

## Graham School of Continuing Studies

### Romanticism and Reaction: Rachmaninov and Prokofiev

**Course Description.** The two Sergeis: giant men, giant pianists, and giant composers whose music has not always gotten the respect it deserves. Rachmaninov's place in the pantheon of romantic composers is sometimes overshadowed by his status as perhaps the greatest pianist of the recorded era. Prokofiev struggled with emerging modernism before settling into a neoromanticism that has sometimes been considered selling out to his Soviet masters. Our stylistic comparison will cover their solo piano works – the percussive virtuosity of Prokofiev and the romantic exuberance of Rachmaninov – their symphonies and other works; and their monumental piano concertos. Music literacy is not required.

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### Syllabus

Note: works are subject to change.

Topic	Featured Works
<b>Week 1 - Rachmaninov</b> Early studies with Zverev. Conservatory days. Tchaikovsky's patronage.	First piano concerto. Songs op. 4. Elegiac trio in d minor. First symphony. <i>Aleko</i> .
<b>Week 2 - Rachmaninov</b> Psychological crisis.	Second piano concerto. Preludes op. 23 and op. 32. <i>The Miserly Knight</i> .
<b>Week 3 - Prokofiev</b> Childhood as a prodigy. Conservatory days. Formation of a unique temperament.	Early piano works. First piano concerto.
<b>Week 4 - Prokofiev</b> Years in the west. The traveling virtuoso.	Ballets esp. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> . Opera: <i>The Flaming Angel</i> , <i>Love for Three Oranges</i> .
<b>Week 5 - Rachmaninov</b> Travels in US, Germany, Switzerland.	Etudes tableaux. Third piano concerto. <i>Isle of the Dead</i> .
<b>Week 6 - Rachmaninov</b> Years in America. Rachmaninov the pianist. Composing drought. Master of the variation.	<i>Variations on a Theme by Corelli</i> , <i>Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini</i> . Symphonic Dances.
<b>Week 7 - Prokofiev,</b> The Soviet years. Lyricism and propaganda.	Film music. Symphony number 6.
<b>Week 8 - Prokofiev</b> <i>War and Peace</i> : the novel and the opera.	Analysis with DVDs.

### Recommended Readings

*Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (Russian Music Studies)  
by Sergei Bertensson (Author), Jay Leyda (Author), Sophia Satina (Author)

*Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews* (Hardcover)  
by Vladimir Blok, compiler

*A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Paperback)  
by Francis Maes

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this topic at  
[www.holdekunst.com](http://www.holdekunst.com):  
John's classical  
music blog

*Prokofiev--A Biography: From Russia to the West 1891-1935*  
by David Nice

*Rachmaninoff* (Master Musicians Series) (Paperback)  
by Geoffrey Norris

*Selected Letters Of Sergei Prokofiev* (Hardcover)  
by Harlow Robinson (Editor, Translator)

*Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* (Paperback)  
by Harlow Robinson (Author)

*Rachmaninoff* (Illustrated Lives of the Great Composers) (Paperback)  
by Robert Walker (Author)