

philharmonia orchestra

Listening guide to Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto with Nikolai Lugansky

Nikolai Lugansky – Piano

Musical excerpt

For me and for probably many pianists this is the high point of history for piano concertos - the biggest Rachmaninov concerto and maybe the most beautiful. And it is only one reason.

So the concert starts with.

Musical excerpt

And this theme became the theme of the whole piano concerto, not only for first movement, but also it comes in the slow movement and in finale. The second theme of this concerto comes first in a scherzo variation.

Musical excerpt

It's the melody which will be in some bars later.

Musical excerpt

So such adventurous themes are very typical for Rachmaninov. For example, in the reprise of the first movement, the boss theme is the main theme.

Musical excerpt

And the second theme.

Musical excerpt

You will get it in a form of two cadenzas. So the first cadenza has also two variants you can choose, and the second cadenza is smaller and starts...

Musical excerpt

It has also the scherzo element.

Musical excerpt

I like just the small one because it's much more logical to prepare with the beginning of piano, to prepare for this great combination.

The second movement is the lyrical combination of the work; a wonderful melody combining Russian and Oriental folklore.

Musical excerpt

And the finale starts in a motoric, very energetic theme.

Musical excerpt

Which becomes even more powerful in the second theme.

Musical excerpt

And only after this second theme comes the lead theme of the finale; one of the most beautiful melodies of Rachmaninov.

Musical excerpt

The middle part of the finale; this scherzo, fantastic moment is the world of Russian fairytale.

Musical excerpt

The concerto finishes with the greatest combination, the most beautiful combination ever written by Rachmaninov.

Musical excerpt

Without the orchestra it's almost impossible to play but I remember even the not very happy performances of some pianists, this combination really can excuse everything. Nobody can be cold during this music.