

MUSIC

Symphony in Double Event

Rachmaninoff Gives New Own Composition in Stirring Performance

By VICTOR MILSON

The fourth symphony concert of the Minneapolis Symphony orchestra given to a near capacity audience at the Northrop auditorium last night offered as double novelty, Rachmaninoff as soloist in a new composition of his own, "Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini" for piano and orchestra, opus 41, Eugene Ormandy, the indefatigable conductor, had surrounded this appearance with a Russian program, very colorful and fascinating. It was one that strangely accentuated the loneliness of Rachmaninoff as a musical figure, remaining the last representative of the great romantic poet in western music, as solitary as he would have been even if the collapse of stardom had never taken place.

The "Capriccio" of Paganini for solo violin have deeply concerned the last "nerve-splitting" ever known among them, although Schumann was the only one who gave all twenty-four of them his pianistic attention. They all stopped with the sixth of them which Liszt so uniquely faithfully and brilliantly transplanted to the piano, the greatest last of these, in A minor, which is the subject of Rachmaninoff's rhapsodic work, which makes use of the half a score of variations of Paganini, thus giving a double technical character to his work, leaving alone that the piano part often becomes but another voice of the symphonic whole. This gives a depth of background which he himself even may as yet not have fully fathomed but which in a first hearing made it strike an audience as very impressive in its bold lengthiness and sweep as a whole which recall vividly his concertos and symphonies with his tone poem "Isle of Death" included.

Begins With Introduction
Rachmaninoff begins his work with a short introduction of his own, recalling the theme more than stating it and then before the variations, the only tangible element of the second theme—necessary for rhapsodic contrast being that joyful medieval "Dies irae" of which many modern composers have been so fond of making integral with their own inventions.

There was long a conflict in the mind of the great musician whether his real mission was that of a pianist or that of composer and he still goes on composing works for his own performance. What these compositions hold of intrinsic worth, it is doubtful will be easier for posterity than contemporarily to decide. It will not be under the wondrous magic of his unique technique and interpretative gifts in which he stands as much alone in power as in other respects. He baffles even the most knowing of pianists with the originality, sweep and wealth inexhaustible as performance. As each he kept his audience captive and at the close again and again recalling him, although it understood that he would not grant any extra numbers.

Grasps Rachmaninoff Purpose
Mr. Ormandy in performing the task of making the orchestra grasp and follow the intentions of Rachmaninoff, the composer and pianist, accomplished an artistic achievement worthy of high praise. A single instance may be quoted out a multitude of effects victoriously reached, and that was when in the first variation where the soloist strikes the sustained note in each bar, while the violins have to supply the crochets.

The Russian program surrounding Rachmaninoff was one of music which would recognize no Bach or no Beethoven and brought into being more or less under the influence of Rimsky-Korsakov, rich, naive, lovable and with the deep, pure color culture of Bilbin's Russian fairy tale illustrations. Anated Zadorov was with Ippolitov-Ivanov one of those who took up "Dieu Koroska's mission of gathering in harvest of Russian folk songs. The endearing opening number was the eight of those which constitute his opus 28 and they charmed a symphony audience once more through their naive and virtuosically expert orchestration to a loving interpretation given them by Mr. Ormandy. Outstanding in beauty was the solo work in choir, quartet and solo of the "Plainsville Melody."

Most Catholic of Composers
Rachmaninoff is in composition the most catholic of composers, never giving up one tenet of his musical contrivance faith. Rivivinsky, quite antipodal to him, is the most heterodox art composer the world has ever seen, who changes faith and standpoint almost with every work of his. The suite from the ballet "The Fire Bird" is twenty-five years old by now, but is possessed of an evidently timeless beauty that seems more touching and ravishing every time when interpreted by Mr. Ormandy and the orchestra. The cello, clarinet and cello soloists added in the dream stuff numbers essentially in the deep impression made by it all, while the violins were exquisite throughout.

Musorogsky, the drenched soloist and army officer, who as musician was next to untaught, has through his boundless naivete and humor, combined with perfect disregard for all traditions, after the death exerted an immense influence traceable from Debussy to the present day. In his "Pictures at an Exhibition," originally a suite of four-hand piano pieces, masterly orchestrated by Havel, he through the carelessly "Promenade" of introduction and intermezzi evidently imagines himself a Russian peasant who in clumsy and haphazard strides wanders through the art exhibit of his friend Victor Hartmann, while in reality he prepares a thing that makes the thematic backbone of the finale for which he draws from his unique folk-wise pictures of medieval Russia, the Gate of the Golden Gates at Kiev.