

RACHMANINOFF RECITAL EXHIBITS MIXED MOODS

Russian Pianist Plays a Varied Programme in the Academy of Music

By LINTON MARTIN

Sergei Rachmaninoff gave a piano recital in the Academy last night that evoked mixed emotions. The programme was one of the most varied that the distinguished Russian has played here within the last half dozen years. It was also one of the most unsatisfactory. And it was also one of the most uneven in performance, ranging from the intense introspection that marks Rachmaninoff at his best, to a manner of casual unconcern that might have marked any ordinary perfunctory pianist.

The austerity of Rachmaninoff's style was well-suited to his opening number, the D major Partita No. 4 of Bach. What merited particular commendation was Rachmaninoff's disdain of striving for modern effects of tonal color in this music which was written long before the resources of the pianoforte of the present were developed.

The rest of the programme was of a more romantic complexion, however. Rachmaninoff played his own transcription of two Schubert numbers, "Impromptu" and "The Brooklet," with much poetic beauty. He played the Chopin B minor Sonata without the sentimentality which so frequently mars it, and with a more heroic conception of the work than usual. But he added nothing to his reputation by the three banal Liszt pieces that followed—the "Consolation" in E major, "Dance of the Gnomes," and "Heroica." Also undistinguished was Medtner's "Fairy Tale," an inconsequential bon-bon that was pleasing enough, but had no particular character. Rachmaninoff played two of his own numbers, an "Etude Tableau" and one of the less hackneyed Preludes, and brought the formal programme to an end with his own transcription of Kreisler's "Liebesfreund," which has been subjected to an over-elaboration that distorts its essential simplicity.

Technique is of course to be taken for granted in a recital by Rachmaninoff. What is not to be taken for granted is evenness of inspiration, and last night's performance showed his audience the degree to which the unexpected may be encountered in an artist of the first rank.

The outstanding encores were the Turkish March by Beethoven from "The Ruins of Athens," and the pianist's transcription of a Moussorsky "Hopak."