

DAILY TELEGRAPH AND

RACHMANINOFF RECITAL

COMPOSER TURNED INTERPRETER

By RICHARD CAPELL

There were apparently some irrepressible dog-lovers at Queen's Hall on Saturday at Sergei Rachmaninoff's recital. Perhaps only a couple of score in an audience of well over 2,000; but their coughing was a nuisance. The rule at Queen's Hall being that dogs must be left outside, the fanatics, so it seemed, consoled themselves by doing their own barking.

This was hard on the eminent pianist, and if some of the performances of the afternoon did not represent his art at its finest, one could not be altogether surprised. The surprise on such occasions is that there should be anyone present who does not realise that every member of the audience has his contribution to make to an atmosphere propitious to the artist's concentration. It is true that the programme itself was not as satisfactory as it might have been, and the result was that the greater part of the afternoon went without an experience of the highest intensity.

But if Rachmaninoff's treatment of Schubert was cavalier—first in presenting the finale of the sonata in D, No. 17, as a detached piece, and then in rendering it as musical-box music—and if in Chopin even he was still somewhat absent-minded, the prestige of the distinguished artist imposed itself.

A STRANGE CAREER

Few can have failed to call to mind how strange and almost tragic had been the career of this sombre and stricken-looking man—how the compositions of his youth had conquered the world; then how his invention had failed him at the same time as the society into which he had been born, the old aristocratic Russia, had crumbled under his feet; and how, 20 years ago, as a middle-aged man, he had made a new and superb career for himself as a virtuoso of the piano.

In the years just before the war Rachmaninoff was nowhere thought of primarily as a pianist, and it speaks both for a wonderful innate aptitude and an heroic strength of purpose that, when he was already getting on for 50, he should have earned a new fame as one of the greatest of executants. If he has days when the task of interpreting other men's music fails to engross him, the other Rachmaninoff is to be remembered whose interest in life was to have been creative art.