

# MUSIC

By OLIN DOWNES.

## Rachmaninoff Concert.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's art as a pianist grows upon us with every year. His recital yesterday afternoon in Carnegie Hall intensified its impression. No performer who confronts the public does so with a more complete lack of any artifice, either of manner or of interpretation. The simple, clear, and on occasion gigantic lines of his interpretations are stripped of every superfluous ornament or excrescence of any kind. Mr. Rachmaninoff often disdains soft and romantic colorings and then his playing has analogy to sculpture rather than to a gorgeous canvas of the romantic era.

It therefore happens that his style, as personal as it is wholly unaffected and sincere, being in fact the accretion of years and of developed individuality, finds itself singularly opposite to these times. The musical tendencies of today are certainly toward a greater simplicity and a greater stress of outline and of formal proportion than they were a quarter century ago. It is not by Mr. Rachmaninoff's design that he finds himself in consonance with it. It is that in this respect he has stood firm, remained himself, that the tide turned toward him—not he toward the tide. Perhaps the result would have been the same if there had not been these coincidences. There is that in this great musical nature which is especially sympathetic and inspiring to younger as well as older generations. Greatness is not superficially contemporaneous.

What, after all, was the climax of the Rachmaninoff recital yesterday? It was not Chopin or Scriabine, nor yet Medtner, nor Rachmaninoff himself. The climax of the recital came immediately, at the beginning. It consisted in the opening performance of the two organ choral preludes of Bach.

It was here, above all, that towering musicianship and impersonality of style, which convey emotions more profoundly than the most hysterical ravings, reached their greatest height, simplicity and grandeur of expression. Many achievements were to Mr. Rachmaninoff's credit before the concert ended, yet it may be said that these two Bach performances constituted in themselves an experience for the listener to reflect upon and treasure in his memory. How nobly sculptured were the phrases! How full and clear the sonority and with what admirable skill, in the final chorale-prelude, did Mr. Rachmaninoff differentiate between the sustained chant and the joyous counterpoint! The chorales were "Now Comes the Gentile's Saviour" and "Rejoice, Beloved Christians," in Busoni's arrangement.

Mr. Rachmaninoff has consistently advanced the cause of Russian music which is not widely known and which he believes to merit public attention. The Prelude and Fugue of Tanieff were placed, no doubt with design, just after Bach's music in the old style. The blend of an occasional Russianism with Tanieff's wonted respect for and proficiency in classic forms was just sufficient, as it happened, to rob the composition of complete unity of style. This Prelude and Fugue, however, are brilliantly written, and Mr. Rachmaninoff's authoritative interpretation gave them their full measure of effect.

Medtner's "Fairy Tale," Op. 25, No. 1, was away from Bach and Brahms, and somewhat in the direction of Schumann. We are among those who do not agree with this composer's eclecticism and the acknowledged influence that German music had in his style as well as that of Tanieff. Yet the "Fairy Tale" has charming and ingratiating mood, is written with beauty as well as scholarship, and is an excellent vehicle for the pianist. Mr. Rachmaninoff finished a group of music by his Russian contemporaries with Scriabine's Fourth Sonata, to which he brought his splendid virtuosity and objectivity in interpretation. We can, however, imagine Scriabine played with more of the sensuousness and neuroticism which are elements of much of his music. The remaining Russian on the program was Rachmaninoff himself, with three preludes in E flat minor, B minor and E flat minor from his Opus 39. There is no particular attempt in these preludes at a modern idiom, but the trail of Rachmaninoff's artistic individuality, with its tendency to melancholy and a somewhat detached pessimism, is over most of these pages.

Of Chopin he played the B-flat minor Scherzo, the Etudes in E major of the first book and C minor of the second. He finished the printed program with Liszt's Etude in D-flat and the Paganini-Liszt Etude in A minor. Of course he played encores—could hardly have refused to do so—and of course an audience that packed the hall endeavored to squeeze into the space of a few yards near the stage. These things occur with monotonous regularity at the recitals of a few great pianists of whom the public is fully aware, and do not occur at concerts given by less famous ones, who sometimes also merit such attention. The musical record of yesterday afternoon's recital is one of consistently great interpretation and mastery of the piano.