

MUSIC

By HAROLD A. STRICKLAND

Rachmaninoff Gives Annual Boro Recital

Before what was probably the smallest audience in size to hear a recognized artist in a Brooklyn program, Sergei Rachmaninoff last night at the Academy of Music gave one of the best, if not the best, performance it has been this reviewer's fortune to hear from him.

The occasion was the Russian composer-pianist's annual visitation and the audience made up in manual approbation what was lacking in numbers. Rachmaninoff responded and his interpretations were the most moving I have heard come from that musical intellect.

Rachmaninoff, to me, has always appeared of the austere type; out of sympathy with the idea of playing a mere program in public, unmindful of the possible reaction of his listeners and always experimenting with pianoforte literature in order to gain different effects for his own personal gratification. His technique, never formidable, has been of the elastic, swiftly moving type and his readings have lacked substance and smacked more of the intimate and personal. He has been a Titan walking with his head in the clouds and unconcerned with mundane matters. Music to him was a purely impersonal medium, wherein he might disport himself for his own satisfaction, unmindful of accepted and traditional measuring rods and with no regard whatsoever for aught but himself.

Last night he was different. That austerity, that impersonality and that stoicism, which seemed to make him one apart from the rest, vanished. Granted his technical equipment and personal musicianship Rachmaninoff added that intangible something which marks the differentiation between a mere hack player and an artist.

True, according to this reviewer's lights, the "Appassionata" sonata of Beethoven was principally Rachmaninoff and not often Beethoven, but the fact remains that it was Rachmaninoff reading Beethoven and not "interpreting" him. The figure of the sonata lacked much of the tenderness and gentleness of the Bonn composer's idea and became instead a virile, impassioned giant. But this pose was not permitted to remain, and the player stressed the religioso aspect of that opening theme of the second movement. Here was beauty and poetry, a new Rachmaninoff superseding that unemotional figure of previous appearances. And the flashing finale found the technician subordinated to the past. It was a dazzling interpretation; but not from the standpoint of pyrotechnical skill.

Intimations of the new Rachmaninoff were found in the opening group of four Chopin numbers, wherein the player's viceroy of aus-

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terity faded before the approach of the poet in the familiar Nocturne which was the third number of this group.

A group of song arrangements by Lizza, Tausig and himself completed the formal schedule.
