

MUSIC

SYMPHONY HALL

Rachmaninoff

In contrast to the all-fantasy program he presented at Symphony Hall earlier in the present season, Mr Rachmaninoff yesterday afternoon chose to play a diverse assortment of piano works—material of varying familiarity to concert-goers. As a matter of fact, this concert, too, fell into a definite category. Excepting the pianist's own Bach transcription, the pieces played were definitely romantic in feeling, whether the composers were of this century or the last.

Beethoven's C minor "Variations," opening the program, set the mood for the afternoon. Despite intermittent moods of quiet and delicacy, the composer was mainly in a mood of sound and fury. The pianist, seeking even the furthest-flung implications of the music, perceived and communicated a mood of sonorous agitation. Coming from the pianist's able fingers, the music sometimes had an almost ferocious sweep.

Both as arranger and performer, Mr Rachmaninoff was best in the prelude to Bach's E major violin sonata. Underlying the pianist's suave, sculptured phrases often lurks an impression of a savage, wild brilliance. During the Bach, this quality was in evidence, but just to the proper degree. Had the tone been less solid and warm, one might have called it glittering. However, it made for a superb performance, even at those moments when some of the harmonies bore Rachmaninoff rather than Bach earmarks. The contrast of Schumann's "Nachtstück," immediately following, merely underscored the pianist's versatility in moods.

Cementing a thoroughly unified whole, Mr Rachmaninoff yet managed to emphasize each fragmentary bit which goes to compose Schubert's F minor "Impromptu." The Weber-Tausig "Invitation to the Dance" undoubtedly marked the technical apex of the afternoon. As always, in a manner seemingly effortless to the pianist, cascades of swift sound rolled from the stage. But always the artist, Mr Rachmaninoff always—save in those few places where the technical display made his efforts paradoxical—contrived to point up the lyrical content of the original work.

If Liszt must be played, Mr Rachmaninoff should always be the performer to do it. His presentation of the "Rhapsodie" and "Sonetto del Petrarca" was very interesting. Without too cruelly exposing the mediocre emotional content, as a sentimental, grandiose rendition must surely do, the pianist brings a dark, brooding mood to the fore.