

# HOUSTONIANS GIVE PIANIST REAL OVATION

Playing of Sergei Rachmaninoff Greeted by Wave After Wave of Applause From 2500 Auditors.

BY ELLEN D. MACCORQUODALE.

A big auditorium in which are assembled 2500 of the most appreciative musicians and music lovers in South Texas. A tawdry stage on which stands in lone significance a huge ebony concert grand piano. A tall, slightly stooping figure coming forward and a flutter of handclapping followed by a mighty wave of applause, the greeting of music's disciples to one of the truly great. A loose-jointed, almost-too-large figure seated at the piano, hands hovering over the keys with preliminary runs and chords.

And then Rachmaninoff played! Into the first movement of the Beethoven sonata from Opus 13, with the deliberate, slow utterance of its opening phrases, Rachmaninoff guided his listeners. The second movement and the third, through technical intricacies and difficulties that baffle any but the most secure, he played with such apparent ease as to deceive a casual observer and make the piece appear very simple. Although the continuity of the sonata was broken by the entrance of late arrivals between the movements, and although ill-timed applause punctuated some of the strophes, those single phrases ending with a hold which mark the poetic periods of the piece, the Rachmaninoff interpretation showed clear and fine to those able to concentrate on the subject and its development. In his feeling for the rhythmic cadences of the sonata Rachmaninoff proved

himself at once a poet as well as a musician.

In lighter vein Rachmaninoff offered the popular program piece, Tausig's arrangement of Weber's "Invitation to the Dance." These first two numbers being played as one group, the audience brought the composer-pianist back to the stage three times with a persistence that must have nearly blistered the hands of the enthusiastic ones. For Rachmaninoff makes no grandstand play for applause. And only after the most prolonged and insistent applause did he return to the stage at any time.

## Playing of Chopin Groups.

After his Chopin group, he yielded and played an extra Chopin number. The rest of the program he played without leaving the stage, but when the audience refused to go without another number he played an extra number and then when the audience stood and called for more he played a final third encore.

The Chopin group consisted of Ballade No. 3, the Mazurka in D major, a nocturne from Opus 27, a valse in D flat major and the polonaise in A flat major, with the waltz in E flat as the extra number. To these readings Rachmaninoff brought the fine dignity and sober philosophy which seem to be a part of the man, thus robbing the Chopin creations of the maudlin sentimentality or hysterical emotionalism which too often cheapen them and dishonor the memory of their composer.

## Two of His Own Compositions.

Only two of the pianist's own pieces were on the program, his famous prelude in C sharp minor, one of his earlier efforts, and a polka arranged by Mr. Rachmaninoff on a melody composed by his father, Vasil, or Basil as the French would have it, Rachmaninoff. The polka is called by the composer, "Polka de V. R.," the initials being those of his father. Although the audience called with the only voice permitted on such occasions, the continuous and voluminous wave after wave of handclapping, Rachmaninoff would play no more of his own pieces, but plunged at once into the Dohnanyi etude, thus giving recognition on his program and by his magnificent interpretation to a present-day composer of acknowledged greatness.

He closed with the florid sweep and brilliance of the Liszt tarantella, "Venezia e Napoli."

Instead of leaving, the audience called the pianist back several times and when he saw they would not go he played Debussy's "Golliwog Cake Walk," and when still they clamored for more he played his own arrangement of Kreisler's "Liebeslied."

Edna W. Saunders, who presented Rachmaninoff in the City Auditorium Monday night, expressed herself as delighted with the size of the audience who heard him, the enthusiastic reception given him and the dignity and greatness of his artistic interpretation.

