

Ovation Given Rachmaninoff At Auditorium

By RICHARD D. SAUNDERS

Sergei Rachmaninoff, ever a favorite with pianists and piano students, played a program of his customary conservatism before a packed house for his recital yesterday in the Philharmonic Auditorium on the Behymer Artist series, and received emphatic ovations.

The noted composer-pianist has gained much in warmth of expression during the last few years, and on this occasion seemed to be speaking more than ever from his heart, although his playing was less impeccable. Never an interpreter of progressive music, he has now attained an age where he lingers over the great music of the past with all the polish and refinement of the Victorian era from which his playing stems.

He began with Mozart Variations in A-major, enunciating the initial theme with particularly exquisite tenderness, and playing the entire work with beautiful delicacy. The Beethoven Sonata, Op. 111, was given a thoughtful, introspective reading, strong but not stirring. Romantic appeal marked a Schumann "Novelette."

Rachmaninoff's own transcription of the Bach E-major Partita proved effectively pianistic. The Prelude was engagingly lively, the Gavotte gracefully genuflective, and the final Gigue was delivered at a jolly pace.

The entire last half of the program was devoted to a group of songs arranged for piano. Considering the literature available for piano, this was a mere stunt, a play to the gallery, capitalizing on virtuoso tricks applied to familiar tunes.

His own "Lilacs" was followed by two Schubert-Liszt items, "The Trout" (a blue trout found its way into that pool), and "Serenade," the Schumann-Tausig "Contra-bandiste," the Chopin-Liszt "Maiden Wish" and "The Return Home," and Rachmaninoff's own very Lisztian arrangements of a Tchaikovsky "Lullaby" and Kreisler's "Liebesfreud." All wallowed equally in sentiment and arpeggios. Encores included Chopin items and his own early "Humoreske."