

MUSIC

Rachmaninoff Plays at 4th Concert of Symphony

By JOHN K. SHERMAN

If Nino Martini can draw a packed house, there is comfort in the fact that Serge Rachmaninoff can draw a packed house too. Last night's phenomenon might give rise to the philosophical reflection that genuine greatness often receives as much public recognition as spurious greatness.

For Rachmaninoff, greeted by an audience that overflowed into the pit at Northrop auditorium, has the aura and aspect of greatness, and it is sensed the moment he steps on to the platform. He is the same crafty sorcerer, the gaunt, wise ogre in evening dress who shambles to the piano to draw from it the blazing fires of eloquence and the slow flame of poetry.

And as usual, the experience of hearing Rachmaninoff goes down as one of the deep and authentic experiences of the season. What may have surprised many last night was that from the man who looks like an oracle of remote and superior wisdom should have come the brilliance, the Lisztian pyrotechnics, the sheer mischief of the composition he chose to play with the orchestra—the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, composed only last year.

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This work has a surprising effectiveness. With less "body" and meat in it than either of the two concertos oftenest played, it is a showpiece which exploits all the Rachmaninoff idiom and virtuosity. In it are flashing rhythms that occasionally are syncopated, a typical investiture of heavy, tapestried orchestral coloring, a wealth of mingled fancy and scholarship. But even in the most dazzling of the variations one feels the basic mood of Rachmaninoff, the mood of elaborate pathos, of regal melancholy. My color impression of Rachmaninoff's music is always that of cobalts and indigos, an almost Oriental richness of hue in which the darker tones predominate.

The pianist-composer brought a generous expressiveness to his work, as always. His technical wizardry in the many arabesque passages was little short of phenomenal. And one again is impressed by his mastery of orchestral color, for his instrumentation is unfailingly luscious and piquant. The work as a whole lives up to its rhapsodical purpose, verging often into fantasy, into fascinating byways and tangents. Less important, no doubt, than the symphonies and concertoes, it emerged last night as a popular projection of the unique Rachmaninoff language of tone.

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The program offered by the Minneapolis Symphony orchestra and Eugene Ormandy was all-Russian, in honor of the composer. It opened with the engaging Russian folk songs of Liadoff, and continued with Stravinsky's ballet music from "The Fire Bird," which has become, in 25 years, a staple of concert hall lore. This was performed with unexampled finesse:

the Firebird's dance had a waspish delicacy, the infernal dance of Katschei had harsh and demonic vigor (though Katschei seems more and more an impotent bogey as time goes on), and the berceuse was all tenderness and peace.

The closing number, the Ravel transcription of Moussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," is one of the most splendid arrays of mood and color in orchestral repertoire, and it was played with great finish and style. It is, in fact, a lavish spectacle, which makes one wonder how pale the Hartmann watercolors they glorify must now seem in comparison. The combination of Russian and French genius, linked with that of Ormandy and his orchestra, made the work a tour de force that reached spectacular heights at the finale.

KEROSENE BLAST KILLS 3 CHILDREN

Eau Claire, Wis.—Explosion of a can of kerosene a farm housewife used to start a fire resulted in the death of three children at their farm home near Fairchild, 30 miles from here.

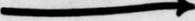
The mother, Mrs. Levis Wood, is not expected to survive. Lovice, 4, died en route to a hospital here, and Margerie, two and a half years old, and Renona, 9 months, died within three hours after reaching the hospital. The children were grouped around their mother in the kitchen when the explosion sent a sheet of flame over the four.

IRA BOUCK RITES HELD AT ROYALTON

Royalton, Minn.—Ira W. Bouck, 80, former state legislator, and a member of the Royalton school board for 50 years, who died Thursday at his home, was buried today.

Bouck, a member of the Minnesota house of representatives in 1903-1907, is survived by a son, Damon, and a daughter, Mrs. Besie Turrin, both of Minneapolis.

Stop in
and
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