

Overflow Crowd Acclaims Rachmaninoff Concert

By Linton Martin

An audience which jammed the Academy to the doors enthusiastically hailed Sergei Rachmaninoff last night when the great Russian pianist and composer opened the major recital season in this city and his own 50th year as a concert artist.

It was a golden occasion on every count. Golden, in inaugurating Rachmaninoff's jubilee year as a musical milestone in his own career. Golden, in the sweet music at the box office for the start of Emma Feldman's All Star Concert Series. And, by no means last or least, golden in the superb display of pianistic powers by the distinguished artist, who will be 70 years old next April 1.

OVERFLOW TO STAGE

A fervent reception was given by the audience—which filled the space in the orchestra pit to the last inch and even overflowed on the stage—to the gaunt, gray veteran who gave matchless display of his utterly individual interpretive and technical skill in a program capably arranged to disclose these qualities.

Although the recital in its range spanned two centuries, or from Bach's day to Rachmaninoff's own music, every number was colored by his feeling and approach as one of the last of the regal romanticists. For this reason he was most felicitous in some of the 19th Century music for which he has a special affinity, particularly the Chopin numbers, which included the Polonaise in C Minor, Nocturne in F Sharp and Scherzo in C Sharp Minor.

CLASSICAL TRADITION

Opening his performance in the classical tradition, Rachmaninoff offered his own transcription of three movements of the Bach E-major Sonata, originally written for unaccompanied violin, which he has

not played here for nine years. Considering the character of the work as Bach wrote it, Rachmaninoff's transcription for piano is remarkably resourceful and thoroughly musicianly. He has given it a genuinely pianistic quality, and he made it magnificently his own in performance.

At this day, it would be superfluous to speak at length of his treatment of each number on the regular program and the encores of course demanded by the insatiable audience. Each number was played with the clean-cut profile and spaciousness of line which are refreshing qualities of the artist, yet each, somehow, seemed to take on a quality of Russian romanticism.

This was particularly true of the Schumann Novelette in F-sharp

minor and of the Liszt numbers—"Valse Oublee," Sonetto del Petrarca, and the Tarantella, "Venezia e Napoli." It was apparent also, to a degree, in the Beethoven Sonata, Opus 31, No. 2.

Oddly enough, one of the least effective impressions was made by the pianist's only composition of his own on the formal program: Four Etude Tableaux. This music is agreeably melodious and skillful, but it is not especially inspired or dis-

tinguished by striking individuality.

But over all was the impress of the artist's dominating strength and power of personality, his straightforwardness and sincerity that disdained any excesses of mannerism or floridity of effect.

There were only three encores—Chopin's Mazurka in C-sharp minor and Waltz in A flat, and—for finality—Rachmaninoff's own Opus 3, No. 2, perhaps better known as the Prelude in G-sharp minor.

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