

RACHMANINOFF THRILLS IN A NOTABLE RECITAL

Russian Pianist Plays in His
Finest Form Before Large and
Enthusiastic Audience

By LINTON MARTIN

That superbly rounded musicianship which gives Sergei Rachmaninoff a place all his own among present-day pianists made his recital in the Academy yesterday afternoon one of the truly notable events of the season.

Presenting a romantic programme that stressed engaging appeal and enjoyment above sheer novelty or an attempt to achieve the unusual, the great, grim, gaunt Russian held the rapt attention of a large and extremely enthusiastic audience throughout his substantial concert. Indeed, his devoted admirers refused to leave after the regular programme until Rachmaninoff had responded with the encores that are so eagerly awaited.

The first half of the programme was devoted entirely to ballades of different composers—Grieg, Brahms, Liszt, and Chopin. It was a felicitous idea, and while it might have been imagined that a number of ballades played in succession would make for monotony, this was not the case, both because of the wealth of variety of the numbers themselves, and the intense individuality of interpretation of the pianist, who proved how much of rugged strength, epic poetry, rhapsodic song and tender lyricism can be put into the performance of these numbers.

He began with the Grieg Ballade, Opus 24, following this lengthy work with two Brahms Ballades—the D minor and D major—giving particularly poetic performances, and rounding out the ballade group with the B minor of Liszt and the perennially popular A-flat major of Chopin. Each of these was played in a manner that gave it an aspect of freshness in effect, and it was stirring to hear the Chopin invested with a sinewy ruggedness of fibre instead of the saccharine style in which it is so often played.

Especially well liked were Rachmaninoff's own compositions, which included the first performance here of his Variations on a Theme of Corelli, the F-sharp minor Prelude, and a colorful Oriental Sketch. The Variations ranged through a considerable variety of musical moods and manners, and included some remarkable technical dexterity. The formal programme closed with the Rhapsodie Espagnole of Liszt.