

Rachmaninoff In Best Form At Recital

By HELEN de MOTTE.

It must have surprised those who hold the firm belief that Richmond does not care for piano recitals to see the audience at the Mosque last night when Sergi Rachmaninoff was presented by the Civic Musical Association. But it confirmed the judgment of those who over the years have found that the general average of attendance for piano recitals has exceeded that of voice recitals. This is not to say that all piano recitals have exceeded all voice recitals, because there have been certain individual song recitals that have exceeded any instrumental recital. We are speaking of the general average. The audience last night almost completely filled the Mosque, and its enthusiasm was unbounded.

Rachmaninoff was in his best form. In addition to the super-technical accomplishments, which are always dazzling and prodigious in this artist, there was a contrasting sensitive feeling for sheer beauty of tone and phrase which has not always been felt. The almost vocal beauty of the melodic line as it sang itself delicately over the interwoven accompaniment has always been a feature of Rachmaninoff's playing, but last night it seemed more than ever clearly impressive. It was at times almost analagous to a dry-point etching, so clearly was it limned against its harmonic background, and one felt the composer predominating over the virtuoso as new beauties were revealed under the magic of his fingers.

The program included a Liszt prelude—"Weeping, Plaints, Sorrows, Fears" after J. Bach, and Bach's "Italian Concerto," gay and brilliant as he played it, with the beautiful second movement, one of the loveliest things Bach ever wrote for the piano, exquisitely played.

Then came a Chopin group—a Nocturne in F Major, the Impromptu in A flat Major, a Mazurka and Valse and the beautiful Scherzo with its exalted chorale-like middle section, given an almost inspired reading.

The Debussy "Suite Bergamasque" was incisively and brilliantly enunciated, the poetic "Clair de Lune" being quite ravishing in its transparent beauty and reflective mood.

The familiar C sharp minor Prelude by the artist was, naturally one of the popular numbers of the program and the program concluded with two Liszt Etudes—tone poems—"Voices of the Woods," a rippling quiet accompaniment with a lovely floating melody, and "Dance of the Gnomes," which was elfin in its swift lightness. At the close Mr. Rachmaninoff added the Liszt transcription of Schubert's "Die Forelle" and two Russian numbers. It was a notable recital by a towering artist, which, so far as we are concerned was quite sufficient if there were no others to follow.