

MUSIC

Rachmaninoff

THE PROGRAM.

- I.
  - Variations, A-major ..... Mozart
  - II.
  - Sonata, Opus 111 ..... Beethoven
  - III.
  - Novelette, F-sharp minor ..... Schumann
  - IV.
  - Partita, E-major for violin alone... Bach  
(Transcribed for piano by Rachmaninoff)  
Prelude Gavotte Gigue
- INTERMISSION:
- A group of songs arranged for piano:
- Lilacs ..... Rachmaninoff
  - The Trout ..... Schubert-Liszt
  - Serenade ..... Schubert-Liszt
  - Contrabandiste ..... Schumann-Fauset
  - Maiden Wish ..... Chopin-Liszt
  - The Return Home ..... Chopin-Liszt
  - Lullaby ..... Tchaikowsky-Rachmaninoff
  - Liebestreu ..... Kreisler-Rachmaninoff

BY FREDERICK YEISER.

Rachmaninoff, being the wizard that he is, left little doubt in his recital last night at the Taft that he stands in a class by himself among the pianists of our time. His is the kind of piano playing that finds everyone, including your reviewer, wallowing in superlatives, and the kind of playing that defies description. One might just as well try to go to the piano and say, "He does it this way." And that would be impossible.

With the exception of one number, the program offered nothing exceptional until the final group—aside from the marvellous playing, that is—not that Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 111 nor the Variations from Mozart's Sonata in A were exactly trifling, nor even the Schumann Novelette. The audience derived no end of pleasure from the exquisite phrasing and subtle coloring of the Mozart and the strength of the Beethoven. Here was one pianist that penetrated to the core of the second movement of Beethoven's last, and probably his greatest, sonata.

Perhaps it is only to be expected that an artist of Rachmaninoff's stature should have the insight into this music and the grasp of its form. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten how few pianists possess both of these attributes, and are therefore not of his stature. Will someone kindly explain just what it was that he put into the Schumann piece to give it its particular romantic sheen?

Rachmaninoff's translation of the Bach's Partita in E for solo violin can be put down as a success. Without altering either the syntax or the essence of the original, it nevertheless became quite a new piece. Some of the harmonic coloring would have startled Bach a little, and delighted him, too. The writing for the piano might also have appealed to the latent virtuoso in him.

Of the three pieces I liked best the Prelude and Gavotte, perhaps because they were more familiar. During the Gigue I kept wondering who else would be able to play it. Apropos of the Partita, I should like to repeat the bon mot of the evening. "Rachmaninoff," someone said. That just about sums it up.

The eight songs arranged for piano formed an unusual group, supplanting as they did the customary novelties and display of fireworks. In nearly every instance the lasting effect of each was in direct proportion to the musical value of the original, though each sounded like the best immediately after it was played—the Rachmaninoff magic, of course. The aura of romanticism hovered over the entire group.

After the program the audience waited greedily for encores, so received Chopin and Rachmaninoff's own "Humoresque." I believe it was, in a revised form. It took his C-Sharp Minor Preludes to convince people that the recital had finished. It was a knockout and there was an enormous crowd on hand to hear it.