

Rachmaninoff In Recital

By Linton Martin

Sergei Rachmaninoff still ranks as one of the greatest of living pianists. The tall, lean, veteran Russian gave ample proof of that when he made his only recital appearance of the season here in the Academy last night.

Presenting a program almost ideally suited to the display of his pianistic prowess, he was acclaimed by an audience of close to capacity proportions, with an overflow of nearly 200 hearers seated on the stage, and the orchestra pit entirely filled. The concert was the second event in Miss Emma Feldman's All Star Concert Series.

Best as Romanticist

At this day, it would be superfluous to speak at length of the brilliance and breadth of Rachmaninoff's technical equipment. Indeed, this was never more arrestingly in evidence than in the flashing fire he brought to bear in the two Liszt numbers which closed his formal program, the "Sonnetto del Petrarca," and the breath-taking tarantella, "Venezia e Napoli," which precipitated a burst of premature applause. Nor has his touch been more persuasively poetic or richly romantic than in certain of the twelve Chopin Preludes immediately preceding.

In these numbers Rachmaninoff comes out in his true colors as a regal romanticist, one of the last of a magnificent line. And for precisely this reason the second half of his recital was far more effective in feeling and eloquence of interpretation than the first part, in which he discharged his duties to the great classicists with due reverence and regard, but something less than ardent affection.

Little Emotion

The Rameau "Variations," which opened the recital, brought an almost inhibited performance. There was clean cut line but little emotion. There was more proportion than impulsiveness in the Bach E-minor Toccata which followed. And the late Beethoven Sonata in B-flat, the "Lebewohl," which followed—far less popular than the "Moonlight" or the "Apassionata"—was more intellectual than affecting. Rachmaninoff came into his own field with more surety in the two Schubert numbers that concluded the first half, the A flat Impromptu, and the Rondo in D.