

RACHMANINOFF'S RECITAL

M. Rachmaninoff played to a very poor audience at the Philharmonic Hall, last night. That seems to be a distinction reserved, in Liverpool, for pianists of real eminence and personality. That M. Rachmaninoff has personality no one doubts. It is perhaps, on the surface, a somewhat severe and unrelenting personality, considered in terms of the pianoforte—a curious mixture of fire and ice. The marked dynamism of his style, his clean and pointed rhythm, the nervous tension, and withal a certain fierceness—these were decided qualities. To watch him is dangerous, for the keyboard mannerisms are rather misleading, and the jerkiness of method is more apparent than real. A creative personality (for Rachmaninoff, as all the world knows, is a composer) is apt to put its own impress on the music of other composers, to re-create them, so to speak, in its own image. The Schumann "Davidsbunder" dances, for instance, contained very little of the essence of Schumann, and were rather an exemplification of pianistic technique, studies rather than poesies—none of the rich, plum-cake quality of Schumann. The two Chopin Scherzi were likewise wondrously translated. There was a dazzling piece of work at the end of the B flat minor Scherzo. For the rest, this was Chopin in Russian boots.

The best came with the Liszt items at the end and the three "Etudes-Tableaux" of the pianist's own composition. The Liszt was brilliant, Liszt seems to have written in advance all the works of the minor composers who followed him, so that his music seems full of commonplaces disguised under a brilliant exterior. All the same, he is an original, and M. Rachmaninoff made us feel that there is always something vital and daemonic in him. The "Etude" in D flat and the "Valse-Impromptu" in A flat were marvellously well done. So was the Moussorgsky "Gopak" which he played for an encore. It was, indeed, something to be regretted that M. Rachmaninoff did not devote more of his programme to works in which his special style had a chance to shine.

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