

CLEVELAND 11

RACHMANINOFF IN GREATEST FORM

Dazzles With Speed and
Lightness and Clarity
of Touch.

BY JAMES H ROGERS.

Listening to the Russian pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff last night in Public Hall, watching him weave his spell over a great audience, one became convinced—almost—that the good old days were coming back, that concert activities were coming out of the doldrums, that the much heralded upturn from depression, in so far as it relates to music in its public manifestations, is just around the corner. Let us hope so.

Mr. Rachmaninoff is doing his share to this end. He shows us what pleasures an interpretative genius can provide. I have heard him many times, and always he has been in great form. But it seemed to me that yesterday evening he surpassed himself, in the poesy and felicity of his conceptions, in the lyric quality of his subtly modulated tone, in the fabulous lightness and clarity of his touch in many a passage taken at bewildering speed, in the dash and glitter of his bravura playing.

Never Hackneyed.

Though there were some familiar numbers on it, the program that the pianist offered was far from being hackneyed; and his readings were even farther from accepted routine. Always there was the play of a lofty and highly individual fancy illuminating the thought of the composer, whoever he chanced to be. In more than one instance, I dare say, the fashioner of this or that work might be surprised at the new light being shed upon it. But the main thing is to get the message over, to make certain its ultimate effectiveness. This Mr. Rachmaninoff achieves, with penetrating insight.

The recitalist began with the D-minor sonata of Beethoven. The first movement was admirable, and so was the adagio. I have heard the finale given with more incisiveness; and for this reading there is warrant. But that is a matter of preference, purely.

Plays Neglected Pieces.

Mr. Rachmaninoff has been looking around, evidently, among the neglected works of the standard composers. One of these that he played, the F-sharp polonaise of Chopin, does not strike me as intrinsically an interesting piece. But there is no resisting such superb playing. Another Chopin piece that calls for special mention was the B-flat minor scherzo, played at incredible speed.

There were several Liszt compositions. Foremost among them, musically, was the well known D flat etude. Here were new ideas in plenty. It was a fascinating performance, extraordinarily brilliant. The "Valse Impromptu" of the same composer was a marvel of delicacy and grace, and his "Carnaval de Pesth," frankly a show piece, was ablaze with all manner of virtuosic fireworks. It was an astounding exhibition of facility and power.

Mr. Rachmaninoff played two of his own pieces, a songful and lovely prelude—in G, this one—and a vivacious etude. He does not stray far from orthodox ways in the choice of composers whose works he presents in his recitals. I am hoping to hear, some day, that exquisite touch in some of the incomparable tone pictures of Debussy.

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