

**Brent Woo, UCLA**

**Letters from Sergei Rachmaninoff:  
Substantiating a Context for His Depression in 1897-1900**

**1. Introduction**

Sergei Vasilevich Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) occupies a special place in the history of Russian classical music. Educated at Moscow Conservatory by the already established composers Anton Arensky and Sergei Taneyev and personally mentored by the preeminent Pyotr Tchaikovsky, he follows a long line of distinguished musicians. Although this environment cultivated a strong musical background, it created high expectations for the young composer. In part, he fulfilled these expectations; in part he did not.

Rachmaninoff's one-act opera *Aleko* won the gold medal for composition, the highest award available for students at the conservatory. By the time he was twenty, he had already composed his Piano Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor (Op. 1)—highly successful in its own right, although he revised it in 1917—and *Morceaux de Fantaisie* (Op. 3), a set of five pieces for solo piano, which includes his most famous work, the Prelude in C-sharp minor (Op. 3, No. 2). But he was not always a model student. In his early years at the conservatory, he failed most of his classes and was referred to Nikolai Zverev, whose study and practice regime was so stringent as to be considered abusive. However, when he discovered his talent for composition, he offended Zverev by asking for a separate room in which to write. He was lazy and stubborn.

Rachmaninoff's tenacity is perhaps best evinced by the catastrophe of his Symphony No. 1 in D minor (Op. 13). Despite a blasé response from his teachers Arensky and Taneyev toward a small symphonic composition exercise, he nevertheless began work on a full-scale orchestral

work in September 1894. Tchaikovsky had encouraged this endeavor and commissioned the 21-year-old to transcribe the latter's *Manfred* Symphony (Op. 58), further increasing Rachmaninoff's then nascent exposure to the symphonic genre.

Rachmaninoff was shocked by the untimely death in 1893 of Tchaikovsky, who had consistently vouched for the younger composer and had been instrumental in Rachmaninoff's entrance into the Muscovite social elite. That same year, his childhood teacher Zverev also passed away. Although they had parted on bad terms, Rachmaninoff was still deeply affected.

Progress on the symphony progressed at such a slow rate that it is surprising he did not compose anything else during this time. For more than a year, he wrote seven hours a day. When he finally completed it in October 1895, the draft was not reviewed favorably. Taneyev called the melodies "flabby" and "colorless," but, meaning well, helped the younger composer revise some of it. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, on hearing the symphony in rehearsal, told Rachmaninoff, "Forgive me, but I do not find this music at all agreeable."<sup>1</sup>

Its premiere took place in St. Petersburg on March 15/27, 1897,<sup>2</sup> and it was almost universally derided by critics. Rachmaninoff himself walked out in disgust before the end of the performance. The few rehearsals were plagued by technical problems, and the conductor, Alexander Glazunov, may have been drunk.<sup>3</sup>

Critics were relentless. César Cui, a member of The Mighty Five, the dominant musician society that dictated the direction of Russian music of the time, spearheaded the assault with this wrenching criticism:

If there were a conservatory in Hell, and if one of its talented students were to compose a program symphony based on the story of the ten plagues of Egypt,

---

<sup>1</sup> Fisk, 234.

<sup>2</sup> Note: Russia did not use the Gregorian calendar until 1918. Therefore, all dates are presented thus: Julian calendar (Old Style) / Gregorian calendar (New Style).

<sup>3</sup> Harrison, 78.

and if he were to compose a symphony like Mr. Rachmaninoff's, then he would have fulfilled his task brilliantly and would delight the inhabitants of Hell. To us this music leaves an evil impression with its broken rhythms, obscurity and vagueness of form, meaningless repetition of the same short tricks, the nasal sound of the orchestra, the strained crash of the brass, and above all its sickly, perverse harmonization and quasi-melodic outlines, the complete absence of simplicity and naturalness, the complete absence of themes.<sup>4</sup>

This vitriol is often cited as the epitome of criticism aimed at the ill-fated symphony, but in fact Cui's comments are stained with bias. As a member of The Mighty Five, he retained not only a sense of superiority, but a political bias against more progressive or modern musicians and their music. Moreover, as a St. Petersburg native, Cui had a natural dislike for composers from Moscow. Rachmaninoff, both relatively progressive and trained throughout his whole life in Moscow, was the perfect target for Cui's stinging criticism.

Rachmaninoff had dedicated more than a year of his life to this symphony, so such obloquy naturally left a strong impression. But what is most puzzling—that which leads to the crucial idea of this paper—is that for months after the actual premiere, Rachmaninoff seemed unaffected by what the critics had to say. He merely mentioned his disappointment to several of his colleagues. His delayed reaction was so significant that Max Harrison, author of *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*, the most recent biography of the composer, wrote: "This delay in Rachmaninoff's collapse has never been, and presumably never will be, satisfactorily explained."<sup>5</sup>

But it may be possible to find a context for this delay. A close examination of Rachmaninoff's letters suggests a story significantly different from the one often promulgated by his biographers.

---

<sup>4</sup> Norris 101.

<sup>5</sup> (Harrison, 78)

## 2. Letters

Throughout his life, Rachmaninoff wrote hundreds of letters to his friends, family, and colleagues. Most of the early letters were written in Russian; in German from the early twentieth century until 1918; and then in English. Although particular groups of letters have been translated, this paper aims to fill the gap left by those who have not concentrated on this early period in Rachmaninoff's life. Presented here are the relevant letters, which depict a different aspect of his life than the ones usually portrayed in his biographies.

The premiere of Symphony No. 1 on March 15/27, 1897, was a significant turning point in Rachmaninoff's career. No longer the wonder child of the Moscow Conservatory, he was mercilessly shot down by stentorian critics after making his first steps as a Free Artist (a title conferred to graduates of the conservatory). His closest friends report that although he left the theater in anguish over the performance, he only mentioned being disappointed in Glazunov and seemed, on the whole, unaffected by the affair. Three days later, in a letter to Natalia Skalon, a family friend, there is no direct mention of the symphony's failure. Notably, he mentions his fear of Glazunov:

Now I want to thank you and your sisters for the money that you gave me for the trip. When I left you for Glazunov's it suddenly occurred to me that now I would have to ask him to lend me some money. The thought of this horrified me. I couldn't have asked him, even if I didn't have your money in my pocket. My tongue would have been tied....<sup>6</sup>

This is in stark contrast to a letter he wrote to Glazunov earlier that year, in which he speaks freely and gratefully: "...I wanted to thank you very much for the inclusion of my symphony in your program."<sup>7</sup> Glazunov also gave the premiere of Rachmaninoff's symphonic poem, *The Rock* (Op. 7, 1893), so he was by no means an incompetent conductor, nor was he disliked by

<sup>6</sup> Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon, Novgorod, March 18/30, 1897. The original text for all letters can be found in the appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Rachmaninoff to A. K. Glazunov, Moscow, January 11/23, 1897.

Rachmaninoff. All that changed after the premiere of the symphony, and in his next letter to Zatyevich, it is pretty apparent that Rachmaninoff was bothered by Glazunov in particular.

The main reason for this [not replying to Zatyevich's letters] is my weakness, which forces me to lie down all the time.... I lie and rarely read. I also can't compose.... I also didn't inform you of my impressions after the performance of my First Symphony. I will do this now, although it is difficult for me since until now I cannot understand them myself.... I am not at all touched by the failure, nor am I bothered by the newspapers' abuse....

Either I, like some authors, have an unfairly biased attitude to the work, or this composition was poorly executed. And it actually was. I am amazed; how can such a talented person as Glazunov conduct so badly? I'm not talking about conducting technique...; I am talking about his musicality. He does not feel anything when conducting. It is as if he doesn't understand anything! ...So, I assume that the execution could be the cause of failure. (I do not assert, I assume). At the present moment, as you see, I am inclined to think that the execution is guilty. Tomorrow, perhaps, this view will change.... After six months, when things lighten up,<sup>8</sup> I will take another look at it, perhaps amend it, and it may even be printed—and perhaps I may even become partial to it.<sup>9</sup>

In the next couple of letters he continues to bemoan his condition. It has progressed to the point that he can't even write. He writes about treatment (in general) and pervasive lethargy.

Forgive me, dear Stephan Vasilevich, for the late answer to your dear letter with the liturgy text. Believe me, I only did this due to bad health, otherwise I would have thanked you long ago for your kindness and attention to me.... I feel so badly that treatment is all I can deal with.... In many ways I have misfortune and trouble!<sup>10</sup>

Without a doubt, Rachmaninoff is becoming physically ill. He constantly talks about his difficulty in writing and underlines the fact that he has not accomplished anything throughout this period of time.

As for me, I've recovered a little bit: this [the writing of this letter] is all I've achieved.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "облежится" is not a well-formed verb. I suggest that he applied the typical consonant mutation to the exceptional verb *облегчиться* 'to lighten, become easier'.

<sup>9</sup> Rachmaninoff to A. V. Zatyevich. Moscow, May 6/18, 1897.

<sup>10</sup> Rachmaninoff to S. V. Smolensky, July 30/August 12, 1897.

<sup>11</sup> Rachmaninoff to A. V. Zatyevich, July 31/August 12 1897.

I received both of your letters, dear friend Alexander V., and I thank you very much for them. Sorry for the late reply. The reason is still the same, that is, the unforgivable laziness and indulgence that I allow myself to partake in lately. And my kidney disease, and therefore in the early summer, I often couldn't sit or go anywhere. I just lay and intensively took medicine. Now I have recovered. The pain has almost left. Because of this disease, there is no work on my mind and I write nothing. But this I do not regret, if only I recover completely.<sup>12</sup>

This kidney disease is not mentioned a single time in any of the biographies by Harrison, Bertensson and Leyda, or Norris, leading me to believe that it's either an embellishment or a transient condition.

Your threat to often write long letters to me is not a fact, apparently, only words. And I believed it was your threat, and, of course, I was pleased. Where are those letters, Tatura?... remember about my nervous system...<sup>13</sup>

He can still muster the humor to write to his friend Natalia Skalon, a proxy to his first crush Vera Skalon, to whom he was forbidden to write by the Skalons' mother. Here he jokes at her empty threat to write long letters.

During this time, until the end of the summer of 1898, Rachmaninoff worked for Savva Mamontov, a Russian entrepreneur, whose new opera company needed a conductor. It was a good experience. He met Feodor Chaliapin, a bass singer, who became a close friend and would work with Rachmaninoff for a good part of his Russian career. It was reported at this time by Chaliapin that Rachmaninoff was generally in good spirits and even led the Mamontov troupe to Chaliapin's place one morning to go mushroom-hunting. Chaliapin reports waking up that morning to a raucous crowd led by a shameless, singing Rachmaninoff.

Rachmaninoff's cousin and teacher Alexander Siloti arranged for the premiere of Rachmaninoff's opera *Aleko* (1892), which was composed while he was a student at the Moscow

<sup>12</sup> Rachmaninoff to A. V. Zatayevich, September 4/16, 1897.

<sup>13</sup> Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon, Moscow. September 24/October 6, 1897.

Conservatory, early in 1899. It was received very well in St. Petersburg. He also began to spend time with Natalia Satina, who would later become his wife.

Up until this point, he still had not composed many pieces of significance. *Aleko* and the Prelude in C-sharp minor were mere student works and his *The Rock* and Piano Concerto No. 1 were perhaps his only successful large-scale works. Many of his other compositions were of little significance to his oeuvre. For example, his *Moments Musicaux* (Op. 16), although a full-length concert work, was composed simply because he was short on money. As a composer, he needed to be constantly writing as part of his livelihood. He had had a real physical illness, and the failure of the critical symphony was a blow to his pride. But he was surviving.

His general satisfaction with life at this point is codified in his casual composition of a song entitled "Were You Hiccupping?"<sup>14</sup> It was not long before this period of general happiness in Rachmaninoff's life would come to a rude and unexpected end.

He received news concerning his childhood sweetheart, Vera Skalon, to whom he had written letters throughout his childhood and most of his teen years. She had been happily married to someone else, whom she had loved that entire time.

Rachmaninoff's own marriage proposal to his cousin Natalia Satina had been rejected by the church since the Russian Orthodox Church forbids marriages between cousins.

His letters immediately begin to reflect this unhappy turn of events.

In general, everything is going so badly, I'm afraid of falling ill by a seizure of black melancholy.<sup>15</sup>

This poetic phrase recurs once more in a letter written a few weeks later, clearly signaling his descent into depression:

---

<sup>14</sup> "Икалось ли тебе?"

<sup>15</sup> Rachmaninoff to L. D. Skalon, Moscow, November 22/December 4, 1897.

My things are still awry. I am starting, it seems, to suffer from a black melancholy. That's a fact! This melancholy... today I cried like an idiot... I have not yet begun to drink vodka or wine at all, although almost every day I see one of the visiting S. Mamontovs in the pub, where I sit and keep quiet, but I'm almost ready to give you my honest word that if my affairs do not change, I will start to drink. I am very drawn to this.

Tatusha, I will die by the end of the season of black melancholy. Look and weep more! Come visit me at my grave....<sup>16</sup>

Rachmaninoff is probably at the worst point of his condition. He is struck with such a melancholy that he considers drinking. Perhaps too melodramatically he says that he will die of this melancholy.

Family intervention was necessary at this point. He was said to be “apathetic” and “greatly discouraged.”<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of 1900, it had been two and a half years since the symphony’s failure and he hadn’t composed a single new large work for his opus. His aunt, Vavara Satina, referred him to Dr. Nikolai Dahl, and they began a course of autosuggestive therapy.

Interrupting what would have otherwise been the road to recovery was a fateful visit to Leo Tolstoy. Princess Alexandra Lieven, a friend of the Satins, had Rachmaninoff meet with the legendary author.

Tomorrow, February 1, at nine o'clock in the evening, Princess Lieven will drag me to Leo Tolstoy. I balk, because I'm afraid. However, Lieven told him about our visit and I can't not go. Be a friend, come too, your presence encourages me. It will be all the easier.<sup>18</sup>

It is not immediately apparent why he is so resistant in the first place, using verbs such as "drag" and "balk." He admired Tolstoy, as virtually all Russians of his time did. He was probably just

<sup>16</sup> Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon, Moscow, December 6/18, 1897.

<sup>17</sup> Harrison, 89.

<sup>18</sup> Rachmaninoff to A. B. Goldenweiser, Moscow, January 31/February 12, 1900.



nervous at the prospect of meeting such a great figure, but it's strange given that he was himself somewhat of a legend already due to his earlier compositions.

In any case, his premonitions were correct. It turned out to be a catastrophic visit. Rachmaninoff was asked to play, and he did, accompanying Chaliapin in some of his own songs. After he finished, Tolstoy said without any reservation that such music was worthless and he hated it.<sup>19</sup>

Rachmaninoff continued his therapy with Dr. Dahl, meeting with him every day from January to April in 1900. His letters at this point reflect an unsatisfied tepidity:

I am healthy. I live quietly and peacefully, and this is very boring.<sup>20</sup>

I live peacefully and quietly, and it's quite boring.... You see how it all is boring and uninteresting.<sup>21</sup>

To Tchaikovsky's brother, Modest, who wrote the librettos for Rachmaninoff's operas, he writes what is perhaps the most telling letter of all. He explicitly states that for at least two years he has not composed "a single note," indeed, that he has lost the ability to compose:

Since I visited you in Klin, two years passed, and during these two years, besides a single romance, I didn't write a single note. Apparently, I have completely lost the ability to compose, and all my thoughts are directed toward regaining it....<sup>22</sup>

In a letter to N. D. Skalon he writes that he is "bored without the Russians and Russia."<sup>23</sup> In very few of his other letters does he ever complain of "boredom." He is more inclined to complain about the amount of work he has to do or about other people, yet in the span of six months he specifically mentions boredom several times.

<sup>19</sup> In his words: "Tell me, is such music needed by anyone? I must tell you how I dislike it all! Beethoven is nonsense, Pushkin and Lermontov also." (Harrison, 89)

<sup>20</sup> Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon, Yalta, May 8/21, 1900.

<sup>21</sup> Rachmaninoff to M. A. Slonov, May 10/23, 1900.

<sup>22</sup> Rachmaninoff to M. I. Tchaikovsky, Varazze, June 14/27, 1900.

<sup>23</sup> Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon, Varazze, July 9/22, 1900.

By this time, Rachmaninoff had completed treatment with Dr. Dahl, but had written nothing about it in his letters. Then suddenly, he received an invitation to Italy from Chaliapin, and there he began to write a small piece that would later become part of his opera, *Francesca da Rimini* (Op. 25, 1905). This composition definitively marks his return to composition.

On his return to Moscow in the summer of 1900, Rachmaninoff immediately began work on a large orchestral piece. By the beginning of December, he had, incredibly, completed two movements. A mini-premiere took place on December 15, 1900 in Moscow, and the half-finished work was received enthusiastically by a huge crowd.

Additionally, he also somehow produced an entire suite for two pianos at this time, finishing three out of four movements in two months by March, and the entirety in May.

I will send you, Alexander B., three parts of my new suite for two pianos. I am asking you to play it through with me.<sup>24</sup>

The letters now reflect a huge jump in productivity, just a year after his course of therapy with Dr. Dahl concluded.

You incorrectly reported that I have finished my second concerto. It is not yet ready. All this time I was busy with other works and just yesterday received my concerto.<sup>25</sup>

He was now working on a concerto and a suite for two pianos, two full-scale works which required the highest level of compositional faculty. He sent two movements (of three) of the concerto to Goldenweiser, asking him to "look at them, especially the last part, which goes quickly."<sup>26</sup> The vestiges of his depression still haunted him, however. "Everything," he writes somewhat bizarrely, "is unhealthy for me."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Rachmaninoff to A. B. Goldenweiser, Moscow, February 17/March 2, 1901.

<sup>25</sup> Rachmaninoff to V. I. Safonov, Moscow, February 18/March 3, 1901.

<sup>26</sup> Rachmaninoff to A. B. Goldenweiser, April 19/May 2 1901.

<sup>27</sup> Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon, June 8/21, 1901.

But we see that Rachmaninoff is generally feeling satisfied with his progress, and his compositional output is proof of this. He said, "The material grew in bulk, and new musical ideas began to stir within me—far more than I needed for my concerto."<sup>28</sup> With encouragement from his friends and colleagues, he completed the Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor (Op. 18) in April 1901.

You're right, Nikita S.! Now I played the first part of my concerto, and just now it became clear that the transition from the first theme to the second will not fit, that in such a way the first theme doesn't have a first theme, but an entry, and that not one idiot would believe, when I begin to play the second theme, that this is exactly the second theme. Everyone will think that this is the beginning of the concerto. In my opinion, I'm just desperate! And why did you come to me with your analysis five days prior to the performance of this concerto?<sup>29</sup>

Five days before the premier of his glorious Second Piano Concerto on October 27, 1901, his contemporary Morozov found some errors. This shows that Rachmaninoff's abilities have returned completely, since he is fully able to understand Morozov's critique and revise the work in time for the premiere.

At its world premiere on November 9, 1901, with Rachmaninoff at the piano and Siloti conducting, the concerto was acclaimed a brilliant success. It remains one of the composer's most enduring works. Its soaring, romantic themes have been adapted to dozens of pop and jazz songs, and it is a favorite of the standard concerto repertoire.

### **3. Final Remarks**

Today Symphony No. 1 is generally regarded as a good work, showing skilled instrumentation and lacking extraordinary defects. However the daring innovations and new musical style may have been excessive for late nineteenth-century Russia. All four movements

---

<sup>28</sup> Harrison, 93.

<sup>29</sup> Rachmaninoff to N .S. Morozov, Moscow, October 22/November 4, 1901.

herald disaster and destruction, with stormy melodies incorporating the medieval *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath) plainchant and torrents of *fortissimo* themes. The work is full of anxiety, drama, and emotional tension.

The reception of Symphony No. 1 certainly contributed to Rachmaninoff's long-term depression, but it was neither the only factor, nor the catalyst. While its failure was by no means an insignificant event in his life, the depression was precipitated only by later reflection on the event, compounded by physical illness and the rejection of his initial marriage proposal to his cousin.

Rachmaninoff's return to composition and normal life were marked by the wildly successful Piano Concerto No. 2. Although it is canonized in the standard orchestral repertoire as a staple of all concertos, it should be recognized as a glorious victory over the purely circumstantial failure of his symphony. Piano Concerto No. 2 marks a comeback not only of composition, but within the realm of personal accomplishment. It is a triumph over the setbacks that haunted him for years.

Rachmaninoff was allowed to marry Natalia Satina on May 12, 1902. He continued to compose and perform in concerts until his death in 1943.

Rachmaninoff unfortunately falls just under the radar of common knowledge. It is very likely that only one or two of his pieces are known by tune by the majority of people, and his name remains largely unknown. But as evidenced by his resistance to the truly progressive music of Prokofiev or Stravinsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff was the last great Russian classical composer of the late Romantic era. His works are remarkable not only for their majestic themes and evocative melodies, but for the struggles and emotional triumph that each represents.

### Works Cited

Bertensson, Sergei, and Jay Leyda, with the assistance of Sophia Satina. *Sergei Rachmaninoff—A Lifetime in Music*. New York: New York University Press, 1956.

Fisk, Josiah, and Jeff Nichols, eds. *Composers on Music: Eight Centuries of Writings*. New York: Northeastern, 1997.

Harrison, Max. *Rachmaninoff: Life, Works, Recordings*. London and New York: Continuum, 2005.

Norris, Gregory. *Rachmaninoff*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1993.

Walker, Robert. *Rachmaninoff*. London and New York: Omnibus Press, 1980.

**Appendix**  
*Original Russian Texts*

The original texts of the letters cited in this paper, all in Russian, can be found in the corpus at: <http://senar.ru/letters/>

**Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon**, Novgorod, March 18/30, 1897.

Теперь я хочу поблагодарить Вас и Ваших сестёр за деньги, которые вы мне дали на дорогу. Когда я поехал от Вас к Глазунову и представил себе, что вдруг мне пришлось бы сейчас просить у него в долг денег, то пришёл прямо в ужас от одной этой мысли. Я бы, впрочем, всё-таки и не спросил бы их у него в конце концов, если бы даже у меня не было бы в кармане ваших. Язык бы не повернулся....

**Rachmaninoff to A. K. Glazunov**, Moscow, January 11/23, 1897.

Затем я хотел Вас очень поблагодарить за назначение моей Симфонии вообще в Вашу программу.

**Rachmaninoff to A. V. Zatayevich**, Moscow, May 6/18, 1897.

Главная причина этому — моя слабость, которая заставляет меня всё время лежать. ... Лежу и изредка читаю. Сочинять тоже не могу.... Не сообщал Вам также впечатлений после исполнения моей первой Симфонии. Сделаю это теперь, хотя мне это и трудно, так как до сих пор не могу в них разобраться сам. ... меня совсем не трогает неуспех, что меня совсем не обескураживает руготня газет....

Или я, как некоторые авторы, отношусь незаслуженно пристрастно к этому сочинению, или это сочинение было плохо исполнено. А это действительно было так. Я удивляюсь, как такой высокоталантливый человек, как Глазунов, может так плохо дирижировать? Я не говорю уже о дирижёрской технике... я говорю о его музыкальности. Он ничего не чувствует, когда дирижирует. Он как будто ничего не понимает! ... В данную минуту, как видите, склонен думать, что виновато исполнение. Завтра, вероятно, и это мнение переменю. ... Через полгода, когда она облежится, посмотрю её, может быть, поправлю её и, может быть, напечатаю — а может быть, и пристрастие тогда пройдёт.

**Rachmannoff to S. V. Smolensk**, July 30/August 12, 1897.

Простите меня, дорогой Степан Васильевич, за поздний ответ на Ваше милое письмо с текстом литургии. Верьте мне, я сделал это только по нездоровью, иначе давно благодарил бы Вас за Вашу доброту и внимание ко мне.... Я себя чувствую сейчас так плохо, что заниматься могу только лечением.... Во многом у меня незадачи и неприятности!

**Rachmaninoff to A. V. Zatayevich, July 31/August 12, 1897.**

...Что касается меня, то я немного поправился и окреп — это единственно то, чего я достигал.

**Rachmaninoff to A. V. Zatayevich, September 4/16, 1897.**

Ваши оба письма я получил, милый друг Александр Викторович, очень благодарю Вас за них. Простите за поздний ответ. Причина всё та же, т. е. непростительная лень и поблажки, которые я позволяю себе делать всё последнее время. И моя болезнь почек, а посему — в начале лета ни ходить, ни сидеть много не мог. Я лежал только и усиленно лечился. Теперь я поправился. Боли меня почти оставили. Благодаря этой болезни мне никакая работа на ум не шла и я ничего ровно не написал. Но не жалею об этом, лишь бы поправиться совсем.

**Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon, Moscow. September 24/October 6, 1897.**

Ваша угроза писать мне часто длиннейшие письма не факт, по-видимому, а слова только. А я было вашей угрозе поверил, и, конечно, порадовался. Где они эти письма, Татура?...помните про мою нервную систему....

**Rachmaninoff to L. D. Skalon, Moscow, November 22/December 4, 1897.**

В общем это идёт так плохо всё, что я боюсь заболеть припадком чёрной меланхолии. Ей-богу же!

**Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon, Moscow, December 6/18, 1897.**

Мои дела обстоят всё так же скверно. Я начинаю, кажется, страдать чёрной меланхолией... я даже сегодня дураком ревел.... Водки и вообще вина я ещё не начал пить, хотя почти каждый день бываю в числе приглашённых С. Мамонтовым в трактире, где сижу и молчу, но я готов дать почти честное слово, что, если дела не изменятся, то я начну пить. Меня к этому очень тянет.

Татуша, я умру к концу сезона от чёрной меланхолии. Смотрите, плачьте больше! Приходите ко мне на могилу....

**Rachmaninoff to A. B. Goldenweiser, Moscow, January 31/February 12, 1900.**

Завтра 1-го февраля в девять часов вечера

к[няжна] Ливен меня тащит к Л. Н. Толстому. Я упирался, потому что боюсь. Однако ж Ливен о нашем визите сообщила и не ехать нельзя. Будь другом, приезжай тоже к Толстому и, присутствием своим, ободри меня. Всё легче будет.

**Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon**, Yalta, May 8/21, 1900.

Я здоров. Живу тихо и спокойно, а это довольно скучно.

**Rachmaninoff to M. A. Slonov**, May 10/23, 1900.

Живу покойно и тихо — и это довольно скучно.... Видишь, как это всё скучно и неинтересно.

**Rachmaninoff to M. I. Tchaikovsky**, Varazze, June 14/27, 1900.

С тех пор, как я был у Вас в Клину, прошло два года, и в эти два года я, кроме одного романа, не сочинил ни одной ноты. Вообще эту способность сочинять я потерял совершенно, по-видимому, и все мои помыслы направлены к тому, чтобы её вернуть....

**Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon**, Varazze, July 9/22, 1900.

Мне скучно без русских и России....

**Rachmaninoff to A. B. Goldenweiser**, Moscow, February 17/March 2, 1901.

Посылаю тебе, Александр Борисович, три части моей новой сюиты для 2 ф[орте]п[иано]. Очень прошу тебя проиграть её со мной.

**Rachmaninoff to V. I. Safonov**, Moscow, February 18/March 3, 1901.

Вам неправильно сообщили, что я окончил свой 2-й Концерт. Он ещё не готов. Всё это время я был занят другим сочинением и за Концерт мой принялся только вчера.

**Rachmaninoff to A. B. Goldenweiser**, April 19/May 2, 1901.

Милый Александр Борисович, посылаю две части моего Концерта. Посмотри их, в особенности последнюю часть, которая идёт быстро.

**Rachmaninoff to N. D. Skalon**, June 8/21, 1901.

А мне всё нездоровится.



**Rachmaninoff to N .S. Morozov, Moscow, October 22/November 4, 1901.**

Ты прав, Никита Семёнович!

Сейчас я проигрывал первую часть своего Концерта, и только сейчас мне стало вдруг ясно, что переход от первой темы ко второй никуда не годится, что в таком виде первая тема не есть первая тема, а есть вступление, и что мне ни один дурак не поверит, когда я начну играть вторую тему, что это вторая тема именно и есть. Все будут думать, что это начало Концерта. По-моему, вся часть эта испорчена и стала мне с этой минуты положительно противна. Я просто в отчаянии! И зачем только ты пристал ко мне со своим анализом за пять дней до исполнения этого Концерта?!