

Review

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Having heard Rachmaninoff's E-Minor Symphony – beautiful in content and style – we had the opportunity yesterday to make the acquaintance of the composer himself at the Gewerbeverein. The New-Russian composer, barely 40 years old, was at the piano to present an important part of his own compositions to his large audience. Some sixteen years ago, Rachmaninoff has been with us once. Temporarily. Sixteen years is a lot of time in an artist's development. It is obvious that during that time, Rachmaninoff didn't spend his time on a bearskin. In the meantime, his name has obtained a clear, strong sound. In his home country everyone will have to pull the hat for the ability of this gifted man; but also beyond his country's borders, one gradually starts to understand the importance of this composer. And such a potent talent deserves a completely open road because here are fresh powers that are moving lively. Rachmaninoff is not a poet of comedies. The gaiety, the frolic, the carefree thrown, the gently vibrating, smooth parlando is the lesser part of the genuine domain of his creativity which is: the more serious conflicts of the spectacle or of the further engaging drama. His sonata in D minor, op. 28, is proof of this. But it is not as if the composer would bury himself in melancholy and longing. No, in no way. Also the pain-killing, liberating moods are his, and exactly that is the beauty of his art: that he is able to let the sun shine after rain and storm. And although there is still a faint lightning, a silent rumbling like coming from a distance, the end of the sonata's first movement finishes in conciliatory chords, and the emotional experiences tracing Lento is imbued with the unforced warmth of feelings. The Allegro Molto has the same penetrating effect, stamping away like a stormy ride in its taut rhythms. A beautiful – with openly expressing passion – impetuously beating work which, at first hearing, may perhaps look sometimes a little lengthened in its proportions. Apart from the Sonata, the program brought a rich selection of differing atmospheric pictures and of course the famous C Sharp Minor Prelude with its harmonically, changing braided, immensely summarized but meaningful thematics. In every piece, Rachmaninoff proved to be a special, deeply and healthily feeling composer, a polyphonist who masterly controls forms, fine and noble in the voicing and shaping. Certainly, his harmonics are often very complicated but roses flourish on the thorn bushes of much branched harmonies. And how caressing the melodic of the Melody op. 3; how captivatingly shaped the Barcarolle; how transparent, clear and original the pithy Polichinelle. Here we didn't see the "merry person" as such, but also something like a black mask. Today I will not talk about the concert artist as pianist. In every respect, in every direction, he succeeded brilliantly and in this it was as well exhilarating as interesting to hear Rachmaninoff by Rachmaninoff a whole evening long.

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[Translation: (c) J. Falley]