

MUSIC

Rachmaninoff

Carnegie Music Hall

PROGRAM

Dante, quasi una Fantasia.....Beethoven
C sharp minor, opus 27, No. 2
 Adagio sostenuto,
 Allegretto,
 Fresto agitato
 (Without intermission.)

Fantasia, quasi Sonata.....Liszt
 (After reading Dante)

Fantasia.....Chopin
Scherzo, Polonaise in C minor, Polonaise, E flat major.....Chopin
Fairy Tale, opus 34, No. 1.....Medtner
Prelude.....Strauss-Toussig
Valse Caprice, No. 1.....Strauss-Toussig

The magic circle of musician's names that have become household words now certainly includes Sergei Rachmaninoff. Looking about Carnegie Music Hall last night, I could see how this Russian pianist's renown had attracted all types, those who know the man as a composer, those who like his piano fireworks, and those who play his prelude which he kindly omitted from his group of encores. After a program composed of almost entirely war-horses, the audience was wildly enthusiastic, and with good reason.

For me, Rachmaninoff's great appeal lies in his tremendous vigor and the extreme clarity of his music, never in his tone. Too often his tone is not truly pianistic, never disagreeable on account of its brilliance and force, and frequently, as in Chopin, of astonishing variety. But his superb intelligence as absolute musician brings into all the music he plays transparency that is never overdrawn nor forced beyond the bounds of good taste. His reading of the Liszt Fantasia was a proof of his genius for finding the intention of the composer far beyond the meaning of the notes, for in all the literature of piano music there are no duller pages than these. And Liszt wrote them after a reading of Dante when he and Marie d'Agout were the envy of all lovers. This fantasy represents Liszt, the showman, at his worst, yet Rachmaninoff imbued it with real music.

One could justly question the tempo of the second movement of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, but in other respects the composition remained not only faithful to text but lost all sentimentality and gained considerable charm, especially by means of the bell-like announcement of the first theme. We hear the F Minor Fantasy of Chopin all too seldom; tremendous color contrasts and descending chromatics like falling rockets characterized its interpretation. Had Chopin been physically able, he would have liked to play his polonaises as we heard them last night, for they had all the revolutionary spirit of Poland with a dash of Russian thrown in. Medtner is a colleague of Rachmaninoff and little known in America. His Fairy Tales (some of them appeared on Rachmaninoff's last program) are well worth study; they are full of fancy and very pianistic. The Strauss-Toussig waltz is not the most interesting nor tuneful from this pair, and looked for all the world like a juggler's act. A Chopin nocturne in E flat and Liszt's Valse Oubliee were the only encores.

J. FRED LISSFELT.