

Rachmaninoff Gave Wonderful Playing In Monday's Recital

The recital which Rachmaninoff gave at the St. Denis Theatre on Monday evening was very different from the one which he gave when he was last here, about a year and a half ago. The surroundings and the audience on Monday seemed to be a trial to his nerves at times, but he never let this interfere with his playing and he gave one of the most wonderful performances that he has ever given in his many visits to Montreal. His program was not a very long one, but a very heavy one for the player. The playing would have been astonishing merely as a feat of endurance but the cleanliness and sureness of it and the fire that was put into it were still more remarkable and never flagged from start to finish. It was so good that, amazing as some of it was, it hardly ever put itself in the way of the music, and one could forget its brilliancy and think only of its effect.

The first of three important things in the program was Beethoven's "Adieux, Absence et Retour" sonata, which was splendidly and respectfully played, and with lots of life, though, looking back on it after the rest of the recital, it seemed rather sedate. The effect of the performance suffered from the long break between the first two movements, which was compelled by the letting in of late arrivals in the audience. A bright Memento Capriccioso by Weber, of which the harmonies may have been enriched by Rachmaninoff here and there, and a familiar Gavotte by Gluck made a peaceful interlude before the biggest thing on the program, Schumann's Etudes Symphoniques. The playing of this was tremendous; if the more tender sections were made rather full-bodied, the more energetic passages flowed on with a rush which never hesitated, and the last section was played in a way that most players can only dream of.

After a short interval, his only rest in the whole recital, Rachmaninoff went on to a composition of his own, a set of Variations on a Theme by Corelli. This took importance from the fact that it was a first performance. It is full of fine work if not always very inspired, and was thoroughly interesting even when played only a few minutes after the Etudes Symphoniques, and it must be hard to write a long set of variations nowadays without ever imitating any one else. There is plenty of variety in these variations, some of which are very free and full of strange, unexpected harmonies, and in some of them Corelli's poor simple little tune is so smothered that it becomes an excuse rather than a theme. The variations have many strong effects but are not for every one to play.

The remainder of the program was made up of Liszt, in three of his more difficult works, two of the Etudes Transcendantes—"Heroica" and "Harmonie du Soir,"—and the "Venezia e Napoli" Tarantella. In these Rachmaninoff's playing brought out all the music that was in them, and this was not too much to allow the wonders of the playing to be conspicuous. At the end the audience as usual wanted more and, of course, had to be given the C sharp minor Prelude.

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