

MUSICAL

RACHMANINOFF PLAYS

FAMED RUSSIAN PIANIST ENTHRALLS WITH GOLOSSAL ART

By Francis Kendig

The transcendent genius, Sergei Rachmaninoff, gave a piano recital last evening at Philharmonic—a concert of such music as has but seldom been heard within the walls of this structure, which has housed the art of so many who are great. Rachmaninoff played as only he can play, with a breadth and seriousness, which compel and hold all in reverent awe.

The program in its very magnitude was strange, in a sense, for it contained the names of but five composers — all immortals; he played the very greatest of their music, and yet scarcely a number which he performed has been heard in Los Angeles for years and years.

His selections were the Bach "English Suite," Mendelssohn's "Variations Serieuses," Beethoven's "Appassionata Sonata," "Funeral March" by Liszt, "Etude Tableau" and a Prelude, both of his own composing, and the "Spanish Rhapsodie" by Liszt. His encores included a posthumus waltz in A flat and the C Sharp Waltz by Chopin, "Gopak" by Moussorgsky, "Liebeslied" by Kreisler-Godowsky and his own famed C Sharp Minor Prelude.

What other artist could dominate and hold an audience through the first three of these without leaving the stage? And follow these with the remainder of the program without time for relaxation? Who beside Rachmaninoff can bring from the piano orchestral color and sweep with such colossal grandeur that for two hours a house packed to the doors will listen with motionless intensity? He plays with a conception such as is only given to those who love greatly, feel deeply, suffer silently and give generously and beautifully.

One cannot criticise Rachmaninoff. It is a great honor to be able to pay tribute to his art. If he does something which may displease the listener, it is of no consequence. His message is ennobling, his grasp colossal in its magnitude and his tone and interpretation, if not so beautiful as he who may be only a poet, triumphs in its blending of realism and idealism.

Yet for all this, Rachmaninoff is wasting his time by playing for people, while the creative genius slumbers within him. While the world would be much poorer without his performances, his compositions reveal depths and beauties which are new.

He is a sensitive man; his face is a mask behind which the soul lives and thinks and breaths; he is apart from those whom he meets and sees, and with whom he talks. His art is in its outlines like a great cathedral, yet it is one of repressed emotion. He who would talk with Rachmaninoff must do so through his playing and his compositions. Again, to resort to simile, as an oak is mightiest among trees, so is this Russian among musicians. A great and serious mind only released and exhibited through the realms of great music.