

Rachmaninoff Recital and New Granville Bantock Work

RACHMANINOFF, looking rather like a benevolent devil and playing rather like a malevolent angel, gave his only London recital at the Queen's Hall on Saturday.

By which I mean that his gaunt and slightly saturnine appearance is offset by a certain prim and deprecating gentleness; and that his playing, in which he speaks with the tongues of angels, is disciplined by a very masculine austerity.

He played Chopin's B Minor Sonata; and in every bar he emphasised the masculine expressiveness which Chopin derived from his feminine intuition.

Even the Nocturne—I still call it a nocturne in defiance of sonata conventions—was so shaped to reveal its ingenious melodic design rather than its ingenuous emotional impulse.

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He did not, I thought, make a very discerning choice of his own compositions. And surely the well-beloved Sérénade has suffered some extraordinary sea-changes since I used to toy with it in my youth?

After two or three encores he returned and, amid loud applause, struck the inevitable A, G sharp and C sharp. It is,

of course nearly as familiar as the National Anthem. But could anyone, hearing it for the first time, deny that it was a bold and remarkable piece of music?

“Pagan” Symphony

“I TOO have lived in Arcady,” says Sir Granville Bantock in the motto to his “Pagan” Symphony, played for the first time by the B.B.C. Orchestra and broadcast last night.

He, of all Englishmen, can say that without fear—or hope—of contradiction. That rough, genial, pagan philosophy has been the basis of most of his music. He was born out of his epoch. I can imagine him embowered in some Thessalian wood, blowing on an eloquent and shamelessly insidious pipe; and I can imagine no man better fitted in outlook or appearance for such an idyllic part.

The “Pagan” Symphony has all the appropriate attributes: an abundance of glowing melody, luxuriously orchestrated, and very little of the Bantock that has in the past brought such wry smiles to our lips.

Stephen Williams