

# RACHMANINOFF IS SEVERANCE STAR

Famed Pianist Is Heard in Own Compositions

BY HERBERT ELWELL

Two dyed-in-the-wool romanticists formed the bulk of last night's symphony concert under Dr. Artur Rodzinski. One, Robert Schumann, represented by his C major Symphony, is still with us in spirit. The other, Sergei Rachmaninoff, was with us in the flesh. And as might be expected when the Cleveland Orchestra books so renowned a soloist, Severance Hall was filled to capacity.

Rachmaninoff was represented first by his "Five Picture Studies," familiar as piano etudes, and brought to us for the first time in the colorful orchestration of the late Ottorino Respighi. In this new garb they are effective, if occasionally more imposing than their brevity and lyricism calls for. Rodzinski gave them a finished reading.

The second and closing Rachmaninoff work was his First Piano Concerto, interpreted, of course, by himself and performed with all that sureness of touch, perfect timing of effects and smoothness of line for which his playing is justly celebrated.

Outwardly the tall, gaunt Russian appears bored with music. But he constructs assiduously, and goes on constructing even when he has run out of ideas. Yet he constructs so well that one hardly notices the lack of them and his easy continuity of mood engenders pleasurable somnolence.

This early concerto, also heard here for the first time, shows him borrowing some of his tonal garments from Schumann's wardrobe, to which Tschaiikowsky lent him the key. It diffuses a faint odor of moth balls and is at the same time extremely ingratiating.

About the Schumann symphony there was no aroma of the cedar closet. The lovely melodies of its

expressive adagio were poured out with ardor, and the fresh, vigorous substance of its allegro, scherzo and finale were set forth with spirit and authority.

The only non-romantic work on the program was the opening "Serenata Notturna" of Mozart, introduced by a little band of a dozen conductorless string players and the kettledrummer. This proved a delicious appetizer as well as a capital idea for varying a symphonic program. Being chamber music, it requires more carefully rehearsed en-

semble than it received, although it involved some skillful playing. The solo parts were taken by Concertmaster Josef Fuchs and Hyman Schandler, violins, Tom Brennan, viola, and Jacques Posell, bass.

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