

## MUSIC OF THE DAY

By EDWARD CUSHING

MR. RACHMANINOFF gave his annual Brooklyn recital last evening before a large Academy of Music audience. His program opened with Bach's D major Partita, No. 4, continued through two Schubert pieces, the E minor Chopin Sonata, a Liszt group, Medtner's Fairy Tale, in E minor, two of the pianist's own compositions, and an arrangement of Kreisler's "Liebesfreud" waltz. Logically, a review of Mr. Rachmaninoff's appearance should end here, with the mentioning of the fact that the audience received him with stormy satisfaction, demanded encores, and got them. But to dismiss Mr. Rachmaninoff with a paragraph merely because he played so well that there is little one can say of him while any inconspicuous debutante can get half a column devoted to her shortcomings seems a bit disproportionate. I shall have to go on.

I remember reading quite a long while ago a sketch (published, I believe, in Vanity Fair) on the etiquette of the concert hall. It was written in the form of questions and answers, two of which, as I recall, went somewhat like this:

"Question—'Do you prefer violinists?' Answer (implying a faux pas)—'Oh, no—pianists.' Question—'Who is your favorite pianist?' Answer (with finality)—'Rachmaninoff, of course!'"

A great many people seem to feel this way. I have seen the Academy of Music almost empty at the recitals of other artists whose names are graven on the tablets of fame in letters as large and as glittering as those which spell Rachmaninoff. But last evening there were no empty chairs—none, at least, in the orchestra. It might prove enlightening to analyze the personal and artistic characteristics of certain famous musicians with the aim of discovering precisely what quality or qualities exercise the greatest fascination for the public.

I shall attempt no such analysis here—it is self-evident that Mr. Rachmaninoff has not acquired his vast following through any ingenious mannerisms or spectacular assaults upon the public eye and ear. I know of no artist whose attitude is more reserved, unless it be Josef Hoffmann. Mr. Rachmaninoff does not sport even that peculiar cold mastery with its overtones of wrapt genius which exudes from the personalities of other first-rank pianists. His manner is casual, hesitant, a trifle embarrassed. The test of his art is in the playing. And here he is pre-eminent.

Last evening his Bach, his Schumann and his Chopin revealed again his intimacy with the secrets of his instrument. And he is not only a master of the piano—he is over and above that a poet, a reflective and reticent poet, whose speech is always noble, never rhetorical, glowing not with slight surface brilliance but with a pervading inner warmth. Never does Mr. Rachmaninoff over-emphasize. His sense of proportion is exquisite. Touch, tone, phrasing

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—impeccability here was granted him long ago. The Chopin Mazurka, which he gave as an encore after the Sonata, was a gravely beautiful lyric. The Sonata itself was surpassed only by the Bach Partita. The program included first performances of Mr. Rachmaninoff's own arrangements of music by Schubert and Kreisler.

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