

RACHMANINOFF IN FINE PROGRAMME

Composer-Pianist Showed Also
Uncanny Mastery of
Technique

Rachmaninoff, with his lean ascetic face and tall spare figure clad in formal afternoon dress, suggested in appearance the foreign diplomat or the head of a university more than a popular virtuoso and one of the foremost musical composers of the day as he stepped out on the concert platform yesterday afternoon to greet a house which completely filling His Majesty's Theatre, bore witness to the interest attached to the composer's performance in the city.

Seated at the piano the virtuoso was revealed, almost crouching over the keyboard he touched the keys tentatively, then paused and glanced about the house sensitive to the slightest rustle.

The opening number gave an excellent opportunity to the artist of demonstrating the outstanding feature of his performance, namely, his almost uncanny mastery of technique. This étude, adapted by the one part scholar, three parts composer, Schumann, from Paganini's intricate violin composition, was a vehicle admirably suited to the brilliancy and austerity of Rachmaninoff's attack. At once was apparent the accuracy and skill of his left hand, which has become world-famous. The Chopin sonata in E minor which followed has not been included for some time in Montreal on the programme of a foreign artist and it would be safe to say that it has never been executed with in the Scherzo and Presto, such lightning quickness and finish. The notes of the Scherzo fell like the drops from the fountains of Versailles playing in the sun. The allegro gave the first intimation of the artist's power of shading, accomplished almost without any use of the pedal, and some times, it must be confessed, losing a little in subtlety. The dash and brilliancy of the Presto made the pianoforte students present, and there were many, gasp in wonderment that the movement, as they knew it could be taken at such tempo, and it was whispered among them that the qualifying words "non tanto" following Presto might well have been omitted from the programme. The encore after this number, one of the more familiar Chopin waltzes, was rather a descent from the altitude of the preceding number. The artist here showed perhaps the defect of his quality, as the absolute accuracy of performance with the slight want of shading tended to suggest the mechanical in the well-known measures.

Not a trace of this defect, however, was apparent in the four Chopin études which followed, the fourth of which, the familiar study for the black keys again, by its skillful handling, provoking the enthusiasm of the audience.

A WARMER FEELING.

The Tableaux of the artist's own composition showed for the first time in the performance a trace of warmer feeling on the part of the pianist. Pictures they might well have been of Russia in stress as expressed in characteristic Rachmaninoff composition of passion and forcefulness, giving glimpses however of the Russian love of beauty in haunting variations of the melody. To the evident delight of the audience the Prelude in C sharp minor was the encore and hundreds who have essayed to play this composition strained to fathom intelligently the composer's interpretation of his own work. It was noticeable that the first part of the Prelude was taken much more quickly by the composer than is usually heard. The lightness and melody of the Rubinstein étude was exquisitely reproduced, and the modern Russian music of Scriabine following, lost nothing of its weird fascination in rendition.

Rachmaninoff's prelude in G sharp minor followed as a encore. The first two of the Liszt études, the group which concluded the programme, showed quite a different side of the performer's work, dainty and fairy-like was the Dance of the Gnomes and a trace of extravagance in treatment marked the D flat major following, in direct contrast to the austerity of the earlier part of the performance. Campanella, in its combination of exquisite melody and inspiring execution was perhaps the most appealing number of the programme and was a fitting conclusion. In response to the insistent applause after the closing number the Paderewski Minuet was given as a final encore.