

Rachmaninoff in Recital Before 3,500 at Rutgers

World-Famous Russian Pianist and Composer Acclaimed by Large Crowd at Opening of University Concert Series; Plays Prelude in C Sharp Minor

BY JAY BRADLEY

Sergei Rachmaninoff, world-famous Russian pianist and composer, opened the Rutgers University concert series for 1934-35 last night with a brilliant recital before an audience of more than 3,500 in the Rutgers University gymnasium.

Presenting a program of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, and three of his own works, he was acclaimed by the largest audience ever to attend a musical event in this city, with the possible exception of Paul Robeson's last appearance here.

A storm of applause greeted the Prelude in C Sharp Minor, by far the most famous of his compositions, which he played as an encore. This prelude is by now possibly a sore spot with Rachmaninoff. Writers have been known to fume when referred to too often as the author of such-and-such a book, without ever a mention of their other works; Paul Robeson probably winces when he hears "Old Man River"—and (perhaps it was our imagination) there seemed to be a look of something like distaste on the famed pianist's face as he sat down to play the prelude. But very few would have felt that they had got their money's worth unless they had heard it.

The audience was rightly enthusiastic over Rachmaninoff's performance. But even the desire to show an artist that you appreciate what he is doing can be carried a bit too far. The Beethoven Sonata was broken by applause after each of the

first two movements—a silly and uncalled-for procedure.

Of Rachmaninoff's technical accomplishments, there is nothing new to say at this late date; they are masterful and unrivaled, and to add anything to that is only to go on saying the same thing in different words—"a beginning again and again and again," to quote Miss Gertrude Stein, an equally amazing artist, in another realm. The analytical critic has phrases in his collection about "the illuminating imagination of a creative mind, the touch of the poet," "subtle nuances" and such. The rest of us say, "It was very good."

The inclusion of more modern works on the program would have been welcome. But their absence is understandable in view of Rachmaninoff's published remarks to the effect that much modern music lacks "heart." But there is no more "intellectualism" in a great deal of modern music than there is in many of Chopin's works.

His program was composed of the following works: Toccata and Fugue, D Minor, Bach-Taussig; Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 10, No. 3; Brahms' Ballade, G Minor; Chopin's Tarantelle, Mazurka and Scherzo; the pianist's own Prelude, Moment Musical and Oriental Sketch, and Liszt's Sonetto del Petrarca, Dance of the Gnomes and Rhapsodie No. 11.

The second concert in the Rutgers series will be given by the Don Cossack Choir, conducted by Serge Jaroff, on Thursday, December 13.