

MUSIC:

Rachmaninoff Plays Last of Beethoven Sonatas

By HELEN BUCHALTER

Fame of the sort that makes his name popularly identified with great piano playing is an old story with 76-year-old Sergei Rachmaninoff. It could not have been any notion of winning more gasps of worship from his public that induced him to play Beethoven's last and baffling sonata, Op. 111, at last night's recital in Constitution Hall.

Rachmaninoff is now in a position with the public where he can do no wrong. The box-office dances when his concerts are scheduled. The white ties and tails show up, sub-debs put on their party dresses and piano students turn out en masse, including some now in Uncle Sam's Army uniform.

CHALLENGE

But Rachmaninoff's performance of the Beethoven sonata seemed something he was doing for himself rather than for his adoring public. His own compositions are sheerest romanticism; two of them in his own lifetime have won the backhanded glory of becoming warhorses.

To such a composer, the Beethoven Op. 111 must be a tremendous challenge. Few pianists dare to program it—not so much because of its considerable technical difficulties but because its meaning, like all of Beethoven's late works, go far beyond the brilliance of the instrument for which they were written and enter the more puzzling realm of Beethoven thought.

The curious result of this performance was a dryness of tone and a fierceness of dynamics during which the more familiar gracioso Rachmaninoff seemed temporarily suspended.

To the audience it was not so exciting an offering as the velvety performance of Mozart's A major variations, or the suave performance of Schumann's sentimental Novelette in F sharp minor, or Rachmaninoff's adaptation of the Bach E major Partita which is such essential string music in the original version.

Likewise the group of songs adapted

by Liszt, Tausig and Rachmaninoff for the piano provided vehicles for the display of his unfailing mastery of the romantic piano—the songful legato, the gentle pianissimo, the incredibly fluent and silky fast passages, the climatic sonorities.

Show Timetable

NATIONAL—"Golden Wings" New play about the RAF by Jay Williams and Guy Bolton. Nightly at 8:30, Wednesday and Saturday matinees at 2:30 p. m.

CIVIC THEATER (Wardman Park)—"Kiss the Boys Goodbye," local production of Clare Boothe's famous comedy. Wednesday thru Saturday at 8:30 p. m.

EARLE—"They Died With Their Boots on," Custer's last stand, with Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland. At 10 a. m., 12:55, 3:55, 6:55 and 9:50 p. m. Stage Show at 12:20, 3:20, 6:20 and 9:20 p. m.

CAPITOL—"The Chocolate Soldier," operetta with Nelson Eddy and Rise Stevens. At 11 a. m., 1:45, 4:30, 7:15 and 9:55 p. m. Stage show at 12:55, 3:40, 6:05 and 9:10 p. m.

PALACE—"Shadow of the Thin Man," mystery comedy with William Powell and Myrna Loy. At 10:45 a. m., 12:55, 3:05, 5:15, 7:25 and 9:40.

METROPOLITAN—"The Night of January 16," court room murder mystery with Ellen Drew and Robert Preston. At 11 a. m., 1:05, 3:15, 5:20, 7:30 and 9:40 p. m.

KEITH'S—"Suspicion," Alfred Hitchcock romantic drama with Cary Grant and Joan Fontaine. At 11:15 a. m., 1:19, 3:29, 5:27, 7:31 and 9:35 p. m.

COLUMBIA—"A Yank in the RAF," flying for Britain, with Tyrone Power and Betty Grable. At 11:15 a. m., 1:15, 3:20, 5:25, 7:30 and 9:35 p. m.

LITTLE—"Ruggles of Red Gap," Revival of comedy with Charles Laughton, Charles Ruggles and Mary Boland. At 11 a. m., 12:50, 2:25, 4:20, 6:05, 7:55 and 9:45 p. m.

PIX—"Rebecca," revival of Director Alfred Hitchcock's famous romantic drama with Joan Fontaine and Laurence Olivier. At 11:10 a. m., 1:35, 4, 6:40 and 9:15 p. m.

GAYETY (Burlesque)—"Siamese Twins. Continuous matinees 11:30 to 5. Nightly at 8:30.