

two-part principal theme, played first by the solo flute, then by the solo clarinet. Piano and orchestra develop both parts before a Tchaikovsky-like theme for bassoons nudges the tempo a bit. Further development goes even quicker, culminating in a solo cadenza that's been teasingly postponed, after which the original material returns, soulfully.

The finale is an Allegro scherzando in C major. The strings play a rhythmic figure that builds to a staccato climax. The piano enters with a flourish, setting up the principal subject -- again, as before in I, motivic rather than tuneful, but admirably constructed for developing. This is followed by another of Rachmaninov's signature melodies, lushly undulant, sung by the solo oboe and strings. (In the postwar 1940s, this was garnished with words and performed unrelentingly by big-band vandals as Full Moon and Empty Arms). A fugato brings back the principal subject, followed by a Maestoso statement of "The Tune." Accelerating fistfuls of piano chords set up a crowd-rousing conclusion.

RACHMANINOFF

CONCERTO No. 2



REINER *Chicago Symphony* RUBINSTEIN



Rachmaninov composed this work in 1900, and played the first complete performance on November 9, 1901, with Alexandre Siloti conducting the Moscow Philharmonic Society.

He suffered a shattering career crisis in the 1897 massacre of his First Symphony in St. Petersburg, by its first conductor, Glazunov, who was reportedly disablingly drunk -- a fiasco the critics en masse, led by César Cui, laid at the composer's feet like an animal carcass. The audience -- ever mindful that Rachmaninov had been expelled in 1885 from the local temple of musical instruction -- listened stonily, glad for the failure of a young lion schooled elsewhere (in Moscow, he completed the Conservatory course in 1891, and graduated a year later with highest possible grades). Because of the failure of the Symphony No. 1, Rachmaninov began to drink immoderately. Believing himself unfit to compose, he tried concentrating on parallel courses as a concert soloist and opera conductor, but embroiled himself in a love affair that ended very badly. By the end of 1899, he was an alcoholic whose hands shook, imperiling his keyboard career. Between January and April 1900, Sergey Vassilyevich saw Dr. Dahl, a Moscow specialist in "neuropsy-

chotherapy," daily, and was urged under hypnosis to compose the new piano concerto that a London impresario was asking for. Trance therapy roused the composer from his lethargy; indeed, he worked with great facility on an excellent new concerto -- the Second, in C minor, Op. 18 -- dedicated to Dr. Dahl in gratitude. Never again in the remaining four decades of his life was Rachmaninov immobilized by depression, despite several convulsive changes of fortune.

The opening, C minor, movement in sonata form was composed last; structurally it is the most conventional. Ten bars of unaccompanied keyboard chords lead directly to a palpitant principal theme for violins, violas, and clarinets -- motivic rather than tuneful, despite a melismatic extension for cellos. An episode links this to the second theme, in E flat, one of Rachmaninov's most celebrated melodies, introduced by the piano. Following the development and a *maestoso alla marcia* reprise, there's a brilliant coda -- but no solo cadenza, yet.

In the E major, *Adagio sostenuto* movement, after four bars of Tchaikovskian string chords, piano arpeggios introduce a

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Artur Rubinstein, piano

Fritz Reiner conducts the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

1 Moderato; Allegro 10:10

2 Adagio Sostenuto 11:46

3 Allegro Scherzando 10:58

Recorded by RCA 1956 at Orchestra Hall, Chicago



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com



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