

Rachmaninoff's Recital

Evidently Mr. Rachmaninoff does not allow his fame as a composer to interfere with his talents as a pianist. With the exception of a few slight pieces of his own, which he played towards the end of his recital on Saturday, his programme was very much along the conventional virtuoso lines. Mr. Rachmaninoff is, of course, a fine pianist besides being a musician. He might, however, have revealed the fact by going outside the hackneyed Chopin and Liszt and throwing some light on contemporary Russian work. As it was, only in the Gopak of Moussorgsky and in his own few pieces did he seem to be doing anything extraordinary. It is probably unfair to judge a pianist by what he does in the first quarter of an hour. The first impression I had of Mr. Rachmaninoff's style was one of stiffness and angularity. His Chopin began by sounding fussy and finished by being exquisite, particularly in the two waltzes. His biggest effort was the B flat Minor Sonata, and except that the slow movement sounded rather like a cortège of Polish ox-waggons, after Moussorgsky, it was an entirely attractive piece of work. The Gopak, touched up by M. Rachmaninoff himself, had to be repeated. Everyone would have liked more of that sort of thing.

Mr. Rachmaninoff has one or two little mannerisms, such as holding back his subject for a few bars and then putting on the pace. But in all he gives the impression of being a sensitive musical mind. It was not his fault that he had hanging over his head, throughout the recital, like some sword of Damocles, the notorious Prelude. Every time he came on for an encore there was a little stronger accent in the applause. He knew what that meant. When at the very end of the recital he succumbed, it was only to be made the victim of a demonstration. Scarcely had he struck the opening octaves than the hall resounded with the din of clapping. Well, Mr. Rachmaninoff played it—very badly, as it seemed to me: which was not to be wondered at considering that he had been provided with a seat which became more and more creaky as the recital proceeded and was by this time groaning under the strain of Mr. Rachmaninoff's desperate ordeal. A. K. H.

"Musical Intelligence"

TO THE EDITOR

Sir,—At the recital by Rachmaninoff at the Philharmonic on Saturday I overheard a remark that is too good to keep. As an encore the composer-pianist played the famous prelude which he is said to loathe. During the applause which marked its conclusion, a member of the audience said: "I suppose they'll keep on now until he plays 'that thing' that he hates."

In view of the suggestion in your columns last week that there was a disposition to under-rate the intelligence of the average concert-goer, I think it perfectly delicious. Even Mr. Peterkin must smile with me, if he is not too busy throwing things!—Yours, &c., J. RAYMOND TOBIN.
2, Church-street, Liverpool,
October 4th, 1924.