

Sergei Rachmaninoff, Guest Artist, Plays His New "Rapsodie"

By DONALD KIRKLEY

A NEW COMPOSITION by Sergei Rachmaninoff, for piano and orchestra was introduced to Baltimore at the Lyric Theater last night by the artist himself in collaboration with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski. The piece, "Rapsodie On a Theme of Paganini," was received with unbounded enthusiasm, drawing the usual capacity audience, drawing the warmest ovation of the evening.

Composed last summer, the "Rapsodie"—Rachmaninoff's Op. 43—consists of twenty-four variations on the same theme used by Brahms in his memorable "Variations for Piano." On first hearing, it impressed this writer as consistently pleasure-giving, with many felicitous passages and a few brilliant ones. Not the composer's best work (it occupies barely twenty minutes), it is ingenious and has the stamp of originality. It may be noted in passing that he has maintained a fine balance between piano and orchestra, avoiding needless display in the solo role and making the music the thing.

A Balanced Program

LAST night's program was well balanced, and topped off by an unexpected little speech from Mr. Stokowski. The whole concert, needless to say, was performed with the suavity which is expected of this orchestra. The first selection was Stravinsky's "Fire Bird" ballet, and one could only wish that the Ballet Russe had stayed over to dance it.

The second offering was a brief but pleasant novelty, "Sand," the work of Mary Howe, a Richmond-born composer now living in Washington. Miss Howe's own words may be used to describe it—"an imaginative piece on the substance itself—its consistency, grains, bulk, grittiness, and its potential scattering quality: more or less what it appears to be when sifting through your fingers on the shore, or at close gaze, having either Lilliput or Brobdingnag in mind." Miss Howe realized her idea with delicacy and charm, and its lilting, curiously gritty rhythms found favor with the audience.

Brahms: And The Speech

THE second half of the program was devoted to Brahms' "Symphony No. 3" and to Mr. Stokowski's little speech, culminating in two encores. Every music lover knows how the Philadelphia Orchestra plays the Brahms Third, and they played it that way last night; trying to find something new to say about this major work is a futile and thankless task and will be shunned. However the "heart-easing, sunset peace and murmuring quietude" of the closing passages came with peculiar appropriateness, acting as balm for the lacerated feelings of those who had just passed through the strain of a Gubernatorial election.

Mr. Stokowski spoke in an effort to placate those who have been complaining by word and letter because the Philadelphia Orchestra comes to town so often unaccompanied by Mr. Stokowski. The pressure of work in his home city, he explained, caused the board of directors to put a limit to his travels. He was sorry, he said, that he will not appear at the two remaining concerts of this season, intimating that he likes Baltimore and its capacity audiences. As a species of good-will offering, he presented a chorale by Palestrina and another by Vivaldi.

Mr. Stokowski, by the way, summed up Baltimore's "attitude to music" neatly and accurately when he said, "I like Baltimoreans because you do not approach music analytically; there is a warmth, an intuition, an inspiration on your part, which is as it should be."