

RACHMANINOFF PLAYS AT BEST

Russian Pianist Pleases Large
Audience at First of
Concert Series

By **DENOE LEEDY**

The Press Music Editor

An audience which almost filled Public Music Hall last night heard the celebrated Russian pianist, Sergei Rachmaninoff, give the first recital in the Cleveland Concert Course series. If one had felt that the day of the virtuoso was over and that the glamour of the concert-hall was a thing of the dim, romantic past, the occasion of last night was certainly one to dispel such feeling.

The brilliant audience, numbering all the music devotees seen at concerts in this city, listened in rapt attention to the gloomy Russian, completely under the spell of his unique personality from the opening Bach transcription to the concluding Rhapsody of Liszt.

Let it be said at once that the artist was at his very best, placing his impeccable pianistic mechanism and profound musical understanding at the service of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin and Liszt—all represented by works of significance.

The Bach-Tausig Toccata and Fugue in D minor under his fingers assumed its proper note of nobility. Its architectural details were set forth with clarity and vigor; contrapuntal lines were made to stand out from the tonal mass; powerful climaxes and pauses charged with eloquence contributed to the splendor of the interpretation.

Students who have struggled over the Sonata, Op. 10, No. 3 of Beethoven must have found much that was illuminating in the performance of last night. They might have wondered at the rhythmic liberties in the Minuetto (certainly unorthodox, to say the least) but the majesty of the Largo was something to treasure in the memory.

Rachmaninoff's tone, although possessing all the warmth desired, is not especially varied in color. For this reason his playing often takes on a note of too much "black and white." The Brahms Ballade in G minor suffered from this.

Various items in the Chopin and Liszt groups were, however, presented with such dramatic effect that they more than compensated for this peculiar tonal quality. One could have wished for nothing more impressive than the Liszt "Funerailles," a work which can so easily be made to sound empty and devoid of genuine feeling.

As at all Rachmaninoff recitals there were examples from the pen of the artist himself. In this case the programmed "Prelude" turned out to be the one in G sharp minor and not the hackneyed creation in C sharp.