

# Enthusiastic House Welcomes Return Of Rachmaninoff

By **CONSTANCE HERRESHOFF**

Sergei Rachmaninoff played last night in the Savoy theater to a full house, receiving something special in welcomes after an absence of five years. In hearing this great Russian, listeners think first of beautiful music interpreted in an interesting, poetic way, and later of large, supple hands working wonders at a keyboard. Rachmaninoff is a great musician who happens to play piano superbly. His virtuoso technique is just a convenience, not a reason for being.

It is only by taking pencil in hand and subtracting 1873 from 1938 that one can be made to realize that the pianist heard last night really is 65. All the power and vigor desirable were there, plus the most beautiful tone quality imaginable and a fresh, clear pianissimo that any young virtuoso would give half a century to possess.

Mr. Rachmaninoff is always an impressive figure on the stage. He radiated a sort of aristocratic benevolence last night as he looked out on the audience from his altitude. In general appearance he probably resembles his tall, noble ancestors who scared the wits out of their serfs. When one of the Savoy's doors squealed in the most

tender moment of a Chopin Prelude, it would have seemed natural for the pianist to charge with a lash.

Last night's program was a joy throughout. Rameau Variations, in a lively but delicate harpsichord spirit; Bach's E minor Toccato, beautifully modulated; Beethoven's Sonata about "L'Absence" and a jolly comeback in 6-8 time (even if you don't like this sonata, you liked it last night); a Schubert opus listed by someone with adenoids as "Improptu; a Schubert Rondo; Twelve Chopin Etudes, the first six and six others—these couldn't have been better played; an appealing Rachmaninoff Prelude in G; and two Liszt pieces revealing Liszt's better nature, his "Petrarch Sonnet" and "Venezia e Napoli."

The audience was very happy and responsive last night. The pianist was generous. The three encores played at the close of the program were "'Troika," by his friend Tschaikowsky; "Bees After Rimsky," or "Flight of the Bees" in alternate years, and, don't all speak at once, his famous C sharp minor Prelude. Rapturous applause broke on the second note, for if you hear A followed by G sharp, can C sharp be far behind?