

PIANIST CHARMS STRAND AUDIENCE

Rachmaninoff Weaves Enchantment About Crowd Of Delighted Auditors

Enchantment as subtle as Merlin ever cast was woven about an audience at the Strand theatre, last night, by Sergei Rachmaninoff, Russian musician and master of the masters of the pianoforte.

The charm that the artist cast was drawn with fingers that dashed and danced and rambled and ran across a keyboard that returned to him every mood, every shading of mood, he chose to call from it. The audience called him back time after time, demanding more and getting it.

Deftness Like Magic

Rachmaninoff's first number was Beethoven's Sonata, Opus 31, No. 2. This together with five Chopin numbers, constituted the first half of the program. Among Chopin numbers were the Polonaise in F-sharp minor; the Mazurka in A-flat major; a nocturne; the Valse in A-flat major, and the B-flat minor Scherzo. Lighter than the sonata, and played with a deftness that amounted to sheer magic, the Chopin group left the audience, at the intermission, and after the pianist had responded with two bows to the prolonged applause, in a mood for more—much more.

Although—or, perhaps, because—there were no encores during the first half or at the intermission, Haage announced that it was Rachmaninoff's custom not to play encores until the end of the program, but that he would be pleased to respond to the crowd's highly enthusiastic mood with encores at the close.

Plays Own Composition

The second half of the program started with one of Rachmaninoff's own compositions—the G-minor prelude. Then, out of a clear sky, came what was not on the program and what most of the audience must have been wondering about all evening—the famous prelude in C-sharp minor. Its first notes brought a noticeable "Ah!" from the listeners, and when it was ended, a storm of applause broke loose, lasting several minutes. The C-sharp minor which prelude was substituted for the Etude Tableau in C-minor which was on the program.

Two Liszt compositions—Etude in D-flat minor and "Valse Impromptu," and a rarely heard number by Balakireff, called "Islamei, Oriental Fantasy," closed the scheduled part of the concert.

Encores Follow Program

When the artist did not immediately respond to the applause which marked the playing of the Islamei composition, a few patrons began to file out, but stopped wherever they happened to be to listen to an encore, "Turkish March" from Beethoven's "Ruins of Athens." Again the part of the audience started to leave, while others remained in their seats to applaud, and again Rachmaninoff played an encore, this time Mourszaky's "Hopak." In all, he responded to three encores, and took two bows after that.

The next, and last, number of the Haage series this season will be a concert on March 2 by Mischa Elman, violinist.—E. M. S.