

# Rachmaninoff Enthralls U. Artist Course Audience

By Johan Storjohann Egilsrud

That the foreful personality of an artist often has as much power to arouse the imagination of a concert audience as the music he plays was vividly apparent last night at the recital given by the great Russian composer and pianist, Sergei Rachmaninoff.

The audience which filled Northrop Auditorium for the opening concert of the University artists' course, was held entranced by the strange power which radiates from Rachmaninoff's somber personality. No sooner had he seated himself at the piano and touched the keys for the first, simple notes of Bach's grave prelude, "Weeping, Plaints, Sorrow, Fears," than the audience sat immobile and enthralled. Keeping the entire prelude within a narrow dynamic range, never rising above a mezzo forte, he achieved extraordinary expressive variety within this scope, sustaining a mood of deep inwardness and grief.

Only through the persuasive authority of his personality did he prevent the phrasing from descending to sentimentality and over-subtlety.

The same kind of intensely personal reading, with delicate nu-

ances, faint but live pianissimos and some rubato marked the Andante from Bach's "Italian Concerto." In marked contrast to the Andante, the other two movements—the Allegro and the Presto—were played with a clear, objective voice-leading and an impersonal formality.

Nowhere did Rachmaninoff exhibit more versatility of temperament, more dramatic imagination and more technical brilliancy than in the Chopin "Fantasie" and "Scherzo." Here the moods kept changing abruptly from brooding sadness and wild agitation to sweetness and joy—changes which called for both technical and emotional agility in the artist.

In Chopin's F major Nocturne, which the pianist played instead of the F sharp Impromptu announced on the program, the subtle left-hand technique made even the slightest harmonic modulation in the bass significant and influenced effectively the color of the main melody.

The fragile beauty of the "Claire de Lune" from Debussy's "Suite Bergmanesque" won the most vigorous applause of the selections played after the intermission. It was evoked with a touch that uti-

lized all the color resources of the piano, and it had a quiet flow which gave it an inner continuity rarely achieved. For some reason, the pianist did not play his own E flat minor Etude as given in the program, but substituted his rather light and phantastically effective G major Prelude.

So enthusiastic was the applause at the end of the concert that Mr. Rachmaninoff had to pay as encores his own famous C sharp minor Prelude, Dohnanyi's F minor Capriccio, and the silly and irritating piece called "The Bee" by Rimsky-Korsakoff.

