

Rachmaninoff Plays

The founders of the so-called modern Russian school of music were principally a lawyer (Cui), a physician and chemist (Borodin), a naval officer (Rimsky-Korsakoff), an army officer and government attache (Moussorgsky) and a second lawyer (Tschaikofsky). But the foremost of the present standard bearers, Sergei Vasselievitch Rachmaninoff, is by profession a conductor and virtuoso-pianist as well as a composer. For the last three years and more he has been one of the foremost musical figures in America. Moreover, he is a man of consummate self-effacing modesty, as his reported declination of the prominent position of conductor of the great Boston Symphony Orchestra, as well as his demeanor at solo and recital appearances, would indicate. He has received compliments and adulation sufficient to turn the heads of a whole galaxy of musicians, but remains as serene, sincere and devoted to his art as the ideal musician should be.

Such is a brief characterization of the great artist who was heard in recital last evening under the auspices of Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, in the opera house of the Academy of Music. Large as is the seating capacity of this auditorium, it had every appearance of having been sold for this occasion.

The programme began and ended with a Liszt composition. (This season pianists seem to be giving more than usual attention to the works of this Hungarian composer and champion of other composers, himself the foremost pianistic virtuoso of the years he chose to appear publicly in that capacity.) There was also a Chopin group and a selection from Grieg and Dohnanyi, as well as two compositions by the pianist himself, and his arrangement of Kreisler's "Liebesleid." A recital of this scope is a revelation to those who have heard Rachmaninoff only as a soloist with orchestra playing his more ponderous piano concertos, as the rendering of the selections demanded much delicacy of touch, poetic insight, interpretative imagination and tonal coloring, which orchestral support is likely to overshadow if not obscure.

The soloist was in his aptest mood and his audience, listening with rapt attention throughout each number, broke into tumultuous applause at its termination. Encores were called for even after the stage lights were turned off and the curtain lowered a significant distance. The generous pianist signalled for the raising of the curtain and delighted the hearts as well as the ears of his lingering audience with one more selection.