

## Lyric

*Rachmaninoff, Pianist.*

It is doubtful whether any other concert artist of note has dared to interpret as freely as does Sergei Rachmaninoff, the superlatively brilliant artist, who last night delighted a large audience at the Lyric. Therein lies one of the many reasons for the extraordinary furore he has created since his arrival in this country. The classics are, conventionally, presented with all classic formalism, and freedom of expression is, conventionally, reserved for compositions of the romantic school.

For these conventions Rachmaninoff obviously has little use. Into the "Sonata Pathetique" of Beethoven, which followed abruptly on a Haendel air with variations, he poured so much of Rachmaninoff as to illumine it with more color than it has ever before worn. Into the Liszt Second Rhapsodie, which formed the smashing finale for his set program, went a liberality of treatment which made it strikingly different from any other Liszt performance known to his hearers.

If this shocked any devotees of the classic school, they did not betray their outraged feelings. On the contrary, the entire audience demanded encores, to the point of rushing back when half way to the lobby at the close of the set program, demanding two more encores and getting them.

This freedom of treatment, liberal use of ritardo and of accentuated dynamic contrast, plus an insistent emphasis of melody, are perhaps the most striking attributes of Rachmaninoff's conception of music. Gifted with an astonishing sense of rhythm and a left hand that a violinist would envy him, with the general technical equipment to be expected of a veteran artist, he achieves effects in concert which no other artist attains. From the formalist viewpoint others are better. None of the romantic school excels him, and probably none of any school furnishes more delight to the average lay concert-goer. Incidentally, there never was an artist more pleasingly oblivious to the presence of an audience.

There was a significant juxtaposition in the program, which placed a Chopin group immediately ahead of two of the artist's compositions, "Daisies" and a sparkling polka. The latter is quite clearly in the Chopin manner, but in modern idiom. It is a suggestion of the whole Rachmaninoff viewpoint—full utilizing of melody wherever melody has its place. The audience apparently could have accepted even more encores than it received.

M. S. W.