



Arcadi Volodos, piano

Monday 8 July 2019 20:00

Hindsgavl Festival

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Piano Sonata in E major D. 157 (1815)

Allegro ma non troppo

Andante

Menuetto (Allegro vivace)

6 Moments musicaux op. 94 D.780, (1827)

Moderato (C major)

Andantino (A flat major)

Allegro moderato (F minor)

Moderato (C sharp minor)

Allegro vivace (F minor)

Allegretto (A flat major)

SERGEJ RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

Prelude in C sharp minor, op. 3 No 2, 4''

Prelude in G flat Major, op. 23 No 10, 4''

Prelude in B minor, op. 32 No 10, 4''

'It's so wonderful here' (Здесь хорошо)

(Romance op. 21 No 7, arr. Volodos), 3''

Serenade, op. 3, No 5

Etude-tableau in C minor op. 33 No 3, 5''

ALEKSANDR SKRJABIN (1871-1915)

Mazurka op. 25 No 3

Caresse dansée op. 57, No 2

Enigme op. 52 No 2

Two Dances op. 73:

1) *Flammes sombres*

2) *Guirlandes*

Vers la flamme op. 72

Franz Schubert (1797-1828): Piano Sonata No 1 in E major, D. 157 (1815)

Schubert was only 17 years old when he composed his first piano sonata. Schubert had been taught by his famous teacher Salieri to compose singable melodies with a simple accompaniment. But with the piano sonata he moves in a new and more personal direction. The melody is no longer the focus. Instead Schubert develops the piano's possibilities of sound and technique in a way that Salieri never was able to do.

The first movement is a catalogue of pianistic contrasts. Chords opposite scales and staccato opposite legato in a perfectly organized sonata form. The heart-rending second movement has a subtle balance between the melancholy and the singable light of the minor key. In this manner we hear a direct link to Schubert's late style. The third movement is an impetuous minuet, but there's no finale. The sonata is incomplete. Nobody seems to know why.

Schubert: 6 Moments Musicaux, D. 780 (1827)

The concert form, a *Schubertiade*, is obviously named after Schubert. An evening at home around a grand piano. Schubert's six musical moments, *6 Moments Musicaux*, are the epitome of this atmosphere. Intimate music without any hint of virtuosity or grand gestures. A mirror of Schubert's own personality.

The shy, ascending C major motive changes into C minor – almost without us noticing it. This is the essence of Schubert's ambiguous harmonic musical tone. The rocking second movement in major nevertheless contains a suppressed sadness. The third movement is one of Schubert's most famous movements. It's also called *Air Russe*, but although it begins like a Slavic dance movement, it unmistakably becomes very *wienerisch* in the modulation into major. The

fourth movement hovers between a baroque-inspired perpetual movement and a gently undulating dance movement. In the last movement time stands still. The most quiet and poignant music imaginable.

The fact that Schubert called his pieces for “*Musical Moments*” is rather misleading. Most of them last for about 5-6 minutes.

Rachmaninov (1873-1943): Selected Piano Works

Rachmaninov’s piano works reflect his own excellent abilities at the keyboard and alternate between transcendent virtuosity and late romanticism filled with pathos. Volodos has chosen works focusing on the beautiful sound-world in Rachmaninov’s music.

Prelude in C sharp minor, opus 3 No 2 is Rachmaninov’s signature work. The solemn beginning is like an echo of the characteristic bells of the Orthodox Church and is soon develops into an inferno of sounds. *The Preludes opus 23 No 10* and *opus 32 No 10* are typical examples of Rachmaninov’s intimate style. A profound Slavic melancholy, exploring unexpected tonal connections.

Rachmaninov made several piano transcriptions of works by other composers. So it’s quite in the spirit of the composer that Volodos has done the same thing with the beautiful love-song “*It’s so wonderful here*”. Rachmaninov’s Studies are more musical character pieces than technical finger-training. In *Etude-tableau opus 33 No 3* a dark motive seeks a reconciliation which crystallizes as heavenly light bells. The contrast between hope and despondency unfolds in a few minutes.

Aleksandr Skrjabin (1871-1915): Selected Piano Works

The Russian composer Skrjabin belongs to the great eccentrics of the musical history, and his artistic development is quite unprecedented. From the Chopin-inspired works of his youth to music of madness, oozing with predictions of the Last Judgment and the notion that Skrjabin himself was a prophetic saviour of the world.

Mazurka opus 25 No 3 from 1899 is a pure pastoral idyll. But in the ultra-short *Cresse dansée* from 1908 we hear strange polyrhythms, a crumbling melodic substance and a movement which is over almost as soon as it begins. The same thing happens in the mysterious miniature *Enigme*. The inspiration for *Two Dances opus 73* from the year of Skrjabin’s death is devilish. The ethereal short melodies in the first movement, *Guirlande*, express a sweet pain. The second movement, *Flammes sombre*, is according to Skrjabin “a *Dance of Death over the perverted erotic urge, an orgiastic parade on gravestones*”. *Vers la flamme opus 72* (Towards the flame) is a miraculous example of Skrjabin’s musical originality. The melody consists mainly of descending half-tone steps. The harmonic effects give the work a unique aura. The movement expresses a prophetic vision that the gradual heating of the world will lead to the destruction of the flames. Today we know all about climate change – maybe the eccentric Skrjabin didn’t get it all wrong?

*Text: Mathias Hammer
English translation: Susanne Lange*

Arcadi Volodos

As an adult, Arcadi Volodos once revisited the music school he attended as a child and met with his old piano teacher. He did remember Arcadi, but neither he nor the other teachers remembered him as being more talented than the other students. Arcadi Volodos was a quite normal student.

Maybe his life had been too full of football and singing. The craze for football he shared with no one else, but the love of singing was all around him, as both his parents were singers. Only when he turned fifteen, did Arcadi Volodos really choose the piano.

And yet it's difficult to combine the words of the piano teacher with the fact that Arcadi Volodos saw himself forced to stop playing concerts in the USA, because they only wanted to hear the virtuoso Volodos. Always the most virtuoso pieces. Always the great Russian piano concertos. Volodos received a Gramophone Award for his first CD, the debut at Carnegie Hall, which may be seen as some kind of reward for his virtuoso playing, but he really doesn't care. It's quite painful for him to listen to his earliest recordings.

As a matter of fact, he's not much for any standardization, which for him is the beginning of the end of any art form. In the USA he seemed always to play the same music, arrive in the same city, at the same airport, at the same hotel. Probably this was the reason for his choosing to play only in Europe with very few exceptions, where he was able to enjoy much bigger variations in his repertoire. In 2005 when in Japan, he was astounded to watch thousands of people walking in the street with their eyes fixed to their telephones and thought to himself: It'll never become like this in Europe.

Well, even a sceptic of technology and sworn enemy of standardization may underestimate

technology as the big leveller. And perhaps Denmark will still be floating when the general shipwreck happens. Volodos enjoys telling a story about Rachmaninov who was both moved and surprised over the warm and hearty reception the audience gave him, after a concert he played in Denmark. According to Rachmaninov, the reason was that this country for so long had lagged behind when it came to technology and therefore still had their hearts intact. Technology kills hearts.

But not in Denmark - at least not one hundred years ago. But if you – after all these years and all that technology – still have a living heart, we ask you to bring it to this concert. Both Arcadi Volodos and Rachmaninov will be very happy!

*Text: Ulrik Damgaard Andersen
English translation: Susanne Lange*

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