

Auditorium Filled for Piano Recital by Rachmaninoff

BY W. L. HUBBARD.

Sergei Rachmaninoff is the most interesting objective pianist Chicago has had the privilege of hearing this season.

The objectives among piano players are apt to prove scholarly to the point of pedantry, analytical to the limit of tediousness. Not so with Rachmaninoff.

Few of the great pianists—and he ranks high among the great—color their interpretations so little with their own musical personality as does he. The "pure white light of inspiration" shines through his mind and fingers still the color it came from the composer. He tinges it little with aught of his own. And yet he is one of the most interesting, one of the most individual, one of the most compelling and enjoyable of all the pianists who come to us.

But his power lies not in his making his interpretations largely subjective. He holds his musical self as much apart from the composer he is interpreting, as he holds his personal self aloof from his auditors. He is kindly to his auditors and they feel that he is gracious. But he still is quiet, unobtrusive, serious in their presence.

And as with them, so is with the composer. He loves him and his works and gives of his best to make him and his works clear to those who hear. But he obtrudes nothing of himself upon him and them. And yet, there are few players who get so completely inside the composition they interpret as does this earnest mannered Russian. With the insight and sympathy of the creative musician he grasps a composition from within rather than through its externals.

The result is an interpretation that gives to every note and phrase its full value and its rightful place and proportion. The hearers seem to get the music exactly as the composer thought it, the melody ever in prominence, each harmony rightfully balanced, each secondary and subsidiary note and phrase perfectly proportioned to the whole and yet clear and ever eloquent.

Performance that satisfies in every respect is the product, and a recital by Rachmaninoff can but rejoice. It is musical in the highest degree, emotionally colorful, sane and warm, interpretatively sincere, and genuine and technically splendid. For coupled with his rare interpretative powers he has a technical equipment that is all that the most exacting could demand.

Yesterday he gave a program at the Auditorium before a packed house. Its list included fourteen Studies and one Sonata to which were added countless encores. The Sonata was the Chopin B minor and the difficult and musically somewhat esoteric work was played with a mastery, a clarity and a tonal beauty that made it a veritable delight, while the Studies, ranging from Paganini-Schumann through Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Rubenstein and Scriabine to Liszt, were musically varied, technically faultless and beautifully given forth as the poems, the dramas, or the emotional messages their creators fashioned them.