

RACHMANINOFF DELIGHTS MANY

Playing Has Astonishing Variety of Tonal Color.

Rachmaninoff's recital in Elmwood Music Hall last night was an occasion of memorable piano playing. It was playing of a very individual sort, remarkable first of all for its astonishing variety of tonal color, Mr. Rachmaninoff's control of tone being such that he is able to extend and enrich the ordinary range of tonal shading with those finer differences of quality and intensity as a rule more often imagined than actually heard. There was furthermore a vitality of performance born of an extremely musical nature, which arrests the attention and keeps a close hold on it. A technical control which had no apparent limitations left the pianist quite free to lay hold on the composer's every intention and to give the best of his spirit to the setting forth of the music.

The music involved was the Prelude, Sarabande and Bourree from Bach's second English Suite, Mendelssohn's Variations Serieuses, the Chopin B major Nocturne and C sharp minor Scherzo, Liszt's Funerailles, Two Etudes Tableaux of Rachmaninoff in B minor and G minor, Rachmaninoff's transcription of Moussorgsky's Hopak from the "Fair of Sorotchinsk," and Liszt's Rhapsodie Espagnole. In spite of Mr. Rachmaninoff's amazing technical resources there was no exploitation of them; the pianist always went below the surface and brought forth the spirit of the music. There was nevertheless much that was a matter of individual expression in his interpretations; he took liberties with rhythms, tempi, and actual note values. For the most part, though not always, these departures had the effect of heightening the character of the music at that particular moment. Occasionally, as in the case of the Chopin Nocturne, it detracted from the simplicity of the musical idea. The Mendelssohn theme he played with frequent holds interpolated between phrases, and some of the variations were taken at an unwarrantedly slow speed. The Bach was beautiful in the articulation and balance of the voices and in the setting forth of that spirit upon which time has no dimming effect whatever. To the Chopin Scherzo he gave fresh vitality, shaping its larger outlines with a free hand, but losing none of the finer details and massing phrase against phrase with further expert use of his gift for tonal coloring.

The second half of the program, with the exception of Rachmaninoff's own Etudes Tableaux, contained less interesting music than the first. The Funerailles was Liszt at his best; the Rhapsodie Espagnole, his worst. Mr. Rachmaninoff's performance of both was in the highest degree pianistic. For extra numbers he added two Chopin waltzes and a Dohnanyi Etude. The hall was crowded.

M. G. C.