

Janis was born Byron Yanks (a shortened form of his family's name, Yanklevich) in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, to Jewish parents of Russian and Polish descent. He had his first piano lesson at age 4 with Abraham Litow, who had studied at the prestigious Music Conservatory in Leningrad (St. Petersburg). Janis studied with Litow until he was 7. The pedagogue Selmar Janson had offered Janis a scholarship at Carnegie-Tech University in Pittsburgh, where he had many relatives, but his mother insisted, over the objections of the rest of his family, that he be sent to New York.[3]

He studied at the Juilliard School with Josef and Rosina Lhévinne, and received musical influences from Rachmaninoff and Alfred Cortot. At 10, Janis lost sensation in a finger due to an accident but this did not prevent his debut, playing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 in New York. When Janis was 16, Vladimir Horowitz heard his performance of the same concerto with the Pittsburgh Symphony conducted by 15-year-old Lorin Maazel and invited Janis to work with him. Janis studied with Horowitz for four years. He remained a close friend and one of only three students ever acknowledged by Horowitz – the other two being Gary Graffman and Ronald Turini.

In 1960, he was selected as the first American to be sent to the Soviet Union, and his performance opened the successful exchange between the cold war adversaries. This was the first of his many world tours, on which he premiered many works and performed breathtakingly challenging piano-concerto programs. In 1967, he accidentally unearthed two previously unknown manuscripts of Chopin waltzes in France – this was considered "the most dramatic musical discovery of our age".

Janis was honored by several U.S. Presidents and in 1984, at a State Dinner at the White House in his honor at the invitation of President Ronald Reagan, he revealed that he had been suffering from severe arthritis throughout much of his decades-long career. The painful and crippling condition eventually required surgery on his hands. However, he recovered sufficiently to resume performing.

He has received a host of the most prestigious honors each of which had not previously been conferred on an American, including the Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur and Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres (France's highest decorations), the Grand Prix du Disque and Cannes Classical Award (both for his Mercury Records recording of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 accompanied by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra under Kirill Kondrashin), and the Harriet Cohen International Music Award and Beethoven Medal (for his performance of Beethoven sonatas).

Janis is the first pianist to receive the V.E.R.A. (Voice Education Research Award) Award on June 1, 2012, for his contribution to the field of voice communication. The program honored Janis and Metropolitan Opera star and recording artist, Frederica von Stade. The annual Voices of Summer Gala is one of The Voice Foundation's premiere events. He served as the first mentor at the Very Special Arts (VSA) International Young Soloists Awards in June 2012. Started by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith in 1984, Byron Janis shared his experience and wisdom with the four award recipients. Since 1984, the VSA International Young Soloists Award Program has annually recognized young artists with disabilities from all over the world who demonstrate exceptional music talent.



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

Rachmaninoff

Piano Concerto No. 3

Byron Janis, piano

Charles Munch - Boston Symphony Orchestra



Mastered in DSD256

Piano Concerto No. 3

Allegro ma non tanto (D minor)

The first movement revolves around a diatonic melody that soon develops into complex pianistic figuration. The second theme opens with quiet exchanges between the orchestra and the piano before fully diving into a slower theme in a major key. The first part of the first theme is restated before the movement is pulled into a loud development section which opens with toccata like quavers in the piano and reaches a loud chordal section. The whole development exhibits features similar to a canon, such as an eighth note passage in the piano in which the left hand and the right hand play overlapping figures. The movement reaches a number of ferocious climaxes, especially in the cadenza. Rachmaninoff wrote two versions of this cadenza: the chordal original, which is commonly notated as the *ossia*, 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 cadenza then ends quietly, but the piano alone continues to play a quiet development of the exposition's second theme before leading to the recapitulation, where the first theme is restated by the piano, with the orchestra accompanying, soon closing with a quiet, rippling coda reminiscent of the second theme.

Intermezzo: Adagio (F sharp minor/D flat major)

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. The melody soon moves to the tonic major which is the second theme. After the first theme development and recapitulation of the second theme, the main melody from the first movement reappears, before the movement is closed by the orchestra in a manner similar to the introduction. Then the piano gets the last word with a short "cadenza-esque" passage which moves into the last movement without pause. Many melodic thoughts of this movement allude to Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto, third movement, noticeably the Russian-like, E-flat major melody.

Finale: Alla breve (D minor D major)

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. However, after the first and second themes it diverges from the regular sonata-allegro form. There is no conventional development; that segment is replaced by a lengthy digression using the major key of the third movement's first theme, which leads to the two themes from the first movement. After the digression, the movement recapitulation returns to the original themes, building up to a toccata climax somewhat similar but lighter than the first movement's *ossia* cadenza and accompanied by the orchestra. The movement concludes with a triumphant and passionate second theme melody in D major. The piece 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. More recently, it has become commonplace to perform the concerto without cuts. A typical performance of the complete concerto lasts about forty minutes.

Rachmaninoff composed the concerto in the peaceful setting of his family's country estate, Ivanovka, completing it on September 23, 1909. Contemporary with this work are his First Piano Sonata and his tone poem *The Isle of the Dead*.

The concerto is respected, even feared, by many pianists. Josef Hofmann, the pianist to whom the work is dedicated, never publicly performed it, saying that it "wasn't for" him. Gary Graffman lamented he had not learned this concerto as a student, when he was "still too young to know fear".

Due to time constraints, Rachmaninoff could not practice the piece while in Russia. Instead, he practiced it on a silent keyboard that he brought with him while en route to the United States.

The concerto was first performed on November 28, 1909 by Rachmaninoff himself with the now-defunct New York Symphony Society with Walter Damrosch conducting, at the New Theater (later rechristened the Century Theater). It received a second performance under Gustav Mahler several weeks later, an "experience Rachmaninoff treasured." [4] Rachmaninoff later described the rehearsal to Riesemann:

At that time Mahler was the only conductor whom I considered worthy to be classed with Nikisch. He devoted himself to the concerto until the accompaniment, which is rather complicated, had been practiced to perfection, although he had already gone through another long rehearsal. According to Mahler, every detail of the score was important – an attitude too rare amongst conductors. ... Though the rehearsal was scheduled to end at 12:30, we played and played, far beyond this hour, and when Mahler announced that the first movement would be rehearsed again, I expected some protest or scene from the musicians, but I did not notice a single sign of annoyance. The orchestra played the first movement with a keen or perhaps even closer appreciation than the previous time. The manuscript was first published in 1910 by Gutheil. Rachmaninoff called the Third the favorite of his own piano concertos, stating that "I much prefer the Third, because my Second is so uncomfortable to play." Nevertheless, it was not until the 1930s and largely thanks to the advocacy of Vladimir Horowitz that the Third concerto became popular.

Rachmaninoff

Piano Concerto No. 3

Byron Janis, piano

Charles Munch - Boston Symphony Orchestra

1. Allegro ma non tanto
2. Intermezzo (Adagio)
3. Finale (Alla breve)

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape Date of Recording: 1957 recorded by RCA

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