

THE MORNING

RACHMANINOFF WINS STORM OF APPLAUSE AT CONCERT

Eminent Composer-Pianist Plays Classic Programme, With Melody Values Appealing to All.

BY C. HILTON-TURVEY.

THE great Sergei Rachmaninoff, virtuoso-pianist and eminent Russian composer, played last night at the public auditorium under the direction of Steers & Co-man. The big house was packed full. An innovation in the stage setting was a spotlight thrown from the ceiling upon the extended platform and the piano at which the soloist sat, the rest of the house being in a dim dusk.

The programme was classic, without one touch of the will-o'-the-wisp of modernism. The first number started with the candid statement of a simple "Air de Ballet" (Gluck-Saint Saens), delivered in a delicious singing tone and later evolving into beautiful complexities.

Musical Speech Sincere.

But no matter how intricate the music, Rachmaninoff always makes it say something very definite. His musical speech throughout is clear and sincere, always significant, never the mere empty, glittering shell of technique.

The melody values in Rachmaninoff's playing are high and, partly for this reason, he says something to everybody in his audience, makes his music exquisitely intelligible to all grades of musical knowledge. His finesse with the pedal is an art in itself. Delicately though he plays, Rachmaninoff can storm! His bravura effects are electrical! He made the house ring with his fortissimos.

In the heavenly Schumann sonata the soloist wisely blocked the applause which started between the movements, and the whole glorious thing was heard in its proper decorum, without disturbing interruptions.

The Chopin group was given with great individuality. Rachman-

inoff follows no beaten track in his interpretations, and much of what he played was very different from the conventional reading of Chopin. His own C sharp minor prelude was received with delight. The composer played it with resignation, if not with any personal pleasure. Occasionally he rebels, they say, and refuses to give this prelude, so hotly and insistently demanded—he has played it so often! But it is a remarkable work to have been created by a boy of 18, and one can imagine that it will persist in the music of the world's tomorrow.

The "Kunstlerleben" (Strauss-Godowsky), with its tremendous difficulties, was given with fire and flash and the consummate ease of a juggler tossing glass balls into the air. In his quieter numbers Mr. Rachmaninoff brought out the delicate antiphonies between the various voices of what he played, till they sounded like little, tuneful angels engaged in sweet conversation. This faculty is perhaps the high light of Rachmaninoff's art, and the most characteristic point in his playing beside his live, elastic rhythm, his virile accent and the infinite grace of his phrasing.

Audience Is Enthusiastic.

The response of the audience was decorous at first, but enthusiasm mounted as the recital progressed, until at the last a wild and vociferous tumult, shouts of "Bravo!" and deafening applause showed the listeners at a white heat of delight at the magic of this master of music.

Mr. Rachmaninoff's encores were "The Wanderer" (Schubert-Liszt); the "Trolke" (arranged by Rachmaninoff); a Chopin waltz, "Liebesleid" (Kreisler-Rachmaninoff), and "The Hopak" (Moussorgsky-Rachmaninoff).