

Greatest Russian of All Thrills Large Audience

The pianist supreme was what the big audience that heard Sergei Rachmaninoff at the auditorium last night would have called the distinguished Russian, had their expressions been resolved into a single term.

He tested, too, their appreciation, for he began with Mendelssohn's Variations Sericuses, opus 54, a set of studies which would ordinarily be deemed too erudite to reach so large an audience. But the wonders of his imagination wove his big house into his web, and one could hear a pin drop, even through the devious ways of the variations.

An arresting appearance he has, very tall, and with the slight stoop of the student; his face large and solemn, and his eyes seeing farther, you would say, than most people. You question whether he ever smiles, and then you discover what you suspect is a sense, at least, of happiness. Just like those chords he played in Schumann's "Carnaval," where the text suggests the Sphinx. Then speedily there is the sunshine on butterfly wings.

Formidable Program.

His program was a formidable one. He made it a stupendous achievement, for into the most subjective of his selections, he puts all of himself, and his moments of greatest repression are often the medium of his tensest effects.

Like the great in every line, he did things, technically speaking, that can't be done, and it was easy after hearing a thing, like his first etude of Chopin, a rippling song of spray and bubbles, that ends, after a pause, on a single note, sounding for all the world like a silver bell, what he must have made his "Bell" symphony, so fine is his instinct of cadences, so exquisite his tonal effects.

Was there ever such ingenuity as in his "Carnaval" of Schumann? His conception of the whole thing was unique. His "valse noble," for instance, well nigh diabolic in its surprising accents; grace again contrasted almost in the same measure with a delicious satire, which explained, perhaps, the ghost of a smile that solemn face could sometimes lighten into.

A tour de force, the Scherzo of Chopin, its music sounding through thunderous chords, whose vibrations thrilled like the news of battle victory. His own Prelude in C sharp minor, his audience felt they had never heard before, hackneyed though it has been by lesser players. Its melancholy was not the melodrama of mediocre performance, but the tragedy that sounds almost inevitably through the music of a Russian when he really feels.

Musical Beauty.

The close of the set program was the Liszt transcription of the Faust waltz, and the virtuosity of the Rachmaninoff performance was surpassing, not only in its brilliance, but in its musical beauty. In his hands it was no mere riot of pianistic skill, but a work of genius.

It is needless to say that the Rachmaninoff program as printed was not sufficient for his hearers. Lesser artists have had to give many encores, and in spite of the great physical demand of the works he had played, and the mental strain attendant upon the quality of his performance, which so evidently draws upon his every faculty, the great Russian was called upon for more, and while a throng crowded close to the stage, he responded until even generosity could grant no more.

The recital was given under the auspices of the Music Study club.

LOUISE DOOLY.