

Competing

Rachmaninoff Concert Concludes Choral Union Series

Pianist Offers Strong Per- formances of Chopin and Balakireff

By Carl E. Gehring

The Sergei Rachmaninoff who ended the Choral Union Concert series, Tuesday evening at Hill auditorium, was different from yet just as striking a pianist as the Rachmaninoff who played here two seasons ago. During the intervening time, an abandon and a breath-taking velocity which once characterized his playing have become modified; in their stead, a more austere and tempered approach has developed. Edgar H. Allies, one of the discerning and musically erudite of past student writers for the Michigan Daily, summed it up well when he remarked that the older certain pianists become, the more attention they accord the architectural side of music; the less they care for the elements of tone and extravaganza. This applies to Rachmaninoff.

While there were flashes of the Mercury-like speed which mark Rachmaninoff as a god of the keyboard, these were not often present nor were they long sustained. While there was abandon about the Slavic music of Chopin, Rachmaninoff's pieces and Balakireff, it had not the rugged note of the virile pianist who emerged from Russia to astound the western world. While a good measure of tone was still apparent, it had a harder timbre than before. Moreover, a more contained Rachmaninoff delighted and piqued the curiosity of those who may have expected somewhat different performances of Beethoven's Sonata in D-Minor, Op. 31, No. 2; a group of Chopin; his own G-Major Prelude and Etude Tableau in C-Minor; the Etude in D-Flat-Major and a Valse "Allegretto," of Liszt, and Balakireff's Oriental Fantasy, "Islamey."

Beethoven Is Interesting

The Beethoven Sonata, as modeled by Rachmaninoff, was a thing of great beauty and restraint. The shadings were exquisite; the scale of dynamics was surprisingly held down; the tempi ran largely to slower movement, even during passages which were supposed to be heard Allegro. It was a rather curious Beethoven, too; despite his restraint, the freedom with which the artist introduced examples of rubato and bits of emphasis made of the Sonata a Beethoven one but seldom encounters. This mixing of elements gave the music a hybrid quality which was engaging enough but hardly was what the composer had intended. The Sonata, in sum, was interestingly but unconvincingly played.

Gorgeous renditions of Chopin's F-Sharp-Minor Polonaise, Mazurka in A-Flat-Major, Valse in the same key, and B-Flat-Minor Scherzo followed. Here Rachmaninoff reacted as one released, smiting the piano in the teeth as few other pianists can. The features about the group were the imposing musical edifice which the pianist erected through keen observance of the structural details which make up the Polonaise; the decisive technical facility with which Rachmaninoff dispatched the group as a whole; and the compelling eloquence of his interpretation of Chopin. If Rachmaninoff has been justly charged with resorting to obvious means in composition, this element was not true of his concert. An authentic Chopin, which was as dignified as Chopin may be made to sound, emerged.

Ending Is Brilliant

The concluding groups showed Rachmaninoff in his broadest stature. As composer, he was represented with an Etude Tableau, the

luminous harmonic coloring of which identified Rachmaninoff at his best. As performer, he played Balakireff's intricate and exacting "Islamey" with the repose and assurance of the master virtuoso. On the interpretative side, the music had that pathos which only a Russian can bring to Russian music. Technically, there were staccato chords, struck fortissimo in "last tempo, which put the hearer on edge, and smooth crossing of hands which were matched by similar feats in the Liszt Etude. Replete with bravura passage work, "Islamey" made an excellent concluding number. Three encores comprised Rachmaninoff's Prelude in G-Sharp-Minor; the Gopak of Moussorgsky, arranged by Rachmaninoff, and the Turkish March, from Beethoven's "Ruins of Athens."

The audience was badly behaved. Being something apart from the courteous audiences which have frequented Hill auditorium of late, it resembled a Hydra-headed monster whose coughing spread from a few to so many heads as to be of epidemic proportions. While it did not occur to those ailing mortals, whose unguarded coughing all but spoiled the Chopin group, to leave the hall, one wished that the stony stares with which they were regarded might have had Medusa's power to transfix them. A less experienced artist might have been disconcerted by so much noise; as it was, however, Rachmaninoff grew more effective as the evening wore on, brilliantly concluding an excellent concert course.

Noted Swedish Dancer to Appear Here April 4

Ronny Johansson Will Give Recital at Lydia Mendelssohn Theater

The spring season at Lydia Mendelssohn theater will be particularly auspicious with the appearance of two artists—each pre-eminent in her field. Of special interest at this time is the announcement that Ronny Johansson, the Swedish dancer, who is to appear at the Wilson theater in Detroit Thursday, will appear in recital Saturday, April 4. According to Miss Amy Loomis, director of the theater, Miss Johansson is a brilliant dancer who has won the highest artistic acclaim in this country as well as in Europe. She has the distinction of being Ruth St. Denis' favorite dancer, and her program promises great variety and charm. Her international reputation as a comedienne of the dance implies a sound technique and artistic sensitiveness, critics say.

On March 12, Chiniquilla, the Cheyenne princess, will bring the drama of her people to the theater.

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