

RACHMANINOFF SWAYS HEARERS

Famous Russian Pianist Delights in "Old" and "Modern" Music

OWN ETUDE GAINS TRIBUTE AT START

In a broad sense, Sergei Rachmaninoff's piano recital, at the Playhouse last night, began with the eighth number rather than the first, although there were only eleven numbers on the program, and these eleven were classified in five groups. In other words, where the so-called "old school" left off and the "new" began—there began the real Rachmaninoff, Russian in nationality, Slavic in temperament, modern in thought and training.

From every angle the concert was a delight. To the student of the piano Rachmaninoff offered, as virtuoso, numerous lessons; to the devotee of music he opened new vistas; to the plain, ordinary listener his work was of that thoroughly charming quality which enraptures the ear and delights the eye.

It was a treat simply to witness a man six-foot two, slender of figure, and with short-cropped hair sit down to a nine-foot Steinway concert grand and pour forth not only notes of thunder but most delicate of pianissimos. And there was, withal, a quiet dignity of demeanor and a commanding, predominant atmosphere about the artist which caught and held.

Moreover, the recital from beginning to end was scholarly in its perfection and finish. That frequent criticism of more than one of the master pianists of the present day, "pounding," was entirely absent. Fire, spirit, verve there was and in plenty; but not even a Liszt Rhapsody could induce the performer to break a string!

But simply, Mr. Rachmaninoff began with that good, old stand-by of pianoforte pupils, Handel's "Harmonious Blacksmith," or the "Aria on Variations." But his method of playing the variations was enough to make pupils gasp. Then followed another standard work of the "old school," the "Sonata Pathétique," of Beethoven. It was unfortunate that this number was interrupted by late arrivals.

The Beethoven work was given in almost flawless fashion, and with a depth of understanding that measured up to the best accepted standards among musicians. Next came a thrill in Weber's brilliant "Invitation to the Dance," Tausig arrangement, played with a dramatic spirit which glorified the pianoforte as a solo instrument.

Four Chopin numbers followed: The well-known Ballade, with its lilting octave theme; a nocturne, a valse and a scherzo. It was unfortunate, perhaps, that Mr. Rachmaninoff chose a valse that is popularized as the "Minute Waltz" from among the fourteen living and posthumous vales of Chopin to demonstrate his abilities as a performer of the works of the most foremost composer for the piano, but he much more than compensated for it by his rendition, as an encore, of Chopin's Valse in A flat major.

It was here that the dynamics of the evening came. The ensuing numbers were of the "modern school," and served to show Mr. Rachmaninoff at his best. The first two were of his own composing, a delicate song transcription, "Daisies" and a "Polka de W. R." An arrangement of the minuet by Bizet, composer of Carmen, followed, topped off by the more or less conventional Liszt Rhapsody Hongroise No. 2, with a cadenza in thirds and fifths by Rachmaninoff.

Early in the evening a member of the audience had sent in a request that Mr. Rachmaninoff play his own Prelude in C Sharp Minor, probably the most popular of his own works. In response to the demand for an encore to the Liszt Rhapsody he thereupon began it. No sooner had he struck the first three familiar notes which form its theme than there was an outburst of applause. At its close another encore was demanded, to which he responded with his piano arrangement of Kreisler's "Liebestied."

Not since Ignace Jan Paderewski played in Wilmington, before the United States got into the World War, has the city heard so estimable an artist as Sergei Rachmaninoff, and to the newly formed Musical Association of Delaware, which has replaced the old Philadelphia Orchestra Association, it owes its thanks, no less than to Mrs. William N. Barvard, manager of the latter organization.