

RACHMANINOFF GIVES A NOTABLE RECITAL

Great Russian Pianist Is at
His Best in Performance in
Academy

Presents Persuasive Pro-
gramme With Versatile
Artistry of Effect

By LINTON MARTIN

Rachmaninoff's recitals are essentially esoteric. That characteristic may have accounted for the otherwise surprising fact that the Academy was not crowded to its capacity when the great Russian pianist presented an appealing and persuasive programme last night. But those who heard him were richly and royally repaid. He was quite compelling "in the vein." He played with less austere detachment of style, and greater human warmth than has marked his concert appearances here for some time past, and his flexibility of mood gave unflinching freshness of interest to every number.

Rachmaninoff first played transcriptions by Busoni of two organ choral preludes of Bach, "Now Comes the Gentle's Savior," and "Rejoice, Beloved Christians." Both were played with true regard for their time and character. And for that reason the contrast was all the more striking in the "Fantasy" Sonata of Liszt. This second number was artistically the high peak of the entire performance. The too facile floridities of Liszt were fairly transfigured in the poignant poetry of certain inner voices, and electrical energy infused fire and feeling into the interpretation of this work which was inspired by Dante, and has unmistakable points of kinship with the "Mephisto" Waltzes.

The Chopin offerings were the F minor Fantasia, the C sharp minor Scherzo (hardly as effective as the B flat minor), and two of the Polonaises, the C-minor and E-flat major (thus avoiding the more hackneyed, but certainly more dramatic "Heroic," opus 53, and the "Military," opus 40). Chopin was again heard in the first of the encores, at the very end of the regular programme, when Rachmaninoff played, with almost ineffable delicacy and wistfulness the so-called "Mediterranean" Nocturne, opus 15, No. 2, in F sharp. The regular programme included Medtner's elin and imaginative "Fairy Tale," a familiar favorite of the pianist's; Rachmaninoff's own prelude—a new opus, of exceedingly fragile texture, and not the world-weary warhorse of the C sharp minor; and a Valse-Caprice of Strauss-Tausig, played with pulsing rhythm and buoyancy.

Rachmaninoff reserves his encores for the very end. But that only had the effect of making the enthusiasm of his audience the more insistent.