

# National Symphony

By Weldon Wallace

The distractions of election night apparently kept no one away from the Lyric Theater last night, for a crowded house was present to hear the season's opening concert of the National Symphony Orchestra, under direction of Dr. Hans Kindler and with Sergei Rachmaninoff as soloist.

In the program selection the concert was intriguing and typical of the fare that Dr. Kindler will present here during the season. Unfortunately, the playing did not measure up to the standards of which this group has proved itself capable. No doubt a finer balance of ensemble and a fuller projection of sonority will be in evidence as the season advances.

## The Soloist

High point of the evening was Mr. Rachmaninoff's performance of his own "Concerto No. 2 in C Minor." It is difficult to write with detachment of this artist's playing, for it has always seemed to me that he possesses to a greater degree than any other pianist the ability to create anew whatever he plays. Thus, his concert programs, which usually contain only the most hackneyed works, are always fresh and exciting. Whatever he touches becomes magic, and last night was no exception.

The concerto is effusive music, romantic in rather a simpering way; but pianistic, melodious and thoroughly appealing. The orchestral support left much to be desired, but if perhaps "body" was lacking in the playing of Dr. Kindler's men, the piano figurations stood out in clearer design than a richer orchestral background would have afforded.

## Honors To The Strings

Orchestral honors of the evening belong to the strings in the orchestra for the performance of a little suite arranged by Dr. Kindler from three Corelli

sonatas. Arrangements of the earlier classics are often performed by the larger orchestras, usually with overbearing color and largeness of tone. Personally, I welcomed the thinner tone of last night and found very satisfying the simple, intimate playing of these beautiful Corelli tunes.

The concert's opening selection, an "American Festival Overture," by William Schuman, received little applause; a fact to be regretted, since Dr. Kindler is doing a great service in the encouragement of American music by including such scores on his programs.

Mr. Schuman's overture opens noisily, the first section having an underlying movement of rhythmic displacement. Following this is a section in which the wind instruments sing of summer nights. The violas then begin a fugato that could be only American in character; like other thematic material in the work, troubling the mind with a sense of something heard before. After further development the piece returns for its conclusion to the opening mood. This overture is muscular, taut music. It is showy; it is strong; it is thoughtful.

## Baltimore Premiere

To conclude the evening, Dr. Kindler presented the Baltimore premiere of Tchaikovsky's "Third Symphony." This work, though it lacks focus and articulation in its structure, contains some lovely melodies—very Russian ones recalling the earlier Russian composer Glinka and his opera "Russlan and Ludmilla." The verdict of Tchaikovsky's contemporary, Cesar Cui, is perhaps the best estimate of the symphony: "It shows talent, but we have a right to expect more of Tchaikovsky."

For the next concert November 26 the National Symphony will bring to Baltimore as soloist Kirsten Flagstad, and Dr. Kindler will release the baton to Edwin MacArthur for the performance.