

Mood Tempers Brilliance Of Rachmaninoff's Playing

Great Artist Permits Music Itself
To Tell Its Own Story, Without
Embellishment of Fantasy

By ALICE EVERSMAN.

Sergei Rachmaninoff is one of those artists who can always count on a filled house to greet him when he gives a recital. This was true last night at Constitution Hall, where the noted Russian pianist presented a varied program. In the many years since Rachmaninoff was first introduced to American audiences he has grown to be more than a beloved and popular artist. He has become a symbol. He represents the superlative idea of what both an artist and a pianist should be and he has reached this by fusing with his technical brilliancy a high order of intelligence and a profound understanding of music in its emotional sense.

As such he can always make his admirers marvel anew at the inexhaustible quality of his musicianship and the many fresh angles of vision he brings to them. There is hardly a moment when one can afford to relax when he is playing, for some new and vital point may be missed; nor does one wish to do so, for he has the power to hold the interest without effort.

What is less uniform in this great pianist is his mood, which when deeply inspired can give added luster to his playing. Last evening he was not in quite the creative mood that he has been on many of his recent appearances. He let the music speak for itself without giving it the embellishment of his fantasy other than in the refinement and polish of his performance. There have been times when he drew the tones with such loving care and directed a passage solely from its idea with results that were electrifying in their beauty so that he seemed to lift music completely out of the material to its natural spiritual plane.

The more solid part of his program was built on Bach, Mendelssohn and Beethoven, with Tausig's "Variations on a Theme by Schubert" as a beginning. He found for each of these its own eloquence in a masterly manner. The fluency and charm of the "Variations on a Theme by Schubert" were developed with the sensitivity that is Rachmaninoff's specialty. The Liszt arrangement of the Bach "Organ Prelude and Fugue in A Minor" gave occasion for the artist to reveal his sculptural powers within the classical form, and the clarity of his phrasing, the vigor and color with which he infused it could only be accomplished by a pianist who respects the integrity of a work profoundly. By the very absence of too personal a touch in interpretation he intensified the strength and nobility of both composer and arranger.

The same respect was accorded Beethoven's "Sonata Appassionata." It did not become a virtuoso display nor did his playing of it drain the piano of all its power, for a limit was set by the good taste of the

artist. Yet it was rich with poetic imagery, with soulfulness and with fire. Mendelssohn's "Rondo Capriccioso," deftly executed, offered a contrast between the Bach and Beethoven.

The romantic mood was the dominating factor in the second half of the program, which included two mazurkas and the "Nocturne in D Flat Major," by Chopin; Liszt's "Sonetto del Petrarca" and "Rhapsody No. 11," and three of his own compositions, "Humoresque," "Moment Musical" and "Etude Tableau in E Flat Major." As a composer, Rachmaninoff writes both rewardingly and with new ideas for the piano, and his playing of his own works is the final polish he gives to his own creations. The three numbers are varied and delightful in their originality.

The two Liszt works with which the program concluded were played in broad and noble style, with a

superb demonstration of pianistic brilliancy. Then followed the more intimate contact of artist and public when the encores, in which the audience delights, were offered with Rachmaninoff's usual graciousness.

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