

KONDRASHIN II

Kirill Kondrashin

Sergei Rachmaninov
Piano Concerto No.3, Op.30
Van Cliburn

The Bells, Op.35

LIMITED EDITION

PRAHA
Digitals
REMINISCENCES

Kirill Kondrashin - Van Cliburn

Sergei RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

PIANO CONCERTO No.3 in D minor, Op.30

43:15

KLAVIERKONZERT Nr.3 d-Moll Op.30

CONCERTO POUR PIANO N°3 en ré mineur op.30

1. *I. Allegro ma non tanto* 17:28
2. *II. Intermezzo : adagio* 10:37
3. *III. Finale : alla breve.* 15:02

Live recording, New York, 19 May 1958

THE BELLS, cantata for soloists, choir and orchestra, Op.35 (1913)

34:36

words by Edgar Poe-Russian translation by Konstantin Balmont

DIE GLOCKEN / LES CLOCHES

4. *I. The silver Sleigh Bells – Allegro, ma non tanto [tenor]* 06:26
5. *II. The Mellow Wedding Bells – Lento [soprano-choir]* 09:57
6. *III. The Loud Alarm Bells- Presto [choir]* 07:34
7. *IV. The mournful iron Bells – Lento lugubre [baritone-choir]* 10:24

Live recording, Moscow, Large Hall of the Conservatory, December 1962

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: **78:01**

(1-3) **Van CLIBURN**, piano / *Klavier*

Symphony of the Air, New York, Kirill KONDRASHIN

(4-7)

Elizaveta SHUMSKAYA, soprano

Mikhail DOVENMANN, tenor

Alexei BOLSHAKOV, baritone

Russian Republic Capella, Alexander Yurlov

Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Kirill KONDRASHIN

KONDRASHIN, SOVIET AMBASSADOR

Until 1996, Rachmaninov's *Third piano concerto Op.30* was largely eclipsed by its older sibling, the famous *Piano Concerto No.2* – but the gap between the two narrowed with the release of the film *Shine*. The movie told the true story of the Australian concert pianist David Helfgott, who suffered a mental breakdown and abandoned his career for many years. 'Rach 3', as it's often referred to by pianists, is used powerfully on the soundtrack and the Oscar-winning success of the film ensured a new audience for this muscular, Romantic work. Rachmaninov composed the concerto in 1909 – a full nine years after the premiere of his *Piano Concerto No.2*. The third is grander, fuller, and more expansive in tone and style – with the soloist stretched to the very limits of their ability. The soloist whom Rachmaninov intended to premiere the piece was his friend Josef Hofmann; curiously, though, Hofmann never actually performed it, apparently declaring that the work was 'not right for him'. This three-movement masterpiece sits alongside Brahms' *Piano Concerto No.2* as the most demanding of all Romantic concertos. It's also one of the most electrifying. The concerto was first performed on November 28, 1909 by Rachmaninoff himself with the New York Symphony Society with Walter Damrosch conducting, at the New Theater. It received a second performance under Gustav Mahler several weeks later, an «experience Rachmaninoff treasured. Rachmaninoff later described the rehearsal to Riesemann: *At that time Mahler was the only conductor whom I considered worthy to be classed with Nikisch. He devoted himself to the concerto until the accompaniment, which is rather complicated, had been practiced to perfection, although he had already gone through another long rehearsal. According to Mahler, every detail of the score was important -- an attitude too rare amongst conductors. ... Though the rehearsal was scheduled to end at 12:30, we played and played, far beyond this*

hour, and when Mahler announced that the first movement would be rehearsed again, I expected some protest or scene from the musicians, but I did not notice a single sign of annoyance. The orchestra played the first movement with a keen or perhaps even closer appreciation than the previous time. The manuscript was first published in 1910 by Gutheil. Rachmaninoff called the Third the favorite of his own piano concertos, stating that 'I much prefer the Third, because my Second is so uncomfortable to play.' Nevertheless, it was not until the 1930s and largely thanks to the advocacy of Vladimir Horowitz that the Third concerto became popular.

The Bells, Op.35, is a choral symphony by Sergei Rachmaninoff, written in 1913. The words are from the poem *The Bells* by Edgar Allan Poe, very freely translated into Russian by the symbolist poet Konstantin Balmont. The traditional Gregorian melody *Dies Irae* is used frequently throughout the work. Rachmaninoff called the work both a choral symphony and (unofficially) his *Third Symphony* shortly after writing it; however, he would later write a purely instrumental Third Symphony during his years in exile. Rachmaninoff dedicated *The Bells* to Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. He wrote to his friend Morozoff in December 1906, asking whether he could think of a suitable subject for a choral piece to follow his cantata *Spring*. Nothing came of this request. However, while on a holiday in Rome, Italy early in 1907, Rachmaninoff received an anonymous letter containing a copy of Balmont's translation of *The Bells*. The sender asked him to read the verses, suggesting they were suitable for musical setting and would especially appeal to him. This suggestion was both extremely sensitive and opportune. It was only after the composer's death that the identity of the sender was found to have been Maria Danilova, who was then a young cello student at the Moscow Conservatory. Nor was Rachmaninoff the only composer to whom Poe's writing would appeal. This

'symphony' is scored for soprano, tenor, and baritone soloists, mixed choir, and an orchestra of piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, cor anglais, 3 soprano clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 4 tubular bells, glockenspiel, triangle, tambourine, snare drum, cymbals, bass drum, tam-tam, pianino, celesta, harp, organ (ad lib), and the standard string quartet of violins (I & II), violas, cellos, and double basses. In the Foreword to *Verses and Versions* by Vladimir Nabokov, the author seems to suggest that Rachmaninoff had, many years after composing the work, asked him to translate the Russian text into English, which may mean that Rachmaninoff was unaware the poem was originally written in English by Edgar Allan Poe.

Harvey Lavan Cliburn was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, the son of Rildia Bee (née O'Bryan) and Harvey Lavan Cliburn, Sr. At age three, he began taking piano lessons from his mother, who had studied under Arthur Friedheim, a pupil of Franz Liszt. When Cliburn was six, his father, who worked in the oil industry, moved the family to Kilgore, Texas near Longview. At age 12, he won a statewide piano competition, which enabled him to debut with the Houston Symphony Orchestra. He entered the Juilliard School in New York City at the age of seventeen and studied under Rosina Lhevinne, who trained him in the tradition of the great Russian romantics. At age twenty, Cliburn won the Leventritt Award and made his Carnegie Hall debut. It was his recognition in Moscow that propelled him to international prominence. The first International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958 was an event designed to demonstrate Soviet cultural superiority during the Cold War. Cliburn's performance at the competition finale of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1 and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.3 on April 13 earned him a standing ovation lasting eight minutes. When it was time to announce a winner, the judges were obliged to ask permission of the

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to give first prize to an American. Cliburn returned home to a ticker-tape parade in New York City, the only time the honor has been accorded a classical musician. His cover story in Time magazine proclaimed him 'The Texan Who Conquered Russia.' Upon returning to the United States, Cliburn appeared in a Carnegie Hall concert with the Symphony of the Air, conducted by Kirill Kondrashin, who had led the Moscow Philharmonic in the prize-winning performances in Moscow. The performance of the Rachmaninoff 3rd Piano Concerto at this concert was subsequently released by RCA Victor on LP and is here SACD mastered today to reach the best reproduction. In 1958, during a dinner hosted by the National Guild of Piano Teachers, President and Founder Dr. Allison announced a cash prize of \$10,000 to be used for a piano competition named in Van Cliburn's honor. Under the leadership of Grace Ward Lankford and with the dedicated efforts of local music teachers and volunteers, the First Van Cliburn International Piano Competition was held from September 24 to October 7, 1962, at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. Until his death, Cliburn continued to serve as Director Emeritus for the Van Cliburn Foundation, as host of the quadrennial competition and host of other programs honoring his legacy. Cliburn returned to the former Soviet Union on several occasions. His performances there were usually recorded and even televised. In a 1962 Moscow appearance, Nikita Khrushchev, who met Van Cliburn again on this visit, and Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, were 'spotted in the audience applauding enthusiastically'. According to The Wall Street Journal, 'Mr. Cliburn's affection for the Soviet people – and theirs for him – was notable in its warmth during a prolonged period of superpower strain.' A 1972 concert performance of the Brahms Piano Concerto No.2 with Kondrashin and the Moscow orchestra, as well as a studio recording of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, were later issued on CD by RCA Victor. On May 26, 1972, Cliburn gave a concert at Spaso House, the

residence of the United States Ambassador to Russia, for an audience that included President Richard Nixon, Secretary of State William P. Rogers, and Soviet government officials.

Kirill Petrovich Kondrashin (Moscow, 6 March 1914 – 7 March 1981) was a Russian conductor. Born in a family of orchestral musicians, his mother was a violinist, his father played the viola. By the age of six, he was already receiving piano lessons although music held little interest for him. Having spent many hours at rehearsals, he made a firm decision at the age of 14 to become a conductor. He studied at the Moscow Conservatory from 1931 to 1936 under the conductor Boris Khaykin (who was only 3 years older than Kondrashin himself). Kondrashin began conducting in the Young People's Theatre in Moscow in 1931, continuing in the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Academic Music Theatre three years later. He conducted at the Maly Opera Theatre in Leningrad from 1938 to 1942 and the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow from 1943. His performance of Shostakovich's Symphony No.1 attracted the composer's attention and led to the formation of a firm friendship. In 1947 he was awarded the Stalin Medal. In the first International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958, he was the conductor for Van Cliburn, who won the first prize. After the competition he toured the United States with Cliburn, being the first Russian conductor to visit America since the Cold War began. They performed and recorded the Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No.3 and Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No.1, which they had played in the competition. Kondrashin was also the first Soviet artist to be personally received at the White House by then President Eisenhower. Later, in 1972, a live performance of Brahms's Piano Concerto No.2 reunited Cliburn and Kondrashin with the Moscow Philharmonic in Moscow; RCA Victor eventually released the performance, along with a studio recording of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, on CD. He was also the creator and artistic director of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra

from 1960 to 1975. During this period he premiered Shostakovich's Symphony No.4 in 30 December 1961 and No.13 the following year, 18 December 1962. He gave several performances in Europe and America with other famous Russian musicians like Rostropovich, Oistrakh, and Svyatoslav Richter. He left the Soviet Union in December 1978 while touring in the Netherlands and sought political asylum there, whereupon the Soviet regime immediately banned all his previous recordings. Bernard Haitink welcomes him and he took the post of Permanent Guest Conductor of Amsterdam's Concertgebouw Orchestra in 1978 and remained in that position until his death. He also established a brief but fruitful collaboration with the Vienna Philharmonic. In the Netherlands he married his assistant and interpreter, musicologist Nolda Broekstra (b.1944). When they first met around 1975, Broekstra was 30 years younger and spoke no Russian; both were married and were not fluent in English, the language they spoke. Yet they fell in love, tried to be together when they could, and exchanged letters. Broekstra diligently started studying Russian and English and quickly mastered both languages. Their family life in the Netherlands was short, as Kondrashin died in Amsterdam from a heart attack in early 1981, on the same day he conducted Mahler's First Symphony with the North German Radio Symphony Orchestra. Philips Records issued recordings of some of Kondrashin's live concerts with the Concertgebouw Orchestra on LP and CD, including fabulous performances of symphonies by Shostakovich. Kondrashin was a conductor of the old school, highly regarded for his ability to handle any orchestra, French included, and in two last years of activity with Vienna Philharmonic and Bavarian Radio Symphony. He was a maestro of contrasts and intense sound colors. His specialty was playing piano and large diminuendo, both a true ones, the softest sound possible. He was known above all as a dramatic conductor and how to convey all these players to follow him! He was going to establish a conductor school at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague...

THE BELLS

I. *Allegro ma non troppo*

Listen! Hear the silver bells, silver bells,
Hear the sledges with the bells,
How they charm our weary senses
With a sweetness that compels,
In the ringing and the singing.
That of deep oblivion tells.
Hear them calling, calling, calling,
Rippling sounds of laughter, falling,
On the icy midnight air
And a promise they declare,
That beyond Illusion's cumber
Births and hves beyond all number,
Waits an universal slumber,
Deep and sweet past all compare.
Hear the sledges with the bells, silver bells,
Hear the silver throated bells,
See, the stars bow down to hearken,
What their melody fore tells,
Whit a passion that compels,
And their dreaming is a gleaming
That a perfumed air exhales,
And their thoughts are but a shining,
And a luminous divining
Of the singing and the ringing
Of the promise that a dream less peace fore 'ells

II. *Lento*

Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Golden bells.
What a world of tender passion
their melodious voice fore tells!
Through the night their sound entrances
Like a loyers yearning glances
That a rise,

On a wave of tuneful rapture to the moon with in the
From the sounding cells up winging,
[skies.
Flash the tones of joyous singing, Rising, falling,
brightly calling, from a thousand happy throats,
Roll the glowing golden *notes*,
And an amber twilight gloats
While the tender vow is whisper'd
That great happiness fore tells,
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells,
Golden bells, the golden bells.
Hear the wedding bells, golden bells
Hark to the song of the bells.

III. *Presto*

Hear them, hear the brazen bells,
Hear the loud alarum bells.
In their sobbing, in their throbbing,
What a tale of horror dwells.
How beseeching sounds their cry, '
Neath the naked midnight sky,
Through the darkness wiidly pleading in affright,
Now approaching, now receding
Rings their message through the night.
And so tierce is their dismay
And the terror they portray,
That the brazen domes are riven,
and their tongues only can speak,
In a tuneless jangling wrangling,
as they shriek, and shriek, and shriek.
Till their frantic supplication
To the ruthless conflagration
Grows discordant faint and weak
But the tire sweeps on unheeding,
And in vain is all their pleading,
With the flames
From each window, roof, and spire

Leaping higher, higher, higher
Ev'ry lambent tongue proclaims:
I shah soon
Leaping higher still aspired end,
Till I reach the crescent moon,
Else I die,
of my desire in thus aspiring ta the moon.
O despair, despair, despair That sa feebly ye compare
With the blazing raging horror,
and the panic, and the glare,
That ye can not turn the flames,
As your unavailing clang and
Clamour mournfully pro claims.
All is vain, and in hopeless resignation.
Man must yield his habitation,
To the warring desolation.
Yet we know,
By the booming and the clanging
By the roaring and the twanging,
How the danger falls and rises,
Like the tides that ebb and flow.
And the progress of the
danger ev'ry ear distinetly feus.
By the sinking and the swelling
by the swelling in the clamour of the bells!

IV. Lento lugubre.

Hear the telling of the bells
Mournful bells!
Bitter end ta fruitless dreaming,
their stern monody fore tells.
What a world of desolation
In their iron utt'ranced wells!
And we tremble at our doom
As we think upon the tomb
Glad end eavour quenched forever,
In the silence and the gloom.

With persistent iteration,
They repeat their lamentation,
Till each muffled monotone,
Seems a groan,
Heavy, moaning
Their intoning,
Waxing sorrowful and deep.
Bears the message that a brother,
Passed away to endless sleep.
Those relentless voices rolling,
Seem ta take a joy in tolling
For the sinner and the just:
That their eyes be sealed in glumber,
And their hearts be turned ta duet.
Where they lie beneath a stone,
But the spirit of the belfry,
is a somber fiend that dwells,
In the shadow of the bells,
And he gibbers and he yells,
As he knells, and knells, and knells
Madly round the belfry reeling,
While the giant beils are pealing
While the bells are fiercely pealing,
While the mighty bells are thrilling,
Moaning forth the word of doom,
While those iron bells, unfeeling,
Through the void repeat the doom:
There is neither rest nor respite,
Save the quiet of the tomb

RACHMANINOV,
PIANISTE-COMPOSITEUR VÉNÉRÉ

Le *Concerto pour piano n°3* en ré mineur, Op.30 fut créé par Rachmaninov lui-même le 28 novembre 1909 à New York sous la direction de Walter Damrosch. Considéré comme l'une des partitions les plus difficiles du répertoire du fait de l'extrême virtuosité technique exigée du soliste, son exécution en public représente un véritable challenge. Il est construit très classiquement en trois mouvements. Achievé le 23 septembre 1909. Rachmaninov dit avoir écrit cette pièce afin de montrer aussi bien ses talents de compositeur que de pianiste. Le concerto est respecté, craint et réputé pour sa difficulté diabolique. Rachmaninov ne pouvait même pas jouer un rappel après l'exécution de son 3^e concerto ; en témoigne ce commentaire d'un journal américain : *“Monsieur Rachmaninov fut rappelé plusieurs fois par le public qui insista pour qu'il rejoue, mais il leva les mains dans un geste signifiant qu'il était d'accord pour rejouer mais que c'étaient ses doigts qui ne l'étaient pas. Ceci fit beaucoup rire le public qui, à ce moment-là seulement, le laissa partir”*. Josef Hofmann, le pianiste à qui l'œuvre est dédiée et que Rachmaninov considérait comme meilleur que lui, ne tenta jamais de le jouer, disant benoîtement *“ce n'était pas pour lui”*. Le concerto est créé le 28 novembre 1909 au sein de la Société symphonique de New York avec Walter Damrosch au pupitre et Rachmaninov apparaissant comme artiste invité au piano du New Theater. L'œuvre est redonnée quelques semaines plus tard sous la baguette de Gustav Mahler. Le manuscrit est quant à lui pour la première fois publié en 1910 par Gutheil. La création en Angleterre est donnée par Georges Thalben-Ball au Royal College of Music à Londres. À la fin des années 1910, Horowitz connaît toute l'œuvre de Rachmaninov ; il choisit le 3^e Concerto pour son épreuve de sortie de conservatoire. Son interprétation est si spectaculaire que l'audience, juges compris, se lèvent pour l'applaudir. Lorsqu'il débarque aux États-Unis pour sa première tournée de concerts, “Volodia” n'a qu'une idée en tête : rencontrer son

idole. La première entrevue a lieu dans les sous-sols de l'atelier Steinway de New York, le 8 janvier 1928. Horowitz exécute 3^e Concerto qu'il doit jouer à Carnegie Hall quelques jours plus tard : Rachmaninov est médusé par son interprétation, et lui déclare que cette œuvre lui appartient, *“il s'est jeté sur la musique comme un tigre affamé. Avec son audace, sa bravoure, son intensité, il l'a dévorée toute crue.”* Le premier mouvement est axé sur une douce mélodie diatonique et allante qui se développe ensuite en figures pianistiques très complexes. Rachmaninov en parle en ces termes : *“Le premier thème de mon 3^e Concerto n'est emprunté ni au chant populaire, ni à la musique d'église...”* Le second thème s'ouvre sur de légers échanges entre l'orchestre et le piano avant de plonger dans un thème lent en majeur. La première partie du premier thème est traitée une deuxième fois avant que le mouvement ne passe au développement fait d'une sorte de *toccata* en ponctué d'accords “lourds”. L'écriture de cette section prend parfois des airs canoniques, en particulier lors d'un passage en croches au piano dans lequel les deux mains se chevauchent. Le premier thème réapparaît juste avant la coda. L'apogée est atteinte avec la cadence du piano. Rachmaninov en écrivit deux versions. Celle, dite “longue”, la plus musicale, fut choisie par Cliburn. Le second mouvement consiste en un thème et cinq variations qui se suivent sans schéma rigoureux. Il conduit au troisième mouvement sans pause. Rapide et énergique, il reprend plusieurs idées thématiques initiales affirmant ainsi l'unité de l'œuvre et se conclut sur une mélodie triomphante.

Les Cloches Op.35 est un poème pour orchestre symphonique, chœur et solistes, d'après Edgar-Allan Poe, composé par Rachmaninov de 1912 à 1913 et initié alors qu'il se prépare à un voyage en Italie. Avant son départ, il reçoit une lettre lui conseillant la lecture d'un poème d'Edgar-Allan Poe, traduit par Balmont qui – arrangea le texte à sa manière –, pour le mettre en musique. Aussitôt après l'avoir lu, le compositeur eut l'idée d'une symphonie vocale en quatre parties. Ce fut seulement après la mort de Rachmaninov que l'on sut qui était l'auteur de cette lettre

anonyme : Maria Danivola, une violoncelliste qui ne pensait certes pas que sa suggestion serait retenue ! La création eut lieu le 30 novembre 1913 à Saint-Pétersbourg sous la direction du compositeur : *Les Cloches* reçurent un accueil enthousiaste. Lors de la présentation de l'œuvre au concert de la Philharmonique de Moscou le 8 février 1914, Rachmaninov remporta encore un succès inhabituel. On lui offrit à la fin de la séance des couronnes de lauriers, des fleurs et des présents tandis que le public le gratifiait d'une ovation d'une ampleur peu commune. Cette partition n'a reçu depuis que des hourrahs tant elle correspond à un hymne, tant à Dieu qu'à l'homme, alors qu'elle ne s'appuie sur aucune tradition ecclésiastique directe. Quatre types de sons de cloches symbolisent les quatre principales étapes de la vie humaine : grelots associés d'un traîneau lors des cérémonies du baptême, cloches d'or du mariage, tocsin résonnant lors des incendies, enfin le cloches de fer du glas. D'autres allégories parallèles surgissent en toute sagesse immémoriale : *allegro ma non tanto* initial représenterait l'âge de l'enfance, le *Lento*, la jeunesse, le *Presto*, la guerre et le *Lento lugubre*, la mort. La proximité avec la Première Guerre mondiale a donné au *presto* une résonance universelle que le Politburo d'URSS a essayé de gommer... "Cette musique émane d'un émigré, ennemi déclaré de la Russie soviétique" alors que l'ensemble des russes, croyants ou non, admirent et respectent cette cantate 'nationale'. Cette musique émane d'un émigré, ennemi déclaré de la Russie soviétique. Pour les mélomanes francophones, il est vivement conseillé de suivre la traduction que fit Stéphane Mallarmé du texte de Poe – disponible sur le web – mais le texte chanté est à suivre sur la partition.

Harvey Lavan Cliburn, plus connu sous le nom de Van Cliburn, né le 12 juillet 1934 à Shreveport, en Louisiane, et mort le 27 février 2013 à Fort Worth au Texas, fut un pianiste américain, célèbre du jour au lendemain après avoir remporté, en 1958 à Moscou, en pleine Guerre froide, la première édition du Concours international Tchaïkovski.

Sa mère, Rildia Bee O'Bryan, qui a étudié le piano auprès d'Arthur Friedheim, un élève de Franz Liszt, lui donne ses premières. Alors que Cliburn a six ans, sa famille déménage à Kilgore, au Texas. À douze ans, il remporte un concours de piano de cette ville, ce qui lui permet de faire ses débuts sur scène avec le Houston Symphony Orchestra. À dix-sept ans, il entre à la Juilliard School où son professeur de piano, Rosina Lhévinne, le forme dans la grande tradition romantique russe. À vingt ans, Cliburn remporte le prestigieux Levintritt Award, et fait ses débuts au Carnegie Hall. Néanmoins, c'est véritablement son succès à Moscou qui le propulse à la gloire internationale. Organisé en 1958 par l'URSS, le premier Concours international Tchaïkovski était un événement destiné à démontrer la supériorité culturelle de celle-ci pendant la Guerre froide, sur la lancée de la victoire technologique du Spoutnik lancé dans l'espace quelques semaines auparavant. À la finale du concours, la lumineuse virtuosité de Cliburn dans le Concerto n°1 de Tchaïkovski et le n°3 de Rachmaninov lui vaut une standing ovation qui dure bien huit minutes. Cliburn obtint le premier prix, devant un Chinois, Liu Shih-kun. Le magazine TIME fit de l'événement sa couverture et titre "Le Texan qui a conquis la Russie". Le retour de Cliburn aux États-Unis est célébré par une ticker-tape parade à New York, du jamais vu pour un interprète de musique classique. Dès 1962, Cliburn devient le conseiller artistique du Concours international de piano Van-Cliburn, concours créé par des professeurs de Fort Worth (Texas) en l'honneur du prodige texan.

Kirill Petrovitch Kondrachine est né à Moscou le 6 mars 1914 et mort à Amsterdam le 7 mars 1981. Sa famille était formé de musiciens travaillant à Moscou : son grand-père était tromboniste, son père, Piotr Kondrachine, altiste, et sa mère, violoniste, à l'orchestre du Bolchoï. Vers six ou sept ans il commence l'étude du piano, notamment par des cours privés auprès de Konstantin Chedrine ; la musique semble peu l'intéresser. À quatorze ans, il se prend de passion pour l'orchestre en tant qu'instrument, et prend des leçons

privées avec Nikolai Zilaïev (théorie, composition, direction, orchestration), qui vont décider définitivement de sa vocation de chef d'orchestre. En 1931, il entre dans la classe de direction d'orchestre au Conservatoire avec Boris Khaïkine (1904-1978), dans la filiation directe avec Rimski-Korsakov, puis avec Nikolai Malko. Il obtient ses premiers engagements comme chef au Théâtre pour Enfants et au Théâtre d'Opéra Stanislavski de Moscou. Il reçoit également des leçons d'Alexandre Gaouk. En 1934 il est engagé comme chef assistant au Théâtre Nemirovich-Danchenko de Moscou. Il y fera ses débuts dans Les Cloches de Corneville de Planquette. Il poursuit sa formation jusqu'en 1936 (sanctionné par un premier prix), mais obtient avant même son examen un poste au Petit Théâtre Dramatique à Leningrad, en même temps que Boris Khaïkine. Menant au succès aussi la Pompadour d'Andrei Pachtchenko (1939) ou La fanciulla del West de Puccini, ainsi que Kalinki de Mikhaïl Tcheriomoukhine. Il y reste jusqu'en 1943, le siège de la ville arrêtant seul cette activité. En 1938, il avait obtenu un Prix d'Honneur au Grand Concours de Direction d'Orchestre de l'Union pour la virtuosité de sa technique de direction et la qualité de sa pédagogie avec les orchestres, qualités peu ordinaires de ce meneur. À la suite d'un concert triomphal avec l'Orchestre du Bolchoï à Moscou, organisé à l'initiative de Boris Khaïkine et Dimitri Chostakovitch, il est nommé chef permanent dudit Théâtre Bolchoï de Moscou. Il y reste de 1943 à 1956. Chef lyrique, s'impliquant dans la mise en scène et l'animation, il a laissé des réussites qui ont fait date : La Fiancée vendue de Smetana, La force ennemie d'Alexandre Serov, Snegourotchka de Rimski-Korsakov, Rouslan et Ludmila de Glinka, Le Prince Igor de Borodine, Halka de Moniuszko. Au lendemain de la guerre, il commence à accompagner des amis qui deviennent de grands solistes, le pianiste Yakov Zak, le violoniste David Oïstrakh dans les grands concertos pour violon, donne la première du Concerto pour violon de Nikolai Rakov, dédié à Oïstrakh, qu'il enregistre, puis Emil Guilels avec divers orchestres : Symphonique de la Radio de l'URSS, l'Orchestre d'État de Moscou, la Philharmonie de Leningrad... En 1949, il est

appelé, notamment à la demande discrète de David Oïstrakh, puis de Guilels, à faire de nombreuses tournées à l'étranger. Il devient chef itinérant, d'abord en URSS se produisant avec un grand nombre d'orchestres qu'il subjugue (Louhansk, Kharkov, Sverdlovsk, Rostov) et accompagnant de grands solistes, Sviatoslav Richter, Mstislav Rostropovitch, Leonid Kogan. En 1958, il accompagne Van Cliburn dans le Concerto n°1 de Tchaïkovsky. Demandé par ce virtuose à Chicago, il fut le premier chef d'orchestre russe à diriger aux États-Unis depuis la guerre et le premier artiste soviétique à être reçu à la Maison-Blanche par Eisenhower. Suivent de nombreux concerts et enregistrements (RCA). Il donna même à Chicago Madame Butterfly, avec Renata Tebaldi et Giuseppe Di Stefano. Se plaignant du peu de travail et des changements permanents de personnel dans les orchestres soviétiques, il est requis d'office pour créer un orchestre de jeunes avec carte blanche quant aux horaires et méthodes de travail. Il forme et dirige ainsi l'Orchestre philharmonique de Moscou de 1960 jusqu'à son départ de l'URSS en 1975, lui faisant atteindre un niveau international. Il entreprend des tournées dès 1963 en URSS d'abord, puis à l'étranger. Kondrachine était un fantastique pédagogue et meneur d'hommes. Il fut titulaire de la classe d'orchestre au Conservatoire de Moscou et donna leur chance à de nombreux jeunes chefs de l'école russe, Oleg Caetani (fils d'Igor Markevitch), Woldemar Nelsson, Vassili Sinaïski... qui furent ses assistants à Moscou. En décembre 1978, Kondrachine décide de passer à l'Ouest, "afin de jouir entièrement de sa liberté artistique", laissant ses trois fils en URSS. Il est invité par Bernard Haitink à partager avec lui le poste de chef permanent du Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam, peu commune marque d'estime ! Il est dès lors amené à diriger les phalanges les plus célèbres, Philharmonie de Vienne et Symphonique de la Radio Bavaroise, ainsi que l'Orchestre National. Il meurt dans la nuit du 7 au 8 mars 1981 d'une attaque cardiaque, à l'issue d'un concert où il avait donné en dirigeant par cœur, au pied levé, avec l'Orchestre symphonique de la NDR de Hambourg, la première symphonie de G. Mahler.

Sources bibliographiques : Wikipedia

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Kirill Kondrashin - Van Cliburn

Sergei RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

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4 - 7 THE BELLS, cantata for soloists, choir and orchestra, Op.35 **34:36**

(1-3) **Van CLIBURN**, piano / *Klavier*

Symphony of the Air, New York, Kirill KONDRASHIN

(4-7)

Elizaveta SHUMSKAYA, soprano

Mikhail DOVENMANN, tenor

Alexei BOLSHAKOV, baritone

Russian Republic Capella, Alexander Yurlov

Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Kirill KONDRASHIN

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