

with health and intends to live in it.

RACHMANINOFF'S RECITAL

Enthusiastic Reception at Colston Hall

Sergei Rachmaninoff, the eminent Russian pianist and composer, was rapturously greeted last night at the Colston Hall, where he gave a recital in the presence of an immense audience. There can be no doubt that Rachmaninoff is among the foremost interpretative artists of the day, and that yesterday he gave a splendid account not only of his own powers but of everything he played, beyond that an unhappy scribe like myself, who is faced with the necessity of writing a detailed appraisal, and to whose mind trite and well-worn phrases come too readily, is at a loss to know how best to deal adequately with so exceptional an event. However, an attempt will have to be made.

Never a noisy player, Rachmaninoff showed that even in Liszt's transcription of Bach's Organ Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, which provides scope and an excuse for heavy-handling, could be presented with as much vigour as was needed, yet at the same time with the utmost lucidity and refinement, with never, or so it seemed, a harsh or miscalculated note.

In the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata in D minor (Op. 31, No. 2) some of the composer's dynamic markings were departed from, certain "pianissimo" passages being interpreted "fortissimo" or thereabouts, and vice-versa, but such modifications did not give one the impression of capriciousness, and were acceptable in the light of the poetic and carefully-thought-out reading of the Sonata as a whole.

Chopin Pieces

Rachmaninoff is a past master in playing the music of Chopin, though it seems almost superfluous to say so seeing that he plays everything so well. But the four Chopin pieces in last night's programme—Polonaise in C minor, Nocturne in F, Impromptu in A flat, and Scherzo in C sharp minor—could not have been executed with greater clarity or imbued with finer feeling. They were, moreover, enjoyable on their own account, not only for their positive virtues, but because they are all devoid of that cloying sentimentality so often the composer's undoing.

The second part of the concert was comparatively short, even with the addition of three pieces given as encores, and contained no music on a large scale. Most interesting, perhaps, were three of Rachmaninoff's own Etudes-Tableaux from the Opus 33 group. They have no profound musicality, but for their harmonic scheme and pianistic figuration, both very characteristic of the composer, they are of value, and their only real drawback would seem to be their brevity.

They were followed by some music for which Liszt was wholly or partly responsible—his own 'Sonetto del Petrarca' in E, and his arrangements of the Spinning Song from Wagner's "Flying Dutchman" and Paganini's Etude in E. The first is a particularly agreeable work which it was a pleasure to hear as a change from the everlasting "Liebestraume" whose style is equally lyrical but not so exalted in sentiment.

It would be redundant to enter into further detailed praise of Rachmaninoff's immaculate performances of these works or of the three additional pieces. They included the pianist's highly ornate version of Kreisler's "Liebeslied" and the inevitable Prelude in C sharp minor, which latter, like many other excessively popular works, does not seem at all bad when judged dispassionately, but has become so hackneyed that one often thinks of it as being utterly beyond redemption.

This most successful recital was the sixth of the season's International Celebrity Concerts, arranged by Mr Charles H. Lockier in conjunction with Mr Harold Holt.

L.R.B.