

# RACHMANINOFF HERE ORCHESTRA SOLOIST

Plays Piano Part in His  
"Rhapsody"; Stokowski  
Thrills in Tchaikovsky

## PROGRAM

Borodin . . . "On the Steppes in Central Asia"  
Rachmaninoff  
"Rhapsodie On a Theme of Paganini"  
Sergei Rachmaninoff, pianist  
Tchaikovsky . . . . . Fifth Symphony

By LINTON MARTIN

**T**WO musical heroes gave distinction to the Philadelphia Orchestra's Russian program presented at the concert in the Academy yesterday.

One was the great Russian composer-pianist, Sergei Rachmaninoff, appearing as soloist in the first performance here of his "Rhapsodie on a Theme of Paganini." The other was that incomparably great conductor named Leopold Stokowski, who also gave novelty to the occasion by introducing a composer named Tchehkovsky, hitherto unheard of here, though the performance of his Fifth Symphony in E minor gave rise to a rumor that the newcomer was either our old friend, Peter I. Tchaikovsky, hiding under an alias, or an impostor who had appropriated bodily—and beautifully—the Tchaikovsky symphony of same opus and key.

Altogether, it was an afternoon of ecstasy and excitement, of throbs and thrills, making emotion musically molten when Stokowski brought the Tchaikovsky Fifth to life electrically and incandescently as he alone can. And somehow, although his presentation of this symphony is familiar, and the Rachmaninoff Rhapsody was brand new locally, with the composer at the piano to make the performance especially impressive, the Stokowski presentation of the Tchaikovsky Fifth stood out ultimately as the outstanding "news" of an unforgettable and exceptional occasion.

A thunderous ovation fairly shook the chandelier after Rachmaninoff's performance of his solo part in his "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini for Piano and Orches-

tra, Opus 43," while the gaunt and gigantic composer walked sadly on and off the stage until the tumult if not shouting died. Indeed, only a final generous gesture toward the Orchestra personnel induced the audience to permit the occasion to subside into silence, and the musicians to "break" for intermission, relaxation and what not.

## Soloist Earns and Ovation

The "Rhapsody" with its twenty-four variations, provides ample opportunity for soloist and orchestra. It is vigorous, vital, varied music, with its mane-tossing moments and its lyrical interludes in Rachmaninoff's characteristically Russian mood and manner. Especially alluring is the romantic melody of the eighteenth variation. Throughout, the composer displays his sure skill in handling his opulent orchestral forces, and he played the piano part with compelling and captivating poetry and power.

The performance of Borodin's pictorially persuasive tone poem, "On the Steppes in Central Asia," set the symphonic scene suitably for the mightier musical matters to follow. The Rachmaninoff piece and performance served to show that musical greatness is still with us. And the Stokowski presentation of the Tchaikovsky Fifth served to show that even the most familiar orchestral offering is no older than its latest performance.

If remarks of this reviewer in many previous years when Stokowski has played the Tchaikovsky Fifth were exhumed, they would probably all observe that he had never before conducted the symphony so passionately and poetically, so powerfully and—yes—with such Pentecostal fire. But however often those remarks have been reiterated, they were never more eloquently in order than yesterday. Much might be written about Stokowski's utterly individual accelerations, his dramatic climaxes, his throbbing thematic developments, his sensuous shadings and soaring ecstasy in mounting melodic moments. There is creative genius in such conducting. And it is incomparable in quality.

Ye Olde Editor's Note: The program notes should really get together with themselves, between the title page's reference to Mr. "Tchehkovsky" and the amplified observations about "Tchaikovsky." Why not avoid another war by compromising on Tchaikovsky in current coinage?