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A Play-by-Play of My 33-Mile Group Run to Rachmaninoff's Grave for Performa



by Guido van der Werve

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This year was the second annual "Running to Rachmaninoff," and we started from Luhring Augustine Gallery instead of MoMA PS1, which added a few miles to the route. This year people were invited to run along. We started with a group including the artists Eleanna Anagnos, Anton Ginzburg, Ragnar Kjartansson, Erkkka Nissinen, and Eva Ostrowka, along with ARTINFO's Reid Singer, the New York Observer's Andrew Russeth, and Luhring Augustine gallery director Kristen Becker. Everyone carried a bouquet of chamomile flowers.

Only Reid Singer had confirmed beforehand that he could run the entire length of the route, which is impressive to say the least because he just finished the New York Marathon in 2.49 hours six days prior to this event. The others were going to see how far they could get. For this purpose Ragnar brought his bicycle along.

We started running with nine people, and Anton ran straight into our accompanying van (which provided drinks and seats), leaving eight runners behind. Coming up to Sixth Avenue, Eleanna had to drop out and take the van, due to an old injury acting up. Entering Central Park we lost Erkkka and Kirsten, leaving us with five runners. On the north side of the park, Ragnar and Eva — who were taking turns on Ragnar's space-clown bicycle (which drew a lot of attention) — were done for the day, and so were Ragnar's flowers, leaving us with three.

Andrew had only run half a marathon before but he was going strong and not showing signs of fatigue. The three of us were running at a steady but very sustainable pace and the miles were flying by. The route was a bit hilly, but we had a strong tailwind all the way and the weather was perfect. After 20 miles Andrew was still going strong and we started thinking he could maybe join all the way. After stopping for a drink, though, something snapped in his knee and he had to drop out after a very impressive effort. Then it was just Reid and me for the last 10 miles.

Having run it alone last year, it was great to have some company and we were gradually moving on, getting stiffer legs with every mile. I changed the course this year to avoid running on the interstate (which I did last year) and this added some more miles. The planned route was supposed to be 30 miles, but when we reached that distance we were still nowhere near the cemetery. The roads were getting hillier and hillier, and with our stiffened legs the last three miles ended up being an unwelcome bonus to the race.

Finally, after a short 33 miles we ended up at Rachmaninoff's grave — which also happened to be on a hill. It was a beautiful sunset moment to honor him. We placed the flowers, and Reid brought along some of his compositions to listen to. It was a great day, and I'm looking forward to next September [when we will do the third annual "Running to Rachmaninoff."](#) You're welcome to join, so start training.