

## Pianist delivers powerful concert

### REVIEW

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Titanic power and artful pacing marked pianist Dmitri Ratser's performance in the final concert of the 16th season of The International Piano Series at the College of Charleston.

Born in Moscow in 1953, Ratser was out of the international spotlight until 1990. Since then, he quickly gained recognition for remarkable skill and musical insight.

Chopin was represented by his Polonaise in C Sharp Minor, Op. 26 No. 1; Waltz in C Sharp Minor, Op. 64 No. 2; Nocturne in F Sharp Minor, Op. 15 No. 2; and Scherzo No. 1 in B Minor, Op. 20.

Ratser delivered masculine readings of these works, so often performed by others with an excess of saccharine.

He created convincing sentiment, without sentimentality, and genuine excitement with his powerful attacks and vivid coloring.

Ratser created the musical mysticism of Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) in two Etudes (in C Sharp Minor, Op. 2 No.1, and in D Sharp Minor, Op. 8 No. 12) and the Poeme "Vers la flamme," Op.72.

Ratser's strength in these difficult works was second-to-none. Playing with an unbelievable intensity, his readings recalled the late John Ogdon's all-Scriabin concert at the first Spoleto Festival USA.

Ratser, a specialist in the music of Serge Rachmaninoff (1873-1943), gave a virtuosic reading of the seldom heard Sonata No. 2 in B-Flat Minor, Op. 36, a work laced with Slavic melancholy and heart-stopping dramatic shifts.

Ratser concluded with "Variations on a Theme by Paganini" by Alexander Rosenblatt (b. 1956), a jazzy take on the famous Caprice by Nicolo Paganini. This Gershwin-meets-Paganini composition allowed Ratser to show his understanding of the American idiom.

Ratser's encore for the audience's standing ovation, was a finger-busting "Toccata" by Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian.

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