

## MUSIC

### SYMPHONY HALL

#### *Sergei Rachmaninoff*

Despite the bad weather yesterday, a large audience was present in Symphony Hall to hear a piano recital by Sergei Rachmaninoff. This great artist is one of a number of musicians of approximately the same generation who are best termed "institutions," since year after year they command a faithful public. Time and again Mr Rachmaninoff's tall, gaunt figure has passed the portal of Symphony Hall stage, bowed soberly, and sat before a piano which became almost vocal in the beauty of the music which issued therefrom. Each succeeding year brings little difference in the quality of his playing.

So it was yesterday, as his marvelously fleet fingers produced sonorities of extreme brilliance. Again there was the familiar clarity of tone, controlled by economic use of the damper pedal, and once more the pianist displayed his wide and finely shaded range of dynamics. For the sake of the whole truth, there were some wrong notes, but who could say that they seriously marred the prevailing excellence of his playing?

The program was not notable, save for three little "sonatas" of Scarlatti, old music that 99 out of 100 pianists disdain, for various reasons, to touch nowadays. Since Mr Rachmaninoff is neither a storming romantic of the keyboard nor given to mincing style in the case of music written before the 19th century, he interpreted these dainty, clever pieces with refreshing gusto and directness.

He served equally well the set of 32 Variations in C minor, by Beethoven, but for all that the pieces seemed a little dull and crabbed. The B minor Sonata of Chopin proved much more rewarding, particularly the scherzo, finale, and slow movement. After intermission came a succession of short works by Scriabin, Medtner, Borodin, Rubinstein, Dohnany, and Rachmaninoff himself. Some of these were technically formidable, some brilliant, yet none was enthralling from an emotional point of view. At the end of the program there was the usual rush to the front of the hall by those intent upon seeing at closer range the wizardry of the artist's fingers. And as usual, encores were in feverish demand.

C. W. D.