

A Rachmaninoffation.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's name was enough to fill the Auditorium in advance at his composition evening on Monday. The experience was interesting, despite the venue being so atmospheric for intimate art. But for now, one must bear with it, especially since there was now hope of a possible solution to the concert hall issue. According to ingrained critic habit, Rachmaninoff also had to be labelled. However, it would cause a headache if one did not know in advance that he belonged to the Moscow school, admittedly national, but anti-musical ethnographic in contrast to the nationalist folk musical Petrograd school with Rimsky-Korsakoff at the head. One already knows the Muscovite Scriabin, whose original music arouses all sorts of sensations except specifically Russian. Rachmaninoff's art then has stronger roots in the native soil; only a Russian can evoke such peculiarly Slavic moods as are encountered in the preludes in E major and D minor. On the other hand, he does not exhibit, like Tchaikovsky and other Russians, a Janus-like face, composed of brutal savagery and weighty melancholy. There is strength and masculinity, as well as elegiac strings, but never rawness, and the composer also has a too refined, noble taste.

Although the Russian element is so unobtrusive, some features can be identified that are typical of modern Russian piano music. First and foremost, the understanding of the soul of the instrument should be emphasized. To clarify this expression, reference may be made to Chopin's relationship to the piano, how he tapped into its secrets, utilized its resources, evoked unimagined sound effects and created a new technique that grew out of the instrument. Schumann was to some extent also more innovative, Liszt to an even greater extent, but none to the same degree as Chopin. The Russians are his heirs, and Rachmaninoff is a distinguished representative of this renaissance of piano art. A listening piano specialist almost overlooks the purely musical values, the flowing melody, the warmth of emotion, the multifaceted rhythm and the captivating polyphony, for the composer's refined treatment of the piano movement. It must not be overlooked, of course, that in his incomparable pianistic skill he possesses the supreme means of realizing and testing his ideas, whether they find expression in bold harmonic combinations or technical inventions, a new embellishment of the passage work, a pedal effect or a peculiar timbre. The union of the imaginative composer and the inventive piano specialist appeared most strongly in the preludes, among which the poetic G major and G sharp minor preludes are particularly memorable; in addition, certain parts of the sombrely sonorous B flat minor sonata, a sensitive barcarolle and the elegiac G minor etude. In piano arrangements, his familiar song "Lilacs" and a deliciously treated polka were also preferred. The audience only reluctantly parted from this humble artist, but not without first having forced a whole group of encores from him. O. M-s.

[Translation: Google]