

## ON THE PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITY OF SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

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În articol este abordat aspectul pedagogic al activității lui Serghei Rahmaninov, alegerea temei respective fiind determinată de insuficiența informațiilor disponibile în acest sens. Sunt aduse diferite puncte de vedere cu privire la motivele din care marele compozitor s-a ocupat cu pedagogia, această activitate fiind stimulată fie de instabilitatea financiară la începutul carierei sale sau fiind o dorință sinceră de a profesa. O atenție deosebită autorul atrage unor fapte din biografia lui Serghei Rahmaninov dovedite documentar, mai ales celor ce fac dovada grijii constante a compozitorului față de tinerii muzicieni talentați.

Three faces of Rachmaninoff, the three sides of the works created by this ingenious personality – an unsurpassed pianist of our time, an outstanding conductor, the author of the great symphonies, operas, chamber and vocal works – all these have been carefully scrutinized and examined in the literature, in scientific research articles and monographs. This is also evidenced by the numerous memoirs of his contemporaries - musicians, writers, artists, friends and relatives who knew him, admired him, proud that they happened to hear, see and communicate with Sergei Rachmaninoff. Among the memoirs are those written by I. Bunin and M. Shahinian, F. Chaliapin and A. Nezhdanova, K. Medtner and R. Glier, B. Asafiev and A. Goldenweiser, A. Ossowski and M. Presman, A. Goedicke, and E. Gnesina, B. Yavorsky and A. Konyus as well as by many other friends, relatives and students.

However, the available literature sources present very modest and fragmented information about the pedagogical aspect of S. Rachmaninoff's activity. Although Rachmaninoff, with all his talent's diversity, did not consider himself a musician-pedagogue and did not show a strong preference and great zeal to teaching, he paid sufficient attention to this kind of work, mainly in the 1890s - 1900s, and treated it with his usual pedantry and conscientiousness.

On 18-th March 1894 Rachmaninoff had got a job in this field and on 1-st September began working as a music teacher at the Maryinsky College. It was a private institution that existed on the means of the rich "benefactress" Ladies' welfare for the poor. The well-known Moscow scholars, as well as prominent representatives of the Moscow's "musical world" were attracted in the teaching process: N. Rubinstein, A. Siloti, A. Dubuc, N. Kashkin, later – A. Brandukov, R. Glier and other respected specialists. The next year - from the 1-st of December 1902, after working at the Mariinsky College until 1901, Rachmaninoff started work as a musical inspector in the College of St. Catherine's Order, also known as the Catherine Institute, and at the same time, in Elizabethan Institute. S. Rachmaninoff's duties stipulated by the post of musical inspector did not take a lot of time, because they consisted only in weekly lectures' attendance, the presence on the exams (those of entrance, transfer and graduation), the participation in report and holiday concerts (by the request of students and teachers he often played himself). In connection with his departure to Dresden, in 1906 S. Rachmaninoff had left the musical inspector post.

In addition to working in schools and colleges S. Rachmaninov attended individually to a number of students. For example, it has been known that in 1892, after graduating from the Conservatoire, Rachmaninoff was invited to pass the summertime in the Kostroma region in the I. Konovalov's manor exactly for the music lessons with the son of the owner, with whom "he had to do one hour a day". A summer of the year 1899 Rachmaninoff spent in the province of Voronezh, in the estate of an agronomist I. Kreutzer, whose family had a close relationship with Satin family. There he taught music to the Kreutzer's daughter, the lessons including piano class and musical theory. Subsequently, E. Zhukovskaya (née Kreutzer), who had become a close Satin cousins' friend, as well as of the Rachmaninoff, told in details about the classes with him in the essay "The memory of my teacher and friend Sergey Rachmaninoff"

Several biographers explained the fact that Rachmaninoff hadn't been offered a job at the Conservatory because of the intense and adverse relationship with the former rector V. Safonov. (In this connection, E. Zhukovskaya wrote: "It seemed quite natural that he would be invited in the pedagogical staff of the Conservatory, but Safonov did not do that, and Rachmaninoff did not ask him to do.")

Some writers had noticed in the Rachmaninoff's pedagogical activity only an employment stimulated by the financial instability at the beginning of his creative path. It is unlikely that such statements can be justified because they are contradicted by other data testifying to the negligible earnings of pedagogue. Particularly, in the memoirs by A.Goedicke "Memorial Meetings" the author suggests that "the Rachmaninoff's work in institutions was paid quite poorly" ...

Some episodes from the Rachmaninoff's pedagogical activity are recovered by the memories of his contemporaries, especially by those of his students. So, for example, his work at the Maryinsky College is remembered by the student of this institution M.Tchelitchew (née Abuladze). In her memoir essay "Sergei Rachmaninoff at the Mariinsky College," she notes that he "loved our young people, showed a big interest in the College life, in the work of other teachers, in the students' successes; he had been present at all the open musical evenings and even directly involved in our musical life, accompanying our choir (...) Rachmaninoff's love to us, his disciples, was manifested in the fact that he occasionally played for us. Once, I remember he came to us with prof.A.Goldenweiser. They played on two pianos the First Suite by Rachmaninoff. This music had excited us, especially the last part with a wonderful holiday theme on the bell ringing background. On another occasion, S.Rachmaninoff came with the famous cellist A.Verzhibilovich. These concerts were to have great educational value: they developed the taste and love for music. He enjoyed our universal love and deep respect. "In conclusion, the essay writer openly declares: "I am happy and proud of being his contemporary and his student (...)"

The most complete information on Rachmaninoff's educational activities contains the above mentioned memoir essay by E.Zhukovskaya. Extremely valuable for "decoding" the composer's piano technique is the very description of his own regular, daily activities. "Nine-eleven hours per day he practiced the piano. He played scales - double thirds, sixths, octaves, arpeggios in different combinations, exercises, starting with the slow tempo and finishing with the fast one. He played also educational exercises, and then got down to work on the Chopin's etudes, which he played in double thirds, sixths, octaves, and finished his studies always with c-moll etude. Etudes by Chopin were played by him in slow and fast mode. E.Zhukovskaya, a former student of Rachmaninoff for nine years - from 1893 to 1901-, said that Sergey Rachmaninoff used during the piano lessons with her those techniques, which had been used by him while studying.

E.Zhukovskaya accentuated "the method of personal impressions and not only explaining how a student should play" as the most characteristic feature of the whole pedagogical activity of the great Russian composer.

"Each new musical composition set me as homework by S.Rachmanoff, surely was played by him, while guided by the proper experience of listening to Rubinstein in his historical concerts. The composer couldn't take verbosity at the piano lessons and usually resorted not to the explanations as to the show. The results obtained by means of this system were good: I learned to catch his meaning at once, especially as in his performance there were a lot of subtle nuances that must be felt and remembered. S.Rachmaninoff played for us very much, and if such listening may be considered a school of music, we have studied with him for many years ..."

Asking us to learn a new piece, firstly Rachmaninoff wrote the most comfortable fingering, "as to the fingering he attached a great importance. Many of the music in his personal use were supplied with special sketches. Even if he set me as work a new etude or piece - he always sat at the piano, played passages, sometimes several times in order to write the most convenient fingers' location".

During the piano lessons with Zhukovskaya S.Rachmaninoff attached great significance to the musical theory knowledge assimilation. He considered it very necessary for a musician-performer, in this connection he conducted also the musical theory classes. In this context, Zhukovskaya describes also some teaching methods and composer's ability to develop creative potential in his students.

"Sometimes, within the theoretical lessons, Sergey Rachmaninoff patiently explained in detail all the mistakes made by me. But sometimes he simply crossed out my work and said curtly: "Rework". It seems to me that this has not been a conscious pedagogical method - to make the student think and find mistakes by himself (...). However, this method (...) gave good results. After short-term frustration and disappointment over the failure of the task I set to work with redoubled energy, and obtained all he expected from me".

E.Zhukovskaya admired Rachmaninoff's ability to give rise to psychologically creative environment, so favourable for teaching. "Plunging my mind in the past sometimes I wonder how I could play without any uneasiness to such a brilliant pianist. It seemed to me that he had created an atmosphere in which I had

never felt him being bored". E.Zhukovskaya appreciated very much the composer's pedagogical qualities: "Every word said by S.Rachmaninoff-pedagogue was law for me".

The pedagogical aspect of the Rachmaninoff's activity was manifested not only directly in teaching. Rachmaninoff had visited Moscow music schools. E.Gnesina notes that the composer has repeatedly visited the students' musical evenings, arranged in the College founded by sisters Gnesin in 1895: "Within one of his visits to the College, Sergey Rachmaninoff listened to my then still small student Lev Oborin (now laureate and professor) and praised him".

During the tours, S.Rachmaninoff readily met with the local musical community representatives, got acquainted with the statement of educational institutions, listened to their students. Thus, N.A.Adrianova-Ryadnova in her essay "Rachmaninoff in Georgia," remembers his stay in 1911 in Tbilisi. Despite the "exhausting and intense concerts" Rachmaninov met with the important local musical personalities, composers and professors. "One morning, Rachmaninoff was here, in the Music College and listened to our students with big interest and attention".

The authors of many materials show the invaluable spiritual support rendered by Rachmaninoff to novice musicians. These were A.Ossowski, M.Bagrinskii, A.Alexandrov, A.Trubnikov, and others.

Thus, Sergei Rachmaninoff's contemporaries have left us a respectable heritage, which contains a lot of information, throwing light upon numerous episodes of his life, showing a great composer's attention to the young talented musicians, the constant care of their education. Sergey Rachmaninoff did everything to support young, budding talents.

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