

FROM CAPTION 1018

Rachmaninoff Great in Recital Entirely of Chopin and Liszt

But Audience Insists on Encores and Hears His Prelude, Too.

By HARRY R. BURKE.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, who chronicled the march of unswerving Fate in the thunders of his C sharp minor Prelude, bowed to the inevitable in the gold room of the Jefferson Hotel last night. He played the prelude. He played it as the first of the encores which followed his masterly Chopin-Liszt program. Somehow there was an air of resignation as he went to the piano. As though he were to say, "We might as well have it over with, and then we can all go home." But he guessed wrong. He must play the Chopin-Liszt "Maiden's Wish" and the E minor Chopin waltz ere his enthusiastic admirers would let him go.

Saves for his own prelude, which the audience welcomed vociferously, his program was made up exclusively from those two masters of piano, Chopin and Liszt. Not to forget, of course, a tincture of Rachmaninoff. All of it familiar, indeed. On its face a conventional program. But not conventionally played. The titanic personality of the Russian pianist pervaded his presentations. They were not less great music for that.

Masterly Pianism This.

A thoroughly pianistic program. Offered by a master. Never an attempt at anything orchestral in effect. Just limpid, beautiful, clear, singing piano-tone. Colorful, too. Rachmaninoff is as masterful with pedal as with the infinitely relaxed body, shoulders, arms and fingers. A tone that is evoked, never pounded.

Virile, masculine, authoritative, was his Chopin on the one hand. Cannons beneath the blanketing rose petals. Fire, Spirit. The melody, which Rachmaninoff considers the heart of music, sang beautifully above the galloping thunders. Or there was a crystalline staccato, marked by rainbow iridescence, as in the B flat major Rondo. Or yet again gargoyles and grotesquerie, and goblin laughter mingled with booming chimes, as in the B minor Scherzo. The programmed Chopin numbers consisted of these, the F minor Ballade, the B major Nocturne, the Fantaisie Impromptu and a Mazurka.

Liszt Works Impressive.

Even greater, to one hearer at least, was his Liszt, the storm-born drama of the B minor Ballade; the rainbow sparkle of the Valse Impromptu; the power and brilliance, the medieval richness and color, and the deep poetry of the Sonnetto del Petrarca, and finally the brilliant and dashing, yet strongly contrasted and tricky rhythms of the E major Polonaise.

Silhouetted against the dazzling white of the stage alcove, Rachmaninoff seemed indeed a Titan so rugged, so sharp in outline was the picture. And there is a rugged character as the hall mark of his pianism—a depth of power—but there is a depth of poetry also. His is a breath-taking technique, a vertiginous velocity, a dynamic range no other pianist is master of. But Rachmaninoff makes them the servant of mood. For all his virtuosity he will be no virtuoso. He towers as artist as he towered on that stage as man.

Miss Cueny's new recital home delighted the smart audience with its smart atmosphere, with the fine acoustics and the intimate aspect it wore.