

THUNDER IN HIS TOUCH

RACHMANINOFF THRILLS CROWD WHICH FILLS ARARAT TEMPLE.

Every Number Stirs Enthusiasm as the Pianist Plays With All the Vigor of His Earliest Performances.

Playing to a completely sold-out house and a crowd in which almost every important community within the miles of Kansas City was represented, Sergei Rachmaninoff appeared in Ararat Temple last night in a program whose every number evoked the greatest enthusiasm. The artist inaugurated the thirty-second season of the Walter A. Frischky concert management in Kansas City. The Russian, whose superb performing qualities have aided so much to public appreciation of the modern art in America in the last twenty years and whose compositions have become so important in the current literature of vocal, piano and orchestral music, has apparently yielded nothing to the years, even though his career and his works may seem to the young generation to connect him with a vanished era. His tall, gaunt figure comes upon the stage erect and firm like a tower; he could have been called "giant" even when he first came to America—and his long, clutching fingers attack the keys with the same strength and zest that astonished his first American audiences twenty years or more ago. It must have finally dawned upon the younger listeners in the audience that the years they have heaped upon him aren't so many, after all, and that their fear that it might be their last chance to hear him is not very firmly grounded.

NO GESTURE OF FATIGUE.

He played a difficult and varied program and one, from a pianist's standpoint, formidable and exhausting. Yet to hands like his, and to a player who is more at home at the piano than anywhere else, it was a simple workout. Unlike the majority of concert pianists, he betrays not the least sign of fatigue, and in places in none of the ordinary tricks of flexing the fingers and bending the arms to indicate weariness. His final encores are as vigorous as his opening number, and his attack at the last evokes the same sympathy for the instrument.

He opened with some Rameau variations, and Bach's E minor toccata, passing quickly into Beethoven's E-flat sonata, Op. 81, whose three movements are entitled by the composer, "Forever," "Absence" and "Return." It is a beautiful work, far less seldom played in comparison with the master's other sonatas, perhaps because it is not generally regarded as much of a showpiece. But it is a highly poetic work, as Rachmaninoff plays it, and shows enough when taken at the proper tempo and played with the requisite clearness in all its interesting details. The second part, "Absence," was beautifully done, with every suggestion of lonely yearning the title implies, and the pure, unrestrained joy expressed in the swift finale, "Return," was sweeping and almost overwhelming in its effect.

EVERY NUMBER HIS OWN.

After a clear but almost too facile rendition of Schubert's impromptu in A-flat and a rondo on a pleasant little theme by the same composer, Mr. Rachmaninoff returned after the intermission to play his own G major prelude, the only work from his own pen programmed last night. It is one that fits well into the category of his other better known preludes, the G minor and the C-sharp minor. But it is entirely different in character from either of them—a beautiful, absorbing melody over a figured accompaniment hardly rising to an important climax, but fading away in soft tones of a melody that almost seems suspended in the air.

Tricks of the Chopin preludes, especially selected for smoothness of modulation and transition rather than contrast, were then played in quick succession, some played very bravely, and others played thoughtfully with a careful avoidance of sentimentalizing. The program closed with a burst of brilliance in two works from the Last Library—the sonnetto del Petrarca, and the Brantella, "Venezia e Napoli."

After first returning for encore with a Chopin mazurka, Mr. Rachmaninoff then delighted the audience with what it seemed to have been especially to hear, his own famous C-sharp minor prelude, which he played with more respect than on his last visit. On that occasion it was common talk that he was thoroughly fed up on that composition. Now he is mellowing. A