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Rachmaninoff Recital BY OLIN DOWNES

Plano music by modern and ultra-modern Russians was interpreted by Sergei Rachmaninoff, the Russian composer-pianist, yesterday afternoon in Symphony Hall. The choice of music was more than creditable to Mr. Rachmaninoff's breadth of view, for he put on his programme several of the most representative compositions of Scriabine with whom, as a composer, Mr. Rachmaninoff does not agree. These Scriabine compositions, little known in Boston, attracted many of the "connoisseurs," who do not ordinarily attend Sunday afternoon concerts.

The programme in full, the most important and representative programme so far as Russia is concerned, which Mr. Rachmaninoff has offered in this city, consisted of Rachmaninoff's piano sonata, op. 23; Etude, op. 13, Rubinstein; Valse, op. 40, Tchaikowsky; "Gopak" Moussorgsky; fifth sonata, op. 53, Scriabine; "Two Novells," op. 17, Medtner; two etudes tableaux, op. 33, Rachmaninoff; Poeme, op. 32; and etude, op. 8, Scriabine.

The Fifth Sonata is still a bone of contention between those who do and those who do not admire the mature Scriabine. There are many who enjoy the rather facile and superficial music of the early days, when he was obviously influenced by Chopin, but as Scriabine went on, the number of his admirers, quite logically, and quite possibly with justice, diminished. An artist will meet more opposition as he develops, whether he develops in a direction right or wrong. The Fifth Sonata, its merits aside, represents very fairly and effectively the mature Scriabine, when he had found his voice, and developed a tonal system, a musical language unequivocally his own.

The scale used in the Fifth Sonata, the chords and sequences arising from the scale are employed consistently and with great strength of workmanship, right through the work. It is almost perfect in form, if by form one means the most beautiful and symmetrical development of ideas. There is no padding, no circumlocution, no hesitation in the music. At the very beginning an initial motive is stated—the motive of a musical anarchist armed to the teeth, and determined to march to the bitter end of his doctrine whatever the consequences—and this motive reaches its full development and its complete justification, so far as form is concerned, by the time the sonata in one movement has come to an end.

The pieces by Medtner are much clearer, in a way more classic, certainly more beautiful, according to accepted standards than this lurid and fantastical music of Scriabine. But they do not attempt to soar so high, which is a virtue or a defect, according to one's point of view in these matters.

It should be added that with all these comparisons, the music of Rachmaninoff himself showed to exceptional advantage. His music is either deliberately decorative or intensely human. It is direct and simple. There are pages of Rachmaninoff which promise exceptionally well for the future. First because they come straight from the heart, secondly because the man knows his business.

As for piano playing, it is unnecessary to describe over again the force, vitality and bigness of this man's art. He vitalizes the smallest thing that he interprets. The audience, which overflowed the hall, kept applauding and asking for more through a half hour of encore playing which followed the appointed recital.