

Rachmaninoff Plays Concerto Brilliantly as Symphony Soloist

Enthusiastic Applause Follows Performance
of Russian Pianist Who Was Given Worthy Support of St. Louis Orchestra.

By HUME B. DUVAL.

Piano playing of the highest quality and most exquisite taste, unmarred by any flashy display of showmanship but ever brilliant, and intelligently conceived with a solid foundation of profound musicianship — that in substance sums up the appearance yesterday afternoon of Serge Rachmaninoff with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

The great Russian virtuoso whose modesty is matched only by his skill, held the rapt attention of a large afternoon audience in the Opera House at the Municipal Auditorium with his recitation of artistry. The lusty applause, which refused to subside until he had taken four bows, was a just tribute to a man who had something worth while to offer and gave it in such generous measures.

His vehicle was his own Concerto No. 3 in D Minor for piano and orchestra, a work, rich in melodic beauty, and in the playing of which he was given worthy support by Conductor Vladimir Golschmann and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. So determined was the soloist that conductor and orchestra should receive their full share of the credit that he insisted Mr. Golschmann return to the stage and take the bows with him.

D Minor Concerto.

The D Minor Concerto offers plenty of opportunity for lavish displays of technique and dynamics, and as such these passages would have seemed in the hands of a less accomplished artist. With their own creator interpreting them, however, they fitted evenly into the general scheme of things which, taken together, presented a picture of evenness and smoothness that struck a complete balance, with nothing overstressed and nothing neglected.

Rachmaninoff's quality of tone is one of the striking phases of his playing. He can make it big and sonorous when necessary, without any hint of overemphasis. From tutti resounding chords of the orchestra, the soloist descends gracefully to the faintest pianissimo, maintaining at the same time the purity and clarity that marks his playing. In either abrupt, staccato passages or easily flowing legato phrases, the tone is always there, shining bright and clear.

Spirited Finale.

His flawless technique was ably demonstrated in parts of the first movement, especially the cadenza, and in the spirited finale. In the second movement his real artistry was revealed in poetic phrasing. Thrilling to the last note was the great climax which soloist and orchestra develop near the close of the finale. Here the full resources of the piano are explored and the depths of Rachmaninoff's musicianship are plumbed. This is accomplished with no overt display of virtuosity, but in the same breath the audience knows that everything that should be there is there.

The music of the D minor concerto is typically Russian in character, especially the last movement. There are traces of sadness interwoven with lacy patterns and brilliant figures, and clear, flowing melodies of a Russian flavor. Lacking, however, is the dark gloom which runs through Tchaikowsky and when the concerto is finished, one feels that one has been elevated by something fine, something one can take home and remember with a feeling of gratitude and thankfulness.

There was splendid co-ordination between soloist and orchestra. Conductor Golschmann and his musicians were quite equal to the occasion and at all times throughout the heavy orchestration, maintained a fine balance and excellent discretion in the employment of volume and tonal shading.

The orchestral contributions to

the program were the Haydn E Flat Major Symphony, popularly known as the symphony with the drum roll, and Weber's romantic overture to "Der Freischutz."

The Haydn symphony is a gem from the classical period of composition and was given its first St. Louis performance yesterday. With its charm, its sheer beauty of melody and its worthiness as an example of pure music, one wonders why it has not been heard here before. In depth of thought and fullness of orchestration, the symphonies of Joseph Haydn are not to be compared with those of Brahms and other later composers who exploited the full resources of what is now the modern orchestra. They must be accepted for just what they are, that is delightful creations of a period limited by strict musical formulas and patterns, which were honored until Beethoven began to break away from them in his later writings.

Stresses Lyrical Quality.

If approached with that thought in mind, the works of Haydn will be received with the proper spirit of appreciation. This was the method of approach employed by Conductor Golschmann, whose conducting of the E Flat opus was one of the finest things he has ever done here. He stressed the lyrical quality of music, emphasizing its beauty and character. His choice of tempi was excellent and his phrasing artistic and well defined.

The orchestra was perhaps at its best in the andante movement, which is comprised of a set of ingenious variations built upon a theme whose beauty lies in its very simplicity. The variation for solo violin was most capably played by Scipione Guidi, concert master of the orchestra. The minuet was taken in a slow, stately tempo, as minnets were played in Haydn's day before they emerged into the more rapidly moving form which composers called the scherzo. Throughout the entire symphony, the excellent work of the string choirs, with their firm, round tone of superb quality, was manifestly in evidence.

The Weber overture, with its haunting horn quartette, the lyrical music of Agatha's aria and the sinister string and woodwind passages suggestive of the Wolf's Glen scene of the opera was played in the true romantic style. This overture which has withstood the ravages of time so well, is chuck full of music and is always a welcome curtain raiser on any symphonic program.

Tonight at 8:30 o'clock the program will be repeated with Rachmaninoff again the soloist.

KENRICK SEMINARY'S ALUMNI ELECT OFFICERS

Rev. Sylvester I. Tucker of the St. Louis Cathedral staff was elected president of the Kenrick Seminary Alumni Association at the association's annual meeting at Hotel Coronado Wednesday. Eight states, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Nebraska and Missouri, were represented in the seminary alumni dinner and program.

Rev. Joseph Anderson of Chicago was elected vice president; Rev. James Johnston, pastor of St. Malachy's, secretary; Rev. Felix Sommerhauser, St. Liborius' Church, treasurer; Rev. John Lamek, Sacred Heart Church, historian, and Rev. John Hyland, St. Cronan's, and Rev. John Marren, Blessed Sacrament Church, to the Executive Committee.

Bishop Winkelmann, who is an alumnus of Kenrick Seminary, addressed the alumni, with Very Rev. Msgr. J. P. Spencer as toastmaster. Other talks were made by Rev. John J. Fisher, Rev. A. E. Westhoff and Rev. J. Gottwald, all graduates.

South Africa has a war on beer halls.