

MASTER PIANIST'S ART ENTHRALLS

Rachmaninoff · Combines
Power, Fire, Supreme
Creativeness.

BY ROBERT B. MAYFIELD

There's a certain quality of sardonic dignity, if you can grasp what is meant by that combination of words, in the personality of Serget Rachmaninoff, master pianist. He is distinctly unlike any other concert artist of this generation in himself and in his art. The fiery Liszt perhaps played in something of the Rachmaninoff manner when presenting such compositions as his "Funeralles" and "Spanish Rhapsody" that appeared on Friday night's program, but he would have given a far different reading of the Bach, and perhaps of the Beethoven, and certainly would have adopted a different attitude toward the Chopin—the latter given among the evening's encores.

But why refer first to the Liszt numbers, which despite the marvelous virtuosity that Rachmaninoff put into them were far from the best things of the evening because of the creative emptiness of the compositions themselves? Liszt was at his best only when as it were, orchestrating for piano the melodic ideas of others, and in the "Funeralles" he attempted to do his own creating, with mediocre results.

Having vented a perhaps purely personal antipathy for the noted Abbe, it is a pleasure to turn to the infinitely satisfying Bach with which the artist of Friday's Philharmonic Society concert opened his program. The prelude, the saradande, the bourree, each in its way was an interpretation of the great German that positively left nothing to be desired. There was never an instant of intent to surprise, to add to or to take away from the mental creation of the composer. As it was, Rachmaninoff passed it on to the assembly. Bach, tiresome? Bach tedious? Not an instant for one with an atom of musical blood in his veins.

Following the Bach "English Suite" came the Mendelssohn "Variation Serieuse." At first as the artist developed the rather commonplace melody through his earlier variations the question arose in mind, "Why was this number chosen?" Presently the answer came as advancing in intricacy and brilliancy the composition swept to a finale that has rarely been equaled on the New Orleans concert stage for its whirlwind fury. It was such a performance as compels applause for the executant, quite apart from any especial admiration one may have for the composition in itself.

A moment after Rachmaninoff was deep in the extreme contrasts of the

Leader of Builders Sees Record Business in 1925



Walter F. Jahncke,

well-known New Orleans business man, who was re-elected president of the Southern Builders and Supply Dealers' Association at its convention in Atlanta recently.

Beethoven "Appassionata." Those contrasts the pianist accentuated still more to a degree that causes one to wonder how this could have been the composer's real intention, since the instruments of Beethoven's day were not mechanically developed to render such a vigorous bass. The sonata is less spectacular certainly when played with more moderation, but then gives a better sense of unity.

Following the Beethoven number the artist gave as encore the Gluck "Melodie" arranged by Sgambati, the loveliness of which both as a composition and in performance was second to nothing of the evening.

The program's second part began with the Liszt "Funeralles" already mentioned, which was a revelation in left-hand velocity. As performed by Rachmaninoff that selection is enough to turn many pianists hopelessly to other styles of music, for only the rare and extremely gifted can aspire to such technical glory.

The subsequent number had been awaited with interest since it was a pair of Rachmaninoff's own composition, an "Etude Tableau," whatever that may mean, and, of course, the "Prelude." How he must have learned to hate that very delightful piece of music that the very name Rachmaninoff brings to mind willy-nilly. The Etude is not a whit less deserving of fame and perhaps because of its less familiarity gave, to some at least, more pleasure than the other selection. Over both the assembly went wild, as indeed it did over every other number of the evening, with a superb indiscriminate. Perhaps this was justified, for the entire program was a delight. The final encore was Chopin with the "touch" at the end in the form of a dance in Spanish form, a complete novelty to New Orleans. The Athenaeum was filled to its doors for this concert, which was an extra given for the benefit of the Philharmonic Scholarship Fund.

irmingham
and
Cincinnati

leans 8:30 a.m. 8:10 p.m.
gham 6:55 p.m. 6:35 a.m.