

Rachmaninoff Shows Breath-Taking Skill

Russian Master Gains in Brilliancy in Concert Here,
Shows Less Regard for Tone

A musical criticism by Mary M. Howard, who for many years has been outstanding in Buffalo musical circles, is presented herewith. In the future Miss Howard will cover all musical events for The Times and in addition will contribute a Music Column regularly to The Sunday Times, commencing next Sunday.—Editor's Note.

By MARY M. HOWARD
Times Music Editor

Philharmonic series of concerts at the Buffalo Consistory, under the local management of Mrs. Zorah Berry, opened last evening with a piano recital by Rachmaninoff. This was both a surety and a venture, the former from the artistic point of view, and the latter from the business viewpoint.

Rachmaninoff has made many appearances in this city, but the large audience of last night proved that familiarity has not impaired his drawing power. And as he played, it was quite as evident that he has lost none of his virtuosity and that custom cannot stale his infinite variety. The Russian pianist has always seemed to approach his art with an almost austere reverence, rather than with the exuberant pleasure in the outgiving of beautiful music which characterizes certain pianists of today. He is a serious worshipper at the altar, rather than an ecstatic enthusiast in the procession of artistic devotees.

Gains in Brilliancy

As Rachmaninoff played, he seemed to have gained in brilliancy and to have a little less regard for beautiful tone than of old. Or perhaps it is because we have heard others with whom sheer loveliness of tone is a fetish. But for a combination of ripe musicianship, artistic intellect and dazzling mastery of his instrument, the Russian artist has few peers.

The program opened with the only sonata of Beethoven to which the composer himself gave a name. He said that the titles "Farewell; Absence; The Return," have reference to his pupil and friend, the Archduke Rudolph, to whom the sonata is dedicated. To the first three notes of the introduction, Beethoven joined the words "Lebewohl," (Farewell). Mr. Rachmaninoff's performance gave full value to these varied mood paintings, which were followed by the rarely heard Momento Capriccioso by Weber. Its fluttering, staccato meas-

ures were played with a sparkle and crispness altogether fascinating and then came a telling contrast in the archaic strains of the Gluck-Pauer Gavotte, a charming number.

Breath-taking was Rachmaninoff's performance of the Schumann Symphonic Studies. Marked by striking kaleidoscopic color effects, throughout the different variations, it rose to a thrilling climax in the finale, sweeping the audience into enthusiastic reception of the number and bringing the artist back for well merited applause.

Great Technician

The pianist's tremendous technical mastery was again shown in the two Liszt compositions which closed the program. The first was "Heroica," No. 7 of a set of 12 studies of "transcendent execution" as the composer styled them. It was a masterpiece of fiery, brilliant virtuosity in the hands of the Russian artist, and equally taxing was the Tarantelle from the "Venezia e Napoli" suite.

Preceding the Liszt compositions, Mr. Rachmaninoff gave a first performance of his own "Variations on a Theme by Corelli." His fertility of invention and his constructive cleverness were constantly in evidence in this beautiful work, founded on a simple melody, which was always raised into prominence, through all the overlying musical embroideries.

And when his official program was ended, Mr. Rachmaninoff gave one of the most beautiful expositions of his art in the playing of a Tschalkowsky encore, "Troika," marked by an individual style of delivery and a tone of gossamer loveliness. The audience refused to move till a second encore was granted, this time the E minor waltz by Chopin.