

Rachmaninoff, THE ARTIST WITHOUT ANY ATMOSPHERE.

But a Brilliant Executant and Master
of Piano Control.

Too much value cannot be placed upon personal atmosphere as a factor in the success of a concert performer. Paderewski has the intellectual atmosphere, Fuchmann the ethereal atmosphere, Rachmaninoff the complete absence of atmosphere. Summing up after ninety minutes of his playing last night in the De Montfort Hall, one could only say that he was a brilliant executant, a master of piano control, and a man with very definite ideas about music. Personality he could infuse into his playing, sometimes to an excessive extent, but of opinions may be held about his merits as a composer, and it is questionable whether popular feeling has not out-balanced reason on that point, there can be no doubt that as a pianist he is definitely not of the first rank.

COMPOSER—AND EXECUTANT.

As a matter of fact the programme was 90 minutes of Rachmaninoff, Beethoven as seen by Rachmaninoff, Schumann as seen by Rachmaninoff, Chopin as Rachmaninoff would have had him, until one was really glad to come to Rachmaninoff as seen by Rachmaninoff.

Throughout his playing was marked by the utmost, almost academical, perfection of technique and tone control. Pianissimo and fortissimo, sforzando and diminuendo were gauged to the fraction in sound and place, every note had precisely the value that Rachmaninoff had determined it should have. The discrepancy arose because Rachmaninoff had different views about this matter from those of the composer of the music.

Beethoven's Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 78, was far too trivial for even the jolliest of Beethoven's moods. Its accentuation and punctuation it altered its form into something much more modern and less classical.

The Schumann Nocturne in F sharp minor was better, probably because its grandiose phrases suited the temperament of the player. It was handled in a commendably restrained manner, and, once or twice, one did catch glimpses of a brooding mind in Rachmaninoff's handling. Chopin was quite unemotional, except perhaps in the



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Scherzo in C sharp minor, which had a certain fine dignity. There was some beautiful tone work in the Tchaikowsky variations, of a purely impersonal kind.

THE PRELUDE MURDERED.

It was only in the group of his own works that we glimpsed the real Rachmaninoff in place of the machine. His Etude Tableaux No. 5, Op. 29, had definitely an electric quality which, for the first time, made one sit up and take notice. There was also a delicious Prelude in G major, and a hybrid paraphrase of Kreisler's "Liebestreu."

"Love's..." in which the composer seemed to have lost sight of the love in his joy at covering the whole of the keyboard. After persistent applause we had the Prelude, treated most inhumanly. Perhaps it was done deliberately, perhaps Rachmaninoff never saw more than that. In any case, some of the sentimental amateur pianists present must have been sorely disappointed.

HE TALKS—ABOUT LUMBAGO.

Rachmaninoff reached Leicester last night with lumbago. He left Leicester this morning with lumbago. He sat down to breakfast in the Granby Suite with lumbago.

When I was ushered into his apartment at the Grand Hotel to-day and said "How do you do," he replied "Lumbago."

"I thought at first," (writes our special representative) that this might be Russian for "Very well, thank you." "What impression was your Prelude in C Sharp Minor intended to convey to those who insist that every celebrated composition must have a history or a sentimental story?" I asked.

"Lumbago," he replied absently. Rachmaninoff, tall, aloof—for a musician, and a Russian, one almost expressions—of a mournfully at Mr. Lionel Powell's luxurious fur coat.

"Lumbago," he muttered.

"And I thought it was sable," I said ruefully.

"He doesn't mean my coat, he means himself," explained Mr. Powell.

THE INCIDENTALS.

"Yes, lumbago," mumbled Rachmaninoff between a round of buttered toast and a rheumatic twinge.

"What was your impression of the concert last night?" I asked.

"Lumbago," growled Rachmaninoff.

"Weren't there any incidentals?" I suggested.

"Yes, more lumbago," retorted Rachmaninoff.

"Tell me the story of the Prelude and its connection with lumbago," I said.

"The Prelude—my prelude—which I sold for £4 and which has made £20,000 for others has no connection with lumbago. It is a story of the dead," answered Rachmaninoff.

He ceased to munch buttered toast. The marmalade and the omelette were neglected.

His eyes, his mournful eyes, saw nothing in that room. They saw only the phantasmagoria of macabre mist.

"Yes, they think him dead. They bury him. In the depths of the tomb the sleeper awakes. Horror! Horror! Horror! He is buried alive. Ah! can you hear his feeble tapping on the coffin lid? It is dark. All is quite dark. Tap! Tap! Louder! Louder! Louder!!

HIS OPERA.

"Boom! In maddened frenzy beats on the earth..."

No response. A cry of despair wrenched from the depths of a scared soul. . . . Then all is still.

"That is the story of the Prelude," said Rachmaninoff. "Of course," he added, "Very few people in England

know that I have written opera. Chaliapin, my revered friend with his glittering voice, has promised to appear in one of my operas."

"Is it true that you prefer the syncopated versions of the Prelude?"

"What? Lies! Lies! Lies! The beauty, the pathos, the misery of the music disappear in the noisy frivolity of meaningless syncopation," he growled.

Rachmaninoff was six feet of magnificent indignation.

"Oh, oh, oh!" growled Rachmaninoff and collapsed in a chair.

"Your emotions have overcome you," I suggested.

"Lumbago," he gasped. H.R.

"THE PRINCESS."

Dramatic poetry is tempting to students of elocution who have learned to speak beautifully, and move with grace and poise. But it is too easy to avoid making what should be a welding of visual and spoken poetry seem a lifeless attempt at an academic play.

To know that "The Princess" is an acting drama, is not to be able to avoid expecting dramatic development and crisis, when it is treated as if it were a play.

The performance at the Association Hall by Miss Gabrielle de Witt, pupils just falls, because it has sought to hold a balance between drama and poetry. Had the production been quite definitely a pageant of color and sound, it would have been altogether delightful.

The fresh clear voices of the young actors were beautiful. Miss Frances Thorneley, as the Princess, and Miss Doris Stone, as the Prince, spoke with the grace and melody with which the grace and melody with which Tennyson should be spoken.

The grouping and staging, too, were vivid and imaginative—the ivory and black cloak against a dull throne, was perfect.

These were the lines in which production should have been developed instead of an effort to introduce dramatic emphasis into an essentially dramatic work.

There was some very good work from Miss Sylvia Fordham, who spoke rightfully as the dancer, and Mrs. Crosby Foster and Miss de Witt, who were surprisingly good.

Miss E. Thorneley, and Miss de Witt.

The musical side of the performance except for a charming song by Miss Stone, might have been more varied of an interesting and colourful production.

JACQUES