

RACHMANINOFF CONCERT HERE MAINTAINS LOFTY STANDARD

Program at Public Auditorium Features Beethoven, But Stresses Many Other Widely Known Composers.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF, whether scheduled for a concert at a mere country crossroads or in a great metropolis, can be depended upon for a program that bears no trace of the hackneyed, to perform without a trace of undue haste or carelessness. We know of no eminent pianist who more persistently maintains a lofty standard of program building and of quality of performance. His Portland concert, given at the public auditorium last night under the direction of Steers & Coman, emphasized strongly the determination of this distinguished Russian composer and pianist to keep his standards well out of reach of chance jests from the hypercritical.

Rachmaninoff opened his program with a Beethoven sonata, neither the best known nor the least known, neither the most ambitious nor the least ambitious, of the 36 Beethoven sonatas for the pianoforte. It was the sonata in A flat, Op. 26, the one that is generally identified by its third movement, a funeral march—a movement that, like many of the Beethoven opera, has some direct connection with the trifling incident of his career, the one in this case being his attending with the composer Paer a production of the latter's opera "Achille."

First Phase Represented.

The grand sonata, Op. 26, represents the Beethoven of the first phase of the so-called "second period." In other words, it represents the composer "just come into full possession of his amazing powers of invention, the Beethoven divorced from the conventions of the Mozartian era.

The Op. 26 would be acceptable on any pianoforte program at any time, but the centenary of its composer's death is to be commemorated the week after next at mammoth festivals in the music centers of the world, and Beethoven is undergoing at this time a great "revival"—a term that borders on the ironical, since Beethoven has never been sparsely represented on concert programs, and is not likely to be. Rachmaninoff augmented the profound effect created by the sonata with the "Funerailles," the seventh

episode of Liszt's "Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses," Op. 34.

We have no record that Liszt was inspired to compose this as a tribute to Beethoven; but the strategic position the piece occupied on Rachmaninoff's program, the intensesness and depth of the soloist's performance, rendered it difficult to avoid the impression that the "Funerailles" were, likewise, an integral part of the centenary observance.

Two Mendelssohn etudes were disposed of deftly, and Rachmaninoff was playing the opening chords of the Schumann "Etudes Symphoniques," opus 13, a vehicle for 30 minutes of the artist's consummate virtuosity. It was a great pleasure to hear this majestic work again, as it had not been performed in this city by an outstanding artist since the concert of Mischa Levitzki last season.

Own Composition Given.

It will be remembered that Rachmaninoff opened his first Portland concert with a set of variations by Medtner, a contemporary Russian, whose strikingly original inventions in composition have brought him much recognition. Rachmaninoff preceded a group of his own composition with the "Fairy Tale" of Medtner, a work that is commendable for the fact that it bears out the traits of its composer that may be identified in the variations. Brusqueness, intermittent passages of great brilliance, and semi-cacophonous resonance gave to this "Fairy Tale" a quality of its own.

Rachmaninoff's own C sharp minor prelude, and a pair of etudes tableaux, the latter two being to all appearances unfamiliar to the audience—together with a Tausig paraphrase on a Strauss waltz, brought the program to a close. They did not, however, bring the concert to a close, as the soloist returned for four encores before the audience would permit him to retire for good.

Rachmaninoff appeared to take no interest in the mere formality of a public recital. The music itself seemed to be not alone his prime consideration, but his sole consideration. He indulged in no superfluous gestures, in no more formal acknowledgments than were necessary. In other words, it was musicianship, and not showmanship, that made his concert a notable event.

D. L. P.