

MUSIC

Igor Stravinsky recently made two very interesting statements in the course of an interview. Having taken off his pink sweater and donned his coat, at the conclusion of a rehearsal, he remarked that what was emotionalism to some was not so to others. This was shortly followed by the comment that, with regard to romanticism, he could play Schumann different from how "we do not like to hear it played today," but people would say it was not Schumann.

Serge Rachmaninoff appearing in Central Congregational Church on Wednesday evening, one soon found oneself thinking of what his compatriot had said. First, because Rachmaninoff is one of the most original pianists before the public today, in that his scheme of emotional values is not made up of the same or similar elements as that which comes from most of his confreres. Secondly, because he played a Schumann

sonata different from "how we do like to hear it played today" (many people are not so egotistically high-brow as Stravinsky and do not sneer at the romanticism of Schumann being interpreted as something romantic) and yet nobody seemed inclined to say that it was not Schumann.

What is Rachmaninoff's particular scheme of emotional values? Admittedly a difficult poser to answer in precise terms, and perhaps to be best understood by an indication of some of the elements of which it is not compounded. In brief, it does not seem to possess any of the factors which constitute the warmth of life of music as played by, say, Paderewski, Hofmann, Bauer or Friedman. Is it not a fact that in everything Rachmaninoff interprets there is an undertone of sombreness running through it? Color is something the writer has never heard in his pianism—that aspect of piano music which was developed by Debussy and which can be seen in perfection in some of his "Images"—and which it is now a kind of an unwritten rule for pianists in general to apply to all the music they play.

Rachmaninoff, however, is Rachmaninoff, and in this being himself lies his originality. Tricks of the trade, conventions, ideas common to many are matters with which he has no concern. There is the music—to be re-created by means of a technique for playing the piano, plus the vision of a great artist. Well, there have always been artists whose art had not the smiles in it as had much of Oscar Wilde's—dreaming seers like the writer of "Axel," strange and perverse talents like Beardsley and Schoenberg, and those who sit sombre and aloof as did Conrad and as does Rachmaninoff. Here, in this attitude, is, of course, the key to the Russian's emotionalism for those who care to pursue the clue.

Offhand, the writer suggests that that which stirs Rachmaninoff is not the musical equivalent of the material of a Manet, much less a Van Gogh, but the equivalent of that which would rouse ecstasy in a great architect or such a painter as Cezanne. A grip on these points—a realization of what Stravinsky said regarding emotionalism—and one can

get under the skin of Rachmaninoff's pianism and feel its greatness intuitively even if one has little vital response to it in the feelings. On Wednesday, as an instance, Chopin's "A Flat Ballade" was diametrically opposed in conception to a famous reading which the music world has been thoroughly familiar with for years, that of Paderewski—and a dozen others. To raise the question of which is "the better" is nonsense. One re-creation of this masterpiece is by a genius, the other by another genius. According to his temperament and culture the listener can live one or the other—and perhaps he can live both. What more can be said of the matter? Nothing, possibly,

except to add that the third genius, that of the composer, is greater than the other two and because it is so permits of the dissimilarity of conceptions without losing its essence.

A spacious topic, Rachmaninoff and his piano playing, and a daily newspaper review of necessity means a stopping before one has really started. How can one of the few supreme keyboard artists of the world be smoothly disposed of in half-a-column? Why, one hasn't even been able to say another word about that Schumann sonata—not to even mention the wonderful Beethoven, extraordinary Chopin, fascinating Liszt or the really marvellous Gluck-Saint-Saens.—A. A. A.

A Splendid S

On Beautiful Quarter-Cut Oak Dining

