

MONDAY MUSICALE

First Concert of the Series Given in the Bellevue-Stratford Ballroom.

There were very few vacant seats to be seen in the ballroom of the Bellevue-Stratford yesterday forenoon when the first in a projected series of six Monday morning musicales was given, with Mr. Sergei Rachmaninoff at the piano. The rise of this fine artist, to the first rank as a virtuoso and the expansion of his following have been extraordinarily rapid. Only a short time ago he was little or not at all known to the musical public except as the composer of the famous prelude which every conservatory student has included in her repertoire, and when he made his debut as a pianist his abilities received only a restricted recognition. This was not wholly the fault either of the critics or the concert-goers, for as a matter of fact, while his performance was far above the ordinary, he did not play anything like as well as he does now; not with the same power and brilliancy and refinement, nor with the same eloquence of expression and exquisite sense of fitness.

These were the qualities which he once again displayed upon the occasion under comment in his presentation of a programme which included a graceful and impassioned "Improvisation" by N. Medinet; Weber's rather meretricious "Rondo Brilliant," which is chiefly valuable as furnishing opportunity for the display of a well developed technique, and some small pieces by himself, and which had Chopin's sonata in D flat minor, Opus 35, as its most substantial and consequential feature. Perhaps the musical worth of this familiar composition has been somewhat over-rated. Its popularity has been principally derived from the funeral march which serves as its slow movement, and while neither the pathos nor the melodic beauty of this march can be denied, it lacks any element of the heroic and is characterized by an excess of sentimentality which was rather exaggerated than otherwise in its yesterday's reading.

Compare this funeral march with the one in Beethoven's "Sonata quasi una Fantasia," in A flat, and note the difference. There is an epic grandeur to Beethoven's music which would befit the approach to a hero's grave, but Chopin's march suggests the interment of a poignantly lamented sweetheart. The concert closed with a superbly dashing performance of Strauss' "Beautiful Blue Danube" waltz, as arranged by Schulze-Evler, of which transcription it may be remarked that its elaborations too often served to blur or to obscure the outlines of the lovely original with which they were associated. The next of these musicales will take place on December 11, when Miss Claire Dux, whose beautiful singing with the Philadelphia Orchestra a few weeks ago will be pleasantly remembered, will furnish the entertainment.