

Rachmaninoff

Program

Choral in G minor Bach-Busoni
 Sonata, Op. 31, No. 2 Beethoven
 Largo-Allegro
 Adagio
 Allegretto
 (a) Polonaise Chopin
 (b) Mazurka A flat major
 (c) Valse A flat major
 (d) Scherzo B flat minor
 (a) Prelude G major, Rachmaninoff
 (b) Etude Tableau C minor
 (a) Etude, D flat major Liszt
 (b) Valse Impromptu
 (c) Carnaval de Venise

Sergei Rachmaninoff has a larger number of people in Rochester desirous of hearing him play than can be accommodated in the seats of the Eastman Theater; this was again made evident by the seats last night on the stage and by the number of auditors standing.

It is easy to set down the qualities of a great pianist which should make and do make him attractive of popular liking to a special degree. But when this is done, it is quite likely that most of these qualities one would credit to a number of other pianists, not all of whom appeal in performance as strongly as does Rachmaninoff. But any artist of so strong individuality as he is finds means to impress something particularly his own upon auditors, independent of the routine of the art he practices; the absorption of the player in the music, the suggestion of happy combination of profound student and brilliant protagonist; the impression of a masterly personality so well borne out by the technical mastery the listener hears—these are factors in the strong and wide esteem which the public holds for Rachmaninoff.

Technically he seems to the writer to be superior to many great pianists in his capacity for immense brilliance with very nearly perfect adherence to the music text; he needs no pedal to make a mass tone effect of rapid and intricate passages; his finger dexterity is such that these passages are made doubly effective, in that one hears the notes distinctly and likewise an effect of the tone grouped.

There is in Rachmaninoff's playing a fine justice to the music as the composer wrote it, and likewise an impression of a musical judgment that passes carefully on the meaning and spirit of that music in perfecting an interpretation of it for hearers. Rachmaninoff can and does play with the lithe line delineation of a harpsichordist, like Landowska, and then at will he masses sonorities to make a miniature orchestra of the piano. And it is perhaps this versatility which is one of the most attractive and satisfying elements of his recital performances.

The emphatic thrust to attention of Rachmaninoff's versatility was made, too, by the program he played—the most widely diversified in musical styles and manners which he has played in Rochester. His Liszt playing and his own compositions are known here of old, so also to some extent his superb Chopin playing. But Bach and Beethoven he has not placed on his Rochester programs as frequently, and last night served to reveal this previous omission as simply a circumstance; Rachmaninoff makes plain the eloquence of Bach and the beauty of Beethoven with as keen sympathy as he does full justice to Chopin, and so as he so plays Liszt that one wonders how he ever thought of that music as banal. The Chopin numbers last night were performances to linger long in memory; the blazing brilliance of the scherzo was superb.

The audience behaved quite as Rachmaninoff audiences have been wont to do; it recalled the player again and again at intermission time, but got no extra numbers then; it indicated after each piece and group its appreciation. At the end Rachmaninoff rewarded the persistent request for more numbers and played three of them, ending with the Beethoven Turkish march, and not with the C minor prelude.