

OWN WORK PLAYED BY RACHMANINOFF

Pianist Heard as Soloist With
Philharmonic in 'Rhapsody
on Theme of Paganini'

HIS SYMPHONY ALSO GIVEN

Sibelius's Incidental Music to
'Pelleas et Melisande' on
Carnegie Hall Program

With Sergei Rachmaninoff giving a resplendent performance as piano soloist in his own "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini," and John Barbirolli doing the best conducting of his local career to date in the same composer's symphony in E minor, last night's concert of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall assumed a gala nature. That the orchestra also was heard in its initial presentation of Sibelius's incidental music to Maeterlinck's "Pelléas et Mélisande" added to the provocative character of the occasion.

Although other pianists have attempted to play Mr. Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody" hereabouts, it is only when he himself is at the keyboard for the opus that its possibilities are fully exploited. The composition is not without its shallow moments, but under his fabulous fingers every measure falls into its ordained place in a way that lends a glorified aspect to the display piece as an entity.

Mr. Rachmaninoff, who was welcomed with an ovation when he first came on stage and scored another of long duration at the close of the "Rhapsody," acquitted himself of an interpretation filled with most vivid contrasts of mood. Making light of the extreme difficulties of many of the twenty-four variations, he invested them with a seemingly inexhaustible fund of color effects. Pages of tender lyricism alternated with others as remarkable for power and expansiveness, in a reading equally memorable for its poetry and its brilliance.

First Given in Moscow in 1909

Mr. Rachmaninoff's symphony in E minor remains the most frequently presented of his orchestral works. After the passage of the years, since its première in Moscow in 1909 it has lost none of its impressive qualities when given an unfoldment of the sort accorded it yesterday evening by Mr. Barbirolli and his men.

The conductor came to this symphony with a full comprehension of its far-flung outlines, its emotional intensity and rich, vibrant sonorities. Never before has this reviewer found the leader so completely en rapport with the music in hand and so capable of giving a compelling account of it. Whether sinew or sensuousness were demanded, delicacy or vividness and strength, it was inevitably supplied in a performance worthy of the masterpiece in all respects. Mr. Barbirolli also furnished admirable support in the "Rhapsody."

Music Is Unfamiliar Here

The incidental music Sibelius wrote for "Pelléas et Mélisande" in 1905 is so unfamiliar in this country that it might have been billed as a novelty. It proved to be one of its composer's weaker creations of a sort little calculated to add to his fame.

Although written three years after the production of Debussy's opera on the same subject and seven years after Fauré's music dealing with the theme, it exhibits none of the sensitiveness of these scores in its approach. There are certain of the numbers of the suite, such as the "Pastorale," "Mélisande at the Spinning Wheel" and especially "The Death of Mélisande," which make a certain appeal, but Maeterlinck's mythical land of Allemonde was mistaken by Sibelius for Finland, evidently, all of the score being as Finnish in its essence as anything he ever penned and having no more to do with the characteristics of the play for which it was composed than any of the mas-

ter's symphonies.

N. S.

The New York Times

Published: February 28, 1941

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