

RACHMANINOFF RECITAL

By Wilson G. Smith

Rachmaninoff's piano recital at Masonic Hall transcended the ordinary in that every seat in the hall was occupied, which is unusual for a piano recital.

And each seat held an enthusiastic auditor who gave ample proof of his presence and interest by applause that verged on the tempestuous. After all, the great public is not apathetic towards real pianistic art when represented by one gifted of the gods.

Certainly Rachmaninoff, judged by his playing on this and former occasion, comes under this category, for such pianism as he projected Monday night places him in the highest of interpreters and virtuosos.

There is no indication of the poseur about his attitude at the instrument. He seats himself without ostentation, but with a placidity and calm that invites confidence. There is no tossing of elongated hirsute halo; no evidence that he considers himself the supreme exponent of pianistic prowess. With him it appears to be a matter of business, but business sublimated to the point of genuine art.

Interpretation Is Aim

He plays with the intent to interpret what he plays rather than to exalt his own personality or startle thru his virtuosity.

However brilliant with technical fluency the composition is charged, and the ease with which it is encompassed, one never is diverted from the manifest fact that the player is more concerned with the total con-

tents than in a mere personal display or exploitation.

While the virtuoso is manifestly in evidence, the musician dominates the situation; the interpreter holds our attention and interest. His program of Monday night ranged from Bach, the polyphonic master, Mendelssohn, the conservative romanticist, Chopin, the poet par excellence, to Liszt, the spectacular and bizarre, and to each was given an interpretation commensurate with his particular individuality. Chopin's "Scherzo" was played with such charm and subtle feeling (also an overwhelming brilliancy) that in response to insistent demands a value of the same composer was given with fetching subtlety.

Liszt Pleased Best

The "Hopak" dance of Moussorgsky also brought out a repetition, so imbued was it with rugged rhythm and delicate dynamics.

For sheer virtuosity and executive prowess the Liszt numbers proved my contention that Rachmaninoff can when occasion requires, demonstrate what can be accomplished in pianism when objectivity and personal display are the order of procedure.

Two of the pianist's compositions were included in the program, testifying to his consummate musicianship and mastery of formal construction and thematic development. While cast in somewhat somber mold they had the quality of intrinsic value, and reflected as Russian literature does, the somewhat sad and dreamy spirit of that nationality.