

Rachmaninoff Plays Superbly

Master Pianist Amazes
in Musicians' Club
Concert Here.

By HELEN de MOTTE.

In presenting Sergei Rachmaninoff in its first artist concert of the season last night at the Jefferson auditorium, the Musicians' Club has added probably the last Titan of the musical world to a long list of the foremost contemporary pianists which it has brought to Richmond.

Rachmaninoff can only be spoken of in superlatives in any aspect of his trinity of gifts—as composer, conductor or pianist. There is a super-quality in all he does that removes him from the ordinary comparative critical values.

His playing is superb. It does not touch the heart deeply; it is not warm with iridescent color; it is not nervously sensitive; it is not fervidly sensuous. But there is a magnificence about it before which one bows in homage. It is as though the very elements of which music is made are his possession, to be combined at will into the patterns which he creates and recreates for his hearers. One does not say "he plays Scarlatti well," or "I like his Chopin best," or "he does the moderns superbly." He is of Scarlatti's time, or Beethoven's time just as much as he is of the contemporary scene.

His playing is timeless, ageless. It pulsates with the rhythm of life. It is almost cosmic in its impersonal quality. If, at the close of the program, one could have visualized Walhalla, he might have gone with the other gods triumphantly into its shining rewards.

Technique, as such, does not exist for him. Two marvelous hands bring from the piano whatever is necessary at the moment, without apparent effort, with perfect dynamic and rhythmic control, with electrifying speed when necessary and with such delicacy of texture at times that it seems all but impossible to combine it with the speed and rhythm.

The personal is wholly absent from his interpretation, and one misses this quality particularly in Chopin, yet he brought to the lovely B minor Sonata something quite startling. It was as though one had been seeing it through a warm mist or veil before, and suddenly found it defined in jeweled perfection, its outlines clearly limned in light.

The Beethoven Variations and the Scarlatti Sonatas were exquisite in their rhythmic and tonal beauty, but it was in the last group, perhaps, that one found the greatest dramatic and emotional variety. It was for the most part a Russian group, closing with the Hungarian Dohnanyi's "Etude Caprice." The Scriabin "Poeme" brought the most poetic interpretation of the entire program, while the "Fairy Tale" by Medtner, with its gossamer left hand scampering about, was an imaginative triumph, as though the right hand were asking Peter Pan's question, "Do you believe in fairies?" while the left hand assured you they were very real.

The incredibly difficult "Etude" and familiar C sharp minor "Prelude" by the composer were played, one felt, just as they should be and scarcely ever were, while the closing Dohnanyi "Caprice" was breath-taking with its speed and brilliance. He added an arrangement of Schubert's charming song, "The Brook," and Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night" overture, which was a miracle of lightness and rhythmic grace. It was a great and memorable piano recital.