

PIANO RECITAL BY RACHMANINOFF

Great Russian Musician
Warmly Received

The capacity of Symphony Hall has rarely been so seriously tested as it was yesterday afternoon. The occasion was the recital of the distinguished pianist and composer, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and his audience filled all the seats in the auditorium and on the stage and stood three deep along the side walls. It was an audience of which a large proportion had come to do homage to the author of the famous C sharp minor prelude, for, enthusiastic as was the applause that greeted all he did, that which burst forth when, long after the printed program had reached its end, the sombre three-note phrase rang out, surpassed all else in warmth and obvious sincerity.

Mr Rachmaninoff's program was not of the highest intrinsically musical interest. Much of it seemed chosen for no other purpose than to display the player's undoubtedly phenomenal technique—a principle of program-building fortunately less observed today than formerly. Of this nature, largely, were the two longest works of the afternoon, the Schubert-Tausig "Andantino and variations" and the Schubert-Liszt "Wanderer Fantasie."

Of these, the former is much the less objectionable, and Mr Rachmaninoff succeeded in investing it with much charm, besides finding in it opportunities for the demonstration of infinite varieties of virtuosity, each achieved with incredible ease, neatness and crisp assurance. For the "Wanderer-Fantasie" and other similar distortions of great songs, crimes of which Liszt perpetrated a great many, not much can be said. Its difficulties were exuberantly surmounted, though not without some forcing of tone in louder and more strenuous passages, especially in the upper treble of the piano, which cannot endure without protest, and should not be subjected to, such forcible treatment as the bass.

Of greater interest were two Brahms pieces, the Intermezzo and Ballade from op. 118. In playing in these works Mr Rachmaninoff failed to convey their essential atmosphere of mystery and legend, these qualities were wonderfully present in his performance of two "Fairy Tales" of Medtner, those in F minor, op. 26, and B minor, op. 20, pieces full of color and varied, often bloodcurdling drama.

A Chopin group began with the Rondo, op. 16, an elaborate salon piece in the composer's early manner, and contained also D flat Nocturne and the E minor Valse. The program terminated with a charming, rippling prelude by the pianist himself, a delicate hint to his audience that he has written many other things than the C sharp minor, and Liszt's exhilarating "Rakoczy March," in which Mr Rachmaninoff surpassed himself by the magnificently exciting rhythm and verve of his playing, to say nothing of its dramatic sonorous effects and the virtuosity of technique which is its first demand.

It is perhaps in the vitality of his rhythms, whether in fast or in slow tempi, that Mr Rachmaninoff most excels, and in his power of knitting a musical work into a single and satisfying unity.

In response to overwhelming applause he played several encores, including, at length, the inevitable one.

BRAINTREE WOMAN