

# RACHMANINOFF RECITAL By William G. Smith

It is a far cry from the soviet to the concert hall; from the misrule of anarchy to the pacific and soothing influences of art, but Russia is the home of radical contrasts and opposites.

So when this great country sends to our door so famous a representative of her intellectuals and art creators as Rachmaninoff one cannot but feel that there is ultimate hope for a country torn by discordant factions; hope that she may soon find her political and artistic equilibrium.

Since the passing of Tschalkowski no Russian composer has occupied so prominent and world-known a position in the musical world as Rachmaninoff, who appeared in recital at Grays Armory Monday night before an audience that filled the hall to overflowing with hearers and enthusiasm.

Since the days of Rubinstein, with the possible exception of Paderewski, no eminent composer with such pianistic attainments has visited this country.

## ATMOSPHERE OF THE DREAMER

Like Rubinstein, Rachmaninoff combines the dynamic force of a keen emotionalism and the analytic and logical dissecting mind of a creative musician.

Whatever he plays has the subtle atmosphere of the dreamer with the keen perception of logical sequence and constructive concreteness. His pianism has to it much more than mere virtuosity and brilliancy of execution. It has the superior attributes of musicianship that not only feels the emotional contents, but has subjected his interpretation to the final test of consistency and structural coherence.

His playing of the Beethoven sonata, for instance, was not only a comprehensive grasping of tonal nuances, dramatic contrasts and contrasted episodes, but went into the deeper significance of the structural development in the several movements of the composition so that we had submitted to our aural vision not only the finely graduated tonal effects, but also was made manifest the architectural beauty of his tonal and thematic structure.

The same may be said of the Chopin numbers, all presented with alternate moods of poetry and virility that made of the much maligned composer a tower of inspirational strength.

## VERSATILITY OF ARTISTS PRAISED

Rachmaninoff's interpretation of the "Ballad" and "Scherzo" were imbued with a dramatic fire and passionate emotionalism that removed them far from the sentimentality one so frequently hears as the essence of the great Pole's inspiration.

It is this versatility in mood interpretation that removes the eminent Russian from the mere virtuoso class of pianists. It is the breadth of his interpretative vision that gives to his readings the introspective power of one who not only interprets, but imparts to his interpretations the charm and strength of his own marked personality.

In the group of his compositions, including his universally known prelude, and a waltz of lilting charm, he gave expression to the special characteristics that mark his pianism as distinctly individual.

The former exploited to the highest degree his resourcefulness in highly colored dynamic contrasts; the latter afforded ample opportunity for delicate tonal nuances and naive effects in tempo rubato.

## TOUCH INCISIVE AND DRAMATIC

If one were to diagnose his special style one would say that his touch is incisive, distinctive and in climax thundersously dramatic.

By way of contrast he can make it seductive, persuasive and highly colored with poetic significance.

His sustained melody playing soars above the accompanying harmonies with the penetration of a cello or French horn, albeit in some instances it seemed that his melodic tones were rather more individualized than blended into a sequential continuity.

However, such are minor details when one considers the individuality and eminent constructive musicianship behind it all.

To have heard Rachmaninoff is to have heard one of the dominant figures

in the musical world, be it either pianist or composer, and when the two are so pre-eminently combined in one personality the occasion is one to be long remembered. After all, pianists—executively considered—are neither rare nor the result of a special providence, but composers who can give adequate expression at the instrument to the ideas of the great masters and clothe them with their own creative individuality are the outstanding marks of a generation, and Rachmaninoff is surely one of them.

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