

## Concert Halls Draw Capacity Sunday Houses

**Kreisler Warmly Welcomed and Symphonic Society Plays to Throng That Is Crowded in Aeolian Hall**

**Rachmaninoff Is Cheered**

**Composer-Virtuoso's Concert Is Given Ovation; Marred by Anti-Climax**

By H. E. Krehbiel

If there should in our day come along a social philosopher bent upon putting an estimate upon the degree of musical culture prevailing in New York in the concluding days of the year 1919 and possessed of the idea that statistics would be significant we should like to help him by estimating the number of persons, percentage of population and racial ratio, as illustrated at the attendance on the city's concert rooms yesterday. We should begin by telling him that Carnegie Hall in the afternoon housed all the people that its boxes, stalls and stage could accommodate and that the space between the seats and the doors was crowded to suffocation, to the disregard, perhaps, of the fire laws, to which defiance is paid for a brief space only after the public and official conscience is quieted by the loss of hundreds of lives in a fire or panic.

Then would come an enumeration of thousands in Aeolian Hall, the Manhattan Opera House, the Hotel Ritz and the Princess Theater at the same hour, and probably as many more in the Hippodrome, the Maxine Elliott Theater, the Metropolitan Opera House, and the Washington Irving High School in the evening. For all these affairs the people were expected to pay, and no doubt this was done by the majority of attendants on the really important incidents of the day. That, however, is inconsequential from the point of view which ought to be kept in mind, but which was never so neglected as it is in these days of neurotic enjoyment over sensuous pleasures of all kinds. Nothing has come to our ears up to the present moment of the happenings in the Great Hall of the College of the City of New York, where in the afternoon Mr. Samuel A. Baldwin gave a concert of organ music which was free to the public. Perhaps a few hundred or a thousand, or even more, persons listened to that. If so, it may also be that their enjoyment was freer than that of any of the other gatherings from the alloy of commercialism and fee. We should be glad to think so and to rank the organ rental higher than some of the other concerts in playing material before the imagined social philosopher of the future.

**Kreisler Greeted Warmly**

Faithful and conscientious chroniclers must be depended upon to tell the readers of this newspaper about most of the musical doings which we have listed. We can only discourse fragmentarily about things which fell into our own ears or of which tidings reached us directly. At Carnegie Hall the tremendous audience, after giving Mr. Fritz Kreisler such a welcome as might be said to be due only to the

bringer of a great, purifying, uplifting artistic evangel, listened to a concert like scores which have preceded it, with the virtuoso playing no better than has been his wont, and, at times, possibly a little worse. He began with music by Mozart (the concerto in D major), followed it with a sonata by Bech (for violin alone) and six set short pieces and a supplementary set of tithbits for the crowd, which is become habituated to ask for more, no matter how generously it has been catered to. That appetite is like jealousy, which "makes the meal it feeds on." At the Hotel Ritz the Society of the Friends of Music, departing from its professed mission, offered its members a recital by Miss Guilomar Novaes, who would have been heard to much better advantage in a theater or concert room. She played Mozart's Sonata in A (with the variations and Turkish march), and the Sonata quasi-fantasia in E flat, Op. 27, No. 1, by Beethoven—the companion piece of the much more familiar, and admired but ill-named "Moonlight."

**Encore Spells Impression**

As the programs of pianoforte, violin and song recitals are generally constructed, little if any offense is given to good taste by the supplementary entertainments upon which gushing devotees of the artists insist. It is seldom that the last set number leaves so uplifting an impression that it is a pity to have it obliterated. It is a different matter when an exalted mood created by a transporting performance of a noble work is deliberately dissipated by the music which is made to follow it. There was a flagrant illustration of such a setting down of the artistic pegs at the concert of the Symphony Society in Aeolian Hall in the afternoon, when, after Mr. Rachmaninoff, aided by the orchestra and its conductor, had stirred the listeners to a depth and height and warmth of enthusiasm such as we have not observed for years, Mr. Damrosch invited a return to a commonplace, frivolous frame of mind by playing Mr. Grainger's march called "Over the Hills and Far Away." The cleverness, ingenuity and enjoyableness of this piece are no in question; we are animadverting only on the conduct of the conductor in dragging the hearers from the lofty heights to which they had been lifted by nobler music down to the frivolous attitude toward art which is characteristic of this neurotic day.

Mr. Rachmaninoff played the solo part of his third concerto. It is a work of great value, full of beauties and marred by few blemishes. In the progress of the performance the composer-virtuoso, Mr. Damrosch and the players of the band were seemingly caught up in an ecstasy, which grew in the listeners as well until at the conclusion it broke out like a flame of living fire. Sound after round of applause, a wholehearted, spontaneous outburst, brought Mr. Rachmaninoff to the stage again and again. The unkindled enthusiasm spread to the orchestral players, who finally rose to their feet and swelled the storm of grateful approbation when the composer, with characteristic modesty and dignity and reposefulness of demeanor returned to bow his acknowledgments for the sixth or eighth time. Half of the audience had followed the example of the band. The air quivered as if charged with a current of emotional electricity. Then came the children's march to bring players and hearers back to an illly agreeable titillation of the ears. The pity of it!

**Played Ten Years Ago**

Ten years ago we heard the concerto for the first time. It was new then, and Mr. Damrosch brought it forward at a Symphony Society concert in the New Theater. We recall the impression which the work made then. Its reception was so triumphant, emphatic and spontaneous that the composer himself could not conceal his own surprise as well as delight. His playing then, as yesterday, was like his music, ingratiating in manner and matter. His frank, manly, unaffected bearing put him in delightful communion with his listeners. His modest and unconscious indifference to the customary devices of the virtuoso or self-exploiting composer held him there and developed the feeling into a sweetly sane intimacy. The concerto seemed overlong and too profusely developed, as it did yesterday, but its strong and beautiful individuality, both in theme and workmanship, was captivating.

We wished yesterday that it might have closed without its vigorous, triumphant, concluding section, though when it did end we felt that we should have missed one of its lofty flights. Still we should have been glad had it ended as with the serenity of its transfigured *Levito*, like the gentle close of a day which had begun with a sunrise that was as a benediction.

Before the concerto Mr. Damrosch played Charpentier's "Impressions d'Italie," and an introduction and allegro for strings by Sir Edward Elgar, a strong and beautiful modern echo of the old concerto, with ingenious use of a concertino band.

## RITA WELLMAN

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