

Ormandy and Rachmaninoff Weld Musical Genius

Concert by Philadelphia Symphony And Russian Composer Inspires Audience to Enthusiasm.

By ALICE EVERSMAN.

The first concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra's series this year in Constitution Hall took place last evening before a large and distinguished audience. The orchestra was conducted by Eugene Ormandy, recently appointed music director of the orchestra also, with Sergei Rachmaninoff, the celebrated Russian pianist, as soloist. The program was mainly Rachmaninoff's, his "Symphony No. 3" being played here for the first time and his "First Concerto" concluding the performance and presented by the composer, himself.

The two works of the Russian composer represent the endeavors of his earliest and his latest years at musical creation, the symphony having been finished a year ago and given its first hearing in Philadelphia shortly afterward. The concerto, in its original form, was composed while he was a student in Moscow, but revised during the troubled period of 1917 before Rachmaninoff was able to leave Russia.

Hearing these two compositions in close proximity to each other, one cannot but feel reflected in them the effect of life's changes and the sobering influence of experience. The symphony has moments of emptiness, as in the opening phrases, but there is ever a looking backward and in the nostalgia thus engendered is born the finest writing. From an arid present, a vista is opened to the scenes and happenings of another time and as the first movement progresses, the warmth of these memories creeps into the music. The writing is disjointed at times, however, and not entirely devoid of Rachmaninoff's ideas in other compositions.

The second movement is the climax in beauty of form and content, coherent in its impassioned speech and genuine in its sentiment. The finale is again marked by the same irregularity as in the first movement, although the flow of inspiration is more continuous. There is originality in Rachmaninoff's harmonic treatment, but it is not always the result of profound conviction. Mr. Ormandy's reading of it was superb, drawing from every phrase the utmost it could give so that the audience was enthusiastic in its reception of it and recalled the conductor repeatedly.

A storm of applause greeted Rachmaninoff as he entered to play his first opus. It was a memorable performance, the artist rising to supreme heights in his brilliant and inspired interpretation, assisted with complete

sympathy by Ormandy's sensitive accompaniment. The vitality of the concerto is more pronounced than that of the symphony and the development of its themes does not lag for a moment. Its lyricism has power and verity which mounts in intensity to broad and passionate climaxes. There are many solo intervals in which the full resources of a pianist's virtuosity are called into play and in these the magnificent technical fluency of Rachmaninoff made a dazzling display. Thunderous acclaim came spontaneously from the listeners for the artist, who outdid himself in the spirited freedom of his performance.

Although Rachmaninoff, as composer and soloist, was the feature of the program, Mr. Ormandy added to his fame as interpreter with a brilliant exhibition of his powers in the symphony and especially in the opening number, Beethoven's overture to "Leonore" No 3. Appearing for the first time on the podium with baton in hand, Mr. Ormandy immediately set about presenting the famous overture in an entirely new light. Its drama was strongly emphasized and, by force of extreme contrasts, became thrilling in its denouement. The whole range of orchestral color was employed with a sure instinct for telling effect. Rarely has such perfect, floating pianissimo been heard or such exquisitely molded phrases that grew to proportion of great magnitude as the music unfolded the dramatic story.

Mr. Ormandy's reading was a splendid example of musicianship, imagination and dramatic insight and as such the effect on the audience was electric. Surrounded by the orchestra members,

AMUSEMENTS.

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