

Briefly regarding the works on this recording, the Piano Concerto No. 3 dates from the year 1909 and has the unsavory reputation of being one of the most devilishly difficult works to have entered the popular concerto repertoire. In fact, the pianist Gary Graffman is reported to have commented that he wished he had learned this work as a student, "when he was still too young to know fear". Rachmaninov completed the concerto in 1909, almost parallel to the completion of his symphonic poem, "The Isle of the Dead". The premiere was given in New York with the composer as soloist and the New York Symphony Society under the baton of Walter Damrosch. Shortly thereafter, it received a second performance, again with the composer as soloist, but under the baton of Gustav Mahler. Years later, thanks to the interest Vladimir Horowitz showed in this piece, did it achieve its status as one of the most popular piano concertos of the 20th century.

Similarly the Suite No. 1 or "Fantaisie-Tableaux" for two pianos is a delightful but very early work that seems to possess literary allusions, although not of a programmatic nature. The work was penned in 1893 and performed in Moscow by Rachmaninov in that year together with Pavel Pabst. The Suite No. 1 is dedicated to Tchaikovsky. Unusual in the history of this work is that it belongs to the few pieces in his repertoire that were never orchestrated, either by the composer or by any of his colleagues. The "Symphonic Dances", for example, received both orchestral and two-piano versions at the hand of the composer and the "Suite No. 1" contains all the elements that might have made of it a popular orchestral work. That it remains as a piece for two pianos alone is, perhaps, the reason why it is not performed as often as its quality and musical inventiveness would deserve.

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In the texts accompanying the previous volumes of the Rachmaninov piano concertos with Sequeira Costa there has been periodic mention of the importance of Rachmaninov's mental state in the development of his music. Following the abortive premiere of his first symphony under Glazunov in 1897, Rachmaninov fell into a deep depression. This was a crisis of enormous proportions for the composer, which resulted in an extended period of compositional burn-out that lasted for two years. In short, the failure of his first symphonic foray at the hands of the drunken Glazunov drove Rachmaninov to a nervous breakdown at the sensitive age of 23.

It is a tribute to the then growing acceptance of psychotherapy that Rachmaninov's family sought the help of the Russian physician and psychiatrist, Dr. Nicolai Dahl. Dahl treated the composer with a therapeutic combination of psychotherapy and hypnotherapy and, himself an accomplished amateur musician, restored to the composer his sense of self-esteem managing to break through the creative block that had brought Rachmaninov to a point of creative stagnation. The music resulting from these months of intensive therapy under Dahl has proved to be an astounding example of the value of sensitive therapeutic measures in the treatment of such creative block. Rachmaninov, shortly after the completion of his sessions with Dr. Dahl, was to set to paper the ever-popular Piano Concerto No. 2, which, as a measure of his gratitude, he also dedicated to the physician.

However, Rachmaninov is not the only important composer to have overcome personal and professional difficulties through psychotherapy. There is the famous story of Gustav Mahler's long walks through Leiden, in Holland, together with Sigmund Freud and the proposed "restoration" of Mahler's "libido" through these therapeutic forays. In Rachmaninov's case, as was reported by the singer Feodor Chaliapin, the disaster following the chaos created by Glazunov had driven him not only into depression but one accompanied by extended periods of heavy drinking. What made this worse for Rachmaninov was Chaliapin's attempt to restore his self-confidence by taking him to see the immortal literary icon, Leo Tolstoy, for whom they performed a recital. Tolstoy managed to make matters significantly worse for the composer by commenting, following every work, on how useless was this music hissing and screaming: "I must tell you how much I dislike all of this."

However, departing from this negative note, there is a prevalent theory first uttered in 2003, that the success achieved by Dr. Dahl in Moscow had consequences which reached much further than simply the composition of the 2nd piano concerto. If we examine the works written in the years prior to this trauma and compare them with those written subsequent to this period of intensive therapy, we see the striking pattern of development in Rachmaninov that follows exactly the hypnotic suggestions instilled in him by Dahl, namely that, when he was ready to do so, Rachmaninov concentrate on writing music the critics might enjoy. It was Dahl who proposed the idea of a quasi-popular piano concerto but the suspicion looms large that these posthypnotic suggestions actually had far-ranging consequences. What Rachmaninov's music does that is so often bypassed by other, some even better composers, is to almost circumvent the brain and appeal directly to the instincts of the heart. Notable examples of this are the 2nd symphony, the Paganini Variations, and many other works which have not only entered the standard repertoire but have also offered the "stuff" for popular ballads.

This same influence on the development of musical creativity was a tangible issue in Sigmund Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams" and Max Graf, a member of Freud's early circle and, himself, music critic and historian sought to investigate the psychological processes of composing music, a project he never successfully completed. Others have explored this phenomenon as well, among them the music historian Leo Treitler who equates musical resonance with the composer's collective experience and the psychologist, Peter Ostwald, who has attempted to distill the role of Robert Schumann's painful childhood memories in his works.

What is clear is that the role played by psychotherapy and hypnotherapy in the case of Rachmaninov resulted not in a cure of his depression but in a directing of that depression towards a new form of popular creativity. This is, in fact, the impetus given to non-traditional therapeutic measures such as the late Dr. Klaus Lange's *Innere Reise* or his attempt to bring the patient into dialogue with his deepest emotions instead of suppressing them by means of medication. This seems to be exactly the process followed by Dr. Dahl in January, February and March of 1900, which opened new horizons to Rachmaninov and started the process that was to give to the world some of the most beloved piano music ever written.