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RACHMANINOFF IN TRIPLE ROLE

As Conductor, Pianist and Composer.

Symphonic Poem and Concerto Heard for First Time.

Cordially Received at Symphony Hall.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, the distinguished Russian musician, appeared at Symphony hall yesterday afternoon in the triple capacity of composer, pianist, and conductor in the larger forms.

At his recent recital in this city Mr Rachmaninoff was found, in a program of his pianoforte compositions, to tend toward serious introspection in his mode of thought, both as composer and as interpreter.

With the wider scope and larger eloquence both of his symphonic poem, "The Island of the Dead," and his second concerto for pianoforte, and the more complete means for expression which he had yesterday in our orchestra, Mr Rachmaninoff again disclosed the same tendency. Its introspective thought imagined to the scale which his present resources could now reveal in his work.

Inasmuch as Rachmaninoff, the composer of his symphonic poem, "The Island of the Dead," must be largely estimated in terms of Rachmaninoff, the conductor of its first performance here, the work must necessarily be known chiefly through his reading.

As Composer.

It is as composer, in this instance, that Mr Rachmaninoff interests most. As such let him first be considered.

He offers no "program" for this tonal poem other than the fact that his inspiration sprang from the painting, "Island of the Dead," by Arnold Boclin.

The solemn grandeur of solitude, vast, still, eternal, all-pervading, broods over the picture. The stately cypress, trees and tall, the silent, ghostly, approaching boat, its spectral cargo of mourner and coffin deeply confirm it. This is the abode of death. The temporal, the trite, the inconsequential jostles of men and the passing hour have no place here. It is a theme of awe and primal bigness. To suggest it through the tones of an orchestra is to declare oneself a creative mind in music of deep insight and of great resource in expression.

As heard yesterday afternoon, the work was happy in the choice of themes, clear and logical in their development, rich in polyphony and appealing in the employment of color. In symmetry and pith of structure, it was admirable. In searching, trenchant delineation of the mood it was masterly.

The work began with repeated figures in double basses and tympani; quiet, remote, intangible, like the incessant beat of a distant sea. The movement then continued in unbroken, undulating waves of tone. There was no obvious, contrasting or diverting episode; no excursion into some new realm of music, as though the visual wonders of the island were the theme. A portent, strangely dissimilar to the world of sense clings to each bar and deepens as the work progresses.

Notwithstanding its flavor of mysticism, this music is not morbid, nor is it melancholy. It is contemplative. It is introspective. It is sombre. It speaks of solitude and infinity.

Dignified Conductor.

It is quite extraordinary how Mr Rachmaninoff has kept his score above intruding or compromising irrelevancy. Its aloofness grows and intensifies. A memorable instance of this sustained cumulative power came in the development of the theme first given out by the horn. It was worked over by the enlarging resources of the orchestra, through constant and accelerated repetition until the whole instrumental body is carried by it to a climax of superb pulsance.

The weird mysticism which the composer gains by the simple device of the theme with the minor third persisting in the clarinets through nasty measures, and then repeated by the solo violin, is a memorable feature of the latter part. The concluding measures are quietly reminiscent of the opening measures. So it passes like a dream tempered by the supernatural.

Men who conduct with a supreme and unmistakable stamp of authority are seldom players upon an instrument. Mr Rachmaninoff is not such a conductor. He took his work with dignity before the band and guided them through the work with an assurance that contrasted with it. His beat upon the strategic first count of the bar is clear, but not strikingly incisive. The palm of the left hand when used at all was oftenest closed, save when the conductor extended the hand to diminish the tone. Mr Rachmaninoff does not depart from his self-contained and reserved attitude even in the climaxes of the work which the climatic points require. Here again is the introspective rather than the actively executive mind.

As Pianist.

As an interpreter through the piano, however, and not as a player upon men, Mr Rachmaninoff was more convincing. His second concerto for pianoforte was heard for the first time in Boston.

While he was admirable as an artist who takes the piano into his confidence, rather than as a virtuoso who performs feats of violence upon it, Mr Rachmaninoff again seem the greater as composer.

He has transcended the confines of the piano in this concerto. He has written music which gives the solo instrument an individual scheme of beautiful color and design in the pattern of the work until it proves too restricted for the breadth of thought which he would express.

Then, by permitting the greater resources of the orchestra to assist, and for the time, by making the piano an auxiliary to the orchestra, he has bettered, he proves himself the composer first and the pianist afterward.

In the concerto, as in the symphonic poem, the composer shows his fondness for themes whose tones progress diatonically, or nearly so. In the first movement a subject of this character is given out by the piano and developed by the orchestra, with a good effectiveness by the violins against embellishment in the solo instrument.

By this constant employ of the orchestra in supplementing his piano, Mr Rachmaninoff has given his concerto a freshness and unfailing variety. The themes are uniformly melodious and amenable to picturesque development. Contrast in means of treatment abounds.

The adagio is wholly contemplative, and offered the artist, as pianist, the opportunity for that curious, searching style of melody playing which under his fingers gives each minute figure significance.

The closing movement, allegro scherzando, secures animation easily by a clever use of staccato accompaniment of suggestive motivity in the orchestra. A coquettish, fantastic, beautiful theme of the work, which is given to the clarinet and is made particularly conspicuous.

Sincerity of Workmanship.

While Mr Rachmaninoff has supplied cadenas for the piano, it seems, when not mere embellishment to the orchestra, as a form of individual speech, too intense to be transmuted by formal accompaniment, and not as a vehicle for mere display.

This sincerity of workmanship is stamped upon the two compositions throughout. It may be that which gives them the remarkable evenness of worth. There are not spots where the composer has seemed to fail of inspiration. He invariably has something to say.

As a pianist Mr Rachmaninoff gave a memorable demonstration of what the subtlety can do in the interpretation of music. Its power, its delicacy, its velocity and all the kinds of tactile tricks which habit gives to fingers were present when needed. These things were automatic servants of a mind which planned the effect, and of an emotion which enlivened and proposed it. This is not necessarily brilliant pianism, but it is admirable art.

The distinguished guest was called to the stage many times after his concerto. He shook hands in evidently grateful appreciation of the cordial and well-deserved ovation with the ardent and long-sustaining applause brought out the scant, fugitive of a smile to the strong lines of the face, which in its aloof absorption, its fine asceticism, mirrors much of the spirit of his music.

Brahms's "Tragic" overture began the concert. The prelude to "The Mastersingers" ended it.

WASHINGTON BRIEFS.

Chang Yin Tang an Optimist—Hull Bill Favors Rifle Practice in Schools and Colleges.

Chang Yin Tang, the newly arrived Chinese minister, feels that conditions in China and Manchuria have greatly improved, and that further progress toward prosperity and international amity is sure to follow. He said today that when he left China the relations of that country with the United States were better than they ever before had been. His advent in Washington is the remarkable change in his status in the eyes of China toward the United States, and minister Wu's recall to China simply meant that his services were desired in another more important character.

President Taft was in conference with his cabinet today for two hours and a half. It was said the session was taken up entirely with routine matters.

Pres Taft had as luncheon guests today at the White House George Thompson of the St Paul Pioneer Press, H. V. Jones of the Minneapolis Journal, William Loeb Jr, collector of the port of New York; Otto T. Bannard, recently the republican candidate for mayor of New York, and Mayor Hunt of Charleston, S C.

Representative John K. Tener of Pennsylvania offered a resolution in the house today calling for an investigation of the steel mills and carriage in which serious labor disturbances have occurred.

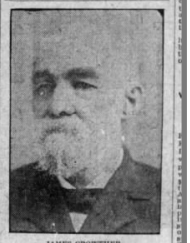
Representative Hull of Iowa today introduced a bill in the house providing for an annual appropriation of $50,000 for rifle practice in public schools, colleges, universities and civilian rifle clubs. The secretary of war is authorized to loan U S magazine rifles and existing service models for such purposes.

Limiting the maximum annual appropriation to $1,000,000, Representative Lowden of Illinois introduced a bill today for the purchase or erection of embassy, legation and consular building abroad.

ENJOYS 90TH BIRTHDAY.

James Crowther Observes Happy Event With Reunion at His Daughter's Home in Attleboro.

ATTLEBORO, Dec 17—James Crowther celebrated his 90th birthday today. A family reunion and supper was held at the home of his daughter, Mrs Ezekiel Blake on 4th st.



JAMES CROWTHER.

For a person of his years there are very few who enjoy their faculties and as good health as he does. He has a small circle of men friends in town who are his junior by ages and have enjoyed his companionship since he came born to live with his daughter.

Mr Crowther was born in Manchester, Eng, Dec 17, 1818, and took up mill business for his first trade. He became to this country and located in Pawtucket. Later he was superintendent of four mills at Chicopee. His wife died in 1902 and he then came to this town.

THREE CHOIRS UNITE.

Mt Holyoke College Christmas Concert Given by Chorus of 200 Voices Directed by W. C. Hammond.

SOUTH HADLEY, Dec 17—The annual Christmas concert by the Vesper and junior class choirs of the Mt Holyoke college of 150 voices, assisted by the choir of 50 voices of the Second Congregational church, was held this evening at the college auditorium, before an empty seat in the auditorium. The choir of 200 occupied their regular choir seats and the junior choir sang from the rear gallery, while the church choir sang from the organ gallery, giving a fine chance for antiphonal effects.

The program was arranged by W. C. Hammond, musical instructor at the college, and he was assisted in the concert work by Miss Julia Dickinson Worthington.

The numbers included an old French processional for an introductory number, several old English, old German and Bohemian carols, the organ selection, "March of the Magi Kings," by Dubois, with several Christmas anthems and selected pieces.

This will be the last public entertainment of the term, the students leaving Tuesday for their Christmas vacation.

EDWARD RILEY DEAD.

Veteran Missing From Soldiers' Home at Bristol, R I, Found Suffering From Exposure.

BRISTOL, R I, Dec 17—Edward Riley, formerly of Providence, but late an inmate of the Rhode Island state soldiers' home here, was found late this afternoon in a dazed condition lying beside a path just east of Wood st, in the lands from the street across lots to the home.

The police took him to the home where medical assistance was summoned, but he never regained consciousness and died at an early hour this evening. Medical Examiner Dr W. Fred Williams pronounced death probably due to exposure.

Riley had been missing from his home since yesterday. He was about 70 years old and served in the 3rd R I artillery.

OPPOSED INCOME TAX.

Col Albert Clarke of Boston and Bolton Hall of New York Speakers at Portland Meeting.

PORTLAND, Me, Dec 17—Col Albert Clarke of Boston, secretary of the Home Market club, and Bolton Hall of New York were the speakers at tonight's meeting of the Portland economic club, the subject being the proposed amendment to the constitution allowing a federal income tax. Both opposed the tax, on the ground that it was unjust and against the principles on which our government was founded.

Hon Charles F. Libby, president of the American bar association, presided and he, too, opposed the tax.

LATE HUNTERS ARRIVE.

One From Boston Among Those with Deer at Bangor, Me.

BANGOR, Me, Dec 17—Late hunters brought in about 40 deer last night. Nora Cameron of Bangor and Mrs Tom Kelley of Lincoln brought two deer each from Patten. W. E. Watkins of Boston had two deer.

Maine hunters with deer included L. S. Clark of Gardiner, L. B. Bradford of Bangor, Charles P. Prudenden of Millinocket, Charles F. Prudenden of Millinocket, E. H. Gerrish, E. H. Burton and Percy Perkins of Bangor, A. Mayo of Foxcroft, H. W. March, W. A. Skeed and Joe Francis of Oldtown.

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