

'Prelude? Oh, Don't,' Moans Its Composer

Rachmaninoff Says He's Forced to Play It, Doesn't Like It

By ALEXANDER FRIED

"Oh, oh! Don't speak of it. Please don't ask me about it."

Someone, yesterday afternoon in the suite of Serge Rachmaninoff at the Hotel St. Francis, had made the mistake of mentioning his famous C sharp minor "Prelude." The Russian pianist held up his hands in mock anguish.

"From one side," he said, as a smile, lazy and pleasant, spread over his somber Oriental features, "I should regret to have written that composition, I have written really better compositions. But nobody believes me. I must always play it."

APPEARS FRIDAY

Willynilly, Rachmaninoff is now playing his "Prelude" that the world adores in a busy tour from Coast to Coast. He will give a recital at the Memorial Opera House Thursday evening, another in Oakland Friday.

"Six months of the year I tour in America," he explained. "One month I tour in the big cities of Europe. Then I rest in Switzerland. No, I do not exactly rest. Three months of my rest I must practice hard every day."

The subject of Russia was brought up. He was sitting on his piano bench, with his broad slump shoulders to the keyboard. His head close-cropped, sank a little. His sleepy inscrutable eyes were bent to the floor.

"It is my dream to go back there," he mused in his unhurried voice. "I do not think I shall ever live that dream. Maybe my children, not I. Two years ago the Soviets put a prohibition even on my music. They said I was a greatest enemy to their government. How shall I go back?"

CONTINUES COMPOSITION

What music the young Russians are producing Rachmaninoff does not know. About other music of our day and of the past he was frank and simple: "Debussy and Ravel I like; The classics—Chopin, Beethoven—are my most favorite masters. The very moderns I do not understand. That is my opinion. I have been a musician forty-five years, but I do not understand them."

He continues his work of composition so much as his concert engagements permit. On his tours he can write only lighter things, like transcriptions. When he is having his vacation he turns to music of a grander style.

But C sharp minor "Preludes?" Don't mention them to him, please. Fate forbid, he prays, that he should enslave himself to another.