

Pianist Scores Rousing Success As Soloist with Symphony

By JIM HAYS

Pianist Richard Syracuse scored a rousing success Saturday night as soloist with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra.

Syracuse first offered the audience a solid performance of the Beethoven Fourth Concerto, from which he extracted, with both glittering technique and superlative musicianship; each dramatic .. and poetic nuance.

His playing in the Beethoven was marked by a passionate vitality, manifested in shimmering arpeggios, quicksilver glissandos, and in a treatment Significant throughout for both its incisiveness and sympathetic ardor.

But it was in his reading of the Rachmaninoff "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini," which to this auditor is far the more ingratiating work, that

Syracuse revealed an even more abundant persuasiveness.

Playing with impeccable rapport with the ensemble, under the baton of John E. Ferritto, the soloist displayed a felicitous sensitivity for the subtleties of the score, soaring atmospherically into the more robust passages, then with an equally simpatico expressiveness tenderly exploring the lyrically ethereal moments, notably in the "Eighteenth Variation" in the set of Paganini caprices.

The conclusion of the Rachmaninoff found the audience rising to salute the soloist, an artist-in-residence at Ohio University, with a standing ovation that endured for two curtain calls.

Last night's program opened with "Ode to Life," a new work by the young Ohio-born composer Leslie Adams.

The Adams piece was marked by pronounced echoes of twentieth century America, resonating at times with snippets from jazz and ragtime, in which Adams sings of lives marked by exuberance.

And while his score acknowledges the more sober aspects that can pervade life, it is essentially a paean to life as it should be lived: filled with courage, dreams, hope, love and joy.

Adams sat in the audience last night, in a row near the back of the hall, and listened critically to the performance of his work ..

As applause built on the completion of that performance, Maestro Ferritto beckoned to the composer to join him on stage.

Adams bounced down the aisle and took the steps to the stage two at a time to accept the congratulations of Ferritto and the orchestra then, with a sweeping gesture saluted the orchestra and, with a gracious bow, the still-applauding audience.