

Sergei Rachmaninoff Again Displays His Immense Virtuosity

Astonishing Phases of His
Odeon Recital Last
Night.

By his recital, long looked forward to, Sergei Rachmaninoff once more made it plain to a large audience at the Odeon last night that he is not on the point of relinquishing his well-established place as the greatest master of staccato in that big and in no wise diminishing gallery of experts who are doing their best in maintaining the grand piano as a musical instrument.

In nearly every number of his none too liberal program he resorted to that crisp, sharp accent, and with a masterly use of the pedal produced effects almost unbelievably precise. In his opening selection, J. S. Bach's Partita, No. 4 D-major, the overture was one succession of short, non-legato notes, and in the Gigue the staccatissimo (as staccato as possible) was played with a touch so light and clean as to cause murmurs of astonishment to ripple through the house.

Schubert's Impromptu and the Brooklet which, as a song, Mme. Schumann-Heink sings so fetchingly, were also examples of that splendidly released touch. The Brooklet, by the way, was given here for the first time in Rachmaninoff's transcription and a similar treatment of Kreisler's always welcome Liebesfreud toward the evening's close caused such outbursts of applause as compelled two encores, Tchaikowsky's Troika en Traineaux and Moussorgsky's Hopak.

Chopin's B-minor Sonata, the program's longest number, was played with every individualistic nuance the recitalist could impart to it. The Scherzo received his best care, for here he could exploit his technic to the full. The finale was massively presented, but with power rather than fervor; for Rachmaninoff throughout the evening held to his impassive ways and seldom rose above his best workmanlike manner.

Amazing Technic.

He demonstrated without apparent effort his claim to being, in a certain sense, the greatest technician of the day, Leopold Godowski alone excepted. As an interpreter he adhered to his method that keeps the grand piano in its place as the chief percussional apparatus. He never gave it that great orchestral value that Paderewski in his palmy days was able to impart. Only a few times during the evening did he relax a bit from his abrupt impact and one of these was when he played Liszt's Heroica. Here he gave a pearly beauty to the concluding sentences reminding of a rousade by orchestral woodwinds. The Dance of the Gnomes, in the same bracket, was out and out bravura delivered with a virtuosity that caused the house to shake with thunders of applause.

The encore here was a Chopin Mazurka. Two of the artist's own compositions, Etude Tableau and a Prelude (not the world-encircling Kremlin theme affair) were also rapturously received. A Fairy Tale, by N. Medtner, was another of the evening's gems.

There were few empty seats and much pent-up enthusiasm, some of which was manifested by applause at the wrong time, and this Rachmaninoff noticed with a sad smile. He did not, however, smile at the platoons of late-comers, whose tardiness momentarily changed the mood of his coterie of intent listeners.