

Rachmaninoff Somberness Blazes to Brilliant Flame To Charm 4,000 Atlantians

BY MABELLE S. WALL

Sergei Rachmaninoff, one of the world's very few really great pianists, returned to Atlanta after an absence of nine years, and surpassed any former triumphs here by his spell-binding performance at the City Auditorium Thursday evening. An audience that numbered over 4,000, the largest of the season, and three times as large as that attending his concert here in 1924, heard this, the third concert to be presented by the All-Star Concert Series this season.

Tall and somber in appearance, the great Russian has only to touch the keys of his big piano with those magnificent hands of his, to arouse his listeners to tensest excitement. One moment, tender and caressing, and the next as hard as steel, his hands are tempered to the mood of the music he plays. The magic of his tone and temperament stirs the emotions, is mood-evoking, and arouses the imagination of his audience to a superlative degree. There is something of the legendary; something epic, in the strength of his conceptions.

From the first note of the beautiful "Adagio" of Beethoven's "Sonata quasi una Fantasia," opus 27, No. 2 (popularly known as the "Moonlight") which was substituted for the programmed "Sonata" in D-minor, opus 31, to the end of the last encore, Moussorgsky's "Hopak," arranged by Rachmaninoff, his hold on the large audience was never lessened. Seldom in a lifetime does one hear this oftentimes over interpreted composition revealed with such sympathy and understanding. It was a tribute of one composer's spirit to another's.

The "Sonata for Violin Alone," by Bach, transcribed by Rachmaninoff for piano, held not only interest for musicians by the composer's masterly adaptation of a composition for one

instrument to the requirements of another, but for its clarity of expression combined with the insight of the poet.

None save a master could have achieved the effect as did this pianist in his interpretation of Schubert's "Rondo" in D major. With its frankness and simplicity of expression, only the true and great artist could have held the attentive admiration of a heterogeneous group as did Rachmaninoff. Though admittedly not particularly sympathetic to the modern manner of composition, Debussy's "Suite" was not at disadvantage in the balanced tonal evaluations and phrase line given the three parts composing the suite.

For Chopin's "Waltz" in A flat major (not the hackneyed one), this reviewer was grateful, and his "Ballade" in A flat, though often heard, took on new meaning in the noble contour given it last evening. It was played truly in the "grand manner."

Two "Preludes" by the composer-pianist, one in G major and one in G minor, followed. Well contrasted in key and content, the first unfamiliar to audiences, and the second, a favorite, met instant and enthusiastic response. For beauty and distinction, the interpretation given the preluding measures and the dance that follows in Von Weber's "Invitation to the Dance," a famous concert piece in a brilliant arrangement by Karl Tausig, was unsurpassed. Subtlety of expression in the first part and exquisite rhythm and brilliance in the waltz section were pictured in romantic terms. Mendelssohn's "Scherzo," from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," transcribed by Rachmaninoff, brilliantly closed a program of gracious proportions which was followed by the composer's "Troika," his C sharp minor "Prelude" and Hopak."