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Vladimir Jurowski Studies Eugene Ormandy's Changes to a Rachmaninoff Symphony

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Vladimir Jurowski Studies Eugene Ormandy's Changes to a Rachmaninoff Symphony

Abstract

Report on the use of the Kislak Center's Eugene Ormandy Collection of Scores by composer Vladimir Jurowski.

Keywords

Music, Rachmaninoff, Ormandy

Disciplines

Library and Information Science | Music

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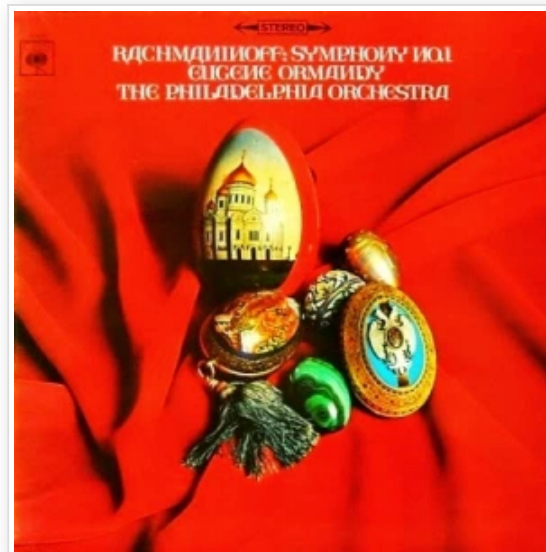
Nothing can more effectually contribute to the Cultivation & Improvement of a Country, the Wisdom, Riches, & Strength, Virtue and Piety, the Welfare & Happiness of a People, than a proper Education of Youth, by forming their Manners, imbuing

26
Sunday
Oct 2014

Vladimir Jurowski Studies Eugene Ormandy's Changes to a Rachmaninoff Symphony

POSTED BY RICHARD GRISCOM IN UNCATEGORIZED

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– 1967 recording of the Rachmaninoff Symphony no. 1 by the Philadelphia Orchestra, cond. Eugene Ormandy

A couple of days ago, I got an email from Bob Grossman, librarian of the Philadelphia Orchestra: “Maestro **Vladimir Jurowski** is **conducting us this week** and he just asked me if I have Ormandy’s score for the Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 1. Apparently, Ormandy has some significant additions to the music in his Philadelphia Orchestra recording. I had been asked about these changes by **Marin Alsop** back in the summer but didn’t see anything in our parts.” I looked in Franklin, and indeed, there was an

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entry for the Rachmaninoff

1st in the Eugene Ormandy Collection of Scores in the Kislak Center. I reported this news back to Bob Grossman, and he replied, "The Maestro would like to come in on Saturday. Do you have library hours on the weekend?"

Kislak isn't open on Saturdays, but John Pollack (library specialist for public services, Kislak Center) said he was planning on being in the library anyway and could meet Maestro Jurowski early in the afternoon. Anthony Solitro, a composer and member of the orchestra staff, agreed to bring him by at 1:00, and the appointment was set. On Saturday afternoon, John pulled the box containing the Rachmaninoff 1st materials, and, right on time, Anthony Solitro rounded the corner near the Orrery at 1:00, and Vladimir Jurowski was a few steps behind him. After a few quick introductions, John let everyone into the Kislak Reading Room, and we gathered around the box.



— Anthony Solitro, John Pollack, and Maestro Vladimir Jurowski

Most boxes of scores in the Ormandy Collection contain more than one work, and the envelope holding the Rachmaninoff 1st was near the middle, below a score by Ravel and another by Rachmaninoff. As John was pulling out the envelope for the symphony, Maestro Jurwoski said, "There is no autograph manuscript for this symphony. Rachmaninoff burned it, and the only printed edition had to be reconstructed from the orchestra player's parts." John opened the envelope, reached in, and pulled out a stack of disorganized paper slips with musical notes on them, along with three or four full sheets of music manuscript paper that were traditional orchestra parts. There was no full score in the envelope, just parts and snippets of parts. Jurowski said, "I've seen situations like this before. I'd like to spend an hour, if I may, with them." He later explained that Ormandy's changes to the Rachmaninoff symphony would have been written out on the small pieces of paper and then taped onto the original parts.

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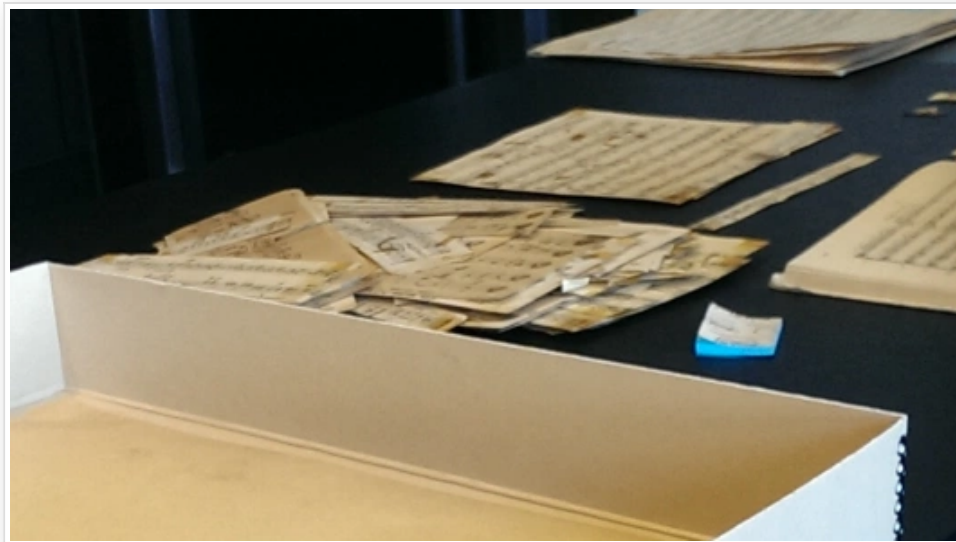
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The strips of paper could have been removed for any number of reasons: Ormandy might have wanted to retain his intellectual property, or perhaps the orchestra had rented the original parts and needed to return them, or maybe the orchestra wanted to revert to Rachmaninoff's original scoring. "With the slips taped onto the parts," Jurowski said, "you'd be locked into Ormandy's version of the work."

The full sheets of paper included two trumpet parts, one for trumpet in C and another transposed down a step for trumpet in D, with "G. Johnson" written in the top right corner. (Johnson was the principal trumpet for the orchestra from 1958 to 1975.) There was also a part for trombone and one for glockenspiel (bells). Jurowski picked up the glockenspiel part and said, "This is interesting. Rachmaninoff would never have written a glockenspiel part for a symphony. There is a rule among Russian composers of this time—and earlier—that exotic instruments were never used in symphonies. No harps, no *cor anglais* (a low-pitched oboe), no percussion other than timpani, bass drum, and cymbals. They would use them in programmatic works and ballets, but never in symphonies. It's the shadow of Beethoven. It was understood that for a symphony you shouldn't score for instruments that Beethoven didn't use in his own symphonies."

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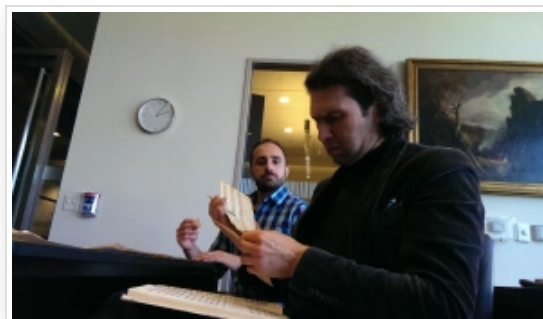
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Mitch Fraas

Jurowski started sorting through the stack of paper slips. He picked up the first and said, "Ah, this is the last movement. Looks like a trumpet part." He quickly flipped through the score and located the passage. Using a pencil, he marked in the score

— Vladimir Jurowski examining the pasteover slips for the Rachmaninoff Symphony no. 1

what Ormandy had done. In most cases, Ormandy simply doubled an existing passage using additional instruments. After looking at several slips, he concluded that Ormandy used four instruments for each of the wind parts (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon) to increase the volume of those instruments. This would have allowed them to be heard more easily over the brass and strings of the Philadelphia Orchestra. At one point, Jurowski said, "This is a violation of the composer's will, but I see why he did it." He explained. "Ormandy did what he did to conform to the sound ideals of the time. Conductors were much freer in making changes like this back then. We don't share those ideals now, but in any case instruments have changed considerably since then, and an orchestration like this would not make sense with today's orchestra." Nonetheless, Jurowski said it would be an interesting project to take these paper clippings and reconstruct Ormandy's version of the Rachmaninoff 1st for publication.



"In what way have instruments changed?" John said. Jurowski thought a moment. "Horns, for example, had a much smaller bore," said Jurowski. "They were softer and had a thinner sound. Now they have a larger bore, and the goal for modern players seems to be creating an equal tone throughout its range, low to high. That runs against nature. Composers worked with instruments that had a different sound in different ranges, and they used that contrast in their scoring. Orchestra instruments in Mahler's time, for example, sounded very different from the instruments of today. I performed Mahler with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in London, with the strings playing on gut strings, and it's a very different experience."

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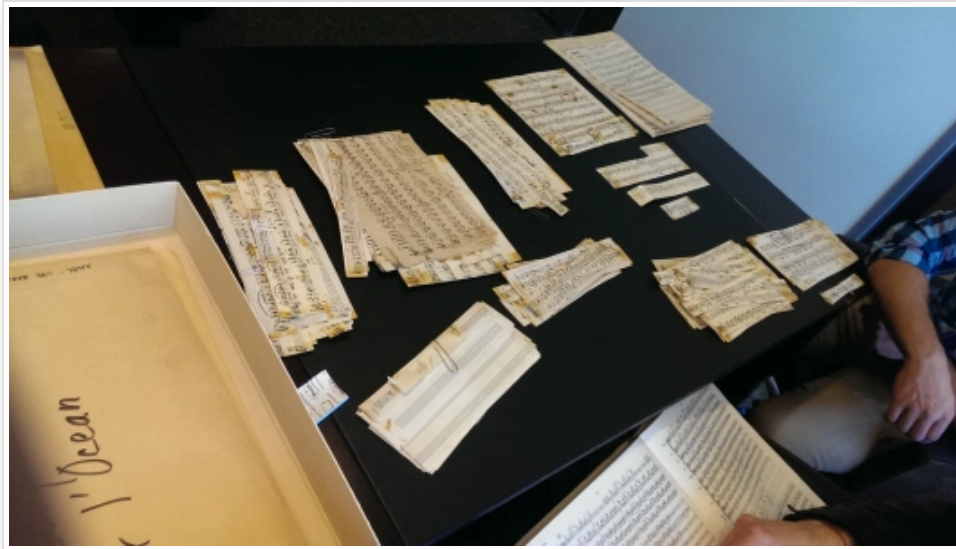
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Jurowski spent an hour examining the slips of paper, one by one. In the end, there were nine or ten small stacks spread across the table, one for each instrument. He had gotten what he needed from the slips, and in the process



had arranged them in a way that would help future researchers. As he pointed to each stack and told me the instrument that should play the part, I scribbled the instrument's abbreviation on a sticky note and affixed it to the table next to the stack.

It was 2:15, and he needed to leave. "Next time, I'd like to look at some of the Stokowski scores. That man was a magician." We said good bye to Maestro Jurowski and Anthony Solitro, and they exited the reading room. John and I looked at the stacks of slips. "Perhaps we could put them into folders," I said. John and I placed each stack of slips in a folder and marked each folder with the appropriate instrument. Now, thanks to Vladimir Jurowski, they're ready for the next researcher interested in studying the changes that Ormandy made in Rachmaninoff's Symphony no. 1.

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