

Southwell u3a Music Lovers Group – 22 July 2020 - Russian

YouTube links are provided for each item or the playlist for all the pieces is at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4qDooMy_Og&list=PLQHiO9b3DnLuhNjqHtnEblc3bEsKibRmF

Or Search YouTube for John Tebbs and find my channel and this programme is under the Playlists tab as Southwell u3a Music 200722 along with other u-3a Music Lovers programmes from January 2020. This time I have referenced some interesting programme notes from the internet.

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 -1943) Symphony No 2 in E Minor Op 27 (1906-07)

Antonio Pappano at Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden

1:01:53

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4qDooMy_Og

It is difficult to believe that I have not played this piece before. Maybe it is because it is rather long, but we are not so constrained during lockdown. Here it is played in its complete form but if you just want to hear the sumptuous Adagio it starts at 30:27

I Largo - Allegro moderato 19:00 II. Allegro molto 10:25 30:27

III. Adagio 14:28 IV. Allegro vivace 17:00

At the time his Symphony No. 2 was composed, Rachmaninoff had had two successful seasons as the conductor of the Imperial Opera at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. He considered himself first and foremost a composer and felt that the performance schedule was detracting from his time to compose.

He then moved with his wife and infant daughter to Dresden, Germany, to spend more time composing and to also escape the political tumult that would put Russia on the path to revolution. The family remained in Dresden for three years, spending summers at Rachmaninoff's in-law's estate of Ivanovka. It was during this time that Rachmaninoff wrote not only his Second Symphony, but also the tone poem *Isle of the Dead*.

Rachmaninoff was not altogether convinced that he was a gifted symphonist. At its 1897 premiere, his Symphony No. 1 (conducted by Alexander Glazunov) was considered an utter disaster; criticism of it was so harsh that it sent the young composer into a bout of depression. Even after the success of his Piano Concerto No. 2 (which won the Glinka Award and 500 roubles in 1904), Rachmaninoff still lacked confidence in his writing. He was very unhappy with the first draft of his Second Symphony but after months of revision he finished the work and conducted the premiere in 1908 to great applause. The work earned him another Glinka Award ten months later. The triumph restored Rachmaninoff's sense of self-worth as a symphonist.

Because of its formidable length, Symphony No. 2 has been the subject of many revisions, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, which reduced the piece from nearly an hour to as little as 35 minutes. Before 1970 the piece was usually performed in one of its revised, shorter, versions. Since then orchestras have used the complete version almost exclusively, although sometimes with the omission of a repeat in the first movement.

More complete programme notes by New York Philharmonic can be found at.

<https://nyphil.org/~media/pdfs/program-notes/1819/Rachmaninof-Symphony-No-2.pdf>

Dimitri Shostakovich (1906 -1975) String Quartet in C Minor Op 110 20:50
Quatetto di Roma
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vl6S_o1ISMg

Dimitri Shostakovich (1906 -1975) Chamber Symphony in C Minor Op 110a 23:39
Amsterdam Symfonietta – Music Director Candida Thompson
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKfLYXWZTM4&t=378s>

Programme Notes for String Quartet No 8 in C Minor Op 110 which was also composed as a Chamber Orchestra piece Op 110a can be found at
https://cso.org/uploadedFiles/1_Tickets_and_Events/Program_Notes/ProgramNotes_Shostakovich_ChamberSymphony.pdf

Shostakovich said the quartet was inspired by the sight of Dresden—"He walked among the ruins of Dresden, shaken by the scenes of devastation," Arnshtam remembered—and that he decided to dedicate the score to "the memory of the victims of fascism and war," a line that ran atop the published score. But his letter to Glikman tells another side of the story:

I have been thinking that when I die, it is hardly likely that anybody will ever write a work dedicated to my memory. So, I have decided to write one myself. The dedication could be printed on the cover: "Dedicated to the memory of the composer of this quartet."

The day of Shostakovich's funeral, in August 1975, fifteen years after that summer, the Eighth String Quartet was performed to honour the memory of the composer, as Shostakovich himself had prophesied. "It was his farewell to life," Lebedinsky said later.

P. Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893) Suite from the ballet "Swan Lake" 29.34
Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZb8VTbMZr8&t=806s>

Swan Lake needs no introduction but sometimes it is good to hear and watch the orchestra and marvel at the orchestration and skill of the players. This suite version by the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra gives a clear rendition.

If you want to see the whole ballet, which I watched the other night then this can be found on YouTube. After sombre Shostakovich it is a real treat.