

Vladimir Davidovich Ashkenazy (Russian: Владимир Давидович Ашкенази, Vladimir Davidovich Ashkenazi; born 6 July 1937) is an internationally recognized solo pianist, chamber music performer, and conductor. He is originally from Russia and has held Icelandic citizenship since 1972. He has lived in Switzerland since 1978. Ashkenazy has collaborated with well-known orchestras and soloists. In addition, he has recorded a large storehouse of classical and romantic works. His recordings have earned him five Grammy awards plus Iceland's Order of the Falcon.

Ashkenazy was born in Gorky, Soviet Union (now Nizhny Novgorod, Russia), to the pianist and composer David Ashkenazi and to the actress Yevstolia Grigorievna, born Plotnova. His father was Jewish and his mother was the daughter of a family of Russian Orthodox peasants.

He began playing piano at the age of six. He was accepted to the Central Music School at age eight studying with Anaida Sumbatyan. Ashkenazy attended the Moscow Conservatory where he studied with Lev Oborin and Boris Zemliansky. He won second prize in the International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw in 1955 and the first prize in the Queen Elisabeth Music Competition in Brussels in 1956. He shared the first prize in the 1962 International Tchaikovsky Competition with British pianist John Ogdon. As a student, like many in that period, he was harassed by the KGB to become an "informer". He did not really cooperate, despite pressures from the authorities. In 1961 he married the Iceland-born Þórunn Jóhannsdóttir, who studied piano at the Moscow Conservatoire. To marry Ashkenazy, Þórunn was forced to give up her Icelandic citizenship and declare that she wanted to live in the USSR. (Her name is usually transliterated as Thorunn and her nickname was Dódy.[4] She recorded as Dódy Ashkenazy.[5])

After numerous bureaucratic procedures, the Soviet authorities several times agreed to the Ashkenazys going to the West for musical performances and for visits to his parents-in-law with their first grandson. In his memoirs, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev recalls that Ashkenazy had married an Englishwoman [sic] and on a visit to London refused to go back to the Soviet Union. Khrushchev mentions that Ashkenazy then went to the Soviet Embassy in London and asked what to do, who in turn referred the matter to Moscow. Khrushchev claims to have been of the opinion that to require Ashkenazy to return to the USSR would have made him an 'Anti-Soviet'. He further claims that this was a good example of an artist being able to come and go in and out of the USSR freely, which Ashkenazy himself said was a gross "distortion of the truth." [clarification needed]. In 1963 Ashkenazy decided to leave the USSR permanently, establishing residence in London where his wife's parents lived.

The couple moved to Iceland in 1968 where, in 1972, Ashkenazy became an Icelandic citizen. In 1970 he helped to found the Reykjavik Arts Festival, of which he remains Honorary President.[8][9] In 1978 the couple and their (then) four children (Vladimir Stefan, Nadia Liza, Dimitri Thor, and Sonia Edda) moved to Lucerne, Switzerland. Their fifth child, Alexandra Inga, was born in 1979. As of 1989, Ashkenazy resides in Meggen. His eldest son Vladimir, who uses his nickname 'Vovka' as a stage name, is a pianist, as well as a teacher at the Imola International Piano Academy, and his second son, Dimitri, is a clarinetist.

VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY

RACHMANINOV

*3rd. Piano
Concerto*

FISTOULARI
London Symphony



Rachmaninov premiered the Third Concerto in New York with the New York Symphony Orchestra, led by Walter Damrosch, on November 28, 1909. The following January he played it with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Gustav Mahler. For many decades, it was neglected by pianists and public alike, in favor of the more compact, more tuneful and structurally sounder Second Concerto. It is a deeper work, full of virtuosic hurdles and lengthy cadenzas. But it was undermined by cuts Rachmaninov was prevailed upon to make, which, in the short run, served to make it more programmable in concerts, but ultimately sabotaged its artistic value. Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, most performances of the concerto have been of the original version, which can run around 45 minutes. (Abridged renditions shaved as much as ten minutes off the score's total timing.)

The Third Concerto's first movement, marked *Allegro ma non tanto*, opens with the piano delivering a lively but solemn theme of Russian character, which then immediately begins to sprout new ideas. A yearning bridge passage leads to a rhythmic theme that slows and quickly takes on another melodic guise, a beautiful and typically Rachmaninovian one in its soaring and ecstatic manner. The main theme returns and a powerful development section yields to a lengthy cadenza, whose opening pages offer alternative versions for the soloist -- a lighter, more athletic beginning or a darker more chordal one. A restatement of the main theme and brief coda close this generally subdued and reflective movement.

The second movement *Adagio* is formally rather unique, with the main theme dominating most of the movement, and a brief scherzo-like section appearing near the end. The mood ranges from the melancholy of the main theme by the oboe to the ecstatic glory of its big restatements by piano and orchestra in the middle part of the movement. After the playful scherzo-ish music, the piano is given a brief but brilliant cadenza that leads directly into the colorful finale.

This movement, marked *Alla breve*, offers a typical Rachmaninov fast theme on the piano right off: it is related to the first movement's alternate theme and is rhythmically buoyant and catchy in its repeated notes. A rhythmic chordal passage harkens back to the rhythm heard at the concerto's outset, and a lovely theme, related to the first movement bridge passage, is presented, hinting at triumphant resolution. Following a dramatic, suspenseful buildup near the end the theme makes one final and absolutely triumphant appearance, after which the brilliant coda closes the work. The middle section of this movement recalls both main themes from the first movement and was once the most heavily cut section of the concerto.

Today, this concerto carries the nickname of "Rach 3," and is the most popular choice among piano competition candidates wanting to perform a virtuoso display piece.

Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 3 In D Minor

Vladimir Ashkenazy, piano

Anatole Fistoulari London Symphony Orchestra

1. Allegro Ma Non Tanto 16:30

2. Intermezzo (Adagio) 11:11

3. Finale (Alla Breve) 25:30

Total Time: 42:18

Producer Erik Smith Eng: Kenneth Wilkinson & Alan Abel

Recorded by Decca 18-19 Mar 1963 at Walthamstow Assembly Hall

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape



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