

# Rachmaninoff Recital Here Great Event

By CHARLES GENTRY

A RACHMANINOFF recital is an event which must mark the ultimate in any musical season and, in this case, Detroit's season started right off at the peak, for the great Russian virtuoso, gave a magnificent performance last night to over 5,000 listeners in Masonic auditorium.

Although we know the number of opportunities left to hear this Titan of the keyboard are growing fewer—he's 70 years old now—there seems to be no faltering of his fingers, no weakening of his attack, no waning of his powers.

Rather he seems to defy the idea of old age with a vigor and a force which is indeed incredible. The facility with which he can encompass the technical demands of lightning passages in a Liszt bravura piece, for example, is something you can hardly bring your ear to believe, and certainly the ear is faster than the eye when you're witnessing such a demonstration as this.

How this tall, gaunt, stoop shouldered figure can suddenly launch a blitz-like attack on a keyboard is a feat which can only be recorded in the Rachmaninoff legend.

## TECHNICAL ENIGMA

As he is a personality, so Rachmaninoff is technically an enigma.

In an interpretive sense, the marvel only increases. While he may select a conventional program, his interpretation grows more unorthodox at each hearing.

He is more of a pioneer, a musical explorer, today than when we first heard him 20 years ago.

## A 'MODERN' BACH

He has taken the familiar Bach E-major Partita for solo violin and arranged it for piano, in a transcription which is so daring and so modern, it hits you right between

the ears. He has given these three movements, the Prelude, Gavotte and Gigue such harmonic overtones, such brilliant elaboration that you almost have to look at your program to be sure that it's Bach.

But if this is radical, then listen to his poetic treatment of the Beethoven Sonata, Opus 31, No. 2. Here he displays such sensitive care in phrasing, such subtlety of tone production, that one might say he re-creates, rather than interprets this well known sonata.

## BEETHOVEN BEST

Sonorous as the Schumann F-sharp minor Novelette was, and as passionately beautiful as the Chopin group proved to be, both of which followed the Beethoven, stands out as a shimmering example of supreme artistry.

The last half of the program was fairly short. New here were the group of four of the composer's own Etudes Tableaux, which are of decided contrast and varied tonal conception.

Frequently composers are not the best interpreters of their own work, but this is decidedly not true of Rachmaninoff. When it comes to performing his own compositions, he is without peer. He alone can charge even his smallest preludes with electric force and lend its color of almost barbaric splendor.

## A TRUE PIONEER

As we stated before, he is becoming more modern as he goes on and in these Etudes Tableaux, particularly the D-major, he out-Shostakovichs Shostakovich.

We can't quite understand Rachmaninoff's great penchant for Liszt, for almost every program includes at least two or three of his works.

Last night his concluding group brought us the Valse Oubliee, the Sonetto del Petrarca and the familiar "Venezia Napoli" Tarantella, all of which served to display Rachmaninoff's magnificent technique and speed, but which proved to be the least interesting selections on a superb program.

He encored with a Chopin Mazurka and that little Frankenstein musical monster, his own C-sharp minor Prelude, which has been haunting him for years.