

RUSS PIANIST STIRS GHOST OF YESTERDAY

Rachmaninoff Resurrects Moods
of Early Masters in Beautiful
Recital at Civic Auditorium

By REDFERN MASON.

Sergei Rachmaninoff addresses the melody notes as if he were Lord Chesterfield bowing to a duchess. In spite of his sponsoring of Medtner and Scriabine, the Russian pianist impressed the audience which greeted him in the Civic Auditorium yesterday afternoon as the representative of a school which has more in common with Czerny and Thalberg than with the modern technicians spawned of Liszt.

He played us the seldom heard Sonata, Op. 109, of Beethoven, played it in a spirit of reverie, as if the piano were doing his thinking. It was lovely, but it sounded like a voice from a bygone day.

YOUTH OF YESTERDAY.

The same thing is true of the artist's reading of the "Papillons." It had youth; but it was the youth of yesterday. The patchwork quilt of Robert's dreams was there; but they affected one like opening an album that has been shut for twenty years.

It was beautiful playing in a technical sense; but it dated curiously. So did the Chopin Sonata, Op. 35. The funeral march was prim and we waited in vain for that blaze of resurrection glory which Paderewski gives it toward the close. In Rachmaninoff's reading the heel of Russia is still on the necks of the Poles.

MORE VITALITY.

In the Medtner "Fairy Tales" and in the artist's own "Etude-Tableau" there was more vitality. Here, for a time, Rachmaninoff seemed to belong to his own generation and not to mirror the home-keeping propriety of forty years ago.

The Ravel Toccata was a model of precision and daintiness; the Debussy numbers, notably "La fille aux cheveux de lin" awoke in the artist a suspicion of sensuousness. Here, at least, there was no feeling that we were listening to a musical Rip Van Winkle who had been asleep for twenty years.

For the three Scriabine numbers we were grateful, though Rachmaninoff tempered their modernity. Curious that this man, who is thirteen years younger than Paderewski, should date so much more in his art.