

## RACHMANINOFF PLAYS "BY DINT OF CONQUEST"

Russian Gives Own Laws to Works of Others, Before Big and Excited Audience.

BY RICHARD L. STOKES.

WHEN Schubert's masterpiece, "The Erlking," fell into the hands of Franz Liszt, that incorrigible virtuoso remarked: "Not at all bad; now, let's see what we can make of it!" and he proceeded to aggrandize the song into a terrific circus-piece for the piano. So also Sergei Rachmaninoff, in the plenitude of his confidence as a composer, is not a little disposed to regard the works of others as raw material, concerning which he is curious to see "what we can make of it." Not that he is so crass as to build up a Chopin waltz into a grand fantasia. But his liberties of interpretation are sometimes so signal that the numbers take on the seeming of transcriptions, and one looks at the program twice to discover whether they are labeled not merely Beethoven and Chopin, but Beethoven-Rachmaninoff and Chopin-Rachmaninoff.

This tendency on the part of the famous Russian was especially notable during the recital given last night at the Odeon. It appeared more than once that this professed study of the compositions of other men has proceeded to the length of appropriation and even conquest. Like Bonaparte in vanquished Italy, he proceeds to overthrow landmarks and set up new systems. Another's sonata assumes in his hands the plight of an invaded province, in which the customs and traditions are to be made over according to the will of the new master.

Such hardihood in one of less genius than Rachmaninoff would be mere impudence. But his gift of original musical intelligence is so powerful that he is probably able to improve upon a composer like Mendelssohn, while even Beethoven and Chopin take on a novelty which, if sometimes eccentric, is frequently exhilarating and intriguing. His favorite freedom is with rhythm, to which is given a flexibility disdaining bars and time signatures. Fresh and suggestive at first, the rubato ends by becoming too persistent. With an effect of strain, one perceives that the performer is attempting to make "something special" out of every note. And then there comes a longing for the relief of simplicity.

Program Light But "Musical."

In addition, a trait noticed in his previous recital here was carried still further last night—that of choosing a program of relatively simple music, of what is occasionally called "musical music," in itself of no great depth, and making it seem profoundly significant and beautiful by dint of consummate elocution. He even betrays a penchant for resuscitating pieces which have been thumped into insensibility by the fists of legions of students, and showing with what brilliant sprightliness they can be made to dance under the elixirs of a master-physician.

There is no denying that Rachmaninoff has the secret of enchanting the pianoforte into the performance of wondrously lovely marvels. There were many moments last night when his auditors, roused to delicious excitement, could scarcely sit still, when they laughed half-hysterically, and exchanged glowing looks of admiration and amazement. His principal miracles were worked in the realms of color and atmosphere. However bold his innovations, it cannot be gainsaid

that every number took on a distinct personality, that every bar had its definite shade in the spectrum of the piano.

When he wished, the tones flowed with liquid smoothness, as if the keys and hammers themselves had been fused together, instead of standing separately side by side. There were prodigies of extreme softness combined with extreme speed, but each tiny and fugitive note had its body and solidity. Then, once or twice, there was a momentary outburst of power, but power so effortless as to indicate reservoirs of strength not even tapped. Throughout there was a constant shifting of tone-color, like the rest less groupings and regroupings in a kaleidoscope. And over all his music played a reserved but ardent emotion, and an intelligence studious and thoughtfully contemplative, even if sometimes predatory.

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The evening began with Beethoven's sonata in D minor, Op. 31, No. 1, the first movement of which was perhaps the concert's biggest moment, and the last section of which was a miracle of grace and deftness, though a bit too emancipated in rhythm for conservative tastes. Then followed one of the pianist's feats of resurrection, the battered "Rondo Capriccioso" of Mendelssohn, which he made live again in pristine youth and charm. The encore was the equally hackneyed "Spinning Song" from the same composer's "Songs Without Words," which experienced an even livelier rejuvenation.

The second group was devoted to

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Chopin—his Quatrième Ballade, in F minor, Op. 52; his posthumous Valse in B minor, Op. 69, No. 2, and his great Scherzo No. 2, in B-flat minor, Op. 31. The playing of these numbers—particularly the abrupt and ruthless opening triplets and the exquisite trio of the Scherzo—raised a demand for two encores. Both were Chopin waltzes—one in A-flat major and the one in D-flat major, wherein Chopin amused himself by describing George Sand's dog in the act of chasing its tail.

Two of the pianist's own pieces formed the third division—his weird and somewhat acrid Waltz in A major, Op. 10, No. 2, and his remarkable "Tableau" study. Concerning the latter, the composer declined to reveal what "pictures" he had in mind, preferring that his hearers choose their own images. He then proceeded to the program's nearest approach to a parade piece, Liszt's fantasia on the waltz from Gounod's "Faust." The rhythm was more than usually bizarre, but there were brilliant glissando passages, besides a series of trills that chimed like a belfry full of carillons.

Becoming a Popular Idol.

From the demonstration that followed, it appears certain that Rachmaninoff—this gaunt, gray and elongated Russian who shambles upon the stage and slouches over the keyboard, with his close-cropped poll and saturnine face, pallid and trenched with deep lines—is by way of succeeding Paderewski as a popular idol. The gathering refused to depart until three more encores had been added. All were Rachmaninoff's own works, his Baracole, his inevitable Prelude in C-sharp minor—which he played with an air of dejected boredom—and his "Polka de W. R." The title here indicates a pretty story. The theme was conceived by the pianist's father, whose name is Wassily Rachmaninoff. His gifted son built it up into a fine dance; when it became popular, he sent the royalties on the sales to his father. The audience filled nearly every seat in the auditorium.

## BIG INCREASE IN GERMAN WAGES

By the Associated Press.

COLOGNE, Jan. 14.—The average daily wage of workmen in Germany has increased 241 per cent, and of women 263 per cent since 1913, according to the Imperial Workers' Gazette. The greatest increase was in the case of the electrical industry.

According to an article in a recent issue of the Cologne Gazette the expenses of maintaining a family of four persons totals 240 marks a week, or 12,480 a year (normally \$3120).

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