

RUSSIAN PIANIST SCORES TRIUMPH

BY ANGUS PERKERSON

If Rachmaninoff had played more of Rachmaninoff Wednesday night at the auditorium, the big crowd that heard his concert would have liked the Russian pianist even better than it did, though perhaps that would have been liking too much. His own music—his "Prelude in C Sharp Minor" and his "Polka de W. K."—gave most pleasure to all but the technicians, because there was rhythm and color and song in those two numbers and they fell familiarly upon the ear. Semi-popular music is a thing for which to give praise at a concert where only the piano sounds.

Rachmaninoff is an odd figure. Never was there a musician who had more the look of a very quiet business man, clad in the neat black of evening dress. And at the same time, never was there one who played more after the manner of an artist—by artist, meaning someone with the creative spirit. Musicians found more to delight them in his concert than in any recital of the season, and those who take a less discriminating pleasure in music found it almost equally pleasing. Rachmaninoff impressed Atlanta as being a great musician on his visit here two years ago, and the impression was confirmed Wednesday night. One of the largest audiences of the season gathered to hear him, and gave him enthusiastic applause throughout his program.

It takes a person of the most susceptible sort to be stirred to any great depths of emotion by any piano concert, no matter who is at the piano. But granting this, it is nevertheless true that the concert Wednesday night was vivid and interesting and at times had a tenderness and singing quality that suggested fragments of verse by Dawson. There should be some way by which you could take such a concert home with you and have it all over again, a bit at a time. Try Chopin's "Valse," for instance, just after breakfast; his "Polonaise," a little later on in the morning, and, as the day gave you strength, go on to the Beethoven sonata. In this manner, mulling over it, the excellence of the program would be plain.

Looking back at the concert, the impression that remains is of a figure in black sitting absolutely still at the piano, a slender figure with hair cropped as though the barber had used clippers. The concert begins. No flourish, no artistic attitude. Rachmaninoff goes through his program with as little display as though he were using a typewriter. But he is never cold, he is never giving only the form of the music. He is expressing the emotion that is at the heart of it. He is intensely interesting to students and teachers because of his skill, he is interesting to his audience as a whole because he is giving them music that pleases and at times, stirs them. At moments there is an infinite tenderness about the way he plays. Again he gives you the impression that he has more than the keys of the piano at his command. There seem to be many instruments going to give the effects he is producing. He reaches a climax that sets the audience applauding. Then he rises, bows, and is done.

His program began with the Beethoven Sonata (Opus 13), then Weber's "Invitation to the Dance," and next Chopin's "Ballade," "Mazurka," "Nocturne," "Valse" and "Polonaise." Afterward came Rachmaninoff's own two numbers, Dohnanyi's "Etude," and Liszt's "Tarantelle." In addition, there were a number of encores.

The concert was given by the All-Star Series. The next of this series will present the Cincinnati Symphony orchestra at the auditorium, January 15.