

PIANIST PRESENTS DYNAMIC CONCERT

Sergei Rachmaninoff Free From
Gloomy Introspection of
Many Composers

By JOSEPH MAERZ

D y n a m i c, forceful personality stalked upon the stage of the auditorium Thursday night and in the person of Sergei Rachmaninoff raised the temperature several degrees with a warmth of piano playing that, in moments, at least, reached the clouds. Rachmaninoff is essentially a musician who has something to say; a message-bearer who, scornful to use his prodigious technic for the amazement of his listeners, speaks to them through the medium of music as a language, his piano being merely the vehicle for the expression of thought.

Rachmaninoff the pianist is fortunately free from the aspect of gloomy introspection characteristic of so many composers. He maintains a healthy perspective toward his public who see him as a virile, masculine genius capable of coming to them in their own less exalted sphere without descending one whit from his own pedestal. Today at 59 he links the musical present with the past. He is one of the survivors of that school of piano playing who, following in the footsteps of Liszt and Rubinstein, find themselves at their best in music demanding a great deal of the grand manner from its interpreters.

Selections Good

Without playing down to his audience in the matter of program selection, the pianist cannily built a program of those numbers which are acceptable to the musician and sure of enjoyment by even the great musically unwashed. Not exactly of metropolitan caliber if judged by present day standards, but at least as admirable from the technical standpoint, and certainly a heap more satisfying on the score of pure musical interest, in the opinion of one at least who has dutifully tried to swallow some of the present day cacophony and suffered amidsthips from the dose.

The first half of last night's program brought to light a fine, orthodox reading of the Beethoven C minor Variations, generally conceded to be the noblest work in this form ever written for the piano. Of the three Chopin pieces that followed, the A flat Waltz was done with such a degree of grace and delicacy of nuance as one heard from Paderewski in the hey-day of his career. Mr. Rachmaninoff's treatment of the A flat Ballade was a bit unusual, but since he as a composer gives other artists the privilege of interpreting his works as they appeal to the individual, one should not begrudge him the right to do likewise.

Plays Old Favorites

This first half was brought to a magnificent close with the Weber-Tausig Invitation to the Dance, re-arranged from the limbo of forgotten tunes and dressed up to meet present-day requirements by Rachmaninoff himself. His broadening of the first part and his insertion of an effective cadenza made the old favorite new again. It was a stunning treatment of an air-udy honorous arrangement.

The famous C sharp minor Prelude opened the second part of the program, with another for company, these followed by the pianist's dazzling transcription of Mendelssohn's Scherzo from the Midsummer Night's Dream. Passing over the Schubert-Liszt Serenade one came to a champagne-like exhilaration with a hearing of the Schubert-Rachmaninoff Brooklet. Then the D flat Etude by Liszt and the same composer's Eighth Rhapsody, which brought the printed part of the program to a close.

Rachmaninoff was brought back repeatedly for encores and in response to applause the character of which indicated clearly the veneration in which the great artist is held, he added three encores, namely: Tschalkowsky's Trčka, Rachmaninoff's own Humoresque and Schumann's Smuggler.