

RACHMANINOFF=== CARNEGIE HALL

Sergei Rachmaninoff, neo-romanticist, neo-Russe, gave Pittsburgh its most distinctive piano recital last night at Carnegie hall. He is a giant in musical stature and he has the grandeur of a granite cliff. Last night he was simple, sincere and as inscrutable as a Sphinx. While he has the massive quality of granite, do not think for a moment that he had no delicacy. When he wished he was as delicate and highly sensitized as a child's eyelash.

There are people who claim that he gets his effects by exaggeration; this is silly nonsense. When a man has the infinite variety of touch, phrase and tonal control that Rachmaninoff possesses, he doesn't have to exaggerate; he plays it that way because that is the way it comes to him. He may be this or he may be that, but he is, au fond, a mystic and a dreamer of queer Russian dreams, and—this cannot be overemphasized—he is the pianist par excellence.

It has been a long time since we have heard a Beethoven sonata, and the return last night of the Titian of Bonn (see Vincent D'Indy's "Beethoven") was a joyous beginning for our pianistic year. The Sonata in D Minor, with its three highly contrasted movements, may represent Beethoven in his categorized "second period," and it may not represent Beethoven in his zenith, but it did serve last night to establish a mood for the program. Rachmaninoff played it in a legal manner.

It takes a man of Rachmaninoff's caliber to play Mendelssohn. Up to date he has been slighted by the half-gods and relegated to the student recital. The Rachmaninoff interpretation of the "Rondo Capriccioso," with the "Spinning Song" for its encore, was Mendelssohn revitalized or redivivus, as you wish. He gave them both a swishing brilliancy that was irresistible. The four Chopin numbers were Chopin in a new light. They were brittle, they were sane, and they were terribly intense. The rhythm of the "Ballade" must have appealed to the Slavish soul of Rachmaninoff, for he gave it all the dark brooding of October shadows.

The most fascinating group on the program was the pianist's three compositions. Do you remember Chimmie Fadden's elegant and eloquent translation of "n'importe"? What of it if Rachmaninoff did play his over-pianoed "Prelude in C Sharp Minor," it was assuredly an object lesson in how it should be performed. Of the three Rachmaninoff numbers, the most fascinating was the "Etude Tableau." What was the picture? Nobody knows. Possibly a gruesome Verestchagin subject, or, perchance, a Leon Gaspard Russian scene; whatever it was, the "Etude Tableau" was a gorgeous piece of writing and a grand bit of playing. The encore at the end of the program was another Rachmaninoff "Etude Tableau." It proved to be one of the most interesting numbers of the evening; it was apparently built on a folksong theme, with a curious insistent little figure that was treated in an original manner.

Josef Hoffman, who plays here next week, said of Rachmaninoff, that he was a "man whose art, I feel, is as pure as gold." Hoffman was right; there is absolutely no alloy. H. B. G.