

MUSIC

Rachmaninoff Gives One of the Season's Best Piano Programs

BY RUTH MILLER.

Sergei Rachmaninoff gave one of the best built and most interesting piano programs of the season at the Auditorium yesterday.

Then he augmented its comfortable length with all those compositions every electric piano ought to know. For example, there was the C sharp minor prelude, which solemnly sentimental fragment caused Ernest Newman to label this austere composer as "a weary Willie of music, with a dash of Werther in him."

He is a pianist of bone and gaunt muscle, this Rachmaninoff. Nothing of the dash of toilet water on the jowl or lacquered hair about his playing. He has reached the Mecca of artists where no one, critic or layman, longer discourses analytically upon his incisive technic, that big tone, his forceful, direct phrasing, his wholly masculine interpretations.

Of greater importance is the general atmosphere he creates with his art. His music is never cold. But its passion and fire are of the cruel, destructive sort rather than the tender and poetic. One imagines, sometimes, that he realizes that the trade mark of his great success is that majestic austerity of his.

He is the only musician who has appeared at the Auditorium this year who used its bleak, hideous asbestos curtain as a background. His music is brilliant, but it never laughs. The humor that he threw into his interpretation of "The Gilliwogg's Cake Walk" was cynical rather than roguish.

But everything he touches becomes interesting, vital. He can even make Chopin sound like a warrior. And if you were naming over the five great pianists of our present day, you would not omit his name. His audience, like so many omnivorous Olivers, demanded more and more.