

Noted Pianist Holds Throng at Recital

BY ISABEL MORSE JONES

As a pianist and composer, Rachmaninoff presented himself in the Philharmonic Auditorium yesterday afternoon. The virtuoso and the sunshine brought out a record matinee audience in a worshipful mood.

The towering Russian has been playing in this country 30 years and in Europe 10 years before that. He has long since transcended technical mastery of the instrument but his achievements in composition and conducting are broader, greater musically and will live longer in the memories of musicians. Not that there are limitations in his pianism, but that the piano seems to shrink as a means of his expression beside the orchestra and composition.

NOT MONUMENTAL

This was apparent in the Beethoven Sonata, Op. 111, yesterday afternoon. He built a musical structure out of Beethoven materials but the final result was not monumental Beethoven. It was something very choice but smaller in scope. In the Mozart A Major variations which preceded the sonata, Rachmaninoff displayed a vibrant youthfulness that is the essence of Mozart style. In the Schumann Novelette, Rachmaninoff revealed the poetic and happy Schumann which is inimitable.

His own transcription of the Bach Partita in E Major for violin: Prelude, Gavotte and Gigue, was a highlight of this program. The Prelude and Gavotte, if published, will become concert pieces of the same high rank as the Bach-Busoni Chaconne, etc. Rachmaninoff brought out new patterns in the Prelude, made them important with new sonorities and developed the Gavotte so resourcefully that it will sound thin on the violin hereafter.

LEAD FROM LISZT

A group of songs arranged for piano made up the last part of the concert list. In this programming Rachmaninoff took his lead from Liszt. In fact, he played four Liszt arrangements, three of his own and one by Tausig. Fragments of great music were thus distributed about in various composers' minds. Most of them fared better in the original.

Polite paraphrases are decorative but not eloquent.

"Lilacs" in both vocal and piano compositions, is pure Rachmaninoff. In arranging this charming song for piano the composer made it practically unplayable by any but the most advanced pianists. He did the same for Kreisler's "Liebesfreud" but he merely added fireworks and did not retain the Kreisler beauty. Schubert's "Trout" and "Serenade" were taken over by Liszt for the edification of salon guests. The "Serenade" was more successful than "The Trout," which sounds slangy on the piano.

EXTRACURRICULAR?

Tausig's "Contrabandiste" (Schumann) was the best of the lot. Liszt's embellishments of Chopin's "Maiden's Wish" and the opening of the "Revolutionary" Etude were in bad taste. These are encore pieces for a musician of Rachmaninoff's rating, however they please listeners who like to recognize familiar melodies. Perhaps he is getting even for all the terrible things that have been done to his Prelude in playing these things—but eight are too many.