

MUSIC NOTES

By Jessie MacBride

RACHMANINOFF CONCERTO EVENT OF ORCHESTRA

Rachmaninoff and commanding yet subtle chords have been inseparable ever since the great pianist-composer first gave us his now unforgettable C sharp minor Prelude.

With the Philadelphia Symphony yesterday afternoon, with again Leopold Stokowski conducting his great orchestra, the music "news" of the moment was the new Rachmaninoff piano concerto, No. 4, opening in G minor. The great pianist interpreted his work with a virtuoso brilliancy that brought cascades of rippling tone in persistent runs that held a water element in much of this highly diversified and fascinating work.

The concerto has an "allegro vivace" a "largo," and again an "allegro vivace" which he ran into the second movement.

The music is tinged with the East, though not that of the ultra moderns, but the East that Rubinstein disclosed in his "Asra," of which the largo holds a touch.

Chords of the lovely progressions that are inseparable from Rachmaninoff announce the entire work, set to bounding arpeggios of orchestra that quickly change into plucked strings and a martial brass. It announces drama.

But suddenly, with rare piano clarity and feathery technique, we find the solo part becoming lyric, the piano plays against successive passages from individual wind instruments, again the East from the oboe, or the sound of chimes of piano against flute bits that are carried on down the woodwind choirs to the bassoon. It makes for lingering reminiscence, a sort of reverie that—in all the work—maintains a thoughtful quality of improvisation.

* * *

The interweaving of solo piano with a vivid orchestral canvas would demand several hearings to thoroughly grasp. To program it, one might define it as a tone poem of an aloof soul dreaming and loving nature and the beautiful, while all around intrude vagrant touches of life. In the largo there is a persuasive crooning element, rhythmically treated, and brought to a torrent of tones that grow raucous.

Then without pause, Mr. Rachmaninoff brings a mad and dash-

ing orchestra into a dance motive, presto, with cymbals, with depth that holds swaying emotion. While the solo instrument brings several cadenzas of startling vitality and virtuoso execution into music that is rich in romance. The finale grows ever more and more exciting, yet ever there is a clarity in the music that even the close—that might rival a Gershwin in its finger trickery and its almost jazz-like treatment—maintains in translucent tones that still hold the element of cascades.

The orchestra, throughout, becomes significant. But foremost does Mr. Rachmaninoff use the wind choirs in his new creation that is a reverie within a capricious setting whose rhythm and harmonies bring us a colorful experience out of that tempestuous land of the East, Russia.

Beethoven, with Leopold Stokowski bringing his Centenary contribution in the eighth symphony, preceded by the Egmonta overture, completed the program. Neither of the works bringing Beethoven in his largest mood, we find the fascinating master of orchestration, with that ruggedness that makes for health, yet with that lyric soul that uses unlimited variety in orchestral treatment, and which the Philadelphia Orchestra gave with vivid dramatic meaning.

We found Mr. Stokowski again with the baton in his left hand and with an evident desire to save himself. It was a desire in all our hearts. His orchestra seemed to answer his look, when the broad sweeping baton was kept quiescent before him. In the symphony they held his usual grace. They enriched the music with that ever-insistent bass that reverberated like an organ beneath passage after passage, whether in grotesque mood, or lovely legato, or the bold and straightforward march that came at the close.

The concert was a charming one, but foremost in delight was the fascinating new work of the great artist, Sergei Rachmaninoff, who so greatly gave it at the piano, with an inescapable sympathy from conductor and players. It is a work one will look forward to hearing again with avidity.

The concert was presented by T. Arthur Smith at the Washington Auditorium before the usual large and enthusiastic audience.