

MASTERSHIP, OF THE KEYBOARD

The Versatility of Rachmaninoff

By Our Music Critic

Rachmaninoff demonstrates the full meaning of the word versatility as a master of the keyboard and an interpretative genius, but to these qualities of a musician he adds those of composer, conductor, and director of opera.

He disappointed his Cardiff admirers by failing to keep his original date in the list of International Celebrity Concerts given in the Empire Theatre, Cardiff, but on Sunday night at Cardiff he certainly gave of his best and the highest demonstration of his art as a pianist.

The programme displayed an admirable variety of styles, from Bach to Rachmaninoff, resulting in a marvellous display of skill, free from any suspicion of showmanship.

The "Italian Concerto" gave place to Beethoven's last Pianoforte Sonata in C minor, a moving performance of depth and daintiness and a brilliance of technique which never interposed itself between the listener and the composer's theme but served to add beauty to the tone colour of the sonata.

Rachmaninoff is a master of lyrical playing and dramatic expression.

Debussy's "Suite Bergamasque" was fairy music by contrast with his prelude, Menuet Clair de Lune and Passepied movements, suggesting typical French scenes and thought.

BRILLIANT PASSAGES

In the second part Rachmaninoff played one of his lesser known Etudes-Tableaux, and four etudes of Chopin, given as distinctive and as illuminating as everything the pianist played. The brilliant and rapid passages in Chopin etudes and the "Three Etudes" of Liszt, so popular with concert admirers of virtuosity, displayed the pianist at his best, to which nothing of the music was sacrificed.

At the close of the programme the audience sat immovable and demonstrated their appreciation of the performance. Encores followed and still the audience remained in their seats. Rachmaninoff was not to be allowed to escape "that Prelude," and there was an outburst of applause as he struck the opening chords of the C sharp Prelude.