

## Pantages Event Lures Throngs

By RICHARD D. SAUNDERS

The Philharmonic Orchestra of Los Angeles moved to Hollywood last night to take up its residence at the Pantages Theater for the remainder of the season. It came with Sergel Rachmaninoff as piano soloist and Leopold Stokowski as conductor, and most of the auditors stood up to honor the 68 year old pianist-composer after he played his own Second Concerto, and enthusiastically applauded the immaculately posed leader.

The welcoming committee was a packed house crammed with notables of screen, music and society who marched into the theater between serried ranks of sidewalk spectators. It was a brilliant opening, even according to Hollywood first night standards.

The orchestra, augmented for the occasion, played in a deep boxed shell of dark blue splotched like camouflage with black, lit by eight pendant droplights which gave strong illumination without shining in the spectators' eyes—a shell loaned by Santa Barbara. The players were arranged according to Stokowski's new seating plan, horns and percussion to the right, trumpets and trombones to the left, woodwinds in front before the conductor, with strings behind.

### Stokowski's Seating

The seating, in the acoustically fast shell, proved a doubtful blessing, for the orchestra men, accustomed to compensate attacks according to their traditional placement, found it difficult to make the necessary adjustments. Timpani and basses were seldom together, and the widely divided brasses were no better off, while woodwind tones generally preceded those of the strings. In the Bowl, in the open air, the experiment was not disturbing; here, it was often distressing.

The auditors obviously reveled in the luxurious appointments of the theater, which were strange indeed to concert-goers after years of genteel shabbiness, and poured out to crowd the ornate lobby at the intermission. Most of the spectators did not observe the appearance of the piano. When, after the solo, the front of the stage holding the instrument quietly sank down into the pit, there arose an audible gasp.

Rachmaninoff's performance of his own Second Piano Concerto proved the musical highlight of the program. He played magnificently, imbuing it with feeling and emotion that he has never displayed here before. The first movement was lovely in its melodic lines, but the piano rarely emerged above Stokowski's overloud accompaniment.

The second and third movements afforded better balance between solo instrument and orchestra, the lovely Adagio flowing with serene tenderness, sensitively lingering. The Finale tingled with rhythmic

—Turn to Page 7, Column 3

## Orchestra in Hollywood Bow

Continued from Page 6—

vitality, and mounted to a virtuoso climax, which brought forth a resounding ovation from the assembled throng.

For some years the programs have read "Southern California Symphony Assn., sponsoring the Philharmonic Orchestra," with the conductors name following. This one was altered. It read "Southern California Symphony Assn. presents Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philharmonic Orchestra." It amounted to just that.

Stokowski's conducting has always been theatrical, but last night it proceeded to an extreme of grandiloquence. He has a flair for melodrama, and brings with him an electric tension, but the effect is individual; it belongs to the person, rather than to the music. In consequence, the interpretations included more of Stokowski than of the composers.

### Bach Fugue Given

The opening Bach Fugue in g-minor, called "the smaller" only by comparison with the even greater proportions of another in the same key, was done with the munificence with which Stokowski invariably contrives to invest Bach. It was given crisply and efficaciously, and was the best rendered item of the orchestral program.

Stokowski quite evidently reveled in the riotous chromaticism of the Suite from Stravinsky's "Firebird." He spread out its rich orchestral dress with an air of flamboyance. The grotesquerie of "Kastchei's Infernal Dance" was sharply limned, and the following "Berceuse" held a caressing quality.

The reading of the Beethoven Fifth Symphony, however, was a long way from Beethoven. It was exaggerated in all dimensions, and made to appear sententious at all costs. If "Fate was knocking at the door," it was an orotund and rather bombastic Fate.

"This move to Hollywood is an experiment," declared Basil Rathbone, in an intermission speech. "We need a musical center. To achieve it, we need more attendance at concerts. We need fresh faces and new blood. In these days of ugliness, let us keep beauty as near to us as we can, and what could be more beautiful than music?"