

RACHMANINOFF ACCLAIMED

GREAT RECEPTION AT QUEEN'S HALL

By H. E. WORTHAM

London gave to Mr. Rachmaninoff on Saturday afternoon the welcome it reserves for pianists of the first magnitude.

The Queen's Hall was packed from floor to ceiling. Even when Mr. Rachmaninoff had added encore to encore, and the lights had been put out, a fervent remnant remained to persuade the famous Russian musician to play once again—which he did in the semi-darkness.

This hero-worship was not unjustified; for Mr. Rachmaninoff had played like Rachmaninoff. The qualities both of intellect and feeling which have long given supreme distinction to his playing are too well known to be pointed out anew.

Mr. Rachmaninoff manages to square the circle—to be at once himself and the composer he is interpreting—with more success than any other pianist before the public to-day. He began with his own arrangement of the Preludio from Bach's E major Violin Sonata, in which certainly there was more Rachmaninoff than Bach.

It was not so with Beethoven. Nothing could have been more convincing than the Beethovenish fury of the "Appassionata" in a performance that one will not easily forget for its power and its restraint. Yet Mr. Rachmaninoff used no crashing fortissimos, and his contrasts of colour in the first movement were remarkable for their studied moderation. It was a deeply interesting reading, in which absolutely nothing was forced except the pace of the final Presto.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's own "Variations on a theme of Corelli," which we have not heard before in England, proved to be brilliantly written in the rich harmonic idiom which Mr. Rachmaninoff has inherited from the romantic school. How far it is possible to say anything new in this medium is another matter.