Rachmaninov - Piano Concertos 3 & 4 (Valentina Lisitsa) [2013]

Piano Concerto No.3 in D-Minor Op.30 *1. Allegro ma non tanto 2. Intermezzo (Adagio) 3. Finale (Alla breve)* Piano Concerto No.4 in G-Minor Op.40 *4. Allegro vivace (Alla breve) 5. Largo 6. Allegro vivace*
Valentina Lisitsa – piano London Symphony Orchestra Michael Francis – conductor

The Third was completed as a major composition which Rachmaninoff would "show off" in New York in 1909 during his first concert tour of USA. He wrote the work in the peace of his family's country estate, Ivanovka, and it was completed on 23 September 190. Due to time constraints, Rachmaninoff was unable to practise it on an actual keyboard in Russia and had to do it on a silent keyboard during his voyage across the Atlantic Ocean on board a ship. The Third was dedicated to Josef Hofmann, who, though regarded by Rachmaninoff as the greatest pianist of the day, did not play the Third in his lifetime. The Third was premiered on 28 November 1909 with Rachmaninoff himself at the keyboard, joined by Symphony Society of New York at the New Theatre, New York, under Walter Damrosch. On 16 January 1910, he repeated the Third at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic under Gustav Mahler. It was reported that both great musicians had great respect and admiration for each other. --- Kar-Gee, Tan, classical.net

Far more successful (then Piano Concerto #1) is Piano Concerto #4 in G minor, Op. 40, the only concerto written by Rachmaninoff while living in the United States. The Rach 4 is considerably darker then its predecessors, using frequent syncopation and more economical part-writing. While the texture is still unquestionably Rachmaninoff's, its ideas are compacted and sometimes toe the lines of valediction. Major reasons for #4's unpopularity are its terseness

and frequently changing shape, leaving it without melodies that render #2 and #3 so unforgettable. What makes #4 effective are the haunting thoughts it leaves you with rather than any particular motifs. The work is one of Rachmaninoff's most intriguing and handled aptly by the performers. --- Paul John Ramos, classical.net

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