

WELCOME HOME, SERGEI

Rachmaninoff, America and a Living Legacy

(Serge Rachmaninoff Foundation by Andrea Loetscher, Artistic & Executive Director, 29.9.26)

More than a century ago, Sergei Rachmaninoff sat at the piano in Carnegie Hall and played his Third Piano Concerto with Gustav Mahler and the New York Philharmonic.

Tonight, in a much more intimate setting, his music and his spirit are back in New York. For our Foundation, this is more than a homecoming to a city — it is a homecoming to the country that welcomed him, celebrated him, and became his third and final home.

Welcome home, Sergei.

Dear Stan and Marion, you have done far more than host us tonight — you turned an idea into a living encounter. Thank you for your generosity, your imagination, and your trust.

I'm Andrea Loetscher, Artistic & Executive Director of the Serge Rachmaninoff Foundation. Our ambition goes beyond preserving Rachmaninoff's legacy — we want his work to keep living: rediscovered, reinterpreted, carried forward by exceptional artists. From Senar into the world.

Senar is where this begins — even its name carries its origin: Sergei, Natalia, Rachmaninoff. There, we bring exceptional artists, ideas and institutions together, and encourage new interpretations and new works that create resonance far beyond it.

That ambition begins with Rachmaninoff himself.

He set almost unreachable standards — Composer. Pianist. Conductor. But also entrepreneur, patron, and a deeply curious human being. His discipline and uncompromising pursuit of quality remain our benchmark today.

And he understood something essential: art never exists in isolation. As a pioneer in music, he surrounded himself with extraordinary people who were changing their time — embracing recording technology through Thomas Edison, supporting Igor Sikorsky's pioneering work in aviation. Artists, inventors, entrepreneurs: different worlds inspiring one another.

You feel that same spirit at Villa Senar. Rachmaninoff didn't simply build a house on Lake Lucerne — he created a modern ensemble of architecture, landscape, music, friendship and renewal: a work of art in its own right. A refuge, certainly, but also a place where ideas could emerge and something new could ignite. That is the magic of Senar.

That mattered, because his life was also a story of repeated loss and reinvention. He left Russia in 1917 and built a new life far from home. In a world fractured by war, he did not retreat into nostalgia — he created beauty, built new relationships, and began again.

And America became the place where that reinvention found extraordinary resonance.

He played around 1,600 concerts in the United States and worked with its great orchestras and conductors.

For Rachmaninoff, America was not only a market or a stage. It became home. And that is why tonight matters.

Today, Senar is where we continue his story. Not as a museum. As a living artistic place.

Just a few weeks ago, Alexander Raskatov completed a full-orchestra arrangement of Rachmaninoff's Corelli Variations, a Foundation commission. It premieres on February 17, 2027, in Washington, with the National Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Gianandrea Noseda.

Through the Rachmaninoff Award with Young Concert Artists, we connect exceptional young American musicians with Senar, bringing them to Switzerland for residencies, concerts and artistic exchange.

And this November, for the very second time in history, Zurich Opera brings Rachmaninoff's three operas to the stage — dramatic, searching, experimental works that reveal another side of him. The Foundation is making the livestream available worldwide.

This is what we mean by a living legacy: not repeating the past, but allowing great art to unfold again — through new artists, new interpretations and new audiences.

And now we are working on perhaps our most audacious bridge yet.

Together with Steinway & Sons — Rachmaninoff was their first brand ambassador, and his original piano still stands at Senar — we want to bring his pianistic voice into the world of Steinway Spirio: using today's technology so a new generation can encounter not just his compositions, but his artistic signature at the piano.

And if we succeed, there is only one place where it should premiere: Carnegie Hall.

2028. That is our ambition. Stay tuned.

None of this happens through artistic ambition alone — it grows because people believe exceptional art deserves to live, evolve, and reach the next generation.

What we hope to find here are friends — friends of Rachmaninoff, friends of Senar, lovers of music, curiosity and excellence. People who want to be part of what comes next.

Come to Senar. Not simply to visit, but to experience a place that cannot be reproduced anywhere else: sit at Rachmaninoff's piano, walk the rooms and garden he created, step onto his beloved speedboat. Be inspired by the same place that inspired him.

And now, two of those exceptional young artists take over: Albert Cano Smit and Oliver Neubauer — outstanding talent and curiosity, in dialogue with musical history rather than simply reproducing it.

Tonight's program brings Rachmaninoff into conversation with Lili Boulanger, Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Maurice Ravel — his contemporaries, inspirations and fellow creators of a new musical language.

So tonight, Stan and Marion's home becomes, for a few hours, a little Villa Senar in New York — a place where music, friendship and new ideas meet.

Welcome home, Sergei.

And now — let the music begin.