

sonatas

introduction

For my debut album, I have chosen to record the cello sonatas by Shostakovich and Rachmaninoff. These grandmasters come from the country where my father was born and raised, so I feel very closely connected to the Russian culture and music. It has been an absolute pleasure to work on and record for this album with my dear friend Giuseppe, whom I met during my studies at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin. Together, we recorded this album in the stunning Kleine Zaal of the Muziekgebouw in Eindhoven, where we went through three intensive days. We are exhilarated and proud that we could make this recording happen with Brendon Heinst. I would also like to express my gratitude towards Sena, who enabled me to make this recording.

dmitri shostakovich

When we talk about Dmitri Shostakovich, more often than not his difficult relationship with the communist party springs to mind. One minute he was a crowned favorite composer of the party elite, the other minute he was censored or threatened with working camps in Siberia. Shostakovich thus lived for years with a fear of being arrested, and always had a packed suitcase at the ready, in case he needed to flee. When Shostakovich started working on his cello sonata in the summer of 1934, this threat was not just yet the order of the day. It was the murder on Sergei Kirov, a confidant of Stalin, which ushered in the Great Purge, with all the consequences that implied. For Shostakovich, the problems started in 1936, with Stalin's disgust after a visit to the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*.

Which is not to say that Shostakovich wrote the sonata in easy times, not in the slightest. His marriage with Nina Varzar was on the rocks, because he fell in love with a young student. In passionate letters to this Elena, Shostakovich wrote that he wanted to marry her, but it would never come that far. Their relationship was short-lived: Nina got pregnant, and in the spring of 1935, she and Shostakovich remarried.

Despite all these turbulent emotions, there is, in some way, a simplicity that stands out in the cello sonata. With this, Shostakovich reacted to the doctrine of the Socialist Realism, an artistic policy that propagated accessible art that had to be understandable to anyone. This is why Shostakovich experimented with simplicity, transparency, catchy themes, and classical forms in this sonata. Meanwhile, he makes sure this never happens at the expense of originality or depth.

The sonata opens with an *allegro non troppo* in sonata form. The understated lyricism on the cello on an arpeggiated accompaniment on the piano, quickly builds up to excitement and motility. The popular music is never really out of sight here, but Shostakovich keeps it thrilling and just a little bit elusive.

The rhythmical force of the many original and unexpected turns give the *Allegro* its sophistication, despite the folksy sounds.

The *Largo*, with a piercing melody on a barren piano accompaniment, is one of the first examples of these chillingly slow movements so characteristic for Shostakovich's most touching pieces.

The neoclassical finale is playful and exuberant, full of virtuosity. There are hints at Mozart and Beethoven, but also to the popular music of the time. But most of all, it oozes fun and vitality.

sergei rachmaninoff

Life was smiling at the nineteen-year-old Sergei Rachmaninoff, when he graduated at the conservatory in 1892 with the highest honours. His exam composition, the opera Aleko, earned him the Big Golden Medaillon from the Conservatory of Moscow, an honour previously only reserved for two other composers. The examination board was so enthusiastic about the opera, that it was promptly programmed for the Bolshoi Theatre. Already during the rehearsals, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was heavily impressed by the music of the young Rachmaninoff, and undertook to conduct the young composer's symphonic poem *The Rock*, Op. 7, in the coming concert season. Rachmaninoff, an admirer of Tchaikovsky, was gilded.

But shortly before Tchaikovsky could make his promise true, he passed away. Rachmaninoff was so shocked by the sudden demise of his big influence, that he didn't write a single note on paper for a very long time. This turned out to be the beginning of a downward spiral for him, with the bad reviews of his *Symphony No. 1 in D*, Op. 13. He ended up in a deep personal crisis and writer's block that remained for almost two years. That was, until the composer checked in with a hypnotherapist, psychotherapist, and amateur musician Nikolai Dahl. After an intensive trajectory of three months, Rachmaninoff started to compose again. And how. In rapid succession, he wrote his *Piano Concerto No. 2 in C*, Op. 18 - still one of the most popular pieces ever, the *Suite No. 2*, Op. 17 for two pianos, and the *Cello Sonata in G*, Op. 19. Dahl pulled Rachmaninoff out of his rut, and the composer came out writing his best pieces ever. This time, the critics saw that as well. Directly, the popularity of his second piano concerto was so huge, that it overshadowed his cello sonata. Maybe it was his fear of disappointing again, or maybe Rachmaninoff had found his voice as a composer for piano and orchestra, but his cello sonata would be the last chamber piece he ever wrote.

The sonata is dedicated to Anatoli Brandukov, the teacher of Gregor Piatigorsky, who - aside from being a major Russian cellist - was also best man at Rachmaninoff's wedding, a few months after the premiere of the piece. Brandukov was famed for his refined temperament, poetical lyricism, and warm, expressive sound, which made this cello part perfect for him.

In the slow opening, the piano presents a short theme, barely noticeable at first, that keeps coming back time after time. The passionate second theme is followed by a development with even more romantic Russian fire.

In the second movement, the cello and piano open rumbling and threatening in their low registers, after which this rhythmical unrest is interspersed with gripping melodies.

In the following *Andante*, the piano introduced a stunning intimate theme with rich harmonies typical for Rachmaninoff, full of desire and melancholy. The cello takes over the theme and together, they head for a climax, after which they slowly die out again.

The finale starts out powerful and energetic, but this is quickly followed by yet another bittersweet melody that Rachmaninoff sprinkles around so richly. The radiant ending sounds so positive and triumphant, that it makes it ever so tempting to hear the miraculous rebirth of the composer.

Alexander Klapwijk

Alexander Warenberg

Alexander Warenberg (1998) was born in Voorburg, The Netherlands, and comes from a very musical family. Since the age of five, Alexander has played the cello and received his first lessons from his uncle. From eight to eighteen years old, he studied with Monique Bartels at the Conservatory of Amsterdam. From 2016 to 2019 he studied with Frans Helmerson at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin, Germany. Since 2019, Alexander studies at the Kronberg Academy with Frans Helmerson.

In 2016, Alexander won both first prize and public prize at the Cello Biënnale in Amsterdam. He also won first prize at the international cello competition of Antonio Janigro in Croatia and won first prizes at the Britten cello competition, the Stichting Young Musical Talent competition, and the Princess Christina Competition.

Alexander performs as a soloist as well as in chamber music ensembles. As a soloist, he performed both in the Netherlands and abroad. He played numerous times at the Royal Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, and was featured on television and radio multiple times. In chamber music ensembles, he has played together with, a.o. Menahem Pressler, Denis Kozhukhin, Gil Sharon, Paolo Giacometti, and Lucas Jussen. Since 2017 he plays in the Amsterdam Piano Trio with Yang Yang Cai (piano) and Shin Sihan (violin).

In the summer of 2017, he took part at the prestigious Verbier Festival Academy. He also performed at many festivals such as the International Chamber Music Festival in Utrecht, the Grachtenfestival in Amsterdam, the Bad Ragaz Festival in Switzerland, the Cello Biënnale and the Chamber Music Festival in Amsterdam, the Delft Chamber Music Festival, Festival Wonderfeel, and CelloFest in Finland. In 2016, he was awarded the Young Talent Prize at the Grachtenfestival in Amsterdam.

Alexander receives a scholarship from the VandenEndeFoundation, as well as a scholarship from the International Music Academy in Liechtenstein.

Alexander plays on a cello by Jean Baptiste Vuillaume from 1845, courtesy of the Dutch Musical Instruments Foundation.

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The logo for the Stichting Nationaal Muziekinstrumenten Fonds (NMF) features the letters 'NMF' in a large, bold, white serif font. To the left of the 'NMF' text, the full name of the organization is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, stacked in four lines: 'STICHTING', 'NATIONAAL', 'MUZIEKINSTRUMENTEN', and 'FONDS.NL'.The logo for the Nationale Cello Concours is a white rounded rectangle containing the text 'NATIONAAL CELLO CONCOURS' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The words are stacked vertically: 'NATIONAAL' at the top, 'CELLO' in the middle, and 'CONCOURS' at the bottom.The logo for the Cello Biënnale Amsterdam is a white rounded rectangle containing the text 'CELLO BIËNNALE AMSTERDAM' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The words are stacked vertically: 'CELLO' at the top, 'BIËNNALE' in the middle, and 'AMSTERDAM' at the bottom.

giuseppe guarrera

Giuseppe was born in Sicily and studied with Siavush Gadjiev and Giuseppe Cultrera in Italy, at the Hochschule für Musik Hans Eisler, with Eldar Neblosin and the Barenboim-Said Academy with Nelson Goerner in Berlin.

In 2015, Giuseppe won second prize at the James Mottram Competition, and first prize at the National Premio Venezia Competition in 2010. He took part in masterclasses by Daniel Barenboim, Ferenc Rados, Mikail Voskresensky, Sergei Babyan, Richard Goode, and Michel Beroff.

In 2017, Giuseppe Guarrera won second prize at the International Montréal Concours, together with five other awards, amongst which "The People's Choice".

In the past year, Giuseppe received the prestigious Klavier Ruhr Festival scholarship, as well as the Foundation Award from the Academy of the Verbier Festival. He graduated from his studies at the Barenboim-Said Academy with Nelson Goerner, and recently started teaching at this academy.

Giuseppe will make his debut with the McGill Chamber Orchestra at the Salle Bourgie in Montréal, the New Generation Orchestra in Florence, the Württembergische Philharmonie Reutlingen in Cremona, and will take part at the Al Bustan Festival in Lebanon. He gives recitals in prestigious venues such as Wigmore Hall, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the Scherzo Series in Madrid, Societa dei Concerti in Milano, Festival Armonie in Valcerrina, and Lingotto Giovani in Torino.

Giuseppe performed many times in Europe, in halls such as the Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin. He was also invited to play at the Klavier-Ruhr Festival, the Estivales de Musique en Médoc, the Bologna and Lercis Festivals, and for the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris. In 2017, he premiered a concerto by Benjamin Attahir, together with the Pierre Boulez Ensemble led by Daniel Barenboim.

Giuseppe played together with orchestras such as the Philharmonische Orchester des Staatstheaters Cottbus, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (led by Vasily Petrenko), the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal (led by Claus Peter Flor), and the Orchestra del Teatro la Fenice.

In chamber music settings, Giuseppe played with Ramon Ortega Quero, Pascal Moragues, Benjamin Goldscheider, and Elena Bashkirova, on festivals in Jerusalem, Alderney, and Berlin. He also works together often with violinist Mayumi Kanagawa.

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recording data

This album was recorded at Muziekgebouw Eindhoven (Kleine Zaal) in the Netherlands, from 17 to 19 December 2018.

about trptk

TRPTK proudly uses DPA microphones, KEF loudspeakers, Hegel amplification, Merging Technologies AD/DA conversion, Furutech cabling and power conditioning, and JCAT network equipment at their recording and mastering facilities, carefully optimized by Acoustic Matters.

All recordings are done in DXD (352.8 kHz 32 bits) in immersive 5.1-channel surround sound, and all masters are generated from the original DXD Studio Master, without any dynamic compression or limiting of the signal. In both stereo and surround sound, our aim is to truly create an immersive experience.

equipment

microphones

Sonodore RCM-402

ad/da converters

Merging Technologies HAPI

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Furutech custom loudspeaker cables

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Furutech LineFlux XLR

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