



Third Furtwängler Concert.

Rachmaninoff.

A few days ago, we met the pianist Rachmaninoff and fell in love with him. Composer Rachmaninoff had been known to us for a long time, but had almost become unknown again. The rapid pace of recent years. The stronger the new music gained a foothold, the more the image of this Russian faded and was pushed far into the background in the throng of minds, close to Tchaikovsky. Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto is still occasionally played, and some piano pieces even more frequently. It was therefore time, from an American perspective, to remind Europe of his work. And so the Romantic Rachmaninoff comes from across the Atlantic, where he had settled, to ascertain in the European capitals what was still in store for the blue flower, especially its growth, amidst a new musical development. The result was predictable. It became painfully clear to all of us, but also refreshingly clear against the backdrop of contemporary music, that Romanticism and Romanticism are two different things, that Rachmaninoff's Romanticism, at least today, already seems a bit salon-like.

And if this attempt had to be made, it was not prudent of the composer to have Furtwängler examine his third concerto, which, compared to the second, is decidedly weaker and more perfumed. The performance itself was, of course, beyond reproach, and yet it dampened the enthusiasm we had felt for the pianist a few days earlier. One can hardly bear to look at furniture from the '90s anymore and instead puts up older, more refined, or even more conventional new pieces. Kitsch is gradually disappearing from building facades. Why should one relapse into this path, which benefits almost everyone, and indulge in musical Makartian bouquets? Certainly, it is a harshness against the past, against an entire generation, but at the same time an injustice to the present. We must acknowledge that a Rachmaninoff piano concerto contains more technical and artistic skill than many modern productions; but can this fact be decisive for an era struggling for a new style, an era that must reach much, much further back into the past to move forward, to find itself? One can disparage, ridicule, or even deny this new artistic aspiration: it is there and alive, still a dwarf, in its struggle against a gigantic past, against a sense of tonality that has developed and been passed down for centuries, and which is one of the hardest things innovators have ever attempted to bend. But that this bold undertaking, which is necessarily evolution, not arbitrary, and that it has gained ground, was felt in a negative sense when the Romantic in Furtwängler championed the Romantic Rachmaninoff. It was a rigorous test for the Russian, a musical X-ray taken in the Schubert anniversary year. Schubert as both an exculpatory and incriminating witness. The findings are not hopeful; Rachmaninoff's compositional constitution has weakened; the air in which he can still musically live is very thin. This is not disguised by the formally well-constructed and elaborate first movement of this third piano concerto, the occasionally still captivating juxtaposition of the second, and the nationalistic, Russian-pounding dance rhythms of the finale. The applause was for the pianist rather than the composer.

This result became even more apparent through a counter-example: Brahms's Symphony in C minor. Also romanticism, but from what depth, with what content, how uncompromising and timeless, romantic only because it was written in that era. We owe Furtwängler this illuminating juxtaposition. One must admire him in everything he undertakes, regardless of whether he lends his great art to the dying or the nascent. Sthg.

[Translation: Google]