

MUSIC

Rachmaninoff Recital.

The pianoforte playing of Mr. Rachmaninoff, to-day the most popular pianist in America, is an enigma. It is transcendent or banal, at moments scaling Parnassus and at other moments grazing the classroom of the conservatory. He is, in final analysis, a master-musician, a vivid interpreter, a technical juggler of amazing powers. In his interpretations one is conscious of the composer back of the pianist, of that authentic personality who has given to the music world such fine creations as the Third Concerto for piano and orchestra, "The Isle of the Dead," the E minor symphony.

Mr. Lawrence Gilman, a few seasons past, declared Rachmaninoff a "first class pianist and fourth class composer." if at all, the classification should be inverse. We rather think that as a piano recitalist pure and simple the Russian composer will receive challenge from those in that domain; his pianism, surely, cannot take rank with that of a de Pachmann, Paderewski, Bauer, Gleseking or Rosenthal. An occasional lapse into the fine amateur obtrudes itself into his performance, forcing itself upon the consciousness only to be scattered by a surprising display of authoritative powers.

Thus, last evening, in two Schubert numbers, the Andantino and Variations of Tausig version and "Wanderer" Fantaisie of Liszt transcription, Mr. Rachmaninoff was absolutely lacking in magnetism, his tone distinctly harsh and without sonority. On the tide of these classics, the player seemed to be curiously adrift, rudderless—an amateur a-sea. But in the course of a Rachmaninoff recital, taut attention prevails, and last night's audience sat enapt, applauding loudly at the close of each piece. Can it be, during the Schubert renditions, that these listeners were unaware of the player's lapse—or was it the man they worshiped, the composer of the "prelude"?

Brahms' energetic minor Ballade and mysterious E flat minor Intermezzo (both of Op. 118), proved examples of the player's lesser though pleasing playing. The higher flights of the artist came with the Chopin group. Here was pianism and musical discourse of unalloyed perfection. The Rondo in E flat, of early years, is Chopin in the bud, and how beautiful the full blossoming last night under Rachmaninoff's kindred comprehension. Of the evening's programme, this number was highlight.

Liszt's fireworks were set off amid a tour de force of brilliancy in the Itakoczy March. And need it be added that the "prelude" was awarded the awaiting assemblage at the close?

The recital was under Institute auspices. About 2,000 were in attendance.