

Review

El Debate 1935-04-10

Rachmaninoff at the Cultural Center.

In musical art, creation always takes precedence over interpretation. The composer naturally dominates the performer, on an equal footing. Sergei Rachmaninoff is a major figure in music, a figure of worldwide renown, but whatever his reputation as a pianist, it is eclipsed by the aura of his compositions. As perfect as his interpretations of Bach, Mozart, and Chopin may be, his operas "Aleko," "Miserly Knight," and "Francesca da Rimini," his cantata "Bells," his chamber music, his two symphonies, his orchestral works, his three piano concertos, his sonatas, his lieder, and his piano pieces are of far greater importance. Bringing this illustrious composer to Madrid for the first time to have him perform the same program as one of the invited virtuosos is a fundamental error on the part of the Association's Board of Directors. This kind of work is reserved for virtuosos, who dedicate themselves to it completely. A composer has a duty to perform their works, especially when, as in Rachmaninoff's case, they achieve international renown. Does this mean that the great musician doesn't play well? Absolutely not. Rachmaninoff possesses remarkable technique, he approaches the interpretation of works from the composer's perspective. Thus, in the first movement of Chopin's "Sonata in B-flat minor," the tempos of the different phrases of the second theme are perfectly balanced, without the frenzy often employed by virtuosos. In the "Funeral March," he creates striking effects of proximity and distance, and, at the end, he inserts rhythmic accents that transform its character. Mozart's "Sonata in D major" was interpreted with clarity and gentleness, even if it didn't reach the musical depths that Kleiber had achieved with the symphony. In the last part of the program, in keeping with American tastes, he played lighter pieces, notably Borodin's magnificent Scherzo in A-flat major and Rachmaninoff's popular Prelude in C sharp minor, which elicited enthusiastic applause from the audience that filled the Comedia.

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