

## RACHMANINOFF GETS CROWD, WITH BRAINS

Giant Russian Reveals Usual  
Pack of Masterly Idioms  
at the Piano.

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE.

Another C sharp minor audience packed Massey Hall last evening to hear the tallest, leanest, most spectral of all pianists: the composer who comes as an intellectual, tinged with mysticism, somewhat with romance, but always remains the Slav. Rachmaninoff completes a triangle of great pianists in ten days. He differs as much from both of the other two as either does from the other; and he is sometimes a combination of both.

What he did with the Medtner improvisations I have no idea; though through the glass door crouched at the piano with a quartet of gaunt white chrysanthemum clumps in stark pots against the brown woodwork he looked uncommonly interesting.

But his penetration of the Appassionata was absolutely complete. Three times for this sonata of Beethoven within ten days; another record. And while Paderewski's was the most colorously romantic and Hutcheson's the most severely studious, the Russian's was the most profound, because the most intellectual. This man always plays with his brains. He turned the sonata inside out and in so doing revealed beauties that are hidden to the romanticist or the pedagogue. It is hard to describe how he does this: the subtle, swift nuances he gets in tempi, in modelings, in phrases and cadences, in melodic lines and figures; some of these pure idioms with himself.

A Tale of Romance.

He took the work faster than common; played with it a good deal; read into it things that Beethoven may never have dreamed. And the people liked it. An intellect working on a thing of classic passion to make it yet more beautiful. A man who looks like a navy recreating a masterpiece.

Inevitably we compare that with the other big Sonata on the program, the Chopin in E flat minor, with the Marche Funebre. Here is a pianistic story more complete than the Beethoven; a tale of romance. Somewhere somebody said this Sonata depicts the composer's own life in Paris, or mixed up with that of some of his friends; a sort of Henri Murger tale of the Latin Quarter. And if you believe that you can feel the studio, the street, the dialogue, the restless ambition, the baffled hopes, the illusion, the broken life—and then the Funeral March.

Nobody else plays this Sonata quite so pungently in the funeral passages as does Rachmaninoff. He exaggerates its intensity. He leaves nothing to the imagination. The tramp of the procession becomes a gloomy trudge; the clouds thicken, the clods thump—such clods. After the gigantic energy of this the cantilena sounded rough and choppy. He has not the legato. His right is a bit clumsy. He sticks a queer little grace note in the third to the last. Even this is his own. Then the fateful fight against the clods again; as though the corpse were angry—and at the end a little hurried Allegro chucking a few hasty flowers on the mound. Fanciful? Oh, yes; but that is what the pianist intended. No wonder he made a fuore.

Not in the Giant's Line.

But he played a very thick sort of Nocturne and a rather fumbly Valse. Such things are not much in the giant's line.

His own two little cameos, Melodie and Serenade were quite suitable—but a bit disappointing. Not even the encore. The audience could wait.

After another of those misanthropic and patient silences, with now and then a pale glimmer at the crowd and a delicate caressing of the keys, he dashed into the perfectly conventional abandon of Moskowiki's La Jongleuse; marvelously painted in rhythm. After which all we had left was the Blue Danube which was given a semi-intellectual treatment, minus the glorified sweeps of an orchestra; beautifully done, but with too little intoxication, lacking the true Blue Danube elan until the very last when it became a glorious finale; followed by the fashionable postlude recital of encores, three; the first stupid, the second sprightly; and the third—the Prelude in C sharp minor!

Ah! at last the deed was done. No wonder the giant smiled. He loves this mild hysteria of his audience.

And there is no more interesting player of any instrument in all this world than the composer of the Prelude which he wrote one way for other folk and himself plays in another.