

TRIUMPH SCORED BY RACHMANINOFF

Composer-Pianist Enthralls Wilmington Audience In Brilliant Recital

In the quiet figure, slightly bent, that came across the Playhouse stage last night, there was little to suggest the drama and fire that was for the next hour and a half to hold an audience spell-bound and send it into a frenzy of applause both at the intermission and conclusion of the concert. Sergei Rachmaninoff made magic at the piano.

Brilliant and dramatic, the pianist's technique was amazing in its control of melody against a complexity of background. The sureness of touch, the speed of fingering, the power of chords, the accuracy of note, the directness of interpretation, and the fluidity of hand and finger left one breathless. It was a mechanically perfect performance.

The program was chosen to give full scope to exhibit this marvelous, dramatic quality of the performer. Rameau, Bach, Rachmaninoff, Chopin, Liszt, and Debussy, filled with crashing chords, sweeping runs, contrasting repetitions, and difficult finger manipulations were so much grist for his mill, and of them he made fine flour, exquisitely delicate to the touch. No matter what the piece, whether it was the opening "Variations" or his own "Etude-Tableau" or the "Italian Concerto," it became a thing alive and challenging.

Three numbers stood out. They were the four minor Chopin Etudes, a series of descriptive pieces by Liszt, and the "Suite Bergamasque" of Debussy. Each brought forth deafening applause. However, it was the Debussy group that left the greatest impression. One is not able to get out of one's system the exotic, changeable, haunting, quality of this modern influence. One cannot forget the new life, the color, and richness that, through the composer and pianist, came last night to the familiar and lovely tune "Clare de Lune."

Sergei Rachmaninoff was most generous in recognizing the appreciation of his art, including in his encores "The Flight of the Bumblebee" and a Chopin waltz, but his listeners were so insistent that, in self-defense, he lowered the lid of the instrument. The audience left, still applauding.

C. L. J.