

RACHMÀNINOFF'S RETURN IS GREETED BY LARGE AUDIENCE

[By Walter Whitworth]

Rachmaninoff, who has been absent from our concert halls for several seasons, returned Sunday afternoon to play a program of piano music at English's, under the auspices of the Martens Concerts. The auditorium was full to capacity, even overflowing into the orchestra pit. It was an

audience that responded eagerly to the music, much of which was familiar to the listeners.

It was a curious program that Rachmaninoff arranged, one making demands on his talent and his technical dexterity, but not on his genius. He proved himself, as always, a magnificent pianist, with enormous resources at his demand, but he did

not reveal the magnificence of his art, as he usually does, for nothing he played required any such revelation. The quality of the music, indeed, was not what one expected from him.

He began with a group of Ballades by Grieg, Brahms, who contributed two—in D minor and D major—Liszt and Chopin (the A-flat major). This was followed by a group of Chopin—two Mazurkas, a Waltz, the A major Polonaise and the G major Nocturne. The program ended with Liszt's "Spanish Rhapsody." The encores included, as might be expected, the C-sharp minor Prelude.

Needless to say, Rachmaninoff did superb things with this music. There was no beauty lacking in the Brahms Ballades. One was made to feel that Chopin belonged, not only to the romantic school, but also to the sentimental school, a fact that is often forgotten. One was excited by the delicacy of the Chopin Waltz and more excited by the blaze of the Spanish Rhapsody, a bravure piece, if there ever was one.

There was the same crisp technic, a little sharper than it used to be. The keys were struck briskly and decidedly, so that some of the singing tone of the piano was lost. There was the same clarity of phrasing, the same judicious use of counter-melody. There was, naturally, brilliance, but there was also softness and something approaching tenderness, particularly in the announcement of the theme of the Grieg Ballade and in sections of the Chopin Nocturne. In short, there was every technical and tonal equipment one could want.

It was easy to admire the accomplishments of this pianist, even in the face of the fact that much of the music is done to death by students, but it was less easy to carry away a sense of complete satisfaction. It is difficult to understand why a great artist should not play music worthy of his great art. So few can play such music. It is played elsewhere by this same pianist. So, while one found the playing exceedingly good, one was disgruntled by the things played.