

written specifically for him. Graffman's numerous recordings are available from Sony, RCA, Decca, and other major labels.

Gary Graffman was born in New York City on October 14, 1928. He played the piano from age three, and at seven began studies with Isabelle Vengerova at the Curtis Institute. Graffman gave his recital debut three years later at New York's Town Hall.

In 1946 Graffman graduated from Curtis, where he was awarded the Rachmaninov Prize. He gave his official debut as soloist the following year with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Graffman's Leventritt victory in 1949 led to further success, but he continued studies with Rudolf Serkin at the Marlboro Music Festival and, in the early '50s, with Vladimir Horowitz privately.

Graffman's earliest recordings soon appeared, but it was his recordings from the 1960s that are perhaps the most memorable. His 1964 Rachmaninov Second and Paganini Rhapsody, with Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, and 1966 Prokofiev Third Concerto, with George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra, are still regarded as classics.

Though his career cooled somewhat in the 1970s, Graffman remained very active, including in the chamber music realm. The injury to the ring finger of his right hand in 1979 eventually caused him to abandon two-hand repertory. From 1980, he taught at the Curtis Institute.

Graffman began commissioning music for left hand and premiered several notable works: the 1993 Ned Rorem Piano Concerto No. 4 and the 2001 Daron Hagen concerto Seven Last Words. Graffman still teaches piano at Curtis Institute, having also served as director (1986–2006) and president (1995–2006)

Rachmaninoff

Second Piano Concerto

Gary Graffman, piano
Leonard Bernstein, New York Philharmonic

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 disabblingly 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 "neuropsychotherapy," 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 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.

Child prodigy, Leventritt Competition winner, student of Vladimir Horowitz and Rudolf Serkin, pianist Gary Graffman had all the talent and credentials for lasting success on the concert stage. His meteoric rise in the 1950s carried him through more than two decades of fame and critical acclaim, but an injury in 1979 limited his career to teaching and performance of left-hand repertory. Graffman was best known for his performances of concertos by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, and Prokofiev, and for solo works by the latter pair as well as Chopin, Liszt, and others. In the 1970s Graffman delved heavily into chamber music, notably in performances of sonatas for violin and piano by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Schumann, with violinist Henryk Szeryng. After his injury, Graffman played not only the well-known concertos for left hand by Ravel and Prokofiev, but many contemporary works

Rachmaninoff

Second Piano Concerto

Gary Graffman, piano

Leonard Bernstein, New York Philharmonic

I Moderato 10:30

II Adagio Sostenuto 12:00

III Allegro Scherzando 11:05

Total Time: 33:45

Released by Columbia Records 1964 Producer - John McClure



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