer Portrait' concerts, I have scripted *Elégie* from Rachmaninov's extensive letters and diaries, as well as from those of his contemporaries.

'Music is enough for a lifetime but a lifetime is not enough for music.'
Sergey Rachmaninov

© Lucy Parham, 2023

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.