

RACHMANINOFF CHARMS LOCAL MUSIC LOVERS

Brilliant Russian Pianist Heard in
Beautiful Program Here Last
Night in the Armory.

(By GEORGE HOYT SMITH.)
Fifteen years—maybe more—ago, I remember my good friend Theo, Earl, of Stuart, and Saratoga Springs and Charleston was talking of a young artist who had come out of Russia and was claiming attention by his work. "That fellow look-man-enough, is a wonder," he said. Saul was a wonder too; six-foot six, hands as big as any two ordinary man's hands, an artist, composer and pianist of ability, he had but lately heard of Rachmaninoff and had some of his music. He played for me the now famous prelude in C Minor. "Fine!" I said. "If that is his calibre he will be very great among artists." Saul was enthusiastic and played it again. Since then I have often thought of how the name sounded when I first hear it—look-man-enough—and last night I realized that for once the title seemed to fit. Solid and manly, the Russian plays the piano as though he were painting pictures, with oceans of colors and hundreds of brushes and no limit but the width and breadth of the canvas which at the moment stretches across the mental sky. Substantial—yet with the keenest appreciation of a hair line here in the foreground, a broad light there, masses of color and vivid outlines and shimmering cloud effects in the perspective. A touch that stops so near the keys they seem to tremble into a whisper, next a driving stroke that calls upon the very fullest response of the startled, yet responsive strings. Rachmaninoff is different from the majority of artists I have seen or known. At the first glance, the first ten minutes after he has taken charge of the piano—to make it tell his stories and those of great masters of the past—it is hard to get a clear idea of one's own impressions; will he merely read the beautiful scores promised or interpret them in a way to make the argument clear? A few minutes pass and the listeners relax to enjoy, to appreciate and to listen. Music pictures are as real to me as those fixed upon cloth or boards of tapestry; but it must be an artist to bring them into the light. Rachmaninoff is an artist; he plays as though he desired to convince his hearers, and yet with that abandon that reveals the fatalist saying, "It is in me, it must come out, and praying that you may understand, it must nevertheless be told as understood. I enjoyed the playing of Rachmaninoff; I had enjoyed his compositions previously, but since hearing him I will enjoy them more.

Opening the program with the Chopin Fantasy—seldom heard in local, at least, not often—the artist very soon had all of his hearers following into the intricacies of the delightful score. The reception given was spontaneous. With very little pause, and quietly denying the appeal to break into the arrangement of his program with an encore, Rachmaninoff next played the marvelous composition of Schumann called The Carnival—a descriptive of intense interest. Quick changing themes, technical intricacies, fanciful, melodic, suggestive always of the gaiety and the variety of the carnival and its many-colored phases the music-story was sketched, elaborated and completed while the listeners followed each development and detail. After this came a Chopin group—familiar selections from that greatest of colorists played with delicacy and verity to delight and satisfy. There is something about the Chopin numbers most often heard that gives to the casual attendant upon recitals a feeling of nearness to the artist that might not be gained in hearing only unfamiliar works. But there is no suggestion in this reference intended to imply a pandering to the mob. The Polonaise, nocturne and waltz, each an exquisite morsel fashioned with the best thoughts of a composer, and interpreted by an artist, were jewels in the casket no less sparkling than the larger offerings. Two numbers of his own were played by Rachmaninoff—and no one in the audience would have been satisfied if he had not played the C sharp minor prelude—and all were charmed with his romantic fancy as expressed in the Serenade. The prelude seems to be typically the Russia of the Czar—tragic, perhaps prophetic—for it was written when Nicholas reigned and the war clouds had not thickly gathered. A number of Moszkowski and La Campanella, concluded the program. Here it was that the artist proved his appreciation of the reception given, for having steadfastly declined to break in upon his program with encores, he added two beautiful numbers at the close, the second Rhapsodie (Liszt) being one of the most brilliant and most thoroughly enjoyed numbers of the evening.

Complete Program.
Rachmaninoff's program was as follows:
1. Fantasy (Chopin).
2. Carnival (Schumann).
3. Preamble, Pierre Arisquin, Valse noble, Eusebius, Piorestan, Coquette, Replique, Sphinxes, Papillons, Lettres, Danseuses, Chitarra, Chopin, Etrelia, Reconnaissance, Fantasia of Colombini, Valse Allemande, Valse, Aveu Promenade, Pause, Marche des Davidbunder contre Philistine, 2. (a) Polonaise, (b) Nocturne, (c) Valse (Chopin).
4. (a) Prelude, C-sharp minor; (b) Serenade (Rachmaninoff).
5. La Jongleur (Moszkowski).
6. La Campanella (Liszt).
The appearance of Mr. Rachmaninoff was the first of a series of artists' concerts under management of Ernest Philpitt.