

## NOVELTIES PLAYED BY PHILHARMONIC

**Rachmaninoff Is Piano Soloist  
in His New Rhapsody on  
Theme of Paganini.**

**AMERICAN'S WORK GIVEN**

**Daniel Gregory Mason's Suite  
After English Folksongs Is  
Introduced by Walter.**

By OLIN DOWNES.

Those who left Carnegie Hall last night after the concert given by Bruno Walter and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra were talking of one obliterating experience of the evening—the performance as pianist and composer of Serge Rachmaninoff. It is perhaps ironical to remark this, for another composer of high aims and accomplishments, Professor Daniel Gregory Mason, also figured on the program, and there were orchestral performances of significant works—of the "Spring" Symphony of Schumann and the "Spanish Rhapsody" of Ravel. However, because of his personality or the quality of an overwhelming piano performance or the character of the same, for whatever reason, the apex of the concert was Rachmaninoff.

It is true that certain factors of the evening threw him into special relief. One of these was the heavy-handed and rhythmically unstable performance of the symphony. It is a work hazardous for any conductor and orchestra, in view of the essential simplicity and poetry that must prevail in the interpretation, and also for the facts of Schumann's inexpert orchestration and not wholly symphonic style. On this occasion the weaknesses of Schumann were well exposed, but the warm and triumphant fantasy of his lovely score was largely obscured by a rough, opaque and poorly articulated reading.

The English folk-melodies which make up the substance of Mr. Mason's variations are very beautiful. One of them, "Arise, Arise," contained in Cecil Sharp's collection of "One Hundred English Folk-Songs," is published in other collections as an Irish tune, and is given the title of "She Walked Through the Fair." But English tunes as well as Irish were modal, and there were few collectors more painstaking as to data and sources of material than Cecil Sharp. The matter may well be begged, anyway, because there is so much that is confused and debatable in the cataloguing of melodies of the British Isles. This writer does not feel that Mr. Mason has accomplished very original or distinctive things with his melodies; he finds the work for its contents discursive and long.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's style in his set of variations may be said to show eclecticism. One can recall Rachmaninoff himself in earlier works, and Tchaikovsky, Liszt. Mr. Rachmaninoff uses the same theme, of the Paganini Twenty-fourth Caprice, that Brahms used for his celebrated set of piano variations. But there is possibly a hidden programmatic meaning in this music, in the interpolation in a number of places of the plain chant "Dies irae." That stern and implacable melody stalks through pages that set against it the whirling and capricious theme of Paganini. What does it mean?

It means, so far as the audience is concerned, a Paganini theme freely treated and developed by a composer-pianist for the solo instrument and orchestra. From this point of view alone the piece is masterfully constructed and is brilliant, imposing and highly dramatic in effect. It requires a pianist of the artistic stature of Mr. Rachmaninoff, with his virility, color and sweep to do the music justice. The scoring is heavy but Mr. Rachmaninoff as performer has no fear of the orchestra pitted against him. He led the performance last night, with the excellent cooperation of Mr. Walter and his orchestra, and his success was immediate. The later pages of this Rhapsody, because of certain glittering and sardonic pages, might call to mind the "Totentanz" of Liszt. But the work is integrated, cumulative in its thought and structural development, with broad melodies for the strings that sing against the piano part; with counter figures that dance against the cantus firmus of the terrible old chant like a pack of wild dervishes, and a grand climax, and two short, laconic chords for the end.

This makes highly effective music, and a work much more concise and effective for concert purposes than either the Third or Fourth Rachmaninoff piano concertos. Perhaps it is only virtuoso stuff in apotheosis. Perhaps this was but the triumph, oft-multiplied, of a great pianist and a musical personality of singular presence and power. At least, it represented the triumph of last night's concert. The audience applauded Mr. Rachmaninoff stormily, and was loth to let him go.

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