

'Rachmaninoff's Technique Best Today'—Critic

RUSSIAN MASTER PERFECT
IN CONCERT AT AUDITORIUM, HE REPORTS.

By CHARLES W. BATE

Friday night at the Central high school auditorium the Philharmonic Concert Company presented a piano recital by Sergei Rachmaninoff, celebrated Russian composer and pianist. His program consisted of a Beethoven sonata, Opus 51 No. 2, five selections from Chopin, two selections from his own works, Etude Tableaux and his popular C sharp minor Prelude, two numbers by Liszt, Etude in D flat major and Valse Impromptu, and finally Islamel, an Oriental fantasy by Balakireff. For encores he played Melodie by Gluck and an old favorite, the Turkish March from the Ruins of Athens.

Unquestionably the outstanding numbers on the program were the opening and closing ones, even though the Beethoven sonata was spoiled a little by the long wait between the first and second movements while late arrivals were being shown to their seats. Rachmaninoff's rendering of Beethoven is something to remember, while as for the last number, it must have been written for Rachmaninoff, for surely no one else could possibly play it.

HIS ARTISTRY SUPERB

Rachmaninoff is a large man, lean and tall and powerful. His bearing is almost coldly reserved. He is the kind of a man that is loved by his children, adored by his grandchildren—and admired and respected by the rest of the world.

But his artistry is superb. Someone said recently that it is all in how hard you hit the keys. Mechanically that is obvious, and it may be that it is so, but only the greatest genius can achieve such a wide range of delicate shading without hitting one of them harder than the average pianist's pianissimo.

We have heard two great pianists this season. Paderewski, the Polish patriot, and Rachmaninoff, the Russian aristocrat. To hear them both is to appreciate more fully the capabilities of the piano for the finer subtleties of expression.

MASTER OF TECHNIQUE

By reason of his superior physical equipment Rachmaninoff surpasses in technique the Paderewski of today. As to which is the greater artist, beyond the fact that they both employ the same medium, they have so little in common, that any comparison seems futile, and like most comparisons, odious. They both played Chopin's B flat minor Scherzo, Rachmaninoff with a little more passion perhaps, Paderewski with more fervor—but both perfect. Compare a diamond with a pearl.

I would say that the Rachmaninoff we heard last night is a greater interpretive artist than the Paderewski we heard earlier in the season, for the sole reason that with Paderewski it is impossible to lose the man in the music, while Rachmaninoff retains the faculty that Paderewski has either lost or abdicated, to subject himself completely to the spirit of the composer. Only when he plays his own compositions is the man at all in evidence and even then one gathers somehow the impression that this is no more Rachmaninoff that one hears now than it was Chopin a while ago—Dr. Jekyll interpreting Mr. Hyde as it were.