

## Rachmaninoff Displays Full Powers in Superb Concert

THERE is no other pianist in this world who performs with the sheer majesty and poetic brilliance of Sergei Rachmaninoff, and the capacity audience that turned out for his concert at Scottish Rite cathedral Tuesday night had the luck to encounter the master in altogether exceptional mood.

The result was one of the most brilliant and electrifying events this reviewer has ever known in the concert halls of the city.

Obviously in better spirits and health than when he last visited Houston four seasons ago, Rachmaninoff played at Olympian level all evening and left one of his listeners altogether confirmed in the feeling that this Russian is the last of the pianistic giants. There is nobody in sight to take his place.

One cannot explain the greatness of Rachmaninoff by any fiddling with musical catchwords. It is a greatness of spirit that sets him off from the other performers on his instrument; there is mysticism in what he achieves. His music has a color that is altogether its own; a strength that is both primitive and exquisitely civilized. As for his technical powers, they leave you quite silent with wonder. Like the writing of Shakespeare and the Bible, they are simply above being praised. When his lean fingers patrol the keyboard it gives up every beauty and subtle effect of which the piano is capable.

Obviously much pleased by the size and great warmth of his audience, Rachmaninoff opened his program with a magnificent playing of the Liszt arrangement of Bach's Organ Prelude and Fugue in A Minor. His interpretation gave to the opening section a tremendous grandeur and power, and he took the Fugue at a tempo that made it a blazing tracery of sound.

From that he went on to a Beethoven sonata, Opus 10, No. 3, and revealed a steady procession of new wonders. The ease and flow of the opening Presto movement were a demonstration of mastery in the absolute, and some of its shaded pianissimo runs had a beauty that sets the nerves atingle.

But the true musical personality of Rachmaninoff was seen best in the slow movement of the Beethoven work, with its songlike central melody that is somewhat similar in spirit to the slow movements of his own piano concertos. He made this music speak a celestial language,

and at no time during the rest of the concert was there ever such a glow in the hall.

Having polished off the Minuetto and Rondo of the sonata with correspondingly brilliant effects, he wound up the first half of the program with sensational splendor in his performances of Schubert's Impromptu in A Flat Minor and the showy Liszt transcription of "The Trout."

Exhibiting no weariness from these prodigious achievements, the 67-year-old virtuoso came back to the stage to supply another hour of superb music. The latter part of the concert included two of his own compositions, the Prelude in G Major and the whimsical Humoresque, and groups by Chopin and Liszt.

In this music there were a dozen displays of magnificent beauty, but your reviewer would single out the Humoresque, the C Sharp Minor and C Minor Chopin etudes and Liszt's D Flat Major etude and "Dance of the Gnomes" as the finest exhibits of Rachmaninoff's style and genius.

Although he is not famous for his generosity in the matter of encores, he came back after playing his conventional two and set a precedent for Houston at least by addressing his audience.

"Shall I play the C Sharp Minor?" he asked with a smile.

He referred, of course, to his own most celebrated and most hackneyed prelude, and when the audience answered with a new storm of applause, he sat down and performed it with ineluctable grace.

It put a somewhat anti-climactic period to an evening of marvelous music.—Hubert Roussel.

## New 'Dance Quiz' At Empire Room Tonight

The Rice hotel Empire room will introduce a new, and what promises to be a very entertaining, form of