

MUSIC

# Stokowski, Rachmaninoff, Share Brilliant Program

We Hear a Brand New Piece and Philadelphia Orchestra Shows Us How Brahms Should Be Played

By RUTH HOWELL

HOW the people of Washington love music! More and more, it seems. We have had now, four concerts this year, and each one has packed Constitution Hall to the doors and called up applause that will not be denied. Last night's was probably the record for applause, when, at the conclusion of the Philadelphia Orchestra's first concert of the season, the applause was so persistent that it won a speech from Conductor Stokowski, and two encores from the orchestra. And it lasted so long at intermission, after Sergei Rachmaninoff had finished playing his newest composition with the orchestra, that people didn't have half enough time to discuss this interesting piece or the artist's stunning playing.

And it will need discussion. For last night's was only its second performance anywhere, and we were privileged to pass judgment on the work of one of the few fine living composers—as our forbears passed judgment on Schumann, Wagner and Debussy.

**CHARACTERISTIC**

This new "Rhapsodie" is not the best thing Rachmaninoff has ever written, but it has the same characteristically skillful construction, the same feeling for the piano as an instrument in the orchestra, and the same demands for brilliant piano playing. As a matter of fact few people but Rachmaninoff elect to play his music for piano and orchestra, it is that exacting.

In this "Rhapsodie" he employs subtle pianistic and thematic devices; he has built the part thickly into the orchestral whole, perhaps too thickly, since it fails to stand out much of the time; and in many ways he has written more interesting material for the orchestra than for the piano.

**WEAKNESSES**

The work's weaknesses are its lack of new and fresh ideas, and its often obvious musical statements and re-statements. Since the work is a theme and variations, much new material was not to be anticipated, yet it was not until the third or fourth variation that the piano began to speak in its own right and have something to say that was not coincidental reiteration of orchestra material.

The work had little melody, but delved deeply into harmonies, often with a modern flavor, and the rhythms, not usually obvious in Rachmaninoff's music, were persistent and sometimes bordered on symphonic jazz. The most interesting details of the whole composition lay in the introductions and quick, contrasting conclusions to each variation.

**PERFECTLY PLAYED**

But no one could find any fault with the performance. Stokowski gave the orchestra part every possible opportunity and it was beautifully played. Rachmaninoff's virtuosity was continually amazing, his technique brilliant, his control perfect.

They called him back many times for bows. And they stood there bowing together, those two, Stokowski and Rachmaninoff, greatest of the great. His reception here is always warmer and more sympathetic when he plays with the orchestra and last night was no exception. He dominates scene and sound so well. I remember the last time we heard him play a new piece of his own, the Fourth Concerto, years ago in the auditorium. They stood up and shouted then. That was the Philadelphia Orchestra, too.

And I seem to remember Brahms on that program, as it was last night.

It is one of the blessings of this decade to have heard the Philadelphia Orchestra play Brahms, and doubtless, all over town last night, little prayers of thanks were going up for that unique and irrevocable joy. On a program that was varied, interesting, important, and beautifully built, the third symphony of Brahms shadowed everything else with its superb beauty and the perfection of its performance.

We don't have treats like that very often—maybe once or twice a year. Probably the last was when the Philadelphia Orchestra, also under Stokowski's magic hands, played the Brahms first symphony. These symphonies more than any others, it seems, call out the unbeatable combination of his rich, warm and dramatic interpretive talents, and the performing skill of this fine orchestra.

**MEMORABLE**

The symphony last night was so beautiful that it blotted out all that had gone before, grand music that it was. It alone of the program remains in many memories today. The performance had the balance and the

calmness that Stokowski does not always give to the music he plays, yet it never lost any of the lift nor the glowing color that is so essentially a part of Brahms' music. It was like the finest kind of a day, with riotous little winds and tossing leaves, after a time of storm.

A clear, cold and often heavily contrasted playing of the "Fire Bird" suite opened the concert—right on the minute, while people by the hundred were still streaming in. Stokowski stood rigid, back to the audience, his blond head shining under the light, waiting for quiet. Eventually you could hear a pin drop, and then he began. After that there was not a breath or a cough or a rattled program while the music was going on.

A quick, little descriptive piece, Mary How's "Sund", was on the program, too, and tho it can be very attractive and full of vividness, it somehow was played without any feeling of importance. The applause at the end brought quiet, beautifully orchestrated pieces by Palestrina and Frescobaldi.

## Pirandello Play Was Suppressed in Italy

ROME—Premier Benito Mussolini suppressed Luigi Pirandello's last work produced in Italy, it was recalled today. The playwright was awarded the 1934 Nobel Prize for literature this week.

It was a libretto for Malipiero's opera La Favola de la Figlio Cambiato. Tremendous sums were spent on the production. Mussolini attended the brilliant premiere. He found his treatment of sex relations so frank that he ordered it taken off, and it never has been presented since.

General satisfaction was expressed thruout the country at the award. Pirandello is regarded as the country's outstanding writer, particularly because of the original nature of his work.

His first great success was in the United States—his "Six Characters in Search of an Author," produced by Brock Pemberton.

## Gertrude Stein Admits Opera Is Good

"Four Saints in Three Acts" Is Inspirational, She Says, Even if the Public Doesn't Understand It; Not Kidding Public, Either

By United Press

CHICAGO—Gertrude Stein has confessed after looking upon her "Four Saints in Three Acts" for the first time, that it's one of the most beautiful and inspiring operas of the ages—even if no one can understand it.

Miss Stein, who stutters only when she writes, was one of two persons at the Auditorium Opera House Wednesday who pretended to know what was going on. The other was her enigmatic companion, Alice B. Toklas.

"It is beautifully written," said the idol of the intelligentsia. "And the music is splendid, too."

"Sense? Of course it makes sense. That is, unless you think of nothing except what words mean."

"I think it's gorgeous—inspirational." A daring doubter wanted to know whether she was "pulling the public's leg."

"But," she protested, "I don't know anything about the public's leg. And I wouldn't want to pull it if I did."

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