

S. RACHMANINOFF DOMINANT FIGURE OF CLOSING NIGHT

Norfolk Music Festival Hears "Man of Mystery" Play Own Concerto.

By Philip Curtiss.
(Special to The Courant.)

Norfolk, June 3.

The gaunt figure of Sergei Rachmaninoff dominated the final concert of the Norfolk festival held here this evening, as it was expected to do.

There is a futile pastime which consists in ranking musicians according to their supposed world importance. Rachmaninoff called for no such ranking, for he is more than a pianist and much more than a pianist who has become a composer. Rachmaninoff is a personality and in this case a personality the memory of which will always haunt the Norfolk music shed. Rachmaninoff is the kind of man who is naturally described as a man of mystery.

The veil of mystery hanging over him at the beginning of the evening and curiously or perhaps not so curiously it was only lifted when Rachmaninoff himself was not on the platform; that is to say, when one of his compositions was being played by others.

Rachmaninoff (in this case it seems absurd to use the "Mr.") played this evening his concerta for pianoforte and orchestra. Later, the orchestra, under the magnificent direction of Henry P. Schmitt, gave Rachmaninoff's profoundly solemn symphonic poem "The Isle of the Dead." It was in this

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number that the veil was lifted from the man of mystery, for those for whom it was lifted at all. As has been said, the force of Rachmaninoff this evening was not the force of music alone. It was the force of a personality. To describe it would be impossible. The present reviewer is not going to try. As an encore, Rachmaninoff played his "Prelude in C sharp Minor."

The final evening of the Norfolk festival is always crowded with numbers, any one of which would make a notable concert. The only initial rendition of the festival was given this evening in "Prelude to the Trojan Women" by Edward Burlingame Hill of the department of music of Harvard University. It is unfortunate that the late hour and limited space have made it impossible to give Mr. Hill's composition the analysis which it deserves. It was a forceful and scholarly composition. It was conducted by Chalmers Clifton, a grateful and highly original conductor of whom Norfolk would like to see more.

The second number on the program, and also the sixth, were furnished by the piquant Frieda Hempel, who, with the feminine perversity allowed to a favorite prima donna, departed entirely from her program and gave the "Arioso" of Handel; the ever-popular "Sweet Bird" of Handel; and a number of which was called "Variations," although variation from what no one has yet discovered. Handel seemed to be among those present. For encores she gave—I will give you three guesses. Right! "The Last Rose of Summer," and the "Beautiful Blue Danube."

Henry Hadley like Mr. Hill suffered from the overshadowing importance of Rachmaninoff, which was a profound pity, for no one more deserves or receives the affection of Norfolk audiences than Mr. Hadley. He conducted, with his usual brilliancy, the intermezzo and also the ballet of the desert girls from his new opera "One of Cleopatra's Nights"; and also the "South" movement from his Fourth Symphony, written in 1911 for the Norfolk festival. The opera numbers were a dream of color, not color as the musician means it, but color as the scenepainter means it. The orchestra was on the tip of his baton every minute.

The evening closed with the beautiful "Symphony Pathetique" of Tchaikowsky in which, as conductor, Mr. Schmitt had one of the opportunities which are too seldom given him for showing his power as a conductor.

A feature of the Norfolk festivals is that all singers, composers and artists are elected members of the Choral Union, and thus members of the Norfolk family.