

RUSSIAN PIANIST CHARMS HEARERS FOR TWO HOURS

After an absence of two years, Sergel Rachmaninoff returned to Convention hall last night and delighted a large audience of old and new friends with a characteristically brilliant exhibition of piano virtuosity. He was acclaimed with the heartiness which is the meed of the true artist, rather than with the excessive fervor with which too adulative admirers advertise their weakness for emotionalism.

For nearly two hours the Russian master charmed, entertained, thrilled and taught his hearers through a program which was in itself a testimonial to his conservatism and sincerity.

Rachmaninoff does not wear his racial artistry on his sleeve. There is little, if any, of the "Slavic somberness"—largely pedantic—which so many commentators are fond of reading into anything and anybody Russian. He is an artist first and a Russian second, though it is impossible to deny the betrayal of certain racialisms in the very character of his programs.

Lovers of Chopin must always remain indebted to Rachmaninoff for his scholarly reading of his Chopin group. It aroused the most demonstrative enthusiasm of the evening. It embraced a typical ballade, a sprightly mazurka, a dreamy nocturne, a particularly biting little valse and the dashing Polonaise. For an encore the artist played another Chopin valse.

Personal interest naturally centered in Rachmaninoff's own compositions. His prelude in C-sharp minor is a strikingly martial etching, filled with great sonorous passages and all too brief, for even a prelude. The beautiful polka, dedicated to his father, Wassili Rachmaninoff, proved one of the features and was perhaps more typically Russian than anything else. His arrangements of the Bizet minuet was extremely interesting.

The program's opening number, Handel's "Ald With Variations," was far from being the least interesting number, surpassingly sympathetic in its reading. His encore was Mozart's "Rondo Turko." Schumann's "Novellette in F sharp minor" was essentially expository, almost staccato in its steely incisiveness and manifestly played for the cognoscenti.—F. A. M.