

# Rachmaninoff Presents His Composition, "Rapsodie"

First Played by Philadelphia Orchestra Last  
Evening, With Stokowski Conducting—An  
Unusual Event in Local Music History.

BY ALICE EVERSMAN.

**T**HE Philadelphia Orchestra last evening presented a concert at Constitution Hall which will make musical history. It is not often that Washington has the honor of a first hearing of a composition by a composer of the fame of Rachmaninoff, nor of hearing it conducted by a master musician such as Stokowski. The latest work of Rachmaninoff, "Rapsodie," on a theme of Paganini, was completed August 24, brought to this country by Rachmaninoff October 4, and given its first public hearing last evening.

The occasion was unusual enough to gather a distinguished audience which stayed on after the end of the program, regretful that such a concert should end. Leopold Stokowski, in his gracious manner and by way of bidding farewell before leaving for his year's vacation, offered to play one of three numbers recently rehearsed by the orchestra, leaving the choice to the audience. Needless to say, all three were asked for, but the preference was for a Palestrina number. Mr. Stokowski played it first, following with an equally lovely number by Frescobaldi. The two beautiful classics rounded out the imperishable impression that the presentation of the printed program had made.

It is rarely that a pianist, when composing for piano and orchestra, gives predominance to the latter, but in his new "Rapsodie," Rachmaninoff has expanded in glorious orchestra harmonization and tonal color. In the 24 variations which he has made on the familiar theme of Paganini he has revealed a rare genius in giving to the orchestra the full-throated resolution of his ingenious conceptions. For his inspiration has been fresh and free flowing throughout and his imagination inexhaustible in its inventiveness. He has given lyric passages to the piano of arresting beauty, permitting it to develop technical intricacies in a solo moment and delighting at other times in fluent mechanical invention that should be the joy of an expert executant. While showing a particular penchant for combining strings and woodwind, he introduces horns, bells and timpani for crashing climaxes.

A noble, religious foundation is afforded by the recurring use of the Dies Irae as thematic material, and his handling of it has a distinctive native color that underscores its somber melancholy. Yet it stands out with an uplifting sentiment, a reiteration, as it were, of the ultimate grandeur of man's destiny, while marking its unescapableness. He has written his work on a grand scale, bringing into play every device for pianistic and orchestral color, yet with clarity and uniformity in his designing. At the end of the hearing, which was beautified by his own pianistic mastery, he was given an emphatic ovation that held that genuine spontaneity and sincerity that is rarely called out.

The program was further interesting in the scheduling of Mary Howe's "Sand," a bit of impressionistic writing played here before by the National Symphony Orchestra. Yesterday's presentation confirmed the intrinsic value of this clever musical

idea and Mrs. Howe's musicianly handling of instrumentation to picture the substance of her subject. Dr. Stokowski gave it with the same fine vision for effect which is his great gift.

The program opened with the six movements of Stravinsky's "Fire Bird" and finished with Brahms' "Symphony No. 3." It is a joy to hear Dr. Stokowski conduct a Slavic work, for there is not an iota of the individual character lost, the peculiar angle of which sometimes escapes one who has not known from childhood the rich fantasy of such subjects as Stravinsky has written about.

After the excessive demands on both the conductor and orchestra, it seemed that the Brahms "Symphony" did not receive quite the vital reading it deserves. Beautiful in tonal color, as is always the case when the Philadelphia Orchestra has Dr. Stokowski for its leader, it had less of the true Brahmsian element than some of his other Brahms' interpretations have had. Finishing, as it does on a hushed note, it seemed to conclude an evening of rich revelations in noble fashion.

## Joan Crawford's Brother Sued.

LOS ANGELES, November 9 (AP).—Declaring her husband, Hal Hayes Lesueur, brother of Joan Crawford, screen actress, stayed out nights and told her it was none of her business where he had been, Kasha Lesueur has filed suit for divorce. They were married in September, 1931.

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