

Couple Here Visited With Rachmaninoff

Among the thousands who heard the Rachmaninoff recital last night at Dallas there were two, and certainly only two, who have been guests in his home in Switzerland. Those two live in Fort Worth, and one of them is a first cousin once removed of the famous pianist.

The two are Marousia Mueller Siloti and her Russian husband Levko Siloti, who talked animatedly of their visit to the Rachmaninoff Summer residence on the shore of Lake Lucerne, in August, 1935.

The house, thoroughly modern in its appointments, would look entirely familiar in our newer residence additions, but is a strange fellow to the Swiss chalets with exaggeratedly overhanging eaves.

Russian at Heart.

The pianist's first name, Sergei, is pronounced Ser (e as in met) gay, with the accent on the second syllable. The other name, formidable to the eye, is Vassilievitch, pronounced as fast as you can say it, with continental sounds of vowels and accent on the second of its five syllables.

Notwithstanding the personal indignities and the serious property losses he has sustained at the hands of the present Russian regime Rachmaninoff still is a Russian at heart. The family servants are Russians. He has had many invitations to return to his native land professionally, but he does not intend to go as long as the present political system prevails.

Although he is 63, he appears younger. He carries habitually a saturnine cast of countenance, and does not encourage the advances of strangers and adult persons in general, but he is genuinely fond of children and is free and kind with them. His own grandchildren he idolizes. His interest in youth extends to young musical talent, though he is little interested in the so-called modern school.

Interested in Motors.

Like Josef Hofman he is intensely interested in motors, and invariably drives his own car, which, by the way, is an American model.

His daily Summer schedule provides for practice in the morning, a nap after lunch, a walk after 4 and evening at home with his family.

In his practice he sometimes works for hours on one problem, trying upon it all manner of rhythmic patterns. His studio, upstairs, is provided with a concert grand piano, a Steinway made in the Hamburg factory.

He spends three months each year, from November to January, in this country, and maintains a New York apartment the year around.

Radio Holdout.

Rachmaninoff, with Paderewski and Kreisler, are the impersuadable radio holdouts. He feels that radio appearances lessen the public desire to hear the artist in person.

His wife also is his first cousin, and Alexander Siloti, father of Levko, is first cousin of them both. There are two daughters, who were at the Lucerne home last year. Neither is a musician. Rachmaninoff says that to be a musician is to be a slave, yet he would not be anything else.

When he was old enough to enter the conservatory, the elder Siloti was his first teacher. He often was a guest in the Siloti household, and young Levko was his favorite.

Fame Spreads.

He was first known in Russia as composer and opera conductor, and it was not until about the time of his first American visit, in 1909, that his fame as a pianist began to grow.

All this came out in rapid-fire, eager sentences from both the Silotis, so strikingly different in physical types, being decided blond and brunet.

I asked about musical doings while they were guests at the estate. "There was a recital in the city by Cortot," Mrs. Siloti explained, "but there was no concertizing in the house. Did I play? You must remember that I was on my honeymoon, and I couldn't be bothered about playing the piano!"

"One more thing about Rachmaninoff. He is a very reticent man, who seems to live alone in a little world inside himself. His face is a mask, and even in informal, more communicative moods you feel that he always is holding something back. He expresses his soul only in his music." E. C. W.