



RACHMANINOFF

Symphony No. 2 in E minor Op. 27

A new arrangement for two pianos

Simon Callaghan
Hiroaki Takenouchi


Nimbus Records

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Arrangement for Two Pianos

by

Simon Callaghan & Hiroaki Takenouchi

Symphony No. 2 in E minor Op. 27

1	Largo - Allegro moderato	21.39
2	Allegro molto	10.07
3	Adagio	12.25
4	Allegro vivace	15.27

Total playing time 59.38

The score of Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2 in this arrangement
is available from Nimbus Music Publishing - NMP1164

For more information visit www.wyastone.co.uk

or contact sales@wyastone.co.uk

A separate score of the 3rd movement *Adagio* is also available - NMP1165

Produced by Adrian Farmer Edited by Simon Callaghan

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Cover image: Rachmaninoff circa 1901

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As long ago as the eighteenth century, composers were arranging orchestral works for two pianos or for piano duet, making them more domestically accessible and exposing their compositions to a wider audience. Four-hand piano versions abound of symphonies by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Haydn and more; even for music lovers, they have been the introduction to previously unknown parts of the classical repertoire, and they are regularly performed by piano students keen to tackle their complex orchestral demands.

Since Rachmaninoff focused mainly on the piano, we were surprised to be unable to find a two-piano arrangement by the composer himself of his Symphony No. 2, particularly since he arranged his own first and third symphonies for four hands. Such was the popularity of the Second Symphony that Vladimir Wilschau (1868-1957) created a four hands arrangement in 1910, just two years after the premiere in St Petersburg under the composer's baton.

Our objective in creating this new arrangement was to remain as faithful to the original as practically possible. We set out to embrace not only the capabilities of the two pianos but also their limitations – we wanted to create a true *piano work*, rather than a less-than-satisfactory imitation of the orchestral version. Of course, our motivation was also to be able to enjoy playing this magnificent masterpiece which we had cherished for as long as we could remember!

We performed our arrangement at St John's Smith Square in London in 2017. In hindsight, many passages were too dense and technically idealistic. For the last five years, we have been working to refine the textures and to create something comfortably pianistic while incorporating as much of Rachmaninoff's intention as is feasible. Naturally, we could only dream of matching the beautiful economy achieved by the composer himself in his own arrangement of the *Symphonic Dances* Op. 45, and certainly we sought inspiration from this work, from his two *Suites* for two pianos Opp. 5 and 17, and from his four-hands version of *The Rock* Op. 7.

We hope that our arrangement will be enjoyable to all pianists who have a love for Rachmaninoff's music. The much-loved *Adagio* would serve as a great challenge for young musicians of diploma level, while anyone who has performed and loved the *Suites* would surely love this new challenge.

Simon Callaghan & Hiroaki Takenouchi 2022

Rachmaninoff was always somewhat secretive about ‘works in progress’, so it is often difficult to establish precisely when his pieces were begun. In the case of the Second Symphony he had better reason than usual to be reticent about its progress. The disastrous premiere in 1897 of the First Symphony and the vituperation of the subsequent critical assault had deeply wounded the sensitive 23-year old composer. Indeed, it may be argued that the whole episode dealt a blow to his confidence from which he never fully recovered - certainly the First Symphony was never heard again in Rachmaninoff’s lifetime.

In a letter written in Dresden on 11 February 1907, the symphony already appears to be complete in sketch form: *I have composed a symphony. It’s true! It’s only ready in rough. I finished it a month ago and immediately put it aside. It was a severe worry to me and I am not going to think about it any more.* Later that year, back in Russia, Rachmaninoff made a start on the orchestration – a task which evidently proved troublesome, with the result that the work was not completed until January 1908, by which time Rachmaninoff had returned to Dresden. The first performances were given a few weeks later in St. Petersburg and Moscow, with the composer himself conducting. To his great relief, the performances were a tremendous success.

The Second Symphony is radically different in content from the First. Whereas the previous work was taut and concentrated, with the emphasis very much on motivic development, this work is lyrical and expansive - seemingly possessed of almost an embarrassment of melodic riches. It is this profusion of sweeping melody which has earned the work a place in the repertoire as the most popular of all Rachmaninoff’s purely orchestral works.

The opening minutes of the symphony cast their shadow over the entire work - not only emotionally, but also musically. The extent to which much of the music is organically derived from the opening bars is generally under-appreciated, so apparently relaxed is Rachmaninoff’s handling of the material. But the shapes, harmonic progressions and even the rhythms of the main melodies in the symphony can all be traced back to the opening.

The most obvious (and in symphonic terms, least important) recurring idea is the two-part ‘motto’ heard at the opening. This fulfils much the same function as the so-called ‘fate’ motif at the opening of Tchaikovsky’s 5th Symphony (another E minor symphony and surely the principal inspiration behind this one) From this shadowy opening the main *Allegro moderato* emerges. There is no rhetoric here: the first subject appears almost hesitantly at first. In fact, one of the notable features of the first movement as a whole is the way it seems to conserve its energies. So when the second subject

emerges, it is not so much as a 'Classical' contrast to the first but as a lyrical extension of it - a condition which continues until well into the development.

It is the return of the 'motto' theme which provokes the first major upheaval of the symphony and it is as a continuation of this climactic passage that Rachmaninoff begins his recapitulation. This is not a great moment of 'arrival' as one might expect in a Beethoven symphony, but an extension of a continually unfolding dramatic paragraph. As such, it is a marvellously subtle master-stroke because this now allows the second subject's subsequent reappearance finally to fulfil its 'Classical' function of providing relief from the dramatic intensity of the first subject. The whole enormous structure is now balanced by a stormy coda bringing the movement to a defiant close.

The scherzo, *Allegro Molto*, begins as an extension of the drama of the previous movement's coda. This is vigorous and energetic music, the outline of whose first theme obliquely refers to the *dies irae* plainchant - a melody which haunted so many of Rachmaninoff's works throughout his life and which appears to underpin much of the music in this symphony as well. A lush melody offers respite from the stresses of the scherzo's main theme and proves to be an effective foil to the Trio proper which, far from fulfilling its traditional function of providing contrast with the scherzo, enters with a crash which sets the music careering off on quite a different path - driven by a ferocious fugato. A return of the scherzo's two contrasting themes eventually evaporates in a ghostly coda which contains a further allusion to the fateful 'motto' theme.

The slow movement begins with one of the great solos (for clarinet) in the orchestral repertoire. More remarkable still is the extension of the melody - a lyrical outpouring which seems destined to go on for ever. The movement is in two distinct halves, separated (somewhat disconcertingly) by a pause. Each half contains a veiled reference to the 'motto' theme, but there is a definite feeling that the tensions of the previous movements have finally been exorcised and it is with complete confidence that each half of the movement culminates in a rapturous and extended climax before dying away.

The Finale, *Allegro vivace*, affirms this new-found confidence. Its opening is celebratory and when, at length, a new melody is introduced its expansiveness outdoes even that of the slow movement's main theme, extending as it does for an astonishing 114 bars. In the course of this melody, the emotional grip relaxes and, in another inspired stroke, Rachmaninoff eventually drops the listener off in the middle of a brief reference to the slow movement.

The darker forces encountered in the first two movements now mobilise themselves for a final, magnificently sinister accumulation of tension. Based on overlapping descending scales, reminiscent of the pealing of bells, and combined with the most overt reference in the entire symphony to the *dies irae*, the music builds in power and intensity. A mood of impending catastrophe almost overwhelms the music, but as the clangour reaches its height the movement's opening triumphantly reasserts itself. From this point onwards, the outcome is never in any doubt. The huge second theme returns, somewhat shortened but even more splendid and, as if on a tidal wave of melodic invention, crowned by the 'motto' theme in the entire brass section, the symphony sails to its glorious conclusion.

Extract from an original note by **John Pickard**

Simon Callaghan

Steinway Artist Simon Callaghan performs internationally as a soloist and chamber musician, in parallel with his highly successful career as a recording artist. In response to his regular performances in the UK's major concert halls, his international tours to Asia, North America and Europe, and his extensive, acclaimed discography, Callaghan has developed a wide following. A favourite artist at the internationally-renowned Husum Festival of Piano Rarities in Germany, Callaghan's recent sell-out recital drew praise from audience and critics, with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* describing his "cleverly curated recital full of discoveries" (*VAN Magazine*) as "technically brilliant". His recital partners have included, Adrian Brendel, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Feng Ning, Raphael Wallfisch, Coco Tomita, Samuel West, Prunella Scales and Timothy West. He is a founder member of the Piatti Ensemble.

Callaghan's repertoire includes over fifty concertos, highlights of the standard solo and chamber works of the 19th and 20th centuries, and much that is rare and unexplored. One cornerstone of his work is his commitment to British music, and he has recently begun a series, presenting world premiere recordings of British concertos with Martyn Brabbins and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (Lyrita). By the end of 2023 he will have recorded five albums for Hyperion's celebrated *The Romantic Piano Concerto* series. Callaghan's first Hyperion album, with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, formed part of his successful PhD project at the Royal Northern College of Music. His three-year Poulenc project for Nimbus launched in 2019, recording *L'histoire du Babar* with Harry Potter actor Miriam Margolyes. Callaghan has also recorded for Orchid Classics, Danacord, Somm, Resonus, Convivium and EM Records, and has expanded his role to encompass performing and producing in an exciting association with Nimbus Records and The Lyrita

Recorded Edition Trust. His reputation and experience in chamber music led to his accepting the role of Director of Music at London's celebrated Conway Hall, curating one of the longest-running series of its kind in Europe.

Hiroaki Takenouchi

Heralded by *The Times* as “just the sort of champion the newest of new music needs”, while being praised as “impeccable in his pianism and unfailing in his idiomatic grasp” by *Gramophone*, Takenouchi's curiosity and a natural penchant for integrity makes his playing and vast repertoire unique amongst his generation of pianists. His love for the music of classical masters – particularly Haydn, Beethoven and Chopin – sits side by side with his passion for the music of Medtner, lesser-known British composers such as Sterndale Bennett and Parry, and the contemporary repertoire.

As a soloist, Takenouchi has appeared on concert platforms including Wigmore Hall, Tokyo Opera City and the Southbank Centre. He has performed at festivals in Bath, Cheltenham and Salzburg and given recitals in the UK, Japan, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Portugal, Italy and Canada. His more unusual recent projects include a recital for the *Piano Rarities* Festival in Husum (Germany), a BBC 4 documentary *The Prince and the Composer* on the life and music of Parry alongside HRH The Prince of Wales, and BBC Radio 3's *Composer of the Week*, for which Hiroaki recorded solo works by Sterndale Bennett (2016), Mackenzie (2017), Carwithen and Müller-Hermann (2022). Takenouchi's discography includes Schumann & Sterndale Bennett (Artalinna), Haydn (Artalinna), *Contemporary Piano Music from Japan* (LORELT), and première recordings of works by James Dillon (NMC), Edwin Roxburgh (NMC) and Jeremy Dale Roberts (LORELT). With Simon Callaghan he has recorded two-piano arrangements of Delius (SOMM), a disc of Sherwood and Parry (Lyrita) and two-piano arrangements by Saint-Saëns of sonatas by Chopin and Liszt (Nimbus). Hiroaki edited the published scores of Sherwood's two-piano works (as recorded for Lyrita), now available from Nimbus Music Publishing. 2022 saw the release of his latest disc for the French specialist piano label Artalinna, featuring multi-movement works by Grieg, Medtner and Dupré, linked together by a common theme-and-variations structure.

Hiroaki Takenouchi is a Blüthner Artist and owns a beautiful 1922 Blüthner piano. Takenouchi teaches piano at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Glasgow). He also returns every summer to give masterclasses at the Ingenium International Music Academy (UK).

Photo : Jean-Baptiste Millot

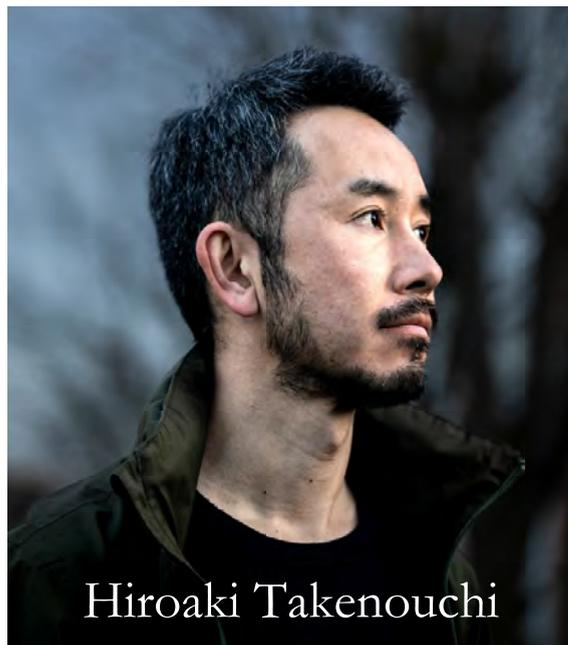
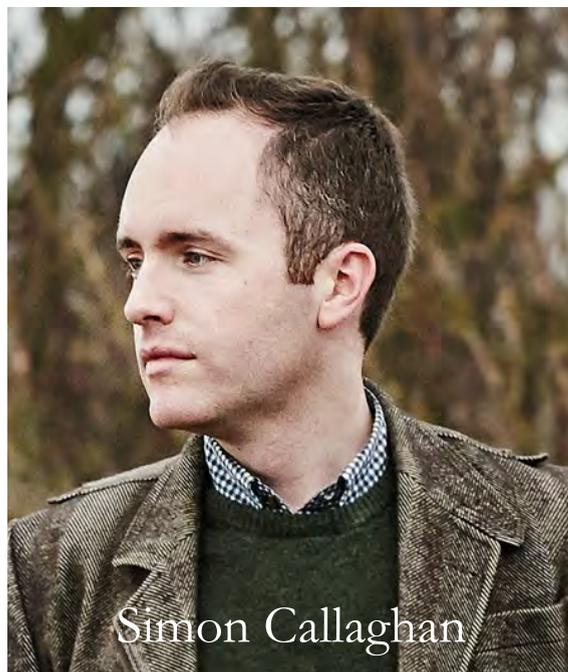


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