

RACHMANINOFF'S PIANO ART CHARMS

Composer at Music Hall
Wins Encores With Song
Transcriptions.

BY HERBERT ELWELL.

Composers, for some unfathomable reason, have the unenviable reputation of being bad interpreters. A few only have managed to live down this stigma, and of these, Sergel Rachmaninoff is one.

Throughout the years he has kept his pianism on a level with his composing. Judged by some standards, his playing is even more interesting than his creative work. But be that as it may, there was another splendid opportunity to judge and enjoy both phases of his art in his recital last night at Public Music Hall.

The most absorbing item on the program, from a musical angle, was the Beethoven "Sonata Appassionata," Opus 57, in the playing of which the typical Rachmaninoff style was paramount—that even, steady direction of movement and attenuated line, a strong left hand, and subdued coloring.

It was Beethoven seen from an individual, perhaps a Russian, point of view—somber, phantom-like, and fateful; by no means out of keeping with the dark-hued content of Beethoven's message, though some of the heroic impulsiveness and exaltation of the master was absent.

The performance drew lingering applause, but were no encores until after the last group.

Flowing Contours.

What Rachmaninoff seems to like best are long flowing contours, thick textures, and certain percussive effects he draws from his instrument with reiterated chord clusters. There was much of this in his own Sonata No. 2, with which he began the program.

Its languorous unwinding of melodic threads brought leisurely rhapsodic moods and considerable agitation toward the end. One may search in vain for the musical idea which merited this concluding excitement. Except where it takes itself seriously and begins formal developments, this is music which says nothing in a very soothing manner.

In the final group the large audience was visibly entertained by several song transcriptions in which Liszt, Tausig and Rachmaninoff himself had taken a hand. Of these, Schumann's "Smugglers" seemed to find especial favor. The one for which the pianist was responsible was Schubert's "Brooklet," dished up, like the others, with brilliant and fancy gew-gaws.

The group included another piece by Rachmaninoff, "Daisies," a sweet and fragrant trifle, and it ended with the Wagner-Liszt "Spinning Song," followed by encores: