

# Rachmaninoff Gives Masterful Recital

## Distinguished Russian Plays Brilliantly at Season's First Appearance at Piano at Carnegie Hall.

By W. J. HENDERSON.

In a day of much music a great musician stood forth conspicuous. Sergei Rachmaninoff, the distinguished Russian composer and pianist, gave his first piano recital of the season yesterday afternoon in Carnegie Hall. He submitted for the consideration of a large audience a popular program, embracing such numbers as Weber's "Rondo Brilliant," a Chopin group containing the B flat minor sonata, two short pieces of his own, and even the Schulz-Evler transcription of Johann Strauss's "Blue Danube."

The recital offered material sufficient for a column essay, but alas! it was a day of much music. The performance of the sonata was perhaps the forthstanding item, though the exquisite cameo of the valse must not be forgotten. But the B flat minor sonata has suffered so long and so bitterly at the hands of mere artisans that every time a master plays it the composition is born anew.

There ought to be a book or at least a pamphlet about all the "readings" since Rubinstein's. Rachmaninoff had his own conception and his own idiosyncrasies. He made not a dramatic but a baldly theatrical pause between the first part of the funeral march and the cantilena. He played the cantilena anything but a battuta. There was much leaning about between the bars. No one, not even a newly risen ghost or a trance conjuring psychic, could have marched to it.

And that was Rachmaninoff's point. The cantilena, according to him, did not belong to the march. Well, the caprice of the artist has always existed. But it was more than caprice. Say, better, the royal prerogatives of genius transcend the privileges of mere talent. Rachmaninoff thundered the procession to the grave. There a serene voice sang a requiem. Then the cortege moved away, receding slowly into the purple distances of hazy sound till silence fell and the

wind rose to sweep over the newly covered grave, not a moist and tear laden wind, but a cold, hard, cruel blast full of dead autumn leaves and the prophecy of sudden winter.

It was a genuinely large and profoundly moving interpretation of a beautiful composition which has been well nigh done to death. If the eminent Russian had done nothing else since he came to this country this alone would have sufficed to make known the advent of a master. About the characteristic qualities found in all the playing of this artist no new thing can be said. He is a virtuoso of the first order and he has all the tricks of the magician of the keyboard from a staccato as full of sharp angles and elementary colors as a prism to pedaling and pressure touch that make the piano a lyric prima donna.

All this has been said before. And so, too, has it been said that in the playing of Rachmaninoff we are again made certain of the proclamation of a big spiritual force, much bigger than the piano playing. But such things ought to be repeated. Rachmaninoff does large things and in his own way. Thereby he justifies himself according to Emerson's dictum, "He is great who is what he is from nature and who never reminds us of others."

### GIVES "AT HOME" RECITAL.

Marguerita Sylva, mezzo-soprano, gave a novel "at home" recital at the Broadhurst Theater yesterday afternoon. Mme. Sylva offered five groups of French, German, Spanish and English songs. Her offerings included airs from Monteverdi's "Orfeo" and Gluck's "Armide" and songs by Fourdrain, Masson, Weingartner, Wolf, Osma, Stevenson, Cadman and others. Interspersing her songs with comment on the program and bits of information concerning the musical world, Mme. Sylva succeeded in pleasing a large audience. Her voice was effective and her interpretation of a group of Spanish songs was done with much spirit and dramatic ability.