

Audience Wouldn't Leave Until Rachmaninoff Played 'Prelude'

By RUTH HOWELL

A TALL, dignified, Russian gentleman, with a close-cropped head and deep lines in his sober face, sat before a mighty piano at Poli's yesterday afternoon, and let his long, skillful hands ripple and skip and fly from one end of the piano to the other, until he had completely captivated his audience.

Fond mothers brought their child prodigies to hear the great master play, and begged him to give the children a hearing. Boarding school misses gasped with delight; music lovers beamed delightedly, and hardened critics roused themselves to applaud.

Sergei Vassielivitch Rachmaninoff played.

Brilliancy and Tricks

His was by no means a commonplace program; it was scarcely a familiar one. There were two of Bach's organ preludes, arranged for the piano by Busoni, and played by Rachmaninoff with scholarly understanding and deliberation, and with comprehensive technique. There was a Liszt Fantasia, of dazzling brilliancy, and crowded with pianistic tricks—trying to play, and a little trying to listen to.

Then with the playing of Chopin, we again discovered the beautiful tone which Rachmaninoff can make his, yet never lose the force of his playing. The Fantasia was brilliant and full of color; the Scherzo embodied the high point of the afternoon's program; and the Polonaise was played with a rare charm equalled only by that written into the composition.

Medtner, a modern German composer, contributed an interesting, yet sometimes enigmatic fairy tale to the program; the artist himself

was the composer of the rare and lovely Prelude, in great contrast to the famous C sharp minor, and the G minor Preludes; and the "Waltz King," Strauss gave a Valse Caprice to finish off the afternoon.

The Climax

But that was not all. The audience applauded and applauded and would not go home. Rachmaninoff tried a simple Chopin Nocturne. That did not satisfy. Then he tried Mossourgsky's "Hopak," and seemed to enjoy playing it more than anything else during the afternoon; but that was not what the audience wanted. Then after another five minutes' of applause, he appeared, with a resigned smile, and played it—the C sharp minor Prelude!

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