

Rachmaninoff Plays "It" Again

By **STEPHEN WILLIAMS**

RACHMANINOFF takes Beethoven and Chopin and does what he will with them. If you should protest that he has no authority for what he does, he would very likely answer—if he answered you at all—that he was his own authority.

So it was at his recital at the Queen's Hall on Saturday, when this authority of his proved powerful enough to sell every seat. I hastened home to Chopin's "Funeral March" Sonata, perturbed by the possibility that I had misread it for 20 years. But no; I was right, and Rachmaninoff was wrong; or, if you prefer it, I had Chopin's authority; Rachmaninoff had his own.

There is, nevertheless, much logic in his method of resuming the Funeral March *fortissimo* (against Chopin's directions) after the interlude in D flat.

ALIVE WITH LOGIC

Every bar of Rachmaninoff's playing was alive with this logic of thought.

Beethoven's early D Major Sonata, one felt, had been questioned and analysed until not a note was without significance.

Even Scriabin's empty study in D sharp minor ceased to be talk merely for the sake of talk. His *pianissimos* were echoes from an enchanted distance.

He played several encores and, after a seemingly hesitation, the notorious Prelude in C sharp Minor.

Familiarity has made this portentous drum ring rather hollow. Yet there is surely some merit in having written a piece of music whose first three notes are instantly recognised in every country of the civilised world?