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WHILE listening to the second recital played here by Serge Rachmaninoff Saturday afternoon at Philharmonic auditorium my mind turned back to a book I had been reading in the morning, "Music in My Time," by Daniel Gregory Mason. In this volume of reminiscences the Columbia professor muses about the manner and function of superior interpreters. I looked up the passage which defines the real interpreter as "one of those rare beings who are transformers . . ." Such a "transformer." He is an artist who intuitively catches the composer's vision of beauty, and by his skill, his feeling, his loyal self subordination realizes for the listener not its letter but its spirit, catches the inner meaning . . . the utterance that is above the notes in all its magic."

Perhaps I was in a less responsive mood, but it seemed to me as if the Russian pianist, encompassing as his performances were, did not play with the same exuberance and subtle diversity of style as on Tuesday evening. Precision seemed to occupy as great a place on his mental stage of musical projection as poesy of phrasing. I was quite often aware rather of percussive motion than of that binding emotion which causes one almost to forget that an instrument stood between Rachmaninoff and the hearer.

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WHAT is remarkable is not that Rachmaninoff performance was in a more matter of fact frame of mind on Saturday compared with Tuesday, but that he should have the command over himself to play as he does when it is time to perform publicly. I thought his presentation of the Italian concerto beautiful and fascinating, combining the bravoura element with exquisite expression. This piece was intended for a two manual cembalo on which the lower keyboard could be coupled with the upper by means of a pedal so as to obtain deeper color effects during certain passages. Rachmaninoff succeeded wonderfully in this as in the dramatic improvisational style of the Beethoven sonata opus 111, the last of all the piano sonatas.

Its contrasted beginning, stormy and singing, might well have stimulated Brahms of the

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first symphony, also in the key of C minor. The Slavic pianist gave characteristic emphasis to Beethoven's ripe method of expression which begins with a majestic opening, turns to variations and closes with the "Arietta." Those not familiar with the work assumed from the manner of printing that there was a fourth movement, but, of course, after the peaceful ending of the third movement—a God speaking with the murmurings of a zephyr—even a Beethoven could add nothing to such sublimity.