

Auditorium-Taxing Crowd Thrilled by Rachmaninoff

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If there is any doubt as to the desire of Detroiters to hear great music played greatly, it surely must have been dispelled by the presence of a capacity audience of almost 5,000 persons at Masonic Temple Monday night.

The occasion which brought out extra chairs on the orchestra pit was the presence of Sergei Rachmaninoff, whose appearance in Detroit is by no means a novelty.

Rachmaninoff remains a phenomenon of unchanging grandeur as the years pass. Miraculously, somehow, his genius continues and if age has touched him it is only in the silvering of that bristling head of hair.

It seemed that his hands and mind remained glitteringly sure and emotionally adept. His program, ranging from the spare harmonies of Bach through the orchestral qualities of Beethoven, to the performer's own Etudes, was a study in contrasts.

Bleak enough was the opening of the program, Rachmaninoff's own transcription of the Bach violin Partita in E major. We say bleak as compared with the wealth of melody and harmony that followed.

As Rachmaninoff played it, however, the Gavotte and Gigue of the Partita were living dances, performed and written in a manner dear to the heart of the ultra-modern composer—sparse of structure and terse in expression.

His command of the idioms of Chopin and of Liszt are too well known to call for extended comment here. Suffice it to say that the austerity of performance which was one time the Rachmaninoff hallmark, became enveloped in a passion of expression that was a revelation.

Four Etudes-Tableaux of Rachmaninoff's devising were easily the high points of the evening. In these four studies, Rachmaninoff set himself a task that might make

any lesser pianist recoil from trying. The etude in A minor, particularly, was a masterwork of genius. It was, in effect, a study in paganism, conflicting, passionate and tremendously rhythmical.

From the Liszt library, Rachmaninoff chose the Valse Oubliee, Sonetto del Patrarco and the Tarantella "Venezia e Napoli."

Schumann's Novelette in F sharp major and the Beethoven Sonata, Opus 31, No. 2, completed the scheduled program. The evening ended with two encores; a Chopin Mazurka and the inevitable Prelude in C sharp minor, after which Rachmaninoff very gently, albeit firmly, closed the lid on the piano.

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