

RACHMANINOFF'S RECITAL

[By Walter Whitworth]

The second Sunday afternoon concert in the Ona B. Talbot Fine Arts Enterprises' series brought Rachmaninoff to the stage of the Murat. The program included Schubert's lovely Andantino, with variations by Taussig; Liszt's transcription of Schubert's "Wanderer" fantasy; two Brahms numbers, an Intermezzo and a Ballade, perhaps the best things of the afternoon; three Chopin works, a Rondo, a Nocturne and a waltz; two "Fairy Tales," by Medtner; a prelude by the pianist and Liszt's Rakoczy march; to which were added, as encores, a Chopin waltz, a Moussourgsky Russian dance; the always sought C-sharp minor prelude by the pianist and Beethoven's familiar "Turkish March."

Like an architect, Rachmaninoff not only sees his music in proper perspective, with due consideration for unity of line, but he also is heedful of details, which fit perfectly into place, a part of the whole, exquisite embellishments, but never jarring notes. A genius of the first rank, the performer has so wide an understanding, so profound a "soul," so sensitive an ear to beauty that, even when he lapses from his own high standard, he can be naught but indelibly impressive. He may not always rise to those elusive places that can be attained only by the great, but he can never be dull, never slipshod. There is something majestic in his music, something of "the universal language" so often mentioned, a something that can not be expressed, but must be apparent to all who hear him. Guided by the composer's thought, he clarifies this thought and translates it with a rare and shimmering beauty.

It seems to this chronicler that

Rachmaninoff has the most amazing technic of all the pianists who come here: amazing not only in the sense that it is prodigiously swift and accurate, but also in the sense that the touch of his fingers to the keys evokes a wider variety of tone color than one would think possible from a stringed instrument so mechanical as a piano. There is intense firmness for fortissimo passages, and there is the most delicate strength for pianissimos, a delicacy that is entrancing, because it has so much limpidity, so much beauty.

One was glad to hear the Brahms intermezzo and ballade, for they are seldom played here. One was even glad to hear Medtner's "Fairy Tales," although one suspected that it was the goblin branch of the fairy tribe that the composer had in mind, since his two short pieces are raucous and sometimes awkward. To familiar pieces fresh meaning was given.