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RACHMANINOFF AS POET AND ROMANCER AT POLI'S

Rachmaninoff, playing with the most exquisite "pianism," the finest art of great piano playing, came to Poli's in recital yesterday afternoon before an audience that filled every bit of available space.

He was something different in mood yesterday. He was a poet, a romance-maker in tone, with less of his chiseled, biting perfection, and more of the wings of song that searched out each bit of melody and built over them the commanding structure of a great architect in music.

No pianist today has a more telling left hand probably than Rachmaninoff. He gave us several instances of impressive retards in his music in which the rhythmic feeling was one of tremendous emotion. To have heard Rachmaninoff yesterday play the Schumann "Etude Symphonique"

(Continued on Page 7.)

MUSIC

(Continued from Page 6.)

and the epic Brahms's "Ballade," was to hear a marvel of loveliness in the tone of the piano, with execution—in diverse moods—of glittering beauty.

Yet, with all this emotion, the artist holds to a clarity in phrase, and in bringing out the inner voices of his harmonies that is amazing transparency. The Beethoven Sonata, an early work, Opus 26, was built in this infinite variety, with something of the great Beethoven in the psychology of the Funeral March.

Oddly enough, after his first group, Mr. Rachmaninoff stayed at his piano and played without pause his entire program. He had been late in beginning, due to the late arrival of the audience, and he will not play with people being seated—so it behooves us to be courteous to the great when they come to us!

There was a delectable Chopin waltz. In imaginative style, too, the Medtner "Fairy Tales," two of them, were either ethereal flights of fairies in moonlight tones, or a grotesque big giant to tell us, in the B minor, opus 20, what grown-up children we are.

His own prelude, given without designation on the program, proved also a delicate whirring as of a spinning wheel, but his audience would not leave until he had played the unchallenged prelude, C sharp minor, which they called for from the theater. This he gave in more dreamy mood than is his wont. He also played another charming waltz, the Chopin E flat, and—one needs to remember—his own arrangement of the Moussorgsky "Hopak," as biting and trenchant as the opening to his own "Polichinelle," with an interesting spirit of Russian folk song.

Music becomes a personal speech under hands like Rachmaninoff. That is why no music will ever replace the personal contact with the artist if we want to know the well-spring of his genius. The concert was the third in Mrs. Wilson-Greene's "Philharmonic Course."

Abraham Lincoln, by Ida M. Tarbell; pictures by Nicholas Afonsky, will start in The Times, Monday, February 28.