

DOBROWEN IN FINAL THURSDAY CONCERT

Philharmonic Orchestra Makes Best Showing of Guest Conductor's Season Here.

RACHMANINOFF AS SOLOIST

Composer's Playing of His Third Piano Concerto Climax of Evening in Its Sheer Effect.

By OLIN DOWNES.

Issay Dobrowen, who conducts his last Philharmonic-Symphony concert of the present season next Sunday afternoon, made his final Thursday appearance last night with the orchestra in Carnegie Hall. Sergei Rachmaninoff was the soloist and the program consisted of an "Old-English Suite," arranged from compositions of Byrd and of anonymous composers by Max Ettinger; the Schumann "Spring" symphony, and Mr. Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto in which the composer appeared as pianist.

The concert was on the whole the best and most effective Mr. Dobrowen has given here. It is never easy for a guest conductor to appear for a short interval with an orchestra which has to learn the ways as well as the wishes of a new leader, especially when that orchestra is in a mood to relax after the exactions of rehearsals and concerts with a Toscanini. And Mr. Dobrowen is not a conventional conductor, or one who falls readily into ruts and allows the orchestra to do the same. He does not yet appear to get from the men all that he wants, and sometimes excessive effort brings only modest results. But last night the performances had always vitality and interest—at least when the music itself was not repetitious or dull—and his readings were better integrated and more saliently individualized than at any previous concert here.

The music from the "Old-English Suite" is taken by Ettinger from books of virginal pieces—from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, and My Ladye Neville's Book, and Will Foster's Book of pieces of modest dimensions for instruments of modest tonal capacities. These pieces are expanded and upholstered by Ettinger for an enormous orchestra covering the full complement of brass and wind-choir with piccolo, third oboe, bass-clarinet, contra-bassoon, tuba, and the customary number of strings. Thus the music is swollen in sound out of all proportion to its original style.

If it were scored with taste and felicity, the entire impression of the suite would probably have been different than it was. Under the circumstances one wondered whether the Byrd variations on the "Walsingham" theme would ever end, and was not well impressed by a sameness—in spite of the staggering orchestration—of character and of color between many different pieces. One then asked whether the great Byrd, so-called "father of English music," was as great as his reputation claimed, and whether, with all the gayety, vigor, melodiousness of this music there was not a good deal too much of the same thing for a concert number. The fifth piece, "The Bells," when the orchestration was best adapted for the big crescendo and decrescendo which ends it, and the last jocose and virile music of the "King's Hunt," when the orchestra laughs aloud, made the liveliest impression of a first hearing.

Mr. Dobrowen's reading of the Schumann symphony was warm and brilliant, and it had the impetuous current of the composer's inspiration. At the same time one asks, why the precipitate tempo of the opening movement? Mr. Dobrowen is not the only conductor who apparently thinks that the ebullience of Spring is best expressed by a headlong pace, so swift that the orchestra can barely play the notes, while details which under normal tempo would beautify the movement and make it the more impressive fly by with the noise, dust and clamor of an express train. But at least this tempo was consistent and was not dragged for a sentimentalized entrance of the second theme. And this whole movement, admitting the impetuous tempo, was genuinely exuberant, lyrical in spirit, with a long line and the proper rhetorical emphasis when the shout of "Spring"—the call of the introduction—is flung in the midst of the development section, from the instruments.

In other programs of the season there has been reason to remark upon and sometimes to question Mr. Dobrowen's tempi, but in the finale of the symphony, which he made uncommonly interesting as well as coherent, one was thankful for a conductor who did not feel it necessary to take a pump-handle tempo in the name of tradition. This was gay and riant and very spontaneous in effect. As a whole, a contagiously sincere and enthusiastic reading of Schumann's work by a musician of genuine sensibility and temperament.

The climax of the concert from the point of sheer effect was, of course, the performance of Rachmaninoff. And it may be said here that his Third Concerto never impressed the writer so strongly as on this occasion. It cannot be claimed that the ideas of this concerto are as important or commanding as themes of other of Mr. Rachmaninoff's compositions. But the resource in the working out of the ideas, the continuity of the thought, the richness and power of the structure were last night very striking. The concerto is the work of a great musician as well as a master pianist, and it has aplenty of Muscovite wail and pomp. Both elements were present in its performance, for Mr. Rachmaninoff played with his customary clarity, rhetorical power and magnificence. The orchestra part carried on the composer's thought and supplied the immense climaxes of which the piano alone is incapable. The audience, much excited, applauded furiously.