

# RUSSIAN PIANIST IN NEW READING OF BEETHOVEN SONATA

Rachmaninoff Makes Hymn, Not  
Marital Air, Out of 'Star  
Spangled Banner'

BY SHIRLEY VICTOR BROOKS.  
Sergei Rachmaninoff, Russian pi-  
anist, appeared at the Odeon last  
night in concert before the most  
critical audience that has gathered  
in that great assembly hall.

The artist of the evening gave his  
hearers plenty to talk about. His un-  
conventional interpretations were  
strikingly numerous. Just as he  
played the "Star Spangled Banner,"  
the opening number, in a manner  
never heard here before, he also  
played Beethoven in a manner just  
as original. From his individual  
viewpoint, Rachmaninoff carried out  
his entire program.

This great musician in the popu-  
lar mind, especially in this country,  
has been associated with composi-  
tion rather than with performance.  
His works have been studied and  
rendered perhaps as frequently as  
those of any other composer.

His playing last night came as a  
revelation to a large part of the  
audience. He broke many traditions.

His technique and execution, his  
staccato precision and finger articula-  
tion, his expression, the power and  
the tenderness of his touch, his con-  
centration, his repose and the aw-  
ward grace with which this tall,  
slender man sat at the instrument,  
made his performance the most re-  
markable in memory.

He put things into the "Star Span-  
gled Banner" never heard before and  
he improved on all other renditions  
of it, unless the martial or patriot-  
ic interpretation is the only one de-  
sired. He made it a hymn. It was  
a song without words.

In classic form, he opened his pro-  
gram with the A major Theme and  
Variations of Mozart and Beetho-  
ven's Sonata, Opus 15, No. 7. These  
he made realistic in his effort to play  
them as they would have been per-  
formed on the piano at the time of  
their composition. His unconven-  
tional interpretation of the Beetho-  
ven number was protested by many  
in the audience, but the fact that he  
was probably giving an interpreta-  
tion as Beethoven himself would  
have given instead of a present day  
reading was not considered by his  
critics.

Three Chopin numbers next were  
given with similar individuality.

Then followed a group of his own  
compositions. The first of these  
was his famous "Prelude in C-sharp  
Minor," one of the most popular and  
undoubtedly the best known com-  
position for piano that has come out  
of Russia.

As he began this number half the  
audience leaned forward in order to  
get every iota of tempo and touch  
that the composer would put into it.  
The "Prelude" has been played in  
many moods the world around. Its  
time and interpretation have been  
the subject of much discussion. The  
main difference between the com-  
poser's reading and that of others, is  
that Rachmaninoff interprets with a  
keener sense of the descriptive ele-  
ment which enters into the work. He  
brings out the ringing of the bells  
of the Kremlin at Moscow with  
greater realism than commonly  
heard and takes the rapid passages  
of the "Prelude" with much more  
speed than others usually do. In  
this he goes apparently some of the  
musical beauty of the composition,  
but he sacrifices it to intellectuality  
rather than to temperament.

The remainder of the group con-  
sisted of the composer's "Hu-  
moresque" and two transcriptions,  
"Romance from 'The Lilacs'" and  
"Polka de W. R." These were inter-  
esting and exquisite.

Great interest was manifested in  
his next number, Liszt's "Etapeodie  
No. 12." This great work which has  
taxed to the utmost pianists of every  
degree since it was written, thrilled  
last night's audience. The artist's  
dynamic power, his tremendous stac-  
cato fingering, the extraordinary  
rapidity with which he met the re-  
quirements of this great composition,  
brought forth cheers at its comple-  
tion.

Although visibly wearied at the  
conclusion of his program the artist  
responded to the demands for two  
encores, because over half of those  
in the audience remained in their  
seats and refused to go. The first  
encore was the performer's own  
composition, "Polichinelle," which  
holds rank in popularity with his  
"Prelude." By this time Rachmanin-  
off was too tired to play this num-  
ber with the precision so marked in  
his previous work and the heavy ex-  
actions of the last number just pre-  
ceding had clearly worn him down.  
Notwithstanding, the exalted tem-  
perament was still there.