

Rachmaninoff Concert Like Elysian Flute

Master Delights Second
Audience With Classic
Rendition

By ALFRED FRANKENSTEIN

Rachmaninoff plowed a less consistently romantic furrow in his second recital of the season yesterday afternoon at the Memorial Opera House, broadening the scope of things to take in Scarlatti, Haydn and Gluck in one of the most beautiful classic groups on record.

The Gluck "Dance of the Blessed Spirits" was in truth the flute of the Elysian Fields, so gentle, ethereal and other-worldly was its grave simplicity.

The Scarlatti was more a musician's music, more a matter of technical subtlety in classic form, except for the fresh ingenuousness of the sonata in E minor, far better known under the title of "Pastorale."

A CHOPIN CLIMAX

Yet to one who listened yesterday the climax of the afternoon came in the most ambitious work of the program, the Chopin sonata in B minor. If the hall contained anyone still dedicated to the proposition that Chopin is only a superior drawing room composer, surely that conviction must have been swept away as Rachmaninoff played.

Claude Debussy did not write in an altogether jocular vein when he remarked that "Chopin's charming ghost flits through the score of 'Tristan and Isoide.'" At any rate, in the hands of a supremely great interpreter like Rachmaninoff the B minor sonata stands revealed as one of those colossi in the literature that are its major milestones.

For all its unearthly dreaming, for all its frank, urgent and impassioned escape from reality, heroic strength and heroic vitality are its core. It is Beethoven dressed in the colors, caprices and longings of a later age and another milieu, but it remains in the line of the giants. Or so Rachmaninoff persuades one to believe.

"LIEBESTRAUM" DISGUISED

The prelude to Bach's E major violin partita, brilliantly recomposed by the soloist in terms of the piano, opened the last half. Small fragments of sentiment, magnificently limned, made up most of this group.

Here I particularly liked something programmed under the colorless title "Nocturne," which turned out to be Liszt's "Liebestraum," and which lost all its stale, commonplace associations when dipped in the cleansing bath of Rachmaninoff's orchestrally gorgeous tone.

The artist tried to pacify his audience with Schubert's "Das Wandern," the Chopin waltz in A flat and other things in the encore session, but at last the C sharp minor prelude proclaimed its thunderous descent, and everyone was happy.

Rachmaninoff gives the last of his Bay Region recitals for the season Wednesday evening at Stanford.