

Overwhelming Applause Greet Rachmaninoff in Piano Concert

By MARY M. HOWARD

Times Music Critic

Despite his many Buffalo appearances, the vogue of Sergei Rachmaninoff has in no wise waned, as attested by the capacity crowd in Elmwood Music Hall last evening when the Russian pianist gave the fifth concert in the Zorah B. Berry series. Other testimony to his undiminished popularity was the overwhelming applause which rewarded his playing.

Some of the listed program numbers gave little clue as to what the audience was to hear. A Brahms Ballade, a Chopin Scherzo and a Mazurka without opus number or key was not very definite. As proved, the Ballade was one in G minor, opus 10, the Scherzo the C sharp minor and the Mazurka one in G sharp minor.

The program opened with Tausig's transcription of the organ Toccata and Fugue in D minor. It is a test of virtuosity in which the pianist lacked nothing, tossing off its colossal difficulties with ease. The Beethoven sonata opus 10, No. 3 in D major followed. The first movement sounded rather perfunctory but it was in the Largo e Mesto and the Minuetto that the poetry and grace, the loveliness of tone that distinguished Rachmaninoff came to its full flowering.

The Ballade, far less familiar than the D major one of the same opus, was played with straightforward

simplicity of style and pulsating energy. And contrasted with the Sonata and the Chopin group, it was evidence that Rachmaninoff's art is all embracing, whether he deals with the school of classic or romantic literature.

The Chopin Tarantelle was breathtaking in its speed and lightness, and what a glamorous reading he gave to the Scherzo, especially the trio with its chorale-like chords, and the delicious tinkling broken harmonies like silver bells above.

A Prelude and an Oriental Sketch comprised the Rachmaninoff compositions, the latter arousing great enthusiasm. A final Liszt group offered the Funerailles, in the playing of which the pianist awoke little interest, but who could in its deadly and monotonous measures? A charming bit of filagree work was the Dance of the Gnomes, and the Rhapsodie No. II was a brilliant closing number, after which the artist granted the usual list of insistently demanded encores.

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