

RACHMANINOFF PROVES WIZARD AT THE PIANO

By MARY M. HOWARD.

A large audience assembled last evening in Elmwood Music hall, attracted by the potent spell of Sergei Rachmaninoff, the Russian pianist whose drawing power does not lessen with the years, and whose marvelous ability impresses more deeply with each recurring appearance. Never has Mr. Rachmaninoff been heard in this city in more glorious pianistic form than last evening, and he warmed his hearers to a white heat of enthusiasm by his electrifying and enchanting playing.

Anything that can be accomplished on the piano with human fingers, Mr. Rachmaninoff can do, and, at times, his achievements seem super-human. Such unerring surety, such an elastic range of expression, such exquisite charm of touch are rarely combined in one artist. Moreover, the stamp of individuality rests upon all that Mr. Rachmaninoff plays, and he arrests attention by the unexpected and original effects with which he enriches all his presentations. He brings to light inner voices hitherto buried, and by incisive accents or clever dynamic devices gives new color to familiar compositions.

The programme began with a prelude, Sarabande and Bourree from the English suite, No. 2, by Bach. The matchless crispness of the prelude, the poetic singing tone of the Sarabande and the limpid, rollicking flow of the Bourree made a trio of wonderful and delightful contrast. Mendelssohn's Variations serieuses, which followed, have never received more magnificent presentation in this city, and the same may be said of the Chopin C sharp minor Scherzo, to which he gave a breath-taking and pulse-stirring performance. Nothing could be more imposing than the virility of the opening octaves; nothing could be more beautiful than the warmth and richness of the chorale, while the trellis of descending notes above sounded ravishingly sweet, like the faint tinkling of fairy bells. It was Chopin music idealized to the highest power, a musical memory to last one's lifetime.

The B major nocturne, which Hynes calls the Tuberosa nocturne, because of its sickly sweetness, was beautifully set forth, but it is doubtful if any artist can make it of interest. Liszt's Funerailles was notable for the stupendous climaxes attained by the pianist without transcending the limitations of the instrument. Two new Rachmaninoff compositions were each entitled, Etude Tableau. Written more in the modern idiom than his earlier works, the first pleased particularly by its galloping rhythms, while the second, in G minor, was of the nature of a reverie. Rachmaninoff's very clever and effective description of the Monssorgsky song, Hopak, so delighted the audience that the artist was compelled to repeat it.

The Spanish Rhapsody of Liszt brought to a close the interesting programme. In this, the artist gave renewed proof of his extraordinary mastery of keyboard and pedal technique, fairly dazzling the listeners by the virtuosity of his performance. Two Chopin waltzes and an Etude by Dohnanyi were the encore numbers.