

## MUSIC

Rachmaninoff Plays  
in All-Russian  
Program

By JOHN K. SHERMAN

Every symphony season has its peaks and the shallower places in between. Last night's concert in Northrop auditorium was assuredly one of the peaks, made so chiefly by the appearance of Sergei Rachmaninoff and more than incidentally by an all-Russian program matchlessly played by the Minneapolis Symphony under Leon Barzin.

Rachmaninoff, in his 60's, has become an almost patriarchal figure on the concert platform, exacting heavy tribute of applause, admiration and something close to reverence from every audience he plays to. Such was the case last night. He is a grave and impassive man. Tall and stooped, he shambles onto the stage, casts a disinterested look at the audience and not until his fingers strike the keys does he impress as anything more than a tired, aging musician.

But when those keys are struck, the expressionless and fatigued countenance is forgotten, for the music which comes from his hands plumbs deep the wellsprings of tone, bringing poetic insight and dramatic vitality to everything he touches. Last night the music was the Second piano concerto, a direct descendant of the great classic concertos, a much loved work for its graceful, long-limbed themes and its wealth of harmonic and melodic material.

Written shortly after the turn of the century, the concerto is an extension of 19th century romanticism, rich and luxuriant in texture, gloomy in the grand style, luscious in its tunes that wind slowly in and out of the mottled weave of the music. The soloist and the orchestra were in rapport in an interpretation of great eloquence and tenderness.

Mr. Barzin deserves an orchid for making up an all-Russian program without doing the obvious thing of including a Tchaikowsky symphony. The opening number, Glinka's "Russian and Ludmilla" overture, cut a bright caper at the start, and was set forth with a fluency and bounce which seemed more Italian than Slav in character.

After intermission came the dark-hued prelude to Moussorgsky's "Khovantchina," played with some majesty and poignancy, an impressive piece of picture-making that brought before the mind's eye the mists and turrets of old Moscow. The place usually taken by a Tchaikowsky work was filled by Borodin's Second symphony in B minor, not played here in many years. Without offering any distinctive ideas, the work had vigor and rhythmic vivacity and rich coloring. Yet the final impression was unavoidable that Borodin's vocabulary and means for developing his themes were limited. The interpretation was plastic, full of felicitous detail and reared to some brilliant climaxes.