

THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY PRESENTS  
FINAL PLAY IN HERSHEY FELDER'S COMPOSER SERIES

**Hershey Felder**  
**Jonathan Silvestri**  
**Rachmaninoff and the Tsar**

The Music of Sergei V. Rachmaninoff

Book by Hershey Felder

Hershey Felder as Sergei Rachmaninoff

Jonathan Silvestri as Tsar Nicolas II

Directed by Trevor Hay

Regional Premiere

January 10 – February 9, 2025 (*opening night: January 11*)

MOUNTAIN VIEW CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA (3 December 2024) — Pianist/actor/playwright/producer **Hershey Felder** returns to **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** as Sergei Rachmaninoff in the Northern California Premiere of *Rachmaninoff and the Tsar*, the final work in his internationally-acclaimed series of composer plays. For the first time, Felder appears opposite another actor: British-Italian **Jonathan Silvestri** in the role of Tsar Nicholas II. Featuring Rachmaninoff's most beloved compositions, *Rachmaninoff and the Tsar* promises to be another mystical musical journey in the Hershey Felder style. TheatreWorks audiences have flocked to Felder's past record-breaking hit productions which brought to life composers including George Gershwin, Frédéric Chopin, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Irving Berlin, Claude Debussy, Ludwig van Beethoven, and more. *Rachmaninoff and the Tsar* will be presented **January 10 – February 9, 2025** (*press opening: January 11*) at Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro Street. For tickets (\$34-\$115) and more information the public may visit **TheatreWorks.org** or call **877-662-8978**.

The play brings to life legendary pianist-composer Sergei Rachmaninoff who, having safely left Russia during the 1917 revolution, has made his home in the United States. In 1942, at the age of 68, he has applied for American citizenship and bought a home in Beverly Hills, but his soul has

never left Russia. Facing a terminal illness brings forth the memory of an encounter with Russia's last Tsar, Nicholas II, and the Tsar's daughter, the Grand Duchess Anastasia, a memory that haunts Rachmaninoff until the end.

*Rachmaninoff and the Tsar* had its World Premiere at the Eli and Edythe Broad Stage in Santa Monica followed by a hit run at the Balboa Theatre in Santa Monica. *San Diego Union-Tribune* called the performance "masterful, visually stunning" noting the show is "one of his best." *HoustonPress* commended Felder's "charm, finesse, and astonishing piano prowess," while *Stage and Cinema* lauded his "fantastic playing of some of the greatest compositions of all time."

Since the 1998 premiere of his internationally-lauded play with music *George Gershwin Alone*, Hershey Felder has appeared on world renowned stages throughout the United States and abroad giving more than six thousand performances in original works that include *George Gershwin Alone*, *Beethoven*, *Maestro Bernstein*, *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin*, *Our Great Tchaikovsky*, *Hershey Felder as Claude Debussy in A Paris Love Story*, and more. World premieres at the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills have included several of his award-winning films: *Musical Tales in the Venetian Jewish Ghetto*, *The Assembly*, *Noble Genius Chopin & Liszt*, and more. In all, Hershey Felder has performed on more than one hundred stages in leading worldwide theatres.

This exploration of Sergei Rachmaninoff's itinerant but extraordinary life illuminates the master's sense of home and family and how those elements influenced his art. Featuring his world famous C# minor Prelude, his second piano concerto, his symphonies, and his Paganini Variations, Rachmaninoff did leave Russia but Russia stayed with him until the very end, influencing every aspect of his life.

Sergei Rachmaninoff was born in 1873 in the Russian village of Semyonovo, more than one thousand miles to the east of Moscow. Beginning piano lessons at four, he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory at the age of ten, later moving to the Moscow Conservatory. He was known as a first-rate pianist, a world class conductor, and heir to Tchaikovsky as composer. He spent most of his life performing as a pianist in Europe and the U.S. While he was world

renowned as a pianist and conductor and beloved for his compositions, he was not critically well received by cognoscenti until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He died just days before his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in Beverly Hills, a few weeks after finally receiving his American citizenship.

***Rachmaninoff and the Tsar*** features direction by **Trevor Hay**, dramaturgy by **Jerry Patch**, concept design by **Hershey Felder**, lighting design by **Erik S. Barry**, sound design and production management by **Erik Carstensen**, sound operation by **Jeremy Kalke**, projections design by **Stefano Decarli**, costumes design by **Marysol Gabriel** and wig design by **Judi Lewin**.

**Hershey Felder** (Sergei Rachmaninoff/ Book) was recently named Artistic Director of the historic Teatro della Signoria in Florence Italy, as well as Teatro Nicollini, both in Florence's historic city centre. Of his prolific career on stage, *American Theatre Magazine* has noted, "Hershey Felder is in a category all his own." Following 28 years of continuous stage productions and over 6,000 live performances throughout the U.S. and abroad, Hershey Felder created Live from Florence, An Arts Broadcasting Company, based in Florence, Italy, which has produced more than eighteen theatrical films to date. They include the recently-released *Noble Genius-Chopin & Liszt*; *The Assembly*; *Violetta*, the story of Verdi's Traviata; *Dante and Beatrice*; *Mozart and Figaro in Vienna*; the World Premiere musical *Nicholas, Anna & Sergei*, the story of Sergei Rachmaninoff; *Puccini*, the story of famed opera composer Giacomo Puccini; *Before Fiddler*, a musical story about writer Sholem Aleichem; *Great American Songs and the Stories Behind Them*, *Leonard Bernstein and the Israel Philharmonic*, a documentary; and the popular *Musical Tales in the Venetian Jewish Ghetto*. Two seasons of programming are currently available at [www.hershefelder.net](http://www.hershefelder.net). Felder has given performances of his solo productions at some of the world's most prestigious theatres and has consistently broken box office records. His stage shows include *George Gershwin Alone* (Broadway's Helen Hayes Theatre, West End's Duchess Theatre); *Monsieur Chopin*; *Beethoven*; *Maestro (Leonard Bernstein)*; *Franz Liszt in Musik*; *Lincoln: An American Story*; *Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin*; *Our Great Tchaikovsky*; *A Paris Love Story*; and *Monsieur Chopin*. His compositions and recordings include *Aliyah*, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*; *Fairytale*, a musical; *Les Anges de Paris*, *Suite for Violin and Piano*; *Song Settings*; *Saltimbanques for Piano and Orchestra*; *Etudes Thematiques for Piano*; *An American Story for Actor and Orchestra*; and the opera *IL QUARTO UOMO* that premiered in Fiesole, Italy in the summer of 2023 with the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. Hershey is the adaptor, director, and designer for the internationally performed play-with-music *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* with Steinway artist Mona Golabek; producer and designer for the musical *Louis and Keely: 'Live' at the Sahara*, directed by Taylor Hackford; and writer and director for *Flying Solo*, featuring opera legend Nathan Gunn. Hershey has operated a full-service production company since 2001. He has been a scholar-in-residence at Harvard University's Department of Music and is married to Rt. Hn. Kim Campbell. Felder has

become an enormous favorite among South Bay Area audiences through his appearances at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, where his stage productions have smashed box office records.

**Jonathan Silvestri** (Tsar Nicholas II) is an actor of British-Roman origin who specializes in international character accents and styles. Silvestri began his career at BAC Youth Theatre in London's Clapham district, later studying with Simon Furness. He is known for his roles in the international television HBO hit series "Borgia" as Cardinal Fonsalida; the film "Dakota," the television series "The Young Pope," "Dangerous Lies," "Devils," "Fangs," and more. He is a regular on Italian TV, in particular RAI's 'Impazienti' in a starring role with Max Tortora and Enrico Bertolino. Silvestri recently appeared as Eugene Delacroix in Hershey Felder's feature film *Noble Genius-Chopin & Liszt*, and in the recently released feature film *Hey Joe* with James Franco. A regular on Roman stages, Jonathan's notable theatre credits include *Closer* by Patrick Marber, *Julius Caesar*, *Our Country's Good*, and *Chinatown* at the Teatro Manhattan, among many others.

TheatreWorks is committed to creating an environment that is accessible for all audiences in its community. American Sign Language interpretation will be available at the performance at **7:30pm Tuesday, January 25**. In partnership with c2 Caption Coalition, TheatreWorks will include open captioning (a private screen displaying all dialogue and a description of sound effects) for the performances **2pm and 7pm, Sunday, January 26** and **2pm Wednesday, January 29**. TheatreWorks also collaborates with Gravity Access Services to offer audio descriptions to assist patrons who are visually impaired., a service available **8pm Saturday, February 1** and **2pm Sunday, February 2** (To utilize audio description, patrons should pre-register at **877-662-8978** after purchasing tickets). Assistive listening devices are offered at every performance with no advance registration required. TheatreWorks will require face masks to be worn for the performances of *Rachmaninoff and the Tsar* at **8pm Friday, January 17; 2pm Saturday, January 18** and **2pm Sunday, January 26**.

**TheatreWorks Silicon Valley**, led by Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli** and Interim Executive Director **Criss Henderson**, presents a wide variety of contemporary plays and musicals and revitalizes great works of the past. Founded in 1970 by **Robert Kelley**, TheatreWorks has grown from a truly original Silicon Valley start-up to become one of the nation's leading professional non-profit theatre companies. TheatreWorks was recently honored as the recipient of the 2019 Regional Theatre Tony Award. TheatreWorks also champions new

work, offering artists support and a creative home as they develop new stories for the American theatre. Offstage, TheatreWorks' arts education programs in local schools and arts engagement programs in Silicon Valley neighborhoods uplift its audiences and strengthen community bonds. Onstage and off, TheatreWorks welcomes the mosaic of people that embody the Bay Area and beyond, celebrating the transformative power of theatre to ignite imagination, inspire conversation, and enliven souls.

Media sponsor for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley's 2024/25 season is *San Francisco Chronicle*.

### FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

**WHAT:** Pianist/actor/playwright/producer **Hershey Felder** returns to **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** as Sergei Rachmaninoff in the Northern California Premiere of *Rachmaninoff and the Tsar*, the final work in his internationally-acclaimed series of composer plays. For the first time, Felder appears opposite another actor: British-Italian **Jonathan Silvestri** in the role of Tsar Nicholas II. Featuring Rachmaninoff's most beloved compositions, *Rachmaninoff and the Tsar* promises to be another mystical musical journey in the Hershey Felder style. TheatreWorks audiences have flocked to Felder's past record-breaking hit productions which brought to life composers including George Gershwin, Frédéric Chopin, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Irving Berlin, Claude Debussy, Ludwig van Beethoven, and more

**WHEN:** Previews: Friday, January 10, 2025  
*Opening: Saturday, January 11, 2025*  
Closes: Sunday, February 9, 2025

**SHOWS:** Previews: 8:00pm  
Tuesdays: 7:30pm  
Wednesdays: 2:00pm, 7:30pm  
Thursdays & Fridays: 8:00pm  
Saturdays: 2:00pm, 8:00pm  
Sundays: 2:00pm, 7:00pm

**ACCESS:** **ASL Interpretation:** 7:30pm Tuesday, January 21, 2025  
**Open Captioning:** 2pm and 7pm on Sunday, January 26, 2025; 2pm on Wednesday, January 29, 2025  
**Audio Description:** 8pm Saturday, February 1, 2025; 2pm Sunday, February 2, 2025. *Please register in advance, as service includes a pre-show talk 30 minutes before the performance.*  
**Assistive Listening Devices available at every performance**

**WHERE:** Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro Street, Mountain View

**TICKETS:** Single tickets (\$34-\$115) and Season 54 Subscriptions are available. Pricing inclusive of fees and subject to change.

**INFO:** For information visit [theatreworks.org](http://theatreworks.org) or call **877-662-8978**

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**PRESS:** Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co., [lauren@cb-pr.com](mailto:lauren@cb-pr.com)

**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos are available:  
<https://cbpr.co/press/rachmaninoffandthetsar>