

Sergei Rachmaninoff Thrills Audience With Piano Triumph At Civic Concert

Another of the great names of the musical world has been added to the imposing list of artists who have appeared in Visalia under the sponsorship of the Tulare-Kings Civic Music association. Yesterday it was Sergei Rachmaninoff, brilliant as a pianist, composer and conductor and the man whose name is probably more closely associated with great music than any other living artist, whose musical triumph at a Steinway piano captured the heart, the imagination and the thundering approval of every member of his large audience, which completely filled the Visalia high school auditorium.

Rachmaninoff Watches Audience When He Plays

By Barbara Carey

Sergei Rachmaninoff, pianist, conductor and composer genius, attributes much of a musical artist's success to the watching of audience reaction. That is why, at yesterday's concert in the Visalia high school auditorium, the house lights were left on during his concert. By watching his audience, he said, he can best tell the type of compositions his listeners like and will know what to play as encores, which he never selects before his program.

Rachmaninoff came to Visalia by automobile, his favorite mode of travel, and was accompanied by his wife, his manager, the piano tuner and his wife and two friends who drove him here. They sat in the wings during the performance.

Mrs. Rachmaninoff always accompanies her husband on his concert tours for their two daughters are married and have established their own homes. They have two grandchildren, one a sixteen-year-old girl who spends her summers with her grandparents and the other an eight-year-old boy who lives with his parents in occupied France. Last word heard from the daughter and her family, living near Paris, was a letter to the Rachmaninoffs in May, but they heard indirectly a few months ago that they were well. Rachmaninoff was touring France when the war broke out and spent five weeks in Paris before he could get passage to the United States.

The next few weeks ahead of Rachmaninoff are busy ones, for from Visalia he returned to Los Angeles to play in concert with the philharmonic orchestra, and will then go to San Francisco, then to San Diego and in two weeks he will appear at Fresno.

Rachmaninoff played magnificently. All of his glorious pianistic art, rich skill and passion for music were translated into a program which thrilled his listeners. His concert was an inspiring contact with a commanding, aristocratic personality as well as with one of the great monarchs of interpretative music.

Compositions by the artist himself, particularly his "C Sharp Minor Prelude" which he played as his first encore, were his audience's favorites. His "Humoresque," "Daisies" and "Oriental Sketch" were illustrations of his versatility as a composer and the skill which has marked him as one of the greatest musicians of this epoch.

The vivid contrasts of the inspiring "Sonata in F Minor, Opus 57" by Beethoven were translated in all their richness by Rachmaninoff and another of his particularly skilled interpretations was Schubert's lovely melody, "The Trout."

Mozart's "A Major Variation" was the opening selection of the artist. Chopin compositions which he played were "Valse," the A minor and G major Mazurkas, and the finished and delicate and very difficult "Nocturne in D Flat Major," which displayed the perfect technique of the piano virtuoso.

The other Schubert composition, besides "The Trout" which Rachmaninoff chose to play was the spontaneous "Impromptu in A Flat Minor," which gave Rachmaninoff an opportunity to show his amazing musical ability.

Liszt's fiery "Sonetto del Petrarca, A Flat Major" and the accentuated rhythms of Hungarian folk music, melancholy and exuberant, illustrated in his "Rhapsody No. 11, closed Rachmaninoff's concert.

His second encore, which followed his famous "C Sharp Minor Prelude" was Moussorgsky's "Hopac."

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