

### RACHMANINOFF, THE SPELL-BINDER OF THE KEYBOARD

Rachmaninoff, the spellbinder of the keyboard, enraptured a Philharmonic Auditorium capacity audience last evening. He did it with the basilisquian poise of seemingly extraordinary ease of technic. But who will reveal what price Rachmaninoff paid for that technic. Nor is there much purpose in calling the Russian a great pianist. The world knows that he is a master of his instrument, though he is greater in the creative realm of composition. What use to speak of his amazing left hand, that is so fleet, so strong, which leaps with the certainty of a Cossack horse in Gogol's "Taras Bulba." There are great strength and greatly stirring tones, also tones of great loveliness.

Rachmaninoff — remnant of Tsarist Russia, draws to the concert hall the comrades of those who confiscated his estate, as well as those that wore high-shafted patent-leather boots, silver-spurred. That tall, haggard, slow-moving, serious-faced man—a remnant of old Russia.

Of Beethoven's sonata opus 109 he made very little. The Schumann "Papillons" he tossed off almost over brilliantly. But the Chopin sonata opus 35, with the "Funeral" March sounded an experience, free from all sentimentality, grandiose, telling of melodic-phrase-gesture, compassionate, and then fatalistic in that Presto-finale, which has something of the speed and hopelessness of Dante's infernal winds, an airy wall between the living and the dead inhabitants of infinitude.

One heard a manuscript work, "Fairy Tales" by Nikolae Medtner, Russian composer pianist, difficult, rhythmic, not very essential, further Rachmaninoff's own "Etude-Tabelau" of Slavic languor, Ravel's scintillating, quasi-Oriental "Toccatà," Debussy's "Girl With the Flaxen Hair" and his rather Nipponese "Garden in the Rain," which the pianist painted in richer colors than is customary; finally three Scriabin etudes, neo-Chopinism, the one in D-sharp minor, opus 8, lighting up the program at the close like a flare of unfulfilled passion.