

Music.

By EDWARD DURNEY.

Rachmaninoff Recital.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, celebrated composer-pianist, now a familiar figure to local concertgoers, gave his annual recital in Elmwood Music hall last night, under the Michael-Kraft local management. An enormous, though late arriving audience, testified to the undiminished popularity of the artist; a vogue which undoubtedly owes much to the well-known Prelude in C sharp minor, but perhaps more to the favorable impression the pianist has created far and wide. Tardy comers were being seated as late as 9:15 o'clock and, as the recital was over shortly before 10 o'clock, the belated ones were denied a considerable portion of the evening's music.

The program included an Improvisation by the Russian, N. Medtner; the Weber "Rondo Brillante," a Chopin group, two compositions of Rachmaninoff, the Liszt D flat Etude and the "Blue Danube," Strauss-Schulz-Evler.

There is little new to be said of Rachmaninoff's playing. Last night it was as estimable as ever, as musicianly, as individual, and as constantly sedate and calculating. The pianist seems never to depart from the serious mood whether his subject be a waltz, a technical study or a funeral march. In the last named, of course, he would not be expected to do so. As order is Heaven's first law, so it is with Rachmaninoff. It is his alpha and omega, and to many listeners his playing appeals as altogether heavenly. Others, the writer among them, listen to the Russian unmoved.

One usually accepts the idea that an artist of Rachmaninoff's giant musical stature can do no wrong in stamping his interpretations with his own individuality. But when the listener hears this pianist carry out his well-laid plans and apply innumerable "different" touches to familiar works, he may be excused for the thought that a good thing can be overdone.

The large work of the evening was the Chopin B flat minor Sonata, one of the composer's finest contributions to the literature, and a work much played and often abused. Rachmaninoff handled it in a big way, his towering musicianship enabling him to penetrate its deepest meaning, his virtuosity encompassing all its problems. In regard to the interpretation of the well-known Marche Funebre, the third movement, the pianist evidently is not of the same mind as Busoni and others who carry on the cantilena portion in strict tempo as an integral part of the martial idea. Rachmaninoff purposely detaches it and treats it with considerable elasticity of tempo.

The sonata was preceded by the "Polonaise," in C sharp minor, the F sharp major "Nocturne," which was exquisitely wrought, and the "Valse," in F major. The pianist gave the "Minute Waltz," as an encore and played it delightfully.

He employed a surprising amount of rubato in his own "Melodie," in E major, but in this he must be acknowledged the highest authority. The Moszkowsky "La Jongleuse" was one of the best performances of the evening. This he played with admirable resiliency, with a clean-cut staccato, an even tempo, and with never a wince at its technical difficulties. A none too interesting finale was the clumsily dressed "Blue Danube," done in the Schulz-Evler mode.

The Russian has a "powerful left," which frequently operates to destroy proportion, especially in bravura passages.

Four numbers of the seven on last night's printed program were unexpected, as the pianist did not hold to the previously published list. Such a policy is open to criticism and it should be roundly discouraged. Many intelligent listeners "brush up" the music they expect to hear, and teachers are wont to discuss programs of coming recitals with their pupils. The pianist substituted the thin, tripping "Rondo Brilliant," Weber, for the Beethoven sonata "Appassionata." The other changes were less significant. The silly "Campanella" of Liszt could well be spared, and even the omission of this particular occasion of the oft-repeated "Appassionata" was not too crushing a blow. But the principle stands. The advertised program should be presented.