

RACHMANINOFF IS STILL SURPASSING

Audience, Not Large but
Great, Acclaims His
Art at Piano.

BY JAMES H. ROGERS.

It was a great audience that acclaimed Sergei Rachmaninoff, Tuesday night. Masonic auditorium was not filled to capacity, as it commonly is when the Russian master pianist visits us. The reason for this is not apparent; unless we come to the conclusion that recitals, and more particularly piano recitals, have in some measure lost their former vogue. For that Mr. Rachmaninoff is tremendously popular in this town admits of no question.

However, his hearers were numerous, all the same; and they were as lavish and as enthusiastic in their plaudits as on any earlier occasion when the famous Slav has revealed his surpassing art to Cleveland friends of music.

It is a sophisticated art, for Mr. Rachmaninoff knows all the secrets of the pianist's craft. Yet it is singularly appealing, sincere, unaffected. It reflects a personality that is at once engaging and potent.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's attitude toward the music of all schools and epochs is more subjective than that of any pianist who comes to mind, at the moment, in any case. Everything he plays is colored by his own individuality. Plainly, he abhors a standardized performance as nature abhors a vacuum.

Every familiar piece becomes an adventure for the hearer, who never knows just what to expect, but has the comfortable assurance that he is bound to hear some beautiful playing and an interpretation with a charm all its own.

To speak again of familiar pieces, the program would have gained in interest if it had contained more of them. Everything the pianist offered was fervently applauded. Cause enough in that amazingly facile and brilliant technic, in the silver clarity and brightness of the tone, in the manifold delightful nuances.

Chopin Pleases Most.

But we observed that some of the better known Chopin pieces gave especial pleasure; notably the A flat ballade, which was superbly played but at the same time in so original a fashion that any worshippers of tradition who were among those present must have registered a mental protest at the time, and no doubt a vocal one later. For our own part, we have never heard this piece, which may perhaps fairly be called a bit hackneyed, so delectably and so engrossingly played.

Fascinating, too, were the C sharp minor waltz of Chopin, and the least known of the same composer's waltzes in A flat, both given as added numbers.

Mr. Rachmaninoff began with the Bach-Liszt prelude and fugue in A minor. Here again we heard the best performance in our memory of a transcription much favored by concert players, who frequently pound it out unmercifully in the attempt to simulate, or approach, the sonorities of the organ. A hopeless task, which Mr. Rachmaninoff did not attempt. He played the work, on the contrary, with fine discrimination and effectiveness, and almost made us believe it is suited to the piano.

The Liszt B minor sonata, played a good deal elsewhere, as we note, but a rarity on local programs, was the most extended item on the pianist's list, and it was splendidly done, with clear grasp of its content, and with abounding spirit. There were compositions of the recital giver, of course. And the Strauss-Godowsky "Artist Life" waltz closed the program.