

Rachmaninoff Plays Prelude; It's a Jubilee

BY EDWARD BARRY.

What do you think is celebrating a golden jubilee this year? Sergei Rachmaninoff's prelude in C sharp minor! Tossed off in a preoccupied moment in the composer's boyhood, it has been pursuing him up and down the world for half a century now.

Possibly because he wished to honor the little piece in its jubilee year, possibly because he was in a hurry and remembered that in the days before he put his foot down the prelude sometimes concluded the encore group and served as a sort of "Home, Sweet Home," Rachmaninoff played it yesterday at the Civic Opera house as the third and last of his extra pieces.

Applause like machine gun fire broke into the prelude's opening measures as the audience recognized the piece. There was more applause at the end—for, played by Rachmaninoff, the prelude is not at all an unattractive work. Its big chords had a rich clang and its charging middle section a great deal of momentum.

The recital as a whole was pleasing and relaxing. There were countless opportunities to enjoy the pianist's easy sonorities and luminous melody lines. He did not go in much for fireworks, and when he did he tossed them off easily.

A movement of Mozart's A major sonata led to Beethoven's C minor sonata [Opus 111] and that to a Schumann novelette. A Rachmaninoff transcription of a Bach prelude, gavotte, and gigue turned out to be one of the afternoon highlights. The gavotte was an especially fine example of clarity of conception and jeweled precision of execution.

A miscellaneous group of song transcriptions concluded the program proper. The pianist added a Chopin mazurka, a second piece whose identity neither this reporter nor those he asked knew, and his own prelude.

A program of Hebrew and other near eastern music was sung in Kimball hall last night by Carl Urstein, Palestinian baritone. A voice of ringing strength and great tonal beauty, combined with a good feeling for color variety, enabled the singer to project movingly the many different moods which underlay the songs.

The music was predominantly serious and even sorrowful, but there were episodes of light fantasy and restrained joy. Notes in English on the content of the songs appeared on the program.