

# Rachmaninoff Prelude Still Big Moment of His Concert

The same Rachmaninoff, 63 now but still the same silent, solemn-faced pianist who has been giving Washington one concert annually for more than 20 years, played again last night before thousands of loyal admirers at Constitution Hall. Time has worn down some of the sheen of his technique but it has had a mellowing effect on his caressing touch at the keyboard.

Even his interpretation of his own C Minor Prelude—the inevitable encore—has been tenderized after countless performances for he played it yesterday with much less splash than younger pianists who use it for bombastic display. This prelude is, apparently, still the big moment of a Rachmaninoff concert to his admirers. They listened to two encores with pleasure and respect but with the third encore—the prelude—the audience broke right down and clamored its approval against the descending octaves that open the work.

They probably wanted the G Minor prelude, too, for they kept applauding even after the lights were dimmed as a hint that the concert was really over. The din kept up steadily for a long time but Rachmaninoff appeared only once in the shadowed side of the stage to take his stiff bow and to give his faint, tired smile of acknowledgment.

## A LEGEND

The man is practically a legend, just as his two preludes are as "classic" in piano repertoires as works composed by masters long since dead. Completely poised on the stage he looks around the hall with his characteristic world-weary expression and delicately fingers the keys as if he has for many years now been resigned to the brief program-rustling restlessness of audiences between pieces.

He still has a soothing magic at the keyboard but it functions most satisfactorily now in pianissimo. The

quiet, gentle way he opened the fugue of the Bach-Liszt Organ Fantasia in G Minor brought separate voices into velvety unison.

He gave the earthy sentiment in Beethoven's Sonata Op. 109, broad leisurely expression. In Chopin, Liszt and his own four Etudes-Tableaux he proved that his fingers are still nimble, tho not always so sure, but even here it was in quiet staccato and in lyric passage that he seemed most in command.

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