



The acquaintance of five friends of international piano greats was expanded to include that of Sergei Rachmaninoff. Despite the dangerously close approach of Christmas, the large concert hall was more than two-thirds full. The Russian artist, reminiscent of Chaliapin in stature, but appearing more distinguished, less robust, and now 56 years old, presented his program in two parts, the first of which thankfully began with a sonata by Mozart in D major (Koch. Verz. 576). A wonderfully polished technique immediately caused a sensation, making all the thematic elements appear extraordinarily clear and effortless. The restraint in dynamics suited the style of the musicians, as the purely musical conception, which stretched out tranquil ideas in tempo, agitated them, and on the other hand exaggerated them, so that the character of the individual passages, of which the Allegretto received the same loving execution, became somewhat blurred. With Chopin, who comprised the main part of the program, the artist seemed more in his element. Even there, particularly in the performance of the B-flat minor Sonata and the G minor Ballade, there were moments where one was distracted by idiosyncrasies of interpretation, but the overall performance, unlike with Mozart, tended to coalesce into a more polished, almost seamless whole. Rachmaninoff doesn't present a Chopin that is either sentimental or technically speculative, despite his superbly developed pianistic skill would have much to offer in terms of special stimuli. He approaches it entirely from the musical side, shaping it powerfully and vividly, and is therefore, despite deviations in the conception, also sure of impressive effect, all the more so as his performance is also superior in its technically sculptural approach to large spaces, which makes an occasionally somewhat pathetic bringing out of the cantilenas understandable.

While two of the artist's own compositions, Etude tableau and Prelude in G major from Op. 32 precious technical subtleties and the associated sounds of the utmost sublimation were brought to life, and the pianist's incredibly poetic rendition of Liszt's Petrarch Sonnet and the first encore, Chopin's Nocturne in E-flat major, truly captivated the audience with his sensitive artistry. With this, he offered perhaps the most beautiful piece of the evening. However, the paraphrase on Kreisler's Liebesfreud, which paramahamized the pretty theme rather than paraphrasing it, was somewhat underwhelming, no matter how brilliantly the sophisticated pianistic problems it presented may have been solved. The audience's interest in the artist, idolized in America, was highly inclined, as evidenced by the thunderous applause. This acclaim waned somewhat towards the end, but then rose again for the encores, the second of which, Rachmaninoff's world-famous Prelude in C-sharp minor, performed in an incomparable manner, was still heard by the reviewer. To hear the illustrious artists again and, if possible, to get to know them from other artistic perspectives, that was probably the general desire of his listeners.

[Translation: Google]