

# Symphony Features 2 Soloists

By FRANCES BOARDMAN

Friday's concert in Northrop auditorium by the Minneapolis Symphony orchestra, Dimitri Mitropoulos conducting, had two visiting soloists: Nathan Milstein, the very distinguished violinist, and Nancy Ness, an attractive Norwegian soprano. The program itself was an interesting arrangement of the comfortably familiar in juxtaposition with the mystically unconventional.

Things started off well with the lovely Haydn Symphony in G major, Op. 88. Mr. Mitropoulos guided it with an easier, more flexible touch than is sometimes the case, and the result was an agreeably relaxed performance. The other well-loved item was the Lalo "Symphonie Espagnol", in which the magnificent Milstein art displayed itself with an indescribable appeal, and the Milstein tone disclosed the full measure of its beauty.

There have been seasons during which this work has been played so frequently as to wear its welcome a little thin, but that has not been the case for a long time, and on Friday it emerged freshly as an example of unusual charm and delicacy in design, and a particularly grateful work for the executant with both skill and imagination. Nathan Milstein is so richly gifted with these and other assets that Friday's audience may assume with justification that they have heard a definitive performance of the score.

Nancy Ness was drafted primarily to take care of the difficult singing parts included by Arnold Schoenberg in his Quartet for Strings, No. 2, in F-sharp

minor, Op. 10, a work which the composer himself transcribed for string orchestra. So much music of a far more revolutionary character has flowed past the public ear-drum in the quarter-century since this was published that this specimen cannot be classified with strictly Left Wing achievements. Indeed, such difficulty as some listeners find in assimilating Schoenberg is traceable, it seems to me, rather to his effort to suggest in music the veil dividing the seen from the unseen world, and his own search for a spiritual means of penetrating it. The result is necessarily both mystical and mystifying, to a certain extent, as well as sometimes poignantly beautiful.

Mme. Ness, a young woman of appealing personality and unusual musical intelligence, supplied the two vocal sections called for: "Litany" and "Transport", the original German text written by the late gifted Austrian poet, Stefan Georg, and admirably translated in the program notes by Donald Ferguson.

The assignment is a difficult one for a singer, since the intervals are unusual, and tonal relationships generally unconventional, but Mme. Ness contrived a performance characterized by fine craftsmanship and clear musical understanding.

However she was very properly slated to sing two Grieg songs in addition to her Schoenberg contribution, and these were Solveig's Cradle Song from the "Peer Gynt" music, and "Fra Monte Pincio", a song of hope for Italy when she was suffering under tyranny nearly a century before the one from which she is even now painfully struggling to free herself. The accompaniment to the lullaby was much too loud; it was much better adjusted to the other one. Mme. Ness sang them in the original Norwegian infusing them with authentic feeling and impeccable taste.