



Cologne Concerts.

Truly, Sergei Rachmaninoff's piano recital at the Gürzenich was an artistic sensation. A masterful evening outside that socially sanctioned concert series to which the concert audience is obliged to attend, while neglecting other performances, even when famous names are involved. Nevertheless, in the only half-empty hall, one saw all the people of the trade, especially pianists, some of whom had even come from afar. The composer, who has lived in America since the Russian Revolution, is returning to Europe for the first time and is now touring Germany. He has long been known as a musician, primarily as the composer of piano concertos and piano pieces. Russian Neo-Romanticism, as a nationally influenced style within the European tradition, further enhanced in his piano works the instrument's unique qualities, qualities often denied by more recent compositions: all the advantages of a harmonically and compositionally rich sound, in which spirit and imagination unite with virtuosic brilliance and verve. A composer of such high piano qualities must also be a pianist of great stature, as Rachmaninoff began his career. He is a pianist in the brilliant tradition that still resonates with Franz Liszt, an art that ennobled virtuosity through spirit. He still improvises interludes between pieces, something that has almost entirely fallen out of fashion in today's pragmatic age. And his program and playing style mark him as a virtuoso whose powerful musicianship is truly masterful. A performance that doesn't break a sweat and yet captivates. After two Bach chorale preludes in Busoni's arrangement, which, despite their subtle tonal nuances, still retained a certain richness, the artist, with his inspired rendering of Liszt's Dante Fantasy and Chopin's Fantasy in F minor, entered the realm that corresponded to his very being. A captivating technique, intense, creative feeling, and great temperament shaped these pieces in romantic splendour. What a passionate rubato Chopin displayed in his performance, of which, after the playful E-flat major Rondo, a Nocturne, a Waltz, a Scherzo, and Études were played. Rachmaninoff then presented his own Préludes, not the well-known one in C-sharp minor, but equally colourful, highly developed pieces of virtuosity, refined both intellectually and formally. Those who thought of the concertos might have missed the Lao Tzu flow of emotion, the grand pathos; but here, too, the phenomenon is repeated, which can be similarly observed with the Italians, that the Germans always prefer such pathos to be more concentrated and intensely expressed. Rachmaninoff, however, presented himself more as a man of the world than as a Russian. He received the strongest applause and gave several encores. [...] W. Jacobs.

[Translation: Google]