

Bruno David Ussher

Speaking Of Music—News Of Artists And Composers

RACHMANINOFF'S PERFORMANCE NOT AS GOOD AS HIS RECORDS

Enthusiasm ran high last week for Sergei Rachmaninoff as performer of his own "Rhapsody on a Paganini Theme" as also for Conductor Bruno Walter. It would be wrong to recommend listening to records instead of going to concerts. (The records make preparation and recollection easy.) Nevertheless, I cannot avoid the conclusion that the performance the Russian composer-pianist gives on the Victor records with the Philadelphia Symphony is far more vivid in every respect than the one enjoyed here last week. He was a few years younger then—he will be 69 on April 1—and perchance, the recorded performance had more rehearsals than the one here. It is an extremely difficult piece, especially also for the orchestra. Musically, one is ever impressed with the combination of highly personal imagination, classic beauty and dexterity from a general standpoint of composition and from the standpoint of displaying solo technic. (Rachmaninoff plays his own recital this Sunday afternoon on the Behymer course in Los Angeles.)

Best performance on the program was "Till Eulenspiegel." This is one of the bravura pieces of the orchestra and Walter let it not lack in meaning. In fact, he favors meaning these days at the expense of fine execution. That was evident during the "Coriolanus," overture and the seventh symphony of Beethoven. This "Coriolanus," however, lacked fierce strength of tone which is necessary for a full-length portrait of the ancient Roman. Walter takes the finale of the symphony at an unusually fast pace. Klemperer did not linger either during this finale, but it had a daemonic force which added superb breadth.