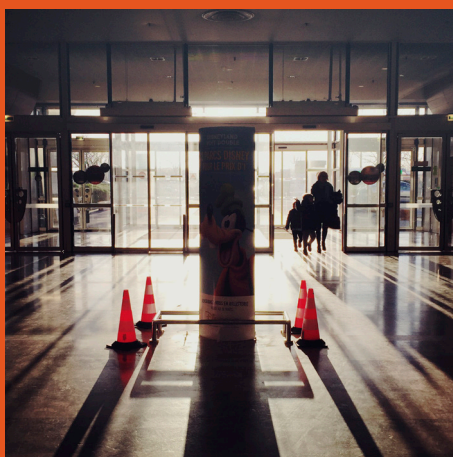


BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

RACHMANINOV



FLAGEY PIANO DAYS

Lukáš Vondráček plays Piano Concerto Nr. 3

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC PRESENTS

A BUCKET LIST PRODUCTION

CONDUCTOR **THOMAS DAUSGAARD** CONCERTMASTER **HENRY RAUDALES**

PIANO **LUKÁŠ VONDRÁČEK**

TICKETS: [BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC.BE](https://brusselphilharmonic.be)

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YOUR CONCERT NIGHT

19:00 PIANO EXPO HALL

discover a selection of remarkable pianos
from the Maene collection

19:30 MUSIC TALK FOYER 2

introduction of Lukáš Vondráček by
Pierre Solot (FR)

19:30 MUSIC TALK FOYER 3

introduction of Lukáš Vondráček by
Waldo Geuns (NL)

20:15 CONCERT STUDIO 4 (with intermission > 22:15)

SERGEI RACHMANINOV

Vocalise, Op. 34/14 (1912)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor,
Op. 30 (1909)

I. Allegro ma non tanto

II. Intermezzo: Adagio

III. Finale: Alla breve

soloist: Lukáš Vondráček

intermission

SERGEI RACHMANINOV

Symphonic Dances, Op. 45 (1940)

I. Non allegro

II. Andante con moto. Tempo di Valse

III. Lento assai. Allegro vivace

PROGRAMME NOTES

Many people consider Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) as one of the last great romantic composers and the most important successor of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893). For most of his life, he combined a career as composer and that of a pianist, continuing the tradition of composer-virtuoso. In Russia, he commuted between Moscow and Saint Petersburg and his country estate in Ivanovka, where he wrote the bulk of his oeuvre in peace and quiet. Critics have not always received his music with the same enthusiasm: in the concert hall, Rachmaninov often had to struggle against the innovative musical language of the emerging modernists. A tonal language that he would never truly make his own. Fortunately, the audience was won over by his opulent and lyrical melodies.

This programme spans a large swath of his oeuvre, from his top-notch romantic Third Piano Concerto and the famous Vocalise to the Symphonic Dances, the last work he wrote after emigrating to the United States. In this swan song, the 67-year-old composer demonstrated that he did have an ear for the music of his time. This is obvious from the rhythmic splurges, adventurous harmonies and daring instrumental combinations.

VIRTUOSO PIANO CONCERTOS

Rachmaninov had the good fortune to be born into a prosperous and musical family. As a teenager, he was admitted to the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, but it failed to motivate him to study. On the advice of a cousin, the pianist and conductor Alexander Siloti, he transferred to Moscow. There he studied with the renowned

but strict piano teacher Nikolai Zverev. The latter's iron discipline worked wonders for Rachmaninov. Moreover, through Zverev he became acquainted with the professional musical life in Moscow. Soon, Rachmaninov was also accepted into the harmony class taught by Anton Arensky. It was soon obvious that he was extraordinarily talented: in 1888, he graduated with the highest distinction in music theory, and in 1892 he passed his examination in piano and composition a year earlier than expected – a performance that earned him a gold medal.

As soon as he had graduated, Rachmaninov was considered a full-fledged composer, and what's more, one who enjoyed the support of Tchaikovsky. He had already composed a number of impressive works. In addition to a number of songs and works for piano, there was his graduation piece, a one-act opera, *Aleko*, that was so successful that it was performed immediately at the Bolshoi Theatre. And not forgetting his First Piano Concerto – the work to which Rachmaninov gave the official title of 'Opus 1'. A few years later, he composed his First Symphony. But the disastrous premiere in 1897 left Rachmaninov paralysed. He sank into depression and for three years he wrote nothing. But he found his second wind, and his Second Piano Concerto in 1901 was certainly an enormous success.

A third piano concerto followed in 1908. Rachmaninov composed the work to serve as his calling card for his very first concert tour, to the United States: "My third concerto was written specially for America, and I was to play it for the first time in New York under the direction of Walter Damrosch. Because I didn't have much time to study during the preceding summer and because I was not familiar enough

with certain passages, I took a dumb piano with me on the ship and learned it during the crossing.” The concerto was intended to highlight his qualities as a composer and pianist. Rachmaninov thus planned a particularly complex and virtuoso piano part. The extreme difficulty and length of the work mean that it took some time for this concerto to become as popular as his second. The definitive breakthrough came partly thanks to the 1996 film *Shine*, in which the Third Piano Concerto plays a crucial role. Since then, the work has found its way onto the standard repertoire of many pianists; over the history of the famous Queen Elisabeth Competition to date, it has been performed around 25 times.

MUSICAL TESTAMENT

In 1917, Rachmaninov fled his homeland after the disruption of the October Revolution. Via Scandinavia, he ended up in the United States, where he soon developed a substantial network as a concert pianist and was thus able to provide for his family. After his departure from Russia, Rachmaninov composed only a handful of major works. His career as a concert pianist took up the bulk of his time and brought with it the inevitable stress. Most of all, he missed the culture of his native land, and the idyllic atmosphere and complete peace and quiet of his beloved estate Ivanovka, to which he used to retreat to compose. “For seventeen years, since I lost my country, I have felt unable to compose. When I was on my farm in Russia during the summers I had joy in my work. Certainly I still write music, but it does not mean the same thing to me now”, he admitted in 1933 in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*.

Around 1930, Rachmaninov had saved up enough money to build a country house on Lake

Lucerne. This gave a new impetus to his career as a composer, and between 1935 and 1936 he composed his Third Symphony, a work that evokes memories of his homeland. Soon thereafter, he had to leave again, this time because of the turbulent political climate in Europe. He settled definitively in the United States, in the luxurious and spacious Honeyman Estate in New York. There, three years before his death, he wrote his very last composition: the Symphonic Dances. The substantial development of its themes give it a symphonic form, but with an explicitly dance-like character. Rachmaninov therefore changed the title from the original Fantastic Dances to its current name, and also deleted the subtitles 'Noon, 'Twilight and 'Midnight'. Yet the original programmatic content shines through in the three dances, which Rachmaninov considered a symbol of the various phases of his own life.

While in the first dance, nostalgia prevails, the calls in the muted trumpets and horns in the second movement introduce a capricious and alienating waltz, full of ambiguous harmonies. For the final dance, Rachmaninov drew on the well-known *Dies irae* melody from the medieval Requiem Mass and the chant 'Blagosloven yesi, Gospodi' [blessed are you, O Lord] from his own Vespers. These musical motifs around death and resurrection seem to compete with each other in a frenetic danse macabre.

Ultimately, resurrection defeats death, a tipping point that Rachmaninov underlined in the score with the cry of joy 'Hallelujah!'. Some historians see this epigraph as the composer's cry of joy – as if he were thanking the creator for the completion of this composition, which he may have felt would be his last.

Commentary by Aurélie Walschaert

THOMAS DAUSGAARD, conductor

www.thomasdausgaard.com

The Danish conductor Thomas Dausgaard has only recently completed his tenure as chief conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and is also the conductor laureate of the Swedish Chamber Orchestra and honorary conductor of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and of the Orchestra della Toscana. He was previously principal guest conductor and music director of the Seattle Symphony. He has appeared as a guest conductor with leading orchestras such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the St. Petersburg Philharmonia and the London Symphony Orchestra.

Dausgaard's musical engagement goes far beyond the pages of a musical score: he is convinced of the importance of music for society, and its relevance and potential in the lives of current and future generations. This commitment has led him to, among others, launch a collaboration with a youth orchestra in the favelas of São Paulo, and give conducting masterclasses worldwide.

LUKÁŠ VONDRÁČEK, piano

Lukáš Vondráček gave his first public performance when he was barely four years old, and made his debut at the age of 15 with the Czech Philharmonic conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy. Since then, he has been performing with renowned orchestras such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra and the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, under the baton of conductors such as Paavo

Järvi, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Marin Alsop and Vasily Petrenko. His recitals have taken him to concert halls including the Elbphilharmonie of Hamburg, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Vienna Konzerthaus and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

In Brussels, he is a familiar guest since winning first prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 2016. His distinctions include first prizes at the Hilton Head, the San Marino International Piano and the Unisa International Piano Competition.

BRUSSELS PHILHARMONIC

www.brusselsphilharmonic.be

“The world needs symphonic music. And symphonic music needs the world.”

That is the firm belief of the Brussels Philharmonic. As a symphony orchestra founded in 1935 under the auspices of the Belgian public broadcaster, unveiling the symphonic world as best we can is deep in our DNA. By innovating while maintaining full respect for the value of the past, we keep the symphonic music of the past, present and future relevant and inspiring – for ourselves and all of society. We do this from the historic Studio 4 at Flagey in Brussels, together with our music director Kazushi Ono: he shares our open and adventurous spirit and our rock-solid belief in the need for cross-fertilization between art, life and society.

Brussels Philharmonic is an institution of the Flemish Community.

MUSICI

CONDUCTOR

Thomas Dausgaard

SOLOIST

Lukáš Vondráček, piano solo

CONCERTMASTER

Henry Raudales

VIOLIN 1

Bart Lemmens ⁽²⁾, Olivia Bergeot, Annelies Broeckhoven, Stefan Claeys, Cristina Constantinescu, Francisco Dourthé Orrego, Sára Kovács, Justine Rigutto, Kristina Rimkeviciute, Elizaveta Rybentseva, Anton Skakun, Alissa Vaitsner, Gillis Veldeman

VIOLIN 2

Samuel Nemtanu ⁽¹⁾, Véronique Burstin, Alexis Delporte, Aline Janeczek, Eléonore Malaboef, Sayoko Mundy, Naoko Ogura, Julien Poli, Eva Pusker, Stefanie Van Backlé, Bram Van Eenoo

VIOLA

Mihai Cocea ⁽¹⁾, Griet François ⁽²⁾, Philippe Allard, Marina Barskaya, Victor Guaita, Hélène Koerver, Agnieszka Kosakowska, Barbara Peynsaert, Stephan Uelpenich, Patricia Van Reusel

CELLO

Kristaps Bergs ⁽¹⁾, Barbara Gerarts, Julius Himmler, Sophie Jomard, Laia Ruiz Llopart, Maria Palazon, Emmanuel Tondus, Elke Wynants

DOUBLE BASS

Jan Buysschaert ⁽¹⁾, Thomas Fiorini, Daniele Giampaolo, Lennert Janssens, Luzia Correia Rendeiro Vieira

FLUTE

Lieve Schuermans ⁽¹⁾, Jill Jeschek ⁽²⁾, Sarah Miller

OBOE

Maarten Wijnen ⁽¹⁾, Lode Cartrysse ⁽²⁾, Emily Ross

CLARINET

Maura Marinucci ⁽¹⁾, Danny Corstjens ⁽²⁾, Midori Mori ⁽²⁾

BASSOON

Karsten Przybyl ⁽¹⁾, Jonas Coomans ⁽²⁾, Alexander Kuksa

HORN

Christiaan Moolenaars ⁽¹⁾, Mieke Ailliet ⁽²⁾, Reindert Geirnaert, Claudia Rigoni

TRUMPET

Ward Hoornaert ⁽¹⁾, Rik Ghesquière, Luc Sirjacques

TROMBONE

David Rey ⁽¹⁾, William Foster ⁽²⁾, Tim Van Medegael ⁽²⁾

TUBA

Jean Xhonneux ⁽¹⁾

TIMPANI

Titus Franken ⁽²⁾

PERCUSSION

Stef Hesters, Miguel Sánchez Cobo,

**Stijn Schoofs, Bart Swimberghe,
Gideon Van Canneyt**

HARP

Eline Groslot ⁽²⁾

PIANO

Anastasia Goldberg ⁽²⁾

SAXOPHONE

Pieter Pellens

⁽¹⁾ principal

⁽²⁾ soloist