

MUSIC IN REVIEW

Sergei Rachmaninoff Plays Program of a Traditional Order in Piano Recital at Carnegie Hall.

By OLIN DOWNES.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's piano recital yesterday afternoon in Carnegie Hall had its special and impressive features. They emanate from the personality of the distinguished musician on the platform. No one discourses his art more sincerely, simply, authoritatively, and no one makes less effort to beguile an audience.

The program yesterday was conventional. It would have been interesting had Mr. Rachmaninoff departed more widely than he did from the beaten path. Perhaps he reasoned that after having played so much Russian music of late seasons in this city he would be well advised to return to some staple items of the repertory. For whatever cause, his printed program opened with the Bach-Tausig transcription, which is a bombastic affair, of the D minor Toccata and Fugue of J. S. Bach. Then Mr. Rachmaninoff played the D major sonata, op. 10 No. 3, of Beethoven; Brahms's G minor Ballade, three pieces of Chopin, three more of Rachmaninoff, and a concluding group of three by Liszt.

Of Beethoven's sonata, the first movement in particular was expounded by an interpreter of symphonic style as well as a singular power of statement. The propulsive rhythm of the piece, the concision and virility of its development, had never been more marked. It may be that Beethoven would have played his largo more slowly, and with more evident emotional expression. Mr. Rachmaninoff's presentation was somewhat cool, laconic. It was furthest from one

that tore tragedy to tatters, and its evident aim was to have the music speak for itself. But a more passionate feeling is probably in the music. Certainly the finale is one of modern unrest and fantasy.

The G minor Ballade from Brahms's opus 118 suited well the style of the composer-pianist. Mr. Rachmaninoff did not prettify or emotionalize this fine and somewhat somber poetry; he conveyed it masterfully to his listeners. The Chopin pieces were the rather second-class Tarantelle, one of the Mazurkas, charmingly played, and the C sharp minor Scherzo, which remains epic in its stride and its evocation of ancestral and warlike spirit. The Rachmaninoff compositions were a Prelude—not in G or C sharp minor—a "Moment Musical," "Oriental Sketch" in no wise Oriental. They delighted the assembly.

Liszt's "Funerailles," unusually heard, has one passage that deserves a better rating than the rest of the piece. We refer to the strange and Dureresque introduction. The remainder of it is commonplace, and the indebtedness of the left-hand octave passages and modulations to Chopin's A flat major Polonaise is too obvious. But Mr. Rachmaninoff played the piece right properly, impetuously, portentously and with full appreciation of its pianistic effects.

His playing is cooler and more objective than in the past. His technique has less of brilliance. He remains one of the great pianists, to be reckoned with in any survey of his art. The audience sat long and late, applauding his performances.