

Rachmaninoff

There is something more than remarkable pianism which holds the audience when Sergei Rachmaninoff plays. Perhaps it is the power of the man. In his personal appearance and manner, he is austere, almost grim. He sits rather awkwardly and very quietly at a concert grand piano, huge and black, and holds the intense interest of his audience for two hours. His readings are those of a virtuoso, but a virtuoso of the emotions as well as the keyboard. His approach to Mozart and Beethoven as well as Chopin and Liszt is equally based on conscious judgment. Nor does he resort to any fantastic means to make his audience aware of the "miracle of music." He doesn't rely upon tone-color or sheer sensuous beauty to reach his listeners; he outlines his melodies in clean cut phrases and projects his interpretations in such a simple, straightforward way that even the most unmusical ones can grasp the impression of the music.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's programme, to say the least, was not an adventurous one; it was, in fact, rather hackneyed than otherwise. But as one very intelligent musician remarked, "It was a splendid thing for young students of the present day to hear the so-called hackneyed music played by a great artist." It was a programme, however, in which none of the pianist's special gifts was lacking. The programme consisted of the Mozart Variations; the "Moonlight Sonata" of Beethoven; a Chopin group; the Debussy "Children's Corner" (which was an innovation for the pianist); three Liszt pieces—"Etude," "Valse Impromptu" and "Rhapsodie, No. 11." Upon each and every number, Mr. Rachmaninoff lavished the mellowness of his art; the music was given with the mastery of one who was a great musician first and a superbly equipped pianist second. From the gentle simplicity of Mozart, the poetic passionate lyricism of Beethoven, the mighty playing of the C sharp minor Scherzo of Chopin, the French wit that twinkled through the "Children's Corner" of Debussy to the final coruscating brilliance of Liszt was an exalted and breath taking display of mastery and power. Debussy's "Children's Corner" was entirely different from anything Mr. Rachmaninoff has ever played here, and he came as near to a complete realization of the possibilities of that delectable music in its delicacy, distinction and humor, as anyone is ever likely to.

No programme of Mr. Rachmaninoff's is complete without one of his own compositions. After many recalls in response to the vociferous applause of the audience, he played the "C Sharp Minor Prelude," much to the delight of the superb audience which filled the Memorial Auditorium.

The recital was the fourth of the Junior League Artist Series under the management of J. H. Thuman. The closing concert of this season's highly successful series will be presented on January 8, with Jascha Heifetz as soloist.

F. E. C.