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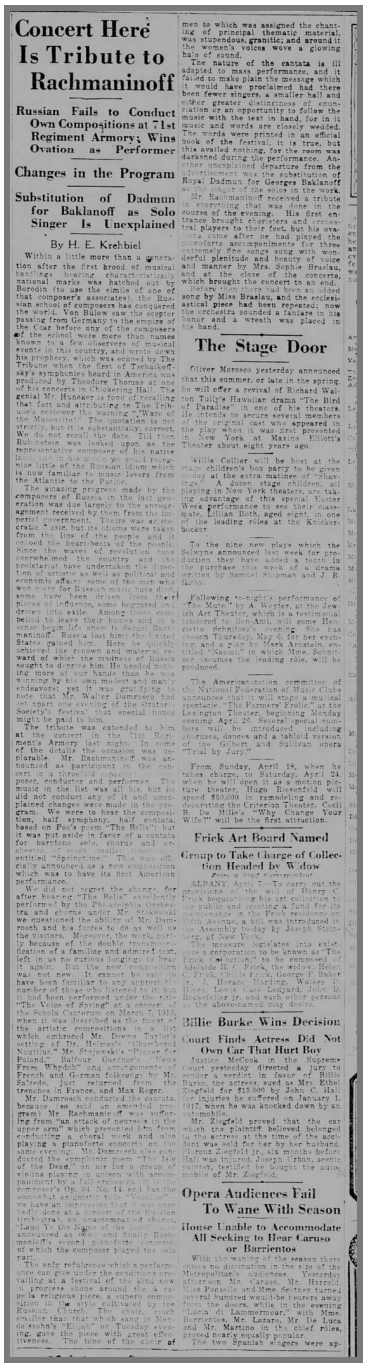

Concert Here Is Tribute to Rachmaninoff

Russian Fails to Conduct Own Compositions at 71st Regiment Armory; Wins Ovation as Performer

Changes in the Program

Substitution of Dadmun for Baklanoff as Solo Singer Is Unexplained

By H. E. Krehbiel

Within a little more than a generation after the first brood of musical hatchings bearing characteristically national marks was hatched out by Borodin (to use the simile of one of that composer's associates), the Russian school of composers has conquered the world. Ven Balow saw the eagles passing from Germany to the empire of the Czar before any of the composers of the school were more than names known to a few observers of musical events in this country, and wrote down his prophecy, which was scoped by The Tribune when the first of Tschaikowsky's symphonies heard in America was produced by Theodore Thomas at one of his concerts in Chickering Hall. The genial Mr. Hunaker is fond of recalling that fact and attributing to The Tribune's reporter the warning "Ware of the Muscovite!" The quotation is not exactly, but it is substantially, correct. We do not recall the date. Till then Rubinstein was looked upon as the representative composer of his native land, and in him, as could recognize little of the Russian idiom which is now familiar to music lovers from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The amazing progress made by the composers of Russia in the last generation was due largely to the astounding agreement received by them from the imperial government. Theirs was autocratic music, but its idioms were taken from the lips of the people and it echoed the heartbeats of the people. Since the waves of revolution have overwhelmed the country and the proletariat have undertaken the direction of artistic as well as political and economic affairs some of the men who won favor for Russian music have died, some have been driven from their homes or influence, some begrimed and driven into exile. Among those compelled to leave their homes and in a sense begin life anew is Sergei Rachmaninoff. Russia lost him; the United States gained him. Here he quickly achieved the renown and material reward of which the madness of Russia sought to deprive him. He needed nothing more at our hands than he was winning by his own modest and manly endeavors; yet it was gratifying to note that Mr. Walter Damrosch had set apart the evening of the Oratorio Society's festival that special honor might be paid to him.

The tribute was extended to him at the concert in the 71st Regiment's Armory last night. In some of the details the occasion was deplorable. Mr. Rachmaninoff was announced as participant in the concert in a triple capacity—composer, conductor and performer. The music in the list was all his, but he did not conduct any of it and unexplained changes were made in the program. We were to hear the composition, half symphony, half cantata, based on Poe's poem "The Bells"; but it was put aside in favor of a cantata for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra of smaller compass. This was officially announced as a new composition which was to have its first American performance.

We did not regret the choice, for after hearing "The Bells" excellently performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra and chorus under Mr. Stokowski we questioned the ability of Mr. Damrosch and his forces to do as well on the visitors. Moreover, the work, partly because of the double transposition of a familiar and admired text, left in us no curious longing to hear it again. But the new composition was not new. It cannot be said to have been familiar to any appreciable number of those who listened to it, but it had been performed under the title "The Voice of Spring" at a concert in the Scala Quintette on March 7, 1918, when it was described as the finest of the artistic connections in a list which embraced Mr. Deems Taylor's setting of De Heinedi's "Chambered Nautilus," Mr. Stojowski's "Prayer of Poland," Balfour Gardiner's "Love Song, Whyder" and arrangements of French and German folksongs by Mr. Salmon, just returned from the trenches in France, and Max Rogers.

Mr. Damrosch conducted the cantata, because, so said an amended program, Mr. Rachmaninoff was suffering from "an attack of neuritis in the upper arm" which prevented him from conducting a choral work and also playing a pianoforte concerto on the same evening. Mr. Damrosch then conducted the symphonic poem "The Isle of the Dead" on an air for a group of violins playing in unison with accompaniment by a full orchestra in the composer's Op. 30. No. 14 and has the somewhat poignant title "Sleeping." We have an impression that it has been well done at a concert of the Russian Symphonic, an unaccompanied chorus "Laudate Nomen Domini" was announced as Mr. and finally Rachmaninoff's second pianoforte concerto, of which the composer played the solo part.

The only reflections which a performance can give under the conditions prevailing at a festival of the kind now in progress shone around the a cappella religious piece, a superb composition in the style cultivated by the Russian Church. The choir, much smaller than that which sang in Mendelssohn's "Elijah" on Tuesday evening, gave the piece with great effectiveness. The tone of the choir of men to which was assigned the chanting of principal thematic material was stupendous, granitic, and around it the women's voices wove a glowing halo of sound.

The nature of the cantata is ill adapted to mass performance, and it failed to make plain the message which it would have proclaimed had there been fewer singers, a smaller hall and either greater distinctness of enunciation or an opportunity to follow the music with the text in hand, for in it music and words are closely wedded. The words were printed in an official book of the festival, it is true, but this availed nothing, for the room was darkened during the performance. Another unexplained departure from the advertisement was the substitution of Royal Dadmun for Georges Baklanoff as the singer of the solos in the work.

Mr. Rachmaninoff received a tribute for everything that was done in the course of the evening. His first entrance brought choristers and orchestral players to their feet, but his ovations came after he had played the pianoforte accompaniments for three extremely fine songs sung with wonderful plenitude and beauty of voice and manner by Mrs. Sophie Braslau, and at the close of the concerto, which brought the concert to an end. However, there had been an added song by Miss Braslau, and the ecclesiastical piece had been repeated; now the orchestra sounded a fanfare in his honor and a wreath was placed in his hand.

The Stage Door

Oliver Morosco yesterday announced that this summer, or late in the spring, he will offer a revival of Richard Walton Tully's Hawaiian drama "The Bird of Paradise" in one of his theaters. He intends to secure several members of the original cast who appeared in the play when it was first presented in New York at Maxine Elliott's Theater about eight years ago.

Willie Collier will be host at the stage children's box party to be given today at the extra matinee of "Shavings." A dozen stage children, all playing in New York theaters, are taking advantage of this special. Easter Week performance to see their classmate, Lillian Roth, aged eight, in one of the leading roles at the Knickerbocker.

To the nine new plays which the Selwyns announced last week for production they have added a tenth in the purchase this week of a drama written by Samuel Shipman and J. E. Hurley.

Following tonight's performance of "The Mirle" by A. Wolter, at the Jewish Art Theater, which is a testimonial tendered to Jacob Ami, will come Henrietta Schnitzer's evening. She has chosen Tuesday, May 4, for her event, and a play by Mark Arnstein, entitled "Naomi," in which Miss Schnitzer assumes the leading role, will be produced.

The Americanization committee of the National Federation of Music Clubs announces that it will stage a musical spectacle, "The Farmers' Frolic," at the Lexington Theater, beginning Monday evening, April 26. Several special numbers will be introduced, including choruses, dances and a tabloid version of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera "Trial by Jury."

From Sunday, April 18, when he takes charge, to Saturday, April 24, when he will open it as a motion picture theater, Hugo Riesenfeld will spend $50,000 in remodeling and redecorating the Criterion Theater. Cecil B. De Mille's "Why Change Your Wife?" will be the first attraction.

Frick Art Board Named

Group to Take Charge of Collection Headed by Widow

Special to The Tribune.

ALBANY, April 7.—To carry out the provisions of the will of Henry C. Frick bequeathing his art collection to the public and creating a fund for its maintenance in the Frick residence on Fifth Avenue, a bill was introduced in the Assembly to-day by Joseph Stolzberg, of New York.

The measure legislates into existence a corporation to be known as "The Frick Collection" to be composed of Adelaide H. C. Frick, the widow; Helen C. Frick, Childs Frick, George A. Baker, Jr., Horace Havilings, Walter S. Hosse, Louis Cass Ledyard, John D. Rockefeller, jr., and such other persons as the above-named may desire.

Billie Burke Wins Decision

Court Finds Actress Did Not Own Car That Hurt Boy

Justice McCook in the Supreme Court yesterday directed a jury to render a verdict in favor of Billie Burke, the actress, sued as Mrs. Ethel Ziegfeld for $15,000 by John C. Hall for injuries he suffered on January 1, 1917, when he was knocked down by an automobile.

Mr. Ziegfeld proved that the car which the plaintiff believed belonged to the actress at the time of the accident was sold for her by her husband. Florenz Ziegfeld jr., six months before Hall was injured. Joseph Urban, scenic painter, testified he bought the automobile of Mr. Ziegfeld.

Opera Audiences Fail To Wane With Season

House Unable to Accommodate All Seeking to Hear Caruso or Barrientos

With the waning of the season there comes no diminution in the size of the Metropolitan's audiences. Yesterday afternoon Mr. Caruso, Mr. Harrold, Miss Fornelle and Mme. Scotney turned several hundred would-be hearers away from the doors, while in the evening Lucia di Lammermoor," with Mme. Barrientos, Mr. Lazaro, Mr. De Luca and Mr. Martino in the chief roles, proved nearly equally popular.

The two Spanish singers were ap-

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