

Rachmaninoff at Rehearsal

Rachmaninoff rehearsed his new work Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43, with the Hallé Orchestra, under the conductorship of Nicolai Malko, at the Free Trade Hall this afternoon. The orchestra will give the first performance of the work in England to-morrow night. To an uninstructed observer privileged to witness it, this rehearsal seemed more fascinating than many concerts. The sense of concentration and control given by a great orchestra is, perhaps, heightened by the atmosphere of a preliminary practice, when the rap of the conductor's baton repeatedly brings matters to a sudden standstill, so that the instrumentalists may listen to instructions in an interval of awful silence.

Rachmaninoff was applauded by the players as he made his way to the piano this afternoon; but there all formality ended. The business of rehearsal went forward swiftly and without any kind of fuss. The composer and the conductor dominated the scene, with a sort of per-

sonal mastery that owed little to speech. Sometimes Rachmaninoff would turn slowly from the keyboard and fix a member of the orchestra with his eye; occasionally he would rise and consult for a moment with Malko in an undertone, or walk over to a player and pencil a note on the score, his tall figure inclined above the music stand. Then, with a gesture from the conductor, the playing would be resumed, until the rap of the baton was heard again—often after an interval of no more than a few seconds.

On Tour by Air

Rachmaninoff composed the "Rhapsody" last summer at his villa in Lucerne. He never composes during the season when he is playing, feeling that the two forms of musical activity are incompatible. The strain of travel, however, has been somewhat reduced for him since he took to the use of aeroplanes. The journeys during his recent tour in Scandinavia were accomplished almost entirely by air, and he thinks of making his forthcoming voyage to South America in the Graf Zeppelin. He has so taken to air travel that he talks in irresponsible moments of "taking out his pilot's certificate."