

Rachmaninoff Piano Playing Gives Thrills

By ELEANOR PITTS BUCHANAN

Sergei Rachmaninoff, the uncrowned king of pianodom, reigned supreme last night to a much-interested and curious public. The somber Russian played an interesting but difficult program in the Memorial auditorium.

The restraint so well known in this momentous character filled his playing with such a degree of feeling and emotion as to make evident his Slav-Russian temperament.

The feeling of power in his being, ever held back from absolute abandon, penetrates his playing as if he were afraid to completely bare his soul to the world.

Strength in Hands.

The opening, Bach-Liszt "Organ Prelude and Fugue, A Minor," gave the artist the opportunity to show the tremendous strength in his hands. Like the mighty swelling of an organ, the music flowed in smooth, tide-like fashion, evenness and force ever apparent.

The accurate manipulation of the pedals sustained the beauty and quality of his tones to such a degree as to prove his theory that the pedal is the soul of the piano.

Plays Lengthy Sonata

The lengthy "Sonata in F Minor, Opus 57" (Appassionato) by Beethoven, a mere 35 pages, was a synchronization of flawless technique and interpretation, clarity and precision dominating. It was here his gift for displaying fineness in interpretation was outstanding.

Contrasting shading, bravado in swelling and retarding, exquisite tonal qualities; all these and many more inadequate adjectives are lame descriptives.

Program Outstanding

Breaking into a melodic theme with Schubert's "Impromptu A Flat Minor," Rachmaninoff completely captivated his audience; the keys fairly talked in rippling crescendo. Completely under the spell of the master's touch, one could hardly recognize the instrument as a piano. Delicately and smoothly played, this was a definite contrast to the previous number.

As an encore, Rachmaninoff played his own composition, "Prelude in C Sharp Minor." He composed the number when a young man and has played it several thousand times.

The entire program proved an outstanding experience for the music-going public of Sacramento, especially Rachmaninoff's own rendition of his "Etude-Tableau, A Minor, Opus 39, No. 2." Those who failed to attend this concert missed one of the outstanding musical events of the year.