

"R" 1945

SERGEI VASSILYEVICH RACHMANINOFF

The world will always be in debt to Sergei Rachmaninoff for his marvelous music. His inspiring compositions will live forever. His musical genius was equalled by only few other great composers and exceeded by none. These facts have been known and accepted throughout the world because Rachmaninoff had the good fortune of being recognized and appreciated during his life-time.

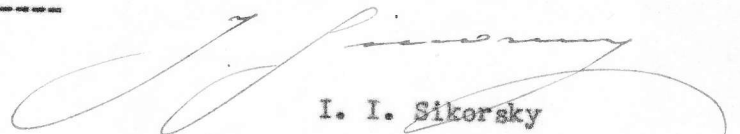
Another of his activities which is not known generally is the vast and generous help given to people in need. I personally was one of many who owe him a debt of gratitude for his assistance so generously given at a time when it was desperately needed. During the years 1923 and 1924, our aircraft organization was experiencing many difficulties; in fact, its very existence was threatened but Rachmaninoff came generously to our aid, making a substantial contribution under circumstances when there was considerable doubt as to the possible return and even the safety of his investment. In addition to his extremely valuable material aid, he contributed moral support and encouragement by agreeing to become the first vice-president of the young Sikorsky Aero Engineering Corporation. The value of his friendly help and encouragement in our time of need can never be over-estimated by myself or my associates.

The immense debt of gratitude which the whole world owes to Rachmaninoff for his music is, of course, well known, but I would like to add a few of my own impressions. I believe his deeply inspiring music is one of the greatest cultural achievements known to mankind. In a number of his compositions he rose far above and beyond the level of the ordinary conceptions of man. I believe that his Symphony No. 2 is such an immense spiritual message that it is difficult to appreciate it in full. It seems to

me that it is a prophecy spoken in terms of music. It is undoubtedly on par with the great work of Tchaikovsky. The Symphony No. 6 (Pathetic). The two marvelous compositions are similar as they both inspire the idea of some profound and immense tragedy. However, they are very different with respect to the final outcome of the great disturbance which, I believe, forms the background of both. "Pathetic" starts with tragic questions, continues in a lighter vein, reaches a confident, proud triumph in the third part and then suddenly registers utter agony and ends finally in ultimate catastrophe. However, the immortal Symphony of Rachmaninoff begins in a tragic mood, continues through extremely tragic periods and deeply turbulent sensations and then gradually evolves into triumphant life.

Tchaikovsky wrote his work some 60 years ago, while Rachmaninoff's work was composed in the face of the approaching storm. But his Symphony ends with bright optimism. I believe that this can be a source of great hope and encouragement. I am convinced that the intuitive feeling of this definitely inspired super-sensitive soul may have foreseen the light ahead. I firmly believe his intuition can be trusted far more than any materialistic speculative thinking of human intellect. I am indeed very happy to add my voice in his praise even though it can express only a small part of our gratitude to this great man. Naturally, we deeply regret his loss but we should also be grateful to destiny for the fact that he once lived and left us so priceless a heritage.

May 24, 1945


I. I. Sikorsky