

Recordings

In the early days, pieces were often needed to be modified to fit on 78 rpm discs. Leading conductors are often the one who condenses a piece for it to be commercially viable. Rachmaninoff, too, made the compromise to admitted several revised versions of his second symphony [10]. Also, to further condense this piece, the composer himself changed tempo, orchestration, and eliminates several repeats in all four movements, and even removed an entire section of the fourth movement. Because the cuts were made in several different times and with various orchestras, there is no standard version of a specific set of cuts.

Although some people opine that those cuts are beneficial in a sense demonstrate that it demonstrates compositions are not a fixed art, and rather, it has potentials to be altered to fit in different purposes. While others, believe that those cuts make the piece unbalanced, and subconsciously influence the audience to think the piece is longer than they have heard.

The piece was reduced from one hour to around 35 minutes especially around 1940s and 1950s. Before the year of 1970, it is often performed in one of the shorter versions. After that, orchestras would choose to perform the complete version, though sometimes a repeat in the first movement may be omitted.

- **Yevgeny Svetlanov** USSR State Symphony Orchestra, Moscow, 1977 [1]

As a gifted pianist and a versatile musician, Svetlanov is a renowned Russian conductor. There are power and intensity that can be found in this recording. The string voices are glamour. Even though the tone of the beginning clarinet solo of the third movement sounds strange and I personally do not in favor of some marcato bowings in the strings during some forte sections of this movement, overall, this recording is rich in detail, sensitive, emotional, and touching. The dynamics contrast makes the piece colorful and the tempo is elastic but always just right.

- **Eugene Ormandy** Philadelphia Orchestra, Philadelphia, 1979 [2]

As one of Rachmaninoff's musical collaborators, Ormandy is a reference interpreter of Rachmaninoff's works. a reference interpreter of Rachmaninoff's works. Ormandy and the Philadelphia dedicated to prepare the Symphonic Dances which is Rachmaninoff's final orchestral composition and successfully premiered in 1941.

This 1979 live movie recording plays a cut version with 49 minutes length. There are a great intense of feeling and passion in this performances with lush string sound. All the voices in the orchestra was blending, intertwined with each other that created a smooth and luxurious sound. However, I personally do not in favor of this version. Maybe because of the audio quality, it seems that all the sound waves are compressed within a certain range that make the pianissimo not really obvious. Also, the overall tempo of the third movement seems to be a little too fast. And the cuts make it lose some of the formal structures.

- **Vladimir Ashkenazy** Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam, September 1981 [3]
This recording is faster and not that melancholy. It has a clear layers of orchestration and instrumental textures that made this version expressed less emotion but more philosophical thoughts and retrospection. Although the solo clarinet is relatively bald, and the acoustics of strings seems to be not that burnished, the contrasts in dynamics is greatly emphasized and rendered dramatically with extreme impact.
- **Valery Gergiev** Mariinsky Orchestra, St. Petersburg, 1992 [4]
The sound is warmer with intense emotions. One of his rather eariler conducting works with a baton. The timpani in measure 86 which is the climax of the third movement was played in tremolo and much longer than any other performances, which may overshadowed the flute and string descending melody in my mind and the recording quality is not good enough, but besides that, I enjoy a lot watching him conducting. The phrasing and flow are expressed thoroughly especially though his facial expressions and motions of his fingers.
- **Sir Antonio Pappano** Orchestra of the Academy of Santa Cecilia, London, 2013 [5]
A totally different interpretation compared to Ashkenazy. The sound is warm with more continuous flow and adherence. All the timbre in different instrumentation is mixed. The dynamics contrast is often changed gradually with less abruptness. Even though many people may criticize that the music structure lacks clarity and the strings are not as glorious as other performances', I am personally in favor this version more. The emotions conveyed is sincere and heartfelt. The sound effect in a sense is popular and dramatic, but it is touching and particular soothing.