

Ovation Echoes Great Music of Rachmaninoff

Concert by the Chicago Symphony orchestra. Hans Lange, conductor; Sergei Rachmaninoff, pianist. Presented at Orchestra hall Thursday evening, Feb. 11, 1943. The program:
Overture, "Leonore," No. 3..... Beethoven
Concerto for Piano, 1, C major... Beethoven
Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis, for double string orchestra... Williams
Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini, for piano and orchestra..... Rachmaninoff

BY CLAUDIA CASSIDY.

Sergei Rachmaninoff evoked a series of ovations when he appeared with the Chicago Symphony orchestra at Orchestra hall last night. His entrance won standing tribute from orchestra and capacity audience, his Beethoven stirred a storm of grateful applause, and his own Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini ended the concert in a kind of avalanche of cumulative excitement.

This has been a vintage Rachmaninoff season. In his earlier recital and last night with the orchestra, his playing was so clearly the voice of the mind that the spirit spoke thru transparency of tone. His way with the Beethoven concerto was sensitivity incarnate. He played it so quietly and yet with such penetration that it verged on the clairvoyant. It was immaculately phrased, and projected with such radiance that memory of the performance will cling to the concerto for many a long season.

This was inspired preparation for the brilliance of his own Rhapsody, that gleaming showpiece which combines the vertiginous dexterity of the Paganini caprice, from which it is taken, with a dash of the febrile glitter of the Berlioz of "Symphonie Fantastique" and the magic of his own way with the broad singing phrase straight out of Tschalkowsky and unerringly aimed at the heart of popularity.

In virility and vitality, the Rhapsody ranks with Rachmaninoff's Second and Third Concertos. For all its glitter it is no tawdry work. It is so spontaneously written that you can understand why when Rachmaninoff decided to set it down he cut short a tour and hurried to his retreat on Lake Lucerne while the fire of creation was white hot. There is flame in its writing, but the kind of flame that burns out dross. These 24 variations on the 24th caprice have a kind of a seventh daughter of a seventh daughter diablerie. They are put together with lapidarian skill, and the result is a network of nerves, color, excitement, and that curious tingle that means success.

Mr. Rachmaninoff played it as fastidiously as he had played Beethoven, yet with that extra quality of the tenebrous that is one of its deepest secrets. Mr. Lange and the orchestra accompanied him on both excursions with sympathy and pleasure.

Mr. Lange's own bows of the evening came with the "Leonore" Overture and with a beautiful performance of Vaughan Williams' fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis, an organist of the 16th century. The fantasia is wrought with double string orchestra, beautifully balanced in both orchestra and suggestion of organ tone, and it employs a string quartet with uncommon skill. The performance had warmth and eloquence and a touching sense of something almost legendary. It was one of the finest things Mr. Lange has achieved with the orchestra.