

STEREO
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 521

Rachmaninov

Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor

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Producer's Note

Few recordings have remained in the catalog for nearly ninety years and still been considered unsurpassed, except insofar as recording technology is concerned; but the 1929 collaboration of Sergei Rachmaninov with Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra in the composer/pianist's Second Concerto is surely one of them. Yet, what is perhaps less well-known is that this recording has existed in two almost entirely different versions over the years, with a performance that was not Rachmaninov's first choice being the only one available for half of its history. The present release brings the two together for the first time.

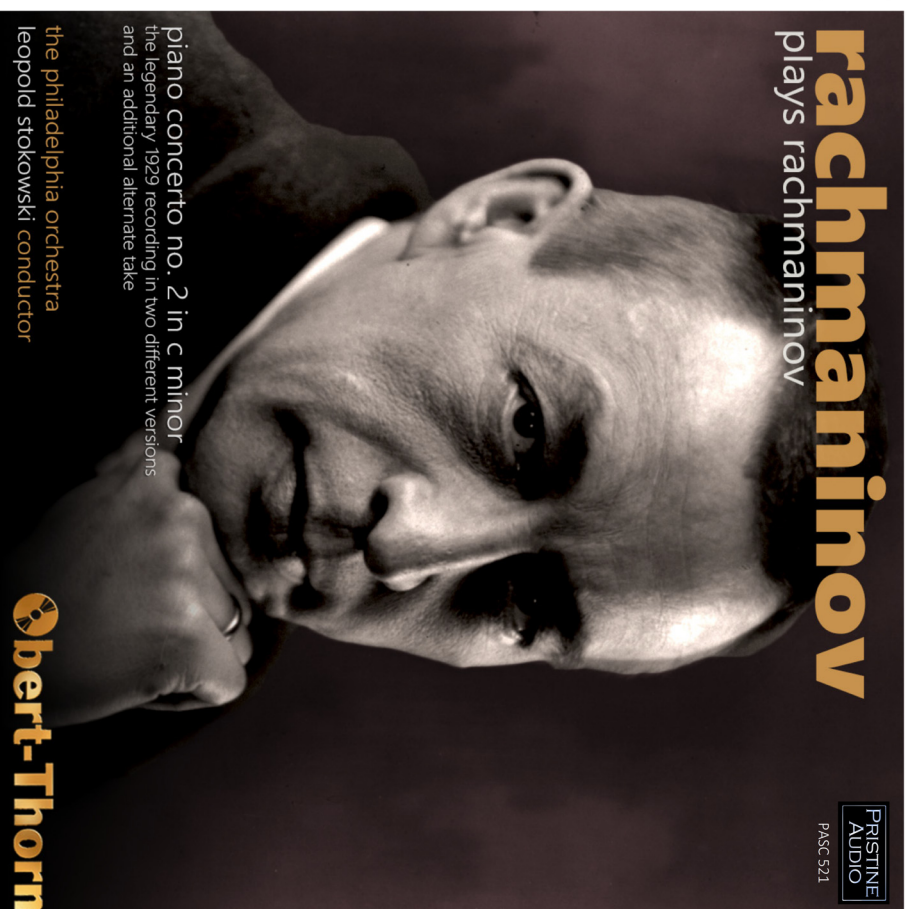
In the early days of electrical recording, it was the Victor label's practice to record at least two and often three takes of each side. One would be approved for release, with the remainder being held as backups or marked for destruction. In the case of the present set, the recording logs show that for Sides 1, 5, 6, 9 and 10, three takes were made for each, with two takes taken down for the remaining sides. Rachmaninov himself chose the takes that were originally issued when the set was brought out in 1929.

By the early 1940s, Victor began drawing on saved alternate takes to replace sides in some of their best-selling older recordings, due to increased wear on the original metal "mothers" which had been used for years to grow new stampers. Sometimes for an album set, this might mean replacing one or two sides. The present recording, however, stands alone in the number of substituted sides: nine out of ten, with only the original Side 4 retained because the sole alternate take had already been destroyed.

The "blue history cards" currently on file at the Sony archives, which document which takes were used for each side and when they were put into production, show that these substitutions were made in 1942 and continued to be employed for the remainder of the set's catalog life during the 78 rpm era. The recording logs also state that the substitute takes were used for all of RCA's LP releases. From the first in 1951 to "The Complete Rachmaninov" 15-LP set issued in 1973. It was not until 1987 that the original takes were first reissued on CD by RCA. Thus, for 45 of its 89 years in the catalog (1942 to 1987), entire generations only got to know this performance from the substitute takes. (An additional alternate take for Side 9 had been issued in 1940, and was only available for two years. This has never appeared on an extended-play reissue before the present release.)

It is fascinating to compare the takes of each side and speculate as to why Rachmaninov preferred one over the other. Sometimes, there are obvious errors that show why a take was not originally favored; but at other times, there are subtle differences in phrasing and timing that suggest a composer trying out different approaches with his most famous and beloved concerted work. Through it all, he has the support of Stokowski at his most impassioned, and his "fabulous Philadelphiaans", the ensemble which Rachmaninov himself once claimed was perhaps "the finest orchestra the world has ever heard."

Mark Obert-Thorn



rachmaninov
plays rachmaninov

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piano concerto no. 2 in c minor
the legendary 1929 recording in two different versions
and an additional alternate take
the philadelphia orchestra
leopold stokowski conductor

Obert-Thorn

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RACHMANINOV PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2 IN C MINOR, OP. 18
RACHMANINOV, THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA, STOKOWSKI

RACHMANINOV Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18

Version 1: Originally-issued takes (publ. 1929)

1st Mvt.: Moderato – Allegro

- 1 Side 1 (mm. 1 – 109) matrix CVE 48963-3 (3:05)
- 2 Side 2 (mm. 109 – 261) matrix CVE 48964-1 (3:27)
- 3 Side 3 (mm. 261 – end) matrix CVE 48965-1 (3:18)

2nd Mvt.: Adagio sostenuto

- 4 Side 4 (mm. 1 – 39) matrix CVE 48966-1 (2:57)
- 5 Side 5 (mm. 39 – 78) matrix CVE 48967-3 (2:25)
- 6 Side 6 (mm. 79 – 129) matrix CVE 48968-2 (2:35)
- 7 Side 7 (mm. 129 – end) matrix CVE 48969-1 (2:46)

3rd Mvt.: Allegro scherzando

- 8 Side 8 (mm. 1 – 162) matrix CVE 48970-2 (3:51)
- 9 Side 9 (mm. 162 – 356) matrix CVE 48971-2 (3:41)
- 10 Side 10 (mm. 356 – end) matrix CVE 48972-1 (3:24)

Version 2: Substitute takes (publ. 1942)

1st Mvt.: Moderato – Allegro

- 11 Side 1 (mm. 1 – 109) matrix CVE 48963-2 (3:00)
- 12 Side 2 (mm. 109 – 261) matrix CVE 48964-2 (3:24)
- 13 Side 3 (mm. 261 – end) matrix CVE 48965-2 (3:20)

2nd Mvt.: Adagio sostenuto

- 14 Side 4 (mm. 1 – 39) matrix CVE 48966-1 (2:57)
- 15 Side 5 (mm. 39 – 78) matrix CVE 48967-1 (2:24)
- 16 Side 6 (mm. 79 – 129) matrix CVE 48968-3 (2:31)
- 17 Side 7 (mm. 129 – end) matrix CVE 48969-2 (2:49)

3rd Mvt.: Allegro scherzando

- 18 Side 8 (mm. 1 – 162) matrix CVE 48970-1 (3:50)
- 19 Side 9 (mm. 162 – 356) matrix CVE 48971-3 (3:43)
- 20 Side 10 (mm. 356 – end) matrix CVE 48972-3 (3:25)

Additional alternate take (publ. 1940)

3rd Mvt.: Allegro scherzando

- 21 Side 9 (mm. 162 – 356) matrix CVE 48971-1 (3:47)

Sergei Rachmaninov *piano*
The Philadelphia Orchestra
Leopold Stokowski, conductor

COMPACT
disc
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Producer and Audio Restoration
Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Rachmaninov

All sides were recorded on 10th and
13th April 1929 in the Academy of
Music, Philadelphia

First issued on Victor 8148 through
8152 in album M-58

Special thanks to Jim Cartwright's
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Total duration: 66:39

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