

RACHMANINOFF DISPLAYS RARE PIANISTIC ART

By RICHARD D. SAUNDERS

Sergei Rachmaninoff gave the first of his two recitals here on Saturday afternoon at the Philharmonic Auditorium. Balcony and galleries were well filled, even if the orchestra pit was not. Rachmaninoff is pre-eminently a virtuoso of prodigious technical equipment and a tone that holds lovely quality, whatever it may lack in emotion. His playing was at all times marked by the same characteristic elegance and polish that are a feature of his compositions.

His opening Mozart D-major Sonata was executed with meticulous care and a singing melodic line, though it was an interpretation translated into the terms of present day pianistic sonorities. His pianism was exceptional in the Chopin Sonata, Op. 35, and the finale, at the tempo he took it, proved a stupendous technical feat. The celebrated "Funeral March" movement held a nicely calculated shading.

Rachmaninoff usually confines his programs to the familiar concert "war horses," but on this occasion he ventured as far towards contemporary music as the Scriabin "Poeme" in F-sharp, Op. 32, No. 1, and really gave a fine reading of its delicately beautiful nuances, with more emotion than he had shown previously. And the same composer's "Etude," Op. 8, No. 12, in the same key, was equally beautifully rendered. Borodin's "Scherzo," with its delightfully humorous quirk, proved a brilliant show piece under his hands. Two of his own "Preludes" were those in A-minor and G-major, works of fastidious grace in both composition and execution. On the sentimental side was a Rubinstein "Barcarolle" and Kreisler's "Liebesleid," which Rachmaninoff has elaborated with arabesques and other apurtenances in the Liszt-Thalberg tradition. The Strauss-Tausig "One Lives But Once" concluded the program in a burst of pianistic pyrotechnics.

The audience demanded five encores, which included the pianist's transcriptions of Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Flight of the Bumble-bee" and Moussorgsky's "Hopak," and the majority remained vehemently applauding even after the stage lights were turned off, until Rachmaninoff finally returned and resignedly played his C-sharp-minor "Prelude."

Rachmaninoff will be heard again tomorrow night in a program of familiar concert items of Bach-Tausig, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt and two of his own "Preludes."

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