

RACHMANINOFF IN BUT OUT—OF SIGHT

Great Pianist Adamant Against Interviewers

By R. D. BOUCHETTE

The Rachmaninoff menage is a perfect domestic combination.

Husband Sergei, greatest of living pianist-composers, doesn't like to be interviewed. Reporters, he says, always twist what he says into something he didn't say. Reporters, also, irritate him by talking too fast.

Madame Rachmaninoff, an understanding spouse, knows that Sergei hates being bothered by interviewers. She capably undertakes the trying task of insulating the Russian artist from the shocking impulses of the representatives of the press.

The Rachmaninoffs travel together when the male bearer of the name is on concert tour. Today, for example, they are occupying Room 1401 in the Hotel Vancouver.

Sergei is practicing on the Steinway in his room, writing letters, reading the books he loves, while resourceful Madame guards his portal from intrusion.

Rachmaninoff is to give a recital at the Vancouver Theatre tonight.

I wanted to interview Rachmaninoff this morning, so I had conversation with his manager, H. O. Heck, a jolly, chubby and very obliging little man.

But Mr. Heck could not help me. Rachmaninoff, he said, had instructed him to admit no one to Room 1401, to allow no newspapermen near him.

"He will not even answer the telephone," Mr. Heck informed me. "He does not wish to appear antagonistic; it is his way. He is an artist."

So I stepped into the elevator and was lifted swiftly to the fourteenth floor. Directly opposite the elevator is Room 1401.

I knocked once, not timidly, exactly, but tentatively, you might say.

No answer.

Twice more I banged my knuckles

against the oaken panels, more resolutely.

"Who is there?" sharply inquired a feminine voice from within.

I mumbled something. There was silence. I rapped again.

The feminine voice repeated the question. It was nearer now. The door handle moved. The door opened a grudging inch. In a sliver of light I saw part of a bare arm and an uncompromising dark eye.

"You cannot enter now." It appeared, from what I could see through the tiny opening, that I had arrived at a time which was embarrassing both to Madame Rachmaninoff and myself.

PHONE NOT ANSWERED

When I explained who I was, Madame Rachmaninoff's voice seemed even less cordial. She said that Mr. Rachmaninoff had no desire at all to see me. He had, in fact, no intention of seeing me.

I pleaded for just a minute with Madame Rachmaninoff. I made polite gestures and smiled hypocritically on my side of the door. On her side, Madame Rachmaninoff displayed no likelihood of exercising the feminine privilege of changing the mind. She asked me to telephone from downstairs later.

I telephoned later as a matter of routine, but it seemed, as Mr. Heck had told me, that the Rachmaninoffs did not answer their telephone while living in a hotel.

But during the morning I saw Rachmaninoff. He stepped out of the elevator into the rotunda. He was smoking a cigarette in a gold-tipped holder of ivory.

EXTREMELY GRAVE

That little white cylinder jutting from his mouth, with vagrant wisps curling from its outmost point, was the only note of frivolity about him.

He is a man of vast gravity. His stride was unhurried and measured. His suit was a sombre brown. The aloofness and restraint of his long, prominently-featured face, sheathed in sallow skin, was emphasized by the unbeautiful, close crop of his hair. This manner of wearing the hair is Russian.

Rachmaninoff does not like interviews, nor could any reporter, unless

revolutionary leader to make the Revolution a vehicle of religious precepts, an expression of religious ideals.

Men like Kalyayev composed some stirring poems about Christ. Also there were churchmen, though not many, in the movement, but the movement itself derived its inspiration from sources remote from church or religion. The revolutionaries were not in the service of God. They did not regard themselves as fulfilling the will or the word of Christ. They were in the service of the Revolution and the "dark masses" which they had set out to liberate.

The passion they cherished for their faith, their spirit of self-abnegation, their readiness to give all they had, including their life, for their cause, were free from any religious influence. Indeed, intellectually and spiritually the Russian revolutionary movement derived its inspiration from the fathers of the French Revolution and from German materialism, and both were hostile to religion.

The Russian Bolsheviks reared emotionally and intellectually in the old revolutionary movement, were naturally enough imbued with a hostility toward religion, any religion. Marx was their spiritual godfather, and it was Marx who had first declared that "religion is the opiate of the people."

Now that the Bolsheviks are in power they make no secret of their hostility to religion. Unlike socialists in other lands, men like Ramsay MacDonald, for example, they disclaim any identity in aim and purpose between socialism and religion, especially Christianity.

As Mr. Krasikov, an associate of the Commissioner of Justice in Moscow, once said to me, "It is preposterous to think that Christianity and socialism have anything in common, and what is worrying us is not that Christianity in Russia is dying, but that it is still surviving."

The Bolshevik indictment of religion and especially of Christianity, since it is the leading religion in industrial lands, is many-sided. Be-

he was lying shamelessly, say that he enjoyed interviewing Rachmaninoff.

SOVIET SEIZED PROPERTY

When you speak to him, the man gathers his reserve about him like an armor, against which your questions strike ineffectually as wooden arrows.

"What are your hobbies?"

"I have none."

"Who is your favorite composer?"

"I have no favorite."

"What do you think of 'canned' music?"

"I don't care to express an opinion."

He will tell you nothing of himself. He will not talk of his native Russia or Communism, although he must feel keenly on the subject. Before the revolution Rachmaninoff had lands in Russia and had 70 men working for him. All his property was confiscated.

COLD AND IMPERSONAL

Rachmaninoff is an artist. He does not believe that because he is an artist his life, his private affairs should be an open book for the world to read.

Off the concert stage he is as cold and impersonal as he is when he sits before the Steinway in the presence of multitudes to thrill them with his mastery of his art.

Rachmaninoff lives to himself and his near ones. Madame Rachmaninoff understands him. The Rachmaninoff menage is a perfect domestic combination.

SUN CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Solution Will Appear Tomorrow

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