

# MUSIC

**W**INNIPEG music-lovers' tribute to one of the very greatest of the world's pianists of today peeped forth in other guises than that of a huge audience and a tremendous ovation in the Board of Trade auditorium Monday evening. Prior to the appearance on the platform of Rachmaninoff himself, opera glasses were to be espied here and there, followed, after the finish of his first group, by a party of enthusiasts moving to seats in the gallery behind him, from which point of vantage they could see those wonderful hands functioning at the subconscious bidding of an amazing brain and an emotionalism of extraordinary qualities.

Fifty years old in March and having made his public debut as a pianist 50 years ago, this countryman of other famous solists played on Monday as though at the zenith of his power. How long ago it is since he forgot all there is to be known about piano-playing technique one would not hazard a guess. It is possible, also, that there were times when the younger Rachmaninoff could not plumb the depths of music as he did in the Board of Trade auditorium, and when his musical stature was not that of a giant. But today—on Monday evening—he played as a Titan, fit company for such as Paderewski, Busoni and Josef Hofmann.

### Magnificent Treat

What a magnificent treat it was to hear his exploring mind delving into three of the finest examples of piano literature known—the Beethoven "Sonata Appassionata," Chopin's opus 53, "Polonaise," and Schumann's "Carnaval." The dominant impression throughout such illustrious music seemed an interpretation unmarred by the slightest suggestion of absurd incongruity. To hear the mighty Beethoven of this sonata in all his rugged and profound grandeur, music oft akin to the mad course of a torrent unchecked in its shattering sweep; to feel the national fire and intensity of Chopin, man of Poland, instead of the usual novelties melodramatics of a "ladies' pet of Parisian salons; to be thrilled by the romanticism emanating from the soul of Schumann in "Carnaval," and not to be amused by the sentimentalities of an imaginary carnival scene in terms of tone—this, and much more, was possible when the music of these three composers was exhibited in the mammoth searchlight of Rachmaninoff's pianism. For the once, so far as Winnipeg was concerned, the potentiality of superbly virile music was mingled with the puissance of almost-matchless performance. Sublimity and loftiness became blended into clouds of ecstatic-swathed beauty.

### Astounding Sense of Form

Many listeners must have been struck by Rachmaninoff's astounding sense of form (one uses the term in other than its text-book meaning). Whether it was the etching in miniature of "Carnaval," or the structural massing of the "Sonata Appassionata," the symmetry finally attained seemed flawlessly balanced. Even the battle-scarred Liszt "Campanella," which has disturbed many weaker opponents, took on a new fascination because of the assembled perfection of its components. Rachmaninoff's all-devouring technique permitted him always to fill out this music with its natural rhythmic life, and there were none of the shapeless gaps and ugly breaks so often met because of a deficiency of skill.

The imperative necessity of complete technique as an essential to great piano-playing was even more pronounced in the Chopin "Polonaise." As one has occasionally mentioned before, speed is almost the pivot on which a successful interpretation of this work centres, while another requisite is a sinewy strength which never flags. Rachmaninoff, being what he is, possesses these qualities, together with a reserve surplus, as a sine qua non of his art, and the only comment upon the "Polonaise" perhaps necessary is to say that listeners are unlikely to hear anything as marvellous for many moons to come.

Naturally, with Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann and Liszt upon his program, Rachmaninoff gave his audience and himself a little relaxation (an instance of the psychology of program arranging), this consisting

of irreproachable renderings of, among other things, the one and only "Prelude" which has brought him a certain fame he could doubtless forego, his "Polchinelie," and his charming "Serenade."—A. A. A.

### WOMEN'S MUSICAL CLUB

**T**HE best phase of the program presented at the weekly gathering of the Women's Musical club in the Fort Garry hotel, Monday afternoon, was the playing of the three pianists, Anna Moncrieff, Beryl Ferguson and Dorothy Armstrong. Miss Moncrieff, whom one hears very seldom in the role of soloist, set herself plenty of difficulties by offering "La Maison du Souvenir" of Dupont and Dohnanyi's "Rhapsodie in F Sharp Minor," and surmounted them so splendidly that it is a matter of regret that she makes so few appearances. The Dupont piece calls for considerable control of nuance to realize its mood of dreamy and disturbed reminiscence, and the Dohnanyi "Rhapsodie," despite a certain monotony of thought not to be found in the Brahms rhapsodies from which it in the main stems, is essentially "masculine" and uncompromising music to clearly outline. Miss Moncrieff's interpretations of both were exceedingly effective, and a decided change from some of the sloppy strains to which one has too often to listen.

### Felicity of Expression

Miss Armstrong played the Scriabin opus 2, No. 1 "Etude" with a freedom of movement and felicity of expression suggesting that she need waste no more time on such immature music as MacDowell's "Concert Etude." Miss Ferguson from whom one has become accustomed to expect soundly good work, did not disappoint; her conception of Frank Bridges' "Fireflies" was admirable and realized with brilliancy.

The remaining purely instrumental item of the afternoon was the quartette playing of Mrs. C. S. Riley, first violin; Miss Phyllis Brown, second violin; Mrs. W. B. Steinhilber, viola; and Mrs. F. M. Bonner, 'cello. In a Bach "Aria" there was some homogeneity of expression, with an occa-



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