Rachmaninoff eye contact – reflections after watching my own videos, 3 versions of eye contact – February 2025
(1 – "regular" performance; no eye contact.
2 – trying to maintain as much eye contact as possible; no expressions.
3 – trying to act out the musical emotions, using a lot of eye contact and expressions in general.)

1ˢᵗ video

Actually on one hand it's much more touching than I thought. On the other hand it's quite annoying no look at someone directly when they are looking down most of the time. Perhaps I should have put the camera on the side like a "regular" audience situation…

A lot of the significant moments – I actually look up or to the sides or make an expression, without thinking about it. I think this is like a seed that can develop, this is the original intent and key. Perhaps I can use this method to figure out what are the more natural key moments that are personal to me in a piece that I'm working on, and figure out what is their essence.

This is an interesting tension that I created by putting the camera in an unusual position for this "control" setup. It's like the audience is asking, begging from the performer for some contact but not really getting it. So a conclusion can be made that just this repositioning of the audience makes them more active and engaged, involved.

There are still a lot of moments that I feel and can hear how the music is not about "the music" or about an emotional story, but about doing something "correctly", artificial flow.

2ⁿᵈ video

It's hard to replicate how it were in class in front of people, because the look you get back it you has so much impact. I tried to imagine it and recreate my response but it wasn't full. With real audience I was sometimes smiling in response to their smiles or to their awkwardness or inconvenience. In a way I was compelled to try to keep a "poker face" because smiling didn't fit with the music, and acting out the emotions felt too much – too awkward, clownish. Here, I decided to just not make any specific expressions and keep as much eye contact (of course with an audience I would switch between different people and here it's just one camera). At times, it felt uncomfortable seeing someone try too hard – when someone's gaze goes quickly back and forth, trying to maintain the eye contact and also look at something else (the keyboard) at the same time… it's a bit too forced and not nice. BUT – at certain points the deep look was piercing and in general, throughout the performance, I felt that just by the change of context, by getting the impression of the performer trying to maintain eye contact – it changed the meaning of the experience, it made it much more real, authentic and personal – to me as an audience, even if in a way less authentic to "me" as a performer.

3ʳᵈ video

Very special. I think here the true meaning is revealed. Even though I really need to work on my acting and expressions – make them more versatile, interesting, diverse – it's clear that in this version I do my best to convey something, to tell a story. As an audience, I felt a real flow and was much more convinced, I was taken away with the experience and was definitely more "in the moment" compared to the other two versions. It also felt the most direct connection with "the performer". Even though something in the first version feels "more authentic", because it's like watching someone in a private moment, this third version, while being a kind of "acting" which can be viewed as less authentic, is more equal, human, real, natural. It's not peeping, observing someone go through turmoil, but rather it's going with someone, even if they're still leading, they are engaged with me and thus it's also an authentic process, just a different one. It's like when we are in a conversation with a close friend, we are not worried they are not authentic because they are not alone by themselves – we can actually be very authentic and intimate, together.