

Богородице Дѣво (*Rejoice, O Virgin*)

From **Всенощное бдение (All-Night Vigil)**
Sergei Vasilyevich Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

The All-Night Vigil

Composed in less than two weeks, and cited often as Rachmaninoff's best work, the **All-Night Vigil Opus 37** is an *a capella* setting for four-part choir, of texts from the **Russian Orthodox ceremony** of the same name. Featuring three styles of ancient chant (Rachmaninoff called it "conscious counterfeit") it includes **Basso Profundo**, and **at one point** divides the choir into eleven parts. Erroneously translated as the "Vespers" (only six of its fifteen movements are from those texts) it has been hailed as one of the greatest achievements of the Russian Orthodox Church.

No. 6: Bogoroditse Devo

The **Russian Orthodox "Hail Mary"**, in the hands of Rachmaninoff, comes in a wave of luxuriant harmony and dynamics, beginning low and solemn, building and layering, to crest as the choir sings "yáko Spása rodilá yesí dush náshikh" (*Thou hast born the saviour of our souls*). Transcendent, regardless of philosophy, it drips with emotion, drama, and, well, *Rachmaninoff*.

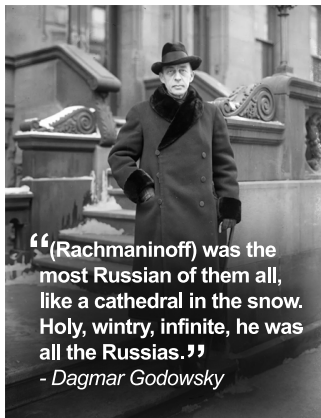
Sergei Rachmaninoff

Like many legendary composers, Rachmaninoff rolls off the vernacular tongue quickly. And superficially, he may evoke a few anecdotes (the infamous "**Rach 3**" piano concerto; his failed **Symphony No. 1** and subsequent depression).

Digging deeper, however, we find a very complicated genius who emerged from a privileged, but transient youth, and who, later in life, would be forced to abandon his beloved Russia; his music banned, and his possessions confiscated by the Bolshevik regime. He would eventually die in Beverley Hills as an American citizen, his potential, according to many, not having been fully realized.

Buoyed by Romantic forbears such as Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninoff developed truly unique

works of piano-heavy melody, expression, and complexity, and remains one of the brightest stars in the once-grand Russian Classical lexicon.



"(Rachmaninoff) was the most Russian of them all, like a cathedral in the snow. Holy, wintry, infinite, he was all the Russias."
- Dagmar Godowsky

Further Reading

Goodbye Russia: Rachmaninoff in Exile — a lament for a lost homeland - *Financial Times*

How Radical was Rachmaninoff? - *The New Yorker*

Rachmaninoff: Romantic or reactionary?
- *The Vancouver Sun*

Should Russian composers be banned in the wake of the war? - *Financial Times*

Watch & Listen

"Bogoroditse Devo" All-Night Vigil (Oktavist, Yuri Vishnyakov)

Rachmaninoff conducts Vocalise, Philadelphia Orchestra 1929

Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3 | Khatia Buniatishvili, Neeme Järvi, Verbier Festival

Feminist punk band Pussy Riot sing "Mother of God, Chase Putin Away" based on the Sixth movement of the All-Night Vigil

On the infamous **Fifth Movement**
(Sung at Rachmaninoff's funeral on his request)

Nikolai Danilin shook his head, saying, "Now where on earth are we to find such basses? They are as rare as asparagus at Christmas!" Nevertheless, he did find them. I knew the voices of my countrymen...



April 1921 Interview with Sergei Rachmaninoff:

What Can Come from Russian Musically With Most of Its Creative Forces in Exile?