



Theater and Concerts.

Tenth Gürzenich Concert in Cologne.

Russian Evening.

Russian chamber music works reach us in the concert hall relatively more often than orchestral works. Of Glinka, Borodin, Balakireff, and Tchaikovsky, it is really only Tchaikovsky, the most important of them, without whom a season program that takes itself seriously cannot do without him. What one has heard from them and the less important Anatol Lyadoff has mostly been substantial music, excellently orchestrated and charmingly enhanced by the national colour of the melodies, but without the monumental style of our Beethoven, Brahms, and Bruckner, even Tchaikovsky's pathos sometimes seems hollow and contrived. The better among them, when they strike the notes of Slavic melancholy—often with a touch of the decadent world-weariness introduced into music by Chopin—or with exuberant gaiety, offer us delightful sonic effects and peculiar, often bizarre and intricate rhythms. The Young Russian School, which leads from Tchaikovsky to Glazounoff, Taneyeff, Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, and Rebikov, maintains a musical entente with the French school. The disintegration of tonality, motivic restlessness, and the greyness of Russian fatalism often characterize the representatives of the most recent generation.

The program of the tenth Gürzenich concert offered an interesting selection from the Russian musical literature. Glazounoff's Fourth Symphony in E-flat is not a work of outstanding originality or inventiveness, nor does it delve very deeply, but the composer is a solid contrapuntist who develops themes and captivates with his rhythm and the luminous colours of his instrumentation. The first movement, unfolding entirely from a single rhyme and captivating with its beautiful, if somewhat monotonous, melody, possesses a certain languor, the fruit of a prudence focused on measure and form, without giving us the feeling that an inner fire is being contained. The Scherzo, a playful springtime spectacle in nature, is quite different, performed by the concert flute and small flute, the strings' pizzicati, and the woodwinds. In the formally subdued Finale, a spirited momentum emerges, imbued with the Russian national character. Steinbach's performance, both generous and effectively executed, resulted in a very favourable reception for the symphony; the charming Scherzo was the most pleasing part.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, born in 1873, a student of Taneev and Arensky and a teacher at the Mariinsky Institute in Moscow since 1903, became known in Germany for his piano music. He has since followed his Piano Concerto in C minor, Op. 27, with the Piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 30, which he himself performed for the Gürzenich audience yesterday. Virtuosity in this work is truly orgiastic; the demands on power, endurance, and speed in full-bodied chords and intricate passages of breakneck tempo and repetitive rhythms, stormy octave crossings, and lightning-fast leaps push the boundaries of what is possible and, in this respect, are reminiscent of Rubinstein's piano concertos, although Rachmaninoff's is far superior in substance and originality of thought. The concerto allows the player's virtuosity to flourish and is thus a monumental testament to the height of piano technique in our time. The artistic seriousness, which does not seek effects for their own sake but rather strives for depth, is deeply moving. In the first Allegro movement, the ideas still bear little resemblance to Slavic character; they are indistinct moods with a fundamental note of native melancholy, imbued with a spirited temperament. In the Adagio, entitled *Intermezzo*, the melancholy takes on a more sentimental hue, with an added touch of sensual warmth. In the Finale, however, an autochthonous powerhouse of Russian whimsy, the listener is as if attacked by Ural wolves. Despite its masterful structure, one might not call the concerto "significant," but it is

saturated with expression and, with its great charm in sound and treatment, is a true piano concerto. The enthusiastic applause was probably directed as much at the work itself as at the brilliant performance by Mr. Rachmaninoff, who achieved something extraordinary in that era. His playing is of astonishing bravura, of a power and verve that is irresistible. to appear solemn, yet filled with the deepest seriousness. The composer was so besieged with calls for encores that, although visibly reluctant, he finally agreed to give one. Among the orchestral pieces, the Enchanted Lake by A. Lyadoff was then heard, which is probably one of the most charming works by this composer, who was not exactly gifted with inventiveness or imagination. A dreamlike, fairytale atmosphere is captured in it with delicate sound; when the strings prepare the mood of the forest murmuring around the lake, one only expects the coaxing song of the little bird to fully savour the idyll. Tchaikovsky, to whom the final number was reserved, was not exactly outstandingly represented. His Slavonic March, in which he could give free rein to his inclination towards brutal orchestral noise, does not belong in the context of a Gürzenich concert. Nevertheless, the title Russian Evening may justify the exception, and this in turn may confirm the rule. The program was certainly stimulating and interesting, and should have guaranteed a better attendance at the concert, all the more so as it was performed with exceptional freshness and temperament by Steinbach and his orchestra.

[Translation: Google]