

'Musical Giants Still Live,' Critic Hears Rachmaninoff

By Martin W. Bush

Someone has said "there were giants in those days." As many Tuesday Musical club members as the law would allow in Central High auditorium Tuesday night are probably maintaining that there still is a giant in the musical world, after hearing Sergei Rachmaninoff in piano recital.

And by this they would be referring to the greatness of the man's intellect, his scrupulous musical integrity, the seemingly boundless scope of his mastery of the piano and his uncanny ability to expose and purvey the very core of the music he chooses to expound.

In trying to tell the fellow who wasn't there, what happened, pianistic parlance must be chucked overboard. Here was a true patrician of music—a great orator and his message begged any thought of mechanical means by which he spoke. His medium happened to be the piano, but it was also, in turn, an orchestra in his hands, or a singer, or a choir of voices.

Program Unconventional

The program he presented was an unconventional one. The Mozart variations from a piano sonata came over as graceful, forthright expressions of that master—no sentimentality, no dripping sweetness. The mighty Beethoven sonata, Opus III, had all the epic qualities the composer lavished on this, his last work in the category of piano sonatas.

He indeed proclaimed the glory that was Beethoven's in one of his most transcendent moments of inspiration, for there

was the drama of life in its every measure from the sinewy austerity of the first part to the sublimity of the arietta and its variations.

Schuman glowed through the seldom heard Novelette in E sharp minor and here was romanticism in one of its loveliest lights.

Sings on Piano

The remainder of the list was made entirely of transcriptions. Disregarding the two schools of thought, "fer and agin" transcriptions, here was much beautiful music. His own transcription of three movements from a Bach partita for violin came off in grand fashion, for they could be naught but virile and red-blooded. The rest were songs by Rachmaninoff himself, Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, Tschaikowsky and Kreisler.

While the alchemists tried to change base metals to gold, he often succeeded in taking songs of a caliber far short of greatness, transmitting them to precious gems. He literally sang them on the piano, and sang them so gorgeously that many a singer could have counted them a score of voice lessons over which to ponder.

Enthusiasm was intense and it was rewarded with three additions to the list, Tschaikowsky's "Troika," his transcription of Moussorgsky's "Hopak" and a piece he had written some time ago called "Prelude in C sharp minor."

Mr. Rachmaninoff had delivered himself of piano playing in its highest estate—such as has not been visited on local audiences for many a season.