

Sergei Rachmaninoff Wrought Usual Spell on Capacity Audience

Famous Russian Gives 100
Golden Minutes of
Music.

By RICHARD SPAMER.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, regarded by many the world's leading musician, pre-eminent as pianist, composer and orchestra conductor, afforded a capacity audience 100 golden minutes at the Odeon last night. Not in the best physical condition, fatigued by almost constant travel and almost nightly recital, the famous Russian overcame these handicaps by sheer will-power and the dictates of his second nature, which always impel him to perform with utmost faithfulness.

From the plenty of his repertoire he chose a program quite different from anything offered hitherto in St. Louis. Antique and modern music, nothing archaic and nothing bizarre, all standard examples were given interpretation through consummate pianism, and if the tonal menu was savored somewhat liberally with the artist's own peculiar style, it wrought its customary fascination upon the house that was raised so high in enthusiasm as to demand and to receive five encores after the stated program had been played.

Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck's opera "Alceste," excerpted by Camille Saint-Saens, who wrote a caprice around some of the ballet music in the German's masterpiece, furnished opportunity for the recitalist to prove once more if further proof was needed that in staccato playing he is facile princeps. Such crispness of impact is only heard when Sergei Rachmaninoff is at the keyboard. Doubtless the ballet in "Alceste," written in the year of the American Declaration of Independence, was a stilted affair; hence, perchance, the unbending precision of the visitor's delivery.

In Robert Schumann's seldom played G-minor Sonata the andantino gave promise of legato delicacy; but the allegro marcato was a reversion to Rachmaninoff's sharp intonation, and the presto, while given with astonishing accuracy, was more of a tour de force than an interpretation. This impression of rigidity vanished when, as the first encore of the evening, there came a Melody by Gluck arranged by Sgambati. Now the piano was permitted to sing in the treble and above the defined stress in the bass. This welcome process was projected into the Chopin group, the E-major Scherzo, E-major Etude and the favorite A-flat Ballade, the latter allowing for the artist's penchant for using a tempo whose strict values are disregarded at caprice, the long notes stealing time from the short ones (the immortal rubato, so to speak).

Two of Rachmaninoff's own compositions, Etude Tableau and an unsigned Prelude, followed, and while not in the least reminiscent of the world-encircling and Kremlin-bell-imitating Prelude, the latter was conjured up in the minds of the listeners, who could hardly await the end of Godowsky's arrangement of Johann Strauss' Artist's Life paraphrase before insistently demanding the piece which had carried the composer's name to every clime that knows the piano as a musical instrument.

But the Russian after last year's recital in St. Louis intimated that he was trying to let his public forget the Prelude most associated with his name; so he adhered to his decision last night and aided his audience in the forgetting by playing five encores after the stated list, namely, a Chopin Mazurka, a Hopak by Moussorgsky, the C-sharp minor Valse of Chopin, a Humoresque by Tschai-kowsky, and, best of all, a Dohnanyi Etude, the despair of even the great pianists, but played by the amiable visitor in a manner so nimble and sure as to cause joyous laughter.