

MUSIC**RACHMANINOFF.**

Sergei Rachmaninoff, who held a large audience spellbound last night at his piano recital in Convention Hall, is one of the towering figures in the musical world to-day. There seems to be no longer any question but that he is the great pianist of the day and those who sat for two hours under the magic of his playing no longer regret that they were not living in the days of the other great master pianists and are content with the thought that they had the privilege of hearing the great Russian composer-pianist at the very height of his powers.

One uses that last phrase with some hesitation. Rachmaninoff is so thoroughly the artist, is so wrapped up in his work, that one feels that he is constantly aiming at some goal of which the ordinary concert-giver can not conceive. On the other hand, his playing right now, the playing that the large audience of last night heard, seems to have reached a stage of perfection beyond which there can be no improvement.

The fame of Rachmaninoff had reached America many years in advance of his coming. He had written a number of valuable piano compositions—and a prelude. It is hardly necessary to mention the key in which this prelude is written. The fame of this particular composition assured him of a warm welcome from America, but Rachmaninoff, the pianist, overshadows Rachmaninoff, the composer of the Prelude in C sharp minor.

The audience last night was large and it was good to think that this year the great pianist was being heard by a crowd, rather than by the slender group of real music lovers who turned out for his concert last March. It was an attentive and enthusiastic audience, but in it were numbered the hundreds who insisted on hearing the master play his Prelude. At the conclusion of the concert Rachmaninoff was recalled several times after his brilliant performance of Liszt's "Tantala." He responded with an encore, but it was not what the audience wanted. He was called back again and again. Then he gave in to the inevitable and struck the first few resounding notes of the C sharp minor. There was a burst of applause and all over the house the people scurried for seats or stood crowding against the stage or rails of the balcony. It was an unusual tribute, but one that was richly deserved.

It seems a futile sort of thing to attempt any description of Rachmaninoff's playing. He is an undisputed master of the piano. It is almost unnecessary to say that he can produce. From the thunder and re-echoing of the great pipe organ to the delicate singing of uncertainty bells; the production of absolute beauty from striking a single note to the ravishing beauty and stimulation of his magnificent sweep up and down the keyboard—these things the audience heard, together with a fidelity to the spirit in which the different compositions were written.

The program of last night was different than that of last year, though it included a Chopin group, some of Rachmaninoff's own compositions and a showy Liszt number to close. Last year Rachmaninoff opened with a Mozart sonata. This year it was Liszt's "Meditation," "Ballade No. 2," filled with poetry and vigor and a selection well calculated to display Rachmaninoff's remarkable pianism. He followed this up with Grieg's "Ballade, Op. 24," a composition in quite a different mode but one which seemed to hold forth greater appeal to the audience.

Then came the Chopin group, consisting of the Ballade, No. 3, Nocturne, Op. 27; Valse in D flat major; and the Scherzo, Op. 39. Rachmaninoff would seem to be the ideal performer of Chopin. His playing is full of color and atmosphere and he achieves delicate nuances which are necessary for the proper performance of these smaller compositions. The nocturne was particularly lovely, as was the scherzo. The D-flat waltz has been somewhat spoiled since a musical comedy composer saw fit to take the most charming part of it and fit it to silly words and slater the time to conform to the Broadway standard of syncopation.

Next came his own "Elegie, Op. 37" and a polka, rearranged from a composition of his father. The polka was a brilliant and delightful bit of musical writing and was given a spirited performance by Rachmaninoff. Then he played Donizetti's "Etude Capriccio, Op. 28," perhaps the most uninteresting thing on the program.

There followed then his arrangement of Fritz Kreisler's famous "Liebesleid." Here was an interesting performance. Rachmaninoff has taken the haunting melody which Kreisler has made familiar and has transformed it into something that breathes the Slavic spirit now instead of the Viennese. The program closed with Liszt's "Tantala (Venetia e Napoli)" and Rachmaninoff literally took away the audience's breath with his magnificent performance.

The concert was the second of the Ellis series, of which A. M. See is the local representative. The next concert in this series will be given by Fritz Kreisler on January 19, 1922.