

Rachmaninoff Hailed By Record Audience At Orchestra Concert

By LINTON MARTIN

Sergei Rachmaninoff was the musical lion of the occasion at the Philadelphia Orchestra concert conducted by Eugene Ormandy in the Academy yesterday. Appearing both as pianist and composer on a program of two numbers devoted to his music, the great Russian, one of the last of the regal romanticists, was hailed with affectionate fervor by the record crowd of the still youthful symphony season.

The first soloist of the season, he set a standard and style in pianism that seems likely to remain unchallenged in the weeks to come. And he achieved his effect and made his impression by an utter absence of theatrical display, save so far as the more bravura passages of his fourth, and least familiar piano concerto demanded it.

WELCOME GUEST

The distinguished Russian, now in his 69th year, is always one of the most welcome of musical guests in this city, whether in recital or in his appearances with the Orchestra. And so it was with eager anticipation that he was greeted by his numerous and loyal admirers yesterday.

There was more reason for regret, consequently, that his exceptional gifts, both creative and interpretive, were not afforded more felicitous scope than in the sterile and ineffective work which he chose for his solo appearance, and in the unduly long Second Symphony, in E minor—which occupies 45 minutes and has little to say for its length—and which Ormandy conducted with an enthusiasm and an energy worthy of more substantial and rewarding material.

The Fourth Piano Concerto, in G minor, which was given its world premiere in the spring of 1927 on the same stage, under Stokowski and with the composer at the piano, was presented in a new version yesterday. It was announced that Rachmaninoff had changed the orchestration of the first two movements, and radically rewrote the finale.

Whatever these changes may have been, they have not sufficed to infuse inspiration and soaring beauty into a work that seems for the most part labored and sterile, and in which the most attractive theme, heard repeatedly in the slow movement, sounds like a variation—a rather lugubrious variation—of "Three Blind Mice."

Yet Rachmaninoff's superb playing was rewarding of and for itself. His

Program

Symphony No. 2, in E Minor
Piano Concerto No. 4, in G Minor

tone was of a crystalline purity, and even had its poetic moments, though the work gave him no opportunity for breadth of style and profundity and feeling, and the orchestration seemed out of balance.

The Second Symphony, written while Rachmaninoff was comparatively youthful, has its Tchaikovskyian moods and manners, and there is a certain prettiness of melody without genuine distinction of musical utterance in its passages of melancholy romanticism. Despite its more spirited and sprightly sections, it does a deal too much plaintive brooding for this day and age, and what once seemed introspective about it has faded considerably. It would be helped a lot, perhaps, by the liberal and not-too-tender use of an editorial blue pencil.

Players Revive 'Street Scene'

The Neighborhood Players, 507 South 8th st., opened their 1940-41 season last night with the proletarian melodrama, "Street Scene," by Elmer Rice. The production, directed by Julie Sutton, with a strikingly realistic set by Igor Belinkoff, will play tonight, tomorrow and next week-end.

Notable in the cast of this revival were Neighborhood favorites, Rudy Bond as Frank Maurant, Ann Israelitan as his mistreated and unfaithful wife, and Sylvia Cohn, playing the daughter, Rose Maurant.

Also featured in the cast of 35, and