

An Appreciative Audience Hears The Master Pianist At His Best

By Dr. Herbert Sanders, F.R.C.O.

Mr. Sergei Vassilievitch Rachmaninoff, the famous Russian pianist and composer, gave a pianoforte recital last evening in the Ruswell Theatre before an audience which completely filled the building, and which was as distinguished as it was large. The name of Rachmaninoff is known throughout the musical world as that of a musician who stands among the three or four living composers whose names are likely to pass into musical history. While known to the general public through its acquaintance with a very few pieces of a somewhat slight nature, Rachmaninoff's concertos for piano and his songs rank among the great concertos and inspired songs of all time. Added to his fame as a composer is his great reputation as a virtuoso on the piano, the two forming a combination of gifts almost unique in this century.

The fact that the greatest musician who has ever visited our city was to play some of his own compositions, and especially his "Prelude," made the very atmosphere redolent with expectancy, but Rachmaninoff, by his unconscious dignity and magnetic personality, little less than by his transcendent musical equipment, more than maintained the sensitive nature of the artistic atmosphere in which he played. He did more: he charged it with an emotional and vitalizing power which never lost its peculiar virtue but, on the contrary, was intentionally and dramatically cumulative.

An Efficient Pianist.

Rachmaninoff is unequivocally a great virtuoso. As far as one can observe from his public playing technical difficulties do not, for him, exist. His touch is clean, fluent, distinct and elastic, while his tone is sensitive, warm, hard, sympathetic or brilliant according to the particular tonal quality required by the piece being played. And these required tonal qualities appeared to intuitively respond to the mercurial changes in the mental and temperamental impulses of the performer. One might feel inclined to describe Rachmaninoff's technique as "colossal," "matchless," "amazing" were it not applied to the aesthetic and artistic demands of the composition being interpreted rather than to that of technical display. But Rachmanin-

off is more than an efficient pianist; he is a sane pianist.

What sanity is in life is difficult to define, but it is perhaps a balanced fusion of the mental phases of knowing, willing and feeling. What sanity is in art is easier to state: it is the union of the intellectual, emotional and sensuous force which conspires to produce the most balanced creation. This, at least so appears to me, is the most salient feature of Rachmaninoff's playing—that it is intensely sane. Rachmaninoff does not cover up any possible deficiency in his technique neither by being a piano-pounder, as not a few pianists are compelled to do, nor does he try to overwhelm his audience with false emotion. On the other hand, his great intellect does not curb the spontaneous expression of his feelings. This great musician appears to have a seminal intellect, a poet's feeling and a virtuoso's technique—sanity raised to the nth degree: the sanity of a man who comes to us from a world of supermen.

As an Interpreter.

While Rachmaninoff is essentially a sane player, yet his playing is intrinsically characteristic. He gives to each piece its own peculiar interpretation and an individual conception. He invests every item on his programme with some new charm or unexpected but yet apparently inevitable beauty. To hear him interpret Bach or Chopin as he did last evening can only be compared to hearing some gifted poet give an eloquent and vibrant exposition of some poem he had studied with intensive and extensive application until it had saturated his very spirit. Rachmaninoff reveals unexpected beauties, hidden significance and new values and carries us captive with the sheer sincerity of his art. Undoubtedly it is being a great composer which makes Rachmaninoff a great interpreter. He perceives hidden things by a subtle second-sight and expresses them with a sensuous warmth which soothes, thrills or electrifies according to his wish. But whatever the interpretation, and however close it may have approached that desired by the composer, the hall-mark of a profound and individual personality was stamped on every bar and every phrase. The programme in its entirety was played with an authority that will assuredly have a mark for life on sensitive minds, and his magic touch quickened the strings of many a soul to vibrate as never before.

Rachmaninoff was greeted with no equivocal applause. His reception was a sure sign that his performance was appreciated to the full. Compelled by the impertinence of an audience loath to leave without some further demonstration of the recitalist's lofty art, Rachmaninoff only brought the programme to an end by playing three encores: Tchaikowsky's "Trotka," Beethoven's "March from the Ruin of Athens," and Mossourgsky's "Hopak" as transcribed by himself. Needless to say they were played in an altogether matchless manner.

The complete programme was as follows:

1. Partita, No. 4, D major J. S. Bach
Overture
Sarabande
Gigue
2. (a) Impromptu; (b) The Brooklet Schubert
3. Sonata, E minor Chopin
Allegro maestoso
Scherzo
Largo
Finale—presto non tanto
4. (a) Consolation, E major; (b) Dance of the Gnomes; (c) Heroica Liszt
5. Fairy Tale, E minor N. Medtner
6. (a) Etude Tableau; (b) Prelude, C-sharp minor ... Rachmaninoff
(c) Liebestrud Kreisler

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ng her Kruschen?"

something on your conscience for you to sit there mum looking like a problem picture. I see the title now— "Who's been missing her

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