

Sergei Rachmaninoff Interprets Old Masters in His Concert Here

For the second time within three years, Poughkeepsians were enabled to hear one of the greatest pianists of the present day, when Sergei Rachmaninoff appeared in concert at the Poughkeepsie High School Monday night, under the auspices of the Dutchess County Musical Association.

To point out the outstanding number of the program is an impossibility. How compare the contrapuntal beauties of Bach with the sheer ecstasy of Chopin or the sublimities of Liszt's "Heroica?" Rachmaninoff let modern music strictly alone and gave his audience a program made up almost entirely of the great musicians of the ages. There were modern compositions, it is true, for there was a transcription by Kreisler, and a Granger number in the encores. But the ultra-moderns were missing. It is rather to be regretted, as one would have liked to have heard this giant of the piano interpret at least one of the contemporary composers, yet no program could have been more perfect than the one of Monday night.

Rachmaninoff moved through the program with scarcely a pause. He played the Bach partita, two Schubert numbers and the Chopin sonata before he left the stage. And within a few moments he was back again, ready to go on with a program that would have proved insurmountable to a lesser artist.

One marvels at the complacency of the man. Accustomed to temperamental soloists who move jerkily to the piano, twirl the stool a few times and look nervously about, Rachmaninoff is a contrast. He strolls upon the stage in casual fashion, looks at the piano woodwork a moment as if to recollect what his number is to be and begins. Unless you have heard him before, you feel that he is utterly abstracted and can't possibly be interested in what he is doing.

And then he plays! And with the first note, a subtle change seems to creep over him and he is lost in his interpretation.

Rachmaninoff opened the program with Bach's "Partita in D Major." Bach is particularly well suited to this pianist who defines his melodies with such precision and he played the four movements with brilliancy and color. From the Bach number he passed to Schubert and played that composer's "Impromptu" and his own transcrip-

tion of "The Brooklet."

Rachmaninoff played the B minor minor sonata for his Chopin number. Chopin has been called a woman's composer, for it is said that women, particularly, are critical of the pianist who essays him without temperamental fitness for his music. But Rachmaninoff, who plays with passion and force when the interpretation calls for it, played Chopin with the grace and beauty of one who loves him. There was fairy beauty in the scherzo, a breath-taking beauty in the largo and brilliant technique in the finale.

His audience demanded more when the sonata had been completed and before he could go on with his program, he was forced to return, again and again and acknowledge the applause. Finally, as if sensing what the audience wanted to hear, he paused in his program long enough to add another Chopin number, and played a mazurka.

Three Liszt numbers came after the Chopin composition. The calm beauty of "Consolation" was followed by the sprightly "Dance of the Gnomes" and the group ended with a marvelous rendition of the stupendous "Heroica."

"Fairy Tale," by Medtner, brief and lovely, was followed by a group of the pianist's own compositions. The first was the lesser known "Etude Tableau," which called for brilliant work, written as it is for a display of left hand technique. The familiar "C sharp minor prelude" followed and the composer's interpretation of it gave new beauty to a number that has survived several years of being played by vaudeville pianists.

"Liebesfreud," which completed the program, is, like the Schubert "Brooklet," Mr. Rachmaninoff's transcription of the Kreisler number. Both were played in Poughkeepsie for the first time. "Liebesfreud" is given a transcription entirely new and Rachmaninoff played it with an interpretation that is all his own. Under his fingers it becomes a different composition; it has been a violin solo, but it is a vivid piano number, finishing with a brilliant glissando.

In response to the applause, the pianist returned to add two more numbers to the program. His encores were the "Turkish March" from the "Ruins of Athens" and a Grainger composition.

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