

A man with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a grey turtleneck and a blue herringbone jacket, is leaning on a black Yamaha grand piano. The piano's lid is open, and two small bottles are on the ledge. The background is dark.

**JOSEPH FLEETWOOD**

**LISZT**  
**Sonata in B minor, S.178**

**RACHMANINOFF**  
**Sonata No.1 in D minor, Op.28**



**YAMAHA**

Recorded at Yamaha Artist Services New York City, on the  
afternoon of December 7th, 2021

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Piano Technician: Shintoro Shane Hishono

Piano: YAMAHA CFX No. 6341400

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Photography: Rob Davidson

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## TRACK LISTING:

FRANZ LISZT: Sonata in B minor, S.178

1. Lento assai - Allegro energico - Andante sostenuto - Allegro energico - Andante sostenuto - Lento assai [31'33"]

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF: Sonata No.1 In D minor, Op.28

2. Allegro moderato [15'32"]

3. Lento [10'00"]

4. Allegro molto [16'17"]

## LISZT SONATA IN B MINOR, S.178

The manuscript of Liszt's Sonata in B-minor bears the completion date of February 2nd 1853. Preliminary sketches of the opening motif date from 1851, and a sketch of the Andante Sostenuto from 1849, but the bulk of the compositional work was done during 1852. Liszt also worked on the Hungarian Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra in this period and after the sonata was published in 1854, he sent a copy to his friend, Louis Köhler, with a letter saying:

*For the present I allow myself to send you my Sonata, which has just been published at Härtel's. You will soon receive another long piece, Scherzo and March, and in the course of the summer my Years of Pilgrimage Suite of Piano Compositions will appear at Schott's..... With these pieces I shall have done for the present with the piano, in order to devote myself exclusively to orchestra compositions...*

For Liszt, the sonata was the pinnacle of his compositions for piano up to that point, and it was also a statement on the future development of sonata form should be developed in the post-Beethoven era.

Carl Czerny, in his “Practical Method of Composition” codified nineteenth century sonata form into what became the standard model. Liszt regarded this formulaic approach as laziness and was not interested in conforming to this model. There was precedent for Liszt’s new sonata form. According to Mark Tanner, Liszt’s B-minor sonata belongs to the tradition of the Viennese Fantasia, citing Mozart’s D minor fantasy, K.396, C minor fantasy, K.397, and Schubert’s Fantasy in F minor, D.940, in which sonata movements are compressed into a unified whole.

Liszt was also influenced by Schubert’s Wanderer Fantasy of 1822. The overarching form of the Wanderer Fantasy is Sonata form, although the four movements are based on only one single theme and conjoined to form one single movement. Liszt’s admiration for the Wanderer Fantasy led him to orchestrate it as a piano concerto, and his B-minor sonata follows a similar model.

Although Kenneth Hamilton and Alan Walker both agree that the matter of whether a program exists or not is settled by Liszt’s silence on the matter, other writers over the years have looked for clues from within the score. Paul Merrick believes that the sonata has a religious theme, and he connects this to the story of Faust. Leszek Polony also believes that the program of the Liszt sonata is a religious one, and states that Hungarian pianist Tibor Száz

believes that the Grandioso theme is based on the Gregorian Good Friday hymn “Crux Fidelis”

Alfred Cortot nicknamed the Liszt Sonata the “Faust” sonata and superimposed the structure of the Faust symphony onto the sonata for his interpretation of the work. The Faust symphony and the B minor sonata both share an almost identical theme, leading others to take the same view that the sonata traces the characters of Faust, Gretchen and Mephistopheles.

### RACHMANINOFF SONATA No.1 IN D MINOR, Op.28

Rachmaninoff’s Sonata No.1 in D minor Op.28 is the most neglected of his major piano works. Rachmaninoff performed the piece for only five years, and the first recording wasn’t made until 1968, by John Ogden. Rachmaninoff thought the quality of the work to be “dubious”, and it received a cold reception during his lifetime. Although the sonata is still not often performed live, there have been several recordings made during the past twenty years. The first sonata is a technically awkward piece, which is

unusual for Rachmaninoff who understood very well the possibilities and limitations of the piano.

In 1906 Rachmaninoff moved to Dresden and worked on four compositions including the first sonata. In December 1906, Rachmaninoff wrote to Nikita Morozov, a theory teacher at the Moscow Conservatoire, to request his guidance on rondo form. In the letter, Rachmaninoff described his idea for the sonata, and a draft was completed by February 1907. Dissatisfied with the work even at that stage, Rachmaninoff wrote to Morozov that the sonata was:

*“Absolutely wild and indeterminately long - about 45 minutes, I think. I was lured into such a length by the program...that of three contrasting types from one outstanding literary work. Of course, there will be no program given, although it does begin to occur to me that if I revealed the program, the sonata would be clearer”*

Rachmaninoff performed the sonata for a group of friends in Moscow, including the pianist Konstantin Igumnov. Overwhelmed, Igumnov asked Rachmaninoff when the work would be printed, and in 1907 the composer sent a copy to Igumnov,

*“Asking me.... To send him in Dresden my opinion of it, particularly as to its suitability to the piano. This request was flattering, but in some degree it did leave me at a loss. Under the direct impression of its music I didn't feel I could be objective enough to give a detailed analysis, and therefore I called on Leonid Nikolayev to examine the sonata with me; with his cooperation a series of comments was composed, accompanying my reply. . . For a long while I had no word from Rachmaninoff, and I began to be afraid that the comments had been somewhat tactless”*

Rachmaninoff was not offended by the remarks and suggestions, and reminiscing on reading the revised version for the first time Igunnov said !

*“it was apparent that the most essential part of my comments had been taken into consideration by the author. A considerable part of the recapitulation in the first movement had been recomposed, shortening it by more than 50 bars; some cuts had been made in the finale, mostly in the recapitulation, about 60 bars. Changes of treatment were made only in the finale... The sonata was played publicly for the first time in my concert of Rachmaninoff works, in Moscow on October 17, 1908”*



The concert attracted criticism from Yuri Engel, who wrote in the influential publication *Russkiye Vedomosti*:

*“The “peak” of the concert was a new piano composition of Rachmaninoff... This new sonata is musically complex and quite intricate in its pianism. ... It was difficult for the listener to free himself from an impression of dryness.... The new sonata appeals with its mastery of form, its abundance of interesting details, just as, for example, do the [second] piano concerto and the cello sonata, but it does not have their freshness of fantasy, nor comparable thematic inspiration. Besides, in it Rachmaninoff can occasionally be heard repeating himself - which would be no calamity if these repetitions were “in a finer edition”, but this one cannot say.”*

Perhaps Rachmaninoff was correct in that revealing the program would have helped illuminate the sonata to the public but. in maintaining silence about the program, Rachmaninoff was echoing Liszt who gave no program for his own *Sonata in B-minor*. Rachmaninoff, however, did reveal the program to Igumnov who wrote:

*“I learned from him that when he composed this sonata he had Goethe’s Faust in mind, and that the first movement corresponds to Faust, the second to Gretchen, and the third, to the flight to Brocken, and Mephistopheles”*

This follows the same sequence as Liszt’s “Faust” Symphony. Some commentators have said that Rachmaninoff had abandoned the idea of a program for this sonata, but Rustem Hayroudinoff refutes this idea, since Rachmaninoff revealed the program privately to Igumnov.

## JOSEPH FLEETWOOD

Pianist Joseph Fleetwood signed as a YAMAHA artist in 2021, and his career continues to gain momentum since his release of J.S. Bach's Six Partitas on Sheva Records/Naxos, which sold more than 720,000 downloads in 2020-21

Joseph comes from an extraordinary musical lineage. His first teacher was Miss Katherine McLauchlan who was a pupil of Tobias Matthay (teacher of Myra Hess, Maura Lympany, Clifford Curzon). Joseph's last teacher, of seven years was Scottish pianist George Donald, who was a pupil of Karl Ulrich Schnabel, son of Artur Schnabel.

Joseph has performed throughout Europe and the USA in Vienna, Milan, Naples, London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and many other places. As a concerto soloist Joseph has performed many of the great piano concertos including Tchaikovsky 1 and 2, Rachmaninoff Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini, Rachmaninoff 1 and 2, Beethoven 1 - 5, Mozart 21, Shostakovich 2, Grieg, Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue and Mendelssohn 1.

His solo repertoire encompasses the core repertoire and lesser known works of Albeniz, Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Debussy, Ginastera, Granados, Grieg, Haydn, Janacek, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Poulenc, Prokofieff, Ravel, Rachmaninoff, Schubert, Schumann, Tchaikovsky and others and he is continually expanding his repertoire to construct exciting recital programmes.

Joseph has worked with many outstanding and celebrated musicians including Josef Swensen, Gianandrea Noseda, Artur Pizarro, Malcolm Martineau, Karen Cargill, Miranda Keys, Stephen Clark, Liam Lynch (RSNO), Thomas Maternick-Piret (RCM, Columbus SO), the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the orchestras of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Royal College of Music.

His playing has attracted high praise from critics and other musicians alike, with commentators noting 'Joseph Fleetwood is an outstanding young performer' (Murray McLachlan of Chethams), "Played with the precision of a fine-arts jeweler, you elevated the art of playing the Chopin Revolutionary Etude to a higher plane.... You played with a beautiful delicacy of touch and absolute clarity. Your Bach performance was perfect" (Alexander Korsantia of the New England Conservatoire).

Joseph's playing has been broadcast on BBC 1, BBC 2, BBC Radio Scotland, and regional stations throughout the UK as both live performances and CD recordings. His debut CD featured some popular and lesser-known works by Edvard Grieg, and in 2022 will record a further album of J.S. Bach's music including the Italian Concerto and Inventions, for the Sheva Label at Yamaha.

In 2016 Joseph was commissioned to compose a short piece of music for Piano Restorations Ltd in the UK, and the resulting piece has been filmed and made into a TV advert for the company. The video, which was posted on Classic FM's Facebook page, has received over 620,000 views and is currently the most viewed video on their page.

