

RUSSIAN PIANIST PROVES A MASTER

A striking figure, a dominant personality at the piano, and a master dramatist in music's interpretation, is the great Russian pianist-composer-conductor Rachmaninoff, whose piano recital at the National Theater yesterday afternoon will remain one of the most memorable events among the list of great artists who have come to us through the years.

Here is an original spirit who enriches his musical speech by a turbulent imagination, that flings wide the portals to music as a voice of the emotions, and yet here also is a great artist whose pianism remains within the limits of his instrument and extends it to a rich, vibrant, and variant medium of tone that is orchestral in its scope.

For Rachmaninoff the pianist amazes by his command of tone; one forgets his mastery of execution, that in itself is a delight, in marvel at the tone-meaning he evokes—tones that hold a wealth of background around them, and that vie with the vitality of his rhythm in painting tone-pictures that are alive.

For Rachmaninoff the interpreter is never placid—not even in Mozart, whose melody he searches and clearly

articulates. Intellectual as he has been called. Yes, but not alone that, even though each phrase becomes a separate mood or meaning in dramatic contrast. In this same relation one listens and finds that apparently the last word in Beethoven had not yet been said.

First his tempos are compelling—then he speaks in phrase episodes of a virile Beethoven, that like all big natures is possessed of infinite beauty and tenderness. His repose sinks deep into one in the "Largo," yet in stately manner he marshals forth intense feeling in tone that is eloquent with life, with betimes a sudden joyance therein.

Life pervades Rachmaninoff's music—cosmic vision. In a Chopin group—not orthodox—he inserts into a "Nocturne," the C sharp minor, amid a scene of orchestral atmosphere, dominant notes that are not all peace, carrying it to an impassioned love song, then back to the calm of the night. Into the Walls and the Follies he puts a warm-hued lure. Life, drama, these, of exultant delight or potential tragedy—all told in tone, in quickly changing rhythm, in a word in their imaginative content.

Again we had Rachmaninoff, the composer. First, by request, he played his famous "Prelude" C sharp minor, more soft toned and legato than we hear it, yet none the less a towering force in its rich-chorded climax. His "Humoresque" stretched across to Albeniz, the Spaniard, in distinct type; yet not like, but Russian truly, a new note with its episodes at times raucous, its entrancing "Presto."

His "Romance, The Lilacs" was throughout as gentle as the spring and as smoothly undulating as her breezes. But the "Polka"—here seems to be a rival for the "Blue Danube" in its rhythms, its content, the many tone values, the inside voices.

The two encores he granted after the big dramatic picture in the Liszt twelfth "Rhapsodie" were also by Rachmaninoff—a "Barcarolle" on rolling not placid waters, and a palpitating orchestral "Polichinelle."

Scenic was the tone-picture of his Liszt Rhapsodie, now a solo dance, then a mob or a gentler group, swaying in a perpetual rhythm with tones exalted or biting in their keenness. Mr. Rachmaninoff played also following the Beethoven Sonata, Opus 10, No. 3, the Beethoven "Scherzo" opus 31.

The impress of this gaunt figure the power in his form and in his art, in his intellect and his imagination, in his individuality and in his temperament that creates a new drama in tone, is ineffaceable. Here is life, intense life. And Rachmaninoff at the piano is an experience in life.

The Symphony Society, of New York, Walter Damrosch, conducting, gave its third concert of the season at the Belasco Theater yesterday afternoon.

Mozart's Symphony in G minor No. 2, was the opening number of a varied and interesting program. This simple and ingenious work, composed about 125 years ago, contains the conventional four movements. Mr. Damrosch's interpretation was that of beauty unadorned and comprehensible to the most undiscerning.

It is a far cry from the delightfully clear harmonies of Mozart to the mysticism of the Oriental "Istar" of Vincent d'Indy. The subject is taken from the sixth canto of the Assyrian epic poem "Ishtar," wherein the goddess Istar, in order to free her lover from Hades, is obliged to pass the seven portals of the infernal regions and divest herself of a garment at each. This leads to seven variations in the music, the opening special harmony by degrees denuding itself until at the conclusion there is a union of harmony in the whole orchestra. In thus reversing the usual processes of orchestration, d'Indy has produced a work of unusual and absorbing interest.

The third number introduced the soloist, Mischa Levitzki. Mr. Levitzki displayed a lightness and graceful touch which earned him the enthusiastic applause of the audience, but it would seem that a medium other than the Saint-Saens concertos might have presented opportunity for a better display of the power of this accomplished pianist.

Part two of the program introduced Wagner to Washington for the first time since the entry of this country in the war. Just why Wagner should

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