

Rachmaninoff is Wonderful at the Piano

The second of the Ellis concerts, under the local management of Bessie Bellanca, Louise Michael and Genevieve Kraft, was given last evening in Elmwood Music hall, by Sergi Rachmaninoff, who established anew his right to be acclaimed as the most individual pianist before the American public today. Mr. Rachmaninoff is not only an artist, whose appeal to all kinds of listeners is direct and irresistible; he is also unique, and in certain kinds of pianistic work he is matchless. What pianist is there who can equal him in the painting of vivid tone pictures? What player of them all can create such atmosphere and delineate so strikingly the mood and meaning of each composition he plays? The element of surprise is always present in the great Russian's interpretations, and he is able constantly to unveil new beauties even in familiar numbers.

This power of Mr. Rachmaninoff was well exemplified in the A major sonata by Mozart, which opened the programme. Technically within the grasp of a child, the composition was made a rare miniature by its exquisite, bell-like tone and its lovely coloring. Dynamically, it ranged from a crisp, clear forte to a pianissimo as tenuous as a cobweb thread, yet ever distinct. Not a tone, however soft, was lost. The Cuckoo, by Daquin, was another gem of delicacy and daintiness, which the audience wished ardently to hear again.

Weber's Memento Capriccioso, which followed, aroused another outburst of applause, to which the pianist responded with a sparkling performance of Mendelssohn's Hunting Song (Children's Corner, a suite of little pieces by Debussy, was a happy medium for the tonal clarity and dazzling speed of Mr. Rachmaninoff's fingers. A Chopin number comprised the Barcarolle, which received a most beautiful and poetic reading, and the E flat major waltz, played with infectious rhythm and without the exaggerated rubato which many concert pianists deem necessary. A recall brought forth a second waltz, that in C sharp minor, which was taken at so rapid a tempo as to blur the runs. Still it pleased the audience, which would not permit further progress with the programme until the artist had granted the inevitable hearing of his own C sharp minor Prelude.

Two very beautiful Rachmaninoff compositions, newly heard here, were Polichinelle, opus 3, and Barcarolle, opus 10. The latter is particularly fascinating in character, suggesting the Debussyan idiom. Around a haunting theme in minor mode, it weaves an arabesque of shimmering sound, like the play of light on the waters. A final programme number of Liszt's Spanish Rhapsody, displaying the pianist's marvelous virtuosity, which, however, he makes always subordinate to the musical import of whatever he plays. And even after all this rare musical feast, the audience would not allow him to withdraw, until he had given them yet one more delicious morsel as an aftertaste. It was indeed a wonderful concert. M. M. H.