



ANTON RUBINSTEIN

PIANO CONCERTO Nº4 • CAPRICE RUSSE



ANNA SHELEST • NEEME JÄRVI
THE ORCHESTRA NOW
IN CONCERT

Anton Rubinstein
(1829 - 1894)

Piano Concerto No. 4 in D minor, Op. 70

- 1. *Moderato Assai*11:55
- 2. *Andante*10:28
- 3. *Allegro* 9:55

4. Caprice Russe, Op.102 18:16

Anna Shelest, piano
The Orchestra Now
Neeme Järvi, conductor

Total time 50:34





*It is difficult to overstate the breadth of contribution of **Anton Rubinstein** to the development of the Russian culture in the 19th century. His multifaceted genius can be divided into three areas – Rubinstein the composer, the pianist, and the educator. In this first release in the series of recordings of his works for piano and orchestra, we focus on Rubinstein's role as an educator. The following reflections by Professor Elena Sorokina bring into light the history of education in Russia, the circumstances surrounding Rubinstein's endeavors, and the effect they had on the advancement of the Russian music in the 19th and 20th centuries.*

Elena Sorokina is a pianist, musicologist, Doctor of Fine Arts, President of the All-Russian Association of Piano Duos, Professor of the Moscow Conservatory (1965-2016), Head of the Department of Russian Music History (1992-2011), and Professor Emeritus (2016-present).

On the subject of education, Rubinstein's contribution might not appear out of the ordinary at the first sight — he founded a music conservatory in St. Petersburg – the capital of a large state, which by then had a number of precedents all throughout Europe. Yet considering the circumstances of time and place, one gets awestruck at how Rubinstein managed to accomplish the task. There had been no lack of previous attempts, as the idea of a conservatory in Russia was alive and well, with the greatest effort taking place in the 1840s. The most active was Charles Mayer, who was also Mikhail Glinka's beloved teacher. At the time it seemed as though everything was granted, even The Highest Assent from the Tsar, but the endeavor failed. Shortly after, Mayer left Russia never to return.

One difficulty, musically speaking, was that historically Russia was far behind the European countries. Whereas those had been in a process of

cultural exchange, Russia was isolated until mid 17th century. This relates first of all to the instrumental music tradition, which was almost nonexistent in Russia – the Orthodox Christian country with great vocal traditions. As a result, it largely bypassed the harpsichord period; the small exception was a few instruments gifted by the English Royal Houses. The first instruments penetrated Russia in the last decades of the 18th century, and those were already fortepianos. Russians quickly appreciated the universality of the instrument – one could play solo, duets, accompany in romances, substitute for a small orchestra at dances, etc.. This interest was reflected in the accounting books of the period, which showed fantastic piano sales in late 18th century Russia. There was much desire but little skill, which is why the end of the 18th century saw hordes of European composer-pianists, mostly Germans, pour into Russia. They would come for work and stay for life. It was they who became the founders of the Russian piano school. Mozart himself almost moved to Russia. A letter from the Russian Ambassador in Vienna to Prince Grigory Potemkin stated that “the finest harpsichordist in Europe and an excellent composer Mozart” is negotiating the terms of his work in Russia, and that he is “inclined to accept the offer.” This took place in 1791, shortly before Mozart’s death.

At that time, all music education took place in the form of private lessons, and in order to advance the taste of instrumental music, these European

masters, upon their arrival to Russia, started composing sonatas. Later, when “the next generation of immigrants” to Russia — John Field, Charles Mayer, and others — had understood the spirit of the salon music, they established the genres that up to the Rubinstein era reigned undividedly – lyric and dance miniatures and variations on favorite themes.

Anton Rubinstein himself, just as his brother Nikolai, was largely self-taught. As a child, he studied for three years with Alexander Villoing, who himself was a disciple of John Field, who in turn studied with Muzio Clementi, and later took theory lessons with Siegfried Dehn. By today’s standards, these were short-term private lessons, and it was under these conditions that Rubinstein self-educated.

When the St. Petersburg Conservatory was founded in the 1860s, it was far from resembling what we associate with a conservatory today. It was an open admission institution, which offered the first six years as preparatory, and the next four as major. However, several graduation classes later, in the late 1880s, the whole world started paying attention to the phenomenon of the Russian pianism. The growth intensity was incredible, both in the Conservatory and the musical culture as a whole. What lasted in Europe for centuries, took Russia several decades — from Glinka’s opera *A Life for the Tsar* to Rachmaninoff’s Second Piano

Concerto. This pace had been accelerating since the 17th century and got "compressed" during the "Silver Age." Rubinstein played one of the decisive roles.

When choosing a model, Rubinstein focused primarily on the Prague Conservatory. To this day, just like in Prague, St. Petersburg Conservatory offers degrees not only in performance but also in musicology, which is otherwise earned at a university. In the latter case, a number of music critics and historians today graduate from universities, where few play an instrument, study harmony, polyphony, or orchestration; it is an entirely different principle. The new foundation was laid by Rubinstein.

In addition to the Prague model, he assembled a team of leading European musicians, including Henryk Wieniawski. He created strict protocols with the belief that every aspect of the faculty actions must have an educational significance, both for the public and the conservatory itself. None of the faculty members, regardless of their level of recognition, were allowed to concertize extensively. Their concert programs had to be approved by the administration. It was a policy of acculturation. Since he sought to create a comprehensive education system, Rubinstein hired professors in theory, composition, counterpoint, fugue, and orchestration, among others. The approach was promising since the first graduates had to get the most solid foundation they would

then transmit to future generations. From such a comprehensive education standpoint, the Conservatory was unique.

Because everything had been happening so quickly, it brought some of the “diseases” that develop during rapid growth — the “ours and theirs” syndrome, which would become a source of continuous heated debates between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles and lead to the confrontations between Rubinstein and the members of the “Mighty Handful.” Sergei Taneyev proclaimed in the 1880s, when Russia had already seen Mussorgsky’s *Khovanshchina* and song cycles as well as a number of Tchaikovsky’s masterpieces, that “the forms of Western European music are alien to us, and we do not have our own!” 1860s were the most combative. On the fine arts side “The Itinerants” or “Peredvizhniki” and on the music side the “Mighty Handful” promoted their ideas of national populism. In music, there was no counterbalance to this until Rubinstein, who, in the context of “ours and theirs”, believed that Russian culture should become part of the European and it was necessary to create a Russian school in connection with the mastery of all European achievements — a bouquet of schools. This part alone got him grief at home. Besides, Rubinstein competed with the “Mighty Handful” for creating of the foundation of music education. At that time, Mily Balakirev founded his “Free School of Music”, but it ultimately “drowned” due to lack of funds and formal education base. This “stone of

vexation” reinforced the opposition toward Rubinstein, who did manage to open and succeed at a new school. Even long after the founding, the opposition was so strong that Rubinstein had to leave his own Conservatory twice.

According to the correspondence of the "Mighty Handful" in the 1860s and 70s, their priorities in music, as well as regard for where great music begins, start with the middle (not early) period of Beethoven; Schumann, Liszt, and Berlioz are among their ideals. The celebrated critic Vladimir Stasov stated in a letter that he was overjoyed with the fact that he managed to substitute in a concert of the Russian Musical Society "hopelessly outdated symphonies of Mozart and Haydn with the extremely interesting works by Berlioz.” Rubinstein, however, greatly expanded the musical time frame. For instance, the first composition he staged was Gluck's opera *Orpheus and Eurydice*.

Rubinstein famously said about himself: “Russians call me German, Germans call me Russian, Jews call me a Christian, Christians a Jew. Pianists call me a composer, composers call me a pianist. The classicists think me a futurist, and the futurists call me a reactionary. My conclusion is that I am neither fish nor fowl—a pitiful individual.”

There were certainly people who helped Rubinstein, such the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna (another thing that angered the “Mighty”). Many in the Imperial Family were of German ancestry, and they understood full well the value of his cause. It also helped that Rubinstein was the finest pianist of the day, so the doors were opened first of all to Rubinstein the pianist. His popularity was so great that the only competitive figure became Tchaikovsky later in the 1880s. Rubinstein’s persona had a magnitude beyond any comparison at the time.

The two works on this CD again and again prove the breadth of views of Anton Grigorievich Rubinstein. His Westernism was by no means as militant and aggressive as Rusophilism of the “Handfuls.” It is not even Westernism, but in the best sense, the position of the cosmopolitan — to include Russian culture, in particular Russian music, in the common family of European cultures, without denying its identity. This is the essence of Rubinstein's position, which these two works best prove. *Caprice Russe* is written in the absolute Glinka tradition: there are two themes as in the “*Kamarinskaya*” — the lingering one and the dancing one; there are similar methods of presentation, imitation of folk instruments, re-coloring of themes, and their contrapuntal connections. Although it is the Glinka tradition, the concerto genre imposes on Rubinstein new demands. And as for the five Concertos, these are a pioneering works. The First Concerto was written in 1850, a quarter

century before the Tchaikovsky First. Later, many others, including Arensky, Rachmaninov, Catoire, Medtner, Lyapunov, Glazunov, and Tcherepnin followed suit. This was a completely new path! And this unification, preached by Rubinstein — the Russian-European unity — to receive the best without denying one's own — was confirmed historically with the development of Russian culture. Looking at the great composers of the 20th century Russia, nothing would impede Prokofiev or Shostakovich, or especially Stravinsky, in expressing their national originality. And it was precisely this that Rubinstein was one of the first, if not the first to proclaim.

Elena Sorokina

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transcribed and translated from Russian by Dmitri Shelest

The head of a musical dynasty, **Neeme Järvi** is one of today's most highly respected maestros. A prolific recording artist, he has amassed a discography of nearly 500 recordings.

Over his long and highly successful career he has worked with the most prestigious orchestras including the Berliner Philharmoniker, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and Wiener Symphoniker, as well as the major orchestras in the USA including the New York and Los Angeles philharmonics. He also continues to have regular relationships with the NHK, Shanghai and Singapore symphony orchestras.

Neeme Järvi has held positions with orchestras across the world. He is currently Artistic Director of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and holds the title of Music Director Emeritus with both the Residentie Orkest and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He is also Principal Conductor Emeritus of the Gothenburg Symphony, Conductor Laureate of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Head of Conducting/Artistic Advisor of the Gstaad Conducting Academy. Until summer 2015 he was Artistic and Music Director of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and ended his tenure with a European tour.

Having recorded with Chandos for over thirty years, Neeme Järvi's most recent disc is '*A Festival of Fucík*' with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Other recent releases include Tchaikovsky's Complete Ballets with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, symphonies and orchestral music by Joachim Raff and music by Massenet, Chabrier, Saint-Saëns, Atterberg, Suchon and Xaver Scharwenka.

Highlights of his extensive discography include critically acclaimed complete orchestral cycles of Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Richard Strauss, Mahler, Dvořák, Glazunov, Grieg, Sibelius, Nielsen and Brahms. Neeme Järvi has also championed less widely known composers such as Wilhelm Stenhammar, Hugo Alfvén and Niels Gade, Franz Berwald, Johann Svendsen and Johan Halvorsen of Norway and composers from his native Estonia including Rudolf Tobias, Artur Kapp, Eduard Tubin and Arvo Pärt. Throughout his career he has also recorded with Deutsche Grammophon, BIS and EMI.

Neeme Järvi has been honoured with many international awards and accolades. From his native country these include an honorary doctorate from the Music Academy of Estonia in Tallinn and the Order of the National Coat of Arms from the President of the Republic of Estonia, Mr. Lennart Meri. The Mayor of Tallinn presented Järvi with the city's first-ever ceremonial sash and coat of arms insignia, and he has been named one

of the 'Estonians of the Century.' Neeme Järvi holds an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters from Detroit's Wayne State University and the University of Michigan, as well as honorary doctorates from the University of Aberdeen and the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. He has also received the Commander of the North Star Order from King Karl XVI Gustaf of Sweden.

Hailed by The New York Times as a pianist of "a fiery sensibility and warm touch", **Anna Shelest** is an international award-winning pianist who has thrilled the audiences throughout the world. Born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, Shelest began her piano studies at the age of six, and at the age of eleven she performed at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

An "effective collaborator" (The New York Times), Shelest made her orchestral debut at the age of twelve with the Kharkiv Symphony Orchestra, playing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1. Since then she has been a soloist with some of the world's most renowned orchestras such as Montreal Symphony Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Janacek Philharmonic, and Netherlands

Symphony Orchestra. Shelest has performed on some of the world's greatest stages such as Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall in New York City, The Kennedy Center in Washington DC, Vienna's Konzerthaus, Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory and Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. In June 2011 she was the first to present a recital at the newly rebuilt 7 World Trade Center in New York City.

Shelest's repertoire ranges from the Baroque to today's contemporary composers. Streaming from her special affinity toward Russian piano repertoire, she released her first solo CD featuring Rachmaninoff Etudes-tableaux op. 39 and Moments Musicaux op. 16. Her other discography includes Mussorgsky *Pictures at an Exhibition* as well as works by Tchaikovsky and Glinka; "*Spirit and Romance*" featuring 19th century Romantic works; "*TUTTI: orchestral arrangements for piano four hands*" with Dmitri Shelest; Prokofiev Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 with Janáček Philharmonic; and "*Ukrainian Rhapsody*" featuring music by Ukrainian composers for piano solo and four hands.

Having received her Masters Degree at The Juilliard School in the class of Jerome Lowenthal, Anna Shelest currently resides in New York City with her husband and two sons.

The Orchestra Now (TŌN) is a group of vibrant young musicians from across the globe who are making orchestral music relevant to 21st-century audiences. They are lifting the curtain on the musicians' experience and sharing their unique personal insights in a welcoming environment. Hand-picked from the world's leading conservatories—including The Juilliard School, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Royal Conservatory of Brussels, and the Curtis Institute of Music—the members of TŌN are not only thrilling audiences with their critically acclaimed performances, but also enlightening curious minds by giving on-stage introductions and demonstrations, writing concert notes from the musicians' perspective, and having one-on-one discussions with patrons during intermissions.

Conductor, educator, and music historian Leon Botstein founded TŌN in 2015 as a master's degree program at Bard College, where he also serves as president. The orchestra is in residence at Bard's Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, performing multiple concerts there each season as well as taking part in the annual Bard Music Festival. They also perform regularly at the finest venues in New York, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and others across NYC and beyond. The orchestra has performed with many distinguished conductors, including Fabio Luisi, Neeme Järvi, Gerard Schwarz, and JoAnn Falletta.

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