

Rachmaninoff Is Hailed as Master by a Tremendous Crowd

Famous Russian's Recital Elicits Rare Enthusiasm by Fine Program.

By RICHARD SPAMER.

Moving along the line of least resistance, permissible when considering the work of so powerful an individual as Sergei Rachmaninoff, let us mention just five moments as played last night to the most enthusiastic concert audience gathered in the Odéon since the halycon and vociferous nights of Ignace Jan Paderewski.

After the first group we had Father Haendel's "Harmonious Blacksmith," the eminent Russian going at it hammer and tongs; after the Chopin group, the D-flat major Valse of which had to be repeated; the Franco-Polish genius' A-flat Valse.

At the conclusion of the program there followed amid scenes of almost unexampled enthusiasm in the order here mentioned: "Troika en Trainaux" (Tchoukowsky); Bizet's Menuet de la Rachmaninoff; the unrepeatable Colara minor Prelude that has dimpled its Kremling's cheeks across the continents, oceans, and the islands thereof; and finally, as a sort of anticlimax to an otherwise impeccable evening, an excerpt from the "Children's Corner" Suite by Claude Debussy, called in the verriaciar of the records "Gollywog" (Cakewalk), "Pavane" a few of those present of the Chicago ten-foot and business man, John Alden Carpenter's "Tango Americain."

At that it's probably better way "Tango" Carpenter must have modeled his "Tango" after Debussy's meaning of infantile amusement.

A glimpse of the state's program's general trend may be had from the list of compositions represented, namely: Liszt, Grieg, Chopin, Liszt, Dohnanyi, Dohnanyi, rather a restricted arrangement, it would seem.

List Is First Choice.

The recital began with Liszt's Ballade No. 2, full of suppressed storm, stress and disturbance of the spirit. Rachmaninoff caused his big instrument to grow beautifully in those also small runs that introduce the briefly stated theme and these contrasted effectively with the following Grieg Ballade, opus 24.

Here we were in an ideal country, after leaving the Hungarian masters' "softie-earth-courty" terrain. Trolls, nixes and fays in forest regions beckoned us all the fairs are not in the woodlands of the temperate zones; and the artist's amazing skill painted this landscape fascinating.

This number came when the last of the invariable late ones had finally found their seats and the capacity audience had settled down for a brief evening's unexampled enjoyment.

Why Rachmaninoff should have chosen "The Harmonious Blacksmith" for an encore here is a question that at this writing lacks an answer. He probably sensed the temper of his listeners who wanted highly pianistic pianism; and what is better than a tonal etching of an humble artisan, ringing away at his anvil. Don't we remember Longfellow's verse?

Great Ardor Shown.

Chopin's Ballade No. 3 solemn was begun so slowly and impressively as in the Russian's version. It was not an interpretation, rather one might say, a dissection of the score, presented with the pedagogue exactitude of a piano professor before a master class, while successively depressing his fingers in the analysis of the chords, etc. The majesty of this procession became apparent in the playing of the Nocturne, opus 27, where Rachmaninoff conjured up a subtle moonlight filtering through umbrageous trees skirting the edge of a billowy lake or words to that effect. In other words, the artist had arrived at his proper mood. It was the evening's psychological moment for him. Reacting to this he gave the D-flat major Valse. In such feeling leathery fineness that the instrument was made fairly to flutter under his velvet touch. The Scherzo, opus 28, with its ponderous introduction, aroused the house from its silence, and the anthem-like strophes of this popular show-piece were filled with soft, saccharine arabesques of perfect, ear-tickling quality.

Rachmaninoff proved his fondness for Chopin in his own bracketed composition that succeeded the "Cavalier Etude" and the "Polka de V. E." both very popular and excellently presented. He proceeded so deftly to his last group that the audience then and there urged the change to call for the Prelude of Paderewski, already mentioned.

Audience Loathe to Go.

Dohnanyi's Etude (Capriccio) opus 28 was a tour de force and the Kreutzer Lohengrin as transcribed and embellished by the soloist was so much his own that the famous violinist hardly figured among the composers. The digital decorations with which this piece was tricked out rather hid the song, but the audience fairly shook the hall with applause at the conclusion of the number.

Then came the biggest thing of the evening, the tremendous "Tarantella Venezian de Napoli" of Liszt, a gorgeous carnival and merry-making tone picture on whose tone-painting Rachmaninoff liberally lavished all his skill.

No wonder there was a loud, persistent demand for post-program additions. The first of these came as a matter of course. The second response was not long withheld, for the artist was not only in a gracious mood, but he apparently was in the best of health, truly a matter for rejoicing among his hundreds of friends in St. Louis.

Then, when three-fifths of the crowd was already in what by courtesy is called the Odéon foyer, Rachmaninoff again came forward and sent us home rejoicing and praising after hearing the fore-said plesantry by M. Debussy.