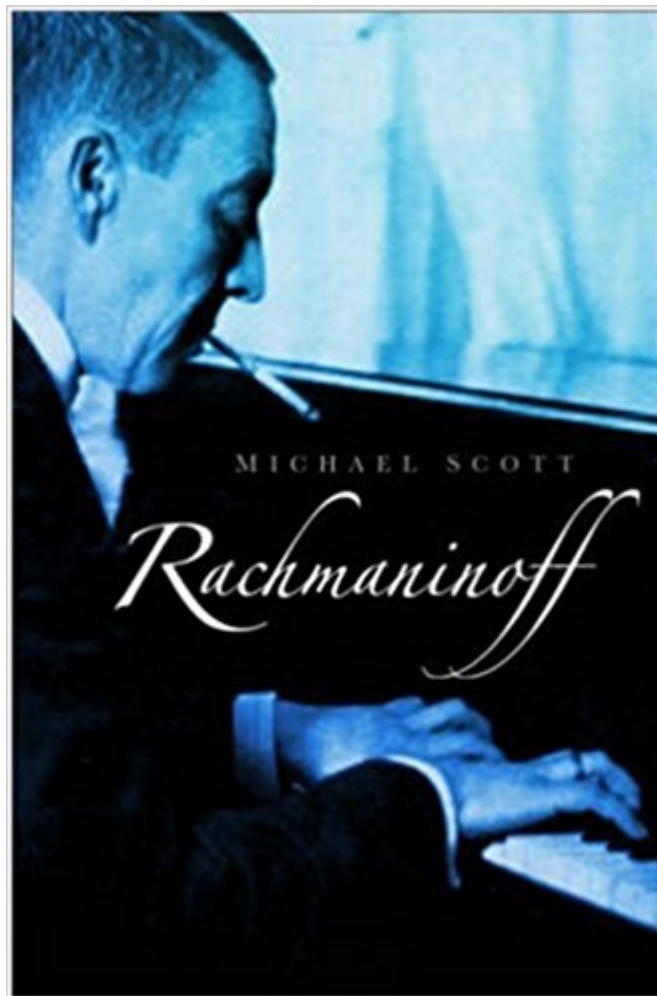


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Rachmaninoff



Synopsis

Rachmaninoff's work was scorned by the musical establishment as hopelessly old-fashioned and emotionally over-indulgent but never failed to find popular acclaim, including being used as the soundtrack to the film *Brief Encounter*. Who was this taciturn genius? This book investigates Rachmaninoff's intense and melodramatic life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Michael Scott is one of the most knowledgeable writers on music and great performers. His previous books include biographies on Caruso and Maria Callas.

Most of the book is virtually a catalog of what Rachmaninoff composed/played/conducted and when, with critics' comments frequently attached. Only toward the end of the book do we really begin to learn about Rachmaninoff's dealings with other people or his home and family - in other words, what he was like as a man. In the whole book, his sister gets one early mention and his mother three. I'd have liked to have got a better picture of the person.

Rachmaninoff by Michael Scott, The History Press, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK, 2008, 226 ff. This recent monograph of the life and works of this great musician was written by Michael Scott, a music critic who is known primarily for his authorship of works on opera singers. It is rather surprising therefore that there is so little in this book on Rachmaninoff as opera composer, even though admittedly this is a relatively minor part of his output. Personally, I relate to Rachmaninoff's operas

more readily than I do to those of the Italian masters which, for all the lovely music, seem to me to be a very artificial art-form. The book is arranged chronologically throughout with biographical details and notes on compositions mixed in together as appropriate. There are no illustrations in musical notation anywhere. However, the book is written in such detail that I felt I was living through Rachmaninoff's life with him. Rachmaninoff was born in 1873 on an estate in the village of Semyonov in Russia which is located close to the cathedral city of Novgorod. This fact is highly significant in its influence on Rachmaninoff's music: the bells of the great cathedral appear in musical form in many of his compositions. Rachmaninoff made his reputation originally as a composer of works for the piano, three symphonies, a number of songs and choral works, and three completed operas. However, he was also a brilliant pianist with a large hand span. After he left Russia in 1917 to live in America, his reputation as a performer was such that he had time to compose only another half-dozen works in the remaining quarter century of his life. The book is well written and, provided you are interested in the minutiae of Rachmaninoff's life, it is a useful source of information about both his life and work. But as another reviewer has commented, there is no perspective into Rachmaninoff's personality.

i bought this book hoping it would be a musical analysis of rachmaninoff's works-and it was strictly an informative biography. from that standpoint, i can see it being useful. but as a critique and evaluation of rachmaninoff's works-it's fairly useless.

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