

HAIL PROGRAM OF PIANO KING, RACHMANINOFF

Admirers of Cleveland Orchestra Jam Severance Hall to Hear Artist

By ARTHUR LOESSER
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Severance Hall was loaded to the gunwales last night; extra chairs had to be put in to accommodate the rush of ticket buyers. The potent attraction, in addition to the orchestra and its conductor, was the impressive personality of that pianistic lord, Sergei Rachmaninoff, to whose work both as composer and pianist the greater part of the program was devoted.

The evening's bill of fare was headed by Rachmaninoff's recently composed third symphony, in A minor, his first enterprise in that form of music since nearly 30 years.

The program closed with the composer's likewise recently completed Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, for piano and orchestra, in which he himself played the solo part.

It was this last number, giving Rachmaninoff an opportunity to exhibit his dazzling pianistic skill, which aroused the audience to a high pitch of enthusiasm.

Audience Stays to Applaud

Fears of traffic congestion were forgotten while people stayed on after the end of the concert to applaud and demand recall after recall of both the soloist and the conductor.

The composition is certainly a tour de force, with its wealth of incredibly tricky figuration; whether it is anything more than that will have to be determined when it will have been performed more often by less glamorous pianists.

In the symphony Rachmaninoff showed that, despite his long period of reduced creative activity, he has not been insensitive to the more recent harmonic trends. Likewise, in the matter of orchestration he seems now to show a willingness to swing along with the moderns to a certain extent; his instrumental center of gravity has shifted a little toward the direction of the wind choirs, and he sees a rich and variegated palette of percussion colors.

However, in the essence of its message, Rachmaninoff's music has not changed during the last decades. He does not say anything in this symphony that he has not said, substantially, in his E minor symphony of a generation ago.

Shows Old Mastery

We notice the same type of theme, oscillating lazily within a narrow range of tones, we have the same profusion of those lush melodic phrases that many people enjoy so heartily in the earlier work. Many of his minor mannerisms are again in evidence.

In this work Rachmaninoff again also shows his great mastery of form, his ability as a manipulator of motives and as a planner of intricate constructions. The fugue in the middle of the last movement is a noteworthy piece of compositional technique.

The symphony is admirable in many ways, although its atmosphere is retrospective and nostalgic.

The program will be repeated on Saturday night and there is every reason to expect that the hall will again be crowded.