

## Stageland Gossip

A good-sized and enthusiastic audience of local music lovers in Emery Auditorium last night made the acquaintance of one of the great figures in modern music. Sergei Rachmaninoff, the Russian composer, gave a program of piano music, and in its performance established himself in the estimation of those who heard him as one of the colossal powers in music of this generation. It was not piano playing in the sense of virtuosity that cast its spell over the audience last night. There are others before the public who can weave a far finer instrument web than Rachmaninoff. Nor was it an exemplification of dry and academic musicianship seeking to make propaganda. It was the master mind of a superior intelligence, directed by a heart of wonderful feeling and poetic sensibility which combined to give an evening of superb musical interpretations to the chosen works, including some of the player's own compositions.

Rachmaninoff is a most unique figure. He has none of the affectations of the matinee idol. On the contrary, he proceeds to his task with a diffidence which is almost picturesque. But, within a few minutes of his playing all that is gone, all the awkwardness of position and technique is forgotten and the giant intellect commands every hearer's attention. In the beginning he played a sonorous arrangement of the "Star-Spangled Banner," after which came the first movement, the theme and variations, from the delicious A major sonata of Mozart. These he played with such purity, variety of tonal gradation and sheer beauty, never for a moment transgressing the style of Mozart, that all idea of piano playing was soon forgotten in the enjoyment of a man who was a great interpreter and incidentally used the piano as the means of audible expression. There followed the Beethoven Sonata, Op. 10, No. 3, familiar to many and played in a manner different from conventional readings. But, it was a creation such as Beethoven himself would have enjoyed, especially the first movement.

In the Chopin group, given with vigor, heroic fervor and, at the same time, poetic charm, were included two seldom heard selections, the nocturne in C sharp minor and the C minor polonaise. The great variety of tonal coloring which Rachmaninoff secured from an instrument generally regarded as unbending, was little short of remarkable, and the power and rhythmic strength of the left hand was magnificent.

A group of his own numbers began with his popular C sharp minor prelude, played in a way which gave it new interest and which made the audience feel its impressiveness. His transcription of an equally familiar song, "Lilacs," was an exquisite example of tonal painting, while a "Humoresque" and a polka were interesting examples of pianistic variety. He concluded his program with a tempestuous performance of the Twelfth Rhapsody of Liszt, with which he fairly swept the audience off their feet. Nobody was disposed to leave and he added several encores, one by Tchaikowsky and two of his own, including the "Polichinelle."

The tremendous impression left by Rachmaninoff was not that he is a pianist for the sake of pianism, but that he is one of the great minds, one of the real giants in the creative as well as recreative art of music to-day.

J. H. T.