

**42nd Season 2025-26**

# Rach 3

Foellinger Great Hall | Krannert Center for the Performing Arts  
Saturday, February 28, 2026 | 7:30p.m.

Ian Hobson, music director, conductor, & piano

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**Vocalise Op. 34 No. 14**

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF  
(1873-1943)

**Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30**

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF  
(1873-1943)

- I. Allegro ma non tanto*
- II. Intermezzo: Adagio*
- III. Finale: Alla breve*

**Ian Hobson, piano**

*Intermission*

**Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 44**

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF  
(1873-1943)

- I. Lento—Allegro moderato*
- II. Adagio ma non troppo—Allegro vivace*
- III. Allegro – Allegro vivace – Allegro (Tempo primo) – Allegretto – Allegro vivace*

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# Meet the Music Director & Soloist

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Pianist and conductor **Ian Hobson** (Music Director) - called “powerful and persuasive” by The New York Times - is internationally recognized for his command of an extraordinarily comprehensive repertoire, his consummate performances of the Romantic masters, his deft and idiomatic readings of neglected piano music old and new, and his assured conducting from both the piano and the podium.

In addition to being a celebrated performer, Mr. Hobson is a dedicated scholar and educator who has pioneered renewed

interest in music of such lesser-known masters as Ignaz Moscheles and Johann Hummel. He has also been an effective advocate of works written expressly for him by a number of today’s noted composers, including Benjamin Lees, John Gardner, David Liptak, Alan Ridout, and Yehudi Wyner.

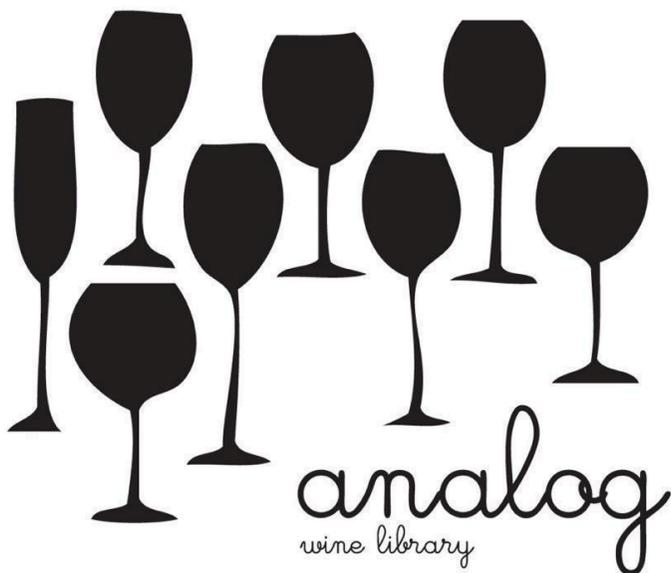
In addition to his work with Sinfonia and at the University of Illinois (Swanlund Emeritus Professor), recital and teaching engagements this season take Mr. Hobson throughout the United States and several times to South Korea. Mr. Hobson conducted at Carnegie Mellon University in January 2018.

As guest soloist, Dr. Hobson has appeared with many of the world’s major orchestras; in the United States these include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and The Philadelphia Orchestra, the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Florida, Houston, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and the American Symphony Orchestra, the Orquestra Sinfónica de Puerto Rico. Abroad, he has been heard with Great Britain’s Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, The London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, ORF-Vienna, Orchester de Beethovenhalle, Moscow Chopin Orchestra, Israeli Sinfonieta, and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Since his debut in the double role of Conductor and soloist with the Stuttgart

Chamber Orchestra in 1996, Maestro Hobson has been invited to lead the English Chamber Orchestra, the Sinfonia Varsovia (including an appearance at Carnegie Hall), the Pomeranian Philharmonic (Poland), the Fort Worth Chamber Orchestra (Bass Hall), and the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra of Israel, among others.

Mr. Hobson is also a much sought-after judge for national and international competitions and has been invited to join numerous juries, among them the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition (at the specific request of Mr. Cliburn), the Arthur Rubinstein Competition in Poland, the Chopin Competition in Florida, the Leeds Piano Competition in the U.K., and the Schumann International Competition in Germany. In 2005 Hobson served as Chairman of the Jury for the Cleveland International Competition and the Kosciuzsko Competition in New York; in 2008 he was Chairman of Jury of the New York Piano Competition; and in 2010 he again served in that capacity of the newly renamed New York International Piano Competition.

One of the youngest ever graduates of the Royal Academy of Music, Mr. Hobson began his international career in 1981 when he won First Prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition, after having earned silver medals at both the Arthur Rubinstein and Vienna-Beethoven competitions. Born in Wolverhampton, England, he studied at Cambridge University (England), and at Yale University, in addition to his earlier studies at the Royal Academy of Music. A professor in the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois, Hobson received the endowed chair of Swanlund Professor of Music in 2000.



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Ian Hobson, *Music Director and Conductor*

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# Notes on the Program

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## Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14

Sergei Rachmaninoff

(Born April 1, 1873, in Oneg, Russia; died March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, California)

Sergei Rachmaninoff, a great representative of Russian Romanticism, was a very versatile musician: a supreme pianist, an admired composer, and a well-respected conductor. He studied at the Moscow Conservatory, whose training at that time was decidedly not like that of the more nationalistic school which dominated the St. Petersburg Conservatory with the group known as the “Mighty Five,” made up of Borodin, Cui, Balakirev, Moussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov. The atmosphere in Moscow, where Tchaikovsky had previously taught, was decidedly more eclectic than that in St. Petersburg, and young composers there were more likely to appropriate the style and forms they used from venerated composers of the past. A contemporary music critic described the Moscow atmosphere in which Rachmaninoff found himself: “Music here was a terrible narcosis, a sort of intoxication and oblivion, a going off into irrational planes . . . It was not form, or harmoniousness, or Apollonic vision that was demanded of music, but passion, feeling, languor, heartache.”

In 1892, after winning a gold medal for composition, he set off on his first extensive concert tour, which launched his long career. In 1893, he wrote his famous Prelude in C-sharp minor, and with its success, he began his long career. The melodic power and the rich, characteristically Russian sonority of his music made him one of the most popular composers of the 20th century.

Despite his heavy schedule of concert performances, he was able to write a great deal of music: four piano concertos, three symphonies, three operas, a large number of works in diverse forms, and a larger number of songs and piano pieces. He left Russia in 1917 and resided in the United States for the rest of his life.

*Vocalise* is the last song in a set of fourteen that Rachmaninoff composed and published in 1912 as Op. 34. These songs were dedicated to some of the fine Russian singers of the era. The texts of thirteen of them were selected from the works of Pushkin, Balmont, and other great Russian poets, but this last one, the fourteenth, is a vocalise, or wordless song.

*Vocalise* quickly became one of Rachmaninoff's most popular works, and it has been arranged for many different combinations of instruments from piano to full orchestra. In 1916, Rachmaninoff made an arrangement of it for solo piano and orchestra at the suggestion of Serge Koussevitzky, and this orchestration was adapted for use as the accompaniment for a soloist.

## **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3, in D minor, Op. 30**

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto makes intense demands on the pianist's stamina and is recognized as one of the most difficult works in the piano repertoire. It was written in 1909 for Rachmaninoff's first American tour, a trip motivated, amusingly enough, by the composer's desire to make enough money to buy a desirable new item of his day, a car. He was charmed by the idea of driving through the countryside and was enchanted by the novelty of the new technology.

Rachmaninoff resisted pressures to give the first performance in Russia and sailed for New York even before he had learned to play the work thoroughly himself. He practiced it while at sea, on a mute keyboard, and after appearances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra, he performed the premiere of the new work on November 28, 1909, with the New York Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Walter Damrosch. About two months later, he played it again, with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under Gustav Mahler. It was published in 1910, with a dedication to the great pianist Josef Hofmann.

The concerto is a large but concise work whose movements are tightly integrated by their use of related themes. In the first, *Allegro ma non tanto*, the piano's entrance with the melancholy and lyrical main subject is preceded by a throbbing accompaniment figure. Then the piano introduces a lengthy, calm theme that has an important role in all of the movements in the score. Even the playful second theme of this movement is a variant of the first. A musicologist friend of the composer, Joseph Yasser, felt that this dark, pessimistic, Russian-sounding melody was derived from an old Russian Orthodox chant, "The Tomb, O Savior, Soldiers Guarding," sung in the Monastery of the Cross near Kyiv. Rachmaninoff denied the source and told Yasser that the theme had written itself and come to him ready-made. Yasser persisted,

hypothesizing that Rachmaninoff may have heard the melody many years before and subconsciously remembered it. Of course, there is no way to know the actual genesis of the theme. The first movement involves the piano more and more as it goes on and ends in an extensive cadenza, which also briefly features solo wind players.

The second movement is a rhapsodic and tender *Intermezzo: Adagio* with a little *scherzando* waltz as a contrasting middle section. The theme of both the pensive introduction and the scherzo are transformations of the main theme of the preceding movement. The piano is not as completely dominant in this movement as it was in the prior one. The poignant, plaintive *Adagio* theme returns, and after a fierce cadenza, leads into the driving, propulsive *Finale: Alla breve*, without a pause, overflowing into brilliant, soaring melodies, most of them again derived from the first movement. This movement shows the solo piano in many different guises, all variations of the piano's potential textures. The concerto ends as the tempo becomes faster and faster and the excitement builds until the climax.

The concerto is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, and strings.

## **Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 44** Sergei Rachmaninoff

Rachmaninoff composed his first symphony in 1895. It had a single unsuccessful performance two years later in St. Petersburg, after which it was not heard again for almost fifty years. His *Symphony No. 2*, written between 1907 and 1908, was a great success at its first performance and is still one of his most popular works. In 1913, he wrote *The Bells*, a choral symphony based on the poem by Edgar Allan Poe, but he gave it no number.

He composed *Symphony No. 3* at his summer retreat overlooking Lake Lucerne in Switzerland between the spring of 1935 and the late summer of August 1936. It had its world premiere on November 6, 1936, with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Rachmaninoff's earlier symphonies have four movements, but the third has only three. The first movement opens with four slow introductory measures (*Lento*), whose brief theme serves as a recurring theme throughout the symphony. The tempo quickly accelerates to *Allegro moderato* for the main portion of the movement, with the woodwinds

initiating its expressive first subject, and the cellos presenting the lyrical second subject. This movement is essentially melodic; its dramatic tension is confined to the animated development section, where the opening motto reappears. After the usual recapitulation of the two principal themes, there is a closing coda in which the theme is heard again.

The second movement combines the functions of slow movement and scherzo. Its opening and closing sections are marked *Adagio ma non troppo*. In the middle, the mood brightens and the tempo quickens to *Allegro vivace* for a crisp *scherzo*-like section. The introductory horn passage at the beginning of the movement and the *pizzicato* strings at the end recall the theme.

The finale, *Allegro*, is based on an energetic first theme and a series of lyrical subsidiary themes. Just before the extended final coda, there is another reminder of the theme, which makes a last appearance near the end of this closing section.

The symphony is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings.

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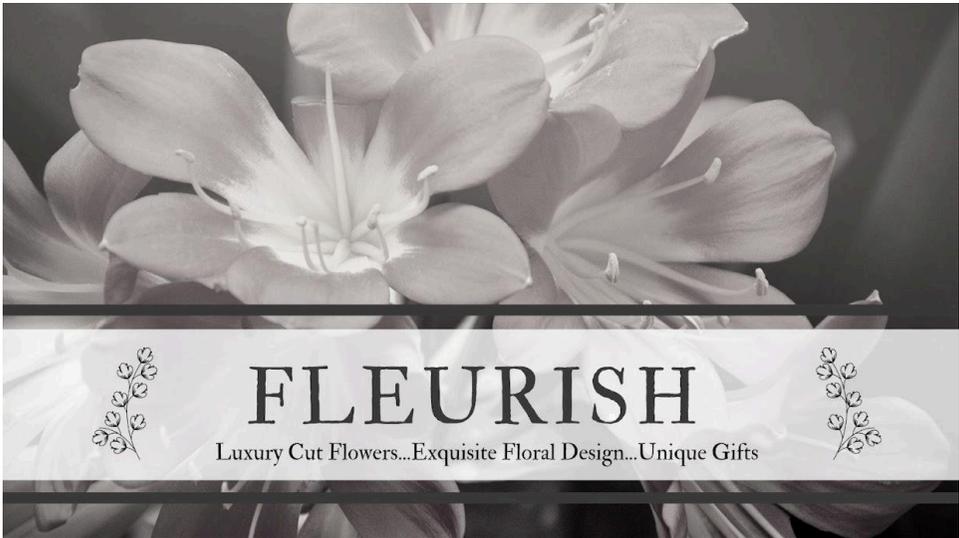
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In residence at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, this professional chamber orchestra is led by world-renowned pianist, conductor, and educator, Maestro Ian Hobson. Sinfonia da Camera is comprised of University of Illinois faculty, staff, and students, as well as distinguished regional and national freelance musicians. Founded in 1984, Sinfonia has welcomed world-class soloists, commissioned new works, and presented beloved orchestra favorites and hidden gems to local audiences for 40 years.

In its debut season, Sinfonia released an acclaimed recording of French Piano Concerti with music director Ian Hobson conducting from the keyboard; it was the subject of a 90-minute Public Television special. Since that time, Sinfonia has performed over 1,000 musical works featuring more than 150 local and guest artists. Through Maestro Hobson's commitment to excellence in all of the orchestra's endeavors - special projects, recordings, tours, and concerts for the hometown crowd at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts - Sinfonia has achieved national and international recognition.

Sinfonia has been featured on over a dozen recordings and has several projects in the works. In 2011, the Albany label released a Sinfonia recording on another American composer, William Schuman, during his centenary year. A live recording of Sinfonia da Camera's October 6, 2012 concert featuring music by Pulitzer Prize-Winning composer George Walker was recently released on Albany Records. The fourth and final volume of the Ignaz Moscheles cycle was released in 2012. The previous volumes were reviewed by American Record Guide: "Hobson, whose elegant phrasing, remarkable ear for color, and miraculous ability to evenly sustain the most difficult runs - each like a string of pearls - are simply a joy to hear" and "[The concerti] seem tailor-made for Hobson's great panache and free-wheeling style." Ten recordings by Sinfonia da Camera for the Zephyr label have been released to rave reviews at home and abroad.

To learn more about the orchestra, Maestro Hobson, the musicians, administration, and Advisory board visit our website at [www.sinfonia.illinois.edu](http://www.sinfonia.illinois.edu).



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