

MUSIC

RACHMANINOFF.

Seldom has a Rutland audience accorded a musician such an ovation as greeted Sergi Rachmaninoff last night at the armory in his Rutland premiere. While the huge building was not filled to capacity, there was more than a representative gathering to welcome the artist and to listen to his exposition of great musical works.

To attempt to criticize Rachmaninoff would be futile, so well established and so merited is his reputation. There have been few if any pianists heard in this city who can compare with the man who has been called the foremost living pianist.

In the first place he completely upset popular conception of a great artist. Modest and unassuming, he has no stage tricks, no characteristic mannerisms and no useless gestures to distract the attention of the audience from his masterly playing.

From the opening chords of the thrilling "Andantino and Variations" of Schubert-Tausig, Rachmaninoff carried his whole audience with him. Beginning with the precise opening movement and rising with a dynamic crescendo, the player at the outset demonstrated not only his mastery of his instrument, but also the forcefulness of his personality. Confidence, absolute accuracy, a marvellous digital dexterity and complete control of tonic values were adequately demonstrated in this number.

In the Schubert-Liszt fantasia, "The Wanderer", as in perhaps no other composition heard last night was offered a scope for the full talent of the pianist. From the opening movement with the dominant theme until the part of the selection where the left hand of the player takes on the major part of the work and on to the triumphant finale, Rachmaninoff demonstrated his thorough musicianship.

To those who are familiar with the work of Brahms the player last night gave a new interpretation of the works of this master in his rendition of the "Intermezzo" and "Ballade", the first complicated and abounding in surprising tonal effects and the second fanciful and delicate with a myriad scintillating runs and trills. In this number the musician showed his control of the piano by means of the pedals, the sustained effects giving almost the semblance of a well-played violin.

The works of Chopin are generally favorites with all pianists and the "Rondo", "Nocturne" and "Waltz" were equally well received, although the "Rondo" was probably the most intriguing of the three selections rendered. In the Chopin waltz Rachmaninoff gave a veritable display of musical pyrotechnics by sustaining the theme, ringing it clear over a marvellous running accompaniment.

A composer little known, yet ranking among the greatest and one whose works are ably interpreted by Rachmaninoff is Medtner. Two of his "Fairy Tales" were played last night, the first a number in F minor, which may be said to be a "story" or "Raconte". The second, in B minor, might well be called a "musical ghost story", full of eerie harmonics and rising at the finale in a crescendo which leaves one breathless.

Without doubt the most popular selection played last night was the "Prelude" composed by the pianist. While this is familiar to most music lovers, those who heard the maestro's interpretation of it went home with a new conception of its peculiar and thrilling beauty. It was at once the most dynamic, complicated and most exacting of the numbers played during the evening.

The "Rakoczi March", by Liszt, called for deafening applause, when the player had finished his masterly interpretation of the difficult number. While this composition was written solely for the piano, Rachmaninoff succeeded in giving that instrument the effect of a full orchestra, the ringing crescendo being sustained by the bass and the treble notes giving a semblance of violins and the higher instruments of an orchestra.

Contrary to his usual custom, Rachmaninoff generously accorded two encores at the close of the program, after which he was repeatedly called back to the stage although he clearly showed the tiring effects of the night's performance. Rutland was pleased with the artist and it is not too much to say that he was delighted with a receptive audience.