

This clip features Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, performed by Evgeny Kissin with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Sir Andrew Davis conducts.

There is an interesting story behind the creation of this famous work.

Rachmaninov composed it following a period of deep depression during which he questioned whether he could ever compose again. Response to his First Symphony, after it was initially performed ... very badly, in St. Petersburg, because the music was so hard to play and the conductor was likely under the influence of alcohol - was extremely negative, sending Sergei Vasilievich into a tailspin.

A brilliant pianist with a famously wide hand span, he began to think performing in concert (or conducting) might be a better career path for him. Deeply unsettled, he began drinking too much alcohol. By the end of 1899, he was drinking so much that his hands shook - preventing him from playing the piano.

Recognizing he needed help, Rachmaninov visited a Moscow specialist in "neuro-psychotherapy," named Nikolai Dahl, whom he regularly saw between January and April of 1900.

Dr. Dahl reportedly used hypnosis to break Rachmaninov's lethargy and depression, suggesting to him - during trance therapy - that he should compose a new piano concerto which had been commissioned by a London patron.

The sessions with Dr. Dahl had the desired effect, prompting Sergei Vasilievich to throw himself into his writing. Composing the 2nd piano concerto, reportedly with renewed zest, he dedicated it to Dr. Dahl.

SECOND CONCERTO

for Piano and Orchestra

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S. RACHMANINOFF
Op. 18

I

Moderato (♩ = 66) rit.

PIANO I

pp *poco a poco cresc.*

PIANO II

Moderato (♩ = 66) rit.

a tempo *con passione* 1

ff

a tempo

ff con passione

Those who do not know Rachmaninov's music will nonetheless recognize parts of this 2nd piano concerto. It has been used in both film and popular music.

Thanks to recorded sound, we can hear Sergei Vasilievich play the first movement of his Piano Concerto No. 2. He was performing with the Philadelphia Orchestra (reportedly his favorite), in 1929, with Leopold Stokowski conducting. The clip is from an RCA Victor recording (and is online via YouTube).

Credits:

Video clip online, courtesy BBC's WorldWide Channel at YouTube.

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Media Stream

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SECOND CONCERTO

for Piano and Orchestra

I

Moderato (♩ = 60)

PIANO I

pp poco a poco cresc.

rit.

PIANO II

Moderato (♩ = 60)

rit.

a tempo

con passione

1

a tempo

con passione

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