

Rachmaninoff Recital Moves Great Audience

Pianist's Method, Evolved in Truly Personal Way, Gains Impressive Response.

BY ALICE EVERSMAN.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF the celebrated Russian pianist, who drew a crowded auditorium at his recital last evening in Constitution Hall, is so distinctly individual that there is no way by which comparison can be made with another artist of the same instrument. In his feeling toward music and in the technique of his presentation he stands alone, having evolved his art in a truly personal way. His appearance bears no indication of his great artistic gift and his detached attitude toward his audience is not at all the usual attitude of a recitalist. He makes no bid for favor, but allows his art to speak for itself. And the rapt attention and the delighted response of his listeners prove the power of his art over his personality.

IN ALL that he does his intellectuality predominates. His quest of the musical idea and even his manner of applying the mechanical means in interpretation are directed by his mental concept and thereby gain indisputable authority. This does not exclude the emotional element in his playing and often he surprises by the depth, warmth and truthness of his feeling.

Last evening he was not so successful as last year in immersing himself in the mood of the programmed numbers, but this was not entirely his fault. Several times one felt he was trying to catch that elusive something, but the lack of co-operation on the part of the audience disturbed him. Late comers continued to arrive well along in the program, and there was a restlessness in the hall that was difficult to quiet. Every artist is sensitive to his environment, and one felt last evening that Rachmaninoff was hampered, in spite of the good will of his listeners, in creating a bond between himself and his audience.

HOWEVER, his art is so perfect that it could not be lacking in conviction because of a disturbing atmosphere. Again one marveled at the unobtrusive dexterity, the pearl-like form of his runs, the variegated color of melodic passages, and, above all, the absolute justness of his musical presentation of every phrase.

Rachmaninoff's hands and his use of them differ from any of the modern school of pianists before the public. He employs none of the modern means to gain relaxation, nor does he display any effort in producing the exact tone color he wishes. His hands are compact and strongly developed through the knuckles and the movement of his fingers in passages of agility is hardly discernable. Quietness pervades all he does, whether in the increase of power, the swiftness of runs, arpeggios or trills, or the outlining of a vein of harmony.

His program last evening contained two major works, Beethoven's "Thirty-two Variations in C Minor" and Chopin's "Sonata in B Minor." In his playing of the "Variations" he matched his inventive skill with that of the composer, and found a wealth of nuance with which to embellish each new idea.

The Chopin "Sonata," as a whole, was an extraordinarily vivid reading, in a musical sense, but there lies hidden within its four movements still greater poetry than Rachmaninoff discovered yesterday. And this was par-

ticularly disappointing, because one felt not only that he divined the deeper grace of the work, but intended to bring it out, could he have captured the mood he evidently was seeking.

"THREE SONATAS," by Scarlatti, given with dynamic stressing, completed the major part of his program. The remainder was devoted to a number of shorter compositions, including his own "Etude" and "Prelude," Scriabin's "Poeme" and "Etude," contrasting the genius of this composer; Medtner's charming "Fairy Tale," Borodin's "Scherzo" and the beautiful "Barcarolle" of Rubinstein carried that understanding Slavic touch which accentuates the varied inspirational sources of these writers.

The concluding number was Dohnany's "Etude Caprice," a wonderful show piece of the Rachmaninoff technique. Numerous encores were demanded by the entire audience, that made no move to leave when the program was finished. Rachmaninoff played these additions to the printed schedule with an evident personal pleasure and a gracious desire to please by choosing many of the universal favorites of his repertoire.

CROTHERS PLAY CHOSEN

THE Mutual Improvement Association players of the Mormon Church will present "He and She," a three-act play by Rachel Crothers, Thursday and Friday evenings in the church amusement hall, Sixteenth and Harvard streets. The show will start at 8:30.

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