

RACHMANINOFF IS SEASON'S WONDER

Famous Russian Leaves Indelible Impression on Audience

Locally the 1922-23 winter season has been replete with a large number of stellar programs by the leading musicians and musical organizations of the country, but without doubt the performance last evening at the Mishler theatre by Sergei Rachmaninoff, the famous Russian pianist and composer, eclipsed all others, not only from the standpoint of entertainment but also from that of true musical worth.

Before he strikes one note one is impressed with Rachmaninoff. Long and gaunt, yet there is a grace about his every movement, particularly while at the piano. Artist he is, and artist he appears. It was probably this fact as much as any other which caused the large audience present to render him homage in the only way which audiences have in their power—namely, by a great outburst of applause, when the Russian first appeared on the stage. After that it was merely an audience paying tribute to a master of the piano, who brought more out of the instrument than it seems possible is therein contained.

Beginning with Beethoven's "Sonata Appassionata," Rachmaninoff played through a program remarkable for its technical difficulties; a group by Chopin; "Carnaval," by Robert Schuman; three of his own compositions; "Jongleuse," by Moskowski; "Campanella," by Liszt, and several encores. If the audience had been given its choice in the matter, the artist would probably still be playing.

The second movement of the sonata was absolutely beautiful, the artist's wonderful touch permitting a perfect crescendo to be worked up, graded so carefully that there was no break in the rising volume of music. If any particular number on the program seemed to be the best received, then either his own well known "C Sharp Minor Prelude" or Schuman's "Carnaval" probably gained the greatest applause.

The various movements, if they may be so called, in the "Carnaval" seemed to come before the listener's eye. But the English language does not contain words which can fitly describe the Russian's playing. His performance was well balanced, understanding—in a word, perfect.

The "C Sharp Minor Prelude" was superb, and while it has been played and replayed and parodied, so to speak, yet under its creator's master hands the composition took on a new meaning. Never was the old proverb, "a prophet is not without honor except in his own country" more applicable than to Rachmaninoff. It is said that for the "Prelude" its composer received just twenty dollars!

It would be easy to continue ad libitum in praise of Rachmaninoff, but the above must suffice. It is certain that the Altoona music loving public will gladly welcome a return engagement.