

Great Rachmaninoff Thrills His Ottawa Audience With Program of Rare Beauty, Vitality, Grandeur

By ISABEL C. ARMSTRONG.

Upon the occasion of a fourth visit to Ottawa and a second concert in the Glebe Collegiate auditorium, the great Sergei Rachmaninoff, one of the legendary personalities in the realm of music, was in exceptionally good form and good humor last night. One evidence of the latter was the fact that he cheerfully played his C sharp minor Prelude as a second encore in response to the applause which persisted after the close of his printed program. He unbent from the gravity which frequently has seemed stern and gloomy to smile almost shyly and as if caught unawares in acknowledgment of recalls heaped upon recalls when the first half of the recital ended with Suite Bergamasque by Debussy.

Beautifully Clear.

Following intermission, there was less restraint, more vigor and vitality in his playing which throughout was beautifully clear, pure, polished and jewel-like. Poetic feeling and subtlety of nuances made his interpretation of Debussy's Clair de Lune an exquisite gem and an unforgettable experience for the listener. One usually thinks of a Beethoven sonata adequately performed in terms of intellectual breadth and clarity, distinction of phrasing, frequently dramatic contrast, dignity and grandeur. The sonata chosen by Rachmaninoff for his Ottawa program, Opus III in C minor, is one of the most out-of-character of the Beethoven thirty-two with its singing Arietta-Adagio Molto movement and quiet ending of the final, Listesso Tempo. He played it simply, clearly, reflectively and musically,

bringing out in it or endowing it with poetic quality generally associated with a Chopin composition.

Four Chopin Etudes of the twelve of Opus 25 were amongst highlights of the evening, No. 7 in C sharp minor, suggesting a duet of voices; No. 5 in E minor, modernistic in its dissonances; No. 4 in A minor, conveying agitation though played strictly in time, and No. 12 in C minor, the arpeggio etude, reminiscent of the Revolutionary in its strength and rushing movement.

The composer-pianist put into his own Etude Tableau, the first number after intermission, the first flash of fire of the concert.

The program of rare quality opened with Italian Concerto by Bach and closed with Three Etudes by Liszt, D flat major, Voices of the Woods, and Dance of the Gnomes, the last bringing into play brilliancy of technique without suggesting fireworks. Then, as an encore, there was The Mill by Schubert before the famous Prelude in C sharp minor.

A Man Set Apart.

No one could see or listen to Rachmaninoff without realizing unusual quality and greatness that set him apart. One could wish that with his superlative technical and intellectual equipment and superb artistry he might put more of his depth of emotional feeling into his interpretations. Is it possible that he is like one of the great rivers of his own country, Russia, or of Canada, frost-bound in winter but with the current rushing below the surface ice? What would his playing be with release of energy comparable to the breaking up of the rivers in springtime?