

RACHMANINOFF HAS ORCHESTRA TRIUMPH

RACHMANINOFF PROGRAM

Third Symphony in A minor
Piano Concerto No. 1 in F sharp minor
Sergei Rachmaninoff, soloist
Three Preludes, in C sharp minor, G major and G minor, orchestrated by Lucien Cailliet

Sergei Rachmaninoff was the towering hero—figuratively and physically—at the Philadelphia Orchestra concert in the Academy yesterday.

The great, gaunt, gray, grim Russian musician, making his first appearance since his return from Europe earlier in the week, was hailed in the twin roles of composer and pianist by an audience that jammed the house to its utmost capacity. The entire program was devoted to music by the distinguished veteran who dominated the afternoon, and he received two ovations—first, when he was summoned to the stage from a parquet box after the performance of his Third Symphony, and again for his superb performance of his First Piano Concerto.

It was the display of his pianistic prowess, still magnificent and unimpaired, which was the arresting, impressive event of the afternoon. No other pianist has ever played this concerto with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and it was manifest that no other living pianist could play it as he did, with Olympian breadth of utterance, poetic warmth and heroic brilliance, and the commanding coordination of intellect and emotion.

PERFORMANCE IS SUPERB

As his earliest work in this form, the first and last movements are palpably haunted by the spirit of Tchaikovsky and some of the floridity of Liszt, while the slow movement gave the soloist his supreme opportunity for individuality of expression. He was at the top of his form throughout.

How the Third Symphony in A minor, given its world premiere under Siskowski two years ago, was suddenly substituted at the last minute for the previously scheduled Second, has already been told. When Rachmaninoff heard Mr. Ormandy and the Orchestra rehearsing it on Thursday for out-of-town performances, he vowed he had never heard it played like that before, and at his suggestion or insistence it was given in place of the Second.

SYMPHONY UNINSPIRED

A composer's parental pride in his musical child is quite understandable. But hearing the work again after two years confirmed the earlier impression that it is at once pretentious and banal, almost entirely empty of inspiration and spontaneous musical speech, its throes of creation achieved by the light of the midnight oil and not the morning sun. To miss no detail of its opulent orchestration, Mr. Ormandy used both book and baton, instead of simply the baton he has resumed this season.

The concert closed with the first performance of three of Rachmaninoff's piano preludes, expertly orchestrated by the now departed Lucien Cailliet. These were the C sharp minor, the G major, and the G minor. Between the heavy bass choruses of the first, the light instrumentation employing violin solo and harp obbligato in the second, and the spirited martial effect of the third, they achieved excellent contrast.