



SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30

Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) was a Russian composer, pianist, and conductor.^[3] Rachmaninoff is widely considered one of the finest pianists of his day and, as a composer, one of the last great representatives of Romanticism in Russian classical music. The Rachmaninoff family was a part of an "old aristocracy", where all of the attitude but none of the money remained. The family, of Russian and distant Moldovan descent, had been in the service of the Russian tsars since the 16th century, and had strong musical and military leanings. Graduating from the Moscow Conservatory, he was briefly offered a position in the Bolshoi Theatre. The 1917 Russian Revolution forced Rachmaninoff to leave Russia and emigrate to the United States, he made a living primarily as a concert pianist. He died in California at the height of World War II, leaving his wife Natalia. Early influences of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and other Russian composers gave way to a personal style notable for its song-like melodicism, expressiveness and his use of rich orchestral colors. The piano is featured prominently in Rachmaninoff's compositional output, and through his own skills as a performer he explored the expressive possibilities of the instrument.

Known somewhat affectionately among pianists as "Rach 3," the **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30** has the reputation of being one of the most technically challenging piano concertos in the standard classical repertoire. The first movement begins with and revolves around a simple, diatonic melody that soon develops into complex pianistic figuration. Rachmaninoff wrote two versions of the cadenza for this movement: the chordal original, which is commonly notated as the *ossia* (optional), and a second one with a lighter, toccata-like style. Both cadenzas lead into a quiet solo section where the flute, clarinet and horn restate the first theme of the exposition, accompanied by delicate arpeggios in the piano. The second movement is opened by the orchestra and it consists of a number of variations around a single lush, heavily romantic melody following one another without a rigid scheme. Many melodic thoughts of this movement allude to Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, third movement, noticeably the Russian-like, E-flat major melody. The third movement is quick and vigorous and contains variations on many of the themes that are used in the first movement, which unites the concerto cyclically. The movement concludes with a triumphant and passionate second theme melody in D major, and ends with the same four-note rhythm – claimed by some to be the composer's musical signature – as both the composer's second concerto and second symphony. Rachmaninoff, under pressure, and hoping to make his work more popular, authorized several cuts in the score, to be made at the performer's discretion. These cuts, particularly in the second and third movements, were commonly taken in performance and recordings during the initial decades following the concerto's publication, but more recently, it has become commonplace to perform the concerto without cuts.