

Music and Drama

RACHMANINOFF.

Brilliant Recital at Massey Hall by Russian Pianist.

Sergei Rachmaninoff gave a truly magnificent performance in Massey Hall last night, and, with the real humility and modesty of a great artist, he was happy in its reception by an audience which followed his work with keen delight and intelligent interest. It was a rather small house, and from the quiet that prevailed while the master bent over the piano, he might have been quite alone in the dimly lighted hall. But when that house applauded, it equalled in volume that of any capacity audience. Rachmaninoff, in acknowledging the appreciation and enthusiasm with grave bows, and his quiet little smile, never forgot to send his grateful glances up to the top gallery, where some of his most earnest listeners were seated.

Although the arrival of late-comers rather spoiled the continuity of the Beethoven Sonata, opus. 81, it proved a happy and impressive opening for a program which was one which demanded much from the pianist. If Rachmaninoff's performance last night had been nothing more than a display of technique, a feat of endurance, it would have been remarkable; but it was so much more, so much greater, that, as the program ended, with his own "Prelude in C sharp minor," that part of his genius was almost forgotten. Rachmaninoff has magic in those long, white fingers of his which puts life, color, soul, into anything he plays. His offerings last night included a gavotte by Gluck-Pauer; Weber's "Momento Capriccioso," which sparkled and danced; Schumann's exquisite Etudes Symphoniques, and two fine Liszt compositions, an Etude Transcendante, "Heroica," and "Tarantella Venezia e Napoli."

Rachmaninoff commenced the second half of the program with one of his own compositions, "Variations sur un Theme de Corelli," which he was playing for the first time in Toronto. It was a privilege thoroughly appreciated by the audience, but when they tried to tell him so in a torrent of applause, he almost bashfully took refuge from their praise by hurrying into the next number. There was no Chopin on the printed program, but when Rachmaninoff came back at the end of the evening in response to a great ovation he played a Chopin mazurka in D major and a waltz in E minor. With almost mischievous intent, he waited until the final encore to give the Prelude without which no Rachmaninoff program seems quite complete. It is good to hear it from the master's fingers. The concert was under the management of Norman M. Withrow.