

## Rachmaninoff Wins High Acclaim Here

Great Russian-American  
Proves Himself Beyond  
Reach of Music Critics

By SYDNEY DALTON

There are a few, a very few, performers before the public whose reputation and art place them almost beyond the reach of the most exacting of critics. Probably they could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Of this select number Sergei Rachmaninoff, who made his first Nashville appearance in Ryman Auditorium on Wednesday evening, under the management of Mrs. L. C. Naff, is one. If a poll were taken among those who are best fitted to judge, it is probable that he would be acclaimed the greatest of living pianists.

There are those who move their listeners with their dazzling technique; others by means of the frenzy and sweep of their emotion, and some, primarily, through a forceful and hypnotic personality. The essence of these qualities, distilled and refined to the highest degree, is found in the playing of this great Russian-American. And underlying his pianism is the brain and soul and scholarship of a remarkable musician.

The little singer, with his shallow repertory of superficialities that show off his voice and top notes; the struggling pianist whose life and art are circumscribed by the white and black notes of his keyboard—how they fade to merest insignificance, even if they but stand in the shadow of a Rachmaninoff, a Paderewski, or a Kreisler. For the artistic wells from which such giants draw their interpretations are not to be found near the surface. Technique and all the mechanics of their art, tone and the complete mastery of the details of reproduction are used merely as means for searching out the content of great music and laying bare its secrets, so that the intelligent listener may grasp its meaning.

To hear Rachmaninoff is to become conscious of the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual significance of great art. What he plays, provided only that it be fine music, as it always is, is of far less moment than how he plays it. From the first notes of his opening group, made up of a Ballade, a Nocturne, a Valse, and a Polonaise, all by Chopin, he displayed an extraordinarily warm and colorful tone, and a perfected technique that would, in itself, have dazzled the auditors. Had he cared to allow it to usurp the thrones of the artist.

The A Flat Ballade took on new meaning under his fingers; the Nocturne in F Sharp was a shimmer of golden notes; the Valse in A Flat was a perfect balancing of conflicting but harmonized rhythms, and the Polonaise in A Flat was a mighty, sonorous triumph. The Sonata "Appassionata," by Beethoven, was a great canvas, painted with broad, sure strokes, and filled in with a multitude of beautiful details, not always made so apparent to the listener.

The last, and most unusual group on the program consisted of eight songs, by Schumann, Chopin, Schubert, Rachmaninoff, and Wagner, transcribed for the piano by Liszt, Tausig, and Rachmaninoff. The singers in the audience were afforded a rare opportunity of learning the interpretation of these masterpieces, as they were all played with consummate understanding.

Numerous encores were demanded, and shouts of approval greeted the opening notes of the artist's Prelude in C Sharp Minor.

There is only one Rachmaninoff. Would that time might pass him by and leave him with us as a model by which the young pianists of generations to come could fashion their art.