

## Music of the Day

By EDWARD CUSHING

### Sergei Rachmaninoff Gives His Annual Recital at the Brooklyn Academy of Music

THE rather surprisingly small audience that last evening attended Sergei Rachmaninoff's annual Brooklyn recital (given, as in the past, under the auspices of the Institute of Arts and Sciences) found the distinguished Russian pianist in an abstracted, uncommunicative mood. Entering upon the stage of the Academy shortly after 8:15, Mr. Rachmaninoff acknowledged distantly the applause that greeted his appearance, seated himself at his instrument and launched without ceremony into the exposition of the evening's program. This included a Bach Organ Chorale in A, transcribed by Tausig; Beethoven's D minor Sonata, Op. 31; four pieces by Chopin, three by Liszt, Medtner's Fairy Tale in B minor, the pianist's own G-flat Prelude and Balakirew's "Isalmey" fantasy. As encores Mr. Rachmaninoff offered a Chopin Mazurka in C-sharp minor, Op. 63; his own transcription of Moussorgsky's Gopak, and the ubiquitous C-sharp minor Prelude.

Mr. Rachmaninoff is indisputably a great pianist; few of his contemporaries possess his authority as a technician or as an interpreter of piano literature. But despite the classic impersonality that is one of its most striking characteristics, his art reflects the fluctuations of his moods to a degree not observable in the performances of pianists equally gifted, equally accomplished. When he is not at his best, as was the case last evening, he can be very dull. His emotional detachment then is translated into terms of indifference, and one feels that Mr. Rachmaninoff has neither head nor heart for his task; nothing is expressed in his playing but weariness and lassitude of spirit. He is sufficiently the master of his instrument, sufficiently the musician always to play brilliantly, in a sense effectively; neither his technique nor his sense of values, of proportion, of style deserts him; but his pianism becomes spiritually, emotionally barren, conveys to us little or nothing of the meaning of the music, seems to us a mere repetition of interpretative formulae, devoid of conviction on Mr. Rachmaninoff's part.

There were times last night when the greater Rachmaninoff was before us for a fleeting moment. The last page of the Adagio of the Beethoven Sonata was, for example, beautifully played, with noble, heart-felt tenderness, with a tone that had almost the expressiveness of the human voice. The music here became pure emotion—quiet, entreating, infinitely touching. And in the two Chopin mazurkas that he played (one as an encore) there were graciousness and charm, a limpid, pastel tone, a fine delicacy of phrase—this was true, too, of the A major section of the Polonaise in F-sharp minor.

But we found less to admire in Mr. Rachmaninoff's playing of the first movement of the Beethoven Sonata (of which Paderewski gave an unforgettable performance at the Academy not so long ago), in his treatment of the F-sharp minor Polonaise as a whole, of the C-sharp minor Scherzo, of the Liszt and Medtner and Balakirew pieces that followed. There was technical here, to be sure—masterful, amazing virtuosity, especially in the Polonaise and Liszt's "Funerailles." There was, too, bigness of style. But the effect was rhetorical and unilluminating. And save for the exceptions that we have noted, there

A piano recital by Sergei Rachmaninoff, at the Academy of Music last night, under the auspices of the Institute of Arts and Sciences.

#### THE PROGRAM

Bach-Tausig . . . Organ Chorale in A  
Beethoven . . . Sonata, Op. 31 No. 2  
Chopin-Polonaise in F-sharp minor  
Mazurka in A-flat; Valse in A-flat; Scherzo in C-sharp minor  
Liszt . . . "Funerailles"; Valse Op. 10  
"Voices of the Wood"  
Medtner . . . Fairy Tale in B minor  
Rachmaninoff . . . Prelude in G-flat  
Balakirew . . . "Isalmey" Fantasy

was noticeable in the pianist's tone a sharpness and harshness alien to it at its best—produced, no doubt, by Mr. Rachmaninoff's insensitive, mechanical attack upon the keyboard.

The audience was, however, lenient to the artist, rewarding him handsomely for his exertions.

#### BENIAMINO RICCIO

Carnegie Hall was fairly well filled last evening with admirers of Beniamino Riccio who went to hear the baritone in what may appear to be his seasonal recital here. His program was drawn, in the main, from classic sources, with a slight list in the direction of Russian and it included such familiar items as the "Ombra Mai Fu" of Handel, Massenet's "Elegie," the Arioso from Rimsky-Korsakow's "Sadko," "Liebestraum" by Liszt, and another Arioso from Verdi's "Ernani." "Canzone dell' Avventuriere" from "Il Guarany" of Gomes was the opening selection.

Mr. Riccio was in good singing form and disclosed many of the virtues with which his followers are familiar. These include a robust, ringing tone, an extensive range and a sensitive feeling for expression. The baritone's dramatic inclinations approach the histrionic and are effective until Mr. Riccio loses himself in his emotions. In "My Land," by Grechaninow, the singer fell shy a half a tone of the high opening note and our ears were twice treated to that when the response of the audience warranted a repetition of the selection.

Other composers on the printed program were Rachmaninoff, Moussorgsky, Rubinstein, Schubert, Trunk and Mozart. Kurt Ruland was at the piano, although Giuseppe Bamboseck had been announced as the assisting artist.

#### A Roundabout Way

(Buffalo Courier-Express)  
Some of these days President Hoover will get what he wants from the United States Senate by telling the Senators that he doesn't want it.

#### Direct Answers Wanted

(New Castle News)  
Few of our noble public monuments were erected to statesmen who made a practice of answering direct questions with an alibi.