

cello rises to its highest registers.

Rachmaninov's Vocalise, Op. 34/14 (1912), is one of the few members of an elite repertory niche: popular, non-avant-garde vocal works without text. In fact, having been arranged for orchestra, piano, various chamber ensembles, and solo string instruments, it is easily the most popular and recognizable of such works, matched perhaps only by the aria from Heitor Villa Lobos' Bacchianas Brasileiras No. 5.

The Opus 34 group contains some of the Rachmaninov's best-loved songs, each of which was tailored to the vocal personality of a particular singer with whom he was acquainted from the Bolshoi opera. The highly declamatory examples, such as In the Soul of Each of Us, Op. 34/2, were dedicated to the great bass Feodor Chaliapin, whose ability to shape words into dramatic musical statements was legendary. The Vocalise, on the other hand, was dedicated to Antonina Nezhdanova, who can be presumed to have possessed a singularly pleasing and flexible voice, given the sustained, almost violin-like character of the piece.



Prokofiev Sinfonia Concertante

Mstislav Rostropovich, cello
Sir Malcolm Sargent
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Sergei Rachmaninov Vocalise

Mstislav Rostropovich, cello
Alexander Dedyukhin, piano

This work, also known as the Symphony-Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, is a reworking of the Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 58 (1933 - 1938). The story behind Prokofiev's decision to recast the piece is fairly well known: in 1947, he heard the young cello virtuoso Mstislav Rostropovich play the E minor Concerto, a work the composer was dissatisfied with, and told Rostropovich he would revise it for him. While Prokofiev's will to carry through on his plans wavered over the next three years, he finally did make good on his promise.

The Symphony-Concerto (sometimes known under the rather confusing title of "Sinfonia Concertante") is generally regarded as an improvement over the earlier work. It is grander, formally stronger, less introverted, and more complex in its relationship between orchestra and soloist. Yet while the cello is a little less dominant, it remains firmly in the lead and offers such technical challenges to the soloist that it has become widely viewed as one of the most difficult works in the entire cello concerto repertory. There are some solo passages for which Prokofiev provided alternate, less challenging music, though he tactfully avoided using the marking "ossia" for them. The first movement, marked Andante, opens

with a rhythmic motif over which the cello introduces the lyrical, dark main theme. Other attractive thematic material is then given in much the same subdued and melancholy vein, but there is little development in the movement.

The second movement, marked Allegro giusto, is the one of the longest movements Prokofiev ever wrote, lasting around 18 minutes in most performances. It has three themes, the first driving and busy, the second sarcastic and lively, and the last a soaring Romantic creation of great beauty. In this lengthy movement the satirical, grotesque music so strongly identified with Prokofiev's youth struggles to find a place with his distinctive Russian lyricism. There is also a challenging, lengthy cadenza, unusually situated in the middle part of the movement. The finale (Andante con moto) begins with a somber theme on the cello which soon turns heroic when the tempo increases and a muted trumpet plays it. Several variations follow, and then a playful, sort of drunken theme appears to provide much color and humor in the brief middle section. The ending is pure excitement as the cello turns frenzied in repeating an insistent rhythmic figure, after which the brasses take up the sarcastic theme from the second movement in a thrilling buildup that reaches its climax as the

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Sergei Prokofiev Sinfonia Concertante In E Minor Op. 125

1 Andante 10:56

2 Allegro Giusto 17:27

3 Andante Con Moto - Allegretto - Allegro Marcato 10:01

4 Sergei Rachmaninov Vocalise Op. 34 No. 14 6:52 (Mono Recording)

Total Time: 45:16

Recorded by EMI Records 1959

Engineers - Christopher Parker for the Prokofiev

Neville Boyling for the Rachmaninoff



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