



Paul Wittgenstein at his piano.

# The Piano Concerto (VI)

**A LIFE Institute Course**

**Bob Fabian**

<http://LIFECourses.ca/Piano>



# Plan for Session

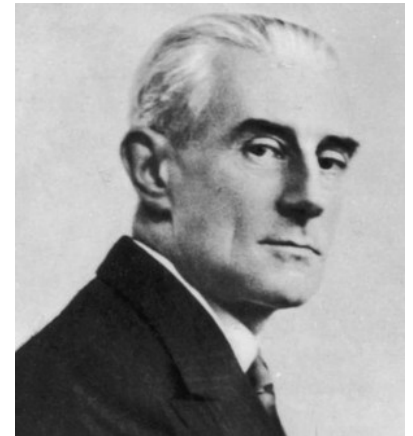
- Ravages of war
  - Paul Wittgenstein & Ravel
- The Russian Revolution
  - Rachmaninoff, who left
  - Shostakovich, who remained
- Folk music influence
  - Bela Bartok
- Modern ambient sound
  - Phillip Glass

# Paul Wittgenstein 1887-1961

- Pianist and elder brother to Ludwig Wittgenstein, the philosopher
- Son of the wealthy Karl Wittgenstein (one of the richest men in Europe)
- Lost his right arm in World War I
- Commissioned piano concertos for the left hand
  - The Ravel concerto for the left hand is still being played

# Ravel: Concerto for the left hand

- Maurice Ravel: 1875 - 1937
- Leading French impressionistic composer
- 2 min bio:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DT4Qh9SFUTg>
- Yuja Wang - Ravel Left Hand Piano Concerto (1932)
- Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Lionel Bringuier
- 13 min  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbEtk1kdYx4>





# 1917 Russian Revolution

- Russia under the Czar was the least advanced, most repressive European power
- The revolution swept away the past, including the “good” arts and culture
- In its place came a workers’ paradise
  - Music was called to do its part
  - Music was recognized to be important, needing direction from the party

# Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

- Began piano studies at age 4
- Before the revolution, promising career as aristocratic, romantic pianist and composer
- Fled Russia in 1917 with his family
- Established himself in New York city as pianist & conductor
- Died in California in 1943



# BBC Documentary



57 Min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3YTSrxmFX8>

# Evgeny Kissin piano



Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Myung-Whun Chung  
54 min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-NKFbjL9Bw>

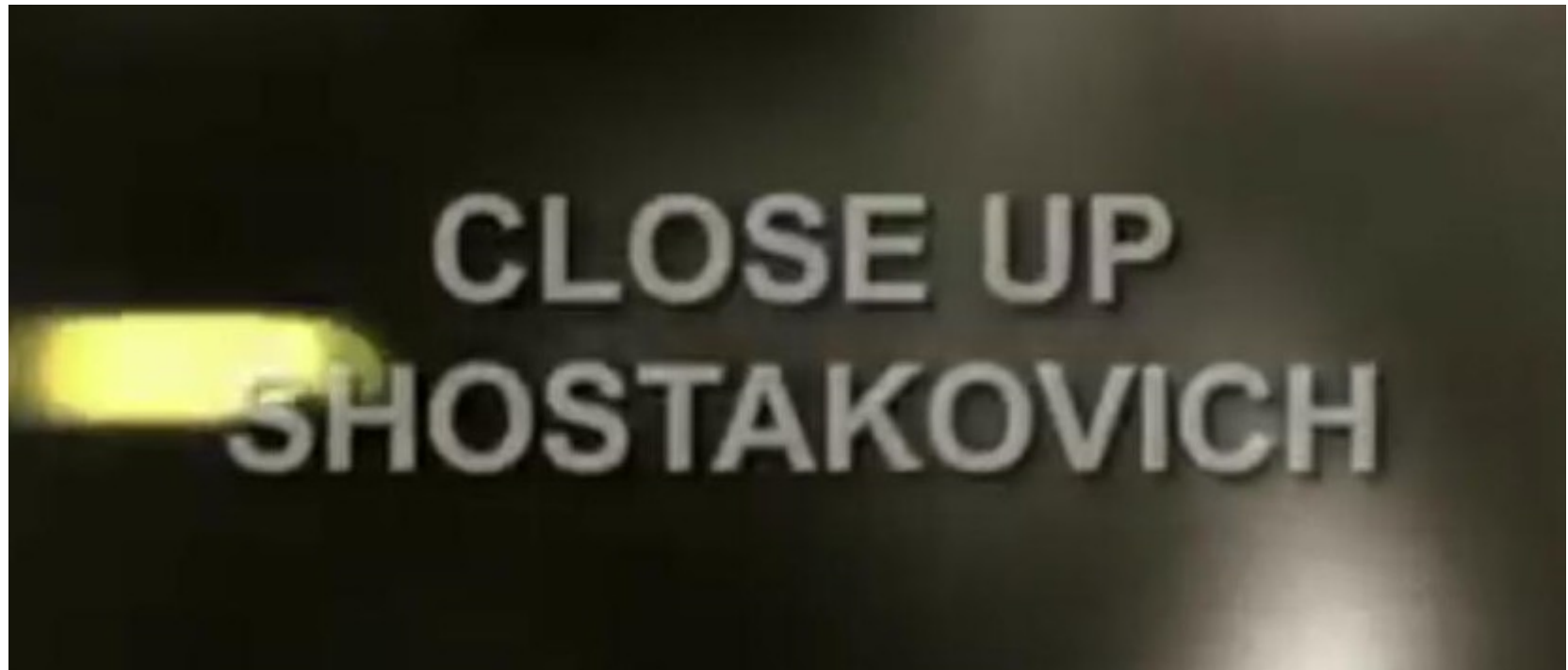


# Dmitri Shostakovich 1906-75

- The leading composer in the Soviet Union, sometimes troubled relationship with the state
- His music displayed “sharp contrasts, elements of the grotesque, and ambivalent tonality” (Wikipedia)
- Recognized as important, but often directed to do the people’s bidding



# Shostakovich Story



A film by Oliver Becker and Katharina Bruner  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-FpiPWdSGA>

# Martha Argerich, piano David Guerrier, trumpet



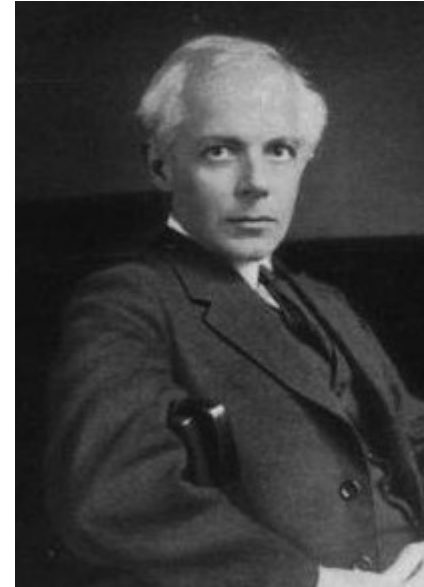
24 Min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PysrplnzKTQ>

# A Comparison ... ?

- Rachmaninoff had compositional spurts, but produced much less than Shostakovich
  - And no string quartets!
- In the West, Rachmaninoff enjoyed full artistic freedom, but was not recognized as a significant social presence
- In the Soviet Union, Shostakovich was often forced to do the state's bidding, but was recognized as a significant social presence
- How would you compare them?

# Béla Bartók 1881 - 1945

- The other great Hungarian composer (after Liszt)
- His first public recital was at 11
- From 1899 to 1903 he studied music in Budapest
- His first wife was 12 years younger; his second was 23 years younger
- His anti-fascism led him to the US in 1940



# Béla Bartók: Orbit



Malcolm Gillies and Esa-Pekka Salonen explore Béla Bartók's world.  
9 Min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4oor8-snV0>

# András Schiff & the Hallé Orchestra



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7J7L53b8U0>

# Direction ...

- From 17<sup>th</sup> century -
  - Growing sense of social progress and development, reflected in music
- By 20<sup>th</sup> century -
  - “Progress” was increasingly questioned, with a future seen as uncertain
- Music reflects its social context
  - There were struggles to discover how music should work (atonal et al)





# Strong 21<sup>st</sup> century trend

- Music doesn't try to lead you into the future
- Music surrounds you with a rewarding sonic environment; it doesn't "go" anywhere
- Almost returned to a medieval musical duality
  - Serious music provided a "place" to appreciate the timeless, the eternal
  - Popular music was for dancing and fun, and for telling stories

# Philip Glass 1937 - ...

- Born in Baltimore, Jewish father had a record store, mother aided Holocaust survivors
- “Glass' musical style is instantly recognizable, with its trademark churning ostinatos, undulating arpeggios and repeating rhythms that morph over various lengths of time atop broad fields of tonal harmony.” Chicago Tribune



# Part One, by Scott Hicks



50 min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGaG5VJqgZg>

# Keyboard Concerto




Harpsichord's uniform sound level fits Glass (first movement)  
8 min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PveH9SNHKq4>

# "Hammerklavier" Op.126 (1970)



Alfred Brendel plays Beethoven  
(I want to go with Beethoven into the future!)  
44 min: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d9UAVfbp2Y>



The world may be troubled, ...  
but we still have great music

Open yourself to it

Enjoy Summer