

# MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

## RACHMANINOFF TRIUMPHS

Had Sergel Rachmaninoff announced that he would play scales and five-finger exercises only, very likely people would have clamored for tickets just the same and remained seated in Philharmonic auditorium until the lights were darkened after four final encores.

In other words, Rachmaninoff's piano tone is gloriously beautiful. His technic is impeccable as ever, and his interpretation uniquely a thing of spirituality and flaming temperament. That pale, haggard man, walking with a limp slowly, smiling wanly after pouring out the treasures of his soul to a tempestuously applauding capacity audience, is a solitary figure as executant, just as his compositions are without question today the foremost among Russians, since Stravinsky must be regarded a modernist before he is counted as member of the Slavic people. He was heard last evening at Philharmonic auditorium.

## SHORTCOMINGS NOTED

Two faults only could be found with Rachmaninoff. One is a matter of opinion. How much more could he give to the world, if he were to devote at least half of his program to Russian music, that of Moussorgsky, for instance, or his own. His other shortcoming is that also of many artists, a failure to announce their encores, whereby program is inadequate, because they separate themselves for their listeners. Similarly, his printed Bach has written not less than six "English Suites," and the one played was not signified.

But, Rachmaninoff is great. His Beethoven "Sonata Appassionata" was purest Beethoven, of purged passion, as compelling that an ever enthusiastic public sat hushed between movements. How keenly Rachmaninoff emphasizes the harmonic element in Bach, where it appears horizontally in the running melodies as much as vertically in passing chords.

## TONES MARVELOUS

Liszt's "Funerailles," a fantasia lamentoso, was majestic in grief and unanswered yearning. Rachmaninoff's manner of playing, with but slightly curved, never rounded, finger joints, thus avoiding tension, here produced marvelous, pure bass tones. One would love to hear him in Liszt's "St. Francis" legends, where, as in "St. Elizabeth," the left hand rolls massive but clear tonal waves. Rachmaninoff's tone is perfect, as can be judged best in playing seconds, or even in that dashing virtuoso piece, the "Spanish Rhapsody," by Liszt, tossed off with such color that one did not miss the conventional orchestra accompaniments.

It was vivid musical playing again in the Mendelssohn "Variations Serieuse," where he conjures up that sweet-voiced composer in unusually pensive, strong, yet Schubert-like, lyric mood. Here, too, where both hands play a great distance (which is not always good writing for piano), Rachmaninoff excelled in quality of tone, rhythmic interrelation, ideal ground and light staccato.

Finally, his is a personality so impersonal as to add strength to that of the composers he plays, yet a personality one cannot forget.