

Rachmaninoff Cheered by Audience

By J. L. Wallis

THE HEILIG theatre presented a picture last night that brought to mind etchings of the old famous opera house packed with a spellbound audience listening to one of the illustrious stars that for all time will live in history of music. Every one within vision had attention riveted on the stage where sat at the huge piano on a massive bench a tall figure meditating or playing as if absolutely oblivious to the surroundings. In every detail the picture was one of perfect arrested action except the playing, which sparkled with life.

The tall figure was Sergei Rachmaninoff, famous Russian pianist-composer, and the piano was the one he carries with him on tours, attended by a tuner whose sees to it that it is tempered or compromised exactly as the artist wants it for the effects he wishes to produce.

Rachmaninoff's appearance in recital here was his first, and, in spite of its unusual refinement, it was sensational indeed. Every seat was occupied and many begged the privilege of standing room, and the crowd was too wrapped up in the playing at first to be demonstrative, but at the close enthusiasm broke bounds and cheer after cheer rang out amidst the storm of applause. Unruffled and without a smile, yet indicating his appreciation, the tall, somewhat awkward, yet graceful, pianist returned to the stage and bowed.

Rachmaninoff's playing is marked by a remarkable cleanness of finger and pedal technique. His sense of rhythm is wonderfully keen and leads the audience through the most complicated compositions so unflinchingly that one must follow. It was this that made Moszkowski's "La Jongleuse" so wonderfully fascinating. The long fingers danced over the keyboard with astounding speed, and yet every note and every chord was as distinct as had it been played by itself.

The funeral march from Chopin's Sonata in B Flat Minor, Opus 25, revealed his distinct personality and interpretative ability, revolutionary perhaps, but immensely impressive. At the conclusion of the first mournful strain, when the vibrations of the low A flat had faded away he paused several moments before proceeding with the beautiful legato strain in the treble. The picture was a beautiful sunshine bursting through the clouds. This march, because of its gloominess, has been regarded by some unsuited for a recital program, but as played by Rachmaninoff, it must have been accepted as the high light of the entire program.

In his own compositions, the Prelude in C Sharp Minor and Serenade, interest was intense, especially so in the prelude, which is probably his most popular composition. The first part he played slower than one hears it ordinarily, and the agitated movement was given speed that students will find difficult to follow.

Other program numbers were improvisations by N. Medtner, Russian composer little known here; Weber's Rondo Brilliant, Chopin's Nocturne, opus 9, and a Chopin Valse, the D flat Etude of Liszt, substituted for Sonnetto del Petrarca by the same composer, and the Schulz-Evler arrangement of Strauss' "Blue Danube" waltz, all of them played superbly. His extra numbers were a Chopin valse, after the group of the composer, and Rachmaninoff's arrangements of the Minuet from Bizet's suite, "L'Arlesienne," and Kreisler's "Liebeslied." The latter is only in manuscript form as yet, but will be published shortly.

Rachmaninoff is of the blond Russian type, blue-eyed and with close cropped hair. He was born in Omega in 1873 and came to the United States in 1917 on his second visit and now makes his home in New York.

Rachmaninoff, who played in Los Angeles and San Francisco, left for Seattle immediately after last night's recital.

The concert was under the direction of Steers & Coman, who will present Feodor Chaliapin, famous Russian basso, next Tuesday evening at The Auditorium.