Rachmaninoff, Pianist-Poet

BY LILLIAN T. PLOGSTEDT

THE second in the College of Music series of piano recitals was given Sunday in Emery Auditorium by the incomparable Rachmaninoff. It should be a very simple matter to review a recital by Rachmaninoff. But would it, for example, be an easy thing to speak technically of the sun, moon and stars? They do but shine. And so it seems to us in recalling the program played by the great master.

One recalls that some numbers have been played in different fashion, or faster or slower tempo. For example, the great Fantasia and Fugue of Bach, originally scored for organ, and arranged by Liszt; we do not recall ever hearing the Fantasia quite as deliberately given, or the Fugue taken at such a stunning tempo.

There followed, then, a most poetic reading of the great Beethoven Sonata, op. 109, then a Chopin group. Instead of the Valse, as programmed, Rachmaninoff played the rarely heard C minor Polonaise; then the D flat Nocturne, in which there were incredibly lovely little nuances. A tiny, exquisite Mazurka, and then the glowingly brilliant Rondo, op. 16, in the interpretation of which the whole artistry of the man was apparent.

After the intermission the artist gave three of his own Etudes-Tableaux, op. 33, each a real pianistic gem. In the next number, the second of the Liszt Sonnetto del Petrarca, Rachmaninoff was more than at any other moment the poet. When he so elects, he makes the piano sing, and his tone is of rare beauty.

There followed the somewhat hackneyed Brassin arrangement of the Magic Fire music from "Die Walkure," and then the major Paganini-Liszt Etude, to form a dazzlingly brilliant ending to a perfect concert. Of course, the audience was not contented. The artist then generously gave the charming Liszt arrangement of the "Spinning Chorus" from Wagner's "Flying Dutchman," Kreisler's lovely "Liebeslied," doubtlessly the artist's own arrangement, and, of course, he had to play the prelude without which no audience would think of leaving a Rachmaninoff recital.