

Rachmaninoff Conducts Program of Own Works

Pianist Given Ovation on Podium
With Philadelphia Orchestra

By Linton Martin

RACHMANINOFF PROGRAM
Symphony No. 3 ——— in A minor
Choral Symphony ——— "The Bells"
Sergei Rachmaninoff conducted a program of his own music when he appeared for the second week in succession with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the concert in the Academy yesterday.

The current concerts mark the conclusion here of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the great Russian musician's American debut, as conductor and piano soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. And although he has appeared here many times since then as piano soloist and his music has become a staple of the repertoire, yesterday marked the first display of his qualities as conductor in this city during that time, and he was given quite an ovation by the large audience.

NO OSTENTATION

Grave, scholarly, earnest and utterly devoid of any ostentation or excesses on the podium, the tall, intense Russian gave his cues yesterday in clear-cut fashion, using score throughout in his own music. Manifestly he knew exactly what he wanted, and his forces, vocal and instrumental, gave him exactly what he wanted. Of Rachmaninoff the obvious observation could not be made that "as a conductor he is still a fine composer and a great pianist."

Rachmaninoff's two Third Symphonies comprised the program. That is to say, his choral symphony, "The Bells," which he originally numbered his Third at its premiere here under Leopold Stokowski in February, 1920, came last, occupying the time after the intermission. It was preceded by the purely instrumental work in A minor, which Rachmaninoff also numbered his Third when it was first played here three years ago.

CHOIR AND SOLOISTS

The tremendous and vitally important chorus work in "The Bells" Symphony—composed after the poem by Edgar Allan Poe—was rousing and magnificently sung by the Westminster Choir, superbly and sensitively trained by Dr. John Finley Williamson. The rather ungrateful solo parts were sung as effectively as the music permitted by Susanne Fisher, soprano; Jan Pearce, tenor, and Mack Harrell, baritone, the tessitura and vocal line of the soprano solo being especially unrewarding.

"The Bells" Symphony has an abundance of vigor in the scoring,

both for the voices and orchestra, ly effective in simulating the effect of various kinds of the bells from which the four movements take title. These are "The Silver Sleigh-Bells," with tenor solo; "The Mellow Wedding Bells," with soprano solo; "The Loud Alarm Bells," without soloist and "The Mournful Iron Bells," with baritone solo. The chorus provides the foundation throughout, and really plays the most important part, though some of the purely instrumental effects are excellent.

RUSSIAN RHYTHM

Thoroughly Russian in its rhythms, color and melodic line, "The Bells" strikingly suggests some details of Moussorgsky's "Boris Godunoff," and some of the effects employed by Rimsky-Korsakoff at times.

Yet it is basically the Rachmaninoff familiar through the concertos and the symphonies and other works for orchestra.

Certainly it is a work vastly more vital than the later, and purely orchestral, Third Symphony, which was played first yesterday.

Unfortunately, this Third Symphony does not improve upon further acquaintance. It has some captivating cantilena passages, especially in the first movement. But hearing the work yesterday confirmed earlier impressions that it is at once pretentious and banal, almost entirely empty of inspiration and spontaneous musical speech.

Its throes of creation seem achieved by the light of midnight oil and not the morning sun. But it was played for all its was worth—and possibly, one suspects, for a little more than it was worth.

James Roosevelt Is Studio President

HOLLYWOOD, Dec. 8 (A. P.).—James Roosevelt, the President's son, was elevated to the presidency of Samuel Goldwyn Studio Co. today. He retains his post as vice-president of Samuel Goldwyn Productions, Inc.

The company which Roosevelt will head owns and operates Goldwyn's Hollywood plant. The production company makes the pictures.

The studio announcement did not indicate whether his salary—reported to be \$750 a week—would be increased.