

RACHMANINOFF IN BRILLIANT RECITAL

Russian Pianist Pleases With His Compositions

Sergei Rachmaninoff, pianist, gave a concert yesterday afternoon in Symphony Hall to a very large audience, which included many standees. With the passing years his ability to draw and please a great number of people becomes more and more evident. Saturday evening the Symphony Orchestra played his "Isle of the Dead." At the close Rachmaninoff rose in his seat to acknowledge applause which was nothing short of an ovation. His reception yesterday was scarcely less enthusiastic.

He has the distinction to command respect before he has played a bar. He has the ability to retain this respect by his playing, and this, despite a personal attitude that occasionally is annoying. Yesterday, for example, he was in no mood to trifle with late comers. At the close of his first Bach group he played a few broken chords and then launched at once into the Liszt Sonata in B minor without allowing anyone to enter the hall. Thus many were prevented from hearing what should have been the major number of the program.

As a matter of fact the loss was not as great as appears. His performance of the Liszt Sonata was not nearly so pleasing as his treatment of his own compositions or those of Chopin. Criticism may be made of the Sonata that it is occasionally mawkish. It may still more justly be said that it revels in bravura. It can scarcely be alleged, however that it is not a unit. The unity Mr Rachmaninoff lost. In his effort to etch the themes sharply, in his striving for extreme dynamic power, he did succeed in clarifying detail but the most certainly lost his conception of the piece as a whole.

After this, then, it was a pleasure to hear his playing of Chopin. He does not prettify the music of the Pole. He will not play him intimately as though for the salon. But who is to say that Chopin himself would want it so. Rachmaninoff's shading, his well kept rhythm, his amassing of sonority, his outbursts of power all make for a Chopin that may displease some but that is more than likely nearer to Chopin's own ideas than the rippling presentations that are the current vogue.

Yet it was in his own compositions, Preludes and Etude Tableaux, that he excelled. Here all his rhythm, his dynamic strength, his sympathetic phrasing seemed perfectly placed. He made the compositions, as is but natural, seem more living than anything else he played during the afternoon.

He has set better programs. A man that can play Bach's "English Suites" so charmingly should not leave them so often from his program. He might have chosen a greater sonata, one that seemed worthy of his stature. But with all that it can not be doubted that he gave a great deal of pleasure to a great many people yesterday.