

RACHMANINOFF GIVES AUDITORIUM RECITAL

Pianist Shows Romantic Virtuosity—Is Heard by Enthusiastic Audience.

By THOMAS B. SHERMAN.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF'S piano recital at the Municipal Auditorium yesterday afternoon was an example of romantic virtuosity at its best. The large audience, which undoubtedly attended with the expectation of being undone by his rich and rolling measures, was obviously not disappointed, for it not only asked for and received a number of encores, but was still asking for more when a member of the staff closed the piano.

Most of the music on the program, including the Beethoven sonata Opus 31 No. 2, was a product of the nineteenth century, and the particular spirit of that exuberant period is the one with which Rachmaninoff has always identified himself both as a composer and a performer. At the service of composers such as Liszt and Chopin—not to mention Rachmaninoff—he places, without reservation, his formidable talents. And as an interpreter of their works he still wears the royal purple.

Those who like the "Sonneto del Petrarca" of Liszt, for instance, must have been swooning with delight when he finished his performance of that number. It had everything that the score called for both directly and by implication. Its sentimental heartache could hardly have been presented with a greater richness of sonority, fluency of line and significance of accent. At the same time the performer's belief in the music gave it a sort of dignity.

Eloquence of utterance also marked the Beethoven sonata. Another performer might have felt the necessity of something a little more explosive in the first movement, but he would have had difficulty in making it more persuasive or, for that matter, more logical. For while one always is made to feel that emotion is the ruling force with Rachmaninoff and that it is the force which is first called into play, its expression always feels the discipline of an idea.

In the Bach Italian concerto, however, the idea seemed to be too much a child of the emotion. The beauty of the music is in the line and the structure. It did not need the color that the performer gave it in order to achieve a complete life. This is not meant as an indorsement of a mechanical or literal style in playing Bach, especially when, as in the Italian concerto, it has such beautiful melodies. But the nature of the text would seem to forbid the raising of one voice over another or anything but the most sparing use of the pedal.

Besides the numbers mentioned, Rachmaninoff played four of his own preludes, Liszt's arrangement of a Bach prelude, Liszt's arrangement of the "Spinning Song" from Wagner's "Flying Dutchman" and Louis Brassin's arrangement of the "Magic Fire" music from "Walkure."

One would think that in a world so full of unplayed piano music nobody would want to make a piano transcription of Wagner. But since it does exist it's a good thing that there is a Rachmaninoff to play it. The performance of the "Magic Fire" music was quite remarkable in the way it managed to convey the depth and variety of the orchestra within the monochrome coloring of the piano.