

Philadelphia Orchestra

By WELDON WALLACE

Rachmaninoff was in Baltimore last night. So was the Philadelphia Orchestra. Both were here for the annual premiere of that musical organization, for which a brilliant audience crowded the Lyric.

The program was devoted entirely to Rachmaninoff, both in spirit and person. His second symphony, in E Minor, was given its local premiere to open the program and proved well worth hearing.

His fourth concerto concluded the program, but even with Mr. Rachmaninoff himself seated at the keyboard to guide its destinies, the work seemed to consume a great deal of time with very little material to hold the interest.

Perhaps the latter composition would have appeared to better advantage if it had been heard in company with another composer's music, but an entire evening of Rachmaninoff's compositions became a little monotonous.

The themes of the symphony are very fluent and are not squared off in as definitely defined melodic patterns as one finds in some of this composer's music and works of similar inspiration.

There are times when a lyric theme swells upward from the strings and suddenly, when one expects that it might go on, drifts into another design.

The orchestra is Tchaikovsky's. Rachmaninoff does not experiment. He likes to use his instruments in masses, thus achieving a compact, thick texture. Sometimes motifs rise from a solo instrument here and there in a method somewhat resembling that of Sibelius. Also, like the music of the Finnish composer, this composition seems to die away from time to time and begin afresh.

The emphasis is on the strings mainly, for the Slavic soul likes cellos and violins.

In the last movement, the Fourth Symphony of Tchaikovsky stands by in smiling approval as galloping fanfares tumble out of brass and strings.

There is a brilliant scherzo, almost Bruckner-like in its conception.

The symphony would be welcomed in the repertoire. It was given a warm reception last night.

Another stand must be taken in regard to the concerto. This is a fourteen-year-old work which Rachmaninoff completely rewrote during the past summer. The whole undertaking seems so futile and the effect nondescript.

The slow movement is patterned after the slow movement of another composer's fourth concerto (Beethoven's) in that both are a duet be-

tween piano and orchestra, but the results are hardly on a comparable level. The melodic line wanders about among a great many moping chords during the progress of this portion of the Russian's work.

The final movement starts out pianistically and goes on at great length, the orchestra twittering, pizzicato-ing, crashing, while Mr. Rachmaninoff moves swiftly up and down the keyboard. At last it stops.

Mr. Rachmaninoff played well, but this concerto is not the work to show

off his superlative pianism. Later on in the season Baltimore will get a chance to hear him play better music, when he gives a solo performance January 19.

Without meaning to tuck away Eugene Ormandy and his magnificent orchestra as a footnote, this reviewer must pay tribute, albeit briefly, to the excellent performance of last night's music.

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