

Rachmaninoff Stirs Audience to Rising Salute

BY EDWARD BARRY.

To be honored in Orchestra hall is no novelty to Sergei Rachmaninoff. Many times during the last 32 years he has bowed his angular bow before a wildly demonstrating audience there after a session with the piano or the baton. Many more times he has been honored in absentia when his compositions have appeared on symphony programs or on the programs of other pianists.

Yet what awaited him in the same hall last night must have moved even his well disciplined spirit to a little rejoicing. The audience rose to its feet in his honor not once but twice. The Chicago Symphony orchestra gave him a brilliant fanfare. Palms pounded against enthusiastic palms at frequent intervals thruout the evening.

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This was an all-Rachmaninoff program, with Frederick Stock conducting and with the composer cast in the rôle of soloist in a first Chicago performance of the revised version of his Fourth Piano concerto.

The evening opened with the Vocalise for Solo Violins and Orchestra (based on a textless song). It was played with a tone quality so pure that the ear could detect no admixture of dross.

The Third symphony, in A minor, followed. As a whole, this is a work which it is easier to respect than to love. It is frugal, late Rachmaninoff, not the generous, flooding Rachmaninoff of the Second symphony.

The instrumentation is less voluptuous. The themes, for all their beauty and provocativeness, do not flow so intoxicatingly nor lend themselves so easily to those exciting summings-up at the end. Moreover, one movement [the third] persistently refuses to jell. Far from coming to seem natural and inevitable, its rhythms still surprise the listener and sometimes, it must be admitted, even the musicians.

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The symphonic poem, "The Island of the Dead," which stood third on the program, is perhaps the most successful modern musical embodiment of the awful—the awful in the strict, not the colloquial sense of the term. The orchestra piled up the piece's grim sonorities competently.

The new piano concerto, played with a quiet expertness by the composer, should become a popular work. Here Rachmaninoff is concerned with his beautiful lost 19th century musical world. Altho the Fourth concerto lacks the fullness and the passion and the all-out quality of the Second and Third, its themes are sometimes reminiscent of an earlier Rachmaninoff in their rueful, down dropping character and in the darkness and richness of their tonal dress.

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Pianist: *Clara Arraras*

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