

Rachmaninoff Plays a Brilliant Program to a Large Audience

Famed Russian Cannot Escape Giving His "C-Sharp Minor."

By RICHARD SPAMER.

Beginning with the unknown composer, N. Medtner's Improvisation, opus 31, and ending with the familiar Schütz-Evler arrangement of Strauss' An der Schoenen Blauen Donau waltzer, Sergei Rachmaninoff, next to Josef Hofmann the greatest living pianist, gave the expected pleasure to a houseful of genuine admirers at the Odeon last night.

Considering the Medtner first and then the Strauss, it is known that the former is held in high regard by his present interpreter, who sees in him one of the greatest of modern composers.

The famous Russian had not proceeded very far with the Improvisation before it became apparent that the Rachmaninoff penchant for staccato octaves and deeply retund bass chords had full play in his presentation of the work. There was no striking novelty in the theme, but the variants were interestingly wrought out and reflective of the recitalist's constant mood-repose and restraint held in leash by an iron will.

In the Strauss as many liberties were taken with this show piece as are indulged in by other players, and while many in the audience must have wished that the otherwise adequate program might have ended with something less trite, still there was value to the occasional concert-goer whose desires Rachmaninoff, good musical showman that he is, cannot afford to slight.

After the Medtner came Liszt's Rondo Brilliant, the runs given as smoothly as rippling water and not a hint of overaccentuation in the motif. It was an elegant prelude to the succeeding Chopin Nocturne, with which the virtuoso wove a spell of enchantment entirely devoid of the strained sentimentality that most pianists put into their presentation.

Opponents of Chopin, and there are yet a few have charged him with a sickly romanticism, but Rachmaninoff last night gave the fame of the Polish genius a clean bill of health, for the Nocturne breathed serenity and soul-quiet amid nature's eventide afflances.

Deep Student of the Pole.

It was with the Sonata, opus 35, that the soloist revealed himself as a deep Chopin student, and nowhere better than in the Funeral March, whose story is that of a young girl's simple burial rites; the village church bells tolling and the singing of a requiem.

The Scherzo was given with novel accents a la Rachmaninoff, that is, with plastic art applied to pianism, a kneading of the keys to mold the sound of the strings, much after the manner of violinists who quavering the fingers of the left hand visibly create the impression that the tone is given a welling sway.

Of course with so mechanical an apparatus as the grand piano, no such effect can be produced by fondling the ivory, but to plainly see it done sometimes creates a concordant impression

The eye, you know, is a prime servitor of the ear at piano recitals.

Two of Rachmaninoff's own compositions, Melodie and Serenade, were warmly received by the now enraptured audience. In the second number his skill with the pedal produced so perfect a lute effect that many listeners believed some love-sick modern troubadour was standing in the "wings" a-twanging his guitar.

Rachmaninoff here measured the guitar wave length to the fraction of an inch and performed another marvel of like kind in his playing of the D-flat major Study of Liszt, when he gave the arpeggios with a sweep and clangor heard only from the best harpists extant.

Moszkowski's La Jongleuse, tonally descriptive of a fair juggler's skill in keeping five or seven objects in the air at the same time was a bounding, springing piece of pianism, played with unparalleled fleetness.

The world-encircling C-sharp minor Prelude which spells Sergei Rachmaninoff on the six continents and the islands of the seven seas, just had to be given as an encore. The audience began to applaud the instant the first chord was struck, even though it was evident that the artist had delayed as long as possible a martyr's concession to popularity.

His other extras were a Chopin Valse after the third group and a rapturously played Schumann-Taussig piece de resistance, Contrabandista (The Smugglers).

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