

GREAT OVATION FOR RACHMANINOFF.

SCENES AT ALBERT
HALL.

MEMORABLE RECITAL.

AUDIENCE CROWD TO
PLATFORM.

It is now quite clear that Sergei Rachmaninoff has been promoted by consensus of public opinion from the position of an eminent composer and pianist to that of a great popular figure. At the Royal Albert Hall yesterday afternoon he had the kind of reception that is accorded only to personalities of world-wide renown—to artists of the rank of Paderewski and Chaliapine.

It is but a few years since Rachmaninoff, to the ordinary amateur, was known merely as the composer of an exceedingly ubiquitous Prelude. After the revolution in Russia he settled in America and built up for himself there a great reputation as a pianist, as a fine interpreter of other music than his own. He brought that reputation with him to Queen's Hall a year or so ago, emerging, in the opinion of our own most enlightened public, as an artist of the highest distinction.

Hence the ovation given him in the Albert Hall yesterday had nothing in it of surprise—except perhaps to himself. His name, his austere personality, had caught the popular imagination. His interpretation of a partly classical but almost wholly romantic programme so obviously appealed to the vast audience that encores were inevitable, and the scene at the close, when people crowded close to the platform, was a spontaneous tribute to his great gifts as composer, his powers as executant, and to the charm of a magnetic but somewhat aloof individuality.

After a particularly brilliant performance of the Liszt Polonaise in E major, with which the programme concluded, he played a Valse of Chopin, and after more clamorous applause the Prelude which all the world knows—its first two bars drowned in acclamations. More cheers followed, and yet another encore ere the audience would let Rachmaninoff go.

Earlier in the programme he had given us a most arresting performance of the Funeral March Sonata of Chopin. Technical difficulties, of course, seemed non-existent, and it was the passion, the drama, the poetry, the colour of the Sonata that were revealed in the white heat of his inspiration. The last section of the March itself disappearing into the distance was a simple but unforgettable picture.

H. H.