Mercury RECORDS
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HI-FI STEREO

MERCURY LIVING PRESENCE

RACHMANINOFF
SYMPHONY NO. 2
IN E MINOR, OP. 27
PAUL PARAY
DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF
SYMPHONY No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 27
PAUL PARAY conducting the
DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

"Sweet are the uses of adversity . . ."

IN considering the career of Sergei Vassilievich Rachmaninoff, one of the great composer-conductor-pianists of our time, this Shakespearean maxim is particularly apropos. For, when Rachmaninoff was born into the wealthy, landed Russian aristocracy (on April 1, 1873 in Oneg, in the Province of Novgorod), it became virtually **de rigueur** that he be destined for a military career. However, fate—in the form of an improvident father—decreed that by the time the child was four years old, the family fortune would be so thoroughly dissipated that plans for his future would have to be altered radically. Instead of the prescribed military career, it was decided to capitalize on his already evident musical talent, and, to that end, lessons were begun. Thus, through "the uses of adversity," the world lost a soldier and gained a great musician.

By the time he was nine years old, Rachmaninoff had progressed so well that he was admitted to the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Three years later he transferred to the Moscow Conservatory, where he studied piano with Zverev and Siloti, and theory with Taneyev and Arensky. It was here he met Tchaikovsky, whose influence on his style of composition was to be a pervasive one—and one, incidentally, which Rachmaninoff always proudly acknowledged. Tchaikovsky's paternal interest is evidenced by his taking an active hand in arranging for the première of the young student's opera, **Aleko**, which won Rachmaninoff a gold medal in composition in 1892.

But, despite his growing skill as a composer, Rachmaninoff was at least equally interested in the possibilities of a career as pianist and conductor. Indeed, shortly after leaving the Moscow Conservatory, he began an extensive tour of the major Russian towns in the role of keyboard virtuoso, with mounting acclaim after each concert. This was followed by a number of equally successful engagements as conductor, culminating in his appointment to the podium of the Imperial Grand Opera of Moscow in 1905-1906.

Some years previous to this, however, an event occurred which had a truly explosive effect in bringing Rachmaninoff to the attention of the world at large. In 1893, he wrote the redoubtable **Prelude in C Sharp Minor,** Op. 3, No. 2, which the famous English music critic, Ernest Newman, eventually came to refer to simply as "IT," and which, later in his career, so bored its composer he could barely bring himself to play it. Nevertheless, "IT" led to Rachmaninoff's being invited in 1899 to appear with the London Philharmonic Orchestra in a concert in which he gained further glory in the triple role of composer, conductor and pianist.

There followed years of concertizing and conducting throughout Europe and his native Russia, interrupted by a sojourn in Dresden in 1906 and 1907, where he sought refuge from the unremitting demands placed upon him as a virtuoso, and devoted his energies to composing. It is from this period that a number of Rachmaninoff's most famous works date, including the **Second Symphony,** the tone poem **The Isle of the Dead,** and the **First Piano Sonata.**

In 1909, Rachmaninoff visited the United States, where he was triumphantly successful. He later became a citizen of this country, having exiled himself and his family from Russia at the time of the Revolution.

In connection with the oft-discussed "Russian character" of Rachmaninoff's music, it is instructive to read his own statement, which appeared in an interview in **The Etude:** "In my own compositions, no conscious effort has been made to be original, or Romantic, or Nationalistic, or anything else. I write down on paper the music I hear within me, as naturally as possible. I am a Russian composer, and the land of my birth has influenced my temperament and outlook. My music is the product of my temperament, and so it is Russian music; I never consciously attempted to write Russian music, or any other kind of music. What I try to do, when writing down my music, is to make it say simply and directly that which is in my heart when I am composing."

Although captious critics bemoaned Rachmaninoff's "conservatism" throughout his career, and decried his unwillingness to take up the cudgels of musical modernism, he refused to clothe his musical ideas in garments of current fashion, preferring to let them speak in the language in which he felt most at ease, the only proper raiment for his richly romantic imagination. And nowhere, in all his works, does this imagination speak more directly and compellingly to the heart of the listener than in this most popular of all Rachmaninoff's purely orchestral compositions, the **Second Symphony.**

The **Symphony No. 2 in E. Minor** is in four movements. The arrangement of these movements is somewhat unorthodox in that the usual pattern of a slow second and a fast third movement is here reversed. Rachmaninoff employs a motto theme which first appears in the violins in the opening Largo section of the first movement, and then recurs in each of the succeeding movements. Thus a feeling of unity is achieved in accord with the "cyclical" principle of Cesar Franck. The symphony was first performed in St. Petersburg on February 8, 1908, with Rachmaninoff conducting, and the first American performance took place on November 26, 1909 at a concert of the Philadelphia Orchestra, again with the composer conducting. It has since gained a firm place in the repertoire of symphony orchestras throughout the world.

NOTES BY WALTER DIEHL

HI-FI FACTS

The present recording was made on March 18, 1957. Through the utilization of Mercury's **Living Presence** Stereophonic recording technique, Rachmaninoff's opulent score emerges with transparent luminosity. The mysterious bass figure introducing the first movement, for example, draws our attention to the right, while the expressive violin theme that follows clearly emanates from the left of the podium. Directional effects, however, represent only one of several new aural dimensions characteristic of true stereophonic reproduction as heard in this Mercury **Living Presence** Stereo disc. In the large orchestral canvas of Rachmaninoff's **Symphony No. 2,** the dimensions of spaciousness and depth of field actually seem to "reconstruct" before you the proportions and instrumental placement of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. This is most dramatically illustrated in a comparison of the ethereal clarinet melody (center) above murmuring strings in the third movement, with the plangent attack of the exultantly romantic Finale.

This Stereo recording was made on three-channel, half-inch tape machines—the original three-channel tape later being transferred by a special electronic process to a two-channel master tape, from which this stereo record was made. Wilma Cozart was the recording director for the session; Harold Lawrence the musical supervisor. C. R. Fine was the recording engineer and technical supervisor, and tape to disc transfer was made by George Piros.

Notes about PAUL PARAY and the DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Since the fall of 1952, when the distinguished French conductor, Paul Paray, took over its musical destinies, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra has become one of the world's finest musical organizations. Founded in 1914, the orchestra first gained national prominence when the renowned pianist-conductor, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, was appointed musical director four years later. He retained this post until his death in 1936. During the next thirteen years, the orchestra went into a partial eclipse, and finally closed its doors in 1949. In 1951, elements of the entire community, including industrialists, small businessmen, labor unions and various cultural organizations, rallied together to build a new orchestra. Within an astonishingly short period of time, Detroit had achieved orchestral solvency. On October 18, 1951, Paul Paray conducted the first concert of the reborn Detroit Symphony Orchestra. On the following morning, the press described the event as a new era in the city's musical life: "Detroit not only again has a symphony orchestra, but it has a great one." . . . "The evening was a personal triumph for Paray." . . . "We have attended many concerts and have had many unforgettable musical thrills—but never one greater than watching the grinning faces of the orchestra as they stood looking at Paray after the last notes of last night's concert. An hour's ovation couldn't have made them feel better. No musician needs applause to inform him that he's made great music."

Normandy-born Paul Paray, a Member of the French Institute and a Commander of the Legion of Honor, now divides his time between the United States and France. A Prix de Rome winner at the Paris Conservatoire, Paray became permanent conductor of the Lamoureux Orchestra in 1923, and of the Concerts Colonne in 1932. Since 1953, Paul Paray and the Detroit Symphony have recorded exclusively under the Mercury **Living Presence** banner.

LIVING PRESENCE STEREO

This Mercury LIVING PRESENCE STEREO record makes available to the disc-buying public an exciting new listening experience. By means of the most advanced recording techniques, it is now possible to record and reproduce within a single V-shaped groove two separate audio channels. With the utilization of a stereo cartridge, these channels are transmitted to two amplifiers and loudspeakers. The result is a vivid re-creation in the home of a "live" performance, with the remarkable phenomena of depth, direction and spaciousness which are the hallmark of true stereophonic recording.

The use of the MARGIN CONTROL system of variable groove spacing in Mercury's LIVING PRESENCE monaural discs represented a major step in the perfection of the long playing record. This technique has now been successfully augmented with electronic groove depth control for the LIVING PRESENCE STEREO record, thus enabling Mercury to produce a two-channel disc of exceptionally wide dynamic range, reliable stylus tracking throughout the frequency range, and startling clarity and definition of instrumental timbres.

This Mercury LIVING PRESENCE STEREO record should be played according to the RIAA standard with a stereo reproducing cartridge having a stylus tip not exceeding .7 mil. For best results, be sure that your two loudspeakers and amplifiers are correctly balanced in terms of output and phase, and that the loudspeakers are placed in the room so as to provide an even "spread of sound" from one to the other.

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Mercury RECORDS

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MERCURY
STEREO

Rachmaninoff
SYMPHONY No. 2 IN E MINOR, Op. 27
Largo; Allegro moderato
Allegro molto

33⅓ R.P.M.

MARGIN CONTROL
SIDE 1

DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
PAUL PARAY conducting

SR90019A

LIVING PRESENCE HIGH FIDELITY

MERCURY
STEREO

Rachmaninoff
SYMPHONY No. 2 IN E MINOR, Op. 27
Adagio
Allegro vivace

33⅓ R.P.M.

MARGIN CONTROL
SIDE 2

DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
PAUL PARAY conducting

SR90019B

LIVING PRESENCE HIGH FIDELITY