

Rachmaninoff Tours City in Auto

Artists' Escape From Russia Told

Sergel Rachmaninoff great Russian pianist and composer really objects to being interviewed and it was with much difficulty this morning that a representative of the News secured a number of interesting little sidelights on the hobbies and personality of the famous visitor. First of all Mr. Rachmaninoff outside of his music is interested in automobiles in each city that he visits when he happens to go for a walk, he seldom fails to pause in front of the automobile show windows and each new intricacy of automobile mechanism is of the utmost interest to the pianist. He drives his own car when at home in New York and spends many hours driving up the boulevards in and around the big eastern metropolis. His single diversion in the city today was a drive taken at noon about the city as the guest of Mrs. Sybella Clayton Bassett, well known local pianist, and accompanied by his manager, C. W. Spalding.

The story of the musician's coming to America includes his escape from Russia following the establishment of the Russian regime there. The pianist was conductor during the imperialistic regime of the Czar's Imperial Opera at Petrograd, an organization only possible under the luxurious monarchistic regime of the Czar Nicholas. As a diversion he owned a large wooded tract near Moscow, some 3000 acres containing two houses, the larger used for residence purposes, the smaller for a studio. Rachmaninoff had a manager to oversee the tract and superintend 200 peasants.

The estate was equipped with the best of American farming machinery and with pure breed stock and horses in which the musician took much delight. It was his most pleasurable recreation after his exacting musical work to wander at will over his lands taking an interest in each detail of its management and upkeep.

One day warning came from the peasants for their landowner to depart, plans being on foot by the Bolsheviks to seize the tract. While not of royal birth, Rachmaninoff was of the despised land owning class and therefore sought by the Bolshevik leaders.

Escaping to Denmark with his wife and two daughters, the pianist made his way to America and has been in this country four years. He owns a home in New York. One daughter is in her third year at Barnard college and the second is a young miss of about 15 years. The daughters and wife while not musicians, have musical talent.

Rachmaninoff himself, a man of about 49 years has been active in the musical world since his youth. At the age of 24 he conducted his first opera at Kiev making his debut on the very night that Tchaikovsky was conducting one of his own numbers at Petrograd. The two musicians were close friends and Rachmaninoff delights in telling the story of the double debut.

The pianist is still interested in Russia and never fails to look first at the headlines in the press telling of events in his native land. He declares that he hears very little of the home land and home ties.

His dislike of being interviewed lies in his extreme modesty and a feeling that the public is interested in his music not in himself. He wishes to appeal to his audience through his music and not through any personal stories which enthusiastic press agents might urge.

Following his ride about the city today, the pianist spent the afternoon resting in readiness for his concert this evening in the tabernacle under the auspices of the Musical Arts Society. He is stopping at the Hotel Utah and is accompanied here not only by Mr. Spalding but also by Benjamin Keith, his piano tuner.