

REVIEW

REGION (Oviedo) 1935-04-12 (Orig.: Spanish)

RACHMANINOFF, THE GREAT PIANIST WHO, WITH CHOPIN'S SONATA IN B-FLAT, MADE US FORGET SAUER

Not as a critique, but simply as a few notes on yesterday's concert, we publish these lines because we cannot remain silent in the face of an event – and we do not hesitate to call it that – where we saw what we so desired: a great figure on stage and an attentive audience during the performance, which applauded enthusiastically at the end. This is not a criticism of the Society's Board of Directors, far from it; we all know what agencies are and what happens to a minority – fortunately insignificant – of those who attend our meetings. Two works of contrasting character comprised the first part of the program: one, austere for both performer and listener, the other, gentle, simple, and seemingly easy for the pianist. In the first, "Bach's Toccata and Fugue" highlighted the melodies in such a way that the public could easily penetrate to the very heart of the composition, analyze it and savor this true main course – let's call it that – that Bach always serves in each of his works.

In the second movement of Mozart's Sonata, it was perhaps here that the performer displayed the greatest prodigy, both in terms of [incomprehensible] technique and pedal work. The crescendos and diminuendos, achieved in very short intervals by finger technique alone, testify to such mastery and such a profound study of the work that we greatly fear they will be sorely lacking when the generation to which Rachmaninoff belongs dies out. We approached the second section with some apprehension. A few years ago, we had heard this sonata—in B-flat minor—performed by Sauer, and the sweet and moving melody of the [third] movement, the funeral march, still resonated within us; but our fears were unfounded. The sonata was performed with exceptional mastery: light in the first movement, sweet and melodious in the second, bold in the fourth, and in the third with an interpretation and nuances we had never heard before. When the third movement arrived, we closed our eyes and, unable to resist... We had glimpsed the macabre vision that had undoubtedly inspired Chopin to compose this poignant work. The funeral procession reached the corner of the street. The rhythmic steps of those accompanying the body to its final resting place echoed on the cobblestones. Little by little, they drew closer; they were almost there. The window shutters were closed. Suddenly, from the back of a house, a lament burst forth, electrifying the members of the procession and preventing them from continuing on their way. All bowed their heads and listened to the song of love, of farewell, of despair – all at once – that sprang from the loving soul. Finally, the song faded away. Those carrying the body remained suspended for a moment, then, unyielding, hard, and cold as death itself, they suddenly resumed their march, marking the time and quickening their pace toward the necropolis. The third movement was captivating, and the audience grew weary of the applause.

Finally, spurred on by the audience's applause, he played two encores, including Tchaikovsky's "Troika," which was very well received. Our only regret about this concert is not having heard more of Rachmaninoff's work than the Prelude and Kreisler's arrangement;

we would have loved to hear him perform his compositions, even for just a moment, in the very places where his music flourished.

A. VEGA

[Translation: © J. Falley]