

Rachmaninoff in Concert at Academy

Overflow Crowd Hears Pianist

By Linton Martin

Playing at the very peak of his pianistic powers, Sergei Rachmaninoff gave his only recital here this season in the Academy last night before an audience that was as overflowing in size as it was insatiable in appetite.

For the enthusiastic crowd, that occupied every seat in the auditorium and all the space in the orchestra pit in front of the parquet railing, with 150 additional listeners on the stage itself, would not permit the gaunt, gray Russian, now in his 69th year, to call it a concert until he had added five encores to the regular program, substantial as it was in itself.

These numbers, constituting an after-concert in themselves, were Chopin's posthumous Waltz in A flat, the Schubert-Liszt "Wandern," Chopin A flat Waltz from the Opus 64, Chopin Mazurka in A minor, and the recitalist's own arrangement of "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" from Rimsky-Korsakoff's opera, "Tsar Saltan."

POET OF KEYBOARD

Where most prominent pianists are concerned, even the greatest and the most distinguished, it is customary to speak of their beauty and brilliance of tone, of their digital dexterity, of their authority and individuality of interpretation.

These things are to be taken for granted at a Rachmaninoff recital. But there is something more. It is the encompassing sincerity and straightforwardness of the poet in the composer-pianist—a poet of the keyboard who sings with lofty sentiment unmarred by the slightest taint of sentimentality.

It was so last night. For Rach-

maninoff's program was prevailingly classical in complexion, richly romantic in warmth of expression and spaciousness of style, always disdainful of meretricious mannerisms or effects—the spontaneous expression of an artist of individuality and impressive authority. And always was there impeccable taste and differentiation of style according to the composer, on a program that was confined strictly to the 19th century, save for the recitalist's own offering, an engaging Etude-Tableau, which also was of that period in spirit.

LISZT ARRANGEMENT

The opening number, a Liszt arrangement of a Bach Organ Prelude and Fugue in A minor, was refreshing in the crystal clarity of detail, in the clean articulation of the fugal pattern.

The Beethoven Sonata Appassionata which followed was notable for its controlled emotion, vastly more effective than any spectacular outburst of passion. The first half of the program closed with Schubert's Impromptu in A flat minor, and the engaging Liszt arrangement of Schu-

Five Encores Added to Recital

bert's "The Trout."

The time after the intermission, on the regular program, was occupied by Rachmaninoff's own familiar and melodious, but hardly important Etude-Tableau, which is a musically but not especially inspired work; four Chopin etudes, and three etudes by Liszt; the D flat major ("The Sigh"), "Song of the Woods," and "Dance of the Gnomes."

Of all the offerings of the evening, the highlights were the four Chopin etudes—C sharp minor, E minor, A minor and C minor. For Rachmaninoff plays Chopin as no other living pianist can play him, with singing beauty, poetry, a springlike impetuosity, ecstasy, and never a bit of sentimentality. This was the Chopin that only the greatest of romantic pianists can convey, irradiated by polished elegance, rewarding warmth of expression and the loveliest legato of melodic line.