

## MUSIC

### SYMPHONY HALL

#### Rachmaninoff

Mr Rachmaninoff's piano recital yesterday was an afternoon of dazzling fingerwork, with a following that evidently continues undiminished sitting rapt at the feet of an adored master. Nearly a year had passed since the eminent Russian had last appeared here, not long before an unfortunate illness cut short his season. Since then he has recuperated at his home near Lucerne. He returns with strength regained, apparently, and his art still in its mellow prime.

His playing is fairly certain to differ not a jot nor a tittle from year to year. Yesterday, as always, there was the crisp, strong touch that produces a tone of more brilliance than depth, and the enviable dexterity with the damper pedal which results in exceptional clarity, no matter how ornately decorated a piece may be. There was the same deceptive coolness of interpretation, tempting one erroneously to think that his readings are detached and impersonal, while actually the reverse is true. If the Bach toccata and fugue, with which he began, was turgid, this may in part be laid to the ponderous transcription of Tausig.

Yesterday's program shared the characteristic to which many of his programs are subject, that of assembling pieces, predominantly of the 19th century, whose substance is slight beneath a showy exterior. After the sonata, Op 10, No. 3, of Beethoven, there was nothing of highest rank. Brahms' G minor Ballade is not Brahms at his best, nor were three Chopin pieces, a mazurka, a tarantelle and a scherzo of the more treasurable Chopin. With the exception of the mazurka, a wistful fragment, all these were effective only by the brilliance of performance.

Three original scores, a prelude, a Moment Musical, and an "Oriental Sketch," were fanciful confections. Liszt of the "Funerailles" is Liszt at his most infelicitous in writing for the piano, according to 20th century taste. A perfect storm in the bass is now but an example of the futility of making the instrument imitate an orchestra.

Though Beethoven's sonata was beautifully played, and its mysterious largo e mesto made deeply emotional—though the pianist did depart from the written score in the matter of nuances—the last number of the afternoon, Liszt's 11th Hungarian Rhapsody, showed Mr Rachmaninoff at his best. So dazzling did he make it that the piece seemed to take on a conviction that is not in the notes.

C. W. D.