

Meridian

THE RUSSIAN DOUBLE BASS
Leon Bosch - Double Bass, Sung-Suk Kang - Piano

CDE 84564

Meridian

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The Russian Double Bass

Leon Bosch - Double Bass Sung-Suk Kang - Piano

Anton Grigor'yevich Rubinstein (1829 - 1894)

- [1] Melodie 2:57
arr. Popper edited Leon Bosch

Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

- [2] Prelude Op.23 No 10 3:35
arr. Allan Stephenson

Anton Grigor'yevich Rubinstein (1829 - 1894)

- [3] Romance 2:57
arr. Leon Bosch

Sergei Koussevitzky (1874 - 1951)

- [4] Andante Op. 1 No.1 3:40
[5] Valse Miniature Op.1 No.2 2:58
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Rheinhold Glière (1875-1956)

- [8] Intermezzo, Op.9 No.1 3:39
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Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

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- [15] Vocalise Op.34 No. 14 6:41

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 -1975)

- [16] Romance from 'The Gadfly' 2:46
arr. Leon Bosch

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The Russian Double Bass

Gliere
Koussevitzky
Rachmaninoff
Shostakovich
Rubinstein
Glinka

Leon Bosch - Double Bass
Sung-Suk Kang - Piano



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Leon Bosch Double Bass

Leon Bosch has an honoured place among the select group of virtuoso double bass players worldwide. Concerto engagements in many parts of the world with the likes of conductors Pinchas Zukerman, Nicolas Kraemer, Nicolae Moldoveanu and Guido Johannes Rumstadt have been matched by collaborations with a long line of leading chamber music groups - among them the Lindsay, Belcea and Brodsky string quartets, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble, the Moscow Virtuosi and the Zukerman Chamber Players. Partnerships with solo performers have embraced such pianists as Peter Donohoe, Vladimir Ovchinnikov, Michael Rudy and Maria João Pires.

Leon Bosch has a growing discography of concerto and recital recordings. These include two albums devoted to the music of the great Giovanni Bottesini and two featuring music by British composers. With more in the pipeline including Domenico Dragonetti, and the complete works for solo double bass by Dittersdorf, Menotti's concerto and recordings of a string of neglected concertos for the instrument.

Andrew Green

Devoted to the double-bass

I have no doubt that the double bass and I were made for each other - we're completely inseparable and the music we make together brings me unbridled joy! It has always been my mission in life to defend the cause of the underdog and my passion for the double bass, the 'Cinderella' of instruments, will never die.

Every note I play on the instrument embraces my life experiences, both in Europe and in my South African homeland. I've known love and comradeship, but also witnessed the epitome of hatred. I've felt both shining optimism and deep despair. I've benefited from the pleasures of civilised society, but also seen the destructive impact of poverty and ignorance. I've been privileged to stand side by side with people who've lost their lives in the defence of their principles.

It's difficult to explain exactly how life's experiences distil into your music-making, but they most certainly do. First you have to face the fact that playing well is 98% perspiration - all the hard work that's done in private. But then, when the day of the performance arrives, you're looking to access that other, magical 2%, which is all about freedom and spontaneity - improvisation, almost. And what you have to draw on is the story of your life - in feelings, emotions and colours.

What you hope is that thereby you link to the mind of the composer. No phrase, or even a single note, should be allowed to pass by perfunctorily ...it's the performer's solemn duty to seek to understand what the composer intended and then to express that unique personal understanding as if one's very life depended upon it.

What is the point otherwise?

When I play the bass at least, I am a totally free human spirit.'

Leon Bosch



It is no coincidence that this CD of Russian solo double bass music reveals an impressive vocal element. Within Leon Bosch's selection of compositions many are song influenced - there are Chanson, Melodie, Vocalise and also two arias transcribed for double bass, one by Shostakovich and by no means least a transcription of Susanin's Aria by Glinka. Leon is drawn to explore and enjoy the deep, richly vocal quality of the double bass as solo instrument, and there is no better opportunity than within Glinka's aria.

This aria comes from Glinka's opera 'The Life of the Tsar', also called "Ivan Susanin", which was acknowledged to be the first truly Russian Opera. At the première in Moscow, November 1836 there was great excitement. Glinka's contemporary, philosopher and music lover Prince Odoyevsky on hearing the first performance, wrote "Initiated into all the secrets of Italian singing and German harmony, the composer has penetrated deep into the character of **Russian melody**.....Rich in his own talent, he has demonstrated..... that Russian melody, naturally by turns melancholy, happy and daring, can also be elevated to the realms of tragedy."

The sonorous quality of solo bowed double bass is naturally suited to the expression of melancholy, and here there is a wealth of melodic material which not only explores melancholy but happiness, daring and the tragic also. There is a strong connection which links solo double-bass playing in Russia and the USSR to singing, an instrumental expression which simulates the human voice. Although Russia is known for a tradition of deep bass singing, a 'basso profundo', in fact operatic bass roles like Susanin do not descend as low, and perfectly fit the solo range of the double bass, a 'basso cantante' style. Many of the bass singers in Russia were more 'basso cantante' than 'basso profundo', a supreme example being Chaliapin who had a beautiful, lyrical and high bass voice.

The rich heritage of notable bass players in Russia and the USSR has always drawn on professionals who played in theatre orchestras, from its history's origins with professional Italian players at Court Theatres which then became public funded Theatres, and latterly state funded institutions. At the end of 1850's and beginning of the 60's the Russian Musical Society was founded, and with it the first conservatoire and a Free School of Music in St. Petersburg. Opera had been a much more important art form compared to instrumental music, but the ideal of the symphony flowered in the second half of the century and with it a strong lineage of double bass pedagogy in the newly formed conservatoires.

Here the solo double bass music represents 'salon' music and is a celebration of the importance of melody to Russian solo double bass playing. To the intense expression of melancholy and tragedy heard in the music of both Glinka and Shostakovich is added an extrovert and romantic approach - a touch of Italian opera flowers within this choice of solo Russian double bass pieces.

The repertoire spans a historical period of enormous political changes and not least compositions from a period of extreme uncertainty when artists such as Rachmaninov, Glière, and Koussevitzky lived. Such was the outlook of the time that their direct contemporary and philosopher Beryaev wrote "Never before were Russians so acutely aware of the illimitable unknown surrounding human life" "of the mystery and the terrifying abyss with which man is faced" (Dream and Reality). Russians lived in "a state of expectancy, - a revelation as well as a revolution".

The melodies chosen here have an ability to portray emotions through the music and surpass uncertainty, to describe the 'thing of beauty', from behind closed doors, in the society of the Salon. Whilst it could be said that 'mystery' and searching concerned the music of Skriabin, and Stravinsky developed elements of primitive Russian folklore, this 'salon' music captures



a Russian landscape of pure melody. By searching the soul in this manner, music provides a welcome outlet for the fear of the unknown and in its way reaches out to large public audiences in Russia and beyond.

The double bass in Russia

The double bass as a solo melodic instrument has enjoyed a rich heritage in Russia and the USSR and there is plenty of evidence to show for it. However the true depth and breadth of quality of its players has been obscured in modern times by Russia's political isolation from Western Europe and the USA. Simply put, if we do not know about it then it doesn't exist. How valuable it is to be able to re-visit Russia and recognise the level of artistry and craft within the history of solo bass playing.

One can see again how developing Russian cultural identity throughout the 19th century was often an explosive battle between preserving Russian identity and acknowledging existing Western culture. As Glinka discovered his compositional voice through various sources, Russian, Italian and Germanic, so too the identity of double bass playing in Russia contains a long history of Italian and Slavic influence.

The earliest double bass players in Russia were Italian musicians invited to be professional players in new Aristocratic Theatre Orchestras from the late 18th century onwards, named soloists such as father Antonio Dall'Occa, his son Antonio, and Giovanni Ferrero being highly respected. Their influence established a strong tradition of double bass pedagogy ever since the first music conservatoires in St. Petersburg and Moscow were founded. Both father Dall'Occa and Ferrero taught at the St. Petersburg music conservatoire, which Anton Rubinstein, famous pianist and composer of well-loved 'Melody' featured here, established in 1861.

Not many years after the founding of the Moscow conservatoire in 1866, a Czech bass player Josef

Rambousek introduced the Slavic school of playing to Russia. Rambousek was a student of Hrabé in Prague, Hrabé also taught Simandl, and from this lineage came Sergei Koussevitzky whose teacher was Rambousek in the late 1880's.

Koussevitzky succeeded Rambousek, teaching at the Moscow Conservatoire after his death in 1901, while the influential Vassily Sgdanov had taken over from his teacher, Ferrero. The strength of quality players in Russia can be traced to the strength of the pedagogy. Koussevitzky's contemporary Josef Gertovich was also influential and unlike Koussevitzky he published studies and his own bass method, whereas Koussevitzky composed the popular short pieces recorded here but made no extra contribution to pedagogy by way of a written method to expand the technique of bass playing. Gertovich and Koussevitzky both performed transcriptions from other instrumental repertoire and this is a feature of Russian bass playing which continues into the present. These transcriptions were not just obscure, forgotten pieces but ambitious replicas of well-known compositions, for instance Mozart's Bassoon concerto, Bruch's Kol Nidrei, Mozart Violin Sonatas and Baroque sonatas by Handel and Bach.

By the time of the first solo double bass recordings made by Koussevitzky in Berlin 1928-9, the strong features which are valued in Russian bass playing were already present. If one is lucky enough to be able to hear more recent players' recordings, the listener will be impressed by similarly virtuosic solo bass playing with a clear, resonant sound, a beauty of sound which is conveyed through strong articulation and clean intonation. Recent players who capture this include Rodion Azarkhin, Leopold Andreev, Rusteem Gabdullin, Ivan Kotov and Rinat Ibragimov. Although Andreev died tragically young, he shared the Bolshoi Theatre position with Ibragimov who gives a very good description of the style and level of training which has produced many fine players.



Ibragimov, who now plays as principal bass in the London Symphony Orchestra (having left Russia in 1990's after teaching at the Moscow Conservatoire), explains that 'sound' is considered to be everything, and is achieved by learning to play with a big sound through solo study exclusively. Not only are Simand studies learnt (from the method of 1874) but also studies from the first Russian bass methods by Meetchislav Domashevich and Alexander Milushkin. These appeared around the same time as Koussevitzky and Gertovich began their playing careers. It was expected that two of these challenging studies would be learnt and memorised each term, and also 3 octave scales played with very many articulations, including a demanding 16 notes to a bow! It has now become the tradition that the conservatoire in St. Petersburg is associated with German style bowing and Moscow with French, predominantly, but there is also mention that older players in the Bolshoi Theatre orchestra play with the thumb placed under the frog in the old-Italian style of bowing.

With the huge expansion of state-funded education, specialist music colleges were initiated throughout the Federal State of USSR, and music easily became a competitive sport like gymnastics. Rodion Azarkhin's second solo bass album includes his extraordinary feat of playing a Bach solo violin chaconne. This feat could be likened to an 'extreme sport'! Especially when one discovers that the virtuosic Azarkhin placed a silver spoon which held mercury at one end of his bow. Performance style was not helped by a normal standard of strings lying high off the fingerboard so the effort required for playing meant that there could be a lack of subtlety and variety of effect. It would not be unfair to say that the meaning in music was sacrificed for physical technique however it is still remarkable that there have been so many solo Russian players playing with strong articulation and a resonant sound.

The grit and determination of solo double bass players in Russia to play repertoire from other instruments certainly has its own long tradition. However there is still a longer history in Russian Opera of the 'hero' being represented by a bass singer, which perhaps helps to explain why this album of Russian solo double bass repertoire is so wholly appropriate.

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Why Record a Disc of Russian Music?

"It is the raw emotional power of music which has exercised a vice-like grip over me ever since I first began to understand the meaning of a phrase. Since then I have instinctively been drawn to music which expresses the kind of tumultuous social history and the associated psychological condition which has so characterised my own personal experience.

South Africa, where I grew up, and Russia may well occupy different hemispheres of our globe but through their respective turbulent histories they share an understanding of the concept of tragedy, coupled with the burning expectation of a brighter and more glorious future which can ultimately only be achieved through principled self-sacrifice. Russian music encapsulates, for me, a veritable roller-coaster of emotions. It can move from the profoundly melancholic to almost unrestrained euphoria, albeit with a sardonic twist, and furthermore has the unerring ability to reach into the deepest, darkest and most turbulent depths of the human psyche.

My first encounter with Russian music was as a young cello student at the University of Cape Town, when I attempted to learn and perform Shostakovich's Cello Sonata, Op.40. Although I was admittedly somewhat technically deficient at the time, the music, especially the second movement, nevertheless had a powerful and permanent effect upon me and once I had become a bass player I felt impelled to learn all the original Russian repertoire for double bass which I could lay



my hands on. Dabbling with transcriptions has had to wait until now.

A few years ago after a performance I gave in Johannesburg, South Africa, of Koussevitzky's Concerto for Double Bass and Orchestra, a very distinguished Russian gentleman by the name of Vladimir Golligorsky approached me, extended his hand and said..... "Congratulations Mr Bosch..... Do you know, I had always thought that it was only us Russians who could play Russian music, but tonight I had to wipe away my tears."

An extremely generous compliment of such magnitude naturally left me somewhat bewildered but ultimately convinced me that I could be justified in recording these pieces which have mesmerised me for so long".

Leon Bosch



Rheinhold Glière (1875-1956)

Intermezzo, Op.9 No.1

Tarantella Op 9 No.2

Prelude Op 32 No.1

Scherzo op 32 No. 2

Almost a century after Glière composed these four individual concert pieces for the double bass and piano they still remain a popular and important part of double bass solo repertoire. Glière has created expansive melodic lines within these pieces, particularly the Prelude and Intermezzo, and they contain a beautiful quality of instrumental expression. Glière trained not only as a composer but also as a violinist, once learning with Sevcík in his home town of Kiev and this solo music for double bass contains the finesse and imagination of a string player.

Glière and Koussevitzky were students together at the Moscow Conservatoire, and at the beginning of their musical lives developed close links. Early in his life Glière composed a number of chamber pieces, including these solo bass works and the Intermezzo is dedicated to Koussevitzky. During this time Glière helped Koussevitzky with the orchestration of his Double Bass Concerto in F sharp minor, first performed in 1905. Three years later Koussevitzky made his conducting debut appearing with the Berlin Philharmonic in a programme of Russian music which included Rachmaninov's C minor piano concerto, the composer as soloist, Glière's Symphony in C minor and a piece by Glière's teacher, Taneyev.

Whereas Koussevitzky increasingly looked to Europe and the USA to continue his career, Glière remained in Russia throughout his life. He taught composition at the Moscow Conservatoire between 1920-41 and became strongly involved with the theatre, both in Opera and particularly Ballet music, developing influence over areas to the East of Russia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. The solo double bass pieces reveal Glière's style of composition which respects 19th century Russian composition, and within them one can hear moments of ballet music reminiscent of Tchaikovsky.

Sergei Koussevitzky (1874–1951)

Andante Op. 1 No.1

Valse Miniature Op.1 No.2

Chanson Triste Op.2

Humoresque Op.4

At the time Koussevitzky composed and performed these pieces he had been a member of the Imperial Bol'shoi Theatre Orchestra in Moscow for several years, having joined on October 1st 1894. It can be difficult to identify hearsay in the detail of Koussevitzky's life. For example, two differing

versions of his appointment to the orchestra appear, one suggesting that he started at the last stand of the double bass section and within two years moved up to a number three position, another from a 'Strad' interview of 1908 states that he was appointed to the post of leader of the basses whilst still a student. Koussevitzky cut quite a Romantic hero, a danger of this is that maybe this impression overshadows the quality of other bass playing in Russia at the time.

He was appointed at the age of 27 to succeed his teacher Rambousek at the Moscow Conservatoire and the four pieces here were composed soon after he commenced, a similar time to the Concerto in F sharp minor. Later Koussevitzky composed two short pieces for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, a Passacaglia on a Russian Theme (1934) and a transcription for orchestra of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C major. Of course Koussevitzky is far better remembered as a conductor rather than composer. He was also a publisher and commissioned many new compositions by composers from his native Russia, his adopted USA and elsewhere, including '*Prometheus*' by Scriabin, Barber's 'Violin Concerto' and Britten's '*Peter Grimes*'.

Koussevitzky's performance of his solo bass pieces were recorded alongside Symphonic movements performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1928-29. A critical appraisal of Koussevitzky appears in Moses Smith's biography from 1947 in which many musicians who knew Koussevitzky have been interviewed. The following description of Koussevitzky's work on the double bass gives an insight into the dedication and determination surely needed to make the transition to being a conductor, fellow student cellist Vladimir Dubinsky remembered"He was a lovely chap - amiable and congenial, he was also ambitious and determined in his decisions, but modest about his ability as a musician.....I used to love practicing together. We would start with scales, go over to 'cello studies and wind up with concertos.

Koussevitzky would play along keeping pace with the 'cello. He possessed everything that makes a great artist - tone, technical equipment, temperament, repose, a keen sense of rhythm and fine conception."

As well as playing in the Bol'shoi Theatre Koussevitzky performed solos at salons in Moscow. This included the mansion of wealthy tea merchant Konstantin Ushkov where he met his second wife Natalya Konstantina Ushkova, a tea heiress also schooled in arts and languages. With their marriage in 1905 Koussevitzky became one of the last entrepreneurs in Russia as she supported his publishing and conducting enterprises. In 1903 Koussevitzky made his first appearance outside Russia giving a double bass recital in Berlin, as a soloist he was inclined to adapt existing pieces. Unfortunately no commission was to increase solo double bass repertoire. We are left to imagine how Stravinsky, Britten or Bartok might have written a short piece for double bass especially in light of their brilliant writing for double bass in ensemble pieces.

His solo repertoire was varied and eclectic, mixing Romantic, Classical and Baroque works. He gave many recitals in Paris and England, a 'Strad' article of 1908 reports that "he has arranged many things from the works of old masters found in the National Museum of Paris, and some of these he plays with M.Henri Casadeu, the leader of the French Society of Old Instruments.....many of these pieces are perfect gems and the combination of viole d'amore and contra-bass as played by two such artists is something to be remembered." Koussevitzky also succeeded in securing a concert with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra playing Mozart's *Concerto for Bassoon* and *Kol Nidrei* by Bruch. The conductor of this concert, Nikisch taught conducting to Koussevitzky at the beginning of his conducting career which led him at the age of fifty to being appointed Principal conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.



The solo pieces are written in an heroic and Romantic vein, and whilst not harmonically adventurous the full range of the double bass is explored from the depths to the very top of the fingerboard. In particular Chanson *Triste* is clearly written for a bass with four strings and concert reviewers commented on his use of a regular orchestral tuned bass and not the three-stringed bass of Bottesini. The *Andante Op. 1* is dedicated to his wife, Natalya Ushkova.

Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Vocalise Op.34 No.14

Prelude Op.23 No 10 arr: Allan Stephenson

Romance Op.6 arr: Leon Bosch

Elegy Op3 arr: Roumen Dimitrov



As a young piano student of twelve years of age Rachmaninoff heard the famous Anton Rubinstein perform a piano recital. This was to leave a lasting impression on him, years later he could recollect Rubinstein's quality of tone and musical imagination as well as his special use of the pedal. Rachmaninoff was a contemporary with both Glière and Koussevitzky at the Moscow Conservatoire and in the same piano class with Scriabin. Their teacher was Zverev and they were both brilliant pianists.

Rachmaninoff appeared as soloist in his second piano concerto for Koussevitzky's conducting debut with the Berlin Philharmonic 1908, and during the war in 1915 Rachmaninoff's publisher Gutheil was bought and taken over by Koussevitzky's publishing firm Editions Russes de Musique.

Rachmaninoff's compositions were popular in their style which honoured melody and whilst he was also a firm supporter of other avant-garde Russian composers such as Scriabin he sometimes felt threatened by their success and wondered whether to cease composing, even before he left Russia.

He is quoted as saying that "The new kind of music seems to create not from the heart but from the head. Its composers think rather than feel. They have not the capacity to make their works exalt - they meditate, protest, analyse, reason, calculate and brood, but they do not exalt."

Rachmaninoff's musical philosophy was firmly rooted in the Russian spiritual tradition, in which it was "the role of the artist to create beauty and to speak the truth from the depths of his heart" and the four pieces recorded here succinctly embody these virtues.

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Vocalise, published in 1912 as the last of his Fourteen Songs, Opus 34, is undoubtedly one of Rachmaninoff's best known compositions and has been transcribed for almost every instrument imaginable. Recent debate suggests that it may, contrary to perceived wisdom, well have started life as a piece for double bass and piano, written for Koussevitzky.

Romance is the first of a pair of pieces for violin and piano, *Morceaux de salon Op.6*, composed in 1893. I find Rachmaninoff particularly intimate and compelling in his shorter pieces, and this beautiful Romance contains many sentiments which have a personal significance for me.

Prelude Op.23 No.10 – Is the final prelude for solo piano in the Op.23 set of ten, composed in 1901.

Allan Stephenson was born in Wallasey, Cheshire, but has lived in South Africa since 1973. He is a composer I truly respect and admire; not only for his consummate skill and unparalleled wisdom but also for the joy his music brings to audiences and performers alike. He has composed a Concerto for me, as well as a Sonatina for cello and double bass and in 2004 I performed the premiere of his Burlesque for Double Bass and orchestra which he composed in

1973 for Zoltan Kovats. Allan has made a number of arrangements for me and this is the first one we have committed to disc.

Elegy Op.3 No.1

Rachmaninoff's Five Pieces (Cinq Morceaux pour piano) Op.3, *Elégie*, *Prélude*, *Mélodie*, *Polichinelle* and *Sérénade* were composed in 1892, when he was only 19 years old, his first published piano work.

Roumen Dimitrov, the Romanian composer, is a colleague and friend of Sung-Suk Kang's and he produced this arrangement of *Elégie* at the request of Sung-Suk, who presented it to me as a gift.

Leon Bosch

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Romance from 'The Gadfly' arr. Leon Bosch

Like '*A Life for the Tsar*', the themes in '*The Gadfly*' are of self-sacrifice, as a soldier fighting to unite Italy is caught but faces the firing squad as a willing martyr to his country. The story is based on a popular English historical novel by Ethel Voymich, and is set in 1830's Italy. Shostakovich composed several film scores, *the Gadfly* was premiered in 1955 and has remained one of the most popular, and the *Romance* is one of the most loved melodies. The score contains a variety of elements, Shostakovich combines the Italian romantic style of Bellini or Verdi with folk-tunes but overall the music remains unmistakably Russian.

Mikhail Glinka (1803–1857)

Susanin's Aria

As dawn rises in Act III of "A Life for the Tsar", the hero Susanin sings these words - "Ti prid'yosh, moyá zarya" "You will come my dawn". This is an aria which expresses the emotional struggle between a strongly felt duty requiring self-sacrifice and human weakness. The melody is derived from a chorus which is only heard in its complete form at the very end of the opera. After Susanin has indeed sacrificed his life and the Tsar is saved, the chorus sing 'Slav'sya, slav'sya, svyataya Rus' - 'Glory, Glory, Holy Rus'. Glinka makes use of this as a source for thematic material which unites the whole opera.

This version for double bass and piano comes from an arrangement that Rimsky-Korsakov made for string orchestra whilst teaching at the Imperial Court Chapel. Within the simplicity of this arrangement one can hear elements that were central to Glinka's compositional style. An instrumental recitative opens the piece. Glinka spent years studying Italian music before returning to Russia to compose this work and notably 'Life for the Tsar' was the first Russian Opera to use sung recitative. As a young boy Glinka was brought up by a nurse in the house of his grandmother, where his soundscape was the Russian songs sung to him by the nurse and the ringing of church bells in the distance. The aria draws to a close and one can hear bells provided in the piano accompaniment. When he became older he enjoyed listening to his Uncle's serf orchestra who performed Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven and the whole aria is clearly respectful of the Germanic classical tradition.

A reviewer of the first performance, V. F. Odoyevsky, wrote that he.... "could not help thinking of Pizarro's musical quality in Beethoven's *Fidelio*" and the opera made such an impact that the political and literary paper in St Petersburg, *The Northern Bee*, published this letter December 15 1836, from his written



account. “In Act 111 Susanin, having led the Poles deep into the impenetrable forest where they are having a rest and he fearing torture, is, naturally enough, given to thoughts of his fate, while struggling inwardly between feelings of sacred duty, love for the Tsar and his homeland and memories of his daughter, his adopted son and happy family, Susanin’s song rises to a style of supreme tragedy, yet at the same time preserving its Russian character in all its purity.”

Anton Grigor’yevich Rubinstein (1829 – 1894)

Melodie arr Popper edited Leon Bosch

Romance arr Leon Bosch

Rubinstein studied composition with Sigfried Dehn, Glinka’s teacher but was famed as a young man as one of the finest 19th century pianists. He composed in the style of the Germanic tradition, influenced particularly by Schumann and Mendelssohn however only the ‘Melody in F’ has remained popular and there are 12 arrangements of this in the British Library.

Such was his influence as a great pianist that as a young man he instigated the Russian Music Society in 1859 to promote professional concerts, particularly instrumental music, and to widen appeal to a paying public. He had gained the close patronage of the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, sister to Tsar Nicholas I, who also maintained strong political influence over her nephew Alexander II and she was to support and help finance the Music Society. It grew to form further societies in Moscow, Kiev and throughout the country and helped to further new music by composers such as Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Another aim of the Society had been to establish true Russian schools of music. Rubinstein succeeded in formalising the St. Petersburg Conservatoire in 1861, Tchaikovsky was one of the first students and went to teach at the new Moscow Conservatoire which opened in 1866, directed by Anton’s brother, Nikolay. Due in large part to these developments Rubinstein’s later life spanned a period which is well recognised as a Golden Age of Russian orchestral music.

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“I first encountered **Melody** as a young child and heard it frequently over the years, in many guises, performed well, badly and indifferently, but it wasn’t until I heard an entrancing performance by Shura Cherkassky broadcast on radio a few years ago that I was finally persuaded of Melody’s unique charm and that it would work well on the double bass.

Inspired by the beauty of the Melody, I tried to find other suitable pieces by Rubinstein, and as luck would have it, I came across a performance of the **Romance** on YouTube, given by Piatigorsky. I instantly knew that this was precisely what I had been looking for, but finding the music proved inordinately difficult. My tenacious enquiries initially met with abject failure, but I was eventually sent a copy by Marian Lewin, a cellist in South Africa, to whom I am eternally grateful.”

Leon Bosch.



Sung-Suk Kang Piano

The pianist Sung-Suk Kang presents a unique blend of elegance, sensitivity and determination, resulting from a synthesis of Asian philosophy and European culture.

At the age of five, she had her first piano lesson in Seoul. She received her professional training at The Royal Northern College of Music in England where she studied with Derrick Wyndham, later at the Fachhochschule für Musik in Vienna with Paul Badura-Skoda, as well as in various master classes held by Perlemuter, Kalichstein, Aronovsky, Rogé, and at the Banff Centre for Arts in Alberta, Canada.

In acknowledgement of her artistic talent, Sung-Suk Kang won 1st Prize and the Schumann Prize for best performance at the International Competition in Macugnaga, Italy. On the occasion of commemorating the 200th anniversary of Mozart's death, Sung-Suk Kang was invited to the "Carinthischer Sommer" where she performed a duet with Paul Badura-Skoda. Furthermore, she has opened concert seasons of many different music associations in Europe.

Her concert activities as soloist and chamber musician have taken her to numerous concert halls in Austria, France, England, Italy, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ireland, Korea, Singapore and Canada and she has also been involved in several radio and TV productions for RTE in Ireland, the Austrian ORF and the Italian RAI.

CD productions include recordings as soloist with works by Mozart, Chopin, Brahms, Debussy and Satie; of particular note are performances of piano concertos KV 466 in D-minor and KV 491 in C-minor by W.A. Mozart with the Praha Mozart Orchestra, also the KV 175 piano concerto in D-Major and the Rondo with Variations KV 382 by W.A. Mozart, and the 4th Piano Concerto Op.70 in D-minor by Anton Rubinstein on the MMO label, New York, USA.





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