

MUSIC

THE SYMPHONY CONCERT.

An ovation—that much over-used word—is the only word appropriate for describing the reception accorded Sergei Rachmaninoff at his appearance as pianist and composer in Northrop auditorium last night. With Rachmaninoff, Mitropoulos, and the Minneapolis Symphony all in top form, this is bound to be remembered as one of the outstanding concerts of the year.

After Bach's Choral-Prelude, "O Man, Thy Grievous Sins Bemoan," beautifully played by the string section, Rachmaninoff appeared, the orchestra rose to its feet, and the storming applause that was to punctuate the evening began.

The performance of Beethoven's C Major Concerto left nothing to be desired, either in the way of fine pianism or excellent orchestral accompaniment. Rachmaninoff is one of those rare pianists who balance a breadth of conception with the utmost perfection of detail. Throughout the Allegro, the beautiful Largo, and the exuberant Rondo, there was always this same striking clarity and precision of passage-work and melodic outline, the same consistently beautiful tone, and the same delicacy which never descended to weakness, so perfect was the intellectual control. The Largo especially showed how, in the proper hands, the elaboration of ornamentation may be made subservient to a total impression of classic and touching simplicity. And it is only fair to add that the solo part was made thus completely effective through the sensitive accompanying of Mitropoulos and the orchestra.

The Beethoven was followed by Liszt's "Todentanz" for piano and orchestra. Mr. Rachmaninoff showed that for him, at least, the "Toden-

tanz" has no terrors. The pianistic difficulties of this work were tossed off with the greatest of ease, the great leaps up and down the keyboard negotiated with impeccable precision. If, when the tumult and the shouting die, the listener feels that the work is after all a piece of musical claptrap, using such themes as death and the "Dies Irae" for little more than a show of pianistic gymnastics, the inclusion of the number on a program may be justified because of just such a performance as it received last night. It does not hurt us to have a little virtuosity for its own sake when it is carried off with the good taste of a Rachmaninoff.

The second half of the concert was given over to Rachmaninoff's Third Symphony, his most recent, and one which has not previously been heard here. This revealed itself to be a solid, dignified, excellently scored work, laid out along traditional lines, and full of effective climaxes and lyric passages. The coloring of the whole is romantic, though at the same time it is pervaded throughout by the persistent eclecticism characteristic of most of Rachmaninoff's works. Thus, for example, one would hear occasionally a Debussyesque use of ninth chords, or, as toward the end of the last movement, a bit that is delicately Spanish. This last movement, indeed, does not succeed quite so well in being gay as the second movement does in being melancholy; but on the whole it is a well-sustained work, and it was given a most convincing performance by Mitropoulos.

The performance of his symphony was an added final triumph for Rachmaninoff, who was called from the audience to share repeated bows with Mitropoulos and the orchestra.

JACK CONKLIN.