

RACHMANINOFF GETS OVATION

Famous Composer And Pianist Gives Recital Of Rare Color At Academy

About as great an ovation as the Norfolk music loving public is capable of expressing was bestowed last night on Sergei Rachmaninoff, world famous composer and pianist, who appeared at the Academy of Music in a recital of rare color and interest.

Undoubtedly one of the outstanding figures in the musical world, it was to be expected that people would flock to hear the distinguished Russian, but the applause which was showered upon him following every number could be taken only as the spontaneous enthusiasm engendered by his remarkable performance on the piano.

From the opening number, an unusually incisive touch and rhythm were in evidence. Each note and chord stood out in cameo-like relief. The composer's technical mastery of the instrument was dazzling. There seemed to be nothing impossible to his nimble fingers, whether he were playing pearly runs and thrills or thunderous climactic chords.

Hailed As Greatest

Recently it seems to have become the vogue to hail a popular artist as the "world's greatest" this, that or the other. This has been the temptation of those who have heard Rachmaninoff during his recent remarkable appearances in the United States. Certain it is that he impresses one with the utmost in virtuosity and authoritativeness of interpretation.

As to technique, considered separately, Rachmaninoff seems able to say the last word. When it comes to interpretation, there is opened a wide field for differences in personal opinion, and each man is entitled to his own, generally speaking.

There are those who would prefer Chopin played with a lighter, more ethereal touch than Rachmaninoff chose to use. His chords were delivered just a little too forcefully, some of the themes were brought out just a little too sharply, for those who think that Chopin should trip and flow from the fingers with dream like ease. That Rachmaninoff is capable of that type of playing he demonstrated again and again, and the fact that he chose to break the spell occasionally with chords of contrasting effect merely proves that his conception of Chopin is somewhat different.

But this is neither here nor there, and as was said before, is a matter of personal opinion. Certain it is that when Rachmaninoff had completed his scheduled number, a great many in the audience were surprised to look at their watches and find he had been playing for an hour and a half. The numbers were presented almost continuously, only two very short intermission being given. Interest, however, was never allowed to lag. Each selection was replete with interest, both to the musician and the layman.

Plays Own Compositions

The regular program included two of Rachmaninoff's own compositions, his "Etude Tableau" and "Prelude in C Sharp Minor." This latter number first brought the Russian into popular favor in this country as a composer and with his other famous preludes to a large extent explains his wonderful vogue. It has been interpreted by some as portraying the despair of Siberian prisoners marching to their doom. To hear the composer's own interpretation was a real treat.

Schumann's "G Minor Sonata" in four movements, given as the second number, quickly brought the pianist into favor with his audience. If that were necessary, for every one seemed eager to extend him an ovation before he struck his first note Chopin numbers included at "Cherzo," "Etude" and "Ballade." The program closed with Godowsky's brilliant arrangement of Strauss' "Artist's Life" waltz. The opening number was from Gluck's "Alceste," arranged by Saint-Saens.—C. H. HOOPNAGLE.