

RACHMANINOFF IS DELIGHT; DULUTH TENDERS OVATION

Russian Composer Gives Varied Program, Including Three of His Own Works.

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF, Russian composer-pianist, appearing at the Duluth Armory Jan. 20, 1920, as the fourth offering of Mrs. George E. Richards' All-Star Musical course, with the following PROGRAM.

- I.
(a) VariationsMozart
(b) Rondo CapricciosoMendelssohn
- II.
(a) Ballade, F MinorChopin
(b) ValseChopin
(c) Scherzo, E Flat Minor, Chopin
- III.
(a) Prelude, C Sharp MinorRachmaninoff
(b) Valse, Opus 10, Rachmaninoff
(c) Valse, "Faust", Gounod-Liszt

By EDWARD BARR.

Many of us remember reading years ago a reporter's story (as we recall by Will Carleton) vividly picturing "How Ruby Played"—being a description of a Rubinstein concert as it affected a man who knew very little about music. And now comes Rachmaninoff, greatest of the active pianists of our generation, interpreting music to initiate and initiate alike in a manner which he learned not from his old master, Silloti, probably the greatest pianist of all his Russian countrymen, but which in some manner has passed to this unassuming but tremendous personality from Silloti's own master at the Moscow conservatory, Nicholas Rubinstein himself.

For this cosmopolitan Rachmaninoff is uniquely independent of all other composers and pianists of his day. He plunged into sotto voce movements last night with an attack which startled musicians who have been accustomed to hearing them begin timidly. In his first Mendelssohn composition, which runs the gamut of emotions, he rose from contained emphasis to climax after climax, ending in a veritable burst of musical passion—and then, called back to his piano, descended in Mendelssohn's "Spinning Song," all the way back again as if to prove that contrasted piano numbers may be fitted, welded and run in together.

The Ballade in F. Minor seemed, as the master played, to typify the reverie of some deep-thinking member of the busy human race, and as it ran on and on, notwithstanding there were some 3,500 of us there together, upon a moment audience and player vanished—we were alone with the piano—the world apart; and suddenly we were all recalled to life and duty and the day's insistent demands as the Ballade mounted in one splendid crescendo. He followed with Chopin's Valse, a lilting delight which ended all too soon; and proceeded to the "grand number," the martial Scherzo—which made those of us who know little of music wonder how so much melody could be found in any classic, while those who were "musical" longed to emulate and wondered what else but a divine spark of genius could make long training so effective.

As encores Rachmaninoff gave us the Minute Valse and another by the same composer, Chopin.

The lights were lowered for the third and last group—it was not a long evening for even the least understanding—and the composer sat down to his famous Prelude in C Sharp Minor, with its rare and exquisite harmonies. We are reminded that the "story" deals with a prisoner condemned to death, to whom in his solitary dungeon comes the insistent, reiterated thought, "I must die." The piano takes up this three-word motif in as many notes, depicting the tumult of the soul, its fight against fate, resignation, an angel's whisper and finally peace. The audience rose in a standing ovation.

Would that Rachmaninoff had played more of his own works, for the Prelude and the Rachmaninoff Valse (Opus 10) were none too much. The valse was indescribably sweet and light, contrasting sharply with bits of the Gounod-Liszt Valse (Faust), which in its marvelous interpretation first impelled one's feet to the dance, then left the audience aghast at the orchestral crescendos which seemingly demanded everything there is in pianoforte skill—and whose demands were ably met. Being familiar to us all, it showed us what the critics have meant by Rachmaninoff's independence.

He responded—while those hasty ones who always have to hurry away

sat down again to listen—with his own Barcarolle, another you will hear every little while on somebody's piano but you probably will never hear it played again as Rachmaninoff played it last night.

