

## RACHMANINOFF PLAYS BEETHOVEN AND BACH

Program Also Includes Three Chopin Numbers and Works by Debussy.

By THOMAS B. SHERMAN.

**S**ERGEI RACHMANINOFF'S recital at the Odeon last night was a successful essay in sustained but discreet romanticism. An affecting poetic quality, modified by a natural discrimination and restraint, pervaded all the important numbers on his program. His technical resources were always used artistically, but were unmistakably in evidence all the time.

In comparing the virtuosi of the older generation with some of the young wizards who have been turned loose on the world since the war, it is often said that the latter have a manual skill that was undreamed of before their time. This generally means that the young wizards can play Chopin's minute waltz in 30 seconds. Rachmaninoff makes no point of playing loud or fast, but one may doubt that any pianist, young or old, has any greater suppleness of wrist or strength and co-ordination of fingers than he. Certainly his measured legato and the controlled dynamics which are in evidence when he plays a rapid succession of chords or octaves never suffer for a split second from any lack of force or musical quality.

The most important number on the program was the Beethoven Sonata, Opus 31, No. 2, which was conveyed with a wealth of reflective sentiment. One may quarrel with this interpretation on the ground that it was a little soft (figuratively not dynamically), but if his original premise is granted everything about it was logical. Moreover, the kind of emotion which was felt in all the movements is an indisputable derivation from the score.

Regarding his own arrangement of the Bach E Major Sonata for violin alone, one admits its effectiveness but wonders why he bothered to do it. When a violinist makes an arrangement of a piano work he is excused on the ground of necessity, but no such compulsion exists for the pianist.

The prelude and gigue, having a considerable formal interest suffered least in the arrangement, but the gavotte lost entirely its innocent and piquant character when heard through the added harmony and counterpoint.

The Schubert Rondo was played with every possible felicity of style and the Chopin group, consisting of the E Flat valse, the Nocturne in F Sharp major, and the A Flat ballade seemed to this reviewer to achieve a perfect combination of deeply-felt emotion and aristocratic understatement. This is said with the knowledge that some of it, particularly the middle section of the ballade, was highly individual. Its individuality was not eccentricity, but a natural and plausible evolution of the performer's general conception of the music.

Four numbers from Debussy's "Children's Corner" started the second half of the program. In fact, most of this section seemed designed for children. It consisted of two preludes by Mr. Rachmaninoff himself, a Borodine Scherzo and Taussig's arrangement of Weber's "Invitation to the Dance."

The audience did not fill the house, but showed a proper and enthusiastic appreciation of the whole recital.