

## *The Brilliance Of Rachmaninoff*

### *Composer Plays His Famous Prelude*

By Our Music Critic

Rachmaninoff drew a most gratifying audience for his recital at Central Hall, last night, so large in fact that a cynic, remembering his last recital here, suggested that Liverpool must now have heard about him!

And the audience having expressed immense enthusiasm during the evening was privileged to hear the best known piece of music in the world played by the composer. For the benefit of amateur assassins let me say that Rachmaninoff played his Prelude in C sharp minor, without affectation, with a sweeping vigour in the triplet section which they can never hope to emulate, and with a beautifully calculated and completely unexaggerated diminuendo at the close. So much for that.

#### THE FINEST PIANIST

Rachmaninoff, take him for all in all, is about the finest pianist at present before the public. He is an intense individualist, and his personality colours much of what he plays, but in some curious way one feels it not so much his ego as his musicianship which informs his most striking departures from the normal. His treatment of the Funeral March from the B flat minor Sonata of Chopin is a case in point—a steady crescendo throughout the March, culminating in a fortissimo which, suspended, as it were, for the duration of the second subject, is resumed at precisely the same strength and taken down the tonal scale to a pianissimo close. This is against all established practice, yet it is logical enough, and in Rachmaninoff's hands one did not feel that any violence was being done to Chopin.

But it would be an injustice to imply that Rachmaninoff's playing is characteristically unconventional. His performance of the D major Sonata of Beethoven, for instance, seemed to me a particularly fine example of real interpretation, if one regards this debatable quality not as the complete submergence of the performer, but as the play of one highly-receptive mind upon the product of another. There was, to me at any rate, an inevitable sense of rightness about Rachmaninoff's playing of this early sonata which fascinated one. The music was never once asked to bear more of significance or eloquence than one felt was implied in it, and the balance and design were perfectly displayed.

#### AMAZING TECHNIQUE

It was as fine a performance as that which followed of the Chopin sonata, a work which might almost have been written for Rachmaninoff—a work which, indeed, given the time and place, Rachmaninoff might almost have written himself, so much in character does it seem. It need not be emphasised that the performance was extraordinarily vital and arresting.

Rachmaninoff made us forget his technique in these sonatas; but in the second half of the programme he played a series of pieces, including several of his own, which revealed his amazing equipment in all its phases and brought the house down, as, indeed, it was well calculated to do.

Even the pianist himself seemed faintly moved by the warmth of his reception. The superb simile which likened Peel's smile—was it not?—to the silver plate on a coffin might well have been coined about Rachmaninoff's extraordinarily ghostly evocation.

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