

PIANIST WINS HIGH PRAISE

By REDFERN MASON.

In a diminished Civic Auditorium—you can see nothing of the walls now—several thousand San Franciscans gathered together yesterday afternoon to listen to Sergel Rachmaninoff, composer and master of the piano.

Rachmaninoff is a Slav pur sang, and he put the brooding melancholy of the race into Schubert and Brahms and Chopin, choosing those works which best lend themselves to the treatment.

The lovely Andantino and Variations of Schubert, in the Tausig arrangement, lent themselves to the artist's mood. The Viennese charm of Schubert was "sicklied o'er with a pale cast of thought." But the transformation was justified by the beauty of the result.

GLORIOUS MELODY.

The "Wanderer" paraphrase, in which Liszt makes use of Schubert's divine melody to picture his own restless gypsy soul, was in a triple sense biographical. The artist is forever wandering, unsatisfied, in search of a happiness which earth cannot give him. In the song we have the spiritual Heimweh of Schubert, in the transcription the nostalgia of Liszt. Rachmaninoff made the work the vehicle of his own unrealizable longings.

Liszt is diffuse; he is an unconscionable time in getting to the "Wanderer" melody proper; but, once it is reached, he handles it nobly. The Russian pianist gave a reading of the work that was worthy of the glorious strain written by the 18-year-old Schubert.

The Brahms numbers were the Intermezzo, Op. 118 and one of the ballades, subtle music which Rachmaninoff colored with twilight hues. From Chopin he chose the brilliant but seldom played Rondo Op. 16 and made the audience feel that the neglect of the work is undeserved. He followed it up with the F major Nocturne, with its elegiac melody and vividly contrasting Con fuoco or grief followed by a mood of revolt.

THOROUGH ART.

Rachmaninoff is continent, restrained; he has the mystic element of Dostolevsky's Prince Mishkin; but underneath it there slumbers revolutionary fire; it blazed out in that Con fuoco.

A couple of "Fairy Tales" by Medtner, conceived in an idiom to which our generation is not yet accustomed, led up to the "Rakoczy" march in the Liszt transcription. Rachmaninoff has virtuosity; but it is unobtrusive and I rather doubt whether, in his heart, he approves of the Liszt tinsel.

A thoroughly artistic recital could not end without the C sharp Minor Prelude, played to an audience that was worshipping round the platform.