

MADE A HERO OF PIANIST

RACHMANINOFF HAD A GREAT NIGHT
AT CONVENTION HALL.**It Was Like Paderewski Hero-Worship When the Polish Player Was at the Height of His Glory.**

Not since Paderewski has any pianist played to such a Kansas City audience as that which filled Convention hall last night for the recital by Sergei Rachmaninoff. There were at least three thousand persons present and the attitude, almost of adoration, was another reminder of the hero worship that attended Paderewski's halcyon days as a recitalist.

As the great man sat, sphinx-like, at the piano, the business of hero-worship looked as if it were going to be difficult. He flashed no smiles, was apparently unconscious that he wasn't alone beside his study lamp. The audience had to content itself with rather a diffident hero.

In happy contrast was the intense humanness of his playing. More than any other pianist, Rachmaninoff brings to the ear of the listener the spirit of the composer whose work he elects to play.

MAKES CHOPIN LIVE AGAIN.

We have heard more than one pianistic marvel in recent years make even Handel exotic. With more originality and force than any of his contemporaries, Rachmaninoff seems to realize his highest ambition when he can make the poetry of Chopin live again, and when he can make a Schumann passage so characteristically Schumannesque that the ardent student of Schumann's music fairly gasps with the vivid speech of it.

The program was in a sense popular. It was a concession to popular choice that induced him to include the C sharp minor prelude, and perhaps also the pretty little polka, in the old-fashioned style, which is dedicated to his father. When he played two years ago at the Shubert theater there was no such music on the printed program, and the audience on that occasion had the delight of hearing him play a number of his heavier and more subtle pieces—music typically racial and melancholy.

In filling the program with lighter music and omitting all that is strictly modern, Rachmaninoff is following in the footsteps of Fritz Kreisler and John McCormack—and who shall say it isn't a noble thing to bring joy to thousands instead of hundreds?—besides which there is the box office to think of.

MORE THAN A TECHNICIAN.

It is something, though, to hear the old pieces played with new understanding and with the color and charm that no mere technician can compass. The Schumann novelette brought reminders of De Pachmann's delicacy. There was never any suggestion of Meiselwitsch's polished phrases, but rather of those wafted tones and tendrils of phrases that made the playing of De Pachmann so fascinating. But De Pachmann would throw up his hands at such wide and flowing rhythms as those heard in the Weber-Tausig "Invitation to the Dance."

Returning to play the Turkish rondo from the ninth sonata of Mozart as encore, the pianist ceased to be Sphinx-like. He smiled with rare warmth, though without geniality, and from then on there was a certain intimacy between artist and audience. This was fortunate for Chopin is not Chopin without intimacy. In the ballade there was majestic movement, in the nocturne a whole Keats ode and in the polonaise such rhythmic splendor as few pianists can command. But in the polonaise there was much more than rhythmic splendor. Rachmaninoff plays it in a succession of moods, instead of all in one. In one transition passage he spun a fine web of tone, light as gossamer, firm as tapestry.

He smiled even more warmly than before as he dropped his tired hands at the end of the polonaise and returned to play a Chopin waltz. His own compositions failed to arouse the enthusiasm that would surely have greeted the bigger works of which he has written so many. The applause did not warrant an extra number and it was not until after the rarely heard sonnetto del Petrarca and "Galop Chromatique" of Liszt that an encore was definitely asked for. It was granted and the audience went home with Rachmaninoff's own arrangement of Kreisler's "Liebeslied" singing in its ears. M. K. P.