

CELEBRITY CONCERT

RACHMANINOFF

Mr. Rachmaninoff's recital at the Paramount Theatre, last evening, was in the popular vein and he himself in a mood that could almost be called genial. Like Kreisler, he rarely unbends, and his set and impassive demeanour is guiltless of any platform mannerisms. The concentration of his playing is as masterful as ever. But last night he did relax once or twice.

He began and ended with Liszt transcriptions and the contours of the concert were thus shaped by a dual virtuosity. He absorbs everything he touches into his own creative style. The opening Bach-Liszt Fantasie and Fugue in G minor was more Liszt than Bach and more Rachmaninoff than either. But seeing that there were four voices at issue here, three composers and a pianist, and that the pianist and one of the composers were both present, this was something far removed from the original organ technics. And that surely is the only way to treat transcriptions—as if they are original works. No organist could have stuck to that fugal tempo which Rachmaninoff set and maintained in his steely grip right down to the bass octaves at the end. What was lost in majesty was gained in the relentless march of the rhythm.

He gave us a delicate, rather romantic version of the Beethoven Sonata in D minor. It takes a giant to use his strength with so much finesse and gentleness. Is there a soft core somewhere in Rachmaninoff? If so, it was here, and in the Chopin Nocturne in F major that he allowed us to have a glimpse of it. The Polonaise, played with marked rubato, the Impromptu in A flat, turned out at lightning speed, but without any positive electric shocks, and the Scherzo in C sharp minor, which was full of fantasy, were equally dazzling studies. His own three Etudes-Tableaux are pieces of the utmost bravura. As to the Liszt, it was quite individual—it is almost impertinent to speak of technique with a master of such gifts. Temperamentally, Rachmaninoff seems far removed from Wagner, and his "Spinning Song" in Liszt's arrangement, was a whirl of brilliant pianistic colours. The encores included the inevitable prelude ("The Prelude," as they say) which is, perhaps, a further proof that Rachmaninoff was in a mood to unbend. A. K. H.