

Rachmaninoff, Greatest Pianist of Today, Wins Enthusiastic Applause At Year's First Civic Music Concert

By INA WICKHAM.

BEAUTIFUL melodies, set in filagree of lovely harmonies came from a singing keyboard under the fingers of Sergei Rachmaninoff, greatest living pianist of the day, when he appeared in recital at the Orpheum theater in Davenport in the first concert of the 1939-40 season of the Civic Music association of Davenport, Rock Island and Moline Monday night. The large and enthusiastic audience sat as if spellbound while he played and then burst into thunderous applause, calling the artist back many times to bow his courtly response.

Rachmaninoff, grave and stern visaged, appeared to be in better health than when last we heard him and the passing years have not changed his playing. His beautiful singing tone, his supreme mastery of the keyboard and his keen musical insight are the same. If anything he has a more rounded tone, more dazzling skill, more powerful technic and glossier, smoother sheen to his scintillating runs and trills. No living pianist can match the tone quality, the variety of moods and coloring and the almost breathless virtuosity that characterizes Rachmaninoff's playing. He seems to surround himself with a wall of indifference to his audience when he plays and the almost enigmatic mask on his face gives little sign of the beautiful conception of the music he is about to give and which holds his audience entranced.

The program Monday night was typically Rachmaninoff; Chopin, Liszt, his own works and Bach. Perhaps one reason the pianist has achieved his greatness and individuality is because he has concentrated upon a limited area in the field of music. He does not dash off after nondescript and novel works to impress the public; nor does he do tricks to dazzle the listeners or thunder or dash over the keys, or do anything that savors of showmanship rather than artistic ability. He needs none of these, he shuns the theatrical and sensational and is satisfied to present the beauties of

the music as the composer wrote it. His real appeal to the public is the music, melodic and undistorted. It is melody that casts its spell on people and Rachmaninoff's very simplicity of presentation makes him great. Every number was played with the ease and intensity of feeling which are his chief attributes.

The Program.

Rachmaninoff excels in the playing and interpretation of Chopin's music. Perhaps it is because he himself, altho a modern composer, is really a romanticist; perhaps because he lives in self-imposed exile, as Chopin did; perhaps it is the nostalgia for his homeland that inspires him to bring out the almost heart-breaking melodies. Chopin loved melody and so does Rachmaninoff and no other pianist has the ability to bring out those songlike themes. Nothing could have been lovelier than the beautiful harmonies of the B Minor Sonata and all thru them was a wondrous melody and under the embellishments and arpeggios there was the soft singing voice that brought out all the poetry of the music. The Largo movement was the most beautiful with its tender song. The Chopin Etudes were jewel-like in their elegance of presentation, their grace and poetic qualities and gems of tonal beauty and perfection.

With Bach, Mr. Rachmaninoff does not have as much in common, he is further removed from his sphere of creation and in the French Suite in E Major, one felt that he brought intelligent perception rather than the affectionate interpretation he gave the Chopin music. The suite is a collection of dance tunes of Queen Anne's day with the fundamental rhythms and arabesque ornamentation. Rachmaninoff also has a predilection for Liszt music and it, too, was charming in its melodic beauty. Liszt music is very romantic, very colorful and decorated but Rachmaninoff kept that all subdued. "The Trout," a fantasy on the Schubert song was lovely, the melody clear and sweet under the glittering embellishments. The "Waldestrauchen" was

Red Cross Life Saving Corps Has Election

Dr. D. D. Slack was elected president of the Life Saving corps of the local chapter of the American Red Cross at a regular meeting Monday evening in the chapter's office in the Kahl building.

Other officers are: Robert Wayt, vice president; Miss Betty Hoyer, secretary-treasurer.

Arrangements were made for a hayrack ride to be given Saturday evening, Nov. 18. The committee in charge includes Miss Jean Glaspell, Myron Nissen and Robert Wayt.

The corps members volunteered to assist with the Red Cross membership drive which begins Nov. 11.

a tonal poem, a song of the wind and the voices of the forest vividly portrayed. There was the long trill on the descending scale that was a feat of virtuosity. "The Dance of the Gnomes" was spritely and brilliant. The pianist also included his own Etude Tableau in A Minor, with almost modern harmonies and rhythms.

The Encores.

The Liszt Etudes ended the scheduled program but the audience demanded more and Rachmaninoff played Liszt's "Liebestraum." It was most exquisite, and had a touch of sadness with the oft repeated single note. A Chopin Mazurka followed and finally after much applause the long awaited "Prelude in C Sharp Minor," was played in the composer's own inimitable manner which no one else can ever equal. The sovereign qualities of the great art of piano playing were never more manifest than in the concert Monday night. It was the performance of the greatest of all pianists and to hear him was to hear the most perfect artist of today.

The next concert of the Civic Music series will be on January 30, 1940, when Marian Anderson, great colored contralto, will make her second appearance under the auspices of that organization.