

Rachmaninoff

Piano Recital

Hearty Welcome Given Russian Pianist-Com- poser On Annual Concert At The Lyric

BRINGING delight to great numbers of his loyal admirers, Sergi Rachmaninoff paid his annual visit to the Lyric last night. The concert was marked by an unexpected change of program so that the Baltimore premiere of the pianist's own Etude in E Flat Minor must be looked for on some other occasion. In its stead, the soloist gave a beautifully atmospheric reading of his own G Major Prelude, that cantabile melody set like a jewel in its shimmering quintuplet accompaniment figure.

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QUITE as hearty a welcome is always given to the distinguished Russian composer-pianist when he comes to the piano keyboard as the central figure of a concerto. On those occasions, however, every pianist is obliged to accommodate his pace (however unwillingly) to the heavier tread of the orchestra, indulging in comparatively few subtleties of rubato. Only in such a program as that of last night, completely free of accompaniment restrictions, does one savor the intimacies of Rachmaninoff's art to the full.

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CHOPIN'S Mazurka in C Sharp Minor, Opus 63, No. 3, which Huneker looked upon as a pendant to the famous waltz in the same key, found the pianist at his best. Here were the artlessly artful fluctuations of rhythm, and the sharply chiseled effects of phrasing which gave gemlike luster to performances of Chopin's F Major Nocturne, much of Debussy's "Suite Bergamasque," and Liszt's "Waldeesrauschen" and "Gnomesreigen."

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HIS VERY freedom from outside restrictions, of course, sometimes turns out to be the one temptation that the virtuoso, secure in his armor of technique, cannot resist. Like the celebrated "Minute Waltz," Chopin's Impromptu in A Flat Major is nearly always taken at great speed, and such was the case again last night.

No doubt, too, just to show despairing students how rapidly and easily the thing can be done, those forbidding octave passages and rippling arabesques of the same composer's C Sharp Minor Scherzo were tossed off at quite a lively pace. Neither this, despite a murmur of admiration stirred up by the feat, nor the presentation of Debussy's dream-laden "Clair de Lune," seemed entirely note-perfect; and each revealed certain mannerisms of handling rhythmic patterns that have become almost hallmarks of Rachmaninoff's pianistic style.

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YET IF ONE thing seems sure it is that one can turn to very few other pianists for such a combination of technical facility, repose and richly poetic outlook. There was conviction in every ringing measure of Bach's rewarding but misnamed "Italian Concerto," and from the opening transcription by Liszt, of some Bach music, down to the concluding Liszt numbers, this was almost entirely a program to please old admirers and to win new friends.

Rachmaninoff's far-famed Prelude (once referred to by the embattled Ernest Newman as "that atrocious C Sharp Minor Prelude") was an encore, and it now seems very unlikely that its creator will ever again be permitted to leave the concert hall without playing it at least once. Other additions to the program included Chopin's "double-rhythm" waltz in A Flat Major.

G. S.