

## MUSIC

### Rachmaninoff Recital.

By HARVEY GAUL.

Are we up to the saturation point or was it just Pittsburgh's way of showing arty sophistication? Whatever it was, it was a disgrace to the village. There isn't another man in Serge Rachmaninoff's division and yet last night he played to rows of empty seats in Carnegie Music hall.

Well, never mind the audience or the absentees, he played like a man. Some pianists play like maudlin old women, but this man has steel in those like skinny hands and with it he has a range of dynamics that is absolutely his own. He has inexhaustible tone and if he leans heavily upon fortissimo it isn't a boiler factory banging. As to that left hand it knows no equal in the piano business.

As often as he has played here

he never impressed us so much as the creative interpreter as he did last night. He had the same biting incisiveness, the ironic staccato of other years, but in his Chopin one felt a new note. In his rhythms he is a stirring metronome and he clicks with the unerring accuracy of a linotype machine. You are never in doubt as to the beats in a bar and you never need listen for a mussy phrase.

Last night's program was different from that of other years. He was orthodox, academic, as against Mendelssohn and Mozart of previous lists. To be sure he included Medtner, the pseudo modernist of the last decade, but that in no way marred the classicism of his Beethoven. Opening with the much tortured "Moonlight" sonata, he immediately cast a new beam for his moonlight and the piano students, and the gallery was filled with them, learned a new viewpoint. If he under-temped it, that was his affair, and he surely wrote slow over his adagios. The pushed phrases in the presto were finely manipulated

and the short bits of dialoguing in the allegretto were nicely contrasted.

### LISZT AND CHOPIN CONTRASTED.

The two or three outstanding works, at least as far as we were concerned, were the Liszt fantasia, the Chopin fantasia and the same composer's scherzo. In the Liszt work it was more than a "quasi sonata," he gave it symphonic proportions. He struck off those opening octaves (and, speaking of octaves, there is no one who can eight-note it in firmer fashion) as if he were playing tympani. Then came that set of arpeggi and the work closed in a fury. The Chopin work was a pageant of tempos and the scherzo was a sparkling finale. Lovely cascades of whispering figures against a strong body tone.

Medtner's fairy tale we have heard before and it is dull reading at best. There are people who think that Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in G" is superior to his boarding school "C Sharp Minor." We don't think so. Outside of a few fascinating

figures the work sounds very much like a product of midnight oil, and not grade A oil at that. He closed with the brilliant Strauss-Tausig "Valse Caprice" and he gave it more than a bravura reading. He tried effectively for variants and he made much of that delightful pull-back which makes every Viennese waltz a joy.

A great man played last night and Pittsburgh was off playing bridge.

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