

VOLUME 4. CLASSICAL CHUMP

ARTIST STATEMENT

This album is not improvised in the way most people use the word. Nothing here was random. Every note — whether composed, arranged, or composed in real-time — came from structure. From rules. From a deliberate process of limiting chaos through design.

Volume 4: CLASSICAL CHUMP is a collection of original compositions, reimagined concert works, and real-time compositions that follow strict internal logic. One real-time composition is built using Michael Wiedeburg 1775 Treatise on baroque real-time composition, “*Der sich selbst informirende Clavierspieler*”.

Others follow self directed systems of mirrored intervals, tritone symmetry, or parametric constraints. Even when I was composing in real-time, I was not reacting emotionally, but executing ideas with intent.

This is not a display of spontaneity. It's a study in control, and what can be expressed when emotion is funneled through structure and form.

ABOUT THE ALBUM

This album is made up of three threads woven together:

1. **Original compositions** rooted in Romanticism and Impressionism
2. **Solo piano arrangements** of all three movements of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2
3. **Original real-time composition** — each built around a specific set of constraints or guiding logic

The composed pieces are fully notated but emotionally loose — lyrical, harmonically rich, and often leaning toward ambiguity. The Rachmaninoff arrangements are not transcriptions; they're interpretations, rewritten to live and breathe through solo piano without an orchestra behind them, and more accessible to the modern musical palette.

The real-time compositions vary widely. Some are shaped by intervallic rules (like tritone symmetry). Another borrows from a 1775 Treatise outlining a baroque real-time compositional system. Freedom inside structure. Each real-time composition is a thought experiment made musical.

Everything on this album is performed alone — no edits, no overlays. Just one pianist in conversation with the past, the present, and whatever's left of the future.

TRACK NOTES

These aren't recital pieces — but they're not guesses, either. Every work on this album is built on structure. Some were fully composed and notated. Others were composed in real-time, but always within strict constraints: symmetry, intervallic systems, harmonic direction, or counterpoint.

Nothing here was made to sound impressive. It was made to hold meaning. Whether I was adapting Rachmaninoff, writing original themes, or composing in real-time with a self-imposed rule set, the goal was always the same — to turn thought into motion, and structure into feeling.

“MAGNUS’S THEME” *by FOREST CHUMP*

Magnus is the older brother — curious, cautious, and deeply kind. He called me Dad, and I took that seriously. His theme is steady, almost noble, with moments of restraint that feel like he's holding something in. I wrote it to sound like a kid who grew up too fast, but still looked out for everyone else.

“SEBASTIAN’S THEME” *by FOREST CHUMP*

Sebastian is the little one — a whirlwind of energy and emotion. His theme is playful, erratic, and tender in the way little kids are when they trust you completely. There's a restlessness in the left hand and bursts of melody in the right, like he's running through a memory I can't hold onto anymore.

“FOREVER YOUR FATHER” *by FOREST CHUMP*

Composed as a love letter in sound, *Forever Your Father* is both a lullaby and a legacy for the two sons I loved raising with all my heart. It moves between tenderness and strength. At its core, it's not about perfection, but presence — the enduring promise of a father's love that remains.

“SCHIZOAFFECTIVE” *by FOREST CHUMP*

This one's stormy — overlapping motifs like voices in a diner, all talking at once, none of them mine. I built the piece on mental clutter: looping fragments, sudden shifts, moments of clarity buried under noise. But G minor holds it together. It's not madness. It's the sound of living with it.

“PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2” by SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

“I. MODERATO” *solo arrangement by FOREST CHUMP*

I kept as much of Rachmaninoff's grandeur as I could without the orchestra and unnecessary filler sections. This movement is all about rising from collapse, something I know too well. My version turns the sweeping string lines into heavy chordal breath — more solitary. Just a man and a piano, pulling himself upright.

“II. ADAGIO SOSTENUTO” *solo arrangement by FOREST CHUMP*

This is the stillness after the storm — the moment when you realize you've survived, but nothing feels whole. I slowed the tempo and let the silences linger. The melody isn't just beautiful — it's lonely.

“III. ALLEGRO SCHERZANDO” *solo arrangement by FOREST CHUMP*

This scherzo is usually triumphant — a full-circle return. But stripped down, it becomes a sprint without a finish line. I played it with clenched teeth and loose wrists, letting the rhythmic drive carry the emotional weight. It's chaos, yes — but it's earned. You can't fake this kind of speed through survival.

“REAL-TIME COMPOSITION NO. 1” by *FOREST CHUMP*

This piece is built on Michael Wiedeburg’s 18th-century real-time compositional method — a guidebook for ornamentation, cadences, and voice leading. I used his rules as a framework but stayed in the moment, weaving lines that talk across each other rather than follow. It’s contrapuntal, but not fugal — like several thoughts in dialogue, occasionally overlapping, occasionally arguing.

“REAL-TIME COMPOSITION NO. 2” by *FOREST CHUMP*

I approached this like a lieder singer with no words — 19th century romantic harmony and Bel Canto principles filtered through touch and breath. Think Chopin meets Bellini in a dream. The rubato isn’t just expressive — it’s desperate. There are no lyrics, but it still says: I was here. I felt all of it. And I’m still singing.

“REAL-TIME COMPOSITION NO. 3” by *FOREST CHUMP*

This is the farthest I’ve gone from tradition. I built a self-imposed system of tritone-based symmetry, pushing away tonality but clinging to structure. There’s no home key — just rotation, tension, and orbit. I composed this in real-time in one take. It’s not supposed to feel good. It’s supposed to feel true.

RECORDING CONTEXT

These pieces were recorded under the same conditions as the rest of the series — solo, live, and stripped to the essentials. I played a modeled Bosendorfer 280VC using Modartt's Pianoteq plugin, tracked through a single mic. No edits. No overdubs. Just a clean capture of what actually happened.

But unlike the folk and jazz volumes, this one demanded more discipline. Even the real-time compositions followed tight internal logic — rules I'd set in advance: consistent tritone intervals, mirrored motifs, harmonic constraints. This wasn't freeform. It was formal and rule based.

Everything you hear was shaped by design — from voice-leading to phrasing to pedal control. All guided by intention. The emotion comes through the structure, not in spite of it.

A PERSONAL NOTE

In a time when everything felt unstable, structure saved me. These pieces gave me rules to hold onto when nothing else made sense.

I wasn't chasing inspiration. I was building systems. Writing something I could trust, even if I couldn't trust myself. This album gave me a way to keep moving without falling apart.

If you hear clarity, it's because I needed it. If you hear restraint, it's because I earned it.

— Forest Chump