

Transcript

Intro Voice: You're listening to Wadcast - a podcast from Wadham College, University of Oxford - bringing you interviews, seminars and stories from our community.

Producer: The voice you just heard is one of our students, Hannah Ledley. Congratulations Hannah. She is the winner of our competition to be the voice of Wadcast's intro. I'm your host for this episode. My name is Martin. I work at Wadham College in web, media and communications.

This episode I interview Philip Bullock, our fellow and tutor in Russian. He'll introduce himself properly in the podcast, so let's just jump straight in. Here it is: Wadcast episode one.

Martin: Well, thank you Philip, for your time.

Philip: It's a pleasure to be here talking to you.

Martin: Yeah, and here is in fact in your office, which is very fun. So thank you for generously opening that up.

Philip: well, even if people can't see it, I hope they can imagine us sitting surrounded by my books, my desk, and my piano in the corner of the room.

Martin: It's a very Oxford setting, very nice. So maybe you could just begin by explaining who you are and at Wadham in particular. Just generally kind of your professional bio.

Philip: Yes, so I'm the Fellow and Tutor in Russian and I've been in that post since 2007, so quite some time now. My history with Wadham goes back further, though, I did my doctorate here back in the late 1990s, and I was also the organ scholar during that period for three years.

So I have a very long association with the college and a very happy one.

Martin: Does that mean you play the organ?

Philip: I do. I play the organ and the piano badly and mostly in private.

Martin: Maybe we can change that in the near future.

So one of the reasons I'm talking to you (Besides that, you're an intrinsically interesting person), is that you have recently come out with a book on a Russian composer.

Now, I'm not going to pronounce the name of this composer, 'cause I'm going to let you take the first stab at that and show me the way.

Philip: So the composer is Rachmaninoff, Sergei Vassiliev.

Martin: Great, and so maybe expanding on that maybe you could give us a first pass as to who this character is.

Philip: I think everybody listening surely know something about him. He is probably one of the most famous classical composers of all time. I had a quick look before we met and he's always come #2

In the Classic FM Hall of Fame, he was born in 1873 in Russia and he died in 1943, just shy of his 70th birthday. In immigration, he'd left Russia in 1917. After the October revolution.

And he's, as I said, incredibly well known as a as a classical composer. He was also a virtuoso pianist, possibly one of the very last people to be both a composer and a pianist.

There were plenty in the 19th century. It's much less common in our own age, and he's also, which is much less known, one of the greatest conductors Of the early 20th century, so he combined 3 professions in one body and lived his life across two halves of the world.

Martin: It's quite impressive.

Philip: And yeah, we know him for things like the second Piano Concerto. Perhaps that's the piece that crops up in the Classic FM Hall of Fame. People might know that work from films such as this brief encounter where it forms the backdrop to the non affair between the two lead characters.

If you're not into all of that black and white melodrama, you might know the seven-year itch wonderful comedy, starring Marilyn Monroe, which also features the second Piano Concerto and Rachmaninoff's music or more recently, shine about the pianist Jeffrey Helfgott and that features the third concerto.

But he composed in all genres. There are three symphonies more than 80 songs, 3 operas, 2 major liturgical works for the Orthodox Church. Some chamber music and he was prodigious in terms of output and a certain amount of that repertoire is extremely, possibly excessively familiar, and that's also an interesting factor when working on him. He's a composer about whom many musicologists have been rather Snooty.

He's too popular to be serious. He appeals too much to the masses to be worth looking at in scholarly terms.

And I'm very keen to to challenge that view, but also to celebrate his popularity. It's absolutely wonderful working on a composer who most people you meet will at least have heard of, and in many cases who will know and love an awful lot of his music.

Martin: Yeah, it's interesting that you note here his extreme popularity. I'd be interested to know whether you have any thoughts on why he's become as popular as he has.

Philip: Yes, I'm sure there are lots of pieces you would know. I mean, he's great at producing earworms.

He was an amazing Melodist and always believed that Melody was the great secret of success in writing a composition.

I think the reason that he is so popular is that right until his death in 1943 he was writing music that many people recognise.

As traditional classical music concertos symphonies, it's melodic. Its harmonies are rich and romantic, but they're certainly not difficult and off putting so his music did appeal to the tastes of a wide range of listeners, and that was very deliberate strategy on his part. He wasn't an ivory tower figure. He didn't believe in cutting himself off and communing with his muse and his inspiration. He very much thought that his duty as a musician was to address as wide an audience as he possibly could, both as a composer and receptionist, and as a conductor.

And and that is one of the reasons you know behind the critical dismissal of a lot of his work was that in the 20th century, and that's the great century of of modernism, and the avant-garde.

Of Stravinsky, of Schoenberg, of those composers who developed a much more stringent difficult, exclusive musical language, frankly, and who thought that was the direction of musical progress now.

But their success was in determining the kind of critical framework through which 20th century music was written.

Composers such as Rachmaninoff, who seem on the surface to be continuing a kind of 19th century late romantic musical language.

Now I think that's not altogether true in other ways, but certainly the reason for his continued appeal is that he's not going to frighten anyone who is who's put off by difficulty.

His music is deliberately accessible and he celebrates that accessibility and, well, I'm very happy with that.

Martin: Yeah, that's really interesting. I think the stereotype of contemporary classical music is it is very hard to get into. My brother actually studied music at Manchester and I think I attended one or two of the concerts that they put on and I didn't leave particularly appreciative he will be sad to hear.

[At this point in the audio, I stumbled over Rachmaninoff's name to a staggering degree, but essentially I just commented that Rachmaninoff seemed to be at the cut off point for most people when it came to appreciation of classical music.

And Philip had some comments to add to that.]

Philip: He I think he is. He falls interesting bridge as well into into that into that world because he did live so late, dying in 1943 and writing music that sounded at 50 years old by that by that point I actually think his music is more modern and more inventive.

And often it's felt to.

The works which people tend to be familiar with. The second and third piano concertos date from before the October Revolution.

They're from the last years of the Russian Empire. They are that sumptuous Grand world of Yester year that was swept away both by the World War One and by the October Revolution, when he goes into immigration, he first moves to Scandinavia. But just after a year there, he heads to New York, and he spends most of his life.

In New York and then later in California, coming back to Europe in the summer.

Those works from that period are much less familiar to us, and they show that he was not cutting himself off from contemporary music.

He was listening to it. He disliked a awful lot of it. He thought it was written with the head and not with the heart. He thought it was music that was written according to a sort of prescribed script with an idea, a mental plan behind it, but not with any emotional sincerity and and above all, he believed in emotional sincerity and truth. But nonetheless he was aware of contemporary music and there are awesome, knowing nods towards those, but they're done in a very clever way that really are only those that that's only available if you're interested in pursuing that particular avenue and if you just want to listen to music in its own terms, it's fully accessible and engaging.

But I know what you mean about some classical music concerts, not always welcoming in the listener by the by that musical language. I think many people do find that.

Martin: So what led you to write about and research Rachmaninoff at this particular time?

Philip: So I've long been interested in Russian music here in Wadham. I'm the fellow and tutor in Russian, which means that I teach mainly language and literature, but I've always had a strong interest in music and I play for my own pleasure. And over the years I've spent much more of my research time devoting myself to Russian music. In 2016 I wrote a biography of Tchaikovsky.

I think it was an important work for me to write, and it would also work, which I think change some people perceptions of what I work on and I've been doing a lot more work on Russian music since then.

So in 2019 I was approached by Bard College, a liberal arts College in upstate New York, in Annandale, on Hudson. They have a wonderful annual music festival which is always devoted to the work of 1 composer and over the course of two long weekends. The festival explores a particular composer, not just their works, but the works of their teachers of their contemporaries or their enemies, their critics. It is also looks at their influence and their legacy, so it's designed to be a music festival, but with a particular kind of selling point, a particular kind of immersive way of understanding a composer and his work. Last year they had the first woman composer that's great deal of interest in contemporary musicology and reclaiming the legacy of women musicians in a field which is still dominated by men.

Of course, so 2019. The team at Bard approached me to ask if I might be interested in coming as scholar in residence to the festival, which I'll be doing later this summer. We might talk about that.

But the first duty of the scholar in the scholar in residence is to produce a book which is called X and his world, or we hope increasingly in future X and her world.

And so my book is called Rachmaninoff and his world. It's just been published by Chicago University Press and it's a volume of essays by scholars from Europe from North America and from Russia. It aims to explore the whole of rachmaninov's life and work from a number of vantage points, cultural, literary, historical musicological and that book comes out in the run up to the festival, and the two are sort of hand in hand.

As well, the book is an academic book published by a Wonderful, Wonderful press.

But it is designed to be accessible to non specialists.

There aren't too many scary musical examples, but there are a number of them, but it's written in a way which presuppose there's no formal technical training, and it is designed not just to address important academic questions, but also to engage the wider public interested in, be it classical music, be it Russian culture, and use Rachmaninoff as a way of getting a little bit sort of further into that field. So I've spent really the last three years editing that book. Things were held up a little bit by the pandemic, but my authors have been wonderfully patient in that process. A group of scholars, as I said, international scholars, some known for their work on Rachmaninoff, but others not, but whom I knew had any interest in him and I gave him carte blanche to write on the questions that interested them.

And over the last few years, there's been a wonderful back and forth with them shaping their essays, finding wonderful illustrations to give it some texture and some character and we finished in early March and sent it off to the publisher then and I'm incredibly grateful to them for their patience.

As well as drawing in general readers, it will also do some important academic work. Moving on the debate, asking how we write the history of 20th century music, how we write the history of Russian

music, a field which was split between Russia and an emigre culture for large parts of the 20th century.

Uhm, so I hope it will also do some important academic work as well, but it's been an absolute joy to work with the press and the whole team at Bard College who've been incredibly supportive have helped to read all the chapters have made very constructive suggestions and who have helped me see the book into production.

Mostly, while we've all been at home and reading things online and not being able to go to concerts and make life music.

Martin: Indeed, and I mean my very reasonable guess is that this is not the first book to be written on Rachmaninoff. So maybe you could just hone in a bit on what you think the unique contribution of this?

Philip: Yes, there had been a number of good books on Rachmaninoff shortly after his death. There was a small spate of books, many of them written by people who knew him.

Many curated by family members or members of his circle who wanted to really establish a biography and a narrative of his work. In 1973, there was a lot more work, particularly coming out of the Soviet Union. Publications of letters, documents. That was the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Of course, and that led to another wave of often very fine scholarship.

I think a lot of that scholarship was written as I said, against the backdrop of a critical consensus which deemed Rachmaninoff to be old fashioned, a romantic composer, a hangover of the 19th century who lived long beyond his sell by dates. Uhm, I think that has not been reviewed. And the book I think makes an important contribution. Interestingly, to seeing Rachmaninoff as modern.

But not as modernist, he was someone who didn't just bury himself in the past. He was very engaged with new audiences.

The new mechanisms of celebrity. He in his American years was a great interview, E with Good Housekeeping, with vogue with all kinds of popular publications as well as musical publications.

He was very keen to use that kind of celebrity status to put across classical music to a very wide audience in early 20th century America.

I also think one of the things I was very keen to do in the book was to devote full attention to his American years and the years he lived in Europe.

Even before he emigrated, he was a regular visitor to Western Europe. He spent three years living in Dresden. Between 1906 and 1909 he regularly visited Switzerland and Italy. He performed in Britain. He was aware of currents, well outside of the Russian Empire, and I think the other thing about Rachmaninoff's reputation is that sometimes we've sort of overdone his Russianness. We've wanted to make him a kind of emanation of the Russian soul, and all of that kind of Mythmaking and yes he was. He loved his homeland. He was bereft when he left Russia in 1917 and spoke about the loss until his death.

He always thought of himself as Russian. He only became an American citizen towards the very end of his life he spoke Russian with his friends and family. He lived a very Russian lifestyle, even in Immigration.

But I think that does him a disservice to sort of pigeonhole him too much. He was very interested in the music of Wagner Africa Charles, he was interested in Inter War French music, American Music and the book tries to tell the full story of him as an immigrant who didn't shut himself off from the world in which he found himself when he left his homeland, and we may come on to politics and contemporary Russia at the moment, but within Russia there is often an attempt to sort of reclaim their own heroes.

There was several years ago, even an attempt to repatriate his body. He's buried in in New York State in Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla, and the Russian Minister of Culture actually tried to propose that he be exhumed and taken back to his homeland, and that's the sort of silly story in many ways and it didn't come to pass, but it's indicative of a broader mindset that says we must see authors or musicians as painters only in their national contexts.

And I'm really keen in all my academic work to pay attention to the cross-border, the transnational. For stories of exile and migration, the way that many of us have other lives, other languages, other selves, and so so. The book I think a thread that runs throughout it. Is this attention paid to him as a Russian composer outside of his homeland? And how he interacted with that experience and the events that took place there?

Martin: That's great, so if I'm tracking correctly, it sounds like what you're aiming to do in this collection is firstly to bring out a reappraisal of him as a serious figure worthy of scholarly attention.

Then to draw out the time periods in his life that have been somewhat neglected relative to other parts and also just to study him as a more fully orbed human being with a kind of more richly complex identity than being some kind of platonic abstract form: Being a Russian. Is that, am I tracking you correctly?

Philip: That's spot on. I clearly need to ask you to write all my book covers, conference abstracts, introductions and everything you you've distilled that much better than I could have done myself. Thank you, Martin.

Martin: Very kind, and so I'm interested to know just either in your own research or in your conversations with colleagues and contributors to the book... Are there particular things that have really stood out to you or that you feel like you've learned that are surprising or new?

Philip: I think one always finds new things about even the most familiar figure, mainly rereading when I began the project, all of his letters, all of his interviews was a very important exercise. It's not a biography. My previous book was a biography, but like a biography you can't just ignore things that you don't know about, or you can't just bracket them off just because you haven't got time. And so I, I did find myself coming across all kinds of new things. New ways of looking at all things or things that I hadn't seen in the same depth or the same complexity before, I think.

One of the chapters by Peter Franklin, who's emeritus professor of music here at Oxford. That chapter really opened my eyes to his time in Germany and his engagement with modern German music, particularly in the Dresden years.

That's just one example where one of the authors revealed that to me there are three chapters on the operas and we seldom hear Rachmaninoff operas, and they're often deemed unstageable. Yet my three wonderful authors and refre, Karen Emerson and Simon Morrison, all of them, took me into a greater understanding of the complexities of the liberty and the music in in ways that I probably ought to have known myself in advance. So every chapter contains either a biographical fact or a way of looking at the facts of the life or has an interpretive framework. There's a lovely

chapter by Rebecca Mitchell who's just published a biography of Rachmaninoff with reaction press that looks at Moscow in the late 19th and early 20th century, not through the prism of tradition and old fashionedness but through modernity through new Rd building projects through new architectural projects to seize the city as a as a space of change.

And that was very exciting to read. Her work as a historian, I was able to bring in a Russian colleague, Medina Raccoon, who really looked at his reputation in the Soviet Union now.

He left in 1917. He was part of the White Russian emigration. He should not have been a figure who featured on the concert programmes of Soviet artists.

He wasn't a Bolshevik. He was the revolutionary. Yet why were not just performers but audiences? And indeed the party interested in not just tolerating but celebrating his music, that story emerged. I haven't got time to go through every chapter, but each chapter contains a new story or new material or new way of thinking and all of the authors were were very keen to apply this reappraisal.

Martin: We have to buy the book to read all the rest of those juicy findings. So I do hope you all will.

Philip: Yes, it's available in hardback and paperback, and as an ebook, and I'm sure my publishers will be very pleased for me to mention that.

Martin: So you said that the origin of this book is connected to your involvement with the Bard Music Festival.

And could you flesh out a bit more what your involvement with that festival is? How the book ties into that.

Philip: Yeah, so the book is not the programme of the festival. They're separate things, but they're intimately linked. The festival takes place over 2 long weekends. In August. We begin on the 5th of August and go through to the 7th.

And then start to get on the 12th, finishing on the 14th of August this summer. And in those two long weekends we will have 12 concerts examining aspects of work man, enough life and like the book the festival falls in two halves. There's a Russian half. And then there's 1/2 of that we've called new worlds, so both America but Europe. But that general idea of newness, and we'll be looking at as I said, a wide range of Rachmaninoff's music, but setting it alongside his teachers, his contemporaries, his rivals, his critics, but also those figures who had very different existences.

I've been very closely involved in making suggestions in offering feedback on programmes we've had.

Lots and lots of zoom conversations and in the last year some in person conversations when we've been able to meet when we found ourselves in the same city or on the same continent to to really just talk about what would make a satisfying programme for the listeners so that the book complements it. But the festival has its own rationale. There will be a separate booklets programme for the festival and I've written the introductory essay I've written essays for a couple of the concerts. I'll be giving some pre concert talks. I'll be taking part in some panel discussions.

So I'll be very visible at all of the events.

I'm trying to represent academic scholarship, but in an engaging, accessible way for non specialist audiences, and I'll be doing that with several other colleagues who will be flying out to Bard over the summer so it will be a real chance for many of the world experts on Russian and American Music to gather in one place to hear great music and to communicate what we love about his repertoire.

Martin: Great, so you spoke about how you want to make your scholarship and that of your colleagues engaging and present it in that way at this festival. And when I think about the usual activities as an academic, I maybe picture when they are kind of presenting. Being at a conference of some sort, presenting to other learned scholars, and this seems like a bit of a different event where it's much more public facing and much more of a blur. And so I was wondering how more generally you view the interaction between engaging the public and producing your scholarship.

Philip: It's a really, really good question I I suppose in the facile answer is that I'm a sort of a failed performer, so doing these events allows me to hang out, hang out with really great performers, and occasionally get on the stage, turn some pages and and just get a little bit of the greasepaint and and and the excitement of live music.

But you know more seriously that there are very good reasons for doing this. I think so.

Or within the academic world, particularly humanities. There's a kind of narrative of crisis the subjects which dominate the headlines are the STEM subjects, science, technology, engineering, maths.

They're the things that are going to get you a great salary. They're going to change the world. You can apply your knowledge and people wonder what's the value of the humanities? Why study Humanities? Now I'm sure people listening to this podcast know what the value of the humanities is, and even more have degrees in the humanities

At Wadham the social scientists, humanities scholars, scientists all live and work together so we don't feel that difference. But more broadly, there can be a narrative of crisis on crisis of humanities. If we take a step back though, and we look at what we study. History, music, literature, painting.

There's a great appetite for that out there. People are always downloading podcasts, listening to in our time attending gallery's going to the theatre, going to the cinema, going to concerts in interesting places, people, people find these products of the artistic imagination integral to what it what we are as human beings. And that's what we work on here, so why wouldn't you want to sort of celebrate that and work with that?

So one of the reasons for doing these kind of public facing events and collaborations with performing arts organisations is that they renew my confidence in in the importance of what we do.

There might be a more instrumental aspect. The creative and performing arts form a huge part of our national economy.

They always have and increasingly, they have. They're one of our big exports like higher education. Of course, they're one of the things that we might want to celebrate about Uhm, about the world in which we live here, and I want to be very confident and unabashedly positive and enthusiastic about the importance of of those.

But I don't think it's just about economic added value and in instrumental way of looking at the humanities and the arts.

As we emerge from the pandemic, yes, of course we pay tribute to the vaccine scientists who came up with the vaccine that's got us back to in person, music making and in person tutorials in person lectures and all of those things and got us off Online work. But what also got us through the pandemic and why? What are we going to do with our lives now that we can do things again, it's to go to the cinema together. It's to go to the gallery's it's to go to concerts. It's to do things

collectively. What? got us through the Pandemic - it was doing things at home online. It was watching those things.

So I really want to celebrate that aspect as well of the centrality of these to our national life to our international life. But also to our sort of being as humans. This is what makes us tick and in a place like Wadham, actually, I don't feel the separation between the arts and the sciences.

So this emerges very naturally out of the sense of community that shapes what we do. Here we make music together we talk about books together. We find out about scientific discoveries together. I feign knowledge when someone talks about social policy and economics, but I think it's a holistic sense of what makes us human beings. That's so exciting. One final thing.

It's very easy to see collaborations with arts and performing arts organisations as kind of one way I'm being used in as the experts and I'm standing on the stage. That's a little bit of it, of course. Yes, we've spent years, those of us who are in academia, learning our subjects we know it profoundly and intimately, but working with an organisation such as Bard College means that I'm collaborating, working with these audiences is 2 way. I learn from them.

I get an awful lot, I measure what I do, I calibrate my ideas. I get a sense of what matters to them.

By listening as much as by talking, and I think it's that mutuality.

That's really, really important about public engagement with research knowledge exchange. Those are the jargon words in the field, but it is a profoundly 2 way exercise I feel. So it's not just me turning up, delivering, communicating and then walking away, I hope.

That in a good instance of this kind of relationship, I will go away as changed banners and enhanced by the experience as I hope the audiences will be.

Martin: And for another small plug, any listeners can go attend this festival I'm sure and interact with you in that two way format.

Philip: Any of you are in North America in New York State or within driving or flying distance. Tickets are on sale so please come and listen to wonderful music. Hear some wonderful talks by my colleagues and friends.

And if you are coming, I'd be only too happy to know about it and so let me know so that I can look out for you at the interval or the drinks reception, or at any point I'll be out there for two or three weeks in the summer, and delighted to connect with Wadham alumni and any of your friends and family. That would make me very happy indeed.

Martin: So I'm aware that over this session we've spoken a lot about Russian culture and just given the current circumstance with Ukraine it seems appropriate just to acknowledge that for a moment and just kind of ask, Just for yourself how, how the unfolding conflict has shaped your thinking as a scholar of Russian culture and what that means at this particular time.

Martin: Yes, it's the conversation. We have all the time with each other with our graduate students with our undergraduates, with our colleagues in Russia and Ukraine and around the world.

We have no obvious easy answers at the moment. What I might say is those of us who've been working on Russian culture all our lives have been facing this question, not just since the 24th of February, but since 2014 and the annexation of Crimea and the unresolved conflict in Donbas and so we have been thinking through these questions profoundly, even if maybe some of the results of that thinking haven't been obvious to the outside world.

I think I've been very keen in my teaching and scholarship always to think about the legacy of empire from the mediaeval period onward. Russia thought of itself in imperial terms. It expanded, it annexed territory. It incorporated other people into its space in the 19th century it thought of itself, explicitly as multiethnic, Multilingual, multicultural and the legacy of that fed into the Soviet experience as well. So that question has been integral to our teaching and our research, and I've been thinking a lot about how we can reflect that in our undergraduate and graduate curriculum.

The kind of text we study can tell us about the relationship between Russia and its neighbours, or teaching the prose of the 19th century.

It's been integral to our teaching and research for a long time. I've wanted in my teaching in particular to bring in a far wider range of Russophone voices.

This goes for all modern languages.

To study French allows you to access not just literature produced in France, but Francophone writing from around Globe - the study of Spanish is the same, Portuguese is the same. All of these languages have their complex contested legacies of colonialism and empire, and Russia is no different.

So I bring into my teaching writers active in the Russian language, but based in the Caucasus and Central Asia in Israel.

In North America in Ukraine, where Russian is one of the languages that is still spoken, and so I think reflecting that complexity in how we teach is an important pedagogical exercise, but has been for a long time I think.

Many of us are keen through public facing work through translation through podcasting through interviews to get that narrative more widely understood by the broader public who might perhaps see Russia as one thing, whereas in fact it can be many things, it has a rich, very complex and often challenging and often tragic history. The other thing that I have been doing a lot of well before February, this year is working with colleagues in Ukraine, in Belarus. Whether they're there or whether they are now outside of those countries.

When it comes to theatre making, I've been part of a big research project here at Oxford, which looks at Russophone drama by dramatists in Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, which began long before this conflict, but which was partly carried out under the shadow of the 2014 annexation.

I've also been using the understanding that I have as a historian and scholar of not just Russian culture, but of the Russian Empire under the Soviet Union. To understand the place of countries like Ukraine. In that narrative, I'm working very closely with Oxford leader, one of the city's great cultural outfits. We're doing a recital later this week of Ukrainian art songs and I will be speaking between the performances to help illuminate the biographies of the composers we'll be hearing.

We'll be doing events in the autumn in the leader festival.

To bring forward those stories, those narratives which aren't always heard outside so.

It's the trickiest, most tragic, most difficult moment I've known in my professional career and I don't have any obvious answers to the geopolitical crisis. How could I have? I'm not trained in that regard.

But all I can do is bring my cultural understanding to bear both on how I teach, how I support the next generation of graduate students who may not be able to go to Russia for some time soon, and also to communicate these stories and these narratives, and these interpretations, to readers and listeners who really want to know what's going on beneath the headlines.

I don't know whether it's enough. It can never be enough, but it's the very small amount that I can do and to come back to Rachmaninoff we thought long and hard about what it meant to do, a festival devoted to his music this summer. It's not to justify it or explain it away, but this was a composer who left his homeland in 1917. He was displaced because of warfare and revolution.

And then, when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, put aside those political distaste he had for Soviet Russia to support the Red Army, which was not just a Russian army but was a Soviet army made-up of many nationalities and peoples to repel Nazi Germany. So that's not an answer, but in Rachmaninoff's own story there is one of those sadly tragic and recurring narratives of displacements of loss, and maybe that's one way of thinking through the the present crisis, at least in my own work.

Martin: Phillip, thank you so much for your time. Thank you so much for sharing. If people want to connect with you online, where can they find you?

Philip: Well, I'm quite low tech so I'm not on Instagram or Twitter or certainly not on Tik Tok and all of these things.

But I have a web page on the college homepage and on the faculty page of the faculty of Mediaeval and Modern Languages, people can find my e-mail address there and they can find a full list of all of the kind of things I'm up to in various places, and I look forward to hearing, perhaps from some old students from some alums that I haven't met before and maybe in Bard this summer. Perhaps some of you there as well.

I'll be looking forward to that and thank you for your time and questions and the conversation today.

Martin: I'll include the link to your web page on the show notes and thanks again. Thank you.