

RACHMANINOFF GIVES RECITAL

Thrills Large Audience in Symphony Hall

Sergei Rachmaninoff played in Symphony Hall yesterday afternoon before an audience which left very few empty seats and applauded the distinguished pianist and composer with exceptional enthusiasm.

Mr. Rachmaninoff played superbly. From every angle—incredible virtuosity of pianoforte technique, profound musicianship, rhythmic verve and charm of detail—he seemed yesterday at the summit of his powers. He showed himself once more, and to a rare degree, that rare combination—a virtuoso who can dazzle and carry away the uncritical listener, and a pianist able to enchant the musician by the exquisite rightness of his style and delight him by the unexpected light he sheds upon familiar music through the creative quality of his interpretative genius.

It was not at first sight an impressive program that Mr. Rachmaninoff had set himself to play; one less pretentious indeed than that of many a debut. A Mozart sonata, two little sonatas of Scarlatti, Schumann's "Carnival," a Chopin group—D flat Nocturne, F major Valse, G minor Etalade—and lastly, from his own pen, a "Moment Musical" and an extraordinarily ingenious and elaborate arrangement of Kreisler's familiar and popular "Liebesfreud." Of the latter one cannot help thinking that it seemed a divinely inspired and diabolically clever vengeance for Mr. Kreisler's own complacently overspiced arrangements of such defenseless tunes as the "Londonderry Air." In a similar vein was an arrangement of the same composer's "Liebesleid" which appeared among the encores.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's Mozart has not, perhaps, the exquisitely polished surface upon the attainment of which so many young pianists of the present generation (some older pianists, too) concentrate too exclusively their attention; but it had perfect style, a delicacy of phrasing that had strength and pungency to redeem it from effeminacy, an elasticity of rhythm and variety of accent that made it ceaselessly interesting, a sense of balance and form that gave unity to the whole. A hint of the harpsichord brilliance of touch and light rapidity of passage work lent historical prospective.

He gave tremendous rhythmic sweep to a D minor sonata, melodic and rhythmic charm to a C major sonata of Scarlatti. To Schumann's "Carnival," already rapidly becoming hackneyed, he gave fresh life and value by a performance of which few hearers can ever have heard the like for imaginative power, musical intelligence, sensitiveness entirely free from mawkish sentimentality and from languishing poetizing, and yet for sheer beauty of conception and execution. Of the "Sphinxes," usually omitted in performances—perhaps not even intended for performances—he made, in an arrangement that justified itself, a section full of terrifying mystery. The enthusiastic applause which followed Mr. Rachmaninoff's electrifying version of "Carnival" was exceptionally prolonged, surviving with undiminished intensity three or four acknowledging returns to the platform.

Equally delightful and musically were his Chopin performances and many a no less mature in interpretation lent them interest. His own pieces and the inevitable encores closed the concert brilliantly.

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