

Rachmaninoff Evening Delights Music Lovers

BY ALICE EVERSMAN.

IT IS seldom that a program is surrounded with an aura of special interest as was that given by the Philadelphia Orchestra last evening in Constitution Hall. It was a Rachmaninoff evening, the composer as soloist and the program devoted to his compositions. Rare as it is in these days to have music interpreted by the man who wrote it, there was the rarer attribute last evening of the performance consisting of two works which the composer considers his best

and which were conceived under circumstances calculated to arouse additional interest in the listeners.

For the choral symphony which took up the first part of the program was, as Rachmaninoff tells, the result of a letter from an anonymous admirer who entreated him to read Belmont's translation of Poe's poem, "The Bells," as, in the writer's estimation, it was ideally suited to musical composition which would appeal to Rachmaninoff. Of his reaction to the suggestion, the composer says, "This composition, on which I worked with feverish ardor, is still the one I like best of all my works."

The "Second Concerto" is probably the only composition in existence which is the outgrowth of auto-suggestion. The composer had fallen into an apathetic mental state which lasted for two years and which made it impossible for him to fulfill his promise to the secretary of the London Philharmonic Society to write a second concerto especially for the English public. After many attempts to bring the composer out of his enervating state of mind, the services of a doctor famous for his "magic" cures were sought. Under his daily suggestion that the artist could and should write a concerto, inspiration finally came and the number on yesterday's program was the result.

For the performance of the symphony there was in addition to the orchestra, the University of Pennsylvania Choral Society, Harl McDonald, director, and as soloists, Agnes Davis, soprano; Fritz Krueger, tenor, and Elwood Hawkins, baritone.

The principal events of Russian life take place to the peal of bells and their varied intonation and the thoughts they awaken from the basis of this magnificent work of Rachmaninoff. The symphony is divided into four parts—"The Silver Sleigh Bells," "The Mellow Wedding Bells," "The Loud Alarum Bells" and "The Mournful Iron Bells." In writing under the influence of Poe's poem, Rachmaninoff seems to have immersed himself in the memories which his subject evoked, to have sought to depict some scene or impression close to his heart. It is this strength and

conviction that incloses the whole work with a glowing color that flares into dramatic intensity in their movement, is silvery white in the first, again warmly rose-tinted in the second and gentle mauve in the last.

A solo voice gives the poetic version of each movement. "The Silver Sleigh Bells" was sung by Mr. Krueger, whose fine lyric tenor was admirably expressive in the part, while the beautiful soprano of Miss Davis and her artistry in projecting the tenderness of "The Mellow Wedding Bells" made this movement the most effective. Mr. Hawkins' baritone was well suited to the more somber meaning of the finale, which ended with one of the most uplifting sequences of phrases ever written for orchestra.

When the composer took his place at the piano for the concerto a storm of applause swept the house. In this work Rachmaninoff has let down all the barriers and the poetry and lyricism of his nature is given full rein. The adagio is of exquisite purity and warmth, while the allegro concludes the number in brilliantly exciting manner. It is a work which should rejoice every pianist who understands the "grand manner" as it soars through arpeggios, lyric themes, sonorous chords and rippling passages to a glorious finish. Rachmaninoff played it superbly, and supporting him was the splendid artistry of Mr. Ormandy's accompaniment.

The young conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra has given many instances of his sensitive musicianship at other concerts here, but last evening the demands made upon him in the symphony and the concerto found him the supreme master at all times. Feeling with the artist in the concerto or as deeply understanding interpreter of the symphony, he was at once magnetic, vital and inspirational.

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