

SOMM
RECORDINGS



Romances

ARENSKY
RACHMANINOFF

ANASTASIA PROKOFIEVA · SERGEY RYBIN

Anton Arensky: Mentor of Rachmaninoff

By comparison with the towering figure and true superstar status in the history of European music of Sergei Rachmaninoff, his mentor, Anton Stepanovich Arensky (1861–1906) could be easily overlooked. Though Arensky's name today is far less familiar than that of his brilliant pupil, his teaching and compositions played an important role in shaping the Russian musical landscape at the turn of the 20th century.

Rachmaninoff studied harmony, counterpoint and free composition with Arensky at the Moscow Conservatory between 1885 and 1888, when he was still a teenager. The relationship between teacher and pupil was unusually close: while Arensky had a reputation for impatience and a fiery temper, he treated Rachmaninoff with encouragement and respect, praising his talent and marking him out of the crowd. Rachmaninoff, for his part, often recalled later in life how valuable those lessons had been, saying that Arensky had given him the tools to think more broadly and inventively about his own music. The diploma given to Rachmaninoff on 29 May 1892 to signify the successful completion of his studies at Moscow Conservatory lists Arensky as his professor of free composition, and Alexander Siloti as his piano professor.

In devising this programme, we intended to bring to the listener's attention relatively neglected pages of the Russian song repertoire and, by juxtaposing the works of Arensky and Rachmaninoff, to highlight their inner connection and relationship, as well as the importance of the tutor's influence upon his famous student. Exploring with curiosity these vital connections, we take pleasure in showing that a musical genius like Rachmaninoff didn't develop in a vacuum. Rachmaninoff's creative credo – "Melody is music, the main fundament of all music, since perfect melody implies and calls to life its harmonic setting" – could equally

apply to Arensky's works. Singable melodies, deeply connected to *bel canto* and a Russian folk aesthetic, affluent and opulent in their plasticity, are some of the most prominent features of Arensky's writing – and without doubt Rachmaninoff's, too. A separate point should be made about the piano writing of both professor and pupil: ubiquitous undulating triplets, breathing figurations, polyphonic countermelodies and a certain virtuosic flair to the piano parts in these romances are unmistakably branches of the same stylistic tree.

Their contact was not confined to the classroom. Both men were part of the Moscow musical world of the 1890s, and Rachmaninoff, who was deeply respectful of his former teacher, maintained a warm if somewhat formal relationship with him. This admiration is preserved in Rachmaninoff's early compositions: the *5 Morceaux de fantaisie*, Op.3 (which include the famous Prelude in C sharp minor) are dedicated to "Monsieur A. Arensky". Later, when Rachmaninoff composed his Symphony No.1 in D minor, Op.13 (1895), Arensky was among those who saw and discussed the work with him in private before its ill-fated premiere.

Though their personal contact diminished in later years – especially as Arensky's health and lifestyle declined – Rachmaninoff never forgot the importance of those early lessons. In his recollections dictated to Oskar von Riesemann in 1934, he placed Arensky alongside his cousin Alexander Siloti and his piano teacher Nikolai Zverev as a key figure in his formative years.

Anton Arensky was born on 12 July 1861 in Novgorod into a cultured and musical family. His father, Stepan Matveyevich, was a physician who played the cello well; his mother, Nadezhda Antipovna, was an accomplished pianist. Music surrounded the young Anton from his earliest years. He began piano lessons aged seven and by the age of nine had already written his first quartet for violin, piano, flute and cello.



Anton Arensky (seated behind the desk),
with pupils (L to R) Lev Conus, Nikita Morozov
and Sergei Rachmaninoff.



In 1872 the Arensky family moved to St Petersburg, and Anton soon entered the St Petersburg Conservatory. There he studied composition with one of Russia's most influential composers, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Under Rimsky-Korsakov's supervision, Arensky developed a strong grounding in counterpoint, orchestration and form. He also absorbed his teacher's fascination with Russian folk traditions and, like him, integrated them into his own music. Yet even at this early stage, Arensky's style displayed a lyricism and elegance more reminiscent of Western European models, particularly the music of Schumann and Chopin.

Graduating with a gold medal in 1882, Arensky quickly secured a teaching post at the Moscow Conservatory. At the remarkably young age of 21 he was entrusted with courses in harmony, counterpoint and, later, instrumentation and free composition. His arrival in Moscow marked the beginning of a productive – if tumultuous – career as a composer, pedagogue and performer.

At the Moscow Conservatory Arensky encountered a different artistic climate than in St Petersburg. Here, under the directorship of Sergei Taneyev and in the shadow of Tchaikovsky, the emphasis was less on folk traditions and more on Western forms and expressive lyricism. This environment suited Arensky's natural inclinations.

Among his students were several who would go on to become some of Russia's most important musicians: Sergei Rachmaninoff, Alexander Scriabin, Reinhold Glière and the Conus brothers, Georgi, Julius and Lev (see preceding photo), among others. Rachmaninoff, still in his teenage years, responded with enthusiasm to Arensky's harmony classes, producing exercises and original compositions that impressed both teacher and peers. Arensky, though often accused of laziness and a short temper in teaching, recognised Rachmaninoff's exceptional gifts and treated him with unusual patience.

Scriabin, on the other hand, clashed with Arensky. Their relationship ended poorly, with Arensky expelling the young composer from his class. The contrast between the experiences of Rachmaninoff and Scriabin highlights Arensky's mercurial temperament as a teacher: he could be inspiring when he sensed talent aligned with his own values, but intolerant when confronted with students whose musical instincts diverged from his.

During his years as a teacher, Arensky was also an active composer. His first symphony, in B minor, appeared in 1883, followed by a second, in A major, in 1889. These works demonstrated his solid command of orchestral writing, though critics often remarked that they reflected too strongly the influence of his mentors, Rimsky-Korsakov and, especially, Tchaikovsky.

Opera was another field in which Arensky sought recognition. His first stage work, *Сон на Волге* (A Dream on the Volga), based on a play by Alexander Ostrovsky, premiered in 1891 at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. Tchaikovsky praised the opera enthusiastically, declaring it a work of true artistry and predicting a bright future for Arensky. Later operas included *Raphael* (1894), a one-act opera inspired by Renaissance Italy, and *Nal and Damayanti* (1903), based on the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. None of these works, however, entered the established operatic repertoire.

Arensky's chamber music and piano works have fared better. His two Piano Trios, the Piano Quintet and the two String Quartets demonstrate lyrical beauty and craftsmanship. The *Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky*, Op.35a for string orchestra, written in 1894, remains his most frequently performed piece, admired for its tenderness and melodic grace. Likewise, his concert pieces, such as the Fantasy on Themes of Ryabinin, Op.48, display his gift for clear form and accessible lyricism.

Arensky also wrote a substantial number of romances for voice and piano – 57 in total – many of which show his affinity for intimate, emotional expression. His sacred works further broadened his output.

Perhaps his most ambitious project was the ballet *Egyptian Nights*, Op.50, written in 1900 for the Imperial Theatres. The ballet had a complex history, with multiple versions and later reworkings by choreographer Mikhail Fokine. Sergei Diaghilev eventually presented it in Paris under the title *Cléopâtre*, where it achieved considerable success.

Despite his talents and achievements, Arensky's personal life was troubled. Contemporary accounts describe him as brilliant but self-indulgent. Rimsky-Korsakov, in his memoirs, offered a severe judgment: Arensky's life "was spent in dissipation, among drinking bouts and card games". According to his teacher, this reckless lifestyle undermined his health and creative output.

Arensky held significant posts, including director of the Imperial Chapel in St Petersburg from 1895 to 1901, but his reputation for heavy drinking and gambling followed him throughout his career. Even so, his productivity as a composer did not entirely falter. He published theoretical works – such as his *Guide to the Practical Study of Harmony* and *Guide to the Study of Forms of Instrumental and Vocal Music* – that remained influential for years.

He died prematurely from tuberculosis at the age of 44, in Finland in 1906. His teacher Rimsky-Korsakov predicted: "He will soon be forgotten". Not all shared Rimsky-Korsakov's harsh view. Tchaikovsky admired Arensky, calling him "extraordinarily intelligent in music" and praising his sensitivity. Leo Tolstoy also valued his works, especially the piano duets and chamber music. The novelist was particularly fond of the Suite No.2 for two pianos

"Silhouettes", Op.23, remembering with pleasure its "Spanish Dancer" (V. "La Danseuse"). For Tolstoy, Arensky was "the best among the modern composers, simple and melodious".

Other contemporaries offered mixed opinions. Some found his music derivative, too strongly shaped by Tchaikovsky's influence. Indeed, critics have often regarded Arensky as standing somewhat in the shadow of greater figures. Yet his best works – particularly the *Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky*, the chamber music and the piano suites – reveal a distinctive voice capable of grace, clarity and emotional warmth.

His role as a teacher may well constitute his most lasting contribution. By shaping the harmonic imagination of Rachmaninoff and Glière, and even in his contentious relationship with Scriabin, Arensky served as a link in the chain of Russian musical tradition. Through his pupils, his influence extended far beyond what his own compositions alone might have achieved.

Anton Arensky remains a figure of paradox in Russian music. His life was marked by talent and opportunity, but also by indulgence and decline. His works rarely achieved the popularity of Tchaikovsky's or Rimsky-Korsakov's, yet they were respected by discerning contemporaries and are still performed today.

Most importantly, his teaching left an indelible imprint on the next generation. Without Arensky, Rachmaninoff's early mastery of harmony might have developed differently; without his classes, some of the finest Russian composers might not have flourished in the way that they did. In this sense, Arensky occupies a curious but essential place in music history: not a towering genius like his students, but a gifted, flawed artist whose contributions greatly enriched the fabric of Russian culture.



Anastasia Prokofieva is a lyric soprano with a voice of unusual timbre, abundant fullness, warmth and femininity, described as "striking" by *Opera Magazine*. With postgraduate studies at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory and London's Benjamin Britten International Opera School, she has captivated audiences across Europe.

Her opera roles include the Contessa and Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*), Violetta (*La traviata*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) and Véronique (*Le Docteur Miracle*).

Prokofieva's recordings have earned critical acclaim. Conductor Lionel Friend praised her album *Russian Heroines*, recorded with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, for its "sensitive and idiomatic singing". In collaboration with pianist Sergey Rybin, she recorded *L'Heure exquise*, a collection of Reynaldo Hahn's romantic songs, and a collection of rare songs by Alexander Dargomyzhsky, *The Secret Garden*.

She has appeared in prestigious venues including Cadogan Hall, Amaryllis Fleming Concert Hall (London), Teatro Filarmonico Verona, Kyiv Philharmonic Hall, East Pyongyang Grand Theatre, Tatar Grand Concert Hall (Kazan) and Rimini's Teatro Ermete Novelli.

anastasiaprokofieva.com

Since completing his studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London under the tutelage of Malcolm Martineau, **Sergey Rybin** has worked extensively for City of Birmingham Opera, English Touring Opera, Garsington Opera, Opera Holland Park and Grange Park Opera. He has been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, London and joined the coaching staff of the Jette Parker Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House (ROH).

After working as chief répétiteur on the ROH production of *Eugene Onegin*, he joined the music staff team for *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Nabucco*, *The Nose*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Maintaining various coaching commitments throughout the year, Sergey has returned to Glyndebourne for *Le nozze di Figaro* and travelled to La Monnaie in Brussels for Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. Most recently, he assisted Evelino Pidò on *La Bohème* at the ROH and Paul Daniel on *The Queen of Spades* at The Grange Festival and conducted a nationwide tour of *Giulio Cesare* for English Touring Opera. Sergey performed recitals in Shanghai Symphony Hall and in Guangzhou with mezzo-soprano Hongni Wu (July 2024) and served as an assistant and cover conductor on the ROH's new production of *Eugene Onegin* (autumn 2024) and on *Die Fledermaus* for The Grange Festival (June–July 2025).

sergeyrybin.com



Photo: Ed Choo

① No.1 Schast'ye

Prichudliivo smeshalisi' svet i teni,
 Vdali alleya solntsem zalita.
 Ishchu ya «schast'ya» v lepestkakh siren,
 Privychnoyu mechtoyu zanyata.
 Uzorom strannym tenevye pyatna
 Menyayutsya na zolotom peske...
 Vsyu belosnezhna, divno aromatna,
 Siren' drozhit v playushchey ruke.
 – A “schast'ya” net! – sheptchu ya beznadezhno:
 Uzhel' nayti ego ne suzhdeno?
 I vdrug... siren' otbroshe na nebrezhno:
 Shagi – ty zdes'... O schast'ye! Vot ono.

② No.2 Osen'

V osenniy grustnyy den', kogda pechal'nym svetom
 V tvoyo okno posledniy luch blesnet,
 Kogda uvidish' ty, kak plyushch purpurnym tsvetom
 Uvyyadshiy sad, proshchayas', obov'yot;
 Kogda uvidish' ty, kak uvyadayut rozy
 I list'ya zolotym dozhydom letyat,
 Pust' na glazakh twoikh ne vystupayut slyozy
 I dushu ne tomit pechali yad.
 Pokin'dushoyu mir osenney t'my i skuki,

 Pripomni te charuyushchie dni,
 Kogda, ne vedaya pechali i razluki,
 My byli schastlivy sovsem odni...

 I snova vsyo tebe vokrug zableschet letom,
 I v dushu radost' snizoydet
 V osenniy grustnyy den', kogda pechal'nym svetom
 V okno tvooyo posledniy luch blesnet.

Happiness

Light and shadows mingled together whimsically,
 In the distance, the alley is flooded with sunlight.
 I search for “happiness” in the lilac’s petals,
 Preoccupied by my usual dream.
 In a strange pattern, shadowy spots
 Flicker upon the golden sand...
 Completely snow-white, wonderfully fragrant,
 The lilac trembles in a burning hand.
 – But “happiness” does not exist! – I whisper hopelessly:
 Is it really impossible to find it?
 And suddenly... the lilac is thrown aside carelessly:
 I hear steps – you are here... Oh happiness! Here it is.

Autumn

On a sad autumn day, when with a melancholy light
 The last ray will glimmer through your window,
 When you see how ivy with a purple hue
 Will entwine the withered garden, bidding farewell;

 When you see how the roses are fading
 And leaves fly away like a golden rain,
 Let no tears appear in your eyes
 And may the poison of sorrow not torment your soul.

 Let your soul leave behind the world of autumn gloom
 and boredom,
 Remember those enchanting days,
 When, unaware of sorrow and separation,
 We were happy completely alone...

 And again everything around you will sparkle with summer,
 And joy will descend into your soul
 On a sad autumn day, when with a melancholy light
 The last ray will shine through your window.

③ No.3 Kolybel'naya

Vsyo tikho vokrug i temno,
Pogasli dnevnye ogn'i,
I noch' proletela nemaya...
Usni, moyo serdtse, usni!

Odna ya, odna ya davno!
Promchalis' volshebnye sny...
Spokoystviyu noch'i vnitmaya,
Usni, moyo serdtse, usni!

Te dni pozabyt'y dolzhna,
Uvy, ne vernetuya oni,
Ikh noch' poglotila nemaya...
Usni, moyo serdtse, usni!

Net schastiya – prizrak ono!
Daryat snovideniya odni
Nam gryozy prekrasnye maya.
Usni, moyo serdtse, usni!

④ No.4 Nebosklon oslepitel'no-sinyi,

Morya nezhno-lazurnaya dal';
Vsyudu gruppy izyashchnye piniy,
Belorozovyy vsyudu mindal'.
Otdykhayet Vezuviy ustaly,
I legko k oblakam zolotym
Podnimayetsya palevyy, alyy
Prikholtivoyu tuchkoyu dym.
My s toboy laski trepetnoy polny,
Miliy vzglyad tvoy lyubov'yu gorit...
Oslepitel'ny sinie volny,
Zhemchugom na nikh pena blestit.
Slyshu v volnakh ya divnyye zvuki,
Govoryat mne o schast'ye oni...

Miliy drug moy! V godinu razluki
Etot den', etot mig vspomyan!

Lullaby

Everything is quiet and dark around,
The daytime lights have gone out,
And the silent night has flown by...
Sleep, my heart, sleep!

I am alone, I have been alone for a long time!
Magical dreams have rushed past...
Heeding the calm of the night,
Sleep, my heart, sleep!

You must forget those days,
Alas, they will not return,
The silent night has swallowed them...
Sleep, my heart, sleep!

There is no happiness – it's a ghost!
Only nightly dreams gift to us
The beautiful dreams of May.
Sleep, my heart, sleep!

The sky, brilliantly azure,

The sea, tenderly blue;
Groups of graceful pines everywhere,
And white-pink almond trees.
Weary Vesuvius rests in peace,
And lightly to the golden clouds
Rises smoke, pale and scarlet,
Shaped like a whimsical little cloud.
We are full of trembling tenderness,
Your dear gaze burns with love's fire...
The blue waves shine bright,
Their foam glistens like pearls in the light.
I hear in the waves delightful sounds,
They speak to me of happiness...

My dear friend! In the hour of parting,
Remember this day, this moment!

⑤ No.5 Ya na tebya glyazhu s ulybkoy,
Usta moi tak goryachi...
Pust' éto budet khot' oshibkoy,
Molchi, molchi!

Na zemlyu redko i nezhdanno
Niskhodyat schastiya luchi...
Pust' éto novo, éto stranno,
Molchi, molchi!

RACHMANINOFF

⑥ Op.14 No.1 *Maria Davidova* 1863-?

Ya zhdu tebya! Zakat ugas,
I nochti tyomnye pokrov
Spustit'sya na zemlyu gotovy
I spryatat' nas.

Ya zhdu tebya! Dushistoy mgloy
Noch' napolila mir usnuvshiy,
I razluchilsya den' minuvshiy
Na vek s zemley.

Ya zhdu! Terzayas' i lyubya,
Schitayu kazhdyya mgnoven'ya!
Polna toski i neterpen'ya,
Ya zhdu tebya!

⑦ Siren', Op.21 No.5 *Ekaterina Bchetova* 1855-1892

Po utru, na zare,
Po rosistoy trave
Ya poydu svezhim utrom dyshat';
I v dushistuyu ten',
Gde tesnitsya siren',
Ya poydu svoyo schast'ye iskat'...

I gaze at you with a smile,
My lips are burning hot...
Even if it be a mistake,
Be silent, be silent!

Rarely and suddenly upon the earth
Descend the rays of happiness...
Though it is new, though it is strange,
Be silent, be silent!

I wait for you! The sunset has faded,
And night's dark veils are ready now
To fall upon the earth
And hide us both.

I wait for you! With fragrant gloom
The night has filled the sleeping world,
And the day that has been
Has departed from the earth for good.

I wait – tormented, yet in love,
I count each fleeting moment's passing!
Full of longing, and impatient,
I wait for you!

Lilacs
In the morning, at dawn,
Across the dewy grass
I shall go to breathe in the fresh morning;
And into the fragrant shade,
Where the lilacs cascade,
I shall go to seek my happiness...

V zhizni schast'ye odno
Mne nayti suzhdeno,
I to schast'ye v sireni zhivyon;
Na zelyonykh vetyvakh,
Na dushistykh kistyakh
Moyo bednoye schast'ye tsveytot.

⑧ **Op.8 No.2 Aleksey Pleshcheyev 1825–1893**

(after Heinrich Heine 1797–1856)

Dity! kak tsvetok ty prekrasna,
Svetla, i chista, i mila;
Smotryu na tebya... i lyubuyus'; –
I snova dusha ozhila...

Okhotno b tebe na golovku
Ya ruki svoi vozlozhil,
Prosyta, chtoby Bog tebya vechno
Prekrasnoy i chistoy khranil.

⑨ **Son, Op.8 No.5 Aleksey Pleshcheyev 1825–1893**

(after Heinrich Heine 1797–1856)

I u menya byl kray rodnoy;
Prekrasen on!
Tam yel' kachalas' nado mnoy...
No to byl son!

Sem'ya druzey zhiva byla.
So vsekh storon
Zvuchali mne lyubvi slova...
No to byl son!

⑩ **One otvechali, Op.21 No.4 Lev Mey 1822–1862**

(after Victor Hugo 1802–1885)

Sprosili oni: «Kak v letuchikh chelnakh
Nam beloyu chaykoy skol'zit' na volnakh
Chtob nas storozha nedognali?»
«Grebitel! – one otvechali.

In life there is only one happiness
That I am fated to find,
And that happiness lives in the lilacs;
On the branches so green,
In the clusters so fragrant,
My poor little happiness blooms.

Child! You are as beautiful as a flower,
So bright, so pure, so dear;
I gaze at you... and I admire, –
And once again my soul revives...

Gladly upon your little head
I would place my hands,
Praying that God forever keep you
Lovely and pure.

Dream

I too once had a native land;
How fair it is!
There a fir tree swayed above me...
But it was a dream!

A family of friends was alive.
From every side
Words of love resounded for me...
But it was only a dream!

They answered

The men asked: «How, in our flying boats,
Might we glide like a white seagull on the waves,
So that the watchmen will not catch us?»
«Row!» – the women replied.

Sprosili oni: «Kak zabyt' navsegda,
Chto v mire yudol'nom yest' bednost', beda,
Chto yest' v nyom groza i pechali?
«Zasnite!» – one otvechali.

Sprosili oni: «Kak krasavits privlech'
Bez chary, chtob sami na strastnuyu rech'
Oni nam v ob"yatya pal'i?
«Lyubite!» – one otvechali.

11 Op.21 No.7 *Galina Galina* 1870–1942

Zdes' khorosho... Vzglyani, vdali
Ognyom gorit reka;
Tsvetnym kovrom luga legli,
Beleyut oblaka.

Zdes' net lyudey... Zdes' tishina...
Zdes' tol'ko Bog da ya,
Tsvety, da staraya sosna,
Da ty, mechta moy!

ARENSKY

5 Romances, WoO

12 No.1 Poéziya Semyon Nadson 1862–1887

Za mnogo let nazad, iz tikhoy seni raya,
V venke dushistykh roz, s ulybkoy molodoy,
Ona soshla v nash mir, prelestnaya, nagaya
I gordaya swoey nevinnoj krasotoy.
Ona nesla s soboy nevedomyye chuvstva,
Garmoniyu nebes i predannost' mechte, –
I byl zakon yeyo – iskusstvo dlya iskusstva,
I byl zavet yeyo – sluzhen'ye krasote.

The men asked: "How can we forget forever
That in this earthly world there is poverty, sorrow,
That there are storms and griefs within it?"
"Sleep!" – the women replied.

The men asked: "How can we draw fair maidens,
Without magic, so that to our passionate words
They fall into our arms willingly?"
"Love!" – the women replied.

How fair this spot... Look – in the distance
The river gleams with fire;
The meadows lie like a flowery carpet,
The clouds shine white.

There are no people here... Here it is silence...
Here only God and I.
The flowers, the ancient pine,
And you, my dream!

Poetry

Many years ago, from heaven's quiet shelter,
Crowned with fragrant roses, a youthful smile upon her face,
She came into our world – so lovely, pure, and naked,
And proud of her own innocent beauty.
She carried with her unknown feelings,
The harmony of heavens and devotion to a dream –
Her moto was: "Art for art's sake",
Her creed was this: "To serve Beauty".

No s pervykh zhe shagov s chela yeyo sorvali
I rastoptali v prakh roskoshnye tsvety,
I tyomnym oblakom somneniy i pechali
Pokrylis' devstvenno-prekrasnye cherty.
I prezrnikh gimnov net!... Likuyushchie zvuki
Dykhaniyem grozy bessledno uneslo, –
I dyshit pesn' yeyo ognem dushevnoy muki,
I ternii yazyvat nebesnoye chelo!...

10 **Op.64 No.3 Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy 1817–1875**

Gornimi tikho letela dusha nebesami,
Grustnye dolu ona opuskala resnity;
Slyozy, v prostranstvo ot nikh upadaya zvezdami,
Svetloy i dlinnoy vilisya za ney verenitsey.
Vstrechneye tikho yeyo voprosali svetila:
"Chto ty grustni? i o chem eti slezy vo vzore?"
Im otvechala ona: "Ya zemli ne zabyla,
Mnogo ostavila tam ya stradan'ya i gorya.
Zdes ya lish' likam blazhenstva i radossti vnemlyu,
Pravednykh dushi ne znayut ni skorbi, ni zloby –
O, otpusti menya snova, Sozdate!, na zemlyu,
Bylo-b o kom pozhalet' i uteshit' kogo-by!"

11 **Osen', Op.27 No.2 Afanasy Fet 1820–1892**

Kak grustny sumrachnye dni
Bezzvuchnoy oseni i khladnoy!
Kakoy istomoy bezotradnoy
K nam v dushu prosyatsya oni!

No yest' i dni, kogda v krovi
Zolotistvennykh uborov
Goryashchikh oseni' ishchet vzorov
I znoynykh prikhotej lyubvi.

Molchit stydlivaya pechal',
Lish' vyzvyayushcheye slyshno,
I, zamirayushchey tak pyshno,
Ey nichego uzhe ne zhal'.

But from her very first steps, from her brow were ripped
And trampled in the dust the splendid flowers;
And a dark cloud of doubt and grief
Has covered her virginal features.
No more former hymns!... The joyful ringing sounds
Were swept away by the storm's breath without trace, –
Her song now burns with her soul's torment,
And thorns are piercing her heavenly face!...

Silently, a soul soared through the high heavens,
Her sad eyes she lowered toward the earth;
Tears, falling from them like stars into the expanse,
Twined behind her in a shining, long trail.
The heavenly bodies softly asked her:
"Why are you sad? And why these tears?"
She answered them: "I have not forgotten the earth –
Much suffering and sorrow I left behind there.
Here I only know bliss and rejoicing,
The righteous souls know not grief, nor anger –
O Creator, let me return once more to the earth,
That I may pity someone, bring comfort to someone again!"

Autumn

How sorrowful are the dusky days
Of silent, chilly autumn!
With what joyless weariness
They press into our souls.

But also there are days when,
In blood-red and golden garments,
Autumn goes seeking for sultry glances
And the burning whims of passion.

Then the shy melancholy is silent,
Only defiance is heard,
And, in her fading hours, yet so opulent,
She has no regrets.

Suita-Vospominaniye Op.71

Konstantin Balmont 1867–1942

(after Percy Bysshe Shelley 1792–1822)

19 No.1

Iz divnykh dney, lazurnykh, yasnykh,
Kak ty, moy miliy drug, prekrasnykh,
Teper' – uvy! – posledniy den'
Skonchalsya medlenno, unyo;
Zemlya svoy obraz izmenila,
Na Nebesakh – gustaya ten'.
Vosstan', moy dukh, stryakhni dremotu,
Skorey ispolnit' pospeshi
Svoyu privychnuyu rabotu
I epitafiyu pishi –
Navek umershim dnyam prekrasnym,
Mechtam plenitel'nym i yasnym.

16 No.2

Nad morem spal sosnovyy les,
Chut' slyshno vody peli;
Dremala burya sred' nebes,
Kak v tikhoy kolybeli.
Igrali tuchi, i s volnoy
Volna skvoz' son sheptala;
I nad morskoyu glubinoy
Lazur' nebes smeyalas'.
Kak budto etot mirnyy chas
Nispol'an byl bogami,
I vechnyy ray siyal diya nas
Nebesnymi luchami.

17 No.3

Drug s drugom sosny obnyalis',
Izmyatye vetrami;
Ikh such'ya zmeyami splelis',
Sklonyayasya nad nami.

Reminiscence Suite

From the wondrous days, azure and clear,
As beautiful as you, my dear friend,
Now – alas! – the last day
Has reached its weary end;
The earth has changed her appearance,
The Heavens are shrouded in dense shadow.
Rise, my spirit, shake off your drowsiness,
Make haste to carry out
Your habitual work
And write an epitaph –
To the beautiful days forever lost,
To the captivating and clear dreams.

The pine forest slept above the sea,
The waters sang in quiet tones;
The storm was slumbering in the sky,
As though in a gentle cradle.

The clouds were playing, and with the wave
Another wave, half-asleep, was whispering;
And over the sea's depths
The azure of the Heavens was smiling.

It seemed as if this peaceful hour
Was sent to us by Gods from on high,
And eternal paradise shone down
Upon us with celestial rays.

The pines embraced each other,
Crushed by the winds;
Their branches, intertwined like snakes,
Were bending over us.

I k nam laskalos' veterka
Chut'slyshnoe dykhan'ye,
Primchavshis' k nam izdaleka,
Kak ch'yo-to lepetan'ye.

No spali sosny mertyvym snom
Bez grez i bez dvizhen'ya,
Kak spyat vsegda na dne morskem
Podvodnye rasten'ya.

■ No.4

Kak tikhо vsyo! Ni vzdokh, ni zvuk
Pokoya ne smushchayet,
Bezzvuchnyy mir, i tish' krugom,
I nashikh dush mechtan'ya,
I les, ob'yaty sladkim snom.
Slilis' v odin volshebnyy krug –
Vershiny gor tumannykh,
Tsvety, polya i ty, moy drug,
S poryvom dum zhelannykh.
I svetu ustupila mгла
Pred schastiem soznan'ya,
Chto v etom mire ty byla,
O, nezhnoe sozdan'ye!

■ No.5

I dolgo my, sklonivshi vzor,
Pod sosnami stoyali,
Glyadeli v glub' lesnykh ozyor,
Tam nebesa siyali,

Polny luchistogo ogya,
Kak budto ch'i-to ochi,
Yasney bezoblachnogo dnya
I glubzhe chernoy nochi.

I les vidnelya v bezdne vod:
Spletalsya vetyvami,

The barely audible breath of the breeze
Caressed us,
Rushing to us from afar,
Like someone's whispering.

But the pines slept in a deep sleep,
Without dreams and without motion,
Like at the bottom of the sea
Sleep the underwater plants.

How quiet everything is! Not a sigh, not a sound
Disturbs the peace,
The soundless world, and silence all around,
And the dreams of our souls,
And the forest, embraced by sweet sleep,
Merged into one magical circle –
The peaks of misty mountains,
Flowers, fields, and you, my friend,
With the surge of cherished thoughts.
And the darkness yielded to the light
Before the happiness of awareness,
That you existed in this world,
O tender being!

And long we stood, our gaze cast down,
Beneath the pines,
Looking into the depths of forest lakes,
Where the heavens shone,

Full of radiant fire,
As though someone's eyes,
Brighter than a cloudless day
And deeper than black night.

And the forest appeared in the watery abyss:
Interlaced with branches,

I byli nam vnizu vidny
Tainstvennye kraski, –
Ikh sozdala lyubov' volny,
Edem bezgreshnoy laski;
To bylo tikhikh, svetykh struy
Nemoye obayan'ye,
To byl Prikrody potseluy,
Vsekh sil yego sliyan'ye.

No veter naletel v tishi,
Ischezli otrazhen'ya,
Kak luchshiy rayskiy son dushi
Pred prizrakom somnen'ya.
Khot' Shelli skorbnaya dusha
Lish' mig odin bespochna.
No, bud' ty vechno khorosha,
Kak les prekrasen vechno.

RACHMANINOFF

Op.26 No.12 *Ivan Bunin 1870–1953*

Noch' pechal'na, kak mechty moi...
Daleko, v glukhoy stepi shirokoy,
Ogonyok mertsayet odinokiy...
V serdtse mnogo grusti i lyubvi.
No komu i kak razskazhesh' ty,
Chto zovyot tebya, chem serdtse polno?
Put' dalyok, glukhaya step' bezmolvna,
Noch' pechal'na, kak moi mechty.

And there below were visible to us
Mysterious colours –
Created by the love of the wave,
An Eden of innocent tenderness;

It was the mute charm
Of quiet, shining streams,
It was Nature's kiss,
The merging of all her powers.

But the wind gushed in through the silence,
The reflections vanished,
Like the soul's best dream of paradise
Before the ghost of doubt.

Though Shelley's grieving soul
Is carefree but for a moment,
Yet, may you be forever fair,
As the forest is forever beautiful.

The night is mournful, like my dreams...

Far away, in the vast and silent steppe,
A little lonely light flickers.
My heart is full of sadness and love.

But to whom, and how, can you tell
What calls to you, what fills your heart?
The path is long, the vast steppe is silent,
The night is mournful, like my dreams.

㉑ **Sumerki, Op.21 No.3** *Ivan Tkhorzhevsky 1878–1951*
(after Jean-Marie Guyau 1854–1888)

Ona zadumalas'. Odna, pered oknom
Sklonyas', ona sitid, i v sumrake nochnom
Mertsayet dolgiy vzor; a v sineve bezbrezhnoy
Temneyushchikh nebes, ronyaya luch svoy nezhnyy,
Voskhodyat zvezdochki bezshumnoy tolpoj,
I kazhetysa, chto tam kakoy-to svetlyy roy
Tainstvenno parit i, slovno voskhishchennyy,
Trepeshchet nad yevo golovkoyu sklonennoy.

㉒ **Op.34 No.4** *Konstantin Balmont*

Veter perelyotnyy oblaskal menya
I shepnul pechal'no: «Noch' sil'neye dnya».
I zakat pomerknul. Tuchi pocherneli.
Drognuli, smutilis' pasmurnyye yeli.
I nad tyomnym morem, gde krutilsya val,
Veter perelyotnyy zybyu probezhal.
Noch' tsarila v mire. A mezhdum tem dalyoko,
Za morem zazhglosya ognennoye oko.
Novyy raspustilsya v nebesakh tsvetok,
Svetom vozrozhdyonnym zablestal Vostok.
Veter izmenilsya, i pakhnul mne v ochi,
I shepnul s usmeshkoy: «Den' sil'neye noch'».

㉓ **Margaritki, Op.38 No.3** *Igor Severyanin 1887–1941*

O, posmotri! kak mnogo margaritok –
I tam, i tut...
Oni tsvetut; ikh mnogo; ikh izbytok;
Oni tsvetut.
Ikh lepestki tryokhgrannyye – kak kryl'ya,
Kak belyy shyolk...
V nikh leta moshch! V nikh radost' izobil'ya!
V nikh sletlyy polk.

Twilight

She became pensive. Alone, leaning before the window,
She sits, and in the nocturnal dusk
Her lingering gaze glimmers; and in the boundless blueness
Of the darkening heavens, dispersing their tender rays,
Little stars rise in a quiet crowd,
And it seems that there some kind of bright cluster
Mysteriously soars and, as if enraptured,
Quivers above her bowed little head.

The wandering wind caressed me
And whispered with sadness: "Night is stronger than day."
The sunset faded. The clouds blackened.
The gloomy fir trees trembled and rustled.
And above the dark sea, where the wave was swirling,
The wandering wind ran across the ripples.
Night reigned in the world. But meanwhile, far away,
Beyond the sea, a fiery eye was kindled.
A new flower blossomed in the heavens,
With reborn light the East began to shine.
The wind changed, and breathed into my eyes,
And whispered with a smile: "Day is stronger than night."

Daisies

Oh, look! how many daisies –
Here, and there...
They bloom; there are many; they are aplenty;
They bloom.
Their triangular petals – like wings,
Like white silk...
In them is summer's power! In them is the joy of abundance!
In them a bright multitude.

Gotov', zemlya, tsvetam iz ros napitok,
Day sok steblyu...
O, devushki! o, zvezdy margaritok!
Ya vas lyublyu...

24 Krysolov, Op.38 No.4 Valery Bryusov 1873–1924

Ya na dudochke igrayu,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
I na dudochke igrayu,
Chi-to dushi vesely.

Ya idu vdol' tikhoy rechki,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Dremlyut tikhya ovezhki,
Krotko zyblutsya polya.

Spite, ovtsy i barashki,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Za lugami krasnoy kashki
Stroyno vstali topolya.

Malyy domik tam taitysa,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Miloy devushke prisnitsya,
Chto yey dushu otdal ya.

I na nezhnyy zov svireli,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Viydet slovno k svetloy tseli,
Cherez sad, cherez polya.

I v lesu pod dubom tyomnym,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Budet zhdat' v bredu istomnom,
V chas, kogda usnyot zemlya.

Vstrechu gost'yu doroguyu,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Vplot' do utra zatseluyu,
Serdte laskoy utolya.

Prepare, O Earth, a drink of dew for the flowers,
Give juice to the stem...
Oh, maidens! oh, stars of daisies!
I love you...

The pied piper

I play a reed-pipe,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la,
I play a reed-pipe,
Cheering up someone's soul.

I walk along a quiet river,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la,
Timid sheep are asleep,
The fields are gently rocking.

Sleep, sheep and lambs,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la,
Beyond the fields of red clover
Stand slender poplars.

A little house is hidden there,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la,
A pretty maiden will have a dream,
That I gave her my soul.

And to the tender call of the reed-pipe,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la,
She will come, as if towards a bright dream,
Through the garden, through the fields.

And in the forest under the dark oak,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la,
She will wait in a languorous fever
At the hour when the earth falls asleep.

I will greet the dear guest,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la,
And will kiss her away till dawn,
Satisfying my heart with tenderness.

I, smenivshis's ney kolechkom,
Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya,
Otpushchu yeyo k ovechkam,
V sad, gde stroyny topolya.

■ **Son, Op.38 No.5** *Fyodor Sologub 1863–1927*

V mire net nichego
Dozhdelenneye sna,
Chary est' u nego,
U nego tishina,
U nego na ustakh
Ni pechal' i ni smekh,
I v bezdonnykh ochakh
Mnogo taynykh utekh.

U nego shiroki,
Shiroki dva kryla,
I legki, tak lyogki,
Kak polnochnaya mbla.
Ne ponyat', kak nesyat',
I kuda i na chyom
On krylom ne vzmakhnyot
I ne divinet plechom.

■ **A-ul, Op.38 No.6** *Konstantin Balmont*

Tvoy nezhnyy smekh byl skazkoyu izmenchivoyu,
On zval, kak v son zoyoyt svirel'nyy zvon.
I vot venkom, stikhom tebya uvenchivayu.
Udyom, bezhim vdvoyem na gornyy sklon.

No gde zhe ty?
Lish' zvon vershin pozvanivayet,
Tsvetku tsvetok sred' dnya zazhyog svechu.
I chey-to smekh vse vglub' menya zamanivayet,

Poyu, ishchu,
"A-ul"
"A-ul"
Krichu.

And, after we've exchanged rings,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la,
I'll put her out with the sheep,
Into the garden, where slender poplars stand!

Sleep

There is nothing in the world
More longed for than sleep,
It has enchantment,
It has silence,
On its lips
Neither sorrow nor laughter,
And in its bottomless eyes
Much secret delight.

It has two
Wide, wide wings,
And light, so light,
Like the midnight mist.
It cannot be understood, how it carries you,
And where, and upon what –
It does not flap a wing
Nor move a shoulder.

Aoo!

Your gentle laughter was like an elusive fairytale,
It called, like the flute's ringing sound calls one into a dream.
And now with wreath, with verse I crown you.
Let us go, let us run together to the mountain slope.

But where are you?
Only the ringing of the peaks resounds,
A flower for a flower has lit a candle during the day.
And someone's laughter lures me ever deeper in,

I sing, I seek,
"Aoo!"
"Aoo!"
I cry.



ARENSKY RACHMANINOFF

Romances

ANASTASIA PROKOFIEVA soprano · SERGEY RYBIN piano

ANTON ARENSKY 1861–1906

5 Romances, Op.70

1	No.1 Schast'ye (Happiness)	2:04	12
2	No.2 Osen' (Autumn)	2:30	13
3	No.3 Kolybel'naya (Lullaby)	2:22	
4	No.4 Nebosklon oslepitel'no-sinyi (The sky, brilliantly azure...)	2:34	14
5	No.5 Ya na tebya glyazhu s ulybkoy (I gaze at you with a smile)	1:28	15–16

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF 1873–1943

6	Ya zhdu tebya, Op.14/1 (I wait for you)	1:43	20
7	Siren', Op.21/5 (Lilacs)	2:08	
8	Ditya! kak tsvetok ty prekrasna, Op.8/2 (Child! You are as beautiful as a flower)	1:51	21
9	Son, Op.8/5 (Dream)	1:30	22
10	One otvechali, Op.21/4 (They answered)	1:48	23
11	Zdes' khorosho, Op.21/7 (How fair this spot!)	2:01	24

ANTON ARENSKY

5 Romances, WoO No.1 Poéziya (Poetry)	2:56
Gornimi tikho letela	
dusha nebesami, Op.64/3	2:32
(Silently, a soul soared through the high heavens...)	
Osen', Op.27/2 (Autumn)	2:05
Vospominaniye, Op.71 (Reminiscence)	13:03
Suite for voice and piano	

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Noch' pechal'na, Op.26/12	2:06
(The night is mournful)	
Sumerki, Op.21/3 (Twilight)	2:12
Veter perelyotnyy, Op.34/4	3:02
(The wandering wind)	
Margaritki, Op.38/3 (Daisies)	2:25
Krysolov, Op.38/4 (The pied piper)	3:03
Son, Op.38/5 (Sleep)	3:27
A-u!, Op.38/6 (Aoo!)	2:15

Total Duration

61:16

Recording: Henry Wood Hall, London, 20 & 21 June 2025**Executive Producer:** Siva Oke**Recording Producer, Engineer, Editor:** Patrick Allen**Front Cover:** Photo by Ed Choo**Design:** WLP London Ltd · **Booklet Editor:** Ray Granlund**Visit somm-recordings.com for further information**

© 2026 SOMM RECORDINGS · THAMES DITTON · SURREY · ENGLAND · Made in the EU