

Rachmaninoff Heard At Constitution Hall

In a day when orchestral power appears a grandiose and growing tyrant in the world of music, welcome relief comes when the artist of the single instrument withdraws one from the turbulency of the multiplied tonalities of a hundred instruments. An artist such as Rachmaninoff, who appeared under the local management of Mrs. Wilson-Greene yesterday afternoon at Constitution Hall.

As leisured and piously-mannered as though in a circumscribed drawing-room, this magnificent Russian made orchestral splendors all his own; and yet, withal, his concert did not lose its chamber music flavor. Naturally, he began with Bach—a choral transcribed by Tausig—brilliantly, majestically interpreted; and quite as naturally, Beethoven followed: His thirty-first opus, a pseudo-Shakespearean sonata, a little roaring like the "Tempest" that inspired it.

Chopin, however, captured the center of Rachmaninoff's program. A set of four numbers. The F Sharp Minor Polonaise with its stately tempos, his regal, stylized, powdered-wig and silver-buckle dignity came first. Then, a Mazurka, a Valse and a full-blooded Scherzo in C Sharp Minor, a piece of Rachmaninoff bril-

liance, as exquisitely presented as any musical work I have ever heard. Here were shades and heights, rhythms and progressions delivered with a magic as consummate and moving as one might conceive. And technically—superb.

Pyrotechnics and Liszt! Pianistic complexities that only Rachmaninoff call clarify came with Funerailles, Valse Oubliee and Voices of the Wood.

The first of the group became an astounding death chant under this Russian's arched fingers, while the Valse acquired a concertized, spectacular quality—a pattern of flushed tones, crowded but enchanting chords, suspended tempos.

Still, the genius of limpid hands stirred new moods, a Fairy Tale by Medtner and the artist's own Prelude in G Flat Major, a simple theme, woven in somewhat silky texture.

"Islamei," Balakireff, also of Cossack blood, proved as modern as Stravinsky, as heterogeneous as Gershwin, as red-blooded as Mussourgsky. Really, a captivating piece of writing, difficult with its freedom of form and colorful with its swift, chameleon changes of theme and key. Again, Rachmaninoff made his magic something to marvel at and "Islamei" gave his concert a well-pointed finale, striking, absodbing, a curtain of surprises.

—FRANK BAER.