

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Cynthia Raim, piano
David Allen Wehr, piano
Friday, December 4 – 6:00 PM

PROGRAM

Suite No. 1 for Two Pianos, Op. 5, *Fantaisie tableaux*

Sergei Rachmaninov

Born: April 1, 1873 in Starorussky Uyezd

Died: March 28, 1943 in Beverly Hills, CA

Composed: 1893

Duration: 23 minutes

This large four-movement work was premiered by Rachmaninov and Pavel Pabst in Moscow. It was dedicated to Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, and one can hear his influence upon this suite, with its richly colored musical textures and sweeping, lush expressivity. Rachmaninov intended the work to represent a series of musical pictures, based on poetry. A few lines of poetry by Romantic poets preface each movement. The theme of love in the first two movements is brought to life by the two pianos with colorful, passionate writing. The final two movements feature the sound of bells--the third movement inspired by cathedrals bells that Rachmaninov heard as a youngster, and the fourth movement capturing the jubilant sound of Easter carillon.

Duets, Op. 11 [Selections]

Sergei Rachmaninov

Composed: 1894

Duration: 12 minutes

A rarely heard collection of gems from Rachmaninov's earlier years, the Duets, Op. 11 were not necessarily meant to be played as a set. Of the three selections that we will hear tonight, the Scherzo in D Major is a dazzling and brilliant virtuoso work, full of wit and rhythmic excitement; Russian Song in B Minor is a set of connected variations on an unidentified theme that grows in intensity and volume up to the quiet reprise of the theme at the end; and the Waltz in A Major is a suite of several continuous Waltzes, which are rhythmic and effective in the traditional Chopinesque style.

Suite No. 2 for Two Pianos

Sergei Rachmaninov

Composed: 1901

Duration: 23 minutes

Rachmaninov's Suite No. 2 is assertive, bold, and confident from the outset. The robust opening march precedes a sparkling waltz, the first of the work's two dances. Here and throughout the Suite, Rachmaninoff integrates the parts for the two pianos so that they can hardly be distinguished. During the middle of the waltz, we get one of the composer's characteristic big tunes, a ripely romantic melody pounded out in chords over a flowing accompaniment. The beautifully crafted third-movement Romance overflows with lyricism and fantasy. Most of the movement is introspective, but the impassioned central climax revisits the expressive world of the waltz's middle section. Rachmaninov closes the suite with a tarantella, an Italian dance whose crazed flailings were once thought to cure the bite of a tarantula. Here, again, we find the composer at his best, crafting a finale that demands staggering virtuosity from both players.