

## RACHMANINOFF A SUPER-MAN AT THE KEYBOARD

By Wesley E. Woodruff

When one sits down to record some impressions of the wonderful experience at the Temple last evening, he naturally recalls certain of the whimsical sentences, describing in the familiar school recitation series, the story of "How Rubo Played," meaning the great Rubenstein, who astonished and dumfounded the music devotees of this country (1873) at a time when it was not hearing and had not heard what the piano forte could be made to mean under the fingers of a great master. That listener, who put down his thoughts not in the manner of a musical writer accustomed to use of definite terms, tonal glories and in the enormous pageantry of sound he thought of a general bringing his troops up to the firing line—he marshalled them by companies, by platoons, by battalions, right, left, centre, until the senses were dumb in watching the performance last evening transcended any ordinary form of description.

The Rachmaninoff we heard last night was a greater player, certainly in virtuosity than we welcomed here before. His technical equipment is enormously more facile and lithe as if indeed the more serene years he has had in this country, trying to forget Russia while the storm was gathering and then while it raged, have had effect. In his native country he saw the blood smeared pages of history being made—depths of human misery and human endurance. To live for months in the shadow of impending catastrophes, when lives are being snuffed out by thousands, when every fourth person wears the uniform of fighting and insignia of authority and of power to inflict death, to be helpless when one's property is swept into the maw of the raging populace, to realize penury, deprivation, to feel the tremble of the earth under artillery, and to realize the shadow depending low over assistance, to know that life itself hangs at the caprice of an utterly mad and frenetic mob impulse—all these things were part of Rachmaninoff's years. Fitted for music performance and teaching, winner of distinguished honors in the schools, exalted for composition when less than twenty, then settling down to a regime of teaching and playing, with the attention of the world centred somewhat toward him, Rachmaninoff suddenly felt the whole structure of the study of years crashing into wreck. And with it went the hope of pouring his artistic fervor into the life of his native country. The readjustment, after he had escaped and come to America, could not have been easy.

But now habituated to these shores, feeling the response of understanding from thousands of people gathered to hear his message, this great man has grown into an artistic stature denied to many who have not been through the holocaust. And as the months have added themselves, and hours and days vouchsafed to study, to calm achievement, fears relaxed and music again ascendant the American people begin to hear the speech that has for a long period been somewhat reluctant and hesitating. When we contemplate the work upon the imagination of this various forces which have been at work upon the imagination of this man, we do not wonder that he has reached heights that are, to many, difficult to train their gaze upon.

To those familiar with the subject, of the variations of Beethoven the marshalling of the thirty-two variations held a fascinated attention revealing a mastery breadth and authority, a very passion, as some one has well said, for minute detail. Then a Chopin group two familiar to most music devotees and the third unfamiliar, came to astonish the many who discovered new impressions and sensations in them.

The Beethoven Sonata Appassionata is a work which one would have infrequent chance of hearing in entirety even in the great concert centers, and though the work was rich and wimming with overpowering impressions of skill in technic, one can not forget that in the andante he was hearing from piano a voice of eloquence, a voice of such persuasion that it seemed almost like a new musical impression, a rich addition to experience.

The Etude Tableau and the familiar Prelude in C sharp minor were transposed in order from the program arrangement. Godowsky's workmanship and adornment of the Strauss waltz closed a program rightly in its effect upon a thoroughly aroused audience. Of course to the student of piano literature the Appassionata was the summit of glory. The marvel was that it could have been in human power to make it so transparently clear.

Generally the evening was so exalted, so super-human, that it will long have standing by itself in our recollections. When we consider that often in listening to talking machine records, and such, we are in doubt here and there as to the particular instrument speaking, we can understand how, in the torrential chords from a big scale piano, and the intermingling of overtones one can be

persuaded of occasional orchestral voices, not usually related at all to an instrument of percussion.

The night was one of technical glories indescribably, of continued varied and sudden changes of stress, of plaintive emotional tender phrase here, and a cataract of power following, a suggestion of many colors, imaginative, enormously dramatic and mighty. Dramatic effect seemed rather the ruling feature. This musical soul cries out for mightiness, and will not be long denied.

We could have been satisfied with less torrent in parts of the familiar things—been satisfied with say a mezzo forte rather than the ear-filling flow. But all this is a matter of the player's leaning and feeling. Audiences and writers used to complain that Paderewski tore a piano to bits in his mad impulses. If he did, Rachmaninoff goes further. But there is a difference. It seems, whether the instrument of last night as to strings is scaled more broadly, or whether Rachmaninoff, with his powerful sinews pressed into the keys instead of striking them, at any rate, there was a more glowing ensemble and a richer tone "mixture." We heard what might be described as at times, in sudden crescendos, a wild harshness of contrast, yet we never did hear that individual clang of the lower strings that has seemed to mark the big moments of certain other great players. In the placid moments the great man who sat somewhat bowed over his keys, caressed the touch. In slaccato he was like to give a punch of electric swiftness with lightning withdrawal of the fingers—all these and more expedients yielding a play of color splendor that was continually absorbing to the listener, and continually beguiling. The hair close cut, the face though lighting up with a smile of radiance and responsive friendliness, yet for the most of it inscrutable, mysterious, introspective.

There was even magic in the preliminary rich chordings with which he coaxed silence before entering upon the particular number. Whatever comparisons one may be inclined to make, whatever preferences for power grades, whatever movings to rubato the listeners might have felt, we must all agree that in Rachmaninoff we have just had an experience as to piano that stands by itself, and at least, in much that suggests depth of imagination and technical finish, a unique experience.

At the close the great composer, conductor, pedagogue and virtuoso yielded three extras, one of them the favorite A flat waltz of Chopin. Thus ends the concert course of the season and ends in great glory, with a gratitude felt by those who esteem to influence of music toward the Landais, who took up the work and carried it through what might otherwise have been a dreary and unfruitful year. They have not been rewarded in a practical way but great outpouring last night proved that the valley is still alive to music.

## OBITUARY

### A WORD OF COMFORT

How sick you get of yourself!  
The only way to get well is to hear to the Perfect Man and learn to define your life's hopes and aims in terms of His splendid purposes. Then all that you are and do and think and say and endure will have a new significance. You rejoice to spend and to be spent in His service. Paradise is just ahead; see all, nor be afraid.

—FREDERICK G. BUDLONG.

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### MRS. MARY J. SWITZER

The death of Mrs. Mary J. Switzer, aged 74, a well known and highly esteemed resident of Kingston, occurred at the family home, 274 College avenue, Kingston, following an illness of complications. She is survived by one son, Elmer, of Philadelphia, and one sister, Mrs. Lottie Gable, of Kingston. The funeral will be held from the home, Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Services will be conducted at the residence by the Rev. Frank Harriscock, pastor of the Kingston M. E. Church. Interment will be made at Forty Fort Cemetery.

### WILLIAM J. WILLIAMS

William J. Williams, aged 16, died yesterday afternoon at 5:30 o'clock at the Wilkes-Barre General Hospital of heart trouble. He is survived by a sister, Margaret Williams, one step brother, Clarence Dean and one step sister, Margaret Dean. The funeral will be held from the home of his uncle, Thomas S. Williams, 55 Logan street, Tuesday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock. Rev. Gomer Evans, pastor of the Second Welsh Baptist Church, will officiate. Interment will be at Hanover Green Cemetery.

### ADOLPH JACOBETZ

The death of Adolph Jacobetz, aged 46, of Bennett street, Boonville, occurred yesterday afternoon at the Mercy Hospital after a two weeks' illness. Deceased had been fireless at the