

BRUNO DAVID USSHER
Speaking of Music

NO COMPARISONS NECESSARY

By the time this leaves the hands of the delivery boy, Rachmaninoff will have played his second recital of the week and it will be too late to urge readers to attend. I have not heard such engrossing and complete piano playing for a long time. Not even the Russian pianist himself has always entered so wholly into the different styles of a program as this which ranged from Rameau to his own writings. I will be told that Rachmaninoff takes liberties. Very well, then he does take liberties, if it must be that the printed note permits of no more than one reading. Which is nonsense, of course. For that matter Rachmaninoff is one of the most exact performers.



ALICE C. BATCHELDER
Who Appears in Recital With
Stephen De'ak, Violoncellist, To-
morrow Night at the Playhouse

Rachmaninoff has always been a great pianist. He has remained that consistently. He plays still, with the enthusiasm, the sincere, self-effacing admiration whether it is Bach, Beethoven, Chopin or Schubert. I do not fancy that he cares for the newer school, such as Debussy. If anything, he has become more the romantic interpreter than before, without falsifying general style or specific mood. It is fascinating to observe the movement of his hands. He comes from the older school of technicians, yet he uses not a hard and fast method to effect different tone qualities. This Russian is so alive as to the inherent message of the music that his technical approach, fingers, wrist, arm and shoulder all come into play according to the demands of a phrase. He uses different "touch methods" (a silly term), different in the right from the left hand, when the occasion warrants. Pianists who talk so much about methods should ponder that fact. He plays according to the needs of details.

Ideal Beethoven

It is really inspiring to see and hear this Russian music-aristocrat, outwardly aloof, bare all the intimacies he feels in a strangely rhapsodic Bach of the E-minor Tocatta, in the candid confessions of Chopin's airy and again agonized confessions called "Preludes." How naive and how legitimate the naiveté of Schubert in the Rondo and the Impromptu. For myself, I admired Rachmaninoff most in the Beethoven sonata opus 81, the "Farewell" sonata. How much, or how little, this is pianistic program music, is immaterial. But this freely flowing mixture of ardent ideas became marvelously expressive the other night. It is an unconventional, unrhethoric work. It wants great flexibility of treatment and a quiet, yet forceful, melting ardor. It sounded as if it contained a personal meaning for Rachmaninoff, and yet, always, there was Beethoven. This is not one of the "big" sonatas with which pianists can make a "big" showing. The technical demands are intricate, yet not showy. It is curiously modern of romantic mood.