

RACHMANINOFF

Brilliant Playing in Birmingham

Serge Rachmaninoff, world-famous pianist and composer, returned to the Birmingham Town Hall last night.

He walked slowly across the platform. He sat at the piano with the ease of a man sitting down to a meal. But thenceforward he defied all similes—and all criticism.

For Rachmaninoff is peculiarly hard upon the critic. You cannot say, as you can with nine out of ten pianists, that his technical abilities are greater than his interpretive, or vice-versa. With him technique and interpretation are welded into one mighty magnificence. His tone always seems to sing; but even here there is an endless variety in quantity and quality.

At times there are distant-sounding pianissimos, at others shattering chords that seem to fill you from the feet up.

Sometimes his tone is cold and precise, as in the Scarlatti sonatas; sometimes golden and warm, as in some of the Liszt, and at others bitterly poignant, as in part of the Chopin Sonata (in B minor). He played last night Beethoven, Scarlatti, Chopin, Liszt—and Rachmaninoff.

The audience was, as far as Town Hall audiences go, large.

At the end they cheered vociferously. Rachmaninoff returned and teased them—with some Schubert. They cheered again, and again he returned. This time he satisfied them—with the Prelude in C Minor.