

# philharmonia orchestra

## **Listening guide to Rachmaninov's Fourth Piano Concerto with Nikolai Lugansky**

### **Nikolai Lugansky – Pianist**

The first motifs were started in Russia in, I think 1914. The First World War started this year, and this concerto was completed in 1924. The historical atmosphere is very clear in this concerto, and is probably the most intimate work of Rachmaninov. You can feel his depression, not only melancholy but really deep depression.

Rachmaninov was a very strict man, he didn't show his emotion, he was very introverted, but in this concerto you really can feel what is inside of him.

#### *Musical excerpt*

It is really the most depressive, the most dark music of Rachmaninov. But it's probably his most honest music, so his soul you can listen to in this music even more than other concertos.

#### *Musical excerpt*

The second theme is as usual for Rachmaninov, quite oriental but without such sun and sweetness that's in the Second Piano Concerto for example.

#### *Musical excerpt*

But it's a short moment, and all the bad forces - forces of Diablo - will come again.

#### *Musical excerpt*

This motif will be used as a main theme of the finale.

The second movement is slow, but short.

#### *Musical excerpt*

This is the orchestra, then the piano plays.

#### *Musical excerpt*

A funny thing is that Rachmaninov wrote a letter after he had completed the work, to one of his friends – 'Why didn't you tell me that this is the main theme of the Schumann piano concerto?!'. The Schumann concerto is of course quite different, but the same motif in minor.

#### *Musical excerpt from Schumann Piano Concerto*

So of course it was a joke, but Rachmaninov I think was very honest.

#### *Musical excerpt*

The finale is the celebration of dark forces. This is the small devils which come. This is the main theme of the finale, but the middle part is also a celebration of dark forces, but maybe not small demons but bigger ones.

#### *Musical excerpt*

The only place probably in the middle part that reminds us about early Rachmaninov was his really beautiful, sweet harmonies.

*Musical excerpt*

That's the only place in the finale which gives us hope, but for a very short moment.

*Musical excerpt*