

PIANIST'S GENIUS SWAYS AUDIENCE

Old And Modern Compositions
Make Up Program Of
Sergei Rachmaninoff

Weaving a thread of beauty through a program that contained both old and modern compositions, Sergei Rachmaninoff opened the artist course of the Birmingham Music Club Friday night at Phillips High School.

The Russian pianist gave a program that was soothingly enchanting, rather than disturbingly thrilling. The music was that of the breezes of Springtime, rather than the tumultuous winds of Winter. The message was peace, rather than conflict; beauty rather than grandeur.

The genius of Rachmaninoff in extracting the full measure of beauty from all compositions was evident throughout the program. It was shown in the interpretation of works by the older classicists, such as Beethoven, Bach, Chopin and Schubert, where the melodic line is seldom lost, and it was revealed in the selections from such more modern composers as Debussy, Borodine and Weber, who choose a more intricate or less obvious theme.

Rachmaninoff opened with the Beethoven Sonata in A major, showing especial understanding in the gentle adagio movement. The seldom heard Sonata in E Major, for violin, transcribed for the piano by Rachmaninoff, was more sprightly and evoked considerable praise for the musician both as player and transcriber. The pianist evinced a special sympathy, too, with the composer's fondness for playing with a lovely theme in Schubert's Rondo in D Major.

In response to what was announced as a widespread request, the other group in the first half of the program was changed from the original announcement to include three Chopin numbers. The choice fell upon three of the most familiar of Chopin's many compositions for the piano, the Waltz in A flat, the Nocture in F sharp and the Ballade in A flat, all played with exceeding grace and skill.

The last half of the program turned to more modern composers. It opened with a Debussy suite, the toccata movement of which was memorable for the brilliant chords evoked from it by Rachmaninoff. The pianist also played two of his own preludes on the set program and as an encore, gave "the" Rachmaninoff prelude, most popular of all his compositions. A Borodine Scherzo and Faussig's arrangement of Weber's Invitation to the Dance, superbly played, closed the program.

The audience almost filled the auditorium of the high school.

The second presentation of the artist course will be Lucrezia Bori, noted soprano, who will be heard Dec. 12.