

# Lend Me Your Ears

By BOB BOUCHETTE

## The Poise Genius

You knew that Rachmaninoff was a genius before he offered his first number last night.

A huge concourse of people turned out to hear him. The audience was so unusually large that the ushers had some difficulty in seating them before the time set for the opening of the concert.

About 25 minutes to 9 Rachmaninoff came on. He walked slowly to the centre of the stage, his great figure bowed. The applause swept over the footlight gutter towards him like an artillery barrage.

Gravely, unsmilingly, Rachmaninoff bowed to the orchestra floor, to the first balcony, to the gallery. This was a formality. He seemed alone, not consciously aloof, but quite detached from the scene.

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**Delay** He sits now at his piano and the crowd rises as he strikes the opening bars of God Save the King. We, who have heard God Save the King played casually, pompously, hurriedly and draggily, find a new meaning in the hymn. The solemnity and hope expressed in the prayer fills the Vancouver Theatre. Parts of it Rachmaninoff almost syncopates.

There are scores of persons yet to be seated in the first balcony and they are still trickling inward downstairs. Rachmaninoff, his shoulders hunched, his hands clasped, regards his piano.

Once in a while he shoots a quick glance at the audience and his eyes rise to the dress circle. His expression does not change, except for the shadow of a frown which moves across his face like a cloud.

For 15 minutes Rachmaninoff sat thus and waited for silence. There was not the slightest trace of embarrassment or irritation visible about him. Yet it must be a trial for an artist of Rachmaninoff's stature to submit to the delay.

But he is in complete command. He is the only individual in that theatre. The rest of us don't count.

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**Power** And as we gaze upon him—a thousand pairs of eyes riveted on one man—we understand the secret of Rachmaninoff's greatness. He is indescribably poised and balanced. He is so completely at ease, so thoroughly in harmony to the current of life around him that he is a living rhythm.

Perhaps genius is only that—an infinite capacity for poise. Without it, certainly, no man can touch the heights. It constitutes a spiritual and physical understanding of the prime forces which must be inherent, although the ability to maintain it increases with self-denial and practise.

Perhaps our politicians, national and provincial and municipal, might learn a lesson from the poise of Rachmaninoff. Or even if a piano recital bores them, they might watch the expert swimmer, or dancer, or boxer. The flowing, effortless rhythm of their movements is a form of the same essence which Rachmaninoff has sublimated to such a degree.

Our politics and our politicians could benefit with an added balance of motion.

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