

RACHMANINOFF CRAFT SHOWN

By MOLLIE MERRICK.

It was a typical Rachmaninoff house yesterday at the New Columbia and the Russian artist gave the crowds that filled the seats and lined the foyer of the theater such musical fare as they have come to expect from him.

Here is an artist that satisfies every requirement of the piano-forte; a composer-conductor whose fingers are as nimble as any of the greatest pianistic names, yet whose grasp of the whole is transcendent. Bach, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Liszt—these were the composers of his choice yesterday; they took on beneath his fingers the Rachmaninoff identity. It made them something more than the Bach or the Liszt or the Mendelssohn or the Beethoven to which we are accustomed; and the mutation adds to the lustre of the work.

We do not hear the "English Suite" played with such beauty and such poesy as that of yesterday. Bach-Rachmaninoff subdues the mathematics and emphasizes the melodic line. Three movements, "Prelude," "Sarabande" and "Bourree," all carried the characteristics of the composer, lit with a tonic quality in the first, familiarly lovely with the singing legato of the artist in the "Sarabande" and amazing in the ease and sprightly interpretation of the "Bourree."

Perfect chord attack, revealed startlingly in the "Variation Series" of Mendelssohn, which was the second number of the recital, and again in the "Rhapsodie Espagnole" of Liszt, which was a tour de force, can only come from one who has made a fetish of the pedal as Rachmaninoff has.

That epic theme of the Beethoven "Appassionata" brought the most enthusiastic applause, it seemed to me.

The "Funerailles" of Liszt was done with clarity and precision and was pregnant with the atmosphere of death. Two of the artist's compositions followed, the "Etude Tableau" and "Prelude." Rachmaninoff is the most complete master of dynamics that has played here this season. His forte has power and strong individuality and his pianissimo, veritable feathers of music, is a revelation; his recital is rife with tonal contrasts such as can come only from a genius of his craft.