

Lyric

The Boston Orchestra And Sergei Rachmaninoff.

The first of the current season's concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Pierre Monteux, the French conductor, took place last evening at the Lyric, the assisting artist being Sergei Rachmaninoff, the famous Russian composer-pianist, who is perhaps the most talked of, certainly the most interesting, player on the concert stage today.

The occasion was a gala one in every particular, because the Boston Orchestra, which is in splendid form and played exquisitely last evening, has now definitely regained all of its old-time prestige. The house was entirely sold out, the audience, from a social point of departure, being one of the most brilliant that has assembled at the music hall this winter. Not only were there no vacant seats on the floor of the house, but many persons stood behind the brass rails of the parterre and in the balcony as well, and after Mr. Rachmaninoff's performance the enthusiasm was extraordinary. Some persons even cheered! As usual an additional feature of the entertainment consisted in the turning on and off of the Lyric's trick lights, the psychologic value of this particular diversion, however, being at no time quite apparent. During the symphony only two rows of ceiling lights and the appalling front lights of the boxes were in evidence. During the Stravinsky ballet music the new and blinding nitrogen lights were used. Part of the concerto was given in a sombre half-light, then other globes were flashed on. These things, it is only fair to state, added little to the significance of the program, which last evening was one of extraordinary interest.

The orchestra played first, and with charming grace, the dainty old "Queen of France" symphony, by Haydn, an exquisite thing of its kind, "lavender and old-lace" music, the complement of a romantic age that is passed, and afterward its antithesis, the extraordinarily imaginative Stravinsky ballet score which other conductors have hesitated to present here, fearing that Baltimore would not prove sufficiently receptive to enjoy its fantastic qualities. It is a wonderful work that must be a peculiarly successful expression of the Russian fairy dance drama that it is meant to accompany and its very intricate instrumentation and its delicate tonal qualities were beautifully projected, and with rare skill, by the big band of musicians last evening.

Not for many years has more exquisite piano playing been heard here than that of Mr. Rachmaninoff, the limpid quality of his tone, its sensuous beauty and, at times, its extraordinary brilliance, were incomparable. His performance was marked by rare poetic beauty and by the deepest sympathy always. He played his own third concerto, a splendid work of unusual orchestral richness, in which, as always with the moderns, the piano is used as one instrument of the orchestra rather than as a mere solo instrument. The introspective significance of this work and its frankly nationalistic quality were things that combined to make it a memorable offering, both the work and the composer's reading of it arousing the house to unwonted enthusiasm.

J. O. L.