

MUSIC

Rachmaninoff Plays

Three things may generally be prophesied before a recital appearance of Sergel Rachmaninoff, Russian composer-pianist. They are:

First—a Rachmaninoff "house;" second, that contentment will enthroned itself on every countenance to remotest seat-holder or standee; third, that the cup of joy may overflow if the pianist will graciously play his famous pr—, but let us not run ahead of our horses.

Of these things it is certain that not a Rachmaninoff "house" (numerically) greeted this artist at the Academy of Music, last night, where he played under auspices of the Brooklyn Institute. The present reviewer, early in the day, had made efforts to secure a pair of seats additional to those he already held, but was informed by a high official of the Institute that none were available. It was with no little amaze, therefore, that rows upon rows of empty seats were noted in the lower and upper parts of the Academy's opera house, and all the boxes but one unoccupied. The reason for this apparent decline of Rachmaninoff patronage here may be because that the lion of all pianists plays in Brooklyn next Monday night, also that Christmas is near.

The programme was Bach's English Suite, No. 2; Mendelssohn's "Variations Serieuses," a Chopin nocturne and scherzo, Liszt's "Funerailles," Rachmaninoff's "Etude Tableaus" in B and G minor and arrangement of a Moussorgsky "Hopak," and Liszt's "Rhapsodie Espagnole." To these were added several encores at the close.

Those resplendent qualities commonly associated with this most popular of pianists, were not last night to the fore. His touch was unpleasantly metallic, his conceptions streaked with amateurishness. Rachmaninoff, never commanding in Chopin, was more obviously less so last night. He played the C sharp minor scherzo and one of the less frequently heard nocturnes, both of them lacking in poetic feeling and Polish poesy. Melodic tone, too, was dead. Nor was the lack of resonance less unpleasantly noticeable in a Chopin waltz encore of lighter vein.

It was reserved for his own group to arouse the sparkle and glint of those superior qualities of touch which he undoubtedly possesses, and bring them into grateful relief. Then did the spirit and technique as of another player come forth. To this point his playing was that of a tired man, but, nerve regained, the "art" stamp appeared, scintillating and brightly featured. There was some big playing in the opportunities offered for characterization in the Liszt "Spanish Rhapsody," albeit, judged as music, the composition itself is an abomination and affront to an audience of intelligence.

The metamorphosis of style and technique aroused a storm of applause and several encores brought his finest playing wherein shone a wealth of artistry—and now, yes, the moment came, a wave of delight, those three notes!