

Rachmaninoff Recital Is Real Event

By HARVEY GAUL.

The resplendent Sergei Rachmaninoff came and gave valedictory last night at the Mosque.

The season of visiting recitalists is past; it's all over but the shouting of choral society tenors.

As in years gone by Rachmaninoff was highly individualistic; he knows no school, he is alone and walks his own steinway. He may not be the perfect pianist—far, far from it—but he is the most exciting personality at the clavier today.

He has developed staccato and incisiveness until every work is characterized with brittle bitings. In his pursuit of sharpness and lucidity he has snapped his wrist (and what Russian wrists they are—strong as steel) until fortissimo creeps in where pianissimo should be.

Being a stylist he is monotonous; with exaggerated tempi (many works were over-speeded) and exaggerated tonal volume he often destroys the very effects he strives to achieve, but at that he is never dull and is usually compelling.

He is the finest personality for a student to hear and the worst to follow or imitate, as what is peculiar or indigenous to him would become pianistic eccentricity in another.

Thunder on the Left.

Strepitant, last night he thundered everything and he employed his left hand in Paderewski poundings. Sometimes they added vitality and sometimes they were unnecessary thumpings. Whereas he used to be concerned with frangible transparency he is now obsessed with rush and roar. His method was never caressing and now it is hit-and-run and while one may occasionally admire his vitreous vigor an hour and a half of it palls.

Only three times did he evoke cantabile, in the Liszt, Medtner and Chopin scherzo, all the rest were marred with lusty, healthy whackings and twackings.

From Bach to Balakireff.

As he plays so does he compose a program, never is he run o' recital and old hat, always is he presenting something different. He is the only pianist we know to play Medtner (Nikolaus Medtner his colleague at the Moscow Conservatory) and this time he dug up a B-minor "Fairy Tale" which proved to be an interesting bit of impromptu writing. His own composition, the G-flat major prelude, (and the best of his preludes) was an outstanding work, notable for a restrained left hand and effective right hand broken chords. The Balakireff "Islamei" is a pretentious piece of Asiatic tone color no more adventuresome on the piano (for which it was written) than it is in orchestral form.

Some unfamiliar Liszt held profit. "Funerailles" was a sentimental attempt at picture painting, while "Valse Oubliee" was a delightful morceau. As for "Voices of the Wood," let it pass, Sinding did that sort of thing much better.

Of the four Chopin works the "Scherzo" with its chorale and feathered antiphony was the best. The "Polonaise" was heavily beaten, the "Mazurka" splendidly rhythmized (rhythm is the grandest thing Rachmaninoff has) and the "Valse" was accelerated beyond necessity.

So the season ended as it began. Depression to the contrary and the corner apple business notwithstanding, it was one of the best seasons Pittsburgh has had.