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LENNON GRAD RAG

for PIANO

PHILLIP RANNEY

MS 1848



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NOTE

Leningrad Rag is freely based on Scott Joplin's *Gladiolus Rag* and the composer suggests that the two might be performed together. Repeats in *Leningrad Rag* are not mandatory; if taken, the performer may vary dynamics, etc. at will.

P.R.

THE COMPOSER

Phillip Ramey was born near Chicago on September 12, 1939. He played the piano from early youth and began to compose at the age of 17. From 1959 to 1962 he studied composition with Alexander Tcherepnin in Chicago and also worked with Tcherepnin at the International Academy of Music in Nice, France. Graduate study followed at Columbia University (1962-65).

Ramey has been active as a pianist since 1962, when he gave the premiere of his own *Concert Suite for Piano and Orchestra* with members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he has a reputation as a writer on music subjects through his numerous magazine articles and liner essays for records.

As a composer, Ramey has written a number of solos for piano as well as other solo, chamber and orchestral works relating to the spectrum of musical instruments.

to Vladimir Horowitz

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LENINGRAD RAG

Duration: circa 5:0 min.

(Mutations on Scott Joplin)

For Piano

PHILLIP RAMEY

March tempo ♩ = 112-132

The musical score for "Leningrad Rag" is written for piano in 2/4 time. It begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a tempo marking of "March tempo ♩ = 112-132". The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains four measures, with the first measure marked *mf*. The second system contains four measures, with the first measure marked *p*. The third system contains four measures, with the first measure marked *mf*. The fourth system contains four measures, with the first measure marked *f* and the second measure marked *mf subito*. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

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First system of musical notation, measures 1-4. Treble and bass staves. Key signature: one flat (B-flat). Time signature: 4/4. Dynamics: *f* (forte).

Second system of musical notation, measures 5-8. Treble and bass staves. Key signature: one flat (B-flat). Time signature: 4/4. Dynamics: *mf* (mezzo-forte).

Third system of musical notation, measures 9-12. Treble and bass staves. Key signature: one flat (B-flat). Time signature: 4/4. Dynamics: *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo).

Fourth system of musical notation, measures 13-16. Treble and bass staves. Key signature: one flat (B-flat). Time signature: 4/4. First ending bracket over measures 15-16.

Fifth system of musical notation, measures 17-20. Treble and bass staves. Key signature: one flat (B-flat). Time signature: 4/4. Second ending bracket over measures 17-18. Dynamics: *mp subito* (mezzo-piano subito).

Musical notation for piano, consisting of five systems of staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first system has a triplet in the right hand. The second system has dynamic markings *p* and *mf*. The third system has a triplet in the right hand. The fourth system has dynamic markings *f* and *mf subito*. The fifth system has a triplet in the right hand and a *(loco)* marking.

This page contains six systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The notation is written for a grand piano, with a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The piece features complex harmonic structures with many chords and some melodic lines. The first system shows a series of chords in the right hand and a more active bass line. The second system includes a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and a crescendo hairpin. The third system has a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. The fourth system features a quintuplet of eighth notes in the bass, marked with a '5' and a bracket. The fifth system includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) with repeat signs. The notation includes various accidentals (flats, naturals, sharps), slurs, and articulation marks like accents and staccato.

First system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Dynamics: *ff* and *fff*. Accents: \wedge . Chordal textures with various accidentals.

Second system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Dynamics: *fff*. Accents: \wedge . Triplet markings (3) in the bass staff.

Third system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Dynamics: *fff*. Accents: \wedge . Triplet markings (3) in the bass staff. A dashed line with an 8-measure rest in the bass staff.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Dynamics: *fff*. Accents: \wedge . Triplet markings (3) in the bass staff.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Tempo markings: *poco allarg.* and *a tempo*. Dynamics: *fff*. Accents: \wedge . First and second endings marked 1. and 2. in the treble staff.

RAGTIME IN LENINGRAD

Scott
Joplin
revisited
and
renovated

It was a cold, rainy March day in 1972 and no sooner had I taken shelter, wet and annoyed, in the foyer of the Library of the Performing Arts at New York's Lincoln Center than I found myself confronted with a placard announcing the publication by the Library of the collected works of the ragtime composer Scott Joplin. My first reaction, an irritable "Why the hell would they do a thing like that?", was succeeded by a certain curiosity about what appeared a rather bizarre project. I knew, of course, of the incipient ragtime revival and had seen, although not heard, the recording of Joplin rags as played by Joshua Rifkin. Being an occasional producer of record liner essays myself and being relatively innocent about ragtime, I recalled that Rifkin's informative notes had instilled in me a desire to know more—even though his description of Joplin's ragtime output as "a subtle and polished art" had seemed probably over-enthusiastic and comments about increasing formal and harmonic complexity in later Joplin sounded suspiciously as if Rifkin might be attempting to transform basically uncomplicated music into something it was not (it occurs to me that perhaps this thought was the genesis of my own venture into ragtime, related subsequently). And I had noted with surprise that the popular ragtime figure also composed ballets and operas.

So now I was inquisitive enough to step into the Library shop, and soon was paging through a thick volume of Joplin's piano compositions, chronologically arranged and illustrated with reproductions of the original sheet-music covers. With a mental sniff I dismissed the first piece, written in 1896 and bearing the incredible title *The Crush Collision March*, as salon silliness and not ragtime anyway. The next three selections proved no better and I was about to abandon the whole business when I saw the familiar name of the fifth work.

Maple Leaf Rag. I remembered an aunt who had been given to pounding it on an out-of-tune upright, along with a non-Joplin something called *The Blackhawk Waltz*. Going on in the volume, I discovered other gems: the high-strutting *Elite Syncopations*, the coolly elegant *Entertainer*, the gentle *Leola—Two Step*, the joyous *Ragtime Dance*, the irrepressible *Pineapple Rag*, the harmonically adventurous *Euphonic Sounds*, the extroverted *Scott Joplin's New Rag*, the intriguingly disparate *Magnetic Rag* and the magnificent *Gladiolus Rag* with its practically orchestral finale.

In short, I was converted, and after half an hour of careful examination I had to have that volume. Besides, I was about to disappear into the New Hampshire woods for three months of composing at the

MacDowell Colony and these ragtime pieces should provide just the right diversion from more serious endeavors.

This rationalization proved to be both true and false. At MacDowell I eventually rewrote and completed my *Piano Fantasy*, sizable, abstract and tending toward atonality, and Joplin's rags did indeed give considerable relief from this undertaking. However, as I began to play ragtime with some authority I began to have ideas of how the music might sound if it were to be harmonically updated. (I recalled Stravinsky's witty essays in the genre, *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and *Piano-Rag-Music*, which had been inspired, circa 1918, by American ragtime scores—including, one would imagine, Scott Joplin.) The next step was improvisation, using one or another of Joplin's works as a point of departure, and little by little my extemporizations became less and less inhibited.

The idea of actually composing a rag of my own did not come until one afternoon when, rummaging through old string quartet sketches, I found a rather peculiar, serially oriented theme



which seemed somehow familiar, but in another context. That evening I was playing *Gladiolus Rag* and there, to my amazement, was the predecessor of the quartet idea, written 65 years before.



It was such an interesting coincidence that I determined to base a ragtime piece on my serial tune. As this had been written in a hotel room in the "Venice of the North" during a 1970 Russian trip, my title became obvious: *Leningrad Rag*.

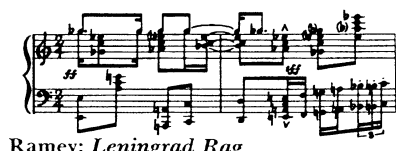
The title may have been obvious but little else was. I decided that, rather than base the work on a distillation of various Joplin rags, it would be better to choose a particular one. Since my quartet theme seemed, by chance, an almost surreal view of the opening melody of *Gladiolus Rag*, *Gladiolus* seemed the logical choice. However, the actual notes came with difficulty, despite my early conviction that it would be an easy and relaxing project, a *bagatelle non serieuse*, so to speak. Obsessions, which this quickly became, are never relaxing, but mine was always amusing—perhaps because of the inherent outlandishness of writing a dissonant virtuoso rag in 1972 modeled after a very consonant, uncomplicated rag from 1907.

So I set about composing *Leningrad Rag*, a five-minute piece that was to be labored over, sporadically, for an entire month. I planned to keep the formal scheme of *Gladiolus*, which is representative of many of Joplin's rags: A,B,A,C,D with each section except the middle repeated. I also decided in the B and D sections to leave the right hand much the same, with only occasional changes (such as a modulation from D-flat major to E-flat major in the last strain), and to content myself with constructing the A and C sections after melodic and rhythmic patterns of *Gladiolus*. In other words, two portions turned out to be Ramey-influenced Joplin and the other three Joplin-influenced Ramey. Add polytonal chords and modulations, an occasional tone-cluster and use of octave-displacement, off-beat accents and cascades of left-hand octaves, and the result is a veritable potpourri of old-fashioned and contemporary mannerisms. And also a display piece for the performer (in this context I cannot help but recall the superb reading Vladimir Horowitz gave *Leningrad Rag* one evening at his home).

THEN AND NOW



Joplin: *Gladiolus Rag*



Ramey: *Leningrad Rag*

When I returned to New York in the spring, my satchel harbored two rather unlikely bedfellows: the *Piano Fantasy* and *Leningrad Rag*. Composer friends' reaction to news of the latter was, to say the least, surprised, for I had long been distinguished for a determined lack of interest in popular music. Reaction to the score itself tended to be quite pro or con: no one remained indifferent. For instance, Alexander Tcherepnin thought it "unique—a fine satire", while Aaron Copland shook his head and said, "You've somehow managed to distort the relaxed and amusing spirit of ragtime into something tense and grim."

And what, the reader may wonder, is the creator's own appraisal of his ragtime Frankenstein? I can only say that *Leningrad Rag* is a highly subjective response to the indeed "subtle and polished art" of Scott Joplin—that remarkable turn-of-the-century composer whose unpretentious little ragtime pieces sound fresh and inspired even today.

— Phillip Ramey

(Reprinted slightly abridged from the December, 1972 Philharmonic Hall Program Magazine by permission of Saturday Review Programs.)