

# MUSIC

## Rachmaninoff and the Symphony.

Sergei Rachmaninoff, famous as composer, pianist and conductor, appeared once more in Northrop auditorium Friday night, where he was guest soloist with the symphony orchestra. Rachmaninoff, the magnificent, he might be called when he seats himself at the piano, not because of unusual physical proportions but because he becomes transformed from the seemingly casual and indifferent personality that moves slowly across the stage, into a dynamo of energy.

Combine this energy with that of our conductor and we have something tremendous. Rachmaninoff served as an object lesson to visiting artists when he insisted that Mitropoulos share the tornado of applause that poured from the audience. This recognition was deserved. Rachmaninoff could do no less after the magnificent support he received from the orchestra.

I would like to hear the great Russian artist in some work not his own, but better his own choice than his absence from our concert stage. He is a fine pianist viewed from any angle; his musicianship is recognized the world over; he belongs, too, in the front rank of performers, endowed with splendid gifts of interpretation, with a surprisingly agile technic and with a mastery of the keyboard one delights to witness.

The concert opened with a ballet suite by Gretry that we welcome to the orchestra's repertory, not because it possesses high qualities as a piece of music but because it runs riot with Gallic wit and sparkle. There is a brief interregnum in this flow of French brilliance while the Menuet is played; but by and large it is the kind of music that make one's pulses tingle with pleasure. Gretry must have borrowed an Irish jig as the basis of the final movement. It was, of course, played beautifully.

It may be that the performance of Beethoven's string quartet in F minor, op. 95, marks the end of the string quartet era. I don't know about that. But speaking as a lover of chamber music I am less convinced than ever before that this kind of music is suitable for orchestral arrangement. It is all very well to say that we should know these quartets, they belong among

the immortals. Which is all very true so far as those who are chamber music addicts are concerned.

The trouble is, a large proportion of symphony patrons do not care for chamber music. This is not any more peculiar to Minneapolis than it is to any other city in any part of the world. It is usually played in small halls and if the attendance reaches half a thousand it is exceptional and I am speaking now of cities where I have heard 30 or 40 string quartet concerts in a single season.

Had Beethoven written his quartets with the orchestra in mind he would have said as much. One misses the delicate intimacies, the finished phrasing, the perfect moulding of instrument into instrument. This is no criticism of the performance heard in Northrop auditorium for Mitropoulos gives his entire being, his heart, his mind and a fervid imagination to make such a performance all it should be.

It was a great success from many points of view and causes one to wonder that 60 players could so nearly approximate the chamber music ideal. The men have been trained to appreciate the splendor of the music as well as to play it with beautiful precision, and yet the precision was not perfect, for as I have said previously it is impossible to obtain the same tone quality or the same response to attacks as may be found in four expert players.

"Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks" brought the program to a scintillating close. Mitropoulos caught the spirit of the music that tells episodes from the life of a great and lovable rascal. The orchestra was one in purpose with him and so the program closed with an air of jollity, even if we were supplied with the foreknowledge that poor Till ended his career on the scaffold; there is some question whether or not the original did suffer that fate.

JAMES DAVIES.

## EXILE RETURNS TO CUBA.

Havana, Dec. 9.—(AP)—Ramon Grau San Martin, former president of Cuba, returned Friday from four and one-half years of voluntary exile in Miami, Fla.