



Short Feature.

Frankfurt, December 18.

[Frankfurt Museum Concerts.] Apparently in honour of the Russian guest, Mr. Serge Rachmaninoff, who was to play his second piano concerto in C minor, a program consisting exclusively of Russian music was arranged for the sixth Friday concert. So that the foreign artist's performance would not be overshadowed too much, Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade" and, simultaneously as the final piece, Tchaikovsky's "1812" Festival Overture were chosen as a kind of musical framing device—two compositions for which one would hardly be able to muster more than moderate interest. The more significant of the two works is still "Scheherazade," a program suite modelled on Berlioz and Liszt, leaning less towards the specifically Russian than towards the Oriental-Romantic. The Sultana Scheherazade tells her husband tales throughout the Arabian Nights, thereby averting Sulfan's cruel fate and saving her life. The composer attempts to depict one such tale in each movement of his suite. Thus, the first movement presents "Sinbad's Ship," the second the story of Prince Calendula, the most appealing third the tale of the young prince and princess, and finally the feast in Baghdad and the ship's sinking. The first movement is relatively fresh and promising, but interest wanes considerably in the Scherzo. The frequent repetitions of the ancient Asian-inspired theme, which is shattered from its tranquillity by the angry interjection of the Sultan's motif, become tiresome despite the ingenious instrumentation. The pleasing third section, with its whimsical children's march in the middle, somewhat compensates for this. In the finale, the reminiscences of this third section again provide a welcome glimmer of hope, but here too, the countless repetitions of minute musical ideas become tiresome. Furthermore, the ship's disaster, depicted with all the orchestral resources at its disposal, deviates considerably from the fairytale-like tone. Even the plaintive melody of the solo violin, intended, in a sense, as the embodiment of the Sultana's wife, strikes us as rather insignificant. After the generally well-received piece, in which the concertmaster performed the violin solo, Rachmaninoff's three-movement C minor concerto followed. A Moderato begins quite sombrely. The melancholy mood, which soon rises to lively excitement, is followed by a softly felt lyrical interlude, without, however, delving significantly deeper. The Lento seemed to us to be only slightly better, in which, among other things, slow arpeggio figures à la Bach were combined with sweetly melodic flutes, the mixing creates a choicelike and therefore also warmly flattened effect. The finale, however, exhibited a more independent character, beginning freshly and briskly in a scherzo-like style, followed by an atmospheric, dreamily melancholic cantilena, and ending with a coda that is both pathosladden and effectively heightened. At the beginning of the concert piece, the orchestral part still somewhat dominates the piano part, which seemed to offer us a truly virtuosic and, in parts, elegant concerto task only in the finale. With his exceptionally reliable performance of the piano part, which is generally only superficially interwoven with the orchestra, the likeable young composer revealed himself to be a pianist possessing a very respectable skill. Regarding the "Festival Overture 1812," in which the Marseillaise and the Russian national anthem are intricately interwoven and the world-historical significance of the Siege of Moscow is depicted, Tchaikovsky himself offered a judgment that is also very characteristic of him. In October 1880, he wrote to his friend, Frau von Meck: "I have composed two pieces with great speed, among them the Festival Overture (The Year 1812). It will be very bombastic and noisy. I wrote it without much love, which is why it will probably lack great

artistic merit." The objectivity of this judgment leaves nothing to be desired. Anyone who listened yesterday to the tremendous orchestral crescendos, lavishly endowed with all manner of excessive noise and rich organ and brass, would likely have inwardly agreed with the composer's dismissive assessment. The loud applause was primarily for the brilliant performance under Mr. Mengelberg, who also received much applause after the Rimsky-Korsakov suite, which he had meticulously prepared. Mr. Rachmaninoff was also honoured with applause and cheers. -g.

[Translation: Google]