

Lyric

*Sergei Rachmaninoff,
With New York Symphony
Orchestra.*

Rapturous applause and shouts, with numerous recalls, followed the playing of Sergei Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 2 for piano by the composer himself with the New York Symphony Orchestra at the Lyric last night. Only comparable with the enthusiasm aroused by the production of this work are the receptions that have been accorded Fritz Kreisler on his appearances, especially this season. And the tumultuous approval called for is to be regarded as discriminating, for the concerto proved to be of great dignity and breadth, profound in feeling and imbued with a sombre beauty in its conception. In part it may be regarded almost as musical orthodox, its continuity, adherence to form and melodiousness being in sharp contrast to the much heralded modern novelties in instrumentation, not to mention the ultra moderns.

The first movement is a sort of free fantasy, moving along in that serious, almost breeding fashion peculiar to the Russian mind, and showing that robustness of treatment so characteristic of Rachmaninoff. In the second movement the adagio sostenuto, the flute sounds a beautiful but plaintive melody, which is first accompanied by the piano and then taken up by it, and which works up to a crash like an outburst by affording relief to surcharged feelings, essentially repeated by the whole orchestra and passing to a subdued finale. The third movement, designated an allegro scherzando, begins with the scherzo form in an exotic and decidedly Oriental style, but soon passes on to the sombre mood, which overshadows the whole work, as if the composer were out of touch with fun and lightheartedness. The air is heard again, being repeated over and over, but always varied. There are periodical crashes, with intervals of a driving tempo and a most spirited finish.

The work was played with great brilliancy, its contemplative, emotional, highly imaginative qualities being admirably brought out, and the ovation accorded Rachmaninoff was intended as a tribute to the pianist as well as to the composer.

Keyed up as the audience was by the concerto, it felt all the more in a humor to relish the two Wagner numbers—"Dreams," a study from (or for) "Tristan and Isolde," and the "Fire Music" from "Die Walkure." Mr. Damrosch has in the past won renown as an interpreter of the Master of Bayreuth and the performance last night of both works well sustained his reputation, being finely tempered and balanced, yet imposing and exalting.

The symphony, the richly rhythmic No. 2 in D minor of Brahms, with which the concert opened, seemed to suffer somewhat in its first movement from flatness and a lack of sprightliness or buoyancy, with the tempo taken rather more slowly than usual. The orchestra, however, proceeded to gain in vitality as the production progressed on a steadily ascending scale, and the gracefulness of the allegretto quasi andantino as well as the spirited fourth movement formed more adequate expression. F. W. S.