

Rachmaninoff Applauded by Big Audience

By Alexander Fried

Sergei Rachmaninoff, great musician and great personality, brought glory to the San Francisco Symphony matinee yesterday in the Memorial Opera House.

Lank and saturnine, he picked his way half sleepily toward his piano. The overflow audience gave him the greeting that fits not merely a performer but rather an artistic institution. And when he had masterfully played his own Second Concerto, the crowd clamored long—though in vain—for an encore.

NOW A CLASSIC.

The 40 year old concerto has become a classic. It follows in the vivid temperamental tradition of Tschaikovsky. It was written, by the way, after hypnosis had cured the composer of a grievous mental lethargy.

Under Rachmaninoff's fingers—and with a splendid accompaniment by Conductor Pierre Monteux—the work was thrilling. Rachmaninoff's keyboard skill is prodigious. His rhythm has a giant drive. Yet in the busy filigree and deep breathed song of the slow movement, his tone spoke poetic enchantment.

SOLOS COMMENDED.

For the rest of the program (*all to be repeated tonight*), Monteux chose wisely and conducted in his finest form. The orchestra's ensemble achievement was matched by countless admirable first desk solos.

In Schumann's radiantly songful Second Symphony, the "Adagio"—thanks to leader and to players—cast a memorable lyric spell. In Liszt's rarely heard "Orpheus"—a less impetuous score than the usual Liszt—a spirit of broad idealistic rhapsody glowed warmly.

Greatly successful was a novelty by the New Yorker, Aaron Copland. His "El Salon Mexico," a sophisticated impression of a Mexican cabaret, was not merely clever. Its native songs had atmosphere; its rhythms crackled. It took popular or even vulgar material and lifted it to an imaginative artistic plane.