

Rachmaninoff Delightful In Buffalo Appearance

Classical and Romantical Schools Proponents Given
Excellent Program; Slight Nod
Given Modernism

By William Breach

Times Music Critic

A large audience braved the inclement weather yesterday afternoon to welcome the return to Buffalo of the famous Russian pianist, Sergei Rachmaninoff in a recital at Elmwood Music Hall. This was the first of a Sunday afternoon series to be presented by Zorah B. Berry during the current season.

To those who enjoy music of the Classical and Romantic Schools and to whom the tonal experiments of the modernists are an abhorrence, the musical fare offered by Mr. Rachmaninoff in his program yesterday must have been most acceptable. The items presented were from the pens of Bach, Chopin and Liszt with a slight nod toward modernism in the Debussy "Suite Bergamasque."

From the beginning of the recital the tall, grave artist, more grave; it seemed, than usual, asserted his customary sway over the audience. The distinctive Rachmaninoff style is in evidence at once. The attack was incisive and determined; the phrases were clearly and sharply etched; the rhythms moved with surety and precision; and above all towered the calm, authoritative command of the great artist. One was compelled at all times to admire the "rightness" with which each phrase was articulated, each figuration, chord and run made significant. The treatment of the music was at all times cerebral rather than emotional.

Lacked Poetic Treatment

One can remember more sympathetic performances of the "Suite Bergamasque," (especially of the Menuet and the Clair de Lune,) than was given us yesterday. This delightful and highly emotionalized music of the early Debussy suffered from the lack of tender and poetic treatment. The Prelude and Passepied with their more sharply marked rhythmic accent fared better and one recalls with a thrill the delicious glissando at the close of the Menuet.

Mr. Rachmaninoff changed the program at will and without announcement. In the place of the two Impromptus of Chopin which were programmed, he substituted the Nocturne in F. Instead of his own Etude in E flat minor he played his Prelude in G major.

The Bach "Italian" concerto with its suggestion of concerted instruments received a noble interpretation. The first movement was played with virility and crispness of rhythm. The Andante "sang" under his hands and the last movement was exhilarating in its sparkle and glow.

Encores Added

The program closed with two numbers by Liszt, "Voices of the Woods" and "Dance of the Gnomes." These were played in a felicitous manner and were received with approbation by the audience. Mr. Rachmaninoff added several encores. Among these were the F Minor Concert Etude,

his own transcription of Liebesleid by Kreisler and "Flight of the Bumble Bee" by Rimsky-Korsakoff.

Although there were moments of ineffable beauty in the concert one has the lingering feeling that we heard a rather perfunctory Rachmaninoff yesterday. Perhaps this is because his former performances have caused us to expect so much more.

Watkins Recital Given Saturday

The first of a series of Saturday evening piano recitals by C. Gordon Watkins, Buffalo pianist, was given in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank B. Baird on Saturday evening. A good sized audience listened with pleasure to a well selected program played with good tone quality, fine phrasing and technical sufficiency.

The program opened with the familiar Prelude from the E Major Violin Sonata by Bach as arranged by Beethoven.

by Beethoven. This was followed by the high-light of the evening—a sympathetic and revealing reading of the Sonata Appassionata by Beethoven. Mr. Watkins brought to the slow movement imaginative, poetic treatment and a beautiful singing tone. Although taken with a tempo slightly on the fast side, the last movement was played with virility and an abundance of sonorous power.

Played With Effect

The contrasted group of numbers by Debussy was played with brilliant effect. Included in this group was the scintillating "Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Quest"; the impish, "La Danse de Puck" and the grotesque—"General Lavine-eccentric."

The program closed with a group of numbers by Chopin which included three Preludes, Opus 28, Nos. 11, 18 and 19, three Etudes, Opus 10, Nos. 6, 9 and 4, and Scherzo, E Major, Opus 54. Mr. Watkins played these widely contrasted numbers with facile technical skill and a keen appreciation of the tonal values demanded by the shifting moods.

Mr. Watkins' playing was received with favor by the cordially receptive audience. In response to insistent applause he added several encores. Included among these was the Scherzo from the Beethoven Sonata, Opus 31, the Schuetz arrangement of the Strauss waltz, "Roses from the South," A Chopin Prelude and his own composition called "A Portrait."