

TRAGIC SONATA OF CHOPIN IS PLAYED BY RACHMANINOFF

Sorrow and Anger Given Voice
by Pianist in Odeon
Recital.

BY ERNEST E. COLVIN.

When Sergei Rachmaninoff walked to the piano on the stage of the Odeon last night, he seemed burdened with the weight of all the sorrows of humanity—a mood which later was to find expression in his marvelous interpretation of the "funeral march" sonata of Chopin.

This sonata, with the famous funeral march as its third movement, was the climax of a program, which ranged from joy to sadness, but fundamentally was profound. Without leaving the piano, he played an unfamiliar improvisation by Medtner, a rondo by Weber, an expressive nocturne and waltz by Chopin—all preparatory, so it seemed, to the sonata.

Here he struck the note of dread, and sounded the protest of anger. In the scherzo, there was a momentary change of mood as the pace quickened, but again the piano gave voice to the emotions of a man angry at the hardness of life. A tender melody followed, with a lingering over the passages of beauty.

Then came the funeral march. As Rachmaninoff touched the opening chords, the large audience stirred in anticipation, and then settled back in absolute stillness as the pianist unfolded the terrifying beauties of the work. The steady, monotonous tread of death drew near and grew louder, heavy strokes in the bass suddenly ceased, and then one heard the melody that is supposed to be a song of consolation. But the element of consolation was minimized as Rachmaninoff played, and the song became one of profound sorrow. It seemed that the lyric beauty which Paderewski put into the melody when he last played in St. Louis was sacrificed for a sadness that found its consolation in memory and not in hope.

Rachmaninoff is a master of melody, and in the rondo of Weber, "La Jongleuse" of Moszkowski, the A-flat major etude of Liszt, and the Schulz-Evler arrangement of the "Blue Danube" waltz, the listener was not permitted for a moment to forget melody in his admiration of technic.

With the conclusion of the sonata, the mood of the pianist changed. Having relieved himself of the burden that apparently was weighting him down, he spoke in terms of joy and gladness. There were gay and delicate interludes in the Liszt number, the brilliancy of an electric flash in the "Blue Danube," and melody that never palled.

As customary at Rachmaninoff concerts, the audience refused to leave the building when the program was ended and brought the pianist back again and again until he had given three encores, one of them the C-sharp minor prelude.