

Stanislav Kochanovsky brings Rachmaninoff for his Cleveland Orchestra debut

by Mike Telin



“Every debut with a new orchestra is a special moment you never forget. But the famous Cleveland Orchestra is definitely one of the most extraordinary musical institutions in the world,” Russian conductor Stanislav Kochanovsky wrote in an email. “I have so many historical recordings with Erich Leinsdorf, George Szell, and Lorin Maazel in my private collection and I can’t wait to hear the unique voice of the orchestra with my own ears.”

Next week he will have just that opportunity. On Saturday, July 15 at 7:00 pm at Blossom Music Center, Kochanovsky will lead an all-Rachmaninoff program featuring the *Symphony No. 1* and the *Piano Concerto No. 3* with Nikolai Lugansky as soloist. Tickets are available [online](#).

Mike Telin: You’re bringing a wonderful program. Why did you choose these particular pieces?

Stanislav Kochanovsky: This year the whole world celebrates Rachmaninoff’s 150th anniversary. As I have almost all of his works in my repertoire, I proposed the rarely performed and not so well known First Symphony. Later I found out that The Cleveland Orchestra has never performed it in their history. This fact makes my debut even more exciting! As for the Piano Concerto, I think it was the soloist’s choice.

MT: The Symphony has an interesting history and I know that you have conducted it in the past. Can you say a few words about the piece?

SK: I was born and studied in St. Petersburg, where the First Symphony, with the unlucky Opus 13, was unsuccessfully performed at the St. Petersburg Philharmonic conducted by Alexander Glazunov. It was a real disaster for Rachmaninoff. After that, he suffered a psychological crisis — for a few years he didn't write anything. Only after the composer's death was the First Symphony rediscovered and the score restored.

The second performance took place at the Moscow Conservatory in 1945 under the baton of Alexander Gauk. The fact that Rachmaninoff quotes the main theme of the Symphony in his last work, *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45, shows that he couldn't forget that premiere for the rest of his life. Every time I perform this symphony, I want to demonstrate how beautiful this music is and “protect” the composer from that terrible evening in March 1897.

MT: You have worked with Nikolai Lugansky in the past, and after Cleveland the two of you will work together in Korea. What do you enjoy about him and his playing?

SK: Nikolai is a dear friend of mine and an outstanding pianist-intellectual with whom it is always interesting to spend time conversing on any topic. He loves chess and has an amazing sense of humor! We've shared the best stages all over the world and have many plans for the near future. In Seoul we will present the whole cycle of Rachmaninoff's piano concertos in two evenings. With my NDR Radiophilharmonie, we've planned the rarely performed Medtner Third Piano Concerto and later the Brahms First Piano Concerto in Belgrade.

MT: You conduct a lot of opera. How does that inform your symphony conducting?

SK: Opera is my first love! I started as an opera conductor at a very early age and I believe that it is the best way for any conductor to find the key to this difficult profession. After the opera, you can go anywhere!

MT: I read that you attended the Glinka Choir School. Were you always interested in music?

SK: I have no musicians in my family. Thanks to my grandmother and the famous Soviet radio, which announced the Choir was holding auditions in the Glinka-Capella in St. Petersburg, I easily passed the exams and began my long musical journey in one of the oldest institutions in Russia.

MT: What made you decide to become a conductor?

SK: Since the beginning we were singing in the choir and of course we adored our chief conductor. I was maybe 10-11 years old when Mariinsky Theatre scouts came to the school looking for boys for Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, and I was selected. This was

the beginning of my endless love of opera. After a long process of piano and scenic rehearsals, we finally came on the famous stage and I saw the man in the orchestra pit who led and controlled the orchestra, choir, and soloists with his “magic” baton. Since that day I clearly understood that I wanted to be there — I wanted to be a conductor!

Many years afterward, I had the honor to conduct different operas and symphonic programs at the historic Mariinsky Theatre. In 2019 my dream to do my own *Magic Flute* also came true at the Verbier Festival.

Photo by Daniil Rabovsky

Published on ClevelandClassical.com July 6, 2023.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)