

RACHMANINOFF MYSTICISM REVEALED IN HIS CONCERT

*Master's Insight Into Scriabine's Modernism Belies
His Assertion of "Not Understanding"*

BY ISABEL MORSE JONES

Sergei Rachmaninoff played at the Philharmonic Auditorium yesterday afternoon. He has reached the three-score mark but lost none of his valor at the piano. However, he is not the same mighty warrior who fought his way to the top in Russia before the revolution. The acid of bitter loss has corroded his outer being and left him a vision into music as his one great, untouchable possession. He let his hearers partake of his mystic insight at his concert yesterday.

It began with the Mozart D major sonata. It had translucent clarity as it was unfolded under the great pianist's fingers. It was all sparkle and light.

Tragedy came in the "Funeral March" sonata by Chopin. The soul of a man can be judged by the way he plays that B-flat minor sonata, provided he is technically equipped to play it, of course. Rachmaninoff does it with great restraint and a sad finality that makes the throat ache. This is not salon music he plays, as he intones Chopin.

Rachmaninoff's published dictum that he "does not understand modern music any more than he understands Chinese," is to be questioned after hearing him play Scriabine yesterday. The Russian mystic composer Scriabine anticipated modern music and certainly Rachmaninoff

is one of the few who can make him intelligible to an audience.

There followed a Scherzo by Borodin, a Barcarolle by Rubinstein and an amusing arrangement of Kreisler's "Liebeslied," which was thoroughly pianistic. Rachmaninoff proceeded to take the dainty Viennese melody on a journey into fascinating musical bypaths where no violin could go. As a comparison of the minds of these two great musicians, the piece was decidedly entertaining.

The audience may have been somewhat disappointed in the two preludes he selected from his own collection because the famous one was not included. They were quite as beautiful, however, and a lesson to all pianists who play Rachmaninoff.

The master will play again Tuesday night.