

Rachmaninoff Plays at Best

Eminent Pianist Plays to
Overflow Crowd With
Usual Brilliance

By VICTOR NILSSON

The first great piano recital of the Minneapolis season was given last night as the second event in the university artists course by a man in every respect supremely fitted for the task. It was Sergei Rachmaninoff, not only eminent pianist but also one of the foremost composers of the age. No wonder the audience was very large, overflowing into the orchestra pit with enthusiasm vivid and intense.

Rachmaninoff after his arrival had changed and added to his program but, even so it was not found to be enough for the audience, which caused him at the close to play three Russian compositions as extra numbers. Tchaikovsky's "In the Troika Sleigh," Rachmaninoff's own famous C sharp minor prelude and "The Bumble Bee," by Rimsky-Korsakov.

Beethoven Number Superb

It was a recital as memorable as any of those by the same giant of the piano that has gone before, each of the eight great numbers as being in some special manner attractive and remarkable as piano interpretation of the highest order for truth, intellectuality and soulful refinement. The first one set a dazzlingly high mark of attainment. It was Beethoven's sonata, Opus 11, No. 2, in D minor upon which he said when questioned as to its meaning, "Read Shakespeare's 'The Tempest.'" It is no program music, but the holy fury with which its outer movements are largely filled seems like that of a superman of Prospero's order, as do the remarkable recitatives that are mingled with it, which are of the lofty dignity of such a personage.

It is, at any rate, the last time Beethoven uses the significant key of D minor for a sonata and he told Czerny at the time that he was to enter upon a new line of composition from that day on when he had his triptych of Opus 31 completed. In this spirit of a now irate, now calmly serene prophet among men, Rachmaninoff interpreted the work without empty thunder and lightning, but with deepest significance. Beautiful was his playing of the adagio, the divine music with whose first theme Beethoven also opens the scherzo in the last of the three sonatas, this time in minuet form.

Bach Sonata Unforgettable

An unforgettable performance also was the Bach E major sonata for unaccompanied violin in Rachmaninoff's own arrangement for the piano. It would be hard to say in which of three movements the recitalist most faithfully and astonishingly transplanted the spirit and violin technique to the piano, but the arpeggi of the first was as stunning as the freshness and gaiety of the famous "Bourree," or second, while the third approached the first most closely.

From these compositions of weightiest import no more charming contrast could have been offered than the almost childishly naive and innocuous Schubert "Dando in D major," a number on which popular music of late has been laying heavy claim. Then followed the most important change of program when instead of some Schumann moreaux, a Chopin group had been placed. It included the E flat major waltz, the nocturne in F sharp major and the A flat Ballade, all exquisitely played but above everything else the nocturne, with pianissimo effects as tender and soft as a child's breath but perfectly audible throughout.

Offers New Variations

The second half of the program was opened with a novelty here, Rachmaninoff's own variations upon the famous theme of Corelli, his Opus 42. Here the arranger and performer diverged definitely from any similarities with violin technique as well as from Corelli's own variations upon the theme. He seemed instead to supply a setting in various archaic modes contemporary with the formative period of modern music or preceding it, in doing so wandering far from the original variations, rather offering new variations upon the earlier ones.

A deeply original scherzo by Borodin followed and then the Tausig arrangement of Weber's "Invitation to the Dance," the latter especially a bravura piece as well as one replete with ingenious and poetic accents for a well-known subject. The fascinating closing number was Rachmaninoff's own piano arrangement of the scherzo from Mendelssohn's "A Midsummer Night" music, very charming in itself and doubly interesting to hear because Guimard Noaves so recently played the Ritter arrangement of the same composition in St. Paul.