

RACHMANINOFF TRIUMPHS

Russian Revealed as Great Composer and Great Pianist at Symphony's Concert.

Last of the three local orchestral series in its starting, the New York Symphony was greeted by a sold-out house when yesterday afternoon in the Academy of Music Walter Damrosch conducted under Institute auspices the first of five Saturday matinees. The soloist was Sergei Rachmaninoff and the program, beautifully planned, held three numbers only: Brahms's "Symphony in C Minor," the "Intermezzo" and "Perpetuum Mobile" from Moszkowski's "First Orchestral Suite," and Rachmaninoff's "Concerto for Piano with Orchestra in D Minor."

The day was a Rachmaninoff triumph. To say as much is not to discount the playing of the band or the directing of Mr. Damrosch; the genial conductor would, we are sure, agree fully with this estimate. But this particular concerto is, except for those few whose memories can go back to a similar occasion in the New Theater, 10 years ago, unfamiliar to New York audiences. The composer also played it a few weeks ago in Boston with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. With these two exceptions, the work has not been heard, though the composer and other pianists have given frequent eloquence to Rachmaninoff's two other concertos.

The reasons therefor were made obvious yesterday. It is not a concerto with which to make a pianist's holiday, for, while it abounds in technical difficulties, they are not of the kind that will impress the average hearer with wonder over the player's virtuosity. One marvels instead at the musical substance which packs all three movements, at the vividly glittering display of color in which the piano blends with orchestral combinations in a thousand unstereotyped hues and shades. Instead, one sits in awe and in emotional revelry as the magnificent effects of great music drive their meaning home to senses and imagination alike.

To dwell upon its many beauties would be to state in bald prose what only rhapsodic poetry ought to attempt. It must be sufficient to call attention, primarily to those who listened rapturously yesterday, to the superb coda of the final movement, when the piano over strings "in *frappando*" builds a tremendous climax that hurls itself to the heights with sharp punctuating phrases in the trumpets and trombones. This "D Minor Concerto" is Rachmaninoff in his noblest estate. We can recall no recent composition to compare with it in majesty and grandeur.

Orchestra and composer-pianist, in its playing, were in strict and harmonious accord. Certainly the occasion was one of the very few in which the results of the performance quite justified, even exalted, the potentialities of the composition. The day was, on the whole, one of Mr. Damrosch's best. His conducting of Brahms's mighty work was one of inspiration, nor is it altogether unfair to suggest that his opening eulogy of the composer may have whipped his powers of inspiration to an unwonted pitch of enthusiasm. The Moszkowski selections are slight and pleasing, but eminently fitted to disclose the technical proficiency of the band's personnel.