

RACHMANINOFF PLAYS ROMANTIC PROGRAM

Great Composer-Pianist More
Than Ever a Recreator in His
Own Moods of Other's Works

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

Rachmaninoff as he performed his slow-motion bow in Massey Hall last night looked more like the incarnation of sublime weariness than ever. Seated at the piano his profile was peculiarly Orientaly Slavic. He seemed to be searching like a Brahmin for a message in music that might come from the world of another composer's work as intensely as it ever did from his own. And most of his playing of a very romantic though not phenomenal program showed more than ever how this eminent composer-pianist differs from any other living. In the silent power of his personality he resembles Paderewski—but in nothing else. His virtuosity is just about all that Paderewski's is not.

He is the only world-famous pianist who has played Chopin's Funeral March Sonata here in at least five years, and I think it was the first time he had ever done it here. That came at the end of the first half of his program—for he left the stage but once before the end, not wanting to waste time being looked at. In this as in everything else he improvised a way to present the picture according to his mood. His prodigious staccatos in the first movement and the limpid wistful beauties of the Melody in the Scherzo were done with all his usual high lighting, but very subdued against the tremendous peremptory smashes of the Funeral March in contrast to the long, tender line of infinite theatrical sadness in the funeral melody. This tone picture with its double-octaved chords and its exquisite decrescendos was mainly his own. Chopin never heard it so. Next week in another sort of hall it might be played another way—just as well, with totally different variations of tempo.

But everything this artist does is governed by great scholarship and the genius of a composer working to re-create other men's music. In the Beethoven Sonata he seemed to be testing every phrase to see what sort of light he might give it and his tone was always incisively equal to the picture. But he is not so great at Beethoven as at Chopin.