

# OWN WORKS GIVEN BY RACHMANINOFF

**Leads Philadelphia Orchestra  
in Third Symphony and 'The  
Bells,' Based on Poe Poem**

**CLIMAX OF THE SERIES**

**Suzanne Fisher, Jan Peerce,  
Mark Harrell and Westminster  
Choir Assist on Program**

**By OLIN DOWNES**

It was necessary to wait until the final concert of the Rachmaninoff cycle, which previously had presented that musician as composer and pianist, to hear him as conductor of his own works, last night in Carnegie Hall. It is a pity that it was necessary to wait so long for this, for it resulted in a loss to the audience and a loss to Rachmaninoff's music—how great a loss was obvious the moment he picked up the baton to lead the Philadelphia Orchestra in the performance of his Third symphony, and to lead the orchestra, the singers of the Westminster Choir, and three assisting artists—Suzanne Fisher, soprano; Jan Peerce, tenor, and Mack Harrell, baritone—in the performance of his symphony, "The Bells," after Poe's poem.

For Mr. Rachmaninoff, on the rare occasions when this writer has heard him lead an orchestra, has proved as masterly in his control, musicianship and projective power as he is when he plays the piano. And the styles of the pianist and of the conductor are of a piece. There is the same complete lack of ostentation, the same dignity and apparent reserve, the same commanding, evocative power.

This was not, by the way, Rachmaninoff's first appearance as conductor in this city. He led the Russian Symphony Orchestra on Jan. 27, 1910, in the performance of his "Isle of Death."

**Mastery Evident From the Start**

From the first down-beat last night his mastery was obvious, as also the response that he secures from the singers and players. The Philadelphia Orchestra is famous for the quick sensitiveness of the players to the wishes of the functioning leader, whoever he may be. But what Mr. Rachmaninoff secured is only obtained when the players know and obey instinctively the wishes of a master whose presence and power are indisputable. In fact, there were places last night when Mr. Rachmaninoff, the conductor, outshone in significance the composer of the music.

This was more particularly the case with the Third symphony, which has much that is personal, individual in inflection and in orchestral coloring, and introspective in mood, but which this writer cannot find to be a sustained flight of inspiration or sufficiently novel in its manner of statement to stand forth as a towering peak among Rachmaninoff's symphonic creations.

But Rachmaninoff got everything from the orchestra, gained from it a response as subtle and instantaneous as though he had been improvising on a piano, and so clearly organized the form and released the emotions of his music that the result could of itself sway or obscure a perfectly good judgment. This is an exception with a composer, who is all too likely to prove a most inept interpreter of his own creations.

**"The Bells" Distinctive**

If, on the other hand, the score of "The Bells" is not to be ranked among Rachmaninoff's most original creations, there is much which is distinctive in it, as for example the magnificent scoring for voices and for voices combined with the orchestra; the form, so well arranged and proportioned for musical and dramatic effect; and, by way of a singularly impressive conclusion, the setting of Poe's final lines.

These are the greatest pages of the score, and they leave a profound impression behind them—of pessimism, if you please, but of emotion and a sombre beauty. The musical motto associated with the thought of the tintinnabulating bells, and their endlessly traveling sonorities, is an idea which Rachmaninoff knows very well how to develop and manipulate. The bell resonances obtained from the orchestra are ingenious; the colors and sonorities vary with the character of each of the verses—the gay and light vibrations of the festive sleigh-bells; the deeper pulse of the tender and melancholy bridal music; the wild drama of the voices, and the crashes of orchestral tone, for the "loud alarm bells," and then the distant tolling, and the poignant memories of the epilogue.

The performance was of a most impressive power and also, again, notable for the youthfulness, the full body of tone, the native fire of the concerted singers. All the soloists sang conscientiously. Mr. Harrell, with a fine baritone and some of the best enunciation of the evening, added materially to the effect of the composition.

At the end, Mr. Rachmaninoff was bowing, without the apparent change of a feature, to an audience that was noisily demonstrative, loath to part with either the man, or, temporarily, his music.