

Rachmaninoff Thrills at Opera House

By ALEXANDER FRIED

Serge Rachmaninoff played the piano at the Memorial Opera House last night.

Yes, the hall was jammed to capacity, stage seats, pit seats, and all. Yes, he played his C sharp minor "Prelude," of which he may be tired, but which audiences continue to adore. It was his third encore.

He made up his program on an extraordinary plan. Every member bore the name of "Fantasy."

But music—what is it itself but fantasy! Is it not the very substance, electric and intangible, of living imagination, imagination that sorrows, imagination in joy, imagination that hopes, imagination that is comfort?

SPRIGHTLY RANGE

There need be no monotony in a concert of "Fantasies." There was no monotony in Rachmaninoff's.

It ranged from sprightly delights in Haydn's C major "Fantasy" to solemnity and drama in Beethoven's "Sonata Quasi una Fantasia"; from the poignant singing poesies and the impetuosity of a Chopin "Fantasy" to the anguish and impetuosity of a Scriabin "Sonata Fantasy"; from wholesome impulsive romance in three "Fantasy Pieces" of Schumann to the arrant bombast of Liszt's "Fantasy After Reading Dante."

ALL IN NOBLE FORM

Every sort of music Rachmaninoff feels and expresses with a regal authority. He sees above small caprice. He molds music in a noble epic form.

But master of fine musicianship though he is, his art is dominated by pianistic sense. His tone can be as richly soft as it is richly grand. His rhythm has the certainty of elemental Nature. With a titan's power and a cunning control he sweeps his keyboard into tempestuous frenzy.

At times tremendous pianistic surety and regal grasp of feeling may make his playing seem impersonal. Even at such times he thrills his audience with admiration of his power.

And then come other thrilling minutes in his concerts. His magisterial sentiment strikes the sharply personal note, and holds it, firmly and long, while music from his fingers is discoursed that is pure fantasy, simple, touching and beautiful.